

THREE METASEARCH TRENDS FOR HOTEL MARKETERS



The metasearch capability that Google has launched in the recent times within Google Maps helps to display flight prices for different routes as people use the search engines for finding information. This feature not only projects the significance of metasearch as a business model, but also the entry of Google into this space to add more value.

Though the impact that this feature is likely to create will be small initially, its addition to one of the world's largest travel websites marks the beginning of three long-term trends which hotel marketers cannot afford to neglect.

#1: Metasearch moves to the mainstream

Following the acquisition of Kayak and Trivago by Priceline and Expedia, respectively, the addition of air pricing in Google Maps signifies the importance of making available offers and prices to prospective travelers when they are planning their travel. The significant move on the part of Google further helps to enhance customers' awareness about metasearch as a booking as well as shopping tool. Hotels need to include metasearch into their distribution plan not only through the existing players in the field, but also through new players like Google.

#2: Maps are important for travelers

Prospective travelers use Maps and other mapping services on a daily basis to plan their trips as Google Maps is one of the world's largest travel-oriented websites. The addition of metasearch to Google Maps may only provide flight data initially (may be considered as a short-term oversight) as Google Hotel Finder has only limited supplier inventory. However, the recently introduced changes such as Google Local Carousel and enhanced Maps reflect Google's recognition of a shift in customer search behavior and its effort to stay ahead in the booking/shopping space.

#3: Innovation in travel distribution is still alive

Though it is more than 15 years after ecommerce was introduced in the travel space, several options to help travelers find and reserve their accommodation continue to exist. Maps may start off with air prices, but more features are likely to be added in due course. Other players in the field may strive to disrupt the conventional online giants, but travelers can anticipate changes to the channels that offer flight as well as hotel data.

Regulatory oversight, among many other things, may pose challenges to Google as it gears up for introduction of metasearch in an aggressive manner in the travel vertical. Google is just starting with information about air services and it is only a matter of time before hotel information will be introduced.

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