

Unit 12: Travel Agency Platforms



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Module: Travel Agency Platforms

Primary Target Group: SMEs in the tourism sector

Secondary Target Groups: Expert VET providers, tourism representatives, and in-company trainers.

Estimated time: 120 minutes

Objectives: The objectives of this module are:

- Identify the different tourism sectors;
- Identify the different travel agents and their benefits to SMEs in the tourism industry.

Learning outcomes: By the end of this Bitesize the participants will:

- Identify the different tourism sectors
- Identify the different travel agents and their benefits to SMEs in the tourism industry.
- Understanding how to use these online travel agencies to your advantage in order to boost your business.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2. Tourism Sectors | 5 |
| 2.1 Food and Beverage | 5 |
| 2.2 Accommodation | 5 |
| 2.3 Travel and Tourism | 6 |
| 2.4 Entertainment and Recreation | 7 |
| 3. Travel agents | 8 |
| 4. Benefits of using these platforms..... | 15 |
| 5. Risks of using these platforms..... | 15 |
| 6. Reading materials..... | 16 |

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1. Introduction

The module Travel Agency Platforms aims to identify the different travel agents and their benefits to SMEs in the tourism sector. This module will try to provide some understanding on some travel agency platforms as well as how it can be used to benefit SMEs .

Customers now book their trip and lodging in a different method. There is a trend toward doing all of your travel planning online. (Selling through online travel agents, n.d.) Online travel agencies and hotel booking websites like Booking.com, Lastminute.com, and Expedia are popular with customers. Customers can choose from a number of alternatives for organizing their journeys on these websites and mobile apps. From a single website, customers can quickly filter and compare a variety of lodging options.

Through this module, you will be able to gain understanding of the different tourism sectors and travel agencies that cater to the different sectors. By understanding how to use these online travel agencies to your advantage, you can boost your business.

2. Tourism Sectors

The hospitality industry is large and can be divided into various sub sectors. The top four sectors are; 'Food and Beverage', 'Accommodation', 'Travel and Tourism' and 'Entertainment and Recreation'. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.) Although the industry is segmented, there is a lot that can be done to enhance the overall customer experience.



2.1 Food and Beverage

The largest of the four hospitality industries, food and beverage is integrated into all areas of the industry. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.) This sector has an interesting role within the industry as it provides people with necessary refreshments during their travel. In addition to that, the food and beverage sector also offers tourists the opportunity to socialise and meet locals and tourists alike all while enjoying themselves. (Tourism Industry: Everything You need to know About tourism: Revfine, 2022)

2.2 Accommodation

The accommodation sector is vast, ranging from caravan grounds right up to luxurious resorts. Essentially, any business that provides a place for people to sleep overnight are all players in this industry. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.) This is a crucial sector within the tourism and hospitality industry as people travelling to different areas will need a place to relax and put their feet up. (Tourism Industry: Everything You Need to Know About tourism: Revfine, 2022) These companies primarily target different market segments based on where they are located. Those in urban areas cater to tourists with long stays, backpackers and special travellers (government, airlines and military). In more picturesque places, they offer a place for guests to unwind from their daily lives. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.) Tourists will select their accommodations based on a few

factors such as the price, location and preferences. (Rudman, 2022) Hotel, motel and lodging are some of the most well liked choices.



2.3 Travel and Tourism

Although tourism is a distinct activity within the hospitality industry, many individuals mistakenly equate it with hospitality. The main purpose of tourism is to promote travel so that people will spend money on accommodations. Transportation comprises both the means of travel used by a traveller to reach their destination and their means of transportation after they have arrived. (Rudman, 2022) By providing transportation, the transportation industry aims to assist travellers in reaching their destinations. This can entail giving them the resources to get to their planned vacation spot in the first place, but it might also entail helping them get around once they get there. (Tourism Industry: Everything You Need to Know About tourism: Revfine, 2022) The performance of this broad industry affects all other aspects of hospitality significantly. All other enterprises in a given location could not expand or even survive without travel tourism. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.)

Air travel by plane, maritime travel by cruise ship and rail travel by train are common modes of transportation when travelling. There are also other modes of transportation such as taxis, buses and driver-for-hire services. Many locations have additional local transportation choices such as a donkey tour of the Grand Canyon or a ride in a gondola around the canals of Venice. (Rudman, 2022)

2.4 Entertainment and Recreation

Any action done for leisure, relaxation or enjoyment is considered recreation. In order to rejuvenate one's body and mind, one engages in recreation. The entertainment sector depends on its customers having disposable income. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.) Travellers frequently visit a place for the entertainment and attractions. Such travellers might be drawn to entertainment options that aren't offered where they live, or they might just need more generic entertainment as part of their trip, which is available practically everywhere. Sometimes the biggest draws for tourist to a specific tourist spots are entertainment attractions or venues. ON the other hand, a lot of different entertainment venues have been established to profit from the current tourism. (Tourism Industry: Everything You need to know About tourism: Revfine, 2022) Travellers could select entertainment based on their desire for enjoyment, knowledge, or the desire to try something new. (Rudman, 2022)

The entertainment industry includes companies like theatres or movie cinemas, tourist attractions like zoos and museums, spectator sports, and participatory sports. (The Different Hospitality Sectors Explained, n.d.) Shows, live music, sporting events, casinos and shopping are a few of the most well-liked entertainment options.



3. Travel agents

The following chapter will shortly outline the different online travel agents. Some might be more commonly known than others but the less well known one might be an interesting read for you and your business. By diversifying your knowledge of these travel agencies, you can diversify your income and the people you share your place with.

TripAdvisor



An online travel and dining site, TripAdvisor.com is primarily focused on user reviews and other user-generated content. But it also includes an integrated hotel booking service. The business was established in 2000 and has its headquarters in Needham, Massachusetts, in the United States.

Tourism Sector: Food & Beverage, Accommodation, Entertainment & Recreation

Link: [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com)

AirBnB

With the majority of its homes situated outside of major hotel areas, Airbnb is renowned for giving customers access to a variety of distinctive lodging options throughout the globe. As the home-sharing giant enters the online hotel distribution business, Airbnb has transformed the travel accommodations sector. According to Airbnb's website, this travel company has a



wide range of offerings that are available to practically everyone, from air beds in flats to magical castles. As you can verify your guests' identities, Airbnb offers a certain level of security. Also, feedback from past hosts can help you determine how your visitor behaves while a guest.

Tourism Sector: Accommodation, Entertainment & Recreation

Link: [Airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com)

Booking.com



One of the biggest and most well-known travel websites in the world, Booking.com, books more than 1.5 million nights every single day. (Top Online Travel Agencies, 2022) More than 50 million verified guest reviews of properties in more than 200 countries can be found on its website and mobile apps, which are available in 43 different languages.

Tourism sector: Accommodation, Travel and Tourism

Link: [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com)

Vrbo

In the industry, VRBO is regarded as a pioneer. They offer homeowners a platform to advertise their holiday homes online in more than 100 different nations. Also, they connect with a large group of tourists that could become your visitors. Property managers can also use VRBO's listing services in addition to homeowners. When customers pay for their reservations on Vrbo, they can also get travel insurance. In addition to being well-known for being a component of one of the biggest travel organizations in the world, VRBO is highly regarded as a reliable business.



Tourism Sector: Accommodation

Link: [vrbo.com](https://www.vrbo.com)



Olivers Travels

Oliver's Travels brings your over 1900 unique and quirky luxury villas and chateaus from all across the globe. Each property is handpicked by their team to ensure the best quality for their customers. With nearly 20 years of experience in the field, they have sent over 100,000 happy customers on holiday each year.

Tourism Sector: Accommodation

Link: <https://www.oliverstravels.com/>

Skyscanner



Skyscanner is an aggregator website that compares costs from all OTAs, airlines, hotels, and car rental firms using a metasearch engine. Skyscanner frequently identifies the greatest deals and enables travelers to save significantly on lodging and travel. Once you've made your choice, Skyscanner will transfer you to the third party's booking page so you can finalize your reservation and book your flight.

Tourism Sector: Travel & Tourism

Link: [skyscanner.net](https://www.skyscanner.net)

Hostel World

With more than 12 million ratings from travellers, HostelWorld is a prominent OTA for hostel-focused accommodations worldwide. They also include hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other low-cost lodging options in their portfolio. Using its mobile app and online booking tools, Hostelworld wants to be a pioneer in social travel by meeting the demands of travellers who wish to connect with others while exploring their surroundings. Twenty different languages are supported by their website and app.

Tourism Sector: Accommodation

Link: <https://www.hostelworld.com/>



Bonappetour



A community marketplace called BonAppetour links tourists with nearby home cooks to provide a special home-dining experience wherever in the world.

Their goal is to make eating at home a crucial component of every unforgettable trip experience. You can opt from a variety of distinctive eating experiences provided by our carefully chosen host community, such as a paella making session on a terrace in Barcelona, a sumptuous Italian feast with a "nonna" in Rome, and a traditional tea ceremony experience in Tokyo. Numerous BonAppetour travelers repeatedly tell us that their BonAppetour experience was the best part of their trip. Together with the billions of other tourists and visitors around the world, we can't wait to share this experience with you.

Tourism Sector: Entertainment & Recreation

Link: <https://www.bonappetour.com/>

HotelTonight



Owned by Airbnb, HotelTonight is a travel agency and metasearch engine that may be accessed through a website or mobile app. In the Americas, Europe, Japan, and Australia, it is used to make last-minute lodging reservations.

Tourism Sector: Accommodation

Link: <https://www.hoteltonight.com/>

All Trails

A mobile app for travel and fitness called AllTrails is used for leisurely outdoor pursuits. For outdoor pursuits including hiking, mountain biking, climbing, and winter sports, people frequently use AllTrails. Users of the service have access to a database of trail maps that also contains user evaluations and photos. Both online

and offline use of these resources is possible, depending on the subscription status of the user.

Tourism Sector: Entertainment & Recreation

Link: <https://www.alltrails.com/>



Hopper

With the use of their own algorithm and historical data, the travel software Hopper, which is available on iOS and Android, seeks to help users cut the cost of airfare. Although several users reported using Hopper more as a research tool before booking directly with the airline or hotel, Hopper is free to download and you can choose to make a reservation straight through the app. According to the business, it can anticipate flight rates up to a year in advance with a 95 percent accuracy rate.

Tourism Sector: Accommodation, Travel & Tourism

Link: <https://hopper.com/>

Yelp

Yelp Inc. is an American firm that creates the Yelp.com website and the Yelp mobile app, both of which publish reviews submitted by the general public about establishments. Additionally, it runs the table reservation service Yelp Guest Manager.

Tourism Sector: Food & Beverage

Link: <https://www.yelp.com/>



WithLocals



Travelers can book private, customized tours with local hosts through the experiential tourism firm Withlocals.

Withlocals is used as an example of the role and impact of the sharing economy on tourism - notably culinary tourism - and consumer demand for "authenticity" and "experiences," describing itself as seeking to achieve "mass personalization" rather than providing group or package tours.

Tourism Sector: Food & Beverage, Entertainment & Recreation

Link: withlocals.com



Klook

Klook provides their customers with joyful experiences, anytime, anywhere.

They offer things from best getaway

deals to entrance to recreational parks, best restaurants in the city and even hotels and transportation to get their customers from point A to point B. It is a one stop shop for travellers.

Tourism Sector: Food & Beverage, Entertainment & Recreation, Accommodation, Travel and Tourism

Link: klook.com

GetYourGuide

GetYourGuide is an online travel agency and marketplace for tour operators and excursions situated in Berlin. Both an iOS and Android mobile app and a website are available for access. GetYourGuide offers tickets for several tourist destinations as well as tours and excursions, activities like cooking lessons.



Tourism Sector: Entertainment & Recreation

Link: getyourguide.com

HappyCow



In order to help travelers and people everywhere locate plant-based / vegan options and wholesome cuisine, HappyCow was established in 1999.

They are staffed by vegans and vegetarians and are administered by vegans from a vegan point of view. People from all over the world who are fervent about the vegan lifestyle as a healthy, ethical, and environmentally sustainable way of living now make up their online community. HappyCow is an ever-evolving internet center that provides millions of users with information about restaurants and health food stores each month.

Tourism Sector: Food & Beverage

Link: <https://www.happycow.net/>

4. Benefits of using these platforms

There are many benefits to being part of these online travel agencies. First and foremost, it gives you instant access to a large number of potential customers as it is a low cost way to list your property. This also reduces your online marketing spend as these platforms will invest in their own marketing and advertising to attract potential customers. Customers tend to have their own preferred online travel agency websites where they can compare costs and services offered by individual providers in one site. Previous customers can also leave a review in the travel agency's website and it may give new customers the confidence to book.

5. Risks of using these platforms

There are some risks that are good to know before you sign yourself and your business up on these online travel agency platforms. As much as it brings in benefits, it is also important to get to know the risks and evaluate if this is the right option for your company.

Online travel agencies tend to charge commission on every sale you make. This can range between 10-25% of the gross cost. Because of the increased traffic on OTA websites, hoteliers pay OTAs a commission so that their properties can create more visibility and bookings. To achieve the same effects using only direct pathways would be incredibly difficult and expensive.

Just like a contract, you should read the terms and conditions of each travel agency you want to be in business with. While each agency might have a similar structure to their contracts, some might have more restrictive conditions when it comes to cancellations and automatic room reselling policies.

You may need a way to manage your room availability across a range of different online travel agency platforms, your own website and your front desk. There are some software's that allows you to manage it in one calendar so that it prevents overbooking. However, that would cost some money and time to set up.

6. Reading materials

Links:

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