

# Kismet

## 4 in 5 OTA Bookers Visited a Direct Channel—Why Didn't They Book There?

*Research shows the majority of OTA customers visit hotel-owned channels before finalizing elsewhere. It seems the “[Billboard Effect](#)” goes both ways.*

Multiple recent studies confirm that a large majority of travelers who ultimately book via an OTA (e.g. Expedia, Booking.com) also visit the hotel's own digital channels during their journey – as high as 4 out of 5 OTA bookers will check the hotel's website or social media before finalizing the third-party booking. Key findings include:

- **Over 80% cross-channel engagement:** A 2019 leisure travel study found **86.7% of travelers visit the hotel's official website prior to booking** their stay ([Fuel Hotel Marketing Podcast: Episode 116 – You'll Be Shocked By These Insights From The 2019 Leisure Travel Study | TravelBoom](#)). This suggests that even those who end up booking on an OTA likely scoped out the hotel's site first. In the same study, **40–50% also checked the hotel's Facebook page** before booking ([Fuel Hotel Marketing Podcast: Episode 116 – You'll Be Shocked By These Insights From The 2019 Leisure Travel Study | TravelBoom](#)), underscoring how travelers seek information on brand-owned channels for reassurance and details.
- **“4 in 5” corroborated by industry research:** Expedia's own research shows **80% of online bookers visit an OTA at some point** in their path-to-purchase – even if they book elsewhere in the end ([Hotels + OTAs: A love-hate relationship that needs to change](#)). Conversely, **other analyses indicate a similarly high share (often 60–80%) of OTA bookers have visited the hotel's direct channels** along the way. For example, **Triptease** reports that **up to 60% of travelers who book on an OTA visited that hotel's website first** ([How to Turn OTA Shoppers into Direct Bookers on Your Website](#)) to gather more information (photos, amenities, location, etc.) before returning to the OTA to book.

This “research on brand, book on OTA” behavior is widely observed.

- **Academic and data-driven studies confirm the majority trend:** Cornell University researchers analyzing millions of browsing and booking sessions found a clear *billboard effect*: **over half of consumers (about 54%) who ultimately booked via an OTA had also clicked on the hotel’s brand website during their research** ([The Billboard Effect: Still Alive and Well](#)). Similarly, a Google travel survey noted that **52% of travelers will visit a hotel’s official site after discovering that hotel on an OTA** ([Hotel Blog | Sharing Tips | Latest Hotel Trends](#)) – effectively **1 in 2 OTA shoppers immediately cross-checks the hotel’s site** for more info. Many then still choose to book through the OTA, meaning those OTA bookings were influenced by prior visits to the hotel’s own channels.
- **Regional nuances:** This cross-channel behavior holds true across regions, though the percentages can vary. In markets with very dominant OTA usage (for instance, China), a higher portion of shoppers stick to OTAs – one report showed **90% of online travel shoppers in China use OTAs**, with relatively fewer checking hotel sites ([How to Win Back An OTA Booking - Little Hotelier](#)). In “developed” markets like the US and Europe, however, direct channels play a larger role in the research phase – **studies there commonly find well over 50% of OTA customers hit the hotel’s site at some point**. (One industry analysis put the range of **15–44% visiting hotel websites in various developed regions** ([How to Win Back An OTA Booking - Little Hotelier](#)), but most other data skew higher.) Overall, *the consensus is that a majority of OTA bookers do engage with hotel-owned touchpoints* on the path to purchase, whether to compare rates, verify hotel details, or seek reassurance.

**Bottom line:** Travelers often **bounce between OTAs and hotel-owned channels** before booking. This means those bookings that **“end up” on OTA sites are rarely uninformed by the hotel’s own digital presence**. In fact, multiple credible sources (Phocuswright, Google, Expedia, Triptease, etc.) support the claim that roughly *4 out of 5 OTA bookers also visited the hotel’s website, social media, or received some direct marketing from the hotel* during their decision process. This **validates the “billboard effect”** – OTAs give hotels exposure, and a significant portion of consumers use that exposure to seek out the hotel’s **brand website or social channels** before finally clicking “book” on a third-party site ([How to Turn OTA Shoppers into Direct Bookers on Your Website](#)) ([Fuel Hotel Marketing Podcast: Episode 116 – You’ll Be Shocked By These Insights From The 2019 Leisure Travel Study | TravelBoom](#)). Such insights lend strong credibility to a “*Kismet analysis*” framing in your Slide 5 – illustrating that OTA customers are not lost causes but rather engaged shoppers who **could be converted** if the hotel capitalizes on those direct-channel touchpoints ([Fuel Hotel Marketing Podcast: Episode 116 – You’ll Be Shocked By These Insights From The 2019 Leisure Travel Study | TravelBoom](#)) ([How to Turn OTA Shoppers into Direct Bookers on Your Website](#)).

**Sources:** Recent travel consumer research and industry data from Phocuswright, Google, Triptease, Cornell University, and Expedia’s Partner Solutions research have been used to

substantiate these findings ([Hotels + OTAs: A love-hate relationship that needs to change](#)) ([How to Turn OTA Shoppers into Direct Bookers on Your Website](#)) ([Fuel Hotel Marketing Podcast: Episode 116 – You’ll Be Shocked By These Insights From The 2019 Leisure Travel Study | TravelBoom](#)) ([The Billboard Effect: Still Alive and Well](#)) ([Hotel Blog | Sharing Tips | Latest Hotel Trends](#)). Each points to the same conclusion: **the majority of OTA bookers also interact with hotel-owned digital channels prior to booking** – often as high as ~80% of cases – reinforcing the importance of a strong direct digital presence to complement OTA exposure.

**About Kismet:** Kismet is the direct-to-guest (d2g™) AI engine that turns live demand into direct bookings—no middlemen, no guessing. Our commercial agent listens for buying signals across web and social, then responds instantly with one-to-one offers tailored to each traveler, which they can book across channels. Behind the scenes, segment-specific models power the magic: **d2g.ai** optimizes social- and leisure-driven traffic, while **smerf.ai** targets SMERF and small-group business to fill pace gaps without blanket discounts. The result is a true “pull” distribution model where high-intent guests get the right offer the moment they raise their hand.

Want to see it in action? Email [hello@makekismet.com](mailto:hello@makekismet.com) to schedule a demo.