The path to purchase: uncovering how travellers plan and book online

Key insights: United States

With a complex and multifaceted path to purchase, this research unpacks traveller behaviours in the path to purchase, including the main drivers and resources that influence online travel booking decisions.

Luth Research includes US traveller data from:
• 800+ survey respondents.
• A digital data panel with 11.5K members.

US travellers spend about one month thinking about their trip and nearly 40 days planning it, which aligns with the average. Booking then occurs over two months prior to going on a trip, slightly shorter than the average.

Open to destination inspiration

More than half of travellers (55%) did not have a specific destination in mind when they first started thinking about a trip.

Resources used leading up to a travel purchase

- OTA: 79%
- Social media: 75%
- Search engine: 65%
- Hotel website: 64%
- Meta travel website: 63%

75% of US travellers use social media in their path to purchase versus 58% on average.

High-content consumers over the 45 days prior to booking

- 277 pages of travel content viewed versus 141 pages on average.
- 524 minutes spent consuming travel content versus 303 minutes on average.
Price and easy-to-use websites are top factors when choosing where to plan and book

- 54% Best prices on travel
- 44% Easy-to-use website
- 37% Positive previous experience
- 33% Transparent or no hidden fees
- 29% Flexible cancellation policies

Travellers notice advertisements early

81% of travellers influenced by advertising noticed advertising early in the planning process, the highest of any country.

57% said that beautiful imagery was the most influential aspect of travel advertising.

US travellers are the most likely to be loyalty members

66% are members of a loyalty programme.

↑ Of those members:

- 83% feel that it is important to book with a brand where they are a loyalty member.
- 60% would pay more to book with a brand where they are a loyalty member.
- 10% would pay significantly more to book with a brand where they are a loyalty member.

Top reasons why US travellers are interested in loyalty programmes

- 74% Price discounts.
- 68% Gaining points or cash rewards for future travel.
- 58% Complimentary upgrades.

Top takeaways

Stand out in a crowded landscape

Leading up to booking, US travellers consume more travel content and spend more time with content than travellers from other countries. It is important to find ways to stand out from the crowd to keep your content top of mind.

Lean in to loyalty

US travellers are more likely to be loyalty members and feel that it is important to book with their memberships. Promote your loyalty benefits in your content and channels and consider offering exclusive discounts for your loyal travellers.

Implement an omnipresent approach

US travellers use many resources throughout the path to purchase. Explore cross-channel and cross-platform strategies, and leverage the power of strategic partnerships to extend your reach and presence.

OTAs are not only for booking

Travellers turn to OTAs as the leading resource when it comes to inspiration, planning and research. We provide travellers around the world with everything needed throughout the path to purchase for all types of travel, which brings our partners demand.