

**Wunderkind**

# How Smart OTAs Win More Travelers

*A field guide to recognizing,  
engaging, and converting in the  
Online Travel Agency space*



# The OTA Industry's Wake-Up Call

In today's travel landscape, it takes more than price comparison tools and flashy deals to stand out. Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) are in the middle of a digital arms race, where seamless personalization, customer recognition, and real-time engagement are the keys to winning the booking.

But there's a catch: most site visitors remain anonymous.

That means the majority of users browsing flights, hotels, or packages on your platform leave without a trace. Rising ad costs, third-party data deprecation, and fragmented user journeys make it harder than ever to turn those casual visitors into loyal travelers.

Modern travelers expect a tailored experience from their very first click. If you're not recognizing who's browsing, you're missing the moment — and the revenue.



# Reclaiming Revenue Through Identity

For OTA marketers, identity resolution is the secret to unlocking the full potential of your digital channels. It's what turns scattered user behavior into rich, actionable profiles. Why does that matter? Because a huge portion of your site traffic — yes, even past bookers and loyalty members — still shows up as anonymous.

This isn't just a tech gap. It's a revenue one. When travelers browse flights, hotels or rental cars, add extras, or drop off mid-search without being recognized, you lose your shot to re-engage, personalize, and convert. That's where identity resolution comes in — quietly powering the difference between a lost visitor and a confirmed booking.

At its core, identity resolution is the ability to recognize returning site visitors — even when they don't log in, switch devices, or clear their browsing data. It tracks their click and browse behaviors, which are then added to a traveler profile in your database, allowing you to trigger personalized communications based on their actions and intent — turning visits into bookings.

Why might a frequent flyer appear anonymous?

**First-party cookies expired:** Visitor tracking cookies may have timed out.

**Passenger cleared cookies or used private browsing:** Incognito mode wipes tracking history.

**Different device or browser:** Someone may search fares on mobile, then book on desktop.

**Logged out of their account:** Without login, the system can't match them to a profile.

**IP address changes:** Common with mobile networks or VPN use.

**Ad blockers or privacy extensions:** These can block tracking scripts entirely.

To solve for these challenges, identity resolution platforms use a combination of techniques: from server-side tracking and cookie stitching to matching emails and phone numbers across devices and sessions. More advanced solutions tap into massive identity networks — built from activity across thousands of websites and partners — to enhance match rates and accuracy.

For OTAs, this means you can:

- Recognize travelers across mobile, web, and app—even if they never log in
- Trigger booking abandonment messages the moment someone exits mid-search
- Avoid sending duplicate messages to loyalty members who are already in your system
- Personalize upsells like hotel add-ons, insurance, or rentals based on full traveler history

While CDPs and ESPs can track known users, they weren't built to decode today's complex, multi-device behavior. Identity partners are. They observe travelers across thousands of destinations and travel properties, creating a depth of insight no single OTA could build alone.

When every click is a potential conversion, identity resolution isn't just a nice-to-have — it's your competitive edge.

**Cross-domain tracking issues:** Happens if your main site and booking engine are on different domains.

**Browser updates and privacy settings:** Features like Safari's Intelligent Tracking Prevention interfere with tracking.

**Multiple emails/accounts:** A passenger might use one email for loyalty and another for booking.

**Expired server-side sessions:** Sessions can time out if the site uses server-side tracking.

**Inconsistent app and web experiences:** Your app might recognize the traveler, but the web session doesn't.

**Third-party cookie blocking:** Increasingly common in modern browsers.

# From Browsers to Bookers: Acting on Intent

Once an OTA lays a strong identity foundation, the next frontier is harnessing intent signals to drive action. ESPs don't always track click and browse behavior at an individual level. Identity partners do. In fact, they build a history of actions any given device takes on your digital properties – and create a profile record even if that traveler hasn't yet opted in to your marketing database. This becomes a digital breadcrumb trail you can use to trigger hyper-personalized messages across channels. And once a contact does opt in, all of that historical data is unlocked. From that point forward, you can personalize onsite experiences and deliver high-impact, revenue-generating emails and texts.

Here are five key categories of intent signals and how OTA marketers can use them to deliver personalized, revenue-driving experiences:

## 1. Identification Signals

These help identify a traveler, even if they haven't logged into an account. This includes IP address, device ID, cookies, or email capture via your site.

**Use Case:** A visitor browses hotel and flight packages to Miami but doesn't book. If you capture their email, you can follow up with a personalized reminder or a limited-time discount to nudge the booking.

## 2. Behavioral Signals

Track specific actions a traveler takes, like filtering for beachfront hotels, spending time on cancellation policy pages, or clicking into loyalty perks.

**Use Case:** A traveler lingers on comparison pages for all-inclusive resorts. Trigger a dynamic email showcasing property perks for their dates or a bundle offer with excursions.



### 3. Product Signals

Monitor engagement with specific destinations, trip types, or ancillary services like car rentals and insurance.

**Use Case:** A user keeps revisiting your Europe package deals page. Send a targeted SMS with a “Flight + Hotel” discount for Paris based on their behavior.

### 4. Lifecycle Signals

These indicate where a traveler is in their journey with your brand – whether they’re new, repeat bookers, or inactive loyalty members.

**Use Case:** A new email subscriber receives a welcome sequence introducing top destinations, the loyalty program, and a first-time booking promo. A dormant user gets a “Welcome back” campaign tailored to their past destinations.

### 5. Transactional Signals

Leverage booking history – like destination trends, travel dates, or average cart value – to predict what they might need next.

**Use Case:** A traveler who recently booked a roundtrip to Denver gets a follow-up offering to add a rental car or a discounted hotel stay based on their preferences.

These signals empower online travel agencies to deliver behaviorally triggered messages at the exact right moment – leading to higher engagement, more frequent visits, and greater lifetime value per traveler. Example: A user adds a rental car to their cart twice but never checks out. Offer a bundled package with a hotel for extra value.

# Activating Revenue with AI-Driven, Behaviorally Triggered Messaging

## Activating Smart Acquisition

Before you can turn anonymous visitors into loyal travelers, you need to turn them into known contacts. Identity resolution doesn't just recognize return visits — it also powers intelligent acquisition strategies. By understanding a traveler's browsing behavior in real time, AI can surface the right offer (like a limited-time hotel deal, loyalty points, or exclusive perks) at the right moment, in the right format — making the value exchange feel relevant and timely. This creates a more seamless opt-in experience, while significantly boosting list growth and downstream booking revenue.

## Triggers Over Cast and Blast

Once an OTA has established a strong identity resolution framework and is capturing real-time intent

signals, the next step is to activate that intelligence through AI. Rather than relying on manual campaign logic or static workflows, advanced machine learning models can now analyze behavioral data and purchase intent to automatically trigger timely, context-aware messaging that enhances the travel experience and drives bookings.

The goal is both to increase message volume thanks to expanded identification — and to ensure every message delivers the right content, in the right channel, at the right time. AI enables this at scale, personalizing across millions of traveler profiles. By combining your brand's customer data with the rich historical profile data an identity partner brings, AI gets a full picture of who each traveler is and what they want.

While some OTAs try to scale messaging by layering in more tools or platforms, this often leads to fragmented execution and uneven customer experiences. A smarter approach is to let your identity partner serve as the central decisioning engine — determining who gets what message, when, and through which channel.

When identity-driven AI sits at the center of your messaging strategy, orchestration across email, text, social, and even ads becomes seamless. No more channel silos. Just one unified experience that meets travelers where they are — digitally and in the booking journey.

**Here are a few strategies to consider once you've established your process for decisioning and executing sends:**

### **Personalized Trip Recommendations**

By using AI to analyze traveler intent signals like browsing behavior and booking history, you can send highly relevant flight, hotel, or package recommendations. These suggestions should reflect each traveler's demonstrated interests and be optimized for timing, content, and channel. For instance, if someone regularly browses weekend getaways to the West Coast, sending a dynamic email with limited-time package deals to San Diego can significantly boost conversions.

### **Abandoned Booking Reminders**

Booking abandonment is one of the most common challenges for OTA brands – but also one of the biggest opportunities for revenue recovery. AI can detect behavioral and transactional signals to trigger personalized messages that remind travelers of the trip, hotel, or bundle they left behind. Adding timely incentives – such as a discounted upgrade or loyalty point bonus – can further encourage them to complete their booking.

### **Re-engagement Campaigns**

AI can identify when a traveler has gone quiet or hasn't booked in a while. This enables your brand to trigger re-engagement campaigns with personalized messaging – like a hotel discount based on past destinations or a loyalty bonus offer – to draw lapsed travelers back to your site.

### **Triggered Lifecycle Emails**

Travelers move through distinct stages in their relationship with your OTA – from first-time bookers to frequent travelers to loyalty members at risk of churn. AI uses lifecycle signals to trigger emails that align with their journey. Welcome series can educate new members on your services and perks, while returning travelers can receive loyalty tier updates, package offers, or exclusive access to seasonal deals.

### **Post-Booking Follow-Up**

AI can also leverage transactional signals to power thoughtful post-booking follow-ups – like sending travel prep tips, reminders to book airport transfers, or partner offers like car rentals or experiences. These messages not only improve the traveler experience but also unlock incremental revenue.

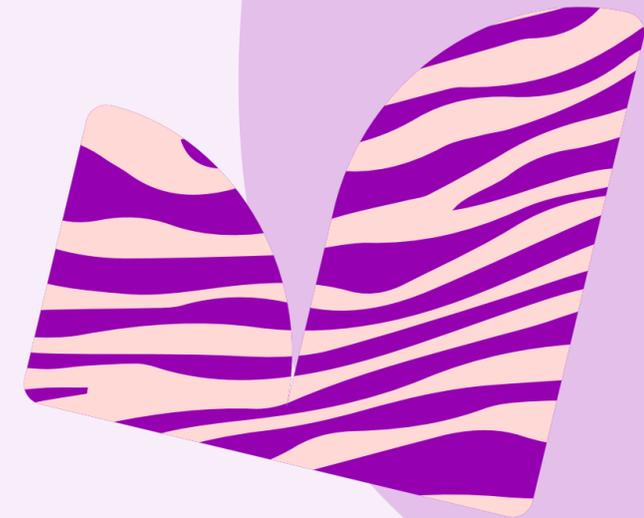
### **Highly Targeted Ads**

Using identity data and intent signals, OTA marketers can recognize site visitors and serve personalized ads – or retarget those who didn't convert. For example, if a traveler browsed spring break trips to Cancun but didn't book, AI can trigger dynamic ads featuring those exact routes or package deals, keeping your brand top-of-mind and driving return visits.

# Identity Solutions Should Flex to Fit Your Stack — Not the Other Way Around

When evaluating identity resolution technologies, online travel agencies should carefully assess how seamlessly those partners can integrate into their broader marketing ecosystem. Many solutions enforce rigid processes, rely on embedded scripts that can raise compliance concerns, or force brands to route through proprietary systems — limiting visibility and flexibility. Meanwhile, modern OTA marketing teams often operate within a decentralized tech stack, utilizing ESPs, CDPs, cloud data platforms, and custom APIs to stay agile. A flexible identity partner should conform to that architecture — not the other way around.

The ideal partner supports multiple implementation paths — whether server-side, client-side, or hybrid — and ensures identity and behavioral data can flow freely into the systems your teams already trust. That includes direct integration with marketing channels like email and SMS, real-time profile enrichment, and the ability to activate campaigns without relying on a single platform or closed interface. Identity should be foundational, not restrictive. The right solution empowers both dev teams and marketers with interoperable tools, thorough documentation, and the freedom to build and scale experiences on their terms.



# What OTA Leaders Should Be Thinking About

Throughout this guide, we've explored how identity resolution and intent signals help OTAs transform anonymous visitors into known travelers – and known travelers into high-value, loyal customers. We've broken down AI-powered strategies to grow your subscriber base, boost bookings, and deliver personalized experiences across every step of the journey.

Whether your focus is reducing dependency on metasearch engines, increasing conversion rates, or driving repeat business, one truth holds: personalized, data-driven engagement is no longer optional – it's the expectation. With the right identity infrastructure, smart decisioning, and seamless activation across

channels, OTAs can convert faster, retain longer, and drive more value with less friction.

Because when every OTA is competing on price, the ones who recognize and serve each traveler with precision are the ones who win the next booking – and the one after that.

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**Don't let anonymous traffic stay anonymous. Partner with Wunderkind.**

# Wunderkind

Wunderkind is the leading AI-driven performance marketing solution that collects consent-based, first-party data and identifies anonymous traffic for restaurant brands in order to scale hyper-personalized one-to-one messages. Restaurant brands lean on the Wunderkind Identity Network, a proprietary database recognizing 9 billion devices and 1 billion consumers, and observes 2 trillion digital transactions every year, to trigger the most impactful offers and rewards to their target audience at the right moment and in the right channel. This proprietary data is accessed by Wunderkind's Autonomous Marketing Platform, an AI engine that integrates seamlessly into a restaurant brands' existing ESP to boost performance across email, text and advertising channels.

Wunderkind is the only performance solution that guarantees a lift in revenue for its clients and delivers over \$5 billion in directly attributable revenue annually for brands across a number of industries, often ranking as a top 3 revenue channel in clients' own analytics platforms. Brands such as SeaWorld, Harley-Davidson, Perry Ellis International and Cracker Barrel partner with Wunderkind to drive top-line revenue through its guaranteed results.



P E R R Y E L L I S

