Wunderkind

TRAVEL

2025 Consumer Insights Report

THE LATEST TRENDS IN TRAVELER BEHAVIOR, BOOKING INTENT, AND DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

🌸 Introduction

The travel industry is evolving at an unprecedented pace, driven by advancing technology and shifting consumer expectations. However, amid this digital transformation, travelers seek more than just convenience—they crave authentic, personalized connections that deepen their experiences with people and places. As we move into 2025, the travel landscape is shaped by four key trends: sustainability, hyper-personalization, rewarding loyalty, and seamless omnichannel experiences.

Despite economic pressures, consumers remain committed to travel, prioritizing exclusive rewards, tailored trip recommendations, and AI-driven tools that provide tangible value. This evolving environment presents both challenges and opportunities for travel marketers navigating shifting expectations and intense competition.

One defining characteristic of travel consumers is their extended consideration period. Travelers typically browse multiple sites, switch between devices, and compare options for six weeks or more before booking. This fragmented booking journey makes re-engagement crucial—delivering the right message, on the right channel, at the right time can mean the difference between securing a booking and losing a potential customer.

Yet, up to 95% of website traffic remains anonymous, making it difficult to deliver personalized offers via email, text, and ads. Additionally, only 3% of visitors complete a booking in a single session. Travel brands that fail to identify and re-engage these potential customers risk missing out on significant revenue opportunities.

This is where identity resolution transforms the game. Traditional identity resolution providers match an unknown device to an email or mobile number, but Wunderkind takes this a step further. With over 9 billion consumer devices recognized and nearly 2 trillion digital engagements observed annually across thousands of websites, Wunderkind possesses deep insights into the browsing, clicking, and booking behaviors of over 1 billion opted-in consumers. This intelligence allows travel brands to match anonymous visitors to their first-party databases, triggering highly personalized messaging at scale. Unlike traditional marketing technologies, Wunderkind guarantees a measurable lift in revenue for its clients.

Wunderkind also addresses a critical challenge for travel brands: recognizing travelers across multiple devices. Many consumers browse travel options on their phones, research further on a tablet, and ultimately book on a desktop. Without the ability to connect these touchpoints to a single individual, travel brands struggle to deliver a seamless, personalized experience. Wunderkind's advanced identity resolution technology ensures that John Doe on his laptop is recognized as the same John Doe who browsed flights on his phone—enabling consistent messaging and a frictionless customer journey.

Beyond identifying existing customers, Wunderkind also helps travel brands capture first-party data from anonymous visitors who aren't yet in their database. By collecting consented first-party data at scale, Wunderkind converts unknown website traffic into engaged subscribers, giving travel brands a larger, more qualified audience to nurture and convert.

Today's travelers expect hyper-personalization in exchange for their loyalty. With partners like Wunderkind, brands can bridge the gap between anonymous traffic and known customers—unlocking the ability to deliver meaningful, behavior-driven offers across owned channels like email and text.

However, if your brand isn't leveraging an identity resolution partner, this research will help refine your strategy. By understanding what travelers expect at every touchpoint—broken down by age and gender—you can craft a smarter, more effective approach to engaging and converting your audience.

✳ Methodology

In partnership with MX8 Labs, Wunderkind conducted the Travel Consumer Insights Report 2025.

This research explores consumers travel plans for 2025, key drivers influencing booking decisions, browsing behavior, what leads to booking abandonment and how they can be won back. The report offers detailed insights paired with strategic takeaways designed to empower digital strategists, marketers, and decision-makers to identify emerging booker trends and develop performance marketing strategies that strengthen brand–traveler relationships.

This report focuses on the travel sector, encompassing transportation services such as airlines, cruise lines, and car rentals, as well as accommodations including hotels and travel agencies. For additional insights into ticketing verticals, please visit our Consumer Insights content hub, which features multiple reports categorized by country and vertical.

Wunderkind
X
MX8 LABS

319

This report delves into the latest trends shaping online booking, drawn from a representative sample of 319 travel bookers in the U.S., reflecting diversity across gender, ethnicity, age, and household income.
*Data collection was completed in January 2025.*

How Often Do Travelers Book Direct? The Trends Behind Direct Reservations

The frequency with which consumers book travel directly from travel websites highlights key generational booking behaviors. Younger travelers, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are the most frequent direct bookers, likely driven by their comfort with digital platforms and a preference for flexibility. In contrast, Boomers and Gen X book less frequently, aligning with their tendency to plan trips further in advance. While men and women book at similar rates, men show a slight preference for booking every couple of months, suggesting potential engagement opportunities through targeted campaigns. Understanding these trends can help travel brands optimize marketing efforts to drive direct bookings.
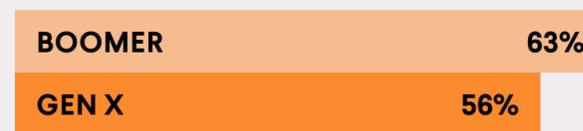
Key Insights

Younger Travelers Lead in Monthly Bookings

|	
BOOMER	9%
GEN X	12%
MILLENNIAL	22%
GEN Z	39%
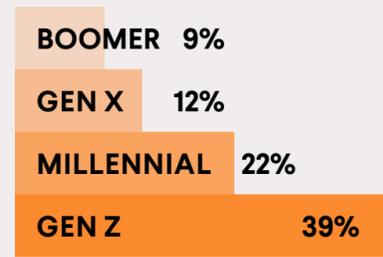
Gen Z (39%) and Millennials (22%) are the most frequent bookers, securing travel at least once per month, compared to only 9% of Boomers and 12% of Gen X.

Boomers and Gen X Book Less Often

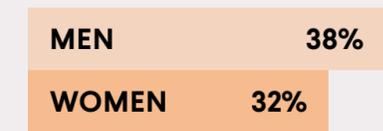|	
BOOMER	63%
GEN X	56%

A significant portion of Boomers (63%) and Gen X (56%) book only 2-3 times per year, suggesting a preference for planned, infrequent trips.

Common Booking Cadence

MILLENNIAL	41%
GEN Z	36%
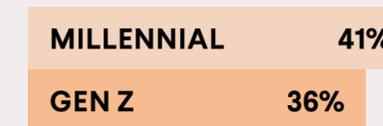
A large share of travelers (35%) book every couple of months, with Millennials (41%) and Gen Z (36%) aligning with this trend.

Gender Insight

MEN	38%
WOMEN	32%

Women and men book travel at similar overall rates, but men show a slightly higher tendency to book every couple of months (38% vs. 32% for women).

Strategic Takeaways

1. Deliver Seamless Cross-Device Messaging
Given the extended booking process—often involving research across multiple sessions and devices—partner with an identity resolution provider to recognize travel customers seamlessly. Implement a unified cross-channel messaging strategy to deliver personalized, consistent communication at every touchpoint, fostering trust and strengthening brand/booker relationships.

2. Engage Frequent Bookers with Loyalty Perks
Given Gen Z and Millennials' higher booking frequency, travel brands should promote membership rewards, exclusive discounts, and flexible cancellation policies to encourage repeat and direct bookings.

3. Encourage Direct Bookings for Occasional Travelers
Boomers and Gen X are less frequent bookers, making it crucial to target them with personalized offers around major travel planning seasons, such as the holidays and summer vacation.

4. Optimize Mobile and App Experience
Since younger travelers are more likely to book frequently, ensuring a seamless mobile booking experience—paired with app-exclusive deals—can drive direct bookings and retention.

HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU BOOK TRAVEL DIRECTLY FROM A TRAVEL WEBSITE?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
At least once per month	9%	12%	22%	39%	25%	24%	24%
Every couple of months	28%	31%	41%	36%	32%	38%	35%
2–3 times per year	63%	56%	38%	25%	43%	38%	40%

First Click: How Travelers Discover New Booking Sites

The way consumers first discover travel websites highlights key differences across age groups and marketing effectiveness across various channels. Search engines (24%) are the most common method for discovery, particularly among Millennials (31%). Social media plays a notable role for Gen Z (16%), while Boomers rely more on direct navigation (24%) and personal recommendations (20%). Gender-based trends reveal that women are slightly more likely to engage with content marketing, influencer recommendations and social media, while men show a slightly stronger tendency to use search engines and direct website entry.

✹ Key Insights

Search Engines Lead for Discovery

| MILLENNIAL | 31% |
| GEN Z | 20% |

The most common way consumers find a travel website is through a search engine (24%), with Millennials (31%) relying on this method the most.

Social Media is Key for Younger Travelers

2x (

Predictably, Gen Z (16%) are twice as likely as Boomers and Gen X to find travel sites through social media or influencers.

Boomers Prefer Direct Navigation

2x (

24% of Boomers type the travel brand's name directly into their browser, the highest of any demographic and 2x that of Millennials showing strong brand familiarity.

Gender Parity

| WOMEN | 10% |
| MEN | 7% |

There is very little variation between men and women, although women are more likely to be directed by content like reviews and blogs (10% vs. 7% for men).

Strategic Takeaways

1. Leverage SEO and Paid Search
Given that search engines are the top method for discovery, travel brands should prioritize ranking for key travel-related search terms and running targeted search ads, especially for Millennials.

2. Strengthen Social Media & Influencer Marketing
To capture younger travelers and women, brands should invest in influencer partnerships, user-generated content, and engaging social media campaigns highlighting travel experiences, deals, and unique destinations.

3. Direct-to-Traveler Brand Awareness for Boomers
Since Boomers often type in travel brand URLs directly, maintaining strong brand recognition through traditional advertising, traveler loyalty programs, and direct email campaigns can reinforce their familiarity and trust.

HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY FIND AND VISIT A TRAVEL WEBSITE FOR THE FIRST TIME?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Clicking on an advertisement (e.g., Google Ads, social media ads)	4%	15%	9%	11%	10%	11%	10%
Finding the website through a search engine	28%	19%	31%	20%	24%	25%	24%
Discovering it via social media posts or influencer recommendations	7%	8%	11%	16%	11%	12%	12%
Receiving a recommendation from friends or family	20%	19%	11%	10%	14%	13%	13%
Opening an email or text message from the travel brand	2%	10%	7%	8%	7%	8%	7%
Seeing a physical ad (e.g., billboard, magazine)	2%	5%	4%	2%	3%	4%	3%
Reading about the travel brand in an article, blog, or review	6%	5%	12%	8%	10%	7%	8%
Being redirected from a comparison site website	8%	6%	2%	10%	7%	6%	6%
Typing the travel brand name or URL directly into the browser	24%	14%	12%	15%	15%	15%	15%

Where Do Travelers Book? The Battle of Direct vs. Third-Party Sites

When it comes to booking travel, consumers are divided between booking directly with travel brands and using third-party online travel agencies (OTAs) like Expedia or Booking.com. While direct bookings are preferred by 35% of travelers, OTAs still lead with 47%, showing that convenience and price comparison remain top priorities. However, younger travelers (Gen Z and Millennials) are more likely to book directly, while Gen X and Boomers lean towards OTAs. Gender-based trends reveal that men are slightly more likely to book through OTAs (50%), while women show a stronger preference for direct bookings (38%).

✤ Key Insights

OTAs Are the Top Booking Channel

BOOMER	40%
GEN X	57%

47% of travelers book through platforms like Expedia and Skyscanner, with Gen X leading at 57%.

Apps Lag Behind

2x 📉

Despite increasing mobile engagement, only 10% of travelers prefer booking directly through a travel brand's mobile app. However, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials are twice as likely to do so compared to Gen Z.

Old and Young Travelers Favor Direct Bookings

GEN Z	43%
BOOMER	41%
GEN X	24%
MILLENNIAL	34%
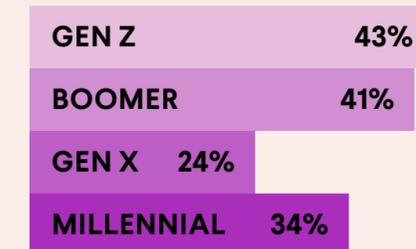
Gen Z (43%) and Boomers (41%) are more likely to book directly on a travel brand's website, compared to just 24% of Gen X.

Men Chase Deals, Women Book Direct

♀♂

38% of women prefer to book directly through a travel brand's website, compared to 34% of men, whereas half (50%) of men book through OTAs, versus 44% of women, suggesting they prioritize convenience and aggregated pricing.

Strategic Takeaways

**1. Compete with OTAs Through
Direct Booking Perks**
Travel brands should offer exclusive direct booking discounts, loyalty perks, and added-value incentives (such as free upgrades or flexible cancellations) to drive more direct sales.

2. Optimize Mobile App Experience
Since only 10% of travelers book through apps, brands should enhance app-exclusive deals, streamlined interfaces, and personalized booking recommendations to boost adoption.

**3. Target Men with Competitive
Pricing & Convenience**
Since men favor OTAs, brands can counter this by emphasizing best-price guarantees and bundling options to make direct bookings more appealing.

**4. Engage Women with Personalized
Direct Booking Offers**
Given their stronger preference for direct bookings, travel brands should tailor loyalty programs and targeted promotions to keep female travelers booking direct.

WHEN BOOKING TRAVEL IN 2025, WHERE DO YOU PLAN TO BOOK THE MOST?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Directly on a travel brand's website (e.g., American Airlines, Hilton, Airbnb, etc.)	41%	24%	34%	43%	38%	34%	35%
Directly in the brand's app	12%	11%	14%	6%	11%	10%	10%
Online travel agency (e.g., Expedia, Skyscanner, Booking.com, etc.)	40%	57%	47%	44%	44%	50%	47%
Through my credit card's travel portal	7%	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	7%

# What Makes Travelers Choose One Booking Site Over Another?

The features that make a travel website a favorite for booking vary across demographics. With travel bookings generally being an expensive purchase, it's no surprise that exclusive discounts come out on top (28%). However loyalty perks (27%), and positive past booking experiences (24%) are just behind, proving you don't always have to chip away at your bottom line.

Gen Z values personalized recommendations (31%) far more than other demographics, while Boomers prioritize ease of use (25%) more than others. Gender-based differences show that men are more influenced by high-quality images and detailed descriptions (22% vs. 19% of women), while women prefer personalized recommendations and flexible booking options.
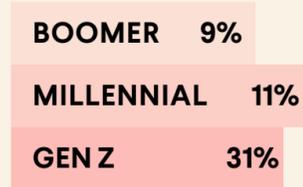
✿ Key Insights

Discounts & Rewards Matter

BOOMER	26%
GEN X	33%
MILLENNIAL	29%
GEN Z	26%
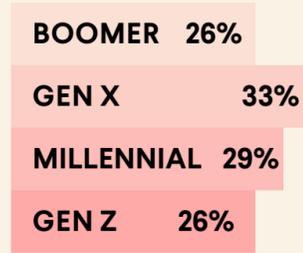
Exclusive discounts are universally popular (28% of travelers), with Gen X leading at 33%.

Younger Travelers Want Personalization

BOOMER	9%
MILLENNIAL	11%
GEN Z	31%

3x 〈

Gen Z (31%) is around 3x more likely to be influenced by personalized recommendations, than Boomers and Millennials.

Positive Booking Experience Drives Loyalty

BOOMER	34%
GEN X	26%
MILLENNIAL	26%
GEN Z	17%
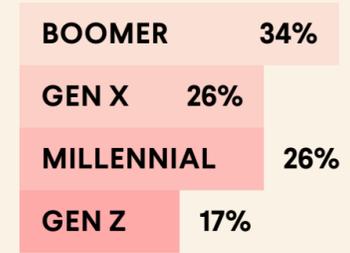
Almost a quarter (24%) of travelers stick with travel sites they've had good experiences with, with Boomers valuing this the most (34%).

Men Book Like New Yorkers, Women Plan Like Parisians

♀♂

There's some clear gender variations when it comes to what makes a website a favourite. Women like personalized recommendations (21% vs. 18% for men), discounts (30% vs. 27% for men) and flexible booking options (19% vs. 14% for men). Men on the other hand prefer an easy to navigate UX (22% vs. 15% for women), high quality visuals and descriptions (22% vs. 19% for women) and loyalty perks (29% vs. 23% for women).

Strategic Takeaways

1. Highlight Discounts & Loyalty Perks
Given the broad appeal of exclusive deals, travel brands should emphasize these offers in email marketing, website banners, and app notifications.

2. Enhance Personalization for Younger & Female Travelers
AI-driven recommendations and tailored offers based on browsing history can improve engagement with Gen Z and women.

3. Invest in High-Quality Visual Content
Since men respond more to images and detailed descriptions, brands should ensure their websites feature high-resolution photos, interactive room/ flight previews, and immersive destination visuals.

4. Promote Hassle-Free Booking Options
Women's preference for flexible self-service tools suggests that brands should enhance their cancellation policies, modify booking tools, and provide clear refund policies.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A TRAVEL BRAND'S WEBSITE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITES TO BOOK FROM DIRECTLY?

| RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Easy-to-navigate design and user experience	25%	15%	22%	17%	15%	22%	19%
Personalized recommendations based on browsing or travel history	9%	20%	11%	31%	21%	18%	19%
Exclusive discounts, sales, or rewards for frequent bookers	26%	33%	29%	26%	30%	27%	28%
High-quality images and detailed descriptions	9%	15%	27%	23%	19%	22%	21%
Inspiration through travel hacks, hidden gems or trip guides	4%	5%	13%	13%	8%	12%	10%
Flexible self-service options for bookings and customer service	17%	12%	17%	19%	19%	14%	16%
Reliable and fair cancellation policies	25%	27%	12%	12%	19%	15%	17%
A loyalty program or perks for members	31%	28%	30%	22%	23%	29%	27%
Positive previous booking experiences with the travel brand	34%	26%	26%	17%	26%	23%	24%

Window Shopping for Wanderlust: How Often Travelers Browse Without Booking

As a sector deeply tied to browsing culture, many travelers visit travel websites without the immediate intent to book, with browsing habits varying significantly by age and gender. While this may seem challenging for travel marketers, it presents a valuable opportunity to guide potential customers toward booking with the right tools and strategies.

Monthly browsing is the most common behavior (47%), particularly among Millennials (54%). Meanwhile, Gen Z (31%) and Gen X (35%) are more likely to browse weekly. Boomers, however, are the least frequent browsers, with 35% rarely visiting travel sites unless they plan to book. Gender-wise, women tend to browse more frequently than men, making them prime targets for inspiration-based marketing.

Key Insights

Most Travelers Browse Monthly

|	
MILLENNIAL	54%
GEN Z	46%
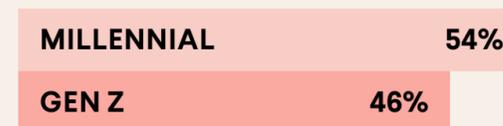
Almost half (47%) of all travelers visit travel sites once a month without booking, with younger generations leading (Millennials 54% and Gen Z 46%).

Boomers Browse the Least

9x

35% of Boomers rarely browse travel websites without an intent to book (9X more than Millennials at 4%), meaning brands need to capture their attention during key planning periods.

Gen Z & Gen X Browse Weekly

BOOMER	18%
GEN X	35%
MILLENNIAL	26%
GEN Z	31%
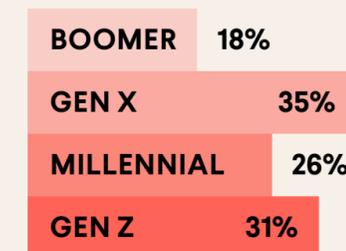
Almost a third (29%) of travelers peruse travel sites weekly, led by 31% of Gen Z and 35% of Gen X, making them strong audiences for regular engagement.

Women Browse More Frequently

31% of women browse travel sites weekly, compared to 27% of men and daily (14% vs. 9% for men).

Strategic Takeaways

1. Leverage AI and Identity Resolution for Undecided Bookers
Use AI-powered insights and identity resolution to identify patterns in undecided travelers' behaviors. Deliver personalized, timely promotions, such as exclusive discounts or limited-time upgrades, to nudge these travelers toward greater engagement.

2. Engage Frequent Browsers with Ongoing Content
Since Millennials and Gen Z browse often, travel brands should leverage dynamic content like trip inspiration, trending destinations, and price-drop alerts to keep them engaged.

3. Target Boomers and Men at Key Booking Moments
Given their lower browsing frequency, personalized email campaigns with strong CTAs during peak travel planning seasons (e.g., holidays, summer vacations) can drive bookings.

4. Use Gender-Targeted Messaging
Women respond well to inspirational content, making social media and storytelling campaigns effective. Men, on the other hand, may respond better to urgency-driven messaging, such as limited-time deals and exclusive offers.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU BROWSE TRAVEL WEBSITES WITHOUT INTENDING TO MAKE A TRAVEL-RELATED BOOKING?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Daily	4%	7%	16%	12%	14%	9%	11%
Weekly	18%	35%	26%	31%	31%	27%	29%
Monthly	43%	39%	54%	46%	43%	49%	47%
Rarely	35%	19%	4%	11%	12%	14%	13%

Why Travelers Browse Without Booking: The Motivations Behind the Scrolling

When travelers visit booking websites without intending to make a reservation, their reasons vary widely. The most common purpose is price-checking for future trips (51%), followed by reviewing future availability (33%), seeking travel inspiration (28%) and saving trip ideas for later (24%). While Boomers and Gen X are the most likely to check prices (58% and 54%, respectively), Gen Z stands out for browsing purely for entertainment (29%). Gender-wise, men are more likely to read reviews (21% vs. 13% of women), while women are slightly more inclined to bookmark trips for later (26% vs. 23% of men).
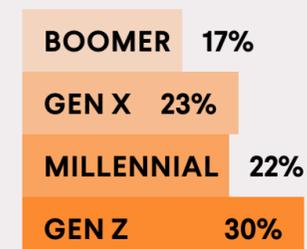
Key Insights

Price-Checking is the #1 Reason for Browsing

BOOMER	58%
GEN X	54%
MILLENNIAL	52%
GEN Z	46%
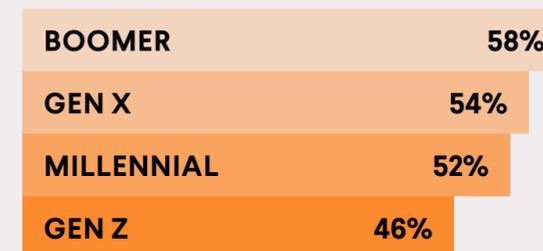
Over half (51%) of travelers browse to compare prices for future bookings. The older the traveler, the more common this is.

Trip Bookmarking is a Growing Habit

BOOMER	17%
GEN X	23%
MILLENNIAL	22%
GEN Z	30%

24% of all travelers save travel options for later, with Gen Z leading at 30%.

Gen Z Browse for Fun

BOOMER	9%
GEN Z	29%

3x

29% of Gen Z visit travel sites for entertainment or relaxation, more than any other age group and 3x that of Boomers.

Men Read Reviews, Women Save for Later

21% of men browse travel sites to read reviews, compared to 13% of women, whereas 26% of women bookmark or save travel options for future consideration, slightly more than 23% of men.

Strategic Takeaways

1. Capitalize on Price Sensitivity
Since price-checking is the top reason for browsing, brands should implement dynamic pricing tools, price-drop alerts, and limited-time offers to convert hesitant visitors. Using email and text triggered by browse and click data to deliver these will generate higher conversions.

2. Engage Younger Travelers with Interactive Content
Gen Z's tendency to browse for entertainment presents an opportunity for immersive content like virtual tours, influencer collaborations, and engaging social media storytelling.

3. Use Personalization to Re-Engage Browsers
Since many travelers save trips for later, brands should deploy retargeting strategies, such as email reminders, push notifications, or in-app saved-trip prompts, to bring them back when they're ready to book.

4. Leverage Reviews to Convert Male Travelers
With men being more review-driven, prominently featuring customer testimonials, ratings, and verified user experiences can build trust and encourage bookings.

WHEN YOU BROWSE TRAVEL WEBSITES WITHOUT ANY INTENT TO MAKE A BOOKING, WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR VISIT?

| RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Looking for trip inspiration	30%	24%	30%	27%	26%	29%	28%
Checking prices or deals for future bookings	58%	54%	52%	46%	54%	49%	51%
Browsing for entertainment or relaxation	9%	18%	25%	29%	21%	24%	23%
Bookmarking or saving travel items for later consideration	17%	23%	22%	30%	26%	23%	24%
Checking availability for a specific booking in the future	46%	35%	36%	25%	38%	30%	33%
Reading reviews from bookers	9%	20%	17%	19%	13%	21%	17%

How Far in Advance Do Travelers Book? The Planning Timeline Uncovered

Travelers' booking timelines vary significantly by age, with younger generations tending to book closer to their departure date, while older travelers plan further in advance. The most common booking window is one month to three months advance (35%), followed closely by two to four weeks (30%).

Gen Z stands out, with 40% booking within two to four weeks, compared to just 10% of Boomers who book that close to departure. Instead, half of Boomers (50%) prefer booking one to three months ahead, showing a more structured approach. Gender-based differences reveal very little variation when it comes to planning.

Key Insights

A Month to Three Months is the Most Popular Booking Window

BOOMER	50%
GEN X	42%
MILLENNIAL	33%
GEN Z	28%
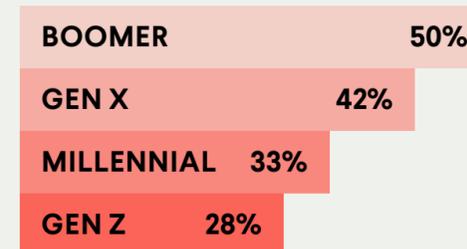
Over a third (35%) of travelers book in this timeframe. The older the traveler, the more common this is.

The Younger the Traveler, the More Spontaneous

BOOMER	29%
GEN X	48%
MILLENNIAL	54%
GEN Z	47%

Predictably, the younger generations are more likely to book travel merely up to 2 weeks or a month in advance.

Travel Booking Timelines - How Men and Women Differ in Advance Planning

Generally there is gender parity in booking, although men are a little more spontaneous, often booking two to four weeks in advance (31% vs. 28% for women). Here, women are more strategic and planned, booking more than three months in advance (12% vs. 10% for men).

Gen X and Millennials Show Mixed Habits

Gen X and Millennials are evenly split between short- and mid-term bookings.

Strategic Takeaways

1. Offer Flexible Booking Options for Younger Travelers

Since Gen Z books closer to their departure date, travel brands should highlight flexible cancellation policies and last-minute deals to capture their business.

2. Leverage Early-Bird Deals for Older Travelers

With Boomers and Gen X booking well in advance, brands should emphasize advance-purchase discounts, packaged deals, and loyalty perks to lock in their reservations.

3. Personalize Campaigns Based on Booking Behavior

Given that younger travelers book earlier and older book closer to departure, targeted marketing should align with these.

HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO YOU TYPICALLY MAKE YOUR BOOKING?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Up to two weeks in advance	4%	25%	28%	27%	25%	24%	24%
Two to four weeks in advance	25%	23%	26%	40%	28%	31%	30%
A month to three months in advance	50%	42%	33%	28%	35%	36%	35%
More than three months in advance	22%	10%	13%	4%	12%	10%	11%

Why Travelers Hesitate: What Stops Love at First Flight?

Many travelers visit a booking site but delay completing their reservation, often waiting for better deals or experiencing decision paralysis. The top reason for hesitation is waiting for a price drop (48%), followed by a lack of urgency to book immediately (39%) and concerns over pricing transparency (25%). Generationally, Boomers (68%) are the most likely to delay due to a lack of urgency, while Gen Z is the least patient, with only 36% citing this reason. Too many options also overwhelm younger travelers, with 20% of Millennials struggling with choice overload. Gender-based trends show that women are more sensitive to pricing transparency, while men are slightly more likely to hold off for a sale.
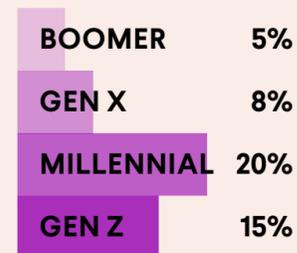
✿ Key Insights

Price Sensitivity is the #1 Barrier

BOOMER	53%
GEN X	50%
MILLENNIAL	53%
GEN Z	41%
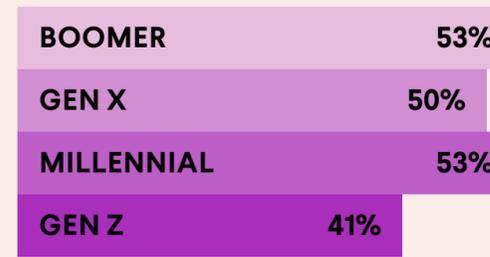
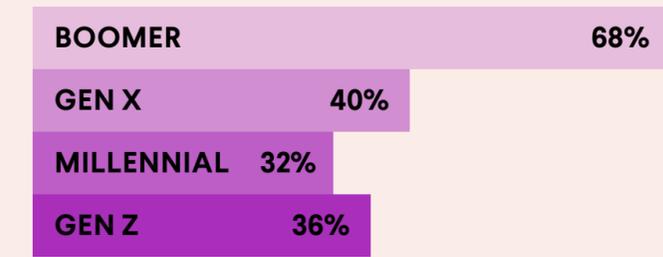48% of travelers hesitate to book while waiting for a sale or price drop, with Millennials and Boomers leading at 53%.

Younger Travelers Experience Choice Overload

BOOMER	5%
GEN X	8%
MILLENNIAL	20%
GEN Z	15%

4x ⟨

20% of Millennials feel overwhelmed by too many options, compared to just 5% of Boomers.

Lack of Urgency is a Major Blocker

BOOMER	68%
GEN X	40%
MILLENNIAL	32%
GEN Z	36%

2x ⟨

39% of travelers don't feel the need to book right away, with Boomers most likely to delay (68%) – 2x that of younger generations.

Women Want Clarity, Men Wait for Deals

♀♂

Women hesitate due to unclear pricing (29% vs. 22% for men) and men hold off on booking in anticipation of a discount (51% vs. 44% for women).

Strategic Takeaways

1. Use Dynamic Pricing Alerts & Limited-Time Offers
Since price sensitivity is a major blocker, travel brands should implement real-time price alerts, countdown timers, and exclusive discount notifications to encourage faster bookings.
Identify users on your sites and apps to send these personalized alerts via email and text.

2. Highlight Urgency for Boomers & Less Frequent Travelers
Limited-seat messages, last-minute deals, and scarcity-driven tactics can help drive conversions among travelers who lack urgency. Also great when served as personalized emails and texts.

3. Simplify the Decision-Making Process
Millennials struggle with choice overload, so brands should leverage AI-driven recommendations, curated travel packages, and streamlined search filters to make booking easier.

4. Improve Pricing Transparency
Since women are more sensitive to unclear pricing, travel sites should clearly display total costs, including taxes and fees, upfront to minimize hesitation.

WHAT TYPICALLY STOPS YOU FROM MAKING A BOOKING DURING YOUR FIRST VISIT TO A TRAVEL BRAND'S WEBSITE?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Waiting for a sale or price-drop	53%	50%	53%	41%	44%	51%	48%
No urgency to buy immediately	68%	40%	32%	36%	41%	38%	39%
Lack of pricing transparency	14%	25%	27%	27%	29%	22%	25%
Too much choice	5%	8%	20%	15%	16%	12%	14%
Not enough options	12%	20%	20%	13%	17%	16%	17%
Lack of reviews	4%	21%	17%	25%	20%	18%	19%

How Do Travelers Want to Be Reengaged? The Best Way to Bring Them Back

The channels travelers prefer for communication reveal their comfort with certain platforms and the frequency of their online interactions. When travelers visit a booking website but don't complete a reservation, their preferred re-engagement method significantly varies by age and gender. Email continues to dominate as the trusted favorite across demographics (40%), while text and app notifications are gaining traction with younger, mobile-first audiences. By tailoring outreach strategies to align with these preferences, travel brands can drive higher engagement, boost bookings, and foster stronger customer relationships.

Key Insights

Email is Still King

BOOMER	63%
GEN X	44%
MILLENNIAL	42%
GEN Z	27%
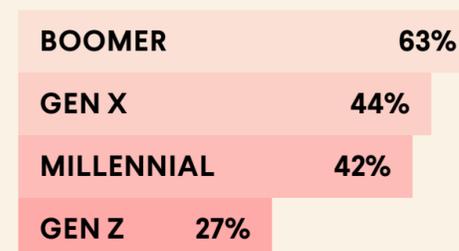
2x

Email, at 40%, is the clear frontrunner for re-engagement, with its effectiveness increasing with age. Boomers are more than twice as likely as Gen Z to prefer email follow-ups (63% vs. 27%), making it the go-to channel for older travelers.

Younger Travelers Favor Push Notifications

BOOMER	9%
GEN X	28%
MILLENNIAL	34%
GEN Z	27%
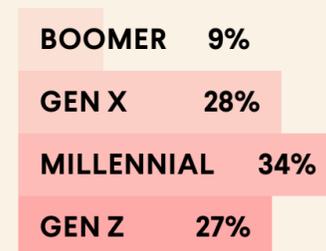
Gen Z (27%), Gen X (28%) and Millennials (34%) prefer app-based notifications, compared to merely 9% of Boomers.

Text is Queen

2x

15% of all travelers prefer text reminders, with Gen Z (21%) being the most receptive and over 2x as likely as Millennials (21% vs. 8%).

Texts for Her, Ads for Him

19% of women prefer to receive booking reminders via text, compared to 12% of men. 21% of men prefer retargeting through digital ads, versus 15% of women.

IF YOU WERE TO VISIT A TRAVEL BRAND'S WEBSITE OR APP, AND THAT TRAVEL BRAND LATER WANTED TO SEND YOU AN OFFER TO RETURN AND CONTINUE YOUR PURCHASE, WHICH WOULD BE YOUR PREFERRED METHOD FOR THEM TO REACH YOU?

Strategic Takeaways

1. Email: The Cost-Effective Powerhouse for Personalized Travel Marketing
With its ability to deliver cost-effective, highly personalized, timely, and relevant content, email campaigns should be leveraged to engage your visitors. Trigger them based on individual browse and click data for maximum engagement.

2. Get Buy-In Through Multi-Channel Integration
Incorporate cohesive multi-channel strategies that create seamless transitions between email, text, and onsite experiences. By integrating identity signals, travel brands can deliver a consistent and personalized journey that resonates across generations.

3. Leverage Push & Ads for Younger Travelers
To re-engage Millennials and Gen Z, travel brands should focus on app notifications and social media retargeting to bring them back.

4. Segment by Gender for Text & Ads
Given women's preference for text and men's openness to ads, travel brands should tailor follow-up strategies accordingly—using SMS-based offers for women and display ads for men.

IF YOU WERE TO VISIT A TRAVEL BRAND'S WEBSITE OR APP, AND THAT TRAVEL BRAND LATER WANTED TO SEND YOU AN OFFER TO RETURN AND CONTINUE YOUR PURCHASE, WHICH WOULD BE YOUR PREFERRED METHOD FOR THEM TO REACH YOU?

| RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Email	63%	44%	42%	27%	39%	41%	40%
Text	16%	14%	8%	21%	19%	12%	15%
Push notification via an app I downloaded	9%	28%	34%	27%	28%	27%	27%
Target me with a digital ad	12%	14%	16%	25%	15%	21%	18%

What Brings Travelers Back? The Offers That Drive Return Visits

Crafting impactful messaging is essential for driving direct bookings. Email and text remain unparalleled tools for delivering highly personalized and timely messages, with its ability to cut through the noise of crowded digital landscapes, targeting travelers with offers that align with their preferences, booking behaviors, and position in the booking journey. By strategically leveraging these direct communication methods, brands can increase immediate bookings, recover lost bookings.

When travel brands do this, the top driver is price-drop alerts (44%), followed by loyalty rewards (36%) and limited availability warnings (23%). Boomers and Gen X are the most responsive to price-drop alerts (68% and 52%, respectively), while younger travelers, especially Millennials, are more motivated by loyalty rewards (41%). Men respond more to scarcity-driven tactics, while women are more likely to engage with personalized recommendations based on previous bookings.
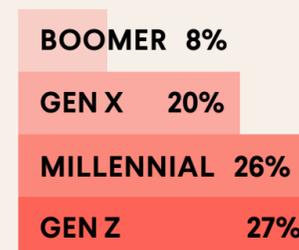
Key Insights

Price-Drop Alerts Are the Most Influential

|	
BOOMER	68%
GEN X	52%
MILLENNIAL	44%
GEN Z	31%
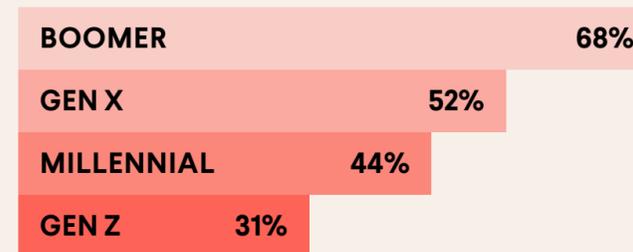
2x

44% of travelers say a notification about a lower price on a previously viewed booking would bring them back. The older the traveler, the more common this is.

Limited Availability Creates Urgency

BOOMER	8%
GEN X	20%
MILLENNIAL	26%
GEN Z	27%

23% of travelers return to a site after receiving alerts about limited seats or rooms left. The younger the traveler, the more common this is.

Loyalty Rewards Matter

BOOMER	38%
GEN X	35%
MILLENNIAL	41%
GEN Z	31%
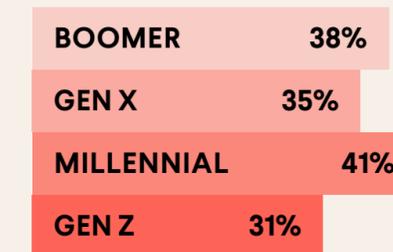
Upgrades and rewards are ubiquitously liked, accounting for 36% of travelers and most popular with Millennials (41%).

Men Act on Urgency, Women Return for Relevance

Men return when notified about limited availability (25% vs. 20% for women), whereas women are influenced by suggestions based on other travelers (18% vs. 11% for men).

Strategic Takeaways

1. Use Automated Price-Drop Alerts
Since price sensitivity is the biggest motivator, travel brands should set up automatic, personalized email and text alerts for travelers who have browsed or abandoned a booking.

2. Leverage Loyalty for All
Travel brands should emphasize points, upgrades, and VIP perks to re-engage all travelers who value long-term rewards.

3. Create Urgency for Male Travelers
Given men's responsiveness to scarcity, brands should use limited-seat and limited-time deal notifications to push them toward booking.

4. Personalize Offers for Women
Since women prefer tailored recommendations, brands should use AI-driven suggestions based on browsing history and previous trips to make follow-ups more relevant.

WHEN A TRAVEL BRAND SENDS YOU EMAILS OR TEXTS WITH OFFERS, WHICH ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL OFFERS TO GET YOU BACK TO THEIR WEBSITE?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Recommendations based on a previous booking	25%	25%	17%	23%	22%	21%	21%
Price-drop alert on a booking I reviewed	68%	52%	44%	31%	46%	44%	44%
Alerts for limited seats / rooms available	8%	20%	26%	27%	20%	25%	23%
Trips trending with other bookers	6%	10%	14%	19%	18%	11%	14%
Trips similar to what you have previously booked	26%	26%	19%	20%	21%	22%	22%
Newly launched routes / locations	6%	12%	21%	18%	18%	15%	17%
Loyalty rewards (air miles, upgrades, VIP extras etc.)	38%	35%	41%	31%	37%	36%	36%

AI & Travel: Which Smart Features Do Travelers Actually Want?

AI-driven personalization is transforming travel, offering tailored experiences that enhance relevance and the booking experience. Younger travelers are very enthusiastic, viewing AI as a tool for enriched booking journeys, including personalized recommendations, AI-powered chat, smart search and curated reviews and feedback. Boomers, while somewhat skeptical, love dynamic pricing. Brands that strike the right balance between personalization and transparency are well-positioned to thrive in this evolving landscape.

Gender differences show that men and women have similar AI preferences, though men lean slightly more toward smart search and women real-time customer reviews.
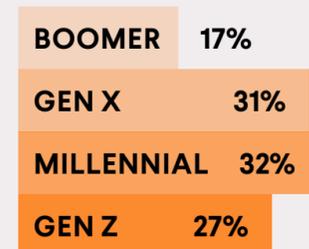
Key Insights

Personalized AI Recommendations Are the Top Choice

|	
BOOMER	33%
GEN X	33%
MILLENNIAL	33%
GEN Z	41%

36% of travelers prefer AI-generated travel suggestions based on their browsing habits, with broad appeal across generations.

AI Chat Assistance Gains Popularity

BOOMER	17%
GEN X	31%
MILLENNIAL	32%
GEN Z	27%

29% of travelers find AI-powered chatbots useful for answering booking questions in real-time, although Boomers are skeptical.

Price Predictions Matter Most to Boomers

BOOMER	55%
GEN X	36%
MILLENNIAL	31%
GEN Z	21%
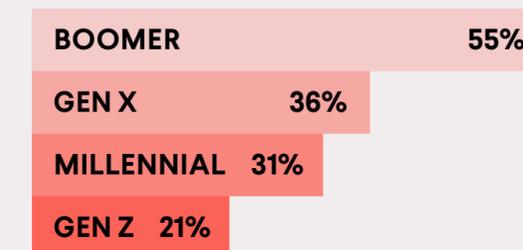
3x

55% of Boomers value AI that predicts price drops or sell-outs, making them the most deal-driven group, almost 3x that of Gen Z.

Men Want Smart Search, Women Crave Reviews

Men want tools that adapt to keywords and preferences (36% vs. 27% for women), whereas women want real-time customer review and AI-curated feedback (39% vs. 26% for men).

MANY TRAVEL BRANDS ARE USING AI TO ENHANCE YOUR BROWSING AND BOOKING EXPERIENCE ON THEIR WEBSITE. WHICH OF THESE WOULD YOU FIND HELPFUL FOR MAKING A BOOKING ONLINE DIRECTLY FROM THE TRAVEL BRAND?

Strategic Takeaways

1. Leverage AI-Powered Personalization to Boost Engagement

Since travelers prefer tailored suggestions, brands should harness browsing history and past booking data to deliver hyper-relevant trip recommendations via triggered messages post visit. AI decisioning will allow you to deliver this at scale, with no need for complicated journey orchestration.

2. Highlight Price Prediction Tools for Older Travelers

Given Boomers' strong interest in securing the best deal, brands should emphasize AI-driven price-drop alerts and sell-out warnings to encourage earlier bookings.

3. Enhance AI Chat Assistance for Immediate Support

With 29% of travelers valuing instant AI-powered answers, brands should refine chatbot capabilities to provide real-time booking assistance, policy clarifications, and personalized itinerary adjustments.

4. Develop AI-Driven Trip Planning Features

Although AI trip builders aren't the top preference, they still hold appeal—suggesting that brands could enhance itinerary-building tools with AI-driven activity suggestions and dynamic travel planning options.

5. Leverage AI for Relevance

Use Wunderkind's AI-powered tools to deliver hyper-relevant content that improves the customer experience.

MANY TRAVEL BRANDS ARE USING AI TO ENHANCE YOUR BROWSING AND BOOKING EXPERIENCE ON THEIR WEBSITE. WHICH OF THESE WOULD YOU FIND HELPFUL FOR MAKING A BOOKING ONLINE DIRECTLY FROM THE TRAVEL BRAND?

RESPONSE	AGE GROUP				GENDER		EVERYONE
	BOOMER	GEN X	MILLENNIAL	GEN Z	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
AI-powered chat assistance for instant answers to questions	17%	31%	32%	27%	31%	27%	29%
Predictions of price-drops or selling out	55%	36%	31%	21%	31%	32%	32%
Personalized travel recommendations based on browsing history	33%	33%	33%	41%	35%	36%	36%
AI-powered trip building assistant	13%	12%	21%	12%	15%	16%	15%
Smart search tools that adapt to your preferences and keywords	19%	38%	34%	32%	27%	36%	32%
Real-time customer reviews and AI-curated feedback summaries	33%	28%	27%	37%	39%	26%	32%

Conclusion: Navigating the Future of Travel Marketing

The insights into traveler behavior across demographics reveal clear patterns and preferences that travel brands can leverage to enhance engagement and drive bookings. As the travel industry continues to evolve, identifying and understanding traveler behavior is the key to driving engagement, loyalty, and bookings.

This report highlights the diverse ways travelers interact with booking platforms—how they discover travel brands, what motivates their decisions, and the barriers that delay their bookings. The data underscores clear generational and gender-based differences, emphasizing the importance of tailored marketing strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

To truly succeed in 2025, travel brands must prioritize true-personalization, at every step of the booking journey across the protracted booking consideration period. However, personalization is only possible when travel brands can accurately identify their potential bookers. Up to 95% of website traffic remains anonymous, making it essential to deploy identity resolution solutions that recognize and track consumer behavior across devices and sessions.

Wunderkind helps brands identify logged-out loyalty members and even builds behavioral profiles for truly unknown visitors, enabling marketers to deliver hyper-personalized offers at the right moment. By leveraging patented email and mobile capture tools, brands can grow their first-party data and re-engage potential travelers through behaviorally triggered email and SMS campaigns.

Wunderkind has identified over 9 billion consumer devices and tracks nearly 2 trillion digital interactions each year across thousands of websites. With insights into the browsing, engagement, and booking behaviors of more than 1 billion opted-in consumers, Wunderkind enables travel brands to connect anonymous visitors to their first-party databases. This advanced intelligence powers highly personalized, one-to-one messaging at scale, delivering a guaranteed increase in revenue— setting it apart from traditional marketing solutions.

By leveraging first-party data, enhancing user experiences, and creating targeted engagement strategies, travel marketers can build stronger connections with their audiences and drive long-term growth.

The insights in this report serve as a roadmap for navigating the modern travel landscape. Those who adapt quickly, innovate strategically, and prioritize value without compromise will be the ones who thrive in this fast-changing industry.

Unpacking the Power of Identity Resolution in Travel

Wunderkind's Identity solution transforms brand-booker connections empowering marketers to deliver personalized experiences, ensuring privacy, compliance, and seamless cross-device engagement, leveraging powerful first-party data insight.

Download Now

The Definitive Guide for Text for Travel

As paid channels become increasingly competitive and costly, it's time to shift your focus to owned channels to maximize your reach and ROI. Learn the benefits of this less saturated communication channel to encourage guests to book travel with triggered messaging.

Download Now

Success Stories from Leading Brands

Discover how leading brands are leveraging Wunderkind's Autonomous Marketing Platform to drive personalized engagement, boost revenue, and enhance customer loyalty. By utilizing identity-powered messaging, first-party data, and seamless cross-channel campaigns, these brands are turning unknown traffic into known and seeing huge lifts in revenue.

Learn More

The Performance Marketing Solution

At Wunderkind, we drive meaningful, measurable outcomes for our clients. With identity and permissioning at the heart of our business, Wunderkind has the data and expertise to help you scale owned revenue channels while providing a premium experience for your customers, all while guaranteeing a lift in revenue.

Drive Unmatched Revenue

Wunderkind

Wunderkind is the leading AI-driven performance marketing solution that collects consent-based, first-party data and identifies anonymous traffic for travel brands in order to scale hyper-personalized one-to-one messages. Travel 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 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 travel 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 Gate 1 Travel, Omni Hotels & Resorts, Hertz and Coach USA partner with Wunderkind to drive top-line revenue through its guaranteed results.