



REVIEWPRO

The Hotelier's Guide to Earning
**Higher Review
Scores on Booking.com**



A Guide from Shiji ReviewPro and Booking.com



The Hotelier's Guide to Earning

Higher Review Scores on Booking.com

In this guide for hotels and all other types of accommodation, we share key learnings from the webinar along with data and insights from our own research. This includes recommendations and insights directly from Booking.com on how to manage reviews, improve review scores, and drive higher visibility and more bookings on one of the most popular travel platforms in the world.



The Hotelier's Guide to Earning Higher Review Scores on Booking.com

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Booking.com: The World's Leading Source of Hotel Reviews

Early this year, while the Shiji ReviewPro team was collecting data for the 2022 Year in Reviews report, we noticed a curious trend. While we knew that Booking.com has been growing its review volume in recent years, we hadn't realized by how much – and how much market share it has been carving from other review sources.

The surge in volume made it clear that managing reviews on Booking.com must be a top priority for hoteliers in 2023. To help, we held a webinar in late January and invited Booking.com to participate as the guest speaker.



Danica Smith
ReviewPro

Charlotte Munro
Booking.com

Daniel Craig
Reknown

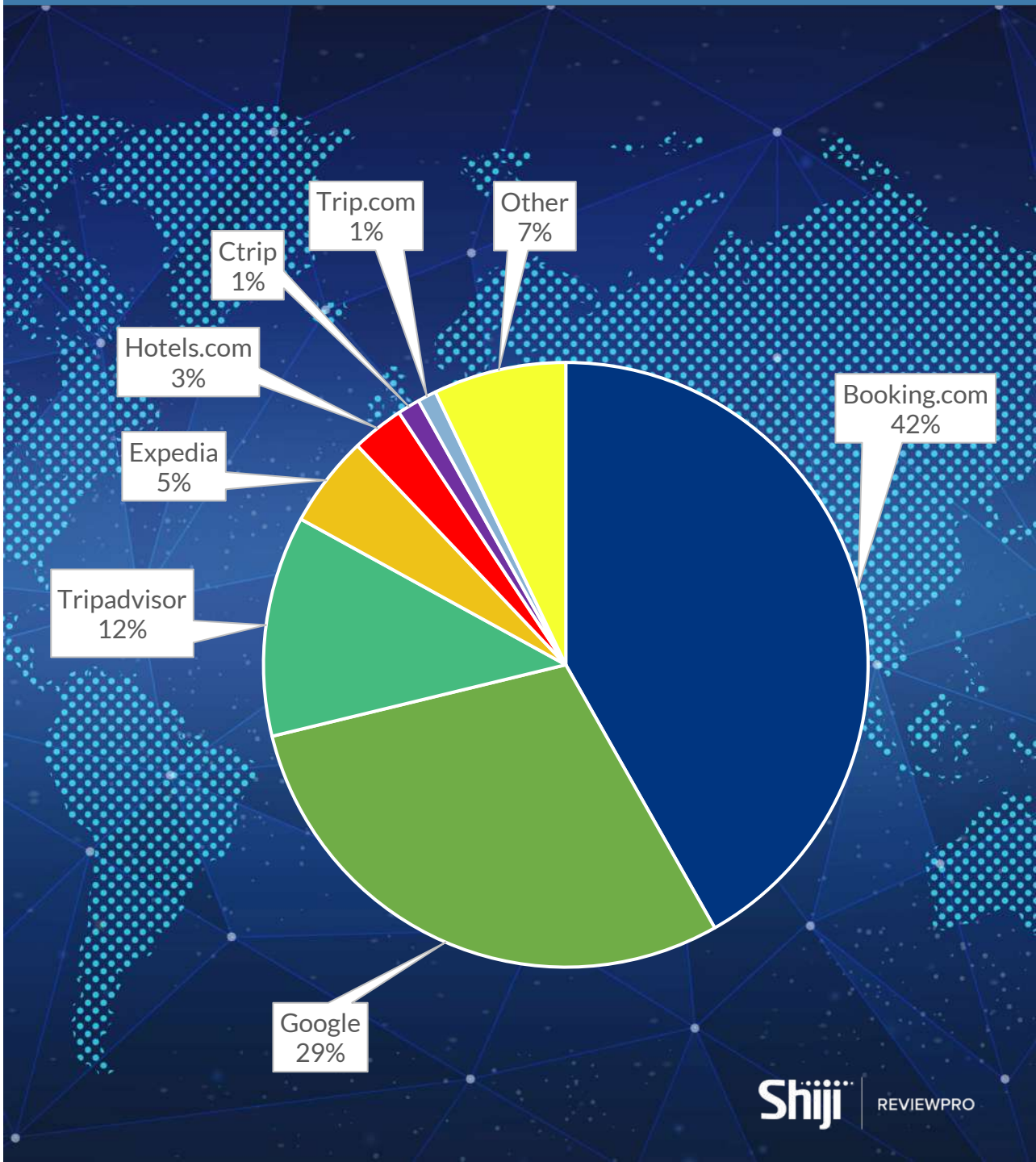
DOWNLOAD WEBINAR

You can view the webinar here:
[Booking.com Demystified: Everything You Need to Know About the World's Leading Source of Online Reviews.](#)



Booking.com's Review Share

In the 2022 Year in Reviews report, the Shiji ReviewPro team analyzes over six million reviews posted to our data set of **7,500 hotels** around the world in 2022. Of those reviews, Booking.com generated an incredible 42%, far more than any of the 66 review sources surveyed in the report. By comparison, Google generated 29% of review volume, Tripadvisor generated 12%, and Expedia generated only 5%.

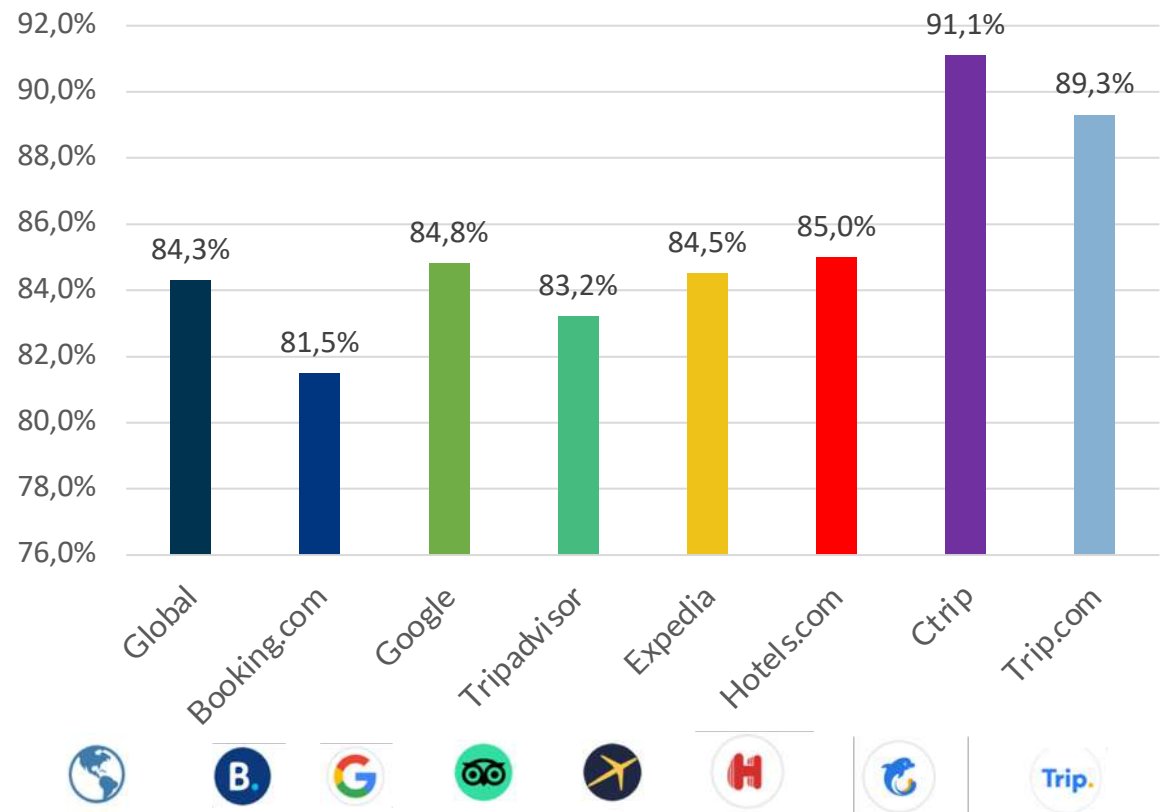


Booking.com's Source Index

Aside from its dominant review share, another trend we observed is that, in 2022, Booking.com's Source Index, or average review score, was lower than any of the top review sources, at 81.5%. By comparison, Google's Source Index was 84.8% and Tripadvisor's was 83.2

Why is this important? Given Booking.com's high proportion of reviews, its lower Source Index had the effect of pulling down overall review scores, as measured by the Global Review Index™ (GRI™), ReviewPro's industry-standard online reputation score. In 2022, the GRI™ was 84.3%, 2.8 points higher than Booking.com's Source Index and 1.7 points lower than the GRI™ in 2019.

So the question is, what can hoteliers do to shift the balance so that Booking.com reviews strengthen online reputation?

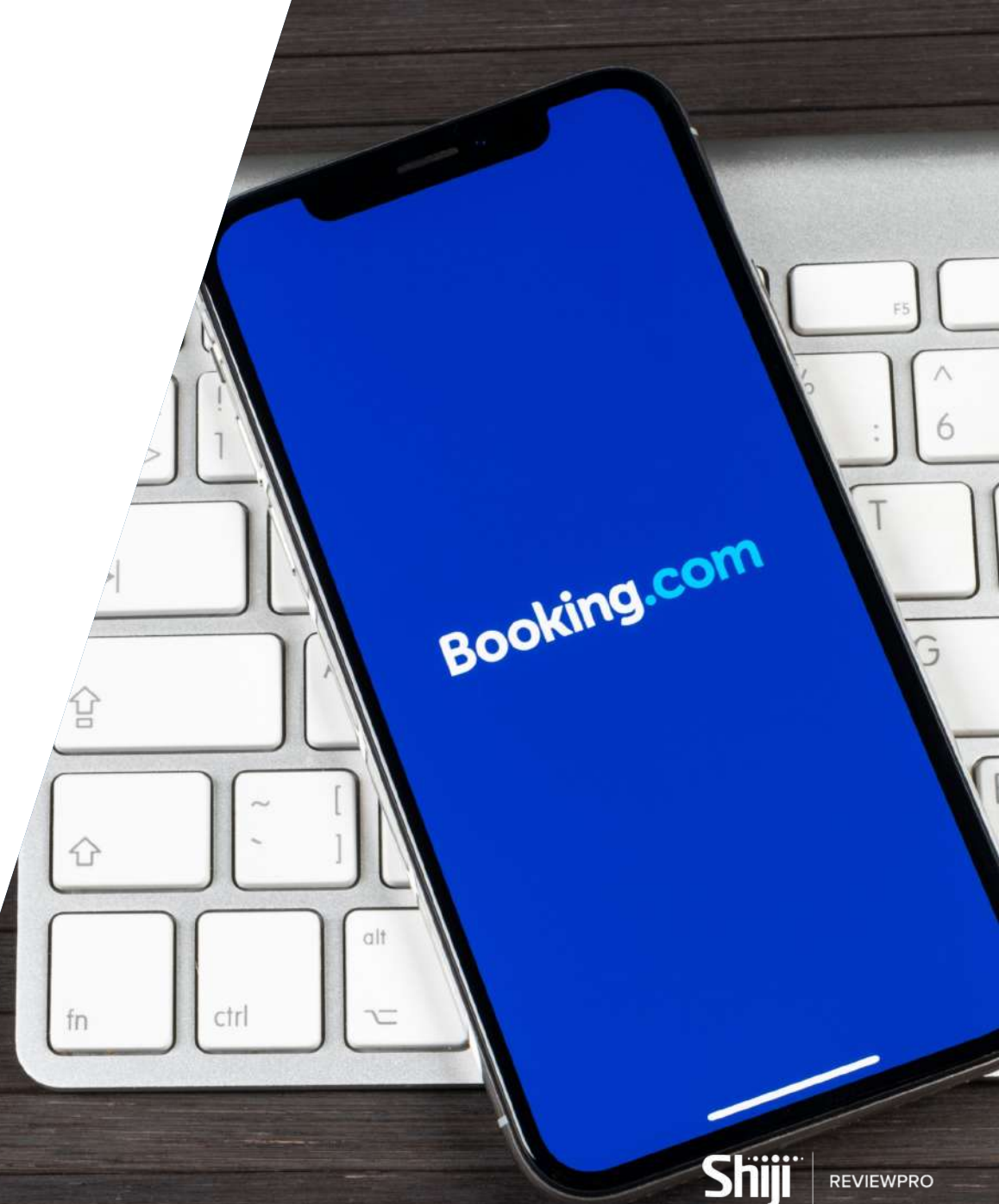




How Reviews and Guest Scores Work on Booking.com

Founded in Amsterdam in 1996, Booking.com was acquired by Priceline Group in 2005, which changed its name to Booking Holdings in 2018. Today, Booking.com is one of the world's leading online travel agencies (OTAs), connecting millions of travelers with flights, activities, and places to stay.

For most hotels, Booking.com is a vital source of bookings. However, with more than **28 million accommodation listings** on the site, competition is fierce. One way to stand out on the site is to earn high guest ratings and rave reviews. Reviews and review scores are displayed prominently on property listings, affecting visibility and rankings in accommodation searches and impacting traveler trust and booking decisions.

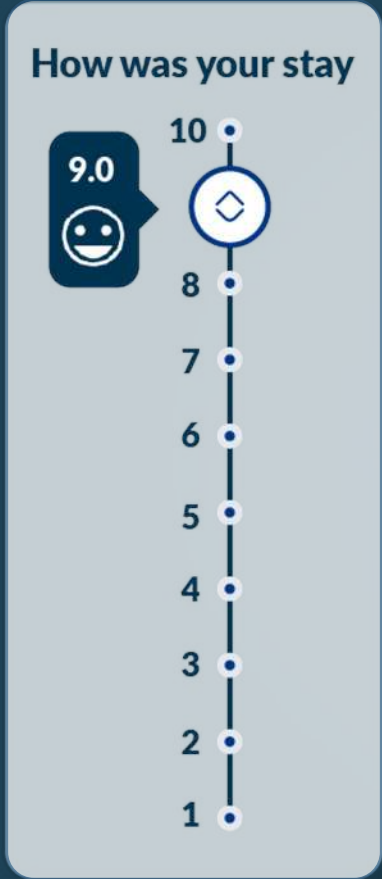




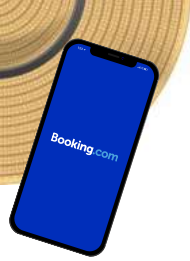
How Reviews and Guest Scores Work on Booking.com

Not only do properties with high ratings receive more exposure on the site, but users often filter out properties with low ratings. In fact, the **“Very good: 8+”** filter is one of the top-three most popular search filters on the site, according to Booking.com. If your property doesn’t have a high rating, users may never see it.

A hotel’s Guest Review Score is displayed on its property page. Scores also appear in search results in the upper right corner of a property’s listing, along with a descriptor based on the rating (Superb, Fabulous, Very Good, Good, Pleasant, etc.) and the total number of reviews. To view a property’s reviews, users can click **“Guest reviews”** on the property page.



According to Booking.com, reviews stay on a property’s reviews page for 36 months. After that, they are automatically archived and can be found at the bottom of the property page. Once reviews are archived, the property’s overall score is recalculated using the reviews that are still online.



How Important Are Reviews to Booking.com Guests?

During the webinar, **Charlotte Munro, Global Product Marketing Manager at Booking.com**, shared the following data about reviews on Booking.com:



“

“This is why it is so important to actively manage your reviews,” Munro said. “That means replying to reviews and learning from insights in reviews because they are a very important factor for guests when looking at your property.”

”

Charlotte Munro,
Global Product Marketing Manager at Booking.com

95%

of travelers read guest reviews before selecting accommodation.

85%+

of customers trust reviews as much as personal recommendations.

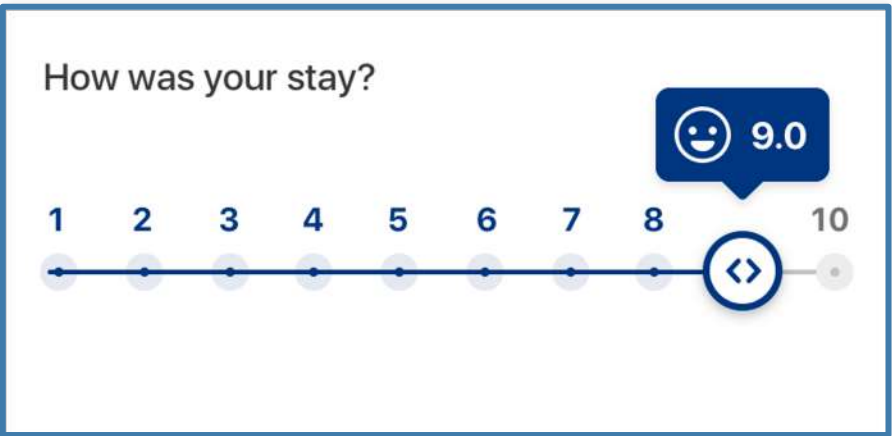
#3

Reviews are the 3rd biggest decision-making factor for travelers when choosing where to stay, next to price and location.



Booking.com's New Hotel Review System

Recently, Booking.com changed its review system. With the old system, guests rated their experience by selecting from one of four smiley icons ranging from unhappy (which was assigned a score of 2.5 /10) to very happy (which was assigned a score of 10/10). Guests were also asked to provide scores for six sub-categories such as Location and Cleanliness. Overall review scores were automatically calculated on the basis of the average across six fixed subscores.



Settings / Review Source Credential Sources / Booking

B. Booking

By authorizing Booking credentials, your response data & department indexes will be shared with your competitors via ReviewPro.

Permissions
Enable response on Booking for workgroups
0611Regression, Area Managers

Booking credentials Connect Your Booking Account

Authenticate your establishments

Establishments Status ▼

B. Booking en 18 May 2019 8.3 / 10 83%

An amazing place to stay when you are in Amsterdam!

Huibert from Belgium

Positive: Loved the surroundings and the location of the hotel. Thanks for such the great service you provided me during my stay. Negative: Nothing I can think of really.

Category	Score
Location	7.5 / 10
Service	10 / 10
Entertainment	7.5 / 10
Cleanliness	7.5 / 10
Room	10 / 10
Value	7.5 / 10

Reply to Huibert using credential ×

Template ▼

Reply from scratch or use a template

Response text

Respond On Booking

Respond Create Case Publish

Booking.com's New Hotel Review System

With the new system, guests are asked to provide an overall review score on a scale of 1 to 10. As an option, they can also give subscores for Cleanliness, Comfort, Value, Facilities, Location, and Staff, in addition to areas like Wi-Fi and Breakfast, which may vary by guest. Providing subscores is completely optional. The subscores are independent and have no impact on the overall property score. Guests are also prompted to provide written comments, but this too is optional.

According to Munro, the change in systems may explain in part why Booking.com's Source Index is lower than other review sources. "As the system is now calibrating from the old system to the new system, we do see a slight decline in review scores," she said. "And that is primarily because now, rather than being limited to four fixed scores, guests can give a score across a spectrum of 1 to 10."

9.2 Superb
3,587 reviews We aim for 100% real reviews ⓘ Write a review

Categories:

Staff ↑ 9.5	Facilities ↑ 9.1	Cleanliness ↑ 9.5
Comfort ↑ 9.5	Value for money 8.4	Location ↑ 9.8
Free WiFi ↑ 9.3	↑ High score for Berlin	

Filters

Reviewers	Review scores	Languages	Time of year
All (3587) ▾	All (3587) ▾	All (3587) ▾	All (3587) ▾

Select a topic to search reviews:

Breakfast + Location + Room + View + Bathroom + 🔍 Show more

Guest reviews Sort reviews by: Highest scores ▾

Thomas Germany
Reviewed: 15 January 2023
Deluxe Double Room
2 nights - January 2023
Couple

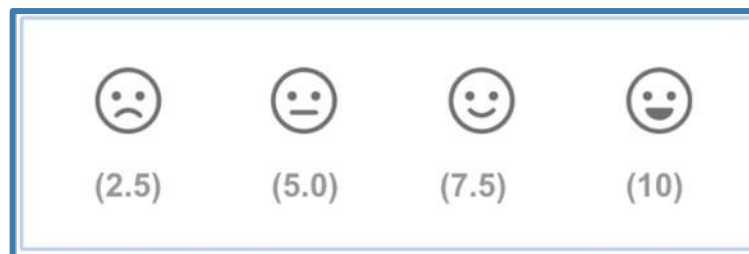
toptop 10
👍 - Top
😊 - alles top

Hotel response:
Dear Thomas,
thank you very much for your positive review.
It is nice to read that we could convince you all around of Hotel Adlon Kempinski and we hope to welcome you again soon.
With warm regards from Berlin
Karina Ansos
Managing Director



Guest Satisfaction Is on The Decline

With the previous system, if a guest wanted to give a property a score of nine, they would give it the happiest smiley, and that always defaulted to a score of 10. With the new system, guests can choose any score from one to 10. If they select a 9, for example, it counts as a 9, removing the upward bias of the old system.



“ So that is going to start bringing scores down slightly, but we do expect this to calibrate in the early part of 2023. ”

Charlotte Munro



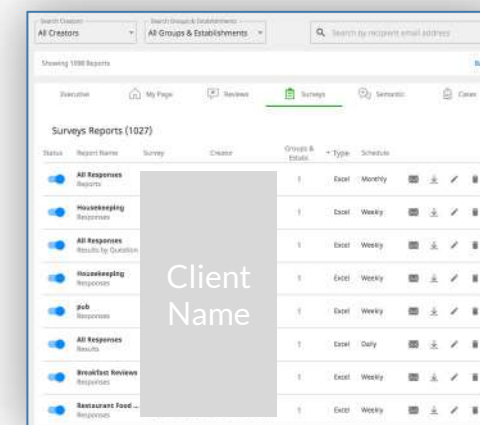
Why Did Booking.com Change its Review System?

According to Munro, there were two main reasons for changing the review scoring system. First, with only four smileys to choose from, guests couldn't always give the exact ratings they wanted. Second, there were legal implications to not reflecting the intended score of a guest.

The site also launched an improved reporting dashboard.

“We had to make sure the system was a lot more transparent,” Munro said. “Before, the score was calculated by Booking.com, and there was a bit of an upward bias.” Now that the subscores are independent, hotels aren’t disadvantaged by things like location, which are out of their control. Or if a property doesn’t have resort facilities, it won’t impact its overall score.

“And it means that in the future we have the ability to customize subscores dependent on what a property’s special features might be,”





Improvements to the Review System

Munro also discussed some of the changes Booking.com has implemented or plans to roll out in the near future to improve the review system.

Guests are now required to give a reason for extreme reviews. “If hotels are given a really high score or a really low score – this will probably be under three or over eight –, we want to make sure that the insights you’re given are really actionable,” she said. “So rather than giving a score with nothing attached to it, guests have to give you a reason.”

No more anonymous reviews. “We want to make sure the system is super transparent and fair,” she said. “Now guests will have to put a name to the review.”

**No more
anonymous
reviews**



**Reasons for
extreme
reviews**





Improvements to the Review System

Personalized subscores. This is under consideration for the future. “For some properties, certain subcategories are not as relevant and there might be other things they would like taken into consideration,” Munro said. “So we'll be looking at being able to select the subscore that might be relevant to you.”

Recent reviews. “Guest Review Scores currently cover 36 months of reviews, but maybe in the last six months or for your last 20 reviews your scores are a bit higher than your overall property score,” Munro said. “So we're looking at ways that this can be reflected, whether it's a more recent overall score or a streak of your most recent reviews.”

**Personalised
Subscores**



Recent Reviews





Improvements to the Review System

In stay. “For a lot of guests, when they leave a review, particularly if it's slightly negative, they might mention something you could have addressed during their stay,” said Munro. “Whether it's wanting a softer pillow or having their shower fixed, for example, we want to make sure properties have the opportunity to address these issues during the stay and help prevent negative reviews.”

In Stay



ooking.com

How Can Hoteliers Improve Review Scores on Booking.com?



Munro shared the following tips for improving review scores.

- Reply to reviews. **95% of travelers** read guest reviews, so be sure to reply to reviews and constructively address any issues raised. If, for example, loud noise was mentioned due to construction that has now finished, mention that.
- Manage guests' expectations. Ensure that the content on your property page is an accurate reflection of what guests can expect at your property. **"We often see that the more accurate the portrayal of the property, the better the review score is because it's what guests book and what they expect,"** Munro said.



How Can Hoteliers Improve Review Scores on Booking.com?

- **Consider providing breakfast.** Breakfast is the last meal guests have with you, so always make an effort to provide the best you can. “Breakfast is a nice way to leave a positive lasting impression,” Munro said.
- **Deliver great service.** Going that extra mile for your guests helps ensure they have a memorable experience. “When we read reviews, we often see super positive reviews that talk about a great experience with a staff member,” she said.
- **Comfort and cleanliness.** Make sure your property respects all sanitary requirements and make it as comfortable as possible for your guests.



Popular Positive Mentions in Reviews

What aspects of the stay do guests mention most often in reviews? According to Booking.com, 92% of positive accommodation reviews mention at least one of these topics positively:

43%

Food & Dining



32%

Location & View



19%

Maintenance



18%

Staff & Service





Popular Negative Mentions in Reviews

And 80% of negative accommodation reviews mention at least one of these topics negatively:

33%

Amenities.



31%

Maintenance



19%

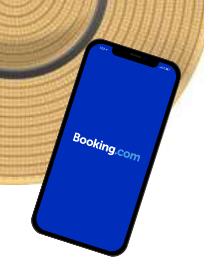
Comfort



16%

Noise





Booking.com Review Volume

What explains the surge in review volume from Booking.com in recent years? “We ask for reviews from our guests at a lot of different touchpoints,” Munro explained. “When a guest checks out of a property, we prompt them for a review, and then twice more after that. And we also have an alert on the app.” Invitations are sent about 48 hours after checkout, and guests have three months to submit a review.

“In terms of how properties can get more reviews, asking guests is really important,” she said. “We know guests find reviews so important when they book. They often like to give back and make sure if they had an awesome stay that's reflected,” she said. “But everyone's busy. They're coming back from holiday, and they often forget. So placing a welcome note in their room, prompting them at checkout, or sending them an email are super important ways to keep reviews top of mind.”



Q&A with Booking.com

Almost 1,000 attendees registered for the Booking.com webinar, and many of them sent in questions in advance or asked them during the live Q&A session. Here are highlights from the responses from Charlotte Munro of Booking.com.

How do review scores factor into visibility and rankings on Booking.com?

The ranking is an algorithm that takes into consideration hundreds of factors, and reviews are definitely an important aspect of that. But it's not the be-all, end-all. It's important that we take into consideration many other things. For example, personalization is a key element of ranking. We look at what the guest has booked previously and what kind of traveler they are, and those factors drive what properties are presented to them. Review scores are important because guests definitely don't prioritize properties that have a low review score. So review score is one of many things that affect rankings, but it's definitely not one of the big ones.

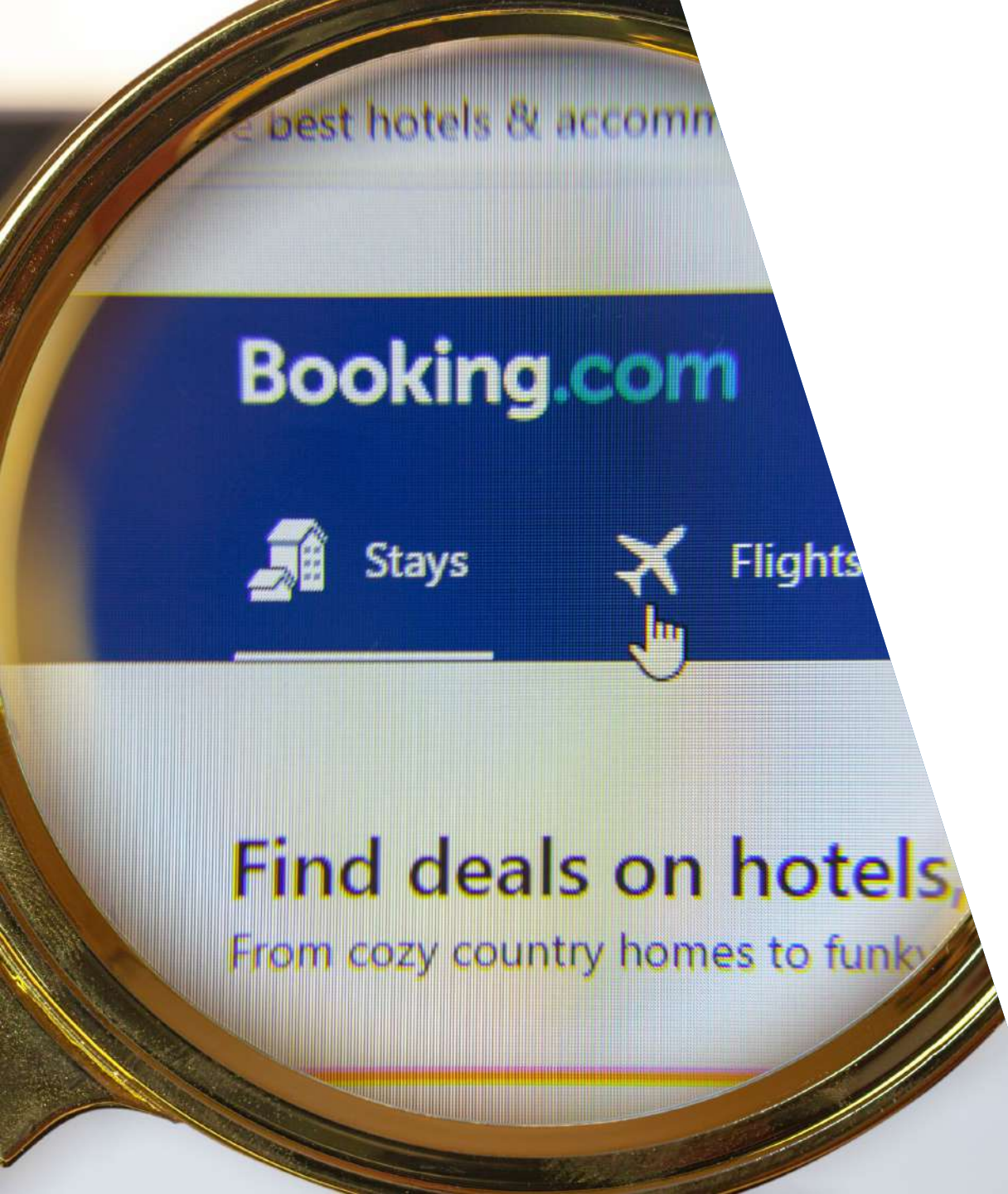


Why are guests who no-show allowed to leave a review?

Previously, we allowed hotels to click a setting when someone was a no-show and there was no way that they could give a review. But then a new European Union omnibus law came into effect. Now, a no-show guest can leave a review only if they came to the property and for some reason related to that experience left the property without checking in. Maybe they thought it wasn't clean enough or it was different from what they'd booked. Or the hotel overbooked their accommodation. Those are the only two instances of a no-show where the guest is permitted to leave a review.

If guests don't turn up but leave a review, you can reach out to Booking.com or your account manager to have it removed. We know that only a small instance of our reviews are from no-shows – I think it's under 2%. But we definitely have a process in place to flag the review and get it removed if it does happen to you.





Can you explain more about the new policy of guests having to give a reason for extreme reviews?

At the moment the only part we're utilizing is having to provide a comment for an extremely bad review. Because we know that's more impactful. You're not as concerned if it's an extremely good review. It's important to highlight that before we roll out a product, we do about 25 different experiments. If, for example, we see that requiring a reason for extremely good reviews resulted in people not giving a review or the scores were impacted, then it wouldn't be rolled out.



Nowadays there are a lot of ratings without comments. What is Booking.com's position on these reviews?

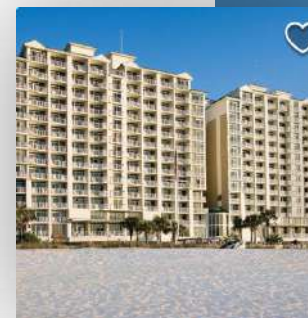
One of our key considerations is that when we ask for comments it can actually decrease the amount of reviews guests leave. This is why we're only requiring it for extreme reviews. Some people can't be bothered to write comments as to why they gave a certain score. So we don't ask that because it's a fine line between balancing the amount of reviews that you want for your property versus the actual insights. This is why we currently only ask guests to give a reason for an extremely low score.





Should hotels respond to ratings-only reviews?

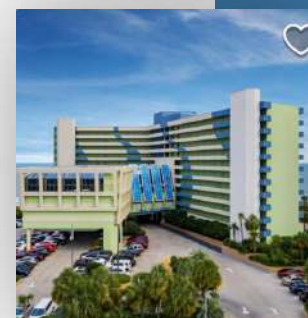
I don't think there's much you can say that would be of benefit. Use your resources elsewhere. I think it's always important to look at reviews through the lens of potential guests. If you didn't know anything about the property, what would you want to know? What would you want to see in responses to reviews? I think there's no point answering anything that's not relevant. Look for constructive things to show what you would want to see if you were looking with fresh eyes at your property.



Exceptional

1 review

10



Good

1,051 reviews

7.2



Very good

658 reviews

8.1



When guests post a review, are they prompted to say what they disliked about their stay?

These questions are prompts. For the positive aspect, we are more active about what we're asking for. So we say, "What did you like best about your stay?" For example, was it breakfast or the staff or the location? For the negative one, the question is, "Is there anything that wasn't as good about the property?" So we're less assertive because obviously we don't want to encourage people to say something negative for the sake of it or to nitpick.

But we're always testing to see whether we can change the question or optimize it. So it does go through a lot of iterations because we look at some of the comments people leave for negative reviews and if it's small things then we can change the question to make it more useful.

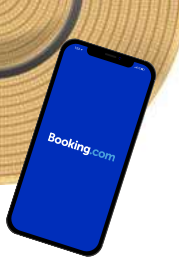




What can hotels do if they think a guest confused the rating system and, for example, gave a rating of 1 instead of 10?

Sometimes guests get confused and think it's a ten or they're just not looking when they hit their score. And I think you can see that if you've got a one or a two rating and the comment says, "We had an amazing experience." If this happens, your best port of call is to message the guests because they can edit their review. We can't change anything from our side. But if you have no luck, you can reach out to us to see if we can contact them through our app channels, for example.





What do you consider to be the best strategy for responding to defamatory or inaccurate reviews?

We definitely take blackmail scenarios very seriously. And we have very strict processes. So, the first port of call is to flag the review as soon as possible. If the guest is still in the hotel and hasn't left the review yet, that's the best time to reach out to us. But if they do post it, definitely flag it to us and we have a process to get it removed. If it's on your property page, reply in a professional tone. I know it's hard when someone has done that to you, but just say this is not an accurate reflection of this stay. We are really quick at removing those reviews because it can be pretty impactful for properties and frustrating.





Booking.com used to take the average of the last two years of reviews to calculate the Guest Review Score, but during Covid it changed to three years. Is there a plan to return to two years?

So yes, it has moved to 36 months. And that is because we're changing from the two different review systems. It actually gives a better overall review score for properties on average than it would if we reduced it to two. And also because during Covid there wasn't enough bulk in reviews. But it's something our data science team is always looking at – when the inflection point is to change it two. Earlier, I mentioned that we're looking at featuring more recent reviews so that guests can see a more accurate, up to date review score of your last 12 months or your last 20 reviews, for example.



Tips from Shiji ReviewPro on Managing Reviews on Booking.com

During the webinar, Danica Smith, Shiji's Director of Product Engagement, shared the following tips for managing reviews and improving ratings on Booking.com.

Prioritize Management Responses

"We understand it was a difficult year for the accommodation industry, especially in the context of staffing shortages, so it was great to see the global average response rate was 61.9%," Smith said. "However, response rates were lower on Booking.com (56.4%) than on other sources. And hoteliers are still prioritizing positive reviews over negative reviews. That needs to change."



Four best practices in management responses.



1

Set the correct workflows & processes

- Who responds to negative vs positive reviews?
- Who responds to PR crisis mentions?

2

Set a management response strategy

- KPIs (reviews/ surveys)
- What time deadlines?
- What to prioritise?
- How to steal market share using responses?

3

Management response templates

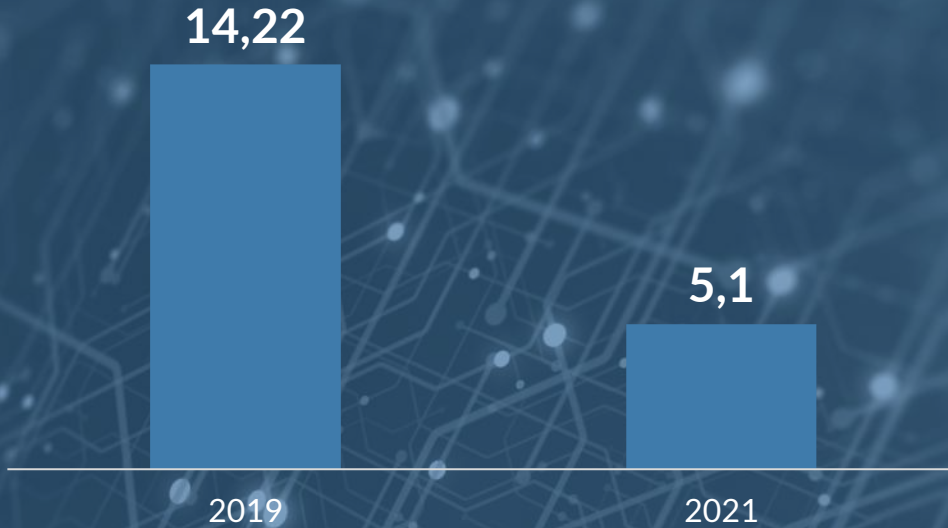
- Sentence samples for online reviews (DO NOT sound like a robot)
- Templates for survey responses

4

Set up direct response integration

- Set up Google & Booking API & respond from within tool

Booking.com Avg. Response Time (Days)



A screenshot of the Shiji ReviewPro interface. It displays a review from a guest named Huibert from Belgium, dated 18 May 2019. The review is positive, praising the surroundings and location. The interface shows a 'Respond' button and a 'Create Case' button. A 'Response text' field is visible, and a 'Respond On Booking' button is at the bottom right.

Activate the Booking.com API

Shiji ReviewPro users now have the ability to respond to Booking.com reviews from within the Shiji ReviewPro platform. As hoteliers know, timely responses to online reviews, especially to negative reviews, can improve traveler perceptions and make them more likely to book a property. Prior to the API becoming available, hotels took **14.2 days** on average to respond to reviews on Booking.com. In 2021, after the API was put into place, the average response time was reduced to just over five days. “That’s more than nine days quicker!” said Smith. “It’s a win-win for everyone.”

Activating the API is easy. For instructions, click [Activating the Booking.com-ReviewPro API](#).



How Do You Improve Guest Reviews?

To earn positive reviews, hoteliers must carefully manage the guest experience across the customer journey, from booking to pre-stay, in-stay, and post-stay, Smith said. “At Shiji ReviewPro, we offer a range of solutions across the guest journey. We provide hoteliers with the right technology to analyze, understand, and improve the guest experience, whether that's through communications, managing guest requests on property, or responding to reviews.”

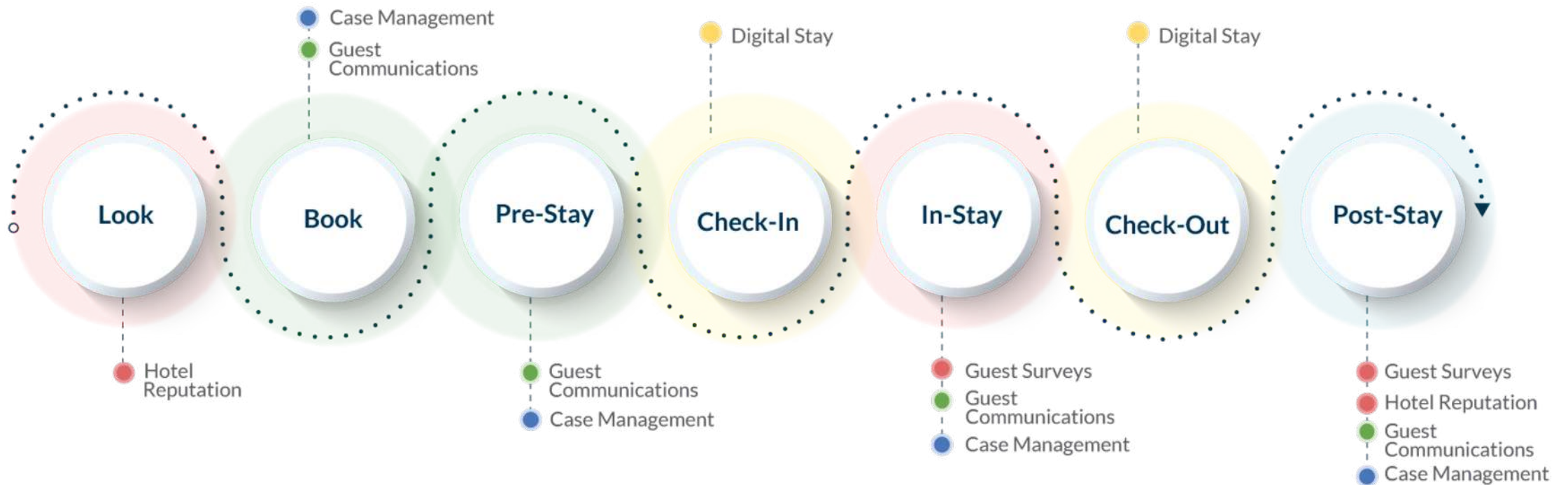
“For example, how are you managing frequently asked questions?” Smith asked. “According to our research, up to 50% of the questions that come through the Booking.com portal go unanswered. How does that impact the guest experience? What technology can you leverage to ensure guests get the information they need at every stage of the guest journey?”



Ensure Guest Experience Comes First



“When you put the guest first across the journey, that's how you really get the good reviews,” Smith said. “All staff must be obsessed with the guest experience, whether it’s senior management, the maintenance manager, or the F&B director. Every department will look at guest intelligence and guest data differently, but they’re all there to serve the guests, so it should be part of meetings and business decisions.”



Ensure Guest Experience Comes First



Smith shared four ways to ensure the guest experience is the top priority.

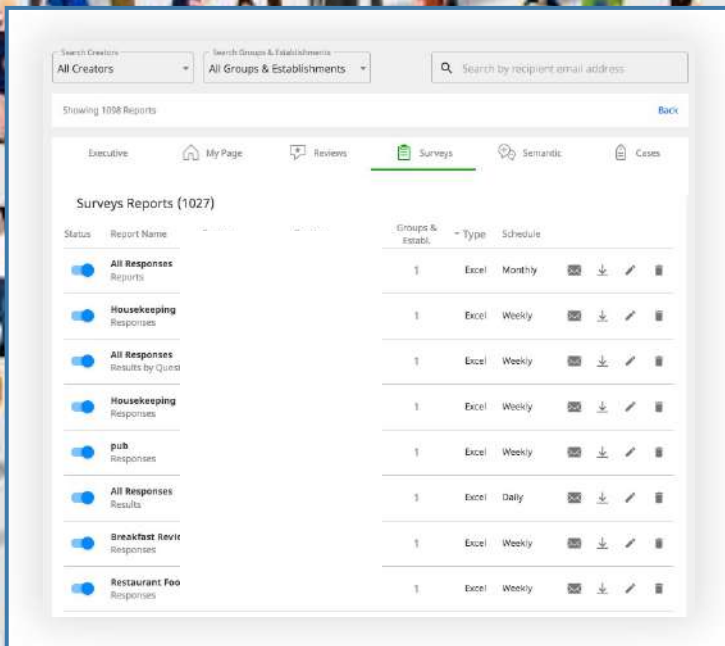
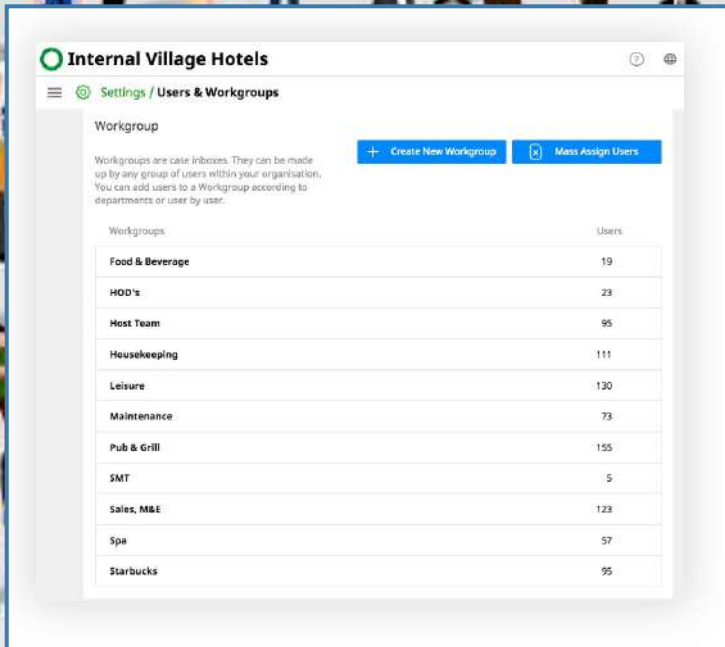
- Make guest satisfaction the primary goal of all major business decisions and strategies.

- Use guest intelligence across the business and encourage all departments to use guest data
 - Automated cases for housekeeping and maintenance
 - Identify competitor weaknesses to win corporate business
 - Integrate guest intelligence into revenue reporting

- Send ad hoc surveys to support business initiatives
 - Test room concepts
 - Market research surveys; i.e., perception of value

- Make the mobile app accessible to everyone.





Set the Right Foundations

“In order to get workflows operating correctly, it's important to have the right foundations in place,” said Smith. “One of our clients, a European hotel chain of 30 hotels, has over one thousand active users using Shiji ReviewPro’s guest intelligence and guest experience data. That means over a thousand individual custom reports are sent weekly, daily, or monthly to users. This helps ensure everybody has the relevant data they need to improve the guest experience.”





Set the Right Foundations

By putting a strategy in place to take control of reviews on Booking.com, earn higher ratings, and respond to more reviews, hoteliers can boost not only their Booking.com Source Index but also their overall online reputation or Global Review Index™.

To learn more about how to improve guest reviews and ratings, check out the [Education section](#) on Shiji ReviewPro's website, where you'll find a large selection of webinars, guides, and case studies. And don't miss the 2022 Year in Reviews report.

Shiji | REVIEWPRO

Products Benefits Clients Education Log

Webinars

Booking.com Demystified: Everything You Need to Know

31 JAN 2023 17:00 CET

Monica Smith Charlotte Munro Daniel Craig

SAVE YOUR SPOT

WEBINARS

Booking.com Demystified: Everything You Need to Know About the World's Leading Source of Online Reviews

The New Hybrid Hotel: Staff & Technology Working in Tandem

WEBINARS

Using 2022 Data for 2023 Planning: Key Takeaways from the Global Hotel Review Index

WEBINARS

About Shiji

Shiji Group provides software solutions and services for the hospitality, food service, retail and entertainment industries, ranging from hotel management solutions to food and beverage and retail systems, payment gateways, data management, online distribution and more. Founded in 1998 as a network solutions provider for hotels, Shiji Group's 4,000 employees in more than 70 subsidiaries and brands serve over 74,000 hotels, 200,000 restaurants and 600,000 retail outlets.

About Shiji ReviewPro

Shiji ReviewPro is the leading guest experience management software helping hospitality become more profitable by gathering and understanding guest feedback data. The Shiji ReviewPro platform includes Hotel Reputation, Guest Surveys, Case Management and Guest Communications. With a decade of experience and investment in innovation, we continue to be the benchmark of the industry. Together, we reimagine the digital guest experience, join us.



Thank you for reading our guide



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