

MOBILE

89pc of prestige hotels investing in mobile site: L2

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From sun-filled guest rooms featuring private step out balconies to award winning see-and-be-seen dining, Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles is a Beverly Hills icon, buzzing with luxury and excitement.

Four Seasons' mobile site

By JOE MCCARTHY

Luxury hotel brands are ramping up mobile investments to regain sales lost to online travel agencies, according to L2's latest report.



According to Business Insider, OTAs account for 64 percent of mobile hotel bookings, and are poised to maintain their advantage. Consumers prefer to book via mobile sites and 50 percent of United States brand mobile sites require six or more clicks to book, a lengthy process that often leads to aborted transactions.

The "[Digital IQ Index: Prestige Hotels](#)" report assesses the digital competence of 66 Luxury, Upper Upscale and Upscale hotel. L2 ranks brands according to the following criteria: 30 percent Web site and ecommerce, 30 percent digital marketing, 10 percent social media and 30 percent mobile.

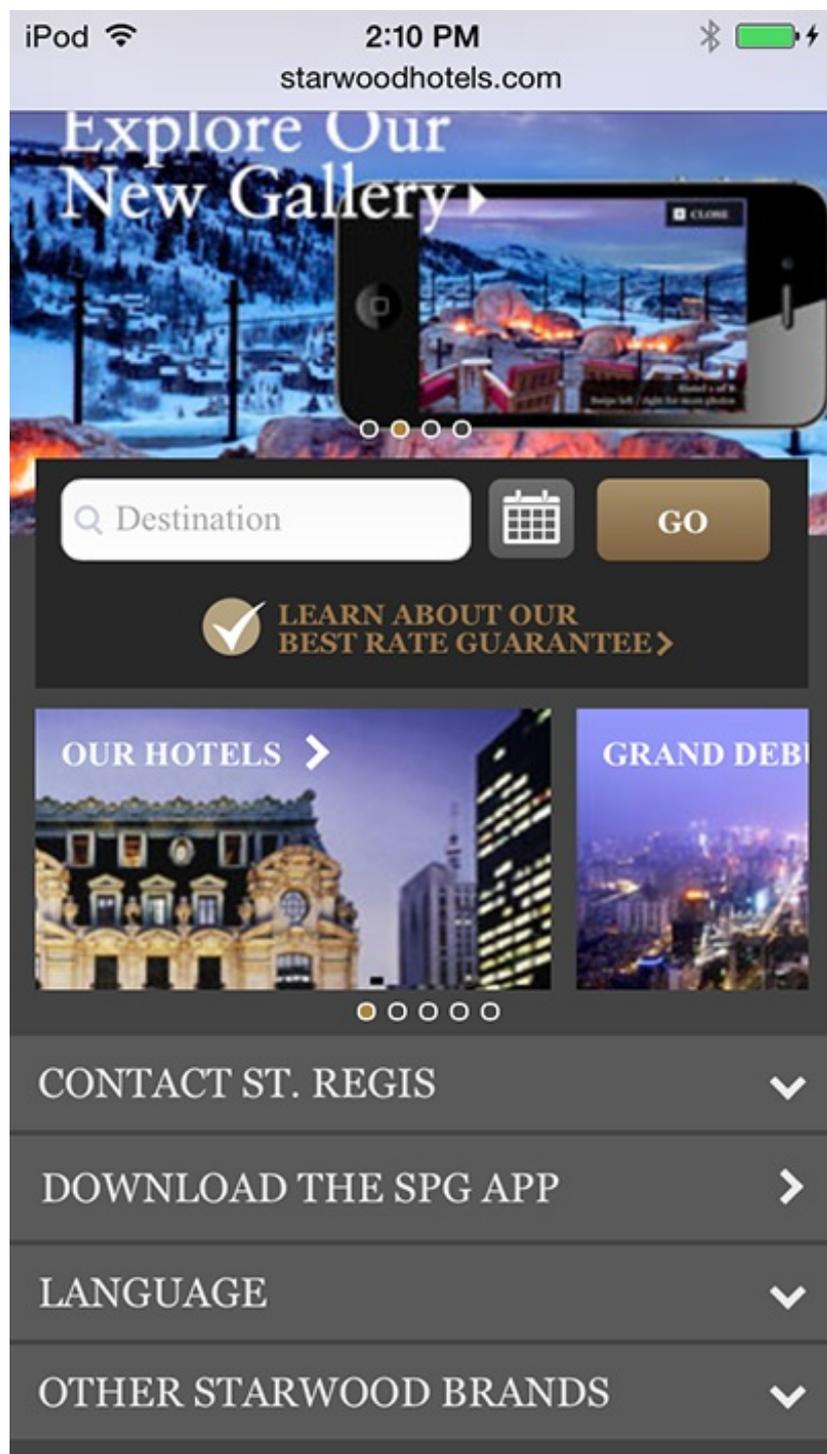
Turning the corner

Many hotel brand mobile sites are lacking in crucial areas.

Ninety percent of consumers are influenced by travel reviews, and 44 percent of consumers access reviews via their smart phones. However, 27 percent of mobile

sites provide reviews and 14 percent permit users to submit reviews.

Travelers on-the-go like to access maps to get a sense of where a hotel is situated, but 42 percent of U.S. mobile sites do not offer a map feature. As desktop Web sites are overhauled to enable a more experiential visit, 35 percent of mobile sites offer full-screen images, 14 percent offer video and 45 percent include local activities and travel guides.



St. Regis mobile site

Efficiency can sometimes make up for shoddy content on mobile, but many hotel mobile sites remain ponderous. In addition to extensive clicks, 39 percent of brand sites do not feature information auto-fill. Outside of the U.S., the picture is more dismal, with many Chinese and French mobile sites lacking basic features.

Brands recognize the need for speedy and engaging mobile sites and 89 percent are

making investments, up from 63 percent in 2013.

Bigger screens

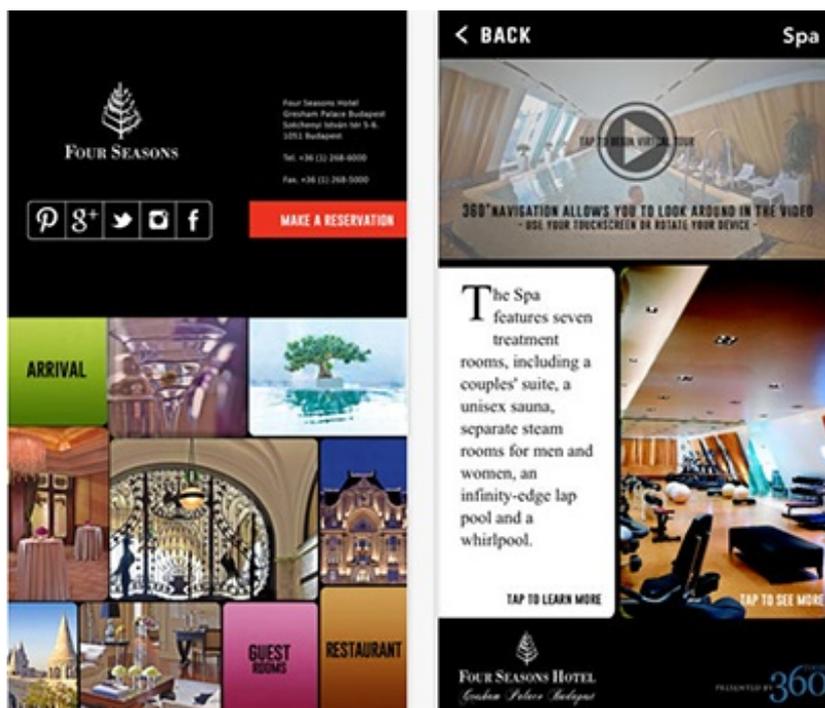
Consumers enact and complete transactions at a much higher rate on tablets than smartphones, and the behavior displayed on both platforms differs. Unlike smartphones in motion, 85 to 90 percent of tablet use takes place while consumers are resting.

Although brands have a great opportunity to generate revenue via tablet, 83 percent of indexed hotels choose to simply transfer their desktop site. Also, 62 percent of tablet sites do not feature swipe functionality and 41 percent have tablet-optimized calendars.

Apps have commanded a lot of resources from brands. More than 60 percent of brands have apps for specific properties, which can create confusion for consumers traveling from hotel to hotel. Furthermore, 68 percent of booking apps do not cater to non-English speakers.

However, property-specific apps do have their benefits.

For instance, Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace Budapest is letting prospective guests explore the property beforehand with a 360-degree immersive application.



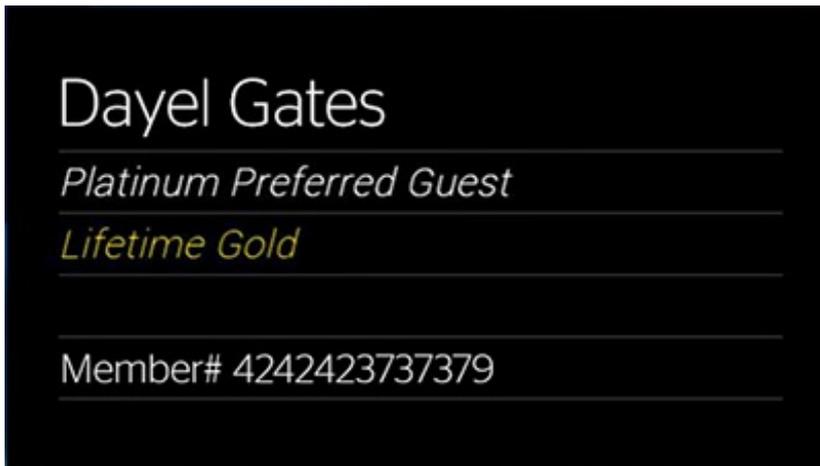
FS Budapest app

The Room360 app uses spherical filming technology for relatively seamless tours of the property's interior. As consumers continue to increase the amount of research they do prior to a trip, brands will have to meet the demand with similar apps and content ([see story](#)).

Brands do have the opportunity to deploy similar apps across their portfolio, since downloading app after app can be frustrating.

Some hotel companies are striving for cross-property fluidity.

For example, Starwood Hotels and Resorts is anticipating the potential surge in consumer interest for wearables with a new Starwood Preferred Guest application for Google Glass.



SPG for Google Glass

Designed by the conglomerate's in-house team, the app leverages Google Glass's functionality while carrying over basic components of its conventional SPG app. Starwood will likely be applauded by the growing number of wearable advocates who are pushing to make Google Glass and similar items more mainstream ([see story](#)).

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/Dk2vogPQwEc](http://www.youtube.com/embed/Dk2vogPQwEc)

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