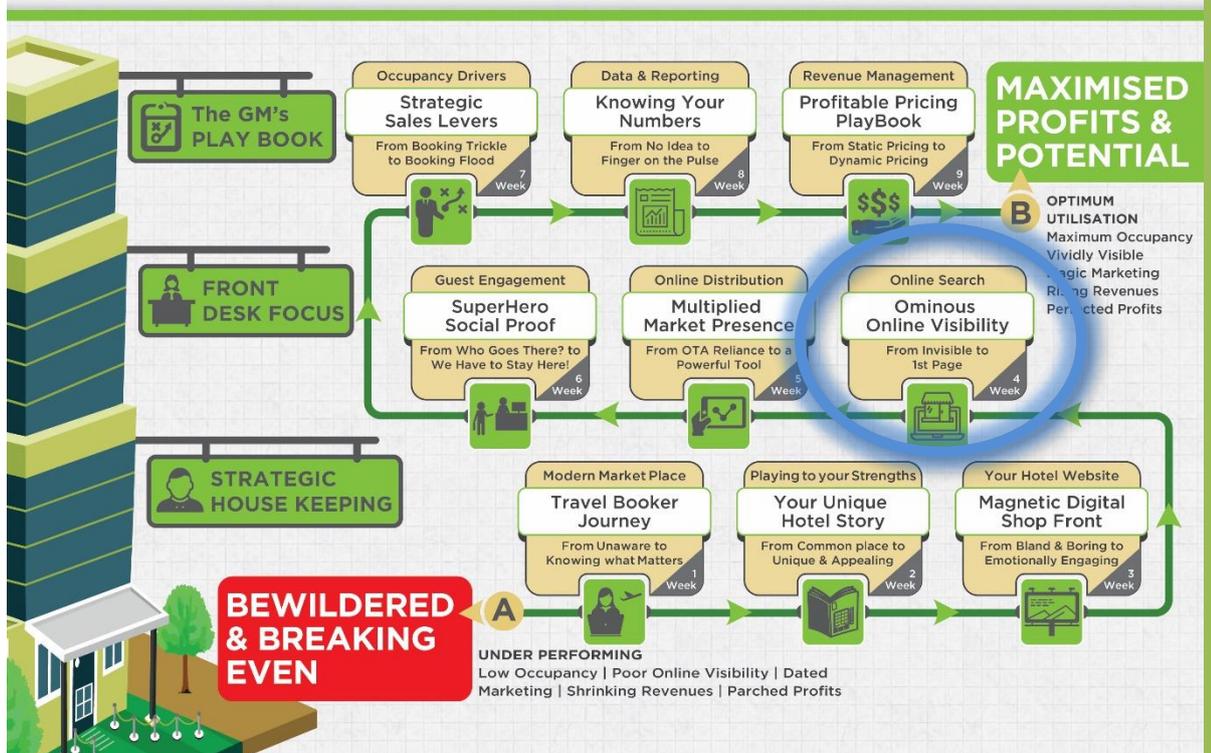


63 Day 80% + Occupancy ROADMAP



The 63 Day 80%+ Occupancy ROADMAP

A proven step by step system for Independent Hoteliers to increase their profit by up to 50% in 63 days without increasing stress or work load



Module 4

Ominous Online Visibility

Michael Harper & Andreas Palmqvist

Hotel Rescue 2017

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Module 4 – Online Search

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page search results

Section 1.	Why Online Visibility is Important	Pg 2
Section 2.	Google - The Biggest Player	Pg 2
Section 3.	Organic Success	Pg 5
Section 4.	The Trip Advisor Effect	Pg 6
Section 5.	Third Party Leverage	Pg 8
Section 6	Other Online Hacks	Pg 9
Section 7.	FRAMEWORKS	Pg 13

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Section 1.

Why is Online Visibility So Important?

As we dig a little deeper into this undeniable trend that travel research and planning and booking, in the modern economy, is now conducted in an 'online' environment, it becomes even more compelling that:

- In Australia, 85% of all accommodation travel planning is conducted online
- Travel bookers will visit anywhere from 22-38 different web pages before making a booking.
- Just under ¾ of Australian hotel shoppers, booked their travel online via OTAs (Online Travel Agents), compared with just 21% who went direct to the hotel
- More than 1 in 4 room nights are booked on a mobile device
- 47% of all last minute hotel bookings are made from a mobile device
- 71% of Leisure Travellers and 86% of Business Travellers switch between multiple devices to conduct the same travel related activity.

So when it comes to running a modern accommodation business, you must be prominent in the online world across all device types, otherwise the ability for bookers to find you, means you're almost invisible. So, what impacts your online visibility is the question. This module sets out how to unravel and simplify this elusive equation. Below we have outlined the big pieces of the puzzle you must get right in order to increase your hotel's online visibility and ultimately be found by the modern travel booker.

Section 2.

Google – The Big Player

As stated, 85% of all travel research is now conducted online. So it is important to understand how this fits into the bigger picture. The number of people using internet search engines is increasing year on year and is almost unfathomable at 6,586,013,574 (6.5 billion) searches per day! Sure there are a number of search engines available such as Yahoo (5.6%), Bing (7.3%) and Baidu (8.13%), however, it is undeniable that **Google is the dominate player with a market share of 77.43%**. (data courtesy of www.smartinsights.com April 2017)

So, let's look at it this way:

- Out of 100 people looking to book accommodation, 85 of them will do it online.
- Of those 85, 66 will do it on Google.

So, if we are going to make a concerted effort to improve our ability to be found when someone decides to try and look for accommodation in your area, it makes perfect sense to optimize your business to appear prominently in Google search results.

Appearing on page 1 search results (SERP) is critical, as the statistics demonstrate that unless you are on page 1, the odds of travel bookers clicking on your website are very dismal indeed. Below is simply an explanation of how Google works and why people see what they do on page 1 of a Google search result.

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Google Basics & Architecture

There are 3 distinct areas on page 1 of Google when consumers are searching for accommodation providers, and therefore, 3 distinct means by which you can begin to optimize your online visibility. Below is a more detailed pictorial explanation.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "Accommodation Sydney". The search results are categorized into three main areas:

- 1-4: Paid Advertising** (Positions 1-4): This section contains four sponsored search results. Each result includes a star rating, a price starting from \$60, and a brief description of the accommodation. The results are from Trivago, Booking.com, Wotif, and AccorHotels.com.
- 5-7: Google Local Search** (Hotel Finder) 3 Pack: This section features a map of Sydney with price markers and a list of three hotels: Four Seasons Hotel Sydney (\$280), Hilton Sydney (\$225), and Swissotel Sydney (\$245). A "More hotels" link is also visible.
- 8-12: Organic Search Results** (1-10 Positions located after Paid (4) & Local (3) results): This section contains five organic search results. The first result is a link to Trivago for Sydney hotels. The second is a link to HotelsCombined for cheap Sydney accommodation deals. The third is a link to Wotif for Sydney accommodation with 728 hotels. The fourth is a link to Booking.com for the best 30 hotels in Sydney. The fifth is a link to Sydney.com for accommodation options.

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Google Paid Advertising Results

- a. These are the top 4 positions on a SERP (plus another 3 listings at the bottom).
- b. They are all derived from companies investing budgets into Google Adwords who are prepared to pay on a cost per click basis to jump the que and have their ads appear before all other organic search results.
- c. Basically, if you have a big enough budget, you can appear at the top of the page as much as you want. However, **the big companies tend to have this sewn up and it is often not viable to compete in this space.**
- d. Although, we still encourage businesses to take a look at it for their specific situation. If your location or property is unique in some way, you may be able to implement a Google Adwords strategy that could just work.

Google Hotel Listing Results (Google Local Search)

- e. This only applies to accommodation based searches. So anyone who is including words like Hotel, Motel, Accommodation, etc in their search term, Google will then bring up an additional 3-pack of local search results below the "Paid" Section.
- f. This used to be called Google Hotel Finder but is now fully integrated into Page 1 search results. This feature is constantly evolving as Google weighs in on the online Hotel Booking space.
- g. It is heavily tied to your properties presence within Google Maps, Google My Business listing and Google Reviews. (see the FRAMEWORK attached to this module, "Hot Wire for Google Local Search") **We highly recommend focusing on this area.**

Google Organic Search Results

- h. This is traditional 'relevant' search results for a given keyword phrase and is often seen as the more trusted results. (this is where your SEO work fits in)
- i. While its position on page 1 is below 'paid' and below 'local search' results, it ultimately has a starting position at #8, it is in effect about half way down the page, and nowadays is below the fold (off screen).
- j. However, the news is not all bad. Our earlier research indicated that as many as 80% of users trust the organic search results more, and as a result consume 80% of click through traffic. More recent data suggests this number is closer to 95% (see diagram on next page). **So, it is still definitely worth focusing on organic search success.**

The confusing part for hoteliers is the rapidly changing landscape with Google, making its 'Hotel Listings' appearance in recent times, and how to go about appearing prominently within that feature. We see this as the biggest opportunity to rapidly increase your online visibility, particularly for Google search results.

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Section 3.

Organic Success

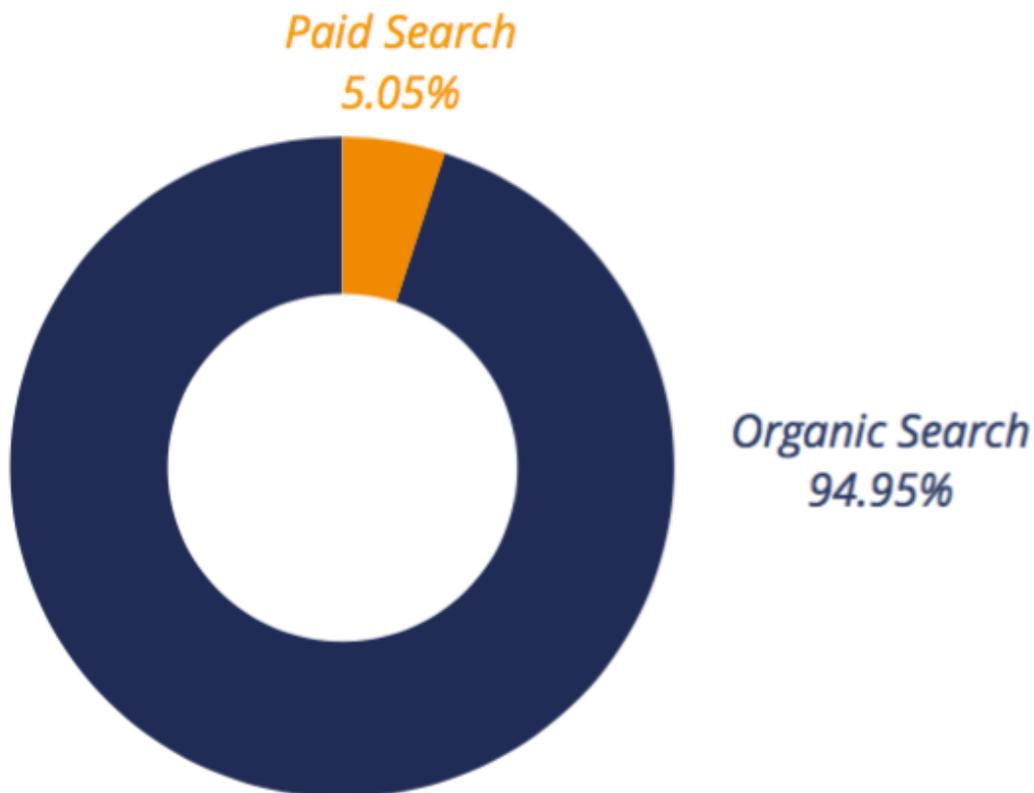
Here at Hotel Rescue we DO NOT profess to be experts in fully understanding and implementing effective SEO, that, we leave to the gurus. It is a complicated beast which requires a long-term approach to get it right. We do, however, wish to make a very strong argument for the fact that it is critical you have a long-term strategy for SEO and we suggest using professionals to get it done right.

As SEO becomes more and more complicated and difficult to achieve, its relevance and importance does not diminish. There are many providers out there who promise to unlock the 'search algorithm' and hence capture that all favoured 1st page search result. It's got to a stage now where it is very hard and can also be very expensive to achieve. However, understanding that, close to 95% of consumers don't trust Paid search results, it is still worth the effort in pursuing organic SEO in most cases.

Shopping Category: Organic & Paid Search

Global Desktop Data, January 2016

Data By  SimilarWeb



Despite the cries that SEO is dead, we are not going to try and unpack the mystery right here, rather offer some practical advice that can help you optimize your organic listings without over focusing your time or money in doing so.

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From Invisible to 1st Page

SEO Simple Advice for Hoteliers

- ✓ Hire a Professional – if the platform or template you are using for your hotel website doesn't already provide some form of SEO, then bring in the guys that know what they're doing but make sure it's within a budget. There are thousands of actions you can take to optimize but use the 80/20 rule that by getting the basics in place will often be enough.
- ✓ Ensure Local SEO is in place – because the accommodation game is clearly based around location. Ensure that every page has your name, address and phone number correctly placed on it. This is critical to search results.
- ✓ Keep your site updated regularly – this is good in Google's eyes because they see that your information is not dated.
- ✓ Content Marketing helps with SEO – I won't explain why, just what you need to do. Create lots of additional pages on your site (perhaps using a blog) that provides loads of great information about not only your hotel, but your local area, what's on, where to eat, what to do. For example, you could write a series of articles on "Top 5 _____ to _____ while in YOUR TOWN". Things to See, Places to Eat, Activities to Do.
- ✓ Mobile Responsive & Backlinks – as noted in the last module (#3) these both help tremendously with SEO.

Think about who Google's customers really are. It's the person typing the search query. It is Google's goal to please that person by providing them with the MOST RELEVANT search results.

Therefore, all the technical algorithm stuff is geared towards that end. Forget the techo approach and make sure your website is appealing, informative, enjoyable, entertaining and appropriate to your target demographic. Keep it simple. Unless you are creating a useful and easy to use resource, you simply won't rank.

Section 4.

The Trip Advisor Effect

Tapping into 'Social Proof' has become a key component of the travel booker journey. So, knowing that, aside from checking rates and availability, they will spend a significant amount of time seeking social proof, it presents another opportunity to be found online. There is no bigger player in this space than TripAdvisor.

➤ The Trusted Advisor

When it comes to travel, Trip Advisor (TA) is the 'go to' resource for discovering the 'truth' about what real customers are saying about travel related products and services. So, for hoteliers, it is obvious to not only have a presence, but have a professional and most importantly, **high ranking profile**. The higher your ranking on TA, the stronger your online visibility is on that channel. Also, now that TA are moving into online bookings, it has become

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

even more critical to perform here as the reduced friction of creating bookings on this channel makes for a strong proposition.

➤ The TA Ranking Algorithm

So what factors go into increasing your ranking? While not everything is revealed, we can ascertain that TripAdvisor's Popularity Index algorithm is based on three key ingredients:

- the quality
- the quantity
- the recency of reviews

Trip Advisor are adamant that their scores are reflective of their users views and opinions and they "take content integrity very seriously and screen every review. If you are caught breaking our guidelines, it can take a big hit on your popularity ranking." in short, don't try and cheat the system as you'll get caught!

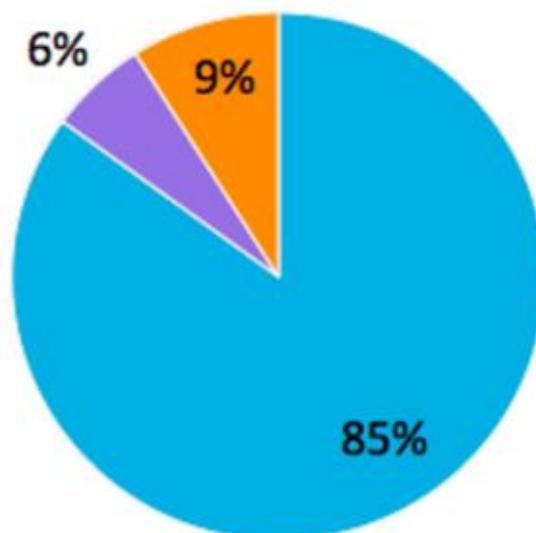
But, TripAdvisor doesn't advertise all the elements of the Popularity Index algorithm. It also doesn't let us know the weighting of each factor. For example, it doesn't tell us whether a property's average review score or whether the total number of reviews are more important.

Revinat.com carried out a study last year and based on their data in the Bangkok market, they came up with a rough approximation of weighting: From what we can tell,

- The average review score of a property counts for 85% of the Popularity Index ranking.
- The total volume of reviews counts for 6% of the property's ranking.
- 9% is left unexplained.

TripAdvisor Popularity Index

■ Avg Review Score ■ # of Reviews ■ Unexplained



Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Section 5.

Third Party Leverage

The Bill Board Effect

A research paper from Cornell University set out to prove that there is more to gain, than is initially obvious, by listing on various online channels.

Abstract from paper;

Hotels that are listed on third-party distributors' websites, commonly known as online travel agents (OTA), gain a reservation benefit in addition to direct sales...The study found that when the hotels were listed on Expedia, they saw an increase in reservations from their own distribution channels (that is, not through Expedia).

More on this in Module 5, Multiplied Market Presence.

OTA Rankings

Just by being on the OTA's will help with visibility because if people are using more specific search terms such as you property name, the OTA's will actually already have their PPC advertising geared for that. So let them take the gamble on PPC and you can just pay the known commission they charge, should you actually realise a booking. Even then some will still visit your website before making the booking giving you another chance to grab that direct booking.

Similar to Trip Advisor, the more bookings and the more reviews you get the better you will rank on the OTA websites. It's a combination of volume and positive reviews that help calculate your ranking.

Other factors that may impact your rankings on OTA's include:

- **Content Score.** Most channels provide you with a content score which is an indication of how complete your profile is and the quality at which your property is presented through photos etc. This scoring will affect your ranking within their site.
- **Commission** (the more you pay, the better your ranking). This is a feature of Booking.com and Agoda (both owned by US giant Priceline) and more recently Expedia, where you can increase commission for a targeted period in exchange for better rankings.
- **Deals & Promotions.** Most OTA's reward hotels that offer "deals" such as discounts based on early bookings, pre-payment or length of stay.
- **Cancellation rate.** This is especially relevant with booking.com, who did not until recently, have a payment gateway on their site. Customers could make a booking without committing to the stay (unless the accommodation provider specifies pre-payment). As a result, it is easy for bookers to make a booking and cancel it if they find a better offer or decide to book elsewhere. The more cancellations you receive are an indication of dissatisfaction and hence down in the rankings you go.

Being on the OTA's is a key move in increasing your online visibility and we encourage almost every property to have a presence. But more on online distribution in the next module.

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Section 6.

Other Online Hacks

Hack #1 – Rapidly increase your quality Backlinks

The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) is a single national platform for tourism websites. All tourism businesses in Australia can list for free on this site, but the big benefit is not from just being listed on yet another online directory. The benefit comes from automatically being included in having your website receive over 700 backlinks from wholesale, tourism and distribution platforms. Not just a high volume of back links but 'quality' back links.

Now sure, you may receive some traffic to your site as a result of the links, but more importantly the quality backlinks will help raise your google and search engine rankings in general.

HOW?

- Go to www.atdw.com.au,
- Check if you already have a listing
- Yes, go to next step
- No, create an account > sign in > Build Profile
- Optimize your listing by again ensuring consistency of imagery and story.
- Watch this [ATDW Guide](#) to making the most of your listing

Hack #2 - Star Ratings on Google Search Results

Having a star rating appear next to your search listing can help you stand out from your competitors. (see example below). Google uses rich snippets, a form of structured data, to create your star rating in organic search results. According to Hitsearch, 3 factors influence getting a Google star rating:

- Trusted review sites
- Schema markup, and
- Site authority

Get these items sorted and you'll begin to see the star ratings appear beside your organic listings.

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From Invisible to 1st Page

Accommodation - Temora Tourism

www.temora.com.au/places-to-stay.aspx ▼

Kames Cottages offer private accommodation in peaceful, rural surroundings. In a place that is far enough to be secluded and close enough to provide the ...

Temora Airfield Tourist Park & Temora Caravan Park

<https://www.thebookingbutton.com.au/properties/temoraparkdirect> ▼

Temora Airfield Tourist Park Cabins ... Temora Caravan Park (tent site unpowered). Photos Details ... Accommodation Details ...

Kames Cottages - Accommodation in Temora

www.kamescottages.com/ ▼

Peaceful, secure & secluded rural surroundings. Kames Cottages offer unique accommodation on a working rural farm near Temora NSW. Please use the ...

The Best Temora Accommodation of 2017 (with Prices) - TripAdvisor

<https://www.tripadvisor.com.au> > ... > Australia > New South Wales > Temora ▼

View deals, see photos and read reviews for the best Temora hotels from travellers like you - then compare today's lowest prices from up to 200 sites on ...

Kames Cottages: Reviews & Photos (Temora) - Cottage - TripAdvisor

<https://www.tripadvisor.com.au> > ... > Temora Speciality Lodging > Temora Cottages ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 3 reviews

This cabin accommodation is on a farm outside Temora and as such was quiet and peaceful. The main room had ample space with a comfortable lounge and a ...

Temora Cabins & Cottages Accommodation - Sydney

<https://www.sydney.com> > Destinations > Country NSW > Temora ▼

Temora Cabins & Cottages Accommodation. Sydney offers diverse accommodation options for travellers, from five-star harbourside hotels to inner-city ...

Hack #3 Google Hotel Ads

Google Hotel Ads have in fact been around for quite a few years, and has changed its stripes a few times but still really flies completely under the radar for most independent Hoteliers.

Unless you're a developer or some sort of IT guru, the best way to take advantage of this is to use a technology integration partner such as those listed here

<https://www.google.com/intl/en/ads/hotels/find-a-partner/>. You may be already associated with one of these companies through your PMS or Channel Manager and the process could be quite painless.

There are number of moving parts to understand and watching the Google playlist on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yand_BRC9EA&list=PL7azzdf4x1h8VEIbjNA_49ml2talQc_8- will go a long way to helping you understand the complexities.

But ultimately, what it means is that Google can act on your behalf just like an OTA, with 3 key benefits.

1. You can jump the que for Organic Search results leveraging off Google Maps/Local listings.
2. People can **book direct** straight from the local search result.
3. You have control and therefore a **much lower cost** compared to OTA commissions.

Below is what a Google Hotel Ad looks like.

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Pounamu Apartments, Queenstown - Best Price Guarantee.
www.booking.com/Pounamu/Apartments
4.5 ★★★★★ rating for booking.com
Book at **Pounamu Apartments**, Queenstown. No Reservation Costs. Great Rates. Book Now. Special Offers. Great Availability. Low Rates. Amenities: Free Wifi, Parking, Non Smoking Rooms, Air Conditioning.
No Booking Fees · Secure Booking · Book for Tonight · Book for Tomorrow · Book Now

Pounamu Apartments - Hotels.com Official Site
au.hotels.com/Pounamu_Apartments_Queenstown
Pounamu Apartments Book Now! Collect 10 Nights and Get 1 Free. No Cancellation Fees. Last Minute Hotel Deals. Luxury Hotels. Budget Hotels. Exclusive Deals. Earn Free Hotel Nights. "Online Travel Service Brand of the Year" – 2015 Harris Poll EquiTrend
Check Availability now · Hotel Reviews · Special Offers & Deals · Hotels.com™ Rewards

Pounamu Apartments deals - Save Up to 80% On Your Booking
www.hotelscombined.com.au/HotelDeals/Queenstown
Book A Room At Pounamu Apartments With HotelsCombined. The Best Hotel Deals.
Compare Room Rates · Book for Weekend · Book for Tomorrow · Book for Tonight

Pounamu Apartments, Queenstown - trivago.com.au
www.trivago.com.au/Queenstown
trivago™ Hotels in Queenstown. Compare & Save up to 78% on Hotels! 1,300,000+ Hotels.

Pounamu Apartments: Queenstown Accommodation | Best Service ...
<https://www.pounamuapartments.co.nz/>
Overlooking the stunning view of The Remarkable and Lake Wakatipu, Pounamu Apartments offers 5-star luxury apartments perfect for couples, families, and ...
FAQs · Accommodation · Contact Us · Our Story

Swiss-Belsuites Pounamu Queenstown: 2017 Prices, Reviews ...
<https://www.tripadvisor.com.au> > ... > Queenstown > Queenstown Hotels
★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 1,424 reviews - Price range: \$213 - \$569 (Based on Average Rates for a Standard Room)
This was a very small studio apartment but worked fine for the two of us as we only used it for sleeping.

Swiss-Belsuites Pounamu ★
4.0 ★★★★★ 43 Google reviews
5-star hotel
Website Directions
Address: 110 Frankton Road, Queenstown 9300, New Zealand
Phone: +64 3-442 4868
Check availability
Check in Sun, 19 Nov Check out Mon, 20 Nov

Swiss-Belsuites Pounamu Official website	\$525	>
Booking.com Read Real Guest Reviews · Get Instant Confirmation	\$503	>
Wotif.com	\$502	>
Lastminute.com.au	\$502	>

View more rates
Know this place? Answer quick questions

Hack #4 - PPC Advertising Options

As mentioned earlier when demonstrating Google's architecture, delving into the world of pay per click advertising can be fraught with danger. You are up against the big boys in the form of all the OTA's, MetaSearch channels, TripAdvisor as well as major Hotel brands (who all have deeper pockets and bigger, better resourced teams to out compete you in this space). Before you even try to get your head around that, it is important to remember that PPC is exactly that. "Pay Per Click". So while you may bid and win to get a "Click", based upon what we know about travel Booker behaviour, you are still a long way from securing a booking.

At the time of writing this content, a search on Google for the term "Accommodation Sydney CBD" indicates a suggested bid of \$5.58. So let's say you convert 1 in 10 clicks through to a booking, then that one booking has cost you \$55.80 approx. Now let's say for a Sydney CBD property, an average of \$250/night sounds reasonable. That would mean over 25% "commission" to Google for a one night stay. When comparing that to say booking.com at 12% then the booking.com option looks more reliable and a safer option.

You can see how quickly this becomes a slippery slope in competitive markets.

The exception to the rule, is when your location is a little more remote/unknown or your product is unique. The competition for specific search terms on Google Adwords may not be so fierce, and you may be able to afford to have a dabble on it using a monthly limited budget.

For example; "Accommodation Temora" (my home town) has a suggested bid of \$1.31 and "Apartments Temora" has no suggested bid or competitive scoring, which shows the big boys aren't near as active on these search terms. So, to spend some money on advertising may well be worth it to get the traffic

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

coming to your site and helping to avoid the OTA's may well be worth it. We suggest trialling with a limited budget so you can only spend a set amount each week or month.

Hack #5 - Social Presence

Having a strong social presence is also another way to expand your online visibility, but brings with it a work load that needs to be considered. Facebook and Instagram are great platforms for cut through and reach, but you must think carefully about how you are going to approach social media as a tool for expanding your reach. More on this in Module #6 - Supercharged Social Presence.

Ominous Online Visibility

From Invisible to 1st Page

Section 7.

FRAMEWORKS

Explore the frameworks for Module # 3

Logon to the Hotel Growth Gurus Portal and download the available FRAMEWORK files.

Use the STRATEGY SELECTION TOOL to decide which frameworks to add to your MASTER HOTEL STRATEGY & Action Plan

Module #4 FRAMEWORKS

#	Name	Type	
1	The COMPELLING CASE for DIGITAL	Concept	
2	The BILLBOARD EFFECT (Intro)	Concept	
3	The 3 BIG LEVERS Cheat Sheet	Action - MILESTONE	
4	GOOGLE HOTEL LISTING Cheat Sheet	Action - Check List	
5	SEO SUPER CHARGE	Action - MILESTONE	

Click on the Hyper Links