BOOST4youth

online Business and e-cOmmerce cOaching for increasing entrepreneurShip among youTh

IO1/A5-BOOKING (TOURISM)

Lead Organisation:

PAR

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Author	Description	Action	Pages
1.0	29/09/2020	PAR	Creation	C	25

(*) Action: C = Creation, I = Insert, U = Update, R = Replace, D = Delete

REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title
1	2018-1-UK01-KA205-047672	BOOST4Youth Proposal

APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title

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BOOKING

2.2 CONTRACTING

2.2.1 WAYS TO PRESENT LODGING SUGGESTIONS

ABSTRACT

Online booking systems directly affect the speed of online sales of tourist packages, becoming an indispensable way of communicating in the travel agencies' business, both with business partners and with potential customers and service users. Without a proper booking system, it is impossible to provide potential customers with online sales of passenger transportation services, as well as sales of tourist packages.

The whole booking process can be divided into two basic steps. The first step is to present your accommodation on the Internet, magazines, posters and other advertising materials for the apartments. The second step is the actions you take before and after booking at an official website. A website is required, and it must look attractive and easy to find all the information. Also, a Facebook page is essential.

Information technology accompanies every user, including every tourist, in all stages of the consumption cycle of a tourism product: when informing and choosing a destination, making a travel decision, booking, paying and preparing for the trip, while consuming the tourism product and after the trip.

Booking is a special form of business, business in the virtual world during which buying and selling occur, exchange of value, or transaction of funds. It has high importance in tourism, where speed, availability of data, and minimizing unnecessary e-mails or telephone conversations is a priority.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

Lodging suggestions presents an essential frame for user-friendly booking. They help the customers through the process of finding the most suitable lodging according to his or her particular needs with ease and speed. Suggestions should convince visitors to complete a booking process.

High-quality images and videos are a must because they will keep the user on the site. Available accommodation, seasonal offers and corresponding prices should be easy to see and well presented. Since lodging suggestions concern international travellers as well, the business should make necessary provisions in order to display different language options as well as currencies on the booking engine.

Online booking systems directly influence the speed of online sales of travel engagements, which have become an indispensable way of communicating in the travel agencies business, with both business partners and potential customers and users of services. Without an adequate computer reservation system, it is impossible to provide online sales of passenger transportation services to potential customers, as well as the sale of travel engagements.

Online booking systems for hotels, apartments or travel agencies are the most efficient and fastest way to sell capacity. Online booking works by having a tourist, a foreign tour operator or an agency access the site of a particular destination or hotel, review the offer and then check the availability at the desired date to choose a free accommodation unit.

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Visitors of the booking site must be introduced to the best-selling features of the accommodation (private accommodation, hotel, etc). The design, high-quality images and complete visual impression are the most important issues in order to keep the visitor on the website.

Another important tip is to connect the business with the user and convey a message about the uniqueness of the accommodation.

The most powerful means of transmitting a message is certainly using high-quality images. All accommodations must be photographed by professional photographers.

The user should be able to easily check the availability of the accommodation. The online calendar on the booking website must be visible on all pages where the user should be able to see the available sections for the selected dates.

By giving a practical example of lodging solutions to customers (for example single room, double room single use, 2 person suite, 1 child, etc), the customer's choice is facilitated and the whole booking process streamlined. It is also important to give concrete details of the solutions offered and available numbers (eg: "2 sea view studios and 1 ground floor garden studio"; "last available double suite"), in order to pinpoint the customer' choice, to increase attractiveness of the solution and to "push" them to quickly close their booking.

ACTION TYPE

1. Simple actions that can be implemented immediately without an investment

CONNECTED ACTIONS

Not applicable

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

Improvement of visual elements can be implemented immediately through collaboration with a professional photographer(s) and tourist boards at a location.
The additional functionalities for the website depend on the solution used for the web site and may need from a few days to a few weeks.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Lodging suggestions have a positive part in:

- a higher rate of conversions,
- smaller abandonment rates of booking services
- procurement of products where it is the cheapest,
- reduction of operating costs,
- possibility of fast and cheap order fulfilment,
- saving time,
- increasing business flexibility and business efficiency.

Lodging suggestions have a negative part in:

- Failing to present the lodging suggestions in a seamless way
- the need for constant investment in further development,
- difficulties in finding staff with appropriate experience,
- the risk of fraud,
- increased marketing costs associated with fierce competition (it is not easy to create a strong brand among millions of websites on the Internet), and
- customer identity theft.

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Smaller abandonment rate, operation cost reduction, shortening of delivery times

ICT COMPETENCE

Basic

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary

WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

REFERENCES

Panian, Ž.; Internet i malo poduzetništvo; Informator, Zagreb, 2000.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Farrokh Mamaghani, Impact of e-commerce on travel and tourism: An historical analysis, 2009.
Woolford L. (2006). The Internet's Impact on Travel & Tourism, Part 1. USDM.net

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Additional functionalities help users to make a booking and will boost all sales is expected that the improvement of visual functionalities and the use of additional languages will help boost cross-border sales.
More specifically, it is hard to get any cross-border bookings from first-time travellers to your destination without most of the features of the present action.

Information communication technologies (ICTs) have changed significantly the hotel business. Hotel guests are more often choosing to make online bookings of accommodation and travel. Despite this, most hotel companies generate online reservations through indirect channels such as online travel agencies.

2.2.2 Traveller reviews

ABSTRACT

Reviews are one of the most important marketing tools in contemporary accommodation, relying on the internet and internet advertisers. The good things about reviews are that it is possible to easily increase the number of reservations for apartments, rooms or holiday homes. The bad news is that it is equally easy for comments on accommodation to make things worse with bad reviews.
Before booking, online customers often research on the web what other people have to say about the destination (city, hotel, private accommodation, Airbnb, …) they are interested in.
This is especially relevant for travelling, as many people are new to a certain travelling destination and they will take into consideration feedback from people who lived similar experiences. Visitors who read consumer packaged goods reviews have a 6% higher average order value than visitors who don't read reviews.
Review information is very important for the business development of each destination. Customers' reviews can drastically minimize the bounce and abandonment rates and also enhance the business' reliability. Moreover, user reviews are a valuable customer service aspect, thus can be exploited in this way, by taking into account the reviews in order to optimize the offered services.

Main highlights for ratings (reviews) by Gavilan, Avello and Martinez-Navarro (2017) are that:
- "Web-users trust bad ratings more than good ratings. However, consumers tend to shortlist hotels with better ratings.
- Results suggest an asymmetric interaction between numerical ratings and number of reviews.
- Bad ratings are trustworthy regardless of the number of reviews.
- Good ratings are trustworthy only when they come along with a high number of reviews." (Gavilan et al., 2017)

Here are six of the most important must-know statistics about online reviews according to siteminder.com:
"88% of travellers filter out hotels with an average star rating below three, 32% eliminated those with a rating below four, 96% consider reviews important when researching a hotel, 79% will read between six and 12 reviews before making a purchase decision, Four out of five believe a hotel that responds to reviews cares more about its customers and 85% agree that a thoughtful response to a review will improve their impression of the hotel." (siteminder.com)

One bad review can result in up to 30 lost reservations! A paper on the influence of online ratings and reviews found that users trust bad ratings more than good ratings (stayntouch.com).

In short, opinions of previous guests influence the minds of the reader and bad reviews are definitely bad for business.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

Most travel online companies integrate an online form into their websites. On this site, registered users can share feedback and rate their experience in the destination.
User reviews are usually located in a separate section of the website below the placement solutions shown.

When the number of user reviews is low, a strategy must be implemented to encourage customers to share existing reviews. In order to encourage customers to share, it is necessary to inform them before leaving the site and to ask for their cooperation in providing feedback.

Upon completion of their stay at the property, customers need to send an email to the email address they used to register.

A link to the review website can be added to this email.

Not all reviews are useful for online commerce. Functionality that allows customers to add expert reviews further enhances the potential of reviews that increase the effectiveness of bookings.

Review pages - It is advisable to refer to widespread travel review sites such as tripadvisor.com and booking.com. However, smaller commercial sites can also provide good reviews for specific target groups of tourists (e.g. cultural tourists, young people, families, ...), so that further customers can reach them by word of mouth.
Six features of online reviews content and one source attribute were identified, namely, usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume, valence (negative and positive) and comprehensiveness. Analysis results testified positive causal relationships between usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume and comprehensiveness and respondents' online booking intentions.
A significantly negative relation between negative online reviews and online booking intentions was identified, whereas impacts from positive online reviews upon booking intentions were not statistically significant. Poor ratings are generally viewed as being credible regardless of their numbers, whereas positive ratings are often only seen as trustworthy when they are present in high volume.

ACTION TYPE

3. Actions that have prerequisites, but require no investment.

CONNECTED ACTIONS

Not applicable

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

Two to three days for setting the procedure and to dedicate to each customer at their departure

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive part of solution:

 - It can increase drastically the visibility of the accommodation facility

Negative part of solution:

 - Negative feedback and poor reviews can affect negatively potential customers

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Better web traffic. Traveller's reviews can increase the odds of being selected, help the business to charge the customers more and increase the market share.

ICT COMPETENCE

Intermediary

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary

WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

REFERENCES

Revinate, https://www.revinate.com/blog/7-ways-to-improve-tripadvisor-performance/
Siteminder, https://www.siteminder.com/r/marketing/hotel-online-reviews/influence-travellers-reviews-hotel/
StayNtouch, https://www.stayntouch.com/blog/how-online-reviews-impact-hotel-revenue/

Gavilan, D., Avello, M., Martinez-Navarro, G., The influence of online ratings and reviews on hotel booking consideration, Elsevier Ltd., 2017., available at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321332563_The_influence_of_online_ratings_and_reviews_on_hotel_booking_consideration

The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/17/how-tripadvisor-changed-travel

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

From more commercial until more specific websites for independent travellers:

Travellers' review search engine
http://www.tripadvisors.com;

Travellers' review search engine
http://www.virtualtourist.com;

Travellers' review search engine
http://www.responsibletravel.com;

Travellers' review search engine
http://www.zoover.com;

Travellers' review search engine
http://www.independenttravel.com

How to use online reviews to plan your next trip:
http://business.financialpost.com/2014/03/13/how-to-use-online-travel-review-websites-to-plan-your-next-business-trip/

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Attention to the multicultural aspect is fundamental, especially for foreign travellers. Their needs have to be considered as well as their reviews and opinions. There have to be provisions about facilitating comments in various languages.
It is a very important feature for cross-border bookings as travellers will be very keen on reading reviews from people from their country. If they can find and read good reviews from fellow countrymen their confidence will increase, leading to a booking. Obviously when going to a foreign country and a place for holidays you will be looking for reviews from others that have lived the specific experience.

2.2.3 DISPLAY BOOKING PROGRESS

ABSTRACT

Visibility is key to business, and with the help of online marketing, is sure to increase the number of reservations in times of less demand. For each period, it is recommended that you rotate the content of the site, with the potential to be offered at that time, so tourists would like to come. Very important reservation segments are Google options and tools with which you can increase your visibility to potential customers and increase the number of reservations.

The booking progress has to be clear and to include distinct steps in order for the customer to navigate effortlessly. Another important component is to reassure the customer that the transaction is safe. Both of these elements will foster the customer to finalize the booking. As a matter of fact, missing out on implementing good booking progress is a cause of high abandonment rates on online stores of all kinds.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

An overview of the entire booking progress has to be provided to the client.

A booking company (travel agency, hotel, etc.) must be sure that the user is aware of each step of the booking.
It is necessary to constantly review each step (e.g. displaying the entire workflow at the top of the page and the precise points of the current process, including an indicator, e.g.: "you are in step 3 of 4") and assisting with different means of communication in each step (email, phone, chat).

Whether it's distractions on the website itself or externally, distractions kill conversions.
External distractions cannot be influenced much. Therefore, the booking process should be simplified. The simpler the booking process, the fewer distractions on the page, the sooner the reservation is completed, which will result in more confirmed (sold arrangements) bookings.

Abandonment increases for every field in the booking process, meaning that number is rising in the case of irrelevant requests such as phone number, nationality, and even fax.
It is worth noting that during the checkout process, the information regarding the security of transaction data (trust seals, SSL certificates etc.) has to be continuously displayed.

The booking process needs to be quick, easy and convenient.
We can give five main reasons and solutions for Booking Abandonment (by the vizlly.com): the 1st problem is "Just Looking", meaning that travellers don't have a particular location in mind as they plan their trip, but are instead browsing and waiting for the right deal or location for their trip. The 2nd problem is "Low Perceived Value" - this happens when users abandon their bookings because they feel that it is too expensive. The 3rd problem is "Total Price", which happens when full price is shown, including add-ons and extras, making potential customers decide not to finalise their purchase after all. The 4th problem, "Forms and Personal Information", happens when a customer abandons their booking upon being asked for personal information, and 5th and final problem, "Slow Loading Times", is specific to mobile bookings when customers abandon a booking because of the slow loading times.

All of these problems can be solved. It is important to follow these recommendations:

(1) "Just Looking" as one of the main problems can be solved by the improved visualization at main (home) webpage, destination stories, and objective information about location because; good location is subjective to the traveller. So, it is important to know who is an ideal guest (target group) for the destination and tailor webpage content to the target group specifics.

(2) "Low Perceived Value" can be solved by special offers or promotions on the website. The Special Offers menu tab should be at the destination homepage. Travelers are looking for deal and they need clear and easy to find information that will keep them in booking process.

(3) "Total Price" - show a breakdown of the full price in the travellers' native currency, with all the extra costs such as taxes, as early as practically possible. One idea for an efficient solution could be to implement a widget dealing with currency conversion at your website's checkout.

(4) "Forms and Personal Information" – forms asking for personal information of any kind should be short, with only the basic information required to complete the reservation made necessary for the customer.

Make sure also that your checkout section has the fewest pages and clicks possible.

(5) "Slow Loading Times" - your website should be optimised for use on mobile devices to ensure faster loading and a consistent, seamless quality of user experience across different kinds of devices.

Travel bookings (accommodation and airfares) made on mobile devices are increasing every year. With this in mind, a website tailored for mobile devices with a well-sized display makes booking on your website all the easier.

ACTION TYPE

2. Simple actions that have no prerequisites, but require an investment.

CONNECTED ACTIONS

Not applicable

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

Two days for setting the procedure

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive part of the solution:

 - Transparency throughout the booking process, lower abandonment rate

Negative part of the solution:

 - Financial cost in order to install the booking progress feature

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Increase security (perceived) of the booking process and making the customer feel secure and well-informed at all steps can have profound effects on the retention rate.

ICT COMPETENCE

Advanced

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Basic

WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

REFERENCES

Xinyuan (Roy), Zhao; Liang, Wang; Xiao, Guo; Rob Law; The influence of online reviews to online hotel booking intentions, Online hotel booking intentions, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Vol. 27 No. 6, 2015pp. 1343-1364

Progress Trackers in Web Design:
http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/01/15/progress-trackers-in-web-design-examples-and-best-design-practices

Vizlly.com, https://www.vizlly.com/blog-5-reasons-booking-abandonment-optimize-checkout/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Booking help manual:
http://www.bookeasy.com/help/index.html?tour_booking.html

CROSSBORDER REMARKS

Not applicable

2.2.4 DESIGNING TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

ABSTRACT

This industry has always been about creating wonderful experiences and memories for people who are travellers/tourists. Designing travel experience is the deep personal relationship between the professional and the client. It means that design can be the main factor in a visitor's trust of recommendations and information, and it can also be a main reason for choosing a certain tour, to stay at a certain hotel, or even to visit a city or country altogether. The travel site need to be inspirational and needs to give all the information that the customer needs to arrange their travel plans. Also, it is important to emphasize that travel designers develop long-term travel plans based on client profile (based on ages, kids, budget, wishes, list of destinations).

Designing a trip based on a real-world destination experience helps the customer imagine their own vacation, recognize the benefits of arriving at a destination and make the most of their time spent on vacation.
Personalization of services (especially in tourism) makes e-commerce conversions in general. This is especially important for the accommodation sector (e.g. private accommodation, apartments and family farms).

Additional suggestions such as information about popular places to visit and / or recreational activities can improve the offer, encourage booking and result in increased sales of tourist services.
The business can utilize user information for the purpose of informing them about attractive travel experiences suitable for each user.

In the debate on the sustainability of a mass tourism development strategy in the medium and long run of a given destination, it has been widely defended the convenience of shifting the pattern of specialization towards higher quality standards in production of visitors experience.

Designing travel experiences is something where you can differentiate from the competition, as most of the competition will be doing more or less the same things. Designing travel experiences specific to your offering will be the most effective advertising for your business. Each tourist company (booking company, hotel, etc.) it should know competitors' offers in order to respond in the right way. It should be in a position to respond with different tourist offer and give detailed descriptions to travellers of what they can experience at location and facilities.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

The competitive advantage is based on offering a complete travel experience, consistent with the number, age, interests and purpose of the trip.

The customer loyalty program must be the focus of every destination and accommodation. It is the customer loyalty program that represents a treasure trove of information for meeting new customers. Customer transaction data, likes, dislikes, and preferences collected through loyalty programs provide the brand with a deep level of customer intelligence needed to deliver the most relevant, high-quality guest experience and drive long-term loyalty.

However, there must be an obligation to engage, reach out to customers and respond through customer service, and share experiences and answers to key quality questions that may arise.
Apologizing and resolving any situations is the best way to create long-term advocates who will drive new customers through word-of-mouth marketing. Those who deny, punish, and renounce responsibility find themselves in a worse situation than they started.

It is advisable to maintain a level of diversity in the destinations as well as the dates that you are offering, and to ensure quick access to as wide a selection of flight options as is possible over a full calendar year. Ideally, a search function that you implement on your site will be flexible and innovative, with options like budget, geography, activity and more. Engines such as the Amadeus Extreme Search can offer plenty of combinations and inspiration for a variety of solutions.

It is necessary to inform customers before the reservation about the additional offers at their disposal: during the season and off the season (in time when they want to book their stay); cultural and entertainment facilities, special offers for children and / or the elderly; more nights; combined packages with additional services, additional activities in the destination (e.g. tourist guides, city tourist tickets, fair tickets, combined spa offers, wellness, restaurants, etc.)
Business can also combine offers of specific experiences ("visit an adrenalin park", "archaeological local diving experiences", "visit protected natural areas" etc.) through special arrangements with complementary service providers.

This industry has always been about creating wonderful experiences and memories for people. Digital is undoubtedly offering further-reaching opportunities for people to begin this experience with brands and destinations. No matter what the medium, the industry still needs to focus on delivering great experiences. Before they spend significant amounts of money on trips and travel, travellers generally research their options carefully. In fact as thinkwithgoogle.com notes, "over 40% of travellers say they bounce back and forth between dreaming about and planning their next trip - zooming in on the details for one destination and then zooming out to reconsider all the options again." (thinkwithgoogle.com). This happens across various devices and within a multitude of contexts.

So you need to be there, in the 'moments', ready to facilitate users on their journey and transition them from dreaming through planning to booking.

On a different, albeit related, note, simplycmb.com points out that Airbnb is branching out into designing travel experiences:

"As Airbnb develops new products and services aside from facilitating hosting people overnight, they've been exploring the idea of 'magical trips' in which the true meaning of travel and its transformational aspects are brought back into modern tourism. Instead of people just visiting cities, they get to know them like locals do." (simplycmb.com). From this new branch of Airbnb's business, it is suggested, we can learn that:

- "Combining of multiple experiences is unnecessary and focusing on one main highlight per slot is preferable.
- Travellers are usually more excited about authentic experiences, rather than perfected service.
- Framing and storytelling is key to success." (simplycmb.com)

ACTION TYPE

3. Actions that have prerequisites, but require no investment.

CONNECTED ACTIONS

Not applicable

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

Two weeks

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive:
 -Conversions are more likely since visitors are offered an engaging travelling package

Negative:
 - Some efforts are required in terms of designing the "right travel package" that suits each consumer and also to making special provisions for practical arrangements

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Greater competitive advantage.

ICT COMPETENCE

Intermediary

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary

WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

REFERENCES

Simplycmb, http://www.simplycmb.com/travel/

Afterdigital, https://afterdigital.co.uk/blog/travel-and-tourism-is-all-about-designing-great-experiences/

Dolores García, María Tugores, Differentiation in the tourist sector: an evolutionary analysis, https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8d65/5cd8ebcc2a3536b75e11d3527d94936a796b.pdf

Amadeus.com, https://amadeus.com/en/portfolio/retail-travel-agencies/extreme-search

Think with Google, https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/micro-moments/micro-moments-travel-customer-journey/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

An inspirational shopping solution for customers:
http://www.amadeus.com/web/amadeus/es_1A-corporate/Online-travel-agencies/Our-portfolio/Connect/Content/OTAs_Ancillary_Services/1319620844592-Solution_C-AMAD_ProductDetailPpal-1319610362839?industrySegment=1319608908790&level2=1319608909378&level3=1319608911535

Travel Foundation, https://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/for-businesses/

Handley Ann, (2012), Content Rules: How to Create Killer Blogs, Podcasts, Videos, Ebooks, Webinars (and More) That Engage Customers and Ignite Your Business (New Rules Social Media Series) , John Wiley & Sons

Li Charlene, (2008) Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies, Harvard Business School Press

CROSSBORDER REMARKS

This is something were you can differentiate from competition as most of the competition will be doing more or less the same things. Designing specific travel experiences will be the most effective advertising for your business.

2.2.5 CANCELLATION POLICIES

ABSTRACT

The cancellation procedure varies depending on the type of accommodation, but most of the time the rule is that accommodation can be cancelled by the travel company (hotel, etc.) rules in order for the money to be refunded, while for the booking of the apartment, room, hotel minimum ten days prior to arrival got a refund, all after receiving commissions.

Cancellation policies determine the guest's refund in the rare event that they cancel a booking. They range from relaxed to super strict policies, although we never refer to them as such with guests.

Cancellation policies that make the customer feel safe is essential for better sales. The cancellation policy should offer various options to the customers and the final price should be adjusted to whether a customer is entitled to make a cancellation or not.

Clear cancellation instructions are key to facilitating the booking process for customers when booking, all in order to avoid potential problems.
If the buyer feels safe in the booking process it will definitely result in better sales.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

Applicable cancellation fees and refund procedures as cancellation conditions need to be clearly displayed at the booking web page. It should be concise enough so as not to distract the customer's attention from booking.
It is a good solution to provide a comprehensive overview of the cancellation terms and a fully detailed page that includes all the terms and conditions pertaining to the particular arrangement that the guest must agree to proceed with the booking.

Customized cancellation options should be offered. For example, free-of-charge withdrawal option in a clearly specified time period (e.g.: 5 days prior to the stay).

The sanctions to be applied in case of customer withdrawal from a booking needs to be clearly specified. For example 5 days before, 25% of the total amount will be charged, while no showing up at all will entail 50% of total charge or total charge of the first night).
Besides that, it is very important to differentiate cancellation policies in special conditions: in case of low season bookings any cancellation could be free of charge, natural disasters, whilst on busy seasons greater sanctions could be applied.
Reasonable cancellation terms are always the best option.

ACTION TYPE

1. Simple actions that can be implemented immediately without an investment.

CONNECTED ACTIONS

Not applicable

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

Not applicable

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive part of the solution:
 - Transparent procedures are always appreciated by customers, so that they are more likely to finalise a booking.

Negative part of the solution::
 - A good balance needs to be found between transparency and the greater overview, in order not to distract customer's attention from the actual booking.

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Increased customer retention rate due to the business trustworthiness

ICT COMPETENCE

Basic

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Advanced

WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

REFERENCES

Rental Support Tripadvisor, https://rentalsupport.tripadvisor.com/articles/FAQ/noc-What-are-the-cancellation-policies

Airbnb, https://www.airbnb.com/home/cancellation_policies

IGMS, https://www.igms.com/airbnb-cancellation-policy/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How to Avoid Chargeback
http://blog.templatemonster.com/2012/06/26/how-to-avoid-chargeback-ecommerce-tips;

Handle Hotel Cancellation
http://www.pricetravel.com/help/hotel-cancellation

Booking.com cancellations: http://www.booking.com

CROSSBORDER REMARKS

Cancelation policies are paramount to the booking process.
The tourism industry as a whole survives because of various tourism products and services but cancelation is their integral part. Transparency of that process is the key to success. So, transparent cancelation policies are one of the most important for bookings and business success. The further away a traveller is situated the more detailed cancellation information and flexibility he/she will be looking for prior to making a booking.

2.2.6 PROVIDING DETAILED INFORMATION FOR ALL POSSIBLE CHARGES

ABSTRACT

All agencies, private accommodation, hotels, hostels have detailed payment rules and detailed information on how to pay for accommodation. From possible internet payments, prepayment, on-site, all rents, hotels and the like have a well-described payment method on their pages and simple information.

Customers need to be fully aware about all possible charges and extras not included in the displayed price. Especially if the customer has requested additional services such as transport from the airport, internet access etc.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

The basic goal is to evaluate customer value and then to define prices that reflect the established value for customers (visitors).

First time visitors are unlikely to be familiar with any specific taxes (e.g. municipal taxes applied in Europe) that may apply and would prefer to know any additional charges in advance, no matter how small may be.
All the costs should be analysed and additional charges should be communicated prior to the booking completion.

It is important that all information, especially information concerning charges, be concise but at the same time clearly detailed.

Similarly to cancellation information, a good solution is to give an overall overview of the business cancellation policies and also to provide a fully detailed page including all terms and conditions concerning individual bookings, which the customer needs to agree on in order to proceed with his or her booking. This functionality should be an inherent feature of the business booking engine.

After that, the invoice sent to the customer should include a detailed description of all services and costs as well as the ability to amend or cancel the booking itself or a particular service.

Chargeback is a transaction that is being disputed by the cardholder or the issuer. There are numerous reasons why chargeback can happen, and the most common are the following: returned merchandise, terminated services, disputes, errors, or fraud.

Usually, chargeback is one of the costly parts of accepting credit cards.

ACTION TYPE

3. Actions that have prerequisites, but require no investment.

CONNECTED ACTIONS

2.2.5.

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

One day

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive part of the solution:
 - Transparent procedures are always appreciated by customers

Negative part of the solution:
 - A good balance need to be found between transparency and the greater overview, in order not to distract customer's attention from the actual booking.

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Increased customer retention rate.

ICT COMPETENCE

Basic

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Advanced

WEBSHOP LEVEL
Established

REFERENCES
Linn Allos, Visibility of Revenue Management as a Business Management tool in Company X, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra, 2015, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/104198/Allos_Linn.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y   Templatemonster blog: http://blog.templatemonster.com/2012/06/26/how-to-avoid-chargeback-ecommerce-tips

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Handbook: Cathy Enz (2010) *The Cornell School of Hotel Administration Handbook of Applied Hospitality Strategy*   http://www.amazon.com/Cornell-Administration-Handbook-Hospitality-Strategy/dp/1412905907

CROSSBORDER REMARKS
An accommodation facility has to make the necessary provisions regarding all explicit and unexplicit regulations and also simple habits, which may sound unfamiliar to a foreign audience.

2.2.7 PROVIDING DETAILED INFORMATION (LOCATION, ROOMS, ETC.)

ABSTRACT

The description should also be designed in such a way as to attract guests. The pictures must be clearly visible; a detailed description of everything in the room, apartment, or hotel room is required, as well as information as to attractive sights nearby: shops, supermarkets and excursions. It is also important to emphasize the address and it is necessary to provide instructions on how to locate the accommodation.

Customers need to have exact and understandable instructions regarding the chosen accommodation facility prior to booking in order to optimize their choice and to easily reach it. Also, location information is important to online booking sites.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

It is recommended that you inform customers prior to the booking about all offers they are offered: low season; groups; children under 12 y.o and under 3 y.o., senior over 65 y.o.; multiple nights; combined packages with extra services, according to destination assets (eg: city tourist cards, tickets for fairs, combined deals with SPAs, restaurants, etc)
Further, a win-win hint may be to combine offers of specific experiences ("full local diving" experiences; green excursions, etc) through specific agreements with complementary providers.

Providing detailed information about location, rooms and etc. it is important for bookings in general. For some users, geo-location information may be of particular importance if they are looking for something very specific (climbing cliffs, walking paths, adrenalin parks, etc.).

ACTION TYPE

3. Actions that have prerequisites, but require no investment.

CONNECTED ACTIONS

2.2.6. Providing detailed information for all possible charges

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

1 week for the incorporation of the basic information and then depends on how much to do.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive part of the solution:
 - Clear mapping and instructions can increase the appeal of the lodging facility

Negative part of the solution:
 - Maps and links to local transportation and other featured locations means need to be constantly up-do-date

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Higher level of customer service will help to retain customers.

ICT COMPETENCE

Advanced

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary
WEBSHOP LEVEL
Established
REFERENCES
Linn Allos, Visibility of Revenue Management as a Business Management tool in Company X, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra, 2015, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/104198/Allos_Linn.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
How to set geographic information data: http://www.hotelmap.com; http://www.roadtriphelper.com; http://apb.directionsmag.com/entry/hotel-mapping-innovation/159863; Google maps: http://www.googlemaps.com; Google earth: http://www.googlearth.com
CROSSBORDER REMARKS
For some users, location and room information may be of special interest as an additional information in order to have all information without additional charges so that guest feels like he/she is getting additional service.

2.2.8 RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES (SPECIFIC ROOM, SPECIAL REQUESTS)

ABSTRACT

When answering special inquiries, you need to satisfy both the guest who comes and the person who rents. Private accommodation is more flexible in terms of changing requests while hotels have certain rules, but they also tend to adjust to accommodate guests.
Responses should be clear and quick
If the special requests of a guest cannot be carried out, there should be another option that will satisfy the guest.

One of the utmost important goals for the business will have to be the personalisation of the offered services. It is essential to allow travellers to describe any special requests by various communication channels (both online and offline) and to make sure that the most frequent are met.
It is a significant competitive advantage to allow travellers to pick a specific room. Customers who return will know which room they like best, and tourists, or new clients who can help for the first time, will be informed through detailed pictures and descriptions. A real-time webcam is also a great tool for informing (potential) clients about the destination.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

This action foresees the possibility to pick a specific accommodation solution, possibly through photos. A zoom feature into the website could help the customer to get information of the chosen solution as precise as possible.
All room descriptions should include the following information: type of room, any possible seasonal offers and discounts, room features, all offered services, travellers' reviews, and applied policies of the accommodation facility. Call to action quotes (e.g. Limited rooms) can increase conversion but they should be used with moderation.
Responding to inquiries (specific room, special requests) imposes on you to make it exclusive and this is particularly important among millennial clients.

ACTION TYPE

3. Actions that have prerequisites, but require no investment

CONNECTED ACTIONS

2.2.7.

TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

One week for the incorporation of the basic information and then depends on how much to do.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Positive part of the solution:
 - Better customer service level

Negative part of the solution:
 - Time/resources invested on satisfying customers' requests

ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Higher level of customer service will help to retain customers.
Higher quality and greater competitive advantage over other facilities. This activity can be charged generating greater profit for the business.

ICT COMPETENCE

Advanced

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary

WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

REFERENCES

Linn Allos, Visibility of Revenue Management as a Business Management tool in Company X, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra, 2015,
https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/104198/Allos_Linn.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Statistics:
Bureau of Labour Statistics (2010-11) *Occupational outlook handbook* Hoepli
http://books.google.it/books?id=5oxGNtegbzsC&pg=PA71&lpg=PA71&dq=hotel+handbook+Catering+for+special+requests&source=bl&ots=VuwlN2G4LI&sig=hW-3ze4G5OMY7dvxcglj93L9V1g&hl=it&sa=X&ei=CygAVM_nKseLOcHMgPgH&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=hotel%20handbook%20Catering%20for%20special%20requests&f=false

NBCNEWS, What are customers looking for? tips for choosing a hotel:
http://www.nbcnews.com/id/31785486/ns/travel-travel_tips/t/tips-choosing-hotel

CROSSBORDER REMARKS

Tourists, meaning foreign travellers, more often require more information about the destination, especially by email. They expect answer to be prompt and detailed so that they feel like everything is under control and in advance planned.