

SiteMinder reveals SA's Top 12 hotel booking channels for 2021

Open hotel commerce platform, SiteMinder has unveiled the lists of distribution channels that over the past year brought the highest booking revenue to hotels in South Africa and more than 20 other of the world's most popular tourism destinations.



Source: ©belchonock via [123RF](#)

The list for South Africa—in line with global trends—reveals a more holistic online commerce strategy, consisting of both new and established methods, is being taken by hotel businesses to reach new customers and produce revenue.

This holistic commerce strategy consists of a greater balance between direct and indirect revenue streams, with direct bookings now one of the top two revenue drivers in South Africa and more than half (12) of global markets—up from five markets last year and two in 2019—driven by increased investments in booking engines, hotel websites, metasearch, frictionless payments, support from hotel consultants and specialist applications designed for conversion.

This year's lists also feature 29 new distribution channels—including Comair Travel, Thompsons Holidays and SafariNow.com in South Africa—reflecting the current aptitude among hotels to embrace new revenue streams in their pursuit of new customers. Additionally, the lists increasingly feature Airbnb, which retained the tenth position in South Africa. Globally, Airbnb rose in 12 markets and debuted in three, in spite of the channel being made available to traditional hospitality businesses only four years ago.

Other findings supporting a greater adoption of a holistic hotel commerce strategy included:

- The maintained relevance of regional channels, particularly in locations with ongoing reduced international travel. Alongside followme2Africa, the arrivals of Comair Travel, Thompsons Holidays and SafariNow.com highlight the growing role of specialist local channels in the South African market.
- The ongoing importance of wholesalers for many accommodation providers, with leading bedbank Hotelbeds again among the Top 12 in South Africa and in each destination examined.
- The consistent performance of global distribution systems, which retained their sixth position in South Africa. Globally, they rose two or more positions in seven markets – Asia, Canada, Mexico, the Middle East, the Netherlands, Philippines and Thailand.

"We're living in a new era of hotel guests, dominated by what we've identified as the 'dynamic traveller' who comes with evolved booking behaviours and preferences. Our data highlights the willingness of hoteliers to adopt both new and established methods to attract these customers, as they pursue a more holistic hotel commerce strategy to sell, market, manage and grow their business," says James Bishop, SiteMinder's senior director of global ecosystem.

"Most clearly, the rise of direct bookings reflects the grown investments we've seen among hotels in their websites—including their booking engines and payment options, and the specialist conversion tools they connect with—as well as their metasearch strategies and local hotel consultant support. Meanwhile, a newcomer cohort of 29 channels showcases the openness of hotel businesses to employ a broader, multichannel approach as a way of connecting with more niche or harder-to-reach customer segments.

"The popularity of Airbnb comes as no surprise. As many travellers continue to seek out accommodation options that allow work and travel to seamlessly meet, hotel distribution channels catering to longer stay and workcation guests will continue to perform strongly.

"The emergence of Comair Travel, Thompsons Holidays and SafariNow.com into the Top 12 over the past year is a reminder of how locally-relevant these booking channels are among South Africans, as well as the impact that travel restrictions have had."

In South Africa, the Top 12 hotel booking channels in 2021, based on total gross revenue made for all users of SiteMinder's platform, were:

1. Booking.com
2. Hotel websites (direct bookings)
3. Expedia Group
4. Agoda
5. Hotelbeds
6. Global distribution systems
7. followme2Africa
8. Comair Travel
9. Tourplan
10. Airbnb
11. Thompsons Holidays
12. SafariNow.com.

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