

MODULE EIGHT

CRITERIA 2: WEBSITE WITH A SECURE ONLINE BOOKING PLATFORM

Criteria 2 of the BoQE Program assesses your online bookings service for customers. This module gives you insights into the impact of online booking systems on local businesses, steps you through the BoQE Consumer Insights Report and provides some tips on choosing the right online booking platform.

Why are online bookings important to your business?

Research shows that consumers have an expectation of being able to instantly book experiences online. If your business accepts bookings in advance, it is best practice to offer a secure online booking platform to your customers.

Make it easy for consumers or else they may choose another business. If you provide live availability, pricing and instant bookings, you are less likely to miss a booking.

Why use online booking software?

- Increase your bookings
- Greater revenue
- Business insights
- Greater or enhanced customer experience
- Saves you time
- Improves your search-engine ranking.

What is online booking software?

Online booking software provides you with a booking engine and a book-now button on your website, to allow customers to book directly with your business. The software houses rates and availability for all your bookable products and provides customers with instant confirmation, helping you to streamline payments and back-of house operations seamlessly. The software can also help maintain your inventory in real time.

Did you know?

66% of Australian travellers booked their last trip online

(Source: Tourism Australia's Consumer Demand Project 2020)

Case Study

HAIGSLEA EWE NIQUE HOBBY FARM, IPSWICH



Hagslea Ewe Nique Hobby Farm offers visitors the opportunity to get up close and personal with alpacas, sheep, lambs, goats, geese and chickens in a relaxed rural setting.

1. What was the motivation for installing an online booking platform into your business?

A key motivation was to save time. We were running the farm full time during the day and often up to 11pm answering enquiries and taking bookings. We needed a more effective way to handle bookings that wouldn't take us away from other aspects of running the farm.

2. In practical terms, what has it meant for your business? What outcomes have you seen as a result?

At our busiest times, our online booking platform has saved me four hours a day as I'm no longer spending that time on the phone answering questions and going back and forth with customers. An occasional challenge is handling a last-minute surge in bookings overnight.

The positive outcomes for our business have been enormous. We can now see upcoming booking which allows us to manage staffing and catering levels. We also have more time to look at other parts of the business. Our time management has improved greatly.

3. What has the ROI been for your business of introducing the online booking system?

Over time the benefits and flow-on effect of bookings has outweighed the cost of introducing the online booking system (only \$40/month). When

researching systems, we took into account our pricing structure to ensure the costs of the system would be covered.

4. What functionality was important for you in choosing a platform?

We did a lot of research as we wanted a platform that suited the business - we did not want to change our business model for the platform. We chose Bookeo for a number of reasons. The booking system is easy to use which was very important as I'm not that computer savvy, and it is relatively low cost. It also enables group bookings to be made under one name (individual names are not required). The platform also has other marketing capabilities that we use including the ability to send emails to our customer database with special offers, news and events. This adds more efficiencies for our business!

5. Top tips for businesses looking at introducing an online booking platform

An online booking platform allows you to manage your business better by keeping you off the phone and investing time in other areas of the business. Use the platform to generate customer reviews. We send an email to guests through the platform thanking them for their visit and inviting them to leave feedback or a review on their experience.

Case Study

BRISBANE WHALE WATCHING, MORETON BAY



Brisbane Whale Watching provides cruises of Moreton Bay on board a purpose-built whale watching vessel to encounter the southern humpback whales.

1. What was the motivation for installing an online booking platform into your business?

We wanted to offer more flexibility for our guests. With the online booking system our guests can check availability online and book a tour when it suits them. From a business point of view, an online booking system offered a solution for improved business efficiencies. We've been able to reduce resources and have all our advertising directed to the same place – our website – where guests can then make their bookings.

2. In practical terms, what has it meant for your business? What outcomes have you seen as a result?

Our online booking system has completely changed the way people book with us, with the vast majority of bookings now being made via our website, particularly interstate and international travellers. We still cater to customers who prefer to call in person.

3. What functionality was important for you in choosing a platform?

In choosing a platform, the non-negotiables were a system that was user-friendly for the customer and would deliver benefits and savings to our business. We've been using Rezdy since 2015. In essentially three clicks a booking is complete for the customer. From a business perspective, the system has the ability to ask the right questions and we are able to

use it as a marketing tool, by capturing key data such as postcodes and using it to send promotional messages to our database. The system integrates simply into our website with plugins and works seamlessly with our business systems such as our accounting system. The system can also be changed to different languages which ensures visitor information centres, travel agents, wholesalers and international markets can sell and book our product.

4. Top tips for businesses looking at introducing an online booking platform

Online booking has made business so much easier and many customers expect it to be offered. It's still important though to have a system in place for taking phone calls or bookings in person. By catering for everyone's preferred booking method, the customer experience is off to a positive start.



Case Study

BEENLEIGH ARTISAN RUM DISTILLERY, LOGAN



Beenleigh Artisan Rum Distillery is Australia's oldest operating distillery and offers tastings, tours and product sales.

1. What was the motivation for installing an online booking platform into your business? What outcomes have you seen as a result?

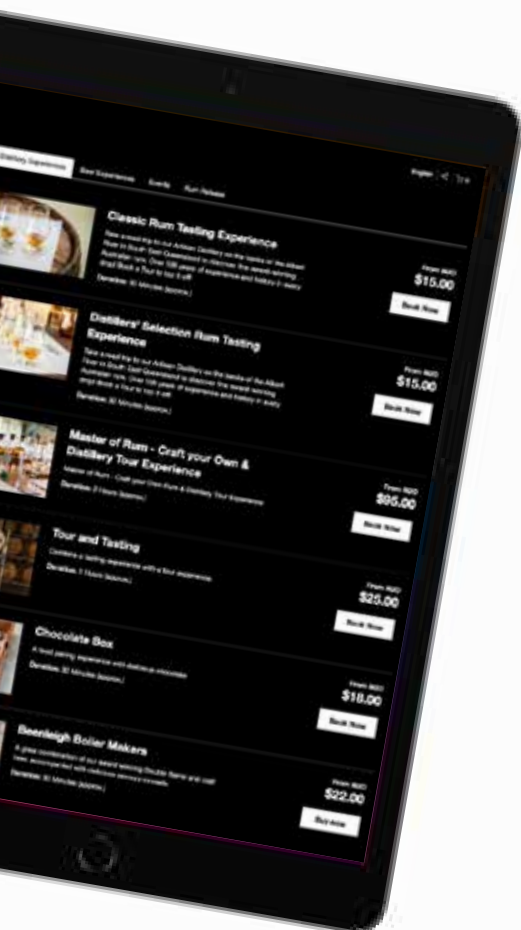
An online booking system helps us connect to other businesses and event suppliers as well as domestic and international tour groups. It also streamlines our booking process and gives customers instant access to all our products online.

2. What functionality was important for you in choosing a platform?

Our main needs were ease of use, full flexibility to control rates and timings as well as provide access to suppliers like inbound tour operators and domestic tour operators. We use Rezdy which has wide industry support, enabling us to easily connect with the tourism industry.

3. Top tips for businesses looking at introducing an online booking platform.

Use the system that best works for your needs. When researching, find out what system your local competitors are using. With a good system in place, you are well positioned to start collaborating together. I can recommend Rezdy, as we have used it for 2 or 3 years and find it works really well.



Case Study

CEDAR CREEK LODGES, THUNDERBIRD PARK, SCENIC RIM

Cedar Creek Lodges offers a range of accommodation options, conference venues and family friendly adventure activities alongside Tamborine National Park on Tamborine Mountain in the Scenic Rim.

1. What was the motivation for installing an online booking platform into your business? What has that meant for your business?

Our main motivation was to save on labour costs. Previously, we took phone bookings which would keep the team busy on the phone rather than engaging with customers. It was really important for our business to drive bookings online. The majority of our bookings are now made online, although we still accommodate customers wanting to speak to someone directly.

2. What has the ROI been for your business of introducing the online booking system?

We have saved on labour costs from moving away from phone bookings. If customers haven't been online on our website, the staff member has to take them on a tour over the phone and sell them the experience. Then they have to collect the booking details manually and process payment. Now the customer is entering their details and making the booking themselves.

3. What functionality was important for you in choosing a platform?

We needed a system that would integrate with our property management system and work across all departments including maintenance, food and beverage and housekeeping. It was important that the functionality incorporated a channel manager. We load availability and prices and the channel manager pushes the information out to booking engines such as Wotif.com.

4. Top tips for businesses looking at introducing an online booking platform

Do your research. The systems available are all similar but you need to figure out what is important to you and your business model and make sure it can deliver on that.





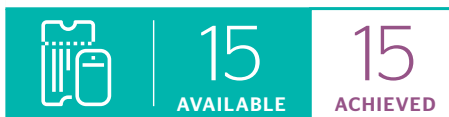
Brisbane City

Interpreting the Consumer Insights Report

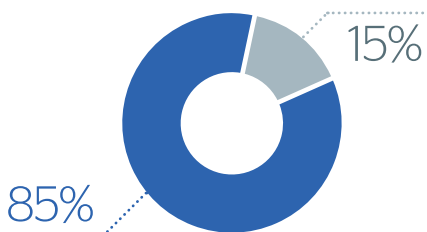
You can earn 15 points if you have your own website and customers can book online and receive an instant confirmation of their reservation. Make sure to have those details included in your ATDW listing as that information will determine if you are eligible to receive the points.

The report allows you to compare yourself with other businesses in your product category in terms of online booking capacity.

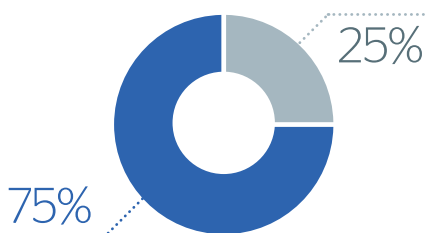
Online Booking



BRISBANE All Operators



QUEENSLAND All Operators



■ Secure Online Booking Platform
 ■ No Secure Online Booking Platform

How to choose the right online booking platform for your business:

1. List all the things you need your booking system to handle.
2. Identify where your bookings are coming from and what they are costing you in terms of fees and commissions.
3. Research competitors' websites for a type of system you want for your website.
4. Talk to BEDA to find out if they have any suggestions or alliances that might impact your decision.
5. Upskill yourself in online distribution if this is new to you.
6. Shortlist your booking systems and call a business whose using it and ask for their opinion.
7. Find out what support is provided by the booking system: Is it all online, do they have a help desk, do their times suit you?

TIPS

- Know how your market books and purchases experiences from you and have systems in place to meet their needs and expectations. This may mean still offering phone bookings despite moving to an online booking system to cater for people that want to call and talk to you one-to-one for a more personalised experience.
- It's a good idea to offer a standard package and price point for online bookings.
- Make sure your website and booking system are mobile friendly. 51% of global internet traffic to websites were from mobile phones.¹⁷

¹⁷ Fareharbor, quoted in Destination New South Wales resource

If you don't take bookings

Some businesses including, but not limited to, cellar doors, breweries, galleries, museums, cafes and shopping centres etc may not accept advance bookings (whether online or via telephone or email). In these instances, consumers also don't typically have an expectation to book in advance. If this is the case for your business, you should apply to be exempt from the online booking criteria.

Your online booking exemption request will be evaluated and if approved, your BoQE Program criteria scoring will be weighted as follows:

Criteria	Points
Consistent delivery of an exceptional experience	75
Active and engaging Social Media presence	15
Regional Tourism Organisation membership	5
Accreditation	5
Total	100

Key Messages

- Understand how your market books and purchases from you and have systems in place to meet their needs and expectations.
- If you are not yet offering online bookings, identify the functions you would need a system to offer and talk to other businesses with online booking systems for any learnings.
- Make sure your website and booking system are mobile friendly.
- Consider incorporating the capability to send emails to your database if this is a gap for you.

Current booking systems

Online Booking Software	Products they service
Booking Boss	Tours, activities and attractions
Rezdy	Tours, activities and attractions
Bookeo	Tours, activities and attractions
Bokun	Tours, activities and attractions
Fareharbor	Tours, activities and attractions
Respax	Tours, activities and attractions
Tour Manager	Tours, activities and attractions
Tour Amigo	Multi-day tours
HiRum/HiSite	Accommodation
Levart	Accommodation
Little Hotelier	Small scale accommodation up to 20 rooms
ResOnline	Accommodation
RMS Cloud	Accommodation
Room Manager	Accommodation
SiteMinder	Accommodation



(Source: Based on a resource created by Destination NSW. This list is not exhaustive, nor an endorsement or recommendation for any one platform.)

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about choosing an online booking system and digital ready Programs to help you make the most of your website.

This online book also has some great points on the features to consider and why online bookings are so important to your business.

Complete this short form to request to be excluded from the Online Booking criteria.