KAM × propeller

Hospitality Bookings

BENCHMARK

JULY 2026

Welcome to the Hospitality Bookings Benchmark

This year marks 25 years since Propeller was founded, and to commemorate this milestone we wanted to produce something that would hopefully be of value to the industry we love - the first sector-wide report benchmarking where you sit in regards to bookings.

Pre-booked business sits at the core of the vast majority of hospitality businesses, but we've seen that a lot of operators don't know where they sit vs their peers, or what good looks like. Our mission was to build the UK's first dedicated benchmarking study for hospitality bookings, capturing the metrics operators wrestle with every day, from table reservations to room bookings, PDRs to large party enquiries.

This year's findings show just how much is at stake: conversion rates that vary wildly between operators, no-show rates eating into revenue, and a booking technology landscape that's evolving faster than most teams can keep pace with. Meanwhile, third-party platform costs are forcing tough decisions, and AI is starting to reshape both online and telephone bookings in ways few of us predicted twelve months ago.

Partnering with KAM delivered the sector specific rigour this data deserves; together we wanted to give marketing and operations teams the actionable intelligence to make smarter decisions, not just about tech, but about pricing, deposits, guest data, and every stage of the booking flow.

Thank you to every brand that contributed their numbers. This report belongs to the whole industry though, not just those who took part, so wherever you're reading this from, we hope you take real value from it.

Matt Richardson
Chief Growth Officer, Propeller
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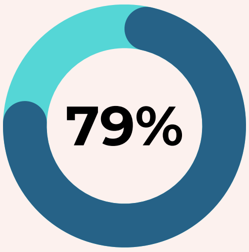
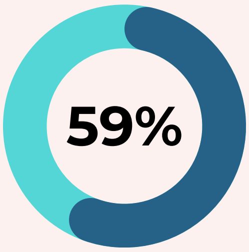
On the Menu

Methodology
- Online survey completed by hospitality operators across a wide range of sectors including casual and premium dining, competitive socialising, bars and pubs, with a mix of single, independent operators through to large scale brands in June-July 2026
- Online survey of UK adults (18+) who had booked at a hospitality venue in the past month, carried out in June 2026

The modern hospitality consumer



of UK adults visit a pub, bar or restaurant to EAT at least once a month



of UK adults visit a pub, bar or restaurant for DRINKS ONLY at least once a month

Source: KAM GLP-1 Report (NatRep UK sample) - Feb26

Eating out is a regular habit for most of our survey respondents.

Frequency is highest among younger adults aged 18–34, but it also varies by occasion: the people surveyed who book for large group occasions and special occasions eat out more frequently than those primarily booking for casual meals, suggesting that people engaging in planned or celebratory occasions are among hospitality's most frequent diners.

In contrast, older respondents and rural residents are more likely to eat out once a month or less.

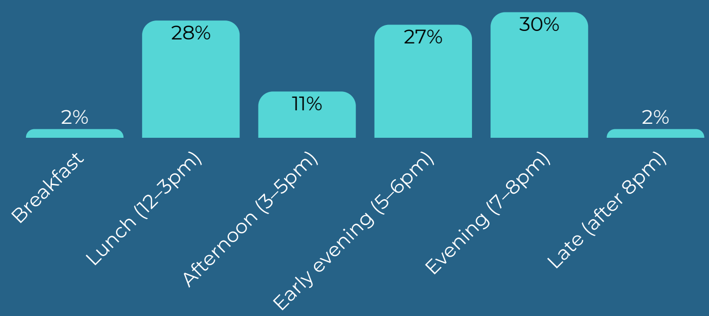
Optimising for peak booking times

Evening dining dominates overall, with 57% of respondents most often booking for either early evening (27%) or evening (30%), while lunch remains the next most popular booking time (28%).

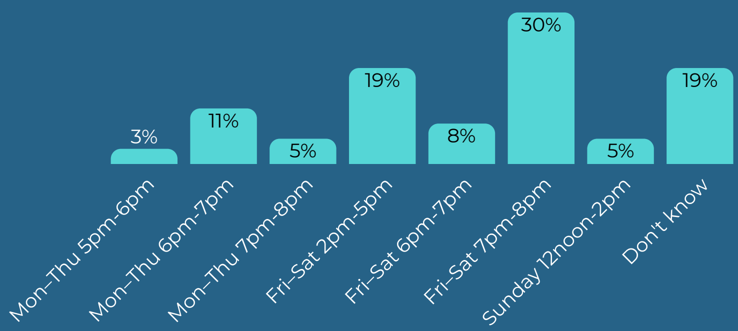
Booking preferences vary significantly by age, with 18–24-year-olds favouring 7–8pm bookings (56%), whereas respondents aged 65+ prefer lunch (55%) and are much less likely to book in the evening.

Geography also influences behaviour, with suburban respondents showing a higher preference for lunch (35%), while urban and rural respondents are more likely to book in the evening.

Consumer booking preferences



Operator's most popular booking times



Surprisingly 19% of operators don't know their most popular booking time - depending on the venue type, this insight can help shape:

Labour scheduling: Aligning both front and back of-house with peak seating times

Capacity planning: Determining whether demand consistently exceeds available tables at certain times, potentially justifying changes to seating layout, table size and table turn times

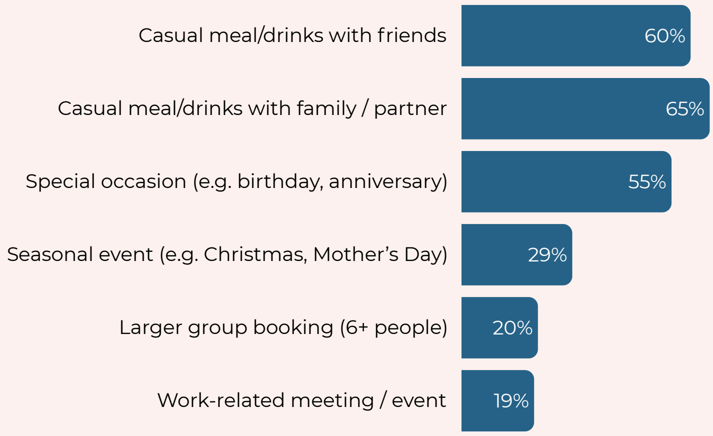
Menu and kitchen planning: Preparing for order peaks and reducing wait times during the busiest periods

Promotion opportunities: If there's a lull before or after the peak (e.g. 5–6pm or after 8:30pm), operators can introduce early bird or late dining offers to spread demand

Customer experience: Knowing when the restaurant is busiest helps explain service pressures and identifies opportunities to improve guest experience

The occasions driving bookings

Most popular respondent booking occasions



Casual dining occasions remain the highest volume of bookings, with respondents booking restaurants with family or partner meals (65%) and meals with friends (60%) most frequently.

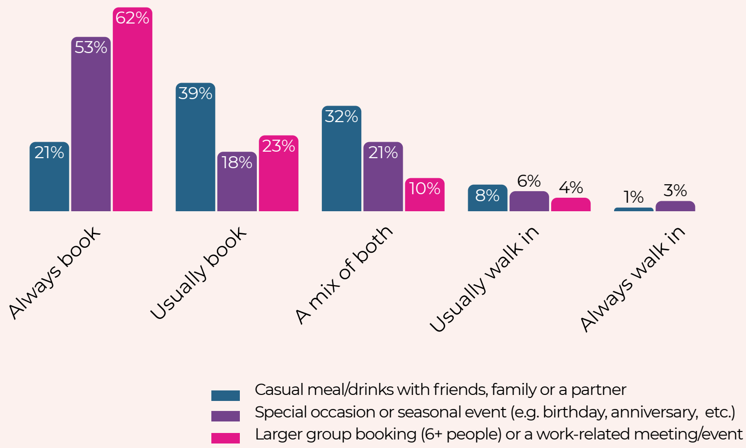
Special occasions are also a major driver of bookings, with over half (55%) having booked for celebrations in the past year, particularly among women (62%) and 18–24-year-olds (69%).

Younger respondents are significantly more likely to book for social occasions, large groups and work events, while older respondents are more likely to book for meals with family or partners.

The occasions that most of our respondents book for are, unsurprisingly, special occasions and seasonal events, followed by larger groups and then more casual events, due to the nature of a special occasion not being missed.

Nearly half of operators say that 10-20% of their bookings are for larger (8+) parties.

Consumer booking habits by occasion



Turning searches into seated guests

Reasons that respondents decide not to book vary, however top reasons are that the booking process was too complicated (39%) and there were too many clicks on the website (22%). This shows that there is an opportunity to improve the website booking journey.

37% of respondents surveyed didn't make the booking as availability didn't suit them. The ability for respondents to see this sort of information online can save operators valuable time.

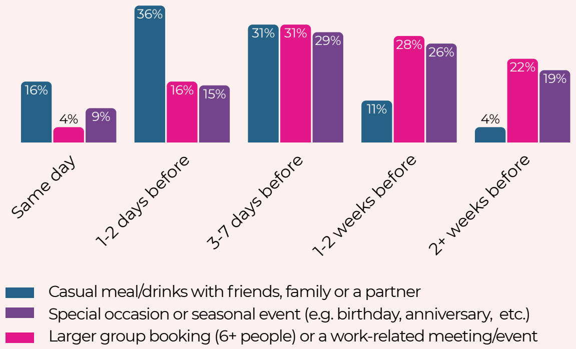
31% of respondents surveyed were put off booking by a deposit requirement, which we will explore later in this report.

22% of respondents wanted to speak to a person directly to book but were unable to, on the flip side, 18% wanted to book online but were unable to do so, with a mix of responses and preferences across the ages and genders. This shows there are a variety of preferences.

'How often do you check your own website booking journey?'

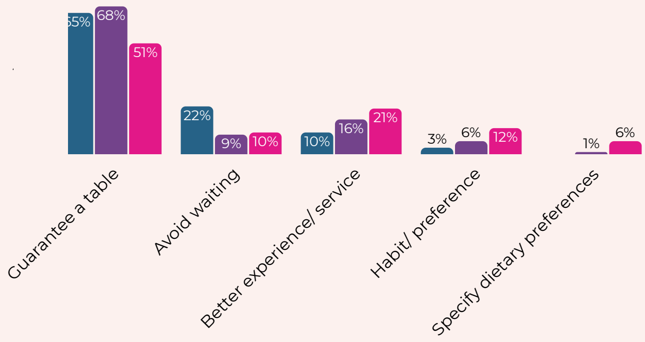
How consumers book today

Advance booking lengths by occasion



Casual events are much more likely to be booked closer to the time, whereas large events and special occasions are likely to be booked much further in advance.

Why our respondents book in advance

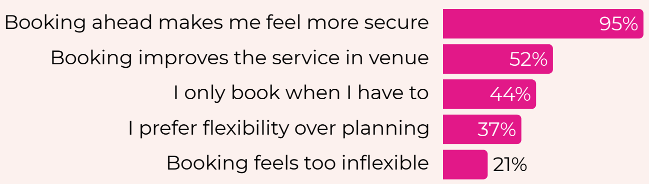


Specifying dietary requirements is much more important for larger group bookings and special occasions, whereas avoiding waiting is more important for casual events.

Respondents who find booking very/fairly easy, by occasions

The benefits of booking clearly outweigh the disadvantages, with 95% of people surveyed agreeing/strongly agreeing that booking ahead makes them feel more secure, and 52% saying that booking ahead improves the service in the venue. There are clearly some who prefer flexibility, with 37% preferring flexibility to planning.

Respondents who agree/strongly agree with the following...

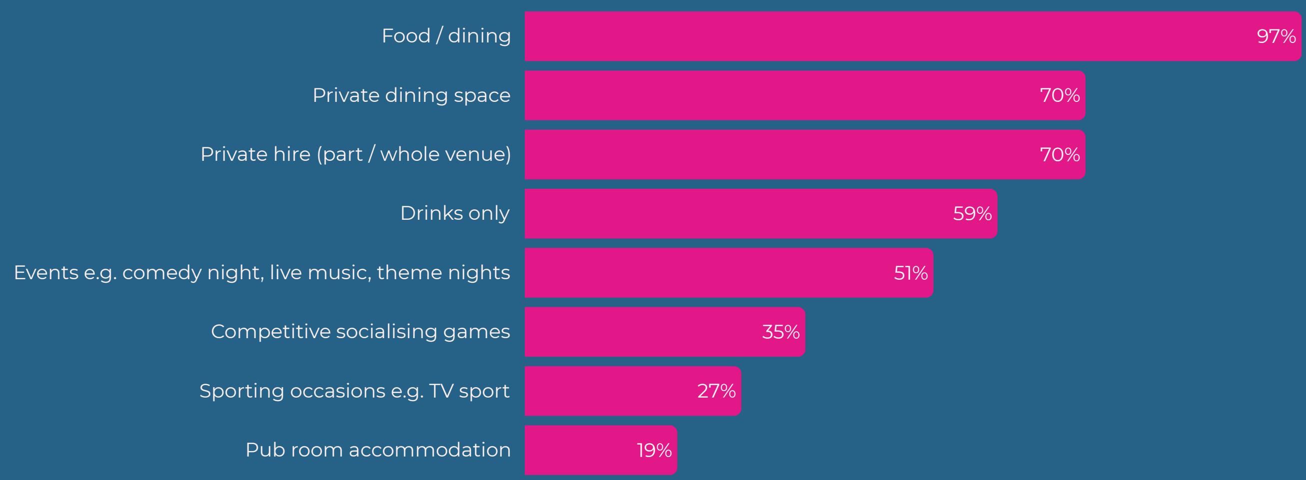


Larger group bookings are clearly perceived as harder to book for than casual dining. This is generally due to operators limiting booking availability to smaller table cover sizes to enable faster table turn during peak periods and therefore maximise covers per table per day, but the opportunity here is to allow larger tables to be booked off-peak, and to ensure that the enquiry process is seamless when a customer wants to make a large group booking (or private/semi-private space).

Booking trends from the operator view

Private dining and exclusive venue hire or semi-private hire have become increasingly important revenue streams for pubs, bars and restaurants, driven by growing demand for birthdays, corporate events and other celebrations. These bookings typically deliver higher spend per head and provide greater revenue certainty than a standard booking may do.

Type of bookings that operators currently take

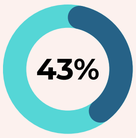


Top tips:

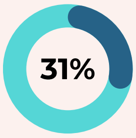
Operators can maximise this opportunity by clearly promoting private hire options on their website and booking platform, showcasing room/venue capacities, packages and using enquiry forms or other clear calls to action to encourage the guest to make contact to find out more - and ultimately book.

Using a bookings platform to manage availability, automate confirmations, collect deposits and pre-orders and capture event requirements can significantly reduce administrative workload while improving the guest experience. Tracking private hire enquiries and bookings also helps operators identify demand trends and optimise pricing, packages and marketing throughout the year.

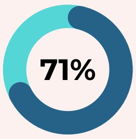
Deposits, no-shows and reminders: The consumer view on deposits



of people surveyed have considered making a booking and changed their mind.



of these people were put off booking by a deposit requirement



of people are neutral to positive about paying a deposit

Maximum deposit our respondents are willing to pay:

The younger generations are more open to paying deposits with up to 85% of 25-34 year olds being neutral to positive. Large groups and special occasions are the key times when bookings with a deposit feel most acceptable to consumers.

Our respondents are also willing to pay deposits for peak times (37%) and in more premium venues (36%). 16% of people surveyed agree that a deposit is acceptable in any situation, showing that the market will tolerate deposits. Full payment in advance is not favoured with only 2% of people thinking this is acceptable - although we would consider that a consumer expects to pay in advance in say a competitive socialising venue, where games are pre-paid at the time of booking, or for a bedroom in a pub.

The maximum deposit favoured is £6-£10 per head, with the younger generation more willing to tolerate a higher deposit. Higher deposits are also more understood for corporate groups and special occasions

The survey revealed that 38% of respondents would be more likely to attend events if they have paid a deposit, while 18% would be less inclined to book.

Financial incentives, like the risk of losing a deposit, motivate cancellations for 37% of surveyed consumers. Many accept deposits are required for large bookings and special occasions, recognising their role in reducing no-shows and protecting hospitality revenues. However, flexibility is key, as concerns about unexpected plan changes and unclear refund policies hinder acceptance. Consumers find deposits reasonable for larger groups and special occasions but unnecessary for smaller bookings. They prefer deposits to be deducted from the final bill, be fairly priced, and have clear cancellation policies.

Some respondents remain opposed to paying upfront. A smaller group simply dislike providing card details or paying before receiving the service, viewing it as unnecessary or a sign of mistrust.

"Paying a deposit for a booking guarantees the commitment of both parties. It secures your spot while ensuring the business is protected against financial losses from no-shows. This practice allows for better operational planning and a smoother experience overall."

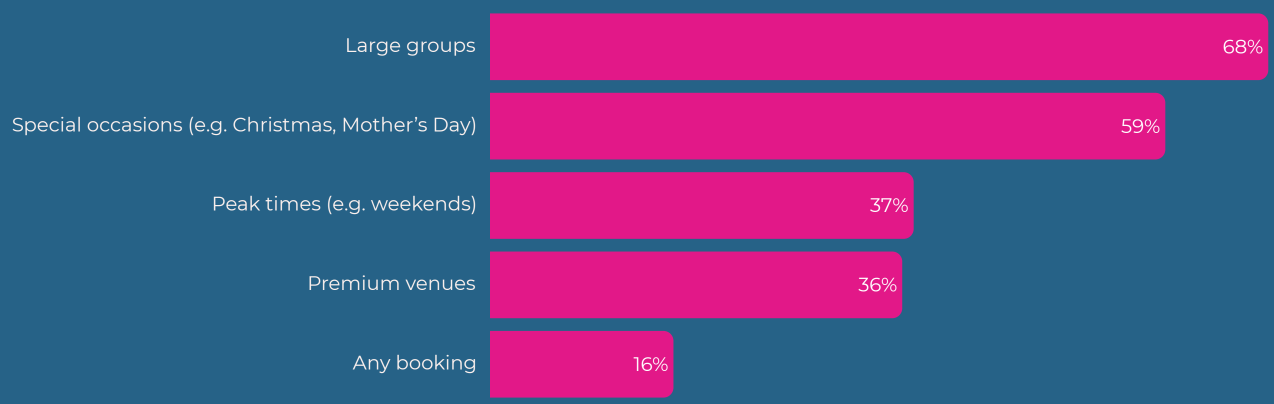
"I understand why deposits are needed, but I prefer not to pay them for casual meals. They can feel restrictive if plans change."

How transparent and clear are your booking terms and conditions, particularly with regards to deposits and cancellation terms?

Deposits from the operator side

7+ is the party size that the majority of operators (71%) say would require a deposit for a standard booking

Operators say the main occasions requiring deposits are:



19% are using pre-authorisation all the time and 49% are using selectively.

Pre-authorisation is an interesting area, which consumers favour more, and use also can ease operator stress. For many hospitality operators, a pre-authorisation can offer a better balance between protecting revenue and reducing friction for their guests

Key benefits of using a pre-authorisation instead of a deposit include:

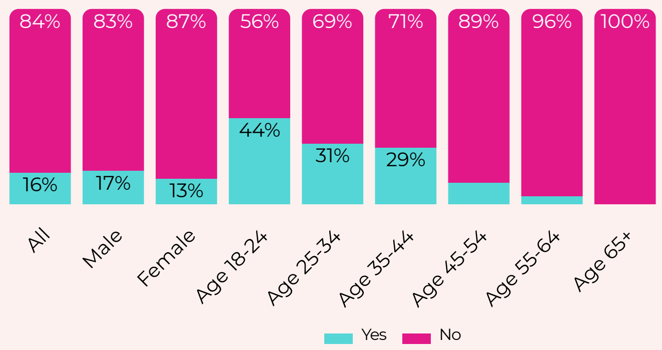
- **Lower booking friction:** Guests don't have to part with money upfront, making them more likely to complete the booking
- **Improved customer experience:** Customers appreciate not having funds taken immediately, particularly for larger groups or higher-value bookings
- **Protection against no-shows:** The operator can charge the pre-authorised amount if the guest fails to attend or cancels outside the agreed policy
- **Reduced refunds:** Because no money has been collected initially, there are no deposits to refund when guests cancel within the policy, saving time and administration
- **Better cash flow management:** Operators don't have to hold and reconcile customer deposits, simplifying financial processes
- **Increased booking confidence:** Some guests are more comfortable committing to a reservation when they know they'll only be charged if they don't honour it

When, why and how often are no-shows happening?

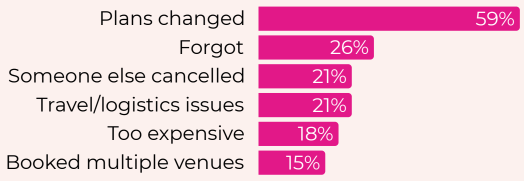
16% of respondents say they have not turned up to a table booking without cancelling (No show). There is clear evidence that younger consumers are much more likely to do this than the older generations.

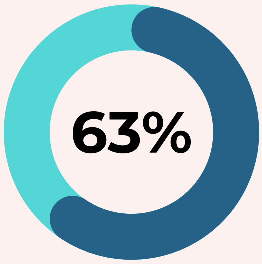
Nearly three-quarters of operators see up to 1 in 10 of their bookings not show up. No-shows generally tend to be higher for larger multi-site operators, especially within the casual dining sector.

Have you ever not turned up to a table booking without cancelling?



The main reason for not turning up to a booking without notifying the venue is 'a change of plans' (59%).



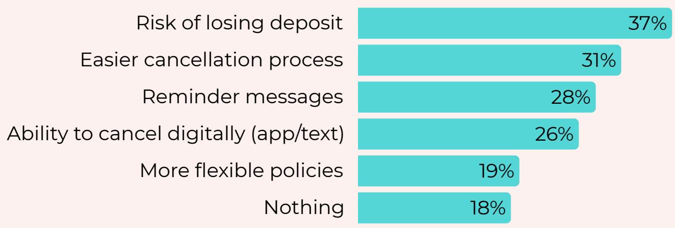


of respondents say they do not cancel bookings, with older respondents even less likely to cancel. Females and younger people are much more likely to make a cancellation

37% of respondents citing the risk of losing a deposit as the reason they cancel their booking.

Ease of cancellation (31%) and reminder messages (28%) also encourage advance cancellations, especially among younger respondents.

What would make our respondents more likely to cancel than just not show up



- **41%** of respondents think it is acceptable to cancel at short notice, however,
- **64%** of respondents also think that venues should charge for no-shows
- **77%** of respondents agree that deposits are fair for busy periods
- **19%** of respondents say they sometimes book multiple venues to keep their options open

Only 15% of respondents have ever booked multiple venues for the same occasion, this rises significantly in 25-44 year olds, especially for work related bookings.

Why and how to pay attention to no- shows

Top tip

Operators - calculate the cost of your no-shows!

Calculation example:
10% no-shows x annual number of covers x average spend per head = £x lost to no-shows per year
So if your ASPH is £25 and you serve 100,000 covers a year with a 10% no-show rate - you will lose £250,000pa through no-shows

- Understand the occasions when no-shows are happening
- Understand the demographics more likely to no-show
- Use technology to implement deposits or pre-auth for higher risk cases

The common perception is that it is not accurate in their booking platforms (or often, the way they use their platform!), or the perception that it is too small to worry about... however some businesses in the survey reported from £8k up to £400k in annual no-show losses.

Where you're likely leaking money and how to prevent it

As operators, we pour huge amounts of effort, resource and money into getting the booking. Thousands of pounds are spent every single month on guest acquisition through paid and search performance alone. Yet there are two things quietly costing you more money than any acquisition channel: guests not turning up, and the ones who do that never return.

Booking data is first party data at its best, and the cheapest incremental cover is the guest who already booked. Here are my two key focuses for every operator right now.

1. Put a number on the no-show. 73% of operators say up to 1 in 10 bookings no-show, yet only a third can estimate what that costs them. Reported losses in the survey run from £8k to £400k, which is a staggering range. Imagine adding half of that back into your sales. But you can't manage a figure you've never calculated. Start simple: no-show rate x average spend per head x annual covers. Once it is viewed as a cost line, it competes for attention like any other. And I urge you to audit your full booking journey immediately. If you are blocking guests from cancelling their booking, really do ask yourself why.

2. Grow the guest after the yes. Nearly 90% of operators hold CRM data on their guests, yet from what I have seen over the past 4-5 years, most never use it to earn a second visit. Every booking tells you who the guest is and gives you a reason to bring them back. In my experience across restaurant brands, around 80% of guests are one and done. They never come back, and the window to win a second visit is around 18 months. After that, they are effectively dead. Lots of operators are pushing for more advanced functionality, segmentation and performance from their CRM, yet they are not using the functionality that already exists. A better system does nothing if no-one uses it. My advice is to not over-think CRM automations. Something is always better than nothing, and you can constantly update it as you go.

Buying the reservations is the easy part. The bigger opportunity, and where the margin sits, is in the covers you keep and the guests you bring back.

James Mobbs
Fractional CMO for hospitality operators and the tech companies that serve them

3 tips for operators reviewing their bookings journey

1. Map where people actually drop off, not where you assume they do.

Most operators might guess the friction point is payment or availability. It's a fair concern, but we recommend you pull the data first. Real drop-off can often be earlier, at the point where someone can't quickly tell if a venue fits their brief. If they're scrolling and re-checking, you might have already lost that booking.

2. Cut the steps between intent and confirmation, not the information.

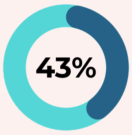
Operators often think a shorter journey means less detail. It doesn't have to. It often just means fewer clicks to get to the same detail. Someone booking a venue for 40 people wants capacity, layout, and price on one screen, not spread across four. Think minimal in design, but not in the information you're delivering.

3. Treat mobile as the primary journey, not just a scaled-down version of desktop.

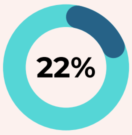
If your booking flow was designed for desktop and adapted for mobile, it often shows. Most bookings now start and finish on a phone. On DesignMyNight, over 60-70% of our users are now mobile-first. Build for mobile first and let desktop inherit it, not the other way round.

Katie Kirwan
Head of Brand & B2C
DesignMyNight (An Access Company)

The technology transforming bookings



of those surveyed have considered making a booking and changed their mind. Of these, 37% said that an easier booking process would make them more likely to book more often, there was also an interest in incentives with 44% saying a free drink or loyalty rewards would encourage them to book.



of those surveyed wanted to speak to a person directly to book but were unable to, do so - but on the flip side, 18% wanted to book online but couldn't, with a mix of responses and preferences across the ages and genders.

Reasons that our respondents decide not to book vary, however top reasons are that booking was too complicated (39%) and there were too many clicks on the website (22%) This shows an opportunity to review improve booking process and the customer journey

A third of operators are neutral to dissatisfied with their booking system, highlighting an opportunity for tech providers to help and advise their operator clients more. Competitive socialising leads the way, possibly due to being slightly newer to the market and therefore having more up-to-date technology - plus operating a model where pre-payment is the norm.

Reporting and analytics are the biggest unmet needs. Our operator respondents consistently want more sophisticated, intuitive reporting, better insights into booking performance, guest behaviour, repeat visits, conversion rates and capacity management. Stronger CRM and guest profiling capabilities are in high demand. Many respondents want richer guest profiles, improved segmentation, marketing automation and the ability to better understand and re-engage customers.

Improved integrations are a major priority; there were repeated requests for better integration with EPOS/POS systems, CRM platforms, GA4, APIs and marketing tools to create a more connected system. Booking journey and operational efficiency could be improved. Users want easier management of large bookings and events, bulk editing, table optimisation, smoother booking flows and a less repetitive setup. AI and automation are emerging opportunities, with several respondents requested built-in AI assistants or integrations to help manage guest communications.

User experience and platform usability need refinement. Comments highlighted a dated booking widget, clunky back-end processes, easier onboarding for new users and greater customisation. Cost and value are of course important - a small number of respondents called for lower costs or more functionality to be included without additional charges.

"We'd like more advanced CRM and guest profiling capabilities, better visibility into website booking conversion rates, and stronger marketing automation tools for re-engaging past guests. Improved reporting and easier integration of customer data across channels would also help us make more informed commercial decisions."

"There are lots of additions coming, but huge areas of gaps are reporting / analysis as well as setting management."

The third-party platform landscape

68%

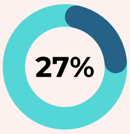
of all operators partner with a third party. Costs here are rising and some 40% of respondents reported that they are increasing their focus on their own website booking journey to offset this. Some 12% are looking for alternatives and 8% said they are considering stopping using them completely.

58%

of bookings come through the venue's own website. This is a space to watch as a growing number of consumers are using AI to make reservations.

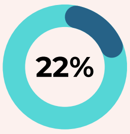
With 39% of consumers surveyed saying the booking process is too complicated, there is a clear opportunity here.

Where bookings actually come from



Use of AI to book and to take bookings is increasing from both the consumers and from operators… whilst 27% of operators are able to use AI to take telephone bookings, it is not being used widely and 35% say they have no plans at all at present to use AI.

A significant 36% of UK consumers are actively planning to integrate AI assistants into their booking and discovery process *(Source: OpenTable 2026 dining trends report)*.



22% of respondents who were looking to make a booking did not complete it as they were unable to speak to a real person and didn't want to 'speak' to a computer/ AI bot.

Seven Rooms is the leading primary booking platform, followed by Access Group's Design My Night (Collins).

Third-party booking platforms are crucial for attracting new customers through Google and restaurant discovery apps, enhancing venue visibility. However, this exposure usually incurs costs, with operators facing per-cover fees, commissions, or marketing charges for bookings.

Top tip
"To maximise return on investment, operators should regularly review the performance of each platform, monitor customer acquisition costs, and encourage repeat guests to book directly for future visits."

The most common pain points fall into a few clear themes:

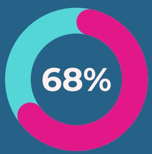
1. **Booking widget and guest journey limitations** - Booking journeys are often clunky, slow or confusing, particularly on mobile. Widgets have limited flexibility, struggle with multiple offers and menus, and gather insufficient guest information. Too many clicks and poor user experience reduce conversion

2. **Limited functionality and integrations** - Weak CRM/API integrations and inconsistent behaviour across systems means limited support for cross-selling other venues, upselling, reporting, events, large party bookings, and ticket sales. Managing multiple sites or complex operations is more difficult

3. **Operational reliability and support** - Platform outages, payment/authentication issues, inconsistent booking behaviour, and slow customer support create operational challenges

4. **Cost and customisation** - High costs for APIs, integrations and fees. Limited ability to customise emails, branding and reporting

Choosing the right booking system



of operators use an out of the box widget on their own website, with 19% using their own solution and 14% unsure of the system they use.

Out-of-the-box widget

Pros

- Quick and easy to implement
- Lower upfront development costs
- Regular updates, maintenance and security handled by the provider
- Proven functionality with minimal technical expertise required
- Often includes deposits, pre-authorisations, automated comms and reporting

Cons

- Limited ability to customise the booking journey
- May not fully match the website's branding or UX
- Dependent on the provider's roadmap for new features
- May involve subscription or transaction fees

Custom-built solution

Pros

- Complete control over branding and user experience
- Can be tailored to specific operational requirements
- Greater flexibility to integrate with loyalty programmes, CRM and other systems
- Full ownership of the customer journey and website experience
- No reliance on standard templates or system provider limitations

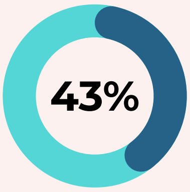
Cons

- Higher development and ongoing maintenance costs
- Requires technical expertise or external developers
- Responsibility for security, testing and compliance sits with the operator
- New features and integrations take longer to develop

Top tip

"For most operators, an out-of-the-box widget offers the best balance of cost, speed and reliability. Custom solutions suit larger groups with dedicated tech resource and complex multi-site requirements."

Trying to make changes in a complex world...



of operators surveyed have made changes to their website booking flow in the last 12 months, suggesting attempts at continuous improvement. Most commonly this was by changing the user booking flow and amending the number of steps to book.

Most changes were positive; however, negative impacts included when introducing deposits for key events, or all/some bookings.

Our consumer respondents do understand the need for deposits, with only 29% of people negative about paying a deposit.

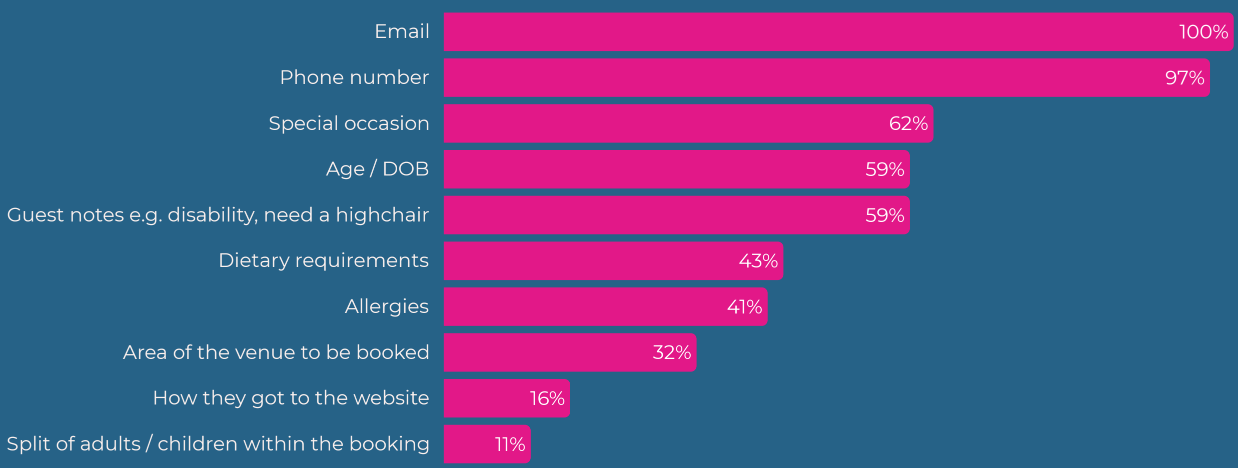
Turning guests into loyal regulars

The majority of bookings that are larger than the online system can manage go to a central sales person (49%), or direct to venue enquiry (32%).

To help ensure consumers turn up, 95% send booking reminders, this is dominated by larger operators who most likely have more advanced systems to manage the CRM. The vast majority of reminders are sent by email (97%), then text message. 54% send a reminder 1 day before, 34% 2 days before and 17% same day (some 45% are sending multiple reminders).

From the consumer perspective, 24% said a reminder message would make them more likely to cancel if they had decided not to go- this was far higher at 56% in the 18-24 age group. In addition, 31% of consumers surveyed said an easier cancellation process would make them more likely to cancel rather than not show.

Guest data that operators currently capture at the point of booking



86% of operators have a CRM system integrated into their bookings platform to track guest data and booking platforms. It is only the smaller operators not doing this. The key is how they use this data to market, capture and convert future visits and loyalty.

Balancing comprehensive data collection for event booking with the need for a seamless, low-click user experience is critical for reducing consumer friction. Strategies such as progressive profiling, autofill, and single-page forms can help maximise insights without causing checkout fatigue.

Growing revenue beyond the booking

38% of operators have productised their events bookings on their websites (hen parties, birthdays etc.)

35% of operators offer a waitlist function for guests who can't find a table for the size and time required, with many venues typically relying instead on real-time online availability, walk-in trade or automated re-release of cancelled tables.

For some operators, the administrative effort of managing a waitlist may outweigh the benefits, particularly where cancellations are infrequent or booking platforms do not offer automated waitlist functionality. However, for venues that regularly reach capacity, a digital waitlist can help recover cancelled bookings, improve occupancy and capture demand that might otherwise be lost.

64% of operators cross sell within their booking flow to promote other venues if no availability at the desired venue

32% of operators offer pre-orderable menus or upsell add-ons at the point of booking, 22% do this for special occasions and 24% for larger groups, showing this additional opportunity is widely used and offers secure revenue streams

38% of operators say that pre-ordering and upselling at the booking stage has noticeably increased average spend per head

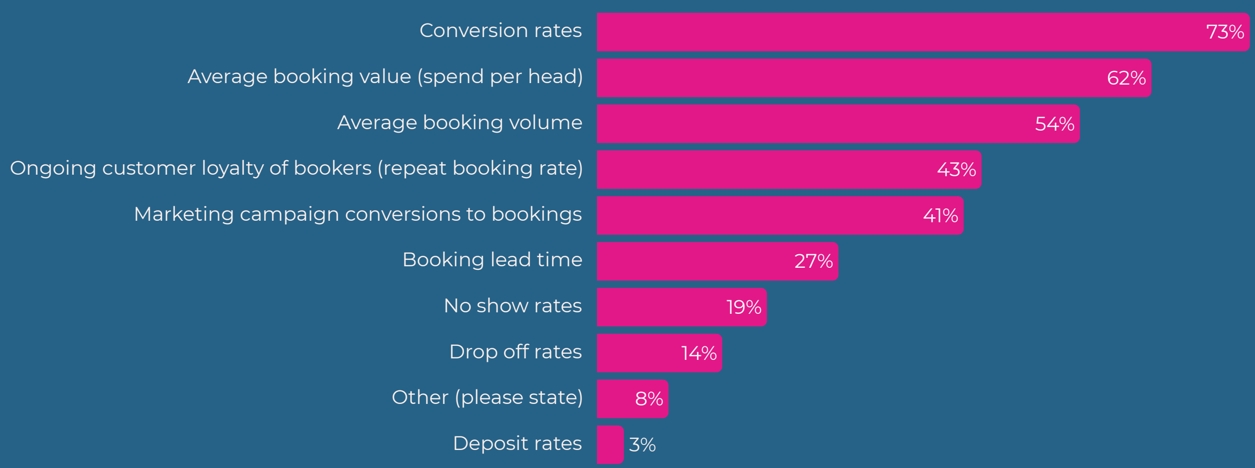
32% offer dynamic pricing or special rates e.g. for off peak bookings, however 8% are considering implementing this where feasible

What success looks like: the KPIs that matter

Conversion rates, **average booking volume** and **average booking value** are the most tracked KPIs, alongside marketing campaign conversions and ongoing loyalty bookers - but these findings suggest there is still room for operators to develop a more complete picture of booking performance. Measuring conversion throughout the booking journey, alongside the financial impact of no-shows and the effectiveness of marketing activity, enables operators to make more informed commercial decisions.

By focusing on a small number of meaningful, revenue-driven KPIs and reviewing them consistently, businesses can identify opportunities to improve cover numbers and occupancy (for rooms), increase guest lifetime value and maximise return on their booking technology.

The KPIs or success measures which operators currently focus on when evaluating their bookings performance:



The opportunity

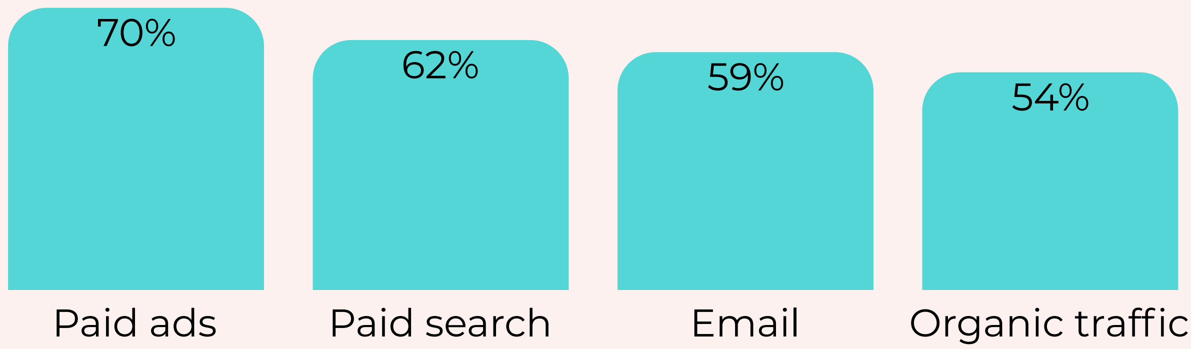
- Only 68% track conversion rates
- Operators use a multitude of ways to measure conversion rates
- Only 19% record a different spend per head for pre-booked
- Only 35% can estimate losses to no-shows

Social media as a booking platform

There is reassuring evidence that completed bookings can be tracked, but there is still room for improvement with 27% not traceable.

Paid ads deliver the greatest trackability, whilst organic traffic and email are less easy.

Operators are currently tracking completed bookings directly from the following...



What's next? Industry priorities for 2026 and beyond

Increasing booking conversion is the top priority: Many respondents are focused on reducing friction in the booking journey, improving website performance, and converting more visitors into confirmed bookings.

Driving direct bookings and reducing reliance on third parties: Businesses want to increase bookings through their own websites and channels while reducing commission costs and dependency on third-party platforms.

Enhancing the guest experience and accessibility: Respondents want to make booking as easy as possible across multiple channels (website, phone, email, WhatsApp and social media), while improving convenience and personalisation.

Making better use of data, tracking and reporting: There is a strong focus on improving attribution, measuring campaign effectiveness, tracking booking sources, and using guest data to inform marketing and commercial decisions.

Growing revenue through optimisation: Priorities include increasing table yield, maximising capacity, reducing no-shows, driving upsell opportunities, and encouraging repeat visits through loyalty and personalised marketing.

Investing in technology and AI: Many operators are looking at AI-enabled booking channels, CRM improvements, automation and better technology integrations to improve both operational efficiency and the customer journey.

> ***"Our main focus in 2026 will be increasing direct bookings and improving conversion rates from our website, while reducing no-shows and improving yield per table. We are also looking to strengthen guest data usage for more personalised marketing and to drive higher repeat visit rates."***
>
> ***"Tracking every booking from source so campaign effectiveness and spend can be accurately reviewed. Also looking at other booking platforms that integrate with our tech stack better but keeping the end customer journey in mind to ensure the experience improves."***

The future and looking at new booking channels

Most businesses are not planning to introduce new booking channels. The majority of responses were "None", "N/A" or "Not yet", suggesting the focus is on improving existing booking performance rather than expanding channel mix.

WhatsApp is the most commonly mentioned new channel. Several respondents plan to introduce or expand WhatsApp as a booking and customer communication channel. Third-party booking platforms remain under consideration. Some operators are looking to expand their presence on platforms such as OpenTable, TheFork, Reserve with Google and other third-party partners.

AI-enabled booking is an emerging area of interest. A small number of respondents are planning to test AI chatbots or research AI-powered booking solutions.
Platform optimisation is taking priority over channel expansion. Rather than adding new channels, many businesses are reviewing existing booking platforms to improve CRM, reporting, conversion and guest engagement.

> ***"In 2026, we are not planning to add new booking channels, but we are actively reviewing and exploring alternative booking platform options alongside our current system. The focus remains on improving direct bookings and overall conversion, but we are assessing whether other platforms could better support CRM, reporting, and guest engagement needs."***

The biggest challenges

Driving booking demand remains the biggest challenge. Many respondents are focused on increasing booking volumes, particularly at quieter sites and during off-peak periods, while managing uneven demand across locations and times.

Maximising capacity and shifting demand is a key operational priority. Businesses are looking for ways to fill quieter dayparts, optimise table availability, and encourage bookings outside peak trading times.

Reducing no-shows while increasing booking value is a continuing concern. Operators want guests not only to honour their bookings but also to spend more once in the venue, improving overall revenue per booking.

Competition and changing market conditions are creating pressure. Respondents cited increased competition, declining footfall, reduced tourism and rising costs as making it harder to attract bookings.

Technology, reporting and customer journey challenges remain. Improving website conversion, integrations, tracking, reporting and the overall booking journey continues to be a significant focus.

"Reducing no-shows and late cancellations, and improving website conversion into confirmed bookings, while making better use of guest data to drive repeat visits and higher spend."

"Maximising off peak bookings to drive bookings into the shoulder times e.g. breakfast and late morning/late afternoon. Outdoor bookings also provide an opportunity – particularly during summer peak, but need to be balanced with impact of poor weather and how displaced bookings can then be managed by the team."

Who is doing it best?

A seamless, customer-first booking journey defines best practice: Our operator respondents consistently praised brands that offer simple, intuitive, mobile-friendly booking experiences with minimal friction.

Pre-booking, upselling and cross-selling are key differentiators: Leading brands were recognised for integrating pre-orders, guest journeys, and opportunities to increase spend before arrival.

Strong use of technology and CRM is becoming a competitive advantage: AI-powered enquiry handling, personalised guest experiences and effective use of booking data were highlighted as examples of industry-leading strategy.

Demand management and conversion are hallmarks of leading brands: Respondents admired other operators that successfully manage high demand, maximise conversions and create a premium booking experience despite limited availability.

There is no clear market leader: Many respondents were unsure or felt most brands face similar challenges, suggesting there is still significant opportunity for innovation across the industry.

Question asked to operators: Which hospitality brands do you think are leading the way with best websites for bookings and strategy - and why?

"Brands like Dishoom stand out for their highly consistent, mobile-first booking experience and strong brand-led demand management, which creates extremely high conversion rates despite limited availability."

"Big Mamma Group do this well, with visually strong, simple booking journeys that are easy to navigate and optimise high demand efficiently across multiple venues."

On the more data-driven and CRM-led side, operators using platforms like SevenRooms are leading in personalised guest experiences, using booking data to drive repeat visits, VIP recognition, and targeted marketing.

What would make the biggest difference to bookings performance

No operator was 100% confident that their digital set up is converting as many potential guests as possible, and 51% are neutral to less confident

Improving website conversion and removing friction from the booking journey is the biggest opportunity. Respondents want faster, simpler booking experiences, better booking widgets and seamless customer journeys to increase conversion.

Better use of guest data, tracking and reporting is a major priority. Businesses are looking for improved attribution, clearer reporting, source tracking and better use of first-party data to optimise marketing and drive repeat visits.

AI and automation are becoming key growth enablers. Many respondents see AI-powered messaging, automated confirmations and smarter booking management as ways to improve efficiency and guest experience.

Increasing direct bookings while reducing reliance on third parties remains a focus. Operators want to grow direct channels through better marketing, customer engagement and CRM, while improving integrations across their technology stack.

Driving booking demand and maximising revenue continue to be core objectives. Respondents highlighted increasing enquiry volumes, improving upsell and cross-sell opportunities, and expanding booking visibility across search engines and third-party platforms.

Summary

Hospitality bookings are no longer simply an operational function - they are a critical driver of revenue, guest experience and long-term profitability for operators. This report provides the UK's first dedicated benchmark of hospitality booking performance, bringing together insights from both consumers and operators to highlight where businesses are succeeding and where opportunities remain.

The findings reveal a growing expectation from consumers for fast, seamless and flexible booking journeys. While demand for eating and drinking out remains strong, nearly four in ten consumers have abandoned a booking because the process was too complicated, and a significant proportion still encounter barriers when trying to book through their preferred channel. Simplicity, transparency and convenience have become essential to converting interest into confirmed reservations.

For operators, the challenge is balancing guest experience with commercial performance. No-shows continue to represent a substantial source of lost revenue, while many businesses are still not measuring the true financial impact or tracking the booking metrics needed to optimise performance. At the same time, operators are increasingly looking to improve direct bookings, reduce reliance on commission-based third-party platforms and make better use of guest data to drive repeat visits and higher spend.

Technology will continue to play a defining role in the years ahead. AI, automation, improved reporting and improved CRM capabilities are emerging as key priorities, but success will ultimately depend on removing friction throughout the booking journey, understanding customer behaviour and making data-driven decisions. Those operators that continually optimise conversion, protect revenue and build lasting guest relationships will be best positioned to compete in an increasingly competitive market.

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From benchmarks to bookings

This report has shown you where the industry is winning and losing, on bookings. If any of it feels close to home, here's how we at Propeller can help you close the gap. For 25 years we've helped hospitality brands like yours turn website visitors into confirmed bookings, and we can do the same for you.

Struggling with your booking conversion rate?
We'll find exactly where guests are dropping out of your booking flow and fix it, so more of your visitors become confirmed covers.

Losing guests somewhere in your booking journey, but not sure where?
We'll map the journey end to end and show you exactly where and why drop-off happens.

Worried guests can't find you as search changes?
We'll make sure your venue still shows up when people are deciding where to book, as search shifts to AI Overviews and zero-click answers.

Not sure your ad spend is actually driving bookings?
We'll show you exactly which paid social and search campaigns are putting covers through the door, not just clicks. All our services run through Gravity AI, our engine that moves your SEO, CRO, AI search and paid media spend to wherever it'll make the biggest difference to your bookings this month, rather than running each in isolation.

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