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# Hotel social posting drops 12-20% in 2015 across all major sites.

## **The Goods**

For this analysis we looked at 1,100 resort and hotel Facebook accounts and found the average monthly posting frequency for every year since 2008.

## **The Results**

Resort and hotel Facebook posting frequency dropped from 25.0 posts per month in 2014 to 22.0 posts per month in 2015, a decrease of 12%. This was the second consecutive year that saw a decrease in volume – 2014 dropped 3.3% – and the lowest volume of monthly Facebook posts since 2010.

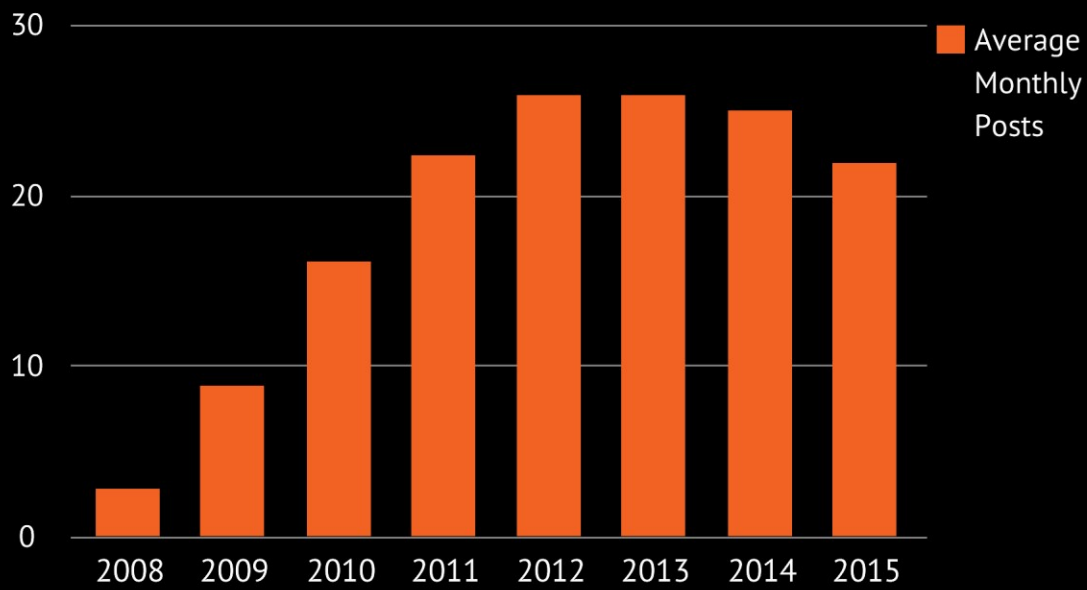
## **What This Means**

What's interesting to note (and supportive of the trend) is that Facebook wasn't alone. Twitter saw a 19.8% drop in tweeting frequency, going from 48.1 tweets per month in 2014 to 38.6 in 2015. YouTube saw the same as uploads declined 14.1% over the same period.

In other words, hotels and resorts as a whole are slowly cutting the amount of content they push through their social channels. Whether this is a result of the cost of content, a focus on quality over quantity, lack of organic reach, or something else entirely is tough to say.

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*Originally published Jan 12, 2016.*



# If I open a hotel marketing email twice, am I twice as likely to buy?

## **The Goods**

We analyzed 10 major email campaigns delivered to more than 1,500,000 recipients by a half-dozen hotels. We separated out the group that received but never opened or clicked, those who opened but didn't click, and those who clicked. We then subdivided the groups by repeat actions and found the percentage that transacted within 10 days.

## **The Results**

About 1.6% of those in our sample who received the email (but didn't open or click) ended up transacting. In terms of clicks, 7.4% of single clickers and 10.0% of those who clicked more than once ended up transacting within 10 days.

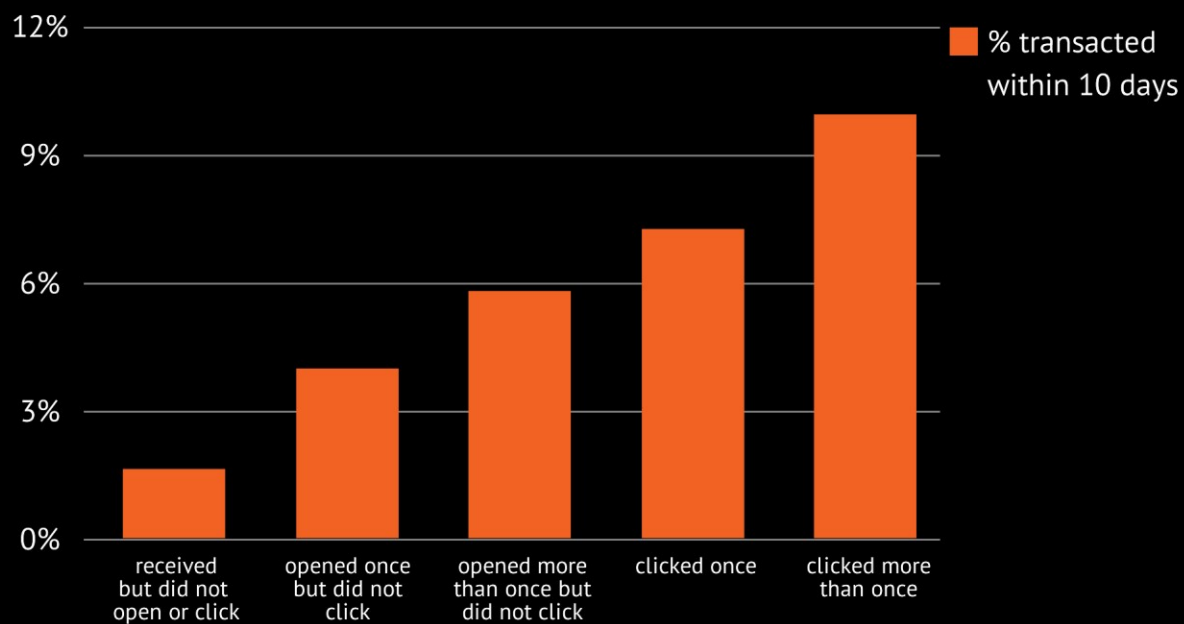
## **What This Means**

The more someone interacts with an email, the more likely they are to transact. It's that simple. All of those opens and clicks appear to be fairly accurate representations of not just their interest, but their likelihood to transact based on any one marketing message.

Does increased activity correlate to larger transactions? For our sample, no. Transaction volume stayed consistent. But to answer our original question, does the likelihood double when someone opens twice? Not quite, but a 47.5% increase is nothing to sneeze at.

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*Originally published Jan 5, 2016.*



# Do 5 star hotels get more Facebook engagement than 3 star?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we looked at over 7,000 hotel Facebook pages and tracked their “people talking about this” percentage (PTAT/fans) over the last three months.

## **The Results**

Engagement peaked for 3.0 star hotels at 5.5% but fell above and below that point to a low of 3.6% for 2.5 star hotels and 4.5% for 5.0 star hotels.

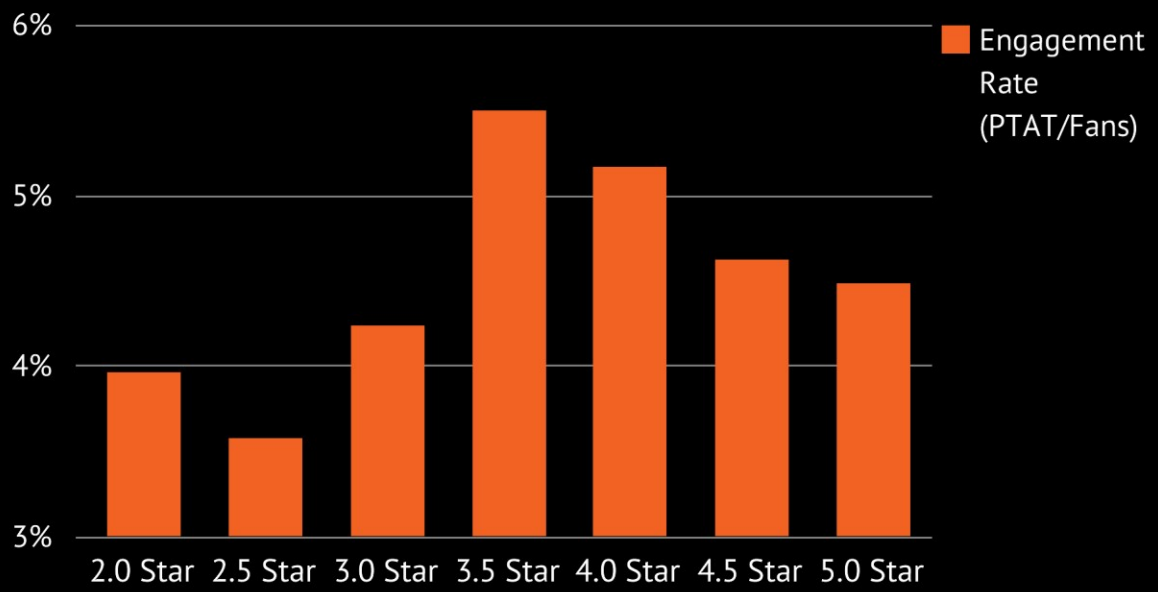
## **What This Means**

We’ve seen before that smaller fan bases tend to have higher engagement. In the case of hotels, however, as star ratings (and fan growth) increases so does the quality of the lodging product and, presumably, their marketing.

Even still, the quality at these properties fails to overcome the challenge of activating a longer list of fans. As far as we can tell, 3 star hotels seem to have the right combination of community size and content/product quality to claim the highest point in this analysis.

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*Originally published Oct 27, 2015.*



# Are OTAs losing share in the mountains?

## **The Goods**

To find that answer we looked at five years of booking history for more than 25 hotels at mountain destinations across the United States. We then found the average percentage of total bookings that OTAs represented for each of the last five years (including 2015 YTD).

## **The Results**

After sitting around 10% in 2011, the numbers have steadily grown since then. So far in 2015, OTAs have accounted for just under 16% of all bookings at the properties we looked at.

## **What This Means**

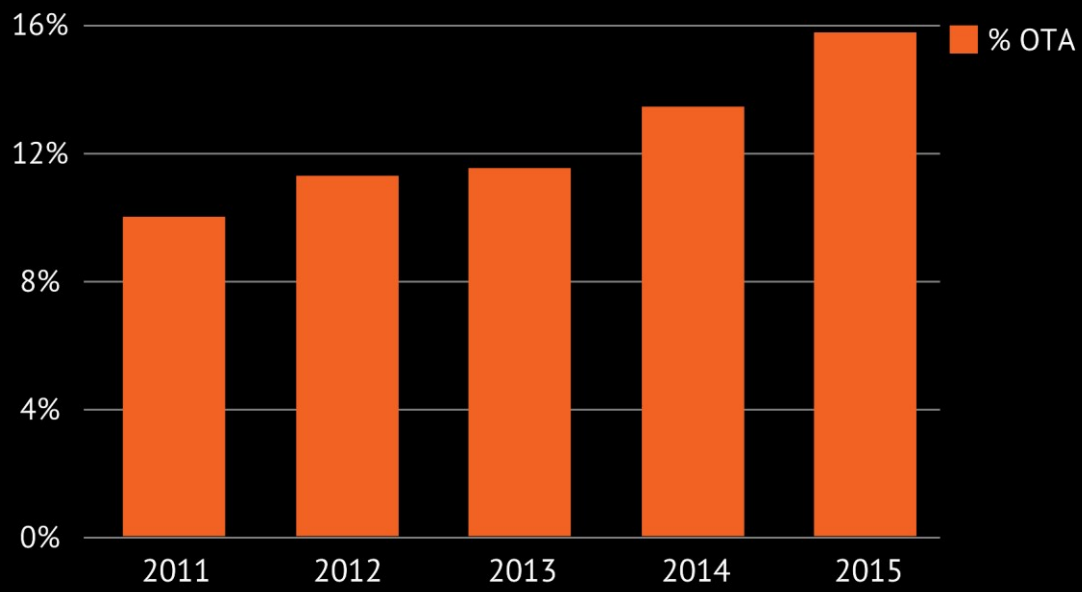
While the numbers have grown, they're still well within the 20% figure many lodging experts recommend hotels try to keep OTA volume.

At the current rate of growth, however, the average across the hotels in our sample could reach that point within the next 2-3 years.

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*Originally published Oct 20, 2015.*





# Do millennials unsubscribe from emails more often than boomers?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we looked at email campaigns sent to over 6,000,000 recipients during the last three months by a dozen hotels and resorts. We then found the opt-out rates for some of the most common generations and age groups.

## **The Results**

Millennials (age 15-30) averaged an opt-out rate of 0.26%. Boomers (age 51+) averaged an opt-out rate of 0.21%. The in-between groups saw averages of 0.21% (age 31-40) and 0.18% (age 41-50). The overall average for this group was 0.21%.

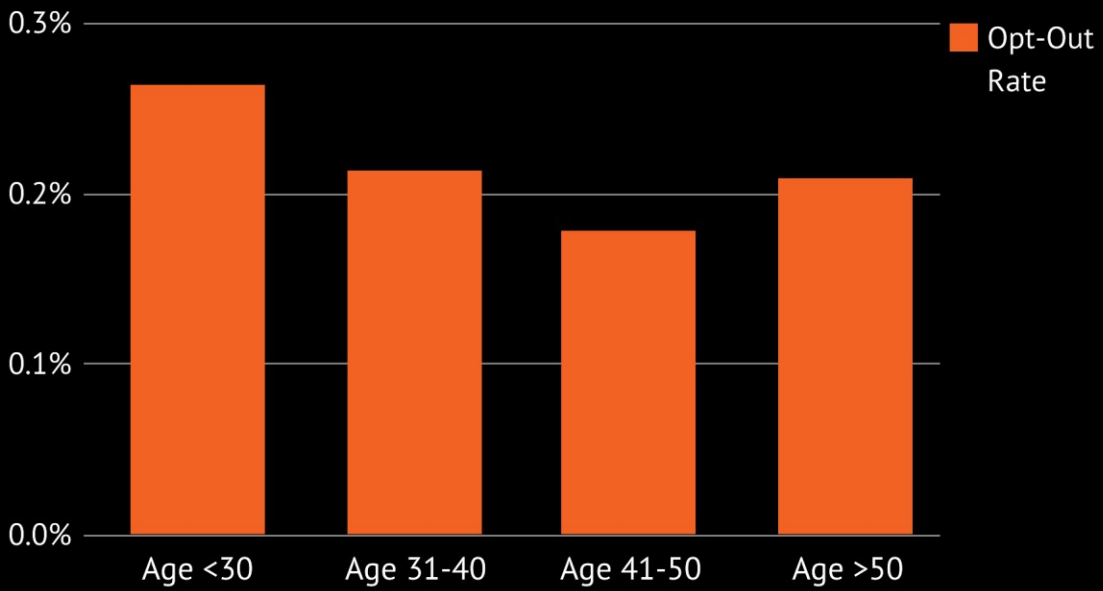
## **What This Means**

The simple answer is, yes, a millennial is much more likely to unsubscribe than a boomer. But boomers, however, are not the least likely to do so. Interestingly, the lowest rate for this sample was found among 41-50 year-olds.

But even at the peak these unsubscribe rates are still less than 1/3 of 1%, which means that if you send a campaign tomorrow to a list of 10,000 millennials and 10,000 boomers and the averages hold true, you will have lost about 5 more millennials than boomers by this time next week.

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*Originally published Apr 5, 2016.*



# Can one email be enough to get past guests back to your hotel?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we gathered data for each of our clients that ran a booking reminder campaign last year. We then found guests who stayed the previous year but hadn't yet booked another vacation by their anniversary date. Finally, we compared return rates between the group that DID get a booking reminder and those that DID NOT.

## **The Results**

Every booking reminder email that was sent last year generated an average of \$2.62 in additional booking revenue (this amount does not include ancillary spending on dining, shopping, etc.).

## **What This Means**

It's easy to look at 3 extra bookings per 1000 messages and not realize how well such a simple message is performing. The fact that one automated email generates an additional \$2.62 each time it goes out is impressive when you consider the only work required is to set up the campaign in the first place.

This is an automated, effective example of a simple way to get guests to come back. It doesn't cover all the bases, but appears to be an intelligent addition to a property's marketing lineup.

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*Originally published Sep 11, 2012.*

Average return rate of those that DID receive a reminder:	<b>4.22%</b>
Average return rate of those that DID NOT receive a reminder:	<b>3.92%</b>
Difference between recipients and non-recipients:	<b>+7.79%</b>
Net increase in bookings per 1000 emails sent:	<b>3.05</b>
Average booking amount for resorts in sample:	<b>\$858</b>
Revenue per 1000 reminder emails sent:	<b>\$2,616</b>

# Is there a correlation between fan counts and hotel star ratings?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we looked at over 10,000 hotel Facebook fan pages and grouped them by the star ratings typically used on U.S. OTAs to find the average Facebook fan count of each group.

## **The Results**

For our sample, 5.0 star hotels averaged 19,500 fans, 4.0 star hotels averaged 9,400, 3.0 star hotels were at 1,300, with hotels at 2.0 stars averaging just 200 fans.

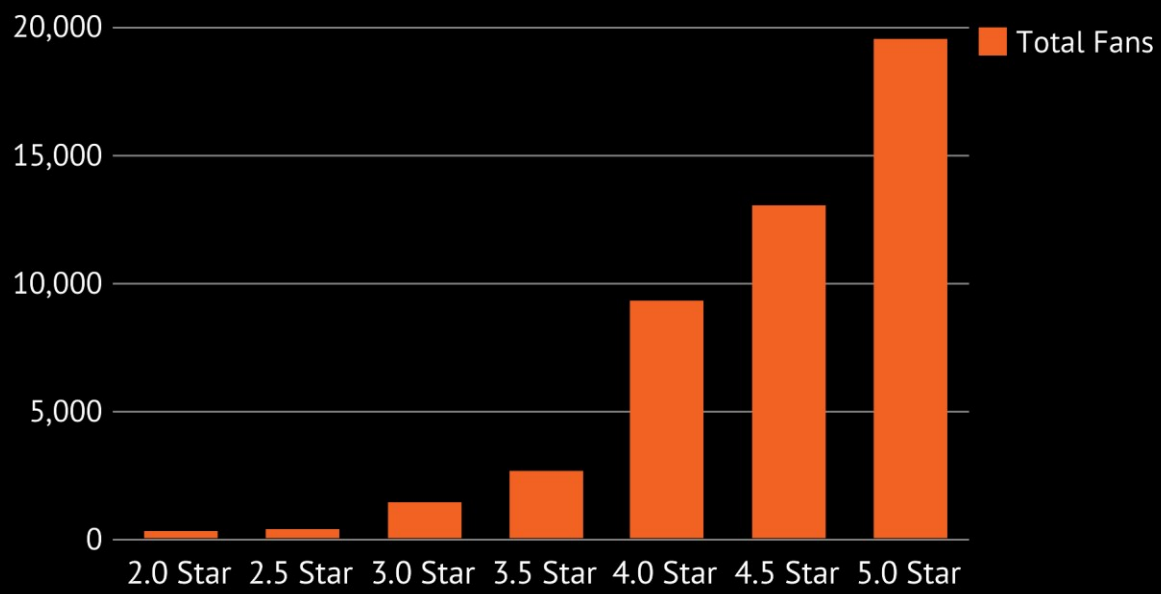
## **What This Means**

Interestingly, the difference in average fan count between a  $\_0$  rating and a  $\_5$  rating (i.e., 3.0 vs 3.5) was an impressive 84%. The difference in average fan count between  $\_5$  to the next even  $\_0$  rating above it (i.e., 3.5 vs 4.0) was a whopping 175%.

There's not enough here to read too deeply, but it does appear that whatever the reason – niche, total rooms, location, rating criteria, etc. – higher rated hotels tend to have more fans: especially when that rating is a round number.

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*Originally published Jan 27, 2015.*



# Are guests who follow you on social media more likely to return?

## **The Goods**

For our analysis we used survey data from a half-dozen hotels and resorts across two years. Being self-reported, these data points carried additional value by eliminating people who clicked “like” or “follow” but aren’t active enough to remember doing so.

## **The Results**

Facebook is the clear winner, with “neither” and “Twitter” nearly even at the bottom. Interestingly, rather than a cumulative effect from following on both Facebook and Twitter, it looks to be more averaged with Twitter following pulling down the return rate slightly rather than boosting it higher.

## **What This Means**

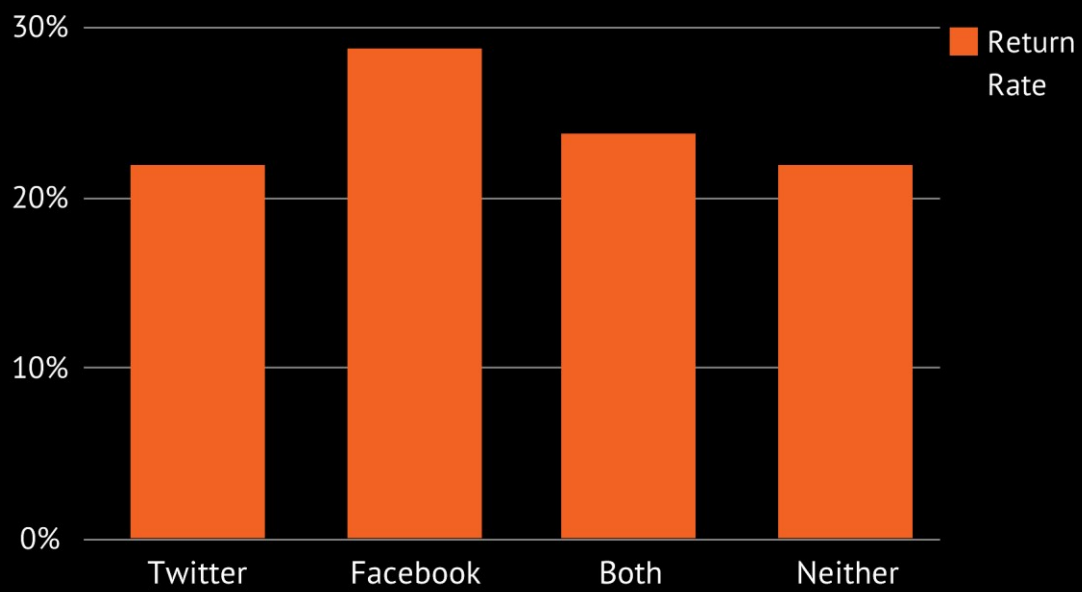
The question we come to is this: Are Facebook fans more likely to return because of the content you share or are they more likely to return because loyal customers are more likely seek out and find your brand on social media?

While the answer may not be easily attainable, we’d imagine it’s a little bit of both.

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*Originally published Jan 14, 2014.*





# Does the ability to email a guest increase the chance they'll return?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we looked at over 100,000 guests who lodged at U.S. hotels and resorts between 2010 and 2012, grouped them by their “emailable” status, and found the return rate (booked lodging again the next year) of each group.

## **The Results**

Even just glancing at the chart, it's easy to see that the difference is significant. To put exact numbers to the data points, 22.7% of emailable guests from the sample returned the following year opposed to 13.1% of non-emailable guests.

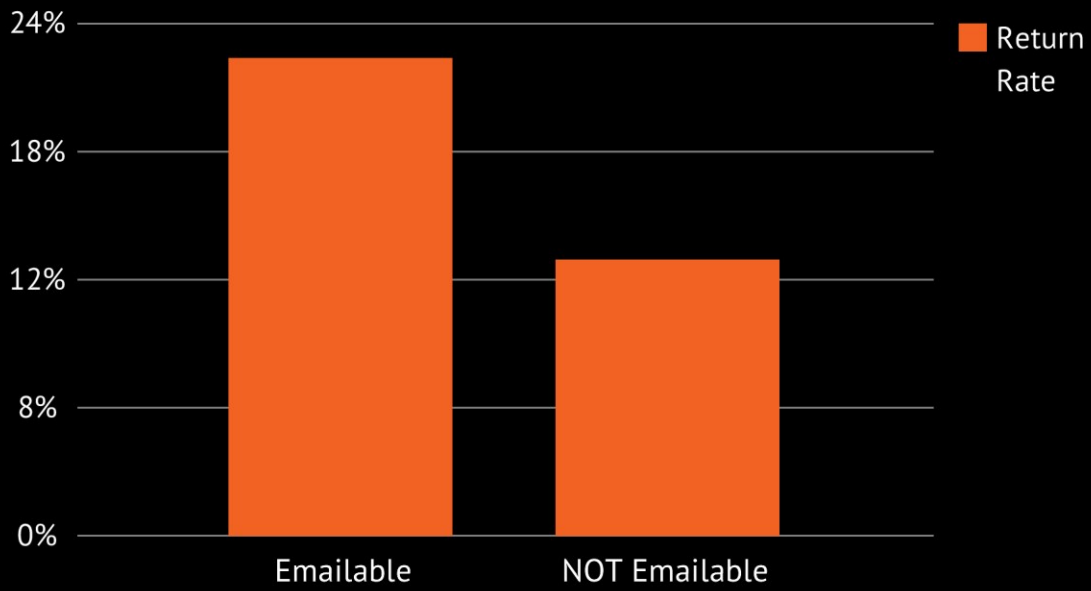
## **What This Means**

With a fairly consistent correlation between age and emailability, we don't think that plays a role.

But what seems to be clear is the value of having an email address on file. Even lumping in everyone – regardless of how many emails they received or opened or clicked – shows that people who you can reach via email are much more likely to return to your resort than those who do not.

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*Originally published Jan 7, 2014.*



# Will guests always plan further in advance for longer stays?

## **The Goods**

We used 4 years of lodging data for 10 hotels and resorts for this analysis, pulling length-of-stay and lead time for each reservation in that window. To focus on an actionable frame for marketing, we excluded lead times greater than 150 days.

## **The Results**

When the LOS was 1, the average lead time was just 2 weeks. At 7, the lead time peaked at just over 2 months (63 days) before sliding to 50 days when the LOS was 10 or greater.

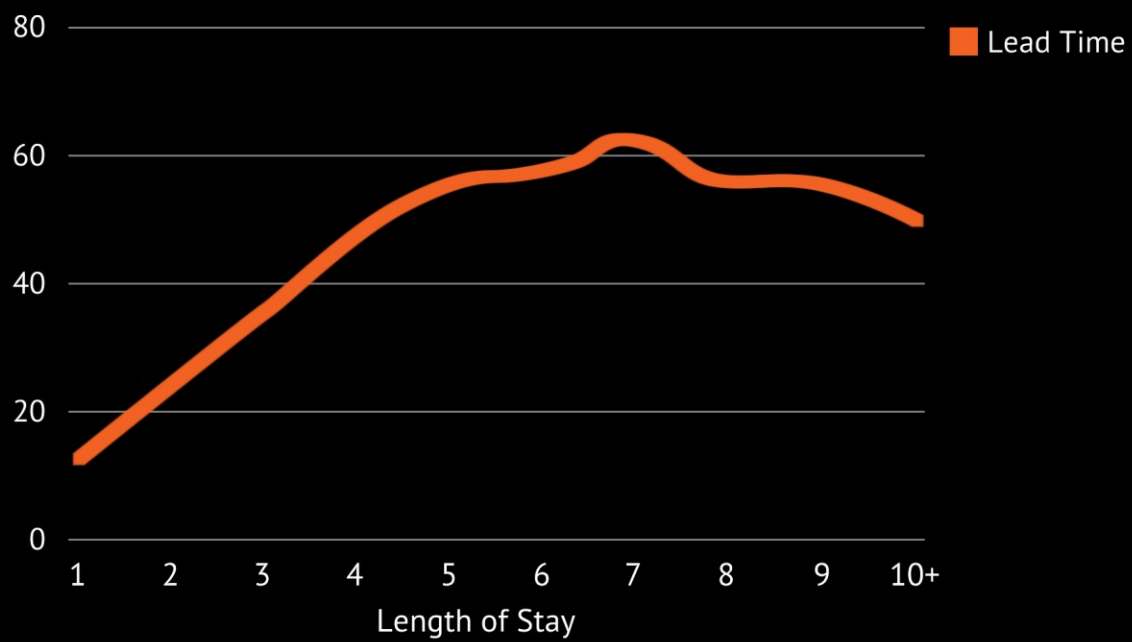
## **What This Means**

Rather than dangle a carrot that would require a guest change in habit, it may be best to work within the timeframe guests already plan and book.

In other words, if you want someone to stay longer, changing the offer may also require changing the timing.

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*Originally published Feb 5, 2013.*



# Do guests read the emails you send during their stay?

## **The Goods**

We took two seasons of data across multiple hotels and resorts that were sending an “in-hotel” or “in-resort” message. Simply defined, these are automated emails sent to a dynamic segment that use data points like arrival date to determine who is lodging right now.

## **The Results**

The results are clear: in-hotel emails average more than double the open rate and similar click rate as a newsletter for the same hotels. Many in-hotel emails tend to be more informative than salesy - often lacking a clickable CTA - which likely brings down the click rate a bit.

## **What This Means**

After seeing these results, in-resort messaging becomes an even better vehicle to get time-sensitive offers in front of the right people at the right time.

It’s also worth pointing out that this campaign, more than others, needs to be optimized for mobile when you consider that the percentage of guests with smartphones has risen above 50% in some of the key demographics for destination travelers.

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*Originally published Apr 9, 2013.*



# If I've visited the last two years, how likely am I to come next year?

## **The Goods**

To find an answer we took reservation data for 8 different hotels and resorts spanning 7 years. We identified the guests with vacation streaks (lodging in consecutive years) and found guest return rates at different streak lengths.

## **The Results**

If someone lodged one year but hadn't the year before, there was about a 12% chance they'd return the following year. If they'd come two years in a row there's a 34% chance they'll return the following year. After 3 consecutive years the likelihood is just under 50%. After 6 years that number is 75%.

## **What This Means**

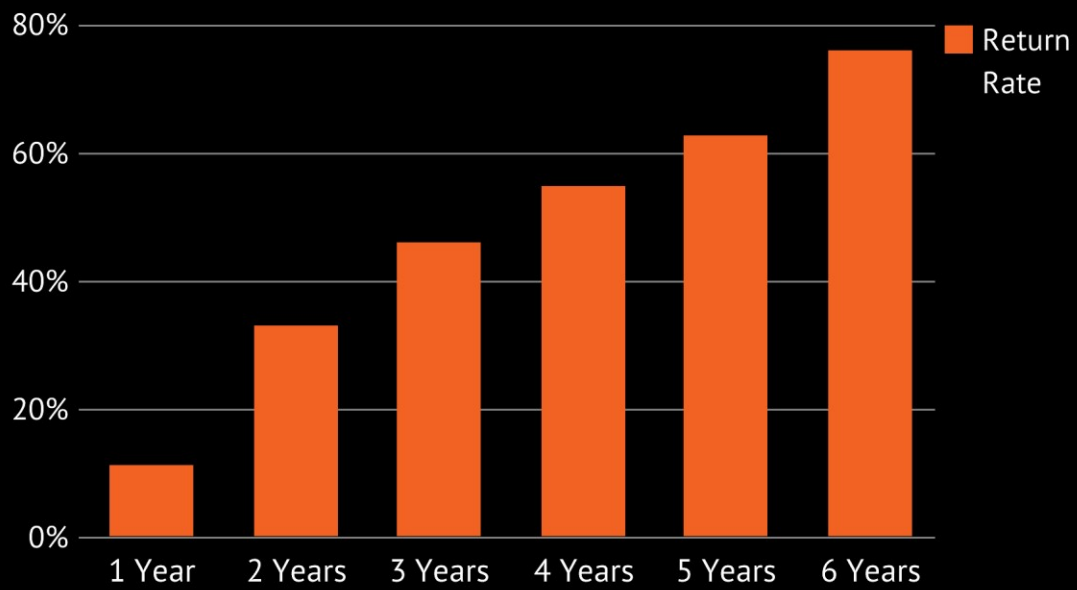
The hardest hurdle in this series seems to be the first: getting guests with a streak of 1 year to make it 2. This is also, by far, the largest group. Depending on your current strategy, this could be either an opportunity or a challenge.

However, if one of the hotels in this sample increased the return rate of first-time guests from 12% to 15%, they would have 100 extra reservations next year made by people who are now 3x as likely to make it 3 in a row than they were to make it 2.

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*Originally published Jan 1, 2013.*





# Are booking lead times really “shrinking fast” for all hotels?

## **The Goods**

A recent article revealed that hotel booking lead times are “shrinking fast.” Meanwhile, mountain destinations have been placing an increased emphasis on advanced booking. To see if this extra effort helped them avoid this trend we looked at lead times over the last 6 years for 30 mountain destinations.

## **The Results**

For this sample of mountain destinations lead times have not dropped. On the contrary, they’ve grown almost 25% from 44 days in 2010 to just under 55 days so far in 2015.

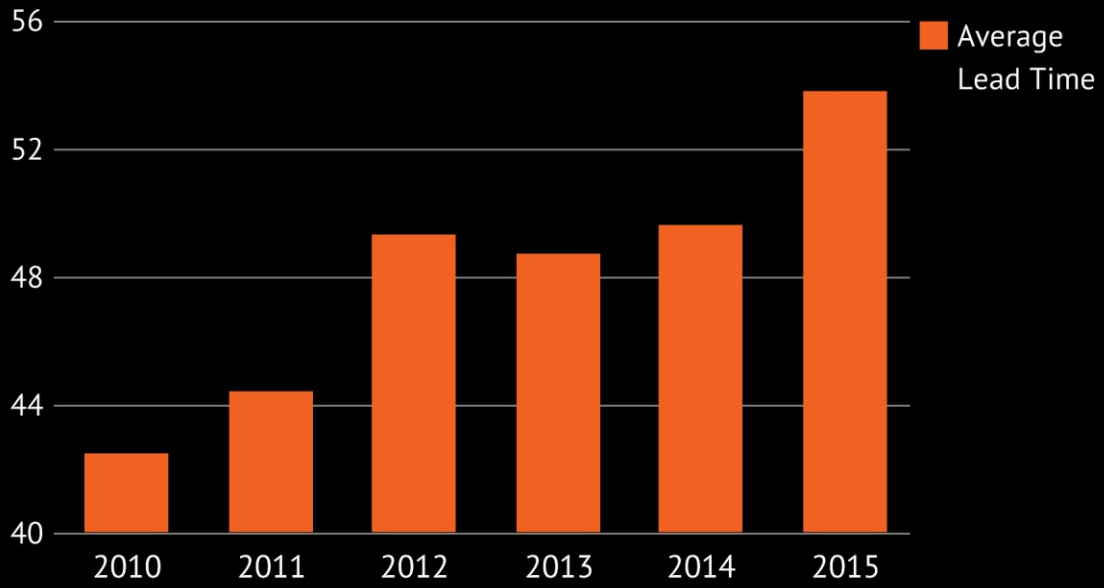
## **What This Means**

Keep in mind that the last few seasons have seen below-average snowfall across much of the country. In a weather-dependent industry like mountains and skiing, this may have impacted last-minute bookings driven by snow storms and kept the average higher than it would have been.

Interestingly, the last season with above-average snowfall nationwide was 2010/2011, which is also the lowest point on our graph.

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*Originally published Nov 3, 2015.*



# Do millennials open and click hotel emails more often than boomers?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we looked at 20 different email campaigns sent by 10 different hotels and resorts to a total of 1,600,000 recipients. We decided to group our initial results by three generations: Gen X, Boomers, and Millennials.

## **The Results**

For this sample, Millennials average an open rate of 12.9% and a click rate of 8.4%. Age 31-40 saw an open rate of 15.0% and a click rate of 8.8% with 31-40 seeing 20.4% and 10.3% respectively. Boomers saw a 23.4% open rate and 13.0% click rate. The overall averages for this sample were an 18.2% open rate and 9.9% click rate.

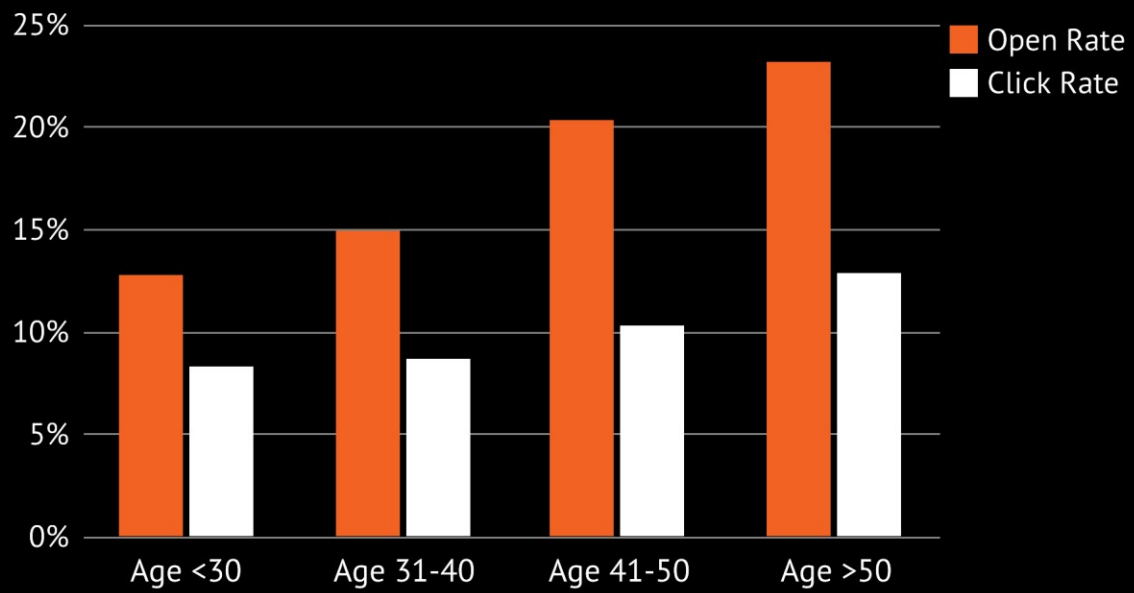
## **What This Means**

Truth be told, we thought Millennials might be lower than this and were surprised to see that, while they are certainly below the average, their behavior isn't that far off email marketing averages from just 5-6 years ago.

Are there other ways to reach millennials? Absolutely, but a 13% open rate among this group is nothing to take lightly. Email is still required for the vast majority of online services and transactions. As long as that game continues, expect Millennials – just like the rest of us – to keep our inboxes open.

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*Originally published Feb 16, 2016.*



# How many people actually click the social icons in hotel emails?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we looked at 50 large email campaigns sent by 10 U.S. resorts. Combined, these campaigns were opened by about 650,000 recipients. We then found the average click rate (clicks/opens) for each social icon link in these campaigns.

## **The Results**

Facebook saw the highest click rate (0.06%) with Twitter, Instagram, Google+, and YouTube all sitting around 0.03%. Pinterest saw the lowest click rate of the group (0.01%).

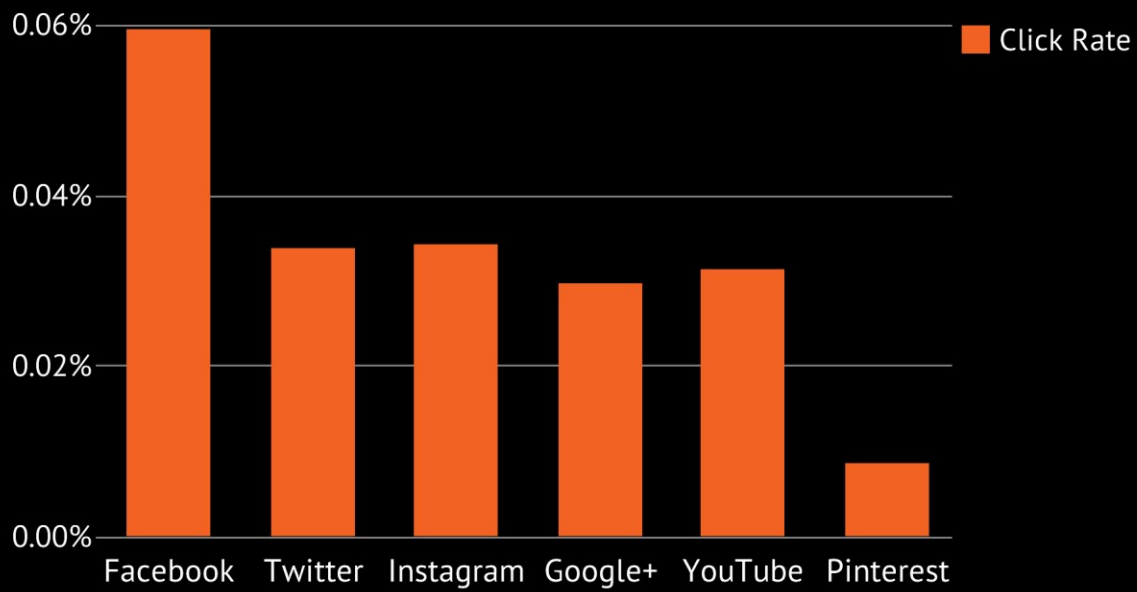
## **What This Means**

Let's put those numbers a different way by looking at an average icon like Twitter. If you send 1,000,000 emails a year, a 20% open rate will earn you about 200,000 opens. At a 0.03% click rate that comes out to 60 clicks per year.

This might be expected, especially for something that isn't the focus of the message, but when you consider that along the way over 15x as many people will click the unsubscribe link in those same emails, it does help put the performance of these icons into context.

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*Originally published Apr 7, 2015.*



# Savings vs price: Which dollar sign usage sees better performance?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we grouped emails by the way they used dollar signs in the subject line. The first group mentioned a dollar savings but DID NOT reveal the discounted price. The second group referred to the discounted price but DID NOT specify how much they were saving versus the regular price.

## **The Results**

For this sample, subject lines that specified a dollar savings saw 10% higher open rates (1.4 percentage points) than emails that referred to a discounted price.

## **What This Means**

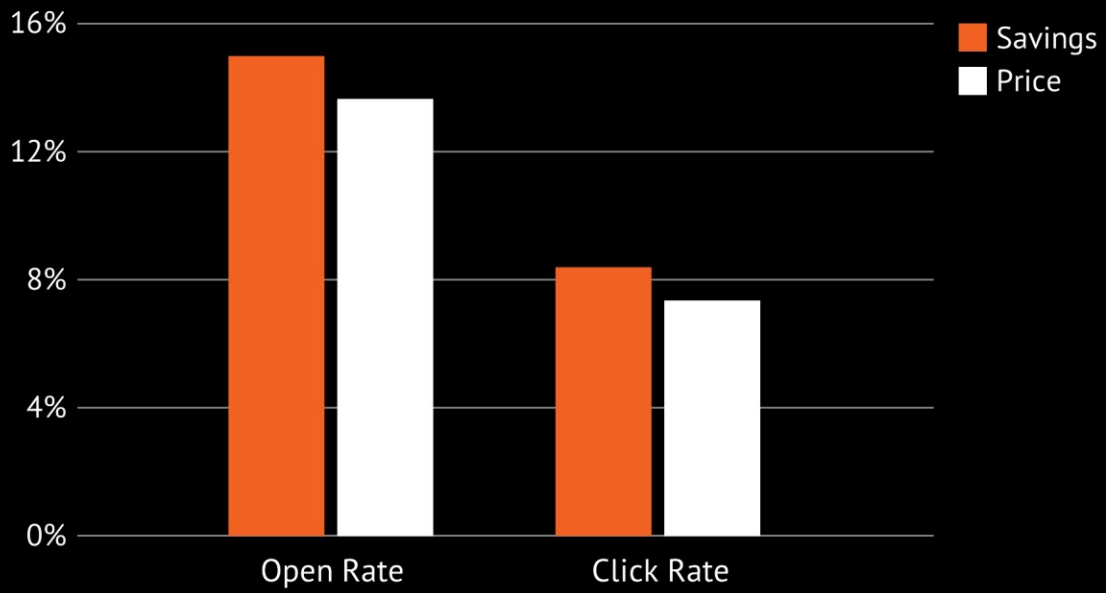
If the inkling you had was anything like ours, this doesn't come as too big of a surprise. After all, a customer doesn't pay the discount, they pay the price. And only by opening the email can someone discover that piece of the puzzle.

But what this simple analysis does do is quantify the effects. For our sample the difference in opens was about 10%. Running a split test the next time you include a dollar figure in a subject line could help identify any behaviors that are unique to your guests.

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*Originally published Jan 6, 2015.*





# At what age does lodging spend peak for destination guests?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we took data from 7 different hotels and resort across two years for this analysis. Over 45,000 reservations were included from guests divided into 5 year increments from 20 – 75 years of age.

## **The Results**

For this sample spending was lowest with the youngest group from ages 21-25. Spending peaked in the 41-45 range then dropped steadily before leveling out around 56-75.

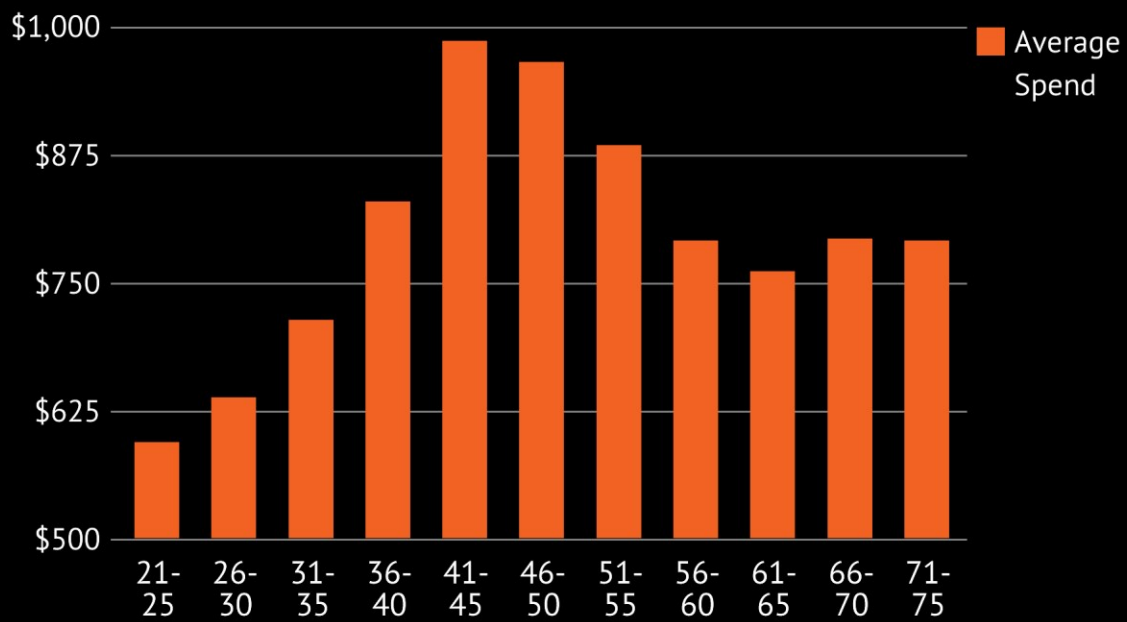
## **What This Means**

What's most interesting about these results is the difference between spend and income. Age versus household income would reveal a chart that rises, plateaus, and never descends.

Spend, on the other hand, shows a drop almost as steep as the climb once kids leave the house, retirement looms, and other factors come into play. So, yes, age impacts spend. But, no, it's not that simple.

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*Originally published Nov 6, 2012.*



# Are older hotel guests more likely to book a return trip?

## **The Goods**

For this analysis we pulled lodging data across three seasons from 10 hotels and resorts across the United States. We grouped guests from any given year by age and found how many in each group returned the following year.

## **The Results**

The simple answer is, yes, older guests are more likely to return. From this sample, about 14% of guests between 21-30 years old returned the following year versus nearly 40% of guests 70 and over.

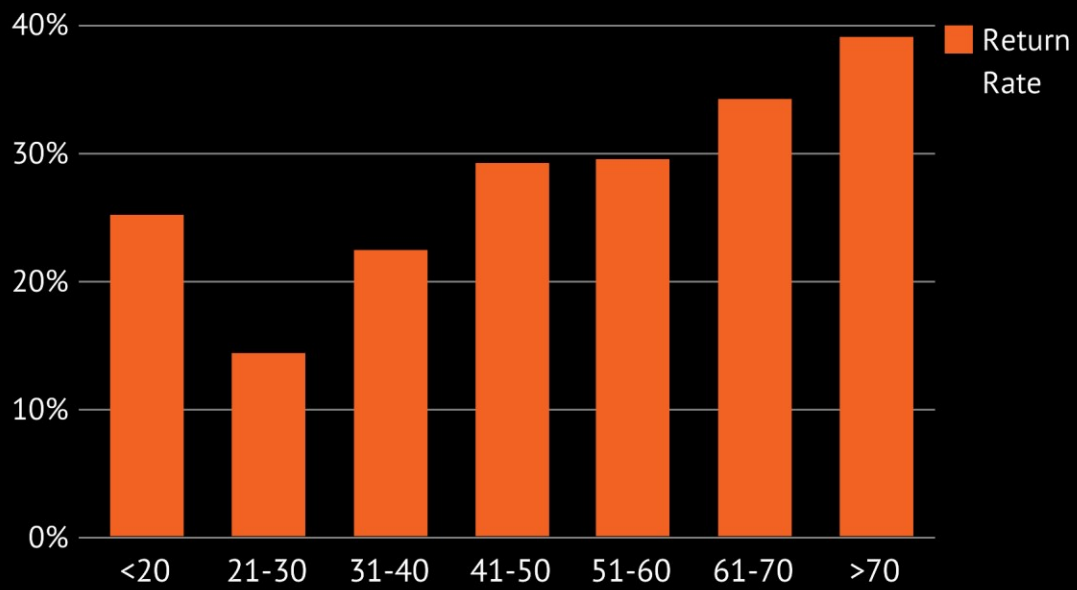
## **What This Means**

Sometimes results are unexpected, but that's probably not the case for most of you reading this.

But while it's no surprise that older guests are more likely to come back, it's helpful to see more specific numbers attached to this concept especially as it relates to spend, length-of-stay, and lead times.

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*Originally published Feb 4, 2014.*



# Are the same people opening your hotel's newsletters each month?

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we analyzed email data from eight hotels and resorts that consistently send email newsletters and compared each campaign only to the campaign that preceded it. So, if 10,000 people opened a newsletter and 6,000 also opened the previous newsletter, 60% would fall into the "Opened Both" group.

## **The Results**

With every newsletter that your hotel sends, you can expect that about 57% of the people who open it also opened your last newsletter. On the flip side, 43% of openers didn't, and are unique to this message.

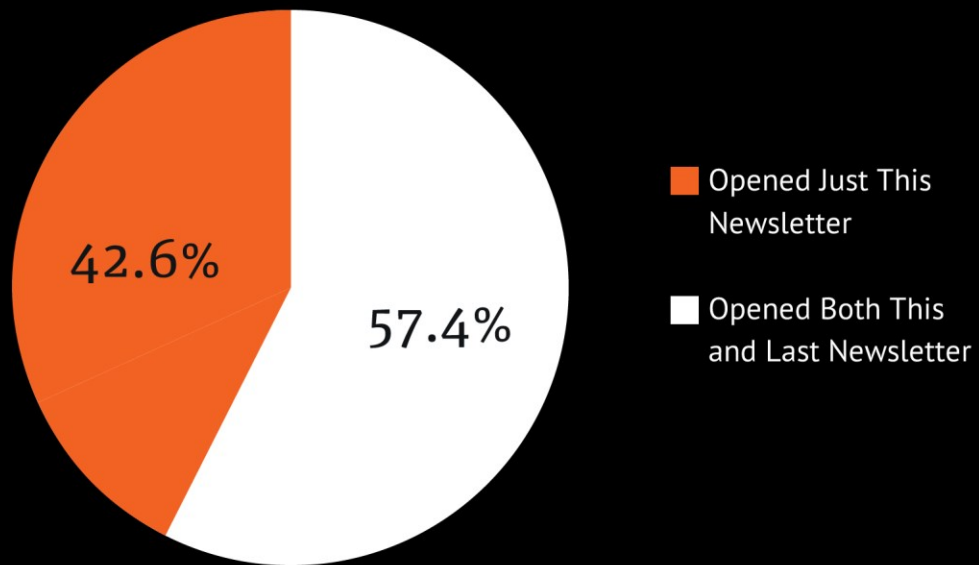
## **What This Means**

While there is a group of subscribers that likely do open every message without fail, a consistent open rate does NOT mean a consistent group of openers. Every campaign reaches new eyes.

If it's worrying to think that all of your newsletters are only being read by the same group of people, worry no more.

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*Originally published August 27, 2013.*



# Google loves fast sites, but most hotels are lagging way behind.

## **The Goods**

To find our answer we analyzed 4,800 hotel websites using Google's PageSpeed Insights tool which gives each website a score of 0-100. A score of at least 85 is what Google considers "performing well."

## **The Results**

The average score for this sample was 68.7 with 13.0% of all sites sitting at or above a score of 85. Looking closer, 4.0-5.0 star hotels saw an average score of 64.5 (6.0% scored 85+), 3.0-3.5 star hotels averaged 68.2 (11.1% scored 85+), and 2.0-2.5 star hotels average a score of 69.9 (16.3% scored 85+).

## **What This Means**

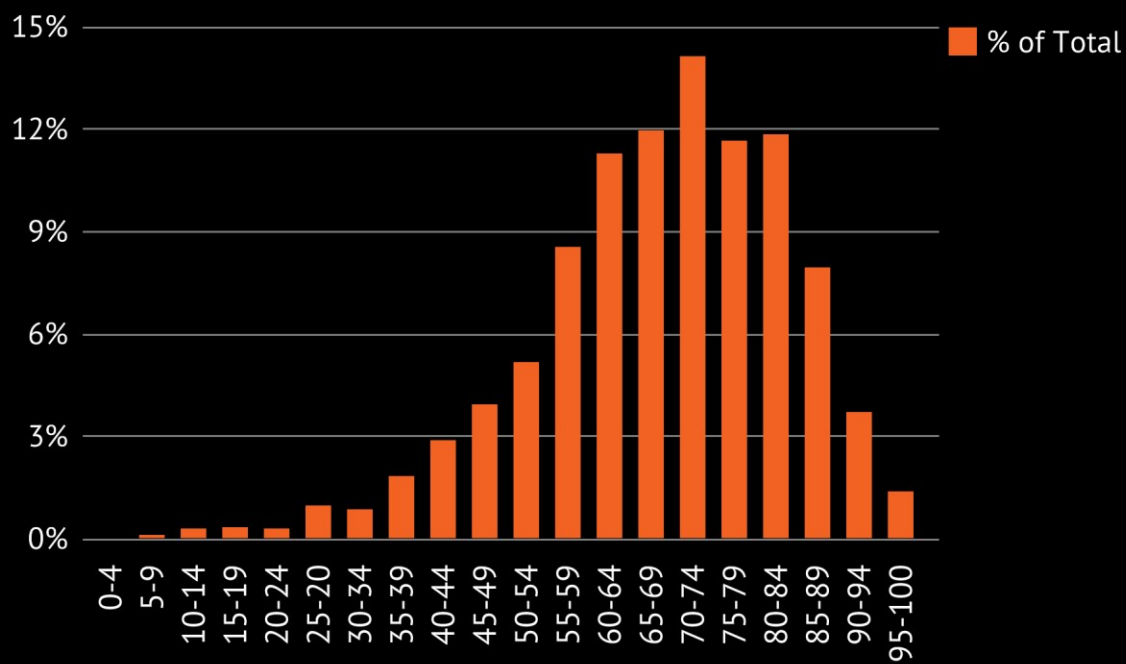
Perhaps most interestingly is how few 4.0-5.0 star properties were considered "performing well." Likely a result of increased complexity with newer websites, it may be worth considering a more simplified approach with the next redesign.

Despite being imperfect, these scores are an interesting insight into how Google views hotel websites relative to the factors they consider in their ranking algorithm.

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*Originally published October 8, 2013.*





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