# TripAdvisor Unveils Self-Serve Advertising Platform for Small Businesses




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In what could be either seen as a challenge to Google or an opportunity for marketers, TripAdvisor, one of the world's largest online travel recommendations and booking sites, has introduced its own self-serve advertising platform directed at small and medium-sized businesses.

Using what the site is calling the "TripAdvisor Media Manager," brands and media buyers will be able to submit their own creative banner ads directly to the platform and see them live within 48 hours. The ads will be able to target specific audiences based on user location, browsed destinations and recent planning activities on TripAdvisor.

By streamlining the process, TripAdvisor is making it easier for smaller businesses to advertise directly on its platform, an audience Google and Facebook have historically found great success in.

“With someone who owns a business, who’s doing everything from bookkeeping and marketing to front line services, we wanted to make this as easy as possible,” Christine Maguire, TripAdvisor’s vp of global advertising revenue, said. “It’s not a challenge [to Google and Facebook]. It’s an opportunity. We wanted to give small, medium-sized business options.”

Maguire wouldn’t speculate on the revenue the platform would generate or the brands that participated in the beta-testing but acknowledge that it wouldn’t have a significant impact on TripAdvisor’s fourth quarter.

TripAdvisor said that the ads cost at least $500, with no maximum.

“If given the option, marketers say they want to diversify their budget across many different platforms,” Maguire said.

According to a TripAdvisor spokesperson, brands that had previously wanted to advertise on TripAdvisor’s platform had to purchase ads directly through the brand’s sales team. Now, through a TripAdvisor dashboard, brands will be able to set a budget and track an ad’s success and adjust in real time.

During National Small Business Week last May, Facebook unveiled new tools for small and midsized businesses that Facebook said made up a majority of the 7 million active advertisers on the platform.

“Small and medium-sized buyers don’t really have the capacity or understanding to run a campaign on their own, so they use self-serve platforms like Google or Facebook,” Maja Milicevic, a founder of Sparrow Advisers, a digital consulting agency, said. “A lot of publishers [like TripAdvisor] are trying to carve out specific niches that already exist with Facebook’s targeting … Hopefully, this will move a brand’s budget away from Facebook.”

On Monday, Lindsay Nelson, TripAdvisor’s president of core

experiences and a former CCO of Vox Media, posted on LinkedIn that the site was looking to hire an “editor-in-chief” type to aid “content strategy.”

When asked about the post, Maguire said “having a diversified revenue portfolio is critical, Lindsay came in with a diverse background … she is seeing the opportunity across our products and experiences … It’s just one of the many things we’re doing to amplify what TripAdvisor is as a media platform.”

In the third quarter of 2019, TripAdvisor reached nearly 460 million monthly unique visitors but saw revenue decreased 7% year-over-year from $458 million to $428 million. TripAdvisor already has a contentious relationship with Google, which competes directly with TripAdvisor in the travel space even though TripAdvisor spends a great deal of advertising on Google’s platform.

During a call with investors, TripAdvisor’s CEO and president Stephen Kaufer acknowledged that the decline could be attributed to Google’s prioritization of its own search results on Google’s search engine.

“Google has gotten more aggressive. We’ve been predicting this, of course, for the past many years … Our focus around the whole TripAdvisor brand is enabling folks and offering many more reasons why they want to come back to TripAdvisor,” Kaufer said.

Maguire sees it similarly.

“TripAdvisor and Google and any other publisher, you have a business partnership with them … and with any scenario, there’s the nature of a frenemy, you’re both thinking strategically with how you partner … I’m a big believer in hearing from marketers and employees, they all feel the same. Any solution that’s going to see them diversify is a good thing.”

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