

venere.com
book *hotels*, *B&Bs* and *apartments*

iPhone and Android

Introduction

Venere, an Expedia Inc. company, is a global online travel agency specialising exclusively in hotel reservations. The Venere Apps are the ideal travel companion for travellers that book their stay on the go, allowing you to search, explore and book a hotel, or bed & breakfast anytime, anywhere.

The apps integrate with Venere's proprietary booking system, and allow users to find and book the perfect hotel in one of eight different languages. The user can make a reservation without advance payment and has real-time access to all information about selected hotels.



The Project

Venere's business model is based on pure intermediation between the guest and the hotelier; unlike many hotel booking agencies, the hotel owner has full control over availability, rates and payments. Venere identified a requirement to develop native mobile apps in order to build on the success of its mobile optimized website and provide the following additional benefits:

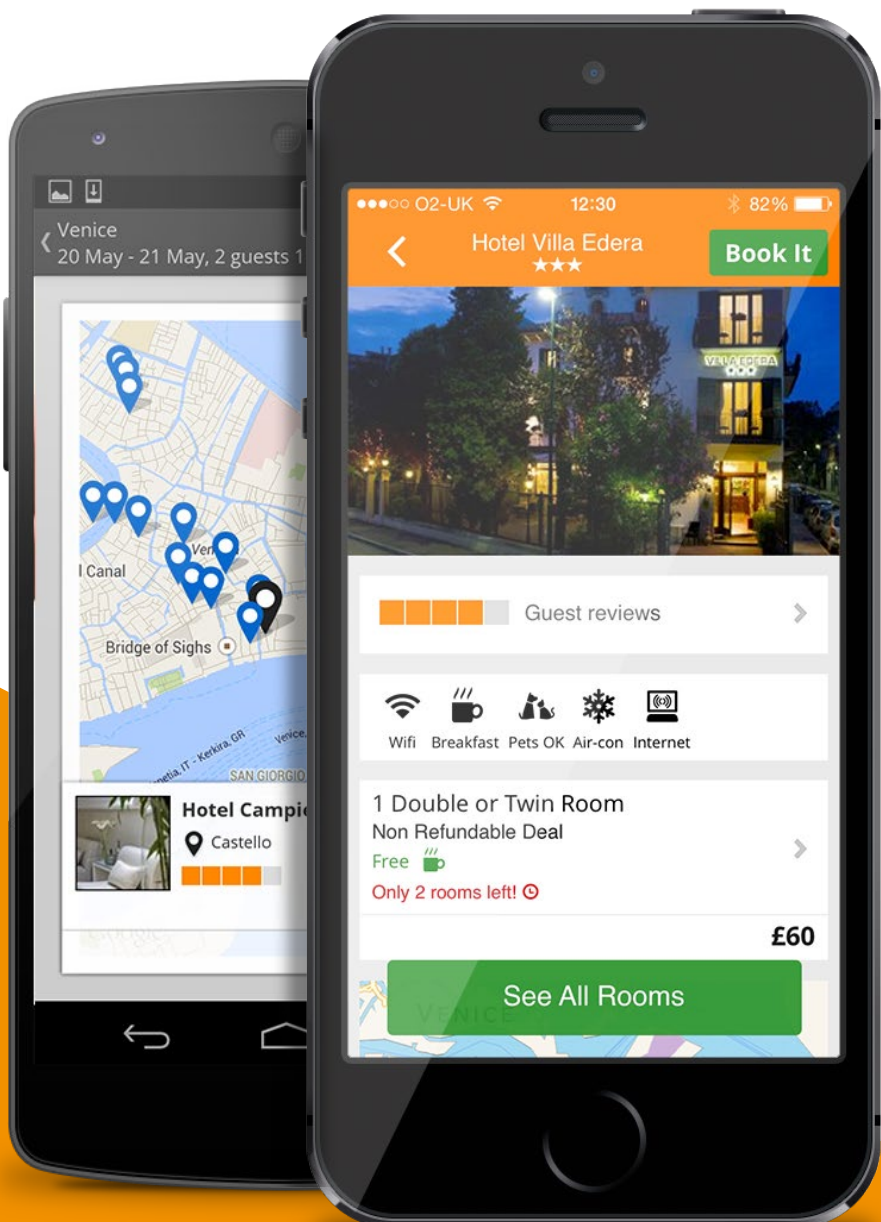
- Improve the conversion rate compared to Venere's mobile web offering
- Increase the average spend per purchase compared to the mobile web
- To specifically target late bookers - users booking within 24 or 48 hours of check-in

Compsoft was introduced to Venere by Hotels.com, another member of the Expedia group, with whom Compsoft has worked extensively. Venere's requirement was to develop bespoke, native iPhone and Android apps, along with a Content Management System (CMS) and middleware component to integrate the apps with Venere's proprietary booking system.

The apps allow the user to:

- Access thousands of hotel deals and offers
- Sort hotels based on current location or use a map to find the perfect location
- Book while on the move using the mobile friendly checkout
- Get direct & easy access to Venere's 24/7 assistance service
- Access everything they need to check-in on arrival, whether on or offline
- Benefit from mobile only deals which target the needs of mobile users (such as a shorter booking window)

The Venere apps integrate with Venere's booking system, XHI, for real time access to rates and availability. Each of the 100,000 hotels in the system has multiple data sources, for instance pricing and availability, catalogue information, and guest reviews. Innovative use was made of algorithms to rationalise requests, and to quickly collate and transmit relevant data in the correct language and currency, for display in the apps. This gives the user access to the key benefits of Venere's service without sacrificing performance.



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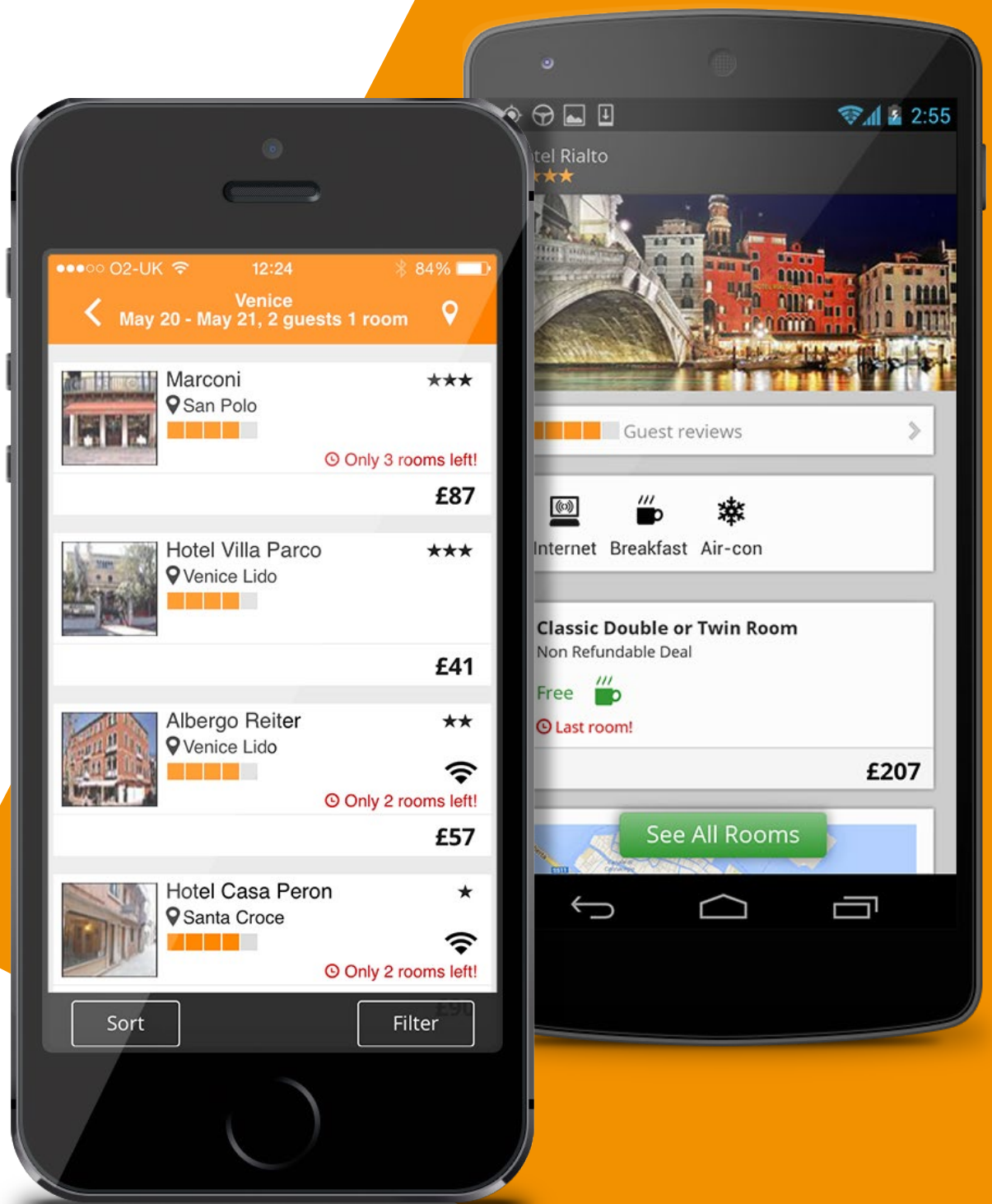


User Experience

The UX for the apps has to cater both for users booking in a hurry, and those who want to explore comprehensive hotel information. It was therefore essential that the user be given access to information without being bombarded with it unnecessarily. Venere has a loyal customer base, and is strong across diverse demographics, for instance business travellers and senior citizens. It was therefore key for the design of the app to be warm and comforting, with easy navigation and obvious, but not pushy, calls to action.

The apps use native iOS and Android controls, animations and themes in order to give the user a familiar and responsive experience. Furthermore localization settings such as language and currency are automatically defined, but can be changed if required.

Users begin with a simple screen where they enter key details of their stay including dates and location (including an option to use current location). The user can sort and filter results; hotel results and detail screens are designed to enable at-a-glance assessment while providing easy access to more detailed information like full page image galleries. The user is efficiently guided through the selection process to the booking area - the app monitors the device's data connection and provides the option to phone Venere when booking via the app is restricted by network availability.



Security

The apps utilise authenticated, encrypted communication with the Venere back-end system, which receives a user's search request then collates and returns the required data. For the best user experience, the Booking section was developed natively however user's personal and financial information is not stored on device after entry, but is encrypted and relayed to Venere's secure payment gateway.

The app features a secure Reservations area - the user must login in with their Venere username and password to see and manage all their Venere bookings. Once authenticated the user's password is hashed and stored in the app, enabling offline login and access to Reservations information. Booking changes (e.g. cancellations) also require password re-entry before the change is submitted. If a user logs out and logs back in with a different account, all data relating to the original account is deleted.

