Global travel booking company Launchtrip uses event data to identify valuable events

Introducing Launchtrip

In today's data-driven travel industry, everyone knows **events drive demand**. But few understand this better than Launchtrip, a rapidly growing startup that enables travelers to effortlessly book group travel for events they're excited about.

They provide a seamless journey from intention to booking for travelers, creating an influx of bookings for their accommodation partners. Because Launchtrip's offering is all about making the complex world of travel simple and satisfying, they are obsessed with **creating a top-notch user experience powered by top-tier event data**.

Headquartered in Vancouver, Canada and serving a global market, the company kicked off a pilot program in 2021 to test providing customized accommodation options to travelers planning for events. The goal was to identify how much events drove demand, and if providing accommodation options specifically inspired by events would work.

Uncovering what drives travel demand

Launchtrip Product Manager Kat Bykova explains the problem they were solving: "When you book an event, you're not told these are the best hotels for your trip: here's how to get to the venue the fastest, the hotels in your area, and the kind of activities that you can do around the event that you're attending. That's where Launchtrip realized we could step in and really elevate our users' experience."

Working directly with event organizers and sourcing events such as music festivals, sports tournaments and conferences manually, the team were thrilled with the results. Consumers would move smoothly through the app, booking their accommodation with one of Launchtrip's partners. They decided to make it a major feature of their app. But how would this scale? This would require a lot more events making this an unachievable task to continue to do manually.

For example, in Launchtrip's home city of Vancouver, there are 242 events in June 2022, with 11 of them being major events. Even if the team could identify all of these manually, that's just one market with other impactful events out there such as:

JUNE 2022

17 major events in Montreal   **22** major events in London

11 major events in New York City   **12** major events in Paris

39 major events in Chicago

KAT BYKOVA

"Sourcing events manually does not work. I was spending literally eight hours a day, five days a week, trying to aggregate all this information by hand." says Launchtrip Product Manager Kat Bykova. "At one point we had four or five people within the company spending around three hours a day helping to locate the data and enter it on a spreadsheet. Everyone from engineers up to our CEO were pitching in,"

Launchtrip uses Predicted Attendance and Impact Rankings to find the most valuable events

Aggregating events was a crucial feature that made their offering, making it a necessity to figure out. The team would enter event titles, dates, locations as well as indicative attendee totals (often based on venue capacity or news articles) into a spreadsheet.

Because they were using multiple ticketing sites to try to get the coverage needed, they had one spreadsheet per platform, often with significantly different information on the same event. While it was clear to the team a manual solution would not scale, they were reluctant to invest in a partnership with a ticketing API due to the inconsistencies and gaps in the data they were working with every day.

"Just when I would think we've made good progress on a city's events, we'd find different details listed on another site. It was driving me crazy," Bykova says. "I had multiple different spreadsheets going for each different source. You also needed to de-duplicate all that information manually, which is obviously a huge burden, and it's really hard to find representative attendance numbers. Then there are many big events such as festivals, parades and community events that aren't on ticketing platforms. It was getting really difficult."

Post pandemic, with events returning at different paces per market and frequently with wildly different attendance levels than their earlier iterations, the team knew they needed to find a solution fast. Suddenly their target accommodation partners realized how impactful events could provide certainty in their planning, and every travel company was looking to recover as fast as possible. Luckily, a consultant group Launchtrip was working with mentioned PredictHQ.

Verified, intelligent event data at scale

Being able to access data on all the events they needed and knowing every detail was verified was a huge relief to Bykova and team.

"After we integrated PredictHQ, we saved 90% or more of our time working with events to find the right details and identify high quality events. We were a little bit worried at first about whether or not PredictHQ would actually be able to differentiate event quality [i.e. which events would have the most impact].

We had our hypotheses from our pilot program, so it was a relief to see PredictHQ align with those. With the rankings and predicted attendance features, we could stop worrying about the event data and focus on promoting the right events to our end users and selling the right event partnerships to our accommodation partners."

PredictHQ's systems aggregates events from hundreds of sources, and verifies each key detail. Its models then provide an accurate predicted attendance as well as a series of impact rankings, from a general rank to how impactful it will be locally to Aviation Rank, which identifies how many airline tickets will be booked for the event. Launchtrip set up thresholds for event predicted attendance and general rank to quickly filter out low impact events, and Aviation Rank to know which events would drive a lot of inbound traffic.

"PredictHQ has alleviated the burden of spending hundreds, if not thousands of hours on sourcing events and trying to make sense out of them. Even outside of the product team, we have team members ranging from marketing to sales who have all really benefited from the data," Bykova says. "We're serving people with very many different tastes in events so if somebody does come on the app and they search for something that they don't see, which would likely be the case if we weren't using PredictHQ, then our conversion rate would be much lower."

The Launchtrip team is expecting material impact on company KPIs including reducing abandonment rates, boosting conversion and building repeat bookings and referrals through increased customer loyalty. PredictHQ's ability to notify customers when key events are postponed or canceled enables the Launchtrip team to rapidly contact and care for their end users and accommodation partners.

With the right demand intelligence in place, the Launchtrip team was able to focus their efforts on growing the company and launch an exciting new interface for their search page in early July 2022, just as international travel begins to ramp up.
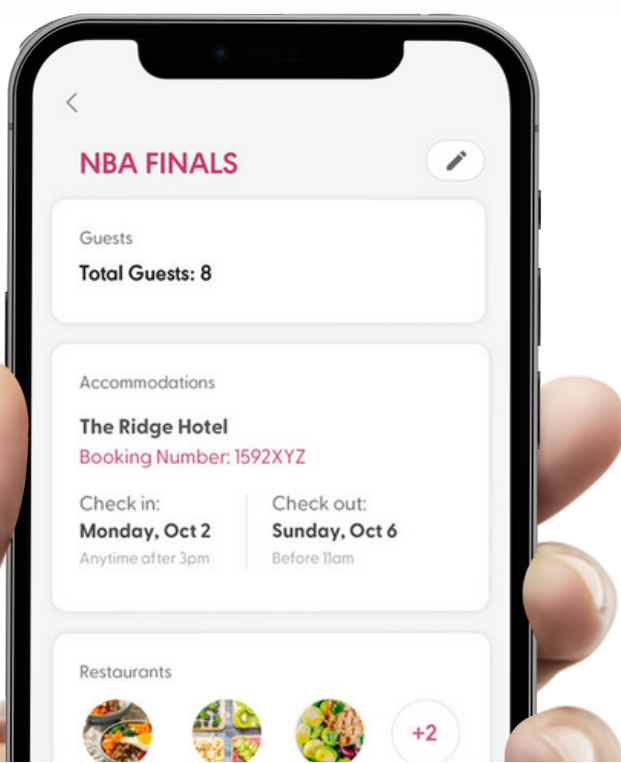
Event data as a secret weapon for accommodation demand predictions

Launchtrip is designed to make planning trips as easy as possible, by connecting users with the right accommodation and additional events to make the trips meaningful - and low stress. As international travel begins to rebound, the team is positioning to tap into the renewed enthusiasm about travel and make it as easy as possible for customers.

"There are a lot of different views on the immediate future of travel, but for sure, people are trying to make the most out of their trips. People are going to try to make their trips really special and memorable, because it's been so long and we're still not sure what the future of the pandemic holds," Bykova says.

Not only did integrating PredictHQ's data increase the volume and quality of events, the ability to stop wasting time googling for events enabled Launchtrip to add new functionality to their app such as the ability to search by city, as well as by event. Most users search for a specific event and then book their accommodation, but as excited travelers plan what else to do on their journey, Launchtrip wants to ensure they can help them have their best possible trip, to drive customer loyalty and delight.

Maximum value and collaboration

For Bykova and the Launchtrip team, being able to extract maximum value from their investment in external data was key. Not only did the company feel confident they had the breadth and depth of travel-driving events, it also meant their team could focus on building a world-class travel experience app and massive network of accommodation providers, rather than checking every major event they could find across four different ticketing providers, often each with slightly different information.

"When we decided to use PredictHQ to power our event search, we were a pre-seed stage startup and about to launch our beta app. So this meant that we had to be really, really wise with our spending. Of course the main concern for us that we had to kind of convince the rest of the team on was if this was going to be a good investment, or whether the manual labor actually ends up being cheaper and still gets us most of the way there," Bykova says.

"But without PredictHQ, we'd be spending a lot more time trying to figure out what events are worth promoting to our end users. And it was nearly impossible to curate better experiences for end users without knowing whether or not an event is popular or not, which is the question that PredictHQ really answers for us, through their predicted attendances, local impact rank and the overall PHQ rank."

By using PredictHQ's data, the Launchtrip team has been able to cut down time spent on sourcing, editing, managing and researching events from ~35 hours a week down to ~2-3 hours. That's a 91% decrease in time spent – or stated differently, that's a lot of time saved that the team can now use in more high impact ways.

Launchtrip currently uses PredictHQ's data across 12 cities in Canada and the US, with plans to extend this more broadly as their user-based, accommodation network and team grows.

"One thing I must add as a tip for people who are integrating PredictHQ is that if there is a feature that you really want to see, just reach out to the team. They really do value that customer feedback and they are always looking to improve the product, which has been really great. We're really looking forward to growing with them."