



A special report from
the HSMAI Travel
Internet Marketing
Special Interest Group

Effective Website Design



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Dear Colleagues:

The [HSMAI](#) Travel Internet Marketing Special Interest Group is pleased to present this report as part of our mission to increase members' awareness and understanding of emerging issues, opportunities and trends; and [TIG Global](#) is proud to sponsor the report as part of its commitment to helping travel professionals drive revenue and profit online by making smart, strategic marketing decisions.

Published by the HSMAI Foundation, this report, *Effective Website Design*, considers several of the most significant topics in contemporary website design and how they can enhance the sales and marketing performance companies and organizations within the global hospitality, travel and tourism sector.

We hope it helps you understand why these topics are significant and provides concrete examples to illustrate them. Organizations seeking to build their brands, offer superior customer experiences and enhance their bottom line performance will find that design offers them numerous innovative and creative avenues for accomplishing this distinct set of goals.

We wish you the very best of success.

Christine Beuchert

Director of Ecommerce & Performance Marketing, Marcus Hotels & Resorts, and Chair, HSMAI Travel Internet Marketing Advisory Board

Frederic W. Malek, CEO and

Trip Schneck, President
TIG Global - a subsidiary of MICROS Systems Inc.
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Join HSMAl to become a part of the Travel Internet Marketing Special Interest Group

Information & Instructions

The on-line membership application is available at www.hsmal.org. To apply off-line, complete & return this form. Membership in HSMAl gives you access to the resources, knowledge and networks you need to make a critical connection with your customers. Examples of some of the benefits you will receive as an HSMAl member include:

- » Local chapter membership
- » HSMAl Marketing Review subscription
- » Web site resources in "members only" section
- » Membership in up to five Special Interest Groups. Sign up on www.hsmal.org under "Update your Record."
- » FOR FACULTY ONLY: Faculty members receive a 50% discount off the member price of most HSMAl publications and conference registration fees, including webinars.

For additional information, please contact HSMAl Headquarters:
1760 Old Meadow Road, Suite 500, McLean, VA 22102 Phone: 703-506-3280 Fax: 703-506-3266

Member Information

NAME: _____ CERTIFICATION(S): _____
 POSITION: _____ COMPANY: _____
 PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS: _____
 CITY: _____ STATE/PROVINCE: _____ ZIP/POSTAL CODE: _____
 TELEPHONE: _____ FAX: _____
 BUSINESS EMAIL: _____ HOME EMAIL: _____
 CHAPTER NAME*: _____ INDUSTRY CLASS*: _____
 REFERRED BY: _____

**See following page for listing of chapters and industry classes.*

Payment Information

ANNUAL DUES:

- \$350** for the first, or only, member from your company.
- \$300** if you sign up for Automatic Renewal. This option is only available if you are paying by credit card.
- \$225** for each member joining from a company where a primary member has paid full dues (\$350). Please note that you must have the same mailing address as that primary member.
- \$60** for students and faculty members – Multiple membership discounts do not apply for students or faculty.

PAYMENT METHOD:

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- Sign up for Automatic Renewal (Pay \$300 instead of \$350)
- Donate \$25 to the HSMAl Foundation (Contributions are deductible under Section 501C(3) of the IRS tax code)

Please charge \$ _____ to my: American Express Diner's Club Master Card Visa

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- Pay by Check—Include your application(s) with your check and mail to:
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Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International Membership Application

Americas Region Chapters

**Chapters Under Development*

Arizona – Greater Arizona Chapter

California

- » Greater Los Angeles Chapter
- » Northern California Chapter
- » Orange County Chapter
- » San Diego Chapter

Colorado

- » Southern Colorado Chapter
- » Denver Chapter
- » Vail Valley Chapter

Connecticut

- » Greater New York Chapter (New York City)
- » New England Chapter (Boston)

Delaware – Greater Philadelphia Chapter

District of Columbia – Washington, DC Chapter

Florida

- » Central Florida Chapter (Orlando)
- » Florida Keys Chapter
- » Northeast Florida Chapter (Jacksonville)
- » South Florida Chapter (Ft. Lauderdale-Miami-Palm Beach)

Georgia – Georgia Chapter (Atlanta)

Louisiana – Gulf South Chapter

Illinois – Illinois Chapter (Chicago)

Indiana – Indianapolis Chapter*

Maine – New England Chapter (Boston)

Maryland

- » Maryland Chapter (Baltimore)
- » Washington, DC Chapter

Massachusetts – New England Chapter (Boston)

Minnesota – Minnesota Chapter (Minneapolis-St. Paul)

Mississippi – Gulf South Chapter

Missouri – Missouri Chapter (St. Louis)

Nebraska – Heartland Chapter (Omaha)

New Hampshire – New England Chapter (Boston)

New Jersey

- » Greater Philadelphia Chapter
- » Greater New York Chapter

New York

- » Greater New York Chapter (New York City)
- » Hudson Valley Chapter

North Carolina – Carolinas Chapter

Ohio

- » Cleveland Chapter
- » Columbus Chapter

Oregon – Oregon Chapter (Portland)

Pennsylvania

- » Northeast Pennsylvania Chapter (Scranton)
- » Greater Philadelphia Chapter

Rhode Island – New England Chapter (Boston)

South Carolina – Carolinas Chapter

Tennessee

- » Mid-South Chapter (Memphis)
- » Nashville Chapter*

Texas

- » Austin Chapter*
- » Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex Chapter
- » Houston Space City Chapter

Vermont – New England Chapter (Boston)

Virginia

Washington, DC Chapter

Washington – Washington Chapter (Seattle)

Caribbean

- » Aruba Chapter
- » Curacao Chapter
- » Puerto Rico Chapter

Industry Classifications

AD Advertising

AI Airlines

AS Associations

AT Area Attraction

CA Casino

CB CVB/Tourism

CC Convention/Conference Centers

CL Cruise Line or Passenger Ship

CM Public Relations Agency

H1 Hotel & Conference Centers – DOM & DOS

H2 Hotel & Conference Centers, all other mgrs

H3 Hotel, Corporate, Regional, National Sales

HH Recruiters/Head Hunters

HM Hotel Management Company

MP Meeting Planner/Event Mgr

PR Press

PU Publishing

RE Restaurant/Dinner Theater/Catering

RS Hotel Representative Firms

R1 Revenue Manager at an individual property

R2 Revenue Manager at a corporate/national/regional office

R3 Revenue Manager at a management company

SM Other Sales & Marketing Individuals

SP Service Providers

TP Transportation

TT Tour/Travel Agent/Destination Offices



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A traveler's first impression of a website – positive or negative – is formed quickly, within just a few seconds. The elements that influence that ever-important first impression, as well as the equally significant second and third impressions, include a variety of options, such as color, images, text, navigation and the overall organization of the page, reflecting the outwardly appearance of a company's brand identity to the world.

Design is, in fact, a mission-critical factor for digital marketing. Excellent website design can help to propel a brand to new heights of sales and marketing performance just as mediocre design can harm its potential in these areas. While technology provides the core foundations that enable digital marketing to work, customers' impressions of a brand are essentially tied to the visual interaction they encounter on the Web, which relies heavily on design architecture and aesthetics to enhance and optimize this customer experience.

Gaston Legorburu, Worldwide Chief Creative Officer of SapientNitro recently responded to the question of whether design or technology is more important and why: "No question. Design. Apple without design would be the old Microsoft. JetBlue or Virgin Atlantic without design would be Air Tran. More and more of the human experience is, or will be, enabled by technology, but you must add design to technology to make magic."

Why is design so important to sales and marketing performance?

- » Design organizes site content in a hierarchical manner to give greatest emphasis to a site's most significant content and features
- » Design creates navigation that makes it easier for customers to move from gathering information to making reservations.
- » Design differentiates a brand from its competitor's websites
- » Design captures consumer attention through photographs, graphics, text and other elements and their arrangement
- » Design reaches global travelers in a superior manner through culturally-appropriate themes, colors, features and content
- » Design creates more positive and rewarding online experiences for customers and builds more positive impressions of brands

This special report considers several of the most significant topics in contemporary website design and how they can enhance the sales and marketing performance companies and organizations within the global hospitality, travel and tourism sector. It explains why these topics are significant and provides concrete examples to illustrate them. Organizations seeking to build their brands, offer superior customer experiences and enhance their bottom line performance will find that design offers them numerous innovative and creative avenues for accomplishing this distinct set of goals.

Color

The impact of color on marketing has been studied for over six decades. Color plays a significant role in molding consumer perceptions of companies and organizations, their products and services. Color stimulates emotional responses in consumers, offline and online, and can be used to generate positive associations with a brand that can help to breed purchase intent.

"We live in what is described as a five-second world and the choice for consumers is getting bigger and broader. Brands that don't touch consumers in a personal way are on shaky ground and any brand that resembles the one next to it is taking the first step to becoming a commodity. Too many brands follow the same rule book and simply become formulaic. Formulas don't deal with emotional need."

– **Mike Stanford**, Executive Creative Director at Landor Associates



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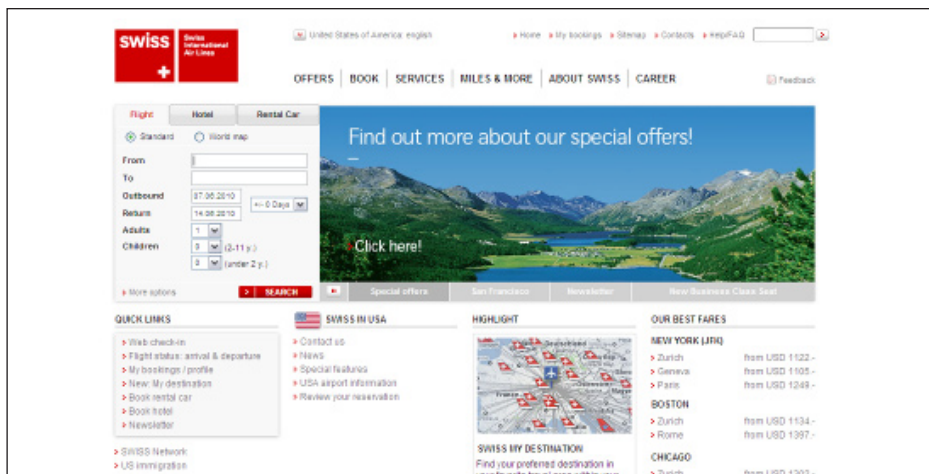
Color can be effectively leveraged to reinforce brand identity, facilitate better site navigation, build emotional connections with viewers and enable greater website personalization.

Brand identity can be enhanced by utilizing the colors found in a brand's visual identity elements within a website. This does not imply that a strict adherence to those colors and those colors alone is necessary or even desirable. However, a considered use of an organization's "official" colors within the context of a website can potentially be effective at strengthening the identity of the brand.

Organizations should resist any temptation to use only official corporate colors or to give them undue emphasis within a website. The overall "look and feel" established by a website's color scheme is far more significant than a forced use of strictly a brand's official colors.

However, depending on the colors in the logotype and how they are used, brand color schemes can be applied effectively. For example, the website of Swiss International Airlines uses a red and white color scheme throughout the site navigation and typeface that reflects the colors that are used in its logo and its aircraft exteriors.

According to a paper presented at a recent meeting of the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences, [studies have shown how color can grab and retain attention, can stimulate emotional responses, can affect an individual's perception, can form attitudes, and improve learning and persuasiveness. . . Color exercises very strong effects plus induces reactions in individuals based on both instincts and associations.](#)



Color can also be used to enhance site navigation and create visual order through a website. One way to accomplish this is by infusing colors used in navigational links into the background colors within the related sections of the site.

The home page of the website of the Beaches of South Walton features a decorative horizontal navigational element that is divided into bands of colors. Each color is associated with one of the beaches featured in the website: the colors used in the navigational links on the home page are coordinated with the background colors and textual navigational elements located on the Web page of each individual beach. This color-keyed navigational technique enhances site navigation by clearly differentiating each beach and by helping users to determine their current location within the website.



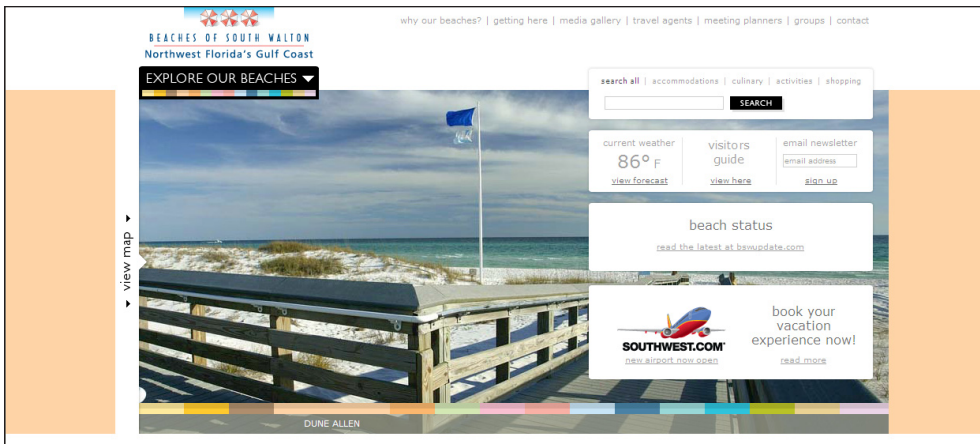
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Because the same colors can sometimes have radically different associations within different nations and cultures, color must be considered when conducting international marketing.

WHITE: Symbolizes mourning or death in East Asia, but happiness and purity in Australia, New Zealand and USA

BLUE: The most popular and most common corporate color in the U.S. is perceived as cold and evil in East Asia but stands for warmth in the Netherlands; interestingly coldness in Sweden; death in Iran and purity in India.

GREEN: Represents danger or disease in Malaysia, envy in Belgium, love and happiness in Japan and sincerity, and dependability in China.

RED: Means unlucky in Nigeria and Germany, but lucky in China, Denmark and Argentina. It reflects ambition and desire in India and love in China, Korea and Japan

YELLOW: Represents warmth in the USA, but infidelity in France. It is associated with jealousy in Russia, but pleasant, happy, good taste, royalty in China. In Brazil purple and yellow are perceived as symbolic of sorrow and despair.

PURPLE: Purple is the color of love in China and South Korea. Anger and envy in Mexico, sin and fear in Japan. Purple is considered expensive in China also.
- From the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences, "Color: Cross-Cultural Marketing Perspectives As To What Governs Our Response To It"



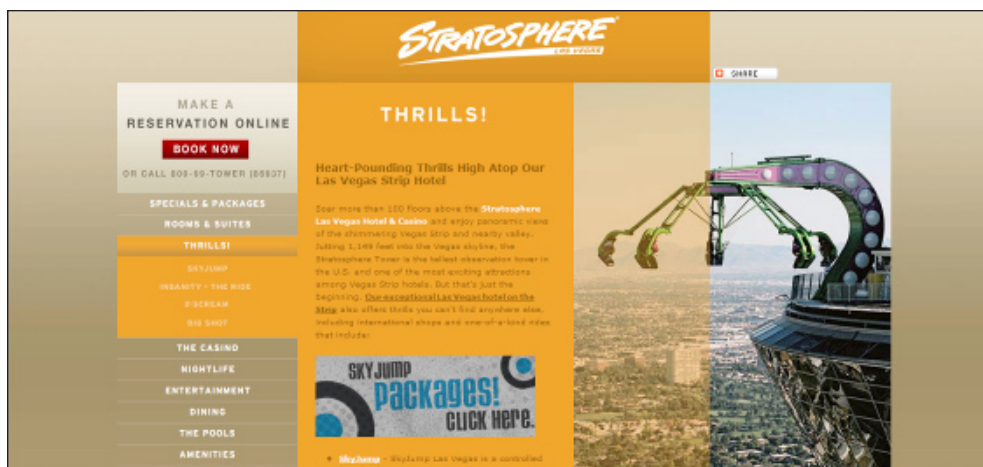
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The website of the Stratosphere Las Vegas uses color in its navigational elements and related website sections to reinforce the experiences being depicted, creating a more powerful emotional connection for viewers.

The section for “Thrills” is rendered in bright orange tones, while the “Nightlife” section features dark blue backgrounds. A section on “Pools” is rendered in light blue that is evocative of the cool essence of swimming pools, while the “Casino” section utilizes rich and elegant purple background colors. Color in this capacity serves a dual purpose. Functionally, it better differentiates the various sections of the website and enhances navigation and information retrieval.



Customization and personalization are two hallmarks of the Web marketing environment. Viewers who are able to personalize their online experiences are increasingly likely to report more satisfying and positive online experiences. Personalization can also be translated into a color scheme.

Typography and Copy

Much of the communication on a website is accomplished by textual means. Due to this fact, a website’s typography or font is a key ingredient in the converting visitors for a variety of reasons:

- » Fonts are a visual website element and part of the visual branding process;
- » Fonts differentiate website content and create a sense of organization and hierarchy;
- » Fonts make text more legible and improve the viewer experience.

Typography also equates heavily to an organization’s online visual brand identity. The type of fonts used, their size, color, line spacing and other factors all contribute to this visual perception.

All fonts can be divided into two primary categories: serif and sans-serif. Fonts with serifs are generally perceived to be more traditional and perhaps more elegant than sans serif fonts, while sans-serif fonts are generally perceived as being more sleek and modern. Most Web typography uses sans-serif fonts due to issues involving readability. However, there are particular



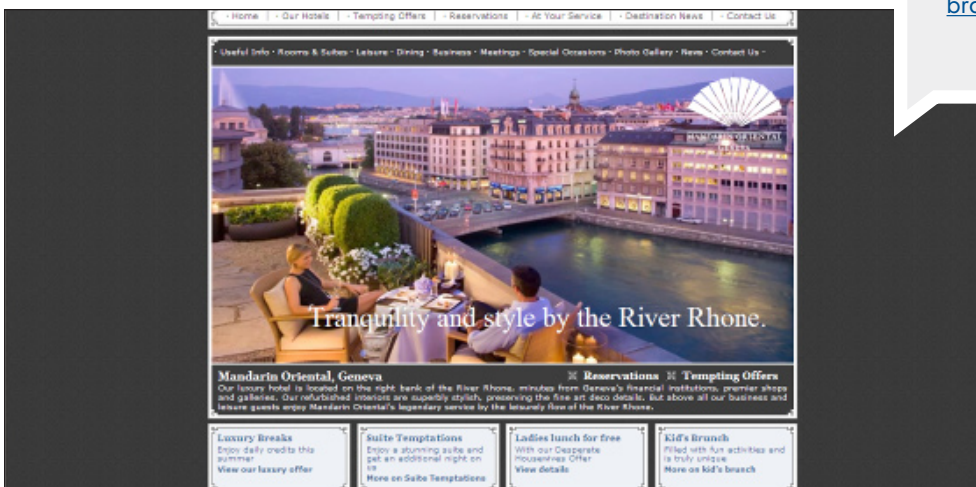
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occasions where both fonts can be used effectively. Mandarin Oriental, for example, combines both serif and sans-serif fonts to create a more elegant appearance for its individual hotel Web pages. The serif fonts are used in larger sizes to provide flair and invoke the understated elegance of the brand. This font is used primarily in copy displayed within the primary photographic images and as navigational links and headings used to display additional hyperlinked elements. Due to their straightforward simplicity, sans-serif fonts are used for smaller sized copy, in order to make text and additional hyperlinks on the page more legible and easily navigated.

According to Sean King Design Director, Corporate Communications at Landor Associates, [One of the main tools in a company's house style is its typeface. Type sits right next to a logo and a color palette in the branding toolbox. Imagine fedex.com using Universal for all text, or nfl.com using Endzone \(the NFL's custom typeface family\). A website is one of the most important points of touch between a brand and the public.](#)



Contemporary CSS or web design techniques enable fonts to be rendered with greater precision than in the past. Aside from aesthetic branding aspects, the choice of fonts used in a website should be oriented to ensure maximum readability. Factors involved in choosing highly readable text include not only the choice of font type, but also, font size, color, line spacing, letter spacing, alignment and more.

Contrast is also a highly important consideration to typography selections, as it directly influences the user's focus and readability. Low contrast between the font and background make reading a difficult prospect, and increase the likelihood of site abandonment. The best contrasting colors are the ones typically found on street signs across the globe. The contrasting red/white, yellow/black, green/white combinations are scientifically proven to be the easiest for the eye to read.

Enabling users to adjust the display size of a font is a helpful personalization tool, as it serves to aid the visually impaired and reduce eye-strain for those who may find it difficult to read smaller text on the Web. It is a standard practice to incorporate toggle controls that are easily located on the site that enable viewers to quickly and easily adjust the size of the text on a given Web page. Although the magnification can always be changed by updating the user's personal browser settings, this additional tool is less time consuming, makes the transition quick, seamless, and more convenient.

The Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts website provides a prominent example of such a feature, with their provision of a text-size adjustment widget at the upper right side of its hotel pages. It is indicated by a small letter "A" next to a large letter "A." Mouseover action displays the messages "Decrease font size" and "Increase font size", respectively.



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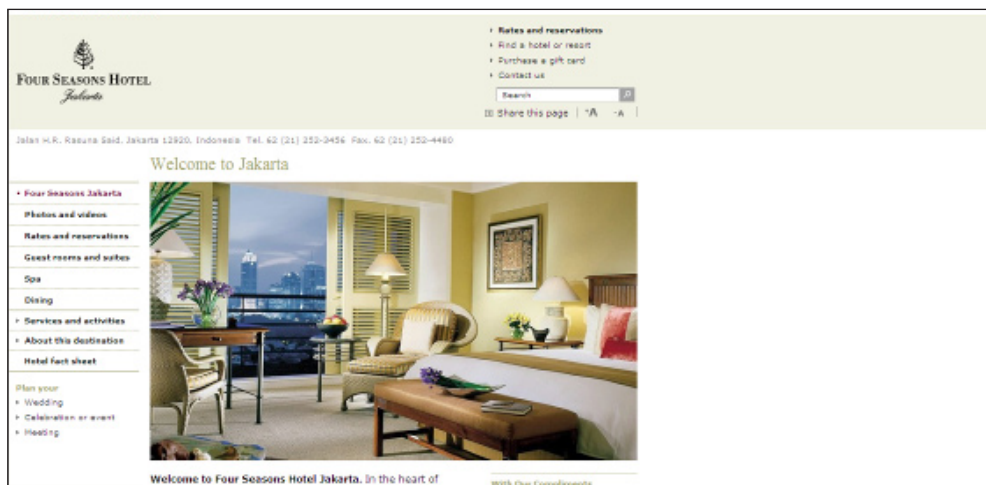


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Four Seasons also uses an attractive serif font for the welcome message, followed by a series of clean sans-serif fonts, at smaller sizes, for the site navigation and general text elements. Font sizes, colors and styles (bold, regular and italic) are used within the page to differentiate various elements and give greater emphasis to the most important information, making the page more user-friendly, and thus, increasing the likelihood of increased conversion rates.



To cater to an international audience, a website should feature professionally translated text to facilitate communication with consumers and increase their chances of booking. The Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts website is available in six language versions covering English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic. Most of the Web pages in these different versions are identical. However, because Arabic is read from right to left, the Arabic version of the website is aligned to the right side of the Web browser window.



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The typography on a site is also used to create visual order on a website. Uniform font sizes and color should be established for main headers, sub-headers, and body copy. When consistently used throughout the site, this visual hierarchy helps users quickly filter and sort information on a site. It also ensures emphasis is placed on the most important items.

As reading from a computer monitor places a strain on the eyes, body copy should always be written with the Internet user in mind. Copy should be written in short sentences and bullets should be used whenever possible in place of long blocks of text. The key is to keep everything clear and concise.

Navigation

Website navigation has two primary functions. It acts as an informational medium to inform viewers of the information and resources that are available within a website. Navigation also serves to guide viewers quickly and easily to the information they seek in a clear and intuitive manner. Within the hospitality, travel and tourism sector, proper site navigation has the potential to influence conversions enormously. When executed correctly, intelligent navigation makes the education and buying process seamless for online visitors to acquire the information they need for their travel plans, and effortlessly complete a reservation. The goal of creating a site's navigational layout should revolve around reducing the amount of steps required between "looking and booking."

Clear and consistent navigational features provide users with more positive and rewarding online experiences. The website [usability.gov](http://www.usability.gov) provides the following recommendations for designing website navigational elements:

Create a common, Web site-wide navigational scheme to help users learn and understand the structure of your Web site. Use the same navigation scheme on all pages by consistently locating tabs, headings, lists, search, site map, etc. Locate critical navigation elements in places that will suggest clickability (e.g., lists of words in the left or right panels are generally assumed to be links).

Source: <http://www.usability.gov/pdfs/chapter7.pdf>

Selecting the best words for the labels of navigational elements is a mission-critical activity. Labels applied to navigational features must be both clear and unambiguous so that users can quickly learn what resources are available and then navigate quickly and efficiently to access those resources.

Text links should be underlined or rendered in a different color. Site search and site map features should be provided as additional methods for locating and accessing resources.

Regardless of the navigational style chosen, it is essential that the meaning of an individual navigational element remains absolutely clear. The exact wording used in labeling a navigational element is critical. Such labels should be clear and unambiguous. Hoteliers and travel professionals need to remember that common industry terms like "accommodations" are not always terms users use in common, everyday language. Use terms in your navigation that your target market uses. Make sure the terms are intuitive to them. If your navigation terms lack a concise concept, viewers may not understand or relate to the content within, and therefore may not discover what is offered within the subpages of the site. This may mean customers will miss out on essential travel-related information or may be unable to navigate to or complete an online booking, an obviously undesirable situation for both the traveler and the travel organization.



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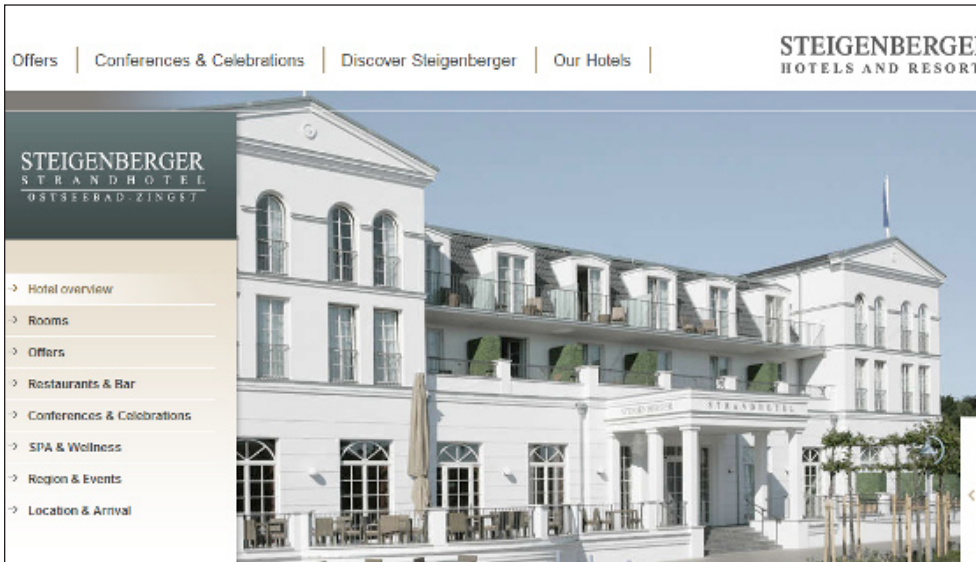
Site navigation should be organized so that the most important features are the most prominently displayed. A clear hierarchy of navigational elements and topics should be immediately apparent to online visitors. A “wide and shallow” navigational layout typically produces more results for hotels compared to a “narrow and deep” layout. A “wide and shallow” layout displays a larger amount of items on the first tier of the navigation leaving only a handful of additional options in the subsequent levels of navigation. This method allows users to see most of the navigation options immediately without having to make multiple clicks to find the information they seek.

In order to ensure a clear-cut navigational path from the start, it is considered industry best practice to develop a wireframe, or sitemap, prior to building out the design elements of a Web site. This step enables an organization to define the primary goals of the site, identify the process that the user will experience when accessing the site menu, and allow for the implementation of distinct and carefully planned methods for driving site visitors to conversion.

As an organizational example, The Steigenberger Hotels and Resorts website combines both vertical and horizontal navigational elements. The vertical navigation contains links relating to the selected hotel while the site’s global navigation is located at the top in a horizontal layout.

The Goal of Navigation is Reservations

One of the most important parts of any website is the reservations page. All navigation systems should ultimately funnel people towards the reservations page to increase bookings and conversions. For this reason, the reservations button should hold a prominent position within the main navigation and every page of a website should have a reservations widget or quick-reservation tool. Videos and photo galleries should also include captions that link to the reservations page for a seamless user experience.



The home page of the San Diego North Convention & Visitors Bureau contains three distinct navigational features. The site’s primary navigation is displayed horizontally across the top of the page, providing convenient access to the most commonly accessed major topics. Secondary navigational links are located horizontally, below the main image area, and cover



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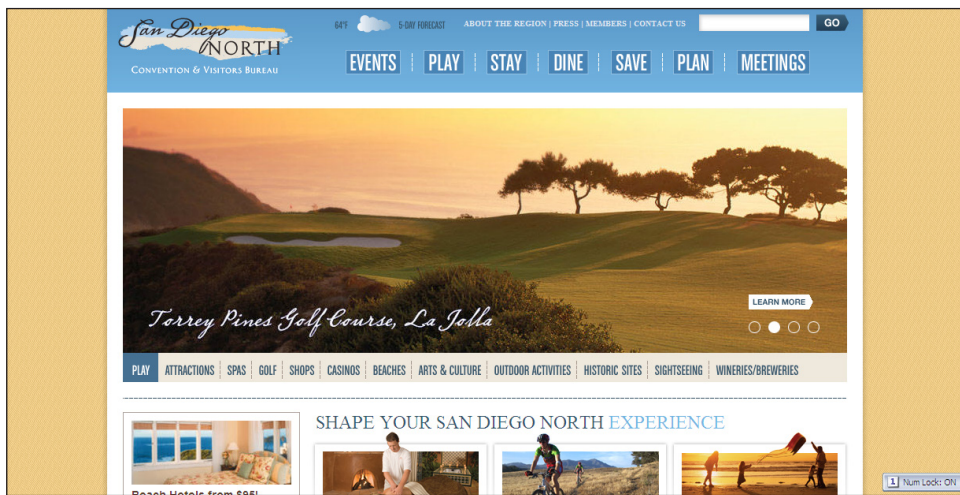


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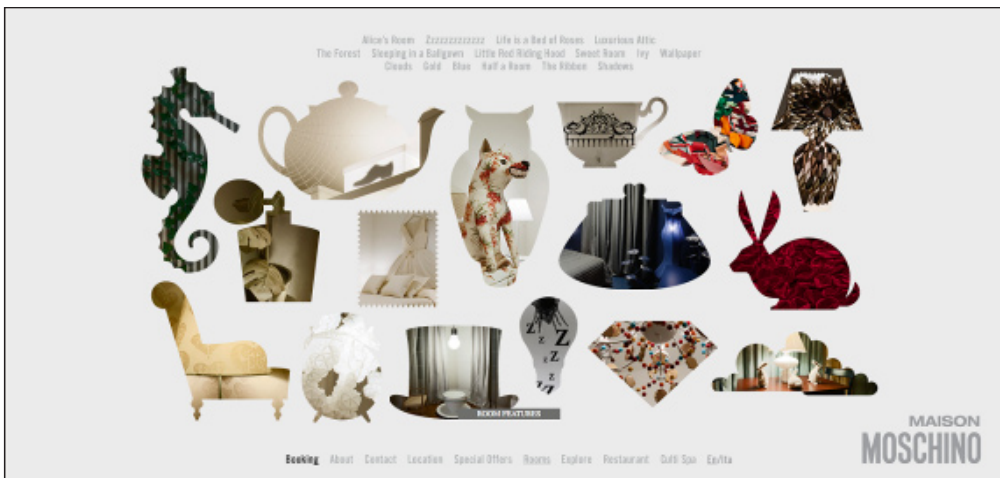
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topics such as attractions, sightseeing, beaches, historic sites and a variety of activities. These elements not only facilitate site navigation but also enhance viewer awareness of some of the most significant attributes of this destination.

Three substantial graphics that serve as additional navigational links are located below the secondary navigation. Displaying a combination of text and images, these graphical elements use a visual approach to capture user attention and encourage further navigation and exploration.



The website of the Maison Moschino, a highly distinctive luxury hotel created by Milan-based designer Moschino, features a creative and whimsical visual design theme. The site utilizes a combination of text and silhouetted images as navigational links. This unique visual and navigational approach helps to powerfully differentiate this unique hotel from more conventional hotels in this major Italian city.



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When using a unique or non-traditional navigational style, it is important to ensure that the proper research and analysis is completed ahead of time to test whether the navigation is easy to use and promotes conversion. Qualitative focus groups or user studies should be conducted to assure navigation will be “user-friendly”. It is nice to have interesting or cool navigation, but it is imperative to have navigation that promotes reservations and ease of booking.

Photography

High-quality professional photography is an essential element of successful hospitality, travel and tourism websites. Photographic images capture the attention of online viewers, showcase hotels, attractions and destinations in an attractive and compelling manner and encourage viewers to navigate and learn more.

First impressions are highly important in digital marketing and high quality photography is an essential element in creating a positive first impression with potential customers. Even the best description of a sweeping, tropical beach covered with white sand cannot provide the same amount of information, nor generate the same degree of emotional impact as a high-quality photographic image of that beach, shot at the right time of day, from the right vantage point, by a professional photographer.

Studies suggest that a combination of images and text are more effective at capturing viewer attention than either of those elements used alone. Additionally, research suggests that the quality of images used within a website exerts a powerful influence on viewer perceptions of brands.

High-quality photography can enhance user confidence and, in doing so, may help to increase purchase intent. A study of online trust by Ye Diana Wang and Henry H. Emurian of the Information Systems Department, College of Engineering and Information Technology, UMBC suggests that “... high-quality photographs of products and well-chosen images generate consumer confidence that can be transferred to other aspects of the web site.”

Source: *An overview of online trust: Concepts, elements, and implications, Computers in Human Behavior, Volume 21, Issue 1, January 2005, Pages 105-125. Ye Diana Wang, Henry H. Emurian (<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.90.2184&rep=rep1&type=pdf>)*

A study conducted earlier this year by Betsy Bender Stringam of the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management, New Mexico State University, and John Gerdes Jr of the College of Hospitality, Retail, & Sport Management, University of South Carolina suggested that, “The importance of having photos on the site was the most frequently mentioned factor in the participants’ assessment of hotel web sites.” The study also noted that, “a hotel’s inclusion of appealing pictures on its site positively affects the respondents’ assessment of it” and “open-ended responses clearly indicated a strong preference for more pictures on the hotel sites:”

Source: *Are pictures worth a thousand room nights? Success factors for hotel web site design, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, Issue 1, Volume 1 (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1845965&show=html&PHPSESSID=vb3432gs2du3joivme9ik2du11&&nolog=223854>)*

Photographic images can also enhance search engine standings. Image captions and alternative text descriptions of images (the HTML “ALT” attribute) can be useful in obtaining superior search result rankings.



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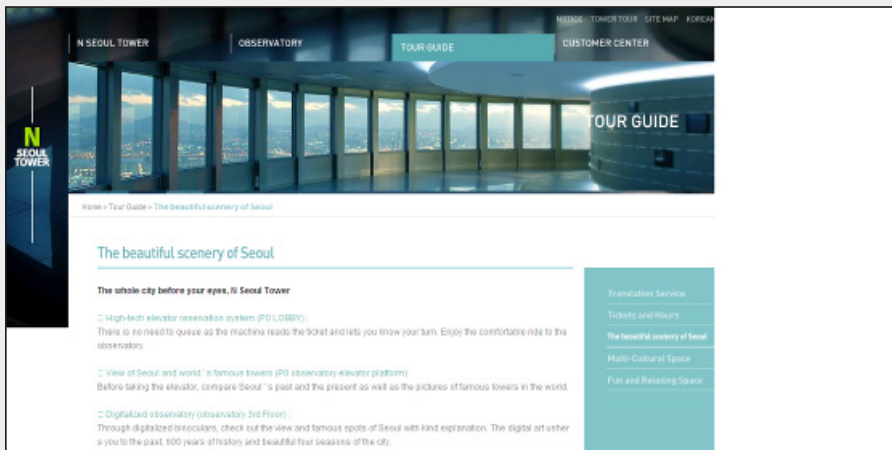
International Tastes

It is always important to ensure that your photography and design matches the tastes of your target markets. In some cases, separate landing pages or entire websites need to be created to appease widely varying tastes. To cater to a Korean market that prefers bright, cartoonish images and an American market that is inclined towards cleaner, more subdued design, the North Seoul Tower hotel maintains a Korean and International version of its website. The varying cultural tastes drove the color and photography choices.

View the Korean site:



View the American version of the site:



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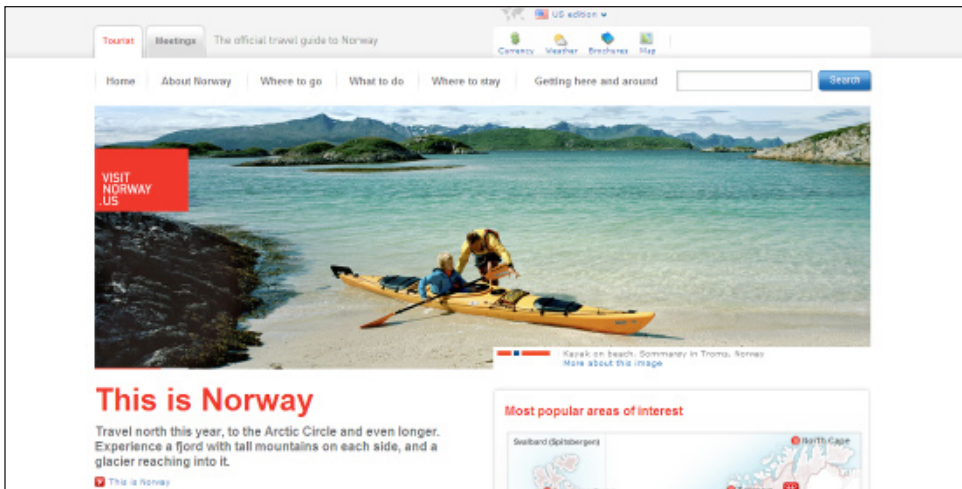


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Visit Norway, the official destination marketing organization for the popular Scandinavian tourism destination uses large, high-quality images to showcase the country's spectacular natural scenery. The images that automatically cycle across the home page as a slide show can also be manually selected.



The website of the Bardessono Hotel contains high-quality lifestyle images that build viewer engagement and interest by showing individuals enjoying the experience of staying at the hotel. These images make it easier for viewers to relate to the experience of staying at the hotel as opposed to more typical images that simply illustrate different aspects of the hotel, its accommodations, amenities and surroundings. In doing so, they are powerful tools for conversion. Every hotel should allocate a portion of their marketing budgets to refresh their website photography every two to three years. Your target market needs to be represented in your photos and those photos of models will become outdated quickly as fashion and clothing trends change.



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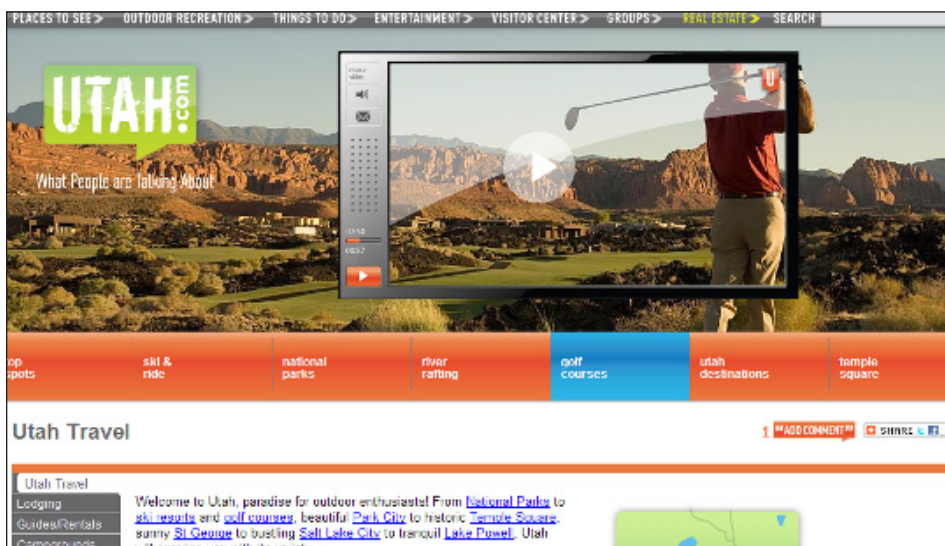
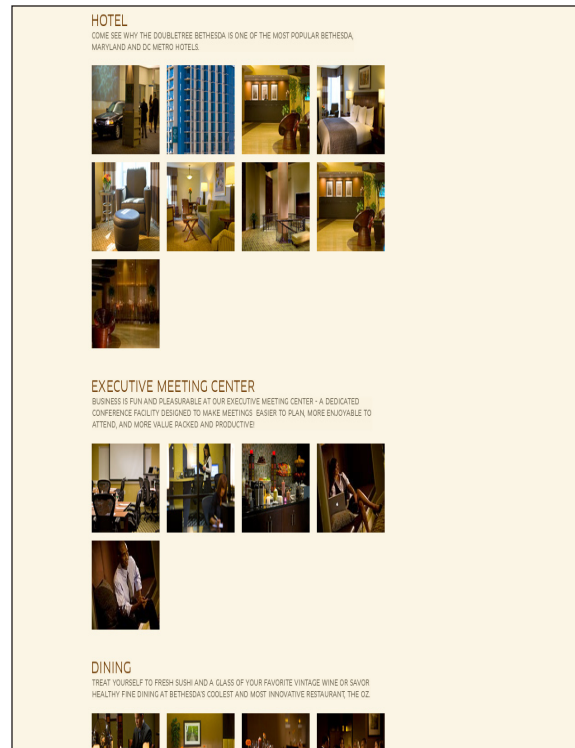
As photos are one of the most viewed sections of a hotel website, it is advantageous to establish a single, master photo gallery that organizes photos by amenity such as rooms, golf, spa, dining, etc. By creating a single, master photo gallery, visitors will be presented with up-sell opportunities; when viewing photos of a suite, they will also notice the photo section for your restaurant and be encouraged to make a reservation. The Doubletree Hotel Bethesda website features a well organized [photo gallery](#) that spotlights all of the hotel's amenities.

Videos

If a photo is worth a thousand words, is a video worth ten thousand? Marketing hotels, resorts, destinations and attractions with video has become a common and effective marketing practice. Video adds an entirely different dimension to a website when compared with still images. It creates a more compelling and immersive environment that builds strong emotional connections to travelers. According to The Traveler's Road to Decision (a study by Google and OTX from June 2009), over half of business and personal travelers interact with online travel videos in all stages of their travel planning. More importantly, 57% of personal travelers and 66% of business travelers use online video when deciding on accommodations.

To elicit a positive reaction, online videos must be professionally produced to create a high-quality finished product. Videos constructed on a shoe-string budget typically tend to show poorly and can leave viewers with a negative impression of your hotel- doing more damage than good. Like photographs, travel videos resonate better with viewers when they can imagine themselves in the locale. Use models or actors that represent the breath of your target market in your footage.

Many hospitality, travel and tourism organizations are using YouTube as a venue for their videos. These YouTube hosted videos can also be embedded on the websites of the organizations that created them. Depending on the overall design of a website, these embedded YouTube players can sometimes interrupt the clean look and layout of a webpage. In these situations, integrating a video directly into a webpage is the better option. Any videos that are built into a webpage



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can still be posted to the video sharing site YouTube to attract viral viewers.

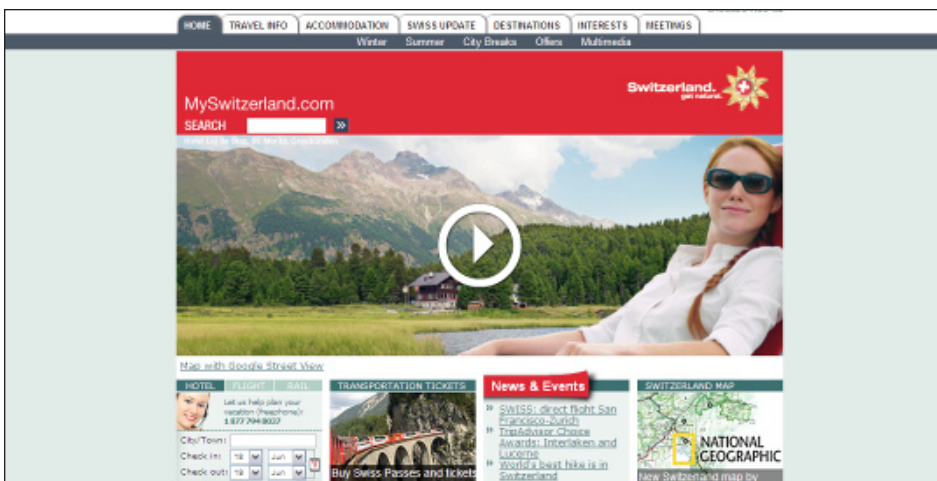
The Utah Travel Destination website links videos to major topical areas and navigational elements on the site's home page. The video is built into the website design and overlaid on top of beautiful animated photos of the destination, allowing for a unique visual experience.

Switzerland Tourism's primary home page image is a photograph linked to a video feature. The video link is the dominant visual feature on the home page. The site also features unique 360-degree panoramic videos of some of the nation's most spectacular train excursions. Viewers can pan the video to the left or right as it plays to change the perspective and take in other aspects of the featured sites.

Switzerland Tourism encourages viewers to share their own videos of their travels in Switzerland, encouraging sharing and community building, two factors that can positively influence conversions. The organization also offers the world's largest collection of Swiss webcams at its website, a value-added feature for potential visitors who prefer to see live camera feeds rather than recorded video.

Getting Social

In addition to photos and video, social media tools can help enhance the user experience on your website. To learn more about how to integrate social media into your hotel or destination website view the article ["Getting Social: Why All Travel Professionals Need to Use Social Media."](#)



Maps

Maps have become an almost indispensable part of most hospitality, travel and tourism websites. Maps come in a variety of types and fulfill a variety of diverse requirements. In all instances, however, they provide essential geographic information that helps online visitors to make their travel plans and, in doing so, are a significant part of the online conversion process.

In fact, maps serve multiple conversion-related functions. Maps are frequently an essential part of the search and booking process by which a viewer first discovers a hotel in a desired location. Customized, graphical maps make it easy for viewers to determine a hotel's precise location with respect to a city center, attractions, dining, transportation, convention facilities and more. The Grand Hotel Esplanade Berlin has increased conversions on its website by creating a highly detailed map of its hotel and surrounding attractions. The map visually showcases one of the hotel's prime features, it's amazing location and proximity to all of the downtown sights. Users can select which set of attractions, from shopping hot spots, to museums and theaters, to appear on the map,



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Maps can also act as part of a website's navigational scheme. When a travel site has more than one destination attraction, or more than one hotel location, maps allow viewers to see the proximity and location of each property or attraction and select their favorite. These multi-property or attraction maps promote cross-selling and can increase overall conversions.

The interactive map used by Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts helps to drive online sales by acting as one of the first elements in the process of locating an appropriate hotel or resort. By clicking on a portion of the world map enables viewers to zoom in on a particular region. Hotel locations are shown in the regional level map. Mousing over a destination reveals the name of the hotel, its address, contact information, time and weather. By clicking on a hyperlinked map location, viewers are transferred to the Web page of the selected hotel or resort.

By facilitating the process of locating a hotel, maps of this type are the first link in the "looking to booking" process. Maps can help transform websites into more powerful tools for sales and marketing. A recent case study from Google Maps describes how Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) benefitted from integrating Google Maps into its website. According to the study, conversions increased after the maps were deployed and "Customers are staying an average of one minute longer on search results pages that have maps".

In the study, Steve Sullivan, Manager of Web Reservations for IHG indicated that "We had a 35 percent increase in conversion rates for our United Kingdom and Denmark sites immediately after launching Google Maps ..."

Source: *Google Maps API Premier case study: http://static.googleusercontent.com/external_content/untrusted_dlcp/earth.google.com/en/us/enterprise/pdf/intercontinental_hotels.pdf*

Maps of this type encourage an efficient and productive flow of actions that can lead viewers to the information they need to make an appropriate purchase decision. By making that process simpler and more rewarding, maps become an essential feature in driving more conversions at the websites where they are deployed.

ESPLANADE
GRAND HOTEL BERLIN

PHOTO GALLERIES VIDEO INTERACTIVE MAP BACK TO SITE

HOTEL GUESTROOMS ACTIVITIES CONFERENCES & EVENTS

view all
Click & drag grey box to navigate map

HOTEL | GRAND HOTEL ESPLANADE BERLIN
Lützowufer 15 10785 Berlin | TEL. 030 - 25478 0

MUSEUMS & THEATERS	SHOPPING	LANDMARKS	OTHER INTEREST POINTS	SCENE / RESTAURANTS / BARS
Alexanderplatz	German Opera House	Hackescher Markt/Hackische Hoefe	New Synagogue	
Gaehaus Archive	Berlin Main Station	Haus der Kulturen der Welt	Nikolaiviertel	
Berlin Zoological Gardens	Brandenburg Gate	Japanese and Italian Embassies	Nollendorferplatz	
Castle Bellevue	Checkpoint Charlie	Jewish Museum	Oranienburger Strasse	
Castle Charlottenburg & Park		Ka De We	Philharmonie	
		Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church	Potsdamer Platz	
		Komische Oper	Reichstag	
			Savignyplatz	

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Florence

Borgo Fieschi, 99
50121 Firenze
Italy

Tel: 39 (055) 2626 1
Fax: 39 (055) 2626 900

Local time: 5:39 a.m.
Local temp: 15°C / 59°F

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Conclusion

In a global marketplace in which travelers are presented with numerous choices, website design can be a key factor in achieving and sustaining success. Excellent design cuts through the clutter to engage travelers more effectively, enhance purchase intent, and drive additional bookings.

There are no generic solutions to website design. Each company and organization must find a solution that is well-suited for its unique situation. Those that deploy superior design solutions are more likely to prosper and flourish in today's challenging economy.

HSMIAI Members in the Arena*



A preferred vendor and HSMIAI partner, TIG Global provides interactive marketing services for the hospitality and travel industry as a subsidiary of MICROS Systems Inc. Serving an extensive portfolio of clients worldwide, TIG Global combines its industry knowledge and e-business expertise to help clients maximize the online channel. TIG Global offers multi-language websites, a vast network of internationally based strategic linking partners, email and pay-per-click marketing campaigns tailored to all international markets, custom Web 2.0 solutions, and websites optimized for major search engines around the world.

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COMPANY	CONTACT
A Couple of Chicks e-Marketing	www.acoupleofchicks.com
Cendyn	www.cendyn.com
E-Site Marketing, LLC	www.sabrehospitality.com/#esitemarketing
Hospitality eBusiness Strategies	www.HospitalityBusiness.com
Hyperdisk Marketing	www.hyperdisk.com
Milestone Internet Marketing	www.milestoneinternet.com
MMG Worldwide	www.mmgworldwide.com/
O'Rourke Hospitality Marketing	www.orourkehospitality.com
OPEN Hospitality	www.openhospitality.com/
PinPoint Local	www.locability.biz
Sabre Hospitality Solutions	www.sabrehospitality.com
Standing Dog Interactive	www.standingdog.com
TRAVELCLICK	www.travelclick.net
Vizergy	www.vizergy.com
Wanderlust Travel and Destination Marketing	http://www.createwanderlust.com/

*This resource listing is pulled from the HSMIAI Marketplace. For additional information on any of the HSMIAI members listed above, and for additional resources, search the HSMIAI Marketplace at www.hsmiamarketplace.com.

Useful Links & Resources

HSMIAI Travel Internet Marketing Special Interest Group	www.travelinternetmarketing.org	This subgroup of the HSMIAI membership connect travel marketers in a way that leverages interactive customer engagement as a marketing medium while increasing the awareness of emerging issues, opportunities and trends.
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TIG Global	http://blog.tigglobal.com/	The TIG Global Blog is the premier source for online marketing strategy and scoop. Written by marketing gurus and designed for hotel and travel professionals, this educational resource is constantly updated with e-marketing tips, case studies, breaking industry news, "Ask the Expert" videos, new research, and much more.
HSMIA Foundation	http://www.hsmai.org/foundation.cfm	As the research and educational arm of the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International, HSMIA Foundation expands and enhances the educational opportunities available to hospitality sales and marketing executives and increases the amount of in-depth research conducted on behalf of this fast-paced, increasingly demanding profession.

Websites, Articles & Related Resources

eConnect: Research & Resources from the HSMIA Foundation	http://www.hsmaieconnect.org	eConnect is a one-stop portal to global information and resources on hospitality sales and marketing topics. Provided by the HSMIA Foundation through its Corporate Membership program, many of eConnect's resources are available exclusively to HSMIA members.
Google Webmaster Central	http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/	
Yahoo! Web Developer Network	http://developer.yahoo.com/	
seomoz.org	http://www.seomoz.org/	
SEMPO	http://www.sempo.org/home/	



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Contributors

The Travel Internet Marketing Advisory Board members are:

- » Chair: Christine Beuchert, Director of e-Commerce & Performance Marketing, Marcus Hotels
- » Isaac Gerstenzang, Corporate Director of E-Commerce, Destination Hotels & Resorts
- » Loren Gray, Director of E-commerce, Ocean Properties, Ltd.
- » Michael Hayward, Director Interactive Marketing & E-commerce, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts
- » Oral Muir, Senior Director, Global Ecommerce Channels, Marriott International
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- » Aaron Stenhoff, Director, Marketing and E-Commerce, Red Roof Inns
- » Tiffany Tchida, Manager, Consumer Websites, Best Western International
- » Brian Tkac, Vice President Marketing & Revenue, Hostmark Hospitality Group
- » Peter Winkler, Senior Manager, E-marketing, Preferred Hotel Group



Don Bender is a strategic design and marketing consultant whose work combines brand identity, interactive design and marketing strategy with an international focus. Prior to founding his own company, Bender Associates Marketing, Don spent over a decade working in advertising in New York City where he advanced from art direction, brand identity and interactive design to strategic marketing and new business creation. Through his work he has created successful brand identity, advertising and marketing programs for a broad range of clients including hospitality companies, airlines, cruise lines, convention and visitors bureaus, international tourism organizations, attractions, historic sites and others. Don has capabilities in several languages and a significant part of his work has involved international

marketing. A popular and dynamic speaker, he is the author of *Marketing on the Web: Internet Strategies for Hospitality, Travel & Tourism*. His column, *The Online Marketer*, has appeared in the *HSMAI Marketing Review* for over a decade and has been utilized in university-level classes across the globe from Cornell to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He has also assisted, on a pro bono basis, the United Nations Environment Program, UNICEF and the innovative Jane Addams High School for Academic Careers in New York City. Don is a trustee of the HSMAI Foundation and has been involved with the HSMAI Adrian Awards for over a decade. He can be reached at theonlinemarketer@yahoo.com.

Molly Israel, Director of Marketing at TIG Global, contributed many best practices to this issue paper along with her editing expertise. She works closely with many of the top global hotel brands and currently aids in the development of TIG Global's new mobile and social media services for hotels and destinations. Her articles are regularly featured in hotel and destination trade publications such as "Hotel Online" and "Hotel Marketing". More educational marketing tips can be found on the [TIG Global Blog](#). Her email address is misrael@tigglobal.com. Lindsey Molnar and Kristen M. Poillon of TIG Global also contributed their time and efforts.



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Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International

HSMAI is the hospitality industry source for knowledge, community, and recognition for leaders committed to professional development, sales growth, revenue optimization, marketing, and branding.



With a strong focus on education, HSMAI has become the industry champion in identifying and communicating trends in the hospitality industry, and bringing together customers and members at annual events, including HSMAI's Affordable Meetings®.

New and upcoming resources and events include:

- » HSMAI Adrian Awards Gala – January 31, 2011, New York - www.adrianawards.com

HSMAI Foundation

As the research and educational arm of the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International, HSMAI Foundation's mission is to expand and enhance the educational opportunities available to hospitality sales and marketing executives and to increase the amount of in-depth research conducted on behalf of the profession. Today, and in the years ahead, the HSMAI Foundation plans to accelerate its research and publishing activities to contribute even more to the continuing education of those engaged in this fast-paced, increasingly demanding profession. For more information, contact the HSMAI Foundation: 1760 Old Meadow Road, Suite 500, McLean, VA 22102; (703) 506-3280; www.hsmaifoundation.org.



TIG Global

As the leader in online marketing for the travel industry, TIG Global (www.tigglob.com)



remains steadfast in its mission to assist hotels and destinations in exceeding their online marketing goals. During this time of decreased travel demand, we realize the unique opportunity that exists for our clients to gain market share.

TIG Global has developed a proven set of strategies to successfully leverage the marketing efforts of hotels and destinations worldwide, delivering unrivaled incremental revenue and visitors online.

Serving an extensive portfolio of clients worldwide, TIG Global combines its e-business expertise and industry knowledge to maximize client exposure in the online channel. TIG Global works closely with each client to create a custom marketing strategy and provide ongoing support and consultation. Our extensive service offering provides the benefits that include:

- » Multi-language website design that increases conversion and pushes customers through to reservations.
- » Search engine marketing that prominently places you at the top of the search engines.
- » Digital media and online advertising that delivers pre-qualified leads from a network of over 2,000 media partners.
- » E-mail marketing that strengthens customer loyalty and establishes relationships.
- » Social media and mobile marketing that encourages direct communication with customers and enables booking any-time/anyplace.
- » Custom strategy and ongoing, proactive support that helps you analyze results and tweak your online marketing plan to maximize results.

Should you have any questions about the information in this report, or comments about how TIG Global can assist your company in gaining market share, please feel free to contact us at info@tigglob.com or 301.841.4700. **We also invite you to visit our blog for additional eMarketing tips and advice from our marketing experts – blog.tigglob.com.**