

# Analysis of the Web Pages as a Strategic Tool of the Most Popular Hotels Worldwide and Their Comparison in Different Countries

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## ABSTRACT

The main idea behind this study is based on the analysis of the structure and content of the web pages of the most popular and powerful hotels in the world. The target is to offer a potential tool for current and future knowledge of the most relevant success factors of these firms. The present study has three main scopes. The first is an analysis of the most important hotels' websites in terms of available information and content. The second one is the comparison between the websites of the most popular hotels worldwide per country. A third scope is a survey with end-users to support the findings. It could be concluded that the key items of the web pages of the most visited hotels can be used as a powerful tool for the formulation and implementation of different corporate strategies, and also be a source of benchmarking for making decisions.

## KEYWORDS

Hotel Strategy, Internet, Top Hotels, Tourism, Travel, Website

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism has become a more and more important industry in the global economy. It is also linked to other industries and its importance has increased significantly in the last decades.

In the 90s only a limited number of hotel industries were using the Internet as a communication tool, but in 2002 it was estimated that over 90 percent of the top 50 hotel chains had company web sites with nearly 95 percent providing reservation facilities to consumers (O'Connor & Frew, 2002). The importance of owning a website when providing services has been increasing rapidly in the last decades. Thus said, the Internet is an important communication tool and is very important for hotels to use it as an effective marketing tool (Cevdet et al., 2011). According to Tierney (2000), the evaluation of web site effectiveness is crucial when owing to the significant setup and maintenance costs.

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Nowadays, the information is easily accessible, transparent and at low cost. In response to the increasing demand for online services, many hotels have established websites to promote their services and products, strengthen their customer relationships, and convert e-lookers into e-buyers (Law et al., 2010; Morrison et al., 1999; O'Connor & Frew, 2002). The current technology has made it less expensive to provide a wide range of customer information; so upscale hotels can maintain customer profiles on their computers (Harrison, 2003).

The influence of the Internet became one of the most important topics worldwide. An enormous number of researchers and academics based their findings on the importance of the digital information. Moreover, Yuan et al., 2003 states that the internet technology is expected to revolutionize most aspects of the tourism industry.

According to Buchanan & Lukaszewski (1997), there are six justification strategies for establishing a web presence: cost reduction, revenue growth, niche marketing, improved customer satisfaction, quality improvement, and addressing other critical business or customer needs. Developing these six strategies might be a powerful tool for hoteliers, who can gain a competitive advantage by using their web presence. A well structured website which includes diverse information can be an enormous asset for owners. The content of the website is defined as the information features or services that are offered in the website (Zafiroopoulos & Vrana, 2006).

It should be recognized that customers search for diverse information while booking their accommodation. Moreover, a well designed web site that includes sufficient information could increase the customer's perception regarding the hotel. In the tourism and hospitality context, website quality directly and positively impacts on customer satisfaction and purchase intentions (Bai et al., 2008).

A growing number of customer book their travel services such as trips, hotels and car rentals online (Yang et al., 2014). Furthermore, Toh et al. (2011) performed a survey of 249 leisure travelers and the results show that 80 per cent of the customers searched for hotel information using websites, with more than half, making their bookings through hotels' website or online travel agencies.

Hoteliers should assure that the information quality which represents them in the search engines databases meets the clients need and expectation (Leung & Law, 2012). They should adopt a web site strategy which will help them to improve their branding, customer perception and transparency.

According to Statista 2017 the number of international tourists' arrivals worldwide has increased significantly between the period 2005-2016 (from nearly 750 millions to more than 1110 millions) with Europe as a top destination (453.2 in 2005 and 616.2 in 2016) followed by Asia Pacific (154.1 in 2005 and 308.4 in 2016), North America (89.9 in 2005 and 130.5 in 2016) and Middle East (33.7 in 2005 and 53.6 in 2016).

As a consequence of the global crisis, the only significant decrease was shown in 2009 in all four regions in comparison to the previous year. In Europe a decrease of 25.9 millions international arrivals, followed by North America with 4.7 millions, Middle East with 3.2 millions and Asia Pacific with 2.9 millions in comparison to 2008.

Having in mind the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP worldwide in 2016, the European Union takes the first place with 611.3 billion U.S. dollars following by North America with 608.2 billion U.S. dollars and North East Asia with 448.4 billion US dollars (WTTC in Statista 2017). The last three places are taken by North Africa with 26.3 billion US dollars, Caribbean with 17.9 billion US dollars and Central Asia with 3.4 billion U.S. dollars.

The annual growth in average global hotel rates from 2010 to 2017 has changed significantly between 2011 and 2013 where 7.4% annual growth was represented in 2011; -1.5% in 2012 due to the economic crisis and 0% in 2013. As from 2014 onwards, the percentage has increased up to 2.5% in 2017. (Statista 2017).

Since the 1980s, the rapid development of information and communications technology (ICT) has largely changed hospitality and tourism (Ho & Lee, 2007; Ipet al., 2011; Murphy et al., 2016). Activities in this sector have been significantly influenced by the growth of the Internet.

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