



HEBSTATEGY Q3 EDITION:
**THE HOTEL DIGITAL
MARKETER'S WHITEPAPER:**

Strategies to reach customers in every
phase of the travel planning journey.

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Q3 2018



Eighty percent of consumers are more likely to do business with a company if it offers a personalized experience. (Epsilon)

TRENDING | WHAT'S NEXT

An understanding of what's trending will help you focus on what to do right now. Here, we highlight the most important insights coming out of the hospitality industry and how these trends should be shaping your strategy.

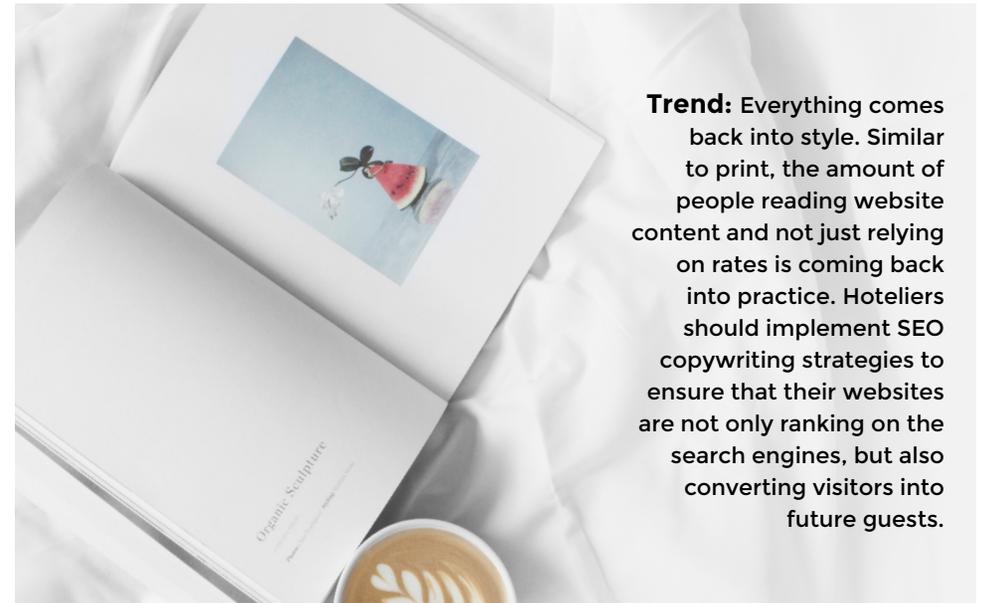


Trend: Google has now updated the Google Maps experience to make it more personalized to the user. For example, if Location History is turned on, each restaurant or bar now features “Your match,” a numeric rating that tells the user how likely they are to enjoy a place based on their own preferences.

Hoteliers with outlets should frequently review their local listing content to ensure that the right customers are being matched.

Trend: Marriott International has teamed up with Amazon to introduce Alexa for Hospitality to their hotel rooms, vacation rentals, and other hospitality settings. Alexa provides a more personalized experience by seamlessly integrating with the property's current amenities and services—allowing guests to control the lighting and temperature in their rooms, make calls and requests to the front desk, find local restaurants and attractions, and even check out.

Since consumers are now expecting a technologically enhanced experience, hoteliers leveraging AI technology similar to Alexa should consider making this the highlight or inclusion for an upcoming campaign.



Trend: Everything comes back into style. Similar to print, the amount of people reading website content and not just relying on rates is coming back into practice. Hoteliers should implement SEO copywriting strategies to ensure that their websites are not only ranking on the search engines, but also converting visitors into future guests.

TRENDING | WHAT'S NEXT

An understanding of what's trending will help you focus on what to do right now. Here, we highlight the most important insights coming out of the hospitality industry and how these trends should be shaping your strategy.

Trend: In the multi-touch world that consumers face when engaging with brands, attribution is always questionable when it comes to reporting on performance. With AI and voice on the rise, hoteliers can get ahead of the curve and implement call analytics to track the impact of digital marketing efforts.



Trend: Any in-house team executing paid media already knows this, but after 18 years Google has decided to simplify their analytics brands and consolidate them into three distinct tiers. The parallel here is that as a new budgeting cycle approaches, hoteliers should reevaluate their branding and consider if a rebrand is needed to better reach consumers.

BUSINESS NEED SPOTLIGHT | REACHING TRAVELERS THROUGH THE JOURNEY

Answering key business needs through strategic and cost-effective digital marketing is one of the major challenges for hotel marketers. Each quarter, we feature a common business need for hotel brands and highlight effective strategies to optimize your website and drive the right audience to increase conversions.

ENSURE YOUR **WEBSITE IS ON POINT.**

Understand the impact of mobile-first indexing.

Search queries completed on mobile recently surpassed desktop as the majority Google search type, a trend that is expected to continually rise as mobile searching becomes more ubiquitous with smartphone usage. Google's mobile-first indexing aims to draw more attention to the mobile experience by viewing websites through the lens of a mobile device. Make sure your mobile website is up-to-speed as Google will soon begin to use the mobile page versions of a domain for indexing and caching in its search results, and subsequently, for ranking.

Incorporate the latest design trends.

Some of the latest trends in website design include animations and movement, depth and shadows, geometric elements, and grid layouts. When going through a website re-design considering incorporating these elements to engage users and create something unique that everyone will remember.

Drive conversions with on-brand SEO copywriting.

An aspect of content writing that is rarely mentioned is on-brand content that is both SEO-friendly and appeals to your target audience. More customers are looking to put a face to businesses, and it's not enough to simply drive traffic to your site or share a ton of articles on social media. You have to build a connection with your audience that encourages trust. Establish a brand message and voice and gear messaging directly toward target customers.

1

GET YOUR BEST **GUEST THERE.**

Refine your Instagram aesthetic.

As it becomes increasingly more common for people to head to Instagram to look for brands and destinations, hotels should make sure their profiles are up-to-date and enticing. Rather than first heading to a search engine, travel planners are seeking out alluring images on Instagram for inspiration. By posting destination images along with property images and images from guests, hotels can reach more people than ever on the platform.

Utilize the new features from Google My Business.

Google My Business has officially rolled out new features to add richer content beyond photos and basic information to help boost search rankings. Businesses are now able to share updates to their local listing. Unfortunately, this feature is not currently available for hotels, but it is available for any spa or dining Google My Business listing. Additional features include Q&A and Messaging which offer more ways to engage with customers online.

2

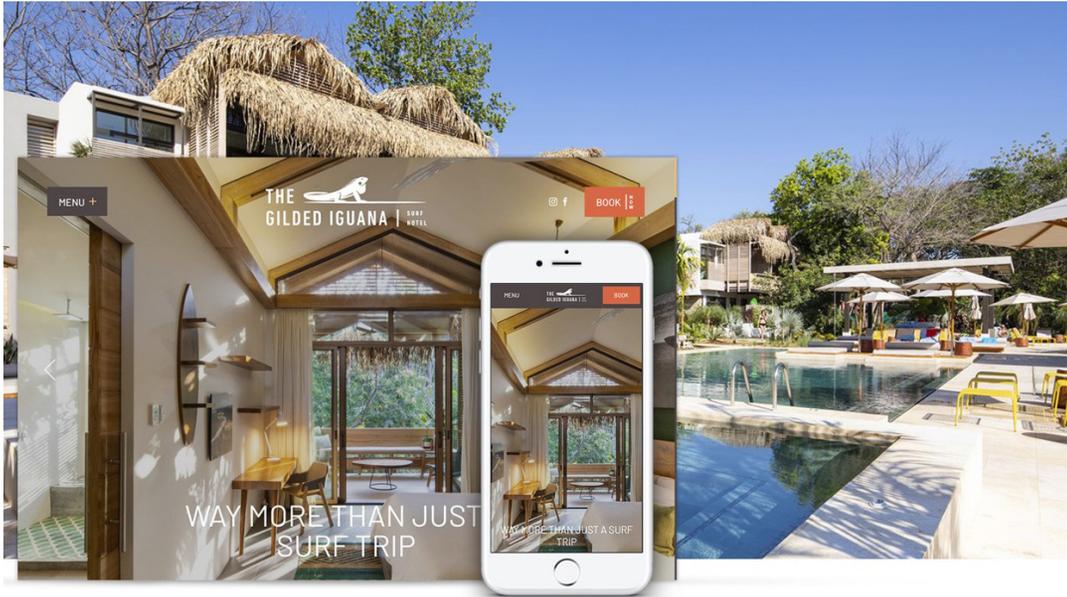
Invest in digital audio ads.

As investment in digital audio advertising continues to grow, Google's DoubleClick Bid Manager is rolling out support globally for buying audio ads programmatically across a handful of streaming services including Spotify, TuneIn, SoundCloud, and Google Play Music. Advertisers can upload .mp3 audio spots in a variety of lengths and an optional companion image or HTML5 asset to display around the publisher's audio player. With 83% of young adults streaming audio weekly, hotels can capture the attention of this audience wherever they may be.

3

FROM THE DESIGN STUDIO | NEW & NOTEWORTHY

The most impactful hotel websites provide a compelling look at the property while driving direct bookings. Get design inspiration from some of our most creative clients, including both independent boutiques and multi-property brands.



THE GILDED IGUANA'S WEBSITE RECEIVES A FULL, CONTEMPORARY MAKEOVER

As the original surfer spot in Nosara, Costa Rica since 1988, The Gilded Iguana reopened in April 2018, unveiling its year-long renovations designed by and for outdoor lovers. Along with its renovations came an enticing new website design to showcase the hotel's spaces, restaurant, and accommodations. The site captivates users with pages created specifically to promote all of the nearby experiences in Nosara.



RAVEL HOTEL: PENTHOUSE, POOLS, AND PLEASURE

As a trendy boutique property just a short ride away from the heart of Manhattan, the Ravel Hotel is on the must-visit list this summer for New York travelers and locals alike. The new website design uses unique elements to highlight the recently renovated features of the hotel, while maintaining an aesthetic that is sleek, sharp, and concise throughout with messaging that invites users to "Meet, Look, Relax, and Taste."



NASHVILLE'S UNION STATION HOTEL SHOWCASES THEIR NEW AND NOSTALGIC VIBES WITH A BRAND-NEW WEBSITE

Formerly a bustling 19th-century train station, Union Station now stands as a beacon of the new and nostalgic Nashville. The new website design brings to life this unique experience in a setting that combines the heart of classic Nashville with the soul of modern-day Music City. With custom pages to showcase the stunning wedding spaces, as well as pages that display the iconic art in the hotel, the website captivates users with touches of old school Nashville and modern design.

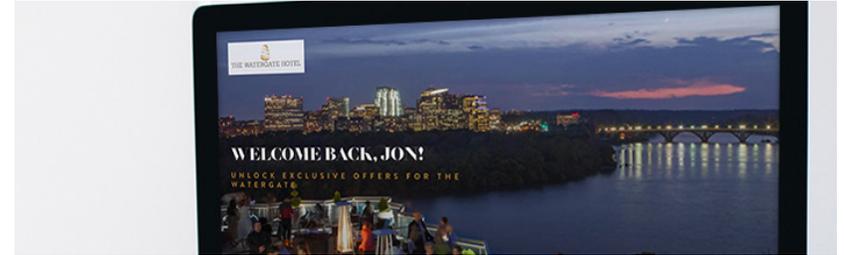
IN CASE YOU MISSED IT | THE LATEST NEWS

Get up to speed with a quick recap of Q2 2018, including highlights from our recently published articles.



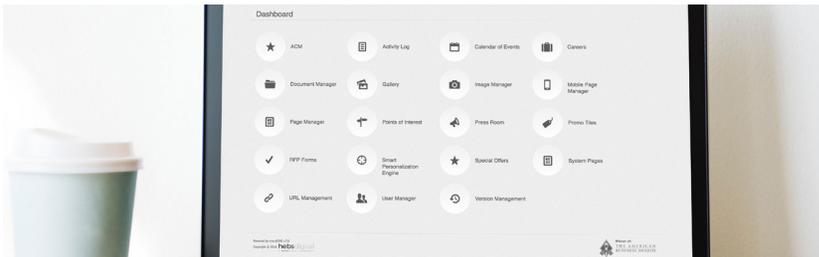
TOP CONCERNS HOTELS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GDPR AND HOW TO PREPARE YOUR ACTION PLAN

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) took effect on May 25, 2018, regulating how companies manage, use, and share personal data. It is crucial to consider the effects this change has on your hotel website, data strategy, and digital marketing. Learn more about GDPR, how it applies to you, and what you need to do next.



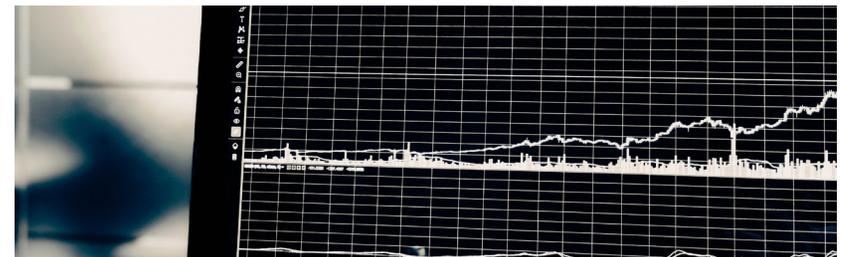
HOW HOTELIERS CAN FOSTER LOYALTY AND SHOW EXCLUSIVE RATES THAT EVEN THE OTAS DON'T HAVE

For those single-property hoteliers not supported by multi-million-dollar loyalty programs, HEBS Digital created their Instant Rewards Module to make website visitors feel special with one-to-one messaging similar to loyalty programs. Hoteliers can now leverage a "closed user group," capturing emails and showing exclusive rates not shared with the OTAs.



HEBS DIGITAL'S SMARTCMS® WINS A STEVIE® AWARD FOR THE FIFTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR AT THE 2018 AMERICAN BUSINESS AWARDS®

HEBS Digital wins a bronze Stevie® Award at the 2018 American Business Awards® for best New Product – Software in the Content Management Solution category for its smartCMS®, competing against over 3,000 nominations. "Our dedicated team works tirelessly to ensure that we are providing a seamless online experience for our clients," said Eric Ruvio, Chief Software Engineer.



DEBUNKING THE IMPACT OF THE BLOCKCHAIN ON HOTEL DISTRIBUTION

Can blockchain offer promising solutions to areas of difficulty in the hospitality industry, or is it an enticing buzzword that is all talk and no action? HEBS Digital Founder & Director Max Starkov reviews this new technology, how it relates to hotel distribution, and the high level of skepticism associated with its success in hotel inventory distribution.

METRICS THAT MATTER | BENCHMARKING

When hoteliers are able to use data to measure their efforts, they are maximizing their potential to add to the hotel's bottom line. Below are examples of what strategic hotels are doing to ensure that their marketing is attracting website visitors and generating direct bookings.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IN THREE SECONDS?

THE BENCHMARK: According to a Google study, 53% of mobile site visitors will leave a page that takes longer than three seconds to load.

BEST PRACTICE: As more marketers are investing in video, this same idea can be applied. Hoteliers should make sure the videos they create not only have the logo present, but also a gripping opening that gives users a reason to continue watching.

INFLUENCER MARKETING, BEYOND JUST INSTAGRAM

THE BENCHMARK: According to YouTube, 40% of millennial subscribers say their favorite creator understands them better than their friends.

BEST PRACTICE: Although influencer marketing offers no measurable ROI, incorporating influencer marketing into a hotel's digital strategy is a must. Since travel planning is greatly influenced by video, hoteliers should work with YouTube influencers to increase brand awareness. Better yet, make it a part of the agreement to receive the b-roll so that cuts of the video can be used for ongoing marketing.

TRIPADVISOR'S NEW SPONSORED PLACEMENTS

THE BENCHMARK: According to TripAdvisor, hotels using Sponsored Placements see a 17% uplift in unique visitors to their page listing.

BEST PRACTICE: If budget allows, hoteliers should try and see if it works for a specific property and its audience. However, unless eligible independent hotels have strict rate parity guidelines, they should reconsider their strategy before looking to move forward with TripAdvisor Sponsored Placements.

IT'S MORE THAN JUST THE WEBSITE BOOKING

THE BENCHMARK: Sixty-seven percent of travelers feel more loyal toward a travel company that shares information during their trip that improves their travel experience.

BEST PRACTICE: Businesses of all sizes know that acquiring a new customer is much more expensive than acquiring a return customer, so hoteliers need to connect with their on-property guests. Leverage CRM tools to send emails that showcase nearby attractions, highlight unique on-site experiences, and more.



Now is the time for hotels to optimize their websites for mobile-first indexing and the mobile user experience. The most impactful, beneficial

ACTION STEP

hoteliers can do for mobile-first indexing is to redesign their website to a mobile responsive design.

ADAM LAWLEY

SEO Specialist

IDEA SHOP | CREATIVE CONCEPTS WORTH STEALING

Small ideas can have a big impact. HEBS Digital's Idea Shop provides quick and easy-to-implement digital marketing ideas and special packages to add a dash of extra creativity to your digital strategy and help boost revenues.



ATTRACT THE “STAYCATIONERS”

Domestic travel in the US is at an all-time high. Attract those in your area and appeal to the “staycationers” with specials for guests who check-in with a local state ID. A free drink or appetizer in the bar could go a long way for guests who aren't traveling a long distance.

CELEBRATE THE SMALL THINGS

Give guests a surprise “gift” to celebrate their half-birthdays. By sending a special discount on a day that most people don't celebrate or even realize is happening is a simple and easy way to make customers feel special and more connected to your hotel. A discount code or limited time offer could make all the difference.



CREATE PERSONA-DRIVEN CONTENT

One of the best ways to engage potential guests is to create content around specific buyer personas. Some research is needed to identify your top customer segments, but tailoring specific packages, blog posts, and advertisements towards these groups can pay off in a big way. If your hotel's primary buyer persona is a young couple looking for a weekend getaway, try creating a “Romantic Getaway Package” and advertise it on social media platforms.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HASHTAGS

Instagram recently introduced the ability to follow hashtags, giving users new ways to stay connected with interests, hobbies, passions, and the communities they care about. Following this mission, Instagram now allows profiles to add relevant hashtags directly in their Instagram bio. This new feature is the perfect opportunity for hotel Instagram profiles to include destination hashtags, as well as a branded hashtag that guests can use during their stay.



A LOOK OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY | HEADS IN BEDS

When it comes to digital marketing, inspiration is everywhere you look. In this section, HEBS Digital identifies unique campaigns and initiatives from industries outside hospitality. By getting to the root of what makes these ideas work, we can develop a strategy that taps into the creative tactic and puts heads in beds.



SHARE A COKE CONNECTS WITH CONSUMERS: As one of the most recognized brands in the world, turning to Coca-Cola for marketing inspiration is a no-brainer. Their “Share a Coke” campaign, which included personalized bottles with hundreds of different names, was hugely successful and increased sales volume for the first time in four years.

HOW THIS CAN PUT HEADS IN BEDS: It is underestimated how far personalization can go. Adding special touches to in-stay experiences, such as a handwritten note, can greatly impact the guest experience. This small gesture can help improve the guests’ overall impression of the hotel.

IBERIA AIRLINES LEADS CUSTOMERS ON A PERSONAL WEBSITE JOURNEY: Iberia Airlines customers received an email posing the question: If you could visit any vacation destination, what would it be, and who would you go with? Upon answering, customers were redirected to a microsite that provided information on their chosen destination.

HOW THIS CAN PUT HEADS IN BEDS: By asking customers what information they desire, hotels can better guide them to the correct place on the website. Identifying who they’ll be traveling with and some of their interests makes it possible to provide a more personalized experience.





MORE ABOUT US:

Through its Smart Guest Acquisition Suite, including the smartCMS®, Smart Personalization Engine, Smart Data Marketing, and full-stack digital consulting and marketing solutions, HEBS Digital helps hoteliers drastically boost direct bookings, lower distribution costs, and increase lifetime value of guests. Founded in 2001, the firm has won over 400 prestigious industry awards for its digital marketing and website design services.

Part of NextGuest Technologies, HEBS Digital and Serenata CRM, the most comprehensive Hotel CRM Suite today, are the creators of the hospitality industry's first Fully-Integrated Guest Engagement & Acquisition Platform.

Who can benefit from HEBS Digital services:

**Top tier major hotel brands • Luxury and boutique hotel brands • Resorts and casinos
Hotel management companies • Franchisees and independents • CVBs • Restaurants**



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