

A photograph of a modern, minimalist desk. On the desk, there is a silver laptop with the Google homepage on its screen. Next to the laptop is a smartphone with a colorful abstract wallpaper. To the left of the phone is a clear glass on a cork coaster. To the right of the phone is a small green succulent in a white pot. The desk is made of light-colored wood. In the background, there is a white storage unit with drawers. The overall scene is bright and clean.

# HEBSTRATEGY Q2 EDITION: THE GOOGLE ECOSYSTEM

Implementing Your Best Strategy  
to Get the Most Out of the Google Suite

# CONTENTS

Q2 2018

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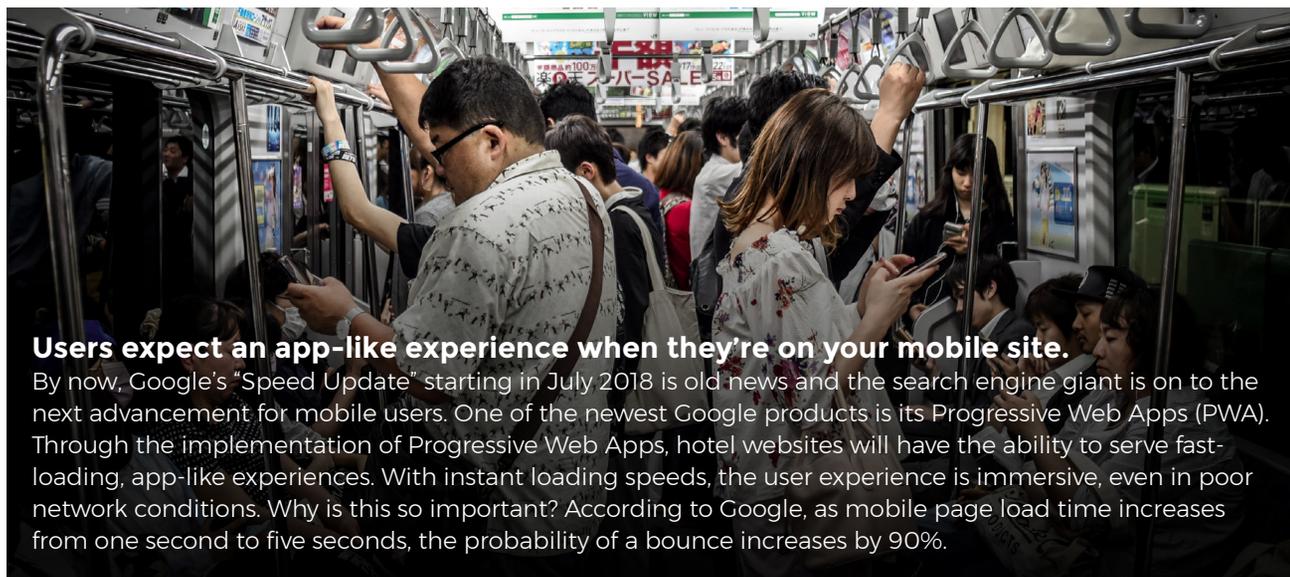


By utilizing the full Google ecosystem, hotels can acquire new guests by reaching them online through every phase of the traveling planning journey. With search, display, email and more, the Google ecosystem helps hotels get in front of potential guests across devices at meaningful moments.



# 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.



## Users expect an app-like experience when they're on your mobile site.

By now, Google's "Speed Update" starting in July 2018 is old news and the search engine giant is on to the next advancement for mobile users. One of the newest Google products is its Progressive Web Apps (PWA). Through the implementation of Progressive Web Apps, hotel websites will have the ability to serve fast-loading, app-like experiences. With instant loading speeds, the user experience is immersive, even in poor network conditions. Why is this so important? According to Google, as mobile page load time increases from one second to five seconds, the probability of a bounce increases by 90%.

## Stories are coming to Google.

Google AMP Stories are making waves by adding a visual layer to search engine results pages (SERPs) and allowing users to view a quick snippet of content. Similar to Snapchat and Instagram Stories, hoteliers will be able to feature content within AMP Stories, which are going to be found across Google SERPs on both mobile and desktop. Though this hasn't been rolled out yet, Stories will have their advantages, including keyword searches rather than a social network following and being script-based so there will be the opportunity for semi-automation.



**Updates to Google My Business give you more control over your listing.** As a recent focus for Google, there are two updates to this product that can help hotels reach more guests with relevant information:

1. Google My Business now allows businesses to post directly to Google Maps. While this feature is not yet available for hotel Google My Business listings, restaurants, spas, and other businesses will be able to publish timely content such as events, products, and offers.
2. Google will soon be adding a feature to Google My Business that allows business owners to add a description that will show up in Google's local knowledge panel. These descriptions can be used to highlight key differentiators which will enhance the listing.

# 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.

## **Push notifications on Chrome can help reach your audience.**

While not directly tied to the Google ecosystem, the browser-based technology called Push Notifications will begin to be more and more important for marketers to incorporate into their overall digital strategy. Companies like Trivago are using Push and are reporting that Push Notification subscriptions have eclipsed email subscriptions. Hoteliers should look into implementing Push to allow followers to receive desktop and/or mobile notifications for timely content such as new offers and new blog content. Hoteliers can even use the technology to facilitate booking engine abandonment, and for sending messages to specific loyalty members. The possibilities are endless.



**Optimize for voice search.** Termed “the next billion” by the Wall Street Journal, marketers should be proactively optimizing their websites for voice search. Voice search optimization is a combination of traditional SEO strategies and the study of patterns inherent in voice search. There are many limitations to voice search when it comes to a hotel website, like making a booking, but hotel websites with rich destination content, unique amenities, and F&B outlets have the opportunity to benefit. For example, a hotel could optimize for, “What is the best hotel in Bali with an infinity pool?” Finding the balance between optimizing for keywords that users type into a search bar, compared to what people actually speak to their device, is a delicate one that marketers will have to watch closely.

# BUSINESS NEED SPOTLIGHT | UTILIZE THE FULL ECOSYSTEM

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.**

### **Responsive websites are a requirement.**

With mobile use on the rise and with Google rolling out its mobile-first index to rank websites in results pages, having a responsive website is more crucial than ever. Mobile sites will now be considered the “real sites” by Google, and these will be the versions taken into consideration in ranking algorithms.

### **Schema markup increases incremental revenue.**

An important initiative for hoteliers, schema markup makes it easier for Google to grasp what your pages and website are all about. Another important benefit from schema are Featured Snippets, which Google creates dynamically based on the content of your website and places on top of the search results, bringing more traffic to the site.

### **Make sure your booking engine looks as good as your website.**

A website is only as good as the booking engine. If your booking engine cannot convert guests, even the best-designed website won't get you the conversions you're looking for. When a user lands on the booking engine they need to be able to easily find what they need in order to complete their booking.

# 1

## GET YOUR BEST **GUEST THERE.**

### **Ensure your mobile strategy is on point with Google AMP.**

With Google AMP, hoteliers can create content and promotional pages to advertise hotel amenities and services including dining options, spa services, maps, and destination information, which can all appear in the Google AMP Teaser Section on the mobile SERPs. These pages load at faster speeds, making the mobile user experience better than ever before.

### **Continuously optimize.**

SEO is a crucial part of any hotel digital marketing strategy. SEO can contribute to the majority of website revenue when combined with a multi-channel strategy. In addition, there is a direct correlation between the quality of the website SEO and the results from paid search campaigns. Ensure the best possible results with continuous optimizations.

# 2

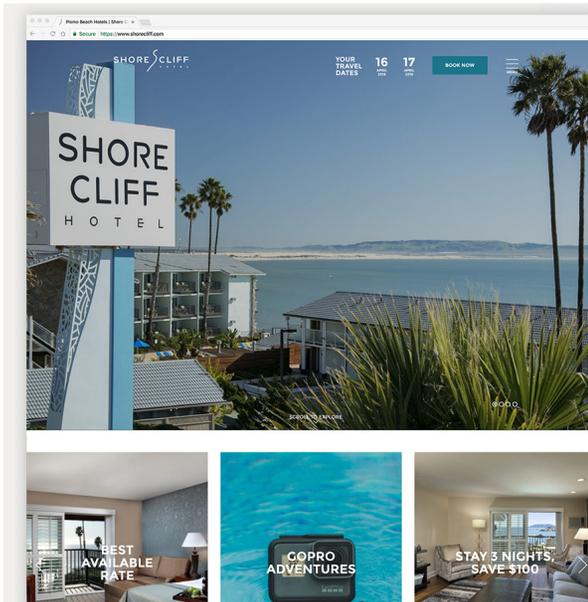
### **Implement Google Hotel Ads.**

Google displays the room rate, room tax, and availability via a real-time inventory feed from the hotel CRS. When a user searches for your hotel or hotels in your destination and they click your Google Hotel Ad, they will be linked directly back to the booking engine.

# 3

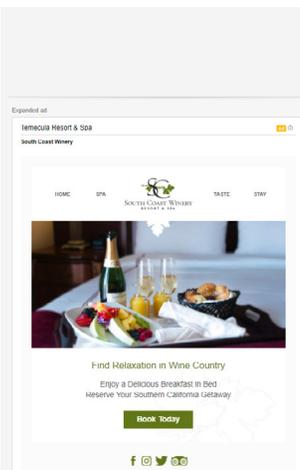
# FROM THE DESIGN STUDIO | THE GOOGLE ECOSYSTEM

Even though it may not seem it, design plays a huge role in the Google ecosystem. Making sure that all ads, even SEM ads, are as eye-catching as possible is very important. Hoteliers can have the most strategic targeting, but if the design of an ad is poor, then the initiative will not be successful.



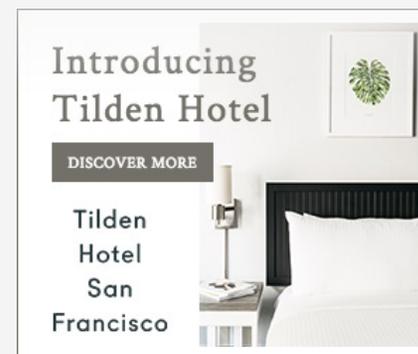
## SHORE CLIFF HOTEL UPDATES TO A RESPONSIVE WEBSITE DESIGN

As the foundation for any marketing strategy, having a visually captivating website design with the same content across all devices is extremely important. Due to Google's mobile-first indexing, a responsive website is critical in order to have the hotel website rank optimally for desktop devices. Shore Cliff Hotel is staying ahead of the game by not only launching a beautiful website, but also a website that will rank well across devices.



## A CLEAN DESIGN BENEFITS SOUTH COAST WINERY'S GMAIL ADS CAMPAIGN

Consumers receive several emails per day and are always checking their phones. South Coast Winery leverages a straightforward design for their Gmail Ads that utilizes white-space and pops of color for their Gmail Ads. This ensures that the most relevant information is quickly digested before they have a chance to close the ad and move on to their next email.



## TILDEN HOTEL FOLLOWS DESIGN TRENDS FOR GDN BANNERS

As users get hit with over 38,000 micro-moments over the course of two months (Google), hotels need to make sure that their creative stands out. Updating banners on an ongoing basis is important to make sure that the hotel's ads stay up to date with design trends.

# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT | THE LATEST NEWS

A quick recap of Q1 2018, including highlights from our published articles.



## FROM DREAMING TO BOOKING: HOW TO CAPITALIZE ON THE FULL TRAVEL PLANNING JOURNEY TO INCREASE DIRECT BOOKINGS

A lot goes into planning the perfect vacation, and with so many devices and planning resources, that journey is complex. As travel planners encounter more digital distractions than ever before throughout their journey, [being there for the most important digital micro-moments is crucial](#) to capturing the attention of potential guests and nurturing them through the path to a direct booking.



## SHOULD HOTELIERS BE CONCERNED WITH AMAZON DISRUPTING ONLINE TRAVEL?

There has been a lot of [buzz in the industry regarding Amazon](#) and whether or not they will enter the online travel space. Amazon's attempt to enter this industry did not prove successful among travelers or hoteliers. However, with their newest acquisitions and expansions into other markets, hoteliers can't help but wonder if now is the time to be concerned.



## THE MOBILE-FIRST WORLD IS APPROACHING - HOW CAN HOTELIERS PREPARE?

The massive shift from desktop to mobile and tablet devices continues at a rigorous pace. Now, with over half of website visitors coming from mobile and nearly 27% of bookings coming from mobile, hoteliers need to find ways to [engage their best potential guests across multiple touchpoints](#) and all devices.



## WINNING THE DIRECT BOOKING: COMBAT THE EFFECT OF AIRBNB ON YOUR HOTEL'S BOTTOM LINE

Recently, [Airbnb announced the formation of a technology partnership](#) with SiteMinder, a cloud-based channel management platform used by more than 28,000 hotels around the world. Now, hotels that use SiteMinder and meet certain criteria can easily list their inventory on Airbnb. How should hoteliers handle this new move?

# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT | THE LATEST NEWS



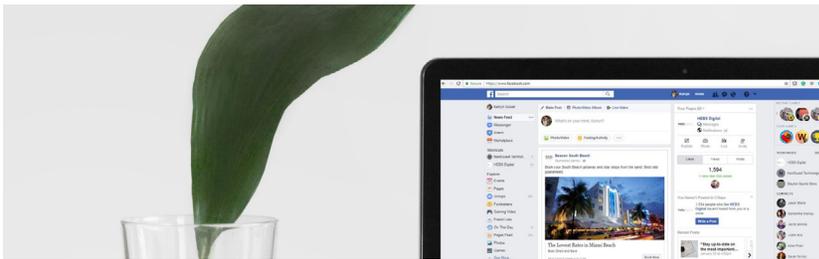
## GOOGLE AMP: WHY HOTELIERS SHOULD CARE, AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT

Introduced as Google's response to mobile publishing platforms like Apple News and Facebook Instant Articles, Google AMP is an open-source initiative enabling [mobile website visitors to quickly access content](#). The content is featured as "teasers" in the Google AMP carousels of mobile search engine results, with a link to the source of the news or info (e.g., the hotel website). Why should hoteliers care?



## HOTEL WEBSITE CONVERSION RATES: KEY TACTICS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN 2018

As the travel planning journey continues to become more complex, hotels are not just competing with OTAs and competitors to get in front of users online—they are also [competing with every micro-moment](#) that distracts the travel planner, such as emails, texts, videos, and social media. Hoteliers need to serve these users content at the correct time in order to convert them into bookers.



## FACEBOOK DYNAMIC ADS FOR TRAVEL: A MARKETING TOOL TO BOOST DIRECT BOOKINGS

Facebook advertising has always proven its value for brands striving to reach the platform's massive audience, but now [it may become even more valuable](#). Facebook revealed upcoming changes to its News Feed algorithm which prioritize content from family and friends. This means that users can expect to see less brand content, increasing the pressure on brands to invest in advertising.



## MARIANA SAFER OF HEB'S DIGITAL HONORED AT HSMIAI'S 2018 ADRIAN AWARDS AS A TOP 25 EXTRAORDINARY MIND IN HOSPITALITY

Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International ([HSMIAI](#)) has awarded [Mariana Mechoso Safer](#), Senior Vice President of Client Success at HEB'S Digital, a spot on the 2017 list of the "Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Hospitality Sales, Marketing, Revenue Optimization." The "Top 25" list recognizes outstanding thought leaders in the hospitality, travel, and tourism industries.

# 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 the ecosystem of Google products will attract website visitors and generate direct bookings.

## INCREASE CONVERSIONS WITH GOOGLE HOTEL ADS

**THE TREND:** Participation in the Google Hotel Ads meta search program has seen hotels generate 3X higher conversions than through traditional paid search.

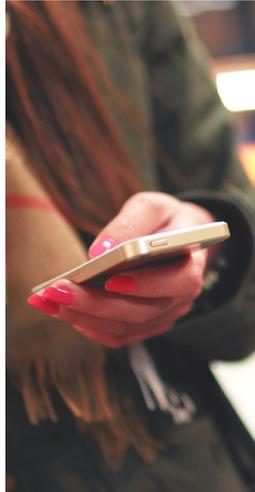
**BEST PRACTICE:** Google displays the room rate, room tax, and availability via a real-time inventory feed from the hotel CRS and directs traffic back to the hotel website. This allows for higher conversion rates for the hotel and lowers the overall cost of sale by taking away market share from the OTAs. Google Hotel Ads generate significant growth in conversions as well as impressions with many clients seeing a return of more than eight times leads to more followers, clicks to the website, and bookings.



## EXPAND REACH ON MOBILE DEVICES

**THE TREND:** With 50% of emails being opened on mobile devices, expand mobile reach with Gmail ads.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Gmail Ads allow hoteliers to target users specifically within their Gmail account inbox with a mix of teaser and email-like ads. Gmail Ads are a great way to take advantage of the 500+ million people using Gmail. Boost marketing efforts with targeting options such as age, gender, job, geographic location, domains, device, and keywords.



## HAVE MOBILE PAGES LOAD INSTANTLY

**THE TREND:** As mobile page load time goes from 1 second to 5 seconds, the bounce probability increases by 90%.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Don't lose out on potential customers because of slow loading speeds on mobile. With the attention span of today's consumer being so short, having information at a mobile user's fingertips is imperative. Whether it's a new menu at your restaurant, a buzzworthy treatment at your spa, or a push for an upcoming sale, utilizing Google AMP will allow pages to load at increasingly fast speeds and be visible in the Google AMP Teaser Section.



## USE GOOGLE SEARCH AND GDN IN TANDEM

**THE TREND:** Consumers exposed to a display ad show an average lift of 49% in site visitation and 40% in brand-name searches.

**BEST PRACTICE:** With the travel planning journey of today's consumer involving over 18 different touch points before making a booking, it is important to use all tools available to engage the consumer throughout their journey. Engagement via paid search ads, followed up with GDN retargeting, helps ensure more users will come back to the property website to complete their booking.



*At Google, we're constantly innovating our products to fit the growing complexity of the digital marketing space and ever evolving customer journeys. We work closely with our*

## **PREMIER PARTNERS,**

*like HEBS Digital, specifically in the hotel industry to craft strategies that push the envelope and allow hotels to reach their best guest.*

**CANDACE JORDAN**

Agency Development Manager at Google

# 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.

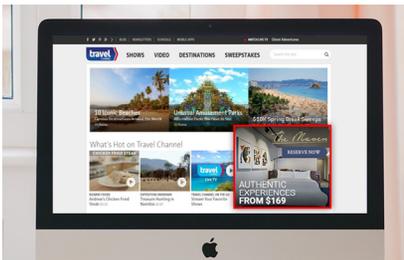


## YOUTUBE TRUEVIEW + INFLUENCER CONTENT

All hotels receive a number of requests from social media influencers for free stays, and hotels don't always know how to qualify them. Next time a request comes through, take a look at the influencer's video content and check if they have a YouTube presence. If they meet the criteria, invite them to come to your property, and ask that they send you their video content and use it for future YouTube Trueview ads. The benefit is that today's users are more captivated by earned media/user generated content, rather than an advertisement created by the hotel.

## GAIN TRAFFIC THROUGH IMAGE RESULTS

Google is making many changes to the way in which users can search and use images found in Google Image results, with one of the most recent being the display of captions in mobile search results. Add image captions to all images, including any destination content to reach users in the dreaming and booking phases. When a user is in the dreaming phase, they will search for the destination and may view images of landmarks or the skyline. When a user is in the booking phase, they will want to see images of the property, so having the best images available is important.



## REACH AUDIENCES WITH GDN AT ANY BUDGET

Generating brand awareness and bookings by running display campaigns on websites like The Knot, TripAdvisor, and others, is quite expensive. Before making a large investment to run ads on private networks, first take a look at which websites are included in the Google Display Network by using Google's Display Planner. You might be able to make the same impact at a fraction of the cost.

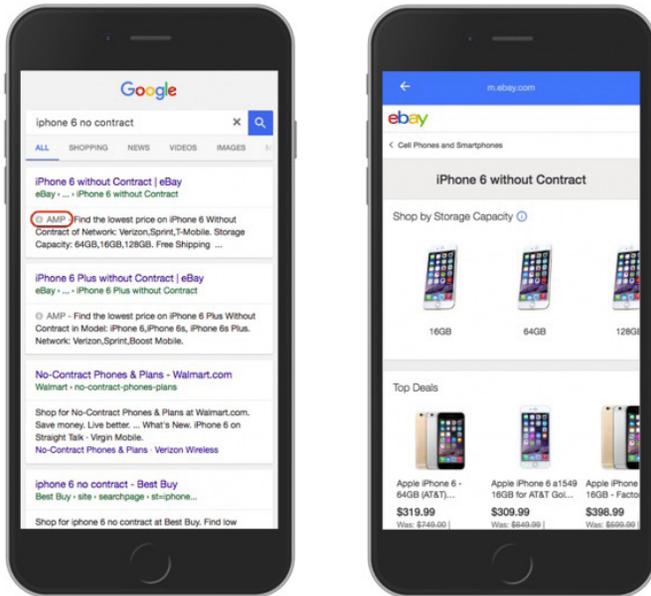
## USE THE NEW ADWORDS REPORTING TO THE FULLEST

There is a report in the new version of AdWords called Landing Pages. The Landing Pages report gives you a performance breakdown of the pages being sent traffic from your ads. This report is a great resource that shows which landing pages are receiving the most conversions and the mobile-friendliness of your landing pages. For example, you could have a mobile-only campaign that is leading users to a landing page that is not deemed mobile-friendly. That is something that can be determined in this report.



# 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.



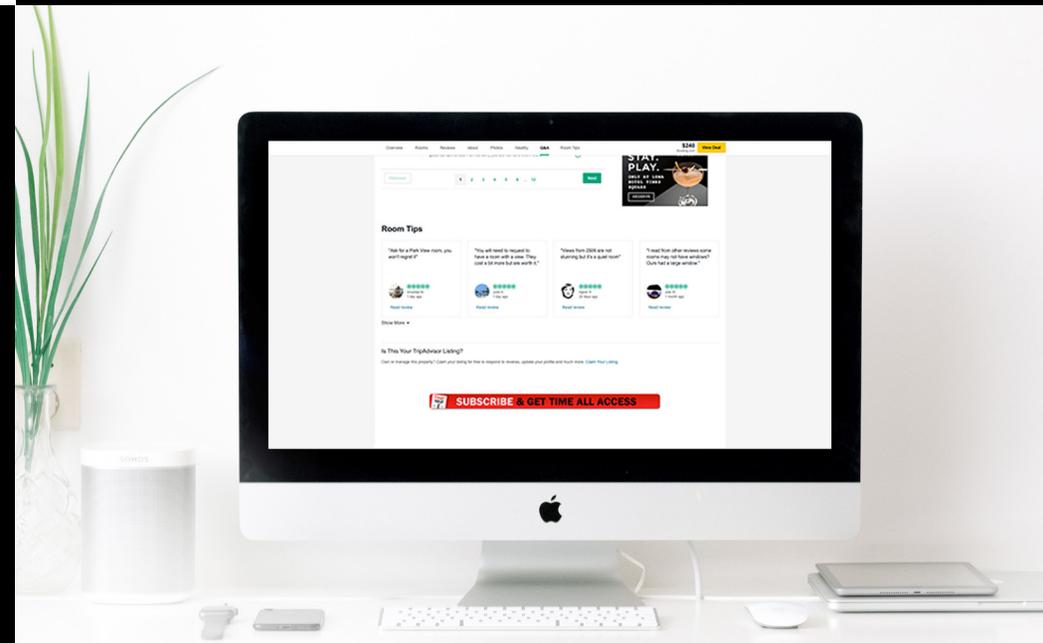
eBay AMP link in Google search results (left); eBay AMP product browse page (right)

**EBAY LEVERAGES AMP TECHNOLOGY:** Looking for a way to provide an engaging experience not only to users on the website, but also to mobile users accessing the website from external platforms like Google, eBay turned to AMP to update their product browsing experience. They created close to 15 million AMP-based product browse pages to make shopping on mobile even easier.

**HOW THIS CAN PUT HEADS IN BEDS:** As Google AMP expands to industries like ecommerce and travel, hotels can use this technology on their highest trafficked pages to get in front of more users online and serve them the information they desire at lightning fast speeds.

**TIME MAGAZINE GENERATES EMAIL LEADS WITH GDN:** Taking it a step further than just increasing website traffic with their display ads, Time Magazine set out to increase their email subscriptions. They used a set of nine banner ads that were displayed on the time.com site to channel potential subscribers to a new funnel.

**HOW THIS CAN PUT HEADS IN BEDS:** Reaching potential guests through email is a tried and true initiative but getting those email addresses can sometimes be difficult. Launching a GDN campaign geared towards email list generation can be beneficial to hotels in the long run and creates a segment of highly-qualified consumers.





## 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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