AN INTERNET HOTEL ACCOMMODATION
BUSINESS STRATEGY BASED ON ONLINE CONSUMERS’
BEHAVIOUR, THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to present a straightforward and achievable online strategy in the form of a structured conceptual framework for hotel accommodation providers and practitioners that was extensive and holistic yet easy to understand and achievable. The basis of this framework was achieved through critical analysis of the literature around the online hotel accommodation process under two main headings (1) online hotel accommodation behaviour and (2) online hotel accommodation thoughts and emotions. Each of these main headings were examined under the influencing factors which were internal to the online process (the individual, search engines, third parties / social media and hotel accommodation websites) and external to the process (online access devices and device visual interaction).

The data collected was extracted from the 100 individual in-depth observational interviews, the 3,107,281 individual online searches extracted from the online analytics of 18 different hotels over an 18 month period and the interviews of the managers of these 18 hotels.

Analysis of the data reinforced the conceptual framework structure providing a standardised map of online hotel accommodation behavioural, thoughts and emotional process patterns. The analysis also revealed mismatches with current perceived norms. Mismatches noted between the requirements of online consumers and the online experience being presented prevent targeted personalisation and individualisation difficulties such as single individuals using multiple devices, multiple individual using single devices, complex multiple segments within single individuals and individual behavioural differences within a single travelling group. Other areas analysed with complex behavioural mismatches included travel stage behavioural differences and psychological advertisement blindness.

The thesis culminates in the presentation of the conceptual framework structured on the internal and external factors, the process factors and the sub factors. All these factors and sub factors are correlated through the structure of the thesis, starting from the literature review going through to the research methodology, the data collection and analysis and ending with the recommendations and conclusions.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Mathew Shafaghi for his understanding and patience during times when I was based in African deserts or uncontactable with the military and unable to send him anything and for coming back to me so quickly with advice and answers when I could take months sometimes to come back to him.

Thank you to the Irish Defence Forces who gave me so much of what I required when I was serving as a senior military officer both at home and operationally deployed overseas during the completion of this thesis and especially anything I forgot to ask for.

Finally I would like to thank my wife Majella for being so supportive despite the overseas realities of military life, my off diving all around the planet and my constantly studying when I am actually at home. Thank you Ella for being Daddy’s little angle. Thank you to my teacher mother whose personnel educational and achievement values drove all my brothers and I to succeed and my father would have been so proud of my achievement but who sadly passed away during this thesis.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction
1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis then examines the background to the research. The research objectives are then formulated and the methodology for fulfilling the research objectives is explained. Finally the contribution to the existing body of research and the chapter structure are outlined.

1.2. Background

The hospitality industry is the world’s largest industry with a total turnover of US$ 6.990 trillion for 2013 representing 9.5% of global GDP (WTTC, 2014). Tourist numbers have increased between 1950 and 2010 by an annualised 6.2% easily exceeding global growth and inflation figures (UNWTO, 2012) and WTTC (2014) forecasts a growth in international tourist arrivals of 4.3% for 2014. Given that hotels account for an estimated 26.3% of global tourism revenue (Datamonitor Industry Market Research, 2009), this puts the 2014 global hotel revenue at an estimated US$1.917 trillion. Consumers have changed almost entirely the method which they choose and purchase this hotel accommodation in a mere decade. Harteveld (2010) found that 89% of Americans are online and Milligan (2006) found that 75% of all travel reservations were made online with the dollar value of these reservations surpassing all other channels combined. Almost every hotel has a website where consumers can book directly with the hotel yet a consumer’s decision to book directly through the hotel or through an intermediary can cost between 18 and 30% in commission of room revenue (Starkov & Price, 2005). Commission rates of this magnitude significantly exceed average tight hotel net profit margins. Figure 1 shows the average net profit margin from 2003 – 2013 for US hotels and motels which is significantly reduced when the recession and the 6.2% negative net profit for 2007 alone are averaged across the whole period. Crowe Horwath (2014) noted that this is not uniform across properties finding in a study on Ireland, that properties with a lower number of bedrooms (1-49) had a significantly lower gross profit margin than properties with a larger number of bedrooms (100+). This would suggest that smaller properties are impacted disproportionately higher and are therefore more vulnerable to the effects of these commission rates than larger hotels.
Ward and Shafaghi (2008) found that 97% of respondents wanted to book directly with the hotel even though they only booked directly 42% of the time and had thought incorrectly that they booked directly 76% of the time. They even preferred the direct seller’s website 68% of the time. Larger budgets and the early adoption of the technology clearly favoured intermediaries initially. Starkov & Price (2007) found a disintermediation of online hotel distribution from 2003 – 2005 and projected further disintermediation into the future (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall for the industry (USA):</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Branded Websites:</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediary Websites:</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Overall for the industry (USA) Source:- Starkov & Price (2007)

Larger hotels have larger budgets for better quality websites and the website investment cost per booking is reduced through greater economies of scale. Starkov and Price (2007) found that larger hotels had greater booking channel success with intermediaries only accounting for 18.6% of their revenue. Clearly websites that are optimised to meet consumers’ demands are financially invaluable to hoteliers.

Hotels and hospitality are not the only service sector that has been negatively impacted by online intermediation. In fact largely because of one single website (Amazon.com), the number of independent bookshops in British high streets fell from 1500 in 2005 to 987 in 2013 with the trend likely to continue as 2.5 shops in 2013 were closing for
every one opening (Butler, 2014). Online intermediation is also occurring in service sectors where no intermediary has ever been previously. Freed (2015) noted that 22% of all takeaways in Australia now offer food through online intermediaries, with this trend growing rapidly the 10% commission plus Goods Service Tax (GST) was reportedly halving businesses gross profit margin. Physical recorded music has also significantly suffered through online intermediation. Figure 2 visually purports the shear drop of physical music sales globally from €21Bn in 2004 to €7.4Bn in 2013 (Barrot, 2015). This has resulted in reduced investment, cost cutting, laying off of staff, and contracting ever fewer artists, mostly those who have proved themselves in the independent circuit (Dahl, 2009).

Figure 2 Global Recorded Music Industry Revenue, 2004 – 2013 Source:- Barrot (2015)

Change however is part of the human continuum and these sectors must learn to adapt and / or challenge online intermediation to survive. Marshall (2013) noted that music stars are now signing contracts with their record labels that include for example the publicising of their divorces and other activities so that they and their recording labels
can participate in and receive income from a range of musical activities beyond the sales of recordings. Major music labels have also started purchasing shares in some digital retailers such as Spotify (Sherwin, 2013). This will allow some labels sell through every single distribution channel while not ceding control of their artist’s recording rights to other intermediaries. Intermediated service industries must also capitalise on the deficiencies of online intermediaries. Travel agents have noted that many travelers have needs or wants that cannot be readily understood even by the consumer themselves which hinders a self-directed online approach. Similarly the desire for customisation and difficult to express desires are best met by a face to face dialogue with a travel agent (Novak & Schwabe, 2009). Kayani (2014) supports this, finding that bricks and mortar travel agents where human elements were combined were winners over online intermediaries. Travelers particularly wanted to speak with actual people who had been there before, especially to new destinations. Other areas which influenced the medium choice were security and unsurprisingly older age groups who preferred to interact directly with a travel agent rather than going online. An interesting counter to the disintermediation of online intermediaries by travel agents through human interaction was CheapAir.com who on realising the importance of the human factor in the supply chain added a bricks and mortar setup with in-house sales advisors to help with reservations, itinerary changes and solving travel related problems of customers (Trejos, 2014). Hoteliers across Europe may also be assisted by “Macron law” which has recently allowed French hoteliers to compete on price with the dominant OTAs through the removal of lowest or price parity clauses in their contracts (Thiessen, 2015).

The entry point for the consumer’s search pattern whether it be a directly inputted URL or by entry through a referred site is significant in terms of influencing an hotelier’s revenue. Park and Chung (2009) found that consumers who enter a hotel’s website directly have a higher average purchase spend than referrer sites such as Google. Significant research gaps exist in the research, Park and Chung (2009) conceded that this could have been because the purchasers may not have needed to browse anymore as they were already equipped with the information needed and / or they were close to the point of purchase. Once the consumer enters the hotel site they are greeted with vast amounts of pages to choose from. In an attempt to map the different pages into headings and therefore research their influence on revenue Law and Hsu (2006) listed five areas; reservations information, facilities information, contact information, surrounding area...
information and website management. Schegg et al. (2005) lists four; context, service, transactions and miscellaneous. Consumers expect to find what they are looking for quickly. On researching hotel websites Leung and Law (2008) found that the average clicks made by consumers to reach the page with their desired information was 3.94 yet the average clicks to the top twenty most popular pages was only 1.84 indicating the navigational path to the information desired by the consumer must be almost immediate.

The interface experience between consumers and the internet is far from optimum. The number of leisure travellers who enjoyed using the Web to plan and book their vacations dropped from 53% in 2007 to 47% in 2010. And in an American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) survey, 44% of agents said that they had more clients in 2010 than they had had the previous year, with the strongest rebound being in rail and hotel reservation numbers (Online Travel Market, 2011). In fact Harteveld (2010) found that 42% of Germans agreed when asked “If I could find a good travel agent to work with, I would”, this drops to 30% for UK residents. This observed difference could imply that something as simple as offering an alternative site in the language of the hotel’s main consumers could significantly optimise a site towards individual consumer’s content requirements and increase revenue.

The first part of identifying a hotel accommodation business strategy is to critically review and identify standardised online behaviour patterns of current consumers of hotel accommodation websites. Berkhin et al. (2001) reinforces this when he found that by understanding visitors' navigation behaviour we can assist the design of more efficient and user-friendly websites and discover misleading, duplicate or overlapping content. Extensive computerised databases of hotel accommodation searches and purchases exist. They show extensive statistical data offering great insights such as the average time spent online, pages visited and entry / exit points etc, (Schegg et al., 2005). They offer the advantage to the researcher of being able to examine hundreds if not millions of real life consumers online at an instant (Leung & Law, 2008). The problem is however, that analysing log files has several interpretive and technical limitations (Murphy et al., 2001; Ramey, 2000; Sterne, 2002; Stout, 1997). Different hotels have different pages preventing cross comparison of results. This is exasperated when language and culturally different sites are examined (Leung & Law, 2008); indeed Ramey (2000) stated that when examining Log files humans must interpret the results
cautiously. In fact what may seem to be minor issues such as IP addresses listed instead of searcher location make geographical, language or cultural analysis impossible, preventing geographically specific target marketing. Where mapped behaviour exists the models were overly complex for this research, e.g. (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006) and the behavioural map was the termination point of the research. Leung and Law (2008) stated that in this area which would seem to be well researched that previous attempts to understand web server logs were unfortunately very limited.

The next part of the process is to analyse and identify consumers’ thoughts and emotions processes specific to the identified standardised web searches of current consumers of hotel accommodation websites. Mapped hotel accommodation website human thought processes allow marketers personal targeting capabilities. Extensive and early research exists into many of these thought processes. They all however have their limitations and gaps and many have not been researched in relation to the online hotel accommodation process; certainly no complete mapped model exists. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) examining the perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology was proposed in 1989, (Davis, 1989). Limitations of this model are extensive, such as those expressed by Pavlou (2003) who found that even though consumers must trust websites with credit card and other financial information, trust and risk were not considered in the TAM. Another seminal human computer interaction model “The flow construct” is described as “a state in which the user is in full interaction with the computer technology” was proposed in 1990 (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Novak et al. (2000) found that this only occurred when the online challenges exactly match the skills of the online consumers, whereas consumers with skills in excess experience boredom and apathy and consumers with deficient skills experience anxiety. Other relevant consumer thought processes have not been fully considered. Consumers generally expect hotel prices to be lower online. Preston and Trunkfield (2006) found that 61% of the consumers interviewed mentioned price as the key consideration when choosing a travel website, with other factors such as trust, ease of use and convenience were mentioned by only around 15%. Yet O’Connor (2002) found the lowest price was achieved by direct phone calls to the hotel asking for discounts. Examples of other thought processes that research indicates should be explored to evaluate their appropriateness to the online hotel accommodation booking and search processes are choice (Jones & Chen, 2011), customer experience (Walls et
al., 2011), confusion (Matzler & Waigon, 2005), booking directly or indirectly with the hotel (Ward & Shafaghi, 2008), first impression (Fesenmaier & Kim, 2008), motivation (Beldonaa et al., 2005), loyalty (Ward & Shafaghi, 2009) which lead to rejection (Online Travel Market, 2011) or the exiting by consumers of individual hotel accommodation sites.

The final goal of this research is to recommend a business strategy for hotel accommodation sites based on the identified online behaviour (as noted using online analytics) and consumers’ thoughts largely utilitarian in nature (practical and useful) and emotions largely hedonistic in nature (the pursuit of pleasure and sensual self-indulgence). The visual optimisation of a sites marketing is incredibly important as Schegg et al. (2005) found that half of hotel website visitors left in less than two minutes, implying that consumers make almost immediate acceptance or rejectionist navigational decisions. Examples that influence consumers were found by Hall and Hanna (2004) who found that colour contrast and preference and aesthetic quality were significantly related to intention to purchase. Whilst automated evaluation systems exist they fail to take into account the individual requirements of consumers. An automated system which evaluated the layout and colour scheme performance of websites for hotels in Hong Kong was only able to achieve certain degrees of success by primarily incorporating generalised users’ perception into the evaluation process (Leung & Law, 2008). Complexities such as the textual style preference of users inhibit sites from attaining optimal experience. Leung and Law (2008) found that PDF documents containing important hotel information could not be read by some Asian users as they didn’t know how to download the free Acrobat Reader additional fonts pack. There are also extensive differentiating factors of consumers that cannot be generalised and therefore automated; for example, age (Bernard et al., 2001) and impaired vision (Jančigová & Ďurikovič, 2007). This research will expand on these areas in order to offer marketers a model of an optimised visual and content hotel accommodation website, taking into account methods of overcoming the limitations of generalisations.

1.3. Research Objectives
The objective of this research is to propose a business strategy for hotel accommodation sites based on the interaction of consumers’ thoughts and emotions processes and online behaviour. The strategy is best achieved by being broken into three distinctive
objectives in a research study which will identify the significant inadequacies and gaps indentified by the research. The three objectives are:

RO 1: To critically review and identify online hotel accommodation behavioural process standardised patterns both online and visually.
RO 2: To critically review and identify online hotel accommodation thoughts and emotions processes standardised patterns.
RO 3: To recommend an online hotel accommodation business strategy based on identified behavioural and thoughts and emotions standardised patterns.

1.4. Research Methodology
This research has three distinct but interrelated objectives. Each objective when fully answered creates an integral part without which the entire business strategy cannot be proposed. The research methodology therefore necessitates data collection for all three objectives. The objectives of the different data collection methodologies are:

I: To analyse and identify standardised web behavioural patterns of current consumers of the online hotel accommodation process.

II: To analyse and identify consumers’ thoughts and emotions processes specific to the identified standardised behavioural patterns of current consumers of online hotel accommodation.

III: To verify the viability of the internet hotel accommodation business strategy based on identified standardised patterns, thoughts and emotions of the online hotel accommodation process.

The research philosophy, choice, design and ethical requirements for each data collection methodologies were critically analysed and debated in the research methodology chapter. The data collection objectives essentially divided themselves into two distinct traditions and research methodologies.

Online Behaviour Analytics (Data Collection Methodology): The log analysis mapping methodology using Google Analytics followed the positivist, deductive and quantitative
research philosophy, approach and choice. This allowed the research to provide agreed and measurable facts that lead to a focus upon objectivity, rigour and measurement (Malhota & Birks, 2003) without compromising rich insights (Saunders et al., 2009) and inhibiting creativity (Malhota & Birks, 2003). The research online analytics methodology also provided a margin of error of 0.069% and was determined to have both validity and reliability.

In-depth Interview (Data Collection Methodology): The in-depth interview method was used to gather information on all three data collection objectives. The respondents were asked questions with a computer available to support their answers or answer in full other questions. The in-depth interview method is interpretive, inductive and qualitative in philosophy, approach and choice. An interpretive methodology is required in this context as it is used to describe, decode, and translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of what is observed (Van Maanen et al., 1982) and giving meaning and context of what is observed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Qualitative studies have being criticised as being unreliable and invalid (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Sandelowski (1993) argued that issues of validity in qualitative studies should be linked not to ‘truth’ or ‘value’ as they are for the positivists, but rather to ‘trustworthiness’. Using the trustworthiness criteria of confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability this research was determined to have both validity and reliability.

Online Behaviour Analytics Confirmation: The interpretivist in-depth interview results from the web searches were used to explain and confirm the vast and extensive positivist log files results gained through the Google Analytics research. The use of both interpretivist and positivist philosophies when used can cancel out each other’s weaknesses (Lee, 1991) indeed Al-Qeisi (2009) noted a number of studies where information systems researchers adopted the pluralist approach it can provide a richer picture and possibly strengthen the findings.

The first phase of the dissertation was to identify through a critical review of the literature, the existing knowledge and the gaps in that knowledge, to create a structure on which the research would be based and to provide objectives for the research. The basis for the literature review was completed in Nov 2012 but was critically reviewed and adapted over the entire period of the dissertation (March 2009 – March 2015) as
results and updates to other sections necessitated further analysis of the literature. The second phase was to create an appropriate methodology for the research which was in-depth observational interviews, an online analytics analysis of hotel websites and interviews with hotel managers. This was completed in June 2013. The data was collected and analysed in 2014 over a seven month period before the dissertation was written up was completed in March 2015.

1.5. Research Contribution
The contributions of this thesis are threefold.

Firstly the Online Hotel Accommodation Business Strategy based on Online Consumer Behaviour to the best of the author’s knowledge provides a combined strategy where none existed before and therefore creates new knowledge with the other empirical research adding to the body of knowledge in this specialised area.

Secondly it is very industry centric in that it offers hotels knowledge that can assist them in significantly disintermediating, reducing commission saving between 18 and 30% per transaction in an industry worth an estimated US$1.917 trillion per year. It also puts forward a generic optimised website design model which eliminates the need for expensive research for individual hotels in a rapidly changing online world.

Thirdly by offering hotel accommodation consumers an online hotel accommodation process optimised to their expectations and preferences, consumer resistance is reduced, consumer confidence, trust and online satisfaction significantly increases, which in turn increases online participation and their intention to purchase hotel accommodation online based on their positive online experiences.

This thesis also contributed to research through the production of three peer reviewed research papers in the areas of online tourism consumer behaviour (Ward & Shafaghi, 2008), human factors and their influence on the online hospitality consumer process (Ward & Shafaghi, 2009) and lastly a literature framework analysis of online hotel accommodation process factors (Ward & Shafaghi, 2013). The roles of these papers were to seek subject and academic peer reviews and validation of the research. Subject peer reviews and validation brings value to this thesis as this area had limited research.
and a community of experts returns qualified, professional and impartial reviews in a narrow discipline where it can be otherwise difficult to compete for feedback. Academic peer reviews and validation brings credibility to this thesis as the process of subjecting research and ideas to academic rigor and the scrutiny of others who are experts in the area returns valuable constructive criticism which elevates the research to a suitable quality through the guidance of peers. The papers were placed in many locations online with academia.edu alone having statistics available showing 2032 views for the three papers over the last 2 years. The author also contributed to other scholarly research by being a reviewer for the Journal of Media and Communication.

1.6. Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into five chapters.

**Chapter One – Introduction:** This chapter introduces the thesis then examines the research background setting out the purpose of the research. The research objectives are then formulated and the methodology for fulfilling the research objectives is explained. Finally the contribution to the existing body of research is outlined.

**Chapter Two – Literature Review:** This chapter critically reviews and analyses extensive literature such as published articles, journal papers, books, online articles and past empirical studies under three headings, hotel accommodation consumers’ behaviour, thoughts and emotions and a resultant online business strategy.

**Chapter Three – Research Methodology:** This chapter describes the research methodologies for this research. The methodologies were selected following critical analysis and the debating of the research philosophy, choice, design, ethics and the research contribution that could be gained from this research.

**Chapter Four – Data Collection and Analysis:** The data in this study is collected and analysed in line with the three research objectives. The numerical results are critically analysed following triangulation of the mixed methods research and presented in graphical form for each research methodology. The research objectives are addressed at the end of the chapter.
Chapter Five – Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter presents the main findings of the study together with the limitations and areas for further research.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review
2.1. Chapter Overview

The Internet continues to gain importance in the tourism sector as a perfect medium for selling travel. In fact the vast majority of travellers globally are accessing hotel information online, however the internet is not the only channel for tourism information searching and the internet must be considered as part of a dynamic process in which travellers use various types and amounts of information sources in vacation planning and selection. As the internet becomes a mainstream and indeed the main tool for travel planning and purchase an internet hotel accommodation business strategy based on online consumer behaviour, thoughts and emotions becomes an absolute requirement for hotel accommodation providers. This chapter examines the relevant literature and finally proposes an internet hotel accommodation business strategy.

This chapter critically reviews the literature in order to identify standardised behavioural patterns and the human thoughts and emotions process specific to the identified process factors of the online hotel accommodation process. This critical review of the extensive literature indicated that a logical structure would be required for the coherence of the business strategy checklist. After a number of attempted structures failed to logically encapsulate in its entirety the appropriate literature, a framework was developed. This framework divided the literature into external factors which were the online access devices and the users interaction with these devices and the internal factors which were essentially the process the user completed i.e. the individual themselves, search engines, third parties / social media and hotel websites. Each element of the process was further divided into standardised behavioural and thoughts and emotions patterns. After formulating the framework, it was published as a peer reviewed paper in order to petition peer criticism and validation. Finally the chapter concludes with the conceptual framework of online hotel accommodation process influencing factors presented in diagrammatic form.

2.2. Online Hotel Accommodation Behaviour

The purpose of this part of the literature review is to critically review and identify the standardised behaviour patterns of the online hotel accommodation process. This will be achieved initially by examining the clickstream / log file analytics of the process. The internal process influencing factors (the individual, search engines, third parties / social
media and hotel websites) will then be examined followed by the external process influences (online access devices and the visual interaction with the media).

2.2.1. Clickstream / Log file Analytics of the process

Bucklin and Sismeiro (2009) describe clickstream data as the electronic record of a user's activity on the Internet. It provides information about the sequence of pages or the path viewed by users as they navigate a web site (Montgomery et al., 2004). Clickstream data however is essentially useless in its raw format. A typical example of a log file is shown in Figure 3.

```
2444 http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=fast+cyclists+in+australia “Mozilla/4.0
(compatible; MSIE 6.0; AOL 8.0; Windows NT 5.1)
```

Figure 3: Log File Code: Source:- Hofacker & Murphy (2005)

This raw data is converted by log file analysis tools which compile raw data into human understandable reports (Ramey, 2000). There are hundreds of free and commercial tools which will read each line of the log files, extract the space-separated fields and then consolidate them in a database and extract meaningful information for management (Schegg et al., 2005).

Click stream data has major advantages to offer us in identifying user behaviour in analysing the online hotel accommodation process. Its widespread availability allows us to examine consumer search behaviour in a large-scale field setting (Moe, 2003). They are a valuable cornerstone for continuous web site design (Burton & Walther, 2001; Giudici, 2003; Murphy et al., 2001; Xue, 2004). They contain masses of technical and behavioural data, which powerful analytical tools convert into management summaries (Schegg et al., 2005). The clinical statistical nature of the data removes the bias of self-reported data. Hospitality managers can draw on data from actual visitors to a website to improve the design of the site (Murphy et al., 2001). The data is instantaneous for tactical decisions for a web site which allows marketers to track behavioural differences for mass media campaigns for specific advertisements or specific individuals (Hofacker & Murphy, 2005). One of the most promising applications is in identifying homogenous user subgroups (Liu, 2008); this allows marketers to target specific demographics more likely to purchase hotel accommodation. It is unobtrusive and can collect detailed real
time information on individuals without artificial interruptions. This data can be collected in ways that were hitherto infeasible, too difficult, or too costly (Bucklin & Sismeiro, 2009). Server log files can also record information on the visitor's cookie ID and IP address, allowing the identification of unique users and their return visits (Bucklin & Sismeiro, 2009).

Clickstream data presents us with vast amounts of incredibly useful information however it is not without its difficulties or limitations. Bucklin et al. (2002) found that marketers lacked a methodology for analysing path information. Montgomery (2001) noted that clickstream data was potentially rich but underutilised. Computer limitations of log file analysis are available storage space which may necessitate eventually deleting files and available computer processing power limiting the use of advanced analytical techniques (Schegg et al., 2005). Limitations for computers may not be limited to the specific device. Take for example a user in an internet café accesses a particular site, later another person sits at the same computer and accesses the same site differently (Hofacker & Murphy, 2005). This can be the same for a family holiday when the whole family accesses the same hotel site at different times. Bucklin and Sismeiro (2009) while observing the difficulties of multiple individuals using a single machine found that similarly there are clickstream data issues when an individual uses multiple computers thereby the particular computers clickstream data even when considered in its entirety only describes a part of the user’s online process. The limitations of the data can also be limited to a specific site i.e. they lack information regarding users on other websites or earlier in the search process. They may also lack user-specific information such as demographic profiles. Bucklin and Sismeiro (2009) noted that while at Internet Service Provider ISP level there may be millions of user’s data recorded, there may be insufficient data with this on specific product purchases to form a representative sample.

Limitations also exist in interpreting the log files of individual users. IP addresses are listed as e.g. 204.6.224.133. Unless this is represented as a domain location e.g. .ch it is impossible to note the country of origin of the user (Schegg et al., 2005). Another limitation of most log file based analysis is that it is only reported how many results pages are viewed by users, but not how many results were selected or in which sequence they click on results. Without additional qualitative research we cannot see the results and the positions that they were clicked in (Höchstötter & Lewandowski, 2009). The
URL corresponding to a page request is often truncated making it difficult to match information recorded in the user centric panel to specific page content or activities taking place on a website (Bucklin & Sismeiro, 2009). Pitman et al. (2010) also noted it was not possible to ascertain the causes for the differences between clusters; nevertheless, knowledge about specific user groups is crucial for understanding the relationships between potential tourism products, users and related information categories.

Most clickstream data is collected and recorded as very long and mostly meaningless URLs (Moe, 2003). This has resulted to date in relatively few attempts to systematically explore the huge potentials of Web Usage Mining WUM in the e-tourism domain (Pitman et al., 2010). Indeed when these results are recorded it can be recommended that humans interpret the results cautiously (Ramey, 2000). Another issue with clickstream data is log files do not permit easy analysis: their sheer volume and simple structure make it difficult to extract business intelligence directly (Liu, 2008). Indeed even when data is recorded, Pitman et al. (2010) noted that the majority of users spend rather little time on the site, perhaps signifying that their specific information needs have not been met but noted it was not possible to ascertain the causes for the differences between clusters. In examining the limitations of interpreting log files Schegg et al. (2005) asked does a user requesting many resources on a hotel website mean an interesting web site or the visitors failing find the information?.

Extensive limitations do exist with log files. Indeed it is clear it is not possible for log file clickstream data to fulfil everything we require alone. Pitman et al. (2010) noted that a web server’s log file is one commonly available data source for learning about visitors’ information needs; however, it is often left unexploited. Standard analytics tools (e.g. Google Analytics or 123log analyzer) provide solely descriptive information about page access frequencies, view times, common entry and exit points, referral sites, etc. and thus provide a blurred and incomplete picture of online behaviour. Schegg et al. (2005) recommended that combining page views with an analysis of the entry and exit pages would help, as would a manual content analysis of the web site and usability testing of the site. They also recommended combining the path analysis with user observations i.e. by video and screen cameras and user surveys would shed more light on how to convert these visitors from lookers to bookers.
2.2.2. Process Influences (Internal)

2.2.2.1. The individual

Consumers have in recent years increasingly relied on the online medium for the travel research process. Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that almost all respondents use the Internet as an information source for planning pleasure trips and a majority (82.5%) used it every time they planned a pleasure trip. Starkov & Safer (2010) found that 94% of travellers were accessing hotel information online and 55% of all leisure and business travel bookings will be completed online. This is significant in that it infers that 39% will search online then will choose to leave the online medium to purchase travel offline. There is limited research to explain this behavioural process. This online/offline behaviour is extremely difficult to map given that it is almost impossible to track which other method was used by the online searcher to subsequently book the travel product. The Travel Industry Association of America found that the most popular websites used for planning by online travel bookers in the past year included travel agency sites (69%), company sites (65%), search engines (57%), and destination sites provided by states, cities, etc. (40%). They also found that the only significant behavioural shift over time, noted between 2007 and 2009 involving the use of online travel agency sites among non-bookers. The percentage of non-bookers using online travel agency sites for travel planning declined from 39% to 29% between these two surveys. A significant limitation of this research was they had no explanation for this behavioural change. Interestingly non-bookers are significantly more likely to rely on search engines for travel information than are those who book online (69% versus 57%) (TIA, 2009). Gretzel et al. (2007) also found a large majority of the respondents (96.4%) use the Internet as a source for trip planning but consulted many other sources (Table 2). Other sources mentioned include timeshare companies, maps, and travel shows. Significantly there is no recent research disputing that the internet is the dominant process medium within travel research. Pearce and Schott (2005) found that tourism information can be gathered electronically, or from other information sources such as guidebooks and word-of-mouth referrals.
Information Source for Advance Trip Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Books</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family / Friends</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broshures / Flyers</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Offices</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Agents</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Information Source for Advance Trip Planning Source:- Gretzel et al. (2007)

Seabra et al. (2007) found that tourists mix the internet and other non-internet information sources, including commercial brochures and travel agents for planning trips. Gronflaten (2009) supports this indicating that tourism information search depends on both online and offline modes. Ho et al. (2012) found that little was known about how individuals search for tourism information using online and offline sources, how they search for tourism information from online to offline, or how individuals use multiple information sources. The lack of studies in this area is evidence that would support further research into this behaviour. iProspect (2009) found that 67% of online users are driven to search following exposure to an offline channel and that 39% ultimately convert back purchasing from the very company that caused them to launch their search. Jun et al. (2007) found that this online / offline mix in travel product information search and purchase were prevalent even in 2001 when they carried out this research (Table 3). Ho (2012) supports the online / offline dual approach indicating that by using both a combination of online and offline modes is a way to gain a better understanding of the comprehensive search process, in particular which activities form their search experiences and how these activities occur sequentially during their searching. Interestingly Jun et al. (2007) found that online / offline patterns vary dramatically depending on the travel product and whether the travel product is the
subject of an information search or being purchased. Pitman et al. (2010) found in examining the range of search terms being used, that only 12% related to accommodation finding that the distribution of search terms could be summarised as follows: accommodation (12%), activities (16%), skiing (7%), dining (7%), shopping (3%), attractions (7%) and services (17%), together with nonspecific terms (32%). This is significant in that it indicates that 88% of travel search terms are non accommodation based and that that the hotel accommodation selection process is heavily reliant on results from search terms largely unrelated to the hotel accommodation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Travel Information Search</th>
<th>Travel Product Purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractions</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car rentals</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Travel Information Search and Travel Product Purchase in the Pre trip Stage
Source:- Jun et al. (2007)

Mapping of the online hotel accommodation process is further complicated in that there is evidence to support that search patterns differs at different stages of the process. Swarbrook and Horner (1999) found that traveller's requirements are differentiated during the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages of a travel product. Li & Chatterjee (2005) propose research that makes mapping the process difficult for different reasons. While they found stages in the shopping process are sequential, they found that consumers may drop out as they progress and even skip stages. They further proposed that consumer navigation orientation and reasons for visiting a commercial website and stimuli encountered during navigation impacts on the decision to proceed through the shopping process and these impacts differ across the different stages of the shopping process. Gretzel et al. (2007) while finding that it is a staged process found that overall, most respondents plan major aspects of their trip in advance (67.0%). One quarter of respondents like to plan in advance and are only open to minor changes (23.6%) and 2.4% plan in great detail and do not enjoy change. Fewer respondents keep advance planning to a minimum (6.4%) or make almost all decisions while on vacation (0.7%). Fesenmaier & Jeng (2000) offer research which supports that travel is a staged process and that different decisions are made at different stages of the process. They propose three basic decision item phases in the tourism travel decision making process:
(1) core decisions, which are planned in detail well in advance of the trip; (2) secondary decisions, which appear to be considered prior to the trip but "flexible" to accommodate the possibility of change; and (3) en route decisions, which are, in the main, not considered until the traveller is actually en route and actively seeking alternatives (Figure 4). Decisions made at an earlier stage appear to be conditional on decisions made in later stages.

Figure 4: A Decision Net of Tourism Travel Source: Fesenmaier & Jeng (2000)

Sumi & Kabir (2010) found that the buying process starts long before the actual purchase and has consequences long afterward. Gretzel et al. (2007) supports this, finding that 44.2% of their survey respondents began their trip planning four or more months in advance, 29.5% plan 2-4 months in advance, 20.3% plan 3-8 weeks in advance and 1.3% plan 1-6 days in advance. Only 0.4% made travel decisions during their trip. ComScore and Google (2008) support this for the online stage of the process finding that on average, customers in the UK make 12 travel related searches, visiting 22 websites and taking 29 days from the first time they search until they make a purchase. The extended nature of the search in the majority of cases was enforced by the finding that 45% of transactions occur four weeks or more after the first search. These results are limited in generalisability in that they only considered one IP address i.e.
they did not consider individual consumers using other devices or offline resources. The extended and phased nature of the online possess is demonstrated by Ho et al. (2012) who found on average that the total search time for an individual online session was only around 30 min.

Jansen et al. (2008) found in an examination of web queries from 1,523,793 searches that they were seeking information 80.6% of the time, navigating between pages 10.2% of the time and carrying out transactions 9.2% of the time. This goes somewhat towards explaining the extremely low purchase completion rates. Early research was very concerned about these rates. New York Times (2000) found that online retailers such as Amazon.com, Macys.com, JCPenney.com, and MarthaStewart.com had purchase conversion rates that ranged between 1-2% averaging 1.8%. Moe (2003) supported this in her 2003 research finding a 1.25% purchase conversion rate and Sismeiro and Bucklin (2004) only a year later found that the clickstream data showed that only about 2% of site visitors completed an order transaction.

Purchase click out rates of this nature clearly need further analysis as a generalisation of the process would imply a no purchase click out. Online ads in tourism fare out even worse for click out rates. Expedia.com (2013) found that a typical online advertisement has a 0.14% click through rate, i.e. for every 714 times the advertisement is displayed; a user will click on one. Consumers who frequently enter the site via the front page also exert a strong negative impact on click outs (Olbrich & Holsing, 2011). These very negative statistics have severe limitations in that they do not explain the behaviour of users, but more in-depth analysis shows interesting behavioural traits behind these statistics. iprospect (2009) noted in research on online ads that there was a 31% direct response rate, however after looking at the ad nearly as many (27%) searched for the product, brand or company using a search engine, 21% typed the companies name into a browser and navigated to the site, 9% investigated the company, brand or product using social media or message boards. Thus the click through rate was only a minor part of the actual influence of ads. ComScore and Google (2008) in examining online travel purchases found consumers visited 22 websites prior to making a purchase implying a 4.5% click through rate would effectively be a 100% online purchase rate. But not every search is the same. Moe (2003) found that even though a viewed product may not be purchased on that visit, it may enter into a consumer’s considered set of products and
lead to a purchase in the future. Park et al. (2007) stated that such users should be treated as potential consumers. Moe (2006) and Moe and Fader (2004) extended this, finding that the more often people visit a retail site, the more likely they are to buy. In supporting ComScore and Google (2008) Moe (2003) found that very few purchases occurred in the beginning of the data period as compared to the latter half of the data. Moe (2003) and Putsis and Srinivasan (1994) have shown that in many cases, consumers build up to a purchase, in other words, consumers will make a series of non-purchase visits before making a purchase visit. Again, in that case, later store visits will tend to have higher purchase conversions as well as more buying / late stage search visits then earlier visits in the data period. In fact the buyers / late stage visits have the highest purchase conversion rate of 20.00%.

The mapping difficulties of the online process are further complicated in that consumers may use the Web to gather information, but use other channels to make purchases (Bucklin & Sismeiro, 2009). Starkov and Safer (2010) indicated that in 2010, 94% of travellers were accessing hotel information online yet only 55% of all leisure and business travel bookings were completed online. There is limited research to accurately indicate the influence or decision making process for or about the link between the online medium and the offline purchase process. One example Starkov (2012b) found that after examining web and call analytics, that approximately 6-7 of every 10 mobile hotel bookings are made via voice reservations clicked directly from the phone number on the mobile site. This research implies that mobile hotel accommodation sites are directly responsible for three times more hotel bookings than their pure web analytics bookings state. Hotel accommodation providers should also be aware that leisure and business travellers are using the internet even after the room has been booked and while the traveller is staying in the hotel. The majority (44%, up 5% from 2011) said they use their smartphones to check the weather and are fearful about missing connections or worried about flights being delayed, with 31% of travellers checking departure and arrival times (up 4% from 2011). 37% of travellers said they use GPS and / or get directions on their smartphones, an increase of 5% over 2011 (Pollard, 2012).

The individual nature of the searcher significantly influences each individuals search. Online tourism users have become comfortable and experienced with the medium and this in itself does not affect the search. Gretzel et al. (2007) found that a large majority
of the online tourism users reported feeling that online travel planning is very important (95.4%), something they like to do (94.0%), enjoyable (93.2%), critical (92.2%), essential (92.0%), and fun (91.5%). Only slightly over 30% view online trip planning as a necessary chore (31.8%) and only 20.1% of respondents like to leave trip planning to others. Bernard (2001) indeed found that the vast majority of online consumers have been conditioned into expecting to find particular items uniformly in particular locations on the webpage and therefore know unconsciously how to use all sites even if they are new to them. Volt and Fesenmaier (1998) and Fodness and Murray (1997) found consumers seek this information to satisfy five different information needs: functional information needs mainly for decision making, sign needs for symbolic expression and social interaction, hedonic needs for emotional, sensory, phenomenological, and experiential expressions and manifestation, innovation needs in search of novelty, variety, and creativity and aesthetic needs for the sake of fantasy and image.

There are significant differentials between searchers across a vast range of characteristics which makes behavioural mapping very difficult solely from clickstream analysis. Bhatnagar and Ghose (2004) found in their examination of internet shopping that it is evident that different user groups approach sites with significantly different information needs. This was reinforced by Wen and Peng (2002) who when examining clickstream analysis for market segmentation found different peaking effects for different personalities. Jayawardhena et al. (2007) describe online consumers as having five distinct purchase orientations (price sensitive 27%, convenience oriented 23%, brand loyalists 20%, discerning shoppers 17% and active shoppers 13%) meaning that even when a segment is identified there are sub groups based on further character traits. Even when segments are identified dates can change their behaviour. Fesenmaier et al. (2009) noted that the percentage of non-bookers using online travel agency sites for travel planning declined from 39% to 29% between 2007 and 2009. This indicated normalisation and confidence in the internet medium for travel purposes. Interestingly, non-bookers are significantly more likely to rely on search engines for travel information than are those who book online (69% versus 57%). The use of these search engines varies significantly between users. Machill et al. (2004) noted that only 14% of search engine users use advanced search features and only 33% of respondents know that it is possible to personalise search engine interfaces. Yang et al. (2007) supported this, finding that less than 25% of respondents frequently use advance search features
on a search engine. The age of consumers and the devices they use significantly affects attempted mapping of use. Marketingcharts (2011) found that over 55s are significantly less likely to purchase products using the mobile internet yet Farago (2012) found that over 55s were significantly more likely to own tablets (7% versus 17%). The individual searcher’s relationship with different devices has contradictions which limit mapping as eMarketer (2013) noted that while travel accounted for just 1% of general internet usage in the USA in 2012, it accounted for 9.3% of mobile internet for Q.1 2013. This mirrors the fact that mobile internet accounted for only 6.95% of general internet online hotel bookings (Starkov, 2012a). There is no research to explain these apparently behavioural opposites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Device Purchases made on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 34</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 54</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Percent of device owners in age groups who have made a purchase using each device Source:- Marketingcharts (2011)

Income and educational attainment significantly affect our ability to map hotel booking behaviour. Zickuhr (2013) found that 49% of US adults with at least a college degree own a tablet, significantly more than the 17% ownership level of those who did not graduate high school. The tablet ownership of parents with minor children living at home was 50% in May 2013. Machill (2004) also found that individuals with higher levels of formal education were significantly more concerned about the appearance of undesired links than those with low levels of formal education. They were also better able to arrive at and evaluate hits and better able to objectively analyse site content. Consumers also pursue a different hotel selection process depending on whether the hotel is perceived by the booker to be a high involvement or low involvement product (Moven & Minor 1998). Consumers also have different levels of willingness to pay for search, very few users are prepared to pay, even for a “perfect” search engine: 43% would not be prepared to pay anything whatsoever, while 22% would pay just €1 per month (Machill, 2004). Jayawardhena (2007) noted that prior purchase experience and gender has a significant impact on purchase behaviour. This is consistent with previous studies by the U.S. Travel Industry Association of America where online travellers are more likely to be females (53%) than males (47%) (Fesenmaier, 2009). Yet this
contrasts with mobile internet usage where only 44% of smart phones and 49% of tablet users are female (Farago, 2012). McCarthy et al. (2010) actually noticed significant differences within these figures with females using more hotel review and travel information sites and males using more search engines. Geographically Kralisch and Berendt (2004) found that individuals from cultural backgrounds with high uncertainty avoidance used search engines to a greater extent in order to meet their need for a greater amount of information. Some geographic information seems to contradict other information. China has higher general internet usage than the US (33% versus 26%) and higher mobile internet usage (12% versus 22%) yet is considered a less developed country (Meeker & Wu, 2013).

2.2.2.2. Search Engines

The Travel Industry Association of America and others have shown that the majority of U.S. travellers use search engines for vacation planning (Fesenmaier & Cook, 2009). In fact in 2012 Pollard (2012) stated that all travellers use search engines to get information. It has been noted that even with newer offerings such as news, image, video, and scholarly document searches which come from specialised web crawls, the core of search engines remains the search index (Höchstötter & Lewandowski, 2009). Shah and Oppenheimer (2008) noted that in order to understand the determinants of the information search process, collecting appropriate process data is essential. Machill (2004) noted as early as 2004 that rankings effectively decide whether websites are seen or not. Most frequently, participants would visit one site, that is to say the first hit (81%), or at most two sites (13%) listed among the results. Research by (Young, 2011; Allen, 2013; Lee 2013) all clearly indicates a significantly higher selection for the number one return on the Search Engine Results Page (SERP) (Table 5). Lee (2013) also noted the vast majority of searchers only check the first page of search engine results (Table 5). Young (2011) however noted that different statistical results can exist between studies citing issues such as seasonality, user interface changes, user perception and human error (Table 5). Unlike other areas discussed in this chapter Allen (2013) and Lee (2013) noted searchers have not significantly changed their search behaviour in relation to result selection from the SERP over time (Table 5).
Table 5: Results of Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Search Entity</th>
<th>Explicit Core Search Share (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Sites</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Sites</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo! Sites</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Network</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOL, Inc.</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Schegg (2005) noted in an analysis of search engine referrals that Google was the most popular search engine (61%), followed by MSN (10%) and Yahoo (8%). ComScore (2013) noted that this has changed little since Schegg (2005) results in 2005 with Google still being the dominant search engine (Table 6). Starkov (2013) noted that for years now hotel marketers have claimed that search engines are on the way out as a viable marketing and distribution channel in hospitality with “declining” number of hotel and travel searches. Google’s own comments on such claims are as follows: “The assertion that hotel searches are down is not true. The numbers on the Google Trends tool are not absolute growth numbers. Rather, interest level in particular keywords is indexed against the growth of overall search volume. One keyword does not represent an entire category, nor does it represent a fair assessment of hotel search demand on Google as compared to any other search tool. To put it simply, growth in hotel searches may just be lower than that for other high growth categories. Our internal data shows growth in search interest for hotels”. While it is interesting Google has had to defend its
position, Starkov (2013) noted that over 55.6% of website booking revenue across HeBS Digital’s client portfolio of thousands of hotel properties comes as direct referral from the search engines (Google, Bing and Yahoo) in 2012, including organic (32.7%) and paid search (22.9%).

Tourism consumers typically start the search process entering keywords into the search engine. Xiang et al. (2008) noted that online tourism users’ questions tend to be short, consisting of less than four keywords. Our attempts to map search engine keywords for hotel accommodation search has limitations especially that it changes over time. Bogatin (2006) noted that Yahoo search engine search query lengths are now more sophisticated and specific and that the average search query length was 1.2 words in 1998, 2.5 words in 2004, and was 3.3 words in 2006. Chitika Insights (2012) noted that it had increased to 4.39 in 2012 over the five largest search engines with 4.29 for Google. This increase in query length over time is somewhat explained by Lu and Keefer (1995) when they found that the effectiveness of different retrieval models depend on the number of search keywords in the query. Keyword search patterns are difficult to generalise as search behaviour can differ. Zhang et al. (2009) noted different behaviour finding that searchers who submit the lowest number of words as a search query click on the highest ranked results. Hardtke et al. (2009) also found searchers who tend to select words with high IDF (inverse document frequency) when formulating queries. They naturally select the rarest terms that they can think of that would be in all documents they desire.

Hotel accommodation searchers use an extensive range of different keywords in their searches. Wolk and Wöber (2009) extracted search words from log files generated by the domain specific search engine ‘European Cities Tourism’ which is comprised of 186 European touristic cities (www.visiteurope.info). The results revealed 5,550 different search words. Interestingly, the top 100 most frequent search words covered over 75% of all search queries. Pitman et al. (2010) noted very similar results to Wolk and Wöber (2009) finding that the first 150 terms covering more than three quarters of the search queries. Interestingly, internal hotel website searches exhibit much greater diversity with around 250 search terms covering about 75% of all queries indicating that a broader range of information is being sought from the hotel itself. Pitman et al. (2010) supported this, finding that when comparing external search terms used in Google
searches to those used in internal searches, it turned out that internal searches are much more specific, usually referring to particular categories or items of interest. Xiang et al. (2008) in examining the top tourism related keywords inputted into search engines for Chicago found they grouped into the following areas (accommodation, activities, areas, attractions, events, information, places, restaurants and shopping). Hwang et al. (2009) supports Xiang et al. (2009) finding that travellers often combine their searches for accommodations with other aspects of the trip, including dining, attractions, destinations and transportation. Hwang et al. (2009) however found that many travellers engage in a switching behaviour that varies between broad and focused search strategies thus limiting generalised mapping patterns. Pollard (2012) found further limitations for generalised mapping patterns. He found that the top five things leisure travellers were looking for were specials, photos, maps, amenities, and guest testimonials. Topping the list for business travellers were hotel ratings, guest testimonials, videos, travel blogs, and social media. The fact that business and leisure travellers in the main are the same individual just at different times, limits our ability to map patterns as they may use the same device to search in different ways. Schegg et al. (2005) found that the keywords that visitors used in a search engine query related to combinations of hotel, the city, the hotel's name, the region and activities/events. Studies by Pan et al. (2007) and Hwang et al. (2009) also indicate that searchers usually focus on cities as the geographical boundary instead of states or countries.

Searches as extensive as a hotel accommodation search are rarely completed in a single search. Yang et al. (2007) noted that because search accuracy largely depends on the quality of search keywords and users seldom use the right search keywords on their first search. In fact, the results of an original query are often unsatisfactory to the users. By adding more related keywords, query expansion transforms the original search based on the existing knowledge structures such as a dictionary and thesaurus. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) noted that the tourism search is phased and that traveller’s requirements are differentiated during the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages of a travel product. ComScore and Google (2008) not only noted that travel consumers are using search engines in more sophisticated ways to research and purchase travel in the UK but that on average, consumers take nearly a month to go from their first search to a purchase making 12 travel related searches, 22 website visits and take 29 days from the first time they search until they make a purchase. They also found that 45% of
transactions occur four weeks or more after the first search. Fesenmaier et al. (2010) indicated three distinct steps in interfacing with search engines, 1) query formulation, wherein the user enters a query into the search engine interface, 2) search results generation, wherein the search engine retrieves a number of search results that “match” the query and then displays them in a pre-defined format; and, 3) search results evaluation, wherein the user evaluates the search results and then navigates back and forth between the search engine interface and the web pages linked to those results.

With the reality that the online hotel accommodation search is not a single visit purchase we must alter the way we attempt to map the consumer’s behaviour. McCarthy et al. (2010) noted that while the hotel brand website had the largest amount of final stage respondent visits, search engines had over three times as many early stage visits as the hotel in the final stage. Thus research such as Schegg et al. (2005) where they indicated that 53% of hotel bookings had no referrer and a further 13% came from the same hotel with only 6% from Google do not give a true map of the process (Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Referrers</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Referrer</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Hotel</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Related Websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Swiss Destination Website</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Intermediaries</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Intermediaries</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hotels</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Hotel Association</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goggle</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Search Engine</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Search Engine</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Referring Web Sites (Each hotel's Top 20 Referrers) Source:- Schegg et al. (2005)

The interaction of the search engine between the searcher and the hotelier is likely to change substantially in the future. Machill et al. (2004) found that online searchers are very averse to paying for online search (Table 8).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness to pay</th>
<th>A perfect search engine</th>
<th>A completely ‘clean’ search engine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. 1 Euro/Month</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. 5 Euros/Month</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max. 10 Euros/Month</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 Euros/Month</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Users’ Willingness to pay for search services Source:- Machill et al. (2004)

Consumers also expect to see relevant search. Schmidt-Mänz (2007) found in a large online survey, nearly a third of 6000 participants complained about paid listings and the nebulosity of the ranking of results. Machill et al. (2004) found that above all hits that have nothing at all to do with the search terms irritate the user: 40% of all those polled stated being bothered by irrelevant hits. Additionally, 36% were annoyed by dead links, 34% disliked the inclusion of advertisements and 47% did not like rankings that seem to have been paid for. Thus search engines must charge hotels for search. Rutz and Bucklin (2011) using daily data on paid search activity for a lodging industry company in the U.S. investigated the role of branded versus generic search terms. A branded search term includes a company brand name (e.g., “Hilton Las Vegas”), whereas a generic search term does not (e.g., “Las Vegas Hotels”). The cost per click pertaining to generic search terms runs substantially higher than for branded terms, yet generic terms are associated with a much lower rate of user conversion from click to purchase (in this case, a lodging reservation) than branded terms. Deeper analysis of McCarthy et al. (2010) would suggest that the searcher is gathering potential hotels at the early stage and deciding or not to stay at a specific hotel at the final stage thus justifying the higher advertisement rate for generic search terms. ComScore and Google (2008) noted that 54% of online travel buyers started the shopping process with a generic product or destination search term and 29% start with a non-branded search term but end with a brand search term. Google are restructuring the manner in which they sell their stage of the search in the form of their Google Hotel Price Ads (HPA). The Google HPA program generates on average 3 times more conversions than a traditional lead from Google paid search (AdWords) and charges on average 10% commission (Wiker & Brien, 2013).
2.2.2.3. Third parties / Social Media

Third party media on the internet are referred to using various names. Litvin et al. (2008) based on Westbrook (1987) define electronic word of mouth (eWOM) as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers. Daugherty et al. (2008) define user generated content (UGC) as media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet. Online consumer reviews about travel destinations, hotels, and tourism services have become extremely important sources of information for travellers (Pan et al., 2007). This is because the influence of online consumer reviews is particularly strong for experience products such as the hospitality and tourism industries (Zhang et al, 2010). Social media not only constitutes a significant portion of results for online tourism information search, but also demonstrate their increasingly important role as an information source (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Ye et al. (2011) found this is because the intangible nature of tourism products makes it difficult to evaluate before consumption, and it has long been recognised that interpersonal communications are an important information source among tourists (Litvin et al., 2008).

Facebook are the dominant provider in the social media space with 655 million daily active users on average and 1.11 billion monthly active users in March 2013 (Facebook, 2013) and TripAdvisor are the world’s largest travel site with more than 230 million unique monthly visitors and over 100 million reviews and opinions covering more than 2.7 million accommodations, restaurants, and attractions (Tripadvisor.com, 2013). When attempting to map social media specific to hotel accommodation it should be noted that very different sites are consulted (Figure 6) compared to general social media sites (Figure 5).
Social Media however has significant limitations which limit our ability to map their effect onto the online hotel accommodation process. Bucklin and Sismeiro (2009) noted that the challenges in using clickstream data to study eWOM can be significant. It is very difficult to track eWOM and can be even harder to connect it to consumer transactions or other behaviour. Traffic influencing factors are not just positive or negative reviews and are outside hotel accommodation providers’ control. Olbrich and
Holsing (2011) noted that while tags and high ratings have a positive impact on a click out, the more lists and styles used, the less likely the user is to make a click out. Ye et al. (2011) found that the effect of reviews have limitations and cannot be truly assessed, noting that we cannot be sure whether all reviews have the same impact and also the authenticity of reviews cannot be considered either. Gender is another limitation; McCarthy et al. (2010) noted that females are more likely than men to post a negative review after a negative experience and more likely to post a positive review following a positive experience and indeed behave differently to men when using social media despite reviewing the same hotel products. Changing behaviour over time is another limiting factor. 7% more leisure travellers (56%) and 6% more business (52%) travellers than in 2011 said testimonials by previous travellers influence their choice of a place to stay (Pollard, 2012).

The purchase of hotel accommodation is now inexorably linked to online third parties and has been for some time. Tedeschi (2006) noted that in general, more and more consumers use infomediaries. This is saying that third parties have been providing information in an increasing manner for years now and this is not a new phenomenon. Gretzel & Yoo (2008) noted that the vast majority (74%) of travellers use the comments of other consumers as information sources when planning trips for pleasure. Lee and Tussyadiah (2010) noted that a reasonably significant number of travellers are starting to leave comments on social media. 27.1% of participants indicated that they have engaged in eWOM about their travel experiences online posting at least once in various formats (posting their experience on their own blogs (53.3%), followed by online travel communities (24.0%), emails (11.4%), online travel review websites (7.8%), and others (7.8%). Indeed Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that more than half (57.8%) read other travellers’ online reviews every time they plan a pleasure trip while 36.7% read them very often or frequently.

Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that the majority of respondents (92.3%) use virtual communities (TripAdvisor, VirtualTourist, Lonely Planet, etc.) to find other travellers’ online reviews. Many also use travel guidebook sites (Frommers, Conde Nast, etc.) (60.6%), online travel agency/auction sites (Expedia, Orbitz, Priceline, etc.) (58.1%), search engines or portals (Google, Yahoo, AOL, etc.) (51.5%), local destination websites (44.6%), state tourism web sites (29.7%), and company sites (27.9%). Meta-
travel search engines (Sidestep, Mobissimo, Kayak, etc.) were only reported as used by 13.4% of the respondents. Other web sites respondents listed were specific travel-related review sites (e.g. cruisecritic.com), general review sites (epinions.com), blogs, newspaper / magazine sites, and travel expert sites (e.g. Rick Steves).

Social media hotel accommodation users are becoming much more involved in the medium. Gretel et al. (2007) in researching Tripadvisor users found that a majority (83%) of respondents not only read but also write / post travel reviews. They are more skilled at using the Internet and are more likely to use and contribute content online. Specifically 70.6% of frequent travel review readers read blogs, 66.2% rate products/contents online, 64.9% rate reviews, and 59% post/share photographs. Their reviews are critically important for hotel accommodation providers as 77.9% of online travel review readers think that other travellers’ reviews are extremely or very important for determining where to stay with other all other travel related decisions being seen as much less important; where to eat (33.6%), what to do (32.5%), where to go (27.0%) and when to go (26.6%). Gretzel et al. (2007) also noted that reviewers examine the credibility of other reviewers. Most online travel review readers indicate that detailed descriptions (71%), the type of Web site where the review is posted (64.7%), and the date the review was posted (59.3%) are critical to evaluating a review. A reviewer's credibility is most frequently judged based on the reviewer's travel experience (75.3%), similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip (65.9%), trip purpose (60%) and writing in a polite and friendly manner (58.5%). Similarly, a review's usefulness is most frequently judged based on the reviewer's travel experience (78.5%), similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip (68.2%), trip purpose (64.4%) and similarity in terms of age, gender or marital status (53.1%).

Social media creates further limitations for the optimisation of the online hotel booking process. It is a phased process and users have different requirements and behave differently at different stages of their personal hotel booking journey thus users see the same social media differently depending on their requirements for that particular stage of the process. Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that of those who read other travellers’ online reviews, a majority (63.7%) reads them in the beginning of the trip planning process to get ideas and 64.7% in the middle of planning to narrow down choices. 40.8% of respondents also use online reviews later in their planning, in order to confirm their
decisions. 8.7% use the reviews during the trip and 29.5% use reviews after the trip to compare and share experiences. Others have stated reading reviews is an ongoing process and they read them with no specific trip in mind; or they read reviews throughout the planning process, long before a trip, or only for accommodations. McCarthy et al. (2010) noted that hotel purchase decision makers use different medium including social media at different phases and different quantities depending whether they are at the early, middle of late stage of the process (Figure 7).

![Number of respondents](image)

Figure 7: Information Sources consulted in all three phases of a purchase decision
Source: McCarthy et al. (2010)

What actual affect does social media have on the online hotel accommodation process? O’Connor (2008) found that 80% of UK consumers are researching online before booking a hotel and half of them maintained to have refrained from booking a specific hotel as a consequence of a negative review on Tripadvisor like websites. This is supported by Milan (2007) who found that 84% of people visiting a site hosting consumer generated content (CGC) have their hotel choices affected by what they see and Gretzel et al. (2007) who noted that almost 88% think travel reviews are important for deciding where to stay. Ye at al. (2011) noted that as early as 2007 online reviews influenced more than US$10 billion in online travel purchases every year.
Mapping of the social media stage of the hotel accommodation process is complicated by male / female behavioural differences. McCarthy et al. (2010) noted that both men and women indicated that they would be significantly more likely to book a hotel that had positive reviews. They also were very unlikely to book a hotel that had negative reviews. Deeper analysis of the figures reveal that women are less likely to book based on negative reviews but crucially more likely to book a hotel based on a positive review. Higher star hotels are more likely to be booked based on a positive review than lower star hotels. Lower star hotels are more likely not to be booked based on negative reviews than higher star hotels. Quantifying the impact of reviews Ye et al. (2009) noted that a 10% improvement in reviewers’ rating can increase sales by 4.4% and a 10% increase in review variance can decrease sales by 2.8%. Additionally reviews related to, hotels with higher star ratings received more online bookings, but room rates had a negative impact on the number of online bookings. Furthermore reviews related to, the GDP of the host city had a positive impact on the number of online bookings. ComScore and The Kelsey Group (2007) noted that 40% of hotel reviewers subsequently purchased a hotel room and 87% said it had a significant influence on their purchase (Table 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Percent of Review Viewers Subsequently Making a Purchase of Stated Service</th>
<th>Percent of Review Users Identifying Review as Having a Significant Influence on their Purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Purchase Behaviour subsequent to Online Consultation Source: - ComScore & The Kelsey Group (2007)

The financial implications of reviews were also supported by ComScore and The Kelsey Group (2007) who found that online reviewers were willing to pay a 38% premium for a hotel that was described on consumer generated reviews as “Excellent / 5 Star” over a room described as “Good / 4 Star”. This probably explains why Moorman (2013) noted in a survey of top US marketers that projected Social media spending as a percentage of marketing budgets would increase from 2013 levels of 8.4% to 11.5% in 2014 and 21.6% within five years. Social media however has financial measurement
limitations depending on hotel grade. Tselepidakis (2013) noted that midscale hotels use social media (Facebook, Trip Advisor and sometimes Twitter) financially to sell rooms through promotions or events attracting guests prior to a stay. Luxury hotels instead use Twitter and other social media to be useful and meet the needs of customers during and after a stay.

2.2.2.4. Hotel Accommodation Websites
Mapping the hotel website search is not just important from a provision of the online patterns of hotel accommodation searchers. Talon and Gonzalez (2011) noted that 99% of hotels allow online reservations, yet Walker (2012) noted in 2011 that 76% of online bookings for non-branded hotels came from online travel agencies (OTAs). Just 24% of online bookings came from the hotels’ own website. This is such a huge issue because of the travel intermediaries’ commission rates of between 18% and 30% (Starkov & Price, 2005). Starkov and Safer (2010) noted that independent hotels have traditionally been easy prey for OTAs due to the lack of understanding of the cost-effectiveness of the direct online channel, ignorance of basic online distribution rules such as rate parity and weak negotiating power with the OTAs. eBusiness W@tch (2006) noted that the whole online process often includes multiple intermediaries on the path from the buyer to the hotel. In some cases, the number of intermediaries between hotel room and guest could climb to five, making this distribution channel more complex and expensive. Starkov and Schaal (2012) also noted that paid search on Google and other search engines include an annual maintenance fee per property and a click-through fee currently between 0.2% and 0.4% of the average daily rate (ADR). However it should be noted that despite Morosan and Jeong (2008) finding overall that users have a more favourable attitude and higher intentions to revisit third-party Web sites than hotel owned web sites, there is a large increase in the number of users who book directly on hotel websites (Jeong & Gregoire, 2003).

Niemann et al. (2006) noted that searchers look for a number of characteristics from a hotel website (e.g. facilities) and its environment (e.g. golf, shopping centre) as well as the attributes of the trip context, such as distance to a meeting place or accessibility (local, e.g. public transportation and remote, e.g. airports). However all the research viewed in this area have some limitations. Schegg et al. (2005) while noting the keywords entered into search engines to find hotels noted stark differences between
individual hotels limiting the ability to offer a generalised map for all hotels. Examples included where the name of one hotel was inputted into a search engine in 4% of all their searches and in another hotel it was in 86% of all their searches (Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MIN</th>
<th>MAX</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>MEDIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Hotel</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City / Location</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hotel&quot; or &quot;Hotels&quot;</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Events</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region / Country</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL Hotel</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Top keywords used in Search Engines Source: Schegg et al. (2005)

Schegg et al. (2005) also found similar differences in the top 20 pages that were selected by users on the different hotel websites he analysed (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News / About us</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F &amp; B Info</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure / Photos</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events / Activities</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Info</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Info</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booking</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guestbook</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Each hotel's top 20 page requests Source: Schegg et al. (2005)
Different hotels are substantially different making the generalisation of hotel accommodation website pattern mapping difficult. Vrana et al. (2004) exposed differences between chain and non chain hotels websites in relation to their capabilities and content (Table 12).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors and Items</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>% Non Chains</th>
<th>% Chains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel facilities</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room facilities</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception facilities</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinning</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference halls</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops/gifts</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer contact information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct form/feedback form</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim form</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest book</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faq</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reservation-prices information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line availability</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book online</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure reservation</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For travel agencies</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packages/promotion</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion other</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group promotions</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members special</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards points or miles</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cards accepted</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency converter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrounding area information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distances</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of transportation</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (interests)</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearby corporation – facilities</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of the web site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilanguage</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web designer</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Percentage of Rendered Services Source:- Vrana et al. (2004)
While searchers look for and find certain words / pages during their online hotel accommodation search Stringam and Gerdes (2010) found they use different word priorities when leaving hotel reviews (Table 13). Zheng et al. (2009) to some extent supports Stringam and Gerdes (2010) in the list of online complaints left by luxury hotel guests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>15,307</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>12,981</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>7,544</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
<td>6,850</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>4,152</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>3,918</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>3,126</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>2,178</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>1,585</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower</td>
<td>1,526</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirt</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towel</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillow</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffet</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractions</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mall</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheap</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decor</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dine</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valet</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disney</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of comments</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected services not delivered</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response to requests</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service delay</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rude employees</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room reservation</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments handling</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcharged/Billing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misleading advertising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Subcategorised Service Comments Source:- Zheng et al. (2009)

Sambhanthan and Good (2013) found that the number of clicks taken to reach a specific set of basic information in hotel websites is critical. Schegg et al. (2005) found that hotels in his study tended to bury important information for their visitors on low navigation levels, i.e. out of an easy access. Essawy (2006) argued that hotel sites that take more than three clicks to reach the desired information will be discarded by the consumers. However Nielsen (2008) stated that a path with 5 easy clicks is vastly superior to one with 3 difficult clicks but stated that shorter paths are usually better: 4 easy clicks are more usable than 5 easy clicks, because the extra click is more work for users. Research by Schegg et al. (2005) and Leung and Law (2008) show pages containing priority requirements are not too many clicks away from the main page (Tables 15 & 16) however it should be noted that the hotel accommodation searcher has been searching for some time and the home page may not be their first click.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Avg required depth (clicks from home page)</th>
<th>% of hotels which provide information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location / Maps</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities / Animation</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination / Other services / Links</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter / Actualities</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History / Identity / USP</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants / Wellness</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spec. cat. (Congress/Seminar/Wedding)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info / brochure</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary Services (room service, shuttle, childcare)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reservation / Booking</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specials (Internet only)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical contact</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video / Gallery / Multi-media / Live Cam</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People / Organisation</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General / Weather / Jobs</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback / Guestbook / Viral Marketing</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Average Information availability, or required clicks from homepage Source:- Schegg et al. (2005)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Hits %</th>
<th>Web Page Description</th>
<th>Clicks from home page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.80%</td>
<td>Home Page</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.24%</td>
<td>Default.Aspx*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.43%</td>
<td>F&amp;B Promotion Main Page</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
<td>Coffee Shop</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
<td>Accommodation Overview Page</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.41%</td>
<td>F&amp;B Promotion Detail Page</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.57%</td>
<td>Hotel Motto</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.21%</td>
<td>Room Promotion Main</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
<td>Home Page (Traditional Chinese)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.63%</td>
<td>Coffee Shop (Traditional Chinese)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
<td>Catering Main Page</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
<td>Hotel Virtual Tour</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
<td>Hotel Contact Details</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>Recruitment Application Form</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
<td>Cake Gift Voucher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>Hotel Room – Normal Floor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>Hotel Location</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.01%</td>
<td>Room Promotion Detail</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>Recruitment – Job List</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.98%</td>
<td>Restaurant Reservation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57.02%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Schegg et al. (2005) found in researching hotel website visits that the median visit length per hotel ranged from 60 seconds to 172 seconds, and the average visitor across all hotels stayed almost two minutes. During their visit, the web surfers requested an average of between 1.6 and 11.7 web pages, depending on the hotel with an overall average of 4.7 pages. These results are supported by Jones and Chen (2011) who found that a user spends about 92 seconds investigating each hotel. Jones and Chen (2011) that prior to landing on a hotel accommodation seller's website, subjects entered the destination, travel date and the number of travellers, the subjects were provided with on average 194.8 hotels. From the consideration set, the subjects only considered in more detail an average of 4.1 hotels before they chose their hotel. While this indicates that hotels have 1 – 2 minutes to captivate a hotel searcher it is not as straightforward as presenting a uniform hotel accommodation website based on mapped behaviour. Every tenth visitors opens a page and exits without viewing another page. In over half of these one-page visits (56%), the visitors land and leave from the site's home page. Without research into the human thought process we cannot optimise the process for the individual consumer. De los Santos and Koulayev (2012) noted that we are able to
customise rankings by relating price sensitivity to request parameters, such as the length of stay, number of guests, and day of the week of the stay. In effect they propose maximising consumers' click-through rates (CTR) based on the information available to the platform at that time and offering a different structured site to different demographics at different times and in different locations. They found that by applying this they were increasing the optimal ranking results in an average consumer by 173% greater than the default ranking.

2.2.3. Process Influences (External)
2.2.3.1. Online Access Devices
In order to understand the hotel accommodation booking process we must understand the implications of the interface device. The interface mechanism for hotel accommodation booking has changed dramatically in recent years. Google (2012a) found that consumers on average spend 4.4 hours of their leisure time daily in front of screens. TVs, PCs / Laptops, tablets and smartphones account for 90% of our media interactions. This contrasts with more traditional media (magazines, papers and radio etc) which now only account for 10% of media interactions. Mane et al. (2013) noted different figures but critically divided them into their respective media types which while representing visual screens as 79% in 2012 found that only 27% of media screen interactions were internet based (Figure 8). Both Google (2012a) and Mane et al. (2013) however show that despite a reduction in TV screen viewing there is an increase in screen based media as a whole because of the increase in internet based media interactions. This behavioural change may be related to the fact that unlike traditional mass media such as radio and television, the Internet is interactive and digital (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).
PCs / laptops have been and still are the main online interaction device. Sterling (2011b) noted that in Q. 2 2011, 90% of mainly US and UK internet users stated they owned a laptop. This had dramatically dropped in just one quarter to 79%. Smartphone ownership had increased somewhat with a large increase in tablet ownership (Figure 9). Meeker and Wu (2013) found that tablets passed desktop PCs and notepads in Q 4, 2012 (Figure 10).
Zickuhr (2013) reinforces this trend finding that tablet adoption in American adults has almost doubled from 18% in May 2012 to 34% in May 2013. Smartphones, according to Raento et al. (2009), are programmable mobile phones that have sophisticated sensing capabilities, increased storage capacity and built-in networking functions. They also feature high-speed data connection, colour screens, cameras, local connectivity that enable web browsing, text and multimedia messaging, e-mailing, and social networking. Smartphone adoption has been incredibly fast in some countries. Worldwide Independent Network (2012) found Ireland had 19% adoption in 2010, 35% in 2011 and the estimated there would be 71% smartphone adoption before the end of 2012. Globally Goldman (2010) estimated that there were more than 450 million mobile web users worldwide in 2010 and expected this figure to reach one billion users within four years. In May 2013 Meeker and Wu (2013) estimated that 1.5Bn of the 5Bn+ mobile phones in the world were smartphones and increasing. Starkov (2012a) estimated that global tablet sales are projected to exceed 232 million in 2016, growing from 64 million in 2011. In 2013, there will be 75.6 million U.S. tablet users, up from 13 million in 2010.

Figure 10: Tablet Shipments: Surpassed Desktop PCs and notebooks in Q4, 2012
Source: Meeker & Wu (2013)
Devises are central to the when and where usage patterns of consumers. Google (2012a) found that for example PCs are used mostly as a work device for productivity and smartphones / tablets are used mostly as a leisure device and at home (Table 17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interactions</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Out of the Home</th>
<th>Main purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCs</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>Find information 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping up to date 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphones</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Communication 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Entertainment 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablets</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Entertainment 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: Context devices drive choice Source: Google (2012a)

The mobility of smartphones and tablets undoubtedly influences the media activities of their users. Eircom (2013) found that smartphone consumers use their devices in a diverse range of places, 71% said they use their smartphone sitting in their car, 51% on public transport, 33% in the bathroom, 78% in the bedroom and 27% while on the toilet. Van Thiel (2013) further found that consumers used different devices more at different times of the day. A limitation of Van Thiel (2013) is that his searches do not reflect absolute traffic volume. In Figure 12 Farago (2012) was able to quantify the results for mobile devices only but his results support Van Thiel (2013). The higher usage of tablets may be explained by Starkov (2013) when he found that 78% of tablet users reach for them for convenience. Consumers similarly spend different amounts of time on different devices. Google (2012a) found that the average per interaction on each device was TV 43 minutes, PC / Laptop 39 minutes, Tablet 30 minutes and Smartphone 17 minutes. Farago (2012) found a similar reduced usage of smartphones in relation to apps where they found that users spend exactly half as much time engaging with apps on smartphones as engaging with apps on tablets.
Figure 11: Hourly Distribution of Searches by Platform and Television Viewing
Source:- Van Thiel (2013)

Figure 12: Usage by hour, Smartphones versus tablets Source:- Farago (2012)

A user’s location influences purchase behaviour even when using the same device. 2 in 3 mobile device owners make purchases or access financial information in their homes, followed by about half who do so in their offices, 44% report engaging in financial activity on their devices while in a store, followed by 37% at a friend’s house, 34% at a restaurant or bar, and 26% at a concert (Marketingcharts, 2011). To a certain extent
home usage may be explained for tablets that in the main rely on Wi-Fi for internet connection. Starkov (2012a) noted that 85% to 90% of tablet browsing happens via a Wi-Fi connection. Online hotels bookings are also influenced by device type. Many major hotel brands report that 80% or more of their mobile bookings are for the same or the following day.

Tracking this usage for the purpose of hotel accommodation sales is far from straightforward. Google (2012a) reported that 90% of consumers use multiple screens sequentially to accomplish a task over time. 98% move between devices on the same day. 43% of people sequentially moving between devices have used them to plan a trip. Van Theil (2013) reported that 39% of UK consumers who researched a product using their smartphone purchased the product on a desktop / tablet and Starkov and Safer (2013) found that six to seven of every ten mobile bookings actually happen by voice made via the mobile website. Searches are increasingly started on one device and continued on another device. Table 18 demonstrates that online trip planning starts on one device and frequently continues on another (Google, 2012a). Identifying the searcher in order to model their search pattern is further complicated in that the searches are not just sequential but can also be simultaneous and with different IP addresses being recorded are almost impossible to link. The devices people use simultaneously are smartphone and TV 81%, smartphone and laptop / PC 66% and laptop / PC and TV 66%. 22% of simultaneous usage is complimentary i.e. see a hotel on screen and look it up on the smartphone (Google, 2012a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started on a smartphone</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued on a PC</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued on a tablet</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started on a PC</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued on a Smartphone</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued on a tablet</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started on a Tablet</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued on a Smartphone</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued on a PC</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Trip planning movement between devices Source:- Google (2012a)

In Table 19 Starkov (2012a) found that the majority of mobile hotel bookings, room nights and revenue are generated by tablet devices not smartphones but the vast majority of online bookings are completed on PC / laptops. This cannot simply be
dismissed as a slowness to engage in newer technology as tablets have significantly higher hotel accommodation bookings and are a much newer technology. eMarketer (2013) noted that while travel accounted for 1% of internet usage in the USA in 2012 it accounted for 9.3% of mobile internet for Q1 2013 suggesting mobile internet is to search and PC/laptop is to purchase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Page views</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Bookings</th>
<th>Nights</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>10.46%</td>
<td>13.98%</td>
<td>2.64%</td>
<td>1.79%</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
<td>8.52%</td>
<td>5.52%</td>
<td>5.24%</td>
<td>5.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop</td>
<td>80.79%</td>
<td>77.50%</td>
<td>91.84%</td>
<td>92.97%</td>
<td>93.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Sources of Traffic and Bookings by Device Category in 2012 Source:- Starkov (2012a)

In reality different consumers use different devices for different activities. Mobile devices especially tablets are largely used for leisure activities (Figure 13) and smartphones are reached for over 150 times during the day by users (Figure 14).

Figure 13: Time Spent per Category, Smartphones versus Tablets Source:- Farago (2012)
Different devices are starting to significantly impact the online hotel booking process. Starkov and Safer (2013) reported that in 2012 overall Google hotel searches increased by 24%, mobile device searches increased by 120% and tablet searches increased by a huge 306%. In 2013 Google also forecasts a 24% overall increase with mobile searches up 68%, tablet searches up 180% but desktop searches actually declining by 4%. Walker (2012) found that 50% of US adults and 80% of business travellers already have smartphones. As business travellers pay higher room rates this group are especially profitable to target. Walker (2012) also found that 24% of leisure travellers and 36% of business travellers have already purchased travel via their mobile devices. Starkov (2012b) estimate mobile online travel bookings will be US$8Bn (6.5% of total) in 2013 up from US$2.8Bn (2.4% of total) in 2011 and US$160m in 2010.

The mobile market is undoubtedly an area to target however it does present significant issues. Expedia and ComScore (2012) found that PCs have a 77% travel booking conversion rate, this drops to 34% for tablets and 28% for smartphones. Chan (2012) found that since the adoption of smartphone technology is relatively new, a limited amount of academic literature is available on mobile adoption within the hotel industry. The general requirement to input a credit card number is also impeding mobile reservations as almost half (49%) of online leisure travellers who use mobile phones are either very or somewhat uncomfortable making mobile purchases that require them to
enter their credit or debit card number (PhoCusWright, 2012). Screen size is also frequently criticised. In 2011, over 85.1% of desktop Internet users had a screen resolution of 1280 x 1024 pixels or higher. Trying to squeeze your wide-screen “desktop” hotel website onto the tiny screen of a mobile device is a futile exercise that inevitably destroys usability and conversion rates (PhoCusWright, 2012). Accessing a “conventional” website via a mobile device, even the latest iPhone (320 x 480 pixels) often results in an undesirable user experience: the inability to find information needed, and a predictable outcome of abandoned websites and reservations (Starkov, 2012b). Without researching the human thought process behind the device usage in this section it is impossible to adapt devices to fully meet hotel accommodation consumers’ requirements.

2.2.3.2. Visual Interaction
The online tourism information search may be viewed as the interaction between information seekers and the online system (Ho et al., 2012). The actual user online tourism information exchange process is in the main conducted visually. Figure 15 supports that while initially websites were predominantly textual in nature, the use of images in websites and social media have increased dramatically.
Figure 15: Daily number of Photos Uploaded & Shared on Select Platforms Source:- Meeker & Wu (2013)

Nowadays other media such as movies (Figure 16) are important and their percentage of the web index is increasing rapidly (Höchstötter & Lewandowski, 2009). Kanellopoulos (2010) noted that in multimedia applications, text offers clarity and self-pacing, graphics provide visualisation and communicate styles and video captures the moving events of the world around us.
Figure 16: YouTube hours of videos uploaded per minute 6/07 - 5/13 Source: Meeker & Wu (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Gap Between Information Searched and Contributed</th>
<th>Information Searched</th>
<th>Information Contributed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Only</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Only</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Only</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text + Photo</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text + Video</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo + Video</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: A Gap between Information searched and Contributed Source: Lee & Tussyadiah (2010)

Lee and Tussyadiah (2010) in surveying textual and visual information in electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) found that that the conventional representation of online information i.e. as text and photo only was the largest percentage of information searched (47.6%) representing 70.6% of the information contributed. Text and video and video only both combined represented 8.6% of information searched but respondents considered it offered only 1.8% of the information contributed.
like in this study where opinion is surveyed after the event is difficult to argue that it is exactly quantifiably accurate however tools such as eye tracking can assist in this regard. The trend seems however to be changing towards video. Mane et al. (2013) noted that video as a portion of total internet usage is increasing. In 2010 it was 7%, 2011 it was 10% and 2012 it was 13% or 24 minutes per person per day. Eye tracking technology allows knowing what a person looks at as a function of time (Ali-Hasan et al., 2008). Eye-tracking nowadays typically consists of a standard desktop computer with an infrared camera mounted under a monitor, with image processing software locating and identifying the reflection of the cornea and the centre of the pupil to calculate the attention focus of users (Poole & Ball, 2005). A limitation Velásquez (2013) noted with eye tracking however is that it only determines what a person looks at. It does not qualify what a person looks at or determine if what is observed is liked or disliked. Eye tracking tools give an excellent insight into online web pages however without simultaneously analysing the human thought process; it is a tool with limitations.
Breeze, (2009) noted that when a face is placed in an image, users focus mainly on the face. Eye tracking research in this case noted that while the image of the baby had the
desired effect of being very noticeable to users it deflected users away from reading the textual information and the brand, thus sometimes the most striking image is not the most appropriate. By a simple reorientation of the direction of the face attention is drawn from the baby’s face and there is a considerable increase in the viewing of the textual message and brand of the product (Breeze, 2009).

Figure 18: Cuing customers to look at your key messages Source:- Maughan (2009)

Maughan (2009) noted that for this Sunsilk shampoo advertisement the model engaged the user by looking directly at them. This was very effective in drawing users attention to the model however this resulted in only 6% of users viewed the product. The eyes of the model were photo shopped to look at the product. No other changes were made whatsoever. This had a dramatic change from 6% to 84% of users viewing the product. There was a similarly dramatic increase in the viewing of the brand logo at the bottom (Maughan, 2009).

Figure 19: Hollywood & Eyetracking Reveals how to sell more magazines Source:- Downey (2008)
Eye tracking of facial imagery is not definitive numerically and research into different eye tracking studies show different results. Downey (2008) compared two well know groups of celebrities. In the two images on the left of Figure 19, 96% of participants looked at the image of Davina alone compared to just 8% who looked at both Patsy and Davina. However when Davina was placed on her own she received much more attention than both together. The opposite was however noted in the image on the right of 16, of Trinny and Susannah where more users viewed both together than Trinny on her own. On the other hand Bunnyfoot.com (2013a) noted almost no facial focus on the model in their eye tracking of bodenusa.com. The draw of facial imagery seems to be very different in different cases and the use of facial imagery may detract from the brand or be inconclusive or incalculable when analysing their support of the product. Clearly the human thought process must be engaged simultaneously when accessing the effect visual imagery.

Figure 20: International Multi-Channel Testing Source: Bunnyfoot.com (2013a)

Different media attract different viewing patterns. Eyetrackshop (2011) noted that users differed in the textual and visual imagery they looked at even within the social media
space. Facebook and StumbleUpon noted that profile photos received the most attention while job titles received the most attention in LinkedIn. In examining hotel accommodation booking viewing locations Bunnyfoot.com (2013b) noted that on the hotels.com landing page, price, star rating and hotel picture and name were the primary viewing locations (Figure 21). These eye tracking results seem to support Murphy et al. (2006) when he advocated that management should strive for short copy and bulleted lists on their web pages.

Figure 21: International needs researched through remote moderated user testing
Source:- Bunnyfoot.com (2013b)
Extensive eye tracking research has been carried out into the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). Extensively the visual representation of the SERP depends on the screen size and device being used. However in general visually similar pages will be returned i.e. the visual page will exceed the screen. This presents an “above the fold” and a “below the fold” where the scroll bar is engaged also called the scrolling visual area and scrolling area (Höchstötter & Lewandowski, 2009). These areas are delineated in Figure 22. This is pertinent in that Nielsen (2010) found that 80.3% of time spent online is “above the fold” with only 19.7% spent “below the fold”.

Figure 22: What users see - structures in search engine results pages Source:- Höchstötter & Lewandowski (2009)
Eye tracking research conducted by Enquiro Search Solutions Inc. (2005) demonstrates the location on the page viewed by users in Figure 23. They labelled the area as the “golden triangle”. Indeed in the study, 50% of participants looked at only the top seven listings of the search results and only 20% of participants looked at all top ten of the search results, thus indicating the value of the top part of the SERP.
The primary issue involving click through data is that users are most likely to click on higher ranked documents because they tend to read the SERP from top to bottom (Hardtke et al., 2009). These “above the fold” and “below the fold” areas have been capitalised upon by the major search engines. The words “Dublin” and “hotels” were inputted into the five largest search engines on a standard 15.6 inch laptop screen. A print screen image (Figure 24) was taken and the organic search areas (unpaid search results) and the Paid search areas (paid or sponsored search results) were marked. AOL has no organic search results whatsoever above the fold followed by Google and Ask.com who had almost none and Bing and Yahoo had two and one and a half results respectively. This means a hotel web site that has spent a large amount of cash to be search engine optimised and hold number one on the five largest search engines will...
only appear on two “above the fold” screens of the five largest search engines. This has effectively changed search engine placement from free to paid.

Figure 25: Eye Tracking Bing vs. Google: A first look Source:- Usercentric (2009)

Indeed all search engines have become so similar that Usercentric (2009) in comparing Google and Bing found that their eye gaze patterns were nearly identical. This would seem to indicate that it should be easy to generalise eye gaze behaviour.

Eye gaze eye tracking results are an incredibly useful tool however they can only be generalised to a certain extent. Different eye gaze behavioural patterns have been noted which imply that the human thought process must be analysed to explain the logic behind the eye gaze areas. González-Caro and Marcos (2011) found that the first ranking position always collects the highest fraction of visual attention. However Shi and Trusov (2013) found it was not that straight forward finding that while eye-tracking data revealed that top to bottom inspection was indeed the dominating strategy within each results section they observed that a significant amount of variability in inspection patterns existed. They also noted a visual sampling (skimming) from different sections of the SERP with frequent re-inspections of already viewed listings and a certain amount of stickiness within certain individual sections. Eye tracking results also have issues with the different devices being used. Höchstötter and Lewandowski (2009)
noted that the number of results shown on the “above the fold” screen for the exact same website depends on the screen and browser window size, respectively. González-Caro and Marcos (2011) also found significant differences in eye gaze duration depending on if a user was performing an informational (finding specific information about a concrete item), navigational (finding a specific web page) or transactional (finding a web page and perform an action) type task at the time. Significant differences were also recorded depending on if the viewed location was organic or sponsored / paid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organic (ms)</th>
<th>Sponsored (ms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>5814</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigational</td>
<td>4757</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>2840</td>
<td>1505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Average gaze duration for type of intent broken down by type of search result

Source:- González-Caro & Marcos (2011)

González-Caro and Marcos (2011) found that it was not just eye gaze duration that was different they also found that eye gaze locations and patterns were different depending on if the user was performing an informational, navigational or transactional type task at the time.

Figure 26: Heat maps (top) and gaze plots (bottom) for three queries with different intent Source:- González-Caro & Marcos (2011)
Maughan (2008) noted a further difficulty with the generalisation of eye gaze behaviour in that it appears that users changed their eye gaze behaviour between 2005 and 2008 and therefore may change again especially when users are using different devices daily.
Similar to González-Caro and Marcos (2011) Shi and Trusov (2013) noted different patterns depending on (a) sequential evaluation from a top sponsored section to an organic section; (b) start with an organic section and then move to sponsored results; (c) an organic section only; (d) sponsored section only.

Eye tracking data clearly needs vast additional information in order to explain the online behaviour of users. Bucklin and Sismeiro (2009) in analysing clickstream data found it lacked detailed information on the visual components of the site. To link the clickstream records of page views to design and content elements, researchers need to analyse in unison eye gaze, clickstream and human thought process information. While eye tracking has its limitations it has excellent research strengths. Traditional process-tracing tools, such as Information Display Board, Mouselab, and Flashlight, require motor responses, which slow down the decision process and render the observed information search process more controlled and deliberate (Bettman et al., 1998). Eye-tracking equipment, in contrast, can capture the fast and dynamic information search process in a less obtrusive fashion. Eye movement data provides moment-to-moment fixation locations of the eyes that indicate the time-course of an information search. This research will not be utilising eye tracking technology due to financial constraints but instead will ask the users where or what they are looking at as they progress through the in-depth interview.

2.3. Online Hotel Accommodation Thoughts and Emotions
The purpose of the second stage of the literature review is to critically analyse the human thoughts and emotions process specific to the identified process factors of the online hotel accommodation process. This will be achieved by analysing the human thoughts and emotions processes and their relationship to the clickstream / log file process factors from the online behaviour analytics and the internal process influences (the individual, search engines, third parties / social media and hotels) and the external process influences (online access devices and the visual interaction with the media).

2.3.1. Clickstream / Log file Analytics of the process
Information is a crucial factor in the hotel accommodation planning, booking, during, and afterwards process (Crnojevac et al., 2010). Crnojevac et al. (2010) also noted that tourism consumer booking behaviour is changing. They are becoming less interested in
tourist packages and much more eager in satisfying their own priorities and timetables and becoming more independent and sophisticated with a wide range of different tools for planning a journey. Starkov and Safer (2010) noted that this search process is now longer than it has ever been. People are searching an average of 22 travel websites before making a booking, communicating with friends and family via Facebook and conducting mobile searches, etc. While clickstream / log file data analytics of the hotel accommodation process are invaluable, their ability to interpret the hotel accommodation consumer thought process is extremely limited. The hotel accommodation process of the average individual booking was identified in section I to be completed both online and offline with multiple devices and people. Crnojevac et al. (2010) supported this, finding customers still use different sales channels in their decision making process and some of the customers who look for information online end up doing the purchasing offline. The same goes for tourism where the majority of online customers use multiple ways of purchasing their travel products. Analysing the consumer thought process for a single hotel accommodation search over these multiple visits, devices and personnel using clickstream / log file data is almost impossible. Ho et al. (2012) found consumers are goal orientated in their tourism search and almost all web users made quick decisions about where to click next, and whether or not a site was relevant. Most of them scanned sites quickly before they clicked in order to move from one site to another. A limitation in explaining the consumer thought process through clickstream / log file data was that while quick decisions can explain consumer satisfaction with the online medium Ho et al. (2012) found if there were too many sites to visit, or if there was lengthy text on a page or download delays, they forged ahead equally as quickly by clicking on new links and looking for new sites. Crnojevac et al. (2010) found that consumers are seeing hotel marketing messages across a variety of different channels. Alpert (1971) describes the attributes that directly affect the decision making process as “determining attributes” indicating that they can cause a desire to buy and differentiate this desire in relation to the competition’s offer. Another limitation of the consumer thought process is that information searchers did not seem to read the text on the screen carefully and that they merely collected the information needed (Ho et al., 2012). Clickstream / log file data cannot differentiate the “determining attributes” consumers viewed and thought about during their search from the ones they did not view or think about. Shi and Trusov (2013) did however note that both the content of listings and the textual information of previously viewed listings exert a significant
impact on inspection patterns noting that transactional (price, promotion, store) and descriptive (attribute, quality, brand) information affect inspection decisions differently. Other limitation that clickstream / logfile data could not correlate to the consumer thought process were inconveniences such as web content pages / sources being out of date and frustration when what they found (the text posted on sites) did not correspond to their needs and they then had to click on another site to continue with their search (Ho et al., 2012). While there are limitations with clickstream / logfile data in relation to the consumer thought process they can however offer some insights. Moe (2003) used page to page clickstream / logfile data from an online store to characterise visits as buying, browsing, searching, or knowledge building based on observed in store navigational patterns. Sterling (2011a) noted that with the rise of smartphones and other methodologies, online to offline tracking is becoming more widely available. In fact Starkov and Safer (2013) were able to quantify this link finding that six to seven of every ten mobile hotel accommodation bookings actually happen by voice made via the mobile website.

2.3.2. Process Influences (Internal)

2.3.2.1. The individual

Online consumers experience a wide range of human thought processes and emotions when engaging with the online hotel accommodation process using the internet medium. Fodness and Murray (1997) found tourism consumers seek information to satisfy five different information needs: functional information needs mainly for decision making, sign needs for symbolic expression and social interaction, hedonic needs for emotional, sensory, phenomenological, and experiential expressions and manifestation, innovation needs in search of novelty, variety, and creativity and aesthetic needs for the sake of fantasy and image. Liu et al. (2000) proposed that the optimum consumer experience results from enjoyment, participation / interaction, excitement, charm and attention while engaging with the online medium. Peter and Olson (2005) stated consumers experience three affective response dimensions: feelings, mood, and emotions. These emotions and thought processes are not experienced singularly or independently. Oliver (1997) found that emotions coexist alongside various cognitive judgments in producing satisfaction thus for example utilitarian requirements such as price may be experienced at the same time as hedonistic requirements such as bedroom ambience. In fact Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) and
Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) indicated that both the goal directed utilitarian searcher should be pleased, as should the experiential hedonic searcher. It is difficult to propose a human thought process and emotions strategy across all individuals as some people have a generally higher preferred sensory stimulation level than others (Raju, 1980; Zuckerman, 1994).

Understanding the human thoughts and emotions during the online hotel accommodation process is hugely important as website quality leads to positive or negative emotions which Hsu and Tsou (2011) quantified to significantly influence repurchase intention. Van Dolen and de Ruyter (2002) also found a positive link between perceived enjoyment and satisfaction when studying the emotions that website features stimulate. Novak et al. (2003) found that online customers will return to a website if they are given flow. Björk (2010) described the sensation of flow while on tour operators’ websites as a state of deep concentration or concentrated activity, a feeling of fun or a nice experience which seems to make time stand still. Constructing an optimum flow website however has its limitations. Martin et al. (2005) found that subjects prefer web sites of a medium level of complexity, rather than high or low complexity; however high sensation seekers prefer complex visual designs, and low sensation seekers simple visual designs, both in web sites of medium complexity; and high need for cognition subjects evaluated web sites with high verbal and low visual complexity more favourably.

In examining the impact of the human thought process and emotions Overby and Lee (2006) proposed two overall value dimensions (utilitarian and hedonic) in the Internet shopping environment, and more importantly, these value dimensions were operationalised at the benefit level rather than at the attribute level. The study found that consumers indeed perceive utilitarian value and hedonic value to be important in their preference for online retailers and future intentions, though utilitarian value was a stronger predictor than hedonic value. It appears that online consumer shoppers turn to the Internet primarily for utilitarian reasons, such as price savings and convenience. Sherman et al. (1997) however found different results. Pleasure in their study was linked to a liking for the store, and dollars spent. Arousal, on the other hand, was exclusively linked to time spent in the store and items purchased. Yu and Dean (2001) support Sherman et al. (1997) stating that the emotional response variable is a better
predictor of customer loyalty than the cognitive one. Kim et al. (2012) however found that while information, system, and service qualities are well known factors for e-commerce business success, their impacts on utilitarian and hedonic values has not been fully examined. Their research showed that system accessibility, security, service quickness, and receptiveness are essential for consumers to perceive utilitarian value, while information variety, service quickness, and receptiveness are critical for hedonic value.

Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that respondents when analysing online travel reviews make their decisions based mostly on their own intuition. Gretzel et al. (2007) found that they trust their inner feelings and reactions (71.4%), rely upon their instincts (60.7%), and rely on their intuition (58.3%). The second most reported style was relying on others: seeking out advice of people (58.3%), making decisions rarely without consulting other people (49.0%), and often needing assistance of other people (27.4%). Spur of the moment decisions were the least reported decision making style by the respondents: making decisions in the spur of the moment (24.6%), impulse decisions (21.5%), and snap decisions (13.1%). Björk (2010) found that the taxonomy of tour operators website atmospherics were complex and very much individual. The two most important atmospherics were pictures, information content and structure. His results also indicated that the mere act of visiting a tour operator’s website, and getting involved in the decision making process, stimulated emotional responses (Figure 28).
Thrash and Elliot (2003) define inspiration as an infusion of some idea or purpose into the mind, these ideas may include a suggestion, awakening, or creation of a feeling or impulse. Inspiration can be understood as an indicator of motivation involving the energy and direction of behaviour and can be evoked by stimuli appealing to truth, goodness, beauty, or superiority (Averill 1975; Thrash & Elliot 2003). Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) stated that within the context of destination web sites, the emphasis on scenic beauty (using visual, auditory, and / or imagery oriented features) reflects the underlying aim of destination marketing to build a strong and positive associative link or image about the destination and to create seductive experiences so that the positive images encourage potential tourists to visit the destination. An example of an awakening is where an individual sees a destination portrayed positively on TV and reaches for their tablet or smartphone to research the destination. Gretzel et al. (2006) found that this information sought by travellers is not only used for utilitarian purposes (e.g., to reduce uncertainty) but also helpful in forming the anticipation, expectation, imagination, and even fantasy about the prospective trip. Kim and Fesenmaier (2008)
when they evaluated state tourism web sites in the United States found that the majority met the basic needs of travel information seekers in terms of the characteristics informativeness and usability, however, other design characteristics (i.e., credibility, inspiration, involvement, and reciprocity related design elements) were not perceived as favourably. Among the six design-related characteristics of destination sites, it was found that inspiration related elements had the greatest impact on first impression formation. This finding enables them to suggest that visually appealing stimuli are the most important tool for converting web site lookers to users and / or making them stay longer on the web site. Usability was the second most significant driver of first impression formation, followed by credibility. From these findings, it can be inferred that travellers easily gravitate toward web sites that are easy to learn and exhibit clear navigational paths.

The online hotel accommodation process is considerably influenced by the human thought process yet Kim et al. (2006) found that there is a scarcity of more comprehensive studies on hotel customers’ online purchase behaviours despite the increasingly important role of information technology in the hotel industry. Trip planning is a much deliberated process with Gretzel et al. (2007) finding that 96.5% of respondents stating they typically become very involved in trip planning and 92.7% devoting a lot of effort to trip planning. Gretzel et al. (2007) also found it to be a phased process with most respondents planning major aspects of their trip in advance (67.0%). Jordan et al. (2013) (Figure 30) also noted it as being phased with general searches becoming refined searches over time.
Enter Search Engine URL → Search with General Search Term → Click link

Enter Search Engine URL → Search with Refined Search Term → Arrive at Useful Travel Information

Arrive at Travel Website → Click Link → Decide to Leave

Figure 30: Example of information foraging behaviour in an online environment. Source: Jordan et al. (2013)

Ho et al. (2012) noted both online and offline phases to the search, including human thought concepts at each phase of the information search process: a start to online searching (Prior knowledge), online searching (Barriers to search, Process information) an end to online searching (Reasons for ending, Summarise information) and offline information searching (Exchange Information, Search for more information). Moe (2003) noted that different thought processes brought about different purchase outcomes. In goal directed visits purchases, if any occur immediately as the consumer is in the store with the objective being, making that purchase. Search / deliberation visits, on the other hand, are motivated by a future intended purchase. The objective of these visits was to acquire relevant information to help make a more optimum choice. A limitation of Moe (2003) is that an individual viewing information on a number of visits and purchasing immediately on another visit were considered as separate individuals for the purpose of behavioural segmentation research. Ho et al. (2012) noted that tourism information seekers’ perceptions are built over time through prior experiences of searching and prior knowledge of a problem. Ho et al. (2012) also noted that the perspective of informants and of intermediaries within the system direct the users’ actions and affect their choices within a search to the extent that users exhibit common characteristics of information behaviour at different stages of the information seeking process. Wu et al. (2008) noted that search engine use requires the cognitive process of information searchers to involve the following stages: recalling, selecting and inputting a search term (keywords or queries), navigating and understanding the search results.
(browsing), judging the relevance of the results, making choices among the results, and refining the search if necessary. Moe (2003) found that the directed buying sessions have the highest conversion rate (12.94%), followed by the search sessions (8.02%), browsing sessions (2.03%), and knowledge building sessions (0.00%), respectively. An interesting point in Moe (2003) was that knowledge building and purchasing / conversion were never completed in the same visit. Fu and Pirolli (2007) noted that not only do consumers develop an updated assessment of a website’s potential usefulness as they search and adapt their page viewing strategies accordingly but they will only search for as long as the website’s utility and inspection cost merits further search. The Internet however appears to be only a source of general information with personal information (from family and friends) being more critical to facilitating the follow-up search activities that are ongoing (Ho et al., 2012). Lehto et al. (2004) noted that tourists’ memory utilisation and internal information search are facilitated by the number of their previous visits and the amount of their experience. Ho et al. (2012) supported this finding the internal information is derived from previous experiences and past information searches. The information is processed and stored in the tourists’ long term memory which then forms their prior knowledge. The knowledge regarding the destination affects tourist information search behaviour and decision making. While the thought process was found to be built on in a phased basis, Ho et al. (2012) found that as they sought and found the relevant information respondents used it for their next move on the screen. They also tended to open two or more windows and browsed web pages within the information categories on a website in order to check if the content was correct. In addition, they visited two or more websites and moved among the sites to examine the information context from the different sources.

Technology and time have a considerable impact on standardised online hotel accommodation searches and the thought process. Kim et al. (2006) noted that technological inclination of online hotel purchases were identified as a dimension that has significantly impacted on consumers’ satisfaction and purchase intentions, especially among consumers with no prior online purchase experiences. Kim et al. (2006) further found that the consumers’ receptivity of new technological innovation and familiarity with eCommerce must be taken into account when evaluating their online purchase intentions. Lazonder et al. (2000) noted that information searchers with internet experience are more proficient in locating websites than are novice internet
users. Kim and Kim (2004) noted that online purchasers and non online purchasers did not differ by gender and income. In terms of age and education level however people over the age of 30 and / or people who were highly educated were more likely to make hotel reservations using the Internet. Respondents with past online purchase experience also reported higher weekly browser usage and more years of Internet use than those who did not have any experience with online purchasing. Moe and Fader (2000) noted that this difference in online shopping behaviour may evolve over time as a function of past experiences. Indeed Lehto et al. (2004) found that tourists’ memory utilisation and internal information search are facilitated by the number of their previous visits and the amount of their experience. Previous online experience has influenced the way we search online to the extent that iProspect (2009) in research on online advertisement avoidance surmised that the percentage of users who opted to launch a search rather than click on a display ad directly because search has become an ingrained behaviour for them, and that they are conditioned to tap into it when they seek additional information or look for further validation of the brand.

Consumers rely heavily on intuition during the online hotel accommodation decision making process. Gretzel et al. (2007) in examining online travel searchers found 71.4% trust inner feelings and reactions, 60.7% rely upon their instincts, and 58.3% rely on their intuition. Given this thought process methodology, the high levels of intangibility and perceived risk involved in the purchase decision of products such as cruises and packaged vacations are impediments to achieving high sales volume on the Internet (Chatterjee & Wang, 2012). Ye et al. (2009) supports this, finding that the travel industry was an excellent example where uncertainty about the quality of service could negatively influence consumer demand. Forsythe and Shi (2003) identified financial risk, psychological risk, physical risk, security risk, privacy risk and product performance risk as potential risks that consumers perceive when conducting transactions online. Canadi et al. (2011) determined that from a consumers’ point of view, the largest barriers are related to data security and privacy threats. There are however several empirical studies that have indicated that uncertainty avoidance has significant implications for the purchases travel searchers eventually make (Money & Crotts, 2003; Palmer & McCole, 2000; Quintal et al., 2010; Susskind et al., 2003).
The independent online traveller has sought new ways in which to replicate the trust and confidence which was previously invested in the face to face interaction and advice of the travel agent (Giddens, 1990). Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that 80% agreed that reading other travellers’ online reviews increases confidence in decisions, makes it easier to imagine what a place would be like, helps reduce risk / uncertainty, makes it easier to reach decisions and helps with planning pleasure trips more efficiently. Higher numbers of online reviews were also found to elicit increased trust (Miller, 2001). Jeacle and Carter (2011) found that one of the characteristics of the trustor is a propensity to trust, in other words their willingness to trust in the absence of information on the trustee; they did however find that some individuals are trusted more than others. They also found that a belief in members’ abilities to bestow accurate and reliable information was seen as having a positive impact on trust creation and that integrity is inextricably bound up in the perceived credibility of the trustee and their sense of justice and fair dealing. Nielsen (1999) recommended personal points of view of people pictured with a biography often win over anonymous comments as users want to know the people behind information on the web and found that only one in five sites offered information about the people working in the hotel.

Hotel Accommodation sellers can enhance their propensity to sell by increasing consumer trust. Jordan et al. (2013) noted that this trust can be achieved prior to the travel itself where pre trip planning mitigates potential travellers’ perceived risks avoiding uncertainty during travel. iProspect (2009) found that 39% of online users attribute brand equity to the companies and brands that appear at the top of search results (a phenomenon known as the brand halo effect). This is supported by Joachims et al. (2005) where they contended that users’ trust in search engines mean that links ranked first received many more clicks than the following link and also that the top two links received more attention than the rest of the SERP together. Established sellers on eBay with hundreds or thousands of largely positive or neutral feedback comments enjoy a 10 - 12% price premium when compared to a seller with no track record (Bajari & Hortaçsu, 2003; Resnick et al., 2006). Zhang (2006) supports this, finding that buyers prefer to bid on auctions by more trusted sellers and that when they do so they also tend to bid above the starting prices or reserve prices. Zhang (2006) however noted that negative selling comments are weighted more heavily than positive ones. SMS texting can also increase propensity to spend. Al-Alak and Alnawas (2010) found that
consumers who have negative attitudes towards SMS marketing and those who were exposed to extensive advertising were less likely to participate in SMS marketing, however consumers who grant permission and perceive it to be useful are more likely to trust the vendors and participate in such a program. Ritzer (2010) found that reassurance for the independent traveller can be achieved by booking into a trusted hotel chain, however they also found for many the brand security these establishments offer, can offer blandness from which the independent traveller may wish to escape. National accommodation ratings published by a government body can also enhance trust and propensity to spend, however Cormack (1998) noted that national ratings rarely assess the quality of the holiday experience and Su and Sun (2007) noted that it can be difficult to compare hotels across different countries. Countries can also damage their accommodation star ratings reputation for example Ireland where four hotels who had their fifth stars removed publically, had them returned on appeal with an announcement that their return was because of assessment process administrative errors and not because the quality of the hotels were reassessed to be five star (Lyons, 2004). Being able to market to consumers in close proximity for example at mealtimes has very obvious increased propensity to spend opportunities for hotel accommodation sellers. Lane (2012) noted that 80% of US consumers are prepared to share a little of their location data provided they get something back in return, and that their data is not shared and they retain control of the data. This is up from 2010 where 30m Facebook users (3.3% of total) were sharing their location (Lane, 2012) with brands they trust and 2011 where this had increased to 7.1% of US mobile subscribers used location based “check in” services (Radwanick, 2011).

Kim et al. (2006) in the study of Chinese hotel customers’ purchase intentions recommended that results should not be generalised for all travel purposes because hotel customers’ online reservation behaviour patterns and their needs for information about products and services differed according to the reason for their travel (business or leisure). In essence an individual consumer can have different human thought processes for the hotel accommodation purchase process. In order to target different groups we should try to segment them into groups that would choose similar hotel accommodation. Venugopal and Baets (1994) describe segmentation as a process of dividing a market into distinct groups of customers who prefer similar experiences or marketing service mixes. The basis of segmentation generally includes various tourists’ characteristics
such as demographics, socio-economic factors, geographic location, and product related behavioural characteristics such as purchase behaviour, consumption behaviour and preference for attractions, experiences and services (Dibb & Simkin, 1991). Crnojevic et al. (2010) found that segmentation into straightforward demographics could not explain internet booking intentions. They found that the booking method significantly depends on the nature of travel. Respondents who were on a business trip or group tour, did not book through the Internet, but guests whose reason for a visit was a conference or leisure largely booked through the internet. Segmentation can also include search personality type which influences online behaviour. Buscher et al. (2012) noted that economic users do not spend much time exploring the SERP, have more directed mouse movements, and abandon SERPs often. Exhaustive-active users explore search results in detail and ultimately click on a result. Exhaustive-passive users explore the results, but are less likely to click on a search result.

Gender as a differentiating segment in terms of the human thought process draws significant debate. Kim et al. (2007) found differences between females and males in terms of attitudes toward travel website functionality and scope as well as actual online information search behaviour. Kim and Kim (2004) however found online hotel accommodation purchasers and non online hotel accommodation purchasers did not differ by gender. Farago (2012) found that smartphone ownership was 44% female and 56% male, yet Eircom (2013) found 52% of females owned smartphones. There is however credible evidence for different behavioural patterns. Hansen and Jensen (2009) found that women are more inclined than men to “shop for fun” online. Kim et al. (2007) found females and males process information in different ways more specifically that females are more exhaustive and elaborative in external information search and attached higher values to a wider variety of both online and offline information sources while choosing travel destinations. This was supported by McCarthy et al. (2010) especially in relation to Tripadvisor but interestingly females search YouTube for hotels significantly less than males. Eircom, (2013) indicated that age has differentiating thought processes finding that 70% of 16 to 24 year olds now prefer to text rather than call and seem happy to disengage directly from people showing a non direct contact preference. Bilal (2001) however found in research on US seventh graders (12 – 13 years old) that failures in relation to online search were due to inexperience rather than age. Indeed Spink et al. (2010) found that young children engage in complex web
searches, including keyword searching and browsing, query formulation and reformulation, relevance judgments, successive searches, information multitasking and collaborative behaviours.

There is a growing body of research examining the role of cultural differences in individuals' use of computers, internet use, online search behaviours, and perceived risk of using the internet to purchase (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Li & Kirkup, 2007; Park & Jun, 2003). Mazaheri et al. (2011) in examining the differences between Chinese and Canadian website navigational pathways found half of the significant structural paths were invariant between the cultures. To optimise the navigational pathways they recommended service providers should enhance the hedonic aspects of the website for the Chinese and the utilitarian aspects for Canadians. Jordan et al. (2013) similarly found cultural differences between Belgians and Americans. Americans were in general found to be more experienced in booking online travel and avoided uncertainty less than Belgians. This resulted in Belgians spending more effort completing travel planning, clicking significantly more links browsing for more alternative options arriving at their “purchases” via search engine links more and producing significantly greater number of general search engine alternatives than Americans. Americans generally “purchased” the first travel product or service their search produced arrived at their “purchases” via travel search engines, preferring a ‘one stop shop’ approach to their searching, putting their trust in one or two travel specific search engines to arrive at all of their final “purchase” and trusting the top search engine results containing the information that lead them to their “purchase”. Kralisch et al. (2005) supports these findings stating that, when searching for information on the Internet, individuals from cultural backgrounds with high levels of uncertainty avoidance preferred to collect as much information as possible about a search subject, while those with low uncertainty avoidance were comfortable gathering less information during their online information searches. Furthermore, individuals from cultural backgrounds with high uncertainty avoidance used search engines to a greater extent in order to meet their need for a greater amount of information (Kralisch & Berendt, 2004). Despite the observed cultural differences Mazaheri et al. (2011) findings suggested that the impacts of site involvement and service attitudes on purchase intentions are not significantly different between cultures.
The human thought process is clearly influenced by the price of a hotel room. However, price has many influencing factors and nuances. Niemann et al. (2006) found that the selection of the right hotel was insufficiently described by price alone and that a number of characteristics (e.g. facilities) and its environment (e.g. golf, shopping centre) as well as the attributes of the trip context, such as distance to a meeting place or (local, e.g. public transportation and remote, e.g. airports) accessibility must be taken into consideration. Crnojevac et al. (2010) surprisingly found that the hotel rate was equally as important to both online and offline guests as it is often assumed online searchers are more price sensitive. Ho et al. (2012) noted that price was a significant comparison tool. They found that searchers visited two or more websites and moved among the sites to examine the information context from the different sources and that price searches were commonly used for screening alternatives online and making comparisons among selected alternatives. This research implies that price becomes significant in the human thought process towards the end of the booking process or the choice set. A lowest price guarantee may influence the searcher to book a particular hotel room however Selvaraj (2011) in analysing lowest price guarantees by US hotels found that only 46% of hotels actually had the lowest price and this dropped to 35% for the mid market segment. A significant limitation in regard to analysing hotel accommodation price and its influence on the human thought process was the complete absence of any research on the influence of independent yet absolutely related products such as the flight price or local prices such as food, drinks or attractions etc on the hotel accommodation booking process.

2.3.2.2. Search Engines

The human thought process is hugely immersed in the search engine stage of the online hotel accommodation purchase process. GroupMSearch. (2011) noted that 86% of searchers found search engines very important, significantly higher than either social media or company web sites. Pan et al. (2007) supports this, finding that users firmly rely on search engines’ capacity to retrieve the information that matches their informational needs. Rangaswamy et al. (2009) noted that 88% of Internet users think of search engines as a specific targeted information tool. Starkov (2013) stated that search engines are travel consumers’ favourite travel research and planning tool. Despite this Flavián-Blanco (2011) found that there was a lack of studies that analysed the emotions that users feel when searching for information about products with search
engines. This is so important given that these emotional outcomes are likely to influence all the subsequent actions that users perform on the Web. Maughan (2008) in an eye gaze study found that the top 3 Google results get 79% of all clicks. Respondents stated that when they couldn’t find their desired search result on the first page of Google, 87% respondents replied that they would modify the search terms or refine the search by category. While this study did not explore the emotional reasons for consumers not clicking on lower ranking results or the second page of the SERP (Search Engine Results Page), Hardtke et al. (2009) found that users trust that a search engine will place the most relevant documents at the highest positions on the SERP. Shi and Trusov (2013) also found that consumers have individual preferences for certain types of search results (e.g., all results, organic and top-sponsored, organic only). While there is a lack of research on the emotions experienced during search engine activity be it consciously or unconsciously, these emotions can determine to a great extent how an online search is performed and what alternatives are chosen (Bechara & Damasio, 2005; Browne, Pitts, & Wetherbe, 2007; Quinn, 2003).

Search engines are used because they are perceived as effort saving tools which increase the users’ satisfaction with the online search process (Bechwati & Xia, 2003). Consumers search for information taking into account the tradeoffs between the costs or efforts required to acquire and process information, and the benefits or the accuracy obtained from the search outcome (e.g., Alba et al., 1997; Bettman, 1979; Klein & Ford, 2003). The Internet is an excellent hotel accommodation search tool because it provides boundless amounts of information that can be consulted with low effort and cost (Flavián-Blanco et al., 2011). Häubl and Trifts (2000) noted that it allows consumers to make better decisions while exerting less effort and in turn improving the decision making process. The human thought process and the emotions experienced have a significant influence over the process as without emotions, the consumer could engage in endless cost benefit tradeoffs between conflicting alternatives, which degrade the deliberation process and the adequacy of the choice (Bechara & Damasio, 2005). In this vein, Garbarino and Edell (1997) showed that alternatives that are more effortful to process are less preferred, since the effort exerted to process those alternatives produces a negative emotional effect.
Tasks completed and the emotions experienced by users were found to influence their search behaviour. Kim (2008) found that users tend to get engaged in more search cycles and use more search / navigation tools in a general search task than in a specific task. Indeed Kuhlthau (1991, p. 362) noted that the information search process “involves the whole experience of the person, feelings as well as thoughts and actions”. When a search has been successful, users may perceive that the effort has paid off, and this perception could have a positive impact on the emotions resulting from the search experience. However the effort exerted to find this information can be perceived as a cost to users, thus producing negative emotional effects (Flavián-Blanco et al., 2011). Roseman et al. (1996) found that dislike, an emotion that is appraised as being caused by external sources arises when the user feels low control over the situation is a common feeling for the generation of post search negative emotions. Oliver (1993) and Roseman (1991) also found that surprise characterised by a dimension of unexpectedness can cause negative emotions when searching for information online. Flavián-Blanco et al. (2011) supported this, finding that users can be interrupted in their navigation by unexpected sources (e.g., pop-ups, broken links). These can have undesirable outcomes in terms of negative laden surprises and feelings of dislike during the online navigation process. Ghose et al. (2013) quantified the negative impact of the human thought process on SERP hotel rankings for both luxury and budget hotels and also identified that consumers think differently of higher or lower rankings in each category. They found that as users move down from the top ranked position to a lower ranked position, the decrease in click through rates (CTR) for luxury hotels is much larger than that for budget hotels. For example, moving down from the top to the fifth position leads to a 75% drop in CTR for the luxury hotels compared to a 54% drop for the budget ones. They also found that the increase in CTR from hotels moving from a lower to a higher ranked position was greater for hotels with a poor reputation than for hotels with good reputation, for example, moving up from the 10th ranked position to the top position increased CTR by 245% for hotels with low user ratings compared to an increase of 83% for hotels with high user ratings.

The human thought process and the emotions experienced by users are not uniform across all stages of the search engine interaction process. The start of the shopping process is characterised by the search for information. Consumers strive to acquire a sufficient knowledge about the different alternatives which are later considered for the
purchase decision (Browne et al., 2007). Users usually search for information trying to maximise the accuracy of the search outcome while minimising the effort exerted to acquire it (Bettman, 1979). However users frequently choose alternatives that are satisfactory, rather than optimal because they expend only the effort necessary to achieve them (Garbarino & Edell, 1997; Häubl & Trifts, 2000). Aggarwal and Mazumdar (2008) noted that it is not just during each individual search where behaviour changes, they noted that Internet users learn from their search experiences and gain expertise for future episodes. In these cases, they consider the effort they put into the search task as being worthwhile, thus the search engine behaviour of each individual user will evolve over time and through their personal experience. Jordan (2008) described the search engine travel information process as consisting of “information patches” or groupings of information that the searcher filters useful information as they proceed along the information search process until the eventual final travel products are purchased. This human thought process and emotions are not however limited to the results of each internet interaction. Louro et al. (2005) noted that the different moods of the search engine user can influence subsequent emotions and behaviours. Terai et al. (2008) also noted that the task type affected the search engine users’ information seeking behaviours. In transactional tasks, participants visit more web pages than for the informational tasks and their reading time for each page was shorter than in the informational task. However at the end of a task Flavián-Blanco et al. (2011) found that search engine users felt joy and pride, primarily because they had succeeded in the search, they valued positively the effort they exerted. Hotel Accommodation providers should attempt to have these emotions felt by search engine users to maximise their online strategy.

2.3.2.3. Third parties / Social Media

Third parties and social media hugely influence the human thought process and the emotions experienced during the online accommodation booking process. The significant issue concerning hotels as a product is that as well as being hugely variable in quality and the services provided they are experience goods and their quality is only known to the user after the service has been consumed (Litvin et al., 2008). Ye et al. (2011) analysed user reviews of a major travel agency in China and found that the valence of travellers’ reviews (both positive and negative) have a significant impact on online sales of hotel rooms. Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) confirm this with
their research, finding that negative online product reviews have detrimental effects on consumer based brand equity leading to a significant brand equity dilution even if the brand is familiar to the customer. Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) also support this finding that both positive and negative reviews increase a consumer’s awareness of a hotel’s existence but, if the comments are negative, they lower consumers’ opinions. An interesting point in their research however was that the hotel awareness generated compensated for the effect of negative comments, especially if the quantity was low.

The influence of third parties and social media may become the central and even the official methodology for rating hotels. Independent.co.uk (2011) reported that British tourism authorities have reported that they are considering scrapping the country’s star rating system in favour of a Tripadvisor type user hotel review system. Given that Jeacle and Carter (2011) noted the emergence of the “independent traveller” who spurs the traditional travel agent and the limited number of online reviews read by them, third parties and social media will become a pivotal player in the hotel accommodation industry. Anderson (2012) found that prior to 72% of consumers read less than 10 product reviews and only 7% read more than 20 reviews. There is also however research contradicting the dominance of social media. Eircom (2013) found that social media fatigue is on the rise with 28% claiming that they are getting tired of social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Kim et al. (2013) also found that human thoughts and emotions cannot be uniformly used to explain online behaviour in social media. After employing a visual recognition test they found that participants recognised photos they acquired from deliberate search more accurately than the photos they acquired from casual surfing of the same Facebook destinations pages. Cox et al. (2009) among Australian internet users found that cultural differences impact on social media and holiday related travel planning differs in different tourism source markets. Kim et al. (2013) also found that there has been little research on users’ cognitive processes on Facebook visual images from photos, particularly in the context of tourism and hospitality.

Trust of the online review is a significant and variable factor to hotel accommodation searchers. The content of third party or social media reviews are perceived as being more trustworthy when compared to official tourism websites, travel agents and mass media advertising (Fotis et al., 2012). Hotel accommodation searchers perceive advice
from other consumers who have prior experience with a particular tourism product and who are interpersonally available as their preferred source of pre-purchase information and the most influential in travel decision making (Crotts 1999). Gretzel et al. (2007) quantified this finding that 61% of TripAdvisor users believed that travellers’ reviews are a more reliable source of information than that received from traditional travel service providers. In common with Pitman et al. (2010) who found that only 12% of search engine hotel searches directly related to accommodation, Pan et al. (2007) Table 22 found that hotel related blogs only had only 8.5% of sentences directly related to accommodation and in fact accommodation only ranked 9th in order of the terms contained in of hotel related blogs. This indicates that hoteliers focusing on accommodation searches are not focusing their attention on the vast majority of their consumers’ information requirements. Stringam and Gerdes (2010) found that travellers perceive different aspects of hotel accommodation related reviews differently and with different levels of importance. The lack of cleanliness of a hotel was the most frequent concern of travellers. Travellers were also concerned with bathrooms and beds. When travellers mentioned the bathroom and its associated amenities, they were more likely to have assigned a lower rating to the hotel. Travellers in the Stringam and Gerdes (2010) study assigned higher ratings more often when mentioning a hotel’s convenience to attractions, shopping, airports, and downtown. Food and beverage items were mentioned significantly more often in comments associated with higher ratings. Breakfast and waffles were frequently mentioned by travellers. The hotel staff and management were mentioned often, regardless of rating. However, words related to attentive service occurred in significantly more comments associated with higher ratings than lower ratings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Sentences</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
<th>Positive as a %</th>
<th>Negative as a %</th>
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</thead>
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<td>16</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>83</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>177</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Coding categories and number of positive and negative sentences for each category Source:- Pan et al. (2007)

As online product review writers are made by individuals who have purchased the product at some stage it is reasonable to imply some sort of purchasing bias or an above average favourable disposition towards the product (Hu et al., 2006). Online reviews however are not always accepted. Ghose et al. (2012) noted that too much feedback from online social communities, along with long sentences, complex words or spelling errors in the social media content, may lead consumers to terminate their search early. Review readers sometimes choose to defy product recommendations. Fitzsimons and Lehmann (2001) found that when consumers decide to go against a product recommendation they experience decreased satisfaction, increased difficulty but increased confidence with their product choice. Senecal et al. (2005) also found that overall the shopping behaviour of consumers who consult but do not follow a product recommendation are more complex than those who do not consult a product recommendation. Online reviews however are not however without difficulty. It is sometimes possible to find fake positive or negative reviews posted by the company or by the competitors trying in the first case, to improve the company’s reputation or in the
second case, to damage the reputation of a competitor (Dellarocas, 2003, 2006; Hu et al., 2012). For this reason the credibility of the review is therefore a key factor that leads the consumer to consider or disregard the message during the purchase decision process (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). In fact reviews containing two sided information (i.e. both positive and negative) are generally considered more credible because for the consumer each product has both positive and negative features.

Fotis et al. (2012) found that the human thought process engages with social media during all stages of the holiday planning process (before, during and after holidays), however to a different extent and for a different purpose. Gretzel et al. (2007) found that social media increases travellers’ confidence during decision making, reduces risk, assists them in selecting accommodation and therefore facilitates decision making. However, it was found that travellers think about accommodation reviews throughout the various stages of the travel planning process: before travel as a source of ideas, as a means to narrow down choices, and post accommodation choice in order to confirm the choice made; during the trip; after the trip to compare and share experiences; but also as an ongoing process even if there is no trip ahead. Cox et al. (2009) found that social media is mostly used before the trip, while during and after the trip was very limited. Fotis et al. (2012) also noted that there is a strong correlation between the perceived level of influence from social media and the changes made in holiday plans prior to the final decisions.

A major issue with third party or social media reviews is it is difficult for the consumer to determine the credibility of the message when it comes from total strangers (Chatterjee, 2001). Despite this and the increasing significance and influence of online third parties and social media only limited studies have investigated the role and characteristics of tourism opinion leaders and seekers (Yoo et al., 2011).

Flynn et al. (1996) define opinion leaders as those individuals who influence the purchasing behaviour of others in a specific product domain. Gretzel et al. (2007) found travel review writers to be more likely to be male and young, have higher incomes and have greater Internet skills. They also have a greater tendency to read blogs, write blogs, post comments to a blog, use social networking sites, listen to audio podcasts, watch videos online, post / share audio files, post / share videos, post / share photographs, rate
products, rate reviews, maintain personal web sites and contribute to wikis. In contrast to those who do not actively write / post travel reviews, travel review writers are more likely to travel for pleasure and are more involved in trip planning than non writers. Their opinions also tend to be focused with specific segments having their own opinion leaders. Jamrozy et al. (1996) found that nature tourism opinion leaders travel more, are more involved in nature tourism, use more information sources and perceive less risk in making travel related decisions. Litvin (2000) also found a relationship between frequent travel and opinion leadership.

Tourism opinion leaders are in the main not paid and write travel blogs or leave comments on social media for a range of reasons. Nardi et al. (2004) postulated that Internet users blog for various reasons: as a document of one’s life, as a social commentary, as catharsis and an outlet for their feelings and / or as a thinking tool. These are all intrinsic motivations, indicating the genuineness of travel blogs and their potential similarities to travel journals as realistic and honest chronicles of visitors’ experiences. Gretzel et al. (2006) found that blogs and social media enable storytelling and provide a sense of belonging to a virtual travel community. Gretzel et al. (2007) surmised that online travel review writers are mostly motivated by a concern for other consumers, helping a travel service provider and needs for extraversion / positive self enhancement. Venting negative feelings or receiving rewards for postings were not seen as important motives.

For opinion seekers the review, identity and motives of the opinion leader are extremely important. Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that reviewers examine the credibility of other reviewers. Most online travel review readers indicate that detailed descriptions (71%), the type of website where the review is posted (64.7%), and the date the review was posted (59.3%) are critical to evaluating a review. A reviewer's credibility is most frequently judged based on the reviewer's travel experience (75.3%), similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip (65.9%), trip purpose (60%) and writing in a polite and friendly manner (58.5%). Similarly, a review's usefulness is most frequently judged based on the reviewer's travel experience (78.5%), similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip (68.2%), trip purpose (64.4%) and similarity in terms of age, gender or marital status (53.1%) (Gretzel et al., 2007). Opinion leaders are allot more likely to indicate that they typically look at / read comments or materials posted online.
by other travellers in the course of planning their overnight pleasure trips. In essence this implies that reviews (either positive or negative) are likely to be self replicating or compounding with resultant implications for hotels. Not all opinions are perceived to be equal in the minds of opinion seekers. Dickinger and Mazanec (2008) found that the recommendations of friends and online reviews are the most important factors that influence online hotel bookings. Despite the increasing importance of online user generated content, a number of studies have reported that online user generated reviews are perceived as being lower in credibility than traditional word of mouth due to the absence of source cues on the Internet (Dellarocas, 2003; Smith et al., 2005). Mauri and Minazzi (2013) found interestingly that the presence of hotel managers’ responses to customer reviews is not considered a key factor by respondents. On the contrary, it has a negative impact on customer purchasing intention. It was considered that the nature of the information in this case was probably seen as not being spontaneous and not independent from the organisation. The predominant opinion across the literature examined seems to purport that interpersonal relationships are the most regarded hotel accommodation opinion indeed Crotts (1999) stated word of mouth or advice from friends and relatives often ranks as the most influential source of pre-purchase information.

2.3.2.4. Hotel Accommodation Websites

Human thoughts, emotions and perceptions hugely influence consumers’ behaviour while on hotel accommodation websites. Essawy (2006) noted that amongst British travellers the preference was to make separate travel and accommodation arrangements rather than choosing a package holiday. Within the hotel they perceive the degree of importance of hotel attributes as the hotel services and facilities that meet their wants and needs. Lewis (1983) reinforced the importance of these attributes indicating that the services and facilities that hotels offer affect the customer’s choice among different products and hotels. For hoteliers it must be noted that the consumer’s mental image of a tourism product can be the main source of information available to enhance expectations and facilitate purchasing decisions (Walters et al., 2007).

Hoteliers are still searching for an efficient way to persuade travellers to reserve rooms directly on hotel owned websites (Crnojevac et al., 2010). This is so important as in some cases the number of intermediaries between a hotel room and a guest can climb up
to five; making distribution more complex and expensive (eBusiness W@tch, 2006) also Crnojevac et al. (2010) noted unfortunately that the tourist’s decision process of the accommodation reservation channel choice is not completely understood. Wong (2004) noted that service quality is positively related to emotional satisfaction, and emotional satisfaction is positively associated with customer loyalty and relationship quality. Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) suggest that there are six dimensions that measure website persuasiveness in the hotel sector: informativeness, usability, credibility, inspiration, involvement and reciprocity. Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) further found that the greatest influence on first impressions for hotel websites was inspiration followed by usability then credibility. Rong et al. (2009) suggests that hotel managers should pay attention to the following dimensions and provide the information that is considered as being the most important: reservations information, facilities information and contact information. Koutra and Diaz (2013) support this recommending that hoteliers need to ensure that their own websites are the best place to find information and that it is essential that hotel chain websites evoke a favourable impression at the moment when the information search begins and potential customer access the website, as users can easily leave the site in one click to find another potentially more persuasive website even for the same hotel room at a high commission cost.

Long and Chiagouris (2006) noted that it is essential to make an effort to include persuasiveness in website design. Yet Koutra and Diaz (2013) noted that there is a lack of scholarly and professional research that examines the importance of the persuasiveness of websites and very few studies that separate hotels according to the persuasiveness of their websites, rather than focusing on demand. Indeed Mason and Roberts (2004) found that many travellers find the process of booking accommodation uncomfortable and stressful. 54% of guests expressed dissatisfaction with some aspect of the booking process. Lack of information about the hotel and its services were quoted most often as being the critical factor. Such resistance to persuasion is of great importance in an online travel planning context, where a new hotel or intermediary charging high commission for the same room or potentially negative information about a destination is only a click away (Lee & Gretzel, 2012). Negative persuasive influences for hotel accommodation can even come from organisations charged with their positive persuasion. Cano and Prentice (1998) concluded in a content analysis of Scottish tourism websites, that they did not offer much endearment communication to the places
or hotels marketed. Koutra and Diaz (2013) also found that there are significant differences in the degree to which the dimensions measuring persuasiveness are present in luxury, midscale and economy hotel chains. Specifically, luxury hotel chains exhibit higher percentages when measuring website persuasiveness. For example Koutra and Diaz (2013) found luxury hotel websites contain more persuasive information about the history of the hotel (39.3%) than midscale (23%) and economy hotels (19%), however economy hotels (96.6%) and midscale hotels (93.1%) reach a high percentage of ease of navigation in their websites as against luxury hotels (79.8%) due to the structure of the website. In essence too much information inhibits easy navigation and every effort should be made to give the consumer exactly what they are looking for but only what they are looking for.

The Internet has been found to be one of the most effective ways for hotels to influence travel plans and thus developing and maintaining an effective website that actively persuades tourists to choose a particular destination and the potential services associated with it is critical to the hospitality industry (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008). Lee and Gretzel (2012) noted that mental imagery processing leads to very strong attitudes and greater confidence in attitudes towards travel planning. These consumers are also more likely to resist negative reviews of the destination because a persuasive website effectively instills confidence in consumers and helps them form attitudes that are more resistant to counterarguments. Jeacle and Carter (2011) reinforce this instilled confidence finding in the case of luxury hotels that consumers felt a 5 star hotel booked now for next summer would probably remain a 5 star hotel in a year’s time. Indeed in the case of eBay and published reviews Swanson et al. (2006) concluded that an “established” eBay sellers can enjoy a 10 - 12% price premium when compared to a seller with no track record and Zhang (2006) found that buyers prefer to bid on auctions by more trusted sellers and tend to bid above the starting prices or reserve prices. Rosen and Olshavsky (1987) found evidence that consumers use a recommended brand from a trusted information source as a benchmark to evaluate other brands in order to find the best brand available. Given that strong attitudes formed at an early stage are resistant to change in the context of tourism destinations (Lee & Gretzel, 2012) and that users typically make very quick judgments about destination websites (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008) it can be inferred that a hotel found earlier in a search when compared with another comparable hotel will be regarded higher in the minds of consumers.
The mental interaction between consumers and websites is extremely important in fact. Newhagen and Rafaeli (1995) claimed that interactivity when implemented appropriately is instrumental in differentiating between successful and failing websites. However, there are very few research works that attempt to measure perceived interactivity, and there are even less regarding hotel websites interactivity (Zafiropoulos et al., 2007). Sigala (2003) stated that hoteliers heavily collect guest information by observing and interacting with guests and then store data into books and other files. Interaction is difficult to measure or access. McMillan (2002) noted that interactivity means different things to different people in different contexts. Zafiropoulos et al. (2007) noted that only comparison with the current status of web interactivity could provide some clues on how hotel websites perform. Indeed, given that hotel websites are competing against other hotels and intermediaries, comparisons of perceived interactivity should probably be against them. A major criticism of hotel websites perceived interactivity is that they do not include high interactivity features such as chat rooms; bulletin boards, etc., and that reservation systems are the only features that enable two-way communication and concurrent communication (Zafiropoulos et al., 2007).

It is imperative for hoteliers to note that consumers’ choices of vacations may be significantly influenced by mental imagery processing (Miller and Stoica, 2003). Indeed, recent research has indicated that the virtual transportation of consumers of travel information to the destination is essential in the formation of concrete expectations (Lee et al., 2010; Rozier-Rich & Santos, 2010). When travellers engage in mental imagery processing, they are described as experiencing the destination in their mind’s eye (Elliott, 1973). This immersion into the hotel experience is brought about through the interactivity with the hotel website in its information manifestations such as images and text. Unfortunately, in the tourism field very little research has been conducted on the effects of features (Lee & Gretzel, 2008) particularly pictures (Jeong & Choi, 2004) and the effects of text formats on mental imagery processing (Lee & Gretzel, 2012) included in destination websites. Green and Brock (2002) indicated that mental imagery may be facilitated by narratives because they allow for deep immersion and thus “transportation” into the story. This is supported by Lee et al. (2010) who identified sensory descriptions on destination websites as textual elements that encourage mental imagery processing. In terms of inducing mental imagery processing when comparing
all information conveyance methods, only pictures were found to make a significant difference (Lee & Gretzel, 2012). Within the myriad of images Miller and Stoica (2003) indicated that photographic images of beach scenes effectively stimulated mental imagery processing. In evaluating text Adaval and Wyer (1998) found that vacations at unfamiliar destinations were more positively evaluated by consumers who were exposed to advertising information in a narrative format rather than in a list of attributes format. Lee and Gretzel (2012) found that sound does not influence mental imagery. Richardson (1999) indicated that information is likely to be retrieved more accurately when it is encoded using dual codes rather than just one code. If one code is forgotten, the other code can still facilitate the retrieval. This is supported by Adaval et al. (2007) confirmed that a picture presented in combination with narrative text can cause a verbal event description to be more vivid and help the recipients to enhance perceptual links between events and increase the story’s coherence.

2.3.3. Process Influences (External)

2.3.3.1. Online Access Devices

The human thought process and emotions hugely influence how, why, where and which device is used in the hotel accommodation process. Emotions associated with leisure / hospitality are experiencing involvement, enjoyment / fun, relaxation, positive state of mind, escape, timelessness, physical stimulation, pleasure, freedom, adventure, and many other positive experiences (Ellis et al., 1994; Hull & Michael, 1995). Vermeeren et al. (2008) noted that if a user is performing a utilitarian driven interaction, the device is interpreted relatively to the outcome. If the outcomes are appraised as positive, then the individual develops feelings of satisfaction, joy and achievement. In fact Massey et al. (2007) found that regardless of the technological readiness of consumers, the greatest influences on usability evaluation were whether the website is utilitarian or hedonic in nature, and whether the website is accessed wirelessly or not.

Research shows that the hotel setting has a strong influence on the emotional state of the guests and the staging of the service environment (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009). Understanding these emotions is crucial for service firms because consumers’ feelings concerning products or services affect their purchase decisions (Barsky & Nash, 2002). Pine and Gilmore (1998) found that services must be ‘experientialised’ because
customers seek rewarding, memorable and pleasurable consumption experiences. Research describes service atmospherics such as colour, lighting, and style significantly relate to the overall impression of hotel lobbies (Countryman & Jang, 2006). Booms and Bitner (1982) recommend that architecture, lighting, temperature, furnishing, layout and colour enhance hotel atmospherics. However Brunner-Sperdin et al. (2012) noted that a lack of empirical research on the effect of service environments on tourist satisfaction is still evident. Hotel atmospherics and the emotions surrounding them are vitally important as the virtual transportation of the online hotel searcher encourages a quasi trial experience which supports the travel decision making processes (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). This virtual transportation is being completed using devices which Turkle (2007) found that users may develop intense relationships with their portable computers feeling at one with them and as companions, inviting users to project life on them, even though they are inanimate.

Coursaris and Kim (2011) propose that the mobile computing device usability in relation to destination websites is influenced by four key contextual factors: user factors such as demographics and experience; environmental factors, such as location and social conditions; task factors, such as structured versus unstructured activities; and technology factors, such as interface and device type. Venkatesh and Ramesh (2006) evaluated the usability of wireless tourism review websites finding that content, ease of use, and made for the device were considered the most important among consumers. This usability of devices has its roots in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which identifies Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness as the key determinants of a technology’s future use (Davis, 1989). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes the emotional involvement (Flow) with the technology as the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter and that they act with total involvement becoming utterly absorbed in the activity. This mode is characterised by a narrowing of the focus of awareness, so that irrelevant perceptions and thoughts are filtered out with the loss of self consciousness and a sense of control over the environment. However users interact with devices from different perspectives. Castañeda et al. (2007) noted that experienced users are more interested in the outcome of the search (extrinsic motivation) than those visiting the site for the first time. The latter evaluate the website in a more superficial manner focusing, in the main, on the novelty of the site and on other instrumental beliefs (intrinsic motivation). Nusair and Parsa (2011) supports this
finding two different levels of online travel shopping interactivity features: low interactive utilitarian shopping features and high interactive experiential shopping features.

In analysing tourist experiences Brunner-Sperdin et al. (2012) noted that situational variables such as age, duration of stay, or gender had only weak influences on the emotional state of the guest; they found that it was devices and human aspects as well as the leisure experiences that most strongly influenced the emotional state. Consumers own multiple devices and move seamlessly between them throughout the day. They choose the particular device depending on the amount of time they have or need, the goal they want to accomplish, location, attitude and state of mind (Google, 2012a). In fact 34% of people simply use the closest device to them when looking for information. As tablets mostly only have internet access via wifi it is unsurprising to find that 85% to 90% of tablet browsing happens via wifi locations while mobile devices use telecommunication carriers to access the internet and are therefore quite universal in terms of access locations (Starkov, 2012a).

Devices and their relationship with the human thought process and emotions however are not without their limitations. In testing these devices Fredrickson and Kahnemann (1993) and Varey and Kahnemann (1992) noted that research assumptions are problematic as judgments of overall experiences are strongly influenced by peak and final moments. Duh et al. (2006) noted that most mobile device evaluation is laboratory based simulated usability testing and the validity of these tests is often questioned for not fully representing the real world conditions found in the field. Conversely Duh et al. (2006) found that field studies, while more accurate and capture real user scenarios are more costly and the observation of research participants is more difficult. There is also the limitation that often arises from the introduction of new technologies is that destination management organisations try to fit a new technology into existing structures and systems instead of creating new strategies or developing completely new systems in order to take full advantage of that new technology (Gretzel et al., 2000). Chan (2012) noted that while much research has been conducted to understand the effects of mobile technology within commerce, few studies have examined the impact from a consumer relationship perspective within the hotel industry, despite the industry’s dependence on their relationship with consumers. Postrel (2009) also found
that many products are differentiated based on aesthetics and a universal desire rather than their functionality. Minghetti and Buhalis (2010) also noted that having access to technology does not necessarily mean that people will use it.

Users experience different emotions when performing tasks on different devices, often when completing the same task. Google (2012a) noted that laptop / PCs are for office or home use and for productivity orientated tasks that require lots of time, focus and a serious research intensive attitude. 31% are at home with 69% at work. 40% of the interactions are to find information 29% are for keeping up to date. PC / laptops have 52% spontaneous search and 48% planned search as against smartphones which have 80% spontaneous search and 20% planned search, yet they are very similar in goal accomplishment. In smartphone searches 44% of spontaneous searches were to accomplish a goal and on PCs / laptops 43% of spontaneous searches were to accomplish a goal. Google (2012a) noted that smartphones are used both on the go and at home and are used to communicate and connect for short bursts of time when information is needed quickly and immediately. 38% or our daily media interactions occur on a smartphone. This time is broken down as 60% at home and 40% out of the home with 54% being for entertainment and 33% for communication.

Starkov (2012a) found that travel consumers on the go use their mobile devices to get concrete information such as hotel location, driving directions and pricing information. Indeed Stienmetz et al. (2013) noted that smartphones are fast becoming the primary way for many travellers to access the Internet in search of travel related information. Their primary advantage over traditional PCs / laptops is that they are available at all times and are easily accessible by the user (Kannan et al., 2001). Wang and Wang (2010) discovered that the ability to obtain information that is timely, detailed, accurate, reliable and selective has a significant and positive influence on perceived value when booking hotels through mobile hotel reservation systems. Chan (2012) noted that smartphones provide users with the convenience to look up information as they travel without having to stop in between or interrupting their trip. Balasubramanian et al. (2002) even before the general adoption of smartphones noted that businesses have the opportunity to reach out to consumers regardless of their location or the time. Vico et al. (2011) proposes that a smartphone could suggest restaurants to users when walking near
the restaurant that fits their preferences very well, while also factoring in the time of the day and other context attributes.

Smartphones as a hotel accommodation tool have limitations. Stienmetz et al. (2013) found that very little research had been done to investigate the usability of mobile DMO websites and also noted that DMOs must consider small screens and slow loading times when designing mobile websites. Vico et al. (2011) supports this finding that in mobile recommender systems users cannot browse easily through many search results and suffer from other restrictions in the user interface such as small display sizes or missing keyboards. Wang and Wang (2010) noted that consumers perceive risk when they book hotels through mobile technology believing these networks may be exposed to others, especially when transferred through an unsafe wireless network. PhoCusWright (2012) supports this finding that almost half (49%) of online leisure travellers who use mobile phones are either very or somewhat uncomfortable making mobile purchases that require them to enter their credit or debit card number. Starkov (2012a) quantified that lack of trust finding that because of both usability and security issues, six of every seven mobile bookings actually happen via the voice channel. Very few people are comfortable entering their credit card information into their phone in a public place and very few hotel mobile websites provide an alternative to guaranteeing your booking without entering your credit card. Their mistrust may be warranted as Eircom, (2013) found that 19% of respondents admitted to having agreed to something without realising it while using a mobile device.

Google, (2012) noted that tablets are used primarily at home for entertainment and browsing and they have a unbounded sense of time and a relaxed and leisurely feel during usage. 9% of our daily interactions occur on tablets mostly for entertainment purposes. Tablets are used for 63% entertainment and 32% communication. This is broken down as 79% at home and 31% out of the home. Zamani et al. (2013) found that tablet users feel a sense of satisfaction, relaxation, pleasure, calmness, deactivation, comfort and liberation. When users approach the tablet as a substitute for other devices, the nature and intensity of emotions change as well in fact they perceived business related processes to be less of an assignment. Zamani et al. (2013) also found similar results when researching senior citizens. Farago (2012) actually found a higher than average usage of tablets in the 55+ age group. Starkov and Safer (2010) also noted in
contrast with smartphones, tablet users have no issues booking a hotel via their device. Tablets are not however without their limitations. Van Schaik and Ling (2008) noted that even though tablets may extend the work environment they found that it cannot fully replace other computationally superior devices within such a context finding that users are faced with disappointment and displeasure when assessing tablets pragmatic qualities.

Our preoccupation with current devices should not limit our future planning. Zamani et al. (2013) noted that technology continuously revolutionises the way people interact with information technology. Devices such as Google Glass that are voice activated reduce the delay of physical human computer interaction somewhat. Kumar and Sharma (2012) noted that that Electroencephalography (EEG) can be used to read specific generalised neuron patterns in the brain to engage directly with a graphical interface with incredible speed will further change the internet / device interaction incredibly. New technology devices are not just being demanded by hotel accommodation consumers they are changing tourists’ behaviour (Crnojevac et al., 2010). The advances in technology are not simply interactive. Al Monitor (2013) noted that Intel are developing cameras which will help computers better understand the intentions of their users, bring new levels of interactivity to games and will have the ability to sense excitement and emotions examining if the user is happy or smiling. Shah (2013) noted these devices will change from mundane 2D devices into powerful 3D tools that can sense movement, depth and track emotion.

2.3.3.2. Visual Interaction

Argo et al. (2006) stated that a satisfactory travellers’ online shopping experience demands a thorough understanding of their online decision making process. Björk (2010) observed that web design for tour operators is about building functioning, content rich, well organised, communicative (interactive), and aesthetic websites that stimulate positive experiences. Björk (2010) also observed that existing studies of web design had been functional and utilitarian oriented implying that the cognitive dimensions have been put to the forefront. Consequently, more attention needs be given to website features which stimulate emotional responses (Riel et al., 2001 and Kim, 2002). The limitation however is that there is little research specifically relating visual components to emotions (Pan et al., 2014). This is utterly essential given that pleasure
significantly influences the level of satisfaction, loyalty and the number of items purchased from websites (Björk, 2010). The difficulty however is that evaluation methods that consider website effectiveness lack consistent validation methods (Schmidt et al., 2008).

Schmidt et al. (2008) noted that new client acquisition, market share, client retention and sales in terms of website effectiveness were positively associated with extensive informational texts and photos about hotel services, rooms and nearby attractions. Joerchel et al. (1998) supported this noting that website visitors pay attention to the display of information content, good pictures and price and these are linked to satisfaction if this is convenient, easy of use and has printable pages. Countering Schmidt et al. (2008) Kim and Mattila (2011) noted however in a study of video clips on hotel websites that customers wanted customisation / personalisation in order to view only those service options that they were interested in pursuing. Pan and Zhang (2010) support Kim and Mattila (2011) finding that 20 hotel alternatives in Online Travel Agents (OTAs) seem to provide too much information for the subjects to digest and that limiting the number of options and considering the use of more images might help to maximise the overall user experience. They also noted however that how the consumers make decisions in this interactive and rich environment is largely unknown. Schwartz (2004) similarly found that offering a large number of options is counterproductive. Schmidt et al. (2008) also found that displaying a function that your hotel website does not respond to may lose clients.

Generalising online hotel user behaviour both visually and emotionally is difficult. Russo and Leclerc (1994) noted using an eye tracking methodology three stages of a purchase decision: orientation, evaluation, and verification. González-Caro and Marcos (2011) noted that the percentage of fixations on the first two organic results of search engines varied depending on the search type: navigational (76.84%), informational (75.46%) and transactional (56.74%). Research also noted that internet users are conditioned to expect to view particular web objects in specific locations on the screen (Bernard, 2003). This has resulted in the location or visual representation of an object on the screen dictating both its usage and trustability. Owens et al. (2011) noted that areas perceived as advertisements will be scanned only if it necessitates completing their task and will likely do so only after scanning other content areas. Users
demonstrate text advertisement “blindness” when viewing web pages. This means that information despite its content displayed in areas of the page dedicated to text ads (e.g., top of the page, right side) is generally ignored or viewed last (Owens et al. 2011). Hotchkiss et al. (2005) found that respondents overwhelmingly choose links offering sources of trusted, unbiased information with more than 77% of participants also favoured non sponsored links more than the sponsored links.

Kim and Mattila (2011) found that customers want to see customer employee interactions on websites that sell experiential services such as hotels and also found such interactions may reduce perceived risk. Bitner (1992) and Wirtz and Bateson (1999) supported this finding that tangible and physical cues of service are highly linked to customer satisfaction and behavioural responses. Kim and Mattila (2011) noted that the ability to view the physical product or the service environment prior to purchase lessens perceived risk, thus enhancing the likelihood of purchase, in particular with experiential services such as hotels. Vivid images of customer experiences such as video clips showing passengers having fun on a cruise reduces pre purchase risk, a factor that commonly impacts consumer behaviour (Legg & Baker, 1987; Mittal, 1999). Kim and Mattila (2011) noted that the use of visual images is particularly attractive when selling experiential services such as hotels and has a positive impact on purchase intent. Bauer et al. (2006) however warns that in particular, online users strongly associate the quality of the content with the visual appeal of the Website design. Furthermore, web site characteristics such as colour and image may affect social presence perception or information recall (Cyr et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2003). Video clips if used also must to be accessed quickly and efficiently to maintain the quality image of a hotel (Kim & Mattila, 2011). This visual perception of quality is hugely important given that most tourists do not make room reservations through the websites of small and medium size hotels (Schmidt et al., 2008). Kim and Mattila (2011) also noted that background music and narrator choice are important components of the aesthetic dimension in the context of video clips. A major issue related however to controlling the quality of hotel images is that 89% of pleasure travellers take photographs and that 41% of them posted their photographs online (Lo et al., 2011). Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) supports this recommending that Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) need to know what images dominate the internet and whether these images are consistent with the information projected by the
destination itself, so that they can reinforce positive images or counter unfavourable images, if necessary.

Jenkins (2003) states that photographs tell desired stories about a place. Edensor (2000) supports this stating that tourists use photography to capture relationships with other people, places and cultures to narrate a story. Visual images are so important to destinations as they have the power to create a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with places (Day et al., 2002). Photos and travel are linked intrinsically because photos shape the travel experience (Larsen, 2008; Lo et al., 2011) and provide an opportunity for tourists to share their experiences with others (Groves & Timothy, 2001). Images spark the interest of potential tourists and reinforce the existing images that result from previously acquired tourists’ perceptions of destinations (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). Visual images are hugely important on hotel websites. Pan and Zhang (2010) noted that when images were present, participants spent more time evaluating each hotel option and viewed more hotel options. This was most prominent in 5 star hotels where users spent 132 seconds on hotel websites with images and 85 seconds on the hotel websites without images. Images alone however do not maximise the thought process engagement between the user and the hotel website. Hong et al. (2004) noted that products with both text and images on a web page lead to shorter search times and better rate of recall. This is reinforced by Pan and Zhang (2010) who noted that text only hotel websites required more of the subjects’ cognitive efforts and as a result were harder to evaluate and that images helped to reduce the cognitive load thus allow travellers to view more hotel options and in more depth. It should however be noted that Hughes et al. (2003) found that people spend more time looking at the text than the pictures and that text was used to make judgments and images as confirmatory evidence.

The majority of hotel thought process research relates to the thoughts about the hotel. However a number of studies suggest that young people in particular use online media to present, manipulate and / or manage a desired self image (Pfeil et al., 2009; Strano, 2008; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) noted that the posting of an image online in an exotic location states “been there and seen that”. Pan et al. (2014) reinforces this stating that travel photos can reflect the inner feelings of the photographers and that they also serve as records of their travel experience. An
understanding of these thought processes are hugely important as people who post images online also tend to search for travel information from others who engage in similar activities (Akehurst, 2009) and given that trust influences hotel room sales relationships are built with fellow tourists who record shared experiences (Lo et al., 2011). It must be noted however that individual online users differ immensely and generalising online human thought process visual behaviour is very difficult. Martin et al. (2005) noted on average subjects prefer websites of a medium level of complexity, rather than high or low complexity, however high sensation seekers prefer complex visual designs and low sensation seekers simple visual designs. Pan et al. (2014) also found that females associated more frequently the “pleasant” quality such as “pleasing”, “pretty” and “beautiful” with images of destinations than males. Breeze (2009) found that users gaze at faces in images in some sites and Bunnyfoot.com (2009a) noted in different site types users did not gaze at faces in images.

2.4. Summary

This chapter examined the literature around the online hotel accommodation process under two main headings (1) Online Hotel Accommodation Behaviour and (2) Online Hotel Accommodation Thoughts and Emotions. Each of these main headings are structured around the internal process influencing factors (the individual, search engines, third parties / social media and hotel accommodation websites) and the external process influencing factors (online access devices and visual interaction). The most pertinent points from the literature review were placed in APPENDIX A: “Section III Strategy - Literature Reconciliation”. The combination of these pertinent sections of the literature from the two main headings and the influencing factors and their appropriate strategies formulated the structure of the conceptual framework. Finally the chapter concludes with the conceptual framework of online hotel accommodation process influencing factors presented in diagrammatic form.
Figure 31: Conceptual Framework of Online Hotel Accommodation Process Influencing Factors
Chapter 3 – Research Methodology
3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction & Research Process

Chapter three describes the research methodologies that will be used in this longitudinal three stage research thesis. The methodologies were selected following critical analysis and the debating of the research philosophy, choice, design, ethics and the research contribution that could be gained from this research.

3.2. Research Philosophy

3.2.1. Positivism

Malhorta and Birks (2003) describe positivists as reaching conclusions based on agreed and measurable facts with the emphasis on facts that lead to a focus upon objectivity, rigour and measurement. Hughes (1976) describes positivists as having a fundamental belief that the social and natural worlds conform to certain fixed and unalterable laws in an endless chain of causation. Hart (2005) states that the idea that knowledge of the world, of what is true and is not true is possible, is a bedrock assumption of the positivist position. Positivism is particularly useful when variables are subject to measurement. Alvarez (2008) found that the main supporting advantages to using positivism in research are; it claims to be always objective, the observer is required to be detached from the observed, the results are universally generalisable, there is a distinct and observable cause and effect and there are no values placed on the information beyond the observable results. Positivist research tends to be quantitative, objectivist, scientific, experimentalist and traditionalist. While positivism provides research with objectivity, rigor, reliability and validity etc it does however have its limitations. Malhorta and Birks (2003) criticise positivism as having a theoretical framework seen as restrictive, narrowing the researcher’s perspective, and being an inhibitor to creativity. Saunders et al. (2009) argued that rich insights into this complex world are lost if such complexity is reduced entirely to a series of positivism law-like generalisations. Easterby-Smith (2002) expressed that we should try to understand and explain why people have different experiences, rather than searching for external causes and fundamental laws to explain their behaviour. Dann and Phillips (2001, p.63) indicated that the absolutism of positivism is softening, finding that there was considerable change in recent years with “foundationalist assumptions of truth, objectivity, and validity being slowly relinquished”.

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The main subject areas within this research (tourism, information systems & website design etc) were examined to ascertain what their dominant research philosophies were. Veal (2011) expressed that the method used in the classic positivist approach is the controlled experiment, which is only possible in a limited number of leisure and tourism contexts yet he found that in the 1990s numerous commentators, in calling for more interpretive and qualitative research, referred to positivist, and quantitative, approaches as being dominant in leisure and tourism studies. Riley and Love’s (1999) investigation into the number of quantitative versus qualitative articles appearing in four tourism journals from their inception to 1996 found the dominant method in tourism journals to be positivism. In a study of Irish and UK tourism PhDs between 1990 and 1999 Botterill et al. (2002) confirmed the prevailing influence of positivist (questionnaire) and hermeneutic (interview) epistemologies in the study of tourism”. Dubé and Paré (2003) carried out research on the main Information Systems Journals. The results clearly indicate that positivism represents the predominant philosophical tradition in Information Systems case research, accounting for 87% of the 210 surveyed articles. Positivism does not maintain the same dominance however in website design. Love (2000) found positivism was especially problematic in design research and theory-making about design cognition because designing is essentially a subjective human phenomena where conclusions may not be reducible to quantifiable data points.

3.2.2. Interpretivism

The interpretive research philosophy is described as having the goal of understanding the social world from the viewpoint of the actors within it. Interpretivist research is best suited to situations involving human behaviour, particularly when the researcher is attempting to understand the reasons for this behaviour (Olson, 1995). Interpretive research tends to be qualitative, subjectivist, humanistic, phenomenological and revolutionist. Van Maanen et al. (1982) describe interpretivism as seeking to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of what is observed, not the frequency of occurrences as is pertinent in positivism. To give meaning to their observations, interpretivists need to understand the context of what is observed (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). Veal (2011) notes that the interpretive researcher tries to get inside the minds of subjects and see the world from their point of view and also relies on people providing their own explanations of their situation or behaviour. This
openness while not inhibited by the positivism type laws leaves interpretivism open to criticism from positivists.

Interpretivists plan their studies and are less concerned with a structured approach than their positivist counterparts (Williamson et al., 2002). Interpretivists have been criticised for this as having little or no theoretical framework (Malhorta and Birks, 2003). Kriegert (1991) warns that central to the Interpretivist researcher is the recognition of their “self” and the bias they bring to the research. While every PhD researcher has some inherent bias this can be counteracted. St Aubyn (1956) while accepting that a researcher can have bias ignoring other arguments that are inconvenient, they can also counteract this tendency by searching for conflicting evidence. The main subject areas within this research (tourism, information systems & website design etc) hold difficulties for generalisable research. The characteristics of the ebusiness design world are different for different designers because each designer has a different character or personality, and consequently focuses, emphasises, ignores and values different issues constructing their internal design worlds differently (Love, 2000). This non generalisability is reinforced by Walsham (1995a) who contends that there is no objective reality which can be discovered by researchers and replicated by others. Walsham (1995a) however contends that a number of writers in the IS field have already demonstrated that interpretive case studies, if carried out and written up carefully, can make a valuable contribution to both IS theory and practice. However, the volume and range of such studies are relatively limited at the present time.

Weber (2004) believes that the positivism / interpretivism debate is spurious and that the two supposed dichotomies have much in common. He also believes they have little impact on how researchers conduct research, rather researchers simply choose a research method that fits their purposes and get on with the business of doing their research. This is reinforced by (Olson, 1995: Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005) who asserted that polarising research methodologies into strict positivist or interpretivist philosophies can prove to be both restrictive and counterproductive. Lee (1991) contends that if a framework involving the two philosophies is used to best advantage it can cancel out each other’s weaknesses. Johnstone et al. (2004) asserted that different subcomponents of his online human information processing model may be better
tackled using either positivist or interpretativist research paradigms, thus using both philosophies in the one study.

3.3. Research Approach

The choice of research approach is very important for numerous reasons. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) stated (1) It enables you to make a more informed decision about your research design. (2) It helps you decide on the research strategies that will work and crucially not work. (3) Knowledge of the different research traditions enables you to adapt your research design to cater for constraints. The research processes are divided into the inductive and deductive processes. Malhorta and Birks (2003) describe the different approaches of both processes as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deductive</th>
<th>Inductive</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Area of inquiry is identified, set in the context of well-developed theory.</td>
<td>• An area of enquiry is identified with little or no theoretical framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research questions emerge from the established theoretical framework.</td>
<td>• The research questions are elicited from respondents in particular contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hypotheses or specific variables for measurement are identified.</td>
<td>• Respondents are aided to explain answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A research instrument / method to measure the variables are identified.</td>
<td>• Broad themes / areas for discussion / observation are identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The responses to the research questions are analysed.</td>
<td>• The researcher develops their theory be searching for the occurrence and interconnection of phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher tests the theory to see of their hypotheses is accepted or rejected.</td>
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3.3.1. Deduction

Deduction is described as a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is validly inferred from some premises, and must be true if those premises are true, thus following the positivist tradition (Malharta & Birks, 2003). Deduction is a highly structured methodology that leads to the development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test which can be generalised (Saunders et al., 2009). The different deduction theorists essentially propose the same process. Robson (2002) lists five sequential stages through which deductive research is progressed: (1) Deducing a hypothesis from the theory (2) Expressing the hypothesis in operational terms (3) Testing the operational hypothesis (4) Examining the specific outcome of the inquiry (5) If necessary, modifying the
theory. Bryman and Bell (2011) list six which are essentially the same as Robson (2002) (1) Theory (2) Hypothesis (3) Data Collection (4) Findings (5) Hypothesis confirmed or rejected (6) Revision of theory.

The highly structured and rigorous methodology of the deduction approach does have its inhibiting factors. Saunders et al. (2009) state it has a tendency to construct a rigid methodology that does not permit alternative explanations of what is going on. This means that should the results be not as expected this will only show up at the hypothesis confirmed or rejected stage and the entire process must start from the theory stage again thus rigid adherence to a deductive methodology in the case of a PhD could nullify it after many years of diligent research. Bryman and Bell, (2011) listed several deductive research studies that after making no sense were changed to inductive studies. One of the most known deductive research cases into the most appropriate lighting levels for factory workers (Hawthorne studies) changed at the hypothesis confirmed or rejected stage after the findings were at odds with the hypothesis i.e. productivity kept increasing no matter if lighting was increased or lowered. The new inductive research found that productivity increased when management took interest in their workers. Bryman and Bell (2011) stated there are several reasons why a researcher’s view of the theory or literature may change as a result of the analysis of the collected data. (1) New theoretical ideas may be published by others before the researcher has generalised his or her findings. (2) The relevance of a set of data for a theory may become apparent only after the data have been collected. (3) The data may not fit with the original hypotheses.

3.3.2. Induction
Malhorta and Birks (2003) describe induction as a form of reasoning that usually involves the inference that an instance of events may be universally generalised, thus following the interpretivist tradition. The inductive research study whilst it may start with no predetermined theories or conceptual framework, it must have clearly defined purpose with research questions and objectives. Saunders et al. (2009) held that it must not be taken without a competent knowledge of the subject area. One of the key advantages of the inductive approach is that the less structured approach might reveal alternative explanations of the subject being examined (Saunders et al., 2009). A further advantage listed was that the lesser reliance on sample numbers may allow a more targeted study. Malhorta and Birks (2003) support this indicating that large
representative samples are generally impossible and validity may be based on fair samples.

In common with the deduction approach, induction also has its inhibiting factors. The main criticism of inductivists is that their less structured approach allows conclusions to be reached without complete evidence (Malhorta & Birks, 2003). Harman and Kulkarni (2006) describe the relationship between induction with deduction as being similar to the relationship between inference and logic, with their main criticism being the problem of assessing the reliability of inductive inference. Walsham (1995b) was very concerned about researcher bias, he asserted that value-free data cannot be obtained from inductive research, since the enquirer uses his or her preconceptions in order to guide the process of enquiry and furthermore the researcher interacts with the human subjects of the inquiry, changing the perceptions of both parties. Ebusiness theory building research was also described as extremely data-intensive, involving induction from observations (Kauffman & Wood, 2003).

Bryman and bell (2011) described deduction as theory leading to observations / findings and induction: observations / findings leading to theory and Saunders et al. (2009) said it was often advantageous to combine both deduction and induction. The main factors of the induction and deduction research approach dichotomies will be considered with the most appropriate or mixed approach being used depending on each individual research question.

3.4. Research Choice
3.4.1. Quantitative Research
The two principal research choices are the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Al-Qeisi (2009) describes the quantitative paradigm as being based on positivism, with an ontological position advocating the existence of only one truth (an objective reality), which is independent of human perceptions. Malhorta and Birks (2003) describe quantitative research as research techniques that seek to quantify data and, typically, apply some form of statistical analysis. Wright and Crimp (2000) support the merit of this highly structured approach stating that quantitative research is carried out within the framework of a scientific method; an approach that uses objectively agreed criteria and procedures to achieve results that have statistical reliability. Kinnear and Taylor (1996)
support the use of the quantitative paradigm in research advocating that quantitative research brings rigour and disciplined enquiry to the overall research activities. Indeed Kraus and Allen (1998) found that quantitative research has tended to be more highly regarded than qualitative methods. Quantitative research has however been receiving increasing criticism in recent years. Quantitative research while it is considerably different in its approach to qualitative research often begins as a qualitative research idea. Trochim (2002) criticised the statistically reliability of this approach stating that all quantitative data is based upon qualitative judgements: and all qualitative data can be described and manipulated numerically. Particular to the peculiarities of this research Lim (2002) stated human factors cannot be fully understood through the use of quantitative methods such as data mining where the time difference between different online actions is calculated, or the progression of movements from one hyperlink to another is charted and so on.

3.4.2. Qualitative Research
Al-Qeisi (2009) describes the qualitative paradigm as being based on interpretivism, with an ontological position that advocates the existence of multiple realities (truths) based on a person’s construction of reality. Kinnear and Taylor (1996) describe qualitative research as being particularly valuable in the early stages of research when concepts are being explored and insights into behaviour and research ideas generation. Qualitative research has also been heavily criticised. Domegan and Fleming (2003) describe qualitative research as the collection of data which is open to interpretation, for instance on attitudes and opinions, and which might not be validated statistically. The main problem with qualitative research is verification of its validity. Kinnear and Taylor (1996) state the approach is not intended to provide statistically or scientifically accurate data. Qualitative researchers have not been deterred by these criticisms. Dann and Phillips (2001) have reported a recent trend where tourism research is moving away from pure quantification and towards a more qualitative approach. This is supported by Veal (2011) when he found that the use of qualitative methods in leisure and tourism research has increased significantly in recent years.

3.4.3. Mixed Methods
The polarisation of research into irreconcilable quantitative or qualitative dichotomies has altered in recent years with the emergence of what is called mixed methods or
triangulation. In common with polarised positions there is also much criticism of the mixed methods or triangulation research choice. Sale et al. (2002) states that the quantitative and qualitative methods represent two different paradigms that are incommensurate further stating that quantitative and qualitative researchers do not, in fact study the same phenomena. Hammersley (2008) criticised triangulation as possibly using different qualitative sources of data, or various quantitative methods, rather than crossing the divide between the two. One of her main concerns was that the very notion of mixed methods research preserves the quantitative-qualitative division even while seeking to bridge it. Another problem with mixed methods is that there are relatively few guidelines about how, when and why different research methods might be combined (Bryman, 1988). One of the most exasperating problems for mixed methods researchers is if the two different methods offer diverging results. Bryman (2006) cautioned that while a decision about design issues may be made in advance and for good reasons, when the data are generated, surprising findings or realised potential in the data may suggest unanticipated consequences of combining them. There is also the question of how to respond to conflicting results: given that continuing the process of triangulation until multiple sources of information agree could be a lengthy and possibly a never-ending process (Perlesz & Lindsay 2003 and Ribbens McCarthy et al., 2003). Johnson et al. (2007) noted that research methodologies are rarely dichotomies categorising them as crossing the whole spectrum from pure qualitative to pure quantitative as in Figure 32.

Figure 32: Mixed Methods Source:- Johnson et al. (2007)
Over the years the terms multi-methods, triangulation and mixed methods have appeared in the journals as approaches for facilitating a combination of qualitative and quantitative research that is intended to end the pragmatic war (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003, cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Several writers have pointed out that quantitative and qualitative research can be combined at the various stages of the research process: formulation of research questions; sampling; data collection; and data analysis (Bryman, 2006). Sale et al. (2002) agreed noting that qualitative and quantitative work can be carried out simultaneously or sequentially in a single study or series of investigations. In confronting critics of multi methods, Sale et al. (2002) stated that even if the approaches are incommensurate this does not mean that multiple methods cannot be combined in a single study if it is done for complementary purposes. Veal (2011) reinforces the support for the complementary aspect of using mixed methods and expressed that the two are moving even closer together as computers are now being used to analyse qualitative research. Moran-Ellis (2006) argue in support of methodological pluralism since even in studies where, for pragmatic or epistemological / ontological reasons, a decision is made not to include mixed or multiple methods in the research design, a willingness to explore their use and potential contribution (whether that be in combination or integration) enriches both the theoretical and epistemological approaches taken to the topic in question. Sale et al. (2002) reinforces this expressing that the maximum benefit of multi methods is not merely using the strengths of each method to bolster the weaknesses of the other(s), or capturing various aspects of the same phenomena. Particular to this research Al-Qeisi (2009) noted a number of studies where IS researchers adopted the pluralist approach, using a qualitative approach in interviews, followed by a quantitative survey or vice versa; hence, indicating that the two approaches, qualitative and quantitative, are not opposites but should be integrated to provide a richer picture and possibly strengthen the findings. Bryman (2006) quantified this noting that in 27% of articles, the collection of quantitative and qualitative data was not based on the administration of separate research instruments. Creswell et al. (2003) noted that a strength of multi methods is that it conveyed a sense of the rigour to the research.
3.5. Research Design

3.5.1. Purpose

The research design is essential towards the formulation of a coherent, logical and appropriate data collection methodology. Maxwell and Loomis (2003) see the design of a study as consisting of five different components, including purpose, conceptual framework, research questions, methods and validity strategies. This research will follow this concept.

3.5.2. Online Behaviour Analytics

The first stage of the research strategy involves critically reviewing and identifying standardised navigational pathways of current consumers of hotel accommodation websites. Data log analysis will be used for the mapping element with observational interviews being used to critically review these mapped results.

3.5.2.1. Philosophy & Approach

The philosophy for this strategy will be positivist with conclusions based on agreed and measurable facts with the emphasis on facts that lead to a focus upon objectivity, rigour and measurement (Malhorta & Birks, 2003), quantitative in that the research will be carried out within the framework of a scientific method; an approach that uses objectively agreed criteria and procedures to achieve results that have statistical reliability (Wright & Crimp, 2000) and deductive where a highly structured methodology will lead to the development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test which can be generalised (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.5.2.2. Methodology

Hotel website navigational pathway data can only be fully analysed if it has specific embedded code on every single page of the site for specific analytics software packages. These packages and code are not interoperable for commercial reasons. The majority of hotels are independent SMTEs (Small to Medium Tourism Enterprises), and employing somebody specifically to analyse online trends is in the main commercially non viable thus only a minority of hotels have analytics code embedded in their sites. The software packages considered by this research were Clicky, Google Analytics, Mint, Piwik, SiteMeter, StatCounter, W3Counter, Web Trends, Woopra and Yahoo Web Analytics. Google Analytics was chosen as it is the dominant analytics tool in the market thus
providing a sufficient number of hotels for the sample, it meets all the navigational pathway requirements of this research, it is easy to use and the researcher completed a Google Analytics course in the Dublin Marketing Institute in order to be competent in its use. It is also free to use the standard version of the software, which fully meets the requirements of this research and given the extreme difficulties in persuading hotels to allow access to corporate information it was considered impossible to gather a valid and reliable sample using an analytics tool other than Google Analytics.

3.5.2.3. Methodology Validity and Reliability
The Online Behaviour Analytics research method was examined for its validity and reliability to access its appropriateness to this research. Validity is describes as the extent to which the data collected truly reflects the phenomenon being studied while reliability is the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later date, or with a different sample of subjects (Veal, 2011).
Data Collection I(a) Validity and Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Relevance to this research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectivity</strong></td>
<td>• All visits considered, therefore no bias within the sample frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No human interaction therefore, no researcher or respondent bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mechanically calculated therefore no researcher opinion impacting on the results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of (conscious) bias and subjective selection during the conduct and reporting of research. (Saunders et al., 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct validity also called (Measurement validity)</strong></td>
<td>• Sample frame across 18 different hotels therefore multiple sources of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Margin of error less than ±1%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pilot study being used and examined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Revisits possible to review and confirm results and re-examine where gaps in the research are identified even at a later stage in the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies multiple sources of evidence, selects changes and demonstrates the measurements to be used. It also involves a review of the pilot study and previous reports. This will enable the researcher to ensure that they are asking the right questions. (Yin, 1994)</td>
<td>• Initial mapping examined for appropriateness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal validity</strong></td>
<td>• Information constantly accessible so results are always available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be revisited anytime to demonstrate reliability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures that the methods are addressing the question. (Yin, 1994)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External validity</strong></td>
<td>• As Google analytics is the research tool, the research can be repeated to test generalisability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishes the domain in which the results can be generalised to a theory and asks if the case study is representative. (Yin, 1994)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>• As Google analytics is the research tool, the results can be repeated using the same method in the future and records can be saved to demonstrate reliability and comprehensiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishes whether the case can be repeated using the method and ensures that records are reliable and comprehensive. (Yin, 1994)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Online Behaviour Analytics Validity and Reliability

The research methodology was found to have both validity and reliability.

Google Analytics was the only option for this research given it’s near complete market dominance. This lack of credible analytical alternatives combined with the complete reluctance of hotels to share information perceived to be of the upmost corporate secrecy meant that no other analytical package could have been considered for this
research. It created some interesting results which are in the Data Collection and Analysis section but all of these results are overall averages e.g. the geographical spread of searchers or the gender breakdown of searchers or devices used etc. The limitations are that as no individual or group behaviour can be identified from the total averages, we cannot for example identify if the genders behave differently. Google no longer shows 90% of the keywords that find hotels and the analytics do not display the multiple searches of the same individual for longitudinal comparisons. It also does not display searches related to the hotel that were not on the hotel site or referrer sites e.g. the hotel’s Tripadvisor page analytics or local tourism pages are not displayed. Google Analytics does not identify multiple individuals using the same device or single individuals using multiple devices. The limitations are not just behaviourally, Google Analytics does not show where individuals look on the screen of devices or the thoughts or emotions they are experiencing while doing so. Consequently the in-depth interviews provided the most interesting and valuable information in this thesis diminishing the value and role of the Google Analytics in comparison with its initial perception.

3.5.2.4. Sample Selection and Quantification

Hotel Selection: The initial number of hotels selected was ten which was the number calculated as being the minimum that would generate the hoped for sample size of 1,000,000 individuals. The hotel sample population and therefore the demographics of the guests was intended to be as representative as possible i.e. cover a broad range of star ratings, urban and rural locations, business and leisure segments and cross different countries. The final sample ranged from 3 – 5 stars, covered locations from capital and major cities to small rural town hotels, beach resorts and city business hotels and covered six countries. It was geographically spread across Ireland, the United States, the Caribbean and Brazil and was therefore appropriately diverse and representative. With absolutely no exceptions only hotels where a close personal friend was a manager and qualified in the author’s hotel management class agreed to give access to their Google Analytics for commercial sensitivity reasons. One personal friend who was president of a hotel management company gave access to 14 hotel’s Google Analytics. This resulted in the hotel sample having 18 hotels instead of the initially intended 10 hotels.

Individual Selection: The sample population for this research will be every individual who uses hotel accommodation websites. Therefore every individual visit noted by
Google Analytics in the eighteen selected hotels will be monitored as the sample frame for the purpose of this research. As the predominate method of searching and booking hotel accommodation is the internet the selection of even one hotel will present very significant numbers of consumer visits. The sample size was calculated for an allowable error of both ±5% and ±1% using the calculation method as recommended in Domegan and Fleming (2003). This research methodology will examine all of the visits found by Google Analytics rather than capping the visit numbers. The number of visits to the 18 hotels over a 18 month period totaled 3,107,281 resulting in a margin of error of only 0.069%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowable Error ±5%</th>
<th>Allowable Error ±1%</th>
<th>Actual Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( n = \frac{Z^2(\pi)(1-\pi)}{E^2} )</td>
<td>( n = \frac{Z^2(\pi)(1-\pi)}{E^2} )</td>
<td>( n = \frac{Z^2(\pi)(1-\pi)}{E^2} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n = \frac{(1.96)^2(.67)(1-.67)}{(.05)^2} )</td>
<td>( n = \frac{(2.58)^2(.67)(1-.67)}{(.01)^2} )</td>
<td>( 3,107,281 = \frac{(2.58)^2(.67)(1-.67)}{(XXX)^2} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 339.751104</td>
<td>n = 14717.3004</td>
<td>E = 0.069%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size = 340</td>
<td>Sample Size = 14,718</td>
<td>Sample Size = 3,107,281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: Sample Selection Size

Where \( n \) = required sample size

\( Z = Z \) value reflecting the associated level of confidence (for 99% confidence, \( Z = 2.58 \)).

\( \pi \) = proportion of the population who have booked hotel rooms

\( E \) = allowable error or the maximum difference between the sample and population proportion we are willing to tolerate.

The Google Analytics and Hotel Managers’ Questionnaire (APPENDIX C: Online Hotel Information Questionnaire) were pilot tested on two managers and their respective hotel’s Google Analytics in mid 2014. One completed the questionnaire in the author’s presence and was completed quickly, easily and correctly. The other manager was too busy to commit to a meeting and answers were returned from some sections in error which turned out to be confusion on behalf of the manager mostly
through inexperience with Google Analytics but also there were no clarification clues on the questionnaire. The questionnaires were amended to have the headings and subheadings stated under the questions so that the manager could figure out the navigational pathway required. This was irrelevant with 14 of the 18 hotels as the president of the hotel company gave the author full open ended personal access including the passwords to the Google Analytics to all the hotels. This allowed revisits at anytime for clarification and rechecks. It was very straightforward, eliminated errors and managers were not agitated through being re-approached for answers that needed confirmation.

3.5.3. In-depth Interview
The in-depth interview involves critically reviewing the online behaviour analytics results and the identified consumers’ thoughts and emotions processes and verifying the proposed hotel accommodation business strategy.

3.5.3.1. Philosophy & Approach
The research philosophy of this strategy will be interpretivism. Positivism while having rigor and measurement was considered to be restrictive, narrowing the researcher’s perspective, and being an inhibitor to creativity (Malhorta & Birks, 2003) and losing rich insights (Saunders et al., 2009). Interpretivism seeks to describe, decode, and translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of what is observed (Van Maanen et al., 1982) and giving meaning and context of what is observed (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). An interpretivist study will be used to explain the positivist study in the first stage thus defusing some of the criticisms of each tradition. Lee (1991) supports this stating that if a framework involving the two philosophies is used to best advantage it can cancel out each other’s weaknesses.

An induction approach will be used as the limitations of deduction would restrain the study. Saunders et al. (2009) state deduction has a tendency to construct a rigid methodology that does not permit alternative explanations of what is going on. A multi methods research choice will be used as Lim (2002) found that online human factors cannot be fully understood through the use of quantitative methods and Domegan and Fleming (2003) describe qualitative research as the collection of data which is open to interpretation which might not be validated statistically. Al-Qeisi (2009) noted a number
of studies where IS researchers adopted the pluralist approach, using a qualitative approach in interviews, followed by a quantitative survey or vice versa; hence, indicating that the two approaches, qualitative and quantitative, are not dichotomies but should be integrated to provide a richer picture and possibly strengthen the findings.

3.5.3.2. Methodology

There are many methods that can be used to inform research. These methods include grounded theory, action research, ethnography, life history, conversational analysis, and case study research amongst others (Myers & Avison 2002). Given the interactional requirement of this research the interview method was the only one which matched the requirements of the research. Both structured and unstructured interviews were considered. Structured interviews have questions in a set order, are very fixed often with a fixed range of answers. The major criticisms of a purely structured interview are the risk of imposing a potentially inappropriate or irrelevant framework, they are rarely able to get the intentions behind the behaviour, they may not be able to combine individual data into the overall picture and they may neglect the context within which the behaviour takes place (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In their favour they are more accurate and effective for behavioural analysis than questionnaires; they work best when combined with other methods and are good with statistical packages. Structured interviews are quantitative in ethos but are not used very frequently.

In semi structured interviews (also called in-depth interviews) the interviewer has an interview guide that serves as a checklist of topics to be covered and a default wording and order for the questions, but the wording and order are often substantially modified based on the flow of the interview, and additional unplanned questions are asked to follow up on what the interviewee says (Robson, 2011). Robson (2002) also describes semi structured interviews as being very helpful in finding out what is happening and in offering new insights. Cooper and Schindler (2008) found that when undertaking an exploratory study, or a study that includes an exploratory element, it is likely that you will include semi structured interviews in your design. The in-depth interview was selected because of its ability to uncover more complete answers than might be answered at a more superficial level during survey research (Domengan and Fleming, 2003). This method also has the strength of revealing attitudes or motives that they may be reluctant to discuss in a group setting. In-depth interviews also have their
weaknesses. The one to one nature of the research limits sample sizes as the intended one hour interview duration at a maximum of 5 interviews per day will at a practical level take a few months part-time for one researcher.

The self-confrontation interview method was considered. Lim (2002) describes the self-confrontation interview method as comprising of the following steps. (a) asking subjects to perform the behaviour being analysed, (b) making a video-recording of the subjects’ actions, (c) asking the subjects to view the video recordings of their own actions, (d) pausing the video recordings at certain junctures and asking the subjects to recount any thoughts and emotions they had when they performed those actions and (e) transcribing the interviews and correlating the actors’ thoughts and emotions with their respective actions. Whilst it is a simple and cost effective method criticisms are that it can be time consuming and heavy on the use of computer equipment. This method was eliminated as Flavián-Blanco et al. (2011) noted that the emotions during the self-confrontation interview search experience were self reported once the search task was completed. This would compromise the research results as the respondent would be being asked about emotions they had experienced a significant amount of time earlier and not at the moment they were occurring. Within in-depth interviews the semi structured interview method were selected for the observational interviews. Within this the ‘thinking aloud’ and interruption methods which involve the interrupting of subjects during their actions and asking them what they are looking at and thoughts and emotions they are experiencing when they are performing particular actions etc was selected. The two different methods of data collection will be used throughout the research and whilst collected separately they will be intertwined in the results and in cases supporting each other throughout the research.

Pilot interviews will be conducted prior to the in-depth interviews and pilot tests for the online behaviour analytics. These are invaluable as questions that are not answered should become apparent, problems may be identified in advance, and they may allow the researcher to determine the adequacy of instructions to interviewers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It may be possible to consider how well the questions flow and whether it is necessary to move some of them around to improve this feature (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Veal (2011) supports this when he stated it is always advisable to carry out one or more pilot surveys before embarking on the main data collection exercise (Veal, 2011). Veal
(2011) lists the purpose of conducting pilot testing as test questionnaire wording, test question sequencing, test questionnaire layout, code open-ended questions, gain familiarity with respondents, test fieldwork arrangements, train and test fieldworkers, estimate response rate, estimate interview etc time and test analysis procedures. Pilot testing will be completed to obtain some assessment of the questions’ validity and the likely reliability of the data that will be collected and conducted on academic experts to comment on the representativeness and suitability of the questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

The 100 interviews were conducted in a room between the author and the interviewee only, with a computer present and connected to the internet for the online aspects of the interview. The computer screen was blacked out when not a requirement of the questionnaire. All answers were notated by the author and later transcribed onto an excel spreadsheet for cross comparison. Analytical type software solutions such as NVIVO were considered but given the human complexity of the open ended aspect of almost every single question, especially the thoughts and emotional aspects, automated type software was found to be simply incapable of meeting the shear expanse of the possible requirements of each question. Quantitative answers were collated numerically. Qualitative answers were collated together into coherent groupings with consideration given to similar behavioural, thought and emotional traits of interviewees and demographic traits such as gender, travelling group, trip type etc and the range of nuances that are noticeable in different individuals.

3.5.3.3. Methodology Validity and Reliability
The in-depth interview method is interpretive / inductive / qualitative in nature. This type of research methodology has been has been heavily criticised as lacking in validity and reliability. Kvale and Brinkmann, (2009) describe qualitative studies as being unreliable and invalid. Robson (2011) describe some of the reliability problems as being participant error, participant bias, and observer error and observer bias. Walsham (1995a) supports this stating that there is no objective reality which can be discovered by researchers and replicated by others. Qualitative research generally makes no claim to quantitative representativeness and does not involve statistical calculation demanding prescribed levels of precision. Generally, therefore quantitative considerations outlined
above are not relevant to qualitative research. Interview data validity specifically has been challenged (Robson, 2011). For example following detailed analysis of the interaction between interviewers and respondents in standardised social survey interviews, Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) suggests that interview results can only be understood as products of the contingencies of the interview situation, and not, as is usually assumed, the unmediated expressions of respondent’s real opinions.

As the whole ethos of interpretive / inductive / qualitative research has been credibly challenged we must put forward a methodology which supports and brings believability to the results. Sandelowski (1993) argued that issues of validity in qualitative studies should be linked not to ‘truth’ or ‘value’ as they are for the positivists, but rather to ‘trustworthiness’. Indeed Veal (2011) stated that some researchers prefer them to use the term trustworthiness when discussing qualitative methods. Different procedures are needed for ensuring trustworthiness (Kirk & Miller, 1986). This section of the research will therefore use the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2011).
Data Collection In-depth Interviews Validity and Reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Relevance to this research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Has the investigator allowed his or her values to intrude to a high degree? (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The researcher will follow a semi-structured format with pre selected probing questions to remove researcher/participant bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non leading semi-structured method questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviewee focused with minimal researcher interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>How believable are the findings? (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thick i.e. deep understanding of individual online behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 100 respondents at each of the 3 stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pilot tested to eliminate errors on interviewees from the sample frame and academics experts beforehand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Do the findings apply to other contexts? (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Carried out on different socio-economic groups to enhance representation / contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Are the findings likely to apply at other times? (Bryman &amp; Bell, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Semi structured interview method to remove researcher/participant bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interview semi-structured with no leading questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Non probability sampling to eliminate researcher error, i.e. all respondents who meet criteria selected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Data Collection In-depth Interviews Validity and Reliability

3.5.3.4. Sample Selection and Quantification

In order to give validity and reliability to the sample used and therefore link the hotels and the interviewees in this research, the population sample will be the same as in the online behaviour analytics i.e. every individual who uses hotel accommodation websites. Unlike online behaviour analytics where every visit identified by Google Analytics in the 18 selected hotel websites form the sample frame we must identify the sample population so that a sample frame can be selected from it. The targeting of specific socio-economic groupings was not considered in order to generalise and validate the sample frame. Early Internet travel consumers were found to be highly educated with high incomes (Heung, 2003). This has changed considerably over the years. Lohse *et al.* (2000) found that as early as 2000 the Internet population was starting to mirror the general population. Today the internet is the overwhelmingly dominant hotel accommodation search and booking method. Toh *et al.* (2011) found in
a 2009 survey of 249 leisure travellers at four hotels in Seattle that eight out of ten respondents used the internet for a hotel room search and 67% made their booking online. The sample population for this research will be any individual who uses hotel accommodation websites. This is the majority of the population making respondent selection very straightforward. A sample of 100 interviewees will be used for each of the three stages in order to provide “thick” data results for a deep understanding of the online behaviour.

The in-depth interview (APPENDIX B: In-depth Questionnaire) was pilot tested on five individuals in early 2014 in order to ensure it fulfilled everything it was required to achieve. After the interview was conducted each question was re-read with the answer discussed to verify the correct meaning of the question was interpreted by the interviewee so that the most appropriate answers would be returned by future interviewees. One of the first two interviewees was a hotel manager which allowed a professional opinion on the questionnaire. Minor changes (mostly making space for the recording of answers on the page and simpler words and clearer language in a few questions) were made after the first two questionnaires and the next three were not required to be changed. The questionnaire then went ahead and was unchanged after this.

3.5.3.5. Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework requires testing in order to attain academic and financial validity and credibility. To this end a paper containing the conceptual framework entitled “A Literature Framework Analysis of Online Hotel Accommodation Process Factors” was submitted to the ENTER2014 eTourism conference organised by the International Federation for Information Technology and Travel & Tourism (IFITT). The peer reviewed acceptance of the paper provided academic validity and credibility. The conceptual framework will be implemented into individual hotels of the Trust Hospitality chain of hotels starting in early 2016. The testing will take some time after the implementation but the before and after analytics and financial results will hopefully provide the financial validity and credibility to the framework.

3.6. Ethical Considerations
Saunders et al. (2009) describes ethics in research as referring to the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it. Bryman and Bell (2011) contend that ethics relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research. In fact poor ethical standards in some research in the past, negatively affects current researchers. Malhotra and Birks (2007) found that ethical lapses involving the identification of research respondents for commercial gain has resulted in a constant fall in the levels of response rate to all forms of survey method.

In ascertaining if any aspect of this research held ethical concerns Diener and Crandall’s (1978) four ethical concerns were used in assessing the ethical integrity of the two main data collection methodologies of this research.

a. Whether there is harm to the participants.
b. Whether there is a lack of informed consent.
c. Whether there is an invasion of privacy.
d. Whether deception is involved.

Online Behaviour Analytics
Participant’s navigational pathways will be assessed from historically saved log files. Generalised navigational patterns of groups only will be numerically mapped. Individual navigational behaviour and their identifiably IP addresses will not be used. As absolutely no individual participant’s navigational pathways will be observed, there will be no harm caused or no invasion of privacy. Informed consent will not be required and deception will therefore not have been involved.

In-depth Interviews
The participants in the observational interviews will be told they may refuse to answer any question they wish and withdraw at any stage without giving a reason thus preventing any harm. Participants will openly and concisely be given all the information required to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to give their informed consent prior to participation in the research. No personal information will be recorded thus preventing any invasion of privacy. Bryman and Bell (2011) describe ethical deception as occurring when researchers represent their research as something
other than what it is. Deception in this case apart from the ethical concerns does not offer anything to enhance the research and will not be used. Pilot phase interviewees will be asked if the interview format caused them any ethical concerns.

This research will be completed fully in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ethical Standards of the University of Bolton. This author has also completed a Research Ethics module in the Dublin Institute of Technology and have submitted the appropriate documentation (Form RE1).

3.7. Summary
This chapter provided the two research methodologies used to collect the relevant data for the study. The selected methods were an online behaviour analytics study using a quantitative / deductive / positivist methodology and an in-depth interview using a qualitative / inductive / interpretivist methodology using the semi-structured interview method.
Chapter 4 - Data Collection and Analysis
4. Data Collection and Analysis

4.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter proposes a holistic and comprehensive online accommodation strategy based on the strategy extrapolated from the literature review, online behavioural process factors based on the results of the examination of online hotel analytics and the analysis of the human thoughts and emotions from the results of the observational interviews. The strategy is presented in the form of a checklist structured on the identified internal process influences (the individual, search engines, third parties/social media and hotel accommodation websites) and the external process influences (online access devices and visual interaction). Figure 33 represents the area of focus for the data collection. This figure is drawn from the conceptual framework (Figure 31) and incorporates the main components of the research.

![Diagram of Online Hotel Accommodation Business Strategy Factors]

Figure 33: Online Hotel Accommodation Business Strategy factors
4.2. Data Collection Methods

4.2.1. Observational In-depth Interview

The answers and/or observed behaviour from the one hundred observational interviews were correlated with the respondent’s answers and preferences recorded with notable individual answers and generalised trends recorded in the results. The results were used as the basis of the strategy i.e. where respondents showed a preference for something the strategy would be to provide them with it.

4.2.2. Online Hotel Information Questions

Eighteen hotel’s Google Analytics were examined and the results noted were recorded in their specific relevant section. These results were used in cases to explain and support answers and/or observed behaviour from the observational interviews. These results helped offer quantitative/positivist results to balance and support the qualitative/interpretative observational interviews.

4.3. The Individual

4.3.1. Target Segment(s) Identification Strategy

The observational interview took on average just under an hour to complete on each person so many work colleagues and friends were engaged as respondents, as an hour of somebody’s time is a generous request. Consequently many (42%) of the respondents were in the same profession (military) but the results were a representative population sample as the military is demographically diverse in all areas including income, age, gender and educational as noted in Table 27. The sample was geographically well spread across the island of Ireland as the military is only approximately 5% female and travel was required to different military bases nationally to interview as many military females as possible to make the sample as representative as possible of the general population in terms of gender. Non military interviewees were selected using friends of family, college and hotelier friends and sports clubs friends. The sample was diverse and representative in terms of the general population. The demographic identification of the global online hotel sample cannot be made however given the vast size of the population in the case of the online sample; it is highly probable they are a representative population sample.
Interview Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 24</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 54</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€0 – €20,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€20,001 – €30,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€30,001 – €40,000</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€40,001 – €50,000</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€50,001 – €60,000</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over €60,000</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelling group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner and children</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple no children</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single traveller</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Star</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Star</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Star</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Star</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Star</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: Observational Interview Demographic Analysis of Respondents

1.1 If you were to describe your holiday demographic, what would it be? What I mean by that is the group you would travel with, costs, activities, attractions visited etc?

Demographically interviewees divided into couples with children, couples without children and singles individually or as part of groups in activities / business. An interesting point noted in this section was that quite typically individuals transcended many demographic types and star ratings. For example one individual every year travelled as a family (3 star with her husband and kids), single in a group (2 star diving holiday with her diving club and 4 star on a girls only weekends) and as a couple
without her kids (5 star weekend break with her husband and without her kids) thus marketing hotels to targeted single individuals based on previously observed activity in these frequently observed cases may be financially erroneous.

1.2 Describe your perfect trip or holiday experience including the hotel that you would normally go to?
Respondents typically wanted a holiday experience that met all their expectations. They wanted a trouble free short journey from the airport to the hotel. They wanted the hotel to be in a quiet yet accessible location with good amenities and food and accessible to local activities with friendly thoughtful staff.

1.3 What would trigger you to think of searching for a holiday or trip somewhere that would include a hotel?
Respondents thought about their next holiday typically when they were on holiday or when they could afford it. They also thought about holidays when the travelling group were together and when the weather was either very good or very bad. They also thought about holidays when their careers allowed them a break or when events or locations in different countries appeared in the media. Specific dates such as birthdays or anniversaries triggered thoughts about holidays and respondents thought about sporting activities abroad when engaging in those activities at home. Only 4% of respondents said that they would be triggered to think of searching for a holiday while online.

2.1 What principal market segments do you target?
All hotels appeared to be quite ad hoc in their targeting of specific segments online. They had offers and packages online but their analytics packages only gave overall percentages and no method of identifying specific segments to target. Most described their target segments as business and leisure with very little further depth.

2.2 What segmentation analytics or other information do you have if any?
Results varied dramatically from honest admissions of no analytics whatsoever to break downs of geographical areas only to currently working on systems to improve this but nothing at present and some had approximate percentages for their segments such as one hotel who segmented their market as corporate, conference, coach, leisure and web.
No hotel segmented their customers in terms of activities and some made honest
statements like “anybody we can get”.

2.3 What location do your online searchers come from?
The hotels which granted access to their analytics were mostly in the US and Ireland. Of
the hotels in Ireland, the main geographical segment was Ireland accounting for over
50% of searchers in all hotels followed by the UK at an average of 26.4% followed by
the US at an average 6.35% with all other nations forming quite small percentages.
Results varied depending on the location of the hotel with International guests holding
the highest percentage in locations closest to airports, internationally branded hotels and
five star hotels and lower amounts of guests in lower star and more remote hotels. In the
US over 70% of the searchers were from the US with the hotels having various amounts
of other guests with their proximity to Canada and Mexico influencing search patterns
with some areas having a large amount of certain nationalities. New York had the most
international searchers with less well known areas internationally having the most US
searchers. One hotel had five times the average of the other hotels for Italian searchers.

4.3.2. Pre Purchase Stage Strategy

1.4 Before you go online what usually have you already decided about for your
holiday or trip?
Respondents had typically decided the location, cost, travelling partners, timings,
holiday type, activities, transport type and hotel type prior to going online.

1.5 What type of information would you look for online when researching a
holiday or trip?
Respondents said they researched the location, the hotel’s facilities and amenities,
general weather, the local area and its costs, activities and medical information. Some
searches were date specific and reviews were important.
1.6 Which best describes you when searching the internet for a trip involving a hotel?

![Information Source Preference Diagram]

**Information Source Preference**

- A single site with all the information but verified through other sites (81%)
- Multiple sources with small pieces of information (19%)
- A single site with all the information (0%)

Figure 34: Information Source Preference

The research found that consumers do not want a single source for their information. The interviews revealed this is largely based on trust but want the convenience of having the information on a single site that they can verify as being true on other sites. Information hotels place on their site must be available on other trustworthy sites or consumers will have a lower level of trust in the information presented.

4.3.3. Online Segment Engagement Strategy

1.7 What on a hotel or trip relevant websites would normally create positive thoughts for you or absorb your attention the most?

Respondents principally stated photos and these were general location, bedrooms, facilities, surrounding area, swimming pool and kid’s facilities. The text beside the photos should be concise, relevant and yet extensive. There should be a review page and the site should be easy to navigate.

1.8 If a hotel made a perfect page 100% relevant to you to convince you specifically to stay there what would be on it?

The respondents wanted allot of photos to show travelling partners. Information on all the hotels facilities and amenities, photos of the bedrooms, restaurant / bar information
and menus and local attractions. There should be a reviews section as respondents did not perceive the hotel to be neutral and all costs should be fully clear.

4.3.4. Decision / Purchase Stage Process

1.9 When you have finished all your research, what should a hotel’s booking webpage have on it to convince you to decide I will pick it and put in your credit card details?
Respondents were concerned about security and on screen information that would reassure to the authentication of the hotel like SSL signs, contact phone numbers and guest reviews were perceived positively. Personnel were interested in price incentives such as discounts but were more interested in non-price incentives such as getting better service. Cost cutting access such as a Viber symbol would encourage calls and only 2 rooms left type statements gave a negative perception.

4.3.5. Hotel Stay Stage Strategy

1.10 What information would you want to see on a hotel site during your stay in the hotel?
Respondents wanted general information on the hotel and contact information, TV information for the bedrooms, current restaurant menus, hotel facilities and activities, pool and kid’s club information and staff biographies. The main information they wanted was on the local area and activities. They wanted travel information but would be deterred by irrelevant or outdated information and many would contact the local suppliers directly as they feel the hotel would charge them commission.

4.4. Search Engines

1.11 In relation to a holiday or a trip involving a hotel, list all the different types of information you would look for using a search engine?
Respondents sought a range of hotel facility and amenity information but were more interested in the location specific to everything and the transport links. They also were very interested in the local activities and costs and the reviews of these. They also sought general weather information.
1.12 Give me examples of what you dislike or would irritate you while searching for holidays, trips or hotel rooms on search engines and anything that would deter you from picking a holiday or hotel?

Irrelevant, not available, out of date or vague information was a deterrent to respondents. The hotels site would deter respondents if anything interfered with the information search process such as slow pages, error pages or pop ups. Hotel sites that didn’t come No. 1 in Google for their own name or were just a page in a hotel group site were also a deterrent. Not being able to press the number on smartphones and automatically ring the hotel were an irritant. Advertisement, hidden costs, remote locations and bad reviews and photos also deterred respondents from viewing hotels.

4.4.1. Hotel Site Search Engine Strategy

1.13 Which would you expect to have the most detailed relevant information on your desired hotel?

**Most Detailed Information Expectation**

![Chart showing Most Detailed Information Expectation](Figure 35: Most Detailed Information Expectation)
Would you be deterred from booking a hotel if it didn’t have the exact information you were looking for on its site Y / N?

![Hotel Website Exact Information Required](image)

Figure 36: Hotel Website Exact Information Required

4.4.2. Search Engine Keywords Strategy

1.14 When searching for a trip or a hotel on search engines what keywords would you put in (Tell me the ones for all aspects of the trip including activities etc? Note: (List back the information they gave above and ask the keywords for each one: also are there any other areas you would think of).

Respondents searched for hotels and stars, locations, amenities, kids and price with a limited number of emotive words. Location was used extensively in relation to activities, the local area, airports and transport.
1.15 Please find the Merrion hotel’s site, Dublin in Google?

Interviewee clicked on:

**Interview Click Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organic Search</th>
<th>Ad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 37: Interview Click Location

39% of interviewees when asked to search for the hotel’s own website clicked on the ad above the fold in order to get to the Merrion Hotel’s website. It was clear from the interview that the interviewees would have scrolled down the page and clicked on the hotel’s own site in the organic search section at no cost to the hotel if the ad were not conveniently at the top of the page.

**Did you click on an ad or on a normal Google search? (Explain if necessary)**

**Interviewee's Click Opinion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organic Search</th>
<th>The Ad</th>
<th>Can't Remember</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 38: Interviewee's Click Opinion
88% believed they had clicked on an organic search when in reality only 61% actually did. Despite Google labelling ads as ads, the interviewees believe they are organic searches.

2.4 What keywords find the hotel’s site?
Hotels with little or no internet strategy had the vast majority of the keywords which found their hotel as the name of the hotel. A prominent Dublin 5 star hotel had the most searched 17 of its keywords as various combinations of its name suggesting that the only people who found the hotel using Google had decided on that hotel prior to initiating their search implying the hotel performs very badly in searches against other similar hotels. A New York hotel had all 50 of its top 50 search terms as various forms of its name or address. Another 3 star hotel in a large town had only 13 of the top 50 search terms not contain the hotel name, this result was even starker as the non hotel keywords were near the bottom and formed only 7.2% of the total searches. The hotel in the study with the most coherent online strategy had in contrast the hotel name in only 55.8% of the top searches.

4.5. Third parties / Social Media
4.5.1. Third Party Strategy

1.16 Apart from search engines, hotel websites, online travel agents websites such as booking.com what sites would you search for when researching a holiday, trip, hotel or related activities?
Respondents searched travel agents, deal sites, local area and activity sites. They also looked at social media and review sites. They were deterred by anything that looked like an ad or was not in the vein of the desired content of the page. Some did not search outside search engines, hotel websites or online travel agents websites.

4.5.2. Third Party Content Strategy

1.17 In relation to these sites what comments, words or sentiment etc in the pages would persuade you to click on a link or research a particular hotel?
Respondents were influenced by hotel credibility in the form of stars and photos and positive comments about staff, activities, amenities, location and price. Reviews were
the respondent’s main influencing factor. The respondents were influenced negatively by dirt, noise, décor and difficult to navigate sites.

1.18 In relation to these sites what comments, words or sentiment etc in the pages would persuade you not to click on a link or research particular hotel?
Respondents indicated that a lack of information about the hotel like stars or information such as road works would deter them. Poor or missing specific photos or negative textual information or poor staff comments would deter respondents along with poor location, price, amenities information and bad reviews.

4.5.3. Social Media Strategy (Stages)

1.19 What Social Media sites do you use?

![Social Media Sites Used](image)

Figure 39: Social Media Sites Used

1.20 Could you give me an example of a post or posts related to a hotel on a social media site that would engage your attention?
Respondents indicated they would be positively influenced by good photos, offers, competitions or discounts. The majority however indicated that posts looking like an ad would deter them significantly and that they would be influenced mostly by posts from family or friends or a post they perceive to be useful to them such as how to make their
favourite cocktail. A significant amount indicated that they would not be influenced by social media in relation to hotels.

4.5.4. Social Media Customer Interaction Strategy

1.21 When a customer leaves a comment on social media what comment from the hotel would be appropriate in the case of a:

Negative comment: The respondents indicated that the text and sentiment of the response should be positive and diplomatic only with no attacking the individual who made the comment. Most respondents indicated they ignore isolated negative comments with some believing it could be competing hotels. They also said that an overly generous response such as a free weekend would make them believe that the comments were true. All responses from the hotel should be different as uniformity would indicate that the manager didn’t care enough to make a genuine response.

Positive comment: The respondents indicated the hotel should thank the guest for their positive comment and tell them they are welcome back in the future. Some said they shouldn’t respond. Respondents believed a reward publically would seem like a bribe and inappropriate but some said individuals who make positive comments should be rewarded by a discount code being emailed privately to them. Respondents similarly indicated that responses should not be uniform.
1.22 Should the comment be from the manager in charge of that particular area or somebody else or the general manager?

Manager who should respond

Figure 40: Manager who should respond

1.23 If you were staying in a hotel how should that hotel encourage you to leave a comment on social media?

Some respondents indicated that hotels should request in the form of “would you mind leaving a comment” and some said an incentive should be offered such as a free drink, however the majority indicated that they would not like to be directly asked and would consider such a request negatively. The majority also indicated that positive comments should be earned i.e. by providing good service to their guests and it was acceptable to have request signs or leaflets dispersed throughout the hotel.

1.24 What type of encouragement would you consider intrusive or off-putting?

Respondents considered face to face requests especially if repeated to be intrusive, they also thought the same about emails and texts especially if requested with texts being the most intrusive. They felt that their opinion to be their own and disliked being pushed or it being structured in any way. They also felt questionnaires that repeated questions or appeared to be irrelevant or long to be off-putting including if they can’t opt out of the questionnaire online. Some wanted incentives but the majority felt it was a bribe or would compromise the honesty of their reviews. Some felt enforced requests could draw negative reviews.
4.5.5. Site Specific Social Media Strategy

2.5 What are the social media referrals from the analytics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Site</th>
<th>Referrals %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tripadvisor</td>
<td>66.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>27.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelp</td>
<td>2.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimio</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuku</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogger</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naver</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pintrest</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkedin</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wordpress</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WikiTravel</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumbler</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocket</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weebly</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsurprisingly Tripadvisor was the most significant social site as it almost has a monopoly on travel social media. An interesting point was that Tripadvisor had an average 83.07% referral rate in the US and in some Irish hotels had a less than 10% referral rate with Facebook being the dominant social media referrer in almost all European hotels.

2.6 Give me examples of very successful social media campaigns you have run?

The social media campaigns varied in the level of imagination but most of the successful ones were competitions with material prizes. These varied from weekends away, Sunday brunch, spending sprees in Brown Thomas, St Patrick’s Day brunch and Sporting tickets. One hotel said that turnover was directly increased by a 10% offer discount code via Facebook ads. 100 rooms were sold over a two week period using this code. The main advantage of this was that that its effectiveness could be measured financially exactly. 2 for the price of 1 drink promotions on the production of a Facebook retweet at the bar encouraged a visit at another hotel which it was hoped
would build up repeat customers. Many were run to build up email addresses, and Facebook likes and shares and retweets.

1.25 Could you give me an example of a post on Facebook that would persuade you to research a hotel?
The vast majority said a comment or photo from friends and family stating they were having an excellent time on holiday would influence them. A small number felt a gripping paid advertisement, a humorous post or a good offer would persuade them to research a hotel however a significant amount did not use Facebook and many who did didn’t consider it an appropriate medium for hotel advertisement. Individuals stated they were significantly perturbed if they clicked on an offer and it no longer existed.

1.26 What are your favourite Facebook posts (they don’t have to be hotel related?)
Humorous photos or posts were in the main the favourite posts especially if they contained photos. Posts from family and friends were mentioned allot, searcher’s own sporting activity type posts were very significantly mentioned and some work related posts. Many either didn’t use it and anything that looked like an ad or a sponsored link received a very negative response.

1.27 What in a tweet would persuade you to check out a particular hotel?
Respondents said that a tweet with an offer or deal with an accompanying photo would attract them especially if it contained friendly staff. Many said it must be linked to or from friends and family, others said the hotel tweet for credibility should be part of a list showing it is not an ad such as 5 hotels with good bars or pools etc. Most said they are either not on twitter or did not consider it a method for researching hotels. Anything resembling an ad or a sponsored link received a very negative response.

1.28 What in a Google+ page would persuade you to check out a particular hotel?
The vast majority of respondents did not use it and knew very little about it. Good imagery and high followings were listed as positive. Irrelevant links or unrelated content to the search being conducted at the time was considered negative.
1.29 When booking a trip what Wikipedia type of pages have you ever looked up?
Respondents said they would only look up Wikipedia for national facts such as currencies, climate, political etc and in relation to location they would look up the history, monuments, castles, cathedrals etc. Almost everybody said they would never look up a hotel or local activities on Wikipedia. The only exceptions were people staying in historic castles and looked up the history or family and searching for pictures of historically significant rooms. Most considered Wikipedia to have a much lower level of credibility than for example a local government tourism board.

1.30 If the hotel had the name / profile of a manager and you could check out their profile on LinkedIn and it was positive, would this give you a positive impression of a hotel?

Most respondents said they would not look up LinkedIn in this case. Some felt it would be positive if the staff had very good experience but most felt it was too much and some even thought it would be a gimmick. Some feel LinkedIn is full of exaggerations. Some also felt that information on key members of staff who had worked in top class hotels should be on the hotel site and not another site.

1.31 Could you show me typically how you would use Tripadvisor and what types of information would you look for? : Note: Have the computer in front of the respondent.

Persuade you to book the hotel: Ratings were extremely important along with stars. Respondents wanted allot of ratings, certificates of excellence and positive comments in the title of the rating. Respondents wanted non typical but welcoming outside photos. Families sought photos related to children. Some wanted crisp, welcoming, spacious expensive looking photos of bedrooms. Some parents wanted twin beds for a “good night’s sleep”. They wanted allot of photos and for them to be modern, elegant, welcoming and a clean well equipped gym. Respondents were very concerned about location and wanted a map with all activities / bars / restaurants close to the hotel. They wanted free wifi and parking but were very concerned about helpful, friendly staff who could speak their language. They wanted good food especially breakfast and friendly service in the restaurant and some when settling on a number of hotels used price / deals as the determining factor. A small amount of people had not used Tripadvisor.
Persuade you not to book the hotel: Respondents were deterred by irrelevant images such as laneways, dark, drab, shabby or tiny pictures. Respondents stated that images only of the outside or appearing to be distant or had different styles in different parts of the hotel had something to hide. Respondents disliked poor or very few ratings but wouldn’t let a tiny amount of terrible reviews put them off. They disliked overpricing, hidden or not shown pricing and misleading location statements like central or a noisy street yet claiming peace and tranquillity. In bedrooms they disliked poor cleanliness, highly starched bedrooms, poor pictures of bedrooms, old looking bed linen. In restaurants they disliked negative comments on food especially breakfast and dated photos and also the words expensive wifi. They disliked pop ups and irrelevant ads and overly positive statements as they believed these may have been written by staff. They also disliked generally negative words like rundown, bloodstained, no aircon or irrelevant words like excellent business trip when you are looking for a family trip or statements like you get what you pay for.

4.6. Hotel Accommodation Websites
4.6.1. Site Level Mechanical Aspects / Embedded Code Strategy

1.32 Look at these ten hotel’s titles and tell me which words / sentences or sentiment would be most persuasive in encouraging you to:

Look up a particular hotel: Respondents wanted to see familiar branded hotel names. The words they wanted to see associated with hotels were modern, comfortable, perfect, luxurious break in Ireland’s finest castle, Galway’s only 5 star, contemporary, tranquillity or country house or time period like 18th century. They expected elegant descriptions of the amenities such as elegant dining, crisp white linen or beauty salon or family accommodation. They also wanted words referring to local attractions and their proximity. They were extremely interested in words that inferred discount but didn’t like the word cheap and were strongly against false statements such as 70% off when it is the same price as elsewhere. They looked for location information mostly like tranquillity or parklands but also proximity to the train station or airport. Reviews in the title also reinforced confidence.
Persuade you not to look up a particular hotel: Sites with too many hotels deterred searchers like 3000 hotels in Berlin. Words that sounded dated such as one of the best hotels or the word imperial hotel and respondents were significantly deterred when a hotel group site did not have a full individual information site or only a single page for each hotel. Irrelevant statements such as whether for fun or business or perfect for weddings sounded “noisy or full of old people”. The words cheap deterred people and discounted if not true. Location statements such as perfect base for your Dublin trip were described as vague and roundabout inn was thought it may be on a busy roundabout and Main Street had noise connotations. Respondents were principally deterred by a lack of information more than anything else.

4.6.2. Inbound Links Strategy

1.33 Name websites or types of websites you might seek information on related to a holiday or trip that are not hotel sites?

Respondents sought local information / websites / history / sightseeing. They also used discussion / blog sites as they determined them to be more trustworthy. They also looked up government tourism sites as they determined them to be more neutral. Respondents also looked up review / guide sites such as Tripadvisor or Lonely Planet and sites such as ownersdirect.com to avoid commission. Individuals with large families looked up sites such as Jayne’s Villas as hotels were unrealistic for them. Specific activity sites were extensively mentioned mostly for physical activities but also allot for kids activities. Some said they just used Google and looked at whatever came up. Almost nobody mentioned social media and some said local and government sites were so poor that they just used Tripadvisor and booking.com.

2.10 What is the hotels link building strategy?

Hotels were very diverse in their link building strategy ranging from we don’t have a strategy or since we put in our new site, link building is not an area of concentration to quite active link building with named targeted links to one hotel who used sites to read other hotels links and actively built up their links based on these links. None had an interactive or strategic approach and links when considered were only really considered for their Google rankings value.
4.6.3. Outbound Links Strategy

1.34 What non-hotel information would you find particularly useful on the hotel’s website in helping you decide to stay in that hotel?
Respondents were interested in the local bars and restaurants with descriptions or their prices, menus and quality level; they were also interested in time current entertainment i.e. the entertainment / concerts on the particular night they are staying. They were also interested in local tourist attractions, parks and activities and places to see. They wanted a vast range of activities particular to their individual interests and local type experiences like the blessing of the local fishing fleet etc. They also wanted the hotel to have some sort of voucher / discount code to the activity or a printable activity programme or map. They also wanted safety warnings or annoyances. They wanted medical facilities, doctors and pharmacies and local shopping and were very conscious of the local transport links / shuttle busses from the airport to the hotel and the hotel to everything else along with the prices and durations and phone numbers. They also wanted average weather information in advance such as September water temperature and actual weather information when there. They would check this information on other sites and expect to find very similar information.

4.6.4. Content Wording / Text Strategy

1.35 What are the most important keywords you expect on a hotel site? Describe different pages for these words?
For hotels, respondents expected luxurious words, demographic specific words such as family orientated and a site search box. They wanted reviews, awards and more factual words rather than emotive ones. They wanted all contact details and an about us page. They judged the hotel quality by their website quality. They wanted ratings / vivid descriptions / prices of all amenities in the hotel. They wanted the staff’s qualifications to be assured they are experts (especially females and spa / beauty treatments) and direct phone numbers to ask questions. They also wanted the description to be fully appropriate e.g. a description of a standard room and a photo of the presidential suite. They wanted vivid descriptions of local activities, bars and restaurants as well as all prices and location information and maps. Many said however that they judged by the photos only as they felt that hotels tended to exaggerate.
4.6.5. Personalisation / Segmentation / Activity Strategy

1.36 If the hotel had a page personalised with exactly the information for your demographic group or activity, what would the general content of that page be?
Respondents wanted a page to be segment specific to their demographic / group; respondents with no children wanted no children on the page etc. Respondents wanted their room price but also how much it would be to upgrade / downgrade and the information on what you get for the extra money. They wanted extensive amenity information e.g. one mother wanted a detailed description of the travel cots / high chairs as previously she had been given ones that were too small and respondents similarly wanted detailed activities information. Respondents wanted vividly descriptive menus especially kids ones and restaurant opening time, wine lists and prices. They wanted very descriptive location information including all prices, options and times as well as pricing information generally. Many felt that where the information was not available the hotel was trying to hide something and they wanted a review section as well.

4.6.6. Site Engagement / Absorption

1.37 How should the hotel information, destination or activities be presented visual or verbally etc on the hotel’s website so that you could actually imagine being in the hotel in your “mind’s eye”? Respondents mostly imagined this visually. They wanted large, good quality, high definition images. They wanted them to be striking and vivid. Some mentioned videos, some 360° panoramics of rooms and some slideshows of all images. Many wanted consumer photos and many wanted information intensive detailed photos such as showing how towels were stacked in the bathroom and how many. Respondents wanted the photo image message to be positive, happy, families smiling and laughing. Respondents wanted the images from many angles and taken at day and night. They wanted bullet point type descriptions which were accurate and unexaggerated beside images and safety reassurance such as staff completed children’s care courses etc. They wanted maps which allow the user to get a feel for the location and all activities with nothing irrelevant.
2.7 What is the average amount of time onsite?
The average amount of time spent on a hotel website was 3 minutes 14 seconds. Unusually the sites with little or no online strategy had in some of the longest dwell time. The dwell time for the US hotels was significantly shorter than the Irish sites.

2.8 How often do users re-visit the site?
Repeat visitors were similarly highest in the sites again with little or no online strategy. The average return rate was 34.9%.

2.9 What is the conversion rate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>% Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desktop %</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile %</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet %</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7. Online Access Devices
4.7.1. PC / Laptop Strategy

1.38 In relation to your use of PCs or laptops when researching a trip would you describe these searches generally as:

**PC / Laptop Search Type**

- Detailed extensive searches 76%
- Quick answers to question searches 24%

Figure 41: PC / Laptop Search Type
1.39 In relation to different devices how do you think you would search differently for a hotel on a PC or a laptop than on other devices?
Respondents used PC laptops for detailed, extensive searches feeling a sense of comfort for longer more unbounded periods of time. They also double checked information, looked at larger images and had many tabs open while cross referencing information. In relation to PC / laptops, respondents used smart phones for shorter question / answer type searches some through necessity while on the move with many describing them as much more difficult to use and navigate through, much slower and time consuming and also that they could only view much smaller images. Respondents also said they used less keywords to search. Some respondents said they used tablets much more than PC / laptops but many said they searched on tablets but found booking easier on the PC / laptops. Some respondents said they would find something on the smartphone but would change to the PC / laptop always to complete their search or purchase because smartphones were much slower to do more in depth research.

4.7.2. Smartphone Strategy

1.40 In relation to different devices what type of information and how would you search for a hotel on a smartphone?
Respondents said they used smartphones for basic information when they know what they are looking for like answers to specific questions like where is the hotel. They also said they click from emailed links and used aps. Some said they only use full versions of sites and not mobile versions. Almost all said that PC / laptops and tablets were much easier to use. Most were critical of smartphones saying they only used smartphones when away from PC / laptops, the screen was too small, they only would use them in an emergency, were not happy putting their credit card details, found them more difficult or tedious to use and over all described them as a second choice tool.

4.7.3. Local Smartphone Strategy

1.41 When you are in the hotel what information would you search for on a smartphone in relation to the hotel or any activity, attractions, social activities or air travel etc?
Respondents stated they would use smartphones to get answers to questions type information i.e. opening / closing times, menus, information for kids clubs / supermarkets / amenities / local attractions things to do. They also wanted to know the local bars, restaurants and entertainment in the area. They were very location specific i.e. how far to and wanted interactive maps and transport options, times and costs etc. Many said they do not use smartphones while on holiday and would ask reception for any information they required and would only use smartphones if they had free wifi to avoid roaming costs.

1.42 In relation to your use of smartphones while on a trip would you describe these searches generally as?

**Smartphone Searches while on Trips**

![Smartphone Searches while on Trips graph](image)

Figure 42: Smartphone Searches while on Trips

4.7.4. Tablet Strategy

1.43 Where would you mostly use a tablet when researching hotel rooms and what would you generally search for using a tablet?

Respondents said they used tablets in a similar way to PC / laptops using them for extensive and detailed research. They liked the larger screens and used them at home mostly where they felt they had a sense of leisure and unbounded time having positive and peaceful emotions during use. They liked the ability to open multiple tabs and to view larger images which they scrutinised at depth. Some however felt they were just
larger smartphones, some disliked not having a keypad and many did not use them at all.

4.7.5. Cross / Multiple Device Strategy

1.44 Would it be normal for you to use different devices when searching for the same trip Y / N?

Using multiple devices on the same trip

Figure 43: Using multiple devices on the same trip

1.45 What devices would they be?

Devices used to book last trip

Figure 44: Devices used to book last trip
1.46 On your last hotel stay would anybody else bar you have searched the internet for the exact same hotel stay?

Multiple searchers on your last trip

Figure 45: Multiple searchers on your last trip

Other Searchers

Figure 46: Other searchers

2.12 What are the analytics for the overall usage of different devices on your site?

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<tr>
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<th>Visits</th>
<th>Reservations</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Mobile %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tablet %</td>
<td>17.87%</td>
<td>16.88%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
4.8. Visual Interaction

4.8.1. Image Strategy

1.47 Describe the perfect photo of a hotel that would persuade you to book a hotel. You can describe a number of different photos if different areas of the hotel or activities / attractions would be required by you. Just describe each photo separately with as much detail as possible?

General: Respondents varied in what they desired from photos. In general they wanted many non staged real life images with real life staff and customers that honestly and accurately represent the hotel. They wanted well presented, smiling, interacting and engaged staff. Some wanted people in images, some did not. Respondents wanted the images to portray the positive happy emotions they wanted to feel on holidays. Parents of children wanted images to portray safety, all facilities, teddy bears and children playing happily.

Foyer: Respondents wanted the foyer photo to give a feeling of space, with most wanting a modern contemporary space. The space should have comfortable chairs to sit down and have tea while waiting. Most wanted people being attended and a free receptionist with people lounging around having a drink such as champagne. They also wanted a concierge ready to take their luggage. All staff should be well presented and smiling. The photo should be bright, airy, spacious and give a sense of elegance and not be over crowded.

Outside: The outside should impart a well maintained, painted clean and tidy hotel with extensive parking. If a five star this should be in the image. The image should show the proximity to the desired location / activities e.g. show the beach in the back ground. There should be both a night and day image. Respondents varied in wanting people or no people in the image and some felt that butlers / ushers or concierges portrayed luxury. Respondents felt that the image should emulate the emotion desired by them e.g. warm, bright, and welcoming or snow in the case of a ski holiday.
Spa / Gym: With the exception of one individual, females only wanted spas and males only wanted gyms. Females wanted the spa to have relaxation areas, treatment rooms and private rooms which had specific things other spas didn’t and were presented as clean and modern. Males wanted a gym that was spacious, clean with all the equipment they personally use. Most respondents wanted a small amount of people in the photo demonstrating free space with the females in the spa wearing bath robes and a sense of quietness and serenity. Respondents wanted the staff to appear friendly, relaxed, healthy and thin and the images should portray waterfall, shells, relaxation, soft music, candles, soft lighting yet clean and bright.

Pool Area: Respondents indicated that the pool photo should impart the size and depth i.e. kids in the photo should be of varying ages so that a parent can judge the depth of the pool relative to their child. The photo should emulate space, a lack of obstacles and facilities in the proximity such a coffee bar. The sun loungers should be abundant and not cheap plastic. There should not be stylised images such as single sun loungers. Kids should only be in the kid’s pool i.e. the adult pool should be calm and the images should not be overcrowded as people with no kids indicated they were deterred by images of noisy kids. A lifeguard should be in the image for safety. The image should be bright, warm, have a sense of space and if possible be unique or iconic.

Bars: The image should show the overall style of the bar be it local, Victorian, modern, nooks and crannies, a warm fire or old world etc. The image should contain the drinks selection to portray what is on offer. Some respondents wanted a selection of beers on tap, some various whiskeys and some cocktails (mostly female). Respondents also wanted the food / snacks on offer and entertainment such as a piano and the seating types. Respondents wanted people in the photo to be enjoying themselves by day and night and somebody using a tablet signifying wifi. Some wanted pictures of famous people in the bar. Respondents wanted a barman serving a customer and one free signifying it is easy to get served and a customer being served at their table signifying lounge service. Respondents wanted the bar to reflect positive emotions perhaps through subdued lighting or candles and to be popular, welcoming, comfortable and where you might not be disturbed.
Restaurants: Respondents wanted to see pictures of both the restaurant and the kitchen. The images of the restaurant and kitchen should show the general layout / style / decor / lamp shades and exude cleanliness. If a high quality restaurant a close up of the silver cutlery, napkins, glasses should be in a shot. The whole restaurant should be in another shot showing how big it is. Parents looked for high chairs and cubicles so that they could coral children. Items giving an air of cheapness such as paper napkins should not be in the image. Respondents wanted photos of the food especially breakfast as it was the meal almost everybody ate in the hotel. Some respondents wanted exotic or adventurous foods but some said they were offended by some foods and others would be deterred if the foods were outside their comfort zone. Some respondents wanted people eating in the photo but many wanted none. The ones that wanted people wanted to be able to see the furnishings and layout clearly. They wanted well turned out waiters available at the table and some wanted them to be thin. They also wanted well turned out chefs. The emotion of the photo should be clean, crisp, luxurious, spaciousness and have a nice ambience.

Bedrooms: Respondents wanted the bedrooms to have a clean, spacious, bright and airy feel with an immaculately made bed. They especially scanned the image for scalable items to figure out the space of the room. The image should be inviting with the vast majority of respondents stating they wanted to see no people in the image. Respondents were very detailed on their physical requirements in the photo. They indicated they scan the image looking for TVs especially for children, tea / coffee facilities, chairs, writing desks and materials, shampoo / shower gels in the bathroom etc. Males looked for hairdryers / irons etc in order to figure what to leave out of their luggage since luggage costs on aircraft increased especially on Ryanair. They wanted a shot of the bathroom and the balcony looking out to the view. Respondents indicated that complimentary chocolates, snacks or champagne in the image would be inviting.

4.8.2. Video Strategy

1.48 Describe the perfect video of a hotel that would persuade you to book a hotel. You can describe a number of different videos if different areas of the hotel or activities / attractions would be needed by you to be happy to book that hotel. Just
describe each video separately with as much detail as possible also tell me what length of time the video should be?

Respondents’ requirements for a video varied. Some wanted a 360º panoramic tour rather than videos. Most judged the professionalism of the hotel by the professionalism of the video. Many wanted the video to be sequenced in the order that a person enters and exits the hotel e.g. reception foyer, pools / activities, restaurant, bar, bedroom etc. Respondents varied in their desired duration however most wanted short videos straight to the point (durations mentioned averaged 2 minutes. Some wanted demographic specific videos i.e. not wanting anybody but their demographic in the video. In relation to bars, restaurants, pools, bedrooms etc respondents wanted the video to answer all their factual requirements i.e. size, depth, nearby cafes / ice-cream, number of sun loungers etc. Many people indicated they would not look at a video unless somebody they knew was in it and most did not want ads in the video.

4.8.3. Images / Video Text Strategy

1.49 Remember the images and video you mentioned tell me the words, text or sentiment that should be beside them to persuade you to select that hotel?

Respondents wanted truthful and extensive facts about all amenities in the hotel in straightforward language. They wanted the text to replicate the image. Respondents wanted emotional language describing the experience they wanted on holiday e.g. luxurious, friendly, exciting, relaxing, peaceful etc. They wanted the text to send a message e.g. clean, good restaurant, mature clientele, abundant amount of sun loungers at the pool etc. Staff were mentioned by most with respondents wanting the words friendly, family orientated, qualified, child security vetted and qualified to do their jobs etc. Respondents did not want exaggeration and some wanted no text expecting images to impart all information / facts about their area.

4.8.4. Images / Video Text Location Strategy

1.50 Pointing to the computer screen in front of us what would be the ideal location for images / videos and text for different pages?

Respondents varied in their choice of screen locations for different items however most wanted the information bar across the top, images and videos in the centre (no small or
huge full screen images), text on the right and demographic segment links on the left. Many didn’t mind where on the screen the information was however most wanted brief to the point but absolutely everything they wanted specific to their demographic only.

1.51 If an image broke the screen at the bottom would you normally scroll down to see the section of the page below the screen Y / N?

Scroll Down Below the Fold

Would not scroll down 5%
Would scroll down 95%

Figure 47: Scroll Down Below the Fold

In general respondents were happy to scroll down. Most seem preconditioned to doing it. Some were however irritated if a photo broke the screen. Most expected the important information to be at the top of the screen and some said they would not scroll down if the information at the top was not what they were searching for. Some said it irritates them when they are at the bottom of the screen and they click to a new screen and they are still at the bottom of the new screen.

4.8.5. Images / Video Full Page Strategy

1.52 With regard to the hotel site as a whole what emotions / or mental frame of mind would you expect to be feeling if the hotel site had everything you needed?

On a utilitarian basis respondents expected the site to feel professional, fulfilling their needs and having all the information on it they required. Emotionally if the respondents had decided this was their hotel, they expected the hotel site to make them feel satisfied,
comfortable in their decision, content, reassured and relieved that their search was over. They also looked forward, hoping to feel excited and that their travelling partners would enjoy the hotel. They were also apprehensive hoping everything is as described i.e. no exaggerated photos and that the experience they hoped for would be delivered. Respondents wanted a booking confirmed response and could be deterred at any point if the information they required was not there.
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<thead>
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<th>Factors</th>
<th>Sub Factors</th>
<th>Lit Review Sections</th>
<th>Question Numbers</th>
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<td>Target Segment(s) Identification</td>
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Legend: Behaviour | Thoughts & Emotions | In-Dept Interview | Online Hotel

Table 28 Conceptual Framework Correlation of Factors, Sub Factors, the Literature Review Sections & the Question Numbers
4.9. Demographic Influence on the factors
Identification of single individual search patterns through their IP addresses as part of a targeting specific individual’s strategy for hotels was noted by this research to be almost impossible based on the currently available software and not recommended as a strategy based on the fact that this research noted that single individuals were observed to be multiple different segments.

4.9.1. Respondents as a Demographic
One not untypical individual every year was a couple only weekend away from the kids (5 star) girls weekend away (4 star), family week away (3 star) and adventure holiday (2 star) (diving). Others were business (5 star) and then family (3 star) etc. Some respondents were very focused on staying within their demographic / class even using disparaging descriptions of demographics considered of a lower status or other demographic behavioural norms. Individuals without kids wanted to see the words “no kids”. Individuals with kids wanted to see the words “family friendly”. These mutually exclusive words and individuals who are multiple demographics demonstrate that separate pages are required for separate demographics and individuals should not be excluded from specific demographics based on previous browsing behaviour.

4.9.2. Gender
Significant differences were noted in the case of gender. Men in general were more utilitarian and quantitative and made unemotive factual descriptions. Females were much more likely to be the decision maker in a couple or family unit with the male being more likely to be the searcher and recommender. Females took on average 10 minutes longer (15%) to complete the interviews and at times looked distracted as they were almost virtually transporting themselves to the location to offer more emotive, extensive and fuller descriptions. Females used more vivid language especially in describing their perfect photos of their optimum hotel. With only one exception females only mentioned spas with males mentioning gyms and physical activities much more. The online analytics were not sophisticated enough to differentiate online behaviour on a gender basis but given the sheer size of the sample it can be supposed it can be generalised to the general population.
4.9.3. Age
The vastness of the number of the online sample while not specifically measured in terms of age would have to be quite generalised in terms of reliability however the observational interview was quite representative of the population and much more reliable than previous research, the majority of which tended to be student or university based exclusively.

4.9.4. Income
The income level for the observational interviews was diverse and representative of the general population. Many previous population samples were quite college student dominant as PhD students interviewed their peers thus this sample is easier to generalise to the population. The online analytics were not sophisticated enough to verify this but given the sheer size of the sample it can be supposed that it can be generalised to the general population.

4.9.5. Education
The level of education in the observational interview was representative of the general population unlike much of the previous research which was quite college student dominant as PhD students interviewed their peers. The high proportion of military personnel allowed for diverse educational attainment from officers with degrees and postgraduate degrees to soldiers with limited education. The online analytics were not sophisticated enough to verify this but given the sheer size of the sample it can be supposed that it can be generalised to the general population.

4.9.6. Travelling Group
The results in this section were interesting in that individuals were often parts of many different groups. It was very common for individuals to stay in hotels with their partners and children and as a couple without the children and also travel separately from their family members mostly for activity based breaks or business. Thus individuals were noted in most cases to be many different demographic segments. Certainly the research indicated that the same single individual will search completely differently depending on the specific requirements / group of the current trip compared with the specific requirements / group of the last trip.
4.9.7. Main Researcher
In terms of searching / booking of hotels it was noted that in almost all non single traveller groups there was a principle searcher in multiple traveller groups for the same booking. That person normally did most of the searching and proposed the hotel options. The other member(s) of the group normally viewed the proposed hotel(s) and make yes / no type decisions. This means that in many cases individuals who online analytics would imply never booked or searched for a hotel room were decision makers for the hotel room and perhaps should not be targeted from a marketing perspective. This also means that in a significant amount of bookings not only do individuals search on multiple devices with different IP addresses but different individuals make booking decisions that are not linked using analytics software to the booking.

4.9.8. Star Accommodation
Stars of accommodation were used to roughly estimate the budgetary spend for individuals. It was quite common for individuals to cover many star categories. Couples travelling with families would stay in 3 star hotels yet stay in a 5 star hotel as a couple only but stay in lower star hotels if travelling for activities. Males especially were noted to be more willing to stay in 2 star accommodation if part of a male only group sporting activity than females for female only group sporting activities.

4.9.9. Device Implications
The research indicated that in 57% of cases people use multiple devices to search for holidays or trips and these individuals are recorded in online analytics as different individuals. The research also showed that when multiple individuals use the same device e.g. a shared computer at work or in the family home these groups are identified as the same individual for online analytics purposes. 68% of interviewees also indicated that different individuals looked at the proposed hotel online, online analytics would record these as being different individuals. Individuals who stay in hotels but do not book it through that particular device are also identified by online analytics as non bookers. This research found that the online analytics were a blunt instrument and have incredible leaps forward to accurately target individuals and groups for hotel accommodation and holidays and trips.
4.10. Research Objectives

The overall aim of this research was to formulate an achievable strategy for online accommodation practitioners and/or consultants. This was achieved by formulating three objectives which formed the structural basis for the literature review and subsequent online accommodation strategy. The objectives and how they were achieved were:

RO 1: To critically review and identify online hotel accommodation behavioural process standardised patterns including online and visually.

This objective was met at an early stage and formed the structure of the dissertation (i.e. the internal and external factors) for the remaining objectives. The theoretical behavioural patterns were identified through a critical review of the literature but were confirmed or quantified using online accommodation analytics research which was quantitative/positivist in method. When key stakeholders refused access to information quoting commercial confidentiality the shortfalls were identified using analytics from similar sites. The results formed the structural basis for the thoughts and emotional research.

RO 2: To critically review and identify online hotel accommodation thoughts and emotions process standardised patterns.

The objective to critically review and identify online hotel accommodation thoughts and emotions process standardised patterns was met after the relevant literature was reviewed and observational interviews were carried out which were interpretivist/qualitative in nature. This type of research was not in keeping with most online behavioural research which is quantitative/positivist in nature. This method however gave valuable and diverse insights into different online hotel accommodation segments.

RO 3: To recommend an online hotel accommodation business strategy based on identified behavioural and thoughts and emotions standardised patterns.

This objective was achieved in the form of a conceptual framework based on the literature review and the information gained from the online accommodation analytics
and the observational interviews. The use of mixed method research i.e. quantitative / positivist for the behavioural research and qualitative / interpretative for thoughts and emotions research gave the strategy a more extensive and holistic strategy then a single method could hope to do. The literature contributed to the checklist in the form of behavioural information and systems structures that a single PhD researcher couldn’t hope to achieve since major companies do not release commercially sensitive information and the observational interviews contributed in the form of strategies to meet the stated needs of the diverse population sample researched.

4.11. Summary
This chapter summarises the main research findings structured under the conceptual framework headings. These findings based on multi methods research were gathered from the online behaviour of consumers through Google analytics, consumer thoughts and emotions from the observational interviews and the current strategy of hotels based on hotel manager’s interviews. The data analytics did not necessitate any modification to the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 31) and indeed Table 28 is a visual representation of the contribution made by the conceptual framework with all the factors, sub factors, literature review sections and question numbers mapped and linked in order to corroborate and underpin the framework. This lack of change may be due to the comprehensive review of the literature and a detailed exploration of the relevant factors. The most interesting findings exposed by the research are the mismatch between the requirements of online consumers and the online experience being presented. All research objectives were achieved and the chapter concludes with an examination of the demographic influences on the research.
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations
5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the research objectives and the research methods used to achieve these objectives, namely the examination of the online accommodation analytics and the observational interviews. It also discusses the contribution to knowledge and practice as well as the limitations of the research and the future work that could be embraced based on this research.

5.2. Conclusion

The objective of the research was to recommend an online hotel accommodation business strategy based on critically reviewed and identified standardised online hotel accommodation behavioural, thoughts and emotional process patterns. This was successfully achieved through a mixed methods approach combining both quantitative / positivist online accommodation analytics research and qualitative / interpretative observational interviews.

In attempting to map standardised online hotel accommodation behavioural, thoughts and emotional process patterns many issues and challenges were identified through the literature and the primary research. These included for example different online behaviour by single individuals researching the same trip depending on the stage they were at in the process, physiological blindness towards traditional hotel online advertisement and search engines screens altering their sites to display ads in the locations that users were preconditioned to expect organic searches. It was also found to be quite standard for multiple individuals to use a single device and single individuals to use multiple devices preventing online consumers from being presented with a fully personalised and optimised online experience based on automated page returns from similar individuals online behaviour.

The merits of a holistic online strategy to eliminate the up to 30% commission (Starkov & Price, 2005) is clearly hugely important as Table 29 demonstrates that the accommodation provider’s websites only account for an average of 2.25% of the online trip planning process. This is especially significant given that 80.6% of online time is spent searching for information (Jansen et al., 2008) on 38 different travel sites when researching a holiday (Mohamud, 2008). To put the potential revenue for the average
hotel in context take Ireland as an example and the tourists by revenue who had never been in Ireland before i.e. no preconceived opinions or loyalties and choose the accommodation using the internet. Table 30 calculates this segment alone to be worth an average of €870,000 per hotel justifying an online strategy on one segment alone.

| Table 30 First visit to Ireland and Bed and Board chosen using the internet per hotel in Ireland |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Irish Bed and Board Spend (31% of €5,101.7 total foreign revenue) : (Fáilte Ireland, 2015a). | € (m) |
| Bed and Board chosen using the internet (60%): (Fáilte Ireland, 2015a). | 1,582 |
| First visit to Ireland (64%): (Fáilte Ireland, 2015a). | 949 |
| First visit to Ireland and Bed and Board chosen using the internet (38.4%): (Fáilte Ireland, 2015a). | 1,012 |
| First visit to Ireland and Bed and Board chosen using the internet per hotel in Ireland (Based on 798 hotels in Ireland) (Fáilte Ireland, 2015b). | 607 |
| First visit to Ireland and Bed and Board chosen using the internet per hotel in Ireland | 0.87 |

The literature review also provided mass market strategies that could not be achievable at the single PhD researcher level and the observational interview research allowed identification for the purpose of targeting unique individualised accommodation consumer segments with their specific thoughts and emotions. This research also
revealed complex segmentation issues even within single individuals. The principal aim of this research was to contribute to practice in an area where previous research was quite academic in type and nature and this research strived to provide a strategy that would be straightforward, structured and achievable to practitioners. This was required as the research revealed practitioners in many cases to have had very limited knowledge, specific qualifications and understanding of the online accommodation medium. This was achieved by the results being presented in an easy to understand conceptual framework format appropriate to group and individual accommodation providers. The conceptual framework is by no means presented as the absolute definitive or complete list nor is it presented as being fully self explanatory. Users should refer to the literature review for clarifications. The principal limitation noted in the research was the sheer scale of a full online strategy which is unachievable for a single PhD researcher or individual industry practitioner. The conceptual framework provides an excellent basis for further work.

5.3. Limitations
The holistic identification and strategic business plan for the online hotel accommodation process is an extensive project. A complete and exhaustive individually targeted map of the process would be a mammoth project for organisations even such as Google and an individual completing a PhD would have insurmountable limitations preventing its absolute completion. A strategic plan is proposed within the following limitations.

The findings of the study suggest that Google analytics was found to be very limited in the way it demonstrated repeat individual behaviour and it could not differentiate if multiple individuals used the same device or if different individuals using different devices were part of the same hotel booking. The online hotel analytics could not identify individual searchers thoughts or emotions and in approximately 90% of cases they no longer show the keywords used in search engines to find websites limiting analysis.

The statistical information gathered from hotel analytics was very laborious with hotels initially agreeing access to their analytics and later withdrawing this access for various reasons mostly around confidentially. Only four hotels had given full access to their
Google Analytics after four months of requesting and it was only when a single individual gave access to 14 different hotels that the sample number increased to 18 hotels. Another limitation in soliciting access to hotels analytics through practitioners was in cases an extreme lack of expertise and a personal sense of fear of exposure and possible job loss if they engaged with a PhD level of knowledge.

Tracking of individual devices has limitations in that multiple individuals using the same device are classified as the same individual by online analytics limiting the individualisation of behaviour. The inverse is also a limitation in that different individuals searching different devices at different times for the same holiday are similarly classified as different individual searchers despite being a single booking just with multiple individuals i.e. one will be recorded as a successful booking and the others being recorded as lookers not bookers. Current devices are limited in that they cannot read users thoughts or emotions in relation to their online activity. Devices of this nature are in the early technological stage and are not integrated into online analytics.

5.4. Future Work
Future work should be conducted with a more holistic approach i.e. joining up research involving individual users, search engines, hoteliers, third parties and device makers together to get a full picture of the consumer’s activity so that the accommodation provider can target the consumer with the products they actually want at appropriate stages of the process should be considered. A research project with a phone or wifi provider to track the entire process of an individual and their travelling companions may be the only viable option as all the other stakeholders are extremely commercially sensitive about their information and co-operation would be highly unlikely. This future work would be an incredibly extensive, labour intensive and expensive project and the limitations listed previously explain why this could not be completed in this thesis. Future work based on the conceptualised framework proposed in this thesis should integrate:

- Individual identification and their multiple trip types.
- Dominant searcher / leader / decision maker identification.
- Email software to identify travel partners for the purpose of group identification.
Trip facets identification, sequencing and mapping.
Social Media data mining software.
Thesis full implementation financially costed and audited before and after.
Thoughts and emotions recognition systems integrated into devices and sites.
Visual tracking recognition systems integrated into devices and sites.

5.5. Contribution to Knowledge
This research contributes to the existing knowledge by presenting an extensive, holistic framework of the online hotel accommodation process (the internal factors) the individual themselves, the search engine, third party and social media websites and the hotel website itself and (the external factors) the devices used and the method of physical interaction which is mostly visual. The holistic nature of the research examines the behaviour, thoughts and emotions experienced during all factors of the process.

The observational interviews which were based on a diverse sample of consumers provided optimum desired behavioural information that would positively and persuasively influence segment specific online hotel accommodation process searchers on their entire purchase journey specific to every section of the conceptual framework. Google Analytics on the other hand provided general type overview information which could not be individualised and was of limited analytical value.

This research offers a business focused strategy in a mostly theorised and in many cases obsolete research area that contributes to knowledge by interpreting single individuals as multiple segments that carry out the same search differently on different devices and react differently to the same images and purchase accommodation based on thoughts and emotions that cannot be measured, differently at different stages of the process.

The outcome of this research is to offer a combined and structured checklist that can be used to provide a holistic framework for the online accommodation process. This research can be used as a theoretical basis for the eventual absolute individualisation of the online accommodation process by integrating external factor’s with emotional and eye pattern reading devices with the internal factor’s online accommodation search to offer the consumer what they actually are looking for.
5.6. Contribution to Practice

The application of this research to practice is to provide an extensive and appropriate holistic checklist of practical strategies which combined can be used to target and influence to purchase, consumers at all stages and during all aspects of the online accommodation process.

This research identifies what the consumer actually wants at all stages of the process and provides a structured list which is essentially what the segment specific consumer identified in this research to be what they actually want. The online process is essentially accommodation provider immediate action neutral with the immediate action stakeholder being the searcher.

This research provides a holistic structured practical checklist to accommodation providers that target all the principle aspects of the online accommodation process in a generalised straight forward manner which can be easily customised to individual properties. It overcomes the weaknesses of previous research which only addressed small individual aspects of the process and online analytics packages which only identify the hotel website element of the extensive online search.
Chapter 6 - References
6. References


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APPENDIX A: Section III Strategy - Literature Reconciliation.

Process Influences (Internal)

The individual

Target Segment(s) Identification Strategy

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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>The basis of segmentation generally includes various tourists’ characteristics such as demographics, socio-economic factors, geographic location, and product related behavioural characteristics such as purchase behaviour, consumption behaviour and preference for attractions, experiences and services (Dibb &amp; Simkin, 1991).</td>
<td>Break down the target demographics, socio-economic factors, geographic location, and product related behavioural characteristics such as purchase behaviour, consumption behaviour and preference for attractions, experiences and services for the hotel.</td>
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</table>

To sum up the aforementioned studies, the previous experiences, knowledge and memories both on Web users’ Web page search and destination travels play a crucial role in online tourism information search (Ho et al., 2012).

Monitor how your customers have searched in the past as past behaviour is the best guide for future behaviour.

In relation to hotels users behaved online as follows: 96.4% accessing hotel information online, 55% booking online, 39% booking offline. They found hotel information offline as follows: 68.3% travel books, 41.6% family / friends, 35.6% magazines, 33.9% brochures / flyers, 27.8% newspapers, 22.6% tourism offices, 22.3% travel agents, 21.4% the AAA (Gretzel et al., 2007). Gronflaten (2009) supports this indicating that tourism information search depends on both online and offline modes. Offline bookers use search engines more. 67% of online users search following offline exposure and 39% convert back to company that started search (iProspect, 2009). Online searching to offline booking reducing over time (TIA, 2009).

Target both online and offline sources. Offline sources trigger the online search. The offline sources can confirm the online intentions.

Different users have different informational needs (Pan et al., 2007). Different types behave differently (Stringam and Gerdes, 2010). Age, education, culture and gender effect search (Kim et al., 2007).

Identify specifically your intended segments carefully but not exclusively.

Goal directed visits produce immediate results (Moe, 2003).

Identify and create information sites / pages to satisfy the goals / intentions of
Demographic segmentation does not explain behaviour (Crnojevac et al., 2010). Thoughts and emotions not experienced singularly or independently, e.g. price and bedroom ambience may be experienced together (Oliver, 1997). Different consumers prefer different levels of website complexity (Martin et al., 2005). Planning both online and offline (Seabra et al., 2007). Different thought process produce different outcomes / choices (Moe, 2003). Experienced users more proficient and higher users (Lazonder et al., 2000). Business / groups / individuals behave differently (Crnojevac et al., 2010). Younger people more text orientated than voice (Eircom, 2013). Different cultures have different hedonistic / Unitarian requirements (Mazaheri et al., 2011) and different search exhaustiveness levels (Jordan et al., 2013). Females more exhaustive and elaborate searchers but use YouTube less (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Identify segments by their thoughts and emotions, offline / online, thought processes, online ability, business / leisure / groups, age, hedonistic / Unitarian requirements and gender. Target specific individuals / groups from previous stays. Past stays are the best guide for future stays, them having previously chosen to purchase your product.

### Pre Purchase Stage Strategy

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<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall budget, dates / length of trip, travel group members and decision destinations (Fesenmaier &amp; Jeng, 2000). 67% plan all major aspects in advance, 24% only open to minor changes (Gretzel et al., 2007).</td>
<td>Design pages assuming the overall budget, dates / length of trip, travel group members and decision destinations are pre determined in advance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average 30 minute visits (Ho et al., 2012). 80.6% informational, 10.2% navigational and 9.2% transactional (Jansen et al., 2008).</td>
<td>Plan your engagement strategy around a 30 minute and 80.6% informational search for each online session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put in a map of your hotel into Google for an indoor map. This can be used to sell your restaurant or other activities on the grounds spa etc.</td>
<td>Plan an indoor map of your hotel should your scale / budget be appropriate. <a href="https://maps.google.com/floorplans/find#">https://maps.google.com/floorplans/find#</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search 17% services, 16% activities, 12% accommodation, 7% skiing, 7% dining, 3% shopping, 32% non-specific (Pitman et al., 2010).</td>
<td>Structure your site / sites with an approximate breakdown of 17% services, 16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average 12 travel related searches, visiting 22 websites and taking 29 days from the first search until purchase, 45% occur 4 weeks or more after initial online activity (ComScore & Google, 2008). Search an ingrained behaviour (iProspect, 2009).

Click-through rate: Click-through tells you how often users clicked on the ad. It is calculated by dividing the number of clicks by the number of impressions. A typical online advertisement has 0.14% click-through. That is, for every 714 times the advertisement is displayed, a user will click on it (Expedia.com, 2013). Hotchkiss et al. (2004) and Greenspan (2004) proposed that users prefer organic listings relative to sponsored links, yet Jansen and Resnick (2006) suggested that if sponsored links provided a high level of relevance, consumers would still consider them. This may be due to the fact that sponsored advertising links deliver relevant and targeted texts, making them less obtrusive and less annoying compared to other forms of online advertising like banners or pop-ups (Ghose & Yang 2009).

Planning phased and refined over time (Jordan et al., 2013). Stages: recalling, selecting, inputting terms, navigation, understanding, judging, choosing, and refining (Wu et al., 2008). Knowledge building and purchasing separate (Moe, 2003).

Users open two or more windows and check content is correct (Ho et al., 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skiing</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>32%</td>
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Online / Website Engagement Strategy
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<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTR 0.14% (Expedia.com, 2013). 31% of successful ads direct click through (iprospect, 2009).</td>
<td>Remember the actual gain from ads is three times the click through rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals conditioned to find particular items in particular locations, speeding up interactions (Bernard, 2001).</td>
<td>In attempting to be original, a site must balance originality with users’ preconditions to expect certain items in certain locations on a site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site over-optimisation including on-page factors like keyword stuffing, header tag stuffing, excessive keyword decoration and auto generated content are penalised by Google. If they suspect that your site’s pumping out computer-generated content, it could result in a penalty or de-indexing (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>The content information on the page should be natural and engage the user. It should not be auto generated or stuffed with keywords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance influences purchasing (Money &amp; Crotts, 2003; Palmer &amp; McCole, 2000; Quintal et al., 2010; Susskind et al., 2003). Pure bounce rate of the page as measured by return visits to the search results page (Moz, 2014). A site that’s difficult to use or to navigate can hurt ranking by reducing time on site, pages viewed and bounce rate. This may be an independent algorithmic factor gleaned from massive amounts of user data. Use of Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools: Some think that having these two programs installed on your site can improve your page’s indexing. They may also directly influence rank by giving Google more data to work with (i.e. more accurate bounce rate, whether or not you get referral traffic from your backlinks etc.) (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Use reassurance and trust building text in decision making points. Give the consumer what they want and expect on the specific page to avoid bounce. Make the site easy to use and use Google analytics and web master tools to monitor this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers will return if they experience flow (Novak et al., 2003). Travellers prefer websites that are easy to learn and have clear navigational paths (Kim &amp; Fesenmaier, 2008).</td>
<td>Make sites easy to use and navigate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian values stronger predictor than hedonistic values e.g. price, convenience (Overby &amp; Lee, 2006). Utilitarian values reduce uncertainty (Gretzel et al., 2006). Accessibility, security, service quickness and receptiveness (Kim et al., 2012).</td>
<td>Place all the utilitarian values on the relevant pages. i.e. all the facts associates with the individual product / activity etc. Have the last inputted dates, room type etc auto remembered in the booking engine to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment and satisfaction and beauty of the destination positive (Kim &amp; Fesenmaier, 2008). Pleasure related to spend (Björk, 2010). Arousal linked to time spent online and items purchased (Sherman et al., 1997). Tourists experience anticipation, expectation, imagination and fantasy about trips (Gretzel et al., 2006).</td>
<td>Have hedonistic values on the individual page. i.e. make the page enjoyable, satisfying, beautiful destination. Transport the user mentally to your hotel by fulfilling their anticipation, expectation, imagination and fantasy about trips on the relevant pages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most consumers wait about 3 seconds for a website to load on a desktop or laptop ...and about 5 seconds on their mobile device. For example, one in four people abandons surfing to a website if its page takes longer than four seconds to load (Hayes, 2013). Amazon's calculated that a page load slowdown of just one second could cost it $1.6 billion in sales each year. Google has calculated that by slowing its search results by just four tenths of a second they could lose 8 million searches per day--meaning they'd serve up many millions fewer online adverts (Eaton, 2012).</td>
<td>Place all sites associated with the hotel on high speed servers to meet consumer needs and improve Google algorithm rankings. <a href="https://developers.google.com/speed/page-speed/">https://developers.google.com/speed/page-speed/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee and Mills (2010) also state that personalisation allows consumers’ needs to be met more effectively and efficiently and thus, increases their satisfaction (Lee &amp; Mills, 2010). The emotional relationships between a company and its customers can be strengthened if communication with loyal customers occurs on a personal and individual level (Nysveen et al., 2005). Virtual Tourism and TripTouch (Kanellopoulos, 2010). A person seeking another person’s attention is normally able to quickly assess how interruptible the other person currently is. If systems could model human interruptibility, they could use this information to negotiate interruptions at appropriate times, thus improving human computer interaction (Fogarty et al., 2005).</td>
<td>Personalise all content / information both on / off site and in emails “written and signed” by the relevant manager if possible. Research the hotel’s segments and ask them what mash up information they would want in a pre trip email or have in the email a tick the box for information on restaurants and have a “signed” concierge’s recommendation in the email etc. Implement an interrupt ability plan when software advances economically allow it</td>
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Decision / Purchase Stage Process

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<tr>
<td>Secondary destinations, activities, attractions, trip route and accommodation (Fesenmaier &amp; Jeng, 2000).</td>
<td>When the guests have made the purchase decision market the secondary destinations / products you have to offer to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2% conversion rate (New York Times, 2000). Front page entries have high click outs. Multiple visits / later stage have higher conversion rates (Putts &amp; Srinivasan, 1994). Different requirements at different stages, some drop out, some skip stages (Chatterjee, 2005). Purchasers often view and exit many times before purchasing skewing conversion rates. Initiated by prior knowledge. Search / deliberation visits motivated for future intended purchase (Moe, 2003).</td>
<td>Have a cookie with the last inputted information so that users do not have to re-input information and send emails when the user hasn’t been active in a few days as they may be further into the process and this reminder / convenience may ease purchase. Include an incentive to encourage booking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 70% of mobile bookings via voice channel (Starkov, 2012b).</td>
<td>Enable your mobile site so that a user can make a call to reservations or specific product department numbers simply by pressing your number on screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel reviews 80% and high numbers of them increase confidence (Gretzel et al., 2007). Some more trusted than other (Carter, 2011).</td>
<td>Strongly encourage segment relevant and purchase persuasive reviews in social media. Do not encourage fast empty irrelevant reviews even if excellent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection criteria, price, characteristics, environment, trip context and accessibility (Niemann et al., 2006).</td>
<td>Ensure that all selection criteria, price, characteristics,</td>
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<td>Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision made seeking out advice 58.3%, without consultation 49% needing others 27.4%, spur of the moment 24.6%, impulse 21.5% snap 13.1% (Gretzel et al., 2007).</td>
<td>Decisions are made by the individual or group very quickly. Target persuasive information toward the entire segment i.e. the individual or group / couple etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions based on inner feelings and reactions 71.4%, instincts 60.7% and intuition 58.3% (Gretzel et al., 2007).</td>
<td>Make the message persuasive targeting inner feelings, reactions, instincts and intuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price becomes a significant factor at search end.</td>
<td>The price at the end should have persuasive messages attached i.e. lowest price guarantee, free cancellation, double the difference if you find a cheaper price etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive or negative emotions influence purchase intention (Hsu and Tsou, 2011). Patent No. US 7,987,188 B2 – Domain-Specific Sentiment Classification “For example the word “small” usually indicates positive sentiment when describing a portable electronic device but can indicate negative sentiment when used to describe the size of a portion served by a restaurant.” The patent goes on to describe a system that solves this problem by determining what the author is talking about, and then understanding whether the sentiment is positive, negative, or neutral. As with most factors in Google’s algorithm, we can only speculate on the extent to which Google applies this system (Ward, 2011). There’s something new in Google's algorithm - a metric or set of metrics that looks for some form of authenticity in a site and passion in the content created on a page (Fishkin, 2011).</td>
<td>Use positively persuasive emotive language for selling your hotel and related products both on site and in related articles posted. Have the positive words surrounding your products e.g. a strategy for Facebook for weddings / christenings i.e. encourage positive comments towards ladies appearances / babies in the pictures.</td>
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**Hotel Stay Stage Strategy**

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0.4% make travel decisions during trip (Gretzel et al., 2007). Gifts / souvenirs, rest / fast stops, shopping purchase locations (Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000). 44% weather, 31% location (GPS), 37% arrival / departure details with all these figures rising with smartphone adoption (Pollard, 2012). Increased usage of mobile internet while on holiday.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>We improved the precision and coverage of our system to help you find more relevant local web results. Now we're better able to identify web results that are local to the user, and rank them appropriately. Traffic maps.</th>
<th>Have emails to the guest while they are staying at the hotel detailing gifts / souvenirs, rest / fast stops, shopping purchase locations, weather, location (GPS), arrival and departure details or other information desired by each specific segment.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>We've improved display of local business information in certain mobile use cases. In particular, we'll highlight information relevant to the search, including phone numbers, addresses, hours and more (Singhal, 2012). Improvements to local search on tablet.</td>
<td>Have a local strategy for your hotel and related products. Also while the consumer is in location target them through a phone and tablet strategy. The Google algorithm will effectively ring fence SEO’d local attractions / your hotel’s products / restaurant etc. Mark all your locations / products on Google maps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoother ranking changes for fresh results.</td>
<td>Target current happenings i.e. a convention, wedding, christening etc. This would blend well into a Social Media strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#82961. [project codename &quot;Alternative Search Methods&quot;] When you search for directions to or from a location on your mobile device without specifying the start point, we'll return results starting from your current position (Singhal, 2012). An enhanced navigation system allowing navigation route and destination planning according to user-specified criteria for the emotion state of persons along the route, at the destination, or both. The aggregate aspect involves determining the aggregate value of the emotion states (according to human emotion metrics) of people along the proposed route(s) or at the proposed destination(s) at a particular time, such as an aggregate value to determine if all people happy now at a</td>
<td>Have a location finding strategy for GPS etc on your smartphone site. Google have patented a route management system capable of finding the optimum route in terms of emotions and can find the emotionally happiest</td>
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| Have a local strategy for your hotel and related products. Also while the consumer is in location target them through a phone and tablet strategy. The Google algorithm will effectively ring fence SEO’d local attractions / your hotel’s products / restaurant etc. Mark all your locations / products on Google maps. | Target current happenings i.e. a convention, wedding, christening etc. This would blend well into a Social Media strategy. |
destination (e.g. is everyone happy at this club right now?), or an aggregate value to determine if all people were happy at a destination at a past date, day or time (e.g. did everyone enjoy themselves last night at this club?). Data from environmental sensors along the route(s) or at the destination(s) such as pollution sensors, ambient temperature sensors, and noise level sensors, are received by and used in the route planning and analysis function of a navigation system (French et al., 2012).

Yeh and Li (2009), the level of satisfaction is the key to gain the trust of mobile users within the m-commerce world. In their study, satisfaction was defined as the “result of a process of post-purchase evaluation and comparison,” and high satisfaction is achieved when the performance of a product is better than expected.

Search Engines

Search Engine Strategy (Dos)

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<tr>
<td>More domain diversity. [launch codename &quot;Horde&quot;, project codename &quot;Domain Crowding&quot;] Sometimes search returns too many results from the same domain. This change helps surface content from a more diverse set of domains (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2012a).</td>
<td>Have multiple sites in order to dominate as many positions in the SERP and block the viewing of competitors' sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branded and specific question type long keywords at the end (Yang et al., 2007).</td>
<td>Have the information on pages which specifically answers questions and helps consumers confirm their questions about your hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation, activities, areas, attractions, events, information, places (city specific), restaurants / bars, shopping, transportation (Xiang et al., 2008), specials, photos, maps, amenities, guest testimonials, hotel ratings, price, videos, blogs,</td>
<td>The off / on site information must have the accommodation, activities, areas,</td>
</tr>
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social media (Pollard, 2012).

Filtering Process. Information patches accumulated (Jordan, 2008). Knowledge acquisition process (Moe, 2003). On average posts with more than 1500 words got a whopping 68.1% more tweets and 22.6% more Facebook likes. Posts with the average length of 2000 words get the most links (Detailedsuccess.com, 2013). Information accuracy confirmation process (Bettman, 1979). Identical content on the same site (even slightly modified) can negatively influence a site’s search engine visibility (Google algorithm). Rel=Canonical: When used properly, use of this tag may prevent Google from considering pages duplicate content (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Uniqueness of the content on the page (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Google doesn’t want to show the same content to searchers for the same query; they do like to diversify the results to their searchers (Google algorithm) (Schwartz, 2013a).

Create multiple pages on different sites for each set of targeted keywords. Make them uniquely different, over 2000 words on each page if possible but with the same message and / or facts to aid accuracy confirmation.

Search Engine Strategy (Don’ts)

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<tr>
<td>Navigating the online marketplace can be confusing and overwhelming. The pace of change in this industry, including technological advancements, updates to search engine algorithms, and new solutions for driving direct online revenues are almost impossible to keep up with. Additionally, most hoteliers are already shuffling many different priorities each day and are not able to devote the time needed to keeping up with industry trends and best practices (Starkov &amp; Safer, 2010). Based on all of this experimentation, evaluation and analysis, we launched 665 improvements to search in 2012 Google (2012b).</td>
<td>Most hoteliers are not qualified in the rapidly changing online strategy area and only have an awareness of the area and generally daily have immediate “fire fighting” priorities. Don’t lose sight of the long term strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant or unexpected results (Oliver, 1993; Roseman, 1991) such as unsought advertisement (Flavián-Blanco et al., 2011). Penguin is in place to stop keyword stuffing and irrelevant</td>
<td>Do not have irrelevant or unexpected results or unsought</td>
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<tr>
<th>links in unrelated text articles (Cutts, 2012b).</th>
<th>advertisement.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Domain has never been penalised (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Sites with low quality content (particularly content farms) are less visible in search after getting hit by a Panda penalty (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Check if a domain has ever been penalised before you purchase it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panda starts off with human quality raters who look at hundreds of websites. Computers, using machine learning, are then brought in to mimic the human raters. When the Google algorithm becomes accurate enough at predicting what the humans scored, it’s then unleashed across millions of sites across the Internet. The main issues are Heavy Template Footprint (low original content), Empty Content (pages which are empty or navigational with very little content), Overlapping and Redundant Articles (where there is a list of the same thing), High Ad Ratio (too many ads on the page and very little else) and Affiliate Links and Auto Generated Content (essentially this is where you have sections automatically updated by somebody else funnelling into information / updates into a box on your screen) (Google algorithm) (Shepard, 2013b).</td>
<td>Do not have pages with overlapping, empty or little original content, high ads ratio or affiliate links or external information being updated into a box on your screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ve heard complaints from users that if they click on a result and it’s difficult to find the actual content, they aren’t happy with the experience. Rather than scrolling down the page past a slew of ads, users want to see content right away. Such sites may not rank as highly going forward (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2012a). The “Page Layout Algorithm” penalises sites with lots of ads (and not much content) above the fold (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Use of advertisement on the page</td>
<td>Do not put ads above the fold or even on the page if possible. Place as much content and the central message above the fold as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This algorithmic change does not affect sites who place ads above the fold to a normal degree, but affects sites that go much further to load the top of the page with ads to an excessive degree or that make it hard to find the actual original content on the page. This new algorithmic improvement tends to impact sites where there is only a small amount of visible content above the fold or relevant content is persistently pushed down by large blocks of ads. Such sites may not rank as highly going forward (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2012c).

**Selling Links:** Selling links can definitely impact toolbar PageRank and may hurt your search visibility (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Don’t want to be harmed in Google? Don’t sell links (Sullivan, 2007). Sneaky redirects are a big no-no. If caught, it can get a site not just penalised, but de-indexed (Dean, 2013).

Google are cutting down on spam, so just don’t do it (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2013).

Sites that were hit by Google Penguin are significantly less visible in search. Websites that violate Google’s Webmaster Guidelines by using now declared black-hat SEO techniques involved in increasing artificially the ranking of a webpage by manipulating the number of links pointing to the page (Dean, 2013). Google is putting less weight on authority signals like PageRank…and more emphasis on Linking Domain Relevancy (LDR). LDR simply means: “Is a site that links to you in a similar niche?” (Dean, 2014). Disavow Tool: Use of the Disavow Tool may remove a manual or algorithmic penalty for sites that were the victims of negative SEO (Dean, 2013). A successful reconsideration request can lift a penalty (Dean, 2013).

Hiding Affiliate Links: Going too far when trying to hide affiliate links (especially with cloaking) can bring on a penalty (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013).

Avoid domain names longer than 15 characters. Short domain names are easier to remember, easier to share, and have a smaller chance of resulting in typos (Moz, 2013). Search Engine Journal notes that excessively long URLs may hurt search visibility (Dean, 2013). If you have got a three, four or five words in your URL; that can be perfectly normal. As it gets a little longer, then it starts to look a little worse. Now, our algorithms typically will just weight those words less and just not give you as much credit (Spencer, 2008).

Deeper detection of hacked pages. [launch codename "GPGB", project codename "Page Quality"] For some time now Google has been detecting defaced content on hacked pages and presenting a notice on search results reading, “This site may be compromised.” In the past, this algorithm has focused exclusively on homepages, but now we’ve noticed hacking incidents are growing more common on deeper pages on particular sites, so we’re expanding to these deeper pages.

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<table>
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<th>Moz, 2014. This algorithmic change does not affect sites who place ads above the fold to a normal degree, but affects sites that go much further to load the top of the page with ads to an excessive degree or that make it hard to find the actual original content on the page. This new algorithmic improvement tends to impact sites where there is only a small amount of visible content above the fold or relevant content is persistently pushed down by large blocks of ads. Such sites may not rank as highly going forward (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2012c).</th>
<th>Do not sell links or sneaky re-directs.</th>
</tr>
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<td>Selling Links: Selling links can definitely impact toolbar PageRank and may hurt your search visibility (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Don’t want to be harmed in Google? Don’t sell links (Sullivan, 2007). Sneaky redirects are a big no-no. If caught, it can get a site not just penalised, but de-indexed (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Don’t spam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google are cutting down on spam, so just don’t do it (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2013).</td>
<td>Don’t buy links. Target relevant links. If you have bad links disavow them. If Google has penalised you for bad links clean up your site and submit a reconsideration request to have the penalty lifted.</td>
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<td>Do not get your site hacked or defaced. Have adequate software in place to prevent this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Popups or Distracting Ads: The official Google Rater Guidelines Document says that popups and distracting ads is a sign of a low quality site (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Do not use pop ups or distracting ads.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel websites most used at the end of the process (McCarthy et al., 2010). Hotel website searches have more specific and longer and more complex searches than SEs at this same stage (Pitman et al., 2010). As the hotel website is generally used later in the process users have built up certain knowledge. The hotel website must answer more detailed and complex search engine questions.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High impression rates, High click through rates and High conversion rates are part of the Google algorithm (Patel, 2012). Joy and pride if search effort successful (Flavián-Blanco et al., 2011). More effortful search less preferred (Garbarino and Edell, 1997). We confirm a common SEM practitioners’ perception that a higher rank in the SERP tends to result in more attention from the consumer; however, the role of the position is strongly moderated by the competitive landscape (Shi &amp; Trusov, 2013). Google Hummingbird update. The hotel’s individual pages content must match the keyword campaign as high impression rates, high click through rates and high conversion rates affect the SERP ranking. Give individual segments exactly what they are looking for on each page. You are competing against your competitors and this is your benchmark to beat. Don’t have the answer required outside the landing page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page contains Open Graph Data and / or Twitter Cards is a Google algorithm signal (Moz, 2014). This can relocate your website to higher positions in search engines like Google, because Google detects Open Graph meta tags (Todor, 2014). Place Twitter cards on your hotel page. Use Yoast.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Future content personalisation implementations should include integration to Facebook’s OpenGraph, which allows targeting certain demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, etc.) (Starkov &amp; Safer, 2010). Target very specific segments when Search Engine’s adwords tools are sufficiently sophisticated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify niche target markets for your destinations and hotel by looking at travel motive or demographics. Here some examples; culinary and gastronomy, incentive, active break, museums, live music, travelling with their pet, senior citizens, families, etc (Landman, 2013).

We improved our web ranking to determine what pages are relevant for queries containing locations. We improved the precision and coverage of our system to help you find more relevant local web results. Now we’re better able to identify web results that are local to the user, and rank them appropriately (Google algorithm) (Nayak, 2012).

eventuh4. [project codename “Knowledge Graph”] We'll show a list of upcoming events in the Knowledge Graph for city-related searches such as [San Francisco] and [events in San Francisco] (Google algorithm) (Singhal, 2012a).

Search Engine Keywords Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 search per SERP 81%, 2 searches 13%, 91.5% of searches from page 1 of SERP (Lee, 2013). Trade off between effort and perceived value of results (Bettman, 1979). Consumers trade off the costs and benefits of inspecting listings on the SERP (Shi &amp; Trusov, 2013). Users trust most relevant results will be top of SERP (Joachims et al., 2005). If results not in page 1 of SERP a new search will be initiated (Maughan, 2008). Luxury hotels expected to be top of SERP or CTR reduces; budget hotels less so (Ghose et al., 2013).</td>
<td>Attempt to be no. 1 on Page no.1 of the SERP for all the target keywords you have identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketers love overlooking tried and true marketing staples in favour of the next big thing: social media, retargeting, mobile, tablets, you name it. HeBS Digital’s own experience shows that more than half of website booking revenue (56% to be exact; 32.6% from SEO, the rest from paid search) across our client portfolio comes as a direct referral from the search engines, including organic and paid search. We recommend allocating between 25% – 30% of the digital marketing budget to paid search (Starkov &amp; Safer, 2010). Only 4% of Americans trust advertising the most as a source for product or service information (Martins, 2013).</td>
<td>Cost an adwords campaign and test for financial viability; also use adwords as a keyword identification strategy. It should be noted ads have very little trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engines most used at the start of the process (McCarthy et al., 2010). Only 10% book after 1 search (ComScore &amp; Google, 2008). Generic short keyword searches at the start (ComScore &amp; Google, 2008). Average 12 travel related searches, visiting 22 websites and taking 29 days from the first search until purchase and 45% of transactions four weeks or longer (ComScore &amp; Google, 2008). Search Engine usage at the end of the process only 20% of that of the start (McCarthy</td>
<td>Construct your search engine campaign around the initial information gathering process by providing detailed information and remember very few individuals book</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
et al., 2010). after one search. Have all the short generic keywords in the information pages.

Google has vastly expanded the presence of its Hotel Finder functionality and now you can see its real time availability and pricing menus in the SERPs, Google Maps, Google+ Local, google.com/Google Hotel Finder, etc. HeBS Digital has been involved with the TripAdvisor CPC Program for several years now with undeniable success. In 2012, participating hotels generated an average return on ad spend (ROAS) of 1131%. In 2013, hoteliers can participate in the CPC Program with a minimum spend of just $500 per month (Starkov & Safer, 2010).

Searches vary between broad and focused (Hwang et al., 2009). Multiple devices not linked to individual user. Multiple users of same device not differentiated. Difficult to generalise individual search behaviour. Different moods influence subsequent emotional behaviour (Louro et al., 2005). Different tasks have different information seeking behaviour (Terai et al., 2008). Inverse frequency selection (Hardtke et al., 2009).

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Remember Google is not simply a search engine. Have a keyword strategy for Google Maps, Google+ Local, google.com/Google Hotel Finder, etc.

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#80435. [project “Autocomplete”] This change improves autocomplete predictions based on the user’s Web History (for signed in users) (Google algorithm) (Nayak, 2012). Better query interpretation. This launch helps us better interpret the likely intention of your search query as suggested by your last few searches (Google algorithm) (Singhal, 2012a).

#84586. [project “Other Ranking Components”] This change improved how we rank documents for queries with location terms (Google algorithm) (Nayak, 2012).

#83406. [project “Query Understanding”] We improved our ability to show relevant Universal Search results by better understanding when a search has strong image intent, local intent, video intent, etc (Google algorithm) (Nayak, 2012).

More text from the beginning of the page in snippets. [launch codename "solar", project codename "Snippets"] This change makes it more likely we’ll show text from the beginning of a page in snippets when that text is particularly relevant. Keyword stuffing classifier improvement. [project codename "Spam"] We have classifiers designed to detect when a website is keyword stuffing. This change made the keyword stuffing classifier better (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2012a).

Target searches early or pre online as the search term inputted initially will come up auto predicted and remind searchers every time they search using those keywords and later searches also build on previous searches.

Target keywords into image / local / video groups when relevant.

Place targeted keywords early in the content but naturally and not simply stuffed in to optimise for search engines.
| Minor weather report: small upcoming Google algorithm change will reduce low quality "exact match" domains in search results. Exact search domains are not as important as they used to be if at all (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2012a). | Have the desired keywords in the domain name but it is not as important as it used to be. |
| Aggregated CTR from Google SERPs for the domain are part of the Google algorithm (Patel, 2012). | The targeted keywords should match the meta description in order to increase the CTR. |
| Keyword is closely related to domain name through entity association (Moz, 2014). Google have patented linking search terms to other search terms. It basically works as if a hotel and its restaurant are always on the same page it links them and will offer suggested related searches at the bottom of the SERP (Slawski, 2013). | Place both your hotel and activities / products on individual pages across multiple sites to gain entity associations. |
| Average keyword number entered (getting significantly longer, turning into verbalised type questions (Bogatin, 2006). Often the most natural way to ask a question is by asking aloud. So we’ve combined our speech recognition expertise, understanding of language and the Knowledge Graph so that Voice Search can better interpret your questions and sometimes speak the answers back as full sentences (Singhal, 2012b). #81776. [project codename “Answers”] We've improved natural language detection for the unit conversion feature to better understand questions like, "What is 5 miles in kilometres?" (Google algorithm) (Singhal, 2012a). Google also acknowledges that people want more intuitive and simple to use interfaces such as voice search. Speech input is already the primary interface on Google Glass. Earlier this year Topeka Capital Markets analyst Victor Anthony said voice search was the next stage of long term growth for Google. Search queries using voice are more likely to use natural language than text searches. This will mean longer, more complex queries. Google recognises this and the Hummingbird Algorithm is designed to deliver better results for mobile users asking a question out loud. Google also recognises that people are not searching for a keyword but something more complex such as an answer to a question (Rayson, 2013). The bottom line on all of this is to keep creating quality content, and start thinking more about how you will provide context to help Google better rank it for open questions (Landry, 2013). | Structure content in the form of natural speech questions / answers. Have a FAQ page with anticipated questions i.e. attempting to match exact search engine natural open speech questions. Remember “Content is King”. Asking and answering questions out loud is a good method of achieving natural language. |
| Microsoft is reportedly looking at encrypting their Internet traffic which would include their search results, in response to the NSA spying controversy where it is believed that the NSA was able to gain access to Microsoft's global communication links (Slegg, 2013b). It means that agencies and other SEO-conscious digital marketers are going to have to be more concerned about rank-tracking rather than keyword tracking. That makes your job harder. It is now virtually impossible to | All internet companies / search engines are removing the availability of inputted keywords. Use different strategies to estimate and strategise segment specific |
write content for specific keywords and to track the results of content marketing around one specific keyword or group of keywords (McKay 2013; McGee, 2013). For marketers semantic analysis and providing in-depth content will be more important than a keyword strategy, more so since Google has stopped reporting keywords in Google Analytics (Rayson, 2013). Google Trends is a public web facility of Google Inc. based on Google Search, which shows how often a particular search-term is entered relative to the total search-volume across various regions of the world, and in various languages (Starkov, 2013).

Semantic matching technology also allows for similarity queries like “Find me a hotel with a lot of Chinese restaurants nearby.” The semantic matcher would also return – with a lower ranking – hotels with Asian, non-Chinese food because of the semantic similarity between “Asian” and “Chinese” restaurants (Niemann et al., 2006).

Studies by Pan et al. (2007) and Hwang et al. (2009) also indicate that searchers usually focus on cities as the geographical boundary instead of states or countries.

Third parties / Social Media

Social Media Selection Strategy

A hotel social media strategy is vitally important as a 10% improvement in reviews can result in 4.4% sales increase and a 10% variance in reviews can result in 2.8% sales decrease in revenue. In a tight margin industry this can significantly impact on profitability (Ye et al., 2009). 40% of social media reviewers subsequently purchased a room and 87% said it had a significant impact on their purchase. Within this research it was noted that higher star hotels were more likely to be booked based on a positive review. It was also noted that different starred hotels use social media in different ways. Luxury hotels used social media to fulfil the needs of customers while midscale hotels...
use social media to sell their rooms. A successful social media strategy takes time and commitment. Instant links / likes can be achieved via link farms however Google penalises these methods significantly. Interflora.co.uk was one of the biggest fallers as a result of this penalty. Their drop in traffic is graphically displayed in Figure 48 and is an example of what not to do (Naylor, 2013).

![Visibility Graph](image)

Figure 48: Interflora - Where have all the flowers gone? Source:- Naylor (2013)

Third Party Strategy

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<td>In the same way that Google trusts sites less when they link to spam sites or bad neighbourhoods; parts of our system encourage links to good sites (Cutts, 2009). Don’t add external links that require registration or login to access the content (Spencer, 2007). Any links intended to manipulate PageRank or a site’s ranking in Google search results may be considered part of a link scheme and a violation of Google’s Webmaster Guidelines (Google, 2014a). Site trust measured by how many links away your site is from highly trusted seed sites is a massively important ranking factor (Dean, 2013). This is measured by algorithms like TrustRank, MozTrust, etc by calculating link “distance” between a given page and a seeded trust source on the Internet. MozTrust can be improved by getting links from other sites with high MozTrust such as government institutions and universities. Quantity of links from known brands / entries to your domain is a ranking signal (Moz, 2014). Diversity of link types to the domain (e.g. forums, blogs, news, distribution or DA, etc is a ranking signal (Moz, 2014). Having an unnaturally large percentage of your links come from a single source (i.e. forum profiles, blog comments) may be a sign of web spam. On the other hand, links from diverse sources is a sign of a natural link profile and is going to rank highly and be more durable to updates. (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Target a diverse range of links from appropriate / relevant / real third party sites and government / institutions / universities / sites / known brands. Do not connect to spam or link factories type third party sites or log in pages requiring passwords. Do not have all your links from the same site. Identify and disavow bad links if your site has them. <a href="https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/disavow-links-main">https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/disavow-links-main</a></td>
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</table>
Links from pages that are considered top resources (or hubs) on a certain topic are given special treatment (Dean, 2013). If page A is related to page B and page B is related to page C then a connection between A & C is assumed. Additionally page title and page headings in relevancy scores can be considered more important than link text (Wall, 2005). If the subject matter of non affiliate links is similar they produce more relevant Google results (Bharat & Mihaila, 2000).

| The study shows how firms can identify members who are disproportionately influential in bringing others to the site, thus opening the door to possible targeting and customisation opportunities. A link from a site considered an “authority site” likely pass more juice than a link from a small, micro niche site (Dean, 2013). | Identify and link to all the respected or authoritative hotel sites and the local attractions or activities type sites etc. Include nofollow where appropriate. |
| Backlinks from aged domains may be more powerful than new domains (Dean, 2013). Also according to a Google patent, older links have more ranking power than newly minted backlinks (Acharya et al., 2008). | Target links from older sites and maintain older links you have if possible. |
| New links can boost your rankings even for highly competitive terms for a short period of time (Acharya et al., 2008). In this case, a new (“young”) link is like fresh content added to your site. However, too many of those can raise a flag; besides, like I said, this factor is believed to be not equal for all niches (Smarty, 2009b). | Target short term linking campaigns like a wedding or conference to have links raising you in the SERPs and searchers searching at the same time. |
| The total number of linking pages, even if some are on the same domain is a ranking factor. A site with positive link velocity usually gets a SERP boost however negative link velocity can significantly reduce rankings as it’s a signal of decreasing popularity. A sudden (and unnatural) influx of links is a sure fire sign of phony links. Matt Cutts has confirmed that sitewide links are “compressed” to count as a single link (Dean, 2013). Quantity of unique linking domains to the domain is a ranking factor (Moz, 2014). Velocity of link acquisition to the domain is a ranking signal. Distance from penalised domains (e.g. the domain is not heavily linked to by penalised sites (Moz, 2014). A sudden (and unnatural) influx of links is a sure fire sign of phony links (Dean, 2013). | Target the maximum number of links but especially from different domains. Build up the links steadily over time. Have a time period target if possible. |
| Moz (2014) claims that linking sites should be topically relevant at domain level for Google algorithm purposes. Dean (2013) supports this stating that a link from a site in a similar niche is significantly more powerful than a link from a completely unrelated site. Dean (2013) found that sites with an unnaturally high amount of links from unrelated sites were more susceptible to Penguin. Links from other pages ranking in the same SERP may be more valuable for a page’s rank for that particular keyword (Dean, 2013) thus Links from competitors | Sites that are being linked to the hotel site must be topical and relevant. Linking to competitors may be mutually valuable for destination tourism. Limit significantly links from unrelated |
may be a ranking signal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dean (2013) stated that at page level the “Hilltop Algorithm” states that link from a page’s closely tied to page’s content is more powerful than a link from an unrelated page.</td>
<td>The external link should be topical to the hotel site e.g. a horse riding site should link to the hotel’s activities page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A site’s reputation / reviews on sites like Yelp.com and RipOffReport.com likely play an important role in the Google algorithm (Dean, 2013). Google has a world-class sentiment analysis system (Large-Scale Sentiment Analysis for News and Blogs) but have not found an effective way to significantly improve search using sentiment analysis (Singhal, 2010). Seeking links through bad reputation will not help in the Google algorithm (Segal, 2010).</td>
<td>Attempt to ensure positive reviews on links for reputation enhancement. Do not seek negative links for Google algorithm purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moz (2014) states the Google algorithm favours links from sites of your own geotargeted area or language.</td>
<td>Target links from locally based sites in the local language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of link anchor text to the page (exact, partial, branded, URL, etc is a ranking factor (Moz, 2014). Barysevich (2013) noted that the average anchor text distribution for competitive keywords across websites ranking #1 was quite diverse. The variation in anchor text will also give search engines a greater understanding as to what your page is about (Mayne, 2011). If the page ranks for several other keywords it may give Google an internal sign of quality (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>The anchor text should be synonyms of the desired keyword. Establish the desired keywords and construct lists of synonyms that are to be used in anchor text. Have each page rank for some other keywords as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean (2013) and Website Management (2011) states links from country TLD (.de, .cn, .co.uk) may help you rank better in that country.</td>
<td>Target links from local TLDs .ie, .co.uk etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words like “sponsors”, “link partners” and “sponsored links” may decrease a link’s value (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Do not seek links that have “sponsored” “sponsors”, “link partners” and “sponsored links” listed near them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links embedded inside a page’s content are considered more powerful than links on an empty page or found elsewhere on the page. A good example of contextual links are backlinks from guestographics (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Embed links in the content and construct infographics for third party sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The words that tend to appear around your backlinks helps tell Google what that page is about (Dean, 2013). Slawski (2010) supported this finding in a Google algorithm patent that the context of a few words before and / or after the link is considered a ranking factor.</td>
<td>Attempt to have your links within a few words of the keyword / topical area you are targeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brands get mentioned without getting linked to in the Google</td>
<td>Get your hotel name /</td>
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</table>
algorithm. Google likely looks at non-hyperlinked brand mentions as a brand signal (Dean, 2013).

Many believe that Google gives DMOZ and Yahoo listed sites a little extra trust. It should be noted that a Yahoo listing is US$299 per year (Dean, 2013).

A link on a page with hundreds of out bound links passes less PR than a page with only a few OBLs. Google’s Link Schemes page lists “Excessive link exchanging” as a link scheme to avoid. (Dean, 2013).

Qualitative results demonstrated that travel blogs are an inexpensive means to gather rich, authentic, and unsolicited customer feedback (Pan et al., 2007). Because of industrial-level spamming, Google may significantly devalue links from forum profiles. Due to the proliferation of blog networks, Google probably gives more weight to links coming from “real sites” than from fake blogs. They likely use brand and user-interaction signals to distinguish between the two (Dean, 2013). Although definitely white hat SEO, links coming from guest posts especially in an author bio area may not be as valuable as a contextual link on the same page (Dean, 2013). If you’re using guest blogging as a way to gain links in 2014, you should probably stop, its spam. There are still many good reasons to do some guest blogging (exposure, branding, increased reach, community, etc (Cutts, 2014).

Forums are significantly devalued. Only target them if you are targeting specific consumers or seeking feedback as they do not help Google rankings. Target related sites and brands. Use guest blogs to directly market to groups but make all the links nofollow.

**Third Party Content Strategy**

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<tr>
<td>Deliberate and casual searchers have different recall levels (Kim <em>et al.</em>, 2013). The ZMOT is the “moment of truth” where the idea for the trip comes about. 92.3% use virtual communities, 60.6% use guide book sites, 58.1% use OTAs / auction sites.51.5% use DMO websites, 13.4% use meta travel search engines (Gretzel <em>et al.</em>, 2007). Singhal (2012) noted that #82367 [project codename “Other Ranking Components”] was launched to help find more high quality content from trusted sources.</td>
<td>Target deliberate searchers who are more likely to purchase. Traditional media should be targeted as a search initiation (ZMOT stimulus) moment. The internet content must be high quality and answer as much as possible the internet queries that come about from the ZMOT throughout your site and with all third parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The significant issue concerning hotels as a product is that as well as being hugely variable in quality and the services provided they are experience goods and their quality is only known to the user after the service has been consumed (Litvin</td>
<td>Make the content persuasive, experiential and a recommendation as its</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
et al., 2008). Online testimonials increasingly influencing choice of place to stay (Pollard, 2012). Going against SM recommendations increases both difficulty and confidence but more complex (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2001). In their study of life insurance purchases, Formisamo et al. (1982) found that 71% of consumers that followed another-based decision-making process made their purchase choice in keeping with the salesperson’s recommendation. In other-based decision-making processes, the final brand decision comes from a recommendation source.

Gretzel et al. (2007) noted that reviewers examine the credibility of other reviewers. 71% detailed descriptions, 64.7% the type of website where the review is posted, 59.3% the date the review was posted. 75.3% reviewer's travel experience, 65.9% similarity in terms of activities engaged in during a trip, 60% trip purpose and 58.5% writing in a polite and friendly manner. 53.1% similarity of trip purpose and age terms, gender or marital status. Reviews less credible from strangers. Two sided reviews (both positive and negative) considered more credible (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013).

Google has patented a system determining what an author is talking about and then understanding whether the sentiment is positive, negative, or neutral (Neylon et al., 2011). For example the word “small” which usually indicates positive sentiment when describing a portable electronic device but can indicate negative sentiment when used to describe the size of a hotel room or a portion in a restaurant. (Ward, 2013). Moz (2014) and Dean (2013) both believe links with positive sentiments around them likely carry more weight.

There should be positive and desirable natural sentiment and emotions in text links and the surrounding words for all products being offered? Do say “large luxurious rooms”. Do not say “small portions of food”. Construct content on all the local attractions / amenities etc in order to have the hotel mentioned when the consumer is seeking activities and may also get your hotel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>55% Attractions, 27% Amenities, 21% History, 17% Food and Beverages, 13% Natural Environment, 12% Overall Impression, 9% Water / Attractions /Activities, 8% Other Attractions, 8% Accommodations, 6% Access, 5% Car Travel and 3% Hospitality Environment (Pan et al., 2007).</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>central message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include the content writer’s identity and picture and give them credibility through their hotel / travel experience, purpose and demographics. Ensure the content is detailed, posted on a topical site, specific activity appropriate; It should be polite and friendly in tone. Tie in hotel guests to target market their friends and family if possible into content. Be balanced (+/-) as an overly positive comment has less credibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google has patented a system determining what an author is talking about and then understanding whether the sentiment is positive, negative, or neutral (Neylon et al., 2011). For example the word “small” which usually indicates positive sentiment when describing a portable electronic device but can indicate negative sentiment when used to describe the size of a hotel room or a portion in a restaurant. (Ward, 2013). Moz (2014) and Dean (2013) both believe links with positive sentiments around them likely carry more weight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There should be positive and desirable natural sentiment and emotions in text links and the surrounding words for all products being offered? Do say “large luxurious rooms”. Do not say “small portions of food”. Construct content on all the local attractions / amenities etc in order to have the hotel mentioned when the consumer is seeking activities and may also get your hotel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consumers who adopt own-based decision-making processes can be influenced by recommendations but do not rely on them exclusively to make decisions. For instance, a consumer may ask a close friend about which attributes are important to consider for a given product (Price & Feick, 1984), but may also gather complementary information from other information sources such as advertising, store visit, and salespeople in order to determine the pertinent product attributes to consider (Senecal et al., 2005).

Pre-empt and have alternative or additional information links on the page so that when a person is seeking additional information on the page attempt that they are channelled into your additional information.

The significance of edits and changes is also a freshness factor in the Google algorithm. Adding or removing entire sections is a more significant update than switching around the order of a few words. Google isn’t a big fan of autogenerated content. If they suspect that your site’s pumping out computer-generated content, it could result in a penalty or de-indexing (Dean, 2013).

Ensure content changes are significant. Do not autogenerate content.

Frequency of page updates also play a role in the Google algorithm (Dean, 2013).

Update pages frequently.

Although Google prefers fresh content, an older page that’s regularly updated may outperform a newer page in the Google algorithm (Dean, 2013).

Update and retain old pages.

How often a site is updated and especially when new content is added to the site is a site wide freshness factor in the Google algorithm (Dean, 2013).

Update even if only a single page often.

Google gives newer pages a boost for certain searches in the Google algorithm (Dean, 2013). Links from fresh sites pass fresh value and user behaviour indicates freshness (Shepard, 2011b).

Link to topical pages visiting your hotel. e.g. a conference with a page with your location on it or a wedding couple. i.e. target events for a short term burst so that they are trending in Google for a short term boost.

A link from a 1000-word post is more valuable than a link inside of a 25-word snippet. Links from poorly written or spun content don’t pass as much value as links from well-written, multimedia-enhanced content (Dean, 2013). Ghose et al. (2012) noted that too much feedback from online social communities, along with long sentences, complex words or spelling errors in the social media content, may lead consumers to terminate their search early.

Gain links from longer posts that are well written, grammatically correct and in clear English with no errors.

Lee (2014) in analysing Google’s penguin algorithm found positive correlations in content as follows: ratio of common

Use high quality content and sentence
words to total, average backlink flesch reading ease, average
backlink flesch Kincaid grade, number of meta words, meta
keywords character length and ratio of rare words to total.
Build on your authorship or press mentions credibility
(Spencer, 2007). More authoritative results. We’ve tweaked a
signal we use to surface more authoritative content (Cutts,
2012). We’re doing a better job of detecting when someone is
sort of an authority in a specific space it could be travel,
whatever and trying to make sure that those rank a little more
highly (Cutts, 2013b). Search-engine results with pictures are
more likely to be clicked.
More credible links get more clicks. More than 17% of search
results feature a verified writer in the top 100 results. Your
content will be indexed quicker if it’s linked to your Google+
profile (Cretella, 2013). Results with attached head shots are
showing significantly higher click-through rates... add a banner
image (optional but looks nicer) (Sammons, 2013). Use of
rel=”publisher” on rel=”author” markup is in the Google
algorithm (Moz, 2014). Cutts (2013a) indicated that author
credibility in certain areas was an algorithm signal. Matt Cutts
states they were using authors or creators since mid 2010 as a
ranking signal. They are looking at author credibility.
Twitter and Facebook rankings are used as a ranking signal
mostly in real time search but also in broad search
(GoogleWebmasterHelp, 2010).

Pages with lots of comments may be a signal of userinteraction and quality (Dean, 2013).
Search results with curse words or adult content won’t appear
for people with Safe Search turned on (Dean, 2013).
Having “poison” anchor text (especially pharmacy keywords)
pointed to your site may be a sign of spam or a hacked site.
Either way, it can hurt your site’s ranking (Dean, 2013).

structure with rare
words in accordance
with the Flesch
Kincaid grade.
Claim authorship in
both topical, quality
and quantity. Register
your content and
profile including a
picture at
https://plus.google.co
m/authorship?__hstc=
80710856.6cd2b435e8
b6b2c0a1054a755418
5efe.1389363201229.
1389363201229.1389
363201229.1&__hssc
=80710856.1.1389363
201229&__hsfp=1896
476610
Check who views
your content at
http://googlewebmaste
rcentral.blogspot.ie/20
11/12/clicks-andimpressions-forauthors.html
Implement
rel=”publisher” and
rel=”author”.
http://www.virante.or
g/blog/2013/06/14/rel
author-orrelpublisher-whichshould-i-use/
Use original non
duplicate content as
widely as possible to
increase authorship.
Allow comments to
posts if confident of
positive responses.
Examine the text to
see if any adult or
curse words are in the
content.
Check your links
credibility and their
anchor text for poison
words.
279


Only 4% of Americans trust advertising the most as a source for product or service information (Martins, 2013).

Fake positive and negative reviews exist.

Do not make content appear or be worded like an ad.

You need a negative and overly positive review policy i.e. address issues of negative reviews but try to identify if they are real or not and dissipate the negative review. Solicit reviews with incentives to push down the negative ones.

Social Media Strategy (Stages)

All Social Media should be examined to ensure it fulfils the basic needs at the different stages and thought processes experienced by searchers at the different stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Stages General</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staged Strategy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
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<td>Later</td>
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<td>Use reviews after</td>
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Social Media Strategy

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<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media increases confidence and reduces risk (Gretzel et al., 2007).</td>
<td>All Social Media should be examined to ensure it fulfils the basic needs at the different stages of the consumer thought processes: to get ideas, to narrow down choices, to confirm their decisions and to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The popularity of a business’s official social media profiles (Twitter, Facebook, and Foursquare) is a Google algorithm ranking factor (Moz, 2014). This is supported by (Sullivan, 2010).</td>
<td>compare and share experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word content to reduce or eliminate risk.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Constantly monitoring your own social media presence and your competitors’ social media presence. Establishing Competitive Benchmarking. Mining the content of social media conversations. Analysing the impact of social media findings and events on business (He et al., 2013). 93% of marketers use social media for business (Jessicadraws.com, 2014).</td>
<td>Put in place a Social Media plan to ensure your pages are viewed as often as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put in place strategies to increase the number of social media shares.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hook up to all the analytics dashboards for Google+, LinkedIn, and have a policy in place for answering the statements.</td>
<td>Monitor your competitor’s social media pages and replicate their content / ideas and target their customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With 87% of online users reporting that Social Media recommendations impact hotel choice (Mastrogiacomo, 2013).</td>
<td>Hook up to the dashboards. Also it should be as personalised and as positive as possible. i.e. restaurant manager if food related or room service etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM purchase impactors: 86% family &amp; close friends, 58% professional, 54% website review, 42% acquaintance, 39% blogger, 11% celebrity (yourdigitalconsultants.com, 2013). Different cultures have different Social Media and holiday planning behaviours (Cox et al., 2009).</td>
<td>Recommend the hotel and related products to customers on Social Media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean (2013) and Moz (2014) believe the amount of referring page level social shares from sites like Reddit, StumbleUpon and Digg may influence the link’s value in the Google algorithm.</td>
<td>Target individuals often and lots of them in order that their social media page / comment will be read by friends / family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshness of content on the site is a ranking term in the Google Algorithm (Moz, 2014).</td>
<td>Put in place strategies to increase the number of social media shares.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent events or hot topics, regularly recurring events or frequent updates are officially part of the Google algorithm (Singhal, 2011).</td>
<td>Have frequent regular Social Media interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72% read less than 10 reviews; only 7% read more than 20 reviews (Anderson, 2012).</td>
<td>Every time there is anything significant and relevant to the hotel or location e.g. a wedding a conference,</td>
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Social Media Customer Interaction Strategy

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<td>Regardless of the media channel, they agreed that hospitality operators should carefully listen to their customers and adapt their offerings and messages accordingly (Cornell University Round table, 2010). Consumers seem to feel more comfortable complaining via electronic means (Sparks &amp; Browning, 2010). Therefore, hotel managers should monitor guests’ comments on the web not only to understand their critical aspects pointed out by negative reviews but also to comprehend the service expected by the customer. In other words, consulting guests’ reviews can be an effective way to tune in to the market, improving the service offered and gaining a competitive edge (Zhang et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2011). It is claimed that tourism and hospitality firms tend to ignore e-complaints, and that they do this at their peril (Tyrell &amp; Wood, 2004; Hart &amp; Blackshaw, 2006). Therefore, online retailers should encourage consumers (their customers) to rate their shop in order to enhance its reputation and trustworthiness (Lee &amp; Turban, 2001). With the power that a single bad customer service experience can have at creating future business opportunities, it’s critical that you focus on investing in customer service (Martins, 2013). For marketers this means a need to focus on social engagement, reputation, authority and social proof through the sharing of content by people with authority, not simply numbers of shares or likes (Rayson, 2013).</td>
<td>Analyse consumers’ comments and segmenting significant areas and adapt the hotels product if appropriate or within budgetary constraints. Encourage consumers to rate your hotel. Engage with them and solve problems they identify and thank them for their comment and state their issue has been resolved. Do not ignore complaints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most literature suggests that meeting and exceeding visitor expectations is the most effective means of inducing positive word of mouth (Neelamegham &amp; Jain 1999; Nyer 1997).</td>
<td>Attempt to meet or exceed customer’s expectations even after the event.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Palmer et al. (2000) found that consumers are more satisfied with the service recovery if it is handled by frontline employees rather than managers. For hotel companies could be better managing the negative event directly at the hotel, personalising the solutions adopted trying in this way to avoid dealing with it before it goes online or as early as possible but attempt to have the relevant manager personalise a
the spread of negative WOM (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). 82% of buyers say they trust a company more when its CEO and senior leadership team are active in social media and 77% said they would be more likely to buy from a company who’s CEO uses social media (Odden, 2013). It helps having a woman at the top. Female small business CEOs are 78% more likely to say social media is highly valuable to their firm’s growth (20.8% vs. 11.6%), and 43% less likely to say it isn’t valuable (14.2% vs. 25%) (Marketingcharts.com, 2013). Women more likely than men to post negative reviews and less likely to purchase following a negative experience and more likely to post positive reviews and more likely to purchase following a positive experience (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Brown et al. (2007) note, attempts by managers to influence online discussions can be risky and any such dialogue needs to “be open, honest, and authentic”.

From a practical point of view, the findings suggest that travel marketers need to target those who are opinion leaders and need to make it easy for them to share information. At the same time, mechanisms could be developed to recognise opinion leaders (Yoo et al., 2011).

Kannan et al. (2001) suggest that instant feedback from consumers can now be obtained due to the fact that mobile technology is accessible to users at all times.

Site Specific Social Media Strategy

In determining which social media to target it must be considered that different social media have different levels of market share (Figure 5), traffic referrals (Figure 49) and small business owner’s perceptions and usage. Pinterest users are 80% female (Wallace, 2012) and are believed to be a Google ranking algorithm signal (Dean, 2013). 61% of Tripadvisor reviewers believe it more trustworthy than traditional travel providers however they believe the hotel manager not credible as they are unspontaneous and non independent (Gretzel et al., 2007). Facebook has the greatest impact on purchase behaviour at 47% and 54% access via their mobile (Van Den Beld, 2012). A strategy targeting all the major social media networks is probably required as Duggan and Smith...
(2014) found that 36% of internet users say that they use just one of the five social media sites specified in this report (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn), while 42% use two or more of these sites. The remaining 22% of internet users have not adopted any of the five major platforms we asked about in our survey. It should also be noted that social signals are believed to be a considerable element of the Google algorithm and therefore particularly valuable to target indeed Shepard (2013a) found that after Page Authority, a URL's number of Google +1s is more highly correlated with search rankings than any other factor. In fact, the correlation of Google +1s beat out other well known metrics including linking root domains, Facebook shares, and even keyword usage.

Figure 49: In Q4, Facebook, Pinterest, StumbleUpon saw 30%+ gains in referrals
Source: Wong (2014)
Figure 50: Small Biz owners say LinkedIn offers them more potential than Facebook, Twitter Source:- Marketingcharts.com 2013

Facebook Strategy

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<th>Reference</th>
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<td>On inputting a standardised search engine initial input “hotels location” into the Facebook search box the first thing people see is a small picture, name, the address “likes this” and “were here” numbers.</td>
<td>Get a picture that works at this size and increase the “likes this” and “were here” numbers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future content personalisation implementations should include integration to Facebook’s OpenGraph, which allows targeting certain demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, etc.) (Starkov &amp; Safer, 2010). While Google has the ability to use Facebook influence in their algorithm, there doesn’t seem to be any evidence that Google is using it to discover, index, or rank any content on the web at this time. This shouldn't dissuade people from using Facebook for marketing purposes, because shares and updates clearly can deliver traffic and exposure (Slegg, 2013b). I think over 10 years, we’re more likely to understand identity and to understand the social connections between people, but at least for the time being, we have to deal with the web as it is and what we are allowed to crawl and what we can easily extract from that and count on being able to access that in the future (Slegg, 2014).</td>
<td>Facebook is supposed not to be a ranking signal; it may become one over time but should be used as strategy in itself and not just for SEO.</td>
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<td>Although Google can’t see most Facebook accounts, it’s likely they consider the number of Facebook likes a page receives as a weak ranking signal. Facebook shares because they’re more similar to a backlink may have a stronger influence than Facebook likes (Dean, 2013). Moz (2014) supports this</td>
<td>There are contradictions about the ranking signals Facebook comments / likes / shares. They</td>
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believing the quantity of Facebook comments / likes / shares for the page are a ranking factor. should be sought more for their intrinsic value.

For advertisers, that means that they can no longer design an ad whose main purpose is to showcase a Facebook user’s likes or check-ins to their friends. But they are free to put up ads for their products, in both news feeds and on the side panels of a Facebook pages, that include people’s likes and pictures – so long as they are not the main focus of the ad, says Facebook spokesman Tim Rathschmidt. (Dwoskin, 2014).

Make your promotions not look like ads and ensure the hotel is not the main focus of the promotion.

As with Twitter, Facebook shares and likes coming from popular Facebook pages may pass more weight in the Google algorithm (Dean, 2013). The authority of users sharing link on Facebook to a page is considered a ranking factor (Moz, 2014).

Target shares and likes from popular and authoritative Facebook pages.

Facebook only publishes a limited number of the posts you send out. They filter them based on the engagement and traction they gain. Weddings and babies are the most popular views. Extremely low engagement countries associated with link farms such as Egypt and, India and the Philippines will lower your engagement figures and lower the percentage of posts your friends will see (Muller, 2014).

Do weddings and christenings Facebook posts of existing customers. Target specific non spam countries for paid advertisement. Target many people at a wedding / Christening in attempt to reach all their friends.

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<th>Twitter Strategy</th>
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<td>Your tweets have a 12 times higher chance of being retweeted if you ask for it, and 23 times higher if you actually spell out the word &quot;retweet”. (Cooper, 2013).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tweets that include links are 86% more likely to be retweeted (Cooper, 2013).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tweets with image links get 2 times the engagement rate of those without (Cooper, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s likely that Tweets coming from aged, authority Twitter profiles with a lot of followers have more of an effect than tweets in the Google algorithm than new, low influence accounts (Dean, 2013) Also the authority of users tweeting links to a page (Moz, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like links, the number of tweets a page has may influence its rank in Google (Dean, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A social media account with 10,000 followers and 2 posts is probably interpreted a lot differently than another 10,000-follower strong account with lots of interaction in the Google Algorithm (Dean, 2013).</td>
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</table>
Text alone requires more cognitive efforts (Pan and Zhang, 2010). Tweets with 1 – 2 hash tags get 21% more engagement than normal however 3+ get 17% less. The moral of this is to only photo 1 – 2 people each time when tweeting them (Cooper, 2013).

Do not tweet text alone. Send tweets with 1 – 2 hash tags in each one only.

Tweets with less than 100 characters get 17% more engagement. This is another stat that was similar for Facebook. Shorter posts tend to garner more engagement on both platforms. If you’re posting tweets with links, Dan Zarrella’s research shows that 120 to 130 characters will be your sweet spot (Cooper, 2013).

Do not tweet text alone. Send tweets with 1 – 2 hash tags in each one only.

Post Tweets without links of less than 100 characters. Tweets with links should have 120 – 130 characters.

Worse, 56% of customer tweets to companies are ignored. 69% of follows are based on recommendations from friends. 34% of marketers say they have generated leads using Twitter (Pelser, 2012). 50% of Twitter users are more likely to purchase from brands they follow (Odden, 2013).

Respond to tweet complaints and engage on a follower campaign as they are 50% more likely to purchase.

Google+ Strategy

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<tr>
<td>Verified Google+ Authorship: In February 2013, Google CEO Eric Schmidt famously claimed: “Within search results, information tied to verified online profiles will be ranked higher than content without such verification, which will result in most users naturally clicking on the top (verified) results.” Verified authorship may already be a trust signal (Dean, 2013). “In the short term, we’re still going to have to study and see how good the signal is, so right now, there’s not really a direct effect where if you have a lot of +1s, you’ll rank higher (Crum, 2012). Establishing authority with Google through a Google+ author profile creates a competitive advantage for driving more traffic and leads to your blog or website (Sammons, 2013).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a verified Google+ author by submitting original quality content regularly which will drive traffic to your website. Strategy = claim your content to increase your Google+ profile and have a photo. This is the page where you claim it and put up your photo. <a href="https://plus.google.com/authorship">https://plus.google.com/authorship</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of Google+ Shares and +1s (Moz, 2014). Number of Google+1’s, although Matt Cutts gone on the record as saying Google+ has “no direct effect” on rankings, it’s hard to believe that they’d ignore their own social network (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target the maximum number of Google+ shares and +1s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean (2013) indicated that Google often places Google+ Local results above the “normal” organic SERPs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place the town or city location in every Google+ result.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean (2013) believes that Google fishes for bricks and mortar location data to determine whether or not a site is a big brand i.e. real businesses have offices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State the address of the hotel in all Google+ pages and register it with them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quantity of + 1s to Google + Brand page / Places page (Moz, 2014).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you brand / location in every</td>
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Domain is associated with high authority author(s) through Google+ (Moz, 2014). Size of Google+ author circles (Moz, 2014). Size of Google+ publisher circle (e.g. the number of people who have brand pages in circles) (Moz, 2014). It’s logical that Google would weigh +1’s coming from authoritative accounts more than from accounts without many followers (Dean, 2013).

Target high authority authors with large Google+ author circles and brand circles for Google+ pages.

Authority of users sharing page via Google+ (Moz, 2014).

Target authoritative users for Google+ shares.

Google+ Circles: Google shows higher results for authors and sites that you’ve added to your Google Plus Circles (Dean, 2013).

Target authors and sites; that will put you in their circles. Do not put competing hotels in your circles.

Quality of mentions of the brand / domain on social sites. Quantity of +1s to Google + Brand page / Places page. A strategy of trying to get every user to Google+ the hotel. i.e. sending them their picture etc an offer etc (Google Algorithm) (Moz, 2014).

Have a Google+ page for every group e.g. conference, wedding etc.

Wikipedia Strategy

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<td>Wikipedia has high domain authority (Cooper, 2011). Because Wikipedia does dominate the SERPs, it makes it pretty important for your company to have an entry in Wikipedia. Link to en.wikinews.org if there is an article there (Spencer, 2007).</td>
<td>Write a Wikipedia hotel page(s) to knock an intermediary off page 1 of the SERP. Create Wikinews if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations for the domain in Wikipedia. Wikipedia are nofollow for links and thus do not qualify for linkage SEO purposes. There is a perception Wikipedia can backfire or infringe other SEO negative aspects such as spamming unoriginal text (Schwartz, 2012).</td>
<td>Use original text in a Wikipedia page only. Note: Wikipedia links are nofollow for SEO purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The page should conform to Wikipedia guidelines / references / citations (Wikipedia, 2014)</td>
<td>Make the page as credible and trustworthy as possible by obeying Wikipedia referencing rules and having credible citations everywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Wikipedia page should be written by a disinterested third party who considers your company notable enough and worth the time to start an entry about you (Spencer, 2007). Microsoft recently attempted to pay a blogger to edit a Wikipedia article about OpenXML and was reprimanded by Wikipedia (Spencer, 2007). You should not use your companies email address when</td>
<td>The article in Wikipedia should appear to be written by a neutral credible third party. Credible references and</td>
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adding information to a page as it looks biased (Cooper, 2011).

Because external links are so hard to add (at least to make them stick, for longer than five minutes before Wikipedia anti-spam zealots remove / revert them), try adding references. Link to en.wikinews.org if there is an article there (Spencer, 2007).

On Wikipedia, notability is a test used by editors to decide whether a topic can have its own article. A topic is also presumed notable if it meets the criteria outlined in a subject-specific guideline listed in the box on the right (Wikipedia, 2013).

Watch function within Wikipedia.

Although the links are nofollow, many think that getting a link from Wikipedia gives you a little added trust and authority in the eyes of search engines (Dean, 2013).

LinkedIn Strategy

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Real businesses have company LinkedIn pages and the Google algorithm ranks them (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Open a LinkedIn page for the hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having LinkedIn profiles of employees that say they work for your company is a brand signal (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Encourage all current and past employees to list the hotel in the hotel’s LinkedIn page.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hotel Accommodation Websites

Site Level Structure / Site links Strategy

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<th>Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>But just having a website does not guarantee that potential or current guests will be attracted to the site (Kasavana, 2001). In general, Websites are often designed by practitioners based on past experience, existing examples, or technological considerations (Lee &amp; Gretzel, 2012).</td>
<td>Do not blindly copy old hotel sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the home page is the favourite page in nearly one third of all visits, essential information should be available on this top navigation level. As importantly as moving basic information higher, these hotels should move transaction related</td>
<td>Have the booking engine as a small widget on all relevant pages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
information higher than the two clicks found in this study. Popular third-party sites such as hotels.com and tiscover.com have their transaction related information on the site's homepage (Schegg *et al.*, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms of Service and Privacy Pages: These two pages help tell Google that a site is a trustworthy member of the internet (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013).</th>
<th>Create Terms of Service and Privacy pages.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Here’s how to generate on-page trust: References and Sources, Thorough About Us Page (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Attach references and Sources and have an About Us Page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information on facilities, environment, distance from locations and accessibility (Niemann <em>et al.</em>, 2006).</td>
<td>Have information on facilities, environment, distance from locations and accessibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Click numbers and click ease largely determine if a page is seen or not (Nielsen, 2008).</td>
<td>Minimise the number of clicks a page is from the main page and make the interanchor text appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#82879. [project codename “Answers”] We've improved the triggering for the &quot;when is&quot; feature and understanding of queries like, &quot;When is Mother's Day?&quot; (Singhal, 2012).</td>
<td>Have an FAQ page to answer question type keywords inputted into search engines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitelinks are valuable for brand reputation, and a strategy to control a greater area of the search results page. They also help users navigate to the appropriate section of your website without having to click the homepage. Your website can become more visible to your potential customers. Sitelinks push other listings lower on the page including your competitors, or in our case torrents. Most importantly displaying 6 - 8 links in the organic search results will easily increase your CTR (Click Through Rate) (Dunbar, 2013).</td>
<td>Utilise sitelinks for your hotel’s site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Architecture: A well put-together site architecture (especially a silo structure) helps Google thematically organise your content (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Create a group of isolated segments / keywords and use nofollow links to isolate them in a particular area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Pages: The number of pages on a site is a weak sign of authority. At the very least a large site helps distinguish it from thin affiliate sites (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013)</td>
<td>Create an extensive number of pages one for each identified segment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Us Page: The aforementioned Google Quality Document states that they prefer sites with an “appropriate amount of contact information”. Supposed bonus if your contact information matches your Whois info (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Have a contact us page but have the number match your Whois number.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
makes the Main Content immediately visible” (Dean, 2013). Priority of Page in Sitemap: The priority a page is given via the sitemap.xml file may influence ranking (Dean, 2013). Presence of Sitemap: A sitemap helps search engines index your pages easier and more thoroughly, improving visibility. (Dean, 2013). Breadcrumb Navigation: This is a style of user-friendly site-architecture that helps users (and search engines) know where they are on a site: Both SearchEngineJournal.com and Ethical SEO Consulting claim that this set-up may be a ranking factor (Dean, 2013).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User Browsing History: Sites that you frequently visit while signed into Google get a SERP bump for your searches. (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). 194.8 hotels in the initial consideration set (Jones &amp; Chen, 2011). Hotels found early are more persuasive as humans think positively and are resistant to similar hotels found later (Lee &amp; Gretzel, 2012; Kim &amp; Fesenmaier, 2008).</td>
<td>Ensure your hotel site is visited frequently and engage in advertisement so that the hotel site is visited as early in the process as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country TLD of Referring Domain: Getting links from country-specific top level domain extensions (.de, .cn, .co.uk) may help you rank better in that country (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Have the local TLD e.g. .ie in Ireland or .co.uk in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the domain (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). One of the many factors in Google's search engine algorithm is the age of a domain name. In a small way, the age of a domain gives the appearance of longevity and therefore a higher relevancy score in Google. Driven by spam sites which pop up and die off quickly, the age of the domain is usually a sign whether or not a site is yesterday's news or tomorrow's popular site (Webconfs.com, 2013). Domain Age: In this video, Matt Cutts states that: “The difference between a domain that’s six months old verses one year old is really not that big at all”. In other words, they do use domain age…but it’s not very important (GoogleWebmasterHelp, 2013).</td>
<td>Have an aged domain name. If changing it keep both the old and new for a long time. Age can be determined approximately by this site. <a href="http://www.webconfs.com/domain-age.php">http://www.webconfs.com/domain-age.php</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time until domain name expires (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Domain registration length: A Google patent states: “Valuable (legitimate) domains are often paid for several years in advance, while doorway (illegitimate) domains rarely are used for more than a year. Therefore, the date when a</td>
<td>When renewing the domain name book it for the maximum amount of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain expires in the future can be used as a factor in predicting the legitimacy of a domain” (Dean, 2013)</td>
<td>Pick a name for the hotel / products that are inputted frequently into Google such as the location “name” and “hotel” and the same for restaurants / bars etc.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search volume for the brand / domain (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014).</td>
<td>Place keywords in the H1, H2, H3 header tags.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword present in the page’s Header Tags (H1, H2, H3) (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Keyword Appears in H1 Tag: H1 tags are a “second title tag” that sends another relevancy signal to Google, according to results from this correlation study. Keyword in H2, H3 Tags: Having your keyword appear as a subheading in H2 or H3 format may be another weak relevancy signal. SEO Moz’s panel agrees: (Dean, 2013). There is some benefit to using H1 tags for SEO. However this may be in small measure (Butterworth, 2012).</td>
<td>Have an SSL certificate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSL Certificate (Ecommerce Sites): Google has confirmed that they index SSL certificates. It stands to reason that they’ll preferentially rank ecommerce sites with SSL certificates (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Make the domain the name of the hotel. If the exact match is not available make the first name in the domain the keyword if possible. In the case of the hotel restaurant / products include the keywords in the subdomain / URL string for the restaurant / products. Have a short URL string and make the important pages closer to the home page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword is the exact match root domain name (e.g. “keyword.com”) (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Exact Match Domain: EMDs may still give you an edge…if it’s a quality site. But if the EMD happens to be a low quality site, it’s vulnerable to the EMD update (Dean, 2013). Keyword is present in root domain name (e.g. “ABCkeyword.com”) (Moz, 2014). Keyword is the first word in the root domain name (e.g. “keywordABC.com”) (Moz, 2014). Keyword As First Word in Domain: SEO Moz’s 2011 Search Engine Ranking Factors panellists agreed that a domain that starts with their target keyword has an edge over sites that either don’t have the keyword in their domain or have the keyword in the middle or end of their domain (Dean, 2013). Keyword is the subdomain name (e.g. “keyword.ABC.com”). Keyword is the secondary subdomain name (e.g. “keyword.123.ABC.com”). Keyword is used in a hybrid of the domain name (“key.word.com” or “key.wo.rd”) (Moz, 2014). Keyword present in the page’s URL string (Moz, 2014). Keyword in URL: Another important relevancy signal. URL Length: Search Engine Journal notes that excessively long URLs may hurt search visibility. URL Path: A page closer to the homepage may get a slight authority boost (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
data, title tags that start with a keyword tend to perform better than title tags with the keyword towards the end of the tag (Dean, 2013). A title tag is the main text that describes an online document. Be Mindful of Length. A maximum amount of 70 characters will display in the search results. The engines will show an ellipsis, "..." to indicate that a title tag has been cut off. Place Important Keywords Close to the Front of the Title Tag. According to Moz’s testing and experience, the closer to the start of the title tag a keyword is, the more helpful it will be for ranking and the more likely a user will be to click them in search results. See below (Moz, 2014). Keyword in Title: Google gives extra love to links on pages that contain your page’s keyword in the title (“Experts linking to experts”).

Organic Click Through Rate for a Keyword: Pages that get clicked more in CTR may get a SERP boost for that particular keyword. Organic CTR for All Keywords: A page’s (or site’s) organic CTR for all keywords is ranks for may be a human-based, user interaction signal. (Dean, 2013).

Keyword present in bold / italic / em tag (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Keyword appears in the main “content” area of the page. Keyword Density: Although not as important as it once was, keyword density is still something Google uses to determine the topic of a webpage. But going overboard can hurt you. (Dean, 2013). Keyword “density” (percent of words on the page that are the target keyword) is an “ideal” quantity (Moz, 2014). Keyword Prominence: Having a keyword appear in the first 100 words of a page’s content appears to be a significant relevancy signal. (Moz, 2014). Keyword Word Order: An exact match of a searcher’s keyword in a page’s content will generally rank better than the same keyword phrase in a different order. For example: consider a search for: “cat shaving techniques”. A page optimised for the phrase “cat shaving techniques” will rank better than a page optimised for “techniques for shaving a cat”. Quantity of Other Keywords Page Ranks For: If the page ranks for several other keywords it may give Google an internal sign of quality. Single Site Results for Brands: Domain or brand oriented keywords bring up several results from the same site. Site over optimisation: Includes on page factors like keyword stuffing, header tag stuffing, and excessive keyword decoration. Page over optimisation: Many people report that unlike Panda, Penguin targets individual page (and even then just for certain keywords) (Dean, 2013). Keyword is the very first word / phrase of the title element (Moz, 2014). Human Editors: Although never confirmed, Google has filed a patent for a system that allows human editors to influence the SERPs (Dean, 2013).

Penalised Whois Owner: If Google identifies a particular

Make your Whois

Bold / italic or increase the font size of the keywords. Have the keywords in the main content and in the first 100 words or first word if possible. Have the keywords appear often but in their most natural spoken exact order. Have the page rank for other related keywords. Insert your brand / hotel name / product on every page. Do not over optimise. The content is for humans so make it natural and engaging.
person as a spammer it makes sense that they would scrutinise other sites owned by that person (Dean, 2013). Public vs. Private WhoIs: Private WhoIs information may be a sign of “something to hide”. Matt Cutts is quoted as stating at Pubcon 2006: “…When I checked the Whois on them, they all had “whois privacy protection service” on them. That’s relatively unusual. …Having Whois privacy turned on isn’t automatically bad, but once you get several of these factors all together, you’re often talking about a very different type of webmaster than the fellow who just has a single site or so.” (Dean, 2013).

Whether you call them rich snippets or by their proper names, the act of marking up your content to tell the engines more details about the content is a wise investment. By following the plan outlined at Schema.org, you can embed meta tags around your content. Visitors won’t see them, but the search engines will, enabling us to understand your content and use it in unique ways to create more engaging search experiences (Bing.com, 2011). Page contains schema.org or other structured data (Moz, 2014). Pages that support microformats may rank above pages without it. This may be a direct boost or the fact that pages with microformatting have a higher SERP CTR (Dean, 2013).

Aggregated page load speed for pages of domain. First, this is actually a relatively small impact change, so you don’t need to panic. Second, speeding up your website is a great thing to do in general. Visitors to your site will be happier (and might convert more or use your site more), and a faster web will be better for all. Third, this change highlights that there are very constructive things that can directly improve your website’s user experience (Cutts, 2010). Amazon’s calculated that a page load slowdown of just one second could cost it $1.6 billion in sales each year. Google has calculated that by slowing its search results by just four tenths of a second they could lose 8 million searches per day meaning they’d serve up many millions fewer online adverts (Eaton, 2012). Site Uptime: Lots of downtime from site maintenance or server issues may hurt your ranking (and can even result in de-indexing if not corrected) (Dean, 2013). Page load speed (Google, 2013).

Today we’re including a new signal in our search ranking algorithms: site speed. Site speed reflects how quickly a website responds to web requests. Speeding up websites is important not just to site owners, but to all Internet users. Faster sites create happy users and we’ve seen in our internal studies that when a site responds slowly, visitors spend less time there (Google, 2010). Using site speed in search engine ranking (Moz, 2014). Page Loading Speed via HTML: Both Google and Bing use page loading speed as a ranking factor. Search engine spiders can estimate your site speed fairly accurately based on a page’s code and file size. Page Loading
Inbound Links Strategy

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<tr>
<td>In the same way that Google trusts sites less when they link to spammy sites or bad neighbourhoods, parts of our system encourage links to good sites (Cutts, 2009)</td>
<td>Connect to appropriate / relevant / real third party sites. Do not connect to spam or link factory third party sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Traffic: It’s confirmed that Google uses data from Google Chrome to determine whether or not people visit a site (and how often). Sites with lots of direct traffic are likely higher quality than sites that get very little direct traffic (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Have many of the external links as a full domain name so that users will either click on it or copy and paste into the URL box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website is listed frequently on LinkedIn profiles as an employer (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Google's search algorithm looks favourably on LinkedIn. Use strong keyword phrases in your LinkedIn headlines and job descriptions. Develop 10 to 20 keyword phrases about your business. Keyword rich anchor text, rather than generic text such as &quot;our website, Make your LinkedIn profile available to the public to increase your exposure in Google &quot;Make my public profile visible to everyone.&quot; Update information frequently on LinkedIn. Keep your company profile up to date and provide deep links to your company website. Add company highlights such as awards, upgraded ratings and mentions on prominent websites or publications (Swenson, 2013). Customise your public profile URL. You have the option of creating what's called a vanity URL within LinkedIn to change that numeric string to your own name. This is far more search engine friendly, not to mention user friendly and business card friendly (Levin, 2011).</td>
<td>Match your hotel website to the various LinkedIn pieces of information. Have each manager with the correct location title, the planned targeted keywords, and a link directly to department page on the hotel website, nofollow links from the department page. Place all awards on the LinkedIn page. Claim a vanity LinkedIn URL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain Trust / TrustRank: Site trust measured by how many links away your site is from highly trusted seed sites is a massively important ranking factor (Dean, 2013). Topical relevance of linking domains (Google Algorithm) (Moz, 2014).</td>
<td>Have trustworthy and topical links to each different page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nofollow Links: One of the most controversial topics in SEO. Google’s official word on the matter is: “In general, we don’t follow them.” Which suggests that they do…at least in certain cases. Having a certain % of nofollow links may also indicate a natural vs. unnatural link profile (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Have a natural amount of nofollows i.e. don’t nofollow everybody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the co-occurrence Keyword and Brand across web. Quantity of unique feeds that contain a mention of the brand</td>
<td>Have your targeted keywords for your</td>
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Outbound Links Strategy

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<tr>
<td><strong>Outbound Link Quality:</strong> Many SEOs think that linking out to authority sites helps send trust signals to Google (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013). The 2011 correlation data showed that there was a 0.04 correlation between the number of external links on a page and higher rankings (Google algorithm) (Shepard, 2011a). If you link to other sites and do not nofollow you leak your pagerank and you can put nofollows internally on your site to funnel the pagerank to the main page on your site (Google algorithm) (Cutts, 2009). 24% of online bookings from own websites (Walker, 2012) despite 99% allowing bookings on own site (Talon and Gonzalez, 2011) Commission 10% - 30% (Starkov &amp; Price, 2005). CTR from 0.2% - 0.4% of ARR (Starkov &amp; Schaal, 2012). Individual hotels have weak rate negotiation powers. Hoteliers seeking direct bookings (eBusiness W@tch, 2006). Increase in consumers booking directly with the hotel (Jeong &amp; Gregoire, 2003).</td>
<td><strong>Have external links on a page.</strong> <strong>Put nofollow on your external links to retain link juice and internal links to raise the PageRank of important pages such as the booking engine. Have a link to the booking widget on all relevant pages.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Outbound Links:</strong> Too many dofollow OBLs may “leak” PageRank, which can hurt search visibility (Dean, 2013). Too Many Outbound Links: Straight from the aforementioned Quality rater document: “Some pages have way, way too many links, obscuring the page and distracting from the Main Content” (Dean, 2013). Hiding Affiliate Links:</td>
<td><strong>Minimise the number of outbound links with nofollow if necessary. Try to have everything on one page with another site for related</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Going too far when trying to hide affiliate links (especially with cloaking) can bring on a penalty (Dean, 2013).

Affiliate links themselves probably won’t hurt your rankings. But if you have too many, Google’s algorithm may pay closer attention to other quality signals to make sure you’re not a “thin affiliate site” (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013).

Internal Link Anchor Text: Internal link anchor text is another relevancy signal, although probably weighed differently than backlink anchor text (Dean, 2013).

Number of Internal Links Pointing to Page: The number of internal links to a page indicates its importance relative to other pages on the site. Quality of Internal Links Pointing to Page: Internal links from authoritative pages on domain have a stronger effect than pages with no or low PR (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Excess PageRank Sculpting: Going too far with PageRank sculpting by nofollowing all outbound links or most internal links may be a sign of gaming the system. Lack of information especially on economy hotel sites (Dean, 2013).

Reference

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<tr>
<td>You should treat the anchor text for internal links in the same way that you do for external links. By that I mean you should try and include the keywords you are targeting. At this point you should take extra care to vary the anchor text you use. This is because it would look unnatural to search engines for many pages to link to one using exactly the same anchor text. Think of the range of terms you are targeting for that page. The variation in anchor text will also give search engines a greater understanding as to what your page is about (Mayne, 2011). Diversity of Anchor Text / Linking Domain ratios (e.g. low occurrence of site-wide anchors (Google Algorithm) (Moz, 2014). MicrositeMasters (2012) found that sites with 90% - 100% the same anchor keywords were penalised by Penguin. It recommends multiple micro sites if you have to keep the same keyword.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use synonyms throughout your site for every page keywords or use multiple sites for identical keywords.</td>
</tr>
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Magnitude of Content Updates: The significance of edits and changes is also a freshness factor. Adding or removing entire sections is a more significant update than switching around the order of a few words. Historical Updates Page Updates: How often has the page been updated over time? Daily, weekly? Frequency of page updates also play a role in freshness. Page Age: Although Google prefers fresh content, an older page that’s regularly updated may outperform a newer page. Site Updates: How often a site is updated and especially when new content is added to the site is a site wide freshness factor (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Recency of Content |
| Update content significantly, often and consistently over time on an old page. Do not have out of date or incorrect pages. Update time sensitive pages e.g. an event currently happening in the hotel. |
Updates: Google Caffeine update favours recently updated content, especially for time sensitive searches. Highlighting this factor’s importance, Google shows the date of a page’s last update for certain pages (Dean, 2013). As described, the most common inconvenience was that the content of the Web pages and the sources were out of date. Some information searchers were frustrated when what they found (the text posted on the sites) did not correspond to their needs and they then had to click on another site to continue with their searching (Ho et al., 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uniqueness of content across the whole site (Google Algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Unique content simply means that those words, in that order, don't appear anywhere else on the web (Fishkin, 2013a). Google's been very specific about this, that duplicate, low quality content in one area can harm you across your entire site (Fishkin, 2013b). Duplicate Content: Identical content on the same site (even slightly modified) can negatively influence a site’s search engine visibility (Dean, 2013). Syndicated Content: Is the content on the page original? If it’s scraped or copied from an indexed page it won’t rank as well as the original or end up in their Supplemental Index (Dean, 2013).</th>
<th>Make all your content unique. Do not use duplicate content anywhere. Claim authorship to avoid syndication issues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful Content: As pointed out by Backlinko reader Jared Carrizales, Google may distinguish between “quality” and “useful” content (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013). MDN might be higher quality, better information, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's more useful to everyone (Schwartz, 2013b). Content Provides Value and Unique Insights: Google has stated that they’re on the hunt for sites that don’t bring anything new or useful to the table, especially thin affiliate sites (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Provide useful and quality content that provides value and unique insights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google has stated many times that it wants to rank and present content to its users that is valuable and is research based, and not thin, low quality content (Ross, 2012). Reading level of the content on the page (Moz, 2014). Reading Level: There’s no doubt that Google estimates the reading level of webpages: Google Reading Level (Google, 2014d). But what they do with that information is up for debate. Some say that a basic reading level will help your page rank because it will appeal to the masses. However, Linchpin SEO discovered that reading level was one factor that separated quality sites from content mills. Content Length: Content with more words can cover a wider breadth and are likely preferred to shorter superficial articles. SERPIQ found that content length correlated with SERP position. (Dean, 2013). When new results appear, the program determines their appropriate reading level based on factors such as vocabulary, word length and grammatical complexity. Google, (2014). I’d also put a side bet on the thought that “ideal reading level” (at least according to the search engines) is different from topic</td>
<td>Do not have thin, low quality content. Have a reading level that is appropriate to the target audience. Have an appropriate amount of content.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
to topic. Make sure you are writing content at an appropriate level for your target audience (Waterman, 2009).

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<tr>
<td>Grammar and Spelling: Proper grammar and spelling is a quality signal, although Cutts gave mixed messages in 2011 on whether or not this was important (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Use correct spelling and grammar.</td>
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**Personalisation / Segmentation / Activity Strategy**

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<tr>
<td>A personalisation strategy entails delivering unique and relevant content to site visitors based on their demographics, location, loyalty (returning website visitors), pathing behaviour, customer segment (leisure, business, group, etc.), travel preferences and/or reward program affiliation. This strategy takes on various tactics, starting with matching content for those visitors who identify themselves as part of a certain group that warrants targeting via specific content. Delivering content that is unique and relevant to site visitors is not only pioneering, it will give your hotel an edge. When shopping around for a new website redesign, content personalisation must be one of your top priorities (Starkov &amp; Safer, 2010).</td>
<td>Draw up a list of target segments, and personalise a page for each one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is now growing opportunity for DMOs to engage travellers while they are at the destination using mobile websites (Choi et al., 2007). Examples of secondary trip decision information that should be integrated into mobile DMO websites would include detailed information about destination attractions, food and beverage options, detailed maps, and instant mobile coupons and other promotions, as this type of mobile website content would influence travel plans that were flexible or yet to have been made (Stienmetz et al., 2013). Thus, they sought and found the relevant information, and used it for their next move on the screen. They also tended to open two or more windows and browsed web pages within the information categories on a website in order to check if the content was correct. In addition, they visited two or more websites and moved among the sites to examine the information context from the different sources (Ho et al., 2012).</td>
<td>Engage with your DMO to ensure their content is appropriate to your central message. Ensure there are off site pages that confirm the content of your hotel pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Query Deserves Freshness: Google gives newer pages a boost for certain searches (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013). Links from Fresh Sites Pass Fresh Value. User Behaviour Indicates Freshness (Google Algorithm) (Shepard, 2011b). Freshness of content on the site (Google Algorithm) (Moz, 2014).</td>
<td>Have a fresh page where the group can interact together on the day e.g. a wedding or conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 hotels in the final choice set (Jones &amp; Chen, 2011). Hotel website viewed generally towards end of the process and viewed as users feel it will contain more information than intermediary sites (McCarthy et al., 2010). Individual hotel websites constructed differently limiting generalised results. Word searches on SERPs different for different hotels types.</td>
<td>Make each hotel page relevant and personalised to fully meet each individual segments needs. Have helpful supplementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Schegg et al., 2005). Analytics only for hotel website search and not rest of the search process. Hotel review words different from SE inputted words (Stringam & Gerdes, 2010; Schegg et al., 2005). Page Category: The category the page appears on is a relevancy signal. A page that’s part of a closely related category should get a relevancy boost compared to a page that’s filed under an unrelated or less related category (Dean, 2013). Helpful Supplementary Content: According to a now-public Google Rater Guidelines Document, helpful supplementary content is an indicator of a page’s quality (and therefore, Google ranking). Examples include currency converters, loan interest calculators and interactive recipes (Dean, 2013).

Within the hotel they perceive the degree of importance of hotel attributes as the hotel services and facilities that meet their wants and needs (Essawy, 2006). Larry Page once described the perfect search engine as understanding exactly what you mean and giving you back exactly what you want (Singhal, 2012). CTR from Google to the page for the keyword (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014).

Hotel visits between 60 – 172 seconds (92) average. 4.7 pages viewed on average (10% one page visits, 56% of these from the home page) (Schegg et al., 2005). Customised / Personalised / segmented results 173% higher than standard (De los Santos & Koulayev, 2012). By perfectly meeting customers’ information needs about products and services prior to purchase, the hotel industry is benefiting from information technology, especially from online reservation, in satisfying customer expectations, in improving service, in increasing revenue, and in decreasing costs (Siguaw et al., 2000).

It is also important to realise that rankings are not absolute. More and more, Google is using information that it knows about you (your physical location based on your network properties, your previous searches and clicks, etc.) to personalise search results (University of Rochester, 2014).

Consumer’s mental image facilitates purchase decision (Walters et al., 2007).

Site Engagement / Absorption

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<tr>
<td>Virtual transportation (Lee et al., 2010; Rozier-Rich &amp; Santos, 2010) / deep immersion (Green and Brock, 2002) to the destination. Positive mental imagery can negate negative reviews (Lee &amp; Gretzel, 2012). Seeing the hotel in “my mind’s eye” (Elliott, 1973). Dual codes i.e. (i.e. not 1 or 3) (images and text no sound) or video and sound no text) (Richardson, 1999). Multimedia: Images, videos and other multimedia elements</td>
<td>Searchers should be virtually transported and deeply immersed to the destination in their own “my mind’s eye” for a quasi trial of the hotel. Use dual content on screen e.g. currency convertors / weather reports etc.</td>
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</table>
may act as a content quality signal. YouTube: There’s no doubt that YouTube videos are given preferential treatment in the SERPs (probably because Google owns it) (Dean, 2013). Picture imagery most persuasive (Lee & Gretzel, 2012). Narratives / text should tell a “story” Green and Brock (2002). Consumers make decisions quickly about destination websites (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008). It is indeed a major concern of providers of tourism products to encourage quasi trial experiences to support travel decision making processes (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003).

 signals only i.e. text and images on a page and video and (sound or text) on a video. Post videos on YouTube. Text should “tell a story”.

#83484. [project “Refinements”] This change helped users refine their searches to find information about the right person, particularly when there are many prominent people with the same name (Google algorithm) (Nayak, 2012).

 Repeat Traffic: They may also look at whether or not users go back to a page or site after visiting. Sites with repeat visitors may get a Google ranking boost (Google Algorithm) (Dean, 2013).

 Include the managers of the areas to engage trust in their ability to deliver an excellent experience.

 Aggregated “Dwell times” or “Long Click” metrics for domain (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014). Dwell time is a small signal. (Visio, 2007). Time on Site: Google Analytics and Chrome data may help Google determine your user average time on site. If people spend a lot of time on your site, that may be used as a quality signal (Dean, 2013). Dwell time it’s a signal we watch (Bing algorithm) (Bing.com, 2011).

 Have useful information required by the consumer on the page requiring repeat traffic.

 Bounce Rate is the percentage of single page visits (i.e. visits in which the person left your site from the entrance page without interacting with the page) (Google, 2014b). Pure bounce rate of the page as measured by return visits to the search results page (Moz, 2014). Bounce Rate: Not everyone in SEO agrees bounce rate matters, but it may be a way of Google to use their users as quality testers (pages where people quickly bounce are probably not very good) (Dean, 2013). Visio (2007) found that the Google Bounce Factor does indeed exist. Basically he did an experiment and with less bouncing out an obscure site improved dramatically. He also did it for a medium sized site and there was no difference proving it is a small signal. He did the same for dwell times and it worked similarly. Persuasive hotel sites instil resistance to counterarguments (Lee & Gretzel, 2012).

 Place information the consumer wants and will take time to engage fully with.

 Site Usability: A site that’s difficult to use or to navigate can hurt ranking by reducing time on site, pages viewed and bounce rate. This may be an independent algorithmic factor gleaned from massive amounts of user data (Dean, 2013). The quality of the website has a direct and positive impact on customer satisfaction and intention to purchase online (Bai et al., 2008).

 Have all pages engaging and with the information consumers are looking for to keep them on the page and additional information pages for them to go to within the site to avoid single visits. Make the information on screen persuasive in nature.

 Maximise the usability of the site.

 Use of Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools: Some

 Use Google Analytics
think that having these two programs installed on your site can improve your page’s indexing. They may also directly influence rank by giving Google more data to work with (i.e. more accurate bounce rate, whether or not you get referral traffic from your backlinks etc.) (Google algorithm) (Dean, 2013).

and Google Webmaster Tools in order to track and make changes to maximise engagement.

Branded, familiar or luxury hotels more trusted as a benchmark can charge a premium and are considered less likely to change over time (Jeacle & Carter, 2011; Swanson et al., 2006). Preference to make separate accommodation bookings (rather than package) (Essawy, 2006).

Build up trust in the brand in order to encourage hotel site payments.

Site Has Facebook Page and Likes: Brands tend to have Facebook pages with lots of likes (Google algorithm) (Moz, 2014).

Place Facebook likes on the hotel site’s main page.

Length of comment on the page (Moz, 2014). Number of Comments: Pages with lots of comments may be a signal of user interaction and quality (Dean, 2013).

Invite long detailed comments. But pre-scrutinise them for inappropriate comments.

Hotel website persuasiveness = inspiration, usability, credibility, informativeness, involvement and reciprocity (Fesenmaier, 2008).

The site should provide inspiration, usability, credibility, informativeness, involvement and reciprocity.

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Process Influences (External)

Online Access Devices

PC / Laptop Strategy

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<td>PC / Laptops 40% find information, 29% keeping up to date. 24% of total interactions, 69% work, 31% at home. 39 minutes per interaction. 44% of PC / Laptops searches are used to achieve a goal (Google, 2012a).</td>
<td>Use your PC / Laptop website strategy for information intensive fulfilment of all consumer needs and goals.</td>
</tr>
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Highest usage 9am – 5pm, decreasing 9pm – 9pm (Van Thiel, 2013).

Structure the information in a businesslike manner as the consumer is in this mind set at the time.

Mobile Strategy

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38% of total interactions. 60% at home, 40% elsewhere (Google, 2012a). Always available: used in car 71%, public transport 51%, bathroom 33%, bedroom 78% and toilet 27% (Van Thiel, 2013).

Mobile advertisement expenditure is considerably below its proportional share of internet advertisement spend (Farago, 2012).

49% of mobile reservation users are uncomfortable inputting credit card information (PhoCusWright, 2012).

Google’s official stance on mobile is to create a responsive site. It’s likely that responsive sites get an edge in searches from a mobile device (Dean, 2013). Sites that use responsive web design, i.e. sites that serve all devices on the same set of URLs, with each URL serving the same HTML to all devices and using just CSS to change how the page is rendered on the device. This is Google's recommended configuration (Google, 2014c). Use of Responsive Design and/or mobile optimised. Cutts says, “Whenever you have a site that can work well for regular browsers on the desktop as well as mobile phones, there’s a couple of completely valid ways to do it. One is called responsive design, and responsive design just means that the page works totally fine whether you access that URL with a desktop browser or whether you access that URL with a mobile browser. Things will rescale, you know, the page size will be taken into account, and everything works fine. Another way to do it is, depending on the user agent that’s coming, you could do a redirect so that a mobile phone – a mobile smartphone, for example – might get redirected to a mobile dot version of your page, and that’s totally fine as well.” (Crum, 2013). Essentially Google recommend Responsive Design over other smartphone site construction methods (Far, 2012).

Smartphones 54% communication and 33% entertainment (Google, 2012a). Highest usage 9pm after steady rise from 6am (Van Thiel, 2013).

80% of smartphone hotel bookings for same or day before stay (Google, 2012a).

Smartphones will be the new credit card (Hanrahan & Krahenbuhl, 2012).

Travel = 1% of internet usage yet 9.3% of mobile internet (eMarketer, 2013).

| 38% of total interactions. 60% at home, 40% elsewhere (Google, 2012a). Always available: used in car 71%, public transport 51%, bathroom 33%, bedroom 78% and toilet 27% (Van Thiel, 2013). | This is the main tourism search medium and should be the main strategic focus. |
| Mobile advertisement expenditure is considerably below its proportional share of internet advertisement spend (Farago, 2012). | Consider mobile advertisement spend if it has financially viable ROI currently. |
| 49% of mobile reservation users are uncomfortable inputting credit card information (PhoCusWright, 2012). | Consider a mobile secured reservation system. |
| Google’s official stance on mobile is to create a responsive site. It’s likely that responsive sites get an edge in searches from a mobile device (Dean, 2013). Sites that use responsive web design, i.e. sites that serve all devices on the same set of URLs, with each URL serving the same HTML to all devices and using just CSS to change how the page is rendered on the device. This is Google's recommended configuration (Google, 2014c). Use of Responsive Design and/or mobile optimised. Cutts says, “Whenever you have a site that can work well for regular browsers on the desktop as well as mobile phones, there’s a couple of completely valid ways to do it. One is called responsive design, and responsive design just means that the page works totally fine whether you access that URL with a desktop browser or whether you access that URL with a mobile browser. Things will rescale, you know, the page size will be taken into account, and everything works fine. Another way to do it is, depending on the user agent that’s coming, you could do a redirect so that a mobile phone – a mobile smartphone, for example – might get redirected to a mobile dot version of your page, and that’s totally fine as well.” (Crum, 2013). Essentially Google recommend Responsive Design over other smartphone site construction methods (Far, 2012). | Use responsive design for your mobile site. |
| Smartphones 54% communication and 33% entertainment (Google, 2012a). Highest usage 9pm after steady rise from 6am (Van Thiel, 2013). | Respond immediately to communications as the users are online always via their mobile devices. Make the ethos is none work as it is used mainly outside work ours. |
| Smartphones will be the new credit card (Hanrahan & Krahenbuhl, 2012). | Implement smartphone payments once they are financially viable and commonplace. |
| Travel = 1% of internet usage yet 9.3% of mobile internet (eMarketer, 2013). | Target aggressively a mobile strategy. |
| 80% of smartphone hotel bookings for same or day before stay | Make your mobile |
and 61% of online consumers are willing to book travel via a mobile device (Starkov, 2012a).

<table>
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<th>and 61% of online consumers are willing to book travel via a mobile device (Starkov, 2012a).</th>
<th>strategy a last minute deal platform. Avoid discounting and charge rack rate like the standard industry last minute offline strategy.</th>
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<tr>
<td>43% of smartphone searches used to achieve a goal (Google, 2012a). 17 minutes per interaction (Google, 2012a). Screen size impeding conversions and usability (PhoCusWright, 2012). Obtain information that is timely, detailed, accurate, reliable and selective when using mobile reservation systems (Wang &amp; Wang, 2010). Since there are only limited amounts of CPU power and memory available on mobile platforms, it is more difficult to design and develop applications for the mobile market in comparison to desktop computer applications (Verbelen et al., 2011). The always on the go mobile user requires short, slimmed down and straight to the point content: hotel location, maps and directions, summary of the hotel product, easy to use mobile booking engine, and a click to talk property reservation number. Hence the need for a mobile website with specialised content (Starkov, 2012a). Make the hotel strategy a short goal / answer immediate fulfilment type site. Restrict the complexity of the mobile site to the screen sizes optimum usability. Keep the entire site simple / straightforward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile devices used to get hotel location, driving directions and pricing (Starkov, 2012a). Smartphones can be used without stopping and to select local attractions (Chan, 2012). Place a hotel location navigation aid / directions finder and pricing sections in the mobile site along with local attractions locations and information.</td>
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<td>66% of user generated tweets that mention brands come from mobile users (Cooper, 2013). Target your tweets as part of your mobile strategy for your hotel.</td>
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<td>Twitter users who mostly use a mobile device are 181% more likely to be on Twitter during their commute. When you're tweeting, think about where your audience is, and what they might be doing. If it's early in the morning, they might be commuting to the office -- this is actually a great time to get them, as they're probably bored and looking for something interesting to occupy them during this time. These users are also 119% more likely to use Twitter during work or school hours, so don't write off these times as being no good for tweeting at least until you try them. Dinner time, on the other hand is not the best time to catch your followers (Cooper, 2013). Twitter engagement for brands is 17% higher on weekends despite the fact that only 19% of brands tweet on the weekends. Cooper (2013) found in one of his Twitter experiments that click-through rates were higher on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Target these tweets for commuting and work hours. Do not tweet during the dinner hour of your target markets. Tweet weekend relevant items such as a wedding that is on in your hotel currently or at a future weekend to encourage the couple’s friends to book or a weekend break or a future conference or event that is at a weekend.</td>
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6–7 smartphone bookings are by voice (Starkov & Safer, 2013).

Enable the smartphone user to click to talk direct to all areas in the hotel that sell products / experiences. Have Skype, Viber, Whatsapp etc enabled with the relevant icon to encourage a free call.

For example, companies can use mobile technology as a marketing medium by sending SMS to consumers. This channel is quite valuable and helpful to businesses because it enables direct marketing activities (Al-Alak & Alnawas, 2010). In fact, Timpson and Troutman discovered that advertisements sent via SMS are more likely to be viewed in comparison to advertisements sent through email (Timpson & Troutman, 2009). According to Frolick and Chen (2004) because SMS is more personal, the expected response rate through mobile marketing will be more successful than through e-mail marketing (Frolick and Chen, 2004). Days Inn operates an “opt in” app for customers. In 2009 the opt in rate was 29%. If the customer opts in their check in and checkout date are entered and they will receive coupons / offers and will from time to time be entered in a draw for a free holiday. A database of guests is assembled. Individual hotel issues can be targeted like one hotel had a particularly low breakfast take up in their Chinese restaurant. A SMS was sent out offering a US$3 discount and they had their busiest ever day in the restaurant. On particularly low occupancy days the database names are sent a text offering up to a 50% discount rats just for opt in customers (Dilworth, 2009). Since it is expected that messages sent through mobile mediums will reach their intended audiences. This is basically saying that customers will receive their texts where as emails on holidays do not have the same receivable rate and don’t have the same immediacy rate as a text will bleep but an email will not unless set up to do so and people may check their emails less often on holidays (Sinisalo et al., 2007).

Consider an SMS campaign for customers who accept it perhaps as part of the free wifi for the hotel. Offer services and discounts to entice hotel customers to use hotel products. SMS messages are more successful in hotel settings and should be targeted especially during quiet periods.

Local Mobile Strategy

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<td>Location based mobile services, typically focused on providing information like mapping and directions via geo-fencing and location-aware, or upselling services/amenities at the property to current guests, as well as check ins (Starkov, 2012a).</td>
<td>Set up a location aware mobile site that is geo fenced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile CRM and customer service: resolving customer service issues at the property in real-time (Starkov, 2012a).</td>
<td>Deal with customers’ first offline or if</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Proactivity means that the system pushes recommendations to the user when the current situation seems appropriate. However, proactivity has not gained much attention in personalisation and recommender system research. Most systems require the user to perform some kind of action to trigger the generation or retrieval of recommended items (Vico et al., 2011). In mobile environments, user experience could possibly be improved by delivering recommendations without any user request or query. Consider the following scenario: A mobile restaurant guide running on a smartphone suggests a restaurant to the user when she is walking near the restaurant that fits her preferences very well, while also factoring in the time of the day and other context attributes (Vico et al., 2011). Previous research (Bailey & Konstan 2006; Cutrell et al., 2001; Cutrell; McGrenere et al. 2002) has demonstrated the harmful effects that notifications can have on a user's task performance. However, this remains an open problem. Community Commands uses an ambient display (Wisneski et al., 1998), where the user can get the information when they are ready, thus avoiding the problems associated with interrupting the user's work flow (Wisneski et al., 1998).

It also informs the user about the category of restaurant recommendation. To do this we have defined four categories (breakfast, lunch, snack / tea or dinner) corresponding to the different restaurant recommendations that can be generated during a day. (e.g. cuisine, distance, price, etc.) To do this, we have integrated Google Maps in our application to localise the places in a map and to have also the possibility of creating routes from user's current location to any of the places. Respondents noted “it would be interesting to have some information about other users' opinions, for example a karma mechanism". “I would like to know what the rank of each place in the map view is. Perhaps, using a colour scale, different sizes or attaching a number to the icon could be good solutions" (Vico et al., 2011).

In this sense, services and / or applications can also be made available to consumers wherever and whenever a need arises (Siau et al., 2001).

With the many different smartphone providers and their individual smartphone platforms, this makes it difficult for application developers to create an application that will online as soon as possible. Have a proactive location sales based mobile strategy. Recommend hotel products / services / restaurants with incentives / discounts during slow periods. A passive app on screen or opt out SMS alerts can be used to prevent consumer irritation.

A restaurant mobile strategy should have separate meal pages recommending each sitting type at the appropriate time. Allow users book particular seats / views. Identify their location / routes / distance on a map (Google maps) with prices / cuisine type. Link a simple overall score or limited diner comments from Tripadvisor etc.

An app / site page with all the information available can allow the user access whatever they want and not feel intrusion. Weigh up the financial viability of an alert based app for your
function efficiently and smoothly on all types of mobile devices (Chan, 2012). A 2011 study by CEM4Mobile Analytics, which used an actual sample of over 56 million mobile impressions from mobile services, noted that hotel applications had only 9.85% of unique users yet 34.61% of impressions while mobile browsing had 90.15% of unique users only 65.39% of impressions. More hoteliers are planning for a mobile site this year (37.5% vs. 25.9%) and a mobile booking engine (37% vs. 22.4%). Also of note, only 8.9% of hoteliers are budgeting for a mobile app vs. 24.1% last year. In my view, hotels do not need a mobile app if they are a single-property, an independent hotel or resort, a franchised property, or a smaller and mid-size hotel chain and multi-property company. These hotel companies are better off focusing on building and enhancing their mobile websites and promoting the mobile site via mobile marketing initiatives as apps are very expensive to build, maintain, promote, device specific and not indexable by the search engines! (Starkov, 2012a).

| Hotel on the most common devices or with responsive design to fit all devices. |
| Geo targeted ads may have a better ROI before mass market adoption. Carry out a quantifiable test to assess their financial viability. |
| Consider mobile online information for each historic / notable room / location / item in the hotel if appropriate. |

Research by mobileSQUARED reveals that less than 50% of mobile ad networks interviewed are offering geo-location options, with a quarter exploring it’s potential and likely to invest in the technology or partner with a location specialist such as Navteq in the short-term. The remaining 25% of mobile ad networks included in the research were adamant that it is not an essential component of their service offering in the short term. Geo-location will only become a volume game when mobile consumer data is widely available via wifi as well as mobile operator connections. Until this happens, business models will remain experimental and the premium rates that geo-location is expected to command will not apply (Lane, 2012). Consumers are undoubtedly more receptive to mobile advertising when location is applied. Location relevant ads increase the digital mobile advertising average mobile click-through rate from 0.5-0.8% to 1.5-2% and upwards. Results from the US reveal that geo-location targeting delivers 10-20 times the click-through rates compared to the web, depending on the mobile ad network. Research by mobileSQUARED reveals that the CPM rate for geo-location based campaigns in the US is between $3-5 CPM, or a CPC of $0.30 per click, both of which are more in-line with existing standard campaign rates, and indicates that location is yet to command a premium rate (Lane, 2012).

| Kanellopoulos (2010) noted that some virtual museums have mobile apps that update the user with information as they go from room to room. |
| Geo targeted ads may have a better ROI before mass market adoption. Carry out a quantifiable test to assess their financial viability. |
| Consider mobile online information for each historic / notable room / location / item in the hotel if appropriate. |
### Tablet Strategy

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tablets 63% entertainment 33% communication (Google, 2012a).</td>
<td>Target the tablet’s site on an entertainment / communication ethos.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tablets less computationally capable than PCs (Van Schaik &amp; Ling, 2008).</td>
<td>Do not have a computationally complex strategy for tablets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9% of total interactions, 79% used at home, 21% elsewhere. 30 minutes per interaction (Google, 2012a). Highest usage 5pm – 9pm, low 9am – 5pm (Van Thiel, 2013). 85% - 90% of tablet browsing via wifi (Starkov, 2012a).</td>
<td>Target the tablet as none work and more leisure in ethos and target its use in the evening. Make the ethos of the site home orientated and do not use location finding widgets as tablets will generally not be used on the move or outside the hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet users feel a sense of satisfaction, relaxation, pleasure, calmness, deactivation, comfort, liberation and an unbounded sense of time (Zamani et al., 2013).</td>
<td>Have a relaxation, pleasure and unbounded sense of time ethos on the tablet site.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Few people are comfortable entering their credit card information into their mobile device in a public place, and few hotel mobile websites provide an alternative to guaranteeing a booking without entering a credit card. In contrast, tablet users have no issues booking a hotel via their device. A well-structured, tablet-optimised website can generate conversion rates several times higher than those of a desktop website merely projected into the tablet channel. One in five Americans will have used a tablet in 2012 – and of this population, more than half reported shopping on their tablets once a week and 12% shopped daily (Starkov &amp; Safer, 2010).</td>
<td>Tablets however do not have credit card imputing resistance and a credit card system should be in place on the tablet site. Place saleable items on the tablet site.</td>
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### Cross / Multiple Device Strategy

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<tr>
<td>Online hotel visits 77.5% PC / Laptop, 8.52% tablets and 13.98% smartphones (Starkov, 2012a). 34% simply select closest device, some devices selected on aesthetics rather than functionality and some based on time, goal, location, attitude and state of mind (Starkov, 2012a).</td>
<td>A multi device strategy is essential and the hotel’s strategy must work on all platforms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43% move sequentially between devices when planning a trip. 98% of users move between devices on the same day (Google, 2012a). Different age groups use different devices (Van Theil,</td>
<td>Have a joined up strategy across all devices targeting PC /</td>
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</table>
According to Google, users searching Google utilise desktop during the day (office); mobile during lunch break and happy hour; and tablet later in the evening when lounging (Starkov, 2012). Devices being used in conjunction with other devices are smartphones 57%, TVs 77%, tablets 75% and PCs 69%. When moving between devices consumers search again on the second device (63%), directly navigate to the destination site (52%) and Via email sending a link to myself (49%) (Google, 2012a).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Online hotel revenue 93.06% PC / Laptop, 5.84% tablets and 1.11% smartphones (Starkov, 2012a). 39% of smartphone researchers purchase on a PC laptop (Google, 2012a).</th>
<th>Laptop 9 – 5pm, smartphone at lunch time and tablets / smartphones in the evening after dinner generally. Have a simplified search, navigation and URL policy for device change ease.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone and tablet interactions and Google searches are increasing, TV and PC / Laptops decreasing (Google, 2012a). Devices are changing over time e.g. Google Glass.</td>
<td>Target your revenue strategy mostly through your PC/ Laptop strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky claim they are trialling multiple device packages i.e. TV and wifi that can track searches and offer customised advertisement on the most visually persuasive medium TV. The information is there and it can also be targeted such as family information can be gleaned from Facebook and the ad can be demographically and specifically targeted with personalised advertisement within a short period of an initial online search from any of the devices accessed via wifi. (Huffington Post, 2014).</td>
<td>Make the PC / Laptop strategy less with the emphasis on mobile and wearables when economically viable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Device process emotions involvement, enjoyment, excitement / fun, relaxation, positive state of mind, escape, timeliness, physical stimulation, pleasure, freedom and adventure (Ellis et al., 1994; Hull &amp; Michael, 1995). Technology accepted based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989). Optimum device flow involves utter absorption in the activity, loss of self consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Experienced users more interested in the search and less experienced searchers more distracted by the device (Castañeda et al., 2007). Feeling at one with the device almost being companions (Turkle, 2007). Wearable technology and BCI will increase interactivity.</td>
<td>In the event of Sky’s strategy becoming a reality prepare segment specific ads targeted at segments that have consumed or have searched for your hotel recently if financially viable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the outcome is positive individuals feels satisfaction, joy and achievement (Vermeeren et al., 2008).</td>
<td>All devices (present and future) must be tested and achieve complete involvement, flow and allow utter absorption into the hotel search.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel must be “experientialised” customers seek rewarding, memorable and pleasurable consumption experience (Pine &amp; Gilmore, 1998). Service atmospherics such as colour, lighting and style in hotel lobbies (Countryman &amp; Jang, 2006). Virtual transportation to the destination via the device for a quasi trial experience (Stamboulis &amp; Skayannis, 2003).</td>
<td>Ensure the device strategy achieves a positive outcome.</td>
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</table>
For content rich websites like the hotel website, it’s not just about providing an optimum viewing experience and fitting the website into different screen sizes. To maximize bookings, hoteliers need to serve the right website content in the right device category (i.e. desktop, mobile, tablet) to ensure the best user experience, relevancy of information and conversions. For example, tablet users require deep, visually enhanced content about the property and its destination. Many hoteliers serve their desktop website content on tablet devices. However, the desktop website cannot accommodate the touch screen navigation required by tablet devices along with the high resolution photography and highly visual presentation necessary to display the hotel product in a way that users are quickly becoming accustomed to on tablet devices (Starkov & Safer, 2010).

Smartphones are made 80% spontaneous search and 20% planned search, PC / laptops are 52% spontaneous search and 48% planned. Yet there are very similar in goal accomplishment. In that smartphone searches 44% of spontaneous searches were to accomplish a goal and on PCs / laptops 43% spontaneous searches were to accomplish a goal (Google, 2012a).

Google also acknowledges that people want more intuitive and simple to use interfaces such as voice search. Speech input is already the primary interface on Google Glass. Earlier this year Topeka Capital Markets analyst Victor Anthony said voice search was the next stage of long-term growth for Google (Rayson, 2013). Sergey Brin’s personal campaign to make wearing Glass look normal couldn’t hide the fact that Glass is a technology in search of an application unless that application is invasions of privacy (Mims, 2013).

Visual Interaction

Image Strategy

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to view the physical product or the service environment prior to purchase lessens perceived risk, thus enhancing the likelihood of purchase, in particular with experiential services such as hotels (Feng et al., 2004; Murphy et al., 1996; Reichheld &amp; Scheffter, 2000; Vilnai-Yavetz &amp; Rafaeli, 2006). Photos that offer tangible and physical cues (i.e., the servicescape) that represent the service provider to its customers are highly linked to customer satisfaction and behavioural responses (Bitner, 1992; Wirtz &amp; Bateson, 1999).</td>
<td>Place images of all the hotel’s consumers desired products or services online. The photos must contain physical and tangible cues of the servicescape. Photos of the destination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photos depicting destinations, one aspect of marketing activities, lead to a personal impression about the destination (Martínez & Alvarez, 2010). Visual images have the power to create a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with places (Day et al., 2002).

Tablet users require deep, visually enhanced content about the property, its product and destination, etc. This is why all hoteliers serve their desktop website content on tablet devices today. Unfortunately, the desktop website cannot accommodate the touchscreen navigation required by tablet devices along with the high-resolution photography and highly visual presentation necessary to display the hotel product (Starkov, 2012).

Consumers conditioned over time to expect frontal facing individual in advertisement photo draws eye gaze to eyes and away from the brand. Side facing individual looking at brand draws attention to brand (Breeze, 2009). Consumers prefer single individual in an image unless multiple individuals considered a team (Downey, 2008). Individuals do not view eyes in goal orientated sites (Bunnyfoot.com, 2013a). They view their goals name or titles in LinkedIn (Eyetrackshop, 2011).

Photos and travel are linked intrinsically because photos shape the travel experience (Larsen, 2008; Lo et al., 2011) and provide an opportunity for tourists to share experiences with others (Groves & Timothy, 2001).

Females view images differently than males (“pleasing”, “pretty” and “beautiful”) (Pan et al., 2014).

Females view images differently than males (“pleasing”, “pretty” and “beautiful”) (Pan et al., 2014).

ItsyBitsy. [project codename “Images”] To improve the quality of image results, we filter tiny, unhelpful images at the bottom of our image results pages is in the Google algorithm (Singhal, 2012).

SuperQ2. [project codename “Image”] We’ve updated a signal for Google Images to help return more on topic image search results is in the Google algorithm (Singhal, 2012). Images on the page send search engines important relevancy signals through their file name, alt text, title, description and caption (Dean, 2013). Moz, (2014) supports this purporting that the use of images on the page is in the Google algorithm. Use keywords in the file name such as “Hilton hotel Drogheda children’s swimming pool.jpg” instead of image0001.jpg. Parse keywords correctly such as “Hilton-hotel-drogheda-childrens-swimming-pool.jpg” to describe an object in detail. Don’t

Don’t use small images if you are going to use them to sell your hotel.

Optimise images to the Google algorithm. Place keywords in the file name, alt text, title, description and caption of an image.

Place frontal looking individuals where the goal is not the image e.g. business frontal picture in LinkedIn. Have side viewing individuals in other photos looking at off picture information or brands or desirable aspects of the hotel.

Customise images for all devices and test them.
mistakenly use underscores, plus signs, or Camel Casing in file names. Leave out non-keywords such as “the”, “a”, “she” and the like (DeJarnette, 2012).

The search engines regard the alt attribute text as a very strong source of keyword relevance, so this is an important SEO consideration. Limit the alt text to a maximum of 150 characters, including spaces. Anything beyond that may not be read by the search engines. The search engines put greater keyword relevance on words used at the start of the alt attribute (similar to the <title> tag), so write your alt text descriptions thoughtfully. As such, always put the copyright declaration at the end of the alt text. When writing alt text, consider the image in context to the page (the actual target for keyword relevance). The generic text “hotel pool” contributes next to nothing in keyword relevance to the page in any of these circumstances. Use minimal image size needed for web resolution (DeJarnette, 2012).

The search engines regard the alt attribute text as a very strong source of keyword relevance, so this is an important SEO consideration. Limit the alt text to a maximum of 150 characters, including spaces. Anything beyond that may not be read by the search engines. The search engines put greater keyword relevance on words used at the start of the alt attribute (similar to the <title> tag), so write your alt text descriptions thoughtfully. As such, always put the copyright declaration at the end of the alt text. When writing alt text, consider the image in context to the page (the actual target for keyword relevance). The generic text “hotel pool” contributes next to nothing in keyword relevance to the page in any of these circumstances. Use minimal image size needed for web resolution (DeJarnette, 2012).

Limit alt text to 150 characters. Put strongest keywords at the start. Always use © symbol at end. Do not use generic words like “hotel pool”. Shrink resolution to minimal for size. Always use the hotel name.

Video Strategy

### Reference

Bauer *et al.* (2006) noted that transferring e-SQ of aesthetics as a dimension that addresses customers’ evaluation of how a product looks, feels, sounds, tastes or smells becomes essential in virtual atmospheres. Consequently, providing updated information in an interactive format (i.e., audio clips or video clips) is crucial in retaining customers, specifically, first time visitors on the Internet (Klein, 2003).

Tags are descriptive keywords you can add to your video to help people find your content. While you’re uploading, you'll see a “Tags” section below the upload progress bar where you can add your tags. To add tags to an existing video, visit your Video Manager, then click the Edit button below the video for which you'd like to add formatting tags Youtube.com (2014). YouTube search results are poorly personalised and seem to be very dependent on on-page text surrounding the video (Smarty, 2012). Title, description and keyword tags, time spent viewing, links, annotations, comments, thumbs up / down, flagging, video responses, favourites, channel views, number of embeds, share, playlists, subscribers, video age, honours and view count (Rivers, 2013). User Signals Google Likes To See (Likes and Dislikes, Comments (and likes and dislikes within comments), Views (specifically, complete views), Shares, Replies and Subscribers. (Adams, 2013).

**Our findings also indicate that customers want to see customer**

### Strategy

Video imagery should be aesthetically focused making the consumers feel involved in the video.

Have a number of YouTube videos one for each activity. Also encourage or post guest videos on YouTube for friends and family publicity. SEO YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/keyword_tool https://www.distilled.net/blog/social-media/youtube/youtube-seo/ http://www.internetmarketingninjas.com/blog/rich-media/proper-youtube-video-tagging/

Have videos with
employee interactions on Websites that sell experiential services such as hotels, and such interactions may reduce perceived risk (Kim & Mattila, 2011). Vivid images of customer experiences (e.g., video clips showing passengers having fun on a cruise) can reduce pre-purchase risk—a factor that commonly impacts consumer behaviour relative to the purchase of experiential services in particular (Legg & Baker, 1987; Mittal, 1999). However, these video clips need to be easily accessed quickly and efficiently (Kim & Mattila, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumers post images to manage desired self image and record their travel experience (Pfeil et al., 2009; Strano, 2008; Trammell &amp; Keshelashvili, 2005). Consumers want customised / personalised video clips of their preferred hotel service options (Kim &amp; Mattila, 2011).</th>
<th>Post videos of customers engaging in activities if they agree and have the individual videos containing individual activities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s the purpose? How does it fit with our marketing initiatives? What are your goals/KPIs? Keep videos as short as possible (30 seconds – 2 minutes works best) (Adams, 2013).</td>
<td>Set a purpose and goals within the hotel’s overall strategy. Have video between 30 – 120 seconds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this study, however, background music and narrator choice are important components of the aesthetic dimension in the context of video clips (Kim &amp; Mattila, 2011).</td>
<td>Have appropriate music or narrators for the videos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Images / Video Text Strategy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On average, 10th position pages have 400 less words on the page than first position pages. For most SERPs it looks like at least 1500 words is a good target. Here we see that fresh domains generally have less content on the ranking page, averaging around 1800 words. Domains 1-10 years old are at around 2100 words of content, while domains over 10 years old close in on 2800 words. (Espiritu, 2012).</td>
<td>Create content rich pages. An image broken in two splits the screen and indicates there is more content below. More words essentially are a sign of a trustworthy site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title Tag Aim for title tags containing fewer than 70 characters (Moz, 2012). This is the limit Google displays in search results and appears in three key places: browsers, search engine results pages, and external websites. Creating a descriptive, keyword-rich title tag is important for increasing rankings in search engines. Place Important Keywords Close to the Front of the Title Tag. If a brand is well known enough to make a difference in click through rates in search results, the brand name should be first. If the brand is less known or relevant than the keyword, the keyword should be first. Consider Readability and Emotional Impact. The title tag is a new visitor's first interaction with your brand when they find it in a search result; it should convey the most positive message possible. When you use keywords in the title tag, search engines will bold or highlight them in the search results if a user has performed a query including those keywords. This gives the user greater visibility, and generally means you'll get a higher click through rate (Moz, 2014).</td>
<td>Have a title tag of less than 70 characters, descriptive, positive, keyword rich, most important keywords to the front, well known hotel name to the front or keyword if not well known. It should be readable and emotive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers view price, star rating, hotel picture and name and primarily viewing locations on hotels.com landing page (Bunnyfoot.com, 2013b)</td>
<td>Have price, star rating, hotel picture and name in 70 characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather than scrolling down the page past a slew of ads, users want to see content right away. So sites that don’t have much content “above the fold” can be affected by this change (Cutts, 2012). Banner ad click through rates have observed a dramatic decline since the early days of the commercial Web (Bucklin &amp; Sismeiro, 2009). Hotchkiss et al. (2005) conducted survey research with 425 respondents who overwhelmingly choose links offering sources of trusted, unbiased information. More than 77% of participants also favoured non-sponsored links more than the sponsored links. Even in an ecommerce like scenario, survey respondents still choose non-sponsored over sponsored links. On more than 80% of the searches, study participants went first to the results identified as organic. Sponsored links were viewed first for only 6% of the time. Generally, it is more likely that users ignore sponsored results than clicking on them (Höchstötter &amp; Lewandowski, 2009).</td>
<td>Have content / text above the fold. No ads if possible. Do not make anything on screen look like a banner ad. All content information placed on pages must be considered by potential customers to be trusted and unbiased. Links should be non sponsored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid hyphens in text / content. Hyphens detract from credibility and can act as a spam indicator. Research indicates Bing penalises more in this regard than Google (Moz, 2014).</td>
<td>Do not use hyphens in content if at all possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Images / Video Text Location Strategy

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The first ranking position always collects the highest fraction of visual attention (González-Caro &amp; Marcos, 2011). The primary issue involving click through data is that users are most likely to click on higher ranked documents because they tend to read the SERP (search engine results page) from top to bottom. Additionally, users trust that a search engine places the most relevant documents at the highest positions on the SERP (Hardtke et al., 2009). Users devoted large fraction of their fixations on organic ranking positions 1 and 2. For the three query intents the accumulated number of fixations on the first two organic results are: navigational (76.84%), informational (75.46%) and transactional (56.74%) (González-Caro &amp; Marcos, 2011). iProspect’s 2008 Blended Search Study revealed that 39% of online users attribute brand equity to the companies and brands that appear at the top of the search results (a phenomenon known as the brand halo effect) (iProspect, 2009).</td>
<td>Place the products you want the customers to view at the top of the page in the top two sections of text. The higher results are trusted more. Transactional details can be spread out more. In the case of a SERP attempt to be no. 1 in the Search engines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERP organic results almost all “below the fold”. Users generally view (80.3%) “above the fold” and in a triangle in the top left corner. Ads Above the Fold: The “Page Layout Algorithm” penalises sites with lots of ads (and not much content) above the fold (Dean, 2013).</td>
<td>Place the products you want the customers to view above the fold in the top left corner with no ads if possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users demonstrate text advertisement “blindness” when viewing web pages. This means that information displayed in areas of the page dedicated to text ads (e.g., top of the page, right side) is generally ignored or viewed last. Users are less likely to find information on a web page if it is located on the right side of the page than on the top of the page if both areas resemble text ads. This is especially true when they are searching for specific information. When conducting an informational, or semantic, search, users have equal amount of difficulty finding information that is embedded in an ad either at the top or on the right side of the page. When a region is seen as advertisements, users will scan the area if it necessitates completing their task and will likely do so only after scanning other content areas. However, if the region is perceived as content, users will integrate the area into their search strategy, possibly as an expected location for their search goal or a location covered by a heuristic (Owens et al., 2011).</td>
<td>Do not place important information at the top or right side of the page. Do not make information look like an ad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye gaze patterns have significantly changed over time. A significant amount of viewing patterns variability exists. Results “above the fold” and therefore views vary depending on browser and screen size (Höchstötter &amp; Lewandowski, 2009).</td>
<td>Test with quirktools.com/screenfly/ but note screen viewing behaviour is changing and will need to be researched from time to time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Russo and Leclerc (1994) noted using an eye tracking methodology three stages of a purchase decision: orientation, evaluation, and verification. Have the desired content stand out to allow immediate orientation, detailed enough to allow evaluation and an external link to allow the searcher verify the content.

**Images / Video Full Page Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumers move from text to images and visa versa as a screen reading pattern and another limitation of the consumer thought process is that information searchers did not seem to read the text on the screen carefully and that they merely collected the information needed (Ho et al., 2012).</td>
<td>All text and photos located together should deliver a unified message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website effectiveness associated with extensive text and images about hotel services, rooms and nearby attractions, price, and good pictures (Joerchel et al., 1998).</td>
<td>Place extensive text and images about hotel services, rooms and nearby attractions, price, and good pictures on the hotel website checklist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughes et al. (2003) found that people spend more time looking at the text than the pictures and that text was used to make judgements and images as confirmatory evidence.</td>
<td>The text wordings should encourage judgement decisions and images should confirm these judgements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequently, more attention should be given to website features which stimulate emotional responses (Van Riel et al., 2001; Kim, 2002). The effect of a virtual environment (design and ambience) on pleasure and arousal was tested by Mummalaneni (2005). Pleasure significantly influenced the level of satisfaction, loyalty and the number of items purchased. Arousal also influenced satisfaction besides time spent on the website.</td>
<td>Place content and images which stimulate emotional responses such as pleasure and arousal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web design is about building a functioning, content rich, well organised, communicative (interactive), and aesthetic (form) website, a website that stimulates positive experiences (Björk, 2010). In particular, online users strongly associate the quality of the content with the visual appeal of the Website design (Bauer et al., 2006). One can also recognise in this study how the aesthetic dimension of web design has been linked to website context and is captured by visual characteristics such as colours, graphics, photos, films, font choices, and sound effects (Björk, 2010).</td>
<td>Build a functioning, content rich, well organised, communicative (interactive), and aesthetic (form) website; a website that stimulates positive experiences is a quality website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These results show that website visitors pay attention to</td>
<td>Make the hotel site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Information content, convenience, ease of use. (Joerchel *et al.*, 1998). Good pictures and printable pages were also dimensions linked to satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy to use and have printable pages.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this study, customisation / personalisation reflected the customer's ability to view only those service options that they were interested in pursuing (Kim &amp; Mattila, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment you customers and give a dedicated page to each segment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: In-depth Questionnaire

The Individual

Target Segment(s) Identification Strategy

1.1 If you were to describe your holiday demographic, what would it be? What I mean by that is the group you would travel with, costs, activities, attractions visited etc.

1.2 Describe your perfect trip or holiday experience including the hotel that you would normally go to?

1.3 What would trigger you to think of searching for a holiday or trip somewhere that would include a hotel?

Pre Purchase Stage Strategy

1.4 Before you go online what usually have you already decided about for your holiday or trip?

1.5 What type of information would you look for online when researching a holiday or trip?
1.6 Which best describes you when searching the internet for a trip involving a hotel.
   (1) I would prefer searching multiple sources even if not fully relevant and finding small pieces information on many different sites.
   (2) I would prefer to find extensive relevant information about my trip, hotel and activities on a single site.
   (3) I would prefer to find extensive relevant information about my trip, hotel and activities on a single site but would check other sites to verify this information.

Online Segment Engagement Strategy

1.7 What on a hotel or trip relevant websites would normally create positive thoughts for you or absorb your attention the most?

1.8 If a hotel made a perfect page 100% relevant to you to convince you specifically to stay there what would be on it.

Decision / Purchase Stage Process

1.9 When you have finished all your research, what should a hotel webpage have on it to convince you to decide I will pick it and put in your credit card details.

Hotel Stay Stage Strategy

1.10 What information would you want to see on a hotel site during your stay in the hotel?
Search Engines

Search Engine Strategy (Dos)

1.11 In relation to a holiday or a trip involving a hotel, list all the different types of information you would look for using a search engine.

Search Engine Strategy (Don’ts)

1.12 Give me examples of what you dislike or would irritate you while searching for holidays, trips or hotel rooms on search engines and anything that would deter you from picking a holiday or hotel.

Hotel Site Search Engine Strategy

1.13 Which would you expect to have the most detailed relevant information on your desired hotel?

(1) The search engine
(2) The hotel
(3) An online travel agent such as booking.com.

Would you be deterred from booking a hotel if it didn’t have the exact information you were looking for on its site Y / N.

Search Engine Keywords Strategy

1.14 When searching for a trip or a hotel on search engines what keywords would you put in (Tell me the ones for all aspects of the trip including activities etc? Note: (List back the information they gave above and ask the keywords for each one: also are there any other areas you would think of).
1.15 Please find the Merrion hotel’s site, Dublin in Google.
   Clicked on:
   (1) The ad
   (2) The organic search.
   Ask them did they click on an ad or on a normal Google search (explain if necessary).
Third parties / Social Media

Third Party Strategy

1.16 Apart from search engines, hotel websites, online travel agents websites such as booking.com what sites would you search for when researching a holiday, trip, hotel or related activities?

Third Party Content Strategy

1.17 In relation to these sites what comments, words or sentiment etc in the pages would persuade you to click on a link or research a particular hotel.

1.18 In relation to these sites what comments, words or sentiment etc in the pages would persuade you not to click on a link or research particular hotel.

Social Media Strategy (Stages)

1.19 What Social Media sites do you use?

1.20 Could you give me an example of a post or posts related to a hotel on a social media site that would engage your attention?

Social Media Customer Interaction Strategy

1.21 When a customer leaves a comment on social media what comment from the hotel would be appropriate in the case of a:

(1) Negative comment.

(2) Positive comment.
1.22 Should the comment be from the manager in charge of that particular area or somebody else or the general manager?

1.23 If you were staying in a hotel how should that hotel encourage you to leave a comment on social media?

1.24 What type of encouragement would you consider intrusive or off-putting?

**Site Specific Social Media Strategy**

**Facebook Strategy**

1.25 Could you give me an example of a post on Facebook that would persuade you to research a hotel?

1.26 What are your favourite Facebook posts (they don’t have to be hotel related?)

**Twitter Strategy**

1.27 What in a tweet would persuade you to check out a particular hotel?

**Google+ Strategy**

1.28 What in a Google+ page would persuade you to check out a particular hotel?
**Wikipedia Strategy**

1.29 When booking a trip what Wikipedia type of pages have you ever looked up?

**LinkedIn Strategy**

1.30 If the hotel had the name / profile of a manager and you could check out their profile on LinkedIn and it was positive, would this give you a positive impression of a hotel?

**Tripadvisor**

1.31 Could you show me typically how you would use Tripadvisor and what types of information would you look for: Note: Have the computer in front of the respondent.

   (1) Persuade you to book the hotel

   Or

   (2) Persuade you not to book the hotel.

---

Actual activity (Include how many comments they would go down through.)
Hotel Accommodation Websites

Site Level Mechanical Aspects / Embedded Code Strategy

1.32  Look at these ten hotel’s titles and tell me which words / sentences or sentiment would be most persuasive in encouraging you to look up a particular hotel.

Inbound Links Strategy

1.33  Name websites or types of websites you might seek information on related to a holiday or trip that are not hotel sites.

Outbound Links Strategy

1.34  What non-hotel information would you find particularly useful on the hotel’s website in helping you decide to stay in that hotel?

Content Wording / Text Strategy

1.35  What are the most important keywords you expect on a hotel site? Describe different pages for these words?

Personalisation / Segmentation / Activity Strategy

1.36  If the hotel had a page personalised with exactly the information for your demographic group or activity, what would the general content of that page be.

Site Engagement / Absorption

1.37  How should the hotel information, destination or activities be presented visual or verbally etc on the hotel’s website so that you could actually imagine being in the hotel in your “mind’s eye”.

325
Online Access Devices

PC / Laptop Strategy

1.38 In relation to your use of PCs or laptops when researching a trip would you describe these searches generally as:

(1) Detailed extensive searches

Or

(2) Quick answers to questions searches?

1.39 In relation to different devices how do you think you would search differently for a hotel on a PC or a laptop than on other devices?

Smartphone Strategy

1.40 In relation to different devices what type of information and how would you search for a hotel on a smartphone.

Local Smartphone Strategy

1.41 When you are in the hotel what information would you search for on a smartphone in relation to the hotel or any activity, attractions, social activities or air travel etc.

1.42 In relation to your use of smartphones while on a trip would you describe these searches generally as

(1) Detailed extensive searches?

Or

(2) Quick answers to questions searches?
Tablet Strategy

1.43 Where would you mostly use a tablet when researching hotel rooms and what would you generally search for using a tablet?

Cross / Multiple Device Strategy

1.44 Would it be normal for you to use different devices when searching for the same trip? Y / N.

1.45 What devices would they be?

1.46 On your last hotel stay would anybody else bar you have searched the internet for the exact same hotel stay?
Visual Interaction

Image Strategy

1.47 Describe the perfect photo of a hotel that would persuade you to book a hotel. You can describe a number of different photos if different areas of the hotel or activities / attractions would be required by you. Just describe each photo separately with as much detail as possible.

Video Strategy

1.48 Describe the perfect video of a hotel that would persuade you to book a hotel. You can describe a number of different videos if different areas of the hotel or activities / attractions would be needed by you to be happy to book that hotel. Just describe each video separately with as much detail as possible also tell me what length of time the video should be.

Images / Video Text Strategy

1.49 Remember the images and video you mentioned tell me the words, text or sentiment that should be beside them to persuade you to select that hotel.

Images / Video Text Location Strategy

1.50 Pointing to the computer screen in front of us what would be the ideal location for images / videos and text for different pages.

1.51 If an image broke the screen at the bottom would you normally scroll down to see the section of the page below the screen? Y / N.

Images / Video Full Page Strategy

1.52 With regard to the hotel site as a whole what emotions / or mental frame of mind would you expect to be feeling if the hotel site had everything you needed.
APPENDIX C: Online Hotel Information Questionnaire

The Individual

Target Segment(s) Identification Strategy

2.1 What principal market segments do you target?

2.2 What segmentation analytics or other information do you have if any?

2.3 What location do your online searchers come from?

Search Engines

Search Engine Keywords Strategy

2.4 What keywords find the hotel’s site?

Third parties / Social Media

Social Media Strategy (Stages)

2.5 What are the social media referrals from the analytics?
Site Specific Social Media Strategy

2.6 Give me examples of very successful social media campaigns you have run?

Hotel Accommodation Websites

Online Segment Engagement

2.7 What is the average amount of time onsite?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience - Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.8 How often do users re-visit the site? (Multiply dwell time X visit number divided by 360)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience - Behaviour - New / Returning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.9 What is the conversion rate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average %</th>
<th>Desktop %</th>
<th>Mobile %</th>
<th>Tablet %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Inbound Links Strategy

2.10 What is the hotels link building strategy?

2.11 What is the breakdown for the main pages on the site?

| Acquisitions - Search Engine Optimisation - Landing pages |
Online Access Devices

2.12 What are the analytics for the overall usage of different devices on your site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Reservations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desktop %</td>
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<td>Mobile %</td>
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<td>Tablet %</td>
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