

HOTEL DIGITAL PROPERTIES USER RESEARCH REPORT

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Executive Summary

- The major hotel chain needs to improve their user experience by better understanding their users' changing needs, attitudes and behaviors through user research.
- User research issues identified and addressed include:
 - ▣ *Unconventional page labels confusing site visitors*
 - ▣ *Important information ignored when placed lower in visual hierarchy*
 - ▣ *Flow between pages is inefficient and deters continuation*
 - ▣ *Inconsistency between the site and the mobile app*
 - ▣ *Nuisance intercept drives potential customers off site*
 - ▣ *Too many clicks deters continuation*
- This report covers highlights of the research plan aligning user research goals with hotel chain's business changing needs.
- The report also covers research method implemented to gather and interpret data and the results of this method.

Background

- The hotel chain has decided to launch a redesign of their digital properties, focusing primarily on the desktop site and the smartphone app.
- GABCOMM has been hired to start creating new design comps and to make other changes to the user experience without any user research throughout the redesign process.
- The agency strongly feels that the project needs to start with user research in order to better understand and define the existing design problems and user experience opportunities.
- The hotel chain felt that they would benefit from the targeted and planned user research; so they encouraged the agency to proceed with the user research and are awaiting the results and the recommendations for improvement that have stemmed from the research and plan to make some final decisions before proceeding with the redesign process.

Business Needs

- Increase hotel bookings via digital properties by 10%
- Increase reservations for their luxury and Lifestyle Collection hotel categories
- Gain 10,000 incremental members of the loyalty program in the first quarter after the redesign
- Decrease by 20% the number of people starting and then abandoning the reservation process
- Increase by 5% the number of people choosing a hotel and flight package (vs. just booking their hotel alone)



<http://michiganworkskalamazoo.org/business.html>

Research Goals

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the online reservation system (to provide a more efficient process for booking rooms from digital properties)
- Evaluate customer awareness of the luxury and Lifestyle Collection hotel categories (to improve brand distinction)
- Identify drop-off point for reservation process (to prevent further loss of potential customers)
- Identify aspects of the loyalty program that would be of most interest to customers (to encourage new member signups)
- Determine what might encourage customers to choose to book a hotel/flight package vs. just booking a hotel room by itself (to increase awareness of package bookings)



<http://static.squarespace.com/static/GoalSettingImage.jpg>

Methodology

- 2 interviews were held in my residence.
- Each participant session lasted 10 minutes and included a short briefing, an interview and a debriefing.
- The participants were asked a series of user research questions to support business needs. Highlights include:
 - Frequency of their hotel stays
 - Purpose of their travel
 - Most important amenities/features of hotel
 - Perception of luxury hotels
 - Most desired perks in hospitality rewards program

Data Analysis

- Both participants were 32 year old young professional males that travel quite frequently – making for valuable insight from real customers.
- 100% participants preferred the site over the smartphone app due to better readability and findability.
- “Free stays” were the most desirable perk within a loyalty program.
- “Breakfast” and “Free Wifi” came in 2nd for most desirable features amongst the participants.
- Luxury hotels are perceived as fancy and pricey.
- Neither interviewee had ever booked a hotel/flight package deal.



Hypotheses

- Customers **did** prefer booking hotel rooms via the site versus the mobile app.
- Customers **didn't** prefer hotel ratings and reviews over brand; they used both to make their decisions.
- It's a 50/50 chance that customers **would** think twice about abandoning the reservation process when presented with a special offer.
- Customers **do** value “free stays” most within a loyalty program.



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<http://psychphsg.tumblr.com/>

Results

- A participant thought a shuttle between the hotel and flight might be a great selling point for package deals.
- Proximity, such as walking and driving distance, were of great importance to an avid traveler.
- The avid business traveler felt that luxury hotels were for leisure and economy hotels were appropriate for business trips.
- A primary reason for abandoning the reservation process was due to pre-planning research.



<http://www.destination360.com/>



<http://www.hotels.com>

Recommendations

- Simplify the reservation process across all digital properties to create an optimal experience for the end user.
- Create the perception that luxury brands can be affordable and have features that are well worth the upgrade.
- Show competitor's pricing towards the end of the reservation process to prevent customers from abandoning the process to do competitors research.
- A shuttle from flight to hotel and vice versa should be the main selling point for hotel/flight packages.
- Optimize the “Free Stays” perk of the loyalty program to increase customer retention and encourage new signups.