



The Content Best Practices Series

Part 2 – Content Creation

The second publication in a series on best practices around creating, managing, distributing and using hotel descriptive content.

CONTRIBUTORS

Sylvain Courtial, amadeus

Tanya Aranda-Drew, Cvent

Wibke Brown, Delta Vacations

Amanda Tabor, DerbySoft

Connie Scaia, DerbySoft

Jodie Gibson, DerbySoft

Lena Hanschmann, HRS Group

Lindsey Shiller, HRS Group

Erica Peek, Hyatt Hotels

Henry Woodman, IcePortal

Audrey Murante, iDeas

David Chestler, Kognitiv

Laurel Clayton, Leonardo

Julie Ford, Leonardo

Beth Koesser, Northstar Travel Media

Kara Matson, Omni Hotels

Sydney Goodwin, Omni Hotels

Dee Thomas, Onyx CenterSource

Dominik Riber, peakwork

Fred Bean, REBEL Travel

Robert Cole, RockCheetah

Kara Madsen, Transperfect

Samantha Jones, Travelsavers

Katharina Heitmann, TrustYou



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Executive Summary

The HEDNA Content Best Practices series examines many of the processes around the creation, management, distribution and usage of content. Contributors to this document series include various individuals in the industry with varying perspectives, expertise on these functions and who have volunteered to provide insight into what they have found to be successful. The first installment in this series covered the business functions around content, including ownership within an organization and considerations when creating an ROI model.

There will be 2 additional documents in this series covering management, distribution and usage of content.

Definitions

Following is a list of definitions of common terms used throughout this paper.

B2B: Business to Business. Term used in e-commerce describing transactions conducted between businesses.

B2C: Business to Consumer. Term used in e-commerce describing transactions conducted between a business and the consumers.

Brand: The trade name by which a hotel is recognized in the marketplace.

CMS: Content Management System.

Content: The information about a hotel which is shown to the client in their chosen distribution channel. This includes text descriptions, visual media, rates and related policies.

Content Aggregator: A company that collects content from multiple hotels across multiple chains, i.e. GIATA, Northstar, Sumplex.



Content Distributor: A company that distributes content on behalf of a hotel or chain, i.e GDSs, DerbySoft, Cvent (Lanyon), DHISCo.

Content Score: A Content Score is a way of ranking properties based on the quality and completeness of their text and visual content.

CRS: Central Reservation System. System used by hotel companies to process their reservations.

Dynamic Content: Information about a hotel, generally date specific, which changes frequently, such as room rates.

GDS: Global Distribution System. Computerized reservation networks through which users (travel agents, airline employees, travelers) view data on a wide range of travel services, including air travel, hotel, car rental and like services. Several GDS's provide their services worldwide (e.g. Amadeus, Galileo International, Sabre) while others provide regional coverage.

Hotel Chain: A company that manages the administration, marketing and promotion of a number of hotels in various locations, typically under a single brand or collection of brands.

Hotel CRS Provider: A company that provides a reservations technology platform for hotels

Image Metadata: Administrative, descriptive and rights information that is transported with an image file. Provides search engines and visitors with detailed information about images.

Meeting Planner: Supervises and coordinates the strategic, operational and logistical activities necessary to produce events, including but not limited to meeting space, sleeping rooms, food & beverage, AV, etc. The planner can be employed by or hired ad hoc by corporations, associations, governments, and other organizations.

Metasearch Engine: A search engine where different sites are consolidated so that offerings can be compared. A meta site searches a number of sites for the consumer so they don't have to search each



individually. The result allows the user to compare a product on different sites to determine where they will purchase.

Meta Tags: Title, description and keywords located within a web page's HTML code that describe content on the web page. Used by search engines to determine relevance and ranking.

Open Travel: OpenTravel is a not-for-profit trade association with a primary focus on the creation of electronic message structures to facilitate communication between the disparate systems in the global travel industry.

OTA: An acronym for Online Travel Agency, a website that offers consumers the ability to research and book travel. Large, generalized OTAs provide access to hundreds of thousands of hotels, but smaller OTAs that serve specific markets also exist. Examples of popular OTAs are Agoda, Amoma, Booking.com, Ctrip, eLong, Expedia, Priceline, and Travelocity

Online Distribution Channels: Any online travel site that sells hotel rooms including OTAs, wholesalers, and Supplier sites.

PMS: Property Management System. The computer system in a hotel which contains information about available and occupied guest rooms, future reservations and guest charges (folios).

Property: An individual hotel where a guest stays.

Representation Company: A company providing marketing services to hotels, typically referred to as a soft brand, i.e. Utell by Pegasus.

Semi-Static Content: Information about a hotel which changes periodically, such as policies and amenities.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization. The process of optimizing your website to get organic, or un-paid, traffic from the search engine results page



Static Content: Information about a hotel, generally physical aspects, which does not change very frequently, such as hotel location and facilities.

Supplier: individual Hotel or Hotel Brand.

TMC: Travel Management Company. Companies that are contracted to manage business travel for corporate customers.

Introduction

Hotel content is a complex topic. Depending on your role in the hotel distribution ecosystem, content can affect you in various ways. If you are a hotel, you are likely tasked with providing the most complete and accurate details about your property to several distribution channels to attract potential guests. If you are an OTA (online travel agency), your target audience will drive the content you need, but is that content available and does it mean the same thing for every hotel? If you are a 3rd party provider of content services, you must balance the needs of the OTAs with the capabilities of the hotels, not only from the perspective of hotel information, but also from a data format, collection and distribution perspective.

Continuing the HEDNA Content Best Practices series, this second installment addresses what is probably the most critical step in the lifecycle of content ... creation. If the source of the content (in most cases, the hotel) doesn't provide the right information for their target market, then the distribution and usage isn't going to matter because demand for that content will be low. Distributors will seek out other alternatives, and most important, the hotel's guests aren't going to materialize. This document focuses on best practices enabling hotels to provide the most appropriate and desirable content for their target audience.



Document Purpose

This document is intended to establish common best practices related to hotel descriptive content and can be used as a reference when determining organizational processes. These best practices are not necessarily meant as recommendations, but simply provide guidance on how one might approach the various functions related to managing hotel content.

Document Scope

This document will address best practices at a high level and may reference other HEDNA material for further detail. For example, the section of this document that addresses content distribution will touch on distribution concepts, but further detail on distribution API options can be found in a recently published HEDNA white paper.

Intended Audience

Some or all portions of this document are suitable for hotel chains, hotel properties, content aggregators, content distributors, and any consumers of hotel content such as online travel agencies, travel management companies, meeting planners, meta search companies, etc. This is intended as a functional and business process guide, not a technical specification.

Channel Types

As with any information made available for consumption by prospective customers, it is important to cater the information to the specific market that is being targeted. While many of the general, fact-based elements of a hotel should be consistent across channels, the tone of the descriptions and the relevance of the primary facilities and services may differ based on the needs of the customer.

This section will take a look at those differences by channel type and highlight the importance of certain types of information for each.



Leisure Travel

Hotels must keep in mind that for the leisure channel, they need content that speaks to the guest who is there to relax, have fun and create an experience not only for themselves but also for their travel companions and family. They are focused on amenities, services and facilities at the hotel and in the surrounding area related to leisure activities. The types of activities that are of importance to each traveler type can vary, but as long as the information is provided in a clear and easy to find way, the traveler should be able to find what suits them most.

Property Descriptions

Provide general fact-based descriptions with the understanding that channels may amend, enhance, or re-write parts or all of this information based on their tone of voice. This is an opportunity for a hotel to highlight its facilities and services that may be relevant to the consumers targeted by leisure channel. For example, the number of pools, watersports, and activities are featured rather than meeting rooms and conference services.

Property Attributes

Detailed information about the available facilities and services will provide hotel customers a full picture of the hotel features and a better opportunity to identify how the property lines up against its competition. In addition, the more features defined on third party channels may directly have an impact on the rating, ranking, and display order of the property on said channels. Therefore, it is important to provide detailed facilities and services information and to make use of standardized fields wherever possible.

- Providing rich descriptions of available room types
- Detailed Room Amenities
- Resort fees and inclusions



- Number of restaurants
- Pools
- Airport Transportation
- Activities & Excursions
- Family-Friendly Amenities

Local Area/Points of Interest

Hotels are generally the best arbiters of relevant local attractions that best merchandise the location of the property. Points of interest, neighborhood information, nearest airports, train stations, transportation, and cultural information are additional opportunities to define the characteristics of a hotel and the experiences that are available to the guests in proximity to the hotel.

Photography

Provide relevant images that showcase the property for leisure travelers.

- Proper and consistent categorization and tagging of images makes it easier to filter out less relevant content such as photos of meeting rooms for leisure channels.
- Utilize a tool such as ICE Portal, Leonardo, GIATA, etc. to streamline the delivery of images.
- Aerial and exterior shots of the hotel can be used to merchandise the location of the hotel and surrounding area.
- While there may be cultural considerations and variations, the general rule is to use photos that showcase the property without people in them. Lifestyle images with people can be used for marketing campaigns and promotions but shouldn't be used on the hotel profiles.



Business Travel

For the business channel, hotels need to think like a business traveler and consider the information that would be most appealing to someone who is not looking to spend a lot of time in the hotel. They would want efficiency and convenience. Things that might appeal to a business traveler include:

- Reliable WIFI and a desk in the room
- Lobby workstations for those that prefer to work in a more office-like environment with others around them
- Business center availability and the services offered
- Restaurant with breakfast and coffee to get their day started without wasting time trying to find a coffee shop nearby

Also, consider travel policies that the business traveler's company may have put in place to manage spending, such as a per diem on meals. Indicating that breakfast is included in the nightly rate, or that there is a kitchenette in the room for extended stays, can be key factors in keeping costs down. Providing information on restaurants near the hotel can also allow travelers to plan their meals and select reasonably priced options in the vicinity.

Meetings & Events

Meetings and events represent some of the most lucrative booking opportunities for hotels. The needs of the travel planner versus the attendee can vary greatly, and therefore the information provided by the hotel should be comprehensive for its own site yet specific enough to cater to the markets being targeted on third party distribution channels. A bride planning her wedding is looking for different information than a soccer coach who needs rooms for her team and bus parking, which is also different than that of a professional planner booking a large meeting. While the core amenities and services are the same, the way they are presented to a leisure group versus a corporate group will differ.



Enabling Personalization

Personalization involves offering a contextually relevant experience based on the unique interests of an individual, group or persona. Complicating matters, an individual traveler may shift between multiple personas depending on the goals for a trip or the specific itinerary. Understanding that context underlies all personalization efforts, the adaptation of the experience may apply both online and in real life, and very often must take place in real-time to impart the greatest benefit.

Three fundamental approaches are employed to tailor experiences. All rely on identifying signals, associated with behaviors, that lead to a particular outcome:

- *Customization* is the adaptation of content and messaging based on explicit signals provided by the consumer (Example: Entering two adults & two children into a hotel search could trigger the presentation of images related to families.)
- *Individualization* adapts content and messaging based on passive signals derived from past history from a reliable sample of past customers (Example: Newsletter subscribers in a geographic locale who are exposed to a specific offer have a high probability of booking a resort vacation in the days following a major snowstorm.)
- *Personalization* is adapting content and messaging based on both customization and individualization, with the addition of personally identifiable information intentionally shared by the customer (Example: A frequent guest profile includes a wedding date, a purchase history including annual resort bookings in deluxe room accommodation near that date, and the current session involves a seven-day length of stay and navigation to suite details pages. An offer of a complimentary dinner for two - for suite bookings of five nights or longer is dynamically presented and tagged to the guest for future sessions.)

This section will focus on the steps that a supplier can take during the creation of content to allow B2C users of that content to personalize what is returned to their end users, and hopefully increase the likelihood of a traveler booking.



Why Care About Personalization?

Imagine a traveler planning a trip to a major city they've never been to before. It's their annual summer vacation with the family and they want to make it perfect. They go to their favorite travel website to find a hotel and are inundated with dozens of hotels in the area in which they want to stay. Sitting among these dozens is a hotel which is ideal for families with a spray park and waterslide at the pool, a kids stay free policy, babysitting service, and free shuttle to the local amusement park. But how do they find this hotel without spending hours combing through many hotel descriptions, amenities and photos? They let the online travel website do it for them.

The online travel website already knows things about the traveler. They know there are 2 adults and 3 children ages 6, 9 and 14 travelling. Since this is a returning customer, they know their preference for 3- and 4-star hotels. If the content they receive from the hotel allows for personalization, they can use these details to determine the best fit hotels for the traveler, saving them loads of time and increasing the chances they will find the perfect hotel for their family stay.

How Can Hotels Enable Personalization?

Identify Target Personas

The first step in creating content that enables personalization is knowing the traveler personas to target. Personas can be built based on psychographic, geographic & demographic characteristics, such as:

- Travel segment, i.e. Business, Leisure, Family, Couples, Groups
- Trip/stay purpose, i.e. Meeting/Convention, Romantic Getaway, Vacation, Wedding, College Visit, Sports Event
- Traveler demographics, i.e. Gender, Age, Ethnicity
- Interests, i.e. Food & Wine, Adventure, Music, Theatre, Local Experiences



- Traveler origin, i.e. Country, City or Neighborhood, Climate, Physical Characteristics of Location (mountains, desert)

Collecting information about past guests is one way to key in on the types of guests your hotel attracts. Another is to focus on the characteristics of the types of guest you would like to attract if you are looking to change or grow your guest profile.

Determine What is Important to Each Persona

After creating target personas, the next step is to dive into the amenities, services and features of a hotel that would appeal most to each persona. It is important to evaluate virtually every aspect of the hotel through the eyes of each persona in order to determine whether or not it is important. For example, a family traveler would likely want to know about pools, babysitting services, whether the restaurants offer a kid's menu, and nearby family attractions, while a business traveler would want to know about WIFI availability and cost, whether there's a desk in the room, and availability of various business services.

Evaluate and Tag Content

Armed with the target persona needs, it's now time to see how well the hotel is able to meet those needs with the hotel information available. Through this process, it may become clear that there are key details missing about the hotel that a target persona would need to know, and it may be necessary to reach out to the property to get this detail. It may also become apparent that the hotel just doesn't have what that persona is looking for. In that case, maybe that persona should be dropped from the hotel's target list altogether.

Tagging the information available is critical in allowing potential guests to find and book the hotel. Tags are searchable keywords that indicate the relevance of the content for specific personas and are used by OTAs to tailor the information shown to their customers based on whatever they may know about



them, i.e. their dates of travel, country of origin and trip purpose. Content types that are typically tagged include property descriptions and photos.

Examples of tagging and how it might be used:

Tagging Types	Example Tag	Possible Usage
Seasonality	Summer	Show photos of the pool; prioritize recreational activities available during the summer to the top of the amenities list.
Traveler Type	Family	Show photos of kids at the pool, families in the restaurant, and the playground; prioritize children's activities, babysitting service, the children's menu to the top of the amenities list.
Trip Purpose	Honeymoon	Show photos with couples at the pool or walking on the beach; prioritize the honeymoon suite to the top of the room types list, and the couples massage service to the top of the amenities list.
Origin	Mexico	Prioritize Spanish to the top of the languages spoken list, and room service and restaurant menus in

		Spanish to the top of the amenities list.
Interests	Golf	Show photos of the golf course; prioritize golf-related activities and services to the top of the amenities list.

There are no current standards defined when it comes to tags. Each OTA can have their own set of tags. Therefore, it is important for a hotel to know which tags are used by their key OTA partners and how they are used. Then be sure to apply those tags to the relevant content or work with a third party that can assist in this tagging.

Textual Content

This section will address best practices around creation of different types of text-based content and when each type is most appropriate.

Structured Information

There are three keys to creating great content – ensuring that it:

- Can be easily discovered
- Is easily understood by the user, and
- Provides relevant information related to the user’s topic of interest.

Structured data helps automated systems understand type of data and how that data relates to other pieces of data. The internet itself relies on structured data standards to enable the global discovery and presentation of information.



There are essentially two forms of structured data –

The first form of structured data is **metadata**, which is how the systems understand the meaning and relationships between independent pieces of information. There are three types of metadata:

- Descriptive metadata describes the information, so it may be accurately identified and discovered. Presenting an ordered list of hotels in an area requires the system to understand the relationship between the hotels – If an alphabetical list is desired, each hotel’s name to be recognized as being stored within a specific structured field, so that particular name attribute may be sorted into alphabetical order.
- Structural metadata signals how information is related to other pieces of information, for example, a hotel could have several restaurants and each restaurant could have different opening and closing hours for particular days of the week. A hotel could also have several different types of room categories, that while different, must all be organized as relating to a single hotel. That hotel could also have a brand affiliation, making it a part of a larger collection of properties.
- A third type of metadata is Administrative metadata, which helps manage an information resource. For example, the timestamp when a piece of content was updated allows for only the latest version of the content to be presented. Authorization of who has the right to create, read, update or delete a particular piece of data is also critical to maintain system security.

The second form of structured data is **the content itself** that is stored within the structures that are used to describe a particular thing, such as a hotel. Examples could be a text field for a hotel’s name, website address, or a property description. This content is what is presented to users. Even for a simple alphabetical list of hotel names, any inconsistent information replacing the desired hotel name content undermines the validity of the list. This content may be a collection of words, numbers, or any other form of descriptive information.

Customers normally only see the content presented, without knowing, or caring about all the data structures and administrative controls required to make it possible. However, to be successful, a



hotel's data must be both well organized (structured metadata) and appropriately defined (descriptive content). If the data is not properly structured, it will often not even be made available for presentation to a customer. If the quality of the content itself is poor, it will be perceived as inferior or irrelevant compared to similar content presented by other entities.

Benefits of following guidelines for structured content:

- Provides means to search
- Allows for comparison
- SEO improvements
- Independent parts can be used separately
- Ability to edit separately
- Build relationships between parts
- Publish to multiple platforms, pick and choose relevant elements
- Makes translation easier
- Create taxonomy to make discovery easier
- Allows you to personalize content to audience

Here are a couple of organizations that have work done to standardize structures for exchanging and using hotel information.

Schema.org

Schema.org is a collaborative, community activity with a mission to create, maintain, and promote schemas for structured data on the Internet, on web pages, in email messages, and beyond.

Schema.org vocabulary can be used with many different encodings, including RDFa, Microdata and JSON-LD. These vocabularies cover entities, relationships between entities and actions, and can easily be extended through a well-documented extension model. Over 10 million sites use Schema.org to markup their web pages and email messages. Many applications from Google, Microsoft, Pinterest,



Yandex and others already use these vocabularies to power rich, extensible experiences.

Founded by Google, Microsoft, Yahoo and Yandex, Schema.org vocabularies are developed by an open community process, using the public-schemaorg@w3.org mailing list and through GitHub. A shared vocabulary makes it easier for webmasters and developers to decide on a schema and get the maximum benefit for their efforts. It is in this spirit that the founders, together with the larger community have come together - to provide a shared collection of schemas.

This page provides background information on the use of schema.org for marking up hotels and other forms of accommodations: <https://schema.org/docs/hotels.html>

OpenTravel

OpenTravel's mission is to engineer specifications to ensure traveler and supplier information flow smoothly throughout travel, tourism and hospitality. OpenTravel creates, expands and drives adoption of open specifications, including but not limited to the use of XML, for the electronic exchange of business information among all sectors of the travel industry.

OpenTravel is a not-for-profit trade association, founded in 1999 by travel companies, with a primary focus on the creation of electronic message structures to facilitate communication between the disparate systems in the global travel industry.

This page provides information for implementers of the OpenTravel specification:

<https://www.opentraveldevelopersnetwork.com/>

Unstructured Information

Unstructured data (or unstructured information) is information that either does not have a pre-defined data model or is not organized in a pre-defined manner. Unstructured information is typically text-



heavy, but may contain data such as dates, numbers, and facts as well. Some examples of unstructured content include hotel descriptions, cancellation/deposit policies and location descriptions.

Unstructured text can be valuable as an SEO tool if written correctly, here are suggestions on how to ensure your content is written effectively.

- Be sure your unstructured descriptive text communicates your brands voice and include keywords that are relative to your brand message. Reflecting on those things like amenities which make your brand stand out.
- Design good content which ensures that your users are engaged:
 - Simple/Clear/Coherent
 - Unexpected
 - Concrete
 - Credible/Valid/Experienced
 - Emotional
 - Entertaining
 - Inspiring
 - Educational
 - Relevant
 - Deep/Thorough
 - Practical
 - Novel/Unique (in value, not just in content)
 - Trustworthy
- Things to do (Google Developer Developer Documentation Style Guide):
 - Use a friendly, conversational tone with a clear purpose — somewhere between the voice you use when talking to your buds and that you'd use if you were a robot.
 - Try to sound like a knowledgeable friend who understands what users want to do.



- Use standard American spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization.
- Craft clear, concise, short sentences with simple words that users will understand.
- Implement effective and descriptive link text.
- Use accessible words and short sentences that will translate well to other languages.
- Consider numbered lists for sequences of events.
- Ensure outbound links are to sites that are “high-quality, reliable and respectable”.
- Things to avoid (Google Developer Documentation Style Guide):
 - Buzzwords
 - Technical jargon
 - Slang
 - Exclamation points
 - Using the word “please” in instructions
 - Placeholder phrases like “please note” or “at this time”
 - Starting sentences the same way
 - Taking metaphors too far
 - Using “click here” in link anchor text

Multilingual

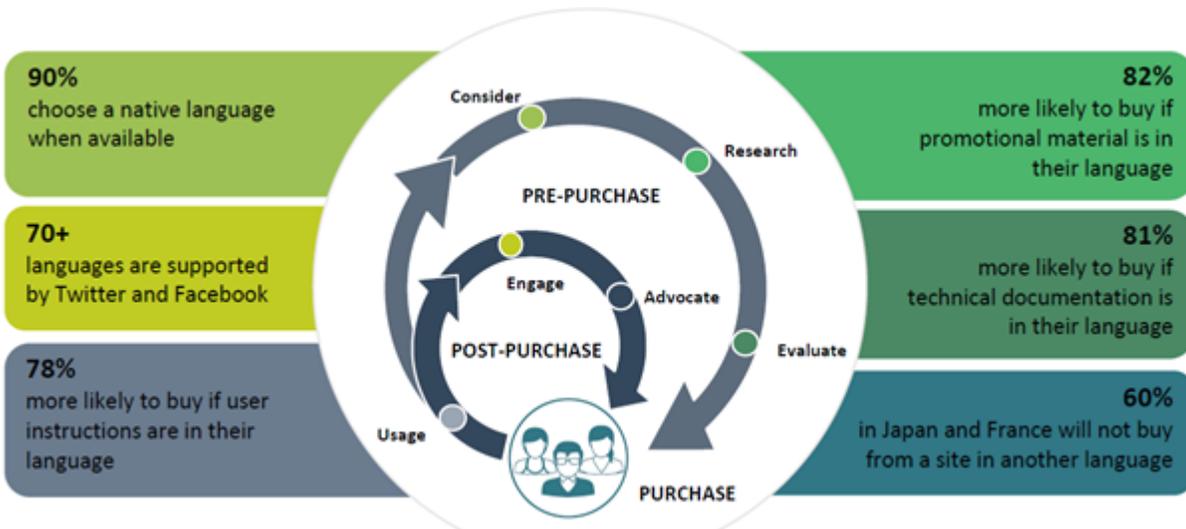
Translation is at the heart of today’s globally connected world. It enables the transaction of travel services online, as well as a superior guest experience in-destination. Translated material is not only a prerequisite for many global travelers, it is also a legal requirement in a number of countries and regions. When translations are available, and are done well, businesses can look forward to repeat custom, customer advocacy and potentially higher revenues as customers gain confidence in your brand and the additional services you may offer.

On the face of it, translation looks to be a straightforward process: words and concepts in one language are exchanged for their equivalents in another. In reality, translation is deeply complex. Many key

decisions must be made even before the source text is sent for translation, such as does the translation matter. Such decisions are vital to ensuring an effective translation process for the content at hand. Deciding incorrectly may result in unnecessary costs and time delays.

Can we consider that only a limited number of languages are required to distribute travel content? As a whole this is true, given that the common language of the travel industry globally is English, and the major language markets of Chinese, Spanish, German, French, Italian and Portuguese are commonly catered for. However, while this limited set of languages works for many in B2B distribution, all travel businesses touch the travelling consumer as some point along the distribution chain. More correctly, B2B travel businesses should see themselves as B2B2C since the customers they serve are ultimately consumer facing.

The Common Sense Advisory published a study that all travel businesses should bear in mind:



It is clear from the CSA data that language is a key component in driving both purchasing and advocacy behavior. Moreover, thanks to social media, consumers are already receiving content in their own languages almost irrespective of where they live. Translation is an expectation and not a preference. B2B businesses that service the consumer are those businesses that the travel retailer will rely upon.



It is understandable that many travel businesses – particularly B2B businesses – would prefer to offer a limited choice of languages for their content. Translation is often viewed as a cost rather an investment and a comparatively high cost at that; one which eats straight into the bottom line. Travel businesses that have large inventories also derive most of their revenue from just a subset of the total products available. Yet, they translate all that inventory even if the cost exceeds the profit for an individual product

This cost sensitivity is, however, often based on a poorly optimized translation process. Using modern technologies and best practice, it is possible to direct translation spend only where it is needed allowing travel businesses to better server more language markets globally within existing budgets, knowing that every penny is accounted for.

Multilingual Content Creation Best Practices

During the translation process itself, a professional translator will use a number of tools and techniques to efficiently translate the source text. It is very much a collaborative process, though. Often, the translator will rely on numerous process and technology investments the company has made in its business to deliver the best possible translation for the price

Ensure the Quality of the Source Material

The quality of the source text to be translated has a direct bearing on the effort (time and cost) to translate it.

Text that is filled with spelling and grammatical errors, missing or poor punctuation, or indeed incorrectly elucidating the concept trying to be conveyed will all make a translator’s job that much harder. Not only that, but any automated technologies that pre-processes the source text in order to reduce human translation costs – such as translation memory or machine translation – will likely fail.



Use Repetition Analysis in the Translation Workflow

It's safe to say that the travel industry loves to use repeated phrases in its content, such as:

"The beach is just 250 yards away"

"Our friendly staff will make you feel right at home"

"The limousine will pick you up at the airport and take you to your hotel"

While such standard platitudes can make travel content a little monotonous, it turns out that repetitions are a good thing when it comes to reducing translation costs.

Technologies build into some Translation Management Systems – a key component in any enterprise translation workflow – can extract these repetitions across all the documents in a translation job. Only one instance of that repeated phrase is then sent for translation and when the translation is returned the System applies that translation to all repeated instances.

This means, for example, that instead of paying 10 times for 10 repeated phrases, you pay only one time, yet all 10 repetitions are translated.

Apply Translation Memory to the Translation Workflow

Another component of a Translation Management System is something called "Translation Memory". This is a technology that stores the translation for a piece of text and applies that translation automatically if that same text appears again. It's in this step that large savings can be achieved in the translation process.

Imagine the phrase *"The beach is just 250 yards away"* is in a description you wish to translate. The very first time the description is sent for translation, the translator will translate the phrase into the target language. The Translation Management System then stores this translation in its memory. The next time *"The beach is just 250 yards away"* occurs, the System will recognize it as a phrase has been translated before and automatically apply the translation in whatever target languages it has stored.



There is no need to send this phrase to a translator, it has already been translated. Some companies charge a small amount for Translation Memory matches, some do not. In either case, reusing stored translations is much cheaper than having the same phrase translated again and again.

Translation memory can identify variations in numbers, dates and other information in the source text and apply a stored translation that is *almost* the same. This is something called a **fuzzy match**. For example:

“The beach is just 250 yards away”

“The beach is just 500 yards away”

In this case Translation memory would use the translation it has stored for the first variation and automatically alter the number “250” to “500”.

Over time, as more and more of a company’s content is translated and stored in translation memory, it is easy to realize savings of 50% or more (usually a lot more) thanks to translation reuse.

Use Machine Translation Where You Can

The use of machines to translate source text from one language to another has come a long way in recent years. The incorporation of an artificial intelligence technology called “deep neural networks” is finally allowing **machine translation** (MT) to deliver on a promise of translation quality, particularly in Asian, Germanic and Slavic languages where machines have traditionally struggled.

The advantages of machine translation are time and cost. They can simply process content for translation much faster than humans can, and at a much lower cost.

Translate Content by the Most Cost-Effective Process

Reading the preceding best practices, you are now aware that there are different options for translating travel content.



Machine Translation can offer fast, inexpensive (although not always accurate) translation and is a good choice for short, simple content types such as user reviews.

Machine translation followed by human translation review – a process called MT Post Editing – is very cost-effective for a large number of travel content types, such as travel inventory, blog posts, travel guides, mailshots and brochures. These are cases where machines do a reasonable job as a first pass over the content but needs a human eye to follow up and correct any linguistic errors.

Marketing campaign content, when translated into other languages, needs not just a translation done but a review of the concepts you are trying to communicate to a local audience. Emotive content simply does not ‘translate’ from one culture to another. A professional translator who has a cultural attachment to the country you want to market to can take an overall brief and create a localized collateral that resonates correctly with that local market.

Corporate reports and legal content should only be done by specialist human translators. There is no room for error in this content, so it’s best to give to an appropriately qualified translator from the start.

In short, there is no “one size fits all” for translating content. Best practice dictates that a translation process should be selected for each type of content in your business. A Translation Management System can automate this decision making.

The primary reasons for routing content are the cost and the suitability of the translation. Each type of translation has its own cost structure and requirement. Each type of content has its audience. Companies should apportion a translation budget appropriately to maximize its effectiveness.

Human Review Ensures Accuracy and Appropriateness

Any business that operates in international markets will be aware of complaints received about the quality of their translated materials. It’s a fact of life that humans make mistakes and that applies to human translators, too.



Simple mistakes can be easily corrected, but some mistakes are a little more unforgivable, such as insulting a local population by using an appropriate translation produced by a machine, being unaware of local cultural sensitivities, or even giving an unqualified translator corporate, legal or sensitive documents to process.

In travel, a human is at the end of the content chain. How that person reacts to the translated material can cause either increases or decreases in business. The translations delivered will be directly affected by the care taken in their creation.

Always make translation a human-led benchmark.

Deliver the Content in a Localized Context

While not strictly part of the translation process, the rendering of translated content on a localized context should also follow industry best practice. The last thing you want to do is devalue all of the work you have put into translating your content by presenting it in a less than optimal manner.

A best practice in creation of translated content is to understand how it will be delivered into the target market. Seek the expertise of those who have done it all before and can bring a professional and polished approach to your own global content delivery.

Most important are the expectations of the end consumer of your content. Whether the content is delivered within the colorful setting of a Japanese ecommerce website, or in short-form through a voice activated assistant, there are always 'exceptions to the rules' to consider.

Visual Content

Photos

When a consumer is shopping for the right hotel, how will one hotel stand out in a sea of properties (many selling on price)? Visuals! Here are some tips to improve the quality and consumer appeal of hotel photos. (Hint: Be sure to share this with the photographer.)

- Travelers like to see a visual representation of the room. Many of the OTAs are now requesting four or more images per room type, including images of the bathroom. This also increases the chances they will upsell rooms.
- Rooms with an attractive view (landmark, beach, mountains) appeal to the consumer who can then see themselves “there”.
- Consider adding images of relevant common spaces, like balcony, pool, lobby, restaurants, etc.
- Images should be lit properly (preferably with natural light if possible).
- Travelers can tell if a photo has been tampered with. Show photos that show an eye-level view, straight lines (not the distortion of extreme wide-angle lenses) and give travelers a true sense of the property. Avoid camera angles/lenses that distort the room/view (consumers think your trying to hide something.)
- Consider including any unique features of the property. Think of how the hotel can stand out in a world of choice.
- Clean and tidy up the area(s) before taking the photos. If room photos show the bed sheets wrinkled, what do you think the consumer should expect?
- Include bathroom images. Clean, well light bathroom shots will help increase booking conversions.
- Include close-up and shots with unique and interesting perspectives.
- Make sure images are consistent across all distribution channels. It is confusing to consumers to see different images for the same property on different channels.



- Whether a prospect views the hotel on their own website or on an OTA, the hotel visuals need to be accurate and relevant. Deliver high quality, up to date visuals.
- Provide the best visuals that include relevant meta-data (captions, room types, descriptions, etc.).
- Consider the OTAs as a marketing channel for showcasing visuals.
- Probably the simplest and most important consideration is to look at the visuals *from a prospective guests' perspective* – what are they seeing, and what appeals to them!?

Finally, ensure all content created for the hotel is owned by the hotel. There should be an agreement (work for hire) with the photographer that grants the hotel company all the rights to the images in perpetuity. Avoid stock images if possible.

Categorization

It is important to set categories that are indicative of the photos being shared. Most OTAs and travel channels use standard image categories to apply consistent processes in recognizing the subject matter and determining how they should be used. Often uncategorized images as well as images categorized as “Other” go unrecognized by most channels. OpenTravel has identified categories (exterior, room, lobby, etc.) that are required by the GDSs and most OTAs.

Some channels will even penalize hotels for images that are improperly categorized by reducing their content score. Proper categorization shows channels that the hotel has met their content requirements. Some channels will not display a property at all if the categorization does not meet basic standards. Using proper categories for images will also help deliver a better experience to the end user.

To improve the listing content score, one should also consider adding contextually relevant meta-tags to every image. All major distribution channels have their own tags, as there are currently no standards. Tagging each image will improve the content score and ranking on the OTAs. To save time and money, consider a service that distributes and maps one set of tags to the leading OTAs' tags.



Quantity

When it comes to the number of photos needed, think Goldilocks ... not too few and not too many. The OTAs would like to see at least 25 or more photos per listing, but consumers may get overwhelmed if they must shuffle through a hundred or more images. According to TripAdvisor, hotels that provide 20+ photos receive 150% more engagement than hotels that provide only a few photos. An increase in images can also have a positive effect on hotel ADR.

As a best practice, a hotel should have at least one image for every amenity and at least four images for every room type (three of the room and one of the bath room). Naturally, larger hotels with more amenities will have more photos.

Here are some general guidelines to follow:

- 15-21+ images for limited service properties
- 18-28+ images for full-service properties
- 21-35+ images for luxury properties

Quality, Resolution, Orientation & Size

Every channel has different image quality and size requirements. Quality can be somewhat subjective, but you know it when you see it. Hotels should always consider hiring a professional. High quality visuals generally increase the look-to-book conversion over poorer quality and often allow hotels to charge higher rates.

The recommended resolution of an image is 2880px. However, an increasing number of OTAs are requesting images that are 3840 pixels or more on the longest side.

When sending images to online channels, the higher the resolution the better. An aspect ratio of 16:9 is ideal as it's the most common aspect ratio for TVs, computer monitors, smartphones and tablets in landscape orientation.



Best practices for quality, resolution, orientation & size:

- Size: minimum 2880px (longest side)
- Aspect ratio: 16:9
- File types: JPG, PNG, GIF are best
- Orientation: Landscape

Many distribution channels are penalizing hotels for providing images that don't meet their quality requirements, so hotels need to be sure to check with their channel partners on those requirements.

Metadata and Tags

Search engines can't read images but they can read the text descriptions (or metadata) encoded on the image. An image caption, short description and long description should describe the content of the image. A high quality and well-composed hotel photo is incomplete without a proper caption.

A **caption** is essentially a short, descriptive title that describes a photo. Photos should be labelled with meaningful captions so that travel shoppers know exactly what they're looking at. Hotels don't want travel shoppers guessing if they're viewing a standard guest room or deluxe guest room.

Avoid acronyms and uninformative titles. Leaving notes in the image file names is also a big no-no. Avoid confusing potential guests by letting them know that the property is organized and well-managed with titles that clearly describe the content of your photos.

While captions are an external description, metadata are encoded on the image itself. The metadata on a file may contain copyright information which trademarks an image to the photographer or to a property. This data should not be altered, unless the hotel has explicit rights to do so.

Videos

Videos are one of the fastest growing media categories online. Over 80% of media consumed online is some kind of video format, meaning consumers are increasingly familiar and drawn in by video marketing. For hospitality, many of the same overall requirements apply to video as they do images.

Videos should have an aspect ratio of 16:9 (like photos) and should be a minimum of 1080p. Ideal formats for distribution include: MOV, AVI, FLV, MPEG.

Hotels should create videos that either give shoppers an overview of the experience of staying with them, or that provide credibility. Short videos typically perform better and are more likely to get more views than longer ones. Viewer engagement decreases the longer the video is, and the ideal length is around 2 minutes.

Some other things to consider when creating videos:

- **Hire a professional.** If a hotel does not have experience in video production and proper lighting techniques, they may do more harm than good to their marketing efforts by creating their own video. Fortunately, it has gotten less expensive to produce quality video, but it should not always be about price. Hotels must do their homework. Even aerial shots can be done with drones at a fraction of what it cost a few years ago.
- **Watch videos.** Hotels should look at other travel and hospitality videos, lots of them. This provides examples to show the videographer to set wishes and expectations. Telling the production crew to create something unique and different does not give a lot of direction or help them get a sense of what is desired.
- **Light it up.** Make sure whomever is creating the video uses appropriate lights – it really helps and makes the production look more polished.

- **Tell a story.** What is it about your property that is share-worthy ... what are the unique things the hotel and the surrounding area has to offer?
- **Get emotional.** Travel tends to elicit emotions, and videos can help the viewer connect with the property, its people, its food, its surroundings, its service, etc. Make sure the video has motion – this is what separates it from photos.
- **Keep it short.** The on-demand internet has created a culture of impatience. One third of consumers stop watching the video before 30 seconds, and after 30 seconds the drop off rate increases dramatically. If needed, consider breaking up the video into multiple shorter videos ... like the general overview, dining, rooms, destination, meetings, etc.
- **Editing.** The hotel and the video production crew should have a script or story board prior to starting the production so that they have what they need in post-production – in the edit room. Make sure the video flows in addition to telling a story. The transitions and music will help make it flow.
- **Ownership.** Like photos, make sure the hotel owns the IP for all videos of the property, and if any stock footage is used (not recommended) ensure the appropriate rights are secured.
- **Have fun.** Just like anything, have fun. Are there members of the hotel staff that have radiant personalities? See if they would like to be part of the experience (don't forget to have them sign a talent release).

360 Tours

A virtual tour is a 360-degree simulation of a location in a hotel (whether it be a guest room, the lobby, pool, etc.). They are made with a sequence of videos or still images. Virtual tours help increase travel shoppers' confidence and provide credibility and detail. They also provide a sense of interactivity. They should:



- Be produced in high resolution panorama format: 7000x1750 pixels
- Be in 4:1 aspect ratio without cropping
- Show 3 – 10 hotel features, including rooms

Along with videos, 360 tours are classified as “rich media,” which some channels require as part of a digital brochure (see next section) or for effective display. Virtual tours are also helpful for Google and search engine rankings, as they are heavily featured in search listings.

Digital Brochures

A hotel digital brochure is a collection of visual and textual information that showcases relevant hotel details for a travel shopper. A digital brochure can be as simple as a PDF available for vendors. It can also take the form of an interactive experience similar to a media gallery, which visually catalogues and easily presents what a hotel has to offer.

An interactive digital brochure typically has tabs for rooms, general amenities, and key services or features. Each of these tabs should include a minimum of 3-5 photos, along with descriptive text to bring the photos to life. A digital brochure should also have at least one piece of rich media (virtual tours or video) so that it meets the requirements of some distribution channels.

Digital brochures should target specific guest segments such as leisure, group, or business/corporate, based on the specific distribution channels that the brochure is syndicated to. For example, a digital brochure distributed to corporate and group booking sites should highlight relevant amenities including meeting rooms photographed in various layouts, specs, package highlights, and business centers.

User Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) refers to any type of content (text, photos, videos, reviews, testimonials, blog posts, tweets, and everything in between) that is created and released by unpaid contributors. To put things simply, user-generated content is what happens when users promote and advertise a brand



rather than the brand doing this itself. For the hospitality industry, the most used and most influential UGC are reviews written to rate an experience and provide feedback to an accommodation. This chapter explains the different types of UGC that are relevant to a hotel and what should be considered to receive UGC.

Reviews

The best way to receive reviews is by proactively asking for feedback from guests during and after their stay. Survey tools can help to easily reach out to guests and ask for their feedback. Studies show that when a review is requested by an accommodation provider, guests are 3.6 times more likely to leave a review. Not only that but every time an accommodation asks for guest feedback, the solicited reviews are 16% more likely to be “extremely” positive, i.e. a 5-star review. This goes to show that the most effective way of getting positive feedback from your guests is also the easiest one: just ask!

On-Site Feedback

Checking in on the guest during their stay has several advantages. Sending a short on-site survey either via email or a messaging tool creates a positive and personal experience for the guest. Additionally, identifying issues while the guest is still on-site and solving them quickly leads to a better overall experience and can positively impact the post-stay review. Upon a guest’s departure, a quick and friendly reminder from the front-desk staff is encouraged. Thanking the guests for choosing the hotel and reminding them that their feedback is highly welcomed and very important, will help to pave the way for the guests to submit a review.

Post-Stay Feedback

Post-stay surveys are an extremely easy and useful tool to collect reviews, and hotels can benefit from UGC on various levels. These are some tips to get the best possible information from guests after their stay.



Send surveys sooner rather than later

Hotels should consider that the impression and overall feedback from the guest will be more genuine and accurate right after their stay has ended, compared to e.g. a week or two later. With the experience fresh in mind, it will be easier for guests to complete their review. Therefore, it is recommended to send the survey one or two days after the guest has left the hotel. The process can be automated through guest data integrations without additional manual work.

Keep it short and simple

It's essential to always keep in mind that when a guest completes a survey, they are using their time to help the hotel. Therefore, the length of the survey, as well as the complexity of the questions in it, should be as short and as "to-the-point" as possible. Keeping the survey short and well-built, rather than long, "heavy," and disorganized, ensures that more guests will actually follow through and complete the questions and actually submitting their review.

Make use of variations of questions

A smart and comprehensive survey solution enables multiple types of questions. It is recommended that hotels make good use of different types of survey questions. A large variety of question types keep feedback interesting, from open- and closed-ended questions to scaled questions that measure satisfaction, to ones that are dependent on previous answer selections. This will also keep guests alert and invested in the survey since they will have different ways of expressing their thoughts and opinions.

Ratings

All reviews, either the ones that are collected by the hotel or the ones that are submitted via Google, TripAdvisor, or OTAs are summarized into ratings or scores. The main rating of the hotel will be the indicator for future travelers to get a first impression of the performance and services of the hotels. They are immensely important for the booking decision. Furthermore, these can be segmented into specific categories which are often displayed on websites, such as Google or in summarized reviews



such as TrustYou's Meta-Review. Based on semantic analysis, different categories such as wellness, families, business etc. can be differentiated and outlined with a designated score for each.

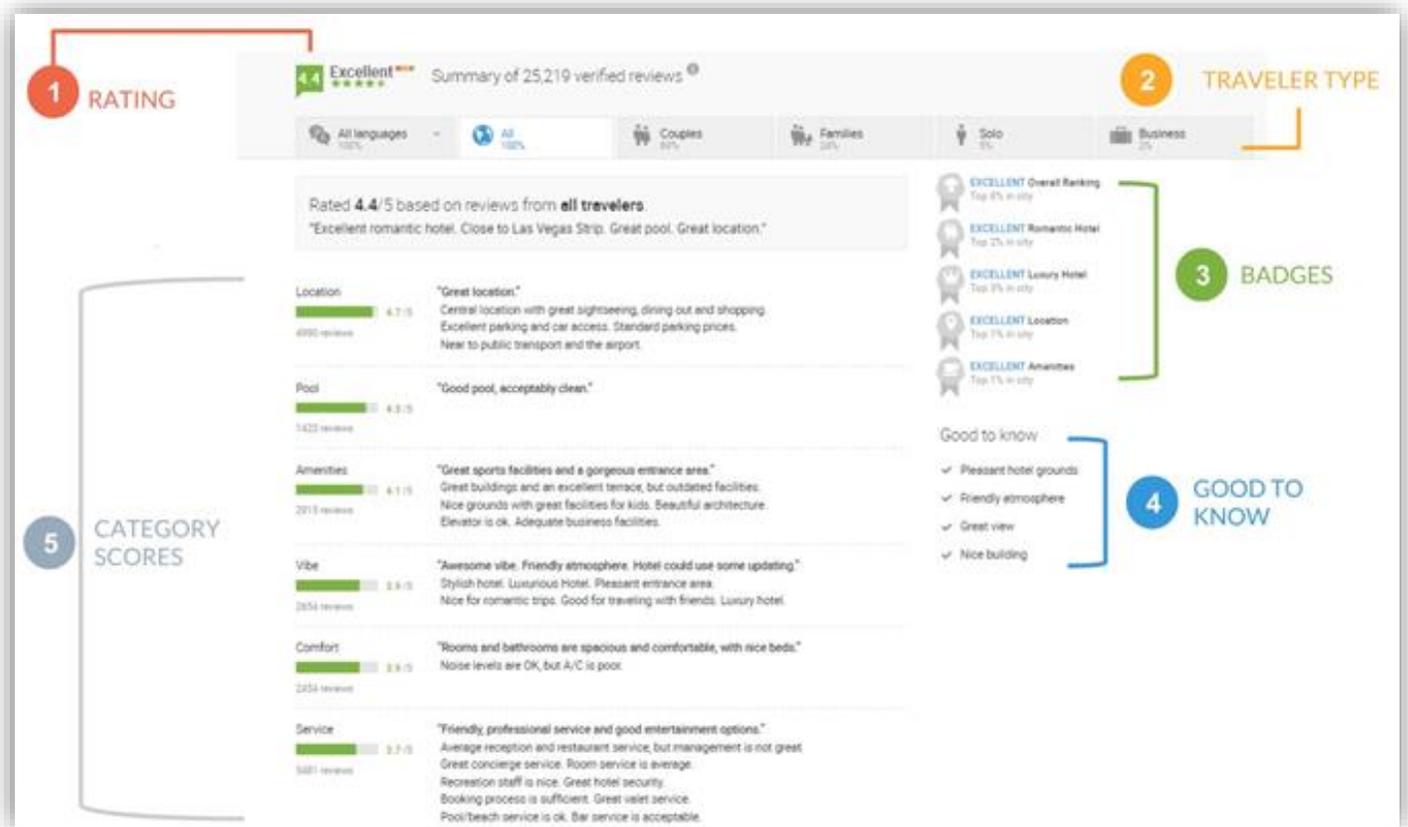
Visualization

Widgets

The visualization of the reviews on a website is particularly important to show how other travelers have rated this hotel at one glance. Widgets can be defined as small applications that can be installed and executed within a web page. Widgets are meant to provide extra pieces of useful information, in a more visual and attention-grabbing way than plain text. In this way, potential guests can receive details about the hotel's score and reputation based on feedback from previous guests right at the beginning of their search where it has the power to influence their booking decision. Using visual review content and trustworthy review widgets helps to build trust and improve the authenticity of the offer which helps to make a confident booking decision.

There are different variations a hotel can choose from:

1. **Ratings:** Using summarized review scores or source-specific scores such as survey results or from review portals.
2. **Traveler Type:** Making the distinction regarding what type of traveler left the review helps to further educate the researcher in making a booking decision.
3. **Badges:** Provide an overview of the performance and highlights the areas in which the hotel excels e.g. top wellness hotel.
4. **Good to Know:** Showcasing which attributes are worth knowing about the hotel based on reviews.
5. **Category Scores:** Highlighting specific categories that are important to the hotel to showcase which areas are particularly well-rated by travelers e.g. service, food, or rooms. Some OTAs and travel sites show this also in the form of icons.



Instagram

Images play an important role in the buying phase of travelers and influence the decision of whether to book a hotel or not. Social media and in particular Instagram is highly popular among travelers across the globe and provide visual UGC that hotels can use to promote their hotel through the eyes of the user.

Some simple steps can help to encourage more visual UGC:

- Set up a company account and be present on Instagram
- Display the username/account and preferred hashtags across the hotel to motivate guests to share their experience on Instagram



- Interact with users by liking, sharing and promoting their stories on the hotel’s channels to create loyalty
- Post quality content/photos that exhibit the most aesthetically-pleasing parts/features of the hotel
- Stick to a certain frequency when posting and keep the schedule balanced

Third-Party Content

For hotels wanting to provide their guests with an overall experience and not just a place to sleep, they may want to look into supplementing their hotel content with destination and event content. Though some hotels include reference points and attractions in their hotel content, this typically consists of little more than the attraction name, attraction type, and distance from the hotel. This is fine if the primary goal is to perform hotel searches. However, to truly engage a guest in the experience of staying at a hotel, they’re going to need more than that.

Third-party content providers specializing in destination content usually offer a more robust level of detail about each point of interest. This can include detailed descriptions, hours of operation, costs, and rich visuals. In some cases, reviews and ratings from past visitors may also be provided, as well as to an option to make reservations and buy tickets.

The types of content that are complementary to hotels include:

- **Attractions.** Tourist hot spots and points of interest in and around a city.
- **Events.** Date-specific events such as concerts, theatrical productions and festivals
- **Activities/Tours.** Sightseeing tours and organized activities such as parasailing, snorkeling and golf.
- **Dining.** Restaurants offering various levels of service and types of cuisines.



When considering the acquisition of 3rd party content, hotels may also want to consider the following:

Who are the target guests and what are their interests?

If a hotel brand is focused more on leisure and family travelers, then they should look for providers with a robust repository of family-oriented attractions such as amusement parks and museums. However, if they are targeting business travelers, a hotel’s proximity to corporate offices and conference centers may be more important.

What is the global coverage of the 3rd party content provider?

A global hotel chain needs to consider where their properties are located and ensure the 3rd party provider selected has good coverage of those locations. In some cases, it might be necessary to work with more than one provider to get the broadest coverage.

Does every hotel location require the content or should it be focused only on the top locations?

It may not make sense to provide destination content for every location where the chain has hotels. Some destinations are just not a big draw for leisure travelers and there may not be a demand for 3rd party content. Be selective in choosing where to provide this more robust content and save some money in the end.

Within what radius around a hotel is the content needed?

When determining how far out to go around the hotel for content, consider transportation and traffic for the area. For hotels in densely populated areas such as downtown Manhattan where traffic can be a nightmare, a restaurant that is 5 miles away may not be considered “close”. However, in a location such as Omaha where it is a little easier to get around, anything within 10 miles might be considered a reasonable distance to travel.



How will the content be integrated with the hotel information?

Maps are a great way to give the potential guest a sense of where a hotel is located and what lies around it. If the 3rd party content doesn't include latitude and longitude details, then it might be difficult to present the combined information on a map. Consider also how maps will be generated. Without the ability to do this in-house, it might be a good idea to see if the 3rd party content provider could offer these services as well.

Where will the content be used?

Is it just for the brand.com website or will it be distributed to channel partners? Be sure the content provider chosen offers the ability to use the content where it is needed.

Conclusion

Hotel content is about more than a few descriptions, photos and a listing of amenities and services. It's about creating an experience for the guest before they ever step foot in your hotel. Careful thought and consideration must be given to the types of guests your hotel might want to attract and understanding their unique wants and needs when it comes to a hotel stay. Only then can you develop a plan for content creation and acquisition that will ensure your potential guests are able to find and ultimately choose your hotel based on the experience they are looking for.

Once you've created the content that will drive your business forward, you will need to focus on getting that content to the right places and making sure it is kept up to date. Best practices around the distribution and management of content will be addressed in our next publication in this series. We will then wrap up the series with best practices for content usage where we will take a look at the application and presentation of the content to the traveler.



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HEDNA: The Distribution Authority

Founded in 1991, HEDNA (Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association) is the only global forum exclusively dedicated to the advancement of hospitality distribution through strategic collaboration and knowledge sharing.

For over 25 years, the non-for-profit association has provided its members with networking platforms, educational opportunities and professional resources to help them navigate the ever-evolving landscape of hotel electronic distribution.

HEDNA works to optimize the use of technologies while influencing the development of current and emerging distribution channels. It promotes an open exchange of information and professional development among its members. HEDNA's global conferences deliver the most comprehensive information, insights and dialogue on trends in hotel distribution.

HEDNA is comprised of hospitality industry leaders and innovators. Members represent all areas of electronic distribution including hotels, representation and management companies, GDSs, switch companies, OTAs, tour operators, software and payment service providers, industry consultants and educational institutions.

HEDNA (Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association)

1000 Westgate Dr, Suite 252, Saint Paul, MN 55114

T: +1 651 290 6291 F: +1 651 290 2266 E: info@hedna.org