

Marketing strategy for web communications a case study essay

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Abstract

In the tourism marketing, the internet plays a very crucial role due to its ability to transcend geographical boundaries and reach the regions that are far beyond the reach of many traditional forms of communication. All this is achieved at an amazingly low cost and the tourism company involved is able to increase sales and awareness without having to force this publicity. The Leopard beach resort in Kenya has employed the use of its website as a gateway to its services, where potential visitors can get information and also make bookings online, prior to visiting. The resort has optimized this site in various ways so that it will help to meet the resort's strategic marketing policies.

However, there is also a wide room for improvement. The resort can add or modify various sections of the website to make it user friendly, informative and more appealing to the users. This site should be able to hook the visitors to explore the various services offered by the resort, and eventually book a room or the facility that they need for their holiday. Since the website is a marketing and information tool for the hotel, every effort should be made to ensure that whoever lands on the resort's website and is looking for the information with the intention to plan for their holiday should be convinced that the resort is the right destination.

Introduction

The Leopard Beach Resort is a luxurious and stylish getaway located on the world famous Diani beach at the coast of Kenya, in East Africa. Diani beach is one of the most primed tourist destinations in the world. It is located on the

Southern coast of Kenya and about 34 kilometres from the port of Mombasa, and hosts some world famous resorts and hotels (Anatolia, 2006). This strategic location for Leopard Beach Resort places it in the vicinity of many tourist destinations, and therefore, with proper marketing, it can be the resort of choice for many tourists. The country of Kenya is one of the leading tourist destinations in Africa, and receives many tourists from all over the world who come to view its world famous sites (Sanya, 2010).

Overview of the Website

For information and marketing purpose, the Leopard Beach Resort has its website, <http://www.leopardbeachresort.com>, which serves as the marketing and information site for all the visitors who are looking for the information from the Internet. The site provides information regarding the various services that are offered and serves as the main entry to the hotel. This is because most of the people who visit the hotel are foreigners from Europe and other countries, which have no other source of information apart from their experiences from visiting the country and information, provided on a website that promote the businesses and tourist attraction sites in the whole area of Leopard Beach Resort Website.

The information available on this site includes the facilities and services available at the resort. This includes local and international cuisine, extensive tropical gardens, a conference centre, cocktail bars, honeymoon suites, a water sport centre, tennis court and an eighteen-hole golf course. The website gives details about the restaurants available and the accommodation facilities, with a visual representation of the resort being

displayed in a slideshow. Other factors included is an online booking system, which does not seem to provide a payment option, as well as a link that can connect one to their partners like the Satao Camp in the Tsavo National Park.

Analysis

The Internet plays an important role in the dissemination of information in the world of tourism (Law and Lee, 2011). Any firm doing tourism related business therefore needs to ensure that they use the Internet well and effectively, in order to increase their clients as well as making it easy for the potential visitors to find information (Elliot and Boshoff, 2009). The website should therefore, be strategic enough to reach all the potential customers and ensure a high-conversion rate for all hits that reach the site. According to Centre for Remote Access, most businesses have been able to grow their customers through their websites, and resorts are ranked in some systems wholly or partially through the information provided in their websites.

Features

There are several features that are visible from the Leopard Beach Resort website, that are useful in serving the interests of the tourists. These include both the content and design features.

Content

The content of the website provides a lot of information that any visitor needs to know about the resort. For a new visitor who is interested in staying at the resort and wants to sample its facilities briefly, a tour through the website will provide the most basic information from the homepage, with

dedicated pages for every major feature of the hotel. This is indispensable in helping to give a clear imaginary experience of what a guest can expect when he or she visits the resort. The description of services is robust enough, although information that is more detailed would be useful in the individual pages, like explaining in depth the combination of menus that are available everyday from every restaurant (Veal, 1997).

The content of the website also helps to portray Leopard Beach Resort as a luxury resort, right from the homepage. The site has images running through every single page that help to give the visitors a visual image of what everything entails in the hotel. Images are a powerful tool that can be used to create impression, and since the best way to depict luxury is to give a visual description, the images used in this case are particularly appealing. Besides these, the website also links to some other luxury destinations in Kenya, which the tourists may be interested to visit (Weimann, 2007).

The link for online booking which seems to have been introduced recently is one of the most influential tools. This is because guests need to book from the convenience of their homes or anywhere they are. It is possible that a potential guest will look for another resort just because he or she is unable to book.

Design

The design of the website is remarkably clear, making it easy for anyone to use. One of the characteristics of an excellent website is a simple but attractive user interface (Karlsson, 2007). The Leopard Beach Resort has ensured that their site is well navigable by users who have different levels of

experience using the web. All the content and links in the site are conveniently located; hence, anyone can view them easily without need to scroll through. This helps to avoid frustration by users when they cannot find the information that they need. Many people looking for luxurious destinations rarely want to spend a lot of time and effort looking for information that they want from the Internet (Weber, 2009).

In the technical part of the design, the website seems to generate a lot of traffic for users who want to find information about accommodation in the Leopard beach and other places around the southern coast of Mombasa. The designer has applied several search engine optimizations, which enable anybody who is googling or using any search engine to find the website easily. Additionally, the landing page that anyone is directed to, which is the homepage, helps to give all the information that one needs.

Features and Effects

As a marketing strategy, the website for Leopard Beach Resort provides appealing features that meet the criterion of the leading website evaluation experts. The use of graphics is well balanced with the text, so that the site is not filled with so much appealing yet unnecessary information. The use of graphics is usually appealing, but its use should be minimized because it is more attractive than informative. It will therefore appear that the graphics have not served the primary role (of being informative) effectively. What has been integrated effectively is the use of flash videos to provide a virtual tour. The virtual tour is exceptionally convenient, and helps to provide a complete mental picture of the different features that are available (Werthner & Klein,

1999).

In terms of creating consumer intent to make a booking, I find the site fairly effective. It is a bit difficult to measure this suitability or effectiveness, unless it is compared with other similar websites. One tool that can be used to monitor the effectiveness is the use of the analytical tools such as the Google Analytics, which helps to give insights on how a website is effective in achieving the basic objectives of it (Shchiglik and Barnes, 2004).

Leopard Beach Resort has also tried to improve user satisfaction by ensuring that all the information that is available on its site is relevant. The clients who are in need of such information are highly specific and focused; hence, they need to get the information remarkably easily (Boone and Kurtz, 2011).

This is why the booking information, services and rates are provided.

Additionally, the management can know the satisfaction of the people who visit the site through an online questionnaire, giving them vital tips for improvements. For such a resort, every person who visits the site is a potential customer or probably a tour guide; hence, there is a need to ensure that the visitor is converted into a customer.

Improvement

Although the Leopard Beach Resort website is strategically designed to meet the resorts marketing needs, there is a significant margin for improvement.

One such area of improvement is the standardization of the language used to ensure that it is favourable for English speakers from different regions of the world. The content should be written in International English language taking into account the simplicity and the clarity of the content. In addition,

there should be an option for using different languages on this site, as it seems that it has been designed for English speakers only, unless one uses translations tools like Google Translate, which are usually not very accurate (Anatolia, 2006).

Use of online advertising would help to increase traffic to the site, since the online adverts link to a landing page of choices, and in this case, it is the resort's website that will act as the landing page. This will consequently increase the traffic to the site, which can be converted into customers.

Working on the home page is also necessary so that it will be as relevant as possible, as it determines if a person is going to click through or just leave the page without doing something (Smith & Taylor, 2004).

The website has also provided an online booking system, which allows guests to check for the availability of rooms on the day that they want to check in, as well as book. However, this does not seem to be working exceptionally well. An attempt to book a room online returns an error in most cases, hence cannot be useful to a person who wants to do the actual booking. This should be rectified and improved as soon as possible. In addition, there should be a service that allows someone to pay for booking online, using services such as MasterCard, Visa, Moneybookers or even PayPal. This will make it even easier for customers to pay for booking online and it will attract more customers.

The links that are provided on this page can be increased to offer more information to the users, especially one that is not provided. This can include the yellow pages and the local directories. It is evident in most cases that people need more information before making a booking; hence, these sites

should be easily available (Scott, 2008). By placing links to useful sites, it will enable users to visit these sites without leaving the home page. Currently, what usually happens is that the person navigates away from the page to search for additional information, and may not return to the page after he has left it. In this way, potential clients are lost and the website fails to meet its objectives.

The influx of high capability mobile devices has led to increase in the number of people who use the mobile devices such as Smartphones to access the Internet (Emerick and Round, 2006). These people form the bulk of tourists, who are on the move many times and may need to use handheld devices instead of laptops or computers, because of their portability and flexibility. There is therefore a need to ensure that the website is easily accessible through these devices. This can be done through by creating a duplicate site that is enhanced for the devices.

Another way to improve this site is by integrating a live chat for users so that they can communicate with the receptionists in real time. In addition, there should be a well-outlined site map, which will make navigation through the pages easier and faster. The main aim of optimizing the website is to make it easier to use and help the visitors get through the various sections easily (Crystal et al, 2011). This will increase the chances that a person who lands on the homepage will follow through to other pages in the site.

Conclusion

Leopard Beach Resort's strategic plan to increase the number of visitors as well as the bed-factor in the resort can be easily achieved by concentrating

efforts on their website. The website can be used to ensure that the objectives of the resort are met, since the site always acts as a gateway for entry into the hotel, and it is the first contact with the hotel that a person makes before deciding on whether to book or not. In this regard, it serves as a powerful marketing tool (Werthner & Klein, 1999, 30).

References

Anatolia (2006). Sustainable Tourism Development on Kenya's Coast: A Hospitality Sector View. *Winter2006*, 17 (2), pp. 189-209

Boone, L. & Kurtz, D. (2011). *Contemporary Marketing*. Cengage Learning. Print

Centre for Remote Access to Learning (CRAL) (2003). *Accessibility & Usability*. Retrieved

April 29th, 2004, from <http://www.cral.ac.uk/guidelines/accessibility.html>

Elliot, R and Boshoff C. (2009). The marketing of tourism services using the internet: A resource-based. *South African Journal of Business Management*. 40 (3), pp. 35-49

Emerick, D. & Round, K. (2006). *Exploring Web marketing and project management*.

Prentice Hall PTR. Print

Crystal I., Law, R. & Lee, H. (2011). A Review of Website Evaluation Studies in the

Tourism and Hospitality Fields from 1996 to 2009. *International Journal of Tourism Research*. 13, pp. 234-265

Karlsson M. (2007). Expressions, emotions, and website design. *CoDesign*, 3,

pp. 75-89

Sanya, V. (2010). Destinations' Competitiveness in Modern Tourism. *Tourism & Hospitality Management*, May 2010 Supplement, pp 1332-1348

Scott, D. M. (2008). *The new rules of marketing and PR: how to use news releases, blogs, podcasting, viral marketing, & online media to reach buyers directly*. John Wiley and Sons. Print

Shchiglik, C. and Barnes, S. (2004), *Evaluating Website Quality in the Airline Industry*, *Journal of Computer Information Systems*. Spring, 17-25.

Smith, P. & Taylor, J. (2004). *Marketing communications: an integrated approach*. Kogan Page Publishers. Print

Veal, A. J. (1997), *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism: A Practical guide (Second, Ed.)*, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Weber, L. (2009). *Marketing to the social web: how digital customer communities build your business*. John Wiley and Sons, 2009

Weimann, O. (2007). *Opportunities and Restrictions of the Internet in Marketing Communication Strategies*. GRIN Verlag. Print

Werthner, H. & Klein, S. (1999). *Information Technology and Tourism: A Challenging Relationship*, Austria: Springer-Verlag Wien