



# The Ultimate Guide to Designing a Website for Your Hotel

A PUBLICATION OF ROSEGOLD HOSPITALITY



Delivering Quality and Performance

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# **INTRODUCTION**



*“Websites promote you 24/7: No employee will do that”*

**Paul Cookson**

Remember that lesson in school about making an indelible first impression? The first impression doesn't just occur when your guests walk into the hotel, in this digital age, it happens when they spot you online.

Having a website is the base of a vital marketing strategy in this age of digitalization, for all businesses, small or large. After all, ***"Design is thinking made visual"*** – Saul Bass. While many hotels have already created a strong online presence, a few others procrastinate to adopt the latest technologies perhaps due to lack of time and dearth of knowledge on the subject. The truth however is that the process of having a website up and running is not all that complex. As long as you have your creative inputs and content ready, you can easily assign this task to a professional web designer and developer.

You may argue that having a dream-team is sufficient to get a steady guest inflow through word of mouth. But in the words of Paul Cookson, ***"Websites promote you 24/7: No employee will do that"***. Sure, word-of-mouth and offline marketing do attract a good number of guests but the internet realm reaches out to more than half the world's population! Imagine how many more potential guests can be attracted by simply making your services available on the world wide web (WWW).

Whether you're looking to redo an existing website or starting from scratch, this guide will certainly help you to get an idea about the do's and don'ts of creating not only a great looking website but also one that's compelling enough to generate more bookings and hence revenue.



## Chapter One

# **INVEST IN DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY**



*“Intuitive design is how we give the user new superpowers.”*

**Jared Spool**

Your website will be a direct reflection of your hotel's persona, and if not fully optimized, it may result in potential customers logging off within seconds. Hence, this chapter.

Let's first understand what design and functionality actually means. Design primarily refers to the visual appeals of a website. Fonts, colors, white-space ratio, images, general layout, etc. all account for a beautiful looking website. Functionality on the other hand refers to the ease of use. Heard of the term 'user-friendly'? Although slightly overstated, it's the one thing every web designer strives to achieve.

**We will now explain some important aspects to keep in mind while designing the website for your hotel.**





**Incorporate Responsive Design:** Unless you're a hermit, you would know the power of smartphones. According to McKinsey, Google says 61% of users are unlikely to return to a mobile site they had trouble accessing and 40% visit a competitor's site instead. A responsive website design is one that has the ability to adapt to different screen sizes.

A site that isn't responsive will either shrink or enlarge on mobile devices, resulting to a bad user experience. Therefore, making your website responsive will ensure a great user experience and more engaged users across devices.

Making your website responsive will also help with better search engine rankings in the long run.



**Design a Magnetic User Interface:** User interface is everything you see on a website. A good user interface engages visitors and translates into great user experience.

The most important elements of a good user interface are: **1)** Fluidic, conversion centric design **2)** Messaging in the content **3)** Font family and font size **4)** Overall color scheme i.e. background colors, font colors, colors in the logo, colors of CTA buttons **5)** Images and videos **6)** Relevant call-to-actions



**Focus on your logo & color scheme:** Another quote by Saul Bass, “Logos are a graphic extension of the internal realities of a company”. There are reasons why hotel chains like Renaissance and Imperial Hotel attract more online visitors than others. In addition to great online marketing efforts, they flaunt a stunning logo and color scheme on

their websites that incorporates all the characteristics of a good website design. A good logo is both simple and eye-catching.

Color schemes are equally important. Psychology tells us that colors affect instincts. By studying a bit more about what a particular color is symbolic of, you can manipulate the psyche of a user, ultimately leading to a certain action on their part. Color scheme should resonate well with your hotel brand and services.



**Easy Navigation:** It is difficult to reach your destination without accurate directions. Similarly, when a website is unorganized, it leads to nothing but frustration for visitors. Your website must have an easy-to-use and smooth menu. How smoothly a user can navigate through all the menu items and the structure of your website will determine how

good or bad the user-experience is. A general rule of thumb is to feature a clear and simple navigation sans complex structures.



**Buy a Secure Server:** SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) is the standard security technology for establishing an encrypted link between a web server and a browser. A secure server will protect all transactions on your hotel's website. It's no secret that hackers are everywhere and without a SSL certificate, it won't be long before someone gets into your

system and misuses sensitive user and financial data. In fact, nowadays, it's a big sign in building trust amongst customers since most of them leave websites that don't possess the SSL certificate. This is especially the case when the website requires personal data of the user. And hotel websites fall into that category.



## Chapter Two

# **INTEGRATE AN ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEM**



*“65.4% of online hotel bookings are done directly through official hotel websites”*

**Statistic Brain**

So, you now have a beautiful website that's also pretty easy to use. What's next? Reservation of course! No, not only via telephone. We're referring to an online booking engine. It's true that OTAs have a wide reach and are dominant drivers of bookings and revenue for hotels. But it's also true that they eat up a good chunk of commission that you can avoid to a good extent.

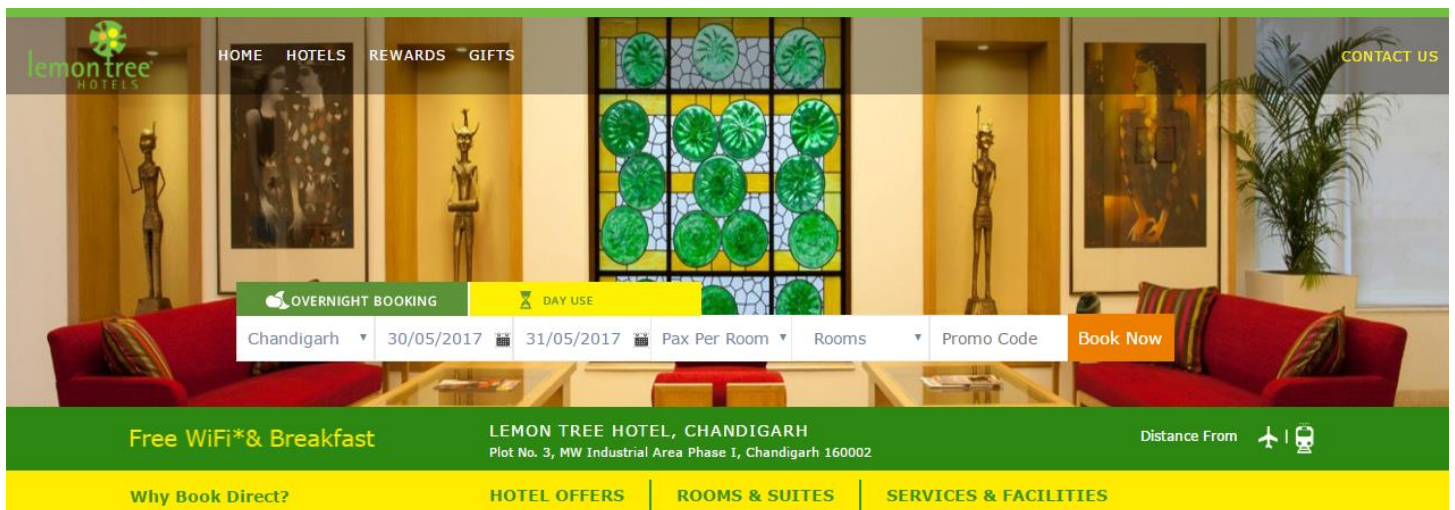
How you ask? There are plenty of companies out there offering online reservation solutions for hotel websites. You can select one based on your preferences and goals. Yes, it is a bit expensive but we guarantee that its worth all the money.

**Pay attention to these points when choosing and integrating the booking system with your website:**

1. Make sure that the system is compatible with the technology on which your website is built
2. Tailor the system to match the color scheme of your website
3. Make sure you can track bookings and revenue through a backend control panel

Here's an example of what a good online booking system looks like – <https://www.lemontreehotels.com/lemon-tree-hotel/chandigarh/hotel-chandigarh.aspx>

**Here is a screenshot of the above page:**



Notice how their reservation bar appear clearly above the fold. This makes it extremely easy for users to enter the details of their journey and get accurate information about availability based on which the users can book their stay.

Moreover, when you scroll down, you can see a section listing the benefits of booking directly from their website.

Not too surprisingly, potential customers check many websites before choosing and booking a hotel (as per a study conducted by PhoCusWright). Therefore, not having a direct booking facility means loss of business because those other comparable websites might have made that option available.

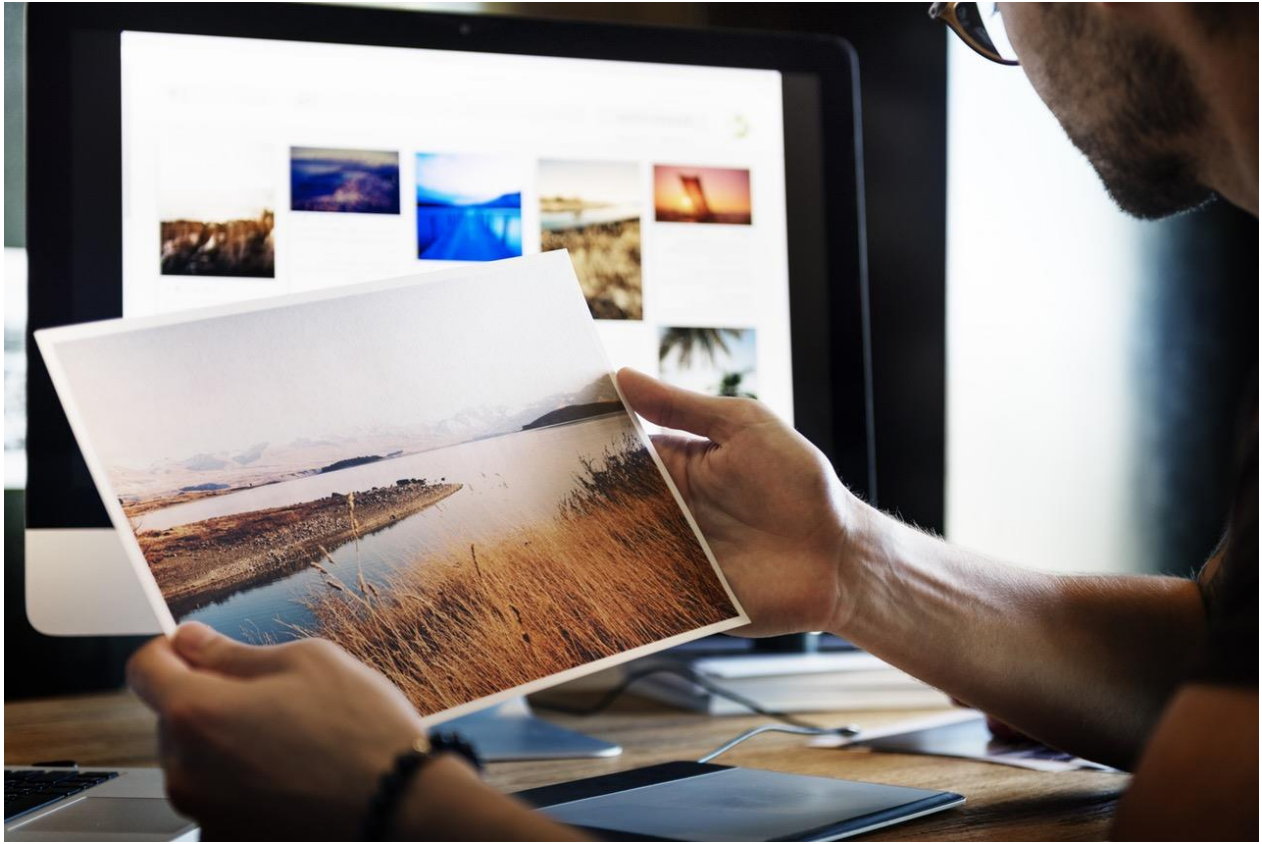
A white wireframe globe is positioned in the upper left corner of the page. It consists of a grid of lines forming a sphere, with a central point from which lines radiate outwards.

## Chapter Three

A vertical bar is located on the left side of the white content area. It is divided into two equal horizontal sections: the top section is yellow and the bottom section is red.

# **INVEST IN HIGH QUALITY IMAGES AND VIDEOS**





*“One minute of video is worth 1.8 million words”*

**Dr. James McQuivey of Forrester Research**

Images and videos are instant crowd pullers! The saying “*An image speaks a thousand words*” cannot be truer. The first thing we do on an unfamiliar website is scroll through the images and within a few seconds, we even form an impression about the company.

You’d be amazed to know that about 70 million pictures are shared on Facebook and Instagram daily. Recent studies have also found that the two chief factors influencing the decision making process include reviews and PHOTOS.

People are getting tech-savvy. A [number of statistics](#) support the fact that many people prefer video content over text content. The same link also provides some other interesting facts about how videos effect overall marketing. Below are some of those statistics:

1. Over half of video content is viewed on mobile – ***Make sure your videos render perfectly on all screens***
2. Videos up to 2 minutes long get the most engagement – ***Don’t make them too lengthy else the visitors would lose interest***
3. Video on a landing page can increase conversions by 80% or more – ***Consider including video on your marketing landing pages***
4. The average CVR for websites using video is 4.8%, compared to 2.9% for those that don’t use video
5. Blog posts incorporating video attract 3x as many inbound links as blog posts without video

## What you should do:

- 1. Capture brilliant photos and videos** that clearly exhibit all the areas of your hotel – the exterior, the lobby, the rooms, the swimming pool, restaurants (including food pictures), the bar, and even pictures of your guests having a good time. Aside from that, you must also capture the gym, spa, the convention center, and the surrounding areas (scenery) if applicable. Experts say that you must have a minimum of 30 good photos of your hotel. But the more, the better.
- 2. Hire an ace photographer** - Mediocre photography and videography will not suffice. You need to entice your customers, and old, hazy pictures and videos will certainly not serve the purpose. The visuals should be so stunning that a person is forced to hit a call-to-action button. And this is only possible when you get professionals on-board.
- 3. Be active on social media** - Interact with your loyal guests by tagging them in the photos captured while their stay. This will help to retain your guests and even help in attracting new guests. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram are great for this purpose.

## What you should NOT do:

Never bank upon deceptive visuals which are edited/photoshopped or different from the actual property of your hotel. If the guests find your hotel property different and poorer from what they viewed online, you will lose trust no matter what.



## Chapter Four

# **PROVIDE NECESSARY INFORMATION**



*“55% of visitors spend fewer than 15 seconds on your website. So you better grab their attention in this span of time”*

**Tony Haile of Chartbeat**

It's easy to forget the smaller things while focusing on embellishing your website with other elements. These smaller aspects include important details about your hotel.

**Provide accurate information about below points on your website:**

1. Current offers and discounts as soon as someone lands on the website. You can try attention grabbing pop-ups also for this purpose. However, use pop-ups cleverly otherwise they might result in visitors bouncing off the website. Use emotional messaging.
2. Benefits of booking with your hotel
3. Free complimentary services like Wi-Fi, breakfast, etc.
4. The exact location of your hotel. Consider including a Google Map
5. Distance from nearest airport, rail head and bus depot and what is the best way to reach the hotel from these points
6. Nearest tourist attractions. For example famous markets, shops, etc.
7. Who to contact for what

If your website lacks to provide above details, you run a high chance of losing potential customers. They will hover around for a bit and then move onto other websites to find what they're looking for.

**Tip:** Make sure that your phone number, booking button and navigation bar always appear even when the page is scrolled down. They should be not be buried down the content.



## Chapter Five

# **START A BLOG AND POST CONSISTENTLY**



*“Companies that published 16+ blog posts per month got about 3.5X more traffic than companies that published 0-4 monthly posts”*

**Hubspot**



Now that web design, online booking system and visuals have been dealt with, it's time to shift your focus onto the supplementary elements of your website. And the king of all supplementary elements is a BLOG.

## **A dedicated blog section is the perfect companion for your website.**

### **Here's why:**

1. Producing interesting content will drive more traffic to your website, translating into engaged users and new customers.
2. Your blogs will aid in forming a long-term camaraderie with your clients. Don't we all relate to businesses who talk to us directly?
3. Blogs help in repositioning brands in the minds of users. You need your customers to think of you not just when they choose to stay with you but also when they're away.
4. You can use blogs as a medium for promoting new as well as existing products and services.
5. And last but not the least, blogs contribute to high SEO rankings. When you write blogs about the commonly searched keywords in your space, Google will start showing your website in search results.

### **The two most important things to note while strategizing a blog are:**

1. **Relevance** – The content on your blog must provide value to your audience
2. **Regularity** – The more you blog regularly, the better results you get

**You can write about a lot of things. Here are a few examples:**

1. Details of nearby hotspots like shops, markets, tourist attractions, beaches, famous food, etc.
2. A guide about how to spend weekend in the city and nearby
3. Posts which inspire people to travel. This is a huge space to come up with a lot of content
4. Interesting stories of your guests. Include images and videos
5. Talk about new service additions at your hotel
6. Tell the success story of your hotel and how you established it

**Check out these two hotel websites that have invested in blogs and have received good amount of attention:**

1. <https://www.dorisanddicky.com/blog-news#header-search>
2. <https://www.i-escape.com/blog/>

**Which platform should you host your blog on? You can host it on any platform which offers these benefits:**

1. Ease-of-use
2. Future scheduling of blog posts
3. Multiple post formats
4. Responsive design
5. Comment handling

We recommend WordPress as it is the most widely used blogging platform which offers all of the above benefits. It also has a tremendously huge directory of plugins which can add a lot of extra design and functionality features.

WordPress also has some really good themes specific to hotels which have in-built online booking facility.



## Chapter Six

# **ADD GENUINE REVIEWS AND TESTIMONIALS**



*“88% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations”*

**Search Engine Land**

Think reviews don't directly impact sales? Think again! A recent survey found that 93% of the people book hotels on the basis of reviews alone. Your guests may not believe all the things you advertise but they'll surely believe other guests who speak about your services.

Websites such as Makemytrip, TripAdvisor, Expedia, Oyo Rooms, etc. are platforms where users post reviews about the hotels they've stayed in. Positive reviews from these sites can be picked up and added onto your website as proof of your hotel's standards. You should also make sure to collect reviews on your website.

**Pro Tip:** People also post reviews on social media nowadays. While posting reviews, they generally tag social media profiles/pages of the hotel. So make sure you have social media profiles set up properly on popular channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

Gathering feedback offline is as important as online reviews. You should train your staff to gather feedback from guests in person. In fact, you can even ask them to shoot videos of guests talking about what they think of your hotel and its services. These videos can be put up on social media channels like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. You should also include video scripts along with videos on your website.



# **CONCLUSION**

Creating a persuasive website that's also attractive takes time and effort but once it's ready, you'll definitely experience your online bookings increasing. Before you make your website live, remember to pass it through several tests. Having said that, it's important to note that website development will be more of an on-going process of your business. You'll have to make changes or redo the website as and when necessary.

Although you'll find many platforms to build a website on your own, we'd recommend you to hire professional web developers/designers to ensure that all the points mentioned in this guide are taken care of with utmost diligence.





Delivering Quality and Performance

## **MAXIMIZE ROI OF YOUR HOTEL**

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