

RESEARCH

Four Seasons tops competitors for site reviews, social media savvy

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By RACHEL LAMB

The Four Seasons Hotel Co. has been named the No. 1 digitally-savvy hotel brand, attributing its success to a combination of mobile, Web site, digital marketing and social media success, according to L2 Think Tank's 2012 Digital IQ: Hotels study.

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Four Seasons beat out competitors such as Hilton, Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis, all of which landed in the top 10. However, Leading Hotels of the World and Orient-Express did not fare so well, coming in at 46 and 43, respectively, out of 49.

"Four Seasons was consistent across every dimension," said Daniella Caplan, New York-based associate at **L2 Think Tank** and leader of the IQ study. "They do everything with full commitment and they try to test elements."

"It's evident that knowledge is being trickled down from headquarters to all of the different properties, and everyone is on board with it," she said. "You can see this especially in its social platforms and its adoption of new platforms like Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram."

"It's a very cohesive brand experience online."

Hotels were ranked based on performance in mobile counting for 20 percent, social

media counting for 20 percent, Web site counting for 30 percent and other digital marketing counting for 30 percent.

Labels are divided into genius, gifted, average and challenged based on points.

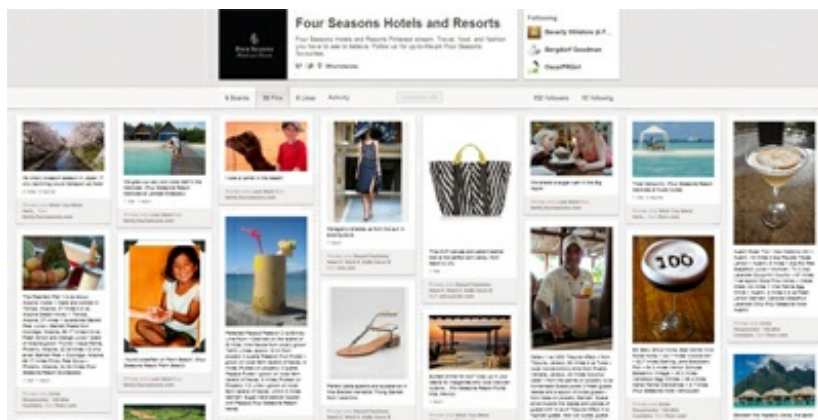
[Click here to download the study.](#)

Smart marketing

The Four Seasons Web site was what made it stand out from the others, giving it a score of 150.

The revamped digital offerings have strong visuals and content. There are also user reviews, a component that many luxury hotel sites are lacking.

In addition, the Four Seasons is not afraid to experiment with emerging platforms, and even empowers staff to contribute valuable content, according to the study.



Four Seasons on Pinterest

For example, the company started posting images on mobile picture application Instagram of properties around the world.

Furthermore, the Four Seasons took interest in new social networking site Pinterest, where it posts images and traveling tips to consumers who can “follow” the hotel’s pins.

Other digital dynamites in the luxury sphere were the Ritz-Carlton, which was lauded for its “forward-thinking foursquare initiatives and site relaunch,” according to L2.

In addition, the St. Regis’ E-Butler app for its New York property earned the Starwood brand “gifted” status.



St. Regis E-Butler app

Overcoming a challenge

The rest of the luxury hotel brands were in “average” and “challenged” categories.

Luxury marketers are known for their “see first, do later” approach to marketing, but innovation is one of the best ways to go, according to Ms. Caplan.

The hotel labels that did not do well in the ranking were likely lacking in one or more categories.

For example, Starwood’s Luxury Collection brand was defined as having “a lackluster social media presence.”

Meanwhile, L2 suggested that “a higher mobile strategy would lead the brand to higher ranks” when it came to Leading Hotels of the World.

“Brands just need to see what resources they have at-hand and that they can leverage best,” Ms. Caplan said. “It’s not just about doing something anymore – you have to do it right.

“I can’t just say, ‘you need to do x, y and z,’ because in order to gain a high digital IQ ranking, you have to do well in all four dimensions,” she said.

“We are seeing less of a mobile adaption in the lower-ranking brands, so that’s where most of the investment should be going.”

Final Take

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