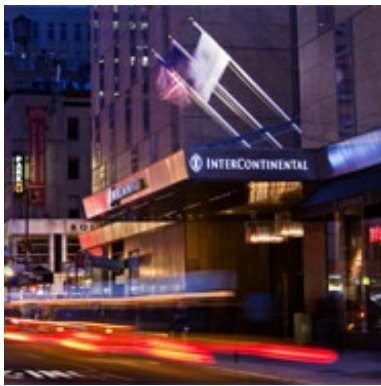


RESEARCH

InterContinental shows digital expertise: L2 Think Tank

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By ERIN SHEA

InterContinental Hotels & Resorts tops other luxury hotel brands by showing expertise and innovation in the digital arena this past year, according to a new report by L2 Think Tank.

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Luxury Daily

Hotel brands that scored in the top 10 on the “Digital IQ Index: Hotels” included InterContinental, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts, St. Regis, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts and The Ritz-Carlton. The hotels that ranked highly made sure to engage consumers on Web sites, mobile applications and social media.

“In the past 12 months, we have seen a significant surge in digital activity among hotel brands and most are meeting the industry opportunities and competition with commitment,” said Daniella Caplan, research lead at [L2 Think Tank](#), New York.

“In contrast to other industries L2 analyzes, hotel conglomerates do a good job at leveraging economies of scale and sharing technologies and platforms such as Web site, mobile and email across their respective brands,” she said.

“Luxury hotel brands are aspiring to become more than just a place to stay - they are investing in content creation around destinations, food, drink and lifestyle.”

The Digital IQ Index: Hotels benchmarked the digital competence of 57 hotel brands on 675 data points across four dimensions: Web site, digital marketing, social media and mobile. Marketers were scored 20 percent on mobile, 10 percent on social media, 40 percent Web site and 30 percent digital marketing.

Marketers were given rankings of Genius, Gifted, Average, Challenged or Feeble.

Digital mavens

W Hotels was given a Genius ranking, while InterContinental, Four Seasons, The Luxury Collection, St. Regis, Fairmont, The Ritz-Carlton, Mandarin Oriental and the Waldorf Astoria were given the Gifted ranking for their digital strategies.

JW Marriott and Small Luxury Hotels of the World received an Average ranking. The Peninsula and Leading Hotels of the World received a ranking of Challenged.

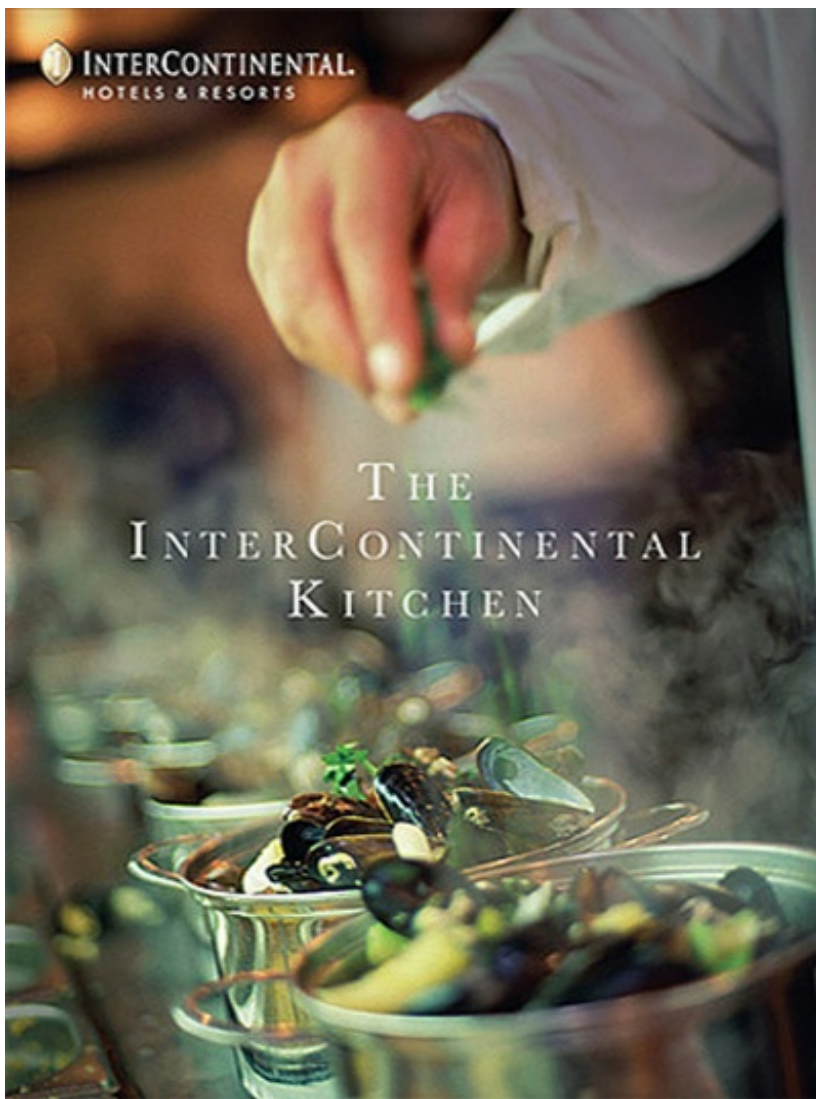
In 2012, 11 hotel brands had launched new Web sites, mobile site adoption increased from 66 to 81 percent and four out of five brands are now hosting at least one mobile app, Ms. Caplan said.

InterContinental scored highly in the rankings due to its launch of the Priority Club Rewards app for iPad.

The brand has also created other iPad innovations this year.

For instance, InterContinental added to the culinary experience at its properties in Atlanta, San Francisco, Boston and Miami through the Kitchen Passport mobile program that features recipes by the hotels' executive chefs from around the world.

The Kitchen Passport is a component in InterContinental's "In The Know" iPad applications that gives guests an exclusive experience in the destination to which they travel ([see story](#)).



Kitchen Passport

Mobile seemed to be an important platform for hotels this year as The Luxury Collection, St. Regis and the Ritz-Carlton stood out from other brands because of their mobile efforts.

In addition, social media has also become a strong channel for luxury hotel marketing. Now, 96 percent of the brands studied are active on Pinterest and 82 percent are active on Instagram.

Four Seasons and Fairmont were ranked as Gifted due to their strong social media campaigns.

St. Regis was praised for its Pinterest activity.

Looking forward

Even though many hotel brands have made strides in digital marketing this past year, there is still more to be done.

Hotel brands should look to optimize more content for tablet users, per Ms. Caplan.

“I think we were most surprised by how little tablet optimization occurs in the luxury hotels industry, given that today more hotel booking are done on a tablet than any other mobile device,” she said.

“Brand have not fully taken advantage of swipe browsing, geo-targeting or drop-down menus, all of which are features native to the mobile experience.”

However, some brands such as Starwood have incorporated mobile platforms into their booking experience over the past year.

For instance, Starwood enabled its preferred guests to upload their member card to the Passbook application for the iPhone’s iOS 6 for instant access to account information and reservations at all nine of its brands including the St. Regis and The Luxury Collection.

Passbook lets iPhone users add their cards to the platform and see account details such as Starpoints balance, year-to-date earned nights, customer service contacts and upcoming stay details.

Users are also able to add an SPG Stay Pass to Passbook that corresponds to an upcoming hotel stay and shows a complete reservation confirmation ([see story](#)).

Starwood also introduced similar features through an Android application to include more guests.

Although some brands are moving ahead, many still have work to do in their digital efforts.

“The hotel industry is catching up,” Ms. Caplan said. “The industry is definitely making a concerted effort to integrate digital from the booking process to the guest in-stay experience.”

Final take

Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/bdwsgyq30Yw>

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