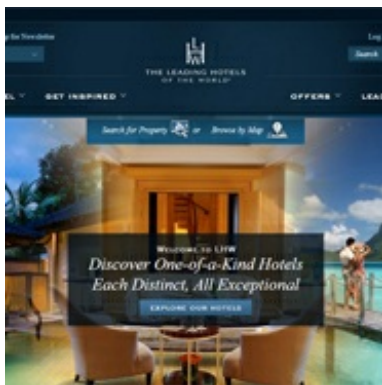


INTERNET

Leading Hotels of the World boosts digital presence through all-encompassing site

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By TRICIA CARR

The Leading Hotels of the World is refreshing its digital strategy through a new Web site that offers content to help consumers plan their trip along with a simplified booking platform.



The hotel group made over its Web site after the completion of a global research and development project during which it sought out consumers' input. The new site takes into account the digital habits of the affluent traveler and provides content to help in the research and planning stages.

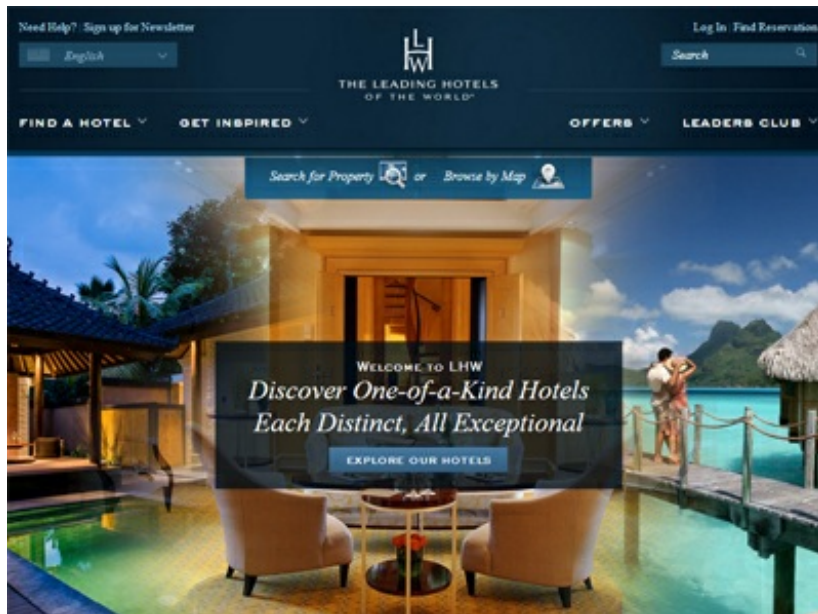
“During our research we identified key needs of the luxury traveler throughout the travel research and planning lifecycle,” said Phil Koserowski, vice president of interactive marketing at **Leading Hotels of the World**, New York. “While the luxury consumer is often very busy and looks for a simple and speedy experience, their feedback included the desire to do research and take time to enjoy the dreaming process.

“With this in mind we emphasized offering consumers rich content, both in the research and planning stage, where we created Magnificent Journeys and hotel-sourced

Destination Guides, as well as enhanced visual content including the expanded use of photography and video content,” he said.

Give them what they want

Leading Hotels jump-started its new digital strategy by redesigning its Web site that now acts as an aggregator for the group’s properties and offers consumers content that is compelling to them.



LHW.com

The group is also looking to appeal to a global audience by simplifying the booking process and providing all of the resources that consumers need to make their hotel decisions in one place.

The “Get Inspired” section offers travel guides and advice including “Magnificent Journeys” that provides sample trip itineraries and “Destination Guides” that helps travelers plan their time in a certain area.

MAGNIFICENT JOURNEYS



Magnificent Journeys content

Other Get Inspired content includes golf and spa venues, environmentally-friendly hotels

and exclusive experiences.

Additionally, Leading Hotels looked to simplify the overall booking process.

Consumers can search hotels by city, country or hotel name, or browse by lists or the map interface.



Map search

Property pages contain recommendations from the hotel's staff and verified testimonials from Leaders Club members.

The site also contains a new simplified search and booking tool that uses the shopping cart feature instead of a reservation platform so that consumers can book more than one stay at a time.

Like most other luxury hotel brands, Leading Hotels of the World optimized the new site to be accessible on the iPad and other tablets.

The site will soon be optimized for all mobile devices, contain a community for the group's Leaders Club members and have additional content.

"Our initial focus for launch was for the desktop and tablet version," Mr. Koserowski said. "The site seamlessly adapts based on the device used, and many of the design techniques were created with tablets in mind.

"The navigation techniques, calendar picker process, as well as the rooms and rates exploration process all work very well in a touch screen environment," he said. "A smartphone-enabled version of the site will be launched later this year."

Get the booking

Quite a few luxury hotel marketers are recreating their Web site so that target consumers can more easily find properties, book stays and explore the brand deeper.

For example, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts rolled out updates to its desktop site so that its features are optimized and touch-enabled for tablet devices.

The hotel brand saw an increase in tablet usage – up more than 300 percent in 2012 – as

well as an increase in time spent on its sites. Therefore, Fairmont catered to the digital habits of its customers through the first phase of digital renovations that included updates to Fairmont.com and online community EveryonesAnOriginal.com, new tablet and mobile sites and new multi-lingual microsites ([see story](#)).

In addition, Mandarin Oriental relaunched its Web site to enhance the brand experience and increase the amount of time that consumers spend with the hotel marketer online.

The site boasts a new layout, informative content, personalization and price matching. There are also more functions available on the brand's lifestyle blog called Destination MO ([see story](#)).

Leading Hotels' No. 1 priority in its site redesign was to distinguish the brand on the digital channel, no matter the phase in the customer journey.

"Our first priority was to establish a rich experience for our hotels to convey their one-of-a-kind stories – a reflection on the LHW brand story," Mr. Koserowski said. "If the consumer is in the exploration phase, we look to provide inspirational content.

"Once he or she has settled on a destination or set of experiences, we really focus on telling the unique story of each of our hotels," he said. "We looked to simplify the actual booking experience, while drawing from retail and ecommerce best practices from both within and outside our industry.

"Lastly, for those who are or wish to become more engaged with us, we have established ways of giving our valued Leaders Club members a greater voice."

Final Take

Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York