



# The TravelClick Perspective

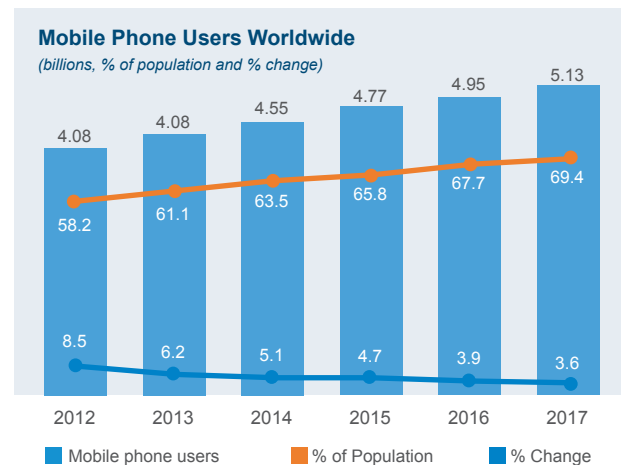
March 2015



## 2015 Digital Marketing Trends for the Hospitality Industry

### The Transition to Responsive Web Design

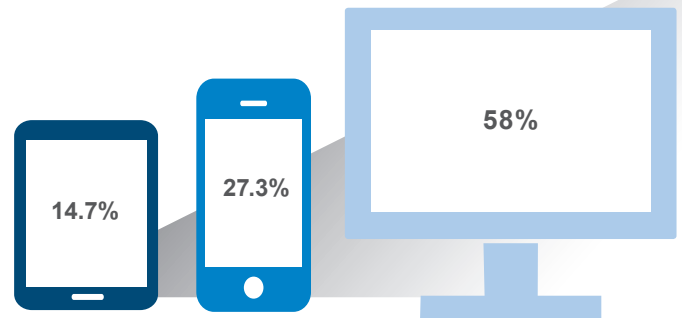
2015 is the year that responsive web design will become mainstream in the hospitality industry. The meteoric increase in smartphone use over the last seven years has transformed the way we search and consume online data. According to eMarketer, by 2017 smartphones will be used by 69.4% of the world's population.



Note: individuals of any age who own at least one mobile phone and use phones at least once per month  
Source: eMarketer, December 2013

The fact that mobile device usage continues to rise is not a new concept and many hoteliers have embraced it through the development of separate mobile websites. However, not only has mobile device usage increased exponentially, the size and type of devices have increased as well. Here is a breakdown of device type usage among all TravelClick websites:

Forty-two percent of all visits to our hotel clients' websites originated from a mobile device, and this percentage continues to rise each month.



Source: TravelClick Data, January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

### What is Responsive Web Design?

Responsive web design is an approach to web design and development that allows the elements on the website to adapt and conform to the screen resolution and device type used by the visitor. Instead of forcing a visitor to a separate desktop or mobile experience based on the detected browser or screen resolution, the website stays on the same domain and dynamically adapts to the web visitor's device.

## The Benefits of Responsive Web Design

- It reduces operational efforts by improving efficiency. One update to the website cascades across all device types, rather than updating separate desktop and mobile websites.
- It benefits Search Engine Optimization (SEO) because it provides a better overall user experience, reduces glitches of user-agent detection and reduces page redirects, which improves page load speed. See below for Google's specific reasons for recommending responsive design. Google is so focused on improving the mobile website experience that in 2014, they started labeling search query results with a "Mobile-friendly" tag if it met their criteria.

### Google

[https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl)

**Mobile-friendly** - Search the world's information, including webpages, images, videos and more.

**Google** has many special features to ...

[Translate](#) - [Sign in](#) - [Google Maps](#) - [Google Videos](#)

- Analytics platforms such as Google Analytics and Adobe Analytics have already adapted to responsive design to deliver data that reflects the quickly changing landscape of device usage.
- Responsive design allows us to create lasting websites. In theory, we're not just designing for the devices and screens of today, but future devices. As devices and screen sizes change, sites will adapt based on the responsive design.
- Studies find that users are increasingly clicking "See Desktop Site" (or "See Full Site") when they come across a mobile-only site. This happens because mobile users are used being able to access all website information from their phone, rather than just bits and pieces.

## WWGD (What Would Google Do)

Here are a few reasons Google recommends responsive design as the mobile strategy of choice, straight from the Google Developers:

- Using a single URL for a piece of content makes it easier for your users to interact with, share, and link to your content, and a single URL for the content helps Google's algorithms assign the indexing properties for the content.
- No redirection is needed for users to get to the device-optimized view, which reduces loading time. Also, user agent-based redirection is error-prone and can degrade your site's user experience.
- It saves resources for both your site and Google's crawlers. For responsive web design pages, any Googlebot user agent needs to crawl your pages once, as opposed to crawling multiple times with different user agents, to retrieve your content. This improvement in crawling efficiency can indirectly help Google index more of the site's contents and keep it appropriately fresh.

## Final Word on Responsive Web Design

Responsive design has become a buzzword in the digital marketing community. You've heard it being talked about quite a bit in the 2014 conference circuit, and that will continue in 2015. However, that doesn't mean that a responsive website is right for everyone.

First, evaluate your online marketing strategy and your needs as a hotel. Does your website have hundreds of pages of content? Are you representing multiple hotels on one domain? Then you may need a separate mobile website. What we do know is that the mobile and desktop device landscape continues to evolve and responsive design is the logical choice in most situations when considering a quality user experience.

To check out some hotels that have created engaging and effective responsive design sites, click on the links below:

1. [Courtyard Marriott – Isla Verde Beach Resort](#)
2. [Dream Hotels](#)
3. [The Buccaneer Resort](#)

## The New SEO: User Experience and Content Strategy

Over the past five years, SEO has been transformed with several important updates from Google. Traditionally, SEO was viewed as a technical skill based on keyword optimization, rankings, and link building. But, as more brands and small businesses began to understand the importance of organic search, more digital marketing agencies looked for ways to manipulate search results and rankings. This deceitful trend caused Google to deploy two game-changing updates to their algorithm: Google Panda and Google Penguin. The significance of these updates were the importance that Google placed on rewarding websites with valuable, engaging content and natural link building techniques through the use of local search citations, social media, and a solid content strategy.

### Focusing on User Experience

When considering SEO for your website, don't be mistaken and ask the question: what do search engines want? Google and Bing have crafted their algorithms to reward SEO professionals that optimize a website based on what the user wants. User experience sits at the forefront of on-site optimization in 2015. When measuring user experience, consider these desktop user metrics and average benchmarks in your analytics platform:

User Experience Metrics	
Bounce Rate (%)	46.43
Avg Session Duration	00:02:41
Pages/Session	2.71
Avg Page Load Time	00:00:05

When optimizing for a better user experience, make sure your SEO agency considers the following:

1. Does the website make use of engaging photography and video?
2. Is your content easy to read with short paragraphs, bulleted lists, and sub-headings?
3. Are important pages on your website accessible within three clicks of the home page?
4. Does your main navigation contain the most important and most visited pages on your website?
5. Do your content and sidebar area contain relevant internal links to other pages on the website?

### Content is King, but Marketing is Queen

Gary Vaynerchuk, a well-known Internet entrepreneur and author, famously said,

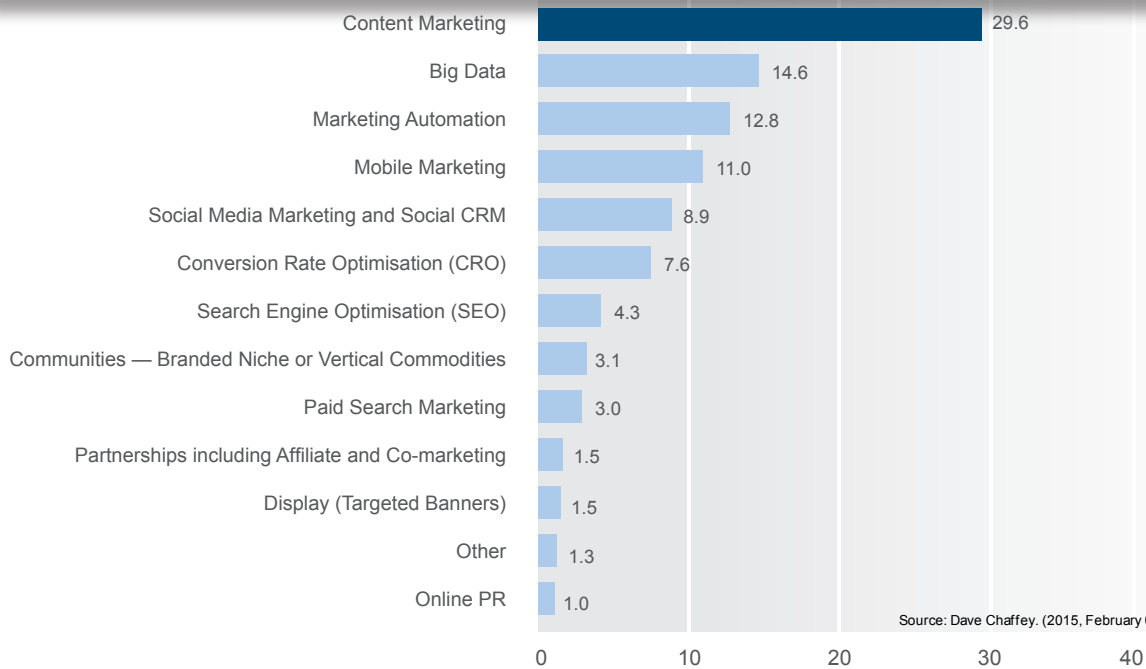
**“Content is king, but marketing is queen, and runs the household.”**

Creating great content for your website and/or blog is invaluable, but good content alone will not drive the results your hotel desires. A quality content marketing strategy puts a purpose behind the content. You may have read the articles about the importance of content for SEO, but it only drive results and increases brand awareness when deploying content with a custom marketing strategy.

Based on a recent digital marketing trends survey by Smart Insights, content marketing was listed as the most commercially important digital marketing trend for 2015 (see chart on following page.)



## Most Commercially Important Digital Marketing Trend for 2015



Simply creating original content will not keep your SEO strategy current in 2015. Be intentional with your content marketing strategy because the importance of content is not a secret anymore. How content is researched, packaged, and distributed will separate the winners and losers in organic search moving forward.

At TravelClick, our content marketing packages follow this strategic process:

1. Research demand generators, local attractions, and events within close proximity to the hotel.
2. Link researched topics with long-tail keywords that show low competition and high search volume.
3. Create engaging blog articles, infographics, videos, and white papers to add to the hotel blog and/or website.
4. Syndicate the content on distribution networks to attract new visitors, create brand awareness, and promote natural links back to the website.
5. Measure the success of the content through the amount of referral traffic it attracts, the quality of the traffic (bounce rate and average session duration), and conversions it generates.

What is your hotel's content strategy? Are you simply writing more content because you've read that it's the right thing to do? Would you create a package for your hotel just for the sake of having a package to offer? When approaching content development, create a strategy with clear, measurable goals to further the growth of your hotel or brand.

### Social Advertising Becoming Necessary for Successful Campaigns

According to Braffton, businesses will spend 8.3 billion dollars on social advertising in 2015.<sup>1</sup> The social advertising trend exploded in 2014 with the introduction of Snapchat's first ad, video ads on Instagram, more Twitter cards, and auto-play video ads on Facebook. The IPOs of Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter over the past few years have created added pressure on social networks to start generating more ad revenue from brands and local businesses. In fact, a study by Social@Ogilvy in early 2014 revealed that the organic reach of content posted on brand Facebook pages dropped from 16% to just 6% in less than two years.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Katherine Griwert, "[Biggest Social Marketing Trends for 2015](#)." Braffton, December 15, 2014.
- 2 Marshall Manson, "[Facebook Zero: Considering Life After the Demise of Organic Reach](#)." Social@Ogilvy, 03/06/14



A few years ago, social media experts beat the drum about brands using social networks properly to market their brands and local businesses. This involved creating fun and engaging content, not sales-driven promotional content that felt one-sided. Brands and marketers responded, and therefore, content is not the issue anymore. Exposing content to more users is now the issue. Even if your content is great, exposure and visibility is sparse, unless it is consistently shared by others.

According to Twitter, approximately 500 million tweets are sent per day. The sheer volume of content published and consumed on Twitter makes it very easy for your brand's tweets to get lost in a sea of pointless Twitter dribble. To avoid your social media content slipping into the abyss of funny cat videos and political rants, we recommend considering social advertising the next time you decide to invest marketing dollars in social media.

Here are a few benefits of social advertising:

- It's a cost-effective way to accumulate new followers and drive referral traffic to your website.
- It offers the ability to target users by specific interests and preferences.
- It can help you reach new customers and increase brand awareness.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest and dozens of other social networks all have advertising opportunities. The strategy becomes based on your hotel's target demographic.

### Final Words

As the digital marketing industry continues to evolve and change rapidly, TravelClick strives to stay proactive with its product offerings and best practices. Investing in website and digital marketing is a long-term strategy that we strongly believe in, as your website is your highest margin channel for guest bookings. If you're interested to learn more about the topics discussed and how to improve your hotel's performance and grow revenue, please email [info@travelclick.com](mailto:info@travelclick.com).



*Erik Folgate  
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TravelClick*

## Hotel Performance Snapshot

The hotel industry outlook for the top 25 North American Markets is showing an increase of 1.1% in committed occupancy for March 2015 – February 2015, based on group commitments and individual reservations on the books as of March 1, 2015 compared to the same time last year.

- The group segment is up 0.9% in room nights committed (contracted).
- New group business added over the last month (pace) is down 4.3% over the comparable period last year.
- Transient room nights booked are up 1.6% compared to the same time last year.
- Average daily rate (ADR) is up 4.7% based on reservations currently on the books for 2015.

For the first quarter of 2015, overall committed occupancy is up 1.4% in the top 25 markets.

- Committed occupancy for the group segment is up 2.3% and the transient segment is up 1.1% compared to a year ago.
- ADR for the first quarter is up 4.3% over the same time last year.
- Business segment ADR, which includes weekday transient negotiated and retail segments, is up 5.0%.
- Leisure segment ADR, which includes transient discount, qualified and wholesale segments, is up 4.0%.

## Performance Summary

The chart below shows the year-over-year position by market of committed occupancy, reserved occupancy, ADR, and revenue per available room (RevPAR), based on business on the books for the future 12 months. Committed occupancy is group blocks plus transient reservations. Reserved occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR are based only on reservations (group pickup and transient reservations). Shades of green indicate highest performance of the markets, while shades of orange indicate average performance, and shades of red indicate lowest performance.

	Committed Occupancy	Reserved Occupancy	Reserved ADR	Reserved RevPAR
Atlanta	4.4%	3.0%	6.8%	10.0%
Boston	1.3%	1.9%	7.3%	9.3%
Charlotte	-3.5%	-1.6%	7.0%	5.3%
Chicago	3.7%	12.7%	7.6%	21.2%
Dallas	3.6%	-6.3%	2.5%	-4.0%
Denver	-3.4%	-5.1%	2.3%	-2.9%
Detroit	2.5%	-2.9%	8.6%	5.4%
Honolulu	-1.2%	2.2%	-1.6%	0.6%
Houston	-6.2%	-12.9%	5.1%	-8.4%
Indianapolis	-3.2%	-6.3%	2.6%	-3.9%
Los Angeles	-2.0%	1.4%	6.4%	7.9%
Miami	-1.7%	1.4%	7.2%	8.6%
Minneapolis St Paul	-1.7%	4.5%	5.8%	10.6%
New York	-1.2%	-2.7%	-3.1%	-5.7%
Orlando	2.1%	-2.2%	4.4%	2.1%
Philadelphia	0.9%	-1.9%	6.6%	4.5%
Phoenix	2.1%	2.4%	5.3%	7.9%
San Antonio	9.4%	11.7%	5.3%	17.6%
San Diego	-0.8%	2.1%	7.7%	10.0%
San Francisco	1.5%	5.9%	11.3%	17.9%
Seattle	3.4%	5.0%	10.2%	15.8%
St Louis	0.5%	-1.0%	7.5%	6.4%
Tampa	-0.2%	5.5%	7.0%	12.9%
Toronto	5.6%	4.7%	-6.3%	-2.0%
Washington DC	4.6%	3.9%	3.8%	7.8%

## About TravelClick

TravelClick ([TravelClick.com](https://www.TravelClick.com)) provides innovative cloud-based solutions for hotels around the globe to grow their revenue, reduce costs and improve performance. TravelClick offers hotels world-class reservation solutions, business intelligence products, and comprehensive media and marketing solutions to help hotels grow their business. With local experts around the globe, we help more than 38,000 hotel clients in over 160 countries drive profitable room reservations through better revenue management decisions, proven reservation technology and innovative marketing. Since 1999, TravelClick has helped hotels leverage the web to effectively navigate the complex global distribution landscape. TravelClick has offices in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Barcelona, Dubai, Hong Kong, Houston, Melbourne, Orlando, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo. Follow us on [Twitter.com/TravelClick](https://twitter.com/TravelClick) and [Facebook.com/TravelClick](https://facebook.com/TravelClick).

Information in this newsletter covers the top 25 markets in North America and is based on data supplied by brands participating in TravelClick's Demand360® reporting.



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