

# A Hotelier's Guide to Google SEO

# Introduction

The travel industry is changing. The lower cost of travel, combined with the ease of booking online, has created more business for the industry than ever. In 2014, Google conducted a [study](#) of leisure and business travelers that provided great insight into how potential guests conduct their travel planning online.

One of the big insights of the study? Travelers are increasingly using their mobile devices to research and book travel. With recent search engine algorithm changes by Google to favor mobile-friendly websites, it's becoming more important for businesses to have websites that function well on all devices.

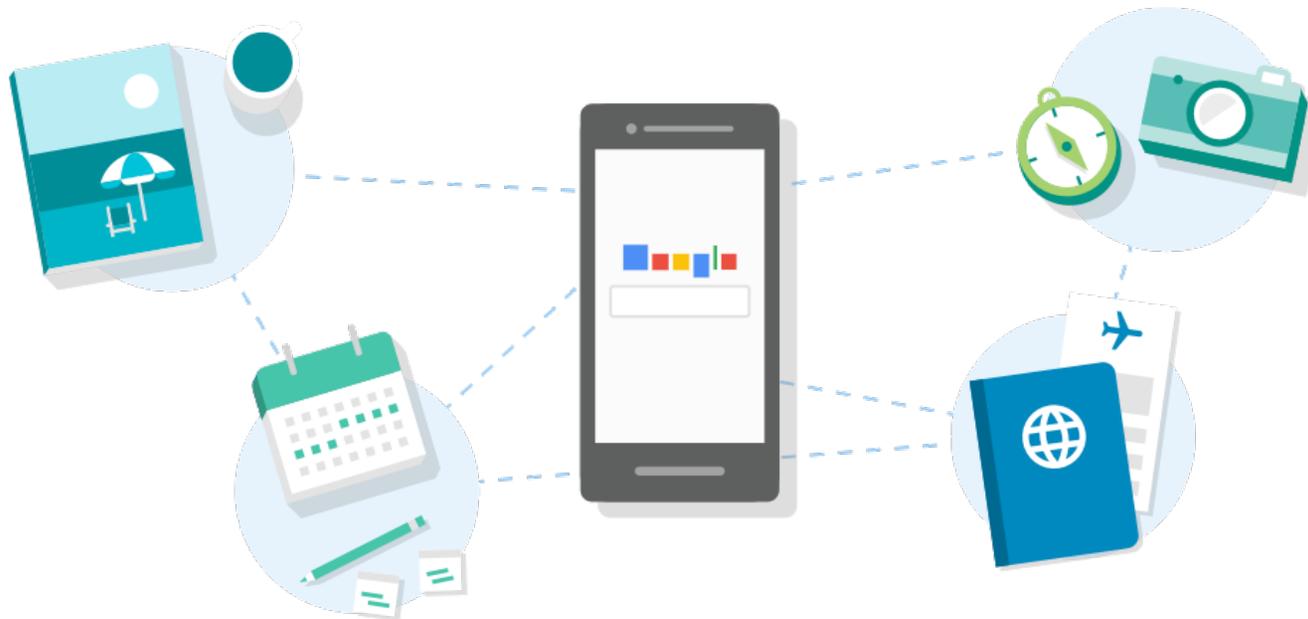
A website that works well *and* ranks high in search engines is no longer optional. With new players in the industry like [Airbnb](#) competing for traveler interest, it's important to understand how search engines see your hotel and what can be improved to capture more business online. As players like TripAdvisor and [Google](#) itself enter the [hotel reservation business](#), independent establishments need to create ways to set themselves apart and take advantage of these new trends.

That's why we've created this guide to explain the most important aspects of search engine optimization (SEO) for hotels.

You'll learn:

- **Ways you can differentiate your hotel on search engine results pages (SERPs)**
- **What you need to know about creating a mobile-friendly site**
- **How to make adjustments to your website to get indexed easily by search engines**
- **Why links are important**

With almost 70% of both leisure and business travelers beginning their research online, now is the time to create a website that doesn't just look good, but captures more business than ever.



Source: Google

## Chapter 1

# Ways to Differentiate Your Hotel On Search Engine Results Pages

According to a study commissioned by [Google](#), the Internet is the primary source of trip planning for both leisure and business travelers.

With almost 70% of all travelers using the web to decide where and how they want to travel, a strong internet presence is key to being found and securing bookings from these travelers.

Organic search can be leveraged by even the smallest of independent hotels to ensure a consistent, professional presence in the search engine results pages (SERPs) by addressing several basic SEO elements.

Let's examine some of the elements that determine the way your hotel appears in search engines and how you can maximize them.

### Title Tags

The page title is among the most important page elements. Not only is the title shown in the clickable portion of your listing in the search results, but placing your targeted keyword in the title has been shown to improve keyword rankings. The page title should also be appropriate to the content of the page, and it should tell searchers what a particular page is about. If a guest is looking for details about the types of accommodations your hotel offers, for example, she is going to look for a page with something like that in the title displayed in search results.

If your titles are unclear or misleading, potential guests will leave your site without interacting, or they may not click through at all. When thinking about how your hotel will be displayed in the search results, always make sure that title shown in the search result is directly in line with the page's actual content.

Some basic elements hoteliers should include with every Title Tag are:

1. **Title of the page**
2. **Appropriate accompanying keywords**
3. **Name of your hotel/brand**

Including these elements in your Title Tags will not only properly represent your pages to potential users; it will also begin to assist with ranking your pages with associated search terms.

### Meta Descriptions

While the Title Tag is displayed as the clickable portion of your search result listing, the description displayed below it is typically the meta description for the page. The meta description provides a short summary of the page to further entice users to visit your link over the others available. While meta descriptions are not directly assessed by Google when ranking your website, they can influence other aspects like clickthrough rate (the number of users who click through to your site) and the average time the user spends on the site. Both of these are direct ranking factors.

Google reports that 65% of leisure travelers consider multiple brands when planning travel. The same percentage of leisure travelers don't know the differences between lodging brands, illustrating that meta descriptions in the SERPs can be used to give valuable information to undecided users.

A good meta description will bring more traffic to your site and should increase the number of direct bookings. Make sure you include not only a call to action for a guest to book with you, but also something that differentiates your hotel from your competitors.

Answering the following questions will help you maximize the potential of your meta descriptions:

- **What makes your hotel different from competitors in your area?**
- **What motivates your potential guests to book directly with you instead of via other channels?**
- **Who are your ideal customers? What attitude do they have towards your brand?**
- **What will motivate your potential guest to take action RIGHT NOW?**

It can be difficult to stand out among competitors, so make sure your meta description appeals to the right people. If it doesn't, all the time and money you spent on your website is wasted. However, as with Title Tags, the need to differentiate must be balanced with the need to accurately portray the content of the page. An over-optimized meta description is just as likely to drive guests away as it is to bring more in. To get more ideas of what to discuss in your meta descriptions, survey your current and past customers to find out why they chose your hotel.

While meta descriptions are not direct ranking factors, it is important to include some variations of targeted keywords as well. Whenever a guest searches for a keyword you include in your meta description, those terms will be bolded in the search results. Meta descriptions are also sometimes used by social media sites like Facebook when a link to a page on your website is posted.

## Rich Snippets

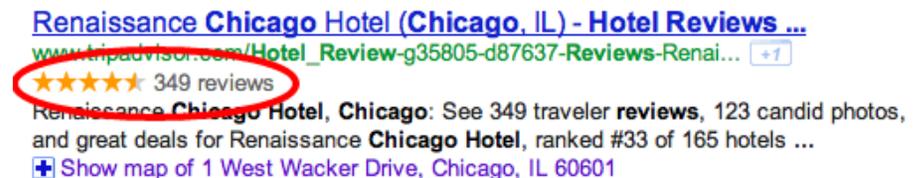
Rich snippets provide instant information about a hotel through reviews and ratings. They are displayed when text on your website is marked up, or labeled, for Google's search crawlers to digest. This allows the search engine to display expanded information along with your listing, improving the rate at which users click through to your hotel's website.

Some examples of how Rich Snippets look in search results include:

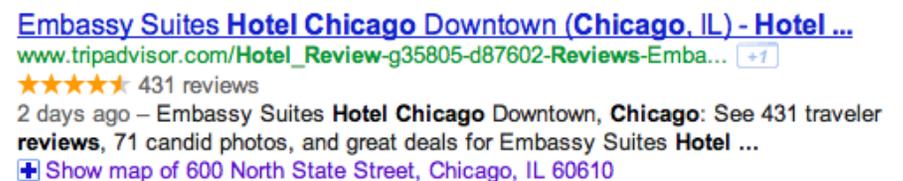
- **A star rating (out of five stars) displayed below your Title Tag**
- **A review written by customers that replaces your meta description**
- **Specific business information, such as address and hours**

Rich Snippets are a way to instantly boost the rate at which potential travelers click through to your hotel's website. Rich Snippets are also certainly among the most underutilized SEO tactics in your arsenal, while the big hitters of the travel world use them well.

To display a rating/review Rich Snippet, or any of the other variations mentioned below, you will need a developer to "mark up" the corresponding text on your website using the standards found on Schema.org. In addition to ratings and reviews, there are several different types of Rich Snippet markup that work well for the travel industry, including Events and Product/Price markup.



[Renaissance Chicago Hotel \(Chicago, IL\) - Hotel Reviews ...](#)  
[www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel\\_Review-g35805-d87637-Reviews-Renai...](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g35805-d87637-Reviews-Renai...)   
 349 reviews  
Renaissance Chicago Hotel, Chicago: See 349 traveler reviews, 123 candid photos, and great deals for Renaissance Chicago Hotel, ranked #33 of 165 hotels ...  
 Show map of 1 West Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60601



[Embassy Suites Hotel Chicago Downtown \(Chicago, IL\) - Hotel ...](#)  
[www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel\\_Review-g35805-d87602-Reviews-Emba...](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g35805-d87602-Reviews-Emba...)   
 431 reviews  
2 days ago – Embassy Suites Hotel Chicago Downtown, Chicago: See 431 traveler reviews, 71 candid photos, and great deals for Embassy Suites Hotel ...  
 Show map of 600 North State Street, Chicago, IL 60610

## Events

Events work especially well for cruise lines, but they can be applied to more traditional hotel websites as well. Event information will display just below the Title Tag and meta description. Hotels can take full advantage of this by listing concerts, special theme nights at a nightclub, and tournaments using the same kind of Rich Snippet.

## Product/Price Markup

TripAdvisor relies heavily on the use of Product/Price markup. Product/Price Rich Snippets occupy the same space as rating and review snippets, so you need to make a choice about which information you'd rather have displayed in your site's Rich Snippet. While meta descriptions are not direct ranking factors, it is important to include some variations of targeted keywords as well. Whenever a guest searches for a keyword you include in your meta description, those terms will be bolded in the search results. Meta descriptions are also sometimes used by social media sites like Facebook when a link to a page on your website is posted.

## What Rich Snippets Do For Your SEO

While Google has explicitly stated that Rich Snippets do not directly affect your search rankings, they have been shown to positively influence the rate at which users click on your listings in the search results. This can affect bounce rate, average session duration, and other usability metrics that have been confirmed to influence search rankings.

Within such a competitive industry, it is critical to utilize every available opportunity to stand out. Rich Snippets give your website's listings an edge by providing reviews, event info or pricing information to enhance your listing in the SERPs. Not only do these snippets draw the eyes of potential travelers to your listing, but they also immediately provide the information sought by users, giving them additional reason to click through to your website.

## Google Publishing for Revinate Surveys

Revinate Surveys customers especially stand to benefit from Rich Snippets with the introduction of Google Publishing for Revinate Surveys. This new service

allows guests to publish their survey responses directly to Google Reviews, putting hoteliers in a better position to not only improve search rankings but to also leverage them to drive more bookings from Google.

## Knowledge Graph

The Knowledge Graph refers to a continuously developing knowledge base that is used by Google to provide enhanced search results based on the content of the user's search. Similar to Rich Snippets, this information is populated from "marked up" text using Schema.org conventions. Where they differ is that Rich Snippets



### Thomas Jefferson

3rd U.S. President

Thomas Jefferson was an American Founding Father who was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence. He was elected the second Vice President of the United States, serving under John Adams and in 1800 was elected the third President. [Wikipedia](#)

**Born:** April 13, 1743, Shadwell, VA

**Died:** July 4, 1826, Monticello, VA

**Preceded by:** John Adams

**Education:** College of William & Mary (1760–1762)

**Children:** Martha Jefferson Randolph, Eston Hemings, [More](#)

#### Quotes

[View 7+ more](#)

*The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.*

*In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.*

*Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you.*

#### People also search for

[View 15+ more](#)



John Adams

George Washington

James Madison

Benjamin Franklin

Frederick Douglass

display as part of the search result listing while Knowledge Graph results display in a separate area on the right side of the search results, offering a wider area in which to display information.

In most cases, the purpose of the Knowledge Graph is to provide an answer to the user's search within the results themselves. While this may keep a number of users from clicking through to one of the search result listings, it also provides an opportunity for hoteliers to have a say in the information that is displayed here. This is beneficial for mobile users who may not be on a reliable connection, as they may be able to find an answer to their query without loading another page. This is especially important given that Google recently reported that over 65% of all travelers use their smartphones during the travel process.

## How the Knowledge Graph Can Work for Your Hotel

While your hotel will not likely display in the Knowledge Graph for search queries concerning a particular destination, you can still take advantage of this powerful technology when a user searches for your brand.

If you search "Gran Ventana Beach Resort" on Google, the Knowledge Graph for this resort appears along the right-hand side. It contains pictures, reviews and the ability to book a room right from the graph. Some Knowledge Graphs include even more information, such as available amenities. Further investigation reveals buttons to get directions, visit the website, and to send all the graph info to your phone.

Special markup is not required for the Knowledge Graph to populate, as Google also pulls data from [other sources](#), including Title Tags, meta descriptions, and on-page content. However, it is recommended that hoteliers mark up Knowledge Graph data on their websites to ensure that the information is accurate.

## Chapter 2

# Creating a Mobile-Friendly Website

With more than half of travelers using their smartphones during the travel planning process, a mobile-friendly website is no longer optional to compete on the modern web.

According to the [latest statistics](#), internet usage on mobile devices is now higher than on traditional desktops. It is not surprising, then, that Google recently announced another ranking boost for mobile-friendly websites. As of March of 2016, mobile-friendly websites are prioritized in search results, while mobile usability is now a direct ranking factor in its Search Algorithm.

Today's best SEO practices are not just about keywords and content, but also about providing the best possible [experience](#) for the users of your website. It is no longer enough to have keyword-optimized content and an aesthetically pleasing website. If you don't optimize your website for mobile, your site's search results will suffer dramatically.

Though mobile devices have come a long way in terms of power and speed, it's easy to forget that great-looking pages might not always load properly on smaller screen sizes. The websites of today need to look great and work well on all devices.

It's a good idea to take advantage of the diagnostic tools Google offers to see how usable your website is on mobile devices. Google's [PageSpeed Insights](#) tool includes diagnoses on mobile User Experience.

In the end, it is about allowing your guests to easily obtain the information they need and providing a positive experience. Not only will this help to increase your website's rankings in the search results, but it will also drive more direct bookings.

## Responsive Design

Printed marketing materials are manufactured at a printing company and distributed as needed. Every person who receives a brochure from your hotel gets the same final product. This is not the case for digital materials. Websites are viewed on a variety of devices with varying screen sizes, which means your website needs to be able to adapt on the fly.

Of all the methods of achieving mobile usability available, responsive design is the preferred one. Responsive design helps smartphone users browse the internet without having to constantly zoom in and pan across pages that were designed for computer monitors. It is able to accomplish this by dynamically reorganizing the elements on the page based on the size of the screen displaying it.

If the website for your hotel is not responsive, it's a good idea to discuss options for bringing your site up-to-speed with your web team. Google's Search Algorithm will be giving ranking boosts to your mobile-friendly competitors, so if you don't have a mobile-friendly site, it can really hurt your search traffic volume.

## Google PageSpeed

As user experience is becoming a more important factor in SEO with each passing year, it is becoming increasingly critical that your pages load at an acceptable pace. Google has even spoken on the issue specifically, suggesting that PageSpeed is a direct ranking factor in its Search Algorithm.

Even though your site loads quickly on a computer, the same may not be true for mobile devices. Fortunately for hoteliers and webmasters, Google has provided a set of diagnostic tools for exactly this in [Google PageSpeed Insights](#). Google PageSpeed Insights is a combination of tools and analytics that allow you to understand how well your page is loading on both mobile and desktop, as well as to correct problems uncovered in the analytics. Pass these tools along to your developer or webmaster to start taking advantage of these insights.

## Chapter 3

# How to Create a Page that is Easily Found

Ranking high in search engines isn't just about the magic behind the scenes. The content of your page plays a large role.

In addition to headers and content, it has to be easy to use. If your potential guests cannot quickly find what they are looking for or do what they came to do, you'll lose business.

## Headers

These tags indicate the headings and subheadings among the content on your page and are among the more important on page elements for targeting keywords in Google.

Because people visiting your page typically [will not read the entire page](#), headers are also important to capture the attention of users by allowing them to quickly determine the relevance of your page. With 77% of affluent leisure travelers using their smartphones to get travel inspiration in spare moments, it's critical that your text is separated in a way that makes it easy to navigate.

There are six levels of headers available, but most websites use three or less. Each level denotes a certain hierarchy of importance, with one (H1) being the most important and six (H6) being the least. In order for them to work properly, they have to be in order, starting at one.

The H1 tag denotes the visible title of your page, so it should only be used once. The H1 tag also carries the most importance from an SEO perspective. Headings carry the H2 tag, and subheadings use H3. Since travelers are looking for very specific information, you will likely never have content long enough to warrant the use of the H4, H5 or H6 tags.

In addition to assisting with keyword targeting in the SERPs, a well-organized page with appropriate headers also increases the usability of your site. Not only is this a direct ranking factor in itself, but better usability means that your users are more likely to return and ultimately book with your hotel.

## Content

In the past, creating high-ranking content was easy. Webmasters just needed to sprinkle in a healthy dose of the right keywords, and any page could climb near the top of search engine rankings. But today's Google Search Algorithm is much more sophisticated, taking more cues from how users interact with your page as well as certain spam indicators.

With today's Google, the most important factors for content are:

- **Quality**
- **Readability**
- **Freshness**
- **Usability**

The quality of your content can make your establishment stand out from your competitors. While most hoteliers may not have the resources to create a publishing studio like [Marriott](#), having well-written, engaging stories on your site will give you an edge over the competition.

Readability is key when targeting people reading online. At a minimum, your content needs to be free of spelling and grammar errors. It also needs to be easy to navigate and scannable, that is, it must contain short paragraphs and bullet points. This kind of writing may not win you a Pulitzer, but travelers will be able to find what they need easily, especially on a smartphone.

The freshness of your content is also important, as the presence of current content on your hotel's website indicates to Google that your site is still relevant. Make sure your travel-related info is up to date and your pricing correct. Since rates change frequently, keep on top of your content to avoid surprising travelers when they get to the booking stage.

In addition to creating content that answers travelers' questions right away, it is also crucial that the website for your hotel works well.

Some important elements for a usable website:

- **All links are functional**
- **Travelers can quickly find what they came for**
- **The site is easy for a stranger to navigate**
- **It's easy for travelers to directly book online**

While user experience is a technical discipline, an easy way to think of it is to put yourself in your customer's shoes. Do not be afraid to use real subjects to test your website while you observe. You may be surprised at how many insights can be gleaned with such a simple test.

In sum, the saying "Content is King" rings true when it comes to ranking well on Google. And, when creating content for your hotel's website, it's important to pay attention to the details. Make sure your headers are tagged appropriately, your pages are easy to read and scan, and that you are consistently publishing fresh, quality content that your audience wants to read.

## Chapter 4

# Using Links to Build Credibility

Since the beginning of Google search, one of the most important factors in ranking in the SERPs is manner in which links interact with your website.

Linking is such a popular SEO tactic that key players in the SEO industry like [Brian Dean](#) have built entire empires around it. There are two primary types of links, internal links and external links.

### Internal Links

Links that point to other pages on your site are called internal links, and serve two specific purposes:

- **To help search engine spiders find all the pages on your site**
- **To create a positive user experience for potential guests by making it easier for them to find what they need**

In order for your pages to rank high on SERPs, the search engines must first know that they exist. The easiest way to do this is to make sure all your pages are easily accessible from others. At a minimum, your hotel website should include a navigation menu that includes links to all important pages and sections on your site.

Internal links also make it easier for potential guests to find what they're looking for. If they want to make a reservation, but cannot quickly find a button or link to do so, you are likely handing sales over to your competitors.

### External Links

There are two types of external links:

- **Inbound links on other sites that lead people to your page**
- **Outbound links on your site that lead people to pages outside your website**

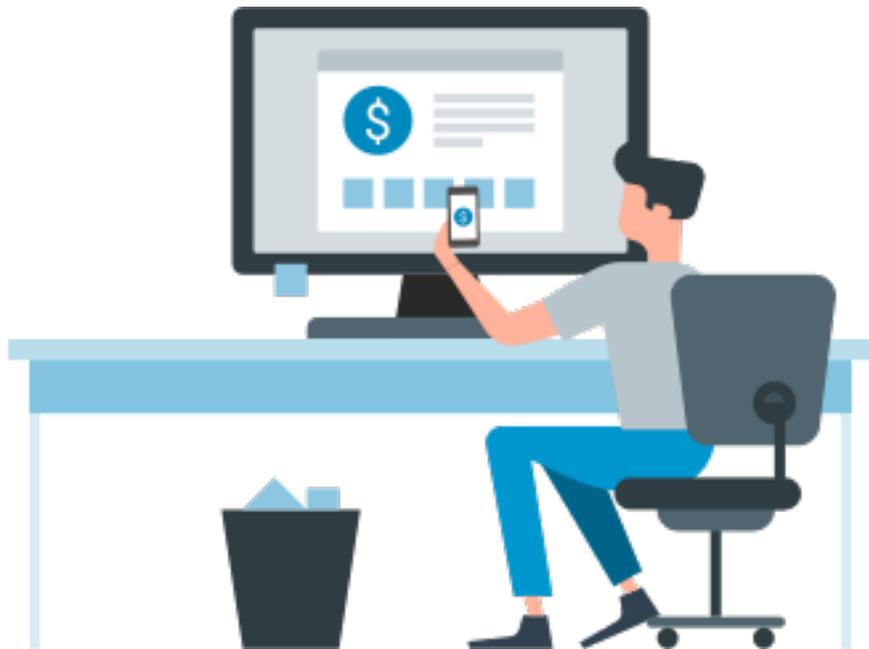
Links from external websites are not the only form of important external link. Google also looks for websites to link out to other relevant websites, as that is indicative that a website is participating in the community. The absence of these indicators can lead Google to interpret your practices as spammy, potentially incurring a penalty.

If someone mentions your brand name but doesn't link to you, this can still help your Google ranking, but it would help much more if a link were present. Reaching out to these websites for a link is a simple tactic that can garner your hotel valuable links with minimal effort.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the travel industry provides an increased opportunity for your hotel to do more business by aligning your strategies with proven Google SEO tactics. As Google SEO evolves, optimization is not only about showing up higher in the search results, but also about providing an excellent, fluid experience to your users.

By focusing on the simple steps we've outlined above, you will have begun the process of optimizing your hotel's website to compete in the modern online travel industry and to appeal to the modern traveler.



Source: Google

## About Revinate

Revinate helps hotels know more about their guests so they can deliver personalized experiences, creating valuable relationships and lifelong customers. Revinate is backed by leading investors including Benchmark Capital and Tenaya Capital. The company is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in New York, Amsterdam, Singapore, and Dubai. Revinate counts over 30,000 of the world's leading hotels as customers. To learn more, please visit [www.revinate.com](http://www.revinate.com) or email [info@revinate.com](mailto:info@revinate.com).