

**An Evaluation of Hotel Websites:
A Proposal for Website Usability on Reviews**

**Prepared for:
The FarmVegas Hotel**

**Prepared by:
MLB Design Corporation**

December 2nd, 2019



FarmVegas Hotels
456 South Main St.
Farmville, VA, 23909

October 12, 2019

David Everett
Principal Consultant
MBL Design Corporation
4321 North St
Richmond, VA, 23456

Dear Mr. Everett,

Subject: Evaluation of hotel website usability

In a society where everything is technologically based, the accessibility of a good website in relation to its net worth is a huge contributor. Since everything has an online platform, a bad website can really make or break a company, no matter how credible it may be. Studies show that companies with an exceptional online appearance have 60% more applicants versus a company without this same presence. Our mission at the FarmVegas Hotel is to create an excellent online status so that we will be able to access many applicants to ensure our hotel can compete with others we are in competition with.

Due to our company just getting started, we do not have as many resources as one may like, making it difficult to make our website and services marketable here on www.somethinghotels.org. A dependable and hardworking staff is the first step into making this company into a reality, and we need a strong website to draw in applicants and therefore start our networking. The goal is to make the website up-to-date modern style for it reflects the style of our exceptional hotel that offers many amenities suitable for people of any age. Ideally, we can get the report sent by November 12th and be presented by December 1st.

We sincerely look forward to seeing the report. If you have any further questions on what we are looking for in regard to the website, please contact us at our office number at 555-555-0125.

Sincerely,

John Jones

John Jones
Director of Admissions

MLB Design Corporation
4321 North St
Richmond, VA, 23456

November 1, 2019

John Jones
456 South Main St.
Farmville, VA, 23909

Dear Mr. Jones

Subject: Hotel website proposal completion

The hotels listed below have reports attached that evaluate the websites accessibility, quality of content, and overall aesthetic that was requested in your letter from October 15th, 2019.

These three hotels excel in some areas, however there is room for improvement in others. We believe that these three hotels will allow you to reach the goal you want, as well as showing you things that are not as desirable in a website

- **Hampton Inn**
- **Holiday Inn**
- **Days Inn**

We are confident that these websites will allow you to identify the do's and don'ts of Hotel websites to help better the ____ Hotels website.

We would like to thank you for reaching out to us to do this research for you. It was our pleasure to help the ____ Hotels create their updated website. We are sure that your business will excel in whatever it does. If you have any questions or concerns about the report or would like for us to do more research for ____ Hotels, please contact 555-444-4321 and we will gladly set up a meeting for you.

Sincerely

David Everett

David Everett
Principal Consultant

Enclosure: Report on hotel websites

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Executive Summary

FarmVegas Hotels seeks to improve their online presence so that the quality and success of their hotel will increase. They have tried remodeling their website; however, the website traffic still remains the same.

Considering how technologically advanced this country has become, it is important to create a strong online presence in order to be successful. This can make or break an institution, and FarmVegas strongly believes that if they increase their online presence that they will see positive results very quickly. FarmVegas Hotels reached out to MBL Design Corporation to give them tips and advice on how to improve their website. They analyzed three different websites in Farmville, that would be considered competitors for the FarmVegas hotel, and pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of each hotel website.

Each website was analyzed based on the following criteria:

- **Overall Aesthetic:** modern, simple layout, color, pleasing presentation
- **Ease of Navigation:** simple layout, utilization of tabs, links and placeholders,
- **Quality of Content:** professional, readable, up to date, well designed.

The three hotel websites that were analyzed were:

- Days Inn
- Hampton Inn
- Holiday Inn Express

The purpose of this report is to provide a basis of exceptional website design for FarmVegas Hotels to work with. They can utilize these resources to incorporate ideas of their choice into their own website in order to ensure the success of their hotel. MBL Design Corporation are confident that we have provided them with phenomenal examples to improve their overall design so that their website will equate the quality of their hotel.

Introduction

A successful and exceptional website is crucial for the success and prosperity of a hotel. These websites provide pictures of amenities, assets, and ratings to showcase everything they have to offer to applicants as well as anyone who is interested in visiting. A successful website must be aesthetically pleasing to the public eye, as well as an ease of navigation in order for users to be able to find what they are looking for at the optimum rate. When websites do not possess these qualities, there is a severe decline in their overall quality and success and in all aspects. Even if a hotel is an exceptional one, it may still suffer considering a well-designed website is the backbone of any institution.

FarmVegas Hotel is located in Farmville, Virginia, otherwise known as the heart of this beautiful state. FarmVegas has sought to bring entertainment to this quaint but wonderful town and has made it their mission to ensure that people of all ages will find their stay there both stimulating and relaxing due to the various activities our hotel has to offer.

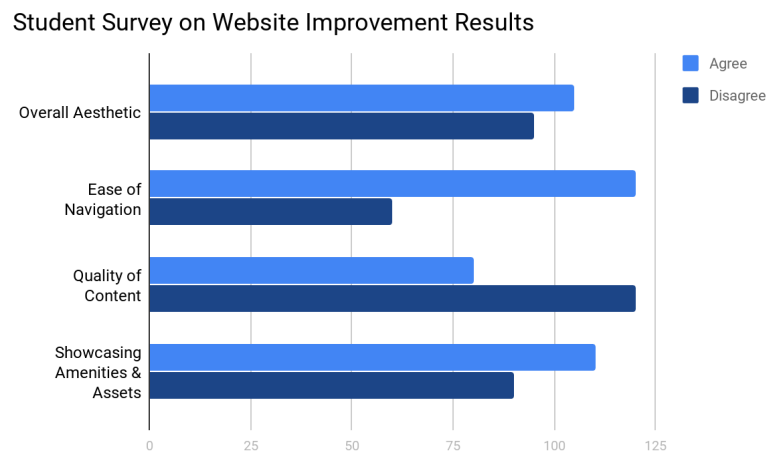


Figure 1: A survey was sent out to students to see their opinion on the

At the pinnacle of FarmVegas Hotels success, the number of people staying varied between 350 - 500 people a day. Since we have updated our website; our website traffic has only increased by 2% since 2018 of last year.

When the faculty and staff of FarmVegas Hotels surveyed what aspects, they believed FarmVegas needed to improve, the biggest complaints were: Ease of Navigation, overall aesthetic, and quality of content.

FarmVegas executives decided to reach out to MBL Website Design Corporations to increase the website traffic of our hotel by analyzing other websites who demonstrate these qualities, as well as including websites that are not as exceptional, which allows FarmVegas Hotels to avoid certain aspects of poor web page design.

MLB Design Corporation is a very prestigious corporation, where all employees are required to have degrees in computer programming, IT, and webpage design. They have more than enough knowledge of websites and how they should look to ensure a successful institution.

This report will explain the issues currently present with the FarmVegas.com and offer tips and strategies on how to make the website more aesthetically pleasing as well as showcasing all of the amenities that the FarmVegas Hotel has to offer.

Our analysis looks at three different hotels in the Farmville area who are considered to be competition. We looked at the Days Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Hampton Inn. These are the overall aspects that we gathered from looking at all of these websites:

Overall Aesthetic: modern, includes pictures, pleasing layout, color, presentation

Ease of Navigation: simple layout, utilization of tabs, links and placeholders,

Quality of Content: professional, readable, up to date, well designed.

Analysis of Days Inn

[https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/days-inn-farmville/overview?CID=LC:DI:20160927:RIO:Local:SM-disatl&iata=00093796](https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/days-inn/farmville-virginia/days-inn-farmville/overview?CID=LC:DI:20160927:RIO:Local:SM-disatl&iata=00093796)

https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/days-inn?tel=8552242016&iata=00093763&cid=PS:DI:20160201:BING:TM:DIUS:Exact_General_777777:EN_US&msclkid=cada25c300621db474ff782194ec268a&gclid=CNLBxr2pkuYCFdb1swodU9YBGg&gclidsrc=ds

Overall Aesthetic

The website's color palette is primarily white and various shades of blue. Blue is a calming color that is easy on the eyes, allowing a comfortable visit to the site. White is hard on the eyes but is clear and increases visibility of the information and images on the page. The various shades of blue compliments the aesthetic, preventing it from being dull or monotonous.

The light blue shade that surrounds a section dedicated to deals associated with happy feelings. The first thing a user will see is a large image on the homepage that primarily serves as an advertisement for the site itself. On the bottom of the image is a white taskbar. The white contrasts with the image clearly despite the bar being small and at the bottom. The formatting revolves around this concept. Different information will be distinguished by a change in shade and shape. However, another taskbar is found at the top of the site. This taskbar is hard to notice due to its transparency. It does highlight in white when you hover it though which increases its visibility.

Ease of Navigation

A taskbar is at the top of the page that allows users to book, find locations, find deals, find groups, and change the language of the website. These are important features that blend into the background despite their text being in white. In addition to their hard to notice visibility, their links do not open in separate tabs. This may cause users to lose their place and cause frustration.

The sign in/join feature is found at the top right-hand corner of the page. Although this may be a good location for this feature, it is small and hard to notice. Users may entirely miss it and never know about it.

There is another toolbar that allows the user to book, search for rooms, and see special deals. Unfortunately, these links also do not automatically open in a new tab which can cause the user to lose their place. These links can be right clicked to be open in a new tab at least.

On a positive note these taskbars allow faster usability and navigation by allowing the user to find important information instantly when they visit the page. However, that relies on them seeing the bars in the first place and not losing their places.

There are also a plentiful number of images that allow the user to become familiar with where they will be staying before their visit. The images depict all aspects of the hotel, including bathrooms, bedrooms, pools, bars, kitchens, and more.

There are several sections dedicated to deals. Although this allows users to see and be surrounded with the possibility of saving money, it is messy and disorganized. Instead of having all possible deals placed in one location, they are all over the page which forces the user to have to keep track of all of them or miss something altogether.

At the bottom of the page are associated franchises and various informational links. These are organized by contrasting the rest of the site by being in dark blue. Although it's easy to see the section, the information is sporadically placed on the page.

Quality

Reviews are not found on the website. The overall quality is moderate. The site has features that allow users to do what they need and want to do quickly, but it is encumbered by a few flaws. The information can be scattered at times or completely hard to notice or see in the first place. There are various images that boast the quality of the hotel itself which is a good function of the site.

In short, the site succeeds in having almost all needed information on the front page but fails to concisely organize said information. It is fairly easy to look at but could be improved in several ways. Its ease of navigation has lots of room for improvement. Such as the links needing to open in separate tabs to prevent users from losing their place.

Analysis of Holiday Inn Express & Suites

https://www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/farmville/lyhfm/hoteldetail?cm_mmc=GoogleMaps--EX--US--LYHFM

Overall Aesthetic

The colors on the Holiday Inn are extremely pleasing to the eye. They use nice dark blue colors and some orange accents which are complementary colors according to the color wheel. When a user clicks on to this website, it offers pictures of all the types of rooms the Holiday Inn has to offer as well as directions and a map that helps users know exactly where the hotel is located.

The pictures that the website uses when one first gains access to the website are pictures of the various times of rooms they offer, bathrooms, the gym, the pool, the outside of the building, the food court area, the front desk, and an outside area. These images are very appealing and great quality so users can easily get an idea of the overall aesthetic of the hotel in general.

The website overall seems very balanced and uses various images and colors are certain toolbars guide the user's eyes from left to right in a horizontal path. After scrolling down to more options, the order switches from horizontal to vertical, however it does not disrupt the flow or make the website any less visually pleasing.

Ease of Navigation

Upon entering the website, there is a big orange button that says "BOOK NOW" which stands out a lot on top of the dark blue background. Users will have no trouble figuring out how to book a room if their interested in staying there. The information one enters to book a room is also located right under the gallery of pictures at the top of the home page. The user will either find it there or click "Book Now" and it will scroll down directly to where the user inserts their information.

After clicking the tabs located at the top of the page, the website does not open up another tab when clicked on. This can sometimes be problematic, for the user can easily lose their place on the website. Luckily, the task bar never goes away when you click on any option, and information will always be at the user's disposal.

All important information, such as booking details, prices, and amenities can all be found on the home page at a very accessible spot where viewers are sure to come across it. It also includes the Check in and Check Out times, the age one must be to book a room, phone number and address of the hotel in white letters on top of blue background. In most websites, check in and out times, as well as ages to book a hotel is often an ordeal to find, however this website makes it a lot easier for viewers to reach this information, as well as navigating through the website as a whole.

This particular website for Holiday Inn Express, which is a limited quality service hotel in comparison to the standard holiday inn is reflected in its website page. It is very user friendly and easy to navigate, which makes sense because the hotel is really only meant for very brief stays. If people are in a hurry to get to book a hotel room last minute, it is generally in an Express hotel such as this one. The website, of course has taken this fact into consideration and it shows.

The only complaint is the formatting somewhat disrupts the natural flow halfway down on the homepage. At first, the reader is reading horizontally left to right, however, when it gets to a certain point the format changes to vertical. Changing the direction at which the reader is taking in information can be disruptive. Ideally this website would maintain the horizontal eye way throughout. This also prevents the user from scrolling more in order to find the information that they're looking for.

Quality

When one scrolls to the bottom of the homepage, the website includes the reviews on each aspect of the hotel. In other words, they show the number of stars they have in regard to staff and service, room and comfort, value, room cleanliness, variety of breakfast choices, and ability to relax. Each category received five stars with the exception of variety of breakfast choices, which received four and a half stars. The website also includes the option to look at all the reviews of the people who have stayed at the hotel before. It shows the comments that people have written on the quality of their stay, as well as their ratings on each category out of five stars which builds their credibility and reputation as an exceptional hotel to stay at.

Hotels who generally don't get very good reviews will not advertise it on the homepage, so this shows that the Holiday Inn has good quality and wants to showcase this.

Even after clicking these tabs, the option to book a room never goes away, it stays on the page even if you click on another tab other than the homepage, which makes it easier for someone to be able to find all of this information.

Analysis of Hampton Inn

https://www.reservations.com/hotel/hampton-inn-farmville-farmville-va?rmcid=dsanew&utm_source=googleads&qclid=Cj0KCQiA5dPuBRCrARIsAJL7oehn-bLghtNysjs38WZBm5mTQXGSvCtp6csVcumQ799TfM7qM3pdzqQaAk41EALw_wcB#overview

Overall Aesthetic

The color of the home page is just plain white and very unpleasing to the eyes. The buttons you can click on are red, which I think is a little harsh on the eyes. The red is good when it comes to accessibility because you can clearly see where things are. However, it does not look good at first glance. I also think it is plain. There is really no color other than the red buttons which stand out. It should be a navy blue because it is a more neutral color that is not too bright or distracting.

The pictures that are on the website are nice. It lets you see the size of the beds and how clean their rooms are. It also shows you photos of the lobby. I think this is a good thing because you will know what the whole hotel is like instead of just your individual room. It also has tabs under the initial title of the hotel where it has the photos of each room so you can choose which one you want and also the sizes of the beds.

The website is pretty balanced when trying to find things. The only thing I see is the top bar with different tabs, it follows down when you scroll. I like that, although I think it should be placed on the side because it is a little distracting when trying to look at the different rooms available. If it is on the side, you can still access it easily, it just won't be in your way when looking at other things.

Ease of Navigation

This website is really easy to navigate through. It has a reserve button at the top, it is very noticeable and easy to find. Also, there is a photo, amenities, room rates, map and location, and guest reviews table at the top that are very noticeable. It tells you all of the extra things, like complimentary breakfast, free parking and free Wi-Fi right on the front page. This helps you know everything that you are getting while staying there. There is also a place to type in the dates you want to stay and then it will tell you what they have available. It asks for the number of adults and children, so they can accommodate your family. Also, if you see a room that you like, you can check the rates to see if they are in your price range. When you click on another tab, it just takes you down the page to where that information is. It doesn't take you to a different page. This is nice because you won't lose your spot or be confused as to where it has taken you. However, it is very hard to find rates because when you click to find out, it takes you to other websites that help you find hotels that are in your price range. It should give you rates on how much the rooms are. This is an irrelevant source because if one is on this specific hotel site, they know what hotel they are interested in.

Quality

This website is good quality because it looks like it is put together well. At the bottom of the page, there are reviews about the amenities and how many stars they rate the hotel. I think this is a good thing to have on the website so people can see what others thought and can make a decision about if they want to spend time at this hotel or not. I think the website is put together nicely and it not overcrowded but it has all of the information one would need in order to know everything that is essential about the hotel.

Conclusions

Upon updating FarmVegas Hotels website, there has been a slight increase in applicants, however it was not the increase that we had hoped for. The purpose of our website it to provide information in a visually pleasing way, with an ease of navigation, as well as showcasing our quality of content simultaneously.

This way, employees who wish to join our team can easily find ways to apply, and vacationers will find our hotel appealing and want to stay with us. Since changing the overall format and layout of www.farmvegashotels.org we have seen a 5% increase in users and applicants interested in our hotel, however, in order to ensure our hotels success, our website needs more improvement.

Percentages of people who rated the websites an 8 or higher

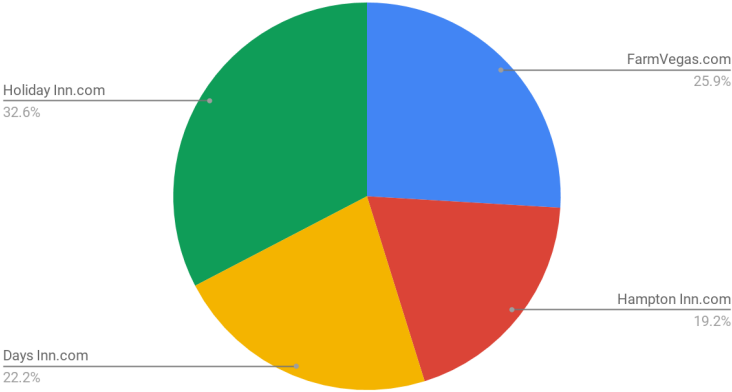


Figure 2: A survey was sent out to see how many people would rate the hotel websites an 8 or better

We are optimistic that our website can be worked on, and we can reach at least a 25% growth rate in users and applicants within the next year or two. Institutions with websites that are unsuccessful is due to their poor designing, specifically when it comes to overall aesthetics, usability, and quality of content. We sincerely believe that if we can improve on our website, then our institution will flourish under this influence. Designing website based on these three qualities have projected to increase between 20 to 35 percent in website visitors based on how well these are actually executed. This would mean that the more people we have visiting our website, the better chance our hotel will have at getting applicants and visitors to stay with us, thus, giving our institution a major step to its prosperity.

When taking these surveys into account, MLB Designing Corporation has concluded that Holiday Inn, Hampton Inn, and the Days Inn all have very desirable qualities in their websites. We have concluded that Holiday Inn Express has the best overall aesthetic and ease of navigation.

Recommendations

We recommend having a color palette consisting of white and various shades of blue. This palette will allow users to feel calm while viewing the page. These colors clearly contrast each other which increases visibility of information. It also allows the user to view the page for a longer period of time thus letting them go at their own pace depending on their circumstances.

An important feature is links opening in new tabs. This allows users to not lose their place and organize their information according to their personal priorities. Pop-up links are intrusive and doesn't allow the user to keep that information open while navigating the rest of the page.

A clearly seen taskbar that lists locations, rooms, booking information, and deals should be found front and center. This allows users to quickly do what they need to do. These links should open in separate tabs thus allowing users to multitask. This bar should be highlighted in a separate shade increasing visibility.

Images should be present but not scattered about the page. They should be neatly placed either behind text or in a section dedicated to information on the rooms. People want to see where they will be staying so having images close to information on the hotel itself and the rooms is crucial.

Appendix A: Student Survey on Website Improvement Options

1. I believe that the overall aesthetic of a website is the most important characteristic of webpage.

Agree Disagree

2. I believe that a website that is user friendly and easy to navigate is the most important quality of a webpage.

Agree Disagree

3. I believe that the quality of an institution's website demonstrates the overall quality of that institution.

Agree Disagree

4. I believe showcasing an institution reviews and accomplishments is the most important element of website design

Agree Disagree

5. I believe that displaying amenities and an institution asset are the most important qualities of a website

Agree Disagree

Appendix B: Student Survey on Website Improvement Results

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Overall Aesthetic	90	200	75
Ease of Navigation	200	100	50
Quality of Content	80	150	125
Showcasing Reviews	50	90	200
Displaying assets and amenities	95	175	115

Appendix C: User navigation when visiting the site survey

MLB Design Corporation administration designed and distributed this survey to all users to get a better feel of how others see their overall aesthetic feel. FarmVegas Hotel is included. 1 being the worst and 10 being the best.

1. FarmVegas Hotel.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☹									☺

2. Hampton Inn.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☹									☺

3. Days Inn.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☹									☺

4. Holiday Inn.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☹									☺

Appendix D: User navigation when visiting site results

Out of 5,000 surveys sent out, 800 were returned within three weeks that were allowed. The following tables show the results as a percentage out of 100.

Hotel	Visitors who rated the website design as an 8 or higher
FarmVegas.com	62
Hampton Inn.com	46
Days Inn.com	53
Holiday Inn.com	78