

An Evaluation of Hotel Websites:
A Proposal for Their Effects on Booking Rates

Prepared for:
Hotel International

Prepared by:
Watson & Watsutton Corporation

December 5, 2019



Hotel International
Marketing Department
555 St. Johnson Avenue
Richmond, VA 23232

November 15th, 2019

Jane Smith
Marketing and Design Consultant
Watson & Watsutton Corp.
Farmville, VA 23999

Dear Ms. Smith:

Subject: Evaluation of hotel's website and its effect on booking and ratings

Over the past few years there has been a strong relationship between the look of a hotel's website and the number of travelers that book to stay there. Because, technology is so prevalent now days, websites allow all people to have easy access to booking a relaxing stay. According to studies, hotels that have an easy, user-friendly webpage saw a booking increase of 29%.

HotelInternational.com has not been redesigned or updated since the spring of 2014 and therefore we are lacking a user-friendly webpage compared to all of our competitors. We are experience a steady decrease in business. We would like to ask you and your team to deliver a report on ways that we can improve our webpage, in order to make it more user-friendly and appealing. We wish that the report be completed by January 1st, 2020 and be ready to present by January 28th.

We look forward to hearing from you, please let us know if you need any more information from us or if you have any questions. We can be reached by phone at 413-555-4477 ext. 731

Sincerely,

Amy Johnson

Amy Johnson
Hotel Manager

Watson & Watsutton Corporation
Marketing and Design Agency
22212 Cary Street
Farmville, VA 23999

November 25, 2019

Amy Johnson
Hotel International
555 St. Johnson Avenue
Richmond, VA 23232

Dear Ms. Johnson,

Subject: Proposal to fix Hotel International's website

Our company is glad to hear that Hotel International wants to pursue better accessibility and invest in an updated website to help their customers. In the last ten years, there has been an advancement with technology and a demand to have the latest technology. When technology is growing, your website needs to grow which allows it to be compatible with different devices.

I have attached a report below evaluating your hotels website for their effects of becoming more user friendly and appealing for your customers that you have requested in your letter of November 15th, 2019.

We have recommended a couple different websites that demonstrate the key factors that you would like to include in your Hotel International website to promote better business:

- **Best Western**
- **Holiday Inn Express**
- **Marriot Hotel**

We are positive that these websites represent the components you are looking for in your website and would like to include in your updated Hotel International website.

Our company has really enjoyed researching information to expand and update your website. We thank you for the opportunity and if you have any more questions we would be glad to talk with you more about it. We can be reached by phone at 888-786-5432.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Jane Smith
Marketing and Design Consultant

Enclosed: Report on Hotel International Website

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Executive Summary

A decrease in the overall number of guests in Hotel International has led to the hotel to want to update its website. The website has not been updated since 2014, and the company wants a newer website that is user friendly and able to compete with its competitors.

With the amount of hotels and travel agencies out there, it is important to have an easy and accessible website for potential guests when booking a hotel online. Hotel International's public relations department asked Watson & Watsutton Corporation to recommend options for a new user friendly website.

Watson & Watsutton Corporation found different websites to help lead Hotel International in the right direction.

Each website was analyzed based on the following criteria:

- **Design Quality:** overall look, layout, color
- **Accessibility:** navigation, ease in booking a room
- **Information:** price, hotel amenities

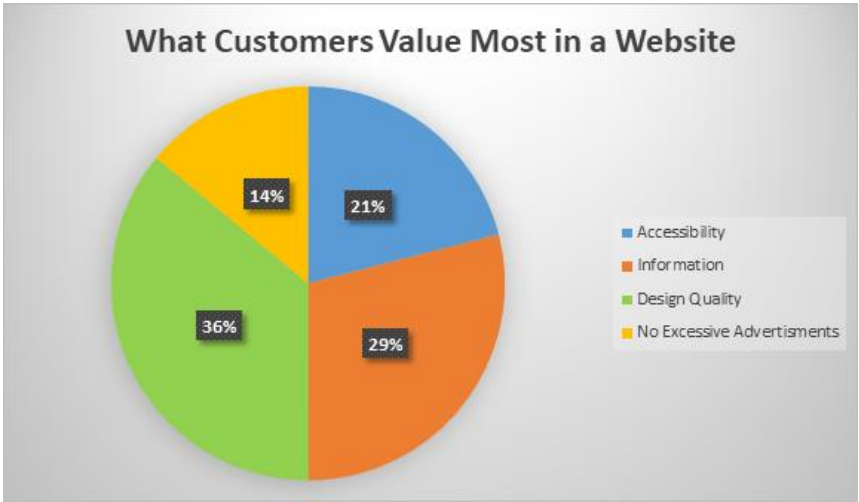
The following three hotels were chosen:

- Best Western
- Holiday Inn Express
- Marriott Hotel

After careful thought, these three were chosen based on their success rate and popularity among the traveling community. Watson & Watsutton Corporation is confident it will provide a thorough analysis of the websites and with its recommendation, be able to create a website that will increase the overall guest rate for this hotel.

Introduction

Hotel websites are almost as crucial as the stay. The website is often the guest’s first interaction with the hotel itself. With that being said, it is essential for the website to be aesthetically pleasing and easily navigable. If not the user will easily leave the website and go choose a different hotel.



Hotel International was founded in 2003. Their mission is to create an affordable, friendly hotel that encourages families to travel. The founder Thomas Wilson stated “Our goal is to make booking a hotel the least of our customers worries. We want them to focus on making memories with their families”

The hotels peak was in 2014, the same year the last time the website was updated. Since then there has been a steady decrease in the overall booking rate. This is due to the hotels outdated website and inability to keep up with the competition.

Watson and Watson Corporation was commissioned to revamp the website to bring in more guests. After polling of frequent travelers, the results showed what they cared about most when booking a hotel online. The four common factors were as follows: Design Quality, Information, Accessibility, and No Excessive Pop Up Advertisements.

After careful consideration Watson and Watson Corporation decided that the following three were the most important components of a successful website:

- **Design Quality**
- **Accessibility**
- **Information**

This report will elaborate how different hotels effectively use each strategy to be successful in their own way. By doing so, Watson and Watson Corporation can make recommendations that will improve the overall booking rate of Hotel International.

Analysis of Best Western

<https://www.bestwestern.com/>

Design Quality

The overall design of the website is very calming as it includes touches of white and blues. The content and layout is appropriate for any computer screen width. It immediately captures the user's attention with high quality photos and adds dynamic to the website. The property features of the website really draw the user in allowing it to have a nice look and feel.

There is a main photo that you can view when you first enter the website, it is a high-quality photo of two women enjoying a conversation.

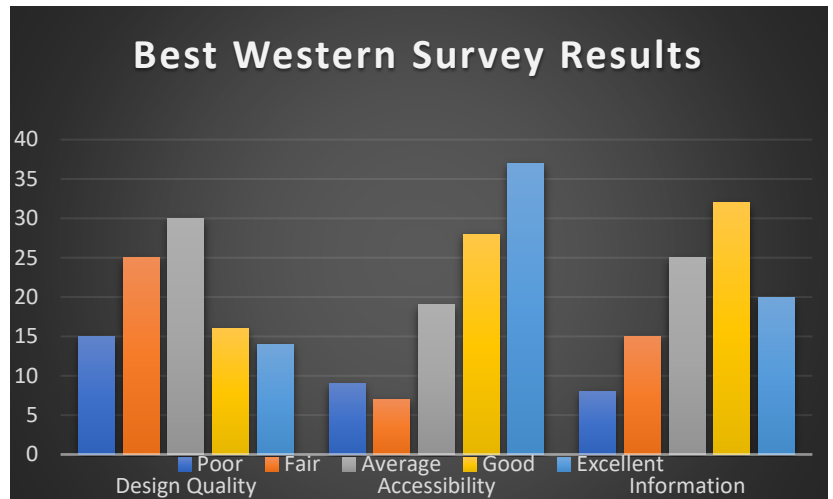


Figure 2. Shows the results of the website user surveys.

This gives the website an achievable desire to want to book with them considering these women seem to be enjoying themselves within the hotels grounds. As you scroll, further down the page the width of the webpage accommodates any screen type. This is important considering people won't have to zoom in and out to figure out what the website consists of. The color scheme stays consistent throughout the website with many blues and whites which brings a calming atmosphere to its customers. This is a great website that doesn't overwhelm its client with crazy bright colors yet relaxing so they are more willing to book with the hotel.

The writing throughout the website is kept to a minimum which is favorable considering you never want to overwhelm your customer but better yet explain through pictures. It is easy to read the text that is provided to the reader providing it from left to right across the screen. This is a hotel website that is very user friendly with its overall design quality.

Accessibility

The Best Western's website strives to give its user the best accessibility they can have. It's always important to have a webpage that all clients can perceive, understand, and navigate. Best Western has a great website that allows its user to have access to the main webpage always by the click of a button. There is a button located in the top left corner that states "Best Western" which allows its user to click on if they get lost or want to return to the home page with just a click of a button.

When you first enter the homepage of Best Western it gives you the option to access where you would like to travel to along with check in and check out dates, the number of rooms you may need, number of guest, and the rates you would like to have during your stay with them. This is

important to many consumers as they don't want to have to search through numerous pages to access this. As you scroll down the page you can also access special offers that are provided through the company, popular destinations that are booked through their hotel, and Best Western Rewards. At the top of the homepage there is a row of menu buttons that you can click that provide other options. This is all important when you are a customer looking for the best experience within a hotel.

The great aspect of this website is that you don't have to constantly search for things you want to have knowledge about through the website. It is important to have access to anything within the website considering this gives you interaction with the company. By giving accessibility through your website you are giving access to individuals with disabilities as well as everyone. It is always important for your website to accommodate anyone within the internet setting you higher than others.

Information

There is lots of information located within the Best Western webpage. They have information on their locations around the country. There is a list of discounts and special offers located at the top of the website that you can push with just a click of a button. It is important to have information located all over the webpage so that customers better understand what is offered to them. There is a location for Best Western Rewards, offers, customer service, brands, and checking reservations. There is a tab that customers can check their reservations that they have made within the company. This not only benefits the customers but it also makes it easier on the employees.

With Best Western being such a country wide known hotel industry it carries a high reputation. The Best Western hotel owns roughly 4,500 hotels and resorts worldwide. This makes it important to always have information accessible to all customers throughout the website so that they can continue to have an exceptional brand name.

Analysis of Holliday inn Express

<https://www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/new-york>

Design Quality

The overall design is very appealing. There is a color scheme and the colors are eye-catching without being overbearing. The layout is simple and easy to follow.

The gallery shows not only the design and layout of the rooms, but it also shows the scenery around that specific hotel. Each website is catered to each specific hotel location.



Figure 2. Shows the results of the Holiday Inn Express Surveys

Accessibility

There is a specific section dedicated to booking a room. All that has to be filled out is the check-in and check-out dates and all available rooms are listed with their prices and amenities. Once a room is selected you can also select different types of packages to appeal to the guests such as “the free pizza package”. Once everything is selected the total pops up at the top of the screen allowing the guest to view it one more time. Then all they have to do is input their information and their hotel room is booked.

If the website user has any trouble during the process there is a “Need Help” chat bubble at the top of the screen so users can ask questions if they arise during the booking process.

Information

The website is full of information. One of the main things when the website is first accessed is a map exactly where the hotel is. Right under the map it has exactly how far the hotel is from the nearest airport along with directions. And it has the hotels number in big blue letters. At the top of the website in big blue letters is the address and average room fairs.

In the menu bar at the top of the screen the hotel has a list of things to do in the local area, events that are happening in the near future, and deals for potential guests to view.

The hotel also has the amenities and even the current weather listed on the page.

Further down on the page there is a section labeled “hotel details” that once again has the address, phone number, and check in/ check out requirements

Analysis of Marriott Hotel

www.marriott.com

Overall Design

The overall design of Marriott's main webpage conveys a professional but welcoming feeling. The layout is easy to navigate and is appealing to the eye. The website is not overcrowded, yet not too much blank space. The website fits the criteria for all hotel comers.

The main photo at the top of the webpage is an appealing yet simple image, giving off a relaxation feeling for all those looking for a nice place to stay. As you scroll down further on the webpage there is a section labeled *This Week's Top Offers*, this layout is still kept very simple and neat. The color scheme across the whole website stays pretty constant. The color scheme is calming colors, such as white and light blue, this continues throughout the whole site.

The writing on this page is kept to a minimum. But of what text there is it is easy to read and in a legible font most of the text is written left to right making it easy for viewers to follow. Other hotel websites often tend to deviate away from these tips making their website crowded and non-user friendly.

Accessibility

The Marriott's website strives to give users a sense of ease when accessing their webpage. This concept allows them to attract viewers of all ages. The basics of navigating around the site are pretty simple. No matter what page you end up on, if the user clicks on the black box that says Marriott in the top left corner, it will return you back to the main page.

The webpage also includes a menu button where users may click on it and find the heading that best fits what they are looking for and with just one click they are on a new page that is full of specific information. For example, if you are looking to open up a Marriott credit card you would click the link labeled "Our Credit Cards", or if a customer was looking to look into booking a room at the Marriott, then once again under the menu tab the user would choose the link named "Find and Reserve". With nay of the examples when the user clicks on new links under the main menu tab, it does not open up a new tab in the browser, instead it operates on the same tab that the main webpage appeared on.

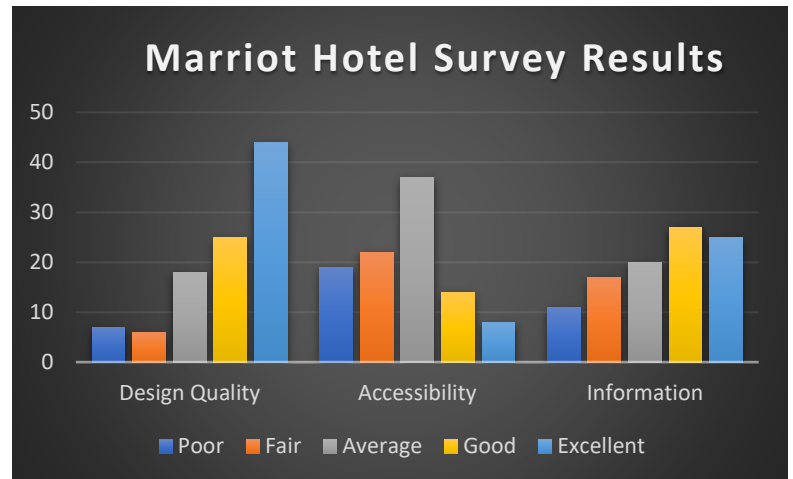


Figure 3. Shows the results of the Marriott Hotel Surveys

Where Marriott site falls short is that even though the main tab has the most relevant links, to find any other information guests must scroll all the way to the bottom to find more links. At the bottom of the page, there are a total of six additional links that can be accessed. Therefore, if guest see that what they are looking for is not under the main menu tab they may exit out or have to go hunt for the information instead. This setup does not meet the expectations of a user-friendly site.

With Marriott being such a big name in the hotel industry it carries a large reputation. Marriott owns a total about 7,000 properties. With that it is important that guest have a great experience during their stay at one of the 7,000 properties. The website must not only attract new guest but also must bring back all returning guest. Figure 3A shows that over the past 4 years, Marriott.com compared to hotelinternational.com shows that by having a link that makes it easy to discover all lodging options and book them easily at the customer's fingertips leads to more business.

Information

With the Marriott being such a big chain in the hotel industry, they are constantly offer promotions and other reward programs. This information is pretty accessible making it easy for potential customers to find all extra information. Not only is this beneficial for customers to have easy access at their fingertips for all there is to possibly know about the Marriott, but it also helps he Marriott increase business by using advertisements and special offers.

When providing extra information on the website, meaning information not directly related to booking a room or dealing with a customer's stay it is important that it is easily accessible but does not serve as being more precedent than things like, reserving a room or general hotel information meaning, phone number, address, and other important hotel information. A good tip, and something that the Marriott portrays well on their site is to clump all of the information according to relevance, and also by ranking it from most to least important.

Another big take away that falls under this section is the customer reviews and travel recommendations. Customer reviews are important to showcase because potential customers can get a first-hand experience of what people thought about your hotel and their overall quality of stay. If potential customers see that you are rated as a 4-star hotel, statistically they will be more inclined to book a room. Marriott also doesn't only showcase their best reviews it is important that there is a variety of reviews so potential consumers can make their best judgement when booking. Marriott does not fall short in this category and gives a great example on how to set up this portion of your webpage.

Conclusions

It is shown that within the last 10 years, bookings and ratings have dropped over time for Hotel International. The hotel believes that they have room for improvement and are hoping to increase their booking and ratings. The new hotel wants everyone to see the elegant features of their facility that really shows off the importance of new a structure and gives the feel of modern touches that people look for in hotels.

The hospitality business has been growing for many decades and hotels that don't have strong online presence will struggle with future bookings compared to other hotels who have great online presence. The design of a website is highly important when dealing with competitors, a properly designed website that focuses on overall design quality, ease of accessibility, and knowledge of information will be very success with future bookings, attracting new clients, as well as keeping a large client base. Carrying out all three of these design elements into the updated website will help see a liberal estimate of 25% increase for website traffic along with a conservative estimate of 10% increase in the website traffic. The reservations for online booking would increase by 12% also increasing your yearly reservations to +4% from last year.

With the use of different survey methods, Watson & Watsutton have concluded that the three best hotel websites to follow with valuable design elements are:

- Best Western
- Holiday Inn Express
- Marriott Hotel

The Survey's concluded that Best Western really showcased their accessibility and ease of navigation throughout their website. The Holiday Inn Express did an extraordinary job with providing information that will attract guests to other areas when staying at their hotel. The Marriott really exemplified their design quality with photos and a color scheme that is very modern and appealing to the eye.

It is very evident that all three websites have strengths throughout their website, but after our analysis we concluded that the Holiday Inn Express has the most overall user satisfaction. It is extremely appealing with its design, provides easy navigation, and great information about rewards, special offers, as well as local area events. It shows that all these elements attract a wide variety of customers and makes it clear they have a strong online presence for hotels.

Recommendations

Hotel International should remodel their website with the following recommendations in mind:

Model the design after the Marriot Hotel. The layout should include simple calming colors, and simple photos that are not overwhelming

Make the website more accessible like Best Western. The website should have an easy checkout process and easy to navigate with a search bar and clearly marked headings

Model the use of information after the Holiday Inn Express. The website should have information about the surrounding areas and events for customers to view

Watson and Watsutton Corporation feel that if the best aspect is taken from each of these hotels websites then Hotel International will be able to produce the best possible product for its potential guests.

Appendix A: Overall Design Survey

Design Quality

1. How does the layout of the page make you feel?

Overwhelmed	Somewhat Overwhelmed	Neutral	Somewhat Calm	Calm
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2. How pleasing is the color scheme?

Very Unpleasing	Somewhat Unpleasing	Neutral	Somewhat Pleasing	Very Pleasing
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3. What is the overall design quality of this website

Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
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Appendix B: Accessibility Survey

Accessibility

1. How easy is it to navigate a website?

Very Uneasy	Somewhat uneasy	Average	Somewhat Easy	Very Easy
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2. How easy is it to book a room?

Very Uneasy	Somewhat uneasy	Average	Somewhat Easy	Very Easy
-------------	-----------------	---------	---------------	-----------

3. How is the overall accessibility of this website?

Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
------	------	---------	------	-----------

Appendix C: Information Survey

Information

1. How well the information is displayed on the page?

Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
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2. How easy is it to access the information?

Very Uneasy	Somewhat uneasy	Average	Somewhat Easy	Very Easy
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3. What is the overall quality of information on the page?

Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
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Appendix D: Meeting Time

Watson & Watsutton Corporation
Weekly Progress Meeting
Up Church
Wednesday, November 13, 2019, 6:00 PM

- I. **Call to Order:** 6:15 PM
 - A. **Present:** Meghan Watson, Kaitlyn Watson, Taylor Sutton
 - B. **Recording Secretary:** Taylor Sutton
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Taylor moved, seconded by Kaitlyn, passed unanimously.
- III. **Previous Minutes:** Approval of minutes from last meeting. Taylor moved seconded by Meghan, passed unanimously.
 - A. Items arising from minutes: None
- IV. **Designers Report** (Kaitlyn)

Kaitlyn reported that the logo for the company is complete. She presented the digital image of the logo to the group.

 - A. The company plans to use the logo in future documents and reports.
 - B. The title page was started and plans to be done by next week.
- V. **Programmers Report** (Meghan)

The survey is in the works for being completed.

 - A. Meghan has reviewed the survey results and began creating the tables for the report. Meghan asks that we make sure to review the surveys to make sure they are correct.
- VI. **Other Items:**
- VII. **Next Meeting** (Taylor)

The meeting will be held on Monday, November 18th at 5:30 PM.

 - A. Kaitlyn asked that the meeting be held at another date. This was impossible. Due to scheduling conflicts, Monday, November 18th at 5:30 PM was the only available time for everyone. There was a vote whether the meeting should be held in Upchurch after class or online. Upchurch won 3 to 3. The meeting will be held in Upchurch at 5:30 PM. Each member is expected to be present at this meeting.
 - B. Each member plans to present their completed assignments for that week. The group will be productive by analyzing the completed assignments before proceeding to the next assignments.
- VIII. **New Business:**

There was no new business.
- IX. **Adjournment:**

Taylor made an announcement and moved the meeting to be adjourned. Passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 7:30 PM.

Watson & Watsutton Corporation
Weekly Progress Meeting
Up Church
Monday, November 18, 2019, 5:30 PM

- I. **Call to Order:** 5:45 PM
 - A. **Present:** Meghan Watson, Kaitlyn Watson, Taylor Sutton
 - B. **Recording Secretary:** Taylor Sutton
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Taylor moved, seconded by Kaitlyn, passed unanimously.
- III. **Previous Minutes:** Approval of minutes from last meeting. Taylor moved seconded by Meghan, passed unanimously.
 - A. Items arising from minutes: None
- IV. **Designers Report** (Kaitlyn)

Kaitlyn reported that the layout and title page for the report was complete.

 - A. The figures plan to be uploaded by the following class.
- V. **Programmers Report** (Meghan)

The survey is in the works for being completed.

 - A. Meghan has reviewed the survey results and began creating the tables for the report.
- VI. **Other Items:**
- VII. **Next Meeting** (Taylor)

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 20th at 5:30 PM.

 - A. Each member plans to present their completed assignments for that week. The group will be productive by analyzing the completed assignments before proceeding to the next assignments.
- VIII. **New Business:**

The was no new business.
- IX. **Adjournment:**

Taylor made an announcement and moved the meeting to be adjourned. Passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 7:00 PM.

Watson & Watsutton Corporation
Weekly Progress Meeting
Up Church
Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 5:30 PM

- I. **Call to Order:** 5:30 PM
 - A. **Present:** Meghan Watson, Kaitlyn Watson, Taylor Sutton
 - B. **Recording Secretary:** Taylor Sutton
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Taylor moved, seconded by Kaitlyn, passed unanimously.
- III. **Previous Minutes:** Approval of minutes from last meeting. Taylor moved seconded by Meghan, passed unanimously.
 - A. Items arising from minutes: None
- IV. **Designers Report** (Kaitlyn)

Kaitlyn reported that the analysis for the report was completed and that conclusion and recommendations were being reviewed.

 - A. The report plans to be uploaded in the next few classes.
- V. **Programmers Report** (Meghan)

The report is in the works for being completed.

 - A. Meghan has reviewed the tables for the report and plans to begin putting everything together for the report.
- VI. **Other Items:**
- VII. **Next Meeting** (Taylor)

The meeting will be held on Monday, December 2nd, 2019 at 7:00 PM.

 - A. Each member plans to present their completed assignments for that week. The group will be productive by analyzing the completed assignments before proceeding to uploading the report.
 - B. Each member will be present. The group will edit and analyze the report before it gets published. A vote was taken on whether the meeting be held in Upchurch or online. Online won 3 out of 3. The meeting will be held online via Google Docs at 7:00 PM.
- VIII. **New Business:**

The was no new business.
- IX. **Adjournment:**

Taylor made an announcement and moved the meeting to be adjourned. Passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 9:00 PM.