



**Hotels – here's 8 quick tips
that you won't want to miss**



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In the early 1900s, Henry Ford marketed his automobiles in any colour the customer wanted – as long as it was black. Are you promoting your property to European visitors in any language they like – as long as it’s English? What initial message are you sending to your potential European customers? How much better would it be if your website were to say “Bienvenido” or “Bienvenue” instead of just “Welcome”?

What happens when a potential European visitor clicks through to your hotel website to find that it’s in English? Many are likely to go straight back to the online travel agent to browse further, losing you a potential booking. In fact, published surveys show that website visitors are **three** times more likely to purchase if the website is in their own language. So if you are deciding to spend money on PPC or SEO and targeting non-English speaking markets, unless your website and booking engine are translated, your investment is only a third as effective as it could be.

Referrals can also be a major driver of revenue growth. As you attract more overseas guests, your network of satisfied clients grows, producing further referrals in turn. So investing in a translated website brings a double boost to revenues: you are attracting new guests and helping ensure they refer your property on to others back at home.

So once you’ve decided to translate – what next? Commissioning a website translation can be a daunting prospect. With this in mind, we’ve prepared a list of the most important tips covering **strategic** and **technical aspects** that hoteliers might need to think about when making their website multilingual.

What languages should I choose?

In the tourism industry, target market population is the single most important criterion when selecting languages for translation. The largest non-English-speaking markets in Europe, and the origin of the most non-English-speaking visitors to Ireland, are Germany, France, Spain and Italy.

TOP TIP

France and Germany are the largest non-English-speaking markets for Irish tourism. More recently, according to Tourism Ireland figures, Spanish and Italian visitor numbers are on the rise. Whatever your property and wherever you are located, these are the markets you should be focussing on.

Know your return on investment

While the initial outlay for translating a website will be higher than for a newspaper or magazine ad, a properly translated website, updated regularly, can serve your needs for a full 12 to 18 months. As with any important investment decision, you need to know your desired return from a translated website in advance. You know your rates: how many additional room nights do you need to secure over the life of your website

to break even on the cost of translation and begin to make a profit?

TOP TIP

The numbers need to add up: ensure you have a clear idea of how long it will take you to recoup your investment.

Focus on the essential if your budget is limited...

Whatever their language, visitors to your website are looking to find out more about your property and make a selection based on features, attractions and pricing. Some pages are more important than others in this regard and it is these that you should prioritise for translation. Others you may be able to leave out altogether. The most visited pages on hotel websites include the homepage and photo gallery and pages with information on rooms, restaurant, amenities and nearby attractions.

TOP TIP

Focus on creating a compact and well translated “microsite” in your chosen language(s) that tells prospective guests what they need to know while keeping costs within budget.

... but select your microsite content carefully

Many of the major OTAs (Hotels.com, Expedia.com, etc.) are already advertising your property online in 5 or 10 languages. French families looking to travel to Ireland are checking out your property in French already. So a translation of your home page only is not really adding much value: these details are already available online. A better strategy is to add in those pages describing the key features and attractions of your hotel. Given that the OTA room rate and your own "best rate guarantee" will likely not be much different, your translated site needs to work for you to capture as many bookings as possible. Another common pitfall is translating the text of a website while leaving offers and images in English. While this is an improvement on an English-only website, the overall impression is not very professional.

TOP TIP

Ensure that potential visitors have access to the information they need in their language to find out more about your property and make the booking through your own website.

Let the professionals help

If you need a document printed, you give it to a printer who will take care of the rest. Translating your website needn't be any more complicated. A professional translation agency will manage your project every step of the way, directing and coordinating the many different contributors involved in a multilingual translation project. All you need to do is pop the finished translations into your website and hey presto – you are welcoming your visitors in their own language.

TOP TIP

A good translation agency doesn't just translate: it can also help you select what content to translate, upload the content to your CMS and carry out final checks on the live translations.

Get the translations right

First impressions count! Research has shown that most web visitors decide within seven seconds of landing on a site whether to read further or go elsewhere. So reading your website content needs to be a pleasant experience – whatever language it's in. It is likely that your English content was created by a skilled author and then reviewed, edited and modified by a number of different people to achieve just the right tone and feel. The translation process should be no different: getting the very best result is always a team effort, involving translators, editors and reviewers. And because translation is just as much of an art as writing original content, you need to be sure that your translators are equal to the task: you are unlikely to get the polish you need from a translation carried out by a friend or acquaintance without significant professional translation experience.

TOP TIP

Use a professional translation agency who can select the very best linguists for your needs. A poorly translated website is just as damaging to your image as a poorly written English website: your content is too important to hand over to a non-professional.

How to manage content in 5 languages

Maintaining any website can be daunting at first. Experienced website administrators know that it's all about following a process: you create the new content, decide when to publish, upload to your CMS, modify as needed, and then sign off. Once you've got this process right, maintaining a website in five languages isn't much different. You simply need to determine whether your new English content needs to be translated or not – offers for local customers will be published in English only, for example – and then send your text to your translation company. A professional translation agency can also work with you to establish a regular weekly, monthly or quarterly website update schedule to keep your translated pages fresh and ensure the process runs as smoothly as possible.

TOP TIP

Consider what changes are needed to your website maintenance process to accommodate your translated content – it will be fewer than you think!

Don't lose a booking at the last minute

Imagine a potential visitor from France is ready to make a booking. They click through to your room offers or booking engine. Up pops an English page! Terms and conditions, room rates, additional specials ... all only available in English.

TOP TIP

Invest in a booking engine that can cater for multiple languages. And don't forget to ensure it can process different payment systems – Visa, MasterCard, German debit cards, etc.

Conclusion

A translated website can open up a whole new world of potential guests for your hotel or B&B. Keeping in mind these eight tips when having your site translated will simplify the process and help you get the best possible return on your valuable investment.

PPC - Pay Per Click Advertising
SEO - Search Engine Optimisation
OTA - Online Travel Agency
CMS - Content Management System



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