

CONGRATULATIONS... YOU HAVE JUST LEARNED LESSON NR 1!

That this is a simple document in a simple website and yet... *you found it.*

In the midst of *30 million pages* with "SEO tips" and *200 million pages* talking about SEO, you found this document.

THAT IS WHAT SEO DOES FOR YOU.

Search Engine Optimization is *arguably the most talked about topic on the Internet.*

If you take into account that an advisor charges a fee, and consequently offers levels that are out of reach of the overall majority of website owners... then it may dawn on you just what a massively competitive domain you are entering now.

So, no – no document or article or even 300 page website on earth can provide you with the full picture.

So I will go straight to the point. To clear your head before you would start with SEO. Which is something that me myself find extremely important. Why do 85% of all websites do not work? Because the website manager does not KNOW where he or she wants to go.

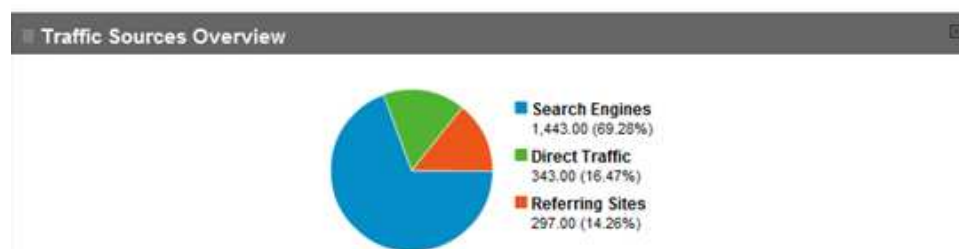
And consequently... is not going anywhere. Or in all directions at the same time, which is the same as: standing still.

READ CAREFULLY... THIS IS WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT:

In this graphic, Google Analytics shows the main results of one month of a small Spanish city hotel:



If you are not familiar with Google Analytics, this report simply informs you of the main facts of the hotel website: *In one month the site attracted 2083 visitors, that on average visited 3,13 pages during 3:13 minutes.* The Bounce rate of 40.90% means: this is the percentage of visitors that visited one page only, and then left again.



In this second, smaller graphic, we see where the 2083 visitors came from: 1443 came from search engines. The remaining 31% came from either direct traffic either referral website.

Now pay attention...

If you knew that ‘direct traffic’ refers to visitors that already knew the domain name of your website, either because they have heard of your hotel, either because they already visited you, either because they have heard of the website via other roads... then you know that this is the result of a combination of word of mouth, online reputation, or classic marketing material (business cards, mailings, brochures, advertisement)... *in all cases a lengthy process that both comes with time and money.*

The same applies to “referring sites”. Just how long does it take before a hotel website sees the importance of its website increase on the world wide web? Or how good does it have to be nowadays to build that reputation?

If you then look again at the amount of 69% visitors that came through the search engines, a marketing tool that is for *free*, then you have just realized the staggering importance of your hotel website being “search engine friendly”.

The FIRST reason not to get demotivated

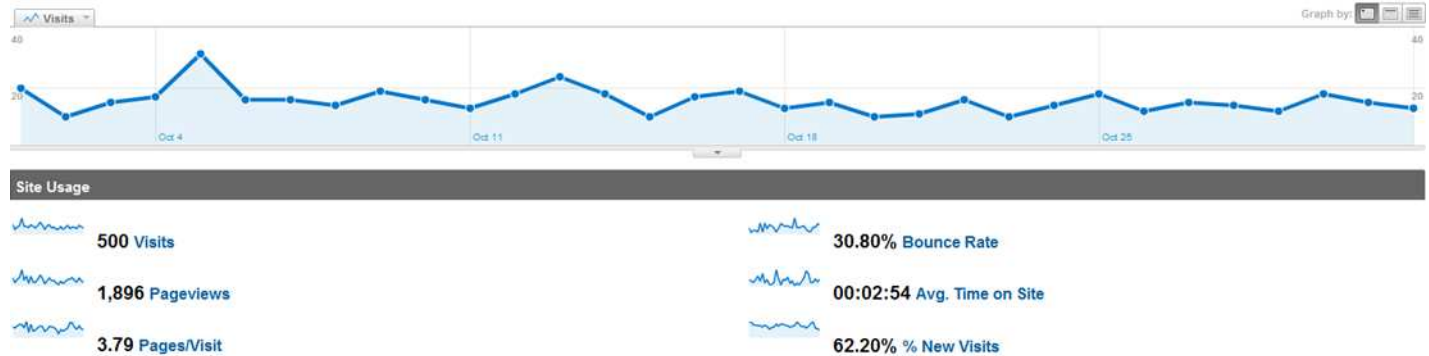
Very few small, independent city hotels get 2000 visitors a month. If there were many, you would not need GDS connectivity or other marketing tools, as such a figure could fill your hotel already with the website alone. The above is an *exception* - achieved *after* SEO strategies.

The SECOND reason not to get demotivated

Here are the results of an OTHER small city hotel in the same city for the same time period:

Dashboard

Oct 1, 2010 - Nov 1, 2010



Only 500 visits, right?

The other hotel had 4 times more the number of visits, right?

Yes, BUT...

Have a look at this graphic:



Of the “only” 500 visitors... 402 went to the contact form. Again, that is fabulous and a *total* exception.

But what it does teach us is one *very* important lesson: **it is not the volume of website visitors that matters, it is their QUALITY and RELEVANCY.**

After all, you are nothing with 10.000 visitors... if they do not make reservations. *It is all about the reservations, not the rankings.*

WHY IS THIS SUCH AN IMPORTANT LESSON?

Because it is ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS forgotten by the overwhelming majority of those that are busy with SEO.

And it is ALWAYS the reason why most SEO strategies are just a total waste of time.

You can save yourself a lot of trouble, money and time if you keep that in mind: before you start thinking of increasing the NUMBER of website visitors, work on their RELEVANCY.

If you do not get reservations with 100 visitors a month... you will not get them with 10.000 visitors either.

WHAT ARE VERY COMMON MONEY WASTERS?

They are plenty:

- ➔ Hotels wish to save money by just buying a very cheap or free website. Then they forever work on the rankings. Not realizing this amounts to literally weeks if not months of work a year, with a ROI that is so low that they are actually throwing away money by permanently missing out on reservations.
- ➔ Even more common: A hotel orders a website. **Pays for it.** It does not result in reservations so they order SEO Advice. **They pay for it.** The advice has to be applied into the website, so the task goes back to the web designer. **They pay for it.** If the advice is very thorough, the website will need to be changed very much, so the costs are basically the same as of a new website. The advice is misunderstood or perhaps even based on old and obsolete techniques... and the new results are not much better than the old ones and much time has been lost. **They pay for it.**

This is a typical never ending circle in which everyone makes money, except the hotel.

Or, perhaps better put: If you have a bad website, don't bother thinking of SEO. FIRST make sure your website is optimized for CONVERSION.

If you do not, you are in for a painfully long, frustrating and expensive adventure.

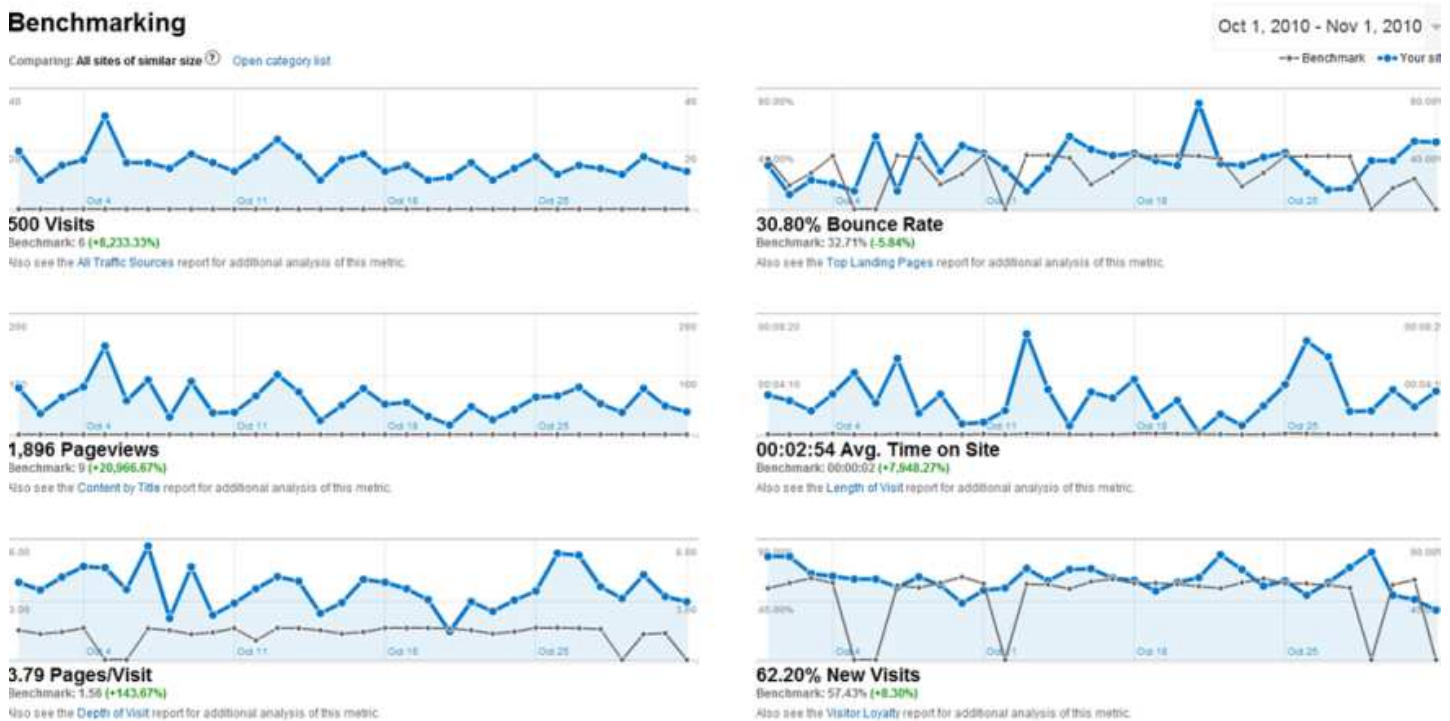
Now, how can you know if the basics of your website are good or not?

The answer lies in: how high is the percentage of reservations in comparison to the number of visitors, and... BENCHMARKING.

WHAT IS BENCHMARKING?

Simply put: comparing your website results with those of other websites in your own industry.

In the following graphic the Google Benchmark Tool compares the results of this small city hotel “with 500 visitors only” to those of other hotel websites of the same size:



What does this graphic tell you?

- The hotel has up to 8000% more visitors than that of other small hotel websites
- The average visitor stays 3.79 pages per visit... which is 143% better than the competition
- The average time on site is almost 3 minutes... which is far better than the competition
- The Bounce Rate is better than that of the average competitor

In other words: *compared to 100 other websites operating in the hotel industry, this hotel website is very clearly a lot better. It can definitely relax when wondering whether the website design is a good one or not.*

SEO STARTS AND ENDS WITH QUALITY

If it weren't, I would not bother and dedicate my life to it or would not be able to motivate any reputable web designer.

As unpleasant the message may seem, you can spend years in pouring sauce over a bad cake... it will always remain a bad cake, and the reason for years of missed opportunities and lost reservations.

It all starts with a decent server, a quality website and highly ethical marketing.

It is not the number of key words that count, but which one and how you deal with it.

If over 85% of all operational websites perform under or far under their potential, and 99% of all SEO strategies come with a very low ROI, it is because of a lack in wishing to go for quality.

Thank you for reading and see you online!

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