

Case Study – Who has the best hero image?

Learn from travel industry leaders on what creates a winning home page and hero image

Crucial for the customer in determining both usability and likelihood to return is a site's home page and, specifically, its hero image. A good hero image entices users to further explore the site and leaves an impression that will draw users to return in the future. Across travel industries, an attractive and relevant hero image that complements the overall home page layout drives not only a customer's perception of the site, but of the brand overall.

Background

eVOC Insights has conducted two waves of syndicated research, evaluating 10 different travel websites, to ascertain the leaders in brand affinity, user experience, and future call-to-action. For each wave, eVOC Insights recruited 1000 respondents per industry to evaluate one of 10 major brand sites in the lodging and cruise industries. Both online travel agencies (Booking.com, CruisesOnly, Expedia, Hotels.com, Orbitz, Priceline, & Travelocity) and providers (Celebrity, Carnival, Hilton, Holland America, Hyatt, Marriott, Norwegian, Princess, Sheraton, & Royal Caribbean) were included.



Objectives



Evaluate each site according to brand affinity, user experience, and future intent



Benchmark each site's performance in relation to the other sites surveyed



Identify leaders in the industry



Determine best practices for home page design and hero images

Solution

To assess home page appeal, respondents were asked the following questions:

- How **helpful** is the site's home page for understanding what you are able to do on the site and what the site has to offer?
- How appealing is the [BRAND] site's home page?
- Based on the home page you just viewed, how interested are you in exploring other parts of the site?
- Please rate your **satisfaction** with the "look and feel" of the [BRAND] site.

Respondents were also asked to rank the appeal of various aspects of the home page, including photos/images, layout, colors used, etc.

Key Findings

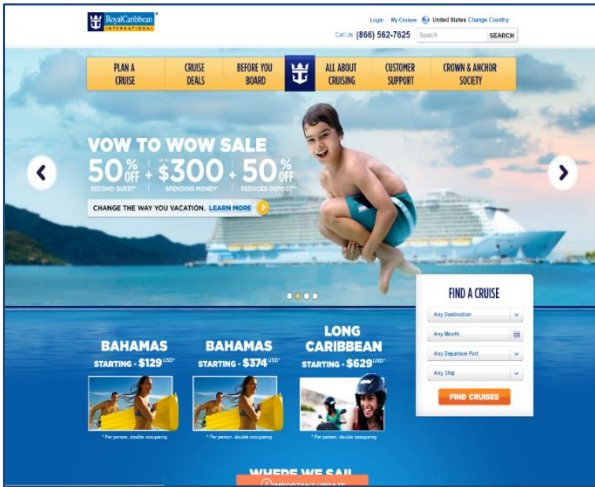
Visual appeal of the home page is key in enticing users to further explore the site and to return to the site in the future. Customers are often driven away by a site that is cluttered and interrupted by popups.

Strong hero images leave a lasting impression on users. For travel industries, having images of fun and relaxing destinations on the home page is particularly appealing. Lodging customers respond positively to images of palm trees, swimming pools, and travel destinations, while cruise customers respond best to tropical locations and images of cruise ships.

Key Findings: Cruise – Wins & Losses

Royal Caribbean's site is very appealing, with attractive images and clear headers for customers to easily find information. Having an image of the cruise ship, as part of the main hero, is particularly enticing. Royal Caribbean's home page also has clear links to current promotions and a prominent Quick Search window. In contrast, while Celebrity includes attractive images on their home page, they do not feature a cruise ship. Additionally, distracting popups and unfamiliar terminology deter potential customers.

ROYAL CARIBBEAN MOST APPEALING HOME PAGE



"The ocean background is soothing and appealing. It is not too busy and is easy to pick out pieces of information."

Source: <http://www.royalcaribbean.com>
December, 2014

CELEBRITY LEAST APPEALING HOME PAGE



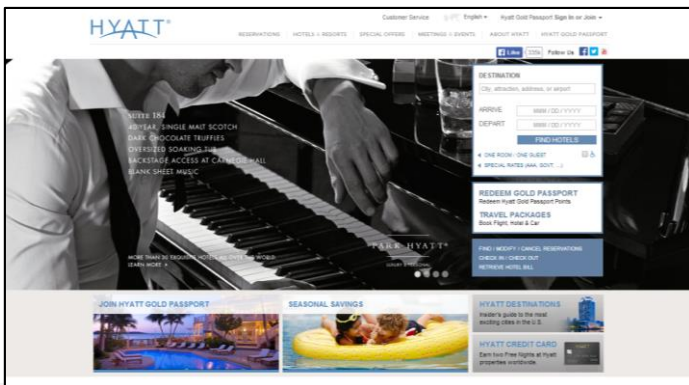
"Right off the bat, there's a booking section which covers up most of the picture, then a few seconds later, there's a pop up to sign up for specials. That's not only annoying, but very intrusive."

Source: <http://www.celebritycruises.com>
December, 2014

Key Findings: Hyatt – Upgraded Imagery

Hyatt's old site included an image of man at a piano, which was not very appealing to users — Hyatt came in 9th place for home page appeal in Wave 1. By Wave 2, Hyatt had redesigned its home page and included an appealing image of a swimming pool in the tropics and included promotional offers with the scrolling images, subsequently boosting its ranking to 3rd place.

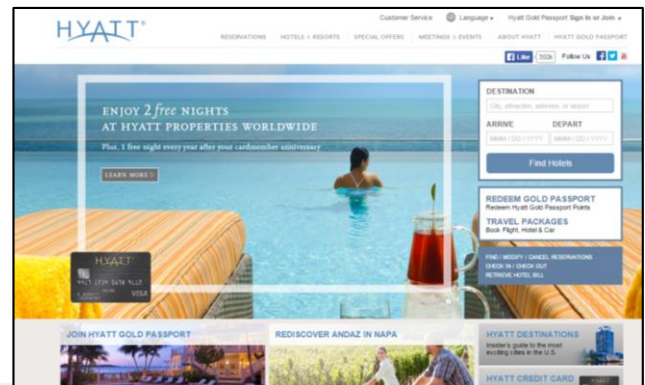
OLD SITE



"It looked depressing with the guy and the piano."
"Homepage is very professional and upscale looking, but I can't really relate to it."

Source: <http://www.hyatt.com>
August, 2014

NEW SITE



"Nice pictures, good-looking site, clear and it is easy to find what you are looking for on this site"

Source: <http://www.hyatt.com>
January, 2015

Insights

Key qualities of a strong hero image and home page include:

- Large, high quality image(s) related to the site content (e.g., photo of cruise ship, destination, happy customers) is shown
- If several relevant images are depicted, horizontal scroll is included
- Images compliment the site colors
- Offers and promotions are clearly listed above the fold
- Promotions compliment site design, include imagery, and provide clear offers / savings
- Clear calls-to-action for key content areas
- Simplistic overall design, with a focus on imagery and minimal text
- Primary navigation bar is organized into 5-7 categories



Best in Class

Winning home pages include attractive images and clear headers for customers to easily find pertinent information. Having an image that is relevant to the content, as well as fun and captivating (e.g. cruise ship, topical destination) as part of the main hero, is particularly enticing. The best home pages also have clear links to current promotions and a prominent Quick Search.