

WHITE PAPER

# **A Wake-up Call:** The State of SEO in the US Hotel Industry



## TLDR:

The hotel industry in the USA has neglected SEO, with an average SEO score of 58.3, equivalent to an “F” in high school grading. Based on an audit of 3341 hotel websites from 32 different US cities and destinations, this whitepaper highlights 12 of over 100 technical SEO points. The findings indicate that most hotels are missing the opportunity to gain further market share and drive direct contributions.



# Contents

Introduction	4
What is Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?	7
Our SEO Survey	11
Results By Region	12
A Deep Dive into 12 Essential Areas	14
On-Page Errors	16
Title Tags	16
Meta Descriptions	19
Heading Tags	21
Thin Content	23
Poor Links	25
Back-End Faults	27
Missing Security Certification (SSL)	27
Missing XML Sitemap	28
No Schema Markup Applied	29
Poor Core Web Vitals Performance	30
Slow Page Speed	31
Over-Sized Download Pages	32
JavaScript Errors	33
Conclusion	34
About three&six	40
Contact us	41

# Introduction

We targeted **14,000** properties in **32** major destinations.



**If you are like the team at three&six, you probably spend your days discussing digital marketing with revenue managers, advertisers, marketers and, on a good day, maybe even hotel guests themselves.**

Mention direct online channels, though, and you might come across a lack of direct knowledge and expertise and soon come to realise there's a lack of in-house knowledge and resources before the discussion moves on. Direct, home-grown websites often seem unloved and forgotten. Perceived wisdom says this is because they inevitably perform badly and have largely been relegated to the back of the queue behind all-conquering OTAs and other channels.

But is there any evidence for this? Is it more than idle chatter? What's the truth? This White Paper is the result of a decision to test our assumptions. Since the US market reached an all-time

high revenue of \$239.7 Billion<sup>1</sup> in 2022, the stakes may have become too high to make decisions with nothing but a hunch to work on.

The three&six number-crunchers spent the early part of 2023 benchmarking US hotel direct website performance. The task took the form of a technical audit. Although we're normally fans of good design and strong content, we put aside a website's look and feel. We cared about its technical functionality and, primarily, search engine performance.

We are hoping hotel management teams will start asking questions. Who built their website? What platform does it use? Is it custom-made or built from templates? Is it fit for purpose? Does it work and can it be found? If so, how well?

We gave each direct site a **Search Engine Optimization (SEO) score out of one hundred**. Then, for fun, we gave hotels a corresponding High School Grade.<sup>2</sup>

1 STR.com  
2 Leveragedu.com

HELLO@THREEANDSIX.AGENCY



## Example results

City	Ave. Hotel Website SEO Score	Grade
Boston	69.4%	D+
Seattle	65.3%	D
Denver	63.8%	D
Los Angeles	54.3%	F
Savannah	54.0%	F
Houston	51.4%	F

**The conclusion is clear** – especially when you know Boston, despite its D+, is the highest-scoring city in the US. SEO seems to be frequently overlooked in the hotel industry, leading to missed opportunities for online visibility and customer engagement.

# SEO



## What is Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?

**SEO is a term you've probably heard and may even have some understanding of. It is the primary tool we have to drive organic traffic to our websites and generate bookings without having to spend on advertising.**

It's part and parcel of any e-commerce operation and, as a result, also a key part of our modern lives. Like it or not, this includes the hotel business. Almost 70% of all travel and tourism sales were made online in 2022<sup>3</sup>, making hoteliers an ecommerce first industry.

3 Statista

HELLO@THREEANDSIX.AGENCY

**36** three  
& six

Despite the prevailing wind, in our experience, hotel revenue and booking managers haven't quite yet fully embraced all online opportunities. The generation to come will be natives, of course, but for now, the perception is that SEO is too technical and often ignored. Part of the reason OTAs dominate the online space is the perception that they alone have the resources to do the required online technical work leaving hotels little hope of competing.

We think it's worth challenging this worldview. OTAs don't inherently care about, or protect, your online brand. They don't worry about your market share either. They are driven by their unrelenting hunt for availability and bookings. But despite their size, OTAs can't be everywhere all at once. Your direct channel gives you an opportunity to find and build different relationships with guests.

An easy-to-find, easy-to-use, optimised hotel website may never compete with OTAs in terms of volume, but it can add a different, valuable revenue strand to your operation.

It is with this in mind, we recommend Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The term describes the practice of improving your website's visibility on search engine results pages.

There's a science to it, of course, but it's not overly complex and there are relatively simple steps you can take to move from a D+ to an A+.

There are three basic strands to the work.

- Relevant Content Strategy
- Link building
- On-Page Optimization

---

## Despite the prevailing wind, in our experience, hotel revenue and booking managers haven't quite yet fully embraced all online opportunities.

---

### **Relevant Content Strategy**

identifies the phrases and terms travellers use to search for hotels and uses them to create relevant content for your website users. Actual searches are not always obvious as we are talking about the vagaries of human behaviour. The process and strategy used to match your website content to your desired keywords and phrases lies at the heart of SEO activity.

**Link Building**, the practice of creating links and building your hotel's online reputation, is an essential part of improving your website's authority and trustworthiness. Google prioritizes websites it recognizes as having authority and that can be trusted. It views links from other trustworthy websites as evidence that your

hotel website is a good one. Typically, link building is aligned with wider PR and marketing activity.

**On-page optimization** involves making sure your website's content, structure and functionality match Google's requirements. Google's vast revenue stream depends on its ability to find the right answers for its search users within a few clicks. Websites that are poor quality or share irrelevant, weak or misleading content reflect badly on them. As a result, its algorithm prioritises high-quality and informative sites in its search results. Having your on-page set-up optimized towards search engines helps Google rank your website for your desired targeting strategy.





3,341

HOTEL WEBSITES AUDITED

## Our SEO Survey

**We based our survey on TripAdvisor data and, firstly, identified 32 high-volume destinations. We combined cities and tourist spots to create a genuine snapshot of the 2023 US hotel trade.**

Within those 32 destinations, we identified 14,000 properties and filtered those down to those with direct websites which we defined as having a recognisable url or web address for each property.

We also filtered out most major branded hotels, those only offered through third-party applications such as booking.com, Facebook, AirBnB, and other OTAs, campsites and properties only offering fixed long-term lets. This left a sample size of 3,341 hotel direct websites that we could then break down by region (average number of hotels per region = 111).

### Technical Audit

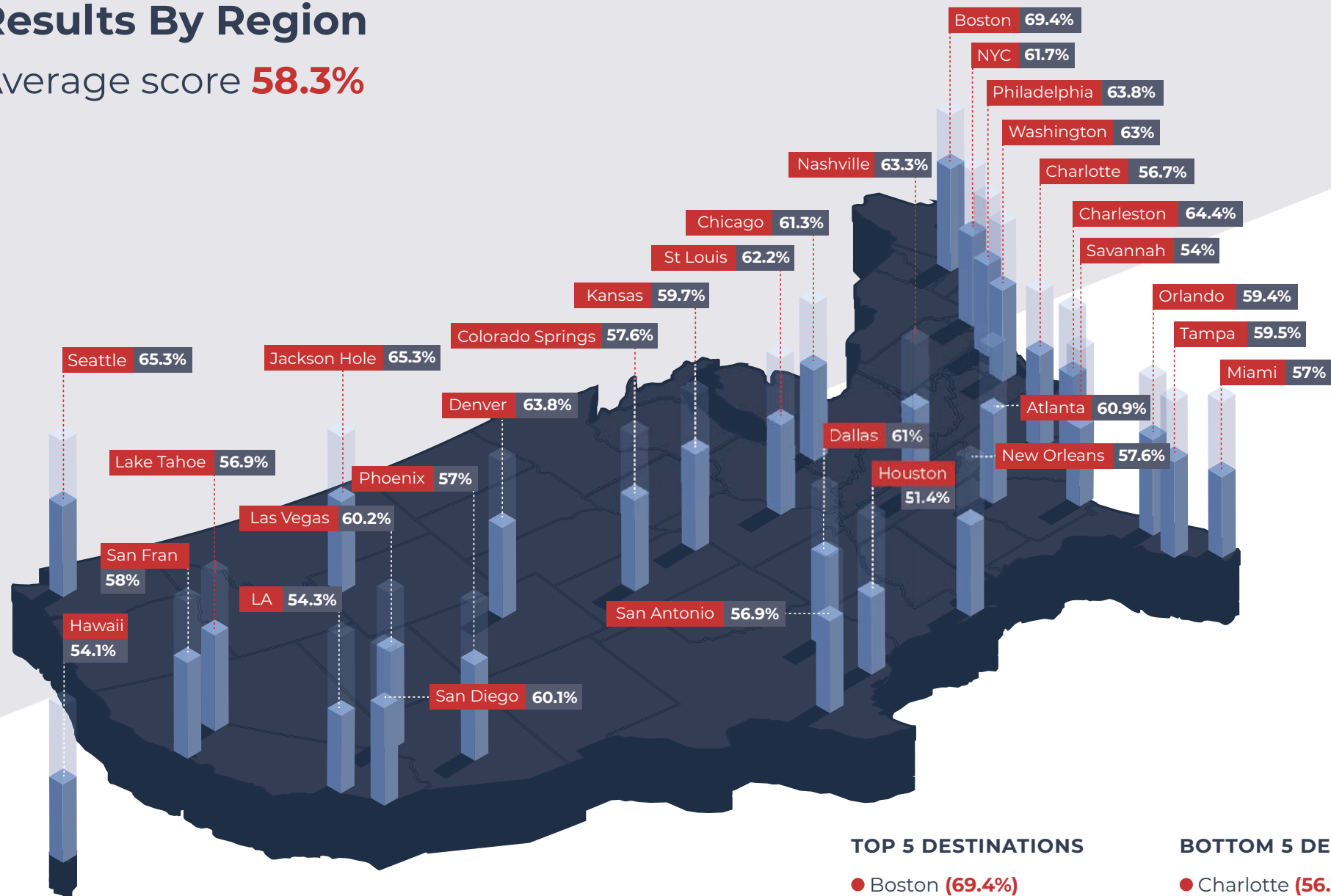
Each of these was put through a 100-point technical audit by our team of specialists across categories designed to highlight the many areas covered by SEO. We have chosen 12 categories that analyse major areas of each website's content, structure, speed and performance against best SEO practices.

It is important to note that our audit is purely quantitative and does not represent any qualitative testing. Our checks looked for on-page SEO categories present, but not at the underlying strategy or targeting which means that some hotels could score higher, yet still be missing opportunities.

**The overall average score of 58.3%**, however, proved there was plenty of room for improvement from a technical point of view.

# Results By Region

Average score **58.3%**



## TOP 5 DESTINATIONS

- Boston (69.4%)
- Seattle (65.3%)
- Charleston (64.4%)
- Denver (63.8%)
- Philadelphia (63.8%)

## BOTTOM 5 DESTINATIONS

- Charlotte (56.7%)
- LA (54.3%)
- Hawaii (54.1%)
- Savannah (54%)
- Houston (51.4%)

# A deep dive into 12 essential areas

**With so many data points, SEO can be a complex topic to talk about. SEO specialists can talk all day about the impact of different ranking factors, but the truth is that some are more important than others. We've identified 12 data points of varying importance to highlight just how much hotel websites are underperforming.**

We promise we won't bore you with too much jargon and technical detail, but we will steer you through the issues and offer some advice on what you should be looking at when analysing your own website SEO performance.

We have divided the data points into two categories – On Page Errors and Back End Faults.





```
<title>The Hanwood Hotel | London
hotel | Covent Garden</title>
```

**16.4%**  
FAILURE RATE

## Title Tags

Every website page has a Title Tag. Google's algorithm uses them to understand what your page is about and create the Search Snippet that appears on the results page.

It's perhaps reassuring that the majority of our hotels (83.6%) passed this first part of our audit. 16.4%, however, failed thanks to missing or poorly thought-through Page Title Tags that were too long for Google to display fully.

Having relevant keywords in a Title Tag are by far the most important of all keyword placements. Fixing these issues will make an important contribution to your SEO efforts and are an easy fix.

Title Tags are also important when someone visits your website. The title tag is displayed at the top of their web browser window and acts as a placeholder, which is useful when there are several browser tabs open.

## TITLE TAG TIPS



### Avoid Generic or Default Titles

Web designers or out-of-the-box templates often use marker titles such as Home, New, Product Page or Blog. If these aren't corrected, Google could identify them as duplicate or generic content and score you poorly.

In fact, we found 8.1% of all hotel websites had the word "home" in their Title Tag. That's 271 websites all telling search engines that their most important identifying keyword is something that has nothing to do with their business.

### Size Matters

Google doesn't specify an exact length for a good Title Tag, but experience has shown, however, that 60 characters, is considered ideal for the Search Snippet. If your title looks too long, Google may cut it short, use ellipses (...) to replace words or characters or even rewrite it entirely.

**8.1%**  
of all hotel websites  
had the word "home"  
in their title tag

TITLE TAG TIPS

Avoid Repetition

Search engines are smart enough to recognise repeated keywords, especially if this is an attempt to cheat the system. Each and every page on your website needs a unique title. This might sound arduous but providing genuinely useful information for potential guests in your title is worth the effort.

Showcase Your Strengths

If you would like to feature an event or an update to the property you know will catch the eye, put it in your page Title Tag so they appear in your Search Snippet. This should be part of the keyword strategy that you are targeting and be compelling to any search engine user to click on.

Why it is important to get your Page Title Tags right

- ✓ Google uses them to understand what you do
- ✓ They influence how you appear in Google Search results
- ✓ Well-written, useful Page Title Tags encourage user clicks

```
<meta name="description" content="Situ-
ated in the heart of London, The Hanwood
Hotel is a must-stay for those seeking
a distinctive and unforgettable stay in
London.">
```



Meta Descriptions

Another web page feature that users see on the search results page is its Meta Description. This is the short paragraph of text that, as with Title Tags, appears with your link within your Google Search Snippet.

The majority (52.1%) of our websites failed this part of our audit either not having any meta descriptions or being too

long to display in the search results page. The good news is Google doesn't use Meta Description to rank pages directly but it's a feature that can have a big impact on the number of clicks you get. A strong Meta Description will help win you more page visitors which, indirectly, will lead to a higher ranking.

### META DESCRIPTION TIPS

When it comes to Meta Descriptions, it's important to catch the potential booker's attention with distinctive, compelling, and active descriptions. Google rewards relevant Meta Descriptions, so it's essential to be accurate, direct, transparent, and genuinely helpful. With a limited word count of up to 155-160 characters, it's recommended to write descriptions between 50 and 160 characters to provide a useful guide to your page content and encourage users to click the link.

### Why Meta Descriptions are Important

- ✓ They are a free way to stand out from online competition
- ✓ Potential bookers use them to decide which links to click
- ✓ High-quality descriptions may indirectly contribute to your Google ranking

## Heading Tags

Well-structured web pages are created using a hierarchy of headings and blocks of body text. Headings create content structures of higher quality that are easier to read and structured content is better for users, which is recognised by search engines as better for your website. Using Heading Tags allows search engines to read and understand content

on your website (Tags are typically number H1 to H6.

Nearly half of our sample (47.1%) either didn't use H1 Tags with 20.8% not having any heading tags at all or implemented it poorly. Their pages are likely to be difficult to follow which may impact badly on Google rankings. Good Heading Tags should reflect the content and purpose of the page.

```
<div class="page-content" .  
  <h1>A London Hotel in Covent Garden</h1>  
  <h2>Welcome to The Hanwood Hotel</h2>  
</div>
```

**47.1%**  
FAILURE RATE

## HEADING TAG TIPS

## It's all in the code

This next bit may be best left up to your developer if your content management system (CMS) doesn't allow for simple changes, but don't panic as these should be easy and very quick to resolve. You won't see a Heading Tag when you view a website, but they are there in the code.

## Be Clear and Concise

Your Heading Tags should confirm to the user exactly what your web page is about. It definitely isn't the place for any poetic licence or overly theatrical marketing spin. There's no specific limit but a good rule of thumb is to write headings between 20 and 70 characters.

## Use Keywords

Customers wondering if they've landed on the right page of your website will quickly scan your headings. It pays to think about what keywords or phrases they've entered into Google to reach you. If that's not in your primary heading, you risk them feeling confused, disappointed or even frustrated.

## Why Heading Tags are important

- ✓ Google uses Heading Tags to understand what the webpage is about
- ✓ Website users value structured, easy-to-read content
- ✓ They reassure users they've landed on the right place

We found many hotels were typically over-reliant on design and imagery and lacking in content.

**51%**  
FAILURE RATE

## Thin Content

'Thin content' is defined by Google as content that provides little to no value to customers and lacks depth, structure or quality. Over half (51%) of our surveyed websites were performing poorly for this reason.

We found many hotels were typically over-reliant on design and imagery and lacking in content. Unhelpfully, Google doesn't give specific word counts or instructions to avoid thin content but its algorithm promotes genuinely informative websites over weaker ones. If you have

included a dozen photos of your rooms but have not explained which room type they are, what amenities you have, room size, how many it can sleep, there's a good chance your content will be deemed thin.

Your Google ranking can also suffer if your copy isn't original. 'Appreciably similar' content seen across more than one location makes life difficult for search engines so your page may not be ranked highly. This includes pages within your own site too. We often see repeated information on websites that have evolved over time.

THIN CONTENT TIPS

Pictures don't always paint a thousand words.

Search engines cannot yet look at a website image in the same way that a user does, so they generally ignore them. Only images with alt text descriptions (recommended for accessibility) are checked. It's easy to assume a website does a great job if it looks the part, but it pays to cast a self-critical eye over the website content.

Code to Text Ratio

Every website will be different, and in so many different ways, so measuring content can be tricky. One method used compares the amount of text content you have on your website as a ratio of the amount of code used to create it. Usually more code means a bigger webpage and Google is keen to make sure this is not just from unnecessary or wasteful code and that you have enough text to engage users.

Why Content is Important

- ✓ Google measures websites against quality, depth and structure benchmarks
- ✓ Thin content is perceived as not valuable and can hurt your website ranking
- ✓ Google rewards original content that genuinely answers user queries

To be useful, links to your site have to be relevant and from reliable sources.

45.5%  
FAILURE RATE

Poor Links

Google continuously strives to rank authoritative and trustworthy sites highly. One way to judge if a website fits into that category is to check if other authoritative and trustworthy sites link to it. Known as backlinks, these inward recommendations act as a vote of confidence.

By simply counting the number of links, admittedly a quite rudimentary measure, we found nearly half (45.5%) of hotel websites failed in this area.

Backlinking's direct influence is now dwindling in favor of strong content, but they still hold value and can make a difference to your overall SEO ranking.

To be useful, links to your site have to be relevant and from reliable sources. The strongest are often described as 'editorial' because they tend to come from well-respected online publications and news sites. Appearing in travel listings and on relevant local business sites will help too.

## BACKLINKING TIPS

## Don't be shy

Every day hotel PR and marketing activities provide lots of opportunities to gain credible backlinks, yet it's a detail that's sometimes forgotten. Local SEO tactics can help here too, so make sure you are on all the credible listing sites for your area and market. Think outside the box too. We know of sites with links to local churches, hospitals and event spaces for example.

## Don't try to cheat

There are, of course, shortcuts to creating a backlink profile but Google is increasingly sophisticated. It is likely to see

through links you don't get through merit. Low-quality, disreputable and 'spammy' links can tarnish your website and have a negative impact on your rankings too, so beware.

## Partner up

Formal partnerships with local businesses typically lead to strong backlinks. Links with reputable local restaurants, tourist attractions or retail outlets all add value. Including your hotel on their website, in their social media posts or within an e-newsletter will not only spread the word, it will also strengthen your reputation with Google.

## Why Backlinking is Important

- ✓ It is a good PR and marketing exercise in itself
- ✓ Backlinks indirectly influence Google's ranking
- ✓ They attract direct traffic to your site

## Missing Security Certification (SSL)

6% FAILURE RATE

Users need to feel secure using your website which means it needs the appropriate certification. It is now an accepted practice that all websites should have Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) as standard, but we still found that 6% of audited websites had no SSL or lapsed SSL certificates. Given this is usually a very simple fix it indicates potentially wider issues with hotel website management.

Users can tell if a site is protected by its address. **'http://www..'** is unsecured, for example. **https://www...** is protected.

Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) describes technology that establishes an encrypted link between a server and a client – typically a website user and the website itself. This encryption makes it harder for cybercriminals to get hold of personal and financial data.

Google increasingly depends on internet-wide SSL certification for its many applications and a site that isn't correctly certified is likely to suffer in the rankings.

Given that Google has indicated security as a top priority, we strongly recommend all sites have SSL certification.

## Why SSL Certification is Important

- ✓ Without it, your customer data is at risk
- ✓ Certification, or otherwise, is clearly signposted in your url
- ✓ Google's ranking favours SSL-certified sites



## Missing XML Sitemap

Google owes its speed to the fact it doesn't need to search the whole internet to answer queries every time someone enters a search query. It initially refers to its own giant index to find information.

To create its index, Google 'bots' continually 'crawl' the internet to find and categorise websites. To do this, they need to read a sitemap, which is a file that lists out the URLs of all the essential pages of your website. If they don't find one on the website, the bot may miss pages or not index your site correctly. Sitemap files come in various forms, but .xml is Google's preferred type. It is this file we checked for in our audit.

**18.6%**  
FAILURE RATE

18.6% of our sample are leaving their website indexing to search engines due to incomplete or missing .xml files on their hotel website.

Don't worry if things change. Crawling is a continuous process and your .xml file will be checked regularly. You just need to make sure it is always up-to-date.

`hanwoodhotel.  
com/sitemap.xml`

### Why XML sitemaps are important

- ✓ Google refers to its own index to answer queries first
- ✓ Bots keep this updated by reading your .xml sitemap
- ✓ An absent or out-of-date .xml file can adversely impact search results

## No Schema Markup Applied

Schema is a semantic vocabulary of tags (or microdata) that you can add to your website to improve the way search engines read and display your page in their results pages. Whilst it sounds technical, it is very similar to other tags we've discussed, but Schema is a collaborative organisation that includes Google, Bing, Yandex, and Yahoo! to standardize how this information is presented on websites.

Given that this collaboration covers the biggest search engines on the planet, it makes sense that websites should adhere to these policies. However, over a quarter (29.8%) of our sample did not have

**29.8%**  
FAILURE RATE

Schema installed on their websites and are missing out on its benefits.

Schema markup doesn't directly improve search rankings, but improving your website's accuracy will encourage clicks and help give your search position a boost, which is similar to Meta Descriptions mentioned above

We recommend Schema markup for all sites.

### Why is Schema important

- ✓ Search Engine crawlers (bots) need help navigating websites
- ✓ Schema 'markup' highlights useful information on your website
- ✓ Users benefit from having information at their fingertips

## Poor Core Web Vitals Performance

**43.7%** FAILURE RATE

Since 2021, Google has taken a website's technical performance into account in its ranking. It now checks sites for usability and functionality as well as their content. We found almost half (43.7%) of the country's hotel websites did not do well against this measure.

Core Web Vitals, as the initiative is called, uses three metrics to establish how well a website performs. Google times how long it takes for the largest block of content on a page to download, how long pages take to stabilise as they download and how long a site takes to recognise the first input – usually a click – from the user. Delays in

any of these processes indicate a website may have poorly designed, broken or outdated features. It will probably have frustrated users too!

What is interesting to note is that we used Google's technology to test Core Web Vitals and our tests could not be run on 100% of our audit size for various reasons. This means the actual number failing Core Web Vitals could be higher.

The technology behind your website and how it is implemented is a major reason why many websites fail this test.

### Why are Core Web Vitals Important

- ✓ Google prefers to link to technically sound websites
- ✓ Broken, poorly designed or outdated websites frustrate users
- ✓ Website technology is always advancing

## Slow Page Speed

**Page speed**

Ranking range 0-100

**69.1**



Desktop page speed

**35.6**



Mobile page speed

As Core Web Vitals demonstrates, overall page speed is now playing a role in Google rankings. As a result, we measured speed in our audit for both mobile devices and desktops. The results are mixed.

If the fastest result is 100, on average mobile users suffered badly as the average site speed from our samples was a low 35.6. Desktop users fared better as the average site speed was 69.1. Both are far from ideal in a highly competitive environment like hotel room bookings.

There are many reasons for slow site speeds which vary from too many unoptimised images on a site or large uncompressed files to scripting or coding errors. Fixing the issue can take some investigation, especially with older sites. Some remedies can be as simple as resizing an image, but others may need a web developer.

As with Core Web Vitals, we recommend you keep an eye on overall Site Speed and action any improvements you can.

### Why Site Speed Is Important

- ✓ Site Speed is a good measure of your site's overall technical health
- ✓ Google now use Site Speed to rank your site in searches
- ✓ A quick site improves your user experience.

## Over-Sized Download Pages

'Download Page Size' refers to everything the user needs to view a web page. It can comprise any number of files such as text, images, video, code, scripts, plug-ins, apps, fonts, data and, well, the list goes on. Our survey found that almost a third of our sample (31.4%) failed this test and had web pages that were too large to easily download, even after compression was taken into account.

Large Download Pages can cause slow site speed which we've established affects your Google Rankings and frustrates potential customers.

**31.4%**  
FAILURE RATE

There may be improvements you can make when speaking with a web developer, but there may also be issues that cannot be easily fixed within the technology used in your website. Technical help will be required to understand what course of action is needed.

### Why Download Page Size is Important

- ✓ It contributes to your Core Web Vitals score
- ✓ It affects site speed and, indirectly, your Google Ranking
- ✓ Slow downloads will frustrate your users – especially on mobile devices

## JavaScript Errors

Alongside HTML, JavaScript is a common coding language used in lots of the websites we audited. It's flexible and allows for some very cool things to happen on your website, but it can be prone to breaking.

It's no surprise that over a fifth (20.6%) of the hotels we audited suffered from JavaScript errors.

We can't tell if the errors we identified were serious or how badly they affected the site's performance, we simply identified if there were any. The trouble with many JavaScript errors is they can often remain unseen. They can quietly cause

**20.6%**  
FAILURE RATE

mayhem in the background of your Google indexing processes without anyone noticing. It pays, therefore, to include all your JavaScript coding as part of any regular website maintenance.

You may need expert help, but we certainly recommend regular JavaScript health checks.

### Why JavaScript is Important

- ✓ It's an incredibly useful web development tool
- ✓ JavaScript elements of your website can be indexed by Search Engines
- ✓ Undetected errors can interrupt search engine indexing process.



# Conclusion

Our assumption, based on our anecdotal evidence, was US hotels' websites have been neglected – relegated to a box checking exercise and that just having a website was enough.

We surveyed 14,000 hotels and audited 3,341 websites to see if our suspicions were true. An overall average score of **58.3%** against our SEO metrics, the equivalent of a High School F, undeniably proves that they were.

Google is very vocal about its central, ongoing role in delivering the best of all possible digital experiences to users. From our evidence it would appear that most hotel websites are not only failing user experience, but they are also failing to position themselves favorably with Search Engines. SEO seems to be an afterthought or ignored altogether.

## How to respond?

Our main advice is not to panic. A low score on our SEO audit does not necessarily mean your website is broken. Far from it.

Your guests, when they find it, might still value your direct website and choose to book directly.

All we've done in this White Paper is identify areas in need of optimization that will broaden your audience. If you can't do all of the recommendations and fixes we've discussed, doing some of them might, for example, add 10-20% to your results. Given the current state of the majority of websites we analyzed, this could be a significant advantage against your competitive set.

# Observations

---

There has never been a better time for hotels to prioritize their SEO strategy and improve their online presence.

---

Whilst there were some very well optimized websites, the majority audited had issues. It is also important to note that our audit is purely quantitative and does not represent any qualitative testing. You may have on site SEO in order, but if your keyword strategy is non-existent and you are targeting the wrong thing, you still have an issue.

One of the biggest issues we see is the use of slogans or branding phrases – without

adequate keyword research it's possible that nobody knows these phrases and nobody searches for them on the internet. So, your site may rank on Google, but your potential future bookers aren't searching for your keywords and not finding your website.

However by observing the quantitative issues, this has led us to identifying common issues that you can use to assess the quality of your own hotel website:



**No SEO Strategy** – given that so many websites failed Title Tags (16.4%), Heading Tags (47.1%) and Meta Description (52.1%) tests, it's reasonable to conclude that hotel websites have little to no SEO Strategy. This is also likely to include failures in SEO quality, especially in keyword Targeting. If we consider that 51% of websites had too little content and 8.1% had the word “home” in their Title Tag, it is not unreasonable to assume keyword targeting has been overlooked.



**Missing Ongoing Maintenance** – there is clear evidence that once a website has been built, there are too few knowledgeable hotel resources available to keep on top of website maintenance or no consideration has been given to any budget needed to outsource this to an SEO company/Web Developer. Lack of Sitemap (18.6%), no Schema Markup (29.8%), missing SSL certificates (6%) and most of the issues in point 1 suggests this to be true. For the cost of 1-2 room nights per month, is it worth missing out on marketing visibility and direct bookings?

3



### Lack of Knowledge –

SEO can be complex and finding knowledgeable and trustworthy companies to handle this for your hotel is difficult. The fact that 45.5% of hotel websites have an inadequate backlinking strategy suggests that there are a lack of quality options available to hotels. Similarly, 44.3% of websites had an unfriendly URL structure which suggests that website developers are failing to consider SEO best practice or are using technology with too rigid structures.

4



### Design over Functionality –

our audit has highlighted that websites are often design-heavy and there are indications websites have been built with more style than substance in SEO terms. Websites with a lack of content (51%) and failed Core Web vitals (43.7%) show us that there is an over reliance on imagery during the website design process. Sadly, this is not Field of Dreams. If you build it, they will not come.

5



### Over Reliance on Template Websites –

templated websites can be a very good option, especially with limited budget, but not all templates are equal. Often there is bloated or unused code where the original website design is changed or amended, which can lead to slow page load times. Throughout our audit we saw that a great deal of websites were using templates, so it is hardly surprising the high failure in Core Web Vitals (43.7%), Download Page Size (31.4%) and poor PageSpeed Insights score on mobile (average 35.6%)

A lot of the SEO issues we found in our audit start at the web development planning stage and hotels are struggling to adequately prepare for everything they need to succeed. **Whether that is through a lack of knowledge, lack of internal resources, lack of budget or lack of professional help will have to be determined on an individual basis.**

What is clear is that the hotels that do get their SEO strategy right are getting more market visibility and greater share of voice as the competition is often very poor.

There has never been a better time for hotels to prioritize their SEO strategy and improve their online presence.





## three&six

three&six is a digital marketing agency entirely dedicated to hotel and resort marketing. We aim to be the most trusted and productive hospitality marketing agency in the world. It's even part of our company motto – **digital without dishonesty.**

We work hand-in-hand with your distribution and revenue team offering a range of digital services including website design and development, paid search and SEO marketing and organic social media and reputation management.

We are a partner, not a vendor and we offer more than just digital marketing. It's why our clients love working with us.

### Contact us

[hello@threeandsix.agency](mailto:hello@threeandsix.agency)

Fraser House,  
South Road,  
Lancaster,  
LA1 4XQ, UK



**three&six**

Fraser House, South Road,  
Lancaster, LA1 4XQ, UK

[hello@threeandsix.agency](mailto:hello@threeandsix.agency)

[www.threeandsix.agency](http://www.threeandsix.agency)