

Gómez Performance Index For Hotels: Inaugural Analysis

The Gómez Performance Index (GPI) for Hotels benchmarks end-to-end response time and availability performance of leading hotel and third-party travel services Web sites executing a multi-step transaction -- the ubiquitous hotel room search. The steps measured consist of navigating to the homepage; initiating a search query; and gathering room details and rate information.

Measurements for the Hotels GPI are taken from a cross section of a high-speed Internet backbone networks once every hour from 10 co-location facilities around the U.S.

To read the complete methodology for the Hotels GPI, please click [here](#).

Four companies set themselves apart in the ten-company GPI: Expedia, Choice Hotels, Marriott and Hotels.com. They outperform the response time benchmark average of nearly 10.5 seconds during the measurement period (November 15 through December 15, 2003) by more than three seconds.

Response Time

The four Hotels GPI leaders established a substantial head start in response time performance above the field of competitors. In fact, Orbitz, the fifth ranking company on the response time benchmark, was a full six seconds slower than industry leader Expedia. Although six seconds doesn't seem like a long time to wait, in Internet response time that is a delta likely to send customers running to the competition.

Industry laggard Travelocity completes the hotel room search transaction in just less than 17 seconds on average across a high-speed connection. This does not include any think-time necessary to enter information or process data, making this Web site the slowest in the competitive set.

To put things into perspective, Gómez evaluated the number of properties displayed in a default search query to determine if our response time leaders were truly producing fast and relevant search

| Hotel GPI Benchmark November 15, 2003 - December 15, 2003 | | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Response Time Rating | | Success Rate Rating | |
| Rank | Site | Response Time (sec) | Success Rate (%) |
| 1 | Expedia | 4.69 | 99.97 |
| 2 | Choice Hotels | 5.71 | 99.89 |
| 3 | Marriott | 6.90 | 99.40 |
| 4 | Hotels.com | 7.27 | 99.28 |
| | Benchmark Average | 10.58 | 99.12 |
| 5 | Orbitz | 10.82 | 98.80 |
| 6 | Ramada | 11.99 | 98.79 |
| 7 | Starwood | 12.88 | 98.60 |
| 8 | Best Western | 13.58 | 98.39 |
| 9 | Hilton | 14.06 | 97.29 |
| 10 | Travelocity | 16.74 | 92.74 |

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results vs. producing one or two properties. Yet, we were surprised to discover that top performer Expedia's results produced 25 properties, as did Hotels.com. Marriott's search results produced 10 properties, which exceeds other direct hotel providers on the benchmark.

Interestingly, Hilton, which is near the bottom of the response time rankings, only produces three properties in the Boston search query results (the search used for every transaction measured by the Hotels GPI). The site requires customers to navigate through additional pages in its multi-step transaction, which contributes to a sluggish end-to-end response time along with slow loading objects on its navigation bar.

Success Rate

The industry average for transaction success rate was 98.4%. Success rate relates to the percentage of tests that were completed without individual page errors, extremely slow performance or other Internet problems impeding the transaction. The most reliable site was Choice Hotels, which measured 99.97% successful in our synthetic testing, followed closely by Marriott at 99.89% success rate.

In total, half of the companies in this benchmark ranked in the 99th percentile demonstrating that the online hotel industry is highly available and able to offer reliable services via the online channel.

However, there was one site that stood out as an outlier in the success rate rankings. Best Western experienced multiple errors during our initial Hotels GPI measurement time period. The bulk of errors on the Best Western Web site occurred on November 25 beginning at 8 AM ET and persisted throughout the day. These errors did not manifest themselves as catastrophic Web site failures, rather our time threshold of 25 seconds for data transfer on any given page within the transaction was exceeded. Patient surfers may still have been able to process their online transactions but were certainly subject to excessive wait times. The performance bottlenecks were evident on the search listing and room detail pages, which both exceeded six seconds to load on that day. Normally these pages load in just over four seconds across a high-speed Internet connection.

Gómez helps companies weigh the benefit of content and functionality against performance to maximize Internet channel effectiveness. The site elements we benchmark are instrumental in shaping overall customer satisfaction, and drive customers' willingness to utilize the online channel. To learn more, visit www.gomez.com.