Juliana Houck: Competitive Analysis

Summary

I did this analysis as a way to asses the competitor bed and breakfasts and get an idea of what is necessary in a bed and breakfast website. I found that simple is best and that many extravagant decorative elements date the site and distract the user from completing their goal.

Interactivity is very important, because many people will be booking the B&B on their phones or other mobile devices. The booking page is the most important. If the user cannot find what dates are available, they will most likely get frustrated and look somewhere else.

Competitors Evaluated

List 5 competitors, their URLs. descriptions of their websites or businesses and how they were chosen. You may use competitors determined by the client or your own.

Red Maple Inn: http://www.redmapleinn.com

Competitor was selected by client

My first reaction was that this website is out of date. It's not responsive, the images are low quality and the layout is confusing. I do like that they have the reservations shown in a calendar, so you can see what dates are available.

The Mill House Bed and Breakfast: http://themillhouse.com

Competitor was selected by client

This one is aesthetically a little bit better, but still slightly outdated. The navigation bar seems too full and cluttered. They need to simplify and make images larger. It is

responsive, but certain objects overflow and don't allow you to shrink the page past a certain size.

Whispering Pines Bed & Breakfast: http://www.atwoodlake.com

Competitor was selected by client

This website is on the newer side, because it is aesthetically more modern and is responsive. One negative that I noticed on this site are the fact that the footer had so much information. They listed their navigation options in the footer, and included the weather report which I feel is unnecessary. I also don't like that when you click "check availability", the website automatically opens a new tab with the availability page.

Willow Brooke Bed & Breakfast: http://www.willowbrooke.com/

Competitor was selected by client

This website is very old and outdated looking. It is not responsive at all. The navigation is hard to find, as it is not listed across the top, but instead on a "scroll" to the side of the page. The availability calendar is difficult to navigate as well.

Clifford House: http://www.cliffordhouse.com/

Competitor was chosen by me

I chose this website as an example because it is well designed, interactive and gives me some inspiration. I like that the menu bar is hidden and then appear on the side. It did, however, take a couple of seconds to load some of the pages. I also liked that their directions were listed on their contact page.

Navigation and Labeling

“Name of B&B” (as a home page)
“check availability”
“Book now”
“Our rooms”
“Area info”
“Directions”
“Contact us”

Most navigation bars on these websites are listed in a horizontal bar at the top of the page. If not, the “menu” option was, and then pulled the navigation out in a column. Many also either re-listed multiple navigation options in the footer or at least included an additional “book now” link at the bottom of the page.

You want to format the document Content and Features

Many competitors include a calendar so that the user can see what dates rooms are available. They also often include a map with directions and an address. Another important feature is a “rooms” page where the viewer can compare different rooms and see the rates for each of them. Photos are really important, as they are what will make a room look appealing.

Voice and Tone

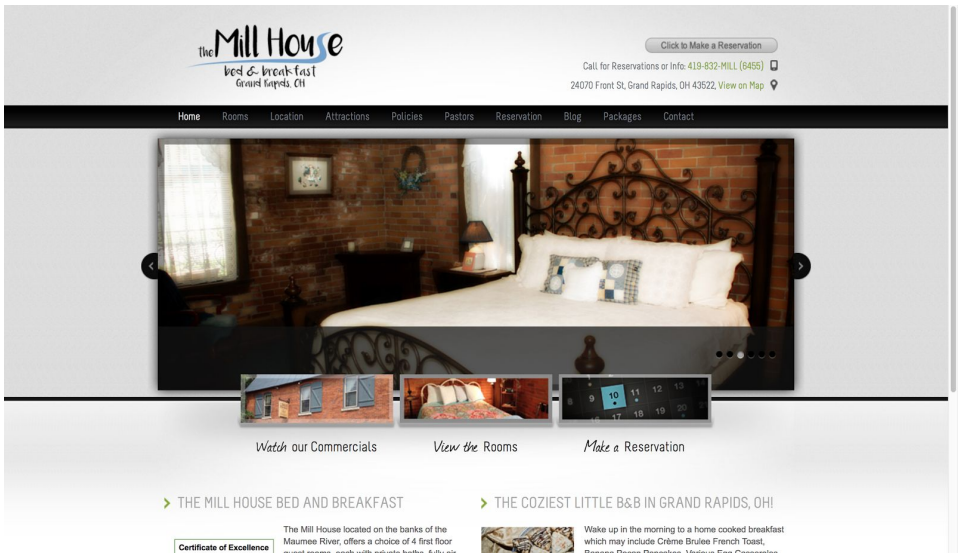
It is important for a bed and breakfast to have a warm and welcoming tone on their website. Some of these competitors succeed and some failed at doing this. The main problem with tone on these websites is that they can be boring. Some people may care about the history of a building if it is especially interesting, but most visitors would not want that info on the front page.

For example:
Willow Brooke Bed and Breakfast lists both their trip advisor rating and their own customer reviews that were given directly on the website. The trip advisor portion is helpful, because it is a trusted third party. However, I would not trust the on-site review system because there is a very small sample of reviews and because the owners could chose to put anything they wanted up.

Design Aesthetics and Layout

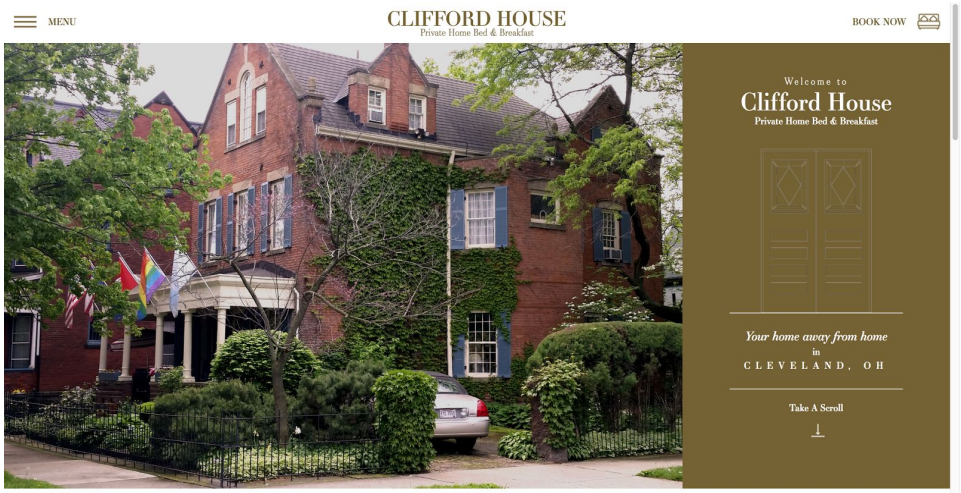
It is popular to have large photos on the homepage of the outside of the building, or scenery nearby to draw the visitor in.
Serif typography and warm colors create a more classic and inviting look
Short, descriptive paragraphs can be broken up so that the written sections are easier to digest.

Design can hurt the site if it's overdesigned. Some of these sites just have too many design feature and too much info going on at once. The best design is design you don't notice, and a lot of the competitors could simplify.
Also, very large files can slow down the website, hurting the user experience.



(330) 735-2824 | Gift Certificates
Whispering Pines
Bed & Breakfast
CHECK AVAILABILITY
ROOMS & RATES
WEDDINGS
SPECIALS & PACKAGES
ABOUT US
AREA INFO
FIND US
BLOG
WELCOME TO

WillowBrooke Bed 'n Breakfast
English Tudor Manor House
Secluded Central Ohio Bed and Breakfast, an Elegant English Tudor Manor House down a tree lined lane A¼ mile into the woods shared with the deer, raccoon and our own free roaming peacocks. We are located far enough away from the hustle and bustle of the city to feel like you have traveled to a distant place yet are close to many points of interest or just escape for a retreat. And for the total recluse is our separate two bedroom Cottage In The Woods at WillowBrooke.
WillowBrooke
Room Information
Amenities / Meals
Reservations
Directions to WillowBrooke
Contact WillowBrooke
Nashink Salon Spa
Check Availability
Make Reservation
WillowBrooke offers generous size rooms with queen size bedding and suites with king size bedding. Other amenities include featherbeds, Jacuzzi tubs (suites with two person Jacuzzi tubs), romantic candlelight, in room fireplaces, free in room Wi-Fi. A full breakfast is served. Enjoy the roofed five person outdoor Thermospa hot tub open year around. See room descriptions for complete details.
The area offers fine dining in nearby historic Granville, home of Denison University. Take a carriage ride after dinner and enjoy the atmosphere of the small town life of yesteryear. Nearby State Parks include, Infirmary Park and Buckeye Lake. There are also 40.8 miles of paved bike path. The Longaberger Basket building is only 12 miles away in Newark and then on down the highway is the Longaberger Golf Club and a little farther is the
Waiting for pr.ak.vresp.com...


MENU
CLIFFORD HOUSE
Private Home Bed & Breakfast
BOOK NOW
Welcome to
Clifford House
Private Home Bed & Breakfast
Your home away from home
in
CLEVELAND, OH
Take A Scroll

I've included screenshots of each home page so that you could see that the majority of them have images as a large element. This also makes it easier to visually compare navigation. MAny of them have too much navigation going on and should simplify.

Recommendations and Strategy

I would recommend that we keep your site simple and clear. We should go through your info and pick out the most important aspects. We should also organize the information in large groups so it is easy to find. We should also make the tone warm and light-hearted to achieve the "quaint" feel that you're looking to achieve.