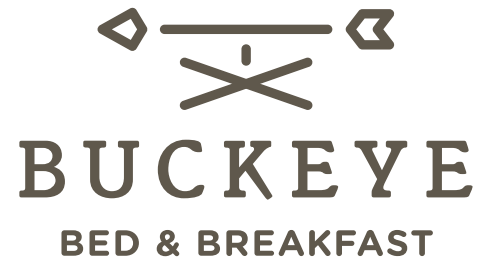# BUCKEYE BED AND BREAKFAST COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

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SUMMARY

In our analysis we wanted to take careful note of what strategies competitors utilized on their websites and how this affected the usability of each website. During our research, we made sure to pay attention to the organization of information on each site, how the user navigated, as well as the process for looking up and booking rooms. This is an essential function for the Buckeye Bed and Breakfast website and if the user cannot reserve a room with ease, then website is not serving its purpose and any additional function is simply excess.

Additionally, it was important to take note of who the user is. The demographic will play a key role in how the webpage is laid out. Since each competitor, as well as Buckeye B&B seem to focus on older clients, typically in the 45+ age bracket, ensuring that all of the text is legible and the layout is straightforward will be essential to maintain this audience and accommodate their comfort on the web.

Finally, we took note of the style used in each of the competitors' website and how this affected our first impressions of the site, how quickly we were able to find key points, and the overall appeal of the company's presentation of itself.

GOALS

Company:

Increase room reservations

Engage with past customers and increase returning customers

Increase specialty package sales, such as our "Sweatheart Package"

Provide better experiences for our customers through partnerships with surrounding area attractions

Analysis:

Find how competitors structure their website

How competitors speak to/interact with customers

What features are most useful

How can we create a website that stands out from competitors and in what way can we build a better brand

COMPETITORS EVALUATED

We selected the competitors to evaluate based on their type of business and location– meaning we focused on other bed and breakfasts or similar establishments such as inns that are located in Ohio. This way, we are examining Buckeye B&B's direct competition, allowing the client to stand out among similar establishments when potential customers are examining various locations.

Red Maple Inn: http://www.redmapleinn.com
Red Maple Inn is a small bed and breakfast in Amish Country Ohio in historic Burton Village. They offer various activities and services for guests. The website is simple, non-responsive, and has a 'Reserve Rooms' button at the top of the home page.

The Mill House: http://themillhouse.com
The Mill House is a bed and breakfast in Grand Rapids, Ohio, that prides itself on its peaceful location and historic surroundings. The website is simple but lacks a strong personality and recognizable brand. However, the site does provide three prominent navigation buttons that link to a virtual tour, room views, and room reservations.

Whispering Pines: https://www.atwoodlake.com
Whispering Pines is another bed and breakfast located in Northeast Ohio. One of the most notable features of their site is their focus on imagery and displaying the scenery around the inn. Featuring a single, prominent top navigation bar, Whispering Pines makes information readily available and directs visitors quickly to rooms. However, there are two separate paths the user can take and this is a potential spot for confusion.

Willow Brooke: http://www.willowbrooke.com
Willow Brooke is housed in an English Tudor style manor in Ohio and seem to have tried to show this regal feeling through their website. The navigation is contained in a scroll illustration and a large amount of text is displayed in a script. This site appears to be outdated and is more difficult to use and navigate than other competitor sites.

Welsh Hills Inn: http://www.welshhillsinn.com
Welsh Hills is located in Granville, Ohio in alpaca countryside. The entry page of the website is sleek, modern, and responsive. However, once you enter the full website, the style changes dramatically and resembles what you would find on a hotel website. The site is still responsive, but contains a large navigation bar and looses the simplicity of the first page.

NAVIGATION & LABELING

Full Screen:

In each website, there are several consistent features of the navigation.
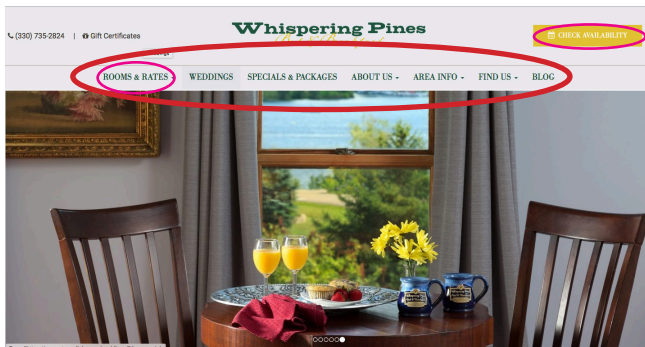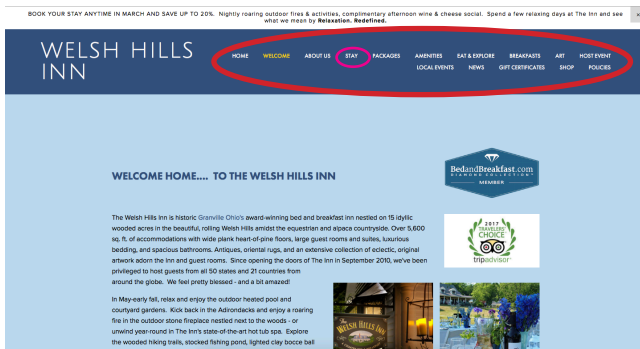
- Reservation Links:

these are prominently display,

often labeled as: ROOM(S), RESERVATIONS, or STAY

- Fixed Navigation:

this is usually found at the top of the page, remains fixed on every page

has a variety of information, some are minimal, others have too much information

Some sites have included a side bar navigation, these often contain links to other, non-essential information elsewhere on the site

Navigation

Secondary Navigation

Reservation

NAVIGATION & LABELING

Small Screen:

Once screen size is reduced, differences in design become even more apparent. Only a few of the studied sites are responsive, and those that are achieve varying degrees of success.

Non-responsive sites: these sites simply require the user to scroll from side-to-side in order to view the full extent of the site

Responsive sites: these sites each attempt to collapse their navigation. Two use hamburgers in the upper right hand corner, while one seems to simply loose the navigation all together.
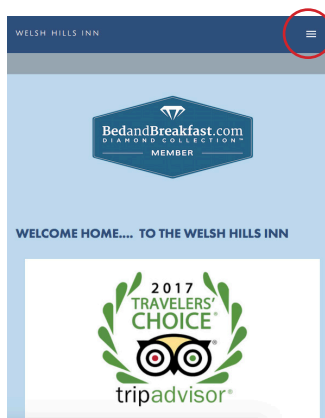Those that use a hamburger have two different methods in which they display the menu when expanded.
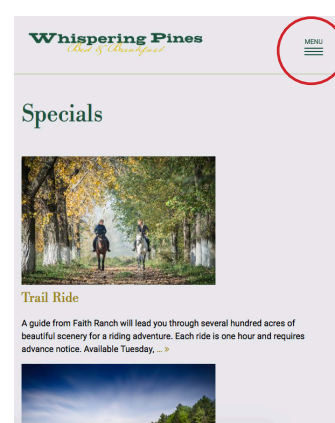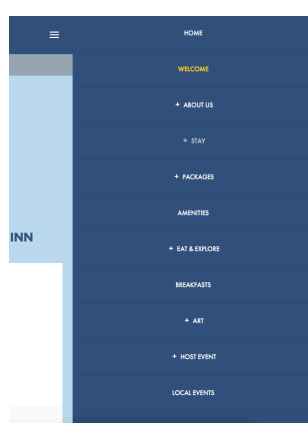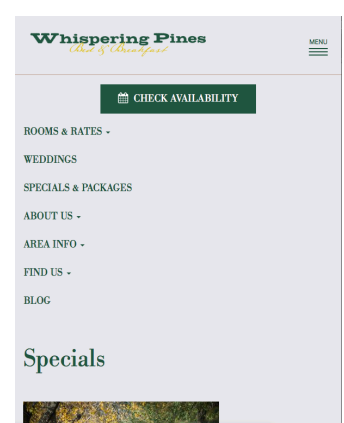

Non-responsive
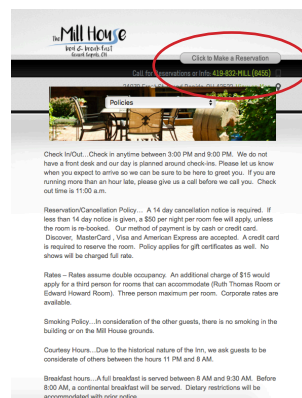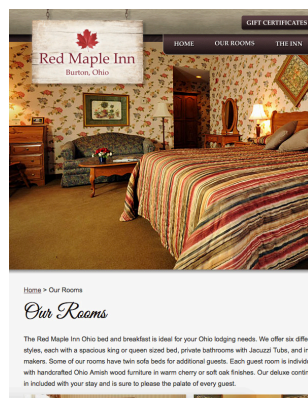
Responsive, menu lost

Responsive, hamburger, expansion pushes web content the side and takes over entire screen

Responsive, hamburger, expansion places menu above the web content, gives Check Availability option prominence

CONTENT & FEATURES

Common Content:

'About' page: This is often found on the home page, from which the user can navigate to other areas that they need to reach.

Amenities/Activities/Meals: Each site has an area(s) that describes what a visitor can do (1) at the inn/ bed and breakfast, (2) in the general area, or (3) extra packages offered by the establishment. Each also provides information on the amenities provided and the meal offerings.

Features:

Contact: a method of contacting the establishment is always available
Reservation: Each site provides access to a link from which the visitor can make a reservation on each page of the site. This is often included in a fixed navigation area
Photos: Because each establishment takes time to demonstrate the benefits of the area in which they are located, most also provide photos of the area. Those that do not provide photos of the location usual ly provide photos of the building(s) itself or guests enjoying their time there.

Additional, Helpful Content:

No site offers a way to compare with other bed and breakfasts in the area, nor is there way to compare different types of rooms within the individual sites.

Some sites provide several ways to reach the reservations page. Often there is a button on the page, as well as a link in the navigation, and on different pages there may even be another button. Wile each is clearly labeled, this is not a very streamlined approach and may be confusing, especially for older user who may be concerned that they will be seeing different information depending on which of these but tons they chose.

VOICE & TONE

Most sites use nearly the same tone and voice. While friendly, open, and professional, most lack personality or any language that is engaging and exciting. Instead, most of the competitors present themselves in a very straightforward, factual manner. This is an acceptable and professional manner in which to address visitors and customers, however, if the content were removed from the sites and read on their own, it would be nearly impossible to tell one from another.

 Welsh Hills takes a more casual approach, in which guest are invited to 'kick back' and enjoy their stay. A part of the uniqueness of this voice in the way in which the owners and innkeepers are introduced. Each have their own page and include quotes in the 'About' area, this creates a more personal and approachable connection that is missing in most of the other sites.

DESIGN AESTHETICS & LAYOUT

Each site uses a fixed navigation, and the home page usually includes at least a small section about the inn. Much of the content is centered within the page and uses at least a small amount of scrolling in order to allow users to view additional content or navigation below the main screen.

Primary Navigation   Secondary Navigation   Main Content   Reservation   Header
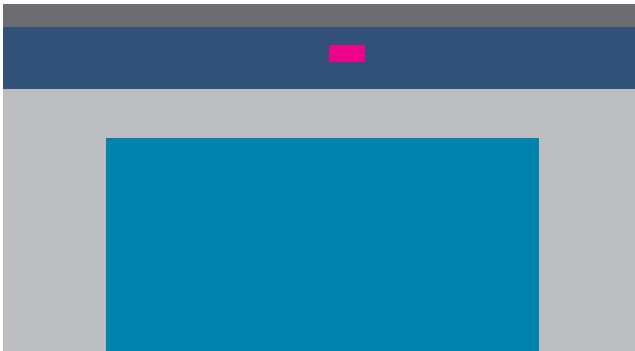
For Buckeye B&B site:

Keeping content centralized will allow us to adapt to multiple devices

The fixed navigation keeps the user aware of where they are and where they can go next

Prominent 'Reservation' button

RECOMMENDATIONS & STRATEGY

Building a brand and standing out among these competitors will rely on several key factors:
- Creating a simple, easy to use website
    - Fixed navigation bar
    - Obvious booking link/button
    - Avoiding 'trendy' looks in order to ensure older visitors are still comfortable using the site
- Developing a voice that expresses personality and excitement for the business
    - Having a voice that is memorable and puts users at ease will differentiate Buckeye B&B from competitors in the market
- Choose consistent branding and color that can be applied across the site
- Include features that are innovative or useful to users, such as a way to compare rooms or even different inns and b&bs in the area
- Focus on making the site work on all screen sizes, competitor sites consistently do not handle various screen sizes well and by functions on mobile, tablet, and desktop sites will make our site easier to use and will reach younger audiences.
- Include imagery, especially any photography that will set Buckeye B&B apart from competitors
- Include at least a footer bar that contains some esssential information that is standard to websites as well as contact information so that it is always accessible

Header/Footer		
	Fixed Navigation Bar	Fixed Res. Button
Margins to allow Responsiveness	Central Content	Margins to allow Responsiveness
Header/Footer Footer on content pages for standard info- do not include on home		