

BED AND BREAKFAST WEBSITES: MARKETING ACCOMMODATIONS TO
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

By

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by

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I dedicate my thesis to my parents, Dan and Sharon Rogers, who have made it possible for me to attend college and have supported me in my endeavors. Also, I dedicate my thesis to my late grandmother, Darlin, who provided me with strength and inspiration throughout my college years.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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By

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Limited research exists in the area of people with disabilities and bed and breakfasts. BedandBreakfast.com was chosen as an online guidebook to locate the websites of bed and breakfasts in Florida listed as accommodating people with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to look into bed and breakfast websites and examine the quality of websites, especially evaluating marketing to people with disabilities and the level of information provided.

Information was collected from 77 bed and breakfast websites that were listed on BedandBreakfast.com as accommodating people with disabilities. Two researchers viewed the websites in April-May using a scorecard. Website information was scored in five areas: user friendliness, site attractiveness, marketing effectiveness, technical quality, and marketing to people with disabilities.

The results revealed that few bed and breakfasts are providing adequate information to people with disabilities on their websites. In the marketing to people with

disabilities domain, 80% of bed and breakfast websites provided no information about accessible accommodations. One statistical significance did occur between bed and breakfasts and year of construction. Those constructed before 1900 had websites that provided better quality information to people with disabilities.

A follow-up qualitative survey was conducted with three bed and breakfast owners whose websites had the highest quality of information for people with disabilities. The researcher phoned the three owners and read each of 10 questions to them. Results revealed that the owner who marketed her bed and breakfast in numerous media outlets had a higher number of guests with disabilities. She also reported a good word of mouth referral from her guests with disabilities. The other two owners reported not using other forms of information dispersal and having fewer guests with disabilities. None of the owners interviewed consulted an expert in marketing or people with disabilities when configuring their bed and breakfast website.

Findings indicated that future research needs to be done in the area of people with disabilities and marketing. Specifically, more research should look into owners' motivations for marketing to people with disabilities and whether people with disabilities are interested in staying at bed and breakfasts. Research could be conducted to review previous experiences had by people with disabilities.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Travel Industry Association of America predicts that Americans will spend \$546.9 billion on tourism in the United States in 2005. Also, for the same year, approximately 1.2 billion domestic trips will be taken (Travel Industry Association of America, 2005). According to Goeldner, Ritchie, and McIntosh (2000) tourism proves to be the United States' third largest retail industry and employs one out of every 17 Americans. By 2010, it is expected that tourism will create \$8 trillion of economic activity and 328 million jobs internationally. In addition, \$1.8 trillion in taxes will be generated in the same year.

Important to the tourism industry in the United States are people with disabilities. Roughly 22.2 million individuals with disabilities have traveled in the last two years (Blum, 2003). Moreover, 49.7 million people with disabilities live in the United States, about one fifth of the total population (United States Department of Commerce, 2003). In a 1995 Census Survey, the last to look at disabilities specifically, 1.8 million people used a wheelchair and 5.2 million people used a cane, crutches, or a walker (Takeda & Card, 2002). Among the 50 states, the highest population living with disabilities resides in the South, about 91 million, nearly double the amount of any other region. Additionally, the South has the most people over 65, with over 50% of them having disabilities (United States Department of Commerce, 2003).

Bed and breakfasts are part of the tourism industry. Each year, bed and breakfasts generate nearly \$3.5 billion in revenue (Lanier, Caples & Cook, 2000). An ideal market

for bed and breakfasts to focus on is people with disabilities (Davies, Hardy, Bell, & Brown, 1996). People with disabilities along with at least one traveling companion have the potential to spend \$54 million a year (Blum, 2003). Simply put, this market is an excellent opportunity for bed and breakfasts to successfully market their accommodations and improve their occupancy rate.

Americans with Disabilities Act. The passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 forced the tourism industry to recognize people with disabilities. Title III of ADA specifically looks at public accommodations. It states that travel services are public accommodations. These include hotels, restaurants, bars, museums, amusement parks, theatres, and state/national parks. The Americans with Disabilities Act states that full and equal access must be provided to people with disabilities (Takeda & Card, 2002). Certain conditions apply as to which public accommodations and to what extent they must be adapted (United States Department of Justice, 2002).

Bed and Breakfasts. The Professional Association of Innkeepers International (PAII) has identified nearly 18,000 bed and breakfasts in the United States (Valhouli, 2002, in Kline, Morrison, & St. John, 2004.). A 2000 study reported that bed and breakfasts, country inns and small hotels represented 31% of the United States lodging industry (Lodging Resources and Workshops and Lanier Publishing, 2003 in Kline et al.). However, there are discrepancies between how many bed and breakfasts exist in each state. There are an estimated 400 bed and breakfasts in the Florida. Lois Cleveland of Florida Bed and Breakfast Inns attributes this to what one actually considers a bed and breakfast. Although there are many converted motels that are licensed as bed and

breakfasts, they are not actually bed and breakfasts because of their size, food, and service (personal communication, April 13, 2003).

Lee, Reynolds, and Kennon's study (2003) revealed bed and breakfast travelers usually are vacationing for a short period and travel closer to home. In fact, for many inns, nearly half of the room nights are contributed to by in-state tourists (Lanier, Caples, & Cook, 2000). Since more people with disabilities live in the southern United States than any other region, there is a compelling argument that innkeepers market to these individuals. In particular, the South has two fifths of the population with disabilities (United States Department of Commerce, 2003).

The Internet and Bed and Breakfasts. The *Fifth Annual Innkeeper Tracking Study: 2001* revealed that 50% of bed and breakfasts guests located the property via the Internet, an increase of 12% from 1999. The Internet allows bed and breakfasts to create an interactive experience for guests. This interactivity exists as a marketing goal for many innkeepers (Kline et al., 2004). For example, the Internet allows guests to view the bed and breakfast prior to visiting it (Countryman, 2000, in Kline et al.). Traditional sources such as travel guides, print media, and convention and visitor bureaus saw a decrease in usage of seven percent from 1999 to 2001 (Schleim & St. Amour, 2001, in Kline et al.). Bed and breakfast owners are able to market their property on the Internet with little time and expense required. Additionally, bed and breakfasts are able to extend past their local regions in which their brochures and advertisements typically reach. Instead, the Internet can allow the bed and breakfast to attract national as well as international guests (Morrow, 2001, in Kline et al.). Lastly, the use of Internet marketing allows bed and

breakfasts to receive exposure 24 hours a day, allowing them to be even more accessible to potential guests (Kasavana, 2002, in Kline et al.)

In *Innkeepers Innernet Information: Marketing Guestrooms Online* (1998), author S. Demarest listed six benefits to bed and breakfasts using the Internet to market themselves. First, bed and breakfast owners experience less phone time if the Internet is used. Internet users will have many of their basic questions answered via the Internet. Innkeepers then do not have to spend as much time describing the property, policies, and near-by attractions.

Second, Demarest said that incremental costs are lower. The cost of time spent filling requests for brochures, information, etc. is less because this information is available on the Internet. In addition, actual cost savings exist in the form of no postage and lower toll free phone line charges.

Third, more business can be a benefit a bed and breakfast marketing itself on the Internet. A bed and breakfast's exposure increases when it utilizes the Internet. The increase in business can vary depending on the depth of the website and in how many online guidebooks it is listed.

Fourth, customers who book after seeing a website advertisement are likely to be more satisfied. This is a result of knowing what a bed and breakfast really looks like and offers to its customers. If a customer uses a basic print advertisement or even a travel agent to make their decision, they may be unhappy with what they find when they arrive.

Fifth, customers perceive the value of a bed and breakfast as being higher when they are able to view them on the Internet. When guests are able to see the vivid photo displays on a bed and breakfast's website, the guests are more likely to pay the expense

for a nice room. Thus, it is easier to sell a high priced room on the Internet than it would be with a basic phone explanation from the innkeeper.

Sixth, owners can reach their target audience even easier. Demarest mentioned a study done by Georgia Institute of Technology in which 91% of online users had an average annual income of over \$59,000. This is an audience in which bed and breakfasts hope to attract to their properties. As Internet usage continues to increase, Demarest said these benefits will be seen through integrating the Internet into a bed and breakfast's overall marketing strategy.

Statement of Problem

At least two factors indicate that marketing to people with disabilities are important. First, a quote by Paul Alterman, chairman for the Second World Congress of the Society for the Advancement of Travel of the Handicapped (SATH), indicated that nearly 24 million people with disabilities do not travel because of a bad experience or the expectation of one. According to Alterman, if a million of those individuals took one trip per year, the travel industry would see an increase in revenue of \$3 billion (Vladimir, 1998).

Second is the potential to increase occupancy rates for individual properties. Occupancy levels for bed and breakfasts are around 50% year round. In comparison, the American Hotel and Motel Association reports a 64% occupancy rate for all lodging properties nationally. Thus, there is a potential to increase profits for bed and breakfast owners. Simply, owners can look to this particular market segment to help increase occupancy rate (Lanier, Caples, & Cook, 2000).

A review of the literature revealed a paucity of research related to people with disabilities and bed and breakfasts. Additionally, little has been studied regarding

marketing and bed and breakfasts and even less about the Internet as a marketing tool for bed and breakfasts. This study will aim to contribute to this dearth of scholarly and practical literature. It will also look at this population and how their information search needs can be improved through Internet websites. Overall, this study seeks to reveal the effectiveness of bed and breakfast websites in relation to targeting people with disabilities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to look into bed and breakfast websites and examine the quality of websites, especially monitoring information for people with disabilities and the level of information provided.

The study was beneficial to both bed and breakfast owners and people with disabilities. Bed and breakfasts have the opportunity through their website to reach people with disabilities and explain their accommodations. In addition, individuals with disabilities are likely to use the Internet and find information on accessible accommodations. An examination of websites key words related to disabilities is one step to improving the marketing strategies of bed and breakfasts.

Research Objectives

Five research objectives will guide this study:

1. To Profile the Sample of Florida Bed and Breakfasts from BedandBreakfast.com
2. To Modify And Test A Revised Scorecard With The Addition Of Information On Marketing To People With Disabilities
3. To Assess The Relative Quality Of Florida Bed And Breakfast's Based On Aspects Of A) Technical Quality, B) User Friendliness, C) Site Attractiveness, D) Marketing Effectiveness, E) Accessibility Issues

4. To Examine The Relationship Between Quality Of Florida Bed And Breakfast's websites and A) Year Built, B) Last Restored, C) Location, D) Lowest and Highest Rate, E) Size.
5. To Examine Bed And Breakfast Owners ' Motivations and Attitudes Towards Marketing to People with Disabilities on Their Websites

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature will cover various areas related to the thesis topic. Although a thorough search was completed for all areas, some have appeared more frequently in the popular culture literature, thus this type of literature has also been included. Areas of discussion will include 1) bed and breakfasts in the United States, 2) bed and breakfasts and their Internet marketing, 3) people with disabilities, their travel, and the ADA, 4) people with disabilities and use of the Internet.

Bed and Breakfasts in the United States

In the United States, bed and breakfasts have long been a lodging option for people staying away from home. Typically, they have offered a place to stay along with a continental or warm breakfast. Today, some bed and breakfasts will offer cocktails or even a warm evening meal. Typically, innkeepers open their homes to guests and engage in conversation. Nonetheless, individuals who stay in bed and breakfasts are usually looking for a relaxing stay with a bit of a different feel of other traditional lodging options.

A study by Warnick and Klar (1991) looked at industry characteristics of bed and breakfasts in Massachusetts. Roughly 125 owners of bed and breakfasts answered questions about their establishment, their background, and educational needs. Findings revealed that half of the bed and breakfasts had only been in existence for five years or less. Moreover, two thirds of owners said their businesses were regulated by town ordinances. Most bed and breakfasts promote themselves by being members of their

local chambers of commerce. Finally, nearly 46% indicate that their needs to be more education for owners about marketing/promotion of bed and breakfasts and would like to see workshops about this topic.

Emerick and Emerick (1994) profiled the typical American bed and breakfast by having owners and operators complete questionnaires about their respective bed and breakfasts. Specifically, the authors collected information about the location, facility, and operations. The results indicated that bed and breakfasts were most often located in towns with populations of less than 10,000 people. Typically, the structure was an owner occupied home that was converted to a bed and breakfast for supplemental income. Lastly, 61.5% of bed and breakfasts were built prior to 1920, with half of those having some type of designation as a historical structure.

Poorani and Smith (1995) looked at the size of bed and breakfast properties in relation to financial indicators. They utilized 400 mail questionnaires that were returned by bed and breakfast owners. In terms of revenue, 37% of bed and breakfasts yielded \$24,000 or less per year. Additionally, 75% of bed and breakfast owners had no previous experience, and those same owners without experience yielded \$3,000 less per room than experienced owners. Most people independently owned their bed and breakfast and purchased the structure with the intention of converting it.

Withiam (1997) wrote that six percent of bed and breakfasts reserve their rooms on-line, a figure he believed was above that of hotels. Moreover, interaction with guests was the primary motivation for opening a bed and breakfast. Most bed and breakfast owners were not looking for an immediate profit because they have another source of income. Many owners viewed bed and breakfasts as an investment.

Lubetkin's (1999) study compared bed and breakfasts advertising to where guests sought out their traveling information. To obtain this information, Lubetkin utilized two different surveys to gather data. First, he surveyed bed and breakfast owners from the United States to look at what specific outlets were used for promotion of their property. Lubetkin asked questions regarding in-house versus agency marketing, type of advertising budget, and tracking mechanisms for advertising. Secondly, guests who stayed at five properties were surveyed to see how they gained knowledge of the property. He also asked them how often they stayed away from home and what other outlets they used to find lodging. On the first part of the study, results indicated that bed and breakfasts typically do their marketing in-house. Owners most commonly used word of mouth, brochures, the chamber of commerce, and Mobil and AAA guidebooks as their outlets. In contrast, guests typically used word of mouth, magazines and newspapers, signs, and Internet and CD-ROMs to find the bed and breakfasts in this study. Although the first two outlets for each group are the same, the rest differ in significance and order.

Lanier et al. (2000) performed a descriptive study on bed and breakfasts. They utilized a database of bed and breakfasts from Lanier Publishing to create profiles. Bed and breakfasts' average daily rate (ADR) was \$122, 54% more than hotels' ADR. Overall, bed and breakfasts accounted for four percent of the room supply nationally. Eighty percent of property owners live on-site. Finally, patrons of 30% of bed and breakfasts typically share bathrooms.

The purpose of the study completed by Lee et al. (2003) study was to look at the types of marketing strategies used by bed and breakfast owners and their perceived success of these strategies. A random sample of Texas bed and breakfast owners was

done utilizing those listed in the *Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Accounts Report*. From this, Lee et al. (2003) determined that bed and breakfast operators most often use word of mouth, chambers of commerce, and brochures as their marketing strategies. Having a website was fifth on the list of marketing strategies. Bed and breakfast owners found that word of mouth was the most successful strategy, followed by brochures, chamber of commerce, websites, and visitor and convention bureaus. The majority of owners (73%) owned a computer that they could use to access the Internet (Lee et al., 2003)

As can be seen, an adequate amount of information is available with respect to bed and breakfasts. Generally, these studies are descriptive in nature, providing a basis for what the bed and breakfast population looks like. In a couple of cases, marketing strategies for bed and breakfasts were reviewed.

Internet Marketing by Bed and Breakfasts

Information about Internet marketing by bed and breakfasts has only started to appear in the literature since 1999. Naturally, this has had a relationship with the increasing presence of the Internet overall. Several articles will be reviewed about bed and breakfast websites including one from a bed and breakfast book.

In 1999, Morrison, Taylor, Morrison, and Morrison looked at small hotels using the Internet to market themselves. According to Kline et al. (2004), bed and breakfasts can be viewed as a type of small hotel. Morrison et al. looked at small hotels in the United Kingdom specifically. The study assessed the effectiveness of small hotel websites, the advantages/disadvantages of the websites, and how to make the websites more effective. At the time of the study, the independent hotel was the most common form of accommodations in the United Kingdom. Morrison et al. believed that there were five marketing challenges that small hotels faced. These challenges were internationalization,

differentiation, adding value, interconnection and distribution, and embracing technological developments. Morrison et al. (1999) stated that small hotels should focus on nurturing guest relationships, building partnerships, diversifying distribution channels, and targeting niche and special interest markets.

For the study, websites of small hotels that were members of a marketing consortium were reviewed. Thus, they had a common goal of working on their strategic marketing. The previously mentioned items were assessed on each of their websites along with additional factors. Sixteen hotels were assessed (only 25% of hotel consortium members had their own websites) and a balanced scorecard approach was utilized. The balanced score card approach recognizes that an assessment should not be one-dimensional. Instead, it looks at balanced dimensions with each dimension being a different aspect of review. Significant time has passed since this study was completed. Thus, some findings are not as applicable now. Nonetheless, one of the key problems was the amount of time it took to download the website. Additionally, Morrison et al. found that most websites lacked interaction with the consumer. Instead, the website appeared to be a digital brochure. Websites scored especially low on appealing to the needs of special consumers. The websites failed to take advantage of the opportunity to provide specific, comprehensive information about the property. Only 7 of the 16 hotels scored above 50% of the available points, with the highest score being a 67%. Overall, results showed that hotels were not making effective use of their websites. Moreover, the authors found there was no relationship between the size of the hotel and the quality of their website.

In tune with the five marketing challenges previously mentioned, Morrison et al.(1999) indicated that websites should provide more information for foreign guests, demonstrate their properties' uniqueness, utilize the four marketing strategies previously mentioned, add more links to their websites, and actually have a website. The last idea referred to the fact that only 25% utilized the Internet for marketing. Morrison et al. suggested that future research should include how to create a standardized training package for owners to make more effective websites. The opportunity to close the gap between small hotels and large hotels was fast closing and the authors indicated small hotels would have to work fast in order to catch up (Morrison et al, 1999).

In the book *Open Your Own Bed & Breakfast*, Notarius and Brewer (2001) presented results of a 1999 study cosponsored by Professional Association of Innkeepers International (PAII), BedandBreakfast.com, and B&B getaways. The authors described the chapter entitled The Internet as the biggest change to the newest edition of the book. Notarius and Brewer say that the Internet has become a cost effective marketing approach that bed and breakfasts can utilize. The 1999 study showed that 54% of innkeepers had e-mail and 52% had their own Internet website. Plus, innkeepers found that 38% of new guests had located their property through the Internet. Nearly 50% of their advertising budget was spent on Internet related pitches. Additionally, 83% of those surveyed currently belong to at least one online bed and breakfast guidebook.

Notarius and Brewer offered advice on what they felt guests as well as innkeepers want. For instance, guests want their search to be easily completed and clearly able to be comprehended. Guest appreciate seeing pictures of the property for an understanding of their accommodations. On the other hand, some bed and breakfast owners worry that the

Internet will cause them to lose the personal relationship with their guests. This is part of what differentiates a bed and breakfast from a small hotel. Bed and breakfast owners want their guests to know them as real people not simply staff. A phone call allows the owners to see to what kind of guests to expect; this is not possible via the Internet. Furthermore, the authors indicate that websites should a professionally created website. A website is now more important than a brochure with 40% of new guests using the Internet as their locating source (Notarius & Brewer, 2001).

The purpose of a study conducted by Lituchy and Rail (2000) was to look at whether bed and breakfast owners were using the Internet to attract people from other countries to their property. More specifically, they reviewed the Internet's impact and potential with respect to bed and breakfasts. Mail surveys were sent to bed and breakfasts throughout the United States and Canada. The survey asked questions about the Internet, websites, e-mail, and marketing of the website. A seven point scale and qualitative questions were utilized on the survey. The study found that bed and breakfast owners are using the Internet to attract foreign guests. However, most of them are not using it to the fullest extent possible. Specifically, they do not use video and audio capabilities, solicit feedback from guests, or provide information in foreign languages. Respondents indicated that cost effectiveness was the main reason why they used the Internet as an advertising medium (Lituchy & Rail).

According to Jeong (2004), more bed and breakfasts are utilizing state tourism websites to link to their own Web page. Bed and breakfasts are trying to make themselves as accessible as possible. In Jeong's study, customer's perceptions of bed and breakfast websites were assessed. Jeong stated that there had been little research done in

this area. Specifically, Jeong (2004) looked at customers' perceptions of website quality, their satisfaction with information found on the website, and their extent in which to reuse or recommend to others the website in the future. E-mails were sent out to 1400 people asking them to participate in the bed and breakfast study. They would look at a bed and breakfast website and then answer questions about their feelings towards the website on a subsequent Webpage. The bed and breakfast website used had all of the 18 attributes that were measured on the survey. Behavioral characteristics including demographics and purposes of visiting bed and breakfast websites were evaluated. The survey had a response rate of 15.8% (Jeong).

Results of Jeong's study showed that users most often used a search engine, community Web pages and bed and breakfast online guidebooks to find bed and breakfasts, from most common to third most common. The most important information sought by users was a telephone number for the bed and breakfast. This indicated that users were more concerned with making reservations via phone than directly on the website. Users were also interested in being able to find a map of the surrounding area, e-mail address, and the bed and breakfast operator's information. Future suggestions for research include using more than one bed and breakfast website and having a larger group of survey participants. Jeong also mentioned that bed and breakfast owners should be more observant about their own guests' feelings about their website.

Kline et al. (2004) used the balanced scorecard approach to look at the websites of 20 bed and breakfasts located in Indiana. The authors mentioned that designing and maintaining websites is relatively inexpensive for owners. Since bed and breakfasts typically have limited financial resources, utilizing their website as a key marketing

outlet was ideal. The website should be designed to be an interactive experience by the guest. The guest should be able to maneuver easily through the website with it being easy to understand and not having technical problems. Using these ideas, Kline et al.(2004) created a four quadrant modified balanced scorecard to review the 20 websites. The balanced scorecard approached included multiple attributes within each quadrant. That way, more areas could be reviewed and the study would not be as subjective. These four quadrants were user friendliness, site attractiveness, marketing effectiveness, and technical qualities. Raters reviewed the first three quadrants while a technical test performed by NetMechanics.com was used for the fourth one. Additional information was collected about the size of the bed and breakfast and lowest and highest rates available. Results showed that bed and breakfasts ranked very differently amongst one another as well from one quadrant to the next. Results presented by Kline et al. focused more on describing which bed and breakfast scored highest and lowest in each quadrant. Additional information about each property was not provided. Of the four quadrants, site attractiveness had the highest mean percentage of points scored with 85% as the average. The lowest mean percentage points were marketing effectiveness. Kline et al. indicated that this was the greatest weakness amongst websites. For the future, Kline et al. indicated that bed and breakfast owners could use the presented scale to review their own bed and breakfast websites. The authors also indicated that the research showed that improvement could exist on websites in each of the assessed areas. Lastly, the authors said that future studies could include more websites, a greater variety of websites based on location, and innkeepers' opinions on the aspects of the evaluation.

As was indicated in all of the studies reviewed in this section, bed and breakfasts are not using the Internet to its fullest potential. Additionally, owners are not discussing with their guests ways to improve their own website. By utilizing the Internet, bed and breakfasts could attract different market segments. One of these market segments could in fact be people with disabilities. The following section will summarize the literatures finding on people with disabilities who travel.

People with Disabilities and Travel

People with disabilities and their travel needs and habits became a more prevalent research topic early in 2000. As previously mentioned, the American with Disabilities Act forced the American public to consider how to be more accessible for people who traveled with disabilities. Though the scholarly literature covering this topic is scant, it begins to provide insight into what people with disabilities must face. Additionally, some popular media articles will be reviewed.

Darcy (2002) wrote a discussion paper on what people with disabilities face when they travel. Travel agents and physical barriers prove not to be the only reasons people with disabilities do not travel. People with disabilities often cannot afford to pay the high prices set by the industry for accessible accommodations. Typically, hotels that have made the necessary adjustments to accommodate travelers with disabilities tend to be upscale. It is not that these hotels charge more for an accessible room than one that is not. Simply, economy hotels are not as likely to make their accommodations accessible. Furthermore, people with severe disabilities might also have to hire a medical professional to accompany them on their trip. In this case, they might not only be paying for a second trip but also for the fee of the medical professional. Also, for example, having to rent a van to accommodate a wheelchair with a power lift proves considerably

more expensive than a compact car. Obviously, the presence of disabilities can result in more expensive travel. As a result, some people are unable to meet this cost and must live a life without travel (Darcy, 2002).

An online poll described by Pfenning (2002) in *Travel Weekly* listed the most common barrier for people with disabilities encountered was the reservations staff's lack of knowledge or an indifferent attitude about special needs. The online poll was conducted by iCan!, a solutions and services company for people with disabilities and business leaders. The poll included over 1,500 respondents with disabilities, ages 18 to 70. In terms of making arrangements, 31% used direct bookings most often followed by 30% who used the Internet and 24% who used travel agents. Accessibility of a hotel room tied for third key factor for people with disabilities when selecting a room in which to stay. Lastly, a majority of people with disabilities found their personal car to be the most accessible form of transportation followed by airplanes (Pfenning).

Ray and Ryder's (2003) study looked at mobility-impaired persons for consideration in tourism research and at their preferred sources of information for their travel choices. Mobility-impaired is defined as physical features/conditions (not including hearing or vision impairment) of one's body that make it difficult for them to maneuver without a wheelchair, cane, walker, etc. Methods used for this study included focus groups, surveys, and questions. Ray and Ryder utilized convenience samples; people used for this study were not randomly selected to be a part of this study. Additionally, relatively small sample sizes existed for this study, too small to run statistics. Through these outlets people were asked a number of questions regarding their travel. For instance, why they choose to visit specific destinations, how they describe

their personality, and how they find out about the areas they choose to visit (Ray & Ryder, 2003).

Results showed that the number one issue when choosing where to go was accessibility. Furthermore, accessibility evaluated by a knowledgeable person ahead of time was important. Too often, areas that market themselves as accessible were not actually accessible. The group indicated that they would like to see more marketing directed towards the general public utilizing people who are in wheelchairs, etc. They wanted people to know that not every person with a mobile disability chooses to go to a destination for the same reason. Everyone is different with different conditions. Word of mouth and the Internet were ranked similarly in responses for how to obtain information about travel. Lastly, simply because this group faces challenges does not mean they do not want to be physically active on their vacations (Ray & Ryder).

A brief article appearing in *Fairfield County Business Journal* entitled Travelers with disabilities could spend \$21 billion (2003) mentions several key statistics about the financial power of people with disabilities. The statistics released were based on a poll conducted by Harris Interactive that included responses from 1,037 people. It was estimated that 194,000 travel related jobs are the result of travelers with disabilities. Furthermore, people with disabilities generate \$4.22 billion in payroll and \$2.52 billion in tax revenues in the United States. Finally, the study suggested that if the needs of people with disabilities were met, spending could increase to \$6.6 billion for airlines and \$8.4 billion for lodging.

The same study by Harris Interactive appeared in an article in *Travel Weekly* by Blum (2003). Additional figures were listed with regards to people with disabilities.

Eighty-five percent of travelers with disabilities share their experiences via word of mouth. The study indicated that 55% of adults with disabilities had stayed in a hotel at some point in the last two years, spending an average of \$241 per visit. Lastly, this same study estimated that people with disabilities account for 4.5% of airline revenue (Blum, 2003).

The purpose of McKercher, Packer, Yau, and Lamd's (2003) study was to examine the relationship between people with disabilities and travel agents in Hong Kong. It also looked at their attitudes towards the travel trade as a whole. Three focus groups and three in depth interviews were used to collect data. Specifically, two different types of people were utilized for the study, those with visual impairments and those with mobility disabilities. Participants in the study reported a great deal of variability between travel agencies as well as staff within an agency. The majority of participants felt that travel agencies did not meet their needs. The single greatest complaint of those in the study was the attitude of travel agencies. They also found that packaged tours never took into account the varying degrees of disability one might have. Yet, package tours were often the only type of trip offered. Lastly, participants felt information provided to them was poor and there was a general lack of communication between agent and person (McKercher et al.).

As one can see, more and more people with disabilities are traveling. However, constraints prevent them from traveling or provide difficulties while they are traveling. Seeing the needs of travelers with disabilities, the tourism industry can now work better to close the gap between themselves and this population. A literature scan of people with disabilities and their use of the Internet will be completed.

Use of the Internet by People with Disabilities

After doing a complete review of scholarly literature, it became apparent that popular media would be the outlet to explore Internet usage by people with disabilities. People with disabilities often are able to use the Internet to make every day leisure choices as well as travel arrangements. As the industry supplies more accessible websites, people with disabilities will be able to make even more of their plans utilizing the Internet.

In *American Demographics*, Wellner (2000) wrote an article summarizing the results of a poll of people with disabilities. An online poll conducted in 2000 by Harris Interactive found people with disabilities spend twice as much time (20 hours) on the Internet each week as people who do not have disabilities. Specifically, this poll reflected time spent viewing websites, not checking e-mail. Four out of every ten people with disabilities spend time on the Internet. Of the people with disabilities who participated in this poll, 48% reported having a better quality of life as a result of the Internet in comparison to 27% without disabilities. Moreover, 56% of individuals with disabilities over age 65 reported the Internet has substantially improved their quality of life, compared with six percent of adults without disabilities. People with disabilities explore the Internet for 20 hours per week, twice as much as people without disabilities. This study demonstrated that marketers should promote their product or service more directly to this segment (Wellner).

Computer mediated communication between people with disabilities was the topic for Johnson and Ashton-Shaeffer's (2003) article appearing in *Parks and Recreation*. The authors stated that many people with disabilities experience social isolation. However, communication via the Internet can result in better quality of life and health

and improved leisure satisfaction. In addition, this communication can create a social support network, increase friendships, and allow for more outlets of interaction. In the described program, Virtual Buddies, individuals in North Carolina were provided with computers, modems and Internet connection free of charge. They were then able to communicate with people with disabilities throughout North Carolina. In all, users reported having more friendships and feeling self sufficient and empowered through this line of communication (Johnson & Ashton-Shaeffer, 2003).

The Internet can be a powerful tool for people with disabilities to have an outlet not only to explore but also develop friendships. People with disabilities spend a great deal of time on the Internet each week. Thus, the potential for marketers to reach towards this population is vast. As people with disabilities use the Internet more to create travel plans, they also will want to explore bed and breakfasts websites for accessible information.

People with Disabilities and Bed and Breakfasts

A thorough review of the literature revealed no academic research on people with disabilities in relation to bed and breakfasts. A general search of the Internet reviewed little to no connection with the two topics. A review of the guidelines for Superior Small Lodging Certification reveals no terms of accessibility. Lastly, a look at Florida state legal cases and federal legal cases revealed no proceedings involving bed and breakfasts and accessibility issues. However, a bed and breakfast book as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act helped to provide some information.

Nonetheless, in the book *So—You Want to Be an Innkeeper*, Davies et al. (1996) provided a brief section entitled Marketing to guests with disabilities. First, they suggested that bed and breakfast owners are careful with the language they choose to utilize. For example, P. Robinson, a disabilities consultant, stated that appropriate

terminology such as people with different physical, hearing or visual abilities should be used as opposed to derogatory terms such as crippled or retarded. Next, Davies et al. advised that owners should have someone from a local group that is knowledgeable about the disabilities community to assess the bed and breakfast. Though an architect may know the legal logistics of accessibility, an expert from the disabilities community might provide a more personal feel. The authors suggest purchasing a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) so owners can communicate with potential guests who suffer from a loss of hearing (Davies et al., 1996).

Davies et al. recommended that owners accurately describe their accommodations so people with disabilities are aware of what is available. Innkeepers should be specific not only about the accommodations but the obstacles that guests with disabilities might face. If a bed and breakfast is accessible, Davies et al. suggests using the blue international wheelchair symbol to show this. Owners should also be careful to have a positive attitude because attitude towards a population can be a barrier like communication or architecture can be to it. Lastly, innkeepers should realize that it is easier to stay at a property that does market and list their accommodations instead of having to contact a bed and breakfast that is not clear about their property (Davies et al.).

The Americans with Disabilities Act

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, if a place of lodging has five rooms or less for rent and the owner lives on site, it is not considered a place of public accommodation and does not have to be accessible to people with disabilities. However, if it is a place of lodging that does not meet these criteria, the owner must make the facility accessible. Where the owner does not live at lodging facility, one room per 25 must be accessible for guests using wheelchairs or who have visual or hearing

impairments. Not until a lodging facility has 51 rooms does it have to provide a bathroom with a roll in shower in one room. A place of lodging that is less than three stories or whose stories are less than 3,000 square feet does not have to have an elevator. A public accommodation must offer a telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD) if it offers customers to make outgoing telephone calls on more than an incidental convenience basis. Moreover, a place of lodging must offer closed captioning decoders on its televisions. Barriers should be removed when readily achievable so that access is available to people with disabilities. Some examples include adding a ramp, widening doorways, installing grab bars in toilet area, making curb cuts, and installing a raised toilet seat. Barrier removal would not be “readily achievable” if it would destroy the historical significance of a building designated as historic under national, state, or local law (United States Department of Justice, 2002).

As one can see, little information exists that directly addresses bed and breakfasts and their requirements to be accessible. Additionally, since those with less than six rooms do not have to comply, many bed and breakfasts are not responsible for making themselves accessible. As previously mentioned, ADA did create awareness and some bed and breakfasts have responded. Thus, bed and breakfasts need to take their response and translate it into target marketing to this population.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

This chapter will cover several areas related to the methods of the project, including, (1) Sampling Frame, (2) Data Collection, (3) Scorecard Approach, (4) Operationalization of the Variables, (5) Qualitative Survey and (6) Data Analysis. The primary method used in this study was a modified balanced scorecard. This method was used to evaluate the quality of five areas of bed and breakfasts' websites.

Sampling Frame

BedandBreakfast.com was used as the sampling frame for the study. This website was founded in 1994 and lists more than 27, 000 bed and breakfasts worldwide. BedandBreakfast.com was rated INNSTAR's top-rated bed and breakfast directory; it was listed on Forbes' Best of the Web list (*About BedandBreakfast.com*, 2004). Being a part of this online directory has a membership fee that is divided into four levels. It is important to note that the lowest level of membership does not include a link to the bed and breakfast's website within the listing (*Membership Levels*, 2004). Thus, it would not be possible for a bed and breakfast at the lowest membership level to be included in this website study. Roughly 90 bed and breakfasts in Florida listed themselves on BedandBreakfast.com as having accommodations for people with disabilities.

Data Collection

In procedures followed by Kline et al. (2004), websites were thoroughly reviewed to determine if they meet each of the items of the scorecard and if accessibility key words are listed on any part of the website as part of an additional analysis. The scorecard used

a variety of items to rate websites. Websites are subjective in nature and the evaluation must be performed with a set of measures (Schanz, 1999). The items used for the scorecard were modified from the study done by Kline et al. (2004) to allow for evaluation of items related to marketing to people with disabilities. This modification included removing the item “spell check” from the technical qualities. S.F. Kline (personal communication, January 26, 2005) indicated that this item was flawed in the study done by Kline et al.

Additionally, more information was recorded about each bed and breakfast including the date built and last restored (Table 3-1). An extra domain was added that looked at the information provided for people with disabilities. This information included the location of information for people with disabilities, the vocabulary use to market to people with disabilities, and the listing of accessible accommodations.

Table 3-1. Information Collected

Number of Questions	Question
1	Bed and breakfast name
2	Location
3	Website address
4	Number of rooms
5	Date built
6	Last restored
7	Lowest room rate
8	Highest room rate
9	If owners live on site

Scorecard Approach

Each domain focused on a different area of quality of the website. Specifically, these areas were user friendliness, site attractiveness, marketing effectiveness, and technical qualities. Furthermore, information for people with disabilities was also added. The survey instrument was created prior to the analysis to record this information in an

organized manner. The instrument was filled in using paper and pencil method. Then, all information was entered into a spreadsheet (Excel).

Operationalization of Variables

User friendliness is a domain designed to look at how inviting a website was to an individual. The construct is based on research by Kline et al. (2004). This construct was included because individuals are more likely to continue using a site or to return to it if they find it friendly. The nine sample items (Table 3-2) included: 1) Is a site content search function available? 2) Is a site map or index available? 3) Is a home button available from all pages? 4) Direct email contact clearly available? 5) Mailing address clearly available? 6) Telephone number clearly available? 7) Fax number clearly available? 8) Clear and effective navigation tools on each page? 9) Limited vertical and horizontal scrolling?

The site attractiveness domain looked at the visual appeal of the website. For instance, text that could be read, a good background color, and uncluttered pages were some of the nine included items (Table 3-2). Though these items could be subjective, a yes or no was carefully considered before making a determination. Additionally, there were nine items to factor the score for the site attractiveness quadrant, with some items being less subjective than others. These items were: 1) Are pictures or images available to reinforce text content? 2) Are the pages clean and uncluttered? 3) Is the text clear and readable? 4) Is there a sufficient contrast between background and text? 5) Is the background effective and appealing? 6) Does the use of color improve the visual appeal of the site? 7) Are the photos and images of a good quality? 8) Is there an effective use of web page space? 9) Are the hyperlinks easy to read?

The marketing effectiveness section had 18 items (Table 3-2), the most of any domain. Basic marketing principles that Kline et al. (2004) determined were important for a bed and breakfast were placed in this domain. These items were composed of the existence of a virtual tour, house and room pictures, rate availability and addressing target markets. These items were: 1) Awards information available? 2) Is Testimonial information available? 3) Is a Calendar of events available? 4) Are Hyperlinks to sponsor/advertisements available? 5) Is there a logo reflected on the website? 6) Is a mission statement available? 7) Are house pictures available? 8) Are room pictures available? 9) Is a virtual tour available? 10) Are the rates available? 11) Can you make a reservation online? 12) Are special packages offered? 13) Are special promotions addressed? 14) Are special target markets addressed (children, pets, ADA, etc.)? 15) Does text describe uniqueness of the B&B (architect, historical, etc.)? 16) Does text describe innkeepers or owners? 17) Are local activities and events listed on site? 18) Are there links to activities and area attractions?

The technical qualities of the website were assessed by a free online evaluation by NetMechanic.com. NetMechanic.com gives zero to five stars for each of the categories it ranks. As previously mentioned, the ranking for spelling was disregarded in this study. Other items reviewed included link check, HTML check, and load time (Table 2). The dichotomous score was taken for each item by considering one or two stars a “no” and three or more stars a “yes”. Without having technical knowledge, this evaluation was an appropriate source for rating the technical qualities for the websites.

Lastly, a separate analysis was done on the availability of information on accessibility for people with disabilities. Items (Table 3-3) looked at placement of the

information, vocabulary, and description of accommodations. The selection of terms that represented possible website key words was determined by the book chapter written by Datillo and Williams (1999) entitled Inclusion and the Leisure Service Industry. The authors indicated that words which were truthful towards the person's condition or provided accommodations were most helpful. Thus, the key words included disabilities/disabled, handicaps/handicapped, impairments/impaired, wheelchair accessible, and accessible. Specific items such as light up clocks or roll in showers were also included in the evaluation.

Table 3-2. Scorecard Items

User Friendliness	1	Is a site content search function available?
	2	Is a site map or index available?
	3	Is a home button available from all pages?
	4	Direct email contact clearly available?
	5	Mailing address clearly available?
	6	Telephone number clearly available?
	7	Fax number clearly available?
	8	Clear and effective navigation tools on each page?
	9	Limited vertical and horizontal scrolling?
Total Score:	0-9	
Site Attractiveness	1	Are pictures or images available to reinforce text content?
	2	Are the pages clean and uncluttered?
	3	Is the text clear and readable?
	4	Is there a sufficient contrast between background and text?
	5	Is the background effective and appealing?
	6	Does the use of color improve the visual appeal of the site?
	7	Are the photos and images of a good quality?
	8	Is there an effective use of Web page space?
	9	Are the hyperlinks easy to read?
Total Score:	0-9	

Table 3-2. Continued

Marketing Effectiveness	1	Awards information available?
	2	Is Testimonial information available?
	3	Is a Calendar of events available?
	4	Are Hyperlinks to sponsor/advertisements available?
	5	Is there a logo reflected on the website?
	6	Is a mission statement available?
	7	Are house pictures available?
	8	Are room pictures available?
	9	Is a virtual tour available?
	10	Are the rates available?
	11	Can you make a reservation online?
	12	Are special packages offered?
	13	Are special promotions addressed?
	14	Are special target markets addressed (children, pets, ADA, etc.)?
	15	Does text describe uniqueness of the B&B (architect, historical, etc.)?
	16	Does text describe innkeepers or owners?
	17	Are local activities and events listed on site?
	18	Are there links to activities and area attractions?
Total Score:	0-18	
Technical Quality	1	Link Check
	2	HTML Check
	3	Browser Compatibility
	4	Load Time
Total Score:	0-4	
Marketing to People with Disabilities	1	Any information about accommodations for people with disabilities?
	2	Standardized wheelchair graphic?
	3	Appropriately vocabulary used?
	4	Description of accommodations?
	5	E-mail address /phone number listed on page about accessible accommodations?
	6	Clear font utilized?
	7	Size of font easily seen?
	8	Clarity of contrast between background and font?
	9	Is audio available?
	10	Is text listed from top to bottom?
Total Score:	0-10	

Qualitative Survey

After the scorecard had been applied to bed and breakfast websites, the top three scoring bed and breakfasts were phoned and asked to complete a telephone survey (Table 3-3). This qualitative survey focused on motivations, marketing techniques, and guest responses with respect to the accessible accommodations at their bed and breakfast. Survey respondents were asked to provide information about the number of guests with disabilities who had stayed with them and what the response of their guests was. The researcher phoned each of these owners on the same afternoon in July. A prepared script was read to them. Once they agreed to participate, the 10 items were read to them, including 1) Why did you choose to make your bed and breakfast accessible? 2) Did you make the house accessible or was it already that way? 3) Besides providing information on your website for people with disabilities, what steps have you taken to make your property accessible for them? 4) In the last year, please estimate how many people with disabilities have stayed with you. 5) Has your revenue/bookings improved because of your accessible accommodations? 6) What caused you to provide detailed information about your accommodations on your website? 7) Have you consulted a person with disabilities or an expert about disabilities to review your accommodations and/or marketing technique via your website? Have you consulted any other type of source with regards to accommodating people with disabilities? If so, what types? 8) Have you had any response from your guests with disabilities, positive or negative? 9) Have you found that guests with disabilities have recommended you via word of mouth to other individuals with disabilities? 10) Is there any other information you would like to share?

Table 3-3. Qualitative Items

Survey Items	Why did you choose to make your bed and breakfast accessible? Did you make the house accessible or was it already that way? Besides providing information on your website for people with disabilities, what steps have you taken to make your property accessible for them? In the last year, please estimate how many people with disabilities have stayed with you. Has your revenue/bookings improved because of your accessible accommodations? What caused you to provide detailed information about your accommodations on your website? Have you consulted a person with disabilities or an expert about disabilities to review your accommodations and/or marketing technique via your website? Have you consulted any other type of source with regards to accommodating people with disabilities? If so, what types? Have you had any response from your guests with disabilities, positive or negative? Have you found that guests with disabilities have recommended you via word of mouth to other individuals with disabilities?
Total Items: 10	Is there any other information you would like to share?

Data Analysis

Before starting any analysis, inter-rater reliability was calculated for each response. Inter-rater reliability is the extent that evaluators agree in response on content analysis. It is important to determine as it assists in determining the validity of results. If the raters do not agree, spurious results can occur. Inter-rater reliability is dependent on evaluators being consistent. To ensure this, all items in which the two researchers disagreed by five points or higher responses were removed from the scorecard as performed by Pennington-Gray (1999). These removed items were not used in the data analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 11.5). Descriptive statistics were run for each item to describe the sample and the responses. In addition, mean scores were reported. Mean scores for each

domain were calculated in SPSS, these scores were then used to respond to the research objectives. T-tests and ANOVAs were used to respond to research objectives 3 and 4.

Data analysis for the qualitative survey used the constant comparison method. Similar responses were grouped together by theme. The resulting themes were reported to provide a more in-depth description of why the top bed and breakfasts had engaged in marketing to people with disabilities.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This chapter of the thesis focuses responding to the five research objectives. Each research objective will be answered individually. The method for evaluation used a scorecard approach. In order to control for reliability, two researchers were involved with the evaluation. Website scorecards were completed over a period of 24 days. Controlling for websites which had information for people with disabilities revealed 87 Florida bed and breakfasts. During the evaluation process, the researcher(s) found that eight of these bed and breakfasts did not have websites listed on their BedandBreakfast.com profile. Thus, 79 bed and breakfasts were reviewed. Each researcher had two websites that were removed from analysis because only one of the two researchers was able to review the site. (The other was not able to access them.) Thus, only the 77 websites were visited by both researchers. These 77 were utilized to respond to the research objectives.

Inner-rater Reliability

As can be seen in Table 4-1, the responses of the two researchers were recorded and the difference in “yes” responses was calculated. All items that received a difference in yes scores of five or higher were removed from the scorecard (as per Pennington-Gray, 1999). The researcher removed 21 items, leaving 29 items in the five domains. The items that were removed appear in bold to show emphasis. The items that remained to create the revised scorecard are shown in Table 4-2.

Table 4-1. Evaluator Responses by Question

Scale	Evaluator 1			Evaluator 2			Difference in yes responses
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing	
User Friendliness							
Is a site content search function available?	2	75	0	2	75	0	0
Is a site map or index available?	5	72	0	2	75	0	3
Is a home button available from all pages?	67	10	0	66	11	0	1
Direct email contact clearly available?	71	6	0	63	14	0	8
Mailing address clearly available?	74	3	0	68	8	1	6
Telephone number clearly available?	75	2	0	75	2	0	0
Fax number clearly available?	43	34	0	34	43	0	9
Clear and effective navigation tools on each page?	73	4	0	68	9	0	5
Limited vertical and horizontal scrolling?	66	11	0	68	9	0	2
TOTAL ITEMS: 9							
Site Attractiveness							
Are pictures or images available to reinforce text content?	76	1	0	74	3	0	2
Are the pages clean and uncluttered?	66	11	0	63	14	0	3

Table 4-1. Continued

Scale	Evaluator 1			Evaluator 2			Difference in yes responses
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing	
Site Attractiveness							
Is the text clear and readable?	74	3	0	64	13	0	10
Is there a sufficient contrast between background and text?	77	0	0	74	3	0	3
Is the background effective and appealing?	70	7	0	71	6	0	1
Does the use of color improve the visual appeal of the site?	71	6	0	71	6	0	0
Are the photos and images of a good quality?	77	0	0	75	2	0	2
Is there an effective use of Web page space?	77	0	0	70	7	0	7
Are the hyperlinks easy to read?	75	2	0	67	10	0	8
TOTAL ITEMS: 10							
Marketing Effectiveness							
Awards information available?	19	58	0	19	58	0	0
Is Testimonial information available?	32	45	0	31	46	0	1
Is a Calendar of events available?	14	63	0	16	61	0	2

Table 4-1. Continued

Scale	Evaluator 1			Evaluator 2			Difference in yes responses
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing	
Marketing Effectiveness							
Are Hyperlinks to sponsor/advertisements available?	13	64	0	25	52	0	12
Is there a logo reflected on the website?	16	61	0	20	57	0	4
Is a mission statement available?	1	76	0	4	73	0	3
Are house pictures available?	77	0	0	68	9	0	9
Are room pictures available?	74	3	0	69	8	0	5
Is a virtual tour available?	15	62	0	11	66	0	4
Are the rates available?	73	4	0	70	7	0	3
Can you make a reservation online?	24	53	0	24	53	0	0
Are special packages offered?	31	46	0	34	43	0	3
Are special promotions addressed?	23	54	0	31	46	0	8
Are special target markets addressed (children, pets, ADA, etc.)?	58	19	0	45	31	1	13

Table 4-1. Continued

Scale	Evaluator 1			Evaluator 2			Difference in yes responses
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing	
Marketing Effectiveness							
Does text describe uniqueness of the B&B?	53	24	0	49	27	1	4
Does text describe innkeepers or owners?	21	56	0	16	60	1	5
Are local activities and events listed on site?	60	17	0	51	25	1	9
Are there links to activities and area attractions?	43	34	0	39	37	1	4
TOTAL ITEMS: 18							
Technical Quality							
Link Check	77	0	0	75	1	1	2
HTML Check	71	5	1	70	5	2	1
Browser Compatibility	71	5	1	69	6	2	2
Load Time	37	40	0	37	39	1	0
TOTAL ITEMS: 4							
Marketing to People with Disabilities							
Any information about accommodations for people with disabilities?	25	52	0	15	62	0	10
Standardized wheelchair graphic?	1	76	0	1	76	0	0
Appropriate vocabulary used?	25	52	0	14	63	0	11

Table 4-1. Continued

Scale	Evaluator 1			Evaluator 2			Difference in yes responses
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing	
Marketing to People with Disabilities							
Description of accommodations?	6	71	0	9	68	0	3
E-mail address /phone number listed on page about accessible accommodations?	21	56	0	12	65	0	9
Clear font utilized?	76	1	0	31	46	0	45
Size of font easily seen?	0	77	0	23	54	0	23
Clarity of contrast between background and font?	77		0	62	15	0	15
Is audio available?	8	69	0	7	70	0	1
Is text listed from top to bottom?	77	0	0	44	33	0	33
TOTAL ITEMS: 8							

Table 4-2. Revised Scorecard Items

User Friendliness	1	Is a site content search function available?
	2	Is a site map or index available?
	3	Is a home button available from all pages?
	4	Telephone number clearly available?
	5	Limited vertical and horizontal scrolling?
Total Score:	0-5	
Site Attractiveness	1	Are pictures or images available to reinforce text content?
	2	Are the pages clean and uncluttered?
	3	Is there a sufficient contrast between background and text?
	4	Is the background effective and appealing?
	5	Does the use of color improve the visual appeal of the site?
	6	Are the photos and images of a good quality?
Total Score:	0-6	
Marketing Effectiveness	1	Awards information available?
	2	Is Testimonial information available?
	3	Is a Calendar of events available?
	4	Is there a logo reflected on the website?
	5	Is a mission statement available?
	6	Is a virtual tour available?
	7	Are the rates available?
	8	Can you make a reservation online?
	9	Are special packages offered?
	10	Does text describe uniqueness of the B&B (architect, historical, etc.)?
	11	Are there links to activities and area attractions?
Total Score:	0-11	0-18
Technical Quality	1	Link Check
	2	HTML Check
	3	Browser Compatibility
	4	Load Time
Total Score:	0-4	0-4
Marketing to People with Disabilities	1	Standardized wheelchair graphic?
	2	Description of accommodations?
	3	Is audio available?
Total Score:	0-3	

Research Objective 1: To Profile the Sample of Florida Bed and Breakfasts from BedandBreakfast.com

The first research objective focused on profiling bed and breakfasts in Florida. The researcher did this by location, date built and restored, number of guest rooms, lowest and highest rate, and if the owners lived on site. The results of this profile are listed in Tables 4-3 through 4-8.

As part of the first research objective, each bed and breakfast was assigned to one of eight regions in Florida (See Table 4-3) based on a map (Figure 4-1) on the Florida Association of Convention and Visitor Bureau website (<http://facvb.org>). More than a quarter of the bed and breakfasts (29.9%) were located in the North East region of Florida. Next, 15.6% of the bed and breakfasts were in the South East Florida. The third region with the most bed and breakfasts (13.0%) was the North. The least number of bed and breakfasts were located in the Northwest region of Florida.

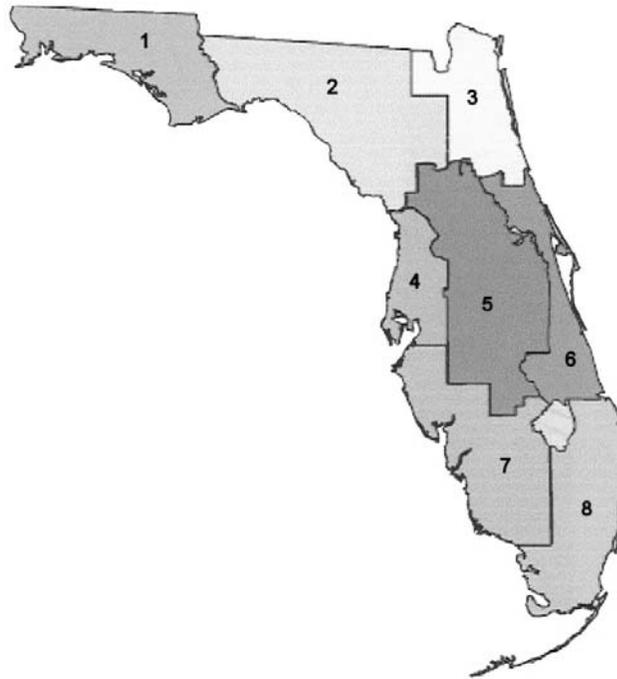


Figure 4-1. Map of Florida Regions: 1: North West, 2: North, 3: North East, 4: Central West, 5: Central, 6: Central East, 7: South West, 8: South East

Table 4-3. Bed and Breakfasts by Florida Location

Florida region	<i>N</i>	%
North East	23	29.9
South East	12	15.6
North	10	13.0
Central West	9	11.7
Central East	8	10.4
South West	7	9.1
Central	6	7.8
North West	2	2.6
Total	77	100.1

(Note: Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.)

In terms of the frequency of when bed and breakfasts were built (Table 4-4), 34.6% were constructed between 1901 and 1923 (23 years). Following those, 13 bed and breakfasts were created between 1924 and 2001. Moreover, only four bed and breakfasts were constructed after 1940. The third most common period for bed and breakfasts to have been built was 1791-1886. Fifty-two bed and breakfasts (67.5%) provided this information on their websites.

Table 4-4. Building Date of Bed and Breakfasts

Year built	<i>N</i>	%
1791-1886	12	23.1
1887-1900	9	17.3
1901-1923	18	34.6
1924-2001	13	25.0
Total	52	100.0

Table 4-5 indicates that most bed and breakfasts (38.9%) were last restored between 1990-1993. The second most common period for restoration (27.8%) was 2000-2003. Eighteen bed and breakfasts (23.4%) listed their last date of restoration on their website.

Table 4-5. Restoration Date of Bed and Breakfasts

Year built	<i>N</i>	%
1990-1993	7	38.9
1994-1996	3	16.7
1997-1999	3	16.7
2000-2003	5	27.8
Total	18	100.1

(Note: Total does not equal a 100% due to rounding.)

The number of guest rooms in a bed and breakfast was pulled from their listing on BedandBreakfast.com. Owners/managers of the property provided this information for their listing. This provided a clear total as opposed to the room, suite, and cottage breakdown that most websites provided. Table 4-6 listed bed and breakfasts in the “six to eight” guest room category as most common (33.8%). Also, 27.3% were listed as having between 12 to 48 rooms.

Table 4-6. Number of Guest Rooms in Bed and Breakfasts

Number of guest rooms	<i>N</i>	%
1-5	16	20.8
6-8	26	33.8
9-11	14	18.2
12-48	21	27.3
Total	77	100.1

(Note: Total does not equal a 100% due to rounding.)

Table 4-7 indicates the lowest and highest rates that bed and breakfasts listed on their website. Six bed and breakfasts did not provide information about their rates (7.8%) on their website. Typically, bed and breakfasts provide a variety of rates for different rooms in their house based on size or location. In cases where the rate was the same throughout, the same amount was recorded as the lowest and the highest rate. For each bed and breakfast, their lowest rate and their highest rate were recorded. Instances occurred where some bed and breakfasts' highest rate was less than another bed and breakfast's lowest rate. The lowest price offered by a bed and breakfast ranged from \$55

to \$255 with an average of \$115.20. The highest price listed by a bed and breakfast for a nightly rate ranged from \$95 to \$608, averaging \$221.48 per guest room. Eight websites listed whether their owners lived on site (Table 4-8). Of those, three bed and breakfasts did have owners who lived on site and five did not.

Table 4-7. Lowest and Highest Rates of Bed and Breakfasts

Rate level	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Lowest	\$115.20	\$55	\$255
Highest	\$221.48	\$95	\$608

Table 4-8. Owners Living at Bed and Breakfasts

Status of owners	N	%
Do not live at bed and breakfast	5	62.5
Live at bed and breakfast	3	37.5
Total	8	100.0

(Note: Only reflects information provided on bed and breakfast websites.)

Research Objective 2: To Modify and Test A Revised Scorecard with the Addition of Information on Marketing to People with Disabilities

Examining the mean scores and revising the original scale to reflect differences from this study achieved this research objective. Each domain was revised separately. There were five domains: user friendliness, site attractiveness, marketing effectiveness, technical quality, and marketing to people with disabilities.

Table 4-9 indicates the scores of bed and breakfasts within the user friendliness scale domain. Most commonly, bed and breakfasts scored three out of five on the friendliness scale. None of the bed and breakfasts scored five out of five. The average score was 2.8.

On the site attractiveness scale, 100% of the bed and breakfasts scored at least three or over on the six point scale (Table 4-10). The majority of bed and breakfasts (76.6%) scored six out of six. The average score was 5.7.

Table 4-9. User Friendliness Scores

Frequency of Score	<i>N</i>	%
3 “yes” responses	57	74
2 “yes” responses	12	15.6
1 “yes” responses	4	5.2
4 “yes” responses	4	5.2
0 “yes” responses	0	0.0
5 “yes” responses	0	0.0
Total: 5	77	100.0

(Note: Mean score: 2.5; Weighted average: 2.8)

Table 4-10. Site Attractiveness Scale

Frequency of Score	<i>N</i>	%
6 “yes” responses	59	76.6
5 “yes” responses	12	15.6
4 “yes” responses	4	5.2
3 “yes” responses	2	2.6
2 “yes” responses	0	0.0
1 “yes” responses	0	0.0
0 “yes” responses	0	0.0
Total:	77	100.0

(Note: Mean score: 3; Weighted average: 5.7)

Table 4-11 shows the number items most frequently scored on the marketing effectiveness scale. Most bed and breakfasts scored four or five out of 11 total items (27.3% and 22.1% respectively). None of the bed and breakfasts scored 11 out of 11. The average score was 4.2.

Table 4-12 looks at the technical quality of the websites that was assessed by NetMechanics.com. Most often, bed and breakfasts met all four of the items being assessed with 46.1%. Closely following, bed and breakfast websites satisfied three of the four technical components with 42.1%. The average score was 3.3.

Table 4-11. Marketing Effectiveness Scores

Frequency of Score	<i>N</i>	%
4 “yes” responses	21	27.3
5 “yes” responses	17	22.1
3 “yes” responses	14	18.2
2 “yes” responses	8	10.4
7 “yes” responses	7	9.1

Table 4-11. Continued

Frequency of Score	<i>N</i>	%
1 “yes” responses	3	3.9
6 “yes” responses	3	3.9
8 “yes” responses	3	3.9
0 “yes” responses	1	1.3
9 “yes” responses	0	0.0
10 “yes” responses	0	0.0
11 “yes” responses	0	0.0
Total: 11	77	100.0

(Note: Mean score: 5.5; Weighted average: 4.2)

Table 4-12. Technical Quality Scores

Frequency of Score	<i>N</i>	%
4 “yes” responses	35	46.1
3 “yes” responses	32	42.1
2 “yes” responses	9	11.8
1 “yes” responses	0	0.0
0 “yes” responses	0	0.0
Total: 4	76	100.0

(Note: Mean score: 2; Weighted average 3.3)

Lastly, 80.5% of bed and breakfasts scored zero out of three on the marketing to people with disabilities scale (Table 4-13). None of the bed and breakfasts scored two or three. The average score was 0.2.

Table 4-13. Marketing to People with Disabilities Score

Frequency of Score	<i>N</i>	%
0 “yes” responses	62	80.5
1 “yes” responses	15	19.5
2 “yes” responses	0	0.0
3 “yes” responses	0	0.0
Total: 3	77	100.0

(Note: Mean score: 1.5; Weighted average: 0.2)

Research Objective 3: To Assess The Relative Quality Of Florida Bed And Breakfast’s Based On Aspects Of A) Technical Quality, B) User Friendliness, C) Site Attractiveness, D) Marketing Effectiveness, E) Accessibility Issues

To examine the quality of the bed and breakfasts, means were calculated for each of the five domains. The mean scores were then divided by the total number of items in

each domain. Thus, the resulting score was a standardized score based on the total number of items. The total scores ranged from 0.9 to 0.1.

As can be seen in Table 4-14, site attractiveness had the highest mean of 0.9 with a standard deviation of .12. This indicated that bed and breakfast's websites tended to score highest on site attractiveness. Technical quality had the second highest mean score with a 0.8. The weakest aspect of the bed and breakfast websites was marketing to people with disabilities. This domain had a mean of 0.1 and standard deviation of .13. This was followed by marketing effectiveness, with a mean of 0.4 and a standard deviation of 0.16.

Table 4-14. Standardized Scores by Quality Domains

Scale	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Site Attractiveness	0.9	0.12
Technical Quality	0.8	0.17
User Friendliness	0.6	0.12
Marketing Effectiveness	0.4	0.16
Marketing to People with Disabilities	0.1	0.13

Research Objective 4: To Examine The Relationship Between Quality Of Florida Bed And Breakfast's Websites and A) Year Built, B) Last Restored, C) Location, D) Lowest and Highest Rate, E) Size.

The relationship was examined by using analysis of variance (ANOVA) or t-tests to test the relationship between the five quality domains and five aspects of bed and breakfasts (year built, year restored, location, rate, and size).

In order to examine the relationship between quality of website and location, the locations were combined into three broader regions: north, central, and south (Table 4-15). Results indicated that there were no significant differences in quality of website based on location of the bed and breakfast.

Table 4-15. Analysis of Variance of Location and Quality of Website

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
User friendliness				0.6	0.6
North	35	2.8	0.6		
Central	23	2.7	0.6		
South	19	2.9	0.6		
Site attractiveness				0.9	0.4
North	35	5.6	0.8		
Central	23	5.8	0.5		
South	19	5.6	0.8		
Marketing effectiveness				2.1	0.1
North	35	4.2	1.7		
Central	23	4.7	1.8		
South	19	3.6	1.5		
Technical quality				0.9	0.4
North	35	3.3	0.6		
Central	23	3.3	0.8		
South	19	3.5	0.6		
Marketing to people with disabilities				0.9	0.4
North	35	0.3	0.4		
Central	23	0.2	0.4		
South	19	0.1	0.3		

In order to examine the relationship between quality of website and size of the bed and breakfast, independent t-tests were used (Table 4-16). Two categories were created, small-sized bed and breakfasts (1-8 rooms) and medium-sized bed and breakfasts (9+ rooms). The results revealed there was no relationship between size and quality of website.

Table 4-16. Independent Samples t-test Results of Quality of Websites by Number of Rooms

Scale	1-8 rooms	9+ rooms	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>		
User friendliness	2.9	2.7	1.4	0.7
Site attractiveness	5.7	5.7	.06	1.0
Marketing effectiveness	3.9	4.5	-1.6	0.1
Technical quality	3.3	3.4	-0.3	0.7
Marketing to people with disabilities	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.6

Independent sample t-tests were used to examine the relationship between quality of website and year built. Categories of the years that bed and breakfasts were built were created. The periods were labeled 1791-1900 and 1901-2001. Results indicated that one statistical significance did exist (Table 4-17). Those bed and breakfasts built in 1900 or before had a higher quality websites relating to people with disabilities than those built later.

Table 4-17. Independent Samples t-test Results of Quality of Websites by Year Built

Scale	1791-1900	1901-2001	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>		
User friendliness	2.9	2.7	1.2	0.3
Site attractiveness	5.9	5.7	0.8	0.4
Marketing effectiveness	4.4	4.5	-0.2	0.9
Technical quality	3.1	3.3	0.8	0.4
Marketing to people with disabilities	0.4	0.1	2.0	0.1

T-tests were used to examine year restored and quality of website (Table 4-18).

Two categories of years restored were created, 1990-1996 and 1997-2001. No significant differences existed between quality of website and year restored.

Table 4-18. Independent Samples t-test Results of Quality of Websites by Year Last Restored

Scale	1990-1996	1997-2001	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>		
User friendliness	2.9	2.7	-1.0	0.3
Site attractiveness	5.9	5.7	0.2	0.9
Marketing effectiveness	4.4	2.0	-1.5	0.2
Technical quality	3.1	0.7	-0.8	0.4
Marketing to people with disabilities	0.4	0.3	-0.8	0.4

Independent sample t-tests were utilized to examine the relationship between quality of website and minimum rate. No statistical significance was revealed by the results (Table 4-19).

Table 4-19. Independent Samples t-test Results of Quality of Websites by Minimum Rate

Scale	\$55-122	\$123-\$255		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
User friendliness	2.8	2.7	0.8	0.4
Site attractiveness	5.7	5.4	1.4	0.2
Marketing effectiveness	4.3	3.9	1.2	2.4
Technical quality	3.4	3.3	0.3	0.8
Marketing to people with disabilities	0.2	0.2	-0.8	0.4

In order to examine the relationship between quality of websites and maximum rate, an independent samples t-test was utilized. Results are shown in Table 4-20 and do not display any statistical significance.

Table 4-20. Independent Samples t-test Results of Quality of Websites by Maximum Rate

Scale	\$95-266	\$267-\$608		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
User friendliness	2.8	2.8	0.1	0.9
Site attractiveness	5.6	5.8	-0.6	0.5
Marketing effectiveness	4.1	4.7	-1.4	0.2
Technical quality	3.3	3.5	-0.8	0.4
Marketing to people with disabilities	0.2	0.3	-0.8	0.4

Research Objective 5: To Utilize A Qualitative Survey as A Follow-up to the Bed And Breakfast Owners of the Three Best Websites Inquiring About Motivations, Marketing Techniques, and Guest Responses

In order to address this research objective, the primary researcher phoned three bed and breakfast owners who had the best websites targeting people with disabilities among those reviewed (measured by the highest score on the marketing to disabilities scale and descriptive information provided). Two owners and one manager completed the survey. Respondents were asked 10 questions that related to their accessible accommodations. The questions were each free response.

For the first bed and breakfast, the primary researcher spoke to Tom, the owner. This bed and breakfast is located in the North East region of Florida. Having been built in 1895, the house has 10 rooms. Additionally, their lowest listed rate was \$139 and their highest \$199. Their website had the most detailed listing about accessible accommodations complete with pictures of grab bars, toilet handles, and hand-held shower head. Additionally, a listing about their accessible accommodations was available on their homepage. Text mentions the tub seat and wheelchair ramp that exist.

The second bed and breakfast's manager, Denise, responded to the survey. It is located in the South East region of Florida and has 21 guest rooms. According to this bed and breakfast's website, it was built in 1891. Their lowest rate \$85 and their highest is \$275. Their website text mentions tub bar grips and an elevated toilet seat. The website also says that the accessible bathroom has tub bar grips and elevated toilet seat. From the accessible rooms, guests have easy access to the pool, parking lot, and side gardens.

The third and final bed and breakfast is located in North Central Florida. The survey was completed by one of the owners, Linda. It was built in 1845 and went through a renovation in 1990. This bed and breakfast has 12 rooms and their rates ranged from \$69 to \$189. The bed and breakfast website mentions that the "spacious building is handicapped accessible with full bathroom facilities." Additionally, it says that they are handicapped approved by AAA.

The first question posed in the interview was "why did you choose to make your bed and breakfast accessible?" Denise and Tom said they made it that way while Linda said she and her co-owner purchased it already accessible. Denise said they made the changes because they are "open to all lifestyles disabled and not disabled. That is our

motto here.” Moreover, Tom commented, “this is a market that we would like to reach, can do it [make accessible], and make it available on our website. Our website helps to see what our facilities are like.” When looking at other places of marketing to people with disabilities besides their bed and breakfast websites, Tom and Denise said they have not used any other outlet. Tom added, “I’m nervous as to what they might do if it is not adequately accessible.” However, the bed and breakfast with the most guests with disabilities at an estimated 50 in the last year uses multiple forms of advertising to reach people with disabilities. Specifically, Linda stated that their accessible accommodations are listed in “AAA guidebook, all advertisements in the newspaper, magazine articles, and word of mouth.” Tom and Denise only report 20 guests and 3 guests respectively in the last year with disabilities.

When asked if revenue/bookings had improved because of accessible accommodations, Denise replied, “Probably not...because we are always full whether our guests are handicapped or not.” To that same question, Tom stated that they had not improved but he wasn’t sure if they would stay that way in the future. Linda said she could not say because she and her co-owner had only had their bed and breakfast open for less than a year. Tom stated that he provided the detailed information on his website for people with disabilities because he wanted to, and Denise said, “We are just trying to advertise.” Linda responded, “It is very important because elderly people do stay with us, and we want to provide that information to them.”

Both Linda and Denise said that no one had been consulted about their accessible accommodations or marketing to people with disabilities on their website. Tom said that he consulted his contractor for the house. He added, “Guests with disabilities who have

stayed with us have provided suggestions to me, and I have made those improvements.”

All three participants told the primary researcher that they had only positive response from guests about their accessible accommodations. Lastly, Tom and Denise had not heard of any guests with disabilities being recommended by previous guests with disabilities. Tom also said, “I don’t know why because they seemed satisfied.” When Linda was asked the question about receiving guests with disabilities via word of mouth, she replied, “Absolutely, definitely, very common!” Finally, the last question asked if participants wished to share any further information. Linda responded by saying, “I think every place should support them. It is very necessary. Those that are not accessible should become so just because it’s the right think to do.”

Results reveal that each of the three bed and breakfasts has had different experiences with people with disabilities. The one common response was that they had all received positive comments from people with disabilities. This indicates that when bed and breakfast owners make their property accessible, people with disabilities are appreciative of this step.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to look at bed and breakfast websites and measure the quality of the websites based on five domains. These domains included user friendliness, site attractiveness, marketing efficiency, and technical quality. The fifth domain was an addition to the literature and specific to understanding the quality of information provided to people with disabilities. Areas covered in this chapter will include 1) summary of procedures and treatment of the data, 2) summary of findings, 3) conclusions, 4) discussion and implications, and 5) recommendations for future research.

Summary of Procedures and Treatment of Data

An advanced search on Bedandbreakfast.com for people with disabilities listed 87 bed and breakfasts with these accommodations. One researcher started at the top of the list and the other at the bottom of the list. A scorecard originally designed by Kline, et al. (2004) was revised and used to assess the websites. Specifically, an item called spell check was removed from the technical quality domain and marketing to people with disabilities domain was added. After removing some of these listings for various reasons, 77 bed and breakfasts were left to be analyzed. The two researchers conducted their website reviews on various days from April 9 to May 3, 2005. .

The second part of the study involved a qualitative questionnaire administered to the owners/managers of three bed and breakfasts. These bed and breakfasts were selected because they had provided the most detailed information on their websites for people with disabilities. The survey had questions about their marketing to people with

disabilities and their response from this population of guests. On a July afternoon, the primary researcher phoned each of the three bed and breakfasts and had the owner/operator respond to questions centered around including people with disabilities on their website.

A prepared script introducing the study was used and permission was asked in responding to 10 questions. Once they agreed to participate, they were asked a series of questions related to their motivations to provide accessible accommodations, marketing strategies, and the response of their guests with disabilities to the accessible accommodations.

Summary of Findings

Research Objective 1: To Profile the Sample of Florida Bed and Breakfasts from BedandBreakfast.com

The researcher found that bed and breakfasts that market themselves as accessible to people with disabilities through BedandBreakfast.com are most often located in the North East region of Florida. This region includes Jacksonville, Fernandina Beach/Amelia Island, and St. Augustine. Bed and breakfasts were found second most common in the South East region of Florida. Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Key West are found in this region.

The majority of bed and breakfasts were built between 1901 and 1923. However, it is important to point out that 25 of the bed and breakfast websites did not list when it was built. Only 18 bed and breakfasts listed a period of restoration on their website. These all occurred in 1990 or after with the Americans with Disabilities Act being passed in 1990. The researcher speculates that with these restorations, perhaps, owners and builders

believed it was important to comply with the ADA and included this information on the website.

Most bed and breakfasts in the accessibility search have six or more rooms. This is significant because the ADA states that a bed and breakfast with six or more rooms must be accessible to people with disabilities. This is because it is considered a place of lodging and must accommodate people with hearing, visual, and physical disabilities (United States Department of Justice, 2002).

Seventy-one of the websites had their rates listed. Overall, rates for a bed and breakfast are between \$55 and \$608. This shows a large range in prices. Only eight websites specified whether the owners lived on site or not. Of those who mentioned this, more than half did not live on site. Perhaps, owners do not think this information is important to the potential guest.

Research Objective 2: To Modify and Test a Revised Scorecard with the Addition of Information on Marketing to People with Disabilities

The scorecard was composed of five separate domains to assess overall quality of the website. The first domain, user friendliness, had five items that were assessed. Of those items, websites most often met three of the five. The items that were frequently missing were not providing a search option and not having a site map or index available.

Site attractiveness was the second domain. Most often, all six of the items were included on the websites. Site attractiveness contained the most subjective questions for the researcher(s) to respond to. Questions relating to whether the “...background effective and appealing?” or “Does the use of color improve the visual appeal of the site?” Thus, because this was a dichotomous response (yes/no) it was more likely that the response was a “yes” thus driving up the frequency of yeses on the scorecard.

The scorecard's third domain was marketing effectiveness. This section originally had 16 items. This was decreased to 11 items after the inter-rater reliability test. Florida Bed and Breakfast websites scored less than five out of 11 most of the time. In terms of marketing, this indicates that bed and breakfasts may not be making the most use of their awards, testimonials, and packages information. These are simple steps that could improve the bed and breakfast's reach to potential consumers.

Technical quality was the fourth section of the scorecard. These items were assessed by NetMechanics.com, a free service used to test the quality of websites. Only one Website repeatedly returned errors on two of the four items. Overall, achieving a 3 or 4 out of 4 was a common score. A total of 35 bed and breakfast websites scored four out of four. All of the websites met at least two of the items.

The section for marketing to people with disabilities originally had 10 items and was reduced to three items based on the inter-rated reliability test. The three items remaining were: (1) if there was a standardized wheelchair graphic, (2) if a detailed description of accommodations was present, and (3) if audio was present. Having a standardized wheelchair graphic was a suggestion for letting others know a bed and breakfast is accessible which was provided by the authors of *So—You Want to Be an Innkeeper* (Davies et al., 1996). One bed and breakfast had the wheelchair symbol. In Davies et al. book, they suggested that the wheelchair symbol should be blue like the ADA one. The one wheelchair symbol located was instead black and less than a square centimeter in size. Davies et al. also suggested that accommodations be specifically described beyond the terms accessible or handicapped equipped. Examples of this would be staying that the toilet seat is raised or that a wheelchair ramp leads up to the entryway

of the house. Only six of the 71 websites had anything specific listed and only four had more than a couple of words.

Lastly, all websites were checked for sound. Audio was found on eight websites. However, in all cases, the audio was music, not a voice describing accommodations or rates.

Research Objective 3: To Assess The Relative Quality Of Florida Bed And Breakfast's Based On Aspects Of A) Technical Quality, B) User Friendliness, C) Site Attractiveness, D) Marketing Effectiveness, E) Accessibility Issues

The strongest quality of the bed and breakfast websites was the site attractiveness component as was also found in the study of Kline et al. (2004). As previously mentioned, this may be a result of ambiguous questions that forced the evaluator to make his/her own judgment about the items. For instance, one item referred to the pictures on the website being of a good quality. However, no definition was in place as to what was a good quality of picture. The weakest component of Florida bed and breakfasts was the marketing to people with disabilities section. This is result of most bed and breakfasts that are accessible not actually marketing this.

Research Objective 4: To Examine The Relationship Between Quality Of Florida Bed And Breakfast's Websites and A) Year Built, B) Last Restored, C) Location, D) Lowest and Highest Rate, E) Size.

When the year built was examined in relation to the five domains, a relationship existed between those bed and breakfasts built in 1900 or before and marketing to people with disabilities. This is contradictory to intuition. It was thought possibly that those bed and breakfasts built in more modern times would be more accessible and in turn would market more of this information. However, older historic homes were more likely to include information for people with disabilities.

The researcher had assumed that there would be a significant relationship between marketing to people with disabilities and year restored. The ADA was enacted in 1990. It was thought that those built a bit later would provide more marketing because they would have restorations that matched the requirements of the ADA. No relationship existed between year of restoration and the five quality domains.

No relationship was revealed between location of the bed and breakfast and the five quality domains. Perhaps this makes sense. Logically there is no reason that a bed and breakfast from the north would be more inclined to include quality information than a bed and breakfast from the south. . There was no statistical significance found between number of rooms and the five quality domains. This is interesting in that it was hypothesized that those with more rooms would have a higher quality than those that had less. This would be because those bed and breakfasts would be operating a more commercial business. They would realize the benefit of having a strong Website.

Research Objective 5: To Utilize A Qualitative Survey as A Follow-up to the Bed And Breakfast Owners of the Three Best Websites Inquiring About Motivations, Marketing Techniques, and Guest Responses

Responses for most of the qualitative questions varied from each bed and breakfast. Two of the three surveyed chose to make their bed and breakfasts accessible while one purchased it that way. The researcher believes that with many bed and breakfasts being historic, new owners will have to renovate them in order to make them accessible. In terms of advertising accessible accommodation in other locations besides their website, the bed and breakfast that used a variety of outlets also had the most guests with disabilities in the last year, 50. The researcher noted a concern when one of the owners said he was nervous to market more because of what might happen if people found him

less accessible than they desired. The researcher thought this might be a possibility when legal action is common place.

None of those interviewed felt that their revenue had increased as a result of being accessible. The researcher had hoped that bed and breakfasts were reaching enough people with disabilities but this was not the case. All three had chosen to advertise their accessible accommodations to reach people with disabilities. None of the respondents consulted someone about what information they placed on their website though Notarius and Brewer (2001) suggest that owners do consult someone. They also suggested that owners confer with someone about their accommodations for people with disabilities. Only one respondent said that he had an expert contractor and people with disabilities who provided him with guidance. All respondents said that guests with disabilities who had stayed with them had all provided positive feedback. Finally, one respondent reported having great word of mouth among guests with disabilities. The other two were not aware of any word of mouth referrals. The researcher believes that a person who was referred via word of mouth might not mention that the referrer had disabilities.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings of this study, the following conclusions are presented. Most bed and breakfasts have six or more rooms. The ADA requires these properties to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Rates for bed and breakfasts vary greatly. Thus, bed and breakfasts are affordable to people with disabilities.

Once listing themselves in an online bed and breakfast directory as being accessible, bed and breakfasts do not follow through and provide this information on their

websites. This leaves people with disabilities without detailed information, unless they make the extra effort of phoning or e-mailing the inn.

Bed and breakfast websites are unlikely to have audio that includes verbal descriptions of the property. Additionally, it is improbable that they will have the international blue wheelchair symbol on their Web page. Few sites have specific information about their accommodations.

Websites are most likely to be attractive in appearance and least likely to market their accessibility. Thus, owners focus more attention on the attractiveness of their site than the descriptive content of it.

Bed and breakfast accommodations can be important to people with disabilities. Typically, they provide positive feedback about their visit.

Discussion and Implications

Though different in several aspects, the bed and breakfast website of Kline et al. (2004) bed and breakfast website study and this one have similar results. Primarily, the study by Kline et al. utilized a different scorecard in the final version than this study did. This study did not include an item in the technical quality domain to check website spelling and did not include the fifth domain for marketing to people with disabilities. The study by Kline et al. used an overall Likert scale at the end of each domain in combination with the dichotomous items of each domain rather than merely a dichotomous response category.

Kline et al. reviewed 19 bed and breakfast websites whereas this study provides the results of 77 bed and breakfasts websites. Additionally, Kline et al. utilized a different test of inter-rater reliability. Since they used nine raters, they were able to test inter-rater reliability with Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance, used with three or more raters

(Kline et al., 2004) This study only utilized two raters and tested inter-rater reliability. Thus, questions where the two raters differed by five or more responses were removed from the overall score card. This study did not have a Likert scale after each domain, only dichotomous questions. Ultimately, the study by Kline et al. had 41 dichotomous items, and this study had 29.

Nonetheless, in both Kline et al.'s study and this one, websites scored highest in website quality for site attractiveness. Though this domain is subjective in nature, it also shows that innkeepers are more concerned with appearance than content or description. Innkeepers provide more detail in the area of background, pictures, and font than other areas. Additionally, in Kline et al.'s study, the domain receiving the lowest average score for quality was marketing effectiveness. In this study, the domain receiving the lowest average score was marketing to people with disabilities, followed by marketing effectiveness. Both studies revealed that websites had a low quality of marketing effectiveness. As Kline et al. mentioned in their results, this further mirrors the findings of Morrison et al. 1999. Morrison et al.'s study concluded that small hotels were not affectively using basic marketing principles to promote themselves through their website. It is interesting that more than five years later this phenomenon is still true.

Bed and breakfasts have an occupancy rate 14 % lower than hotels (Lanier et al., 2000). Through website marketing, bed and breakfasts have an ability to improve their occupancy rate. In this study, the highest possible score was a 29. Nonetheless, on average, bed and breakfasts scored a 16.2, with a low of 11 and a high of 21. There are points of improvement that each bed and breakfast can attain. Internet users have access to websites 24 hours a day; a well designed website can attract their attention. When a

website is poorly designed or does not provide necessary information, Internet users are likely to go elsewhere.

Moreover, practical books such as *Open Your Own Bed & Breakfast* (Notarius and Brewer, 2001) provide specific information to bed and breakfast owners on how to market themselves through the Internet. Notarius and Brewer state that website users want to be able to easily execute a search and understand the material provided. Additionally, viewers want to see exactly at what type of place they will be staying, specifically through 360° pictures. Lastly, website users like to check room availability on-line and even make reservations there (Notarius and Brewer). Frequently, bed and breakfast websites in this study did not even follow these few guidelines put forth by the authors in their book.

Bed and breakfast owners have the ability to target market to people with disabilities by providing easily accessed, detailed information on their websites. Over a two year period, 22.2 million individuals traveled (Blum, 2003). This a large segment which bed and breakfasts can address. Improving occupancy rate leads to better profit for the bed and breakfasts.

In *So—You Want to Be an Innkeeper* Davies et al. (1996) provide simple steps for accommodating people with disabilities. This practical text can also provide insight as to necessary preparation for innkeepers. Innkeepers should be conscious of their attitude when interacting with people with disabilities, being open and inviting. The authors suggest that if an innkeeper purchases an inn that does not already meet the ADA that they should ask for a price adjustment. In this book, Davies et al. describe in detail some of the items of ADA that apply to bed and breakfasts such as bathrooms, bedrooms, and

elevators. Lastly, the authors suggest that an accessibility consultant be contacted to review the bed and breakfast property (Davies et al.). However, results of the qualitative show that none of the three individuals interviewed had consulted an accessibility consultant.

Simple steps can be taken by bed and breakfasts to improve their marketing in general as well as to people with disabilities. As seen from this study, the average bed and breakfast scored 13 points lower than the highest possible score. Providing better description of accommodations and benefits and having easy navigational tools will help a website to be more functional to users. In addition, information for people with disabilities should be easily located on the home page. This could be a link to the information or the actual information. Minimal steps can make a bed and breakfast website more appealing and helpful.

The author of this study suggests the following for bed and breakfast websites and property, (1) The website should be easily searchable for people with disabilities. They (like other guests) prefer to seek information without hassle. It can be more convenient for them to contact a chain hotel were it is likely that accessibility exists than to spend time looking for the necessary information on a bed and breakfast website. (2) Specifically, a link on the home page entitled people with disabilities should be provided. Once directed to this information, details should be provided on specific types of accessibility. Simply saying that a bed and breakfast is “accessible” does not provide detailed information. Guests with disabilities likely want to know whether an alarm clock with strobe light or a wheelchair roll-in shower is available. (3) In terms of the bed and breakfast, the author would suggest that the property met the ADA requirements of

accessibility. (4) Additionally, as suggested by Davies et al., the researcher would suggest that a consultant be asked to review the property for suggestions in barrier removal. The researcher would suggest interacting with some people with disabilities to be familiar with their preferences. Being at ease around guests with disabilities will make them feel more comfortable, and thus more likely to return or provide positive word of mouth.

This study has shown that bed and breakfast websites do not adequately market themselves to people with disabilities and can also use improvement in the other areas studied. Through using available texts and professional resources, owners can create a website that better reaches potential guests. This study should encourage bed and breakfast owners to take a closer look at their websites and make improvement where possible.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, a range was provided for rates at bed and breakfasts. However, these were not the rates for the room meant to accommodate a person with disabilities. Research should look at how much accessible rooms cost and if that is affordable to people with disabilities. In reason, Darcy (2002) said that accessible hotels tend to be more upscale; maybe, people with disabilities need or are looking for more cost efficient lodging when they travel.

This study looked mainly at the bed and breakfasts and their websites. The other side should be a point of focus. Further investigation should look into if people with disabilities want to stay at bed and breakfasts. Also, research should review how often people with disabilities currently stay at bed and breakfasts.

Bed and breakfast owners who do not provide this information on their websites should be researched. Specifically, motivations as to why they chose to select they were accessible on BedandBreakfast.com and why they do not place detailed information on their website. Owners should be asked whether had a consultant, builder, or specialist review their property for accessibility.

Websites that describe their accommodations should be visited to check these depictions. This could be done with or without the knowledge of the innkeeper and the identity of the bed and breakfast could be kept anonymous. This could determine if they are really accessible or not.

Davies et al. (1996) suggests that innkeepers hire someone to design and to maintain their website. Further investigation should include if the website was professionally created. Also, if professional, information should be collected on if a consultation was provided in terms of content and marketing.

Studies have not recently been conducted on bed and breakfasts and the Internet as a form of attracting guests. Future research should include determining how important their website is to their overall occupancy rate. Perhaps, even with the increase in Internet usage, bed and breakfasts are still marketed through word of mouth or chambers of commerce.

Research should look into properties already choose to target market to a different segment such as those with special dietary needs or gay and lesbian travelers. Within their business plan, owners may establish that they want to target market a segment other than people with disabilities

A qualitative study could be performed that reached a larger sample of owners.
More of a consensus might be seen among answers if there were more participants.

APPENDIX A
BED AND BREAKFAST WEBSITE EVALUATION

B&B Name: _____

Location: _____

Website address: _____

Number of Rooms: _____

Date built: _____ **Last restored:** _____

Lowest rate: _____ **Highest rate:** _____

User friendliness

	YES	NO
Is a site content search function available?		
Is a site map or index available?		
Is a home button available from all pages?		
Direct email contact clearly available?		
Mailing address clearly available?		
Telephone number clearly available?		
Fax number clearly available?		
Clear and effective navigation tools on each page?		
Limited vertical and horizontal scrolling?		

Site Attractiveness

	YES	NO
Are pictures or images available to reinforce text content?		
Are the pages clean and uncluttered?		
Is the text clear and readable?		
Is there a sufficient contrast between background and text?		
Is the background effective and appealing?		
Does the use of color improve the visual appeal of the site?		
Are the photos and images of a good quality?		
Is there an effective use of web page space?		
Are the hyperlinks easy to read?		

Marketing Effectiveness

	YES	NO
Awards information available?		
Is Testimonial information available?		
Is a Calendar of events available?		
Are Hyperlinks to sponsor/advertisements available?		
Is there a logo reflected on the website?		
Is a mission statement available?		
Are house pictures available?		
Are room pictures available?		
Is a virtual tour available?		
Are the rates available?		
Can you make a reservation online?		
Are special packages offered?		
Are special promotions addressed?		
Are special target markets addressed (children, pets, ADA, etc.)?		
Does text describe uniqueness of the B&B (architect, historical, etc.)?		
Does text describe innkeepers or owners?		
Are local activities and events listed on site?		
Are there links to activities and area attractions?		

Technical quality: (by NetMechanic.com)

	YES	NO
Link Check		
HTML Check		
Browser Compatibility		
Load Time		

Analysis on marketing to people with disabilities

Location of information: home page ____ 1st subsequent page ____
 (check all that apply) 2nd subsequent page ____ 3rd+ subsequent page ____

	YES	NO
Any information about accommodations for people with disabilities?		
Standardized wheelchair graphic?		
Appropriately vocabulary used?		
Description of accommodations?		
E-mail address listed on page about accessible accommodations?		
Phone number listed on page about accessible accommodations?		

7. Have you consulted a person with disabilities or an expert about disabilities to review your accommodations and/or marketing technique via your Website? Have you consulted any other type of source with regards to accommodating people with disabilities? If so, what types?

8. Have you had any response from your guests with disabilities, positive or negative?

9. Have you found that guests with disabilities have recommended you via word of mouth to other individuals with disabilities?

10. Is there any other information you would like to share?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Felicia Ann Rogers was born on January 3, 1982, in Lakeland, Florida, and she lived there her entire life prior to moving to Gainesville. She is the daughter of Dan and Sharon Rogers and has one sister, Lori. Felicia moved to Gainesville in 2000 to pursue her bachelor's degree in commercial recreation and hospitality management at the University of Florida. During her last semester of undergraduate work, she completed an internship with the Hilton University of Florida Conference Center as a sales and catering intern.

After completing her bachelor's degree, she continued schooling with a similar focus for graduate coursework at the University of Florida. Specifically, Felicia chose to focus her master's degree in tourism marketing. She enjoyed taking classes related to ecotourism, heritage tourism, and marketing. She took the most pleasure in attending the National Outdoor Recreation and Rural Consortium in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It was the first hand experiences with tourism, nature and history that she liked the most. Felicia is now graduating with her Master of Science in Recreational Studies degree from the Department of Tourism, Recreation, and Sport Management.