



# Social Traveller Report

## 2011

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## Introduction

We're immersed in a truly global, social media environment. Web 2.0 and its supporting convergent technologies continue to reveal seemingly boundless potential for information sharing, but understanding what people actually want, that's never been harder.

Analysis reveals 'vertical reading' – where web users flick up and down a page rather than read in full; web users now filter streams of content, jumping from source to source. So what do they want from your site?

The aim of this report is to better understand the distance between travel companies' thoughts and their customers' needs.

When a travel company is online, its website should still be the primary source of information for would-be customers – Twitter may be a useful signpost, but it's their site that's the destination. And when site visitors navigate away, they take with them their money and your booking.

So, if your website doesn't speak the same language as your customers, or they don't trust its content, the synergy slips away – when it comes to booking, "reliability" and "trust" may be the two most important factors in this market, but how can you guarantee travelers stay on your site?

We named this research the “Social Traveler Report”, as your clients are looking for information about travel, but will travel far and wide to get it...

### The Survey

We created two questionnaires: the first one, Business to Consumer (B to C1) was addressed to the travelers (your potential customers) while the second one, Business to Business (B to B2) went to travel companies.

And the results surprised us. As you will see, the distance between what the travel industry thinks people want from its websites, and what travelers actually want, is massive.

We asked travelers to rate from 1 to 5 which of the following made a travel website a reliable resource,

- Design
- Use of quality images
- Inclusion of a regularly–updated blog
- Use of well–written English
- The availability of feedback forms

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix. Exhibit 1

<sup>2</sup> Appendix. Exhibit 2

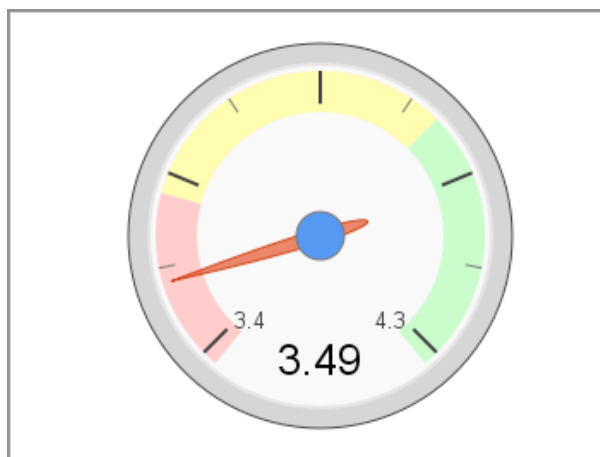
In parallel, we asked companies to rate the same five features, answering the question, “What do you think potential customers expect from a travel website?”

## The Results

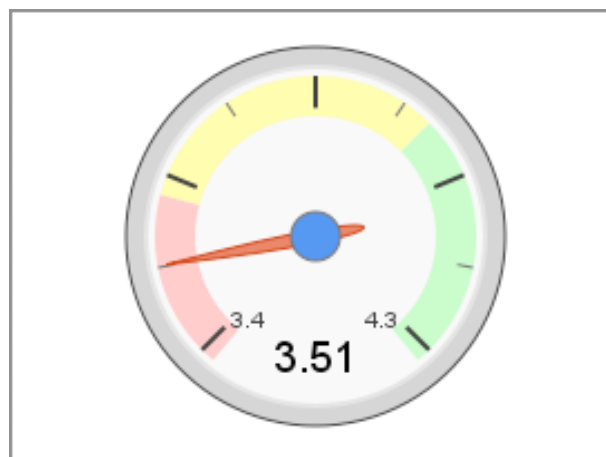
In this part of the report, we analyse each of the five features, comparing research from both travel companies and their potential clients.

- Website Design

The following images/dials show the average rating (1-5) given to each feature found on travel website; you can find the customer rating on the left, the business one on the right.



Website Design B to C (average rate)



Website Design B to B (average rate)

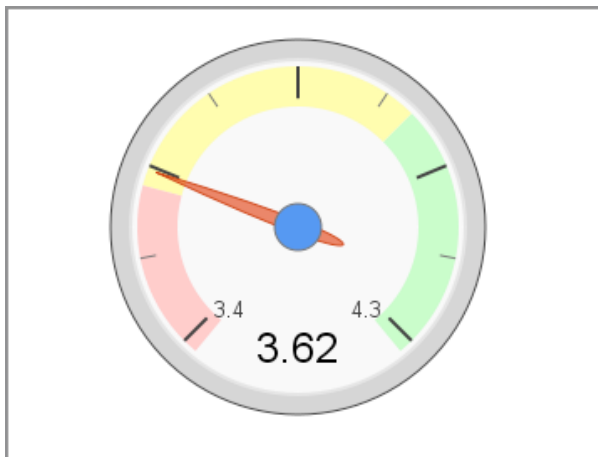
Each indicator has been split in three sections, from the red (less valued) to the green (more valued) in order to better highlight the perceived value of each feature.

Based on this, we can see that the two results overlap: this means companies and travelers give the same value to the design of a travel website.

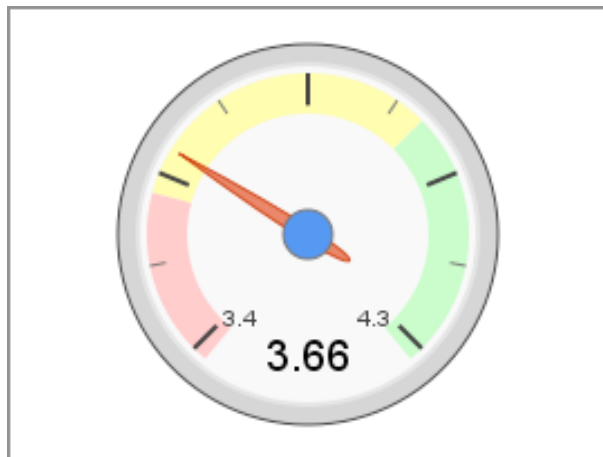
Going a bit deeper in the analysis, it's possible to look at the grade's distribution graph<sup>3</sup> in the appendix.

It shows how grade '4' got the largest share, with almost 30% of total replies, suggesting that good website design is 'fairly important' in a traveler's mind.

- Quality Images



Quality Images B to C (average rate)



Quality Images B to B (average rate)

According to these indicators, there's only a slight disparity between what customers want and what companies think they want.

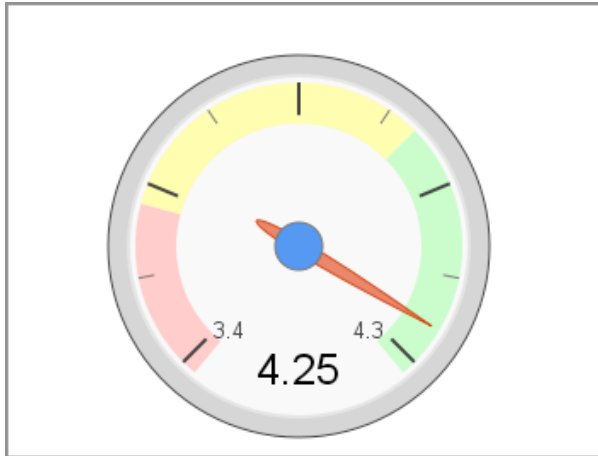
Although this feature's average grade is slightly higher than that given to web design, the distribution of grades<sup>4</sup> reveal that the largest percentage of answers (more than 30%) were grade '3', a medium/low grade – this means that most travelers value this feature '3' on a scale of 1 to 5.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix. Website's Design B to C grades' distribution.

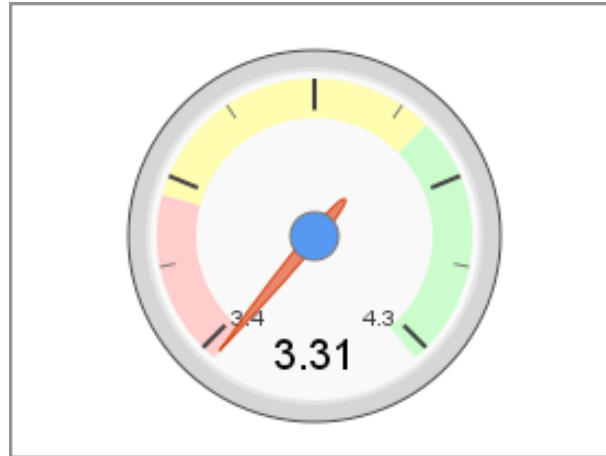
<sup>4</sup> Appendix. Quality Images B to C grades' distribution.

- Regularly-updated Blog

From here the results get interesting:



Updated Blog B to C (average rate)



Updated Blog B to B (average rate)

In this case, the dissimilarity between the two is clear: it's almost one full point! This is even more evident when we consider the spread of grades<sup>5</sup>: half of the travelers rated the value of an updated blog with a '5'.

In simpler terms, if you pick 10 random travelers, five of them will say that a regularly-updated blog is the most important feature in helping them trust a travel website. A further 4 of them will still rate a blog with a '4' – now we are seeing what potential customers actually want.

- Well-written English

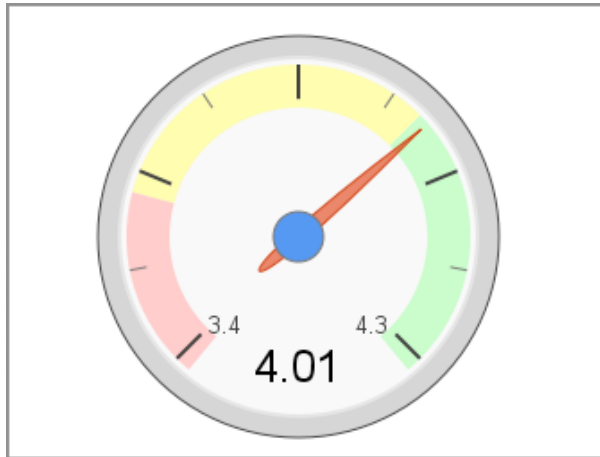
Many travel companies don't speak English as their first language and only half of them know what a copywriting service is<sup>6</sup>. Often, it is their websites that have the

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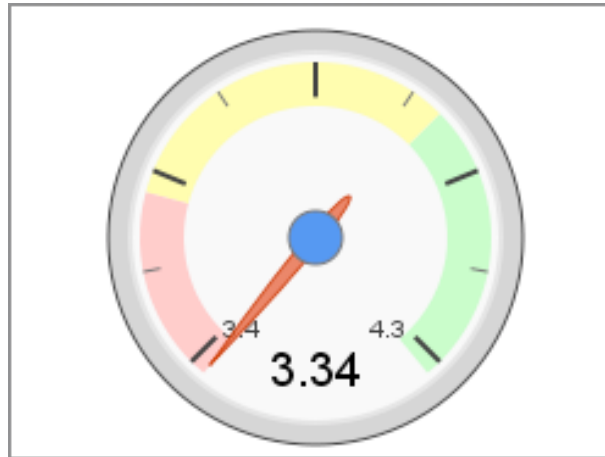
<sup>5</sup> Appendix. Modern Blog B to C grades' distribution.

<sup>6</sup> see Appendix: Copywriting Exhibit.

poorest standard of English – sad, as it’s these companies that are looking to reach out into English-speaking markets.



Well-written English B to C (average rate)

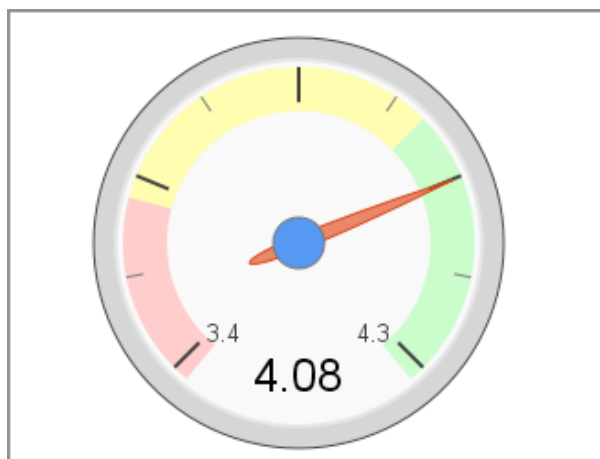


Well-written English B to B (average rate)

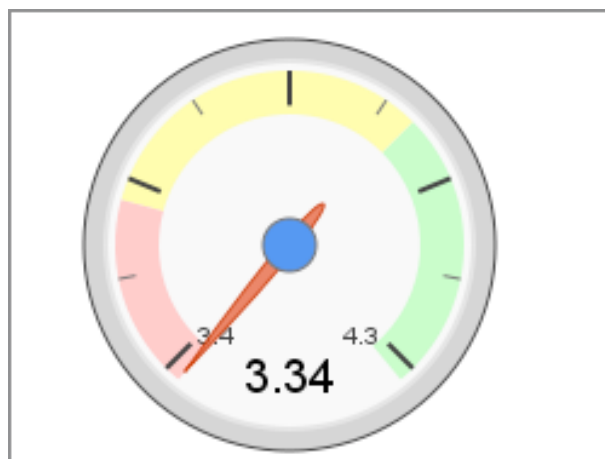
According to the distribution Exhibit<sup>7</sup>, we see that on average, 70% of travelers value very important (‘4’ and ‘5’ ratings) the quality of a travel website’s English.

So, just how much business are companies losing by not having their content written professionally?

- Feedback Forms



Feedback Forms B to C (average rate)



Feedback Forms B to B (average rate)

<sup>7</sup> Appendix. Well-written English B to C grades’ distribution.

Even in this case, companies are not on the same wavelength as their clients.

And, according to the distribution graph<sup>8</sup>, 45% of travelers valued this feature with a grade '5'. Clearly, customers really value the opportunity to communicate when they look at travel websites.

### Conclusions

The difference between what travelers want and what companies think they want, is clear. And it's most obvious within the sphere of social communication – i.e. the blog.

Blogs, content that's well written, and feedback forms are what your potential customers are actually looking for.

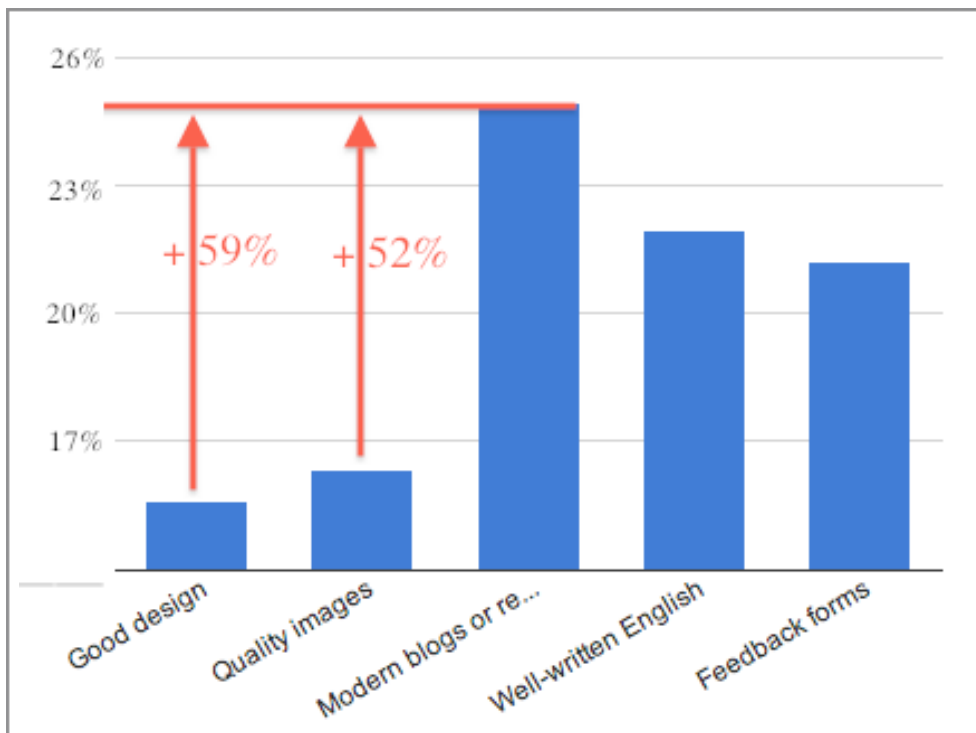
In order to better emphasize this disparity, we generated the 'ROI Comparison Exhibit'; it shows, in percentage, which feature got more of the highest grades ('4' and '5').

So while a modern blog gained almost 25% of the share, good design and quality images reached 15% and 16% respectively. In other words, according to travelers, a blog is twice as important (52 %) as quality images and 59% more valued than good design.

We have intentionally named this graph 'Return on Investment' because the greater the perceived value in the eyes of the customer, the higher its profitability.

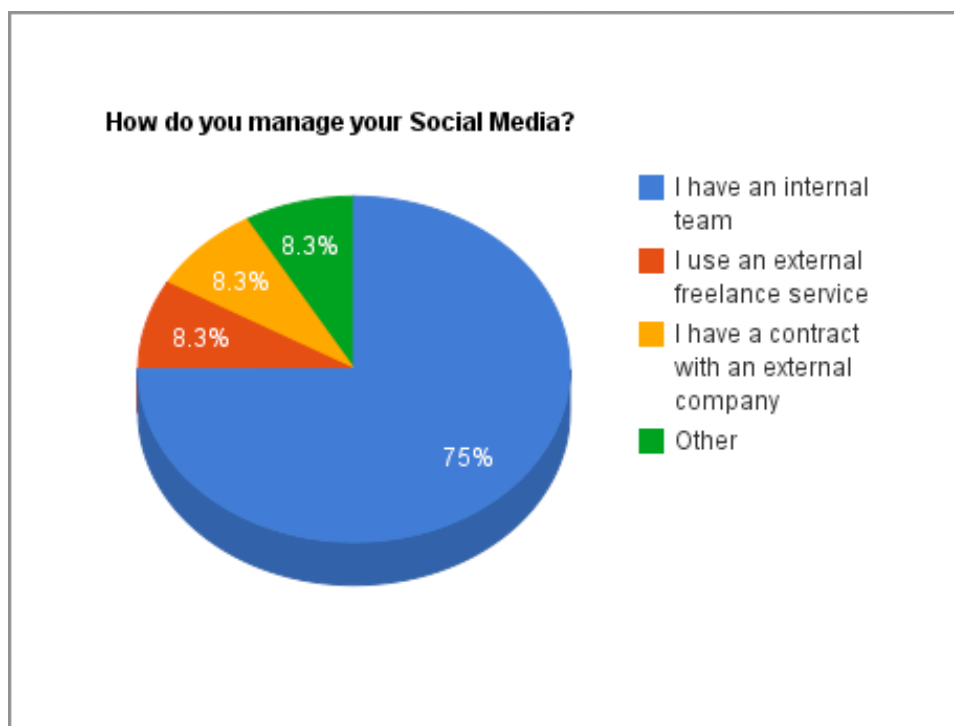
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<sup>8</sup> Appendix. Feedback Forms B to C grades' distribution.



ROI Comparison

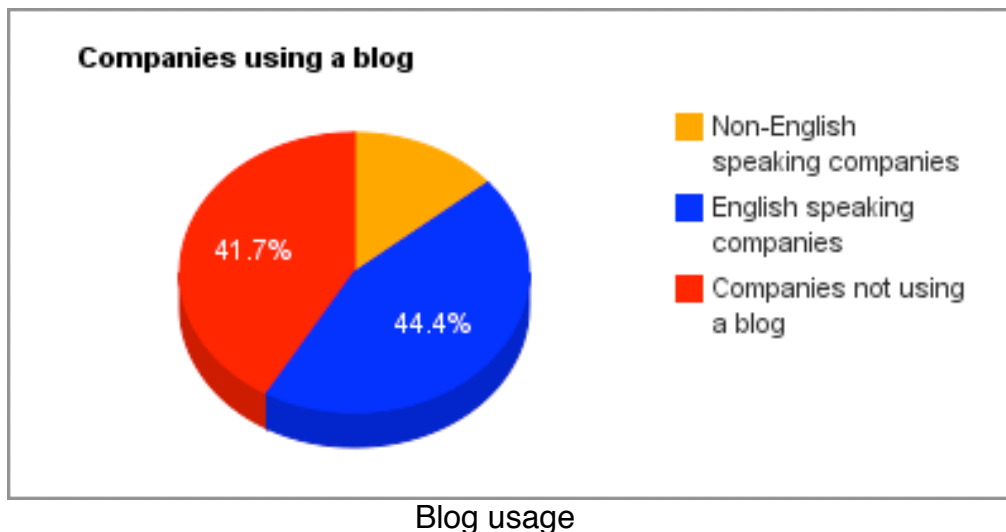
It suggests that, although travel companies are still investing a large part of their money in the design/appearance of their website, soon they will realise that others features may be more effective – and consequently more profitable.



Social Media Management Exhibit

In addition, according to the picture showing the ‘Social Media Management Strategy’, most of the companies (75%) are still regulating their online presence internally – for smaller companies this is often delegated to their sales/ marketing team – adding to their workload.

This could explain why many companies simply don’t bother with a blog (see below) and are missing an excellent opportunity to give travelers what they want.



## Travel Copywriting

Where are you investing your money?

Is your company still investing in design and quality images?

Adventure Sports Holidays, the leading adventure sports travel portal, created a sister company, Travel-Copywriting.com (TCW). Its aim is to provide the content we know web users are looking for, deliver tailored and targeted copy that helps turn a

travel website into a travel resource, and keep the attention of the search engines locked in place.

As well as company blogs, TCW delivers original web content and rewriting services, press releases, features for print media, and travel brochures. Experienced in search engine optimisation and creating blogs with Word Press, the company has a loyal and growing customer base.

For more information, please contact its editor, Mark Pawlak.

Mark Pawlak

Editor

[mark@travel-copywriting.com](mailto:mark@travel-copywriting.com)

Appendix:

Adventure Sports Holidays

\* Required

**For you to trust a travel website, it needs... \***  
( 1:strongly disagree 5: strongly agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
Good design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality Images	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Modern blogs or recently updated content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Well-written English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback forms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do you get information from travel blogs as well as websites? \***

Yes

No

**How could travel websites improve?**

Exhibit 1: B to C Questionnaire

# Travel-Copywriting.com

\* Required

## Promoting your business

*Which of the following do you use to promote your business? \**

	Yes	No
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Website	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*How do you manage your website/ social media content? \**

- I have an internal team
- I use an external freelance service
- I have a contract with an external company
- Other

*What do you think potential customers expect from a travel website? \**

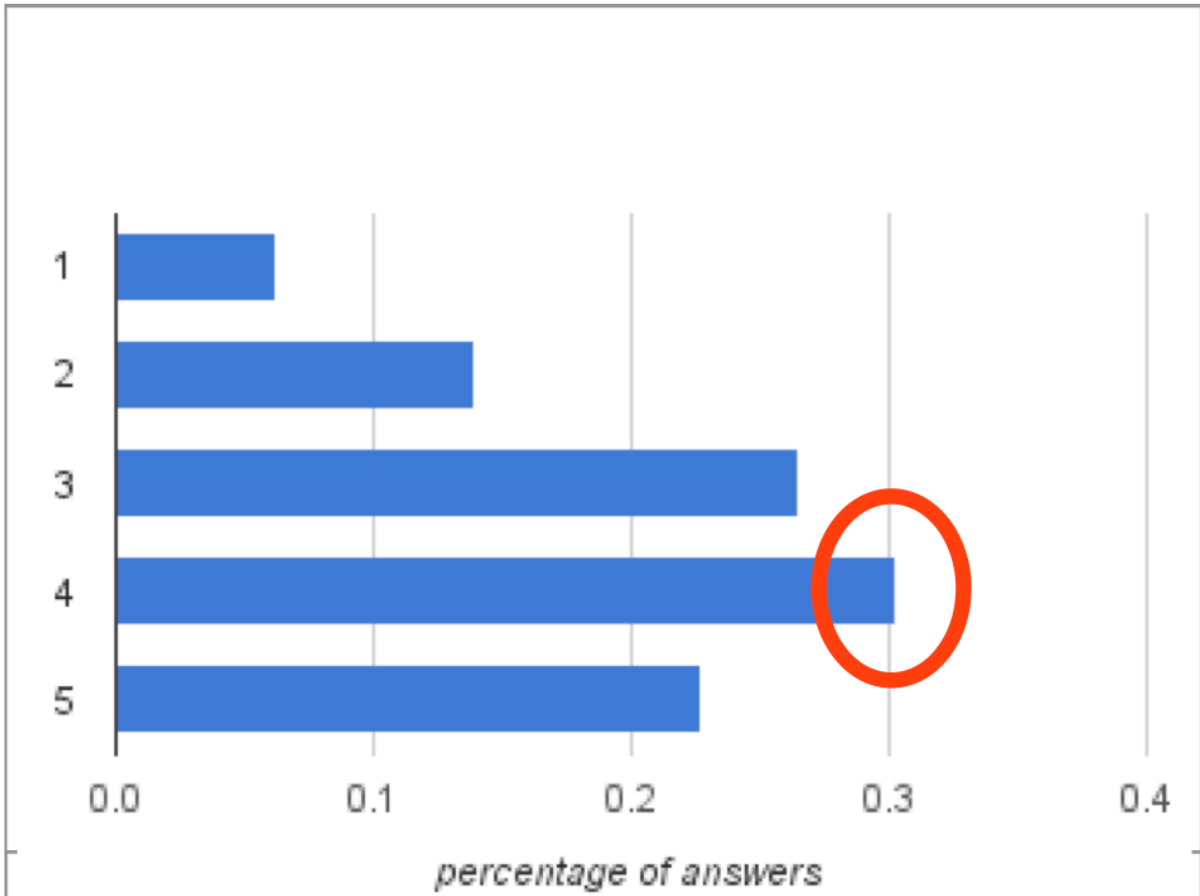
	1	2	3	4	5
Good design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality images	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Modern blogs or recently updated content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Well-written English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback forms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

« Back Continue »

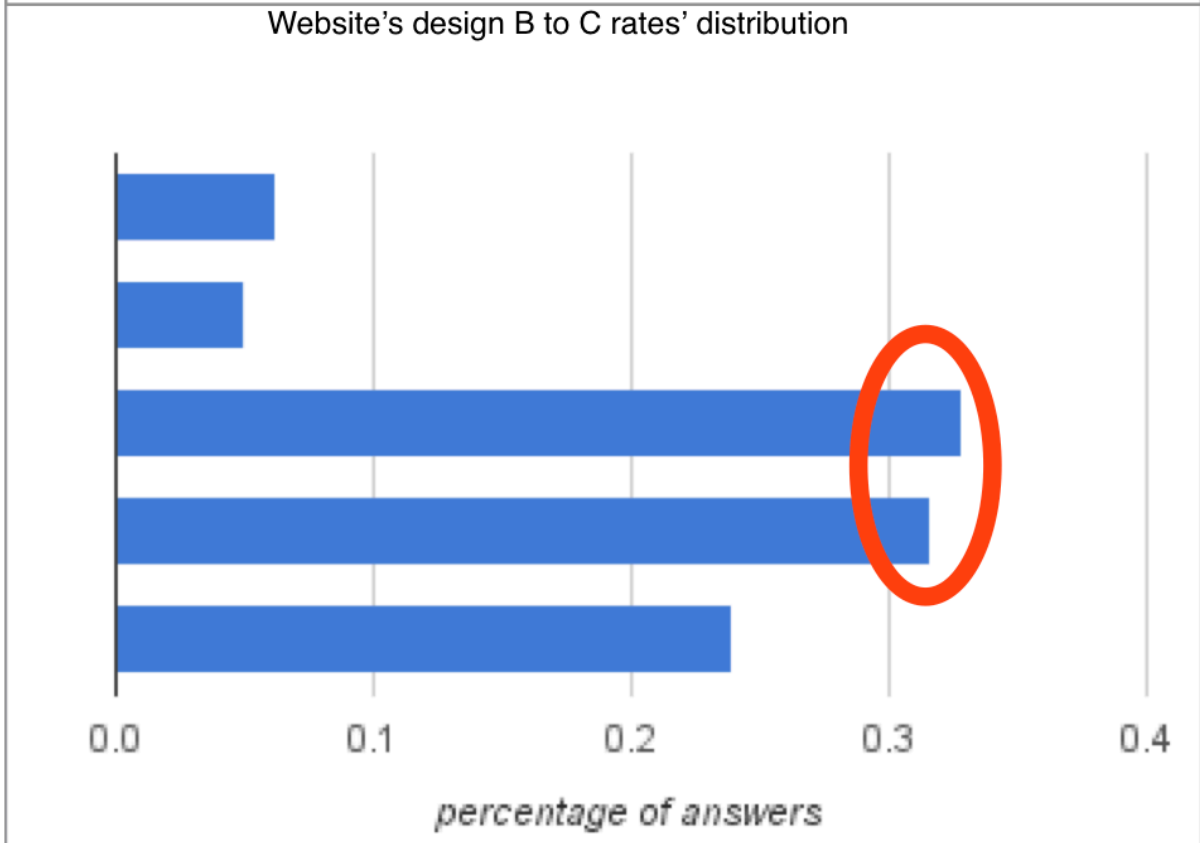
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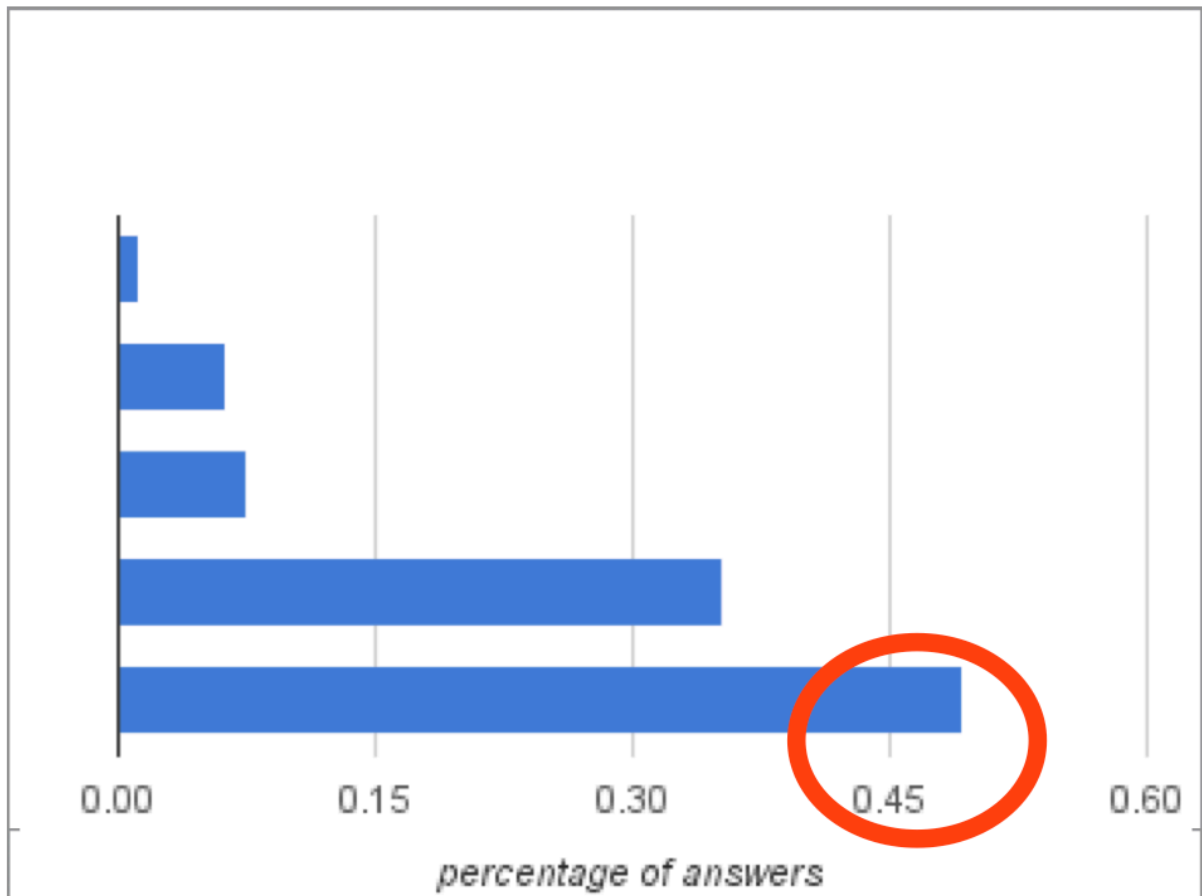
Exhibit 2: B to B Questionnaire



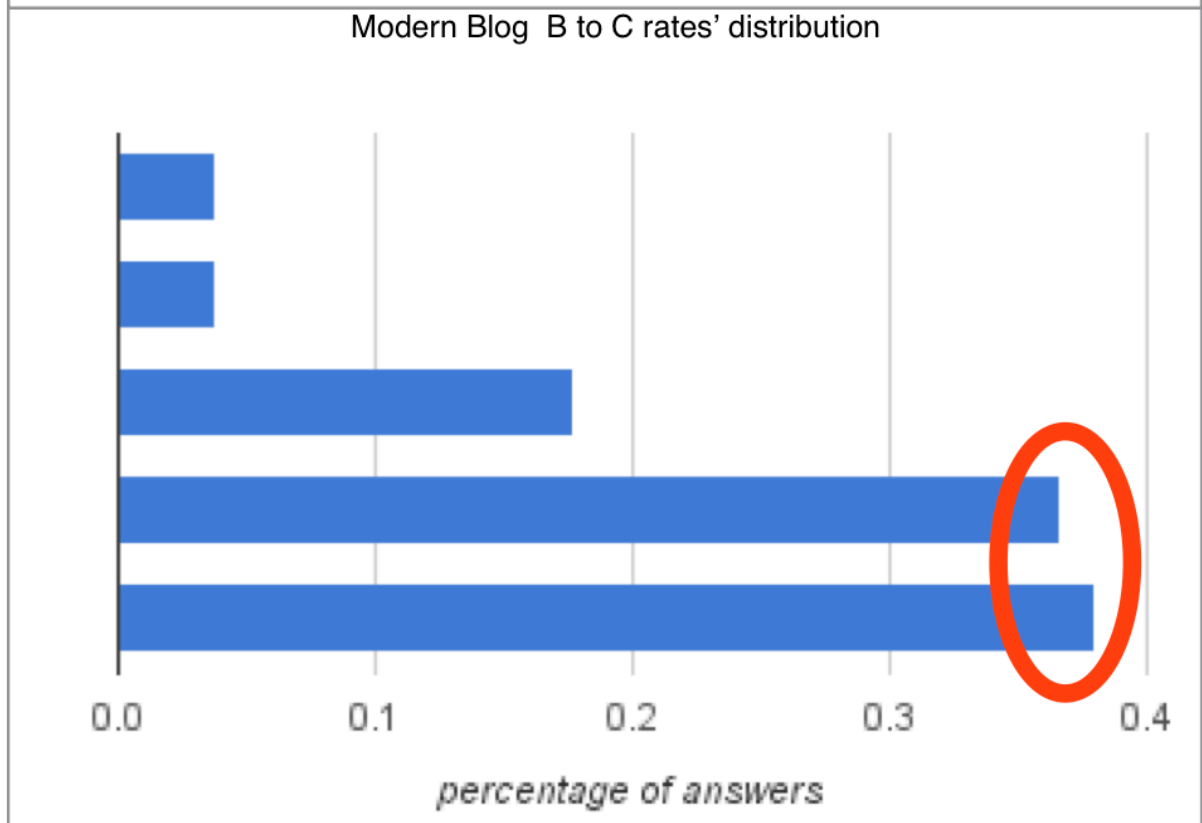
Website's design B to C rates' distribution



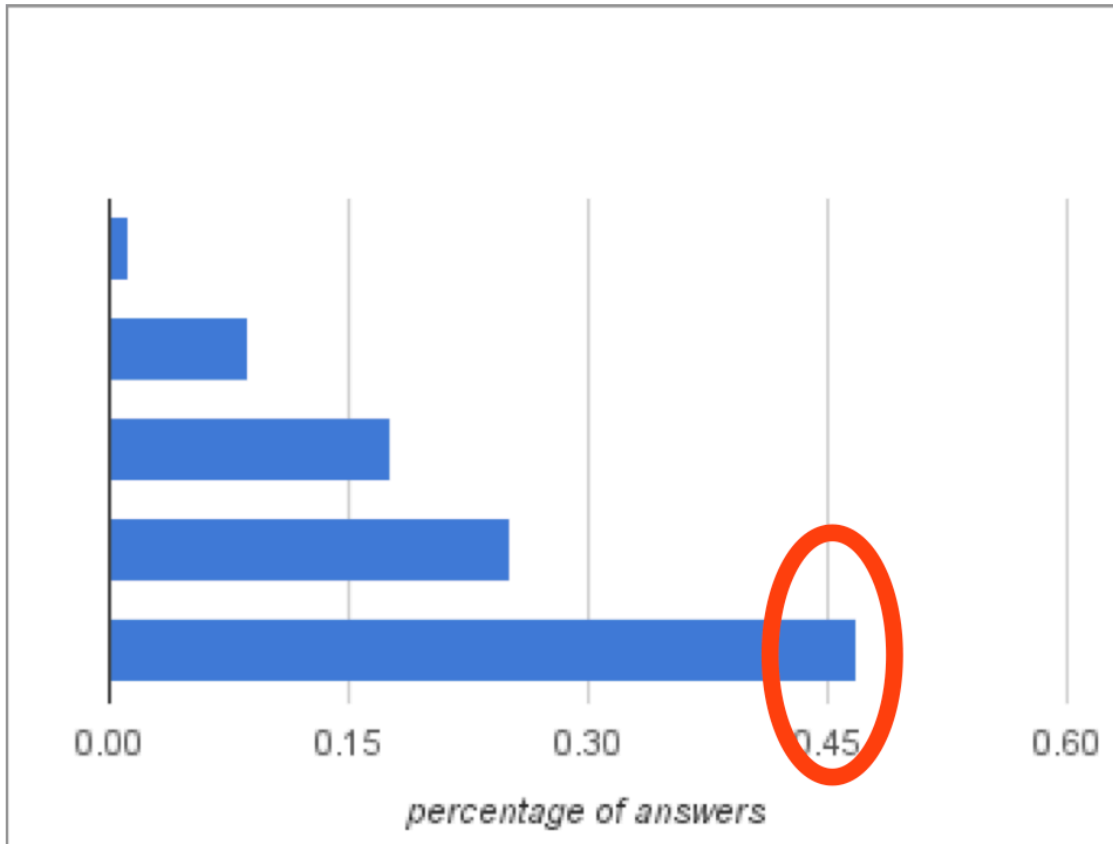
Quality Images B to C rates' distribution



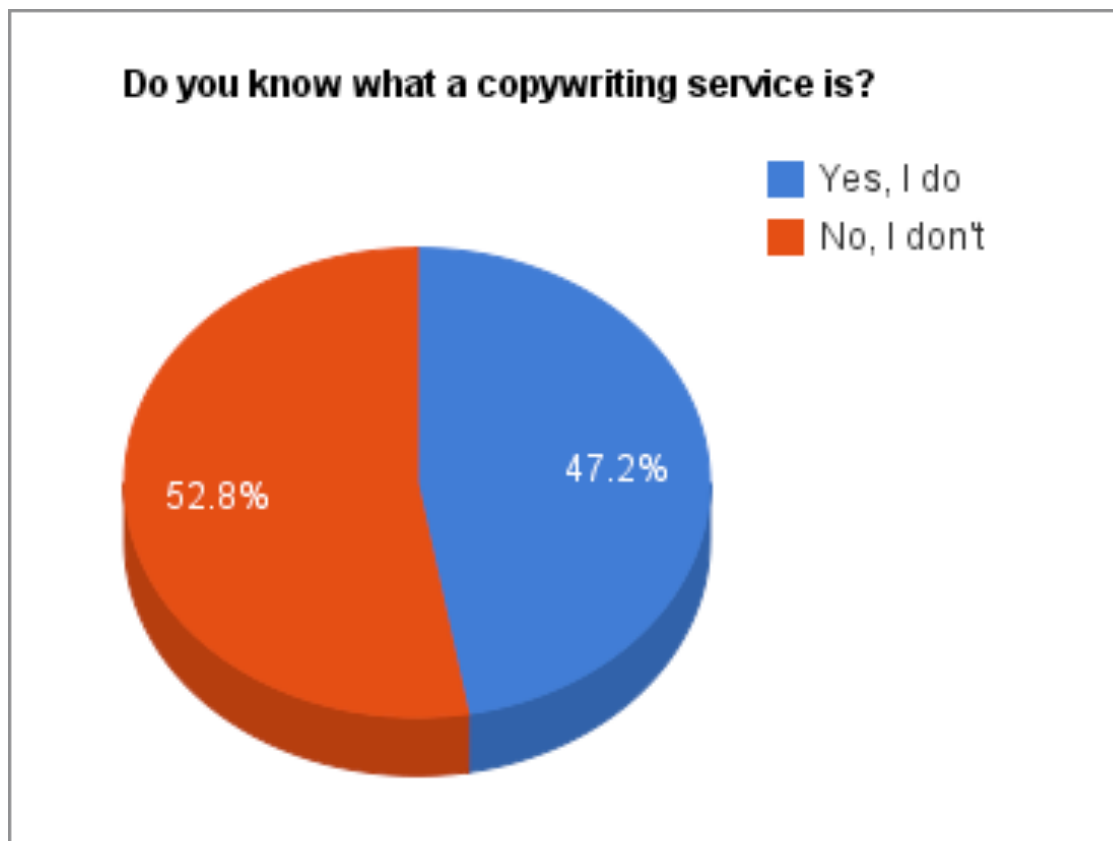
Modern Blog B to C rates' distribution



Good English B to C rates' distribution



Feedback Forms B to C rates' distribution



Copywriting Exhibit