

Topic | Website

Tutorial 16

Images 101

This tutorial will cover the basic concepts to respect when preparing images to use on your website or on the Internet.

Reading time: 15 minutes | Prerequisites: None

The Tourism e-kit is an initiative of the National Online Strategy Committee and is funded by the Australian State & Territory Tourism Offices. This tutorial has been produced by The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse as part of the complete online education program, Tourism e-kit

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1. Which images will help me sell my product?

Use images on your website to help your customers imagine a holiday on your premises. Good images enhance your website and are extremely important.

a). **First impression**

Images are the first thing visitors see when they come to a website. They make or break a first impression. Which one of the 3 homepages below makes a better, more professional first impression?



Screen capture www.renoirs.ca



Screen capture www.whistlermountainhouse.com

Homepage doesn't convey a professional message

Homepage seems dry, as it lacks images



Screen capture www.latitudefivzero.com

Homepage conveys a professional first impression

b). Images tell a story

An image is not a two-dimensional, static placeholder – it sends a message to the visitor. In the tourism industry, this message should not only showcase a product but should also convey an enjoyable, positive experience.

It is therefore important for photos to paint a timely and realistic picture of all the aspects of the experience the visitor can expect. Use your images to tell a story.

On your website, images should:

Set the scene:	Show your property in its current surroundings.
Show the action:	Put a face to the picture and show people experiencing your product. These people must fit the look of your target market. For example, do not show kids on your images if you don't cater for them.
Evoke emotion:	Allow the clients to visualise themselves in the middle of the picture and feel as if they are experiencing your offerings.

Too often websites only set the scene. Consumers need to be able to picture themselves at your property, in the centre of the action. Do your photos send a message to your visitors?



Photo credit: <http://flickr.com/photos/paraflyer/>

Photo credit: Fabienne Rabbiosi

Static, hard to relate to

“Nice view, but what can I do there?”

Evokes action and emotion

“It could be me and my mates on top of that glacier”

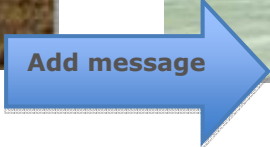


Photo credit: <http://flickr.com/photos/freewine/>

Photo credit: <http://flickr.com/photos/annamatic3000/>

Static, hard to relate to

"I see, they have kayaks, but can I use them?"

Evokes action and emotion

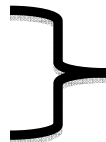
"How much fun would my kids and I be having?"

2. Technical components of images

It is crucial to understand the importance of having images that speak to your target market. However, there are technical rules that images need to abide by to convey a professional message.

Images need to:

- Have an appropriate size
- Have a web-friendly resolution
- Have a file type of either .jpg, .gif or .png
- Load fast (file size)
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Size, resolution and file type go hand in hand

a). Size

By image size, one refers to the width and height of an image. This is calculated using a unit called a pixel (instead of using centimetres or inches). The grey image below is 200 pixels wide by 200 pixels long.

The amount of space the image file will take when saved on a computer is proportional to its size and resolution (see section c below).

To better understand image sizes, let's first review the size of a computer monitor. The size of a monitor is also called its resolution.

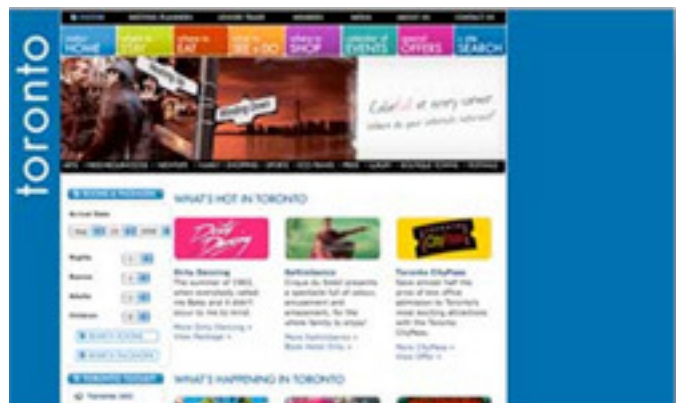


The majority of monitors nowadays support a size of 1024 pixels wide by 768 pixels long. Older monitors only support an 800x600 resolution.

The image on the right is a screen capture of a computer monitor displaying the www.torontotourism.com website. The resolution of the monitor is standard: 1024x768 pixels.

The website itself (not counting the blue border on the right) is 760 pixels wide, an industry standard as well.

If one wanted to show one image that covered the whole surface of the monitor, one would have needed to make that picture 1024 x 768 pixels wide. This is obviously not recommended, but it provides a starting point to understand size.



How do I determine an optimal size for my images?

Below are some guidelines for sizing images. If you are working with a web designer they should help you understand image size requirements.

	Width (left to right)	Length (top to bottom)
	Standard website width: 760 – 910 pixels	No standard length as one can scroll down with the mouse

Hero image (Main banner or header image)	No wider than the website itself (No wider than 760 or 910 pixels)	Maximum a third of the website's length (256 pixels)
Images within content	Maximum half of the width of the website (380 or 455 pixels)	Depends of the overall design of the site
Thumbnail (Small representation of an image that can be clicked on to view the larger image)	Maximum 100 to 200 pixels wide (Otherwise it wouldn't be a thumbnail anymore)	Maximum 100 to 200 pixels long (Otherwise it wouldn't be a thumbnail anymore)

The above table is a guideline and your website designer might suggest something different. What is essential is to size and arrange your images in a manner that aesthetically complements the text:

- Choose a maximum of 2 to 3 sizes and stick to them as a variety of sizes does not portray professionalism
- Spread your images and your text in a logical manner
- Respect a similar layout on all pages

b). Resolution

Resolution refers to the **amount of details in an image**. The higher the resolution, the more you can enlarge the image and still see a sharp and clear picture. If the resolution is low, the image will look blurry and distorted when enlarged.

Example of an image with an inappropriate resolution for its size.

Copyright: UntangleMyWeb.com

Like the size of an image, its resolution is also measured using pixels, but it specifically counts the number of pixels (a pixel is the smallest element of an image) per inch square (PPI).



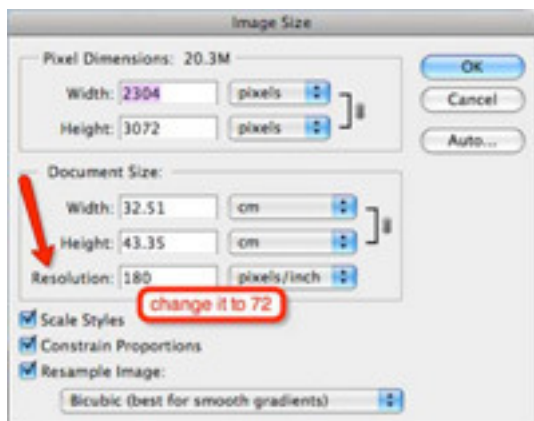
The optimal resolution for an image is:

- 72 PPI for images that will be displayed on the Internet
- 300 PPI for images that are intended to be printed (e.g. glossy brochure)

Because digital cameras provide very high resolution images measured in mega (thousand of) pixels, you will need to reduce the resolution of the image before you upload it to your website.

To do so, you will require an image-editing program. If you do not already have one (such as Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, Fireworks), you can download one for free:

- Gimp for Windows (www.gimp.org) and Gimp for Mac (www.gimp.org/macintosh)
- Irfanview for Windows (www.irfanview.com) which offers a very handy batch resizing feature
- FastStone Image Viewer for Windows (www.faststone.org)
- ChocoFlop for Mac (www.chocoflop.com)
- iPhoto for Mac (comes standard with the operation system)



Once you have opened your image in an image-editing program, you will be able to change the resolution. Remember that you will also need to change the size of your image if its current size is too large. The example below shows how to change the size and resolution of an image using Photoshop.

Reduce the pixel dimension to the size you desire and ensure the resolution is 72 pixels per inch (square).

c). File size

The size of a file is the result of image size (width and length), resolution and image type. Remember, the larger the file size, the longer the user will have to wait to view the image. You will be able to view the size of your files while navigating to their file location and hovering your mouse over them.

Optimal file size for images

An image should not exceed 50-60 KB in size otherwise it will take too long to load.

d). File types

There are three main file types or format for images that will be displayed on the web:

JPEG (.jpg, .jpeg)

Format you should use for photographic images.

More info: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JPEG>

GIF (.gif)

Format you should use for graphics and illustrations. It allows transparent backgrounds.

More info: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GIF>

PNG (.png)

This is a new file type and it can be used for photos, graphics and illustrations.

More info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portable_Network_Graphics

Other file types you may have come across are bitmap (bmp), eps, psd and tiff. They are not recommended to use to display images on your website.



3. How to take good photos

You do not need to be a professional photographer to take good photos, but there are some key principles to respect to put the WOW factor in your snaps. Don't forget that your photos, just like your content, should be aimed at your target market.

Digital Photography School (<http://digital-photography-school.com/blog/10-questions>) is a great place to start, as it will review topics such as:

- What story am I telling?
- What is the visual focal point of this shot?
- What competing focal points are there?
- What is in the background and foreground?
- Am I close enough?
- What is the main source of light?
- Is my framing straight?
- What other perspectives could I capture this subject from?
- How would holding the camera in the other format change this shot?
- How will the eye travel through this image?
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There are many other websites you can learn from:

- <http://digital-photography-school.com/blog/digital-photography-tips-for-beginners/>
- <http://digitalphotography.tipcentral.net/>
- www.digital-photography-tips.net/
- http://malektips.com/digital_cameras_help_and_tips.html

4. Key learning outcomes

- Ensure you understand image resolution and size before you upload any image on the Internet
- Images with people enjoying your property, tour or experience are best. E.g. Avoid images of empty swimming pool. They don't add as much value as those with happy people splashing around in the pool!

5. Related material

a). Related tutorials

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- Flickr and photo hosting websites

b). Related websites

- Digital tips for photographers: <http://digital-photography-school.com/blog/digital-photography-tips-for-beginners/>
- Digital photography tips: <http://digitalphotography.tipcentral.net/>
- Demystifying digital photography: www.digital-photography-tips.net/
- Digital cameras tips: http://malektips.com/digital_cameras_help_and_tips.html