Goals:

BruceGreySimcoe is the public face of Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7), which is one of 13 regions created in 2010 as part of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's regional tourism management and funding strategy.

As RTO7's long-term strategic technology partner, Seventyeight Digital was engaged to develop this consumer focussed tourism website - a socially interactive communications and information hub designed to promote the region overall, its activity clusters, destinations, attractions and events. The hub serves as a jumping off platform where consumers can be directed to businesses, services, attractions and organizations within the region based on their particular needs and interests. It augments marketing efforts of the individual tourism operator and creates new channels for these organizations to market through.

The goal here was not to produce a standard tourism site. We needed to promote awareness of the region and drive tourism dollars while being supportive to other tourism organizations within the region. Multiple data sources are consolidated into a centralized operator directory, which is available to users through a series of search, filtering and mapping utilities.

This project was just one of several in a continuing multi-year, multi-phased online strategy that has included the following previous initiatives.

– Digital Asset Management System – a custom web-based data management system for the storage, management and retrieval of mapping, data, document, image and video resources in support of Ontario tourism industry stakeholders.

– RTO7.ca Operator Portal - provides targeted information to business operators, government organizations, NGO's, partners and stakeholders in the region.

– Four Seasons of Fun Microsite – an online vehicle used to create consumer awareness and establish an SEO base for the new brand identity launch of "BruceGreySimcoe".
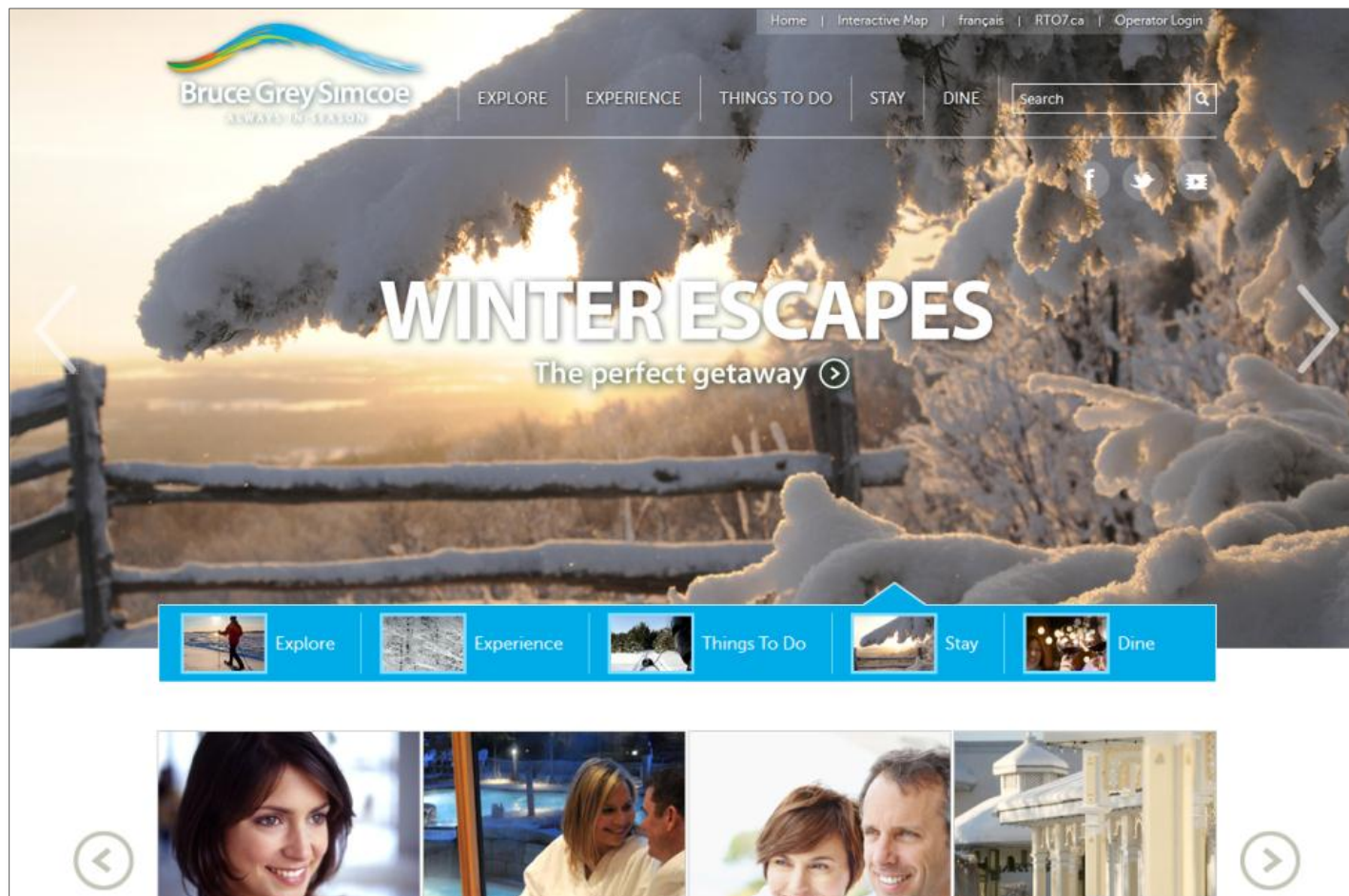
Key outcomes include:

1. Visually Dynamic, Engaging, On-brand Design
   – A premium was placed on experiential imagery.
   – Thoughtful combinations of visual factors - image selection, size and placement – contribute to creating a visual "wow factor".
   – Consumers are introduced to the region from a visual perspective.

2. Business Operator Engagement
   – Businesses have the ability to self-manage their profile and marketing information.
   – Businesses have the ability to post special offers to the site. This includes options for both a free posting service as well as a paid service for preferred placement.
   – Businesses have the ability to contribute to a centralized blog.

3. Consumer Engagement
   – Consumers have the ability to easily gather information as they browse the site - adding items of interest to their "Inspiration Book" for future reference and sharing with their friends.
   – Consumers can register and opt-in to receive ongoing, targeted communications from BruceGreySimcoe.

4. Interactive Mapping Functionality
   – An interactive mapping interface serves as a vehicle for consumers to explore and consume information on the site through a variety of methods including panning, zooming, filtering, rollovers, searching and iconography.

5. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
   – Ongoing content management practices ensure site content is easily found and highly placed in organic search results (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.) based on tested and established keywords.

6. Social Media Connections
   – The website is designed around a social platform that encourages user generated content - adding a level of "authenticity" to the information provided.
   – Ongoing use of integrated social channels amplifies key messaging.

Seventyeight Digital | 5000 Yonge Street, Suite 1901, Toronto, ON M2N 7E9   Tel: 416.274.4024   Email: info@78digital.com   Web: www.78digital.com

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Challenges:

Highly interactive and modern CSS3/HTML5 website design

As one of the primary objectives of this site is to invoke emotion through strong experiential imagery it was important that the site look and feel like a place you would want to visit. At the same time the site needed to appear flourishing and alive with frequent content updates provided by a content administrator and regular contributions from partners, business operators and marketing organizations. An essential component of the success of the site would depend on providing a stream of timely and useful user generated content to the visitor.

Intuitive forms

When the project began, we knew that the focus of the site would be on user generated content to keep the content authentic and up to date. It would be unreasonable to have RTO7 system administrators managing the key information for thousands of tourism business operators.
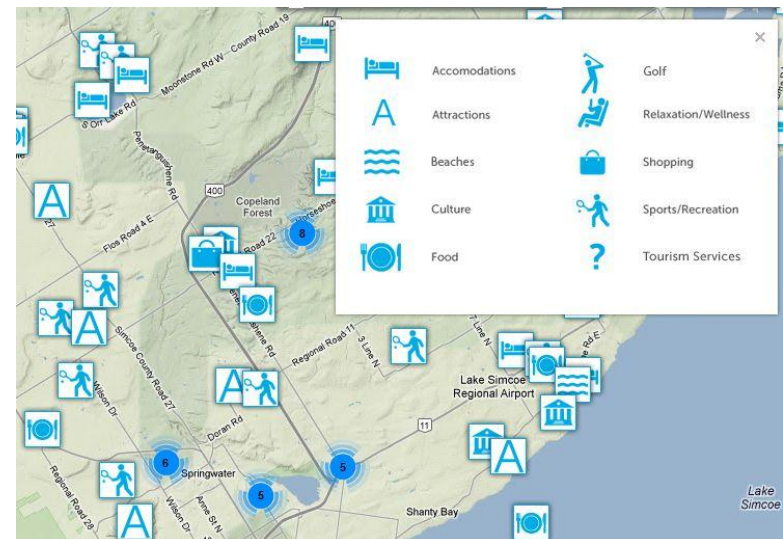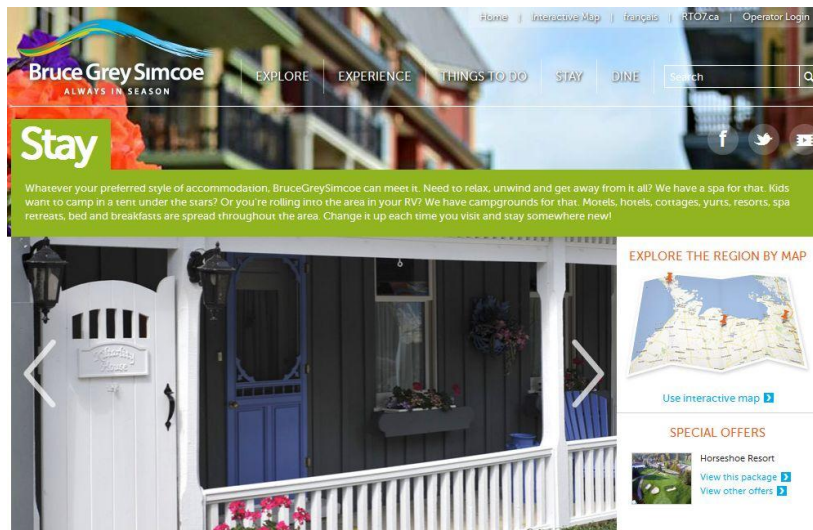
- Operator Listings – RTO7 decided very early on in the project that the key information they wanted to deliver to prospective travelers would be detailed operator information that is accurate, authentic and presented in

an appealing manor.

- Special Offers – are a major reason for visitors to return to the site. By giving operators the ability to login and add offers, RTO7 is adding tremendous value to its overall offering. The key was to design the form and submissions workflow to be as user-friendly and efficient as possible.

- Blogs – each tourism region in Bruce, Grey and Simcoe Counties has its own self-managed page on the website where they can provide a description of the region and blog about events and news in their corner of BruceGreySimcoe.

Information architecture

Getting the information architecture correct was very important given the fact that we are expecting businesses in the region to provide information about their business and special offers – these business operators need to be able to easily identify where their operation best lives within the site architecture.

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Solution:

Kentico helped us achieve all of the objectives that we set out to accomplish in this project. Key elements of the solution include the following:

- Intuitive forms – our solution was to create operators and special offer entries as a custom Kentico content type. For the blogs we leveraged Kentico's blogging feature to encourage a two-way conversation. Because of the complexity of the forms, inputting information like geo co-ordinates using Google maps and uploading images, we needed to create the form (front end design and back-end programming) in ASP.NET. Doing this we were still able to save the submissions into the Kentico custom content type using Kentico's very powerful and well-designed API. This provided the best of both worlds – a highly custom and interactive submission process for the operator as well storing the data in a manner that would make subsequent stages easier (i.e. moderation, workflow, messaging and final listings view) using Kentico features in the CMS desk and web parts and transformations for public views.

- Highly interactive and modern CSS3/HTML5 website design – it was very important to make the site as visually engaging as possible considering the nature of the marketing initiative. To accomplish this we incorporated effects and interactive features such as an advanced slider – which require several advanced methods of construction. Advanced caching techniques were used to keep site responsiveness snappy even though the content is visually rich. Using Kentico facilitated the integrity of the html document with non-technical staff content edits and provided the flexibility required by our front end developers to push the boundaries.

- Information architecture – a large amount of research was put into selecting content categories that would satisfy all tourism related businesses in southern Ontario. Late into the project this complex categorization schema was completely revised. Without Kentico the task of re-mapping categories would have been much more difficult requiring significant development resources. Because Kentico is so easy to use, several support staff were able to complete the task over the course of a day.

We leveraged many of Kentico's built in features, which significantly reduced development time while ensuring a high quality feature rich product for our client. The core is based off the Portal engine allowing for our non-technical staff to enter content, design templates and affect the Information Architecture with ease. The Kentico API was used extensively and found to be very powerful, well documented and helped accelerate many of the custom development tasks.

In particular, we made extensive use of the following Kentico features:

- Custom Document Types and the Kentico API – as part of the website business operators are tasked with maintaining their business profile and their special offers. These highly customized forms were integrated with Kentico's API to utilize Custom Document Types. Because the Custom Document Type is so easy to use, a document of type 'Operator' and 'Special offer' were created by a Project Manager with little coding experience to give our developers a head start when creating the story submission form using Kentico's API. Kentico helped us turn this project around quickly.

- Repeaters – very flexible and powerful, this in conjunction with ASPX transformations allowed us to display the operator listing in a visually pleasing manner in very little time.

- Macros – we really like using Kentico 6 macros – they add another dimension to the level of customization available to the end product. There have been some great improvements to macros in Kentico version 6 which our developers have enjoyed leveraging.

- Image Editor – one of the goals for the blog was to get photographic experiences from the region so the visitor could try to see the story through the eyes of the operator. The Kentico Image Editor allowed for images to be cropped, resized, rotated and reformatted with ease.

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Key Criteria For Choosing Kentico CMS:

Prior to selecting Kentico as the foundation for this project we completed a comprehensive comparative evaluation of a number of leading CMS products, both commercial as well as open source. Although each product had its advantages we determined that the product that best met the RTO7's initial and future needs was Kentico CMS for ASP.NET.

Evaluation criteria and key determinants included:

- Feature set related to the client's requirements.
- Ease and flexibility of programmatic customization as the site contains a large number of features that we built using Kentico as a base.
- Ability to integrate third party and custom components.
- Ability to handle a large number of simultaneous visitors and still exceed performance expectations.

- Social media integration.
- Strength and flexibility of workflow configuration.
- Ability to adapt to and incorporate changing technologies.
- Ease of use for non-technical users.
- Relative cost of license, upgrades and technical support.

About Seventyeight Digital:

Seventyeight Digital is an award winning strategic technology development and interactive design firm focused exclusively on the Internet space. Our solutions engage and benefit users, generate brand recognition, provide relevant and actionable data, stimulate thought and communication, inspire people to take action, capitalize on business efficiencies, and offer significant ROI.

The Seventyeight team is comprised of highly accomplished and talented folks specializing in digital strategy, data management, technical development, and creative design - providing the competencies, agility and technical bandwidth to manage complex deliverables.

We can offer time to market, competitive rates and a level of responsiveness that traditional firms can't touch. We believe there is an effective solution to meet most budgets and can help you navigate the strategic & technical complexities to achieve your key business objectives.

Seventyeight Digital is a Kentico Gold Certified Solution Partner and a Certified Kentico Hosting Partner offering a full range of interactive design, development, hosting and support services. Contact us for a free Kentico CMS consultation at info@78digital.com or visit us at www.78digital.com.

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