Preparing PBSA for the influx of overseas students using multiple devices

The UK is the second biggest destination in the world for overseas students. In the next 5 years, the number is expected to grow by 15-20% according to the British Council. The opportunity to cater for this audience has been realised with the sharp rise of PBSAs, but are student accommodation providers doing enough to attract these audiences to their portfolios? Timing is critical. Decisions will soon be made on university choices, closely followed by accommodation.

The options of facilities should be presented to these international students through a self-serve website, serving them at every interaction stage – initial research, parental interaction, transaction, and finally on-campus support.

The biggest growth is coming from Ear East countries such as China, as well as South East Asia, but growth is seen in many European countries too. We know that the millennial audience already have an insatiable dependency on their mobile technology – a smartphone or tablet becomes increasingly important if it's your source of contacting home. With smartphone penetration in China already at 70%, a PBSAs core audience is currently using multiple devices to access websites, so your content should fit this purpose too.

Responsive website design is created by considering the overall online experience of an individual, and their interaction with a website across different devices. This allows the correct content to be served up at the correct moment, whether that's on-the-go, for example students sharing their choices with their friends when out, or at home on desktop, such as carrying out the transaction with their parents.

The way the website is created means that variations such as additional language versions, becomes no trouble. Traditionally, character sets would need to be pre-defined so the design could fit maximum characters. Responsive website are in their nature adaptable, so the design fits fluidly around different content such as different length headlines and text.

The proposition of the Student Accommodation providers is to provide purpose-built services for the audience, and this should extend through to their digital offering too, ensuring that facility services can be accessed online, by students on campus. If this facility was provided for international students, helping to further ease their integration, another positive USP is created for that PBSA.

This approach to website design is also handy when considering the full range of technology that could be used to access the site, not only will it adapt to all new screen sizes, including wearables, but it does this automatically with no need for extra development, future proofing your digital investment.