

Best Western® Hotels & Resorts and IBM Watson Advertising Introduce AI-powered Ad to Help Consumers Personalize Vacation Planning

NEW YORK, June 29, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Vacations are meant to be enjoyable but planning activities and finding appropriate accommodations can be a stressful experience. [IBM Watson Advertising](#) (NYSE: [IBM](#)) and [Best Western](#) have teamed up to help take the sting out of summer travel with a new interactive AI-powered ad. Best Western's Watson Ad personalizes vacation planning by providing consumers with travel tips and tricks, recommendations for local accommodations, and special offers based on their travel preferences.

Best Western is the first hospitality brand to launch a Watson Ads campaign. Watson Ads have launched in multiple industries including automotive, consumer healthcare, consumer packaged goods and entertainment.

Vacation Planning Made Easier with Best Western's AI-Powered Ad

Consumers can start a conversation with Best Western's AI-powered ad by simply engaging the ad and providing information on their current or upcoming travel plans. Through a series of dialogue prompts, the consumer will be guided seamlessly through a conversation about their travel needs and the AI-powered ad will respond with tailored suggestions on how to make the most out of their vacation and how they can take advantage of Best Western's locations across North America.

"We're thrilled to partner with IBM Watson Advertising, as this cutting-edge AI-powered ad will allow us to drive more meaningful engagement with travelers, while showcasing all that today's Best Western has to offer," said Dorothy Dowling, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer for Best Western Hotels & Resorts. "As the first hospitality brand to launch a Watson Ads campaign, we look forward to continuing our position as a frontrunner in innovation."

The AI-powered ad is driven by the consumer's questions and desire to learn more. For example, a consumer may engage the Watson Ad to share that they are "hitting the road to visit the mountains this weekend," and the ad would respond to ask for more information around activities that are planned such as hiking or sightseeing. If the consumer says, "We're going hiking," the ad could respond with tips on how to make the most of their hiking excursion by packing water, marking their parking spot, and fueling up for the hike with the hot breakfast served daily at Best Western. From there, the consumer can choose to book a room at a Best Western, take a virtual 360 tour of a Best Western hotel, learn more about the award-winning Best Western Rewards® program, or learn more about the amenities available at Best Western locations.

Best Western's virtual 360 tour is a unique feature in the AI-powered ad that helps further personalize the hospitality experience. Through the tool, consumers will be able to virtually visit different Best Western properties that are available at their upcoming destination and get an immersive feel to better understand what each property offers.

Best Western's AI-Powered ads are available on [weather.com](#) and The Weather Channel app.

"Since launching Watson Ads in 2016, we have seen how AI-powered ads can help brands deepen engagement and increase brand awareness amongst consumers," said Carrie Seifer, Vice President and Chief Revenue Officer, IBM Watson Content & IoT Platform. "We are thrilled to team up with Best Western, one of the world's most innovative companies, on an AI-powered ad campaign that will help personalize the vacation planning experience for consumers."

Watson Ads is an industry-first AI-powered advertising creative that leverages machine learning and natural language processing to make sense of unstructured data sets and enables brands to have two-way conversations with consumers. These personalized experiences empower consumers to ask the questions that truly matter the most to them during their customer journey —creating meaningful connections with the brand that may ultimately impact purchase consideration and reveal new brand insights.

IBM Watson Advertising

IBM Watson Advertising (formerly The Weather Company's ad sales business) offers agencies and marketers an ecosystem of media, data, and AI technology solutions to help improve decision-making and reduce costs across key facets of the marketing lifecycle (from media planning through measurement). Watson Advertising is part of the IBM Watson Content and IoT Platform portfolio, which includes The Weather Company, Watson IoT Platform, and Watson Media. For more information, visit watsonadvertising.com.

About Best Western® Hotels & Resorts:

Best Western Hotels & Resorts headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, is a privately held hotel brand with a global network of 4,200* hotels in more than 100* countries and territories worldwide. Best Western offers 11 hotel brands to suit the needs of developers and guests in every market: Best Western®, Best Western Plus®, Best Western Premier®, Vīb®, GLö®, Executive Residency by Best Western®, BW Premier CollectionSM by Best Western, and BW Signature CollectionSM by Best Western; as well as its recently launched franchise offerings: SureStay® Hotel by Best Western, SureStay Plus® Hotel by Best Western and SureStay Collection® by Best Western. Now celebrating more than 70 years of hospitality, Best Western provides its hoteliers with global operational, sales and marketing support, and award-winning online and mobile booking capabilities. Best Western continues to set industry records regarding awards and accolades, including 64 percent of the brand's North American hotels earning a TripAdvisor® Certificate of Excellence award in 2017, Business Travel News® ranking Best Western Plus and Best Western number one in upper-mid-price and mid-price hotel brands, and Best Western receiving seven consecutive Dynatrace® Best of the Web awards for its leading hotel website. Best Western has also won nine consecutive AAA®/CAA® Lodging Partner of the Year awards, recognizing the brand's commitment to providing exceptional service and great value to AAA/CAA's nearly 58 million members in the U.S. and Canada. Best Western-branded hotels were top ranked in J.D. Power's 2017 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study – ranking first in breakfast (food and beverage category) for midscale; and second in overall guest satisfaction. Over 32 million travelers are members of the brand's award-winning loyalty program Best Western Rewards®, one of the few programs in which members earn points that never expire and can be redeemed at any Best Western hotel worldwide. Best Western's partnerships with AAA/CAA and Harley-Davidson® provide travelers with exciting ways to interact with the brand. Through its partnership with Google® Street View, Best Western is the first major company of its size and scale to launch a virtual reality experience for customers, setting a new industry standard and reinventing how guests view hotels.

* All Best Western and SureStay-branded hotels are independently owned and operated.

* Numbers are approximate, may fluctuate, and include hotels currently in the development pipeline.

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