

Top Five Items in a Hotel Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital marketing for hotels is becoming increasingly complex. Hotel managers need not only to service guests, manage rooms, availabilities and pricing, but now are also expected to compete for guests in new channels and digital communities that emerge every day. Hence, many hotel managers are asking themselves how they can expand their brand online while still having the time to run their business.



The obvious choice has been to hire additional staff, but this tactic is just a temporary solution, because demand for digital marketing is unstoppable and the problem will continue to grow. The breakthrough solution for this complex problem is a digital marketing architecture and tools that provide a consistent multi-channel experience to hotel guests and prepare hotels for future digital marketing demands. See how tools such as email marketing can help with any business by reading this email marketing case study.

This article provides a quick checklist on five important items hotel managers should consider when defining a digital marketing strategy for their hotels:

Hotel website and booking engine are Number One. This is probably nothing new to you, but your hotel's website is the best opportunity that you have to engage and sell to your guests. On average, guests spend 6 minutes on hotel websites. 6 minutes is ample opportunity to engage your future guests with bold pictures, easy-to-read room descriptions and attractive offers that make the decision to book simple and predictable. One additional important item is to show what guests will experience when they come to your destination: ensure video is part of your web strategy and you will mesmerize your guests. So, when was the last time you updated your website? If the answer is

more than 2 years ago, your website could probably be a lot better. **60% of consumers are social travelers.** According to Forrester, 60% of guests use one or more social networking platforms during their search, shop and buy process. Hence, it is critical to manage Tripadvisor ratings, have a professional-looking presence on Facebook, and allow guests to engage over Twitter. And to use the social network to amplify your message, ensure that good experiences your guests write about are shared on the different digital communities. For photos we see the best results using Flickr and for videos a dedicated YouTube channel. And don't forget email: it is still the most widely used mechanism to share itineraries and ideas of trips. **Mobile consumers will demand optimized content in 2012.** Mobile traffic is the fastest growing category in digital marketing, and to no surprise also in travel. Google research states that 19% of all hotel searches are already executed on a mobile device. If you deployed a mobile solution in 2011, you will realize that mobile consumers have a much more utilitarian behavior - they are looking for the hotel's address, phone number, or want to book a room for tonight or tomorrow night. Hence, the experience to conclude those tasks must be optimized in 2012. While success can be found using mobile as a stand-alone media, it provides the largest rewards when it is used as an integrated, multi-channel engagement platform. If you can provide consistent messages across web, social and mobile, while ensuring that the most relevant offers are prioritized then you truly have provided multi-channel digital marketing.

Diversify online distribution channels. Recent studies indicate that booking.com is driving a whopping 50% of all hotel online bookings in Europe. This dominance is threatening to hotels as they become more dependent on (and therefore vulnerable to) a single channel that is already demanding higher commissions based on results. Therefore, it is critical to diversify your channels. If you are the manager of a boutique property you should consider signing up with tablethotels.com, mrandmrsmith.com or jetsetter.com. One good source of information for the latest trends in accommodation websites you should consider signing up for is tnooz.com's roundup of top travel websites per market. **Innovate with marketing campaigns.** Digital marketing is not a one-time project. It is a new discipline that must be embraced by hotel managers. However, digital marketing does not necessarily require learning a lot of new tools and hiring a lot of new staff. Using the appropriate tools, hotel managers can use their existing e-commerce and reservations staff to create campaigns, follow-up and reap the rewards of increased marketing exposure: more and better bookings. So, choose your tools to minimize setup costs and provide maximum flexibility when creating your campaigns.



In conclusion, a successful digital marketing strategy must provide a consistent multi-channel experience to hotel guests. This can be achieved by using a multitude of tools or an all-in-one hotel digital marketing platform. But no matter which tools you select, at the core of your strategy should be a digital marketing architecture that prepares your hotel for future digital marketing demands.

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