



20 Hotel Marketing Strategies

to Increase Bookings



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20 Hotel Marketing Strategies to Increase Bookings

When it comes to optimising revenue and attracting as many customers as possible, hotel marketing strategies have a crucial role to play. However, this is a complicated area, because there are many different techniques and approaches that fall under the marketing umbrella. In this document, you will learn about 20 of the most important strategies you can use to attract guests to your hotel and generate the best possible financial results.

Strategy 1: Focus on Personalisation

Any business running a marketing strategy in the modern climate needs to contend with the scepticism and cynicism that is often directed towards promotional content. For hotels, one of the best ways to break through is to deliver more tailored, personal marketing messages, so that they are relevant to the audience that sees them.

Personalised marketing relies heavily upon data collection, but can be used to target specific adverts towards specific users, with specific browsing habits. Personalisation can also be used during the booking process, making intelligent recommendations, similar to the way services like Amazon and Netflix work.

Of course, personalisation can go further still. For instance, imagine targeting former customers with marketing messages in the lead up to their birthday, or in the months before the anniversary of their last visit. Meanwhile, smart or voice-activated devices, like Amazon Echo, can add to the personalisation provided in your hotel rooms.

Strategy 2: Create a Customer Loyalty Scheme

In order to fully optimise revenue, your hotel will need to do more than just attract one-time guests - it will need to try to generate some degree of customer loyalty, so that certain customers choose to stay with you

whenever they are in the area. A great way to achieve this is through the creation of a customer loyalty programme.

Most of the top hotel chains in the world offer customer loyalty reward schemes, with examples including Marriott Rewards, Hilton Honors, La Quinta Returns and World of Hyatt. The exact rewards they offer can differ quite significantly, but what they all have in common is they encourage repeat business.

These schemes are beneficial in terms of marketing for several reasons. Firstly, they make people more likely to return to your hotel, because customers that sign up want to actually benefit from being part of the scheme. In addition, their friends, family and colleagues may hear about their rewards and sign up in order to benefit too.

Strategy 3: Build an Engaging Website

The internet is now the main way that customers, or potential customers, find out about hotels. Although they may use price comparison websites, or online travel agents, a large number still opt to visit the hotel's official website and book directly, knowing they may be able to gain favourable prices this way.

It is, therefore, absolutely essential that you take the time to build an engaging, attractive, functional website, which makes a good first impression. Keep in mind that, as such, an internet user's first impression of your website is also their first impression of your hotel in general - and first impressions count for a lot.

Aside from being visually appealing and engaging, your website needs to offer all of the important information customers may need before booking a room. It should also include a robust booking system, which is easy to use, which is reliable, which loads quickly and which is available in multiple different languages.

Strategy 4: Reap the Rewards From Content Marketing

Content marketing ranks among the most effective hotel marketing strategies, for a number of reasons, including its ability to improve visibility on search engines and attract visitors searching the internet for things other than hotels. It also gives your audience a reason to keep coming back to your website, looking for fresh content.

The most common example of content marketing for hotels is a blog. This can be used to write about a wide variety of topics, although it is best to keep within the basic field of travel, tourism and hospitality.

Some of the other benefits associated with content marketing include the ability to gain backlinks from other websites and the opportunity to establish either yourself or your brand as experts within your field. Content marketing also links in nicely with the concepts of influencer marketing and social selling.

Strategy 5: Make Use of SEO Techniques

It is important for hotel owners to understand that a huge number of modern customers use search engines like Google to find hotels and make bookings. For this reason, one of the single most important and effective hotel marketing strategies is to make use of search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques.

This may mean optimising on-site content to include certain high value keywords, in order to improve your rank on search engine results pages. It could also mean taking the time to optimise your web pages for mobile users, because modern search engine algorithms reward mobile-friendly content.

Getting the most from SEO also involves claiming your Google My Business page, optimising it, keeping information up-to-date and writing contact information in a standard format across various different online platforms. This allows hotels to maximise the benefits that are on offer to businesses through local search results.

Strategy 6: Capitalise on Virtual Reality

One of the more unique ways that hotels can promote their property is through clever use of virtual reality technology. This is an interesting area for exploration, because virtual reality headsets have helped to turn the technology into a mainstream consumer product, but the technology is still not widely used by marketers.

Nonetheless, virtual reality is valuable for those in the hospitality industry, because it has the power to digitally alter a person's surroundings, effectively placing them in a different environment, without them having to actually change location. This means users can experience something akin to being in your hotel, without moving.

To put this into practice as a marketing strategy, you might create virtual reality experiences of your hotel rooms, tie them in with your online booking process and allow potential customers to experience a digital recreation of a hotel room before they commit to making their booking. VR can also be used to provide customers with virtual experiences connected with local tourist attractions, making the trip itself more tempting.

Strategy 7: Focus on Review Websites

According to research from TripAdvisor, 77 percent of people say they 'usually' or 'always' reference online reviews before booking a hotel. That is significantly greater than the number of people who check out online reviews before booking a restaurant or visiting a tourist attraction, which emphasises its importance.

While the vast majority of trustworthy online review platforms have procedures in place to prevent hotels from influencing reviews, there are steps that hotels can take to help them in this area. For example, hotels should keep their details up-to-date, upload recent photos and respond to feedback quickly and politely.

You can also take steps to encourage customers to leave reviews, such as by sending email reminders, or reminding them upon check out. If you are delivering an excellent customer experience and convincing customers to

leave positive reviews, this will serve as one of the most beneficial hotel marketing strategies of all.

Strategy 8: Take to Social Media

Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can be a godsend for hotel owners, because they offer a multitude of ways to advertise to customers. For instance, you could promote your hotel using social media posts, competitions, photos, business pages and even paid advertising campaigns.

Facebook is perhaps the most obvious platform to take advantage of, and you should make sure to claim a business page, keep it up-to-date and add photos of your hotel. You can also use it to share interesting content, host prize giveaways, respond to customer questions, and promote upcoming events at your hotel.

However, Instagram and Twitter have more than their fair share of uses too. Twitter is especially useful for quick communication, making it an ideal platform for customer service-type interactions. Instagram, on the other hand, is a very visual platform, offering an ideal place to upload photos of your rooms, restaurant, gym, etc.

Strategy 9: Prioritise Mobile Optimisation

As stated earlier in this document, mobile optimisation is important for any hotel that wishes to maximise visibility on search engines. However, mobile optimisation also extends far beyond this and many of the best hotel marketing strategies succeed precisely because they target mobile users and capitalise on smartphone technology.

Setting up an online booking process so that it automatically displays well on a mobile device can be a form of marketing in of itself. After all, users exploring multiple hotels on their phone may opt for the one that caters to their device most effectively, out of pure convenience. Creating your own hotel app can also be beneficial.

Many of the top hotel chains in the world are also continuing with mobile marketing even after guests arrive. For example, guests who have

downloaded your app can be sent push notifications providing them with special offers for the hotel gym or restaurant, or to remind them about events being held within the hotel during their stay.

Strategy 10: Run Pay-Per-Click Advertising Campaigns

Pay-per-click adverts are one of the most common hotel marketing strategies - and for good reason. They offer hotels the chance to put marketing messages out there and to target those messages towards users with relevant interests. Moreover, the hotel only pays when the ads are actually clicked, making them cost-effective.

Services like Google AdWords allow PPC advertising to be targeted towards specific keywords, meaning the ads will be displayed to people who are searching for topics related to hotels, or holidays. This means you can gear promotional content towards users at the precise point they are most likely to be receptive.

Meanwhile, pay-per-click advertising on social media offers numerous benefits over other methods of online advertising. These include the ability to target users based on age group, gender, interests, location and even on the basis of whether they have interacted with your business before, allowing for more targeted campaigns.

Strategy 11: Try to Create a Viral Campaign

For marketing professionals, creating a viral campaign is the holy grail, because it means a promotional message is rapidly shared across the internet by its own audience. This circumvents problems associated with consumer cynicism and also means the campaign achieves excellent reach at minimal cost.

With that said, one of the problems with viral marketing is the fact that it can be difficult to anticipate which content will capture people's imagination and gain viral status. Nevertheless, there are some common features, such as emotional pull, humour and social currency, which can significantly improve your chances of 'going viral'.

An example of an effective viral campaign came from Miami Beach's Raleigh Hotel back in 2016. The campaign, which ran on Instagram, targeted local people and offered a prize of a 'Daycation' - two poolside passes and credit for food and drink - to a select number of people who followed them, tagged a friend and shared their post.

Strategy 12: Form Partnerships With Local Businesses

Among the most influential hotel marketing strategies is the formation of partnerships or affiliations with other businesses in the local area, so you should try to make this a priority. In particular, it can be effective to focus on local museums, attractions, event venues, restaurants and shopping centres.

These relationships should be mutually beneficial, and this is often fairly simple. For instance, you could ask a nearby museum to recommend your hotel to visitors travelling from outside the local area, in exchange for your hotel carrying the museum's promotional literature, advertising it to your guests.

Similar agreements can be formed with venues, if you agree to promote their upcoming events, or restaurants, if you agree to recommend them to guests. In addition, you might also wish to speak to local tourist boards, as they can not only help to promote your hotel, but also help to put you in touch with businesses in the area.

Strategy 13: Optimise Your OTA Profiles

Recently, Avvio reported that the number of customers who exclusively use online travel agents has risen from 48 percent to 60 percent. This suggests that optimising revenue depends heavily on achieving success through these platforms and to do so, you need to optimise your OTA profiles.

This means keeping profiles updated with the latest information, as well as the latest images of your hotel rooms and other facilities. It also means taking the time to respond intelligently to users who ask questions, voice

their opinion on your hotel, or make complaints about the service they received during their stay.

Customers are significantly more likely to make bookings through OTAs with hotels that they see actively using the service and openly engaging with their customers, or potential customers.

Strategy 14: Capitalise on Remarketing Opportunities

Studies suggest that the abandonment rate for hotel bookings stands at somewhere in the region of 75 percent. This means that out of every four people that start the process for booking a room at your hotel, three will back out. In many cases, this is because they get distracted, get cold feet, or decide to carry out more research.

This means it is highly likely there are significant number of people out there right now, who have shown an interest in your hotel, and who came close to making a booking, but who failed to follow through. Remarketing allows you to capitalise on this by intelligently reminding them of your hotel and their interest in it.

Remarketing is possible through a variety of platforms, including Google Ads and Facebook. People can even be shown adverts featuring the exact hotel room they were interested in. This offers you the chance to re-capture some of those who got distracted, or to try to convince some of those who backed out for other reasons.

Strategy 15: Differentiate Yourself From Rivals

Next, you need to think about what separates your hotel from other hotels in the nearby area and, indeed, in other locations. Try to create a list of the unique features of your hotel and if you are unable to think of many, try to come up with some ideas you could implement in the near future, in order to stand out from the crowd.

Once you know what it is that makes you different, put these things front and centre in your advertising campaigns and marketing emails, so that potential customers know that you are offering something completely different.

There are many ways you can differentiate yourself and make it part of your marketing. One of the most famous examples is Henn-na hotel in Nagasaki, Japan, which decided to differentiate itself by making extensive use of robots. As a result, the hotel promoted itself as the world's first robot-staffed hotel. Clearly, your efforts do not need to be as tech-driven as that, but you do need to identify your unique selling points, or create some.

Strategy 16: Emphasise Your Location

Some hotels fail to reach their marketing potential, because they are too literal with the idea of promoting their hotel. While it is important to advertise what your hotel has to offer - whether its excellent rooms, excellent customer service, excellent prices, or excellent facilities - this should not be the limit of your campaigns.

Instead, use your promotional content to speak about your location. After all, a large number of your potential customers will be more interested in what there is to do around the hotel, rather than what there is to do within it.

Use adverts, your own website and other promotional content to give people ideas about the things there are on offer in the local area. You should also be sure to emphasise the benefits of staying in your hotel if you are ideally situated for guests to take advantage of nearby tourist attractions.

Strategy 17: Deliver An Excellent Customer Experience

In the end, no amount of hotel marketing strategies can make up for poor customer service, so in order to optimise revenue, you are going to need to deliver an excellent customer experience and make sure people know

about it. This means taking the time to do the little things better than your competitors.

There are no shortage of ways to deliver in this area. The high-quality customer service you provide can range from ensuring your staff are well-trained and able to answer questions, through to introducing unique technology into the hotel, making sure your rooms are immaculately clean, or using a mobile app to great effect.

By going above and beyond with regards to the customer experience, you can gain access to new customers via word of mouth. Therefore, the aim is to deliver an experience that is so positive and memorable that your guests end up becoming brand advocates for you, recommending your hotel to the people they know.

Strategy 18: Explore Local Media Possibilities

A common mistake that many hotels make is to focus too much on attracting international travellers, or travellers from out of town, to the point of neglecting potential customers in the local area. Yet, for many hotels, local customers should be a priority, as people are happy to stay in nearby hotels for all kinds of reasons.

In terms of hotel marketing strategies that can target local customers, it is worth taking the time to build relationships with the local media, whether that means magazines, newspapers, or even radio stations.

Working closely with local media sources can help you to weave your hotel into the consciousness of the local community and can also enable you to target customers in ways that are culturally specific to them. Speak to media companies about opportunities to write for them, advertise, run competitions, and contribute in other ways.

Strategy 19: Do Not Neglect Email Marketing

In the modern age of content marketing, social media posts, search engine optimisation techniques and pay-per-click advertising, it can be easy to neglect more traditional email marketing. Yet, this method still has a lot of offer most businesses and can be especially beneficial for hotels.

According to research from Revinate, two-thirds of customers actually prefer to hear from hotels via email, rather than through other methods. Email allows marketers to personalise their communication with customers and also affords them more room than most PPC ads for actually conveying their messages.

This method also opens up the possibility to communicate at different stages of the buying cycle. For instance, purely promotional content can be sent to people who do not currently have a reservation, while up-selling or cross-selling messages can be sent to those who do, and feedback requests can be sent to guests after their stay.

Strategy 20: Experiment With Augmented Reality

Finally, augmented reality is an example of a technology that offers excellent marketing potential, but which is still under-utilised. Yet, for those involved with hospitality, it has the ability to enhance the entire travel experience for guests, and can be easily used to promote your hotel as being forward-thinking and tech-savvy.

Unlike virtual reality, which requires users to have a virtual reality headset, augmented reality technology requires nothing other than a smartphone and an app. It also differs slightly from virtual reality, because while VR involves altering a user's surroundings, AR involves augmenting real-world environments through information overlays.

By promoting your own app and advertising its augmented reality potential, you may be able to attract guests who are intrigued by the

technology. You may also be able to use the app to allow guests to take interesting photographs, which have been enhanced in some way. They can then share these photos, indirectly promoting your hotel for you.

Conclusion

The hotel marketing strategies you use can go a long way towards determining your revenue generation. By taking advantage of the 20 strategies listed in this document, you will have the best possible chance of attracting positive attention, making your hotel stand out from your competitors, and optimising your financial results.



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