

PARADOX

HOTEL GROUP

Digital Marketing Strategy

Purpose

1. Discuss the role of digital media in marketing the modern hotel
2. Propose a framework and action steps for the PARADOX digital marketing strategy

Summary of Contents

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2. The Hotel Experience
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Useful Definitions

Sales and Marketing

According to HubSpot, “Marketing is the process of getting people interested in your company’s product or service, while sales encompasses any activities involved in selling that product or service to a consumer or business. One cannot exist without the other. You cannot sell without initially igniting interest in the consumer through marketing, and you cannot be a marketer without having a team prepared to sell the product once you’ve captured a consumer’s attention.”

Modern buyer journeys blur the lines between sales and marketing. However, we don’t have to stress about semantics. We need only understand that “sales and marketing” refer broadly to the activities that generate interest in the hotel and/or lead to bookings.

Brand/Branding

A product or business’s identity. Its values, language, and imagery. Building familiarity and rapport with customers.

“Brands are essentially patterns of familiarity, meaning, fondness, and reassurance that exist in the minds of people.” — Tom Goodwin

Media

Means of communication, comprising various mediums—e.g. newspaper, television, website, apps, email, photo, video, telephone, etc.

Digital Media

Communication occurring on computing devices, such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones. The majority of today's media.

Social Media

Digital communication platforms with an interactive character—users can publish content and engage with the content of others.

For the hotel—a place where marketing and customer service collide.

Content

The substance of media. The message.

Campaign

An organized course of action to achieve a goal. In sales and marketing, it's your plan to sell product X to customer Y.

The Hotel Experience

As a hospitality business, we are a product-service hybrid with tangible and intangible qualities.

Tangible

There is the tangible product—a physical dwelling for travellers. There is a tangible service—our attention to their questions, concerns, and needs.

Intangible

And there is the intangible component—their emotional experience during their stay, how their vacation made them feel.

Cyclical

A hotel stay can be sold to the same person repeatedly, resulting in a cyclical sales and marketing cycle. Customer relationship management is paramount.

Location Dependent

Travellers rarely book lodging for that experience alone. A hotel's location determines its guest's motivation for visiting and contextualizes its marketing strategy.

In Whistler, for example, we sell lodging but guests are sold on the Whistler experience—everything that happens outside of the hotel. Our goal is to form an intrinsic link in the minds of travellers between our property and this experience, so they can't imagine one without the other.

An Emotional Experience

Travelling can be an emotionally intense experience. A guest's opinion of their accommodation can be greatly skewed by their emotional state. A traveller who had a wonderful trip might rave about the quality of their accommodation, when in fact it was nothing out of the ordinary. Conversely, excellent accommodation might never be enough to please a traveller who is stressed and having a bad time.

We can only do our best to manage a guest's expectations before visiting, their experience while visiting, and our relationship with them after their stay. As we'll discover, digital media plays a key role in accomplishing this.

Selling and Marketing the Modern Hotel

Digital Journeys

The modern hotel is a product with myriad customer journeys. Some guests book pragmatically, motivated by cost, location, and availability, paying no attention to the character of the property. Some research for months or years, seeking absolute certainty they've planned the perfect trip before committing.

This variability is amplified by digital media, which now accounts for the majority of our sales and marketing. With digital media, customers can engage with our brand countless times in countless ways before committing to spending a few days using our product, and they can continue to engage indefinitely afterwards. From the first instant they discover our brand, we are constantly marketing, branding, and providing service to them. And we are constantly selling—there is virtually no time when a person couldn't decide to make a reservation.

The Sum of Our Interactions

To account for this, we must plan for all contingencies. A guest who clicks our listing on an online travel agency (OTA), one who is staying at the property, another who finds us on Google and calls in—these are all interactions.

These interactions can all serve to “[get] people interested in the goods and services being sold,” and can “lead to the selling of goods and services.”

Therefore, our sales and marketing strategy is the sum of our interactions. To create an effective marketing strategy, we need to understand the scope of these interactions, prioritize the most valuable ones, and match them with an action plan.

Specifically, this report aims to identify our most valuable digital interactions and suggest actions for each.

Blurred Lines

By thinking in terms of interactions, we can see the relationship between seemingly distinct roles on the hotel team with regard to sales and marketing.

For example, the Front Desk Agent interacts with guests and prospective guests in person, by phone, email, and direct message (DM). They facilitate the guest experience by responding to questions, concerns and requests (service), and making reservations (sales). The quality of the service they provide impacts purchase decisions (marketing) and interacting with guests provides them with insights that are valuable to the marketing strategy.

The Social Media Coordinator is responsible for communicating about the property on digital channels, which can address questions and concerns of potential guests (service), increase awareness and esteem for the property (marketing), and direct customers to sales channels (sales).

Reactive vs Proactive Interactions

The Front Desk Agent responding to guests is reactive—the guest initiates the communication and we respond. The Digital Coordinator publishing content on the website is proactive—we initiate the communication.

Digital media offers opportunities to transform reactive interactions into proactive ones, e.g. if a Front Desk Agent answers the same questions repeatedly, the answers to these questions should become website content. We've learned that our guests care about this information, so sharing it with them before they have to ask for it could lead to further sales.

One of the unique features of digital media is that brands are now expected to act as publishers. As a publisher, we have boundless opportunities to communicate proactively, reaching potential guests with information that wins their trust and attention, and drives them to book.

The remainder of this report has been excluded to protect the interests of PARADOX Hotel Group.

Thank you for reading.