

A guide for independent hoteliers

The smart digital strategy to ensure your hotel is always fully booked



amenitiz

Empowering
independent hoteliers.

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1. Digital

Defining and improving your hotel's digital strategy



Analyse the context of your hotel

The first step in defining an hotel's digital strategy is to understand your current position and context. To do this, take some time to sit down in a

quiet place with a notebook and a pen to make notes on these 7 key factors, to reflect on where and how the hotel stands regarding the following points.

Product

Clients

Competitors

Budget

Time

Competencies

Objectives

This can and should be repeated every year, as the hotel and the clientele can change over time, which means that the budget and objectives need to be adapted. The global pandemic has shown us how quickly things can change.

The hotel's position in these 7 elements changes regularly, so they need to be periodically reshaped and redefined in order to plan the strategy that will be most effective and consistent with the context. Once all the key factors are consistent with the hotel, it is time to move on to the next step.



Define or refine your web marketing strategy

The web marketing strategy is composed of 2 dimensions

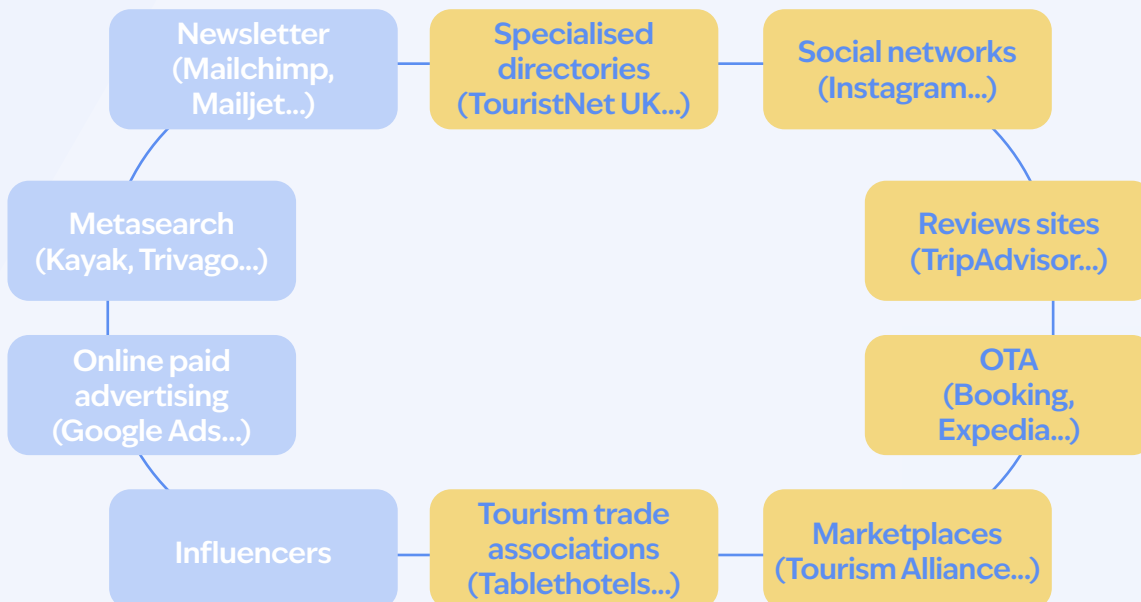
The first dimension is the core of the online strategy of any tourist facility. The website is always at the centre, with four satellites revolving around

it: the mobile version, the SEO/natural positioning, the online booking and the multilingual versions of the website.



The second dimension is considered to be the 'peripheral' one, and consists of a series of lever tools that can be acti-

vated under certain circumstances to bring more direct traffic to the website.



The levers of the second dimension are divided into two categories

Priority levers

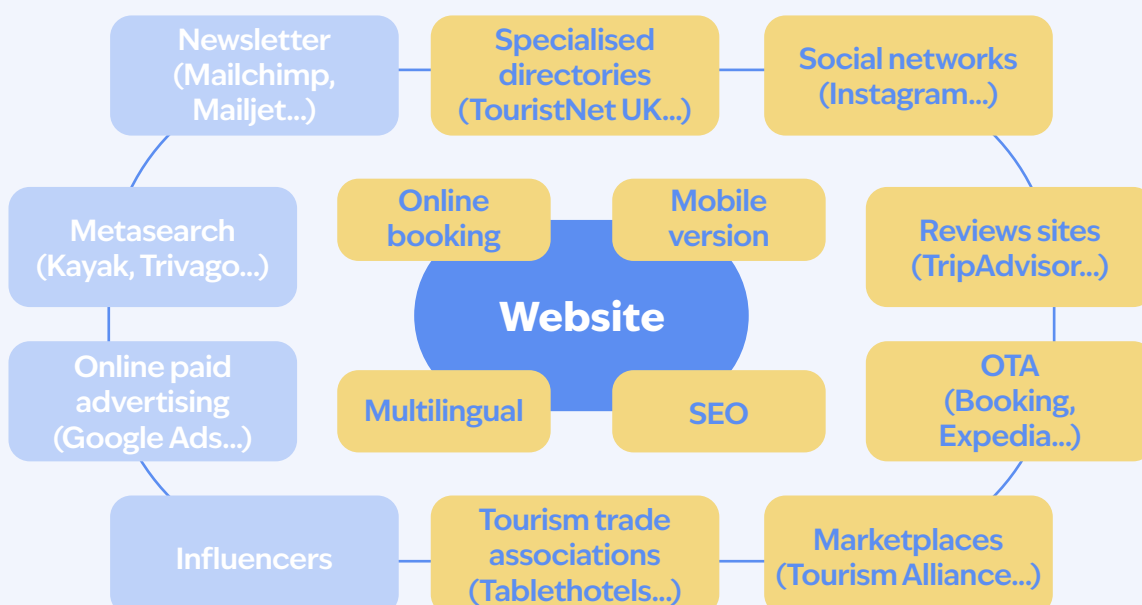
These are the indispensable, regardless of the context of the hotel. However, each of these resources must be used according to the clientele. There is no point in putting yourself on Youtube, TikTok and other social media platforms for example if you know your customers do not use nor appreciate these platforms. Thinking like a guest and what appeals to them should drive your decision making process.

- Specialised directories (TouristNet UK...)
- Social networks (Instagram, Facebook, Youtube...)
- Reviews and comments sites (TripAdvisor, Google My Business...)
- OTA (Booking, Expedia, HRS...)
- Marketplaces/public players (Tourism Alliance, VisitBritain)
- Affiliation to tourism trade associations / bodies (Tablethotels)

Additional levers

It is not necessary to use all these levers. It is simply a matter of choosing those that are most relevant and coherent with the context of the hotel. Selecting those that you think work for your desired audience and will resonate with them. It is also a question of not spreading yourself too thinly by trying to do too much, as this could be counterproductive, and above all lead to a waste of time and money.

- Newsletter (Mailchimp, Mailjet...)
- Meta search engines (Kayak, Trivago...)
- Online advertising (Facebook Ads, Google Ads...)
- Influencers



Establish a reverse planning

Once the strategy has been established, it is time to implement it. At this stage, timing is vital. You can't expect everything to be done in a day or two, nor to carry it out once the season has started. You have to plan ahead and activate the different ideas of the strategy before or after the peak season, but never during.

Some actions need to be carried out on a regular basis, such as posting on social networks, managing online reviews, or updating offers. Other actions take longer to implement, as they require major strategic changes and more in-depth thinking. It will take longer to see the results, but you need to be patient and not get discouraged.



2. Website

Designing your website with care



Create a graphic charter (visuals and colours)

The website is the hotel's showcase. It is therefore imperative that it reflects the image of the hotel and correctly conveys the hotel's atmosphere. A brand-specific graphic charter should be put in place, based on 4 elements.

Some of these elements may already be defined, such as the logo, but others will need to be implemented. It is best to work with a designer to create tangible graphic elements.

✔ **Storytelling**

This is about telling your story, presenting the hotel in a few words. Travellers need to understand the values and atmosphere of the hotel in order to make it their own.

✔ **Creation of the logo**

The logo must be easily adaptable, so that it can be used on several platforms, and it should preferably contain the name of the hotel. It is the first element of the site's graphic identity.

✔ **Choice of colours**

This is a crucial stage in the creation of a website and its brand image. It is imperative to define a colour palette that corresponds to the identity of the facility. Generally, brands use 3 colours that are close to the tone of the logo.

✔ **Typography**

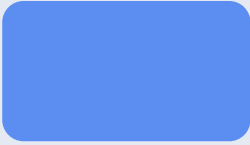
Fonts are often misused and yet they are an essential aspect of the digital strategy. With a designer, it is easier to choose fonts that are suitable.

To create an effective graphic charter, you must start by defining your clientele. Depending on the persona of the hotel's visitors, the aspirations will not be the same.

What does the traveller feel when he visits the website? Dreams, discovery, passion, elegance...? These are the types of questions that need to be asked so as to guide your graphic design towards the right path.

BLUE

- Calm
- Change
- Confidence
- Communication
- Security



RED

- Life
- Love
- Passion
- Danger
- Strength



YELLOW

- Cheerfulness
- Youth
- Happiness
- Heat
- Optimism



GREEN

- Nature
- Growth
- Hope
- Richness
- Jealousy



PINK

- Femininity
- Sweetness
- Romanticism
- Daring
- Naivety



ORANGE

- Youth
- Creativity
- Exchange
- Vitality
- Friendly



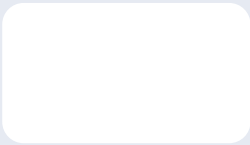
PURPLE

- Luxury
- Mystery
- Spirituality
- Wisdom
- Dream



WHITE

- Purity
- Innocence
- Elegance
- Powerful
- Simplicity



BLACK

- Elegance
- Mystery
- Timelessness
- Pain
- Prestige



Build the architecture

Once the graphic charter is in place, it is time to move on to the foundations of the website, its architecture. This is none other than the site's menu, with different tabs.

Mainly located at the top of the site or sometimes on one side, the menu should be visible and easily accessible on any page. The names of the different menu categories that make up the pages or tabs are customisable, however in the hotel industry it is advisable to use well-defined tabs.

✓ Home page

This is the main page of the site, often the one where your visitors arrive. It is the ideal place to quickly introduce the facility, highlight the different sections of the site or display the most beautiful rooms. It is important to make the traveller dream so that they continue to browse the site until they book a room.

✓ Our history

This page allows you to describe the hotel in more depth, by telling how its story began, who the owners are and sharing the values of the establishment.

✓ Rooms

This is where all the rooms are listed and categorised by room type or package. It is imperative to indicate the price, the size of the room and the number of beds, the facilities available and type of decoration. And, of course, a button must be added to allow direct booking.

✓ Services

On this page, travellers can be introduced to the various services that are offered in the hotel, such as breakfast, conference rooms, parking, relaxation/spa area and much more.

✓ Surroundings

This is the perfect page for selling dreams to Internet users by talking about the region and the activities available near the hotel. Historical monuments, museums, walks or bike rides, cultural outings, sports facilities, the possibilities are almost endless.

✓ Contact

The page with all the useful information for the traveller, including the address, directions on how to get there, opening hours, check-in and check-out times, phone number, email address, links to your social networks, or any other useful information.

Select the pictures

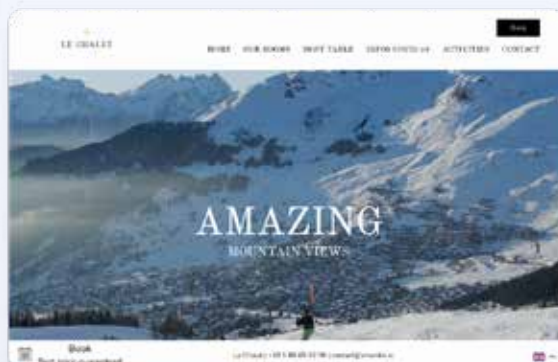
They say a picture is worth a thousand words! Well, in the tourism sector, this is even truer. Thanks to photos, travellers can project themselves and imagine their dream holidays. It is important that Internet users perceive a positive and warm image, which will make them want to surf the site and book a room in the hotel. This is achieved through photos that show the hotel in its best light.

The choice of photos is clearly not a task to be taken lightly. Indeed, 78% of

travellers believe that photos are a decisive element in the choice of accommodation. For this reason, don't make the unfortunate mistake of going cheap and not hiring a professional photographer to shoot the interior and exterior of the property. The ideal? Have these shots taken featuring people as well as the rooms and other areas. A restaurant or bar filled with happy, socialising customers is far more inviting than even the most beautiful of pictures taken of these places when empty!

78%

78% of travelers believe that photos are a decisive factor in choosing accommodation



3. Website

Refining the text content of the website



Content on the pages of the site

In the process of writing content for the hotel website, keep it simple and use vocabulary that matches the identity of the hotel and the personality of the owner. The best way to shine in this task is to write the content in the same way that you present your hotel in person, using relevant keywords related to the hotel, to the business and to the page in question.

To find the perfect keywords, the Google Trends tool is of great help. It allows you to determine a lexical field

that will provide the right tone and the right way to write. Keywords should be placed in the H1 title and H2 titles as much as possible, for better SEO. They are also used to customise the meta-data (meta-description and meta-title).

Regarding the text itself, the minimum length on a web page is 300 words. Below this, Google will not even pay attention to the page. The ideal length for a hotel website page is between 500 and 1000 words.

Create a blog

Blogging is primarily a means of drawing attention to one's website, and, as such, to one's property. Blog posts can also help Google find the website and move it up the search results. Blog posts can be a great source of traffic, especially if the topic is highly searched for by internet users. The blog is an integral part of the marketing strategy and should not be seen as a side activity.

For the content of blog posts, you should aim for pages of at least 600 words, ideally between 1000 and 1500 words.

The blog of a hotel or any other tourist accommodation is there, above all, to tell the story of the establishment, demonstrate the passion that guides the owners, convey the atmosphere of the hotel, or to showcase the cultural wealth of the region. The aim is to make the traveller dream!

Several ideas for blog posts

- ✓ A list of events taking place throughout the month or year
- ✓ Interviews with clients, in the form of spontaneous questions and answers
- ✓ Things to do in the region or things not to miss
- ✓ Behind the scenes of the hotel, such as the daily life of the receptionist or the gardener
- ✓ Traditional recipes with local products
- ✓ The best reviews of restaurants or shops in the area
- ✓ Tutorials on activities such as gardening or painting
- ✓ The history of the hotel's creation

Meta tags

Meta titles and meta descriptions are the shop window of a website. It is the text that will appear on list of the results on Google, after a search. It is the first thing that people see and read, so it really should not be taken lightly. Meta titles and meta descriptions should entice all those who fancy a trip or want to book a holiday to click through and visit the site.

To increase the chances of a good ranking on Google, keywords should be included in the meta titles and meta descriptions.

The meta-title is without doubt the most powerful thing to boost a keyword. It is therefore important to include the main keyword for the page in

question in this space, taking care not to exceed the character limit. For best results, it is advisable to start with the name of the establishment followed by a hyphen and the main keyword.

For the meta-description, the use of keywords is not strictly necessary. To have a good meta-description, it is sufficient to describe the page in one sentence, trying to include a USP (Unique Selling Point), which is a specific asset of the product or service on the page. For example, mentioning the presence of a swimming pool or a sauna would be a USP for an establishment, as opposed to Wi-Fi, which is now considered as a necessity and not an additional benefit or luxury.

4. E-reputation

Managing online reviews



The importance of online reviews

Online reviews are now extremely important for the growth of any business, but even more so in the tourism sector. Indeed, 93% of travellers look at online

reviews before booking a hotel room and 88% of visitors use filters, so they only see hotels with an average rating above 3 stars.

It's therefore essential to gain great reviews, and if necessary, mitigate any negative ones!

For internet users in search of a room, comments and online reviews are the

third most important criterion, after price and location.

A circular infographic with a yellow border and a blue segment at the top, containing the number 93% in white.

93%

93% of travelers look at reviews on the internet before booking a hotel room

A circular infographic with a yellow border and a blue segment at the top, containing the number 88% in white.

88%

88% of visitors use filters, only to see hotels with an average rating of over 3 stars

In the hotel industry, one often has to deal with tyrannical reviews, and it is true that this can bring a certain fear of negative feedback. Many hoteliers say that it is very difficult to deal with reviews because the fatal verdict can come at the slightest misstep! However, reviews can also be very beneficial.

Online reviews help to improve the visibility of the establishment. Google takes them into account, for example, in the referencing. As such, a hotel that has

more customer reviews on the net will have a better chance of being visible.

However, reviews are also a way to improve. They are sometimes constructive and help to change things for the better in the hotel. And they also provide free marketing, as reviews give exposure, helping to distinguish the structure from its competition while making itself visible to the wider world.

Negative opinions

A negative online review or comment about your hotel is probably the biggest nightmare for any business owner or manager.

The best way to avoid this risk is by anticipating it and doing everything possible to ensure that visitors do not leave that negative review in the first place. This means making an incredible first impression on visitors.

The first impression for a traveller today is no longer made at the hotel reception during check-in, but from the moment they search on the internet and on the hotel's website. The customer experience really begins at the time of booking. This is why the website and social pages must be updated regularly to avoid disappointment for the traveller. For example, if the room decoration has just been changed or if the swimming pool is not available due to ongoing works, guests should be informed on the hotel's website, so that they are not surprised and frustrated when they arrive.

Another very important point is that there is no need to wait to see the opinion of visitors once they have posted on the net. Why not ask them directly? Without being nagging or arrogant or

oppressive, you can approach guests to check that everything is fine. By checking with them if everything is ok, the staff can accommodate any additional requests or be made aware of small problems that can be solved easily and immediately. In this way, customers will have no desire to vent on the internet because you will have already listened and taken in their impressions verbally. When checking out, for example, you should always ask how the stay went, because if there were any problems, there is still a small chance of finding the solution and making a good impression.

If a guest has unfortunately encountered a problem during their stay, there's nothing better than taking the time to create a lovely "apology package". Sometimes, minor inconveniences occur in a hotel, such as a water leak or a heating malfunction. In such cases, whether it is a member of staff or the manager who does it, it is good to be proactive and make sure to give guests a small gift, such as a basket of local products with a handwritten apology note. It is likely that the guest will appreciate the gesture and will be less inclined to mention the inconvenience in an online comment.

Yet, even when you pay all the attention in the world and try to minimise the possible risks, the guest might still leave a negative review. The most important thing is to always respond to comments. And above all, taking the time to do it right.

Only a third of hotels respond to online reviews, so this is where the difference can be made.



80% of travellers think that a responsive establishment cares more about its customers



85% of guests agree that a thoughtful response improves their impression of the hotel



70% of visitors consider that an appropriate response makes them want to book

5 tips for responding to negative reviews

- ✓ Reply quickly, ideally within 24 hours, while avoiding brusque responses
- ✓ Customise the response rather than giving a copy/paste version to different opinions
- ✓ Stick to the facts rather than reacting to emotions
- ✓ Show gratitude by thanking the customer for leaving feedback, even if it is negative
- ✓ Offer to discuss it offline and in private, in order to find a suitable solution for the client

Positive reviews

On the other hand, positive feedback on the internet is the Holy Grail for any hotel.

In order to see more and more positive comments, you should not hesitate to ask visitors who are happy during their stay to leave one, as customers are not used to leaving positive comments. Rather, they tend to leave reviews when something is wrong. Remember that a satisfied visitor will tell 2 or 3 other people about their experience, while a dissatisfied person will tell at least 10 other people.

How and when to ask customers to leave a review? This can be done in different ways and at different times. The

most appropriate moment is obviously during check-out, by simply asking them to leave the review on Google, showing a QR code to scan, for example, to facilitate the process. The request can also be made in a post-stay email. Rather than attaching a satisfaction form to the email, a link can be used to redirect the customer to the establishment's Google reviews.

Once the hotel receives several positive reviews, don't just admire them, but take the time to respond to them. Unlike negative reviews, those that are positive are much easier to handle and very pleasant to deal with.

4 tips for responding to positive reviews

- ✓ Keep the same tone as when welcoming visitors
- ✓ Show appreciation by highlighting positive points made by the customer
- ✓ Stay humble and don't ignore customers' comments
- ✓ Do not be too formal in the response

5. Social networks

Establishing a presence



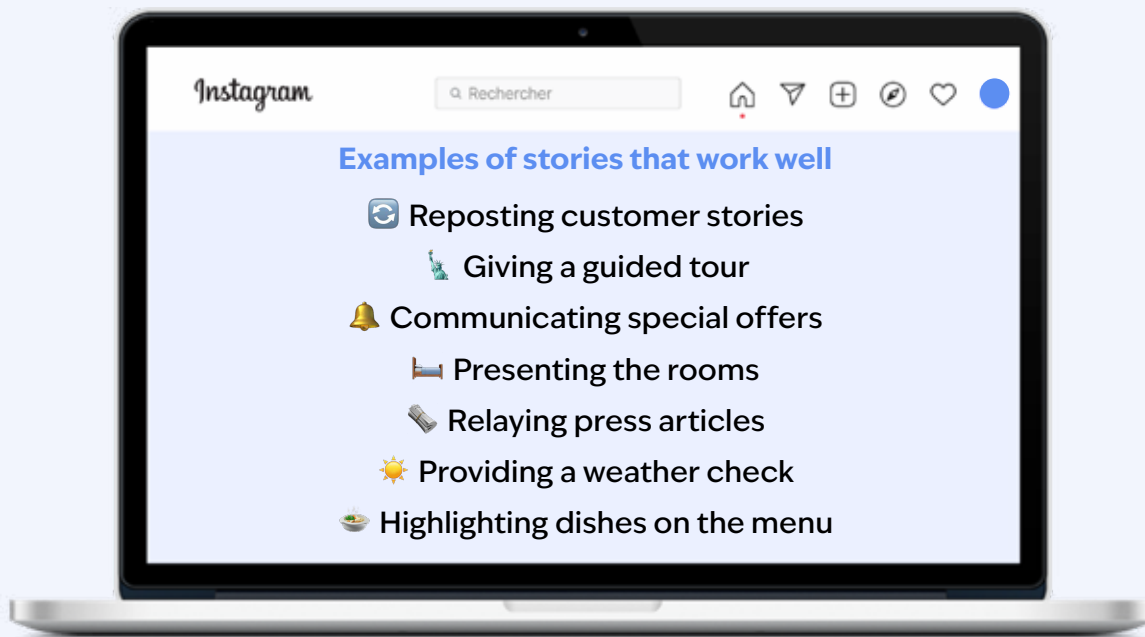
Stories

Regardless of the times, the hotel industry is a very competitive sector. As a result, hoteliers need to ensure they create dynamic content on social media to differentiate themselves. In particular, Instagram and Facebook stories have exploded in popularity in recent years, as they allow travellers to seamlessly view a series of videos or photos, over a period of just 24 hours.

Stories are a great way to enhance your digital marketing strategy, as they allow you to stand out from the competition, show visitors what's behind the hotel's doors, interact with travellers, highlight guest experiences or showcase upcoming events at the property.

But for stories to work well, a certain methodology must be followed:

1. Create a calendar of upcoming publications
2. Adopt a casual style
3. Publish once a day
4. Activate messaging
5. Track follower engagement
6. Create permanent stories (front page)
7. Engage followers by tagging them with @
8. Post live videos and reels



Contests

Contests are a promotional technique that works very well in tourism, and particularly on social networks. It is the type of publicity that best engages the community, and for a hotelier, running a competition on Facebook is an integral part of the marketing strategy. By running regular competitions on the Facebook page, the community grows, which also allows you to expand your follower base and with it the possibility of reaching new potential customers.

What types of gifts can be given to travellers?

An overnight stay for 2 people, for example. While this may seem like a lot of money, it is an integral part of the marketing budget, although profitability should clearly be at the centre of the project.

What conditions must participants meet for the competition?

What works best is to ask participants to follow the account, post a comment under the post and share it with a story tagging the hotel. If all three conditions are met, the user can enter the draw, and the hotel emerges with great publicity on social media.

How to promote the competition

It is best to start by sponsoring the post. A budget of 5 pounds would be enough to give the necessary boost to get started and the comments will follow accordingly afterwards.



6. Email

Launching clever email campaigns



Segment for better customisation

Even if each hotel normally has a specific customer base (family tourism, business travel, couples' weekends, etc.), there are always several types of customers. In order to run a successful email campaign, it is therefore necessary to first define the different types of customers and segment them. The approach will not necessarily be the same for each of them.

This segmentation can be based, for example, on the nature of the trip taken. In this case, it will be possible to identify business customers from leisure customers, short stay customers from long stay customers...

This marketing segmentation work can be done using other data. For example, it is very interesting to study the consumption habits of customers within the hotel. By observing this data, the hotelier will be able to see common behaviours among guests, such as the use of the restaurant, the bar, the gym, or other services.

Thanks to these different customer segmentations, it is possible to personalise the content of emails and make it as relevant as possible to each customer.

Create engaging content

Once the segmentation work has been done, the important aspect to focus on is the message to be conveyed in the

email, so that the content is relevant and encourages the customer to come or return to the hotel.

✔ Subject of the email

This is the first thing the customer sees. The subject line should be personalised, for example with the customer's first name, or should contain the content of the special offer that might interest them.

✔ Body text

The core content of the email. It must be entirely related to the subject of the email and must make the reader want to click on the proposed offer. It must create a real desire, or a real "teasing" in English.

✔ Visual content

The addition of photos and colours can add life to the email. Of course, it is important to follow the hotel's brand image in order to be perfectly identified and not to confuse the readers.

✔ CTA (Call To Action) button

The goal of the email is to get the customer to book a room. To achieve this goal, you need to create a nice CTA button that will make the customer want to click on it to be redirected to the booking page.

Email frequency

Email frequency is a sensitive element in any digital web strategy. Many readers unsubscribe from a newsletter simply because the frequency is too high. Regardless of the industry, customers may see emails as spam if they receive too many.

If segmentation and personalization are done correctly in advance, the problem of unsubscribing will definitely be reduced if not eliminated entirely.

As you implement and send out your campaigns, the analysis of the results obtained will allow you to adapt and modulate the frequency of sending and make your campaigns more targeted and more effective.



Get in touch *with us*

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Empowering
independent hoteliers.