



The Importance of *Social Media* for Hotels

BENEFITS AND BEST PRACTICES



A person in a dark suit is seated at a desk, working on a laptop. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand, looking at the screen. The background is a blurred office setting with large windows. The overall tone is professional and modern.

The Importance of Social Media for Hotels

Social media has grown to be one of the most influential tools in the marketing world over the last couple of years. There are over 4 billion users on social media platforms worldwide in 2020, which is an increase of 10% over 2019. That makes marketing online essential – it is no longer a unique, interesting tool to take advantage of to get the upper hand. Users online spend an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes per day online, according to SmartInsights⁵. This time is spread across an average of 8 social networks and messaging apps. During the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, these numbers were influenced by Stay

in Place orders, but even as those have lifted, social media use did not drop off as much as expected. Instead, it remained high.

With a sustained lift in usage, hoteliers have an unmistakable opportunity to shift more of their marketing to social media channels. Capturing guest interest at an early stage in their travel journey can set the wheels in motion for them to eventually book a stay at the property. Understanding in-depth the benefits of using social media and maintaining best practices will serve to grow a hotel's reach and boost their reputation.

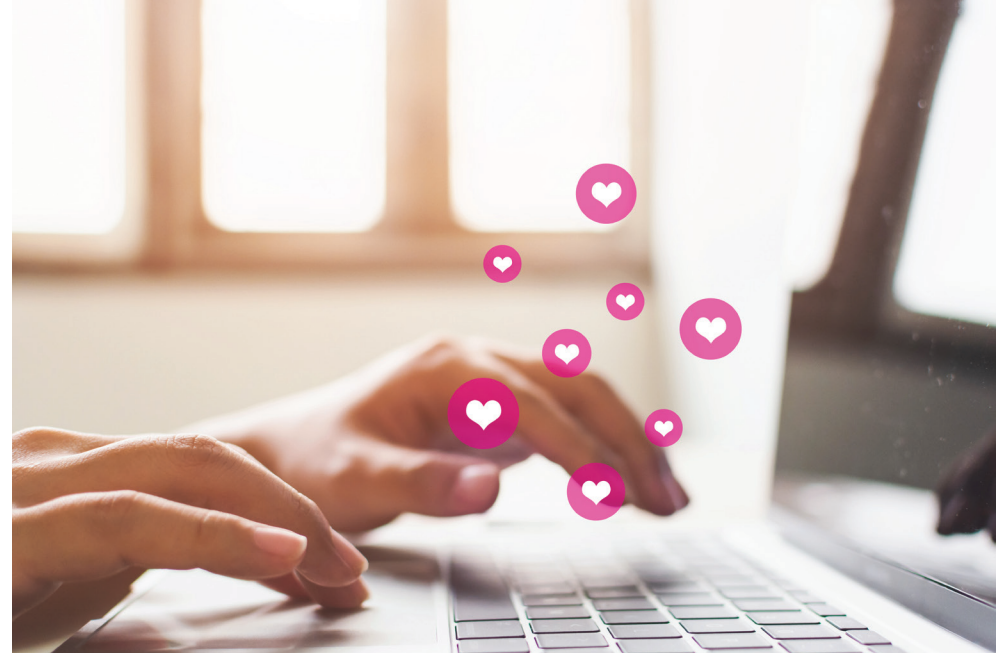
Why Use Social Media?

Considering the billions of users spending time online each day, hoteliers should easily see the opportunity for more engagement. Curating a community environment with travelers increases the chances that those travelers will return to a property and book when they're more prepared. Additionally, enhancing a property's online marketing efforts includes the chance to directly promote its own website, lifting heavy reliance away from OTAs and associated expenses. This means that when travelers are ready to make their reservations, they'll be far more likely to return to a hotel's site as long as the process to book is straightforward and simple.

Users' digital screentime is higher than ever, and hoteliers must acknowledge the significant impact social media has on their property, their reputation, and in the end, their revenue. In many ways, simply having a profile on various social platforms can boost a traveler's trust in a hotel, as it makes the property easier to find. The concept of trust plays a key role in a hotel's digital marketing strategy. According to data from Reputation X, 85% of customers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations, meaning that most potential travelers believe the opinions of strangers as much as their close friends or family². This concept of "social proof" can be influenced by hoteliers through sharing engagement, comments, or posts made by previous travelers. These posts raise trust more than hearing from the property directly – especially if a friend or family of the traveler Likes or follows the hotel's profile already.

Additionally, if the profile is set up with outgoing links to websites or includes vital contact information, travelers will be able to reach out more readily and easily if they encounter questions about the property itself.

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Information you can display on your social media profile might include:

- **A website**
- **An email address**
- **Physical address with map**
- **The property's phone number**
- **Professional photos and traveler-submitted photos**
- **Links to important health and safety information**

Each social media site has a different way you can display prominent information. Facebook pages have an informational sidebar that loads beneath a Page's profile picture. On Twitter, there is space beneath a short bio to include a link to a website, along with the ability to "pin" a tweet to the top of a profile that showcases prominent information ahead of the rest of the feed. On Instagram, there is only one space for a link, but this spot can be used for showing multiple links at once through a landing page that opens up to multiple links. There are a wide variety of tools available to make this process easier for hoteliers to accomplish, and once the hotel's profile is set up properly, all that remains is implementing best practices for each post.

Social Media Marketing: Best Practices

Following best practices is crucial for hoteliers at every level of experience in digital marketing. With a fast-paced environment like social media, the list of best practices shift from season to season, though following a set of core principles will make developing content a straightforward process for hotel marketers.

Use plenty of images. Digital marketing is most effective when images drive the message. Attractive property photos, images of guests having a good time, and staff highlights are all great starting points for hoteliers to consider when adding images to social posts. Images are necessary for boosting engagement: according to Twitter⁴, tweets with photos earn 35% more retweets than those with plain text. In some cases, short videos – typically less than a minute – are even more effective than plain images in capturing user attention depending on the social platform. Photos are particularly important for hotel marketing because they help set guest expectations about staying at the property.




Be clear and concise. Depending on the needs of the business, the message made through social media platforms will have to shift between brand awareness and conversions. Regardless of what message a hotel aims to deliver, however, it must be brief and exciting. Online, the attention capacity for posts is not high, so marketers only get the first few sentences to pull in their desired audience. A beautiful image that inspires them to travel may keep them looking at a post for longer, but in general, captions to posts and Tweets should be brief. Having a concise message is equally important, as users don't want to feel lost after reading a caption: the intention should either be to spark inspiration, interest, or motivation to book right away.

Include hashtags for everything. Unlike typical SEO practices, social media relies heavily on the use of hashtags to archive and find content to share with its user base. Without hashtags, posts can only be seen by the account's followers, dashing any chance of follower growth or brand awareness. While not as much of a requirement on platforms like Facebook, hashtags should be present on every Twitter and Instagram post. It's best to vary the tags, as well, since the algorithms for these websites are more likely to mark posts and associated accounts as spam. Researching popular hashtags and curating a reliable cycle is one way to help prevent accounts from being flagged. Hashtags will help your post reach more potential travelers.



Post multiple times a week. Posting about 4 times each week, per platform, allows for the maximum growth potential – both related to a hotel’s audience and the interaction and engagement received per post. Frequent posts cement the memory of a hotel’s branding and imagery in the mind of the consumer, which leads to them being more likely to select that specific location when their needs next arise. Additionally, if posts are engaging and varied, potential guests may choose to follow the hotel to keep track of future updates, including booking deals and events.

Post at the right hour of the day. Another imperative element of social media best practices is timing. Optimal windows for emails tend to be early morning or early evening, to catch consumers either right before they begin their workday or right after they’ve signed off and are preparing to head back home. However, social media marketers cannot rely on the same timing spectrum when scheduling and creating posts. Each platform has a different frame of times that are best to earn the optimal amount of engagement per post, broken apart into hour of the day and day of the week. The below chart interprets heatmap data from Sprout Social⁵ based on hotel industry activity.

Platform	Best Time to Post*	Best Days to Post
 Facebook	9 AM – 2 PM	Mid-week (Tues & Wed)
 Twitter	8 AM – 9 AM	Late week (Friday)
 Instagram	12 PM – 3 PM	Mid-late week (Wed & Thurs)

**All times are the hotel’s local timezone.*

Hoteliers are busy throughout the day, so finding time to make social posts at such specific times can add unnecessary stress. Thankfully, Travel Media Group’s innovative TMG OneView® dashboard and social media teams are dedicated to streamlining this process, so whether hoteliers utilize our user-friendly platform or leave it entirely in our hands, social media marketing is painless.



Guests As Influencers

What might be an unexpected precedent for hoteliers to set is the idea of the customer as an influencer. However, we see this idea in reviews continuously – past guest reviews are the primary source for future travelers to get an idea about what a stay at a hotel will be like. Typically, influencers are defined by their large followings, paid by businesses to write positive reviews of their products to be promoted. Through the lens of hospitality, a guest's follower count doesn't matter – their experience alone is enough to influence other potential guests researching a property.

When guests share experiences about aspects of a hotel that hoteliers want to highlight, sharing those experiences can prove beneficial for boosting brand awareness. A key element of brand awareness is building trust in the business, and user-generated content is often an ideal way to do this. Additionally, it encourages more user-generated content to be created, because guests may enjoy seeing their experiences highlighted by the property itself. Hoteliers can think of this as going a step beyond simply responding to positive posts and comments they find outside of review sites – it's essentially pre-made content for a property's social platforms and serves to boost the property's reputation.



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Travel Media Group's Solutions Help Save Time



Investing in Travel Media Group's robust social media program will save hoteliers time and effort. We create and schedule content based around areas of the business that hoteliers define, making posts 4 times per week across all platforms. Our TMG OneView® dashboard is constantly receiving new and exciting upgrades that increase the quality of user experience without raising the price tag for hotels. This even encompasses changes in technology that allow for more diversity and features within the program itself.

With so much else for hoteliers to balance, having a reliable partnership with a team dedicated to boosting the success and revenue of the business can be an immense relief. In the long-term, starting a partnership with us will save hoteliers money that can then be attributed to other areas of the business.

Sources:

1. [How can social media marketing help the hospitality and travel industry during this pandemic?](#), YourStory
2. [Best Practices for Hospitality Marketing](#), Modern Restaurant Management
3. [The Best Times to Post on Social Media in 2020](#), Sprout Social
4. [The customer as the new social media influencer](#), LiveMint
5. [Global social media research summary July 2020](#), SmartInsights
6. [What fuels a Tweet's engagement?](#), Twitter
7. [2020 online reputation management statistics](#), Reputation X

Get in touch with one of our representatives or email info@travelmediagroup.com to learn more about what makes our social program a cut above the rest.

