

Guerilla Marketing showcases performance-based marketing solutions at WTM Africa

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The just-ended World Travel Market Africa 2017, held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, provided a shot in the arm for travel and tourism businesses in Africa. Profitable networking took place between suppliers and buyers who came from all over the world. Being a [specialist digital marketing agency for the travel and tourism](#) industry, our attendance at this prestigious event was to showcase our performance-based marketing solutions that build positive brand experiences, foster customer engagement and maximises revenue.



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The feedback we received from our interactions with the exhibitors was both insightful and encouraging. Clearly, travel and tourism is an indispensable industry to the national economy and it is also a money spinner for savvy investors. However, the marketing landscape within this vertical is fraught with potential landmines and the biggest headaches are the decline in revenue due to high commissions paid to online travel agencies (OTAs) and also the proliferation of non-traditional alternatives provided by disruptive platforms like AirBnB.

Fortunately, it is not all gloom and doom as solutions to remedy this are available. To win the marketing battle, hoteliers can leverage the following proven strategies that enhance their online visibility, drive direct revenues and strengthen the engagement with their customers:

Direct bookings strategies

This is by far the best panacea to the challenge posed by OTAs who charge hefty commissions. A hotel's website is central to the success of its direct booking strategies. In fact, the website should be the most successful and profitable booking channel for any hotel. To unlock value and facilitate the conversion of strangers into customers, the website should be compelling and user friendly. Additionally, it should be easy to navigate and guests should be able to complete transactions in the least number of steps.

Another great tactic is to add social proofing onto the website. According to the Wikipedia, "Social proof, also known as informational social influence, is a psychological phenomenon where people assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect correct behavior for a given situation." With regards to digital marketing, when the number of a business' social

media followers are displayed on the website, as well as the number of likes, shares and tweets it exerts great influence on conversions.

Hotels can also incentivise bookings by providing value added services that OTAs cannot offer. Examples of these add-ons include bed and breakfast, free Wi-Fi, romance packages, spa services and the combination of seasonal bookings with local activities.

Data

Data is an indisputable game changer in hotel marketing. Why is this so? Hotels gather a lot of data from their guests via channels like reservation and booking engines, WI-FI logins, feedback forms, POS, bar and restaurant orders etc. This data helps hotels to know a lot about their guests, the number of times they've stayed at the hotel, when they tend to visit, the services they enjoy (and spend their money on), and so forth. By analysing this data, hotels get granular insights that empowers them to connect and engage with their guests effectively.

Data enables hotels to identify their most lucrative customer segments and then create highly targeted, relevant and personalised marketing messages that are delivered through the right channels (website, social media or paid advertising) at the right time to maximise conversions. From pre-stay emails to post-stay surveys to reservation reminders, targeted guest communications increase guest engagement and inspire repeat business.

Data can also be used to build a loyalty programme. These programmes are a marketing system instituted by a business that rewards purchasing behavior, thus increasing the customer's urge to stay loyal to the company. A loyalty program may offer convenience, credits, discounts, prizes, or any other benefit that would entice the loyalty of a guest.

Online reviews management

An effective review management strategy leads to improved bookings. A recent study conducted an international travel research company shows that reviews have leapfrogged everything else to become the most important factor when booking decisions are being made. This is because they represent an important source of information affecting tourists' pre-purchase evaluation of a hotel. Hotel experiences are intangible products and prospective guests naturally rely on the feedback of others. According to the study, 83.4% of surveyed guests said that they will not book a hotel without reading reviews. Ultimately, positively framed information together with numerical rating details increase both booking intentions and consumer trust.

It is quite clear that the digital revolution has changed how travelers shop for hotels and other attendant service providers. Hotel marketers should incorporate savvy tactics that will help them connect and engage with their customers in a profitable manner. It is imperative that they know the importance of data in marketing and the various ways that it can be utilised to hyper target the relevant audience, drive personalised messages and offer guests unique value add services. Having a great website where specials and discounts are offered results in increased direct bookings.

For more information about our specialist digital solutions to the travel and tourism industry visit www.guerillamarketing.co.za. To request a free audit of your digital marketing assets, kindly contact us on 011 704 2641 or email gmarketing@adclickafrica.com

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