The Definitive Guide to Guest Feedback for Hoteliers
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INTRODUCTION
The Rise of User Generated Content in Hospitality

From the luxury resort to the neighborhood bed and breakfast, hotels all have one thing in common: Guests. The GSS has long been the benchmark of performance in hospitality. But, the popularity of review sites and OTAs is rising. Guests are writing hotel reviews on dozens of sites, rather than filling out a GSS. They’re posting to Facebook and Twitter about their hotel experiences. They’re Instagramming their vacation photos. The guest experience is more visible than ever before, thanks to user generated content.

User generated content (UGC) is media created not by professionals, but by your peers and your customers. It’s not particularly new—one can argue that it’s as old as the World Wide Web itself. But, its use and consumption expanded dramatically in 2005 when the BBC set up a UGC content team. In 2006, UGC was featured as Time magazine’s Person of the Year, in which the person of the year was “you,” meaning all the people who contribute to user generated media like YouTube and Wikipedia. Today, it makes up a huge part of the information that is available to consumers, from digital video, to blogging, podcasting, forums, social media, review sites, and wikis. Your guests are consuming UGC daily, whether on a computer, a mobile phone, or a tablet.

So what does UGC mean for hoteliers? It means that every day, more and more people are leaving feedback related to your property on sites like TripAdvisor. Furthermore, prospective guests look at these sites while deciding where to book their stays. According to a 2012 TripAdvisor survey, 93% of travelers look at online reviews before they book a hotel. 53% of travelers say they won’t book a hotel that doesn’t have any online reviews.

Many hoteliers already know that responding to hotel reviews is important for bookings, and a 2014 TripAdvisor study offers resounding confirmation. It found that hotels providing a management response to reviews are 21% more likely to receive a booking inquiry via TripAdvisor than those who don’t respond to any reviews. And, properties that respond to over 50% of their reviews increase their likelihood of receiving a booking inquiry by 24% (compared to properties that do not respond to reviews).

Additionally, with technological advances and evolving consumer preferences, the traditional GSS has become problematic for hoteliers. Guests now prefer to leave feedback online. GSS participation rates are low because long-form surveys are cumbersome for the modern traveler.

Taking all this into consideration, it appears that hoteliers have an overarching problem with regard to guest feedback. Traditionally, their performance has been tied to GSS, and this has been a mainstay of hospitality for many years. Unfortunately, today’s guests are choosing to leave feedback elsewhere. This breaks down into two issues. Guests are leaving public feedback rather filling out a private GSS. Hoteliers have also not yet learned how to use this valuable content to their advantage.

Hoteliers need to use UGC more effectively by making it the focus of their guest feedback strategy. There are several necessary objectives here. Hoteliers need to:

- enable more guests to write more online reviews and fill out surveys
- respond to reviews in a timely and appropriate manner
- extract strategic, actionable data points from guest feedback
- get familiar with sites like TripAdvisor, and the major social networks like Facebook and Twitter
- learn how to get the most value out of user generated content

In this guide, you’ll learn exactly how and when to respond to online reviews. You’ll also learn how to get the most out of your guest satisfaction surveys. We’ll teach you the ins and outs of TripAdvisor, including how to improve your property’s ranking, and we’ll give you the rundown on the various social networks. Finally, we’ll outline some guidelines on how to set goals and measure your success.
SECTION 1
Online Reviews

Chapter 1: The Review Site Landscape
Chapter 2: How to Respond to Online Reviews
Chapter 3: Six Ways to Drive Direct Bookings
Chapter 4: Dominating TripAdvisor
Chapter 5: Measurement and Benchmarking
CHAPTER 1
The Review Site Landscape

Management responses to online reviews are extremely important. But because there are so many different review sites, it can be difficult to keep track of them. Here's our list of the major review sites that allow management responses. We've also included instructions on how to obtain the credentials you need to start responding.

**TripAdvisor** is the world's largest travel site, and it allows public management responses. To start replying to reviews, you must first register as an owner (CLICK HERE to get started). TripAdvisor also allows you to send reviewers private messages. This is great for service recovery purposes—if you not only respond publicly but privately to a negative reviews, it re-iterates to your guest that you really do care about his or her experience. CLICK HERE for TripAdvisor's official guidelines for management responses.

**Booking.com** is a dominant review site globally, especially in Europe. Previously, the site only allowed hoteliers to contact review authors privately. But, since a public response feature is now in Beta, Booking.com has removed the private response feature. As of the writing of this guide, the public response Beta was only available for a select number of properties. Hoteliers should check in with Booking.com regularly to stay on top of further updates. They need to be ready to jump in and start managing their public Booking.com reputations should the site allow their properties to respond in the future.

**Expedia** and **Hotels.com** allow public management responses. To respond, hoteliers must log in at Expedia Partner Central. You can also respond to reviews by emailing Expedia. If responding by email, please make sure you include your Expedia Property ID. The email address for responding to reviews on Expedia is ehrr@expedia.com and the email address for Hotels.com is htlrvw@hotels.com.

**Google+ Local** is growing fast and is likely to become more prevalent in the coming years. It allows public management responses. In order to reply, you will first need to claim your listing. If you are having trouble verifying your Google+ Local listing, note that Google is now providing phone support for verification issues. CLICK HERE for Google's official guidelines for management responses.

**Travelocity** has a “Comment” button located at the bottom of each review to allow for management replies. This functionality also allows hoteliers to add photos and videos to the response.

**Ctrip**, an OTA, has the largest share of online reviews in China. It also syndicates reviews from other sites. Hoteliers can respond publicly to some reviews on Ctrip, but not all. It only allows public management responses to the reviews left directly on Ctrip, not to the reviews that come from a syndicate. If you have not created login credentials for the Ctrip Extranet, email ebooking@ctrip.com or call 021-34064880 ext 76153, 761151, 76143 or 761140.

**Wotif** is the dominant review site in Australia and New Zealand. It allows hoteliers to reply publicly to a review. If you have not yet registered as a supplier on Wotif, you can register on the Supplier's Registration Request form. CLICK HERE to learn more about Wotif's guidelines for review responses.

*Please note that Wotif was recently purchased by Expedia, so these guidelines may change in the near future.*
Now that you know how to find the major review sites and claim your property’s listing, the next step is to start responding to reviews. In the next chapter, we’ll give you some guidelines on how often to respond. You’ll also learn how to craft your responses to positive, negative, and mixed reviews.

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CHAPTER 2
How to Respond to Online Reviews

Your guests are talking about their experience with your property on review sites and OTAs. Prospective guests look for these reviews at a critical stage in the booking process. It is essential for hoteliers to respond and interact with these guests for three reasons.

By responding you can:

- Minimize the damage negative comments can do to your hotel’s reputation
- Recover service with unhappy guests
- Discover brand enthusiasts and turn them into promoters

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I RESPOND TO REVIEWS

Ideally, hoteliers would respond to every online review. But we realize that not every general manager has the time to do so. If you don’t have the resources to respond to every review, we usually suggest that you respond to every 1 and 2 star review, and as many other reviews as you can, while still personalizing your responses.

With positive and neutral reviews, it’s a good best practice to respond within 24 hours. Since reviews are moderated by the review site, you want to respond quickly, while the review is still top of mind with your guest. You should respond to negative hotel reviews ASAP (within 24 hours), once you’ve researched the details of the guest’s stay. Responding as quickly as possible is one more step you can take toward repairing your relationship with an unhappy guest. It will also minimize the number of prospective guests that see the review online without your response. When it comes to review response, the more you can interact with your guests, the better.

It’s also helpful to have an Online Reputation Management system that aggregates all your online reviews onto one platform, and alerts you when you get a one or two star review online. This way you know right away when a guest gives you feedback online, and can respond promptly.

The next question is, how do I respond to each type of review?

HOW TO RESPOND TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS?

In addition to affirming that yes, hoteliers should respond to online reviews, the 2012 TripAdvisor survey sheds some light on how to respond to reviews. Of the travelers surveyed, 84% agree that an appropriate management response to a bad review "improves my impression of the hotel.” But, 64% also agree that an aggressive or defensive management response "makes me less likely to book that hotel.”

The message is clear that not only do hoteliers need to respond to negative reviews, but doing so in the right way is crucial. Having a bad review on TripAdvisor hurts your reputation. But, a proper response to a bad review can do two things for you. It can minimize the damage to your reputation by making prospective guests think more highly of you, and it can repair your relationship with the unhappy reviewer.

In general, you want to show prospective guests that your hotel reads, internalizes, and responds to reviews. Personalize your response to each guest review, and show your brand voice. You should also research the review and respond in a thoughtful and professional manner.

Suggested Response Rate:

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- 84% of users agree that an appropriate management response to a bad review “improves my impression of the hotel.”
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the issue before you respond, so that you are aware of as many details of the guest’s stay as possible. Did the guest complain before checkout? Is there a record of his or her communications with your staff?

THE NEGATIVE REVIEW RESPONSE FORMULA
To maximize your review response efficiency, try creating a formula for responding to different types of reviews. Here’s a great formula for responding to negative reviews. Be careful not sound canned in your response. The formula is just a guideline—your responses should still be personalized to each review.

1. Thank the guest by name
Even if the negative review is aggressive or hurtful, you should thank the guest for taking the time to give feedback. Take a minute to remember that all feedback is valuable, even if the review feels like a personal attack. If you handle the situation gracefully, your response can mitigate the effects of the bad review in the eyes of your prospective guests.

2. Apologize for the guest’s poor experience
Remember, an apology is not an admission of guilt or wrongdoing. For whatever reason, this guest’s expectations were not met. This is disappointing for anybody. You should express sympathy that his or her experience fell short of expectation.

3. Highlight any changes you have made or intend to make
This is a good opportunity to take the conversation offline to avoid further public conflict. If the situation warrants, “changes you have made or intend to make” can be as simple as inviting the guest to contact you, so you can make it right.

4. Evaluate the need for follow up procedures
If you have the guest’s contact information it’s a good idea to send them a personal email to express your apologies and offer compensation if appropriate.

When you get a negative review, you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did this guest experience a systemic problem that each customer could face?
2. Is there an easy fix to the problem?
3. Is the problem unfounded or not likely to be repeated?
4. Or is the problem linked to something you cannot easily change, like infrastructure or design?

Remember, feedback is valuable insight into the guest experience at your hotel. If you start to see trends in your negative feedback, it may be a sign that you need to invest time and money in making changes to your property and/or operations.
REAL WORLD EXAMPLE

Here’s an example of a situation where the problem is linked to something that cannot easily be changed.

“Needs updating badly”
Reviewed January 17, 2014

Stayed in same room last year. Everything was exactly the same. Room looks really tired. Bed skirts had holes this year. However, room was clean. Faucents leaked. Tub needs to be resurfaced. Will not return next year. I stayed in larger room with 2 single beds. My roommate said the room looked like it was decorated by grannies.

PATRICE Y
CAMBRIDGE

A manager could respond like this:

Dear Patrice,

Thank you very much for your candid review of your recent stay at our hotel. Your feedback is extremely valuable to us as we strive to improve with each and every stay. I greatly appreciate your comments about aspects of the room that need updating. It is a pleasure to announce that we will be implementing many of these upgrades to the property within the next couple of months. Our rooms will be getting new mattresses, bed skirts, window treatments, carpeting, in-room accessories, and much more! In taking great care of our charming hotel, our main priority is to be able to offer a very well-maintained and comfortable atmosphere. I hope that I can convince you to change your mind about another visit to our property. Please reach out to me directly at [email] if you would be willing to give us a chance to turn your experience around. It would be such a pleasure to personally welcome you back to our new and improved hotel!

With much appreciation,

Jimmy L. | General Manager

Everything this manager says indicates both to the reviewer and any prospective guests that may read the review that she truly cares about her guests. Although he is unable to fix all the issues immediately, he takes care to highlight the aspects of the hotel that are getting an update. This is a great way to mitigate any damage to your reputation, and potentially repair your relationship with an unhappy guest.
I’VE DONE EVERYTHING I CAN, AND THE GUEST IS STILL UPSET. NOW WHAT?

When a guest goes online and writes a bad review, even after you’ve done all you can, the next objective is damage control. You need to show any potential guests who see the review that you’ve done everything possible to resolve the issue. In the following example, this manager has clearly taken all the steps he can in terms of following up with the issue. Sometimes there’s only so much you can do.

“Make sure to use the safe”
Reviewed November 14, 2013

Please read this and learn from my mistake. I stayed at this hotel for business as I do many hotels around the country. Nice please, friendly staff, etc. All that you would expect from a higher end hotel accept for one thing: On the day I checked out I left two things in my room: A phone charger and a very expensive watch. It was a very busy morning, I left in a hurry and left both on the table. A few hours later I realized my watch was not on my wrist and new right away where it was. I was still in downtown so I went back to the hotel. Well guess which of the two items they had? Yup watch gone. The hotel swore up and down they would get to the bottom of this"We will do everything we can to make this right" I was told. After a few weeks they did nothing. NOW I bear some blame in this, leaving a $10,00 watch in my room, but shouldn’t your belongings be safe no matter what? Please to all who use this stie, when you travel use the safe, ALWAYS! Or avoid this hotel when in Cincinnatti.

Here’s one way for the manager of this property to respond:

Dear James,

Thank you again for bringing this issue to our attention. The safety and security of our guests is always our top priority. As discussed in our previous conversations, our team has done everything possible—in cooperation with the Cincinnati Police Department—to investigate your claim. I am so sorry that we have not been able to resolve this. Please feel free to reach out to me directly at [email] if you have additional information to share.

Kind regards,
Jimmy L | General Manager

In his response, the manager of this property does a couple of things. First, he thanks the guest. Then he outlines a few of the details of the situation, which informs the reviewer that the hotel took action at the time of the guest’s stay. It also reassures any prospective guests reading the review that theft is not a common occurrence at the hotel, and that the staff is taking the situation seriously. Finally, he indicates to both the reviewer and prospective guests that he still wishes to resolve the situation if possible by inviting the reviewer to contact him should any further information arise.

The most important thing that the manager does in his review response is refrain from getting defensive. Remember, if you get defensive, your response to negative reviews actually hurts your online reputation. But if you respond in a caring way, you can assuage any fears that prospective guests may have about your property.

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HOW TO RESPOND TO MIXED REVIEWS

The majority of reviews on TripAdvisor, even some five star reviews, express mixed sentiments. Since customers can learn unflattering things about your property from mixed reviews, it’s important to respond to as many as possible. In the 2012 TripAdvisor survey, researchers found that 74% of travelers say that seeing management responses to reviews makes them believe the hotel cares more about its guests. They also found that 57% of users agree that seeing hotel management responses to reviews generally “makes me more likely to book it (versus a comparable hotel that doesn’t respond to reviews).”

Because it can win bookings for your property, you want potential customers to see your responses and get your side of the story when there are negative mentions of your property online.

THE POSITIVE SANDWICH FORMULA

Mixed hotel reviews are often mostly complimentary. One way to address mixed feedback is by using the positive sandwich method. By sandwiching your responses to the negative remarks with positive statements, you can recognize and respond to negative messages without emphasizing them.

1. Thank the guest
   Address the guest by name and thank him or her for taking the time to write a review.

2. Highlight the positive comments
   Express delight that the guest had a good experience with some aspects of his or her stay. This personalizes the message, and reminds the reader that the guest said good things about the hotel.

3. Address the negative comments
   Apologize for the negative experiences discussed in the review, and give details on any changes the hotel has made or intends to make.

4. Return to the positive
   Highlight another positive aspect of the guest’s stay. This surrounds the negative comments with positive statements, which allows you to address customer service issues without putting too much emphasis on any unflattering information about your property.

5. Invite the guest to return
   Inviting your guest to return reminds the reviewer and readers that you value your guests and any feedback they have to offer. Even though this person said negative things about your hotel online, it says great things about you if you accept the feedback graciously.

57% of users agree that seeing hotel management responses to reviews generally “makes me more likely to book it (versus a comparable hotel that doesn’t respond to reviews).”

EXPERT TIP:
Don’t overlook mixed reviews!
Many potential guests trust mixed reviews the most as they present the least biased viewpoint, showcasing the hotel’s good and bad qualities in an honest light. Show these guests that you care by being honest and open in your response.
REAL WORLD EXAMPLE

Here's one example of a guest that had mostly positive things to say at a newly launched property in Cincinnati. But, he or she found that the staff did not live up to expectations:

“So pretty, but...”
Reviewed May 28, 2014

Mustard333
New York, NY

A pretty hotel with enthusiastic staff that just need a little more training. The menu in the dining room was innovative and very good. The upstairs, outdoor bar was a very nice addition. Beautiful, comfortable, well designed hotel/rooms. A very good place to stay in Cincinnati.

A manager could respond like this:

Dear Mustard333,

Thank you for taking the time to share your recent experience at our hotel. We are so glad you found our hotel a good place to stay, and that you enjoyed the menu and food at our restaurant. Unfortunately, it seems that we did not meet all your expectations. We would certainly like to learn more about that. If you would like, please connect with me at the hotel or via email at JimmyL@hotel.com. Your feedback is very valuable to us as we work to be better each and every day. We are pleased that you enjoyed so much of our establishment, and we would be honored to have you return to our hotel in the future.

Jimmy L | General Manager

Even though the guest’s mention of the staff was brief and most of the review was glowing, it’s clear to any prospective customers that this guest did not have a perfect stay. The manager’s goal here is not just to manage online reputation, but also attempt service recovery. He addresses the guest’s issues, sandwiching the negatives between positive comments to de-emphasize them. He also invites the guest back, to reassure the reviewer and any readers that he really does care about his guests.

HOW TO RESPOND TO POSITIVE REVIEWS

It’s clear that hoteliers should respond to negative reviews and mixed reviews. But, when we recommend that hoteliers respond to as many reviews as possible, that does include some positive reviews. Why? By responding to at least some of your positive reviews, you can encourage loyalty, turn brand enthusiasts into promoters, and influence prospective guests at a critical stage in the booking process.

1. Loyalty

You can encourage loyalty with guests by reaching out to those who take the time to write you a positive review. They’ve already had a great experience with your property. This extra personal touch will make them more likely to choose your hotel again and again.

2. Turn brand enthusiasts into promoters

Guests who write positive reviews are also likely to be brand enthusiasts. Not only does your response encourage loyalty, it also makes these guests more likely to tell their friends (in person, or

EXPERT TIP:

Promoters, Promoters, Promoters!

Word of mouth is the most powerful marketing tool. Find your promoters and enable them to do what they do best...promote! Learn more about them (look at their stay history and the size of their social networks, for example). If they book again, they should be given the highest level of service. You should even consider giving them a gift or a promotional rate.

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on social media) about the great experience they had at your hotel. If your capacity to respond is limited, pick the reviews that really stand out.

3. Leave a positive impression with prospective guests
78% of travelers say, “A management response to a good review makes me think highly of the hotel.” By responding to at least some of your positive reviews, you have the opportunity to influence prospective guests at a critical stage in the booking process.

THE THANK YOU SANDWICH FORMULA
To maximize your review response efficiency, try creating a formula for responding to different types of reviews. The Thank You Sandwich is a great formula for responses to positive reviews. Be careful not sound canned in your response. The formula is just a guideline—your responses should still be personalized to each review.

1. Thank the guest by name
Be sure to thank the guest and address him or her by name. This person took the time to write a glowing review of your property, which does wonders for your online reputation. The least you can do is thank your guest for doing you a favor.

2. Personalize the response to the review
Highlight some of the specific compliments the reviewer makes about your property. Express delight that the guest had such a wonderful stay. This reinforces the positives and communicates to readers that you truly care about your guests.

3. Thank the guest again, and encourage him or her to return
Encourage loyalty by reminding your guests that you love seeing them again and again.

REAL WORLD EXAMPLE
Here’s one example of a guest that wrote a glowing review that highlights some of the unique aspects of this hotel. If you’re not able to respond to all of your positive reviews, select the reviews that stand out like this one.

“Most Unique Hotel I’ve Experienced!”
Reviewed 1 week ago

The hotel incorporates modern art into everything...and it’s very fun! The art includes paintings, sculptures and videos. It encompasses every part of the hotel, the gallery spaces, the hotel lobby and hallways, the elevator and even the public rest rooms and hotel limo. (We didn’t take the limo anywhere, but it is very noticeable sitting outside the entrance!) We also took an art tour shortly after arrival. The guide was extremely knowledgeable and made the art that much more interesting. The hotel room itself was a little more typical of an upscale hotel room (probably the least artsy part of the experience), but extremely well maintained and comfortable...again, everything you would expect from an upscale hotel room. We had a room facing the interior of the hotel. Initially, I wasn’t excited about an interior view, but it was very unique.. sort of an artsy view of interior block walls and a skylight letting in nature light. We definiey enjoyed the hotel and will definitely stay again if we have the opportunity.
A manager could respond like this:

Hello awwasti,
Thank you for choosing our hotel, and for taking the time to write a review! We are so glad to hear that you enjoyed your accommodations, as well as the guided docent tour through our museum galleries. Our hotel aims to provide a truly unique experience, and we are thrilled that we were able to exceed your expectations. We look forward to welcoming you back to our hotel in the future.

Sincerely,
Jimmy L | General Manager

In the perfect world, a hotel would respond to every guest who takes the time to write a review online. By responding to reviews, you send the message to former guests and prospective customers that your hotel aims to provide the perfect guest experience. When the guest’s stay isn’t perfect, you want reviewers and prospective guests alike to feel reassured that your establishment will do everything in its power to make the situation right. When the stay exceeds all expectations, you want former guests and potential customers to know that you are delighted that your guests had a great experience, and would be happy to repeat the performance upon return to the hotel.

Responding to online reviews is clearly an important part of developing and maintaining relationships with past and future guests. It can also be helpful in terms of encouraging guests to book with you directly, rather than with an OTA. How? We’ll cover how to drive direct bookings in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

Six Ways to Drive Direct Bookings

Adjacent to the challenge that online reviews present is this new struggle: how do hoteliers capture bookings directly with the hotel rather than with an OTA? Rate parity clauses in agreements with OTAs make it difficult for hotels to convince customers that they can find a better deal elsewhere, as they prevent hotels from advertising lower rates on their direct website.

Fortunately, there are ways for hotels to drive more direct bookings and avoid expensive OTA commissions without violating rate parity agreements.

1. Post reviews on your website
Having reviews on your site enables travelers to make purchase decisions without leaving to look for reviews on OTAs. According to a case study by L2, Four Seasons launched user reviews in 2010, and was among the 17% of brands that featured them on their brand.com sites. Those brands sent 39% less traffic to OTAs, avoiding expensive OTA commissions.

2. Create a loyal following
Be sure to capture your guests’ emails at check-in. In most cases, OTA rate parity agreements only apply to rates you advertise to an open audience – for example, all visitors to your website. These requirements do not, however, apply to offers distributed to a very gated, limited audience.

For example, you can use your email list to send special promotions to past guests or to loyalty customers, to welcome them back to stay with you again. You can also provide a special offer to your loyal Facebook followers with savings greater than what they can find anywhere else. Don’t limit yourself to discounting. You can offer gift cards, tickets to a local event or coupons for a discounted meal in your hotel restaurant. By rewarding repeat visitors, you can build a social community of people who love your hotel. Loyal customers are also more likely to create and share valuable user generated content, which can in turn drive the inspiration phase of travel.

3. Share blog posts about great deals
Your blog is a great avenue for both reminding potential customers why that moment is a great time to travel and for pitching them on deals relevant to whatever seasonal event might be happening. You can send these articles to your email list, as well as optimize them with keywords that have high search traffic. This latter strategy can drive more organic traffic to your website. For example, “SXSW hotels” receives 170 searches per month, so Austin-area hotels could write blogs optimized for these keywords so they rank relevantly when people search for that term in Google. Here’s an example of a blog post advertising springtime events in the area around The Sanctuary Beach Resort in Monterey Bay.

4. Offer money-saving packages
Packaging services and other perks is another great way to offer discounts to customers while still following rate parity agreements. The price for the package might be greater than the OTA offer, but the extra perks make your deal more worthwhile and result in a
Some ideas for add-ons include free parking, breakfast and event tickets. For example, a ski resort could offer the room at the regular full price but include a free pair of lift tickets. The opportunities here are endless and will vary by your market.

5. **Mobile optimize your site**
According to Google's 2014 Traveler Study, only 29% of leisure hotel bookers and 24% of business hotel bookers who have encountered a mobile site that wasn't optimized actually pushed through. Many of the customers who didn't push through booked with an OTA or a competitor instead. To avoid losing bookings to OTAs and competitors, it is crucial for your property to have a mobile optimized site.

6. **Start conversations on review sites**
Here's another way you can benefit your hotel by responding to as many reviews as possible. When customers use OTAs, they often get a list of five or so properties in a similar price range. In addition to visiting the hotel websites, they will also read online reviews. If you respond to your online reviews, those customers see your responses. As we mentioned previously, 57% of users agree that seeing hotel management responses to reviews generally “makes me more likely to book it (versus a comparable hotel that didn’t respond to reviews).”
CHAPTER 4
How to Dominate on TripAdvisor

Now that you know how to get started on the various review sites, how to respond to reviews and how to use those reviews to your advantage, let’s zoom in on TripAdvisor in more detail. Although the share of online reviews on different sites may vary by region and even by property, on a global scale TripAdvisor is still the dominant player in online reviews. It's important for every hotelier to know the basics of the world’s largest travel site.

GETTING STARTED

If you haven’t started interacting with your guests on TripAdvisor yet, it’s never too late to start! Here’s how you get on the road to success with TripAdvisor:

- **Claim your business page**
  Even if you’ve never used TripAdvisor before, chances are your property already has reviews. To start managing your reputation on TripAdvisor, you need to claim the business. (CLICK HERE to get started). Be sure to update the profile with relevant information like your property’s phone number, address, website, and contact email.

- **Build out your page**
  Once you’ve claimed your business, you can start customizing the page. Add professional photos and videos that show off the best your property has to offer. Start dedicating time each day to respond to reviews.

- **Drive traffic**
  Encourage guests to write reviews on TripAdvisor. The more you can increase your volume of positive reviews, the higher you will rise on the TripAdvisor Popularity Index.

- **Promote it**
  Recently, L2 reported that brands who displayed consumer reviews directly on their websites sent 39% less traffic to unprofitable OTAs by enabling travelers to make purchase decisions on brand sites. Since 93% of travelers look at online reviews before they book a hotel, make it easy for your customers by adding TripAdvisor widgets to your website. There are a variety of widgets available including widgets that display your latest reviews or your Popularity Index ranking.

- **Keep it up**
  Don’t neglect your page! The more often you can respond to reviews and keep your page updated with fresh photos, the better.

Of course, TripAdvisor takes integrity very seriously. When responding to reviews, be careful to adhere to all management response guidelines. You’ll also want to be aware of what constitutes fraud, so as to avoid being penalized.

Once you’ve started managing your business page, you’ll notice a couple of items on your profile: your average rating, your ranking on the Popularity Index, and your Recommended By or “Thumbs Up” percentage. The average rating is pretty self-explanatory—it’s the average of all the ratings of all of your reviews on TripAdvisor. The Popularity Index ranking and the Recommended By percentage, however, are a little less transparent.

**HERE ARE SOME OF THE BIG NO-NOs:**

- Don’t ask guests to review while they’re on property. TripAdvisor checks the IP addresses of reviewers. A review written on property may appear to be written by staff.

- Don’t offer incentives for positive reviews, like discounts or upgrades.

- Don’t submit reviews on behalf of guests.

- Don’t ask any reviewer to remove his or her review.
WHAT’S UP WITH THE THUMBS UP?
The TripAdvisor “Thumbs Up,” or Recommended By percentage, is at first glance a bit of a mystery to many hoteliers. It shows up on some properties’ pages but not others, depending on the user’s browser and the type of business. Additionally the question, “Would you recommend this hotel to others?” is no longer on the TripAdvisor guest review form.

So, how is TripAdvisor calculating the Thumbs Up? Some hoteliers in the TripAdvisor support community have figured it out, but here’s our analysis:

The “Recommended By” percentage is a feature that TripAdvisor chooses to display for certain properties. It indicates whether users would recommend this property to others. This feature is not available on all properties, like restaurants, and it is only available on properties that use third party booking sites like Orbitz and Expedia.

TripAdvisor appears to roughly calculate the “Recommended By” percentage by adding up the number of four and five star reviews, and looking at those as a percentage of total reviews. So, for example:

At this property, the four and five star reviews add up to 91% of its total reviews. \( \frac{490 + 222}{782} = \text{about 91%} \), which is roughly the thumbs up percentage for that property.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR RANKING
The TripAdvisor Popularity Index is becoming a critical metric for many hotels. Based on traveler feedback, a property’s ranking on the Popularity Index reflects how it compares to other hotels within a geographic area. Hotels that are closer to the top of the list are more likely to be seen when prospective guests search for hotels in the area.

TripAdvisor says that the Popularity Index algorithm is based on three key ingredients: the quality, quantity, and recency of reviews. It also tells us on its Insights blog, “We take content integrity very seriously and screen every review. If you are caught breaking our guidelines, it can take a big hit on your popularity ranking.”

But, TripAdvisor does not disclose all the elements of the Popularity Index algorithm. It also doesn’t tell us the weighting of each factor. For example, it doesn’t tell us whether a property’s average review score or total number of reviews are more important. So, we decided to do a little digging.
WHAT EXACTLY AFFECTS YOUR TRIPADVISOR SCORE?
The results of our research aren’t entirely conclusive, but they give us a better idea of how the Popularity Index works. Our data scientists looked at data on the Bangkok market—our customers, and their competitive sets. We found for the Bangkok market:

1 Extra Point on average review score will, on average, increase Popularity Index rank by 321 places.

1 Extra Review will, on average, increase Popularity Index rank 1.5 places.

TRANSLATION?
When calculating ranking, TripAdvisor weights a property’s average review score 20,000 times more than its total number of reviews. So, if your average review score stayed the same and you only increased the volume of reviews, it would take 2,1400 reviews to increase your rank by the same amount as one average review point.

Based on our data in the Bangkok market, we were able to come up with a rough approximation of weighting:

FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL:

- The average review score of a property counts for 85% of the Popularity Index ranking
- The total volume of reviews counts for 6% of the property’s ranking
- 9% is left unexplained

We can speculate that recency of reviews makes up some of the unexplained 9%. This can also be where TripAdvisor factors in punitive action for violations of its guidelines, and it can include factors that are yet unknown to the general public.

What are the key takeaways?
To move up on the Popularity Index, improving customer experience is far more important than getting a greater volume of reviews. But, don’t forget: as a function of averages, it is more difficult to improve your ranking on the Popularity Index as you climb the scale. So, if you’re already trending toward the top of your market, it may be necessary to get a greater quantity of recent reviews in order to dominate your competition.
CHAPTER 5
Measurement and Benchmarking

Now that you’re taking an active role in managing your online reputation, there are several different metrics you can use to measure your success. Please note that review response alone won’t change many of these metrics. Managing your online reputation isn’t just about interacting with your guests online. Ultimately, you must listen to your guests and operationalize their feedback to increase your level of guest satisfaction and improve your hotel’s reputation.

AVerAGE REVIEW SCORE
Your Average Review Score is based purely on how your guests have rated your hotel in their reviews. One way to measure your success is to make goals around this metric. But, remember that as a function of averages, it is more difficult to improve your rating as you move up the scale. For example, on a scale of one to five, it is more difficult to move from a 3.5 to a 4 than it is to move from a 4 to a 4.5.

TRIPAdVISoR POPULARITY INDEX RANKING
The TripAdvisor Popularity Index is becoming a critical metric for many hotels. Based on traveler feedback, a property’s ranking on the Popularity Index reflects how it compares to other hotels within a geographic area. Hotels that are closer to the top of the list are more likely to be seen when prospective guests search for hotels in the area. It’s one way to benchmark yourself against your competitors, or other hotels in your geographical area.

The Popularity Index algorithm is based on three key ingredients: the quality, quantity, and recency of reviews. TripAdvisor does not disclose all of the elements of the algorithm, but we found that by far, the most important element is your Average Review Score, as it accounts for about 85% of the ranking according to our data scientists.

REview RESPONSE COVERAGE
The one metric you as a hotelier have direct control over is the number of reviews to which you respond. If you can’t respond to 100% of your online reviews, make an effort to respond to every one and two star review. Then, decide how much time you have for responding to mixed and positive reviews.

SET GOALS AND TRACK YOUR RESULTS
Now that you know what to measure, it’s important to keep track of your progress. You can’t improve what you don’t measure! Table A shows one way to record your TripAdvisor success.

You can also track your review response coverage to measure your improvement. If you’re NOT using an automated solution that tracks and measures the data for you, refer to Table B for one way to do it manually.

While it’s important to manage your online reputation and get as much guest feedback as possible, it is much more important to listen to your guests and operationalize their feedback. Improving your guest experience is the ultimate goal of reputation management. TripAdvisor says, “The key to building a successful business and a higher popularity ranking is stellar hospitality and paying attention to your customers’ needs. Encourage customers to write reviews, learn from them and watch your hard work pay off.”
### Table A: My TripAdvisor Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>TripAdvisor Popularity Index</th>
<th>Review Volume</th>
<th>Average Review Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>December</td>
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### Sample A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>TripAdvisor Popularity Index</th>
<th>Review Volume</th>
<th>Average Review Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
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### Table B:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>% Total Review Response</th>
<th>% Pos. Review Response</th>
<th>% Mixed Review</th>
<th>% Neg. Review Response</th>
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<tr>
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SECTION 2
Guest Satisfaction Surveys

Chapter 1: Why Review-Style Surveys are the Future
Chapter 2: How to Create an Effective Survey
Chapter 3: Building your Email List
Chapter 4: The Benefits of Publishing to Review Sites
Chapter 5: Measurement and Benchmarking
CHAPTER 1
Why Review-Style Surveys are the Future

Traditional guest satisfaction surveys became very popular for a few reasons:

- The uniformity of the questions makes it easy to report on results and see changes over time. As a result it’s easy to operationalize this data.
- You can require answers to ensure you get feedback on the services and amenities that matter you. If, for example, you have just added a check-in kiosk, you can add questions to get feedback on that service.
- GSS data is private. Your competitors don’t know what your guests like about your property, and what they tend to complain about.

But, with technology like sentiment analysis and the rise of public user generated content, traditional GSS has become obsolete. Here are some reasons why hoteliers should consider switching to a review-style survey:

Hear what is really important to the guest
When people write reviews, they tend to focus on just the things that stood out during their stay. If something doesn’t make it into the review, it didn’t make a lasting impression for the guest. When you evaluate this organic feedback, you can really identify where the important issues lie.

See trends
Once you have a volume of review-style feedback, you can start to see trends of things that really stand out in your guest experience. You can delve into review data with sentiment analysis to assess the topics and details that guests share and value. With traditional long-form surveys, hoteliers only get data from a preset structure of questions the hotel selected and asked.

Get more detailed feedback
Closed-ended questions like “Please rate your satisfaction with your room from one to ten” will not yield rich data about what a customer really liked or disliked about his or her room. With review-style feedback, hoteliers can get very specific data they might not have even thought to ask the guests. You might find out, for example, that you don’t have enough electrical outlets in your rooms. Or perhaps a guest thought the bathroom was beautiful and clean, but that the water pressure wasn’t great. You can’t get that kind of detail from a traditional GSS. Overall, asking your guests to fill out a survey is essentially asking them to do you a favor. It’s important to make it as painless as possible.

Get more bang for your feedback buck
Remember, user generated content is gold for any customer-facing organization, especially for hospitality. Review-style surveys can be user generated content if you decide to make them public. We’ll go into in further detail on making surveys public in Chapter 4.

Many hoteliers are uneasy about making their feedback public. But, surveys actually have the potential to help your online reputation if you make them public, because solicited feedback tends to have higher average ratings than unsolicited public feedback. Why not put your best foot forward? By being transparent about your data, you can increase your review volume and average rating. On sites like TripAdvisor, this will give your hotel greater visibility which can help you capture more bookings.

Now that you’ve chosen the ideal survey format, you’re ready to write your survey. We’ll cover some tips on how to come up with an effective survey in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 2
How to Create an Effective Survey

A guest feedback survey is only helpful when you can get a significant number of your guests to take the time to complete it. Here are some tips for creating a high-performance guest feedback survey that accommodates the modern traveler’s behaviors.

Optimize your Survey

For the highest possible completion rate, you need to optimize the overall structure of your survey. Here are a few factors to consider:

1. **The right length**
   Aim for 5-10 minutes, under 25 questions. A good survey is long enough to harvest useful information, but not so long as to bore customers into abandoning it.

2. **Grab attention**
   Ask the interesting questions in the beginning of the survey to grab guests’ attention.

3. **Logical flow**
   Survey questions should follow a logical pattern, to avoid confusion. Try this: Follow the booking/stay process from start to finish to trigger guests’ memories. Surveys with higher completion rates also tend to group questions according to topic, like housekeeping or amenities.

4. **Use at least one review-style field**
   A review-style field encourages guests to focus on just the things that stood out during their stay. If something doesn’t make it into the review, it didn’t make a lasting impression. This allows you to pare down the length of the survey and be more selective about the questions you include. For example, instead of including a laundry list of the same questions about housekeeping and amenities, you can focus your multiple choice questions on items like recent renovations or areas where you want to track improvement like the check-in process.

5. **Check reporting**
   If certain questions have lower answer rates, ask why. Maybe the questions are not relevant to your guests, or maybe they are phrased in a way that is confusing.

Compose Effective Questions

How you compose individual questions is just as important as the overall structure of your survey. Questions that are easy to understand can give you more accurate survey results and a higher completion rate. Here are some points to consider when composing your questions:

1. **Objectivity**
   It’s important to compose guest satisfaction survey questions that will make guests give genuine answers. For example, instead of asking, “How did you like our state-of-the-art check-in kiosk?”, which can be leading, let the guest make the call: “How would you rate your experience with the check-in kiosk?”

2. **Don’t use industry jargon**
   Instead of saying “OTA,” for example, use “third party reservation site,” or “online travel agency.” Your guests may not be familiar with industry jargon and as a result may become frustrated or confused.

3. **Avoid questions stated in the negative**
   A question starting off like this, “I would not prefer a completely automated check-in process” is confusing. If a customer wanted to answer, “Yes, I would prefer a completely automated check-in process,” he or she would have to make “disagree” the answer. Instead, use a direct, positive statement with which the guest can agree or disagree: “I would prefer a completely automated check-in process.”
4. Only ask one question at a time
   For example, don’t ask about both the pool chairs and the towels in the same question. The guest could make statements that mean either the pool chairs or the towels, and your survey results won’t be clear.

5. Can you use this feedback?
   Ask yourself about each question: If you received an answer to this, could you use it and act on it? If not, how valuable is it to you? Think about how you plan to use the results, and consider eliminating any questions that don’t deliver actionable information.

After you’ve crafted an effective survey, your next step is to make sure you have a representative sample of guests to whom you can send it.
CHAPTER 3
Building Your Email List

The simplest way to obtain a representative sample with your survey is to make sure that you capture your guests’ email addresses accurately. The more guest emails you have, the more surveys you can send out. You’ll get a much higher volume of feedback, which you can then submit to TripAdvisor for publication, thereby increasing your review volume. But because OTAs don’t usually provide hotel properties with the emails of guests who book through them, you should have a few backup methods for collecting guest emails.

Check-in
Train front desk clerks to ask for emails, and to reassure guests that they won’t be deluged with marketing emails. You should also program any check-in kiosks to include a field for the email and a statement that the address won’t be shared.

Receipts and Confirmations
Instead of providing a paper receipt, offer to email the guest his or her receipt. At this time, you can ask the guest whether he or she wishes to opt in to an exclusive email list for your property’s best customers. The same goes for confirmations for reservations, like spa appointments. Ask the guest whether he or she would like to receive an email reminder for his or her appointment.

Incentives
Offer discounts and special rates to guests who sign up for your mailing list. A loyalty program is a great way to incentivize email sharing.

As always, you must follow CAN-SPAM regulations in your email marketing practices, so be sure to include opt-in check boxes wherever you collect emails.
CHAPTER 4

The Benefits of Publishing to Review Sites

TripAdvisor has a program that allows for integration with digital surveys, where hoteliers can submit private feedback for publication on their TripAdvisor listings. But, some hoteliers are wary of making their private feedback public. They worry that prospective guests will see their negative feedback and they worry that competitors will see their property’s weaknesses.

The thing is, times have changed. With the advent of review sites, your guests and competitors are already seeing your negative comments online. Additionally, it can actually help you to be transparent and make your feedback public. How? Combined with the fact that private feedback has a higher average review score, the sheer increase in review volume can have a huge effect on your property’s ranking on the TripAdvisor popularity index.

According to our customer data:

- **409%** Hoteliers who submit surveys for publication see an average of 57% increase in review volume within three months
- **15%** Hotels who submit surveys for publication see an average improvement of 15% on the TripAdvisor Popularity Index
- **70%** Some hotels who submit surveys for publication move up as much as 70%

Consequently, it can really only help you to be transparent with your guest feedback and make it public. When looking for a digital surveys provider, look for a product that allows you to submit your responses to a review site like TripAdvisor.
CHAPTER 5
Measurement and Benchmarking

We find that most guests are happy to leave you feedback. They just need a reminder to do so. Sending an email to each guest a few days after they have checked out is a great way to remind them. But in addition to optimizing the survey itself and collecting as many guest emails as possible, you need to think carefully about your post-stay emails. By understanding your performance metrics, you can identify where you can optimize your emails.

Delivery Rates
Delivery rate is the percentage of emails you send that actually reach your guest. If you find that your delivery rates are lower than expected, look into making an effort to verify with guests that the emails they have provided are correct, whether this is at your front desk or a check-in kiosk.

Open Rates
According to eMarketer, average email open rates in hospitality are 36.2%. If you find that your open rates are below average, consider your subject line. This is your main piece of real estate to catch your guest’s attention, reminding them of their stay. A good best practice is to keep it under 40 characters, and keep it simple. Also, though we have seen a variety of subject lines work, we have noticed that subject lines with promotional messaging have resulted in lower open rates. We can conclude that these types of messages seem like marketing messaging which may be off-putting.

The timing of your email delivery can also have an impact on your open rates. Industry standard is 2-3 days, but we do not see a significant difference in open rates between industry standard, and those who send their review invitation at a different time. However, your feedback may be more accurate if you choose to send the email sooner rather than later. If you choose to send the email too much later, your guests’ memories of their stays might not be quite as fresh and they may not recall their stay in as much detail. Feel free to test with different send times to see if it has an impact on the quality of your reviews.

Click Rates
Click rate refers to the number of people who opened your email and then clicked on your survey link, as a percentage of the total number of emails sent. Hospitality gets an average 4.9% click rate, according to eMarketer. Success in this area will depend on how you have crafted your email invitation.

There are a few components to consider in your email invitations:

- **Look and feel:** If your email has an image header, make sure your image header looks sleek and professional. We have seen that image headers work best when something is designed specifically for that space in the email. Avoid shrinking or blowing up an image as it could result in poor image quality. This could be a turnoff for your guests who otherwise felt they had a stay at a hotel where no detail was ignored. It’s the little things that count.

  **Email body:** Keep your email short and sweet, but be clear about what you are hoping to accomplish. Introduce yourself and explain that this feedback will be used to improve the guest experience. In addition, provide an estimate of how long it will take to complete, and make sure you have a clear call to action link or button that leads to the survey. Though you may have other things you want to communicate to guests, you save those messages for other communications. If your main goal is to receive feedback from your guests, then you’ll want to make sure nothing is distracting them from clicking on that survey link.

Completion Rates
Once your emails are optimized for delivery, open and click rates, you’re set up for success on the survey itself. But, you can’t actually capture the data if your guests don’t take the time to complete your survey. Completion rate is insight into your survey’s optimization.
Overall, a good best practice is to keep testing and adjusting your surveys and emails until you’re satisfied with your metrics. The more data you can get, the better insight you’ll have into your guest experience.

**Publish Rates**
If you’re using a solution that submits your surveys to be published on sites like TripAdvisor, you’ll want to track at what rate your surveys are being published. To find your publish rate, divide the number of surveys being published by the total number of surveys submitted.
SECTION 3
Social Media

Chapter 1: Proving Social Media ROI
Chapter 2: The Right Social Strategy for You
Chapter 3: Facebook
Chapter 4: Twitter
Chapter 5: Google+
Chapter 6: Pinterest
Chapter 7: Instagram
Chapter 8: Measurement and Benchmarking
CHAPTER 1

Proving Social Media ROI

The majority of hotels today have active profiles on social networks and are using the channels to engage with prospects and guests. But, many hoteliers are still trying to find the resources and prove the ROI before diving into social media management. Here’s some data on the value of a strong social media presence to help hoteliers take the plunge.

Engaged social followers are your best customers

In a 2013 study, Forrester Consulting found that people who engaged with a brand on social media were likely to make twice as many purchases with that brand as someone who only engages monthly.

![Bar chart showing engagement frequency and purchase likelihood](image)

Those engaging with a brand daily are likely to make twice as many purchases as monthly engagers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Purchases</th>
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<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least monthly</td>
<td>11.6</td>
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<td>At least weekly</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least daily</td>
<td>22.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Average frequency viewing these brands’ posts, videos, or photos on social media

Base: Respondents who engage with brands on social media

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Wildfire, May 2013

While Google Analytics can help track traffic to your booking engine, even hoteliers that can’t directly tie a booking to a successful social media campaign can use social media to identify brand enthusiasts. With the right marketing initiatives, you can turn brand enthusiasts into advocates.
Word of mouth marketing creates discovery

According to an ACCENT research survey, nearly 65% of participants found it helpful to post questions on a brand’s social media channel and receive answers from fellow consumers. This suggests that consumers use social media to create community.

Additionally, 44% of U.S. travelers always or often consult friends and family for travel advice. Hoteliers can take advantage of this trend. By engaging with brand enthusiasts within the social media community, hoteliers can foster trust with their brand.

Which brands have done this well? Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts is one example. By encouraging guests to share their vacation photos with the hashtag #FSFotog, they’re using influencers to create trust with new potential guests. Then, they further develop the relationship with their influencers by sharing the photos and interacting with consumers. Note two things: The social media manager at Four Seasons Hong Kong in the image replied to the mention of their property. And, other comments are mentioning other Instagrammers, perhaps in the inspiration phase of trip planning.

Consumers expect responses

ACCENT found that nearly half of consumers use social media to make issues public. More than half (51%) use social media to see if others have had similar issues. When consumers post to Facebook in particular, nearly half of all consumers (44%) expect a response from the brand. Social media is becoming a very public, interactive support line. It is more important than ever to respond promptly and appropriately.
CHAPTER 2
The Right Social Strategy for You

Not all hoteliers have the resources to engage on every social network. You should evaluate each network, to see if it is the right place to invest your time. Here’s a checklist of questions to ask yourself:

1. Who are the users of this social network? Is this a place where I can engage prospective guests? Are these users likely to influence my prospective guests?
2. Do I already have content that suits this network or will I need to create it?
3. Remembering that each social network requires unique content, how much time and resources do I need to participate?
4. What is the benefit of this network? Is there a monetary ROI or does it help my brand by making people happy?

Consider each of these points carefully, especially the questions in number four. If a network in question does not help your brand, or deliver money savings or revenue, then it probably isn’t worth your time. In the following chapters, we’ll give you an overview of each major social network. While Facebook and Twitter are clearly the leading social networks, you may also want to consider some of the others, depending on your brand, your audience, and your available resources. Evaluate, and make your decisions on social strategy based on what’s right for your hotel.
CHAPTER 3
Facebook

With 1.1 billion global active users, Facebook has become a major part of its users’ daily lives. As the world’s largest social network, it is not surprising that Facebook is an effective way to obtain guest feedback and extend the reach of your brand's message in a personal and unobtrusive way. Brands who engage with their fans here can tap into a wider range of demographic information than anywhere else, including identity, activities, interests, and location.

It is essential for every hotel to maintain an active presence on Facebook, even if you only post 2-3 times per week. Here are some guidelines for successfully nurturing your community of Facebook followers.

1. **The 80-20 Rule**
   With the rise of the Millennial generation, your customers are becoming more and more averse to advertising. So, a good best practice is to make 80% of your shared content non-promotional. Blasting your audience with marketing messages is a good way to chase them away. But, telling a story about your guest experience in a real, honest, and personable way is a great way to foster a genuine community.

2. **Use high-quality photos**
   Facebook’s Timeline and NewsFeed are designed to support visual content. Photos get 53% more likes than text posts on Facebook, according to Hubspot. The good news is, you probably already have a lot of beautiful high-res images of your property. Don’t be afraid to show them off! Use one of the professional photos for the cover image on your property’s brand page. If you have staff members who are good with a smartphone camera, you can also use plenty of impromptu snapshots.

3. **Fix the little details**
   Your page may still need a little help to get the most out of your Facebook experience. Be sure it displays the correct location and contact information, and that you’ve assigned it to the correct category (hotels). You should also use the relevant keywords in your about section for SEO.
CHAPTER 4

Twitter

Twitter is a great place to connect with travelers on the go with real-time ideas and up-to-the-minute information. The world’s largest microblogging site, what makes Twitter different from Facebook is its focus on simplicity. Ideas are neatly segmented into categories by hashtags and geo-located trending topics.

**Hotels that receive customer service-related messages:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60% of Twitter users connect using a smartphone, and travelers are no exception. But, in addition to searching for specials and events during their travel, and connecting with the property long after they have returned home, guests are using Twitter as a customer service resource. Hotels who are engaging on Twitter are finding many more opportunities to perform service recovery than they are with Facebook. Emarketer reported in 2011 that 77% of hotel and airline Twitter accounts experience customer service inquiries and complaints. Only 46% of Facebook accounts dealt with customer service.

It appears that more customers are engaging on Twitter in real-time to get their service issues resolved. It is critical that all businesses on Twitter be prepared for this. But, there are also everyday functions of Twitter to consider for maximum engagement. Here’s our roundup of tips.

**Utilize #hashtag Searches**

In addition to the services mentioned above, Twitter allows you to search for and save hashtags from both your desktop and mobile application. Search for hashtags for upcoming events near your hotel, like #ParisFashionWeek. Use trending hashtags for your geographical region for inspiration for tweets. You can also use hashtags for your city, not only to get your own Twitter activity noticed, but to keep yourself up-to-date on events happening near your hotel.

**Schedule Your Tweets**

Low-cost application like HootSuite, TweetDeck and Buffer App may be worth a trial as they are convenient for tweeting on-the-go from a mobile device, and they provide auto-scheduling functionality (allow for scheduling your tweets at optimal engagement times). These features are especially important when capturing behind-the-scenes looks of your property’s operation in real-time or, more importantly, maintaining an active social media presence over evenings and weekends when social media activity remains significant.

**Flash Deals**

Make your Twitter followers feel special by offering last-minute or limited time deals. Make sure your tweet includes a link by which to contact you directly.

**Visit the Discover Page**

Twitter’s Discover page offers a helpful way to uncover compelling re-tweetable content that you may have missed by showing you what content your followers have shared, favorited and re-tweeted. The discover section also allows you to explore the browse category, which is extremely helpful when looking to follow travel-related brands, thought-leaders and small businesses.

**Limit Your Tweet’s Length**

To ensure that your content is most shareable, limit your tweet’s length to 100 to 120 characters. Nothing is more annoying to an active tweeter than when a message is not easily re-tweetable (RT) due to its maxed-out length. By limiting this length, you allow your user to share the content easily, add a comment to your message and ultimately give your content the best chance at maximizing its reach.
CHAPTER 5
Google+

Although Google+ started slow, it now has more active users than Twitter, according to a 2014 GWI study. Google+ Local is a directory like Urban Spoon that is integrated with Google Maps and Google Search. A Local page allows your property to appear in Google’s “local block,” which is a collection of search results that are promoted to the top of the page for local queries, just below the first or second organic result. The advantage of having an active Google+ presence, even if you don’t see much engagement directly on the social network, is that you may see growth in organic search traffic because your property has increased visibility in Google Search.

It’s also important to remember that Google is an ambitious, rapidly-growing company, and the Google Business Page is the pillar of Google’s strategy in travel. Google+ Local now has a significant share of online traveler reviews. Also, with Google Maps taking more and more space on search results pages, well-managed and content-filled Business Pages will rise to the top of results. This is only Google’s first step into the realm of travel, so hoteliers should be ready today. Here are some tips to get you started:

1. **Make a Google+ Business Page**
   Use your Business Page to engage with your guests and share items like photos, hotel news, and deals.

2. **Create content that is unique to Google+**
   While you could get away with posting the same content to Google+ as you do to Facebook, to really succeed on the network, you should take advantage of some of its unique features. Post valuable content to relevant Community pages. Incorporate keywords to take advantage of the SEO factor. You can also customize your messages with bold, italic and strike through text. These styles can make your posts stand out while also making them impactful.

3. **Add a +1 button to your website and blog**
   Encourage guests to add your hotel to their circles and share your content.

4. **Remember your demographics**
   Many active users of Google+ are younger and largely male, so remember that you’ll be talking to Millennials more than Boomers. Target your messaging accordingly.
CHAPTER 6
Pinterest

In 2012, Google identified five stages of travel starting with a dream, or inspiration. According to a 2014 Ahallogy media consumption study, 38% of all active Pinterest users have bought something because they saw it on the site. 64% of daily users try a new Pinterest-inspired activity once a month. This is an ideal place to find those active doers and early adopters that love to try and buy new things.

38% 64%

38% of all active Pinterest users have bought something because they saw it on the site
64% of daily Pinterest users try a new Pinterest-inspired activity once a month

Now that Pinterest drives more traffic than Google+, YouTube, and LinkedIn combined, it’s more important than ever for hoteliers who have the resources to cultivate a community of followers there. The key to success? Beautiful photography. With large, high-resolution photos and a little bit of planning and time spent browsing, your hotel can take advantage of the perfect time to inspire Pinterest users and gain exposure on their travel boards. Here are some tips to get you started.

1. The 80-20 Rule
Remember the 80-20 rule from our Facebook chapter? It applies to your posts on Pinterest too. According to the Ahallogy study, 45% of active Pinterest users worry that ads won’t fit with the platform’s spirit of sharing authentic, organic content. Therefore, 80% of your posts should highlight the best of your geographical location, local events and attractions. If you post too much about your own property and amenities, you risk pushing away your prospective guests rather than attracting them to your brand.

2. Collaborate on group boards
Get together with your vendors, neighboring attractions, or local restaurants and create a group board. Since multiple people can collaborate around a specific interest or theme, you can create a place of inspiration for Pinterest users without coming off as too salesy.

3. Highlight Weddings and Food
The “Weddings” category on Pinterest is by far the most popular on the site. If your hotel is a wedding venue, this is a great avenue by which you can increase your weddings business. Use your best photos from weddings to capture the fancy of future brides in their early planning stages. Likewise, if your hotel has a relationship with local restaurants, hire a professional photographer to highlight some of the best local flavors.

4. Engage with your brand enthusiasts
An easy way to turn your brand enthusiasts into promoters is to engage with their pins. Search for your brand name and comment on or repin what you find. Your fans will be tickled that you thought highly of their content.
CHAPTER 7

Instagram

Due to its highly visual and user-friendly nature, hotels can have great success marketing themselves on Instagram. Instagram now has more daily active users on mobile than Twitter. And, any employee with a smartphone can create photos of the hotel, its events, local activities, and more with very little time investment and little to no cost. Consumers appreciate this impression of an exclusive look into your hotel, and you could benefit from a very high ROI on your marketing spend. Here are a few tips for success.

1. Leverage user generated content
   Encourage your guests to tag their Instagram photos with a certain hashtag. For example, guests at The Four Seasons use #FSFotog. As a result, #FSFotog has grown into a collection of over 30,000 photos of guests enjoying their stay at Four Seasons properties. Another good best practice is to get permission to feature these hashtagged photos on Facebook or a special page on your hotel’s website.

2. Ask for employee submissions
   As we mentioned previously, it’s easy to get the whole team involved in content creation. You never know whether some of your best photos are going to come from the professionals, or from your valet staff.

3. Try the videos feature
   Instagram makes it very easy to take and edit video, and not many hotels are doing it yet. Here’s your chance to shine! Try documenting the setup for a stunning wedding or your chef’s construction of a beautiful dessert. GoodEggs has some great examples of simple, charming videos.
CHAPTER 8
Measurement and Benchmarking

Part of the beauty of social media marketing is you can measure nearly everything you do. Keep in mind though, you need to know what it is you hope to get out of your time spend on social networks before you dive in. Collecting data from which no meaningful insights can be derived can lead to time wasted in what's not-so-lovingly referred to as “analysis paralysis.”

For some, goals are as simple as driving traffic and measuring conversions. For many, however, things are far more complex. Your ROI may come in the form of cost savings from handling customer service issues on Twitter instead of over the phone. Perhaps you can track increased foot traffic from a Facebook promotion, or a collection of user-generated content from an Instagram campaign. The key is striking a balance between two kinds of data: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Data
Quantitative Data is generally numeric in nature. You can apply true scientific analysis to this kind of data. Examples of quantitative data in social media marketing might include the following:

1. **Engagement**
   An incredibly meaningful metric—perhaps one of the most important in measuring your own success and efforts in social media marketing—engagement can actually measure a host of different items. For a blog post, this could be the number of shares and comments per post. On Twitter, this could be the number of mentions, retweets, favorites, and responses. On Facebook, it can be likes and comments. Engagement tells you how well your doing in having conversations with your community and whether the content you create piques their interest.

2. **Fans/Followers**
   Don’t place too much weight on this metric, as it is only a number if not tied to something more meaningful. But, it is a sign of success if your following gets into the several thousands.

3. **Click-through Rate**
   Click-through rate or CTR is valuable for hoteliers looking to drive traffic back to their brand.com sites. While familiar to most Internet marketers, it can be useful for social media marketing as well.

Qualitative Data
Qualitative Data is less concrete than quantitative data, and is based on observations from smaller sample sizes. It often takes the form of a hypothesis that can then be tested using quantitative data.

1. **Conversation Drivers**
   With the right tools, we can look at nearly any platform (or all of them for that matter) and see what people are talking about. When it comes to your brand, you’ll want to know the topics and context of conversations about you, your competition, and your niche. This incredibly useful knowledge can tell you, for example, who your customers see as your closest competition, what they’re sharing in relation to your product, their concerns, etc. This is one of the most important and insightful qualitative measurements you can use.

2. **Sentiment**
   As we discussed in our Surveys section, sentiment analysis attempts to measure the tone and tenor of a conversation around a stated topic or item. In social media, this is largely used to tell if people love, can’t stand, or are neutral about your brand or campaigns. Most sentiment measurement tools are automated these days.
Influence

This one’s a bit controversial. Everyone wants to find their community’s influencers, but there is currently no universal standard for measuring influence or finding those people. There are several tools available that offer “influence scores.” (Klout is a popular one.) If you choose to use such a tool, you should have a good sense for how it determines the score. You want to make sure it aligns with what you are actually trying to measure. Beyond tools, also consider looking at Twitter and Google rankings for influencers within a certain topic. This can help you target the individuals that will have the audience you’re looking to reach.

With any data you’re collecting, whether it be quantitative or qualitative, the most important things to ask yourself are “What can I do with this?” and “What are my insights?” If you can’t do anything with your data and you’re not gleaning actionable business takeaways from it, then you should question why you’re measuring it in the first place. Don’t be afraid to ask questions, dig deeper, and challenge the way things have been done in the past.
SECTION 4
Other Forms of Guest Feedback

Chapter 1: On-Site Feedback
Chapter 2: Capturing Guest Feedback with Mobile
Chapter 3: Taking Guest Relationships to the Next Level
CHAPTER 1
On-Site Feedback

Paper comment cards, digital surveys, and staff notes are forms of feedback collection that are currently available to hoteliers. On-site feedback systems are an excellent complement post-stay solutions because they collect feedback while the guest is still on property. This gives hoteliers the opportunity to enact service recovery should the guest report a problem.

Comment Cards
Paper comment cards have long been a mainstay of the hospitality industry. They're inexpensive and they can be placed almost anywhere on property for maximum feedback collection. Because they've been around for so long, they're also extremely recognizable and user-friendly. Unfortunately with the advent of digital technology and online review sites, paper comment cards are losing efficacy as guests have less patience for them and are less likely to fill them out.

Digital On-Site Surveys
Many hospitality establishments are choosing to invest in digital on-site solutions. These have several advantages over paper surveys and comment cards, especially if they include a review-style comment field.

1. Save time
With text analysis software that automatically analyzes guest responses, hoteliers can instantly get a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the hotel. They no longer have to manually read and analyze the information, saving managers hours of work.

2. Real-time service recovery
One of the great features of digital surveys is they often come with an alert system, to notify hoteliers when a guest makes a negative comment on the survey system. After all, the major advantage of having on-site feedback is so that issues can be resolved before the guest leaves the property. With comment cards or paper surveys, if you are unaware that you have a newly completed form, or if the guest's contact information is not included or is illegible, it is impossible for hoteliers to follow up and make things right.

3. Analytics
Digital surveys produce intuitive and detailed reports that allow for filtering and segmentation. Hoteliers can quickly get information on specific operational aspects of the hotel. Not only this, but with the right digital surveys solution, the information is dynamic, meaning it updates automatically with every new survey completion.

4. Flexibility
To get the most out of your data, guest satisfaction surveys need to change from time to time. You’ll want the guest perspective on recent changes like improvements to wi-fi, elevator service, and special promotions. With digital surveys, it only takes a few clicks to change the whole survey.

5. Enable Users to Create Valuable Content
With digital surveys, hoteliers can submit guest comments to TripAdvisor. This improves your hotel’s online presence, its position on TripAdvisor, and as a result, can considerably boost your online bookings.

6. Environmentally Friendly
If you want your hotel to project an environmentally friendly image, you can avoid wasting paper by using digital surveys. Consider the values you want your hotel to project.

Staff Notes
Many hotels have systems in place that encourage staff members to record interactions with guests in order to capture guest feedback and preferences. If this system is easily accessible by all staff members, this is a great way to get to know your guests. You can learn more about individual guest preferences over time, and eventually anticipate their needs to surprise and delight them.

Overall, comment cards and staff interactions are simple ways to get immediate guest feedback. But, to save time and get a greater volume of data out of their on-site feedback, hoteliers should invest in a digital solution.

Schedule a demo or contact us for more information at info@revinate.com
CHAPTER 2
Capturing Guest Feedback with Mobile

Today’s travelers expect a seamless digital experience and access to information around the clock. With the prevalence of smartphones, travelers now use mobile devices to do more than research and book travel. They also use their mobile devices to plan entire itineraries, research destinations while on the road, purchase in-destination activities, and share their experiences with their friends and family.

Taking digital surveys a step further, a mobile solution that is easily accessed and used by every staff member is the ideal channel to optimize the connection between the hotel and guest. Hoteliers can communicate with their guests via the preferred method of communication. Guests can leave feedback from anywhere in the hotel, at any time of the day or night. Also, a mobile solution like a native app or mobile website can be both a 1:1 connection between hotelier and guest and a back-end ticketing system so that hotel staff can assign tasks amongst themselves. Hoteliers can make sure that guest feedback never gets lost in translation, and ensure that all necessary follow-up is completed.

In total, the use of a mobile solution represents a more efficient way to operationalize guest feedback. But before you can get started, you need to evaluate your options and pick the right solution for your hotel.

Native App or Mobile-Optimized Site?
A debate is raging about whether mobile web or native apps are best for your guests’ mobile experience. Traditionally, a native app provides the best user experience on a smartphone since it can use the features of the phone, such as GPS. However, native apps have two major drawbacks: developing for both iPhone and Android can be time-consuming and expensive, and getting guests to download an app when they might just be staying in your hotel for two or three nights can be an inhibitor to active use.

A mobile-optimized website, on the other hand, is accessible on any smart device. It’s also essential, according to Google’s 2014 Traveler Study, because users who have already downloaded a hotel’s app continue to use the site as a result of their natural interactions with search engines. Also, with iPads using about 25% of wi-fi connections in hotels, a mobile-optimized website is attractive because of its responsive design, meaning that it looks great on a phone, computer or tablet.

Both native apps and mobile-optimized sites have strong selling points, and in fact, it’s not an either-or question. Ideally, all hotels should invest in both a native app and a mobile-optimized website.

On the other hand, for the hotelier with limited resources, here’s a good point: a native app is only a good investment if you can drive your guests to download it. It’s a great option if your hotel is a large global brand with a large base of loyalty club members. Otherwise, focus your resources on providing an outstanding mobile web experience.
CHAPTER 3
Taking Guest Relationships to the Next Level

Capturing, analyzing and operationalizing guest feedback is only the beginning. Travelers today expect high levels of personalization. To keep good online reviews coming now and in the future, hoteliers need to start collecting more information about their guests. There are technology solutions that allow staff members to enter data about guests as they collect it. The more information you can collect about your guests and their experience with your property, the more you can learn about the kind of service you need to deliver.

There are at least six types of guest data that a hotel can collect along with guest feedback:

1. **Contact information**
   First name, last name, email address, physical address, and mobile number should all be collected.

2. **Demographics**
   Sex, age, nationality, marital/parenting status, and other demographic information can be collected for your analytics system.

3. **Usage/history**
   Trip type, number of visits, and average spend are all clues as to the types of experience each guest might expect. For example, if you have a group of people traveling together, you may only have one guest’s email. You should make an effort to capture the rest of the emails and solicit feedback from as many guests as possible.

4. **Interests**
   Did your guest visit the spa? How about the restaurant? If you have this data, you can target the right guest feedback survey to his or her stay. This can help you get the most relevant feedback data possible.

5. **Preferences**
   Did the guest request a high floor, quiet room, or a specific newspaper? Did you follow up on this request? And, will your system record that these are the guest’s preferences the next time he or she stays with your hotel?

6. **Experiential**
   Feedback from reviews or prior surveys, comments made to staff members, and other interactions with the hotel can be clues to what each guest expects of his or her stay.

What is possible?
Imagine what you could do with specific action items from automatic guest feedback data analysis. You could:

- See who is arriving on any given day and personalize the guest’s stay based on his or her previous feedback and preferences. If your guest prefers a high floor, assign him to a high floor automatically the next time he stays with you.
- Surprise and delight guests by acting on preference information from past reviews, purchases, service requests, or social media
- Capture all service and purchase requests in a single dashboard to ensure timely and organized responses and follow-up
- Access guest profile information at critical times, such as check-in or check-out, to provide personalized service and update preferences
- Understand a guest’s spending habits on property to anticipate needs
CONCLUSION

The New Age of Guest Feedback

The New Age of Guest Feedback

Guest feedback can be a powerful tool for hoteliers, once they know how to collect, analyze, and operationalize it. The challenge lies in gathering the most information possible, and extracting actionable data points from that information. With the knowledge gained from reading this guide, you are well on your way to creating the ultimate guest experience in your hotel.

We realize that if a hotel were to do all the things we've outlined here, the time and resource expenditure would be huge. Fortunately, there are excellent hospitality-specific technology solutions available that can help you collect more guest feedback, and get better data on it. Revinate's Guest Feedback Suite helps you optimize the guest experience by collecting and analyzing all reviews, surveys and social media mentions for your property. It also has the power to submit feedback to be published on TripAdvisor, thereby increasing your volume of reviews. As a whole, the Guest Feedback Suite can improve your rating on review sites and OTAs by more than 30%. It can also increase your collection of guest feedback by 300%. With the time saved on data collection and analysis, you can spend more time focusing on what is most important to every hotel: your guests.

30%

The Guest Feedback Suite can improve your rating on review sites and OTAs by more than 30%.

300%

It can also increase your collection of guest feedback by 300%.

Schedule a demo or contact us for more information at info@revinate.com
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About Revinate:
Revinate helps hotels improve the guest experience pre-, during and post-stay, with innovative mobile applications and services for engaging with guests and collecting and analyzing guest feedback. Revinate works with more than 23,000 of the world’s best hotels and hospitality brands to increase revenue, build deep guest relationships, and drive loyalty.