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Social Media: Getting Personal

Social media platforms have revolutionized the hotel industry. Popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Tumblr now account for 2.3 billion active users, and this phenomenon has forever transformed how businesses interact with consumers. Given that social media allows for two-way communication between businesses and consumers, the emphasis of any marketing strategy must be to positively and personally engage the customer, and there are innumerable ways to accomplish that goal. One popular strategy is to encourage hotel guests to create their own personal content - typically videos and photos -which can be shared via their personal social media networks, reaching a sizeable audience. In addition, geo-locational tags and brand hashtags can be embedded in such posts which allow them to be found via metadata searches, substantially enlarging their scope. Influencer marketing is another prevalent social media strategy. Some hotels are paying popular social media stars and bloggers to endorse their brand on social media platforms. These kinds of endorsements generally elicit a strong response because the influencers are perceived as being trustworthy by their followers, and because an influencer's followers are likely to share similar psychographic and demographic traits. Travel review sites have also become vitally important in reputation management. Travelers consistently use social media to express pleasure or frustration about their guest experiences, so it is essential that every review be attended to personally. Assuming the responsibility to address and correct customer service concerns quickly is a way to mitigate complaints and to build brand loyalty. Plus, whether reviews are favorable or unfavorable, they are a vital source of information to managers about a hotel's operational performance. The February Hotel Business Review will document what some hotels are doing to effectively incorporate social media strategies into their businesses.

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