lighthouse

The independent hotelier's marketing audit

Use this 10-part checklist to assess where your hotel marketing stands today. Fewer than 3/5 ticks for a certain area? These highlight your opportunities to attract more guests and direct bookings!

Relax, you don't have to fix all 10 areas this week. Prioritize your two or three biggest gaps and revisit this checklist every quarter to further perfect your strategy.

1. Your website and SEO

- ○ My website pages load in under three seconds on mobile
- ○ Every key page targets a relevant local keyword
- ○ My site has been updated with fresh content (blog post, guide, offer, ...) in the last 60 days
- ○ My direct booking button is visible on every page, including on mobile
- ○ I have backlinks from two or more trusted sources (local tourism board, travel blog, ...)

2. Social media presence

- ○ I post at least once a week on my main social media platform
- ○ My photos and videos showcase experiences and personality, not just rooms
- ○ My profile bio clearly states location, offer and unique assets
- ○ I collab-post or cross-tag with a local business at least quarterly to boost reach
- ○ I have actively encouraged and reposted guest-generated content in the last month

3. Loyalty and repeat guest strategy

- ○ I have a simple loyalty program in place with tangible rewards for direct bookings
- ○ I know which guests have stayed more than once in the last 24 months
- ○ I keep track of guest details and preferences to personalize offers and service
- ○ I actively promote my loyalty program online and in person
- ○ I encourage repeat stays by bringing variety to the experiences I offer

4. Pricing strategy

- ○ I know what my three main competitors are charging for the next 30 days
- ○ I'm not undercutting competitors consistently or pricing higher without a clear reason
- ○ I raise prices timely for local events that drive up demand, including shoulder nights
- ○ My rates adjust dynamically in response to market demand and occupancy levels
- ○ I compare my hotel's performance year over year to make informed decisions

5. Google Business profile

- ○ My website and direct booking rate are properly linked on my Google profile
- ○ My amenities, check-in times and contact details are accurate and complete
- ○ My hotel description is short, compelling and highlights key unique assets
- ○ I respond to every Google review in 48 hours or less
- ○ I have added new photos or a Google Post (offer, event or news) in the last month

6. OTA partnerships

- ○ I am bookable on five or more OTA channels, including at least one niche platform
- ○ My rates and availability are synchronized automatically across all channels
- ○ There are no OTA offers undermining my direct booking rate
- ○ I use visibility boosters, sponsored listings or promotions strategically in low-demand periods
- ○ I am not over-reliant on a single high-commission OTA (>60% of bookings)

7. Direct booking experience

- ○ "Book now" buttons immediately catch the eye on my homepage and room type pages
- ○ The online booking process is fast and mobile-friendly
- ○ Booking directly is the obvious choice (best rate, more value-for-money or exclusive perks)
- ○ Customers receive an instant confirmation email that looks trustworthy and professional
- ○ Guests are being nudged to book higher-value packages or extra services

8. Email marketing

- ○ An automatic post-stay email invites guests to leave a review and book directly next time
- ○ I tailor promotional emails to different guest segments
- ○ I send guests who stayed 6–12 months ago a seasonal or event-based offer each quarter
- ○ My emails are short, professional, visually appealing and aligned with my brand
- ○ Every email includes a direct booking link

9. Event-based marketing

- ○ I know which events are happening near my hotel in the next 3–6 months
- ○ I leverage the buzz around upcoming events to promote my hotel on social media
- ○ I create event-themed packages that offer extra convenience or a richer experience
- ○ I collaborate with event organizers to attract attendees to my hotel
- ○ My website contains pages or sections around popular events and seasonal activities

10. Market insights

- ○ I know who my real competitors are, not just the hotels closest to me
- ○ I check competitor rates at least once a week to ensure my prices are well-aligned
- ○ I know which dates in the next 60 days have the highest demand in my market
- ○ I use accurate, real-time data instead of gut feeling to make decisions
- ○ I spend fewer than 30 minutes a week gathering market data

Is collecting data and adjusting rates too time-consuming for you? You can automate these tasks!

Read more

for **independent hotels**