

The competitive edge: Why an effective PR strategy is a must for the hospitality industry

The hotel industry is a highly competitive field, so it is no surprise that an effective public relations (PR) strategy is paramount to enabling long-term, sustained messaging to keep your establishment top of mind.



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Integrating an effective marketing tool

With new developments constantly on the rise to increase rooms for occupancy, compounded by a shared economy with the likes of Airbnb, the hospitality industry, globally, has become extremely competitive. An effective public relations marketing tool is essential for generating visibility, telling the guest experience story and connecting with your audience.

South Africa and Cape Town more specifically enjoy a consistent ebb and flow of tourism and a generous influx of locals visiting the Cape to relish its yield of world-class vineyards, beaches and restaurant offerings. However, with a recent drop of 28% in the travel and tourism sector, largely due to the repercussions of the drought, the time for hoteliers to sit up and get proactive is now.

“Formulating a six to 12-month forecast is essential for establishments to align strategies with their consumers’ interests and curiosities. Announcements, news releases, and events should be carefully spaced apart so there is no period of inactivity through the year. A strong PR partnership, with a field specialist, is highly recommended for the conceptualisation, curation and implementation of a long-term communication strategy.

“Taking into consideration seasonal temperaments and travel climates, an equipped PR agency will assist in measuring and tapping into consumer interests to help drive campaigns and secure desired results,” says Jade Allen, managing director of Red Carpet Concepts.

Highlighting topical strengths

Corporate or family packages, couple getaways and local travel specials are always a win. High and low seasons should both be accounted for, with a focus on packages and seasonal specials to attract bookings even during slow months. The off-season period is also an opportune time to invite travel and lifestyle media to stay at your establishment and fully experience everything it has to offer in order to report on their first-hand experiences.

Readers tend to gravitate towards reviews rather than advertisements as they carry a greater weight in integrity and honesty.

Other topics include creating hype and accrue bookings around new restaurants or restaurant specials, seasonal menu launches, hotel awards, new appointments, spa specials, interior design upgrades, as well as special events and experiences. Collectively these types of talk factor topics keep the brand active and relevant in a competitive space, specifically pertaining to the luxury hotel business being predominantly service based.

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“Brand journalism and content marketing must be newsworthy, relevant and drive a strong call-to-action. In the current climate of our tech-driven world, it is important to ensure that strategy covers traditional press channels of print and broadcast as well as the digital sphere, where social media has largely taken an upper hand in our personal and business engagements.

“As more traditional PR methods tend to be more timeous, online media portals, digital magazines and blogs are platforms which offer us immediate results. Therefore, a good mix of sustained messaging across a multitude of platforms is essential for sustained messaging,” adds Allen.

Gaining visibility in the hospitality industry means being creative in what you plan, as well as what you promote. Content curation or content creation must be meaningful. Hoteliers should be investing in placing stories with press releases, diary listings, social media and direct marketing channels to enjoy a healthy return on investment. For well written, compelling stories journalists and copywriters key to the field will have a better understanding of the internal workings of the media and a good harness of what will grasp the customers’ attention.

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