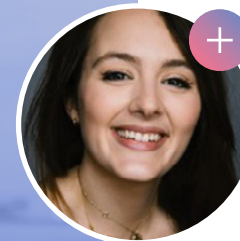




Guest messaging

JUNE 2022

www.techtalk.travel



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Since Maud joined For-Sight, she has been developing marketing campaigns and educational content to support hospitality professionals make informed decisions. Maud loves to put business ideas into words and designs. Generalizing and informing around the complex topic that is technology is a challenge she truly enjoys.



What are critical channels to leverage for optimized guest communication - reactively and proactively. How to design a successful in- and outbound multi-channel communication strategy to increase guest engagement and experience. What are the opportunities of channels such as SMS, WhatsApp, Messenger, Social Messengers, and others in terms of guest relations, marketing, upselling, etc.?

How does guest messaging enhance the guest journey?

More and more people are using multiple channels to interact with their peers. In 2021, there were approximately 3.09 billion mobile phone messaging app users worldwide, projected to grow to 3.51 billion by 2025¹. Meanwhile, the main activities for which people use their phones are:

- **messaging (47%),**
- **emailing (37%) and**
- **engaging with social media (29%)²**

Consequently, guest messaging has become a key element of the guest journey to create interaction, build engagement and maximize revenue. Since people are using those channels, how does guest messaging fit into the guest journey? What are the opportunities?

1. Statista, 2021
2. Deloitte



BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Guest messaging allows you to reach out to your guests anywhere and at any time. This method helps you improve the guest's experience and create a safe and private way of communicating with your property - for each individual guest's journey through every hotel touchpoint:

- **Pre-arrival**
- **On-arrival**
- **During the stay**
- **At departure**
- **Post-stay**



Before looking at how guest messaging can enhance the main stage of the guest journey, there are 2 important questions we want to address:

#1 Will leveraging guest messaging channels consume all my time?

tions, creating automated marketing campaigns, or feeding your chatbots with information will require your marketing team's expertise. However, this will put you in a great place where the repetitive questions will be answered in seconds, and campaigns will run without you having to lift a finger.

geographic, generational, business vs. leisure, or based on past stays. The moment you capture a segment's general profile is when you can tailor your offer to your guests to upsell and advise your guests in a relevant way. Segmentation combined with accurate data is a sweet shop for hoteliers eager to develop true guest personalization.



The magic with guest messaging technology is that it can process a large volume of incoming and outgoing communications and free up your staff for essential and high-value tasks.

#2 What is 'great' guest communication?

From the content of your message to the tone you use, you should be driven by the data you hold on to your

We're in a time when staff shortages are an issue for our industry, making each of your team member's time more valuable than ever before.

Is it true that the more guest communication deployed to your guest, the more work is created? That shouldn't be the case, thanks to automation. The initial work of setting up your communica-

tion. This will add meaning to your message and consequently attract the interest of guests who will see the value.

When messaging your guests at scale and reaching out to thousands of contacts, you must create categories of guests sharing similar characteristics, also called segments. This can be

APPROACHING GUEST MESSAGING WITH EMPATHY

Since guests are human beings, let's be empathic in how we approach them with messaging. Engaging with guests is a dynamic where your business attempt to get 'closer' to the guest. However, it's essential to establish healthy boundaries. What is too much in guest messaging?

- **Too frequent interactions:** spamming can cause you to run foul of junk mail and spam filters, or worse, put you on the path to being blacklisted.
- **Too irrelevant intrusion:** your guests' privacy should be a top priority. The line is crossed when you start collecting and using insights that do not relate directly to the guest experience.
- **Too much information:** your message should focus on 1 idea and 1 call-to-action based on your marketing objectives.



How can you use guest messaging pre- during- and post-stay? Before looking at each stage, it is important to mention that you should have clear objectives that drive all your campaigns and that the coherence in the tone, design, and information is crucial.

GUEST MESSAGING PRE-ARRIVAL

The digital experience is now an essential part of overall guest satisfaction. Today, the first contact between your guests and your property is usually digital - during the accommodation research phase and booking stage.

During this early stage of the journey, what to focus on?

- First and most important advice: collect your guests' email contact details to be able to engage with them directly. This is essential to the implementation of effective guest messaging.
- Collect your guests' preferences to personalize their journey and anticipate their needs. You could send an automatic survey that allows your guests to pick preferences for their upcoming stay, for example.
- Upsell before guests arrive (upgrades, restaurant bookings, activities, etc.). Upsell can be a generalized or personalized offer. For example, you could offer a SPA voucher to guests that have visited your SPA during a previous stay.
- Communicate essential information and tips to help your guests prepare and enjoy their experience.

Pre-arrival guest messaging helps you create a welcoming feel and build a strong relationship with your guests before they even step through your front door.

OTAs won't let you access your guests' details. How do you get around this?

Having actual actionable data is key to the success of your business. To convert OTA email addresses into real ones, it is important to spot them easily. CRM technology can equip your front desk staff with the vital reports they need to see which guests have an OTA email address, and take action to get an actionable, personal address from the guest.

ON ARRIVAL AND DURING THE STAY

Enhance the stay

Each moment of the guest journey is an opportunity you have to enhance the experience and maximize revenue - guest messaging allows you to transform that opportunity into action - and ultimately drive results.

While your guests are 'on-site', guest messaging should contribute to the experience:

- Check-in can be facilitated through your messaging channels,
- Personalised in-stay offers, based on guest data, can help fulfill guest expectations and anticipate needs
- Satisfaction checks can ensure that guests are happy or listened otherwise
- General or supplementary information can be communicated to your guest without them having to ask for it (hotel shuttle times or best boat tour in the region, for example)

Adopting a proactive approach with your messaging strategy will ensure that each guest stay is maximized to its full potential and that the relationship beyond the stay can grow into loyalty.



POST-STAY

Guest sentiment

When guests have completed their stay, guest messaging could be used to keep the relationship going. There are various ways communication can help you maintain engagement:

Feedback and reviews should be collected at the end of the stay or very soon after. Feedback and reviews should contribute to the continuous improvement of the service and be part of the decision-making process.

The information your guests share with you can also be used to praise your team. It's important to remember to celebrate success!

No matter how much effort you put into running a smooth operation, someday, something will glitch. At this point, hoteliers should address the situation and fix it. The sooner the better. While a negative review can be turned into a positive, hoteliers might want to avoid soliciting reviews from those guests - by excluding from the automated review message those guests who have experienced a negative situation. Instead, you could personally use guest messaging to collect direct feedback and address the issue individually.

We have distinguished 3 types of post-stay campaigns that should help with your strategy.

Bring back campaigns

These types of campaigns target OTA guests and aim to encourage direct bookings. Ideal if you're trying to reduce OTA commission.

Re-engagement campaigns

Guest messaging is also a great way to re-engage with guests who have stayed at your property and haven't been in touch for a long time. We would recommend messaging those guests 6 months after the previous contact.

Marketing offers

Whether this is seasonal, related to an event, or simply a creative offer, your messaging channels allow you to reconnect with guests that have been sharing their details with you. It can be offered to guests that have stayed or people who subscribe to your marketing.

OVERALL, THERE IS A WIDE ARRAY OF BENEFITS TO USING GUEST MESSAGING:

- Free-up valuable time for your staff (fewer phone calls, fewer repetitive questions, smoother management of complaints)

- Offer a solution to your guests before they ask the question (e.g. parking access)
- Deploy marketing campaigns (e.g., limited time offers, seasonal campaigns)
- Support your upselling strategy
- Collect information about your guests
- Personalise the guest journey
- Provide your guests a safe and private way of communicating with you, to create requests or submit feedback
- Widening of communication channels





TECHNOLOGY SHOULD SERVE YOUR MESSAGING STRATEGY

Data is at the core of being able to deliver a messaging and marketing strategy that puts the guest at the center.

Technology is what makes data available and accessible for practical purposes, whether in industry or our everyday lives. For hoteliers, technology has flourished and can serve various purposes, from managing operations to the topic of this article: guest messaging.

When investing in guest messaging or CRM technology, you should always consider your marketing objectives and your own market: 'how do your guests

like to be approached, and how do they approach you?'. This should determine what messaging channels you need and how to use them.

Integrating your tech systems can give you an accurate guest profile, enhance your marketing strategy and open up new, more effective communication methods. This knowledge can be used to make informed decisions and develop a personalized relationship with your guests at scale.

Depending on your objectives, connecting your technology stack can provide you with the necessary insight to grow your business and make better strategic and operational decisions – guest messaging strategy included.

