



A Beginner's Guide to

Digital Hotel Distribution and Marketing

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Welcome!

If you're reading this eBook, chances are you're a hotelier who is learning the importance of taking your business online.

Digital is no longer an experimental new channel for hotels – it's widely renowned as a scalable, measurable way to fuel growth via lead generation and conversions all the way down the funnel.

This eBook will show you why digital hotel distribution and marketing are important in today's world. You'll learn best digital marketing and digital distribution practices that attract travelers, delight guests, and build loyalty.

It's time to grow your brand and your revenue.

So, let's get started!



The Changing Hotel Industry

Digital trends in travel

The hotel industry is constantly changing, thanks to shifting consumer habits and advances in technology.

With most of the travel bookings now taking place via a website or mobile app, hotels are increasingly focusing their marketing and distribution strategies on digital channels.

Highlighting the role that digital plays for both travelers and the companies that serve them, a research conducted by trivago and Phocuswright¹ concluded, "Independent lodging properties now drive most of their business through online channels (79% and 69% in the U.S. and Europe respectively, up from 59% and 63% in 2015)."

In such a scenario, it's essential for you to be reachable online, have a positive digital presence, and create a seamless online booking journey for travelers.

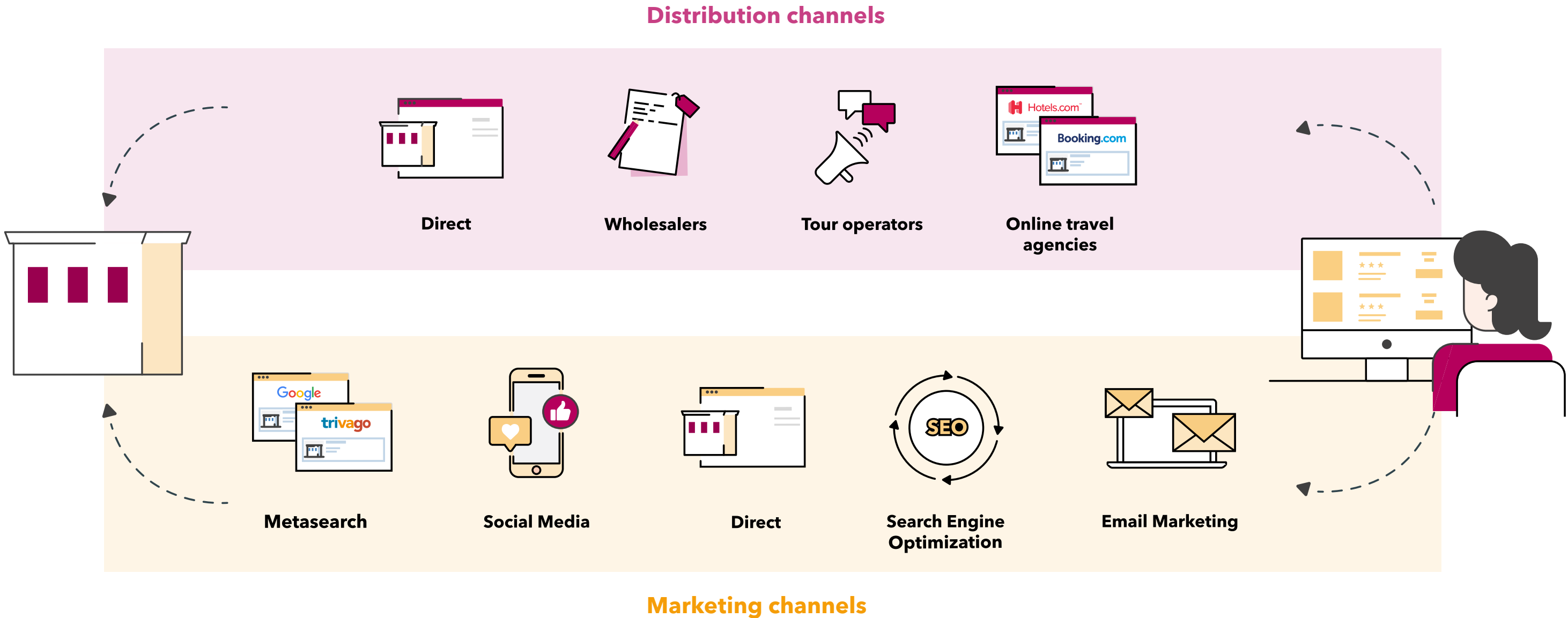
Let's have a look at the current digital hotel distribution and marketing landscape. Distribution and marketing tips and tricks in the subsequent chapters will help you step up so that you don't fall behind in the online world.

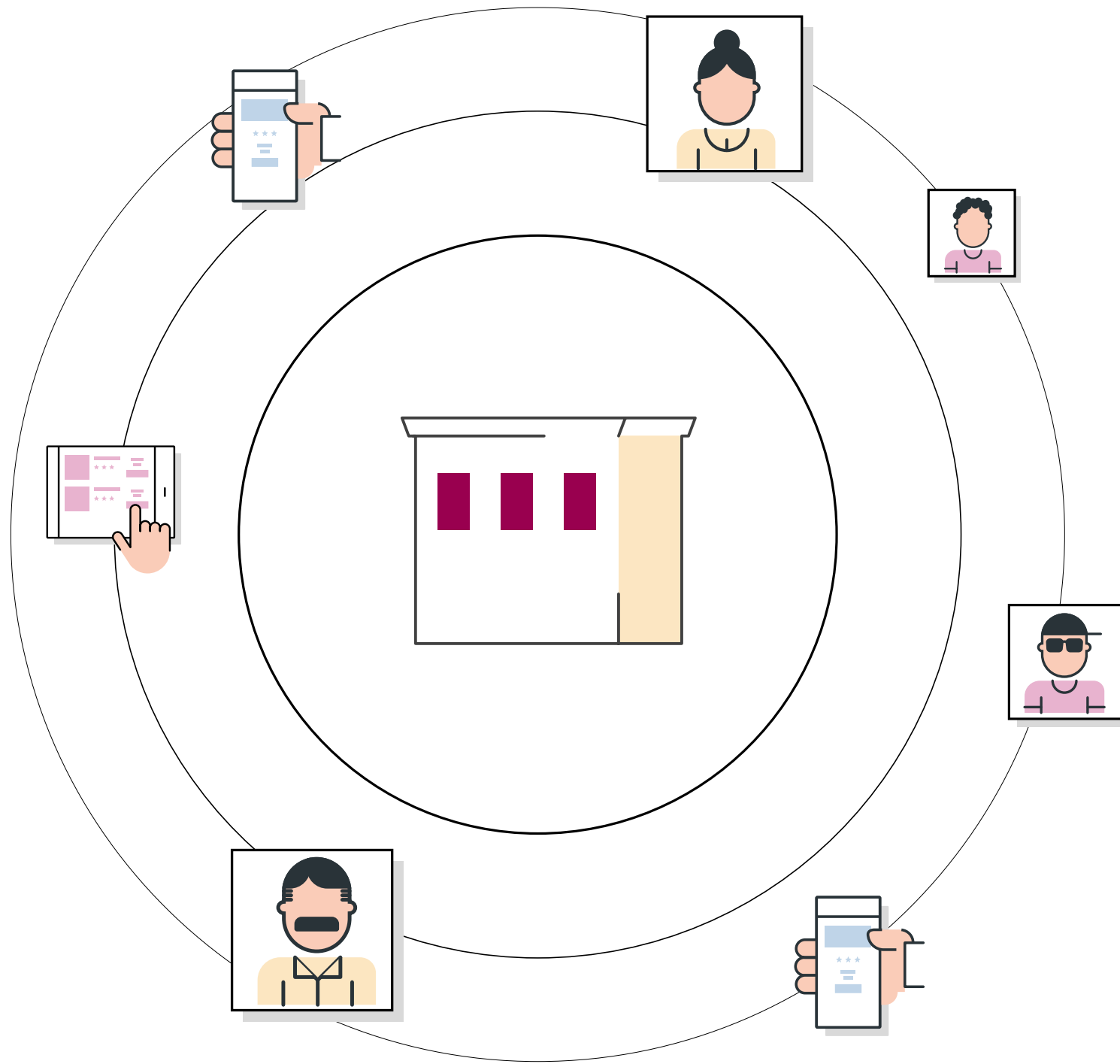
"Independent lodging properties now drive most of their business through online channels (79% and 69% in the U.S. and Europe respectively, up from 59% and 63% in 2015)."

The background features a solid dark blue field. On the left side, there are three overlapping circles in shades of blue and teal. A faint, light blue grid pattern is visible across the entire background.

Digital Distribution & Marketing

The hospitality distribution & marketing landscape





Be everywhere your customers are

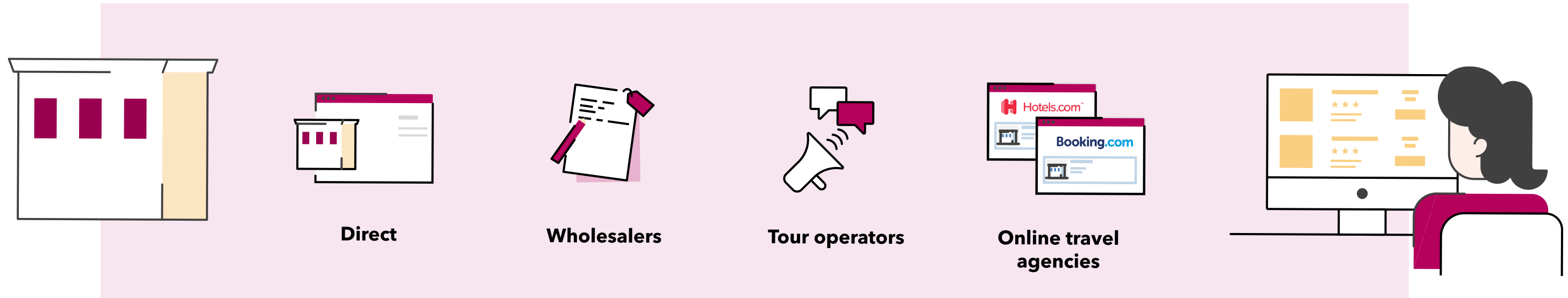
The basis of digital success is to make sure your customers can find you. After all, travelers' online search and booking behaviors directly influence the digital marketing and distribution strategies for hotels.

Today, tech-savvy travelers are searching and booking on an ever-expanding mix of direct and indirect channels, including metasearch engines, brand.com websites, big and small Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), and social media channels.

In the next sections, you'll learn how to make the most of these different channels by creating an effective hotel distribution and marketing strategy in the digital world.

Digital Hotel Distribution

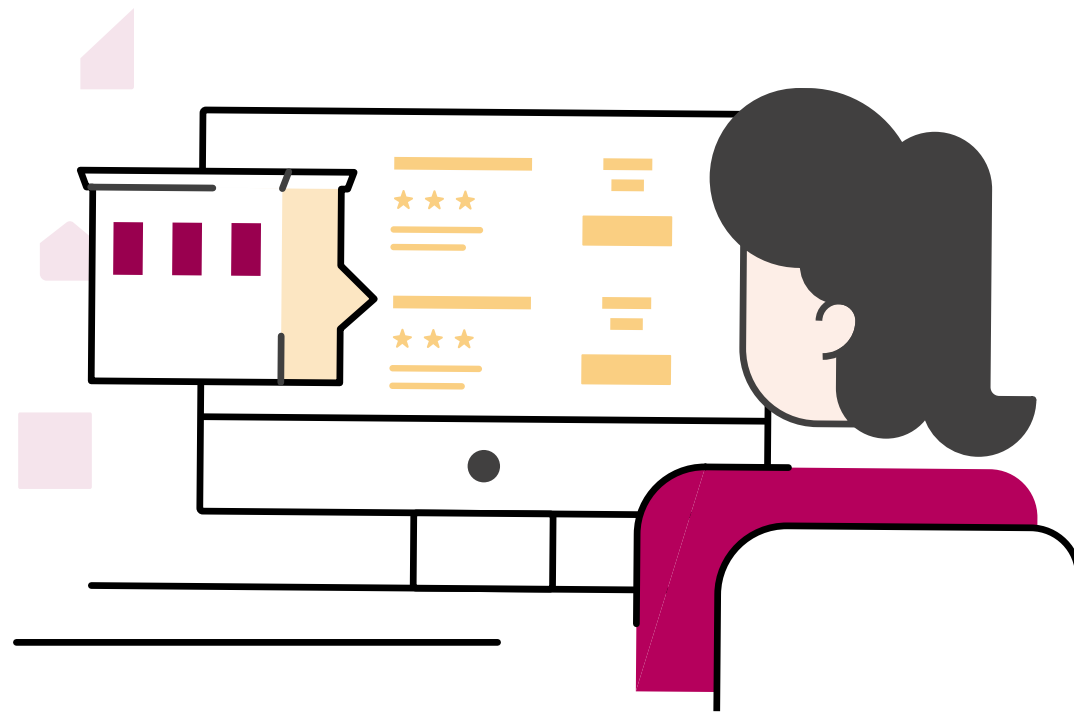
Digital distribution channels



A hotel distribution strategy is key to more hotel reservations. An effective distribution strategy controls when and through which channels the rooms will be sold, while lowering the acquisition costs for each channel. This is what makes it one of the most crucial parts of running a profitable hotel business.

It can be divided broadly into two categories: Direct distribution and third-party distribution.

Next, we show you how to effectively distribute your rooms on these various channels to create a winning digital hotel distribution strategy.



Direct distribution

Direct hotel online distribution requires various hotel distribution solutions, like a website, an Internet Booking Engine (IBE), and a channel manager. By investing in these solutions, you can sell your room inventory directly without paying any external commission fees.

You need an optimized website² where travelers can book rooms directly with you online. It needs to have in-depth information about the hotel, along with the latest, high-quality images.

An IBE³ will enable your hotel to accept direct bookings online through your official website. It'll also ensure a simple, seamless, and secure booking experience for your travelers.

A channel manager helps you distribute your room inventory and rates amongst OTAs and direct channels. Cloud-based technology can be your best bet these days, as it lets you control your room inventory and rates from wherever you are.

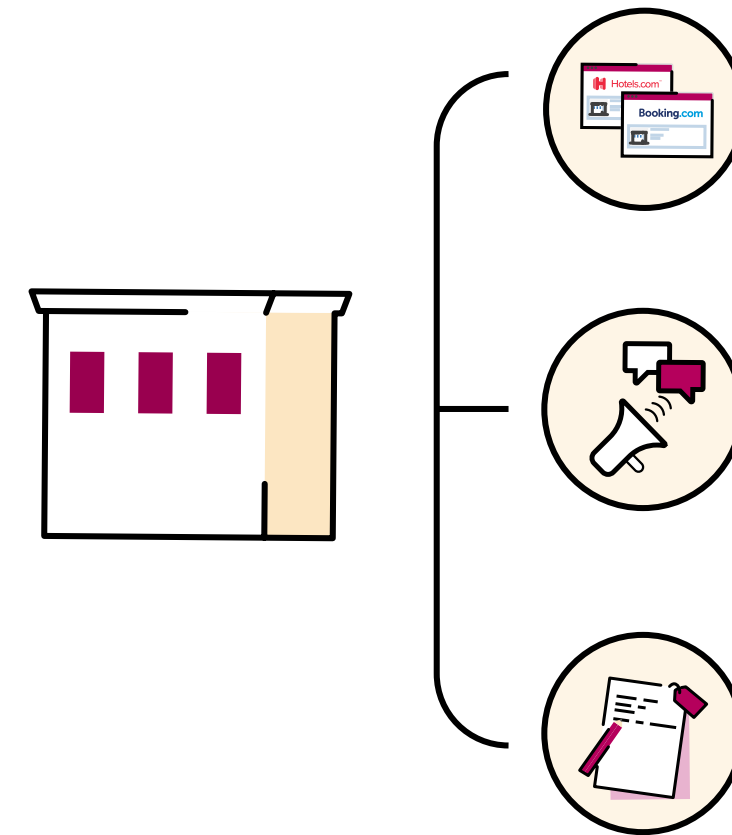
Third-party distribution

Third-party distribution refers to selling room inventory through OTAs, wholesalers, and other tour operators. Working with multiple third-party distribution agencies can help you increase your hotel's online exposure and overall occupancy.

An online travel agency, or an OTA⁴, is a third-party booking site that offers travel-related products, as well as displays guest ratings and reviews. It sells hotel rooms alongside flights, car rentals, tours, etc. and takes a commission for each booking. Thus, OTAs, like Booking and Expedia, operate similarly to traditional travel agents.

A wholesaler or a merchant is a middleman between a travel supplier (hotel) and an OTA or a travel agent. It sources the hotel room nights in bulk, packages them, negotiates rates, and then sells them to OTAs and travel agents.

To outspread your distribution portfolio, it's essential to build partnerships and sell rooms via various tour operators. With tour operators, you can also bundle your room rates and additional offerings into attractive packages for your guests.



Effective digital hotel distribution strategy

Effective hotel distribution means being present on various booking sites while having a booking engine on your own website.

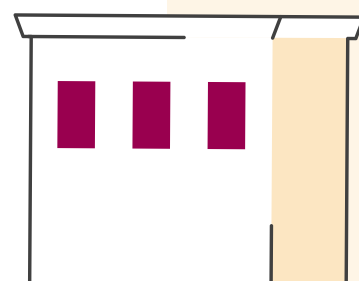
You should consider the following things when developing a distribution plan for your hotel:

- ✓ **Find the right balance between different distribution channels.**
- ✓ **Maintain a presence on an array of third-party booking sites, including OTAs, wholesalers, and tour operators.**
- ✓ **Have an official website with a seamlessly integrated booking engine.**
- ✓ **Invest in a well-performing channel manager to avoid overbooking.**

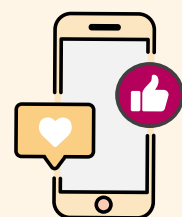


Digital Hotel Marketing

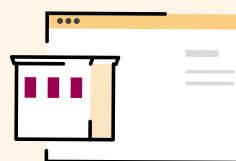
Digital marketing channels



Metasearch



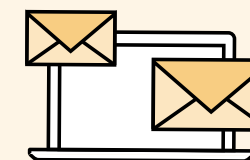
Social Media



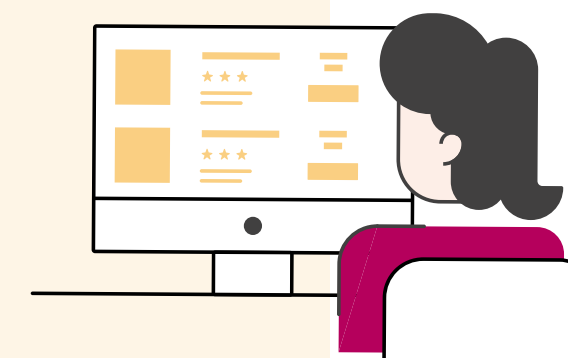
Direct



**Search Engine
Optimization**



Email Marketing



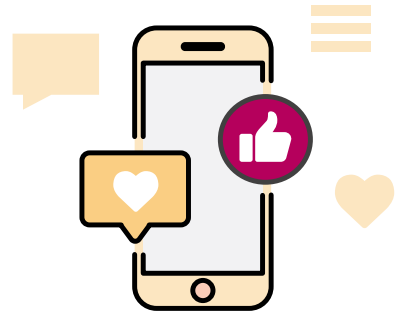
These days, digital hotel marketing is being adopted in many forms. This enables hotels to be visible and noticeable on social media platforms, search engines, and metasearch sites throughout the research, consideration, and final booking phase of travelers.

It can be divided broadly into three categories: Social marketing, direct marketing, and metasearch marketing.

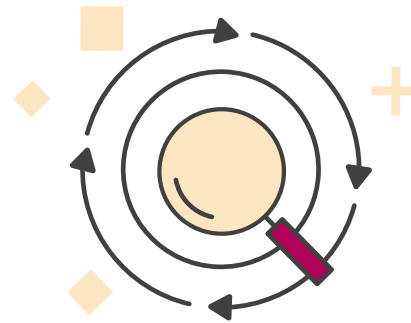
Next, we'll take a closer look at how you can promote your property across all of these categories and create a winning digital hotel marketing strategy.

Social marketing

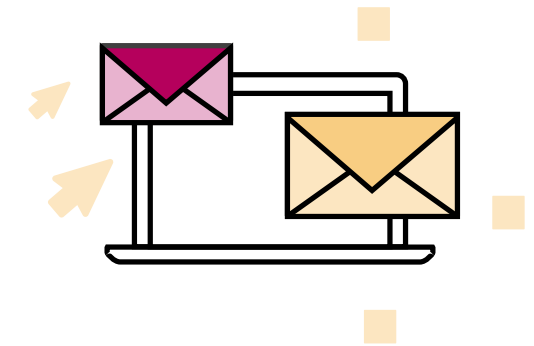
The most effective social marketing tools are social media, SEO, and email campaigns. Let's have a look at each one of these:



Social media⁶ is a versatile, effective, and indispensable hotel marketing tool. A successful strategy integrates several platforms, like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.



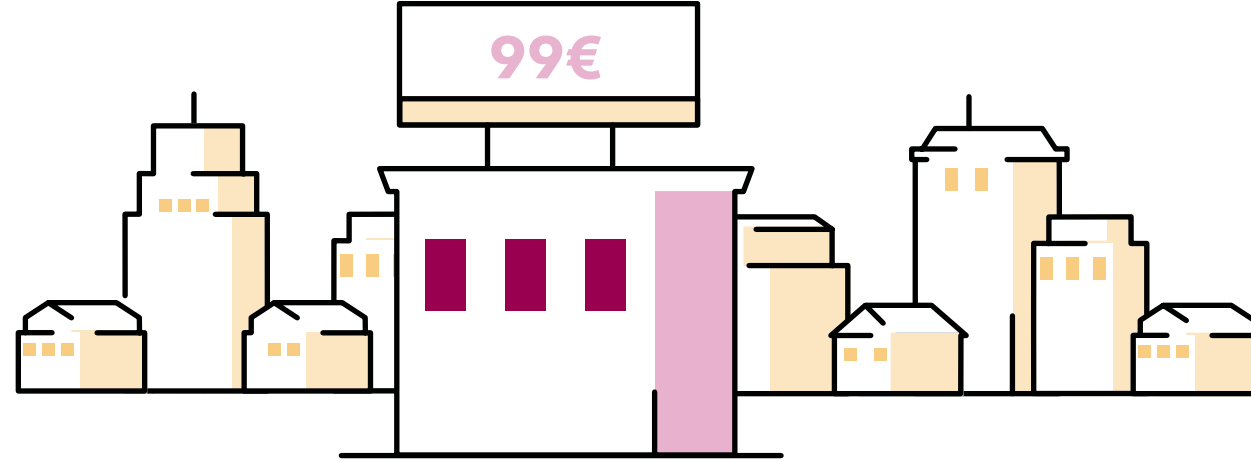
SEO⁷ is crucial to the success of any hotel marketing strategy. As such, it should be updated as often as needed to keep up with shifting traveler search behaviors and rising trends in the SEO environment.



Email marketing⁸ is a cost-effective and powerful means of engaging with your guests and increasing the visibility of your hotel's brand.

With the help of eye-catching hotel, staff, and guests' photos, short videos, stories and live videos, latest blog posts, and special offers and deals, you can enhance customer engagement. Thus social marketing through the above-mentioned channels can help you create both a loyal fan and customer base.

Direct marketing



Along with social marketing tools, direct marketing via a website is a key component of inbound digital marketing strategy for hotels. Inbound marketing is a method of attracting, engaging, and delighting people by providing value and building trust. The benefits of such initiatives and investments exceed the costs.

Firstly, you don't have to pay any commissions and it helps you reduce your dependency on other booking channels or OTAs. Secondly, it helps you foster closer guest relationships and create a loyal customer base.

A hotel's website¹⁰ is, therefore, the most critical marketing and sales tool. Your website is your digital storefront. On your hotel website, you can tell your unique story and vision of hospitality to set yourself apart from the competition.

It's also essential that you provide the information to your guests in a consistent and updated manner. This includes your hotel's location, contact information, hotel photos, and list of your room types, amenities, and features. In short, the content of your website should sell dreams and make guests want to stay with you.

Metasearch marketing

According to a trivago and Phocuswright study¹, metasearch is perceived by independent lodging properties as an important channel for reaching new customers. In fact, of all the available modes of digital hotel marketing, metasearch is rated as one of the most effective by hotels.

trivago, Kayak, Skyscanner, and TripAdvisor are good examples of metasearch engines.

The widespread popularity of metasearch sites among properties can be attributed to multiple benefits, like extensive global reach, increased direct bookings, and a great search experience. It is changing both the way hoteliers market their properties online and how travelers research and book their stays. It's transparent, efficient, and cost-effective for hotels and travelers alike.

Case in point: The global hotel metasearch, trivago, can help you promote your hotel in front of millions of travelers. With trivago Business Studio⁹, you can improve your online-marketing performance with apps you can mix and match. There are several apps that let you manage your hotel profile and stay on top of your online reputation. With the PRO package, you can stand out on trivago with competitive rates and attractive content. Its Rate Connect¹⁰ app helps you promote your direct rates in the trivago search results and win direct bookings.

Effective digital hotel marketing strategy

Effective hotel marketing means reaching and impacting potential guests and existing customers with your brand on the platforms where they research, plan, and book their trip. We suggest creating an optimal mix of social, direct, and metasearch marketing in order to effectively reach the maximum amount of travelers.

You should consider the following things when developing a marketing plan for your hotel:

- ✓ **Define your brand message and your key target market.**
- ✓ **Invest in a website for your hotel.**
- ✓ **Optimize your website for SEO and create a blog to enhance your organic reach.**
- ✓ **Have a strong social media presence.**
- ✓ **Plan a regular newsletter and send it out to foster loyalty.**
- ✓ **Get your hotel listed on a metasearch engine⁹.**
- ✓ **Update your profile on metasearch regularly, including a list of your amenities, contact details, and attractive images of your property to ensure consistency across various channels.**



What's next

Finding success in the digital world

The digital hotel marketing and distribution marketplace is becoming both more complex and more competitive. There are many ways to grow your hotel business, many platforms to take advantage of, many stories to tell, and many people to reach.

In such a scenario, there is no single formula for success. Hotels need to distribute their inventory via a mix of direct and indirect channels while executing marketing initiatives on various channels to reach and convert the maximum potential guests.

An optimal and diverse distribution and marketing portfolio needs to be created, which includes metasearch, direct website, SEO, social media websites, email campaigns, OTAs, wholesalers, and tour operators, among other channels.



The next best steps

Now that you understand a bit more about digital hotel distribution and marketing, it's time to take the next useful steps to create a winning edge in the digital world.

Would you like to reach millions of travelers via trivago for free?

[Register now](#)

Would you like to know how metasearch can help you win more direct bookings?

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Citations & Useful Resources

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