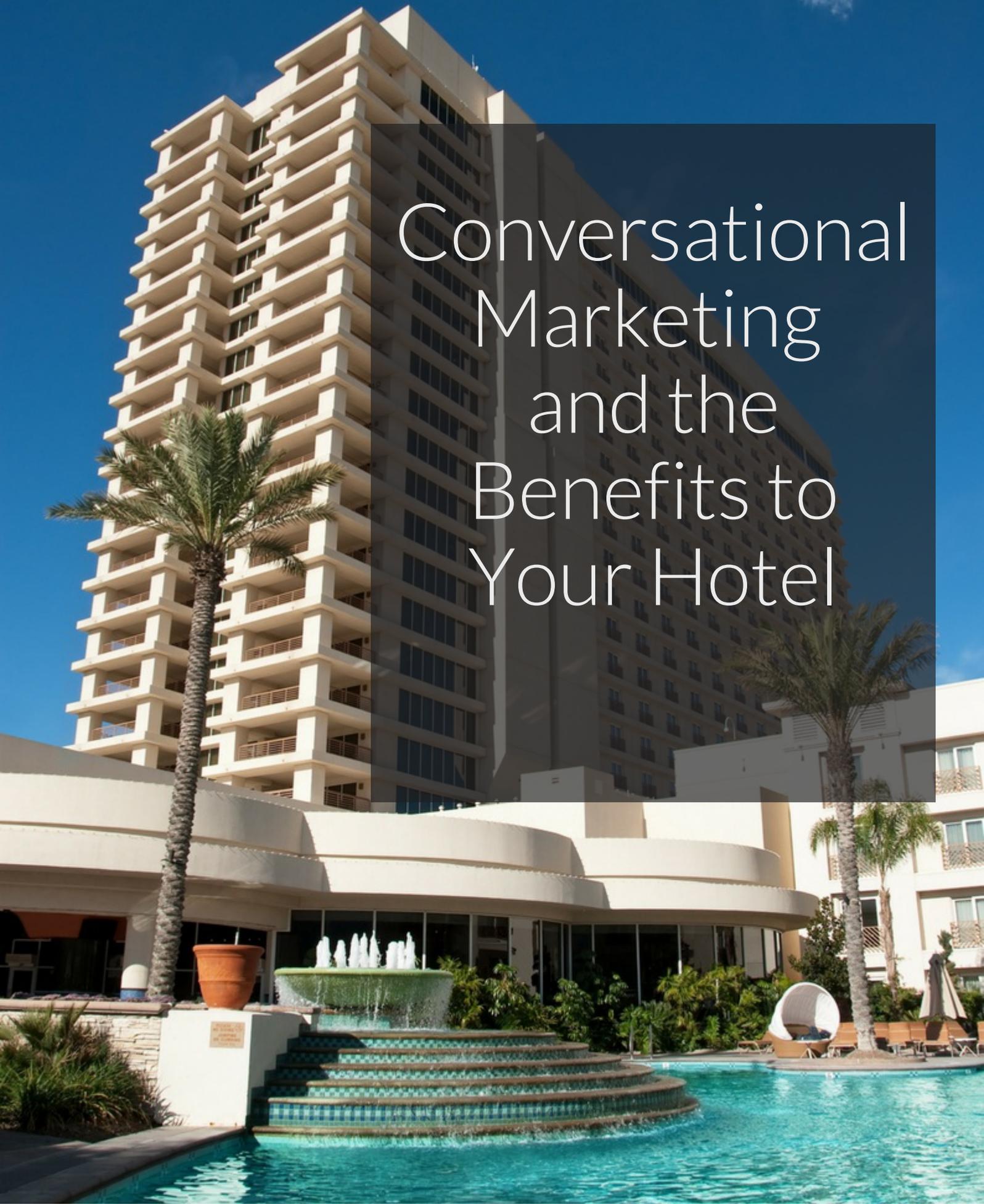




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Conversational Marketing and the Benefits to Your Hotel



Conversational Marketing: Future of Hotel Customer Service

Use of messaging and chat apps at hotels are fast becoming the preferred means to communicate with guests and, with this, come the endless possibilities to build relationships and increase sales. Hotel guests can chat in real-time and receive valuable and convenient customer service. This builds a trusting relationship that will go a long way toward loyalty and guest retention as well as lower overhead costs with efficient daily operations.

The technology is not new but primarily it is the exponential increase of mobile usage in recent years that is at the heart of the resurgence of messaging and chat apps. A Forrester Research study shows consumers spend nearly 78% of their time on smartphones and more than 3 billion consumers world-wide are heavy users of instant messaging platforms.

Conversational Marketing and Building Hotel Guest Relationships

The implication of conversational marketing might be to drive sales but its use now-a-days is more toward providing good customer service. Uber's Chris Messina coined the term conversational commerce and, simply put, it refers to the trend toward interaction between consumers and businesses through messaging apps, chat apps, and voice-activated technology. Consumer engagement can be through a human representative, chatbot or a fusion of the two.

For hotels it provides an excellent tool for hotel staff to automate customer service messages to guests. This increases hotel staff efficiency and provides a great guest experience. Hotels can interact with guests to quickly answer questions, resolve issues and provide personalized recommendations – all in real-time and at the guests' convenience.

Conversational Marketing: Future of Hotel Customer Service

In the artificial intelligence market, there is now IBM's Watson Technology. It's essentially a supercomputer system that answers questions using natural human speech with filters for intent and context. The likes of [Facebook](#), Google and Microsoft have their own versions that are free within their platforms.

[Facebook Messenger](#) is now able to accept payments through chatbots that not only increase guest engagement but create the possibility to translate the conversation into booking transactions without ever leaving the application. This makes it easy and convenient because it means there is no jumping back and forth between website and text conversations. Reducing the number of sources hotel guests need to turn to will shorten the distance between a prospect and a booking.

Conversational Marketing and the Hotel Guest Journey

Regardless of how conversational marketing reaches you, guests want help, advice and direction while they work through their [decision-making process](#). It should be an effortless process for your guests and gives a chance to establish a better rapport with your guests and prospective guests. A quick turn-around to questions/inquires, convenience and personal attention mean everything to your guests. So it's vital to have the conversation stay natural – human – real.

Effective conversational commerce can successfully get your hotel to increase customer satisfaction and foster meaningful relationships. Hotel marketing strategies should carefully consider ways to provide a better customer experience by fusing with emerging technology that will help make those engagements turn into bookings.

Hotels Learn to Reach Out to Millennials Via Texting

It's the same story with a new twist – No matter the era we were born into, most innovations are made by youth looking for the next best thing that will differentiate them from older generations. Then older generations learn to adapt to the changes. It's an expected part of the life cycle.

These days the millennial lifestyle has shaped the way we communicate. Nearly a quarter of the US population are millennials and, with mobile usage increasing each year, our exchanges have adapted to accommodate the explosion of social media outlets, video viewing and – texting!

Reality Mine, a mobile research agency, found a trend across all generations that texting has become preferable to calling and the trend is most prevalent in millennials. The April 2016 OpenMarket nationwide poll of millennials showed that 75% of millennials preferred texting more than any other method of communication. The more recent [OpenMarket survey](#) shows text messaging is the preferred way millennials like having exchanges with businesses. According to this recent survey:

- Texting leads the way as a notification preference from businesses followed by email and then last with calls.
- 80% prefer texting a company's 1-800 customer service line rather than making a call and being put on hold.
- 60% prefer texting with companies because it's quick and works within their schedule without being intrusive
- 30% receive texts from companies they interact with on a regular basis and, of these, 75% find text reminders and promotions helpful
- Only 0 to 5 texts from businesses are received per week and nearly 20% never receive any texts from businesses.

Hotels Learn to Reach Out to Millennials Via Texting

This could not only present opportunities for hotels to better reach their millennial and even Generation Z guests but also help create a more efficient staff in terms of operations. Hotels could improve the guest service experience by using text messaging to confirm spa appointment, send payment reminders, process Wi-Fi requests, make and confirm room reservations, provide offers/discounts/coupons and conduct short surveys just to name a few.

Providing such services via text would reach out to millennials and improve your hotel's chances for good guest reviews. If the millennial guest is left feeling satisfied with your hotel's service they would be inclined to let others in their network know it. Good reviews mean a greater chance for positive content in organic search results. Positive organic content means building toward a better reputation for your hotel. A better reputation increases opportunities for direct bookings.

If hotels want to reach millennials, then it's best to reach them in their language preference – text messaging!

Facebook Messenger & Mobile Messaging Apps

Facebook Messenger is one of many messaging services offering immediate customer response. The particular features offered by each app as well as what demographic it attracts determine what content fits and which app should be used. The main purpose of these apps is to connect people together by sending free messages, pictures and videos.

Here are some compelling stats: WeChat has grown quite popular in the Asian market and has more than 697 million monthly active users. Snapchat has 100 million daily users and is popular with millennials though its user base is aging up. Over 16000 companies from 140 countries use LiveChat. WhatsApp has 900 million users worldwide in 109 countries and is popular in markets outside the US. Facebook Messenger has now become the most popular of all messaging services with 1 billion users.

Almost every major messaging service has grown exponentially in recent years and is dominating mobile usage. This warrants the attention of hotels in seeing the importance of having a messaging service in place on their websites and leveraging chat toward providing efficient customer service.

Hotels can provide instant guest gratification with their on-the-spot answers and, since issues are resolved on the fly during the chat session, it significantly reduces follow up time. Hotels can also provide guidance toward making the final booking all the while potential guests are navigating their websites.

About Lodging Interactive

It's not just about discount programs or loyalty points. Show your guests they are important and make them feel special. Find and use a messenger app on your website and make it all about your guest or potential guest's happiness. It's the guest experience that will create your hotel's loyal followers.

Headquartered in Parsippany, NJ, Lodging Interactive is a full-service digital marketing and social media engagement agency exclusively servicing the hospitality industry. Through its web design and search optimization division as well as its **CoMMingle Social Media Division**, Lodging Interactive provides effective Internet marketing services to hundreds of branded and independent properties as well as management companies, restaurants and spas. The company also offers fully managed Live Chat agents for hotel websites through its **LiveChatForHotels.com** division.

Lodging Interactive is an HSMAI Adrian Award winner, and has won awards from the International Academy of Visual Arts, Interactive Media Awards, Horizon Interactive Awards, Web Marketing Association, Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts, and Travel Weekly's Magellan Awards have recognized Lodging Interactive as an industry leader.

Lodging Interactive is a proud supporter of the Hotel Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) and the company's president, DJ Vallauri, currently serves on the Board of Directors of HSMAI's New York Chapter. For more information, please contact sales@lodginginteractive.com, 877-291-4411 or visit the LodgingInteractive.com.

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Thank You!