



HARNESSING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LEISURE

Hotels are increasingly using social media to promote their leisure activities even as the summer season is here.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

Social media, particularly Instagram and Facebook, play a pivotal role in overall marketing strategy. It is also the easiest way to get the attention of people who extensively use these platforms.

TARGET ON POINT

Content is curated for social media in line with the target audience - which usually encompasses honeymooners, couples, families with younger children, conferences and wedding guests.

"Our endeavour remains to showcase the serenity and uniqueness of the resort in the most evocative manner through use of high-quality static visuals and engaging reels. Since our resort extensively caters to leisure travellers, we focus on content that spotlights a multitude of offerings that we have for families and vacationers, such as recreational activities, culinary experiences, unique dining, barbecue experiences and more. In addition, the distinctive aesthetic appeal of our resort as well as the charm of the desti-

nation is what we lay a lot of focus on, content wise," says Praydhumna Rathore, General Manager, Taj Aravali Resort & Spa, Udaipur.

ENGAGING RIGHT

At Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai, the team visually showcases the leisure facilities available at the hotel, such as the swimming pool, gym, spa, and outdoor spaces. They share these services on social media platforms where millennials and Gen-Z are highly active such as Instagram and Facebook.

"We offer exclusive discounts and promotions to regular guests and



With families enjoying their holidays, hotels are ensuring that kids have good opportunity to engage, interact, and laugh together through various engaging activities

target families to encourage them to try out the leisure activities such as our Weekend Staycation packages which are highly recommended for families. We partner with different categories and groups of influencers who have vast followership to promote the hotel's leisure activities. They create social media content upon their valuable experience and share it in real-time with their followers, which will help increase visibility and reach," says Tarana Lalchandani, Assistant Marketing Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai.

TOURISM IMPETUS

Hotels are also using their accommodation choice, to push tourism in the city they are located in. For example, in the past one-and-a-half year, Taj Lakefront collaborated with Government bodies like Madhya Pradesh Tourism, joined hands with important social media celebrities, and has executed several campaigns on national levels promoting Bhopal as a destination with rich history, vibrant culture, close to nature and for its peaceful charm. The Taj Lakefront, Bhopal, did a Tribal Food Festival promoting indigenous tribes of Madhya Pradesh and their food, curated bespoke packages for destination weddings, focused on the forgotten local cuisines to bring to the forefront and has been able to come a long



Praydhumna Rathore, General Manager, Taj Aravali Resort & Spa, Udaipur



Tarana Lalchandani, Assistant Marketing Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Mumbai

way to establish Bhopal as the hub of tourism.

"The hotel has had great success in offering off-beat itineraries and travel experiences to encourage our guests to experience the 'City of Begums' Bhopal. The city offers history tours coupled with food trail, off beat hiking and bicycling paths, an opportunity to visit two UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, experience an urban safari and even an opportunity to unwind with a good book by the banks of the lake," says Kanika Hasrat, General Manager, Taj Lakefront Bhopal & Area Director - MP, UP and Uttarakhand.

TECH TALK

Hotels usually work with a dedicated team of photographers and videographers who create high quality content using the best cameras with varied exposures, handheld camera stabilisers, slow and hyper motion modes, lights, and the like.

"Some of the important technologies we use as digital platforms helps us track data on our consumers so that we can understand their needs and address them. Competitor scanning technologies for in-depth research on like-minded brands and



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boosting software helps amplify our reach. We also work with monitoring technologies to analyse our growth and understand areas of improvement. We promote and provide loyal guests/members with information about leisure activities. Online booking platforms like Expedia and Booking.com can also be used to promote leisure activities within the vicinity. To list our leisure facilities on these platforms, guests can book activities in advance," says Lalchandani.

Grand Mercure Mysore uses hype auditor and similar platforms to gauge the impact of influencers and ensure that they have the right content tactics to feature their property. Understanding the analytics from Meta suite to curate content accordingly and target more effectively also helps them in reaching their audience better.

SUMMER FRESH

With the arrival of the Indian summer holiday season, hotels are going all out to peg their properties as perfect family getaways. A recent survey by Travel Lifestyle Network said that 24% Indians took at least one vacation every month compared to the global average of 11%. On the other hand, summer, often considered off-season, is now on a changing trend with people preferring to visit destinations when there is a lesser crowd.

Taj Aravali Resort & Spa, Udaipur, is an excellent destination for summer vacations since it offers a host of experiences for the entire family. "We are easily accessible from key metropolitan cities and will be marketing our recreational activities for children and adults – including outdoor excursions, our two expansive swimming pools for kids and adults, adventure activities, unique dining experiences and wellness rituals at Jiva Spa. Our pure vegetarian restaurant Javitri is one of its kind and a great destination for those looking for healthy and wholesome fare, as we procure a lot of fresh produce from our lush kitchen gardens," adds Rathore.



➔ Kanika Hasrat, General Manager, Taj Lakefront Bhopal & Area Director – MP, UP and Uttarakhand



➔ Sunaina Manerker, General Manager, Grand Mercure Mysore

CREATIVE CUES

Leisure is an exciting segment to cater to and offers much room for creativity for hoteliers. Sunaina Manerker, General Manager, Grand Mercure Mysore, says, "We have a keen eye on our analytics on social media platforms as to where our followers are based - from different countries to different cities in India. It helps us in curating a better message to our audience. While looking at campaigns, we create distinct content for each campaign keeping in mind the demographics for the promotion. We have swimming classes, summer coolers' food festival and different kids' activities planned such as junior chef cooking, face painting, magic shows etc. Our team ensures that we do good research on the changing needs of our guests and takes great efforts in bringing together unforgettable experiences for our patrons. True to the brand's ethos, we ensure that our activities and experiences are inspired from the local culture and its vibrant narratives."

FAMILY FIRST

Post pandemic, holidays are increasingly veering towards spending time with family and hoteliers have started recognising this trend too. A picnic day at Taj Lakefront, Bhopal, be it by the pool or by the lake has a specially curated brunch picnic hamper that offers everyone from kids to elders an opportunity to engage, interact, and laugh together. This includes a wide array of finger foods, fresh mocktails, card and board games, a guide to the flora and fauna in the area and a scrap book for kids to carry back memories of nature. "At the Taj Lakefront, Bhopal, we have unique room packages that include a rooftop sunset dining experience by the Infinity pool that overlooks the lake, spa indulgences for me-time, complimentary access to weekend celebrity events at Infinity, the rooftop bar and lounge along with cooking sessions with our chefs. Guests can choose from many other options to make their holiday truly unique. While our concierge team plans an entire day



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out in the city that explores fun activities like boating, a Gond painting workshop, a visit to the local handicraft market, visits to the tribal museum, we make it special with a guide and photographer who knows the best spots and captures memories with his lens,” says Hasrat.

BEING SOCIAL

This is the age when people post about their holidays on social media regularly. Therefore, properties are also creating nooks and corners for the perfect picture. Hoteliers understand that each traveller has unique preferences, and therefore they personalise and curate social media strategies for leisure activities to cater to each guest's preferences.

Shibani Malhotra, General Manager, Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark, says, “Our property boasts several Instagram-worthy locations, such as our infinity pool located on the 14th floor, which offers stunning views of the city skyline. Guests can enjoy a refreshing swim, meditate, or do yoga while watching the sunrise over Kochi. We also have great roads for cycling and jogging, and our tranquil location provides a serene environment for those who seek relaxation. In addition to our beautiful property, Four Points by Sheraton Kochi also offers a great spa experience. Our spa services are designed to provide guests with a range of treatments for rejuvenation. Our social media strategies for leisure activities reflect our commitment to providing our guests with an exceptional experience. We believe that by showcasing the beauty of our property and Kochi through social media, we can inspire our guests to explore more of what the city has to offer.”

GUESTS AS BRAND AMBASSADORS

For most hotels, guests are the brand ambassadors, and hoteliers leverage technologies such as social listening and sentiment analysis to understand their preferences and feedback.

“This allows us to curate personalized experiences and offer tailored recommendations to our guests. In addition, we use various social media management tools to manage our social media accounts, track our performance metrics, and analyse the success of our social media campaigns. These tools help us stay up to date with the latest trends in the social media landscape and enable us to make data-driven decisions for our social media strategies. At Four Points by Sheraton Kochi, we believe in promoting a healthy lifestyle. Our yoga classes will be accompanied by healthy drinks and bites, ensuring that our guests start their day on a refreshing note. We are committed to making every moment of our guests' stay memorable and enjoyable,” says Malhotra.



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IN CONCLUSION

Social media has undoubtedly revolutionised the way hoteliers communicate and engage with their guests. Conscientious hoteliers believe in using social media mindfully and responsibly, respecting everyone's privacy and ensuring that messaging is always relevant and authentic. The challenge with social media is that it can have a positive impact and the other way round, and hence there is a need to leverage its positive impact by promoting positivity and inspiring guests to explore the city's culture and heritage. By using social media rightly and ethically, hoteliers can build strong relationships with their guests and create memorable experiences that they will cherish forever. With the introduction of AI tools, 360-degree videos, interactive platforms, and review systems, it is going to be another leap in bridging the communication gap. Understanding guests' needs not only at the hotel but prior to their visit with the interaction online will become an integral part of every business plan and strategy. 