



## “Should our hotel have a page on Facebook?”



A qualified “yes,” if you have the resources to keep content fresh, interesting, and relevant to the Facebook community. Companies worldwide are now using Facebook as a free marketing channel to increase brand awareness, connect with new audiences, boost website traffic, augment multimedia campaigns, and build stronger relationships with target demographics.

Consumer online behavior is rapidly changing. The traditional methods of driving traffic to hotel websites will evolve to incorporate social networking. According to Google, by 2012, networking on social media sites will be the second-most-popular online activity, overtaking shopping and surpassing communication and entertainment. Hotels need to be in the places like Facebook where potential guests are spending more of their online hours.

Facebook can help you engage more people in connecting with your hotel brand and its locations. It can also be another place for guests to provide reviews and feedback. But your hotel content must be kept fresh and interactive. Involve your hotel staff in uploading photos and videos and creating opportunities to interact with online visitors. Create real-time buzz with Facebook-only specials and packages at your hotel, as well as your restaurants and conference facilities. Consider providing a handwritten note from the general manager at check-in, thanking guests for being a fan and inviting them for a free drink.

Branding opportunities are further reinforced by the option to reserve your brand name at the most popular social networking sites. Facebook is letting page owners create “vanity URLs,” for example, [facebook.com/yourhotelnamehere](http://facebook.com/yourhotelnamehere). The new names protect brand and enable promotion of Facebook usernames through other marketing channels online and offline.

Although the verdict is still out on the ability of Facebook and other social networking sites to drive actual booking revenue, they do provide concrete benefits. The value of these sites is in their capacity to build brand awareness and a community of interest around your hotel. As they proliferate, they will not only enhance brand visibility; they will provide a high volume of links to your hotel website, increasing SEO rankings and boosting website traffic. That is their ultimate and immediate ROI.

## EXPERT



*Jake Smack, Director of Product Management at TravelCLICK, is a hospitality industry veteran with expertise in hotel search marketing and social marketing. He works on behalf of TravelCLICK clients to educate and continuously evolve search engine marketing strategies, tactics, and performance to maximize hotel visibility, drive direct website traffic, and increase online conversions.*



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