



IoH Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Broadsheet is a thought-leadership article written by a Member or Fellow of the Institute. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The IoH Broadsheet is published exclusively for members.

Marketing for when the going gets tough

Since 2021, Kim Bailey MIH has been Head of Marketing and PR at the Institute of Hospitality. Responsible for devising and managing the Institute's marketing strategy, she has helped to elevate and build the IoH Brand, increase member engagement and help grow membership.

In the latest Broadsheet, Kim looks at '**Marketing for when the going gets tough**', providing a handy checklist of how global hospitality businesses can make their budgets work harder and smarter. Kim has been a member of the Institute since 2021.

Introduction

In times of economic uncertainty and when budgets are under increasing pressure, businesses need to cut costs, and marketing budgets are often the first to take the hit.

However, for the hospitality sector, where consumer confidence directly impacts bookings and revenue, marketing is not an expendable cost but a crucial investment.

Reducing marketing efforts can lead to a loss of brand visibility, decreased customer engagement, and ultimately, declining revenue.

Instead of eliminating marketing, hospitality businesses must adopt smart, cost-effective marketing strategies that maximise return on investment (ROI) while maintaining brand presence and customer loyalty.

In times when budgets are being squeezed you need more bangs for your bucks!

Firstly, find out what has worked for you in the past. Any low-cost activities that have delivered ROI should obviously be continued. However, for other low-cost alternatives here's a short, practical guide to how your business could work smarter and re-prioritise expenditure to make every penny work harder.



DO

Social Media and Direct Marketing

- Leverage social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Facebook. It costs you nothing but time to drive your messages across social media platforms and there is always options to boost posts if you have the budget. With so many graphic platforms available you can easily generate images and interactive posts to help connect with existing and new prospective customers organically. And don't forget to respond to posts to leverage engagement with your audience and remember to comment on other key user's accounts to gain greater visibility and followers.
- Invest in email marketing, it has a high ROI and keeps customers engaged and if you already have a good CRM system it will cost you nothing to do more.

Invest in Low-Cost, High-Impact Content Marketing

- A strong content marketing strategy, such as blogging about travel tips, local attractions, case studies highlighting customers' delight, or sustainability efforts, can drive organic traffic to your website and improve your search engine rankings. They can really capture people's imaginations at no cost to the business.
- Optimise your website for Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). Simply put, SEO means adding key search words across your website to attract organic traffic to your site. It really helps.

Customer Retention and Loyalty

- Offer exclusive deals, discounts, and personalised promotions to returning guests. Feeling valued is crucial and being given discounts is a motivating factor for many.
- Use CRM and data analytics to understand customer preferences and tailor experiences. This tied into your Direct Marketing Strategy will help ensure you deliver the right messages to the right people.
- Implement a referral programme to encourage word-of-mouth marketing.

Local and Community-Based Marketing

- Partner with local businesses or community groups for cross-promotions.
- Attend relevant trade shows and target the delegates.
- Sponsor or participate in local events to enhance brand visibility.

Maximise Press and Media Opportunities

- Engage with relevant journalists, bloggers, and influencers to engage with you and write about your products/services or reference your brand.
- Create your own newsworthy articles/campaigns or partnership news that you can send to your local/national/trade press and media and obtain free coverage.
- Encourage guests to leave positive reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google, and on social media platforms.

Use Smart Paid Advertising Strategies

- If you want to advertise, focus on performance-based digital campaigns that allow precise targeting and tracking.
- Invest in retargeting ads to re-engage website visitors.
- Use geo-targeted advertising to attract local or regional guests.

DON'T

Rely on expensive advertising

- Avoid high-cost print, TV, and billboard ads unless they have a proven track record for your business.

Forget your existing customers when chasing new customers

- Acquiring new customers is more expensive than retaining loyal ones.
- Avoid generic mass marketing. Personalisation of messages leads to stronger engagement.

Use hard-sell

- Customers trust content on respected platforms and media not direct sales pitches.
- Aggressive or comical promotional tactics can alienate potential customers.

Ignore local and regional customers

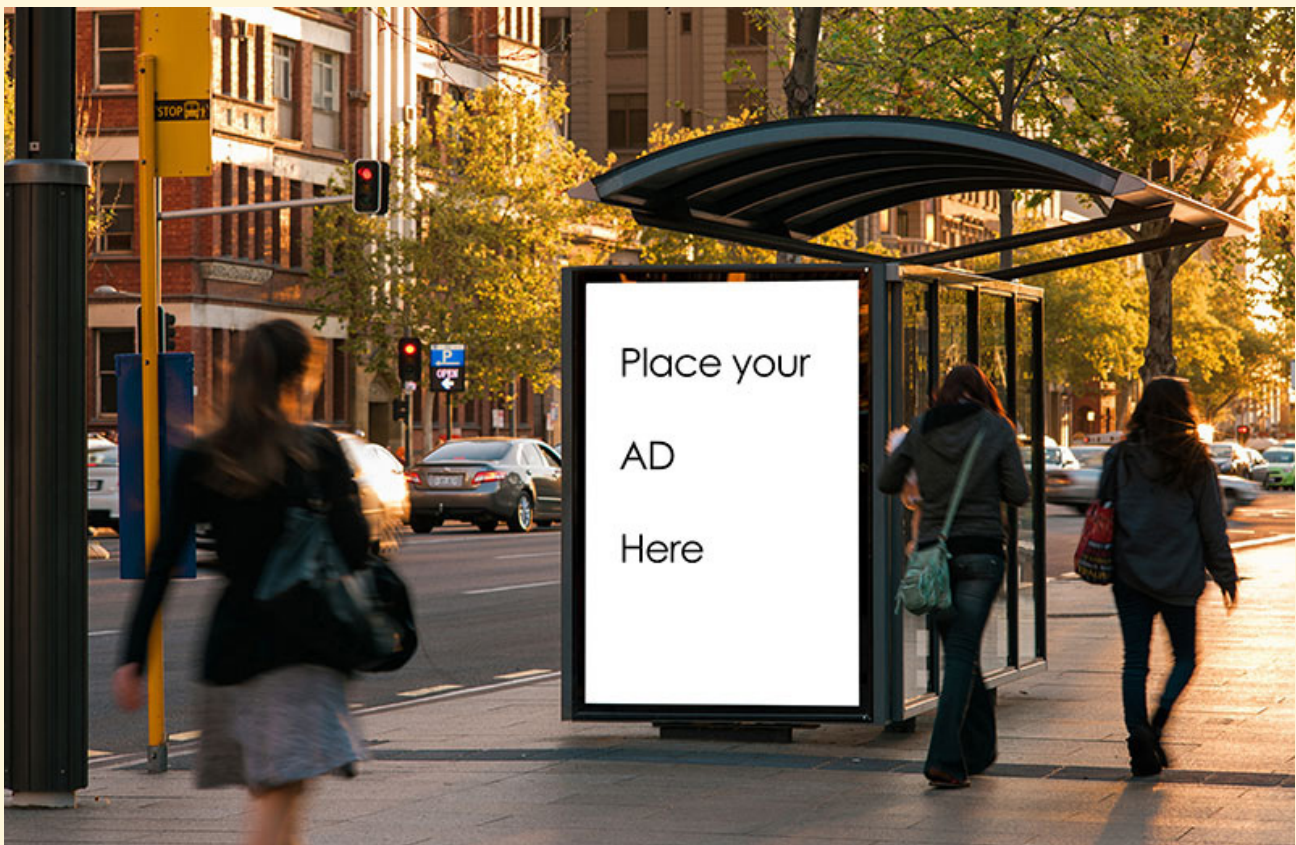
- Businesses sometimes focus more on international customers and neglect the potential of local customers. Remember don't assume local/regional customers don't seek luxury/premium experiences or want what you have to offer!

The power of reviews and word-of-mouth

- Bad reviews or a lack of online presence can damage credibility and your brand.
- Don't neglect your online reputation management and always respond to reviews professionally.

Waste Money

- Avoid running broad, expensive campaigns without a clear objective.
- Don't focus on platforms, marketing activities or audiences who have minimal interest in what you are 'promoting/selling'.



Marketing promises

Whether you are fine tuning your existing marketing strategy or redefining it completely, always ensure your messages and campaigns deliver what you promise and measure your outcomes to understand your level of success.

- A great guest experience leads to organic marketing through word-of-mouth
- Train staff to provide exceptional service that encourages repeat visits
- Misleading ads damage brand trust
- Brief your teams to ensure they understand your marketing activities, your objectives and ensure they 'live your brand'

Marketing data

In business knowing what works and how much it costs is second-nature, and it's the same for marketing activities.

- Use analytics tools to measure the effectiveness of campaigns. With Google Analytics, social media platforms, CRM and Direct Marketing tools at your disposal even small operators can access 'free' analytics to determine ROI
- Remember to adjust activities and messages to keep your strategy fluid based on actual performance rather than assumptions
- And don't continue ineffective campaigns or activities just because you've done them before.

Smarter Marketing, Not Less Marketing

Marketing is not an expense to be eliminated during tough or challenging economic times, it is an investment in a business's long-term sustainability. The key is always about spending smarter, not necessarily spending more.

By focusing on cost-effective digital marketing, personalisation, loyalty programs, PR and community engagement, hospitality businesses can navigate economic slumps while maintaining brand awareness and customer loyalty.

The businesses that survive and thrive during challenging times are those that remain visible, relevant, and adaptive. Something the hospitality industry and its professionals know a great deal about!

So keep it relevant, timely, consistent, deliver against your promises, measure it and re-align your strategy as necessary.

In hospitality, like any industry sector, businesses that stop marketing effectively are often the ones that customers stop remembering. So make what you do count.

About the author

Kim Bailey MIH has been the Head of Marketing and PR at the Institute of Hospitality since 2021.

She has a 30-year career spanning various sectors including in-house roles within utilities, security, medical, and aviation and held senior management and executive roles as Marketing Director of Independent Fulham & Chelsea College, Head of Marketing at The Corps and Head of Marketing & External Events for Barclays Business Banking.

She has lived in the Middle East and has extensive experience in brand management, strategic and operational marketing, digital marketing, PR and communications.

Before joining the Institute, she was a Marketing Consultant for six years, supporting UK-based companies with global reach.

Kim is a graduate of Wolverhampton Business School and holds a Diploma from the British Society of Industrial Editors.



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