



Email Marketing Guide for Hoteliers



INCLUDING DATABASE BUILDING STRATEGIES

BY JANINE YU

“The hospitality industry is a very competitive market,” says Courtney Witherspoon, a Senior Solution Strategist at NAVIS.

“There are so many options for guests to book—think about OTAs, travel agencies, property management companies, hotels, etc. Most properties have very limited marketing budgets, so it’s crucial for them to have effective marketing strategies,” Witherspoon adds.

ChiefMartec.com [identifies 8,000 marketing technology solutions](#). It’s an overwhelming array of options, some driven entirely by trends. One can easily get swept up in the noise, but one thing remains constant: email remains the most powerful channel available to the modern marketer. Especially when it comes to delivering highly personalized and relevant messages, emails are pure gold.

“The ultimate goal is to get direct bookings,” Witherspoon says. It’s the number one way to drive revenue – think about how much a property can save by not paying up to 30% in commission to OTAs. The most efficient way to build that marketing strategy is to have automated and strategic emails to targeted guests. But first, you would have to build that email database, then work to maintain it. Here’s how.

To learn more about Direct Booking Strategies, read [NAVIS’s Essential Guide to Direct Bookings](#).



Database Building Strategies

Have Email Sign-Ups Everywhere

NUMBER 1

The rule of thumb here is to be ubiquitous – add sign-up buttons and opt-in forms wherever you can. Sharon Lee Thony, a digital marketing expert, says, “it’s important to build email capture into the guest experience, without making it feel or seem disruptive.” Create experiences so that guests feel good about providing their contact details to you, and most importantly, ensure that they know what they are signing up for.

Some ways to collect emails include:

- ▶ **ON YOUR WEBSITE** – in the header or footer so that it’s on every page.
- ▶ **FOR ONLINE RESERVATIONS** – when guests are booking a stay include a checkbox to opt-in to your marketing messages.
- ▶ **UPON WELCOME AND ARRIVAL ON-PROPERTY** – as guests sign a registration card to check-in.
- ▶ **ADD A SIGN-UP BUTTON TO YOUR SOCIAL CHANNELS**
 - ▶ Hosting an event at your property? Collect email addresses when people sign up.
 - ▶ Add a link to your employee signatures. Hyperlinked email signatures can lead people to a landing page where they can sign up for your mailing list.

NUMBER 2

Ask For It

Like most things in life, you need to ask for what you want. Asking for an email address is so commonplace as a business practice that most people won't be turned off by a simple ask. What you want to maximize is the number of opportunities your team has to collect this information.

The first touch-point should be the first attempt. When a guest calls to make a booking, make sure your reservations team asks for an email address. Subsequent calls and pre-arrival can also be an appropriate time to ask, but make sure the email address hasn't already been provided, as that could potentially be annoying to the guest and show a lack of organization. The same is true at check-in and when the guest is already on property. However, for guests that didn't book direct, Witherspoon says you can incentivize your front desk staff to collect

their email address, with the intention of remarketing to guests directly.

Email capture is often a prerequisite when guests sign on to property wifi. Witherspoon says that there are apps that capture where on property a guest logged on to the wifi, in order to gain more insight, such as whether they visited the spa or the golf course. Thony adds, "this will expand your list to include patrons of your F&B outlets or folks who like to linger in your lobby."

Once you have a guest's email address, there are opportunities to tap into their personal network to collect more email addresses from their friends and family. Include incentives for them to share and forward your emails in exchange for referrals. One way is to promote email-only specials – offers not provided through the hotel website, phone reservations, or general advertising.



NUMBER 3

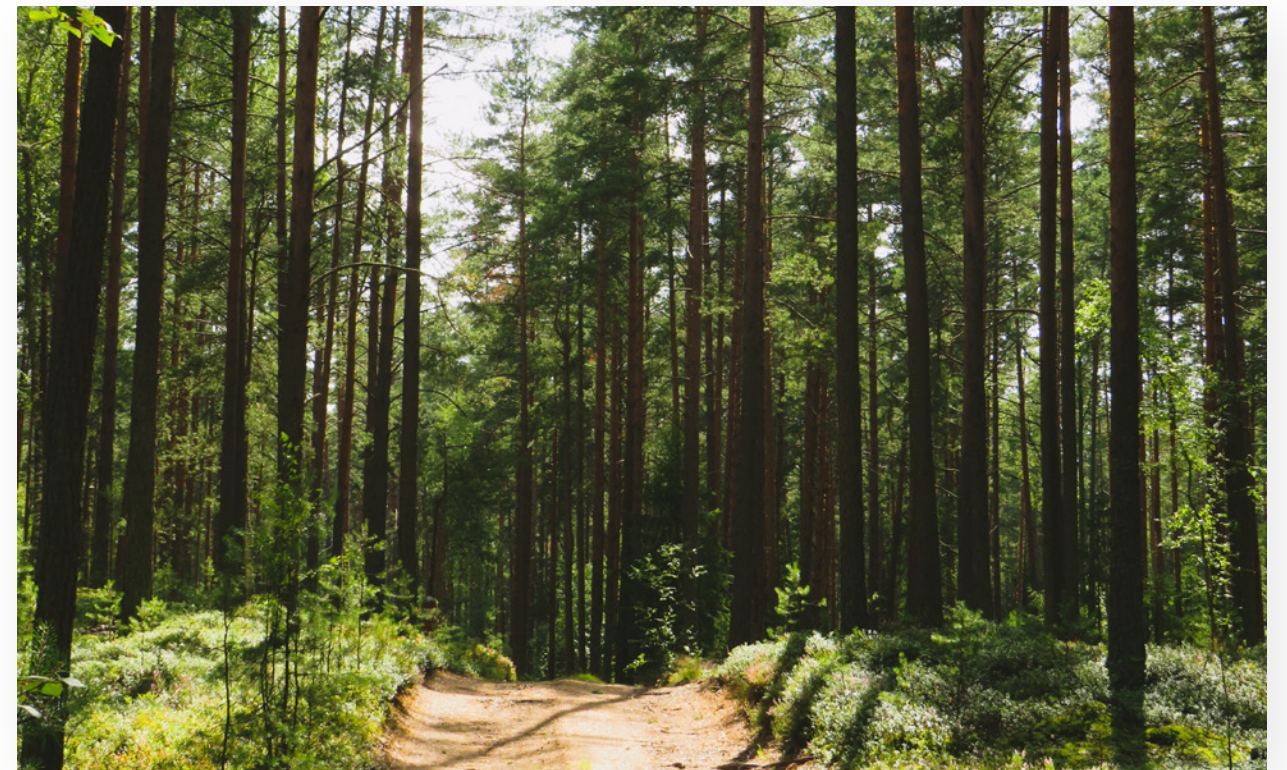
Make Sure You're Mobile-Friendly

These days it's a no-brainer to ensure that anything online needs to be mobile-friendly. Make it convenient for customers to join your email list by giving them the option to sign-up using a mobile device. With 68% of email campaigns being opened on a mobile device, email with mobile-friendly design is a must-have.

Having responsive email design is particularly important. Working with a template that allows you to drag and drop content makes it possible for marketing emails to display perfectly on any OS. After all, your marketing email is only as good as how compatible it is with a mobile OS – if it shows up garbled or distorted, it can't be used.

When designing the email, keep your copy concise, be thoughtful about whether it makes sense to use images, and make sure your Call to Action is front and center and easily clickable.

If it makes sense for your property, offering a mobile app can be very good investment. As [Travelport Digital's research](#) has shown, there is a growing number of travelers turning to the app experience over mobile-web for every travel activity.

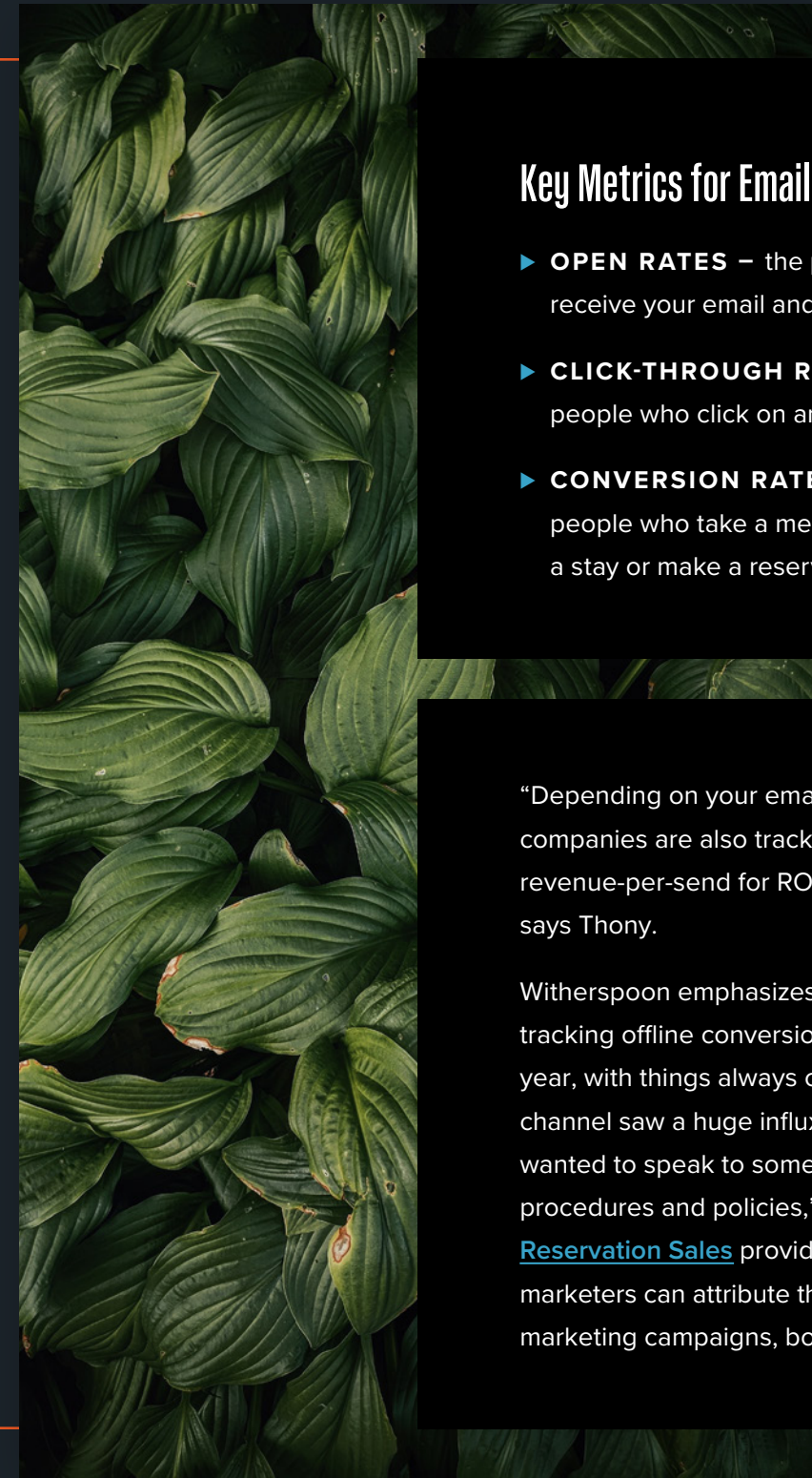


Capture It During Purchase Intent

When a guest visits your booking engine, they are often required to input their email address. Have the right tools to capture that email address and use it wisely. If they book, you'll want to re-market to that guest later on. If they leave your website without booking, you can still capture their emails and target them later with tools like NAVIS's [Shopping Cart Abandonment](#).

"You need to have strategies in place for unconverted inquiries," says Witherspoon. "How do we capture their info to nurture them down the booking path? You can re-target prospects for second- or third-chance booking opportunities."

Witherspoon points out that having the right tools in place was particularly important at the height of the pandemic when there was so much hesitancy around booking travel. As properties dealt with the quandary of dealing with numerous inquiries while operating on a lean staff, the ones that had email automation set-up could do more with less. "You could send timely, triggered email communication to help stay engaged with guests," says Witherspoon, without overstretching your team's bandwidth.



Key Metrics for Email Marketing Campaigns:

- ▶ **OPEN RATES** – the percentage of people who receive your email and open them.
- ▶ **CLICK-THROUGH RATES** – the percentage of people who click on anything within the email .
- ▶ **CONVERSION RATES** – the percentage of people who take a meaningful action, like book a stay or make a reservation .

"Depending on your email platform, most companies are also tracking transactions and revenue-per-send for ROI benchmarking as well," says Thony.

Witherspoon emphasizes the importance of also tracking offline conversions. "Especially this past year, with things always changing, NAVIS's voice channel saw a huge influx in demand. People wanted to speak to someone and hear about procedures and policies," she said. [NAVIS's Reservation Sales](#) provides offline tracking, so marketers can attribute the full value to their email marketing campaigns, both online and offline.

NUMBER 5

Create Content-Specific Calls To Action

“Remember that not all guests are created equal,” says Witherspoon, adding, “It’s crucial to have an understanding of what’s important to one segment versus another.”

Consider unique Calls To Action for different sections of your website. If a guest is on your spa page, include a Call to Action such as “Sign-up today for exclusive spa offers.” Email addresses collected this way can then be segmented into a list for spa lovers. “The more you communicate content that matters to them, the more engaged they are with your brand,” says Witherspoon.

Include a Call to Action on every page of your website, especially if you can glean further insight into a guest based on what page they signed up on. That includes your “About Us” page.



NUMBER 6

Create More Landing Pages

Create individual and personalized landing pages for your email campaigns. Every person who visits your site needs something different, so the more segmented landing pages you can create to answer each person’s individual concerns, the more sign-ups you’ll gain.

One example is a page for the LGBTQ+ market. Besides showing that your property is LGBTQ+-friendly, it takes your commitment to being an ally a step further by having a dedicated page with relevant content for this audience.

► Read [A Primer on Marketing to the LGBTQ+ Community](#)



NUMBER 7

Consider Lead-Generation Content

Get creative! What are fun and relevant content pieces that would inspire email sign-ups? Consider quizzes such as “What Type of Traveler Are You?” or send a curated list of activities in your area.

Thony recommends thinking beyond just offers and promotions: “Use email as a way for folks to get to know your hotel and your staff better and bring the destination directly to them through updates on hyper-local happenings, like an “Ask Me Anything” with their favorite concierge or perhaps in today’s post-COVID landscape, news of re-openings and things to do safely.”

NUMBER 8

Keep Their Attention

Getting an email sign-up is only the beginning – you have to work to maintain your email list. Keep recipients interested and engaged by keeping the content relevant. Do this by segmenting according to personas – don't send spa content to people who only want golf content or room deals. Learn how [NAVIS Marketing Suite](#) segments email databases.

Deliver inspirational content. “A gorgeous image of your welcome amenity can reinvigorate memories of a past stay or inspire a potential guest to book their first visit,” says Thony. “By creating and sending regular emails highlighting the things that make your hotel different, unique or special, you are able to deliver exclusive experiences right into their inboxes.”

Beyond just producing beautiful and enticing images and text, consider how to get guests to create and promote their own content. [Flip.to](#), a NAVIS partner, provides a social platform for guests to share and promote their hotel experience with their personal networks.

Never lose sight that it's a privilege to have someone's contact information and to keep communicating with them. Remind them that you realize this by offering email-only exclusive offers, and reward them for being part of your list. Send “thank you” emails and wish them a “happy birthday” or “happy anniversary,” if you have that data.

But don't inundate them with communications – respect their inbox and allow recipients to choose their email frequency, whether it's once a week or once a month. However often they choose to hear from you, monitor the performance of your email marketing campaign. Track engagement and revenue metrics, top-performing channels, and segment analysis.

“Integrating your email marketing platform with your CRM system and your website is key to being able to segment your database, as this will give you a holistic view of how someone interacts with your business.”

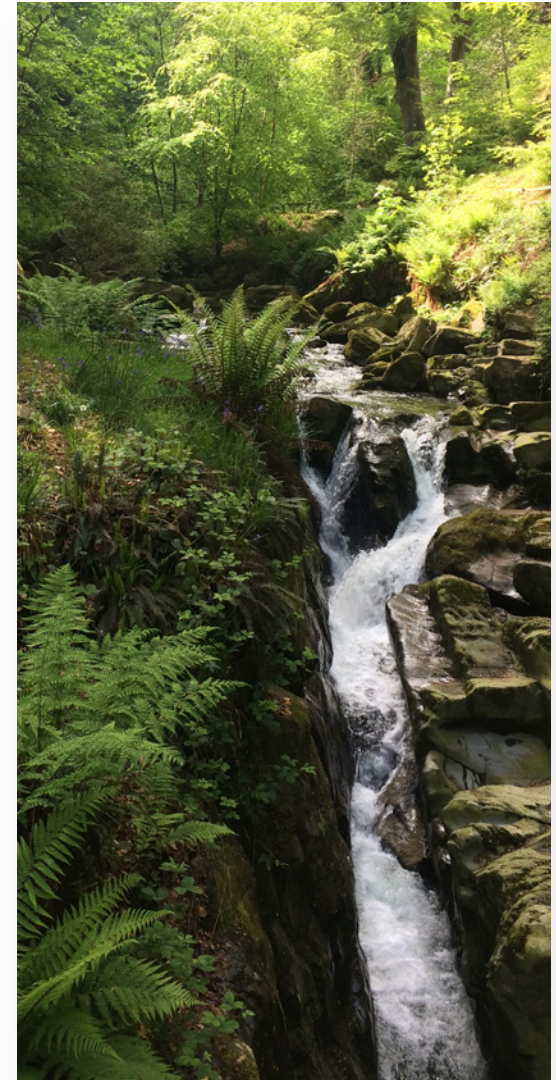
SHARON LEE THONY, FOUNDER, SLT CONSULTING

Key to Segmentation:

Basic segmentation might be to group audiences based on how they've interacted with your hotel (past, potential, or lapsed guests).

More sophisticated segmentation might involve their transactions and preferences - i.e. average revenue per stay, preferred room type or preferred package, or traveler type - whereas behavioral segmentation may involve interactions with the content within your emails or website to gauge passion points and interests - i.e. a guest may spend the most time viewing and clicking on scuba diving content and therefore would respond well to packages related to diving experiences.

Finally, the same way that you aim to serve their preferences on-property, organize your emails so that you match guest preferences with email cadence (how frequently they are interacting) and content.



Give Them a Reason to Stay

You're never going to keep every person on your mailing list, and that's OK. However, don't give up too quickly. Maybe their issue has to do with the frequency of the emails they receive, rather than a lack of interest in the content. Before they opt-out, give them options to adjust their subscription preferences to keep them engaged based on how often they want to hear from you. It's a short and easy step that doesn't cost anything, and you have everything to gain with the chance to continue nurturing a future or repeat customer.

Contributors



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Senior Solutions Strategist at NAVIS

Courtney Witherspoon has been involved in the hospitality industry for over 14 years, with a focus on reservations sales, management, marketing, and training. Since joining the company in 2010, Courtney has been very involved in building out the education department at NAVIS.

With her extensive knowledge and experience, Courtney serves as the primary technical and product expert for the territory sales force. She helps clients

understand complex business problems and requirements and articulates those into solutions by leveraging the NAVIS software solutions.

SHARON LEE THONY
Founder & CEO, SLT Consulting

Sharon Lee Thony is a brand and marketing executive, with nearly two decades of experience creating award-winning marketing campaigns for travel, beauty, and luxury lifestyle brands. She is the founder and CEO of [SLT Consulting](#), a boutique digital marketing collective that partners with savvy businesses looking to scale their efforts in various integrated marketing channels for growth: social media, search marketing, website optimization, email marketing, digital performance, and brand strategy. Sharon's hospitality marketing experience includes both corporate and on-property Director of Marketing roles at COMO Hotels & Resorts, Triumph Hotels and Le Soleil D'Or (a Kimpton Property).

In her spare time, Sharon is co-host of Top 50 Podcast [Modern Minorities](#) and a Distinguished Faculty member at General Assembly, having led the creation of their Digital Marketing course curriculum and has taught over 100+ classes and workshops in digital marketing. She has earned a BA from New York University and an MBA from The Wharton School.





Chart Your Course.

For hospitality professionals, getting and keeping profitable guests is tougher than ever. NAVIS has created the only complete Direct Booking Platform that helps Reservations, Revenue Management, and Marketing operate as one team and maximize direct booking revenue.

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