

Your 2020 Digital Marketing Guide

VACATION RENTAL MARKETING SECRETS

- How to Market Your Rentals Like a Pro



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Part I

THE VACATION RENTAL INBOUND MARKETING FUNNEL

As a vacation rental owner or marketer, you want to ensure you are creating content and marketing with a purpose. The best way to do this is to understand your inbound marketing funnel. If you haven't heard of an inbound marketing funnel, you can see an easy breakdown of how it works in the graphic below.



The inbound marketing funnel is a strategic tool used to help you visualize your target customer at each phase of their buyer's journey. It helps you implement a targeted solution to meet them at each step, therefore increasing your chances of converting them from leads into paid customers! Let's go through the stages of the buyer's journey and how you can use strategic inbound marketing tactics to move them through the funnel.



The Awareness Stage

The awareness stage is located at the top of the funnel and is the broadest part. It's designed to help introduce your company to new and fresh audiences, who are your potential customers.

Top-of-the-funnel content is important in expanding brand awareness with your potential customers. Later in the SEO section, we will break down keyword lists that will be helpful for you as a vacation rental company focusing on driving traffic and new bookings online.

Your awareness stage content should be information leveraging your vacation rental company as THE source of information for your area. By creating this high value "locals only" content in your vacation hotspot, you will establish brand authority with your customer base.

Who is an example of a top-of-the-funnel persona?

Mary is 45 and loves going on vacation with her family to a new destination every year. She has never been to *your location*. She browses Facebook, as she does regularly, and sees an ad from *your company* showing a beautiful shot of your location. She pauses and takes note of the gorgeous locale and keeps scrolling.

Marketing tactics during this stage

- Showcase beautiful photography of your location
- Plant the idea of a dream vacation
- Introduce your location as a perfect destination



The Consideration Stage

The consideration stage is in the middle of the inbound marketing funnel and is noticeably smaller than the awareness stage. That's because in this section, your leads are more qualified. Leads in the consideration stage have taken some action that lets marketers know they're thinking of booking your property.

It's important that the tactics you implement here answer brand-specific questions regarding your properties and services. The goal in this stage is to ease your customers' worries and objections so you can move them along to the final stage of the funnel.

Think of common concerns customers have before booking and create communications to address those issues. For example, imagine your property is located in an area prone to hurricanes. A common customer concern may be increased costs to cover travel insurance in case of inclement weather. This gives you an opportunity to assure them that your travel insurance partner offers affordable premiums to travelers who book your properties.

Who is an example of a middle-of-the-funnel persona?

After seeing a few ads and photographs of your location, Mary decides she wants her next family vacation to be there. She has researched the sights and things to do on Google and Pinterest. Now she's looking for a place to stay. She remembers your name from the Facebook ad and has visited your website while looking at properties on Airbnb, Vrbo, and other vacation rental companies. She is evaluating the pros and cons of each option and has requested a quote from your company and a few others.

Marketing tactics during this stage

- Showcase beautiful photography of your properties
- Share customer reviews and testimonials
- Highlight your company's differentiators compared to both national and local competitors
- Assuage any doubts in your messaging



The Decision Stage

In the decision stage, located at the very bottom of the funnel, your leads are ripe for conversion! By this point, you've attracted and maintained their interest, established your brand, secured their trust in you and overcome objections. All that's left to do is lead them to take your desired action – to book one of your vacation rentals. In order to do this, you need to use highly effective calls to action (CTAs) and ensure your online purchasing experience is fast and seamless. In the CTA section below, we will show you how to use them to get the sale.

Who is an example of a bottom-of-the-funnel persona?

Mary has done all of her research and decided she likes your properties and prices the best. She visits your website to pick out the house she wants to stay in, selects her dates, and presses “book.” Your website flows quickly and smoothly, and she enters her payment information and passes to the last stage of the funnel: the sale.

Marketing tactics during this stage

- **Fast website**
 - **Clean, clear, and simple user experience**
 - **Effective calls to action**
 - **Easily accessible help and support**
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Part II

KEY TACTICS TO USE WHEN MARKETING YOUR VACATION RENTAL

Now that we've reviewed each stage of the marketing funnel, let's dive into the most effective inbound marketing tactics you can use to increase bookings and website traffic.



Blogs

Your blog should be filled with helpful information your target audience wants to know. They are extremely common in the hospitality and tourism industry because, in the age of DIY travel arrangements, more travelers are searching for answers on how to do it on their own. They're looking for ideas on where to go, what to bring, how to build their itineraries, and more. Your blogs provide those answers, making them a fantastic way to:

1. Drive traffic to your website.
2. Establish your brand as a go-to source for information in your market.
3. Rank on Google search for strong keywords at all stages of the marketing funnel.

Blogging Tips

- Choose a focus keyword that your audience is using to search for information
- Create an SEO title that answers a question related to your keyword
- Use your keywords naturally throughout the article
- Break up your content with subheadings so it's easy to read
- Include valuable links so your readers can easily access information you reference, like museums, restaurants, and local attractions.

Sample content topics for your blog:

- **Top of the funnel**
 - 5 Reasons to Plan a Vacation at *Your Location*
 - Top 10 Restaurants in *Your Location*
 - Best Things to Do in *Your Location*
- **Middle of the funnel**
 - 3 Reasons to Book Local
 - Why Our Guests Love *Your Company*
- **Bottom of the funnel**
 - How *Our Company's* Travel Insurance Works
 - COVID-19 Policy Changes to Know Before Your Trip
 - What to Bring on Your Vacation in *Your Location*



Social Media Advertising

Social media is one of the best ways to capture the attention of audiences at all stages of the marketing funnel. Social media platforms provide you with opportunities to not only interact directly with your followers and page visitors through direct exchanges, but ads allow you to reach highly targeted audiences, whether they are new potential customers or returning customers who need a reminder to book again this year.

Why Social Media?

1. Establish brand awareness with new audiences.
2. Strengthen relationships with existing audiences
3. Score solid ROIs on paid social media ads due to social media's enhanced targeting abilities.

Social Media Tips

- ❑ Use emojis in your ad text.
— *We have tested this! Emojis 🏆 win 🏆 every time.*
- ❑ Show home exteriors in your ad images.
— *Users love seeing what your properties look like!*
- ❑ Write appropriate copy for each stage of the marketing funnel.
— *Don't tell new audiences to book now, and don't tell past guests about why your location is a great place for them.*
- ❑ Include text or a design with your photo.
- ❑ Include images of people in your posts.
— *These help drive connection and emotional reactions.*

Campaign ideas for social media ads at all stages of the funnel:

- **Top of the funnel**
 - Goal: Awareness
 - Audience: People who live within driving distance of your location



- Messaging: “Is it vacation time yet? Check out *your location!*”
 - **Middle of the funnel**
 - Goal: Lead generation
 - Audience: People who have visited your website but not booked a reservation
 - Messaging: “Sign up for our newsletter for 10% off a future reservation!”
 - **Bottom of the funnel**
 - Goal: Conversions
 - Audience: People who have rented from you before
 - Messaging: “Book your favorite beach house again this year!”
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Web & Landing Pages

Your website is a great place to showcase who you are, what you do and why you do it. It's important for vacation rental companies to include:

- A gallery of all your properties
- Local information
- Online booking
- Information about your company/staff
- Policy and insurance information

Having a potential customer visit your website is great, but it's hard to know why they're there. That's what makes a landing page different from a typical page on your website, especially your home page.

A landing page is an inbound marketing tactic that is essentially a web page created with one purpose: to generate a lead. Landing pages are usually designed to collaborate with ads you're running. They give the visitor a focused look at what their online behavior says they're interested in.



Landing Page Tips

- ❑ Create a powerful headline that speaks to your target audience's greatest need or pain.
— Example: *"Tired of Quarantining at Home? Paradise is a short drive away!"*
 - ❑ Use high resolution images that are attention-grabbing.
 - ❑ Add forms in a lightbox pop-up format that's layered on top of the page content.
 - ❑ Keep the forms as simple as possible.
 - ❑ Make your visitor an offer they don't want to pass up.
 - ❑ Prominently place CTA buttons that call for clearly defined next steps.
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Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a technique marketing professionals use to increase the number and quality of visitors to your website by improving your website's position on search engine rankings.

There are many ranking factors that go into positive SEO, but one of the most important is keywords used in your content and throughout your website. Keywords are the very terms users input to search for properties like yours in your area. By including them on your pages, posts and ads, you can improve your site ranking on search engine results pages.

Inbound Marketing Funnel Keyword Tips

- ❑ Keywords are not new SEO. However, one thing we have found is that with vacation rental companies, you should be breaking out your keywords into the different sections of your inbound marketing funnel as you have your team, agency, or website development company create content. One of the worst things you can do with SEO and content marketing is to pay for your team or an agency to create content just because they say that it's a good thing to create content. Not only does content marketing take resources from your company, it also represents *lost opportunities* if you are creating that content and



putting it out into the internet world without setting it up to be seen by the right audiences.

- ❑ What this means is that you need to know the following things for each piece of content that is created for your company:
 - ❑ What stage of the inbound marketing funnel is this content for?
 - ❑ What action do we want this visitor to take?
 - *Hint, hint, it should either create more leads or create more bookings for you!*
 - ❑ What are the most important terms that someone might put into the online search engine to make them perfect for this piece of content?

- ❑ With that said, your keywords should fall into one of the three different categories of your inbound marketing funnel. Here are some examples of keywords for the inbound marketing funnel with the Destin, FL Vacation Rental example:
 - ❑ **Awareness Stage Keywords**
 - ❑ Destin, FL vacation rentals
 - ❑ Destin, FL vacation rental properties
 - ❑ Destin, FL places to stay

 - ❑ **Consideration Stage Keywords**
 - ❑ Best vacation rental company in Destin, FL
 - ❑ Cheapest vacation rentals in Destin, FL
 - ❑ Destin, FL vacation rentals for large families

 - ❑ **Decision Stage Keywords**
 - ❑ Book Destin, FL vacation rentals online
 - ❑ Book a beach house in Destin, FL
 - ❑ How to book a vacation rental Destin, FL



- ❑ Make sure your content matches keyword intent of users!
— *Hint: a quick, easy, and free way to do this is by simply Googling your keyword. Evaluate the types of results that pop up. Are they informational, commercial, transactional, or navigational?*

 - ❑ Get a technical audit and clean up any and all technical errors that could be generating negative SEO signals such as slow website speed, missing metadata, unoptimized images, and more.

 - ❑ Understand which amenities and features are important to your guests and create specialized landing pages for these features. (*ex: vacation rental with private pool*)
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Google Ads

Google Ads is a pay-per-click online advertisement that helps to drive qualified traffic to your website. It works by displaying your ad prominently on the search engine results page when a user searches for your keyword or on third-party Google partner websites. These ads can be highly visible and customizable to your budget and marketing goals.

Google Ads for all stages of the marketing funnel:

- **Top of the funnel:**
 - Display campaign targeting people who live within driving distance of your location who enjoy domestic travel
- **Middle of the funnel:**
 - Search campaign bidding on keywords such as “Gatlinburg vacation rentals”
- **Bottom of the funnel:**
 - Search campaign bidding on keywords such as “*your company name* vacation rentals”



Google Ads Tips

- ❑ Bid on your brand name to combat competitors bidding on your keywords.
 - *This ensures that YOU show up when someone searches for your brand name, NOT a competitor.*
 - ❑ Maintain a strict negative keywords list to avoid wasting ad spend on irrelevant locations.
 - ❑ Drive traffic to your site with your target audience by creating low-cost, targeted display campaigns.
 - ❑ Add observation audiences to your search ads and use the data you collect to make bid adjustments.
 - ❑ Make bid adjustments on your ad schedule based on your conversion rates throughout the day.
 - ❑ Utilize ad extensions.
 - ❑ A/B test ad text.
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Calls to Action (CTAs)

Calls to action are straightforward directives that tell your lead what you want them to do. It may seem pushy, but prompting your target audience to “click,” “call,” or “book” works! It’s not too direct when you’re offering them the opportunity they’re looking for – it’s helpful. That’s all a part of moving a lead down to funnel to the decision stage. You don’t want them to only browse your property gallery or blog, you want to convert them into paying customers.

CTA Tips

- ❑ Use direct action verbs
 - *“Book Now”*
- ❑ Use words that excite or inspire your visitor to action
 - *“Book Now for 1 FREE Night!”*
- ❑ Create a sense of urgency
 - *“Reservations are Filling Fast! Book Your Rental”*



- ❑ Play to your audience's needs/desires

— *“Your Paradise Awaits”*

Remarketing

Sometimes, a potential customer visits your website and looks around but leaves before completing the action you desire. Maybe they looked at a particular property but suddenly closed the page. But you want them back on your website!

That's where remarketing or retargeting comes into play. That site visit and the properties they viewed is marked in their web browser and used to help you put those properties back in front of them for a second (or third) chance to act on it.

Remarketing is everything in vacation rentals! There are multiple touchpoints towards booking a property, and remarketing helps you stay top of mind. It's rare that one visit to your website results in a booking immediately.

Remarketing Tips

- ❑ Run remarketing campaigns on all platforms.
 - ❑ Set up dynamic remarketing ads so you can show users the exact properties they were previously interested in.
 - ❑ Target bottom-of-the-funnel would-be converters with abandoned cart remarketing ads, reminding them to come back and book.
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Miscellaneous

Design Tips for Creating Ads & Posts

- Use professional photography that is bright, high-resolution, and taken with a wide angle lens gives your properties the attention they deserve.
- Have a logo, brand colors and consistency in your properties' look and feel gives you credibility with renters.

General Tips for Vacation Rental Marketing

- Since vacation rentals are so seasonal, tailor your ad budgets to match.
 - Encourage guests to leave you a review on Google.
 - Optimize your Google My Business page and post regularly
 - *This is a major differentiator for local companies compared to OTAs.*
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Final Notes

Thank you for downloading our guide of vacation rental marketing secrets! We hope we've inspired your next campaigns and content marketing strategies. For help putting the wind back in your marketing sales, contact digital@15000cubits.com for a free consultation. 15000 Cubits specializes in SEO, content creation, Google Ads, social media ads, and design/branding for vacation rental clients. [Learn more about what we do!](#)