



The HMA 2026 Hotel Marketing Awards

Introduction

The HMA 2026 Hotel Marketing Awards will recognise & celebrate marketing best practice in the UK hotel industry, as well as the best marketing talent. The various categories reflect what is current in hotel marketing and include a brand new category: Innovative Use of AI in Marketing. We embrace inclusivity, in that we welcome entries from independent hotels, no matter how small, branded chain hotels and groups, no matter how large, and other kinds of accommodation providers. Plus, you don't need to be a member of the HMA to enter and entry is free, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. An agency may also submit an entry so long as they have secured formal agreement from their client and submitted the client contact details.

We provide support with any queries you may have about submitting an entry.

The awards embrace Marketing in its broadest sense, so we welcome entries that vary from say an internal campaign, to a brand loyalty programme, from an email campaign for your restaurant to a paid-for social media campaign for staycations, from a print-based activity for your spa to a multi-channel campaign for the chain or from a seasonal special event to a year-long PR campaign. We also encourage entries supporting sustainability, including employee engagement and positively engaging with the latest technology.

You can enter a campaign or activity in as many categories as it is relevant to and submit as many entries as you wish.

What is Marketing Best Practice?

There are specific criteria for each award category, but in addition **every entry** will be judged on the following:

- Relevance to target market / audience and the specific market in which you operate.
- Creativity that makes you stand out from your competitors.
- A strategy that has been clearly thought through and developed.
- Objectives that are quantifiable, meaningful and measurable. Think SMART.
- A budget that is cleverly used and generates a good ROI.
- Use of the most relevant Marketing channels.
- Innovative ideas.
- Good ethical practice.
- Authenticity, not gimmicks!

Award Categories

Best Website

Best Partnership Marketing

Social Media Campaign of the Year

Innovative Use of AI in Marketing

HMA Creative Excellence Award

Best Hotel Marketing Team

Rising Star in Hotel Marketing

How to Enter

The procedure for entering is very straightforward.

Read the descriptions below (or on our website) to ascertain which categories you will be entering, paying particular attention to the criteria against which entries will be judged.

Please note that the Entry requirements are the same for all categories except for Best Hotel Marketing Team and the Rising Star in Hotel Marketing, each of which have a specific form.

Click 'Enter Here' on the relevant category page on our website. The forms below are to show you what you will then be required to provide. Complete all sections on the entry form, which include Marketing Objectives (SMART), Target Market / Audience, Summary of Approach taken, Results and a statement as to why the entry is a worthy winner. Please also include links to all creative materials, web pages, social media post etc that support the entry BUT included in one Powerpoint or Canva document i.e. not a list of links! Please also ensure that any files are relevantly named i.e. to make it easy for the judges to know what they are expecting to see!

For Best Hotel Marketing Team you will be required to submit a brief resume of all team members, details of their major hotel marketing achievements in 2025, a supporting statement from a director, links to campaigns, all included in one Powerpoint or Canva document, and a statement as to what makes this team special and worthy of the award.

For Rising Star in Hotel Marketing you will be required to submit a Manager's Nomination, a Candidate Statement, the candidate's CV, details of campaigns they have worked on, including links to relevant materials, and evidence of their ongoing commitment to Marketing.

Entries must be submitted by 5pm Friday 13th March 2026.

All entries will be acknowledged, and the shortlist will be announced early May.

Terms & Conditions

Entrants and their campaigns must be UK-based and activities must have taken place during 2025. These awards are for hotels, but we also welcome entries from conference centres, wedding venues, hotel-based restaurants and spas, restaurants and spas with bedrooms, hostels, serviced apartments, student accommodation, hotel chains, consortia and individual hotels, as well as agencies representing any of these.

The content of entries will be treated in the strictest of confidence, and shared only with judging panels on that basis.

Judging panels will not comprise people who have an interest in any of the entries, nor represent direct competitors.

By entering the awards you give us permission to use any of the submitted creative materials in HOSPA and HMA Social Media activities, once winners have been announced. You also allow us to use entries as the basis for HMA blog articles, once winners have been announced. BUT none of the statistics provided will be used without your express permission.

| Category | Best Website |
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| | <p>The website is still at the heart of most hotel's Marketing and the channel through which most direct bookings are achieved. As such it should stand out from the competition, be memorable, make compelling offers, encourage and facilitate the booking process & provide a seamless customer journey. It should also creatively convey the brand's message, services, and unique selling points.</p> |
| What Judges will be looking for | <p>Entries will be evaluated based on design, user experience, functionality, innovation, and the website's capacity to compellingly represent and endorse the brand. Additionally, emphasis will be placed on crafting an engaging customer journey through strategically placed and persuasive Calls-to-Action (CTAs) that drive user interaction and conversion. Furthermore, the evaluation will consider the website's effectiveness in capturing and leveraging pertinent data to enhance user engagement, facilitate personalisation and optimise the overall experience.</p> |

| Category | Best Partnership Marketing |
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| | <p>Brand collaborations can produce amazing benefits to both parties, many continuing long after the partnership activity ends. Successful partnerships share similar brand values, use a creative approach unique to the collaboration and achieve an amplified level of reach to consumers. Often unique propositions are developed, which produce not just</p> |

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| | marketing impact, but significant revenue increases & a healthy ROI. The partner may actually be an Influencer, as many of these have become brands in their own right. |
| What Judges will be looking for | This category aims to recognise successful collaborative marketing efforts of brands with shared values, emphasizing creativity, measurable outcomes, and mutual tangible benefits for the partners involved. The uniqueness of the activity & selection of partner will be assessed. |

| Category | Social Media Campaign of the Year |
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| | Social Media channels are an essential component of any business's marketing strategy. Hotels have unique opportunities to create engaging and innovative content showcasing their offerings and producing high levels of engagement and ultimately bookings. Creativity, strategic planning, an assessment of channels (including Blogs and Podcasts) and their various benefits & audiences, innovative messages, and the use of videos and live-streams can produce significant tangible results. |
| What Judges will be looking for | Criteria include innovation, engagement, reach, creativity, impact on brand visibility and audience engagement & interaction. The judges will focus as well on the data used to select and monitor channels. They will expect consistency in brand positioning. |

| Category | Innovative Use of AI in Marketing |
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| | AI has been a hot topic in both hospitality & marketing for several years. Rather than replacing jobs in Marketing, as was feared, it can facilitate data analysis, personalisation, customisation of content in real time and produce creative content, in ways never previously imagined. AI encompasses so many things such as Chatbots, AI Concierge services, content creation, reputation management, predictive customer insights, image optimisation and voice search. |
| What judges will be looking for | The winner in this category will need to have demonstrated how much more successful their marketing is, as a result of the innovative use of AI. This success may emanate from better insights, more relevant & exciting executions, better engagement, greater use of personalised content, more creative content or all of these. |

| Category | HMA Creative Excellence Award |
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| | Creativity is at the heart of any memorable marketing campaigns. A good creative idea ends up having a life of its own and sets a brand or hotel apart from all its competitors. Sometimes it is a slogan, or a cartoon character, or use of a celebrity, or ownership of a certain colour (think Premier Inn) or typeface. On social media it can be a unique style of delivery. Great creativity resonates with audiences way beyond the original target audience and lives on long after the campaign has ended. |
| What Judges will be looking for | Entries will be evaluated on originality, engagement, and the effectiveness in conveying the brand or promotion message creatively. Its impact and memorability will be considered as will the ways in which it supports the brand's values long-term. Judges will be looking for creativity, defined as 'the use of imagination or original idea to create something'. |

| Category | Best Hotel Marketing Team |
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| Relevant Marketing Team | This team will, between them, be responsible for the overall marketing of an individual hotel, a small group or a chain. The team may be as few as 2 people. Marketing should be the main focus of how they spend their time. |
| Relevant Marketing Activities | Highlight outstanding results, creative initiatives, great leadership and effective teamwork in achieving marketing objectives and elevating the hotel's brand presence & business performance. Activities may just focus on those segments, promotions, activities & channels most important to the hotel's success or cover the whole range of Marketing activities and initiatives. |
| What Judges will be looking for | Judging will be based on outstanding results, creativity, teamwork, and the team's overall contribution to successful marketing initiatives. Judges will also look for great leadership and a commitment to on-going learning in Marketing. |

| Category | Rising Star in Hotel Marketing |
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| Relevant Marketing Individual | This individual will have worked in Hotel Marketing in the UK for a minimum of 2 years, and be committed to establishing a career for themselves in this area, whether in an individual hotel, chain or agency and regardless of team size. They will be able to illustrate exceptional creativity, early success in implementing innovative marketing strategies, significant |

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| | contributions to the hotel marketing landscape, an ongoing desire to learn and passion that inspires others. |
| What Judges will be looking for | This category aims to recognise individuals who show exceptional promise and yet have already made a notable impact in the field of hotel marketing, early in their careers. They will be creative and inspirational, able to think outside of the box and be bold in implementing memorable marketing initiatives. The judges will also consider evidence of ongoing learning and their ability to inspire other team members. |