

Content marketing for travel and leisure brands

Five golden rules to turn your
content campaigns into profit

By

flagship
INTELLIGENCE. INSPIRATION. IMPACT. 

It's true what they say, content is king and the possibilities for travel and leisure businesses are endless.

The world's best media is writing about you. Superstar influencers are engaging with your brand. Hashtags are ringing across social. Think you've got the job done? Think again.

Whilst it is an important cog in the marketing wheel, securing earned content is only half the battle. Travel and leisure customers (who now take an average of 3.4 holidays a year¹) look for more than just content from third party reviewers. In fact, 65% of consumers say they are influenced by content published by brands and destinations themselves when making travel plans².

So what is the secret to creating content that both piques interest and closes a deal? Is it even possible?

We have synthesised five key moments – our “golden rules” – in the customer content journey where smart brands have a chance to close the decision making circle.

1. Answer the question

Consumers are complex. Think about your own buying behaviour and what it takes for you to make a purchase, continuously fluctuating between needing practical information and wanting inspirational content. Travel customers are no different.

Take the time to get to know them, research their motivations, think about what they want and how they want to hear from you.

83% of consumers expect businesses to be active on social media
(Source: Vocus)

Without a real understanding of the continual flux in decision-making behaviour, your content won't systematically convert lookers to bookers, no matter how good looking it might be.

Only 50% of marketers drive content that aligns with the customer's journey
(Source: Contently)

Think what the biggest questions are that your prospects might ask you, and make sure you have the answers embedded into your content.

2. Be consistently you

It is important that wherever your customers or prospective customers land in their purchase path, they see the same messages and themes. Tracking the customer journey is harder than ever so it's up to you to make things as simple as possible for your customers - don't make them guess. Ensure that whatever content they are reading, they know it has come from the same brand, with the same ideologies and the same purpose.

With the number of pages that consumers visit before making a purchasing decision increasing year on year, now is the time to concentrate on your messaging and purpose, and ensure all of your content, whether owned or earned, paints a consistent picture of your brand and offering.

Consumers visit 38 sites on average before making a booking
(Source: Expedia Media Solutions)

The trick here is to think integrated at every step. Reflect press coverage themes within your own content so that everything tells the same story in a similar tone of voice. Ensuring internal and

external voices are harmonious will ensure consumers get a well-rounded, robust and trustworthy picture of your brand.

¹ ABTA Holiday Habits Report 2018

² Expedia Media Solutions

3. Become a content mixologist

Data shows that our average attention span is just 12 seconds, an alarming figure for travel and leisure brands looking to influence booking behaviour in a complex and competitive landscape. One way to deal with this is to consider alternative types of content to the traditional written form; after all, variety is the spice of life.

Whilst blog content is key, this longer form content is not the only thing that gets consumers buzzing about your brand. It is vital to produce content that keeps audiences with you because, quite simply, the longer they linger, the more chance you have of converting them to book or buy.

Video is becoming more and more important in showcasing the experiences on offer, so consider producing video content to showcase information in an engaging way. Overhaul your photo library so that your imagery attracts your target market. Create quizzes, games and competitions so that your customers can interact with you in the digital world. It's all about feeding consumers with similar stories in different ways so that you make a bigger impression on their decision making.

66% travellers watch videos when researching online
(Source: Google)

CASE STUDY: Dubai Tourism #BeMyGuest campaign

A tourism campaign by the Dubai Tourist Board featuring Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan contributed to a 6.2% increase of visitors to Dubai from 2016-2017.

The campaign includes film content that features the Bollywood actor taking viewers on a journey through the many experiences in Dubai. With the world-wide star taking centre stage and inviting tourists to experience his Dubai, Dubai Tourism created a welcoming, exciting and engaging campaign that tourists could get involved in.

The partnership involves Shah not only fronting the short films, which have gained millions of views on YouTube, but also promoting Dubai on his Twitter feed to his 36 million followers. And visitors to Dubai have also been encouraged to get in on the action through the ability to receive their own #BeMyGuest itinerary, as well as being invited to enter video and photo competitions that celebrate Dubai's experiences for tourists.



4. Make the most of FOMO

User Generated Content (UGC) was the big buzzword in marketing a few years ago, but that doesn't mean that its influence within peer-to-peer marketing has disappeared.

In fact, 32-39% millennials have admitted that they will not book a hotel or pay to stay without seeing some sort of UGC³. It is this peer-to-peer validation, plus a healthy dose of FOMO (or fear of missing out) that drives consumers to move into decision making mode.

Brands have a real opportunity to expand the reach and influence of UGC by reposting on their own social feeds, channels and platforms, providing the validation many consumers need.

CASE STUDY: Contiki and UGC

Contiki is an excellent example of a brand harnessing the power of UGC for its own marketing ends. Not only does Contiki encourage consumers to engage with the brand on social media through the use of campaign-led hashtags by documenting their experiences on trips, they also feed this content through to their own website. This means customers and prospective customers see real-life, inspirational imagery about their product offering, which helps to showcase the brand in a positive light.



5. Be interesting

If you want customers to keep coming back to you, keeping your content fresh, dynamic and interesting is paramount.

Out of date, boring content is no longer accepted in our 24/7 connected world. Refresh and review your content often to keep up with our 'always on' culture, giving your customers new ways and reasons to engage with you again and again.

A note of caution however, be honest with how much you think your brand can update content. If resources are tight, stick to a few channels and make them really sing, or seek external help to keep things whirring.

Companies that published 16 or more blog posts per month got 4.5x the leads than companies that published 4 or less monthly posts
(Source: Hubspot)

We are now spending 20% of our online time looking at content⁴ in all its many forms, so there is no doubt it is a powerful force. The trick is turning passive viewers into active bookers and that takes a little more thought, a little more planning and an injection of creativity. But for brands who invest the time, the rewards can be real and rapid.

³ http://resources.bazaarvoice.com/rs/bazaarvoice/images/201202_Millennials_whitepaper.pdf

⁴ <https://www.demandmetric.com/content/content-marketing-infographic>

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