

# SUCCESSFUL PROMOTION STRATEGY IN DESTINATION TOURISM MARKETING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA; QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA CASE

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## Abstract

The World Tourism Organization's message in the new awareness campaign is "Tourism enriches individuals, families, communities and all the world". On the other side, Tourism business at all levels is becoming increasingly competitive, due to emergence of new destinations, rapid and affordable modes of transport, new marketing strategies and tools, changing trends etc. Tourism being an extremely competitive industry requires a coordinated management approach, based on a collective vision and strong partnership among stakeholder including governmental bodies and local community. Thus, tourism businesses can succeed with the help of a strong destination marketing organization. In promotion of destinations, the role of social media increases day by day. Today more travelers use online resources to learn about travel destinations, service providers, and pricing options to inform and make their purchases. Effective use of social media is probably the best tool for destinations for raising awareness about the destination. It's cheap and effective. But it requires time, planning, good strategy and innovation. In this paper; Firstly, destination tourism marketing will be mentioned. Secondly, the term and effective use of social media will be emphasized and finally as the case study, social media campaign of Queensland, Australia to market the Great Barrier Reef will be examined in detail. **Keywords:** destination tourism marketing, social media, destination marketing organization, tourism promotion, tourism campaign

## Introduction

World Travel & Tourism Council and International Hotel & Restaurant Association(1999) state that "Travel & Tourism creates jobs and wealth and has tremendous potential to contribute to economically, environmentally and socially sustainable development in both developed countries and emerging nations". Tourism enriches individuals, families, communities and all the world. This is a central, simple but straight-forward message of the new awareness campaign with which the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (2004) wants to raise awareness of the positive impacts tourism can have on life, culture and economy, in short on society at all levels. Due to emergence of new destinations, rapid and affordable modes of transport, new marketing strategies and tools, changing trends etc., tourism business at all levels is becoming increasingly competitive.

Tourism being an extremely competitive industry requires a coordinated management approach, based on a collective vision and strong partnership (Terzibasoglu, 2010). According to Buhalis (2000), "Destinations need to differentiate their products and develop partnerships between the public and private sector locally in order to coordinate delivery. Taking advantage of new technologies and the Internet also enables destinations to enhance their competitiveness by increasing their visibility, reducing costs and enhancing local co-operation. Destination marketing must lead to the optimisation of tourism impacts and the achievement of the strategic objectives for all stakeholders".

Tourism business can succeed with the help of a strong destination marketing organization (DMO). At the core, a shared community vision about the values in a community are at the heart of any shared marketing project (Lucier, 2009). The DMO must direct its marketing efforts – different not only in terms of tourists as final consumers of place, but also in terms of

other stakeholders who evaluate the promotional effort of the marketing organization for their own reasons (Ryan and Gu, 2008).

The process of destination marketing development involves a number of important steps which include the following (TIM, 20011):

- Identifying target markets
- Analyzing motivational factors of target visitor markets
- Developing a marketing plan with promotional goals
- Developing an advertising campaign with a well-focused theme aimed at target markets

Coordinator for Destination Management of UNWTO Terzibasoglu (2004) emphasizes that "The success of the destination (not totally) but largely depends on the performance level of the strategic and operational functions of the DMO and well-managed destination marketing which covers all the activities and processes to bring buyers and sellers together. It focuses on responding to consumer demands and competitive positioning. It is a continuous coordinated set of activities associated with efficient distribution of products to high potential markets. And DMO involves making decisions about the product, branding, the price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution".

In promotion of destinations, the role of social media increases day by day. All countries, particularly developing ones are finding that tourism, already a major source of income, can be greatly enhanced by setting up domestically run websites that enable potential customers to research, reserve, and pay for trips and hotel stays electronically (UNCTAD, 2005).

## What is social media and social networking?

There are different definitions of social media and social networks. For example Weber (2009) defines as "the social web is the online place where people with a common interest can gather to share thoughts, comments, and opinions". And Wikipedia (2011) defines social media as "media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue". According to Grenfield (2011) "Social media is a collective term for a

range of websites that let people contribute to them. YouTube for example, is a social media channel. Blogs are a social media channel". Social media involves a natural, genuine conversation between people about something of mutual interest, a conversation built on the thoughts and experiences of the participants. It is about sharing and arriving at a collective point, often for the purpose of making a better or more-informed choice (Evans, 2008).

On the other side, Social networks are places where people with a common interest or concern come together to meet people with similar interests, express themselves, and vent (Weber, 2009). Facebook and MySpace are two examples of social networks (Grenfield, 2011). The communication in social media is done using "social networking". These sites connect groups of people together. They replicate in an online environment the behaviours that people have in an offline environment (e.g. being part of an association or a special interest group). The online environment is extremely well suited to networking, as it doesn't involve location or time constraints. Anyone can participate from anywhere at anytime. (Tourism Queensland, 2011).

Boyd and Ellison (2007), define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

### Social Media Services and tools

It includes hundreds of thousands social media services and tools ( Lips, 2011; Weber, 2009) such as;

- Blogs - Wordpress, Blogger, Typepad
- Content Sharing - YouTube, Flickr, Photobucket
- Social Networks - MySpace, Facebook, Gather, BlackPlanet, Eons, LinkedIn
- Professional Networks - LinkedIn, ecademy, xing
- Microblogging & Presence - Plazes, Twitter, Jaiku
- Democratic Content - Digg
- Preference Sharing - Last FM, Wakoopa
- Branded web destinations - Amazon, Netfl ix, eBay
- Enterprise sites - IBM, Best Buy, Cisco, Oracle

### Why Social Media Marketing

In the extremely competitive world of today, social media marketing is the new 'in' thing and definitely here to stay. In a nutshell, it means using social media such as blogs, community sites, video sharing sites etc. to market a product or a business ( Hailey, 2011)

Social media has many advantages and has changed the methods of doing business. For example (Weber, 2009; Marvin, 2010; Hailey, 2011):

- It is a low cost investment offering many links to your site for free. If done by yourself, costs are limited to only time and perhaps the expenses involved in hiring a freelance programmer/designer.
- Social media is a new world of unpaid media created by individuals or enterprises on the web but marketing the

same thing through conventional methods would cost you thousands of dollars.

- Once successfully mastered, social communities can be a great source of web traffic on top of any traffic you are already receiving from search engines. These sites get a lot of traffic and they in turn generate traffic to your site.
- It acts like a word-of-mouth concept that people tend to believe when compared to commercial advertising. These new strategies, which have the capacity to change public opinion every hour — if not every minute.
- There is no time or place limit. It can be reached to our site from all around the world and twenty four hours.

### Social Media Comes With Risks and Opportunities

Businesses using social media face inherently greater risks than traditional communications' channels, particularly to their reputation and financial success (McGonegle, 2011). Scott (2011) says "Companies that don't understand the risks of social media are putting themselves at reputational and regulatory risk, there are many hidden risks and implications for human resources, customer service, etc.". Many organizations think the biggest risk of social media is that people will use it to say negative things about them. That's certainly worth addressing, but the biggest risk is actually the opposite: that your organization will create a social media presence, and nobody will participate (socialsignal, 2011).

Chong (2010) emphasizes that "Word of mouth is a powerful thing, and it has been made even more powerful by the internet and social media". Costumers, competitors, opposites may write unfair writings or add pictures etc.. One another risk, businesses face when it comes to social media is the sharing of information. Either employees can share opinions in ways that reflect badly on the company or they can release confidential information or intellectual property. Confidential information being leaked, data breaches, privacy violations, offensive tweets – all of these possibilities make organizations hesitant to adopt social media (McGonegle, 2011). Jacka (2011) participates to this view and adds, "Social media is often delegated to junior staff members in an organization because there is the perception they grasp its value. In actuality, while they may understand how to deploy the tactics, they lack business acumen and are not privy to the highest levels of knowledge or strategy in their organization necessary to center social media efforts around business objectives".

Just because social media comes with risks does not mean companies should avoid it. All they need to do is prepare for social media disasters and unpleasant situations in general. Handle it well and reap the vast benefits of social media (Chong, 2010). However, not engaging in social media can become a risk in itself. Most every company and brand are being discussed through online social channels. It is important that the company provides its voice in these discussions and conversations. If the company does not provide a voice, others will regardless. Social media is developing into a standard practice for communications and rather than avoiding it, businesses should actively take steps to engage these online audiences ( McGonegle, 2011).

To minimize risks and protect/improve reputation companies, destinations must implement following rules on the web (Moyer, 2009; McGonegle, 2011)

- Actively engage on social network venues to understand how reputation can be impacted by the interactions
- Gather information on the social media activities your company is considering. Then assess the areas of vulnerability, create counteraction plans and communicate them to employees.
- Dedicate at least one employee to the monitoring of your online reputation
- Build a process to identify new reputation risk elements as social media evolves
- Communicate ethically and transparently

### **Social Media Strategy as a Marketing Tool**

Today, commercial or non-commercial all establishments have to use social media and have social media strategy to continue their activities more fruitful. Social media strategy is the process of devising and implementing plans and tactics to optimally harness the power of social media for promotional and marketing purposes. In other words, it is the plan of action for using social media optimization effectively for commercial marketing (Arora, 2009). With another expression; Social media marketing is the process of promoting your site or business through social media channels and it is a powerful strategy that will get you links, attention and massive amounts of traffic (Marvin, 2010). As Bourque (2009) underlines "Social media is reshaping the world we live in. Greater connectivity with friends and family gives "word of mouth" new meaning, advice on what products to buy and what brands to avoid is only a mouse click away. Social media is reaching deep into our everyday lives, including affecting things like how we travel".

To make a lasting impact on the user and build a successful business any entrepreneur should be adept in social media marketing. There are a number of factors to keep in mind while promoting your business online so as to maximize its potential and achieve realistic real time sales (Hailey, 2011). Social networking, and social media specifically, have been painted as the new marketing landscape for businesses to engage with their communities of customers wherever they congregate (Solis, 2011). As many writers (such as Arora, 2009; Qualman, 2009; Brown, 2010) agree, there are myriad social media, social networking, social computing and social business sites on the web, like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Wikitravel, Concierge, LinkedIn, and hundreds of them, encouraging conversations with millions of people who use various mechanisms to connect, communicate and collaborate through a variety of channels. This is a massive socio-economic shift that is fundamentally changing the way consumers and companies communicate and interact with each other. Companies and customers are adopting newer and more sophisticated ways of communication. Traditional marketing campaigns now have to have a digital component to ensure that they are reaching the correct segment of the audience, and there are lots of case studies about success and positive ROI from web campaigns.

For a successful **Social Media Strategy** Peter Scott and Mike Jacka (2011) provide a solid overview and the tools you need to:

- Evaluate the opportunities and risks of social media
- Develop a strategic approach that best addresses these issues
- Use social media as a tool—and monitor its use
- Comply with Federal Trade Commission guidelines
- Gain significant strategic value from social media
- Ensure social media aligns with your business's strategies, goals, and objectives
- Implement tracking with the right metrics

### **An Extraordinary Promotion Strategy Through Social Media; Queensland, Australia Case**

It is extraordinarily important to have an effective and assertive social media marketing campaign in which your branding is solid and your business offerings are highlighted and appear compelling and attractive. Monitoring the results of your social media marketing campaign is equally important (Cohn, 2010). A very genuine and fantastic campaign was launched by Digital Marketing, Tourism Queensland, Australia to promote and to market the Great Barrier Reef internationally: **The Best Job in the World**. PhoCusWright Inc. (2011) admits that "The best job in the world,' represents one of the most creative, recent destination marketing campaigns using the social Web".

Vision of Tourism Queensland is to be the global leader in Destination Management and champion of world's best practice in sustainable tourism. And Mission is to enhance the development and marketing of Queensland tourism destinations in partnership with Industry, Government and the Community (linkedin.com, 2011).

In January 2009, Tourism Queensland embarked on a global search to find an Island Caretaker to explore the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland Australia and report back to the world about their experiences. While on the job, the successful applicant was also expected to explore the islands and write a weekly blog reporting on his adventures. Compensation included round trip travel from anywhere in the world, room and board, all expenses while in Queensland, and a salary of AUD \$8,800 per month. Total package, \$150,000 AUD (islandreefjob.com, 2011). Chris Chambers, Director of Digital Marketing for Queensland, Australia, presented his campaign to market the Great Barrier Reef internationally: Tourism Queensland's The Best Job In The World relied heavily on social media, it was an integrated marketing campaign that could not have succeeded without a website, the heavy use of advertising, public relations and a healthy dose of crisis management. Following tools and tactics were used (travelindustrywire.com, 2010; createwanderlust.com, 2011)

**Paid Advertising;** While the core of The Best Job In The World campaign was social media-based, it launched as a world-wide drive to web effort using paid classified advertising, online recruitment ads, banner advertising and video.

**Website;** The want ads pointed interested parties to a website selling the Great Barrier Reef in terms of the benefits of the job - live in one of the most beautiful, unspoiled places in the world and definitely on your top ten list of places to vacation. Anyone interested in applying was encouraged to submit a 60 second video explaining why they should get the job.

**Public Relations;** An aggressive pr push was also mounted. Coverage was widespread, with placements on Oprah, ESPN Sports, in Time magazine, on TechCrunch and SpringWise, and in local news programming around the world. The BBC produced a reality tv-style documentary, following four British applicants as they competed for the job.

**Social Media;** YouTube was used both for distributing recruitment videos and as the video submission engine on the campaign website, and a branded YouTube channel was created to expose the applicant videos to a much larger audience. This was a particularly effective play as YouTube is the largest social media network in the world. Branded Facebook and Twitter pages were also created to open the campaign up to an even wider social media audience, as well as photos on Flickr.

Here's what Queensland had achieved as of October 31, 2009 (travelindustrywire.com, 2010; createwanderlust.com, 2011; islandreefjob.com, 2011)

#### Marketing measures

- 8.4 million site visitors, from every country and visitors to their destination (Australia tourism down, but Queensland tourism up 20%).
- 8 minute average time on site

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- 34,680 job applications from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe and everywhere in between uploaded a 60-second video showing their creativity and skills. From celebrities, writers, tour guides, environmentalists, students, to mums, dads and retirees everyone was vying for the Best Job in the World.

- \$390 Million AUD of publicity globally.

#### Business measures

- First quarter of current fiscal year
- Australia tourism down, but Queensland tourism up 20%
- 50% of Australia trips now include a Queensland component

Tourism Queensland Chief Executive Officer Anthony Hayes (2009) says “ the Best Job in the World campaign had received a phenomenal response and achieved its aim of drawing the world's attention towards Queensland's Islands of the Great Barrier Reef. The campaign has opened Queensland's doors to the world”.

#### Conclusion

The importance of social media increases day by day. It has many advantages compared to traditional media. Like other establishments, destinations also have to involved in social media. But they should not forget that being in social media comes with risks. On the other side; if destinations have carefully prepared, and planned social media strategies, and if they implement, and monitor theme succesfully, will have great competitive edge over competitors.

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