

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism
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Introduction

Social media has fundamentally changed the way that many companies communicate with and market to their target demographics. For the travel and hospitality sector, in particular, the rise of the Internet and the increased popularity of social channels has altered travel marketing. From the moment that tourists research potential destinations to the activities that they participate in once they arrive, the new ways that consumers use social media to make purchasing decisions has influenced tourism marketing from start to finish. Social media, unlike traditional media channels, represents a unique way of transmitting information in all directions, not just one-way or top-down. So people generate and share their own content, which is vital for marketing in tourism industry.



The aim of this report is to give tips to ecotourism businesses on how to best use social media to promote their products and activities.

The report is structured to focus first on the role of social media in the tourism industry. Then, the four most popular social media platforms and best practices in tourism are described and discussed. The final part focuses on ecotourism businesses and how they can act in order to create a growing and loyal audience, illustrated using case studies.

Methodology

In terms of methodology, the material for this report was researched through a desktop study of industry reports and web sites. In addition, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere undertook two case studies. The first related to the use of Facebook by a start-up company in the Biosphere. The second saw the Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research at UHI and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere collaborated to engage a travel blogger, WatchMeSee, to undertake a 'Biosphere Experience' and communicate her story. These case studies are appended to the report.

Social Media in the Tourism Industry

Social media and tourism marketing are definitely a good match. In fact, travel is one of the most shared topics on the 'big three' social networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). People love sharing new experiences and travel is full of them. People also love telling their networks about their upcoming travel plans and reminiscing about them after they've returned. The reason why social media is so effective could be the fact that word of mouth has long been the most effective form of marketing because people buy from brands they trust. That is why a peer recommendation or review on social media could easily get people thinking about how they could follow in their friend's footsteps and live the same exciting experience they read such great things about. People tend to have more of a general distrust for ads these days and therefore social media allows you to bypass that feeling and jump straight to the point of being a trusted resource for adventure and excitement or rest and relaxation.

There are five principal ways that tourism industry marketing has been impacted by social media.

Travel Research Transformed

The most profound effect that social media has had on the tourism industry to date is the democratisation of online reviews. Today's tourists go online to research their future travel destinations and accommodations. When booking travel, 89% of millennials plan travel activities based on content posted by their peers online.

From social sharing sites such as Instagram to crowd-sourced review sites such as TripAdvisor, people are browsing the Internet for travel inspiration and validation from their peers. There, they can easily find other travellers' photos, check-ins, ratings and more. This easy-to-attain, real guest feedback serves to preview the in-person experience that the destination has to offer from a viewpoint other than that of the brand itself. This social media content is tremendously accessible and influential, and it can serve to either put off potential guests or inspire them to book.

The Rise in Social Sharing

People have always loved sharing photos and videos taken of their travels. What social media has done is to facilitate and expand people's ability to share travel experiences with a wider audience than ever before. Over 97% of millennials share photos and videos of their travels

online, building an influential web of peer-to-peer content that serves to inspire potential guests.

Enhanced Customer Service

Customer service and satisfaction have also been transformed as a result of social media. The vast majority of brands have a social media presence that is being used to become aware of unsatisfied or confused customers and, when necessary, to help them. The companies that respond to complaints in a sincere and genuine manner develop a strong reputation among current and potential customers.

When Twitter users contact a brand, more than half expect a response. If they are reaching out with a complaint, that number rises to almost 75%. Responding to complaints and questions helps to humanize your brand and to indicate to current and future customers that they are valued.

Additionally, customer success can be facilitated through a company's social media interactions. For example, social media can serve as a social listening tool to find out information about your guests, such as customers' motivations for travel. Listening to customers through social media can help your brand create an exceptional experience that is sure to delight your guests.

Reshaping Travel Agencies

Social media has also had a major impact on the travel agency industry. The availability of information and ease of self-service booking have forced travel agencies to adapt from a brick-and-mortar model to a more digital one. Travel agencies are not obsolete - they are still responsible for 55% of all airline bookings, 77% of cruise bookings, and 73% of package bookings. But many agencies have shifted their focus from in-person to online experiences as they adapt to new technology and market trends.

Moreover, agents working with millennial travellers should take into account the generation's preference for "experiences over materials." Instead of trying to upsell them on flight upgrades and lodging, businesses should consider presenting unique experiences guaranteed to create a lasting memory (and to inspire a great Instagram post). While travel agencies may struggle to remain relevant as self-booking options increase, their advantage is that many travellers still prefer the personal touch.



Changing Loyalty Programs

As most marketers know, acquiring new customers is far more expensive than retaining existing ones. Loyalty programs have become a core element of the travel business model and many customers understand that the opinions they share with their individual networks have tremendous influence. As a result, these guests sometimes feel entitled to compensation for the positive word-of-mouth marketing that they are doing for a brand. More than 25% of millennials that participate in loyalty programs are very likely to post about a brand in exchange for loyalty points.

Millennials are an increasingly valuable customer base for businesses in the travel industry. Marketers clearly need to invest in reaching this younger target market, but they cannot rely on traditional channels like TV or radio to forge a connection with them. Instead, travel brands need to go to where millennials actually are spending their time. And there's probably no more important place right now than Instagram, as it's become the default option for travellers to post their pictures.

Contemporary Social Media for Tourism Businesses

Instagram

Instagram is the platform that businesses in the travel industry should be using as a channel for branding and inspiration, but not sales.

Millennials are visual-inspiration shoppers. They're less likely than those older than them to have a clear idea of what they want at the outset of their search, and this especially pertains

to travel. They're also more likely to use social media for research - planning for activities as well as where to stay.

To increase their standing among millennials using Instagram, travel brands should:

Create "Instagrammable" moments

Instagram is a platform where authenticity rules and regular people's photos have a lot more credibility than professionally-staged branded content. So travel brands should be posting photos and dedicating resources to their efforts. In Scotland, for example, "a modern twist on the traditional map is aiming to boost tourism... as the Outer Hebrides embraces its "Instagrammable" nature, [through] a new "Insta-friendly" map symbol to sit alongside the traditional place of worship and museum signs on their maps, to help those looking for the perfect picture opportunities." See the map on the right.

It is recognised, however, that getting visitors to post pictures of relevant destinations and experiences is more effective still, due to word-of-mouth amplification.



Listen to your guests

Businesses should show visitors that they're listening by liking and commenting on the photos of guests who post pictures of their experience with them. These small actions will go a long way toward fostering loyalty toward their brand. They can also take it a step further and offer coupons or credit to guests who tag their brand in their posts. When customers see a brand genuinely listening to their customers and engaging with real people, it helps to humanize and validate the brand's online presence.

Hire influencers

Of course, not all Instagram users are created equal in their value to marketers, and a photo by an influencer with massive reach is inherently more valuable than a picture from a person with 50 followers.

Especially valuable are those influencers who appear to make a living from globe-trotting and posting beautiful pictures along the way. Marketers often underwrite those adventures, and it may be worth it for a business to sponsor an influencer's trip, paying for some of their travel costs - especially if it identifies an influencer whose style and interests perfectly align with its

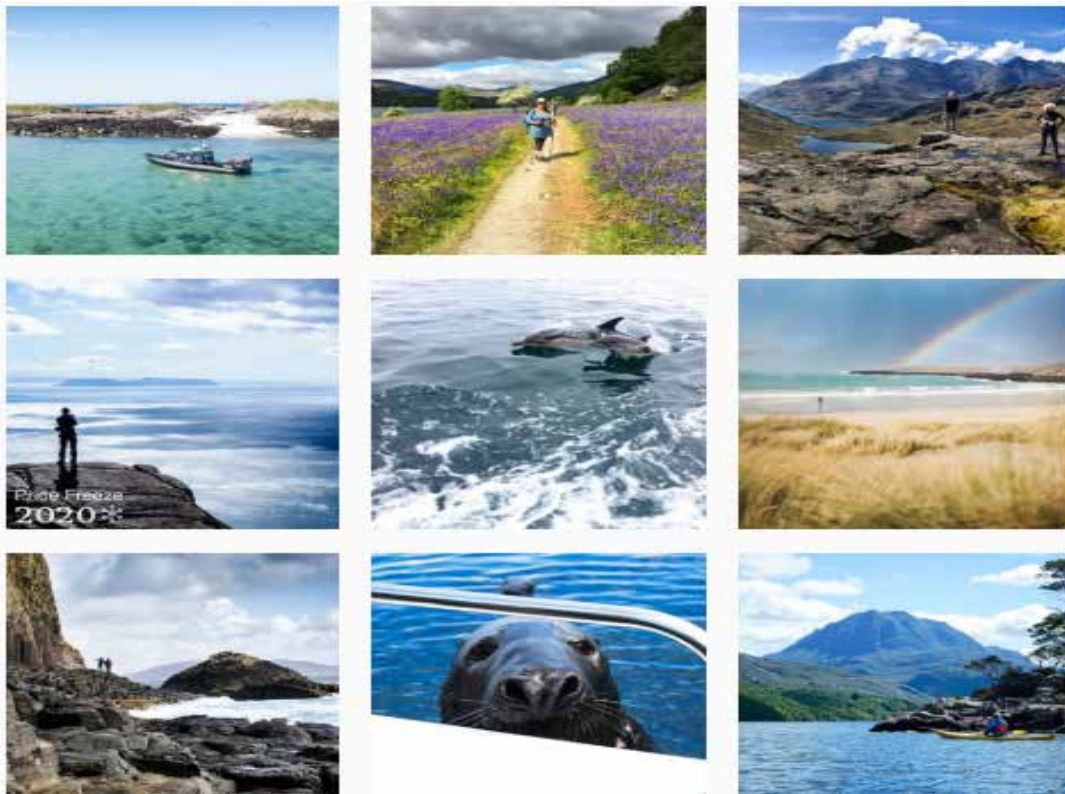
brand values. In fact, because this is an investment, it is important to find the right influencer and ensure a good fit to your business.

Feature content around activities

Millennials are using social media to research travel activities, not just hotels and accommodations. So businesses should think about how to feature events and adventures on Instagram as much as possible, from shore excursions to dipping a perfectly pedicured foot into the pool.



A good example of Instagram use is Wilderness Scotland, one of the most popular adventure travel companies in Scotland. With its 36,000 followers, an average of one shared post every two days and number of likes between 600 and 1000, through this social media Wilderness Scotland is able to tell about the experiences they offer, and the landscapes and wildlife that their potential customers can see if they choose to travel with them. These are just few examples as there are 780 posts on their page.



(https://www.instagram.com/wilderness_scotland/)

Facebook

Facebook is now used by many brands as a customer-service platform, not just to promptly handle complaints, but also to create a discussion platform to answer potential customers' questions about the products or services a business is selling. In this way your brand will earn trust. A great example of Facebook use by a start-up company in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, undertaken during the SHAPE project, is appended to this report.

Another powerful use of Facebook is 'remarketing', a specific kind of ad that targets people who have recently visited a website. The purpose of remarketing is to pull people back to the business' website, to encourage users, who have already shown a clear interest in its products, to return. As well as targeting people who have recently visited its website, Facebook also lets the company target people who have made a purchase, as well as anyone on its email list. Remarketing works because it keeps the brand in a potential customer's sights; it works especially well on Facebook because the social media platform has more daily users than any other platform.

Another valuable aspect of Facebook is its advertising system. On Facebook, you can choose an incredibly specific audience, specifying the age, gender, jobs, interests, and so much more about your target audience. No social media platform can help target an audience with such precision. Facebook reported that defining and targeting the right audience can bring almost three times the return on investment, and it can also reduce the cost per action of each ad. In short, defining the Facebook audience is absolutely crucial. The good news is that Facebook

has made this process relatively straightforward. A business can choose between different kinds of ads on Facebook:

- *Lead ads*, that allow Facebook users to download files directly from the Facebook ad without having to click through further into a web site;
- *Carousel ads*, which allow a business to put several product images together for its audience to search through, essentially browsing a curated selection of its products;
- *Video ads*, perfect for the tourism industry where most companies are selling an experience and not just images of a nice location;
- *Boosted and promoted posts*, probably the simplest ad on Facebook - they simply boost a company's Facebook posts, giving it greater exposure;
- *Standard Facebook homepage ads*, which generally include a short line of text with an image - if the user clicks on it they will be linked to the business' web site.

Travel Alberta, a Canadian destination management organisation, provides a good practice of Facebook ads use.

It often creates 360 degrees videos to introduce the province's less known heritage and attractions to its international visitors. This type of video is specifically created to offer potential visitors a more immersive experience than just a photo or a video, and the interactive element of these posts allows viewers to actively engage with the content. Combined with boosting through Facebook ads, the posts reach an average of 600,000 visitors and 400 shares (Example: <https://www.facebook.com/TravelAlbertaCanada/videos/592884901196289/>). While normal videos have an average of 100,000 viewers and 100 shares (Example: <https://www.facebook.com/TravelAlbertaCanada/videos/348929589101544/>).

LinkedIn

If an SME caters to business travellers, LinkedIn groups are a great way to reach out and offer no-obligation value to travellers visiting your town or city. LinkedIn groups exist for users to come together and share information about most topics business, including travel. These groups are, however, generally put off by anyone coming in with the obvious intent to sell themselves.

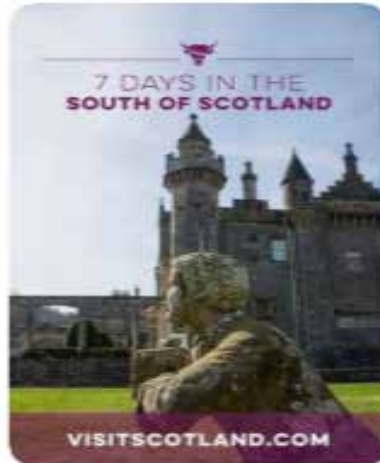
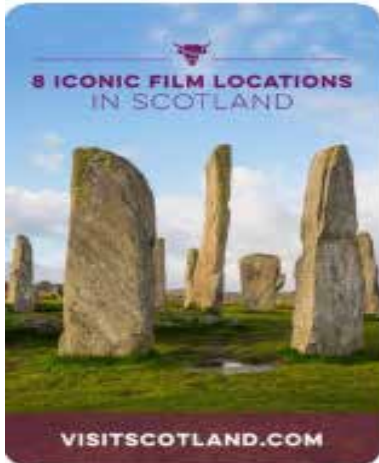
Pinterest

Pinterest says 250 million people use its site each month to look for ideas and inspiration, and travel is one of its most active categories. While social networks are primarily for communicating and connecting with friends, family or fans, Pinterest is for connecting with yourself, because people use it to discover inspiration and ideas they want to try in their own lives - such as planning their next family vacation or researching remote island destinations.

To help brands fine-tune their marketing messages on the platform, Pinterest has categorized these "travel pinners" into five personas: The Group Vacationer, the Culture Chaser, the Spa Sojourner, the Adventure Lover and the Eating Explorer. Pinterest encourages marketers to develop campaigns based on its 2019 "Pinterest 100" compilation of the most-searched key words. For travel, some of the most popular search topics include 'small-town travel' (up 276%

over 2017), 'abandoned castles' (up 142%), 'less-travelled island' (up 179%) and 'zero-waste travel' (up 74%).

For example, Visit Scotland has a Pinterest community of 6,400 followers and 356,000 monthly viewers. It inspires potential visitors through pictures of landscapes and attractions, but also through tips for travelling in Scotland linked to the blog on their official website.



Ecotourism: best practices to attract eco travellers

Vacations have long been known as a time for retreat and relaxation. Today, many environmental concerns are encouraging people to immerse themselves into new settings to make a big difference in the world with their traveling dollars via sustainable travel or ecotourism.

Here are four tips to help ecotourism businesses to boost their marketing efforts.

Starting the Conversation

Travel blogs have increasingly played a significant role in influencing where people have decided to travel. Travel bloggers discuss their trips, experience, advice, and open the door to new ideas and adventures for their followers. People seek travel blogs to get a better grasp of what to expect on their vacations. Therefore, travel businesses should acknowledge the importance of travel bloggers and influencers and consider working with them but at the same time they should be very careful during the selection process.

As part of the SHAPE project, the Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research at UHI and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere collaborated to undertake a case study on the effective use of travel blogging to inspire, engage and influence consumers. The Biosphere worked with local businesses to create a three-day 'Biosphere Experience' and engaged a travel blogger, WatchMeSee, to undertake the experience and use various media to communicate her story to consumers. Please see the appended case study.

What influencers have to offer is a richer level of audience engagement that can be cultivated like a relationship. In this way, the influencer acts as a sort of conduit for authenticity, bridging a trust gap that inherently exists between a company and a target audience. To find the most suitable influencer, travel companies oriented towards eco-tourism should find one whose audience reflects their target markets. Influencers themselves can tell who their audience is, and businesses can select the ones that fit their needs the most. Secondly, travel businesses need to find an influencer who already has an established and loyal audience. Finally, it is important to set aside a budget, as influencers make money on their platforms through advertising, sponsorships, brand collaborations (influencer marketing) or other forms of everyday hustle.

Traveling Jackie

A travel blog owned and created by Jackie Nourse, a travel and adventure enthusiast who launched The Budget-Minded Traveler blog in 2013 (<https://www.thebudgetmindedtraveler.com/>), it started as a platform to give readers some tips to travel on a budget. The blog took off and the next year she launched The Budget-Minded Traveler Podcast (<https://www.thebudgetmindedtraveler.com/podcasts/>) and also created a community on Facebook that now encompasses 6,250 users (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thebmtcommunity/>). When she realised she could not fit all her ideas in this project, Jackie created a website, Traveling Jackie (<https://travelingjackie.com/>), a space not just for the niche of budget travellers but one to explore adventure travel and personal development, lead mentorship programs and organise

group trips. She collaborates with many brands through, for example, brand ambassador partnerships, tour partnerships and social campaigns. Traveling Jackie is a good example of both a travel blogger with a wide and loyal audience and a sort of tour operator business that started from a blog and a community on Facebook, which therefore created a dialogue with its potential clients.

Sharing Ideas on Pinterest

Pinterest is another key platform for reaching prospective ecotourists. People use Pinterest to map out vacation ideas and learn what to expect. Businesses should start their own discussion, harness their existing ideas, and show consumers why their eco-travel services are a great proposition for people considering an 'enlightened' vacation.

Ecobnb

A community of sustainable tourism SMEs based in Trento, Italy, its website is a platform where tourists can find sustainable accommodation across Italy and Europe (<https://ecobnb.com/>).



In addition, it runs a blog where it gives its viewers tips and ideas of sustainable holidays. This blog is linked to its page on Pinterest, which has 12,000 viewers per month and where it also posts content related to sustainable travel, quotes and curiosities on other topics always related to sustainability, such as food and green energy (<https://www.pinterest.it/ecobnb/>).

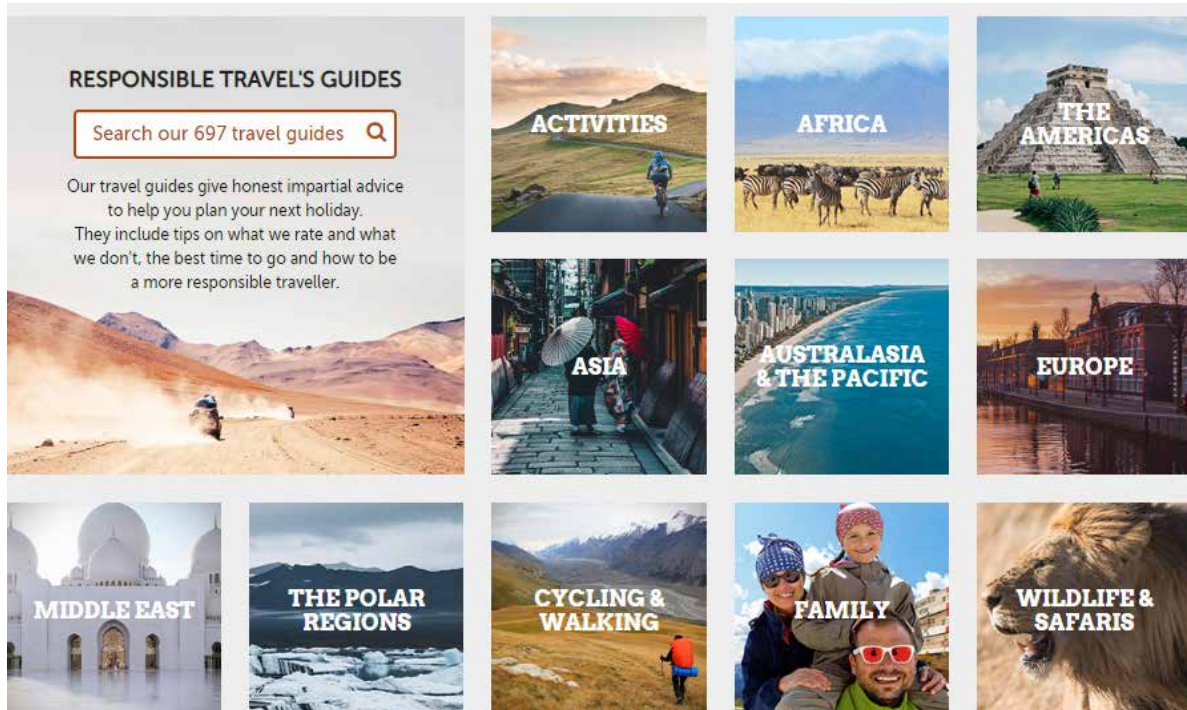


Creating a Unique Content Strategy

Business should look to develop a content strategy that sets a business, a travel destination, and a team apart. What is your team's background? Why are you so passionate about ecotourism? Did you stumble upon a 'eureka' moment of your own? For example, Journey Beyond Travel (<https://www.journeybeyondtravel.com/>) creates e-books, articles, videos, brochures, newsletters and so much more. It knows it's amazing at its specialty and is utilizing multiple channels to make sure its audience has access to it.

Responsible Travel

Another good example of an ecotourism business adopting this strategy is Responsible Travel, selling sustainable holidays since 2001. It works as an intermediary connecting tourists with over 400 specialists and small travel companies who run the trips. In addition to this, it publishes articles, books, videos and documentaries on issues related to tourism, such as sustainable tourism and overtourism. Its website has a selection of more than 600 free accessible travel guides. Of course, users can also subscribe to its newsletter and get the latest news and travel tips.



Building a Community, Based on a Love for Ecotourism

'Community building' is an excellent marketing tool for most businesses, especially when it comes to travel, and especially so with eco-travel. Establishing and nurturing a community platform for future travellers, current travellers *and* former travellers can be a powerful tool. Creating a travel forum can nurture a feeling of unity, establish trust and allow for an opportunity to maintain a connection with consumers and offer future travel packages. Building a forum will give your audience a platform where they can share, suggest and advise each other while also giving you an opportunity to listen to your previous customers and make future marketing decisions based on the information you gather. The people on your forum are your biggest promoters: they've booked, they've enjoyed, and now they are sharing amazing memories, videos, and pictures.

G Adventures

One the most well-known adventure travel companies in the world, with its 2,200 employees and 28 offices around the world, G Adventures promotes and sells authentic adventures that are responsible and sustainable. Beside having a webpage on all major social media, including Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, the travel company created a group on Facebook to allow past, present or future G Adventures travellers to connect with other explorers and get recommendations. The community has 5,500 members.



Hashtags: How to Boost Posts on Social Media and Increase the Reach

Ecotourism businesses should acknowledge the value of hashtags on social media. Even though proper hashtag research can be time consuming, hashtags can double traffic on businesses' social media pages, especially on Instagram, where published content includes photos and videos. As previously stated, tourists now use social media to find inspiration for their holidays and hashtags work by bringing together a community around a certain theme or topic, even if they aren't followers of a page yet, thereby increasing the reach. Therefore, a proper use of hashtags can be of strategic importance; but it is also crucial to choose the right ones.

The most-used hashtags related to sustainable tourism include:

- #travelinspiration (more than 1,000,000 posts on Instagram)
- #ecotourism (700,000 posts)
- #sustainabletravel (150,000 posts)
- #responsibletravel (160,000 posts)
- #slowtravel (340,000 posts)
- #wildlifeconservation (600,000 posts)

However, it is a mistake to post photos on Instagram which have only hashtags in their descriptions. Before the hashtag, ecotourism businesses should always put a description on the photo they post and try to tell an interesting story behind the photo itself.

Better Places Travel is an ecotourism business that offers authentic and sustainable adventures across the world (<https://www.betterplacetravel.com/>). Here are a few examples of its Instagram posts and proper description and hashtags:



Contests and Campaigns to Engage Your Public

Social media contests are one of the best ways to engage with your audience, raise brand awareness and build a community of interest around your brand. Contests influence

purchasing decisions for three out of four participants, and three out of four people are more likely to recommend a brand who hosts contests and giveaways.

Some examples of social media contests include:

- **Photo contest** à users submit their photos which can then be voted for and browsed. The business selects a winner (or winners) based on whatever criteria it specifies at the beginning of the contest. Photo contests are great for getting feedback from the business' employees or customers about an upcoming campaign or product;
- **Caption Contest** à users comment on a photo with their favourite caption. These types of contests are great for getting feedback from followers on what the company's new slogan should be or how they feel about a new product. Or simply to get interesting new user generated content;
- **Vote Contest** à a fun way to help engage your company's fans by allowing them to vote on various options. They're also great because entrants are incentivized to share your business' promotion with their own networks;
- **Video Contest** à similar to photo contests, with the exception that instead of users uploading a photo, they upload a video.

Here is an example of a photo contest created by Overseas Adventure Travel:

Overseas Adventure Travel
19. Oktober um 12:00 · 🌐

Enter our 2019 Traveler Photo Contest and you could win a FREE O.A.T. adventure for two. All you need to do is share your best travel photos with us from an O.A.T. Land or Small Ship Adventure by November 30, 2019 to be entered to win. Follow the link below to view the full contest details.

OATTRAVEL.COM

🟢 **2019 Traveler Photo Contest**
Read the full contest details and upload your photos.

👍❤️ 37 5 Kommentare 9 Mal geteilt

Instagram Stories to Grow Your Potential Customers' Engagement

Instagram stories are one of the best ways to build a relationship with a business' potential audience. Best practice includes the use of Instagram Stories **poll stickers**, a great tool for businesses to crowdsource ideas, collect product feedback or find out what content your audience wants to see more of. Including your Instagram followers in the creation of your new products is a great way to engage your audience, and by asking questions with polls you can get direct feedback from your target customers. Remember: when using polls in your Instagram marketing strategy, it's important to not only ask the right questions, but also let your audience know you're listening. Once the Instagram Stories poll is complete (after 24 hours), businesses should always share the results.

In addition to this, it's smart to use Instagram stories to a) drive traffic back to your website or blog (adding a link and "Swipe up" button), b) learn more about what type of content your audience would like to see on your Instagram page or c) simply entertain them with questions related to your brand.

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Case Study One: Travel Blogger in the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

‘Biosphere Experiences’

Nowadays it is impossible to understand the world of travel & tourism without the opinion of bloggers; what they say on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks matters. The blogger is a key influencer in the tourism industry, a communicator who knows the sector first-hand, is well connected, keeps sources and contacts, and can do a good job offering relevant content and quality stories.

There is a travel blogger for every consumer type, a very important detail when you consider that the profile of travellers is increasingly segmented, and the competitiveness of destinations depends on an ability to develop and market specific tourism products.

Choosing the Right Travel Blogger

To achieve our goal, which was to raise the profile of our eco-tourism initiative ‘Biosphere Experiences’ and the profile of our Biosphere as a sustainable destination, we needed the right blogger. First thoughts were to approach a ‘macro-influencer’ with a large following, but after seeking advice we decided on a ‘micro-influencer’, with a smaller, but more targeted following.

The Travel Blogger – Watch Me See

Our choice of blogger was *Watch Me See*, run by Kathi Kamleitner. Kathi’s website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts had a good following but what stood out was her ability to create engaging content, great photographic images and achieve our ultimate goal: to inspire travel to our Biosphere and to raise awareness of eco-tourism and sustainable travel. Kathi’s brand personality and values matched very well with our sustainable values as a Biosphere.

Developing the Brief

A three-day ‘Biosphere Experience’ was developed for Kathi. Most of the elements of the experience were sourced for free as the businesses offering those services and accommodation would be given media exposure through Kathi’s travel blog posts and a short film which formed part of the brief. It was agreed that Kathi would use sustainable travel to both arrive at and travel around the destination. A very clear itinerary was developed for Kathi’s three-day experience so things went as smoothly as possible and Kathi could have the best possible experience to blog about. The brief requirement was what is referred to as a ‘destination’ piece. Travel Bloggers like working to briefs but also need to be allowed a degree of flexibility to be creative and consider the article target audience.

Key campaign points:

- Three-day/two-night visit to the biosphere utilising sustainable transport (train + e-bike).

- Focus on Biosphere experiences (Dark Skies, water/land-based activities, wildlife/cultural guide).
- An objective to promote eco-tourism and sustainable travel.
- An aim to create engaging, visual content about the trip to the biosphere and raise awareness for the project on social media.

Use of Hashtags

Today's traveller looks for experiences through travel blogs, which have become a source of inspiration for destination search and vacation planning. Experiences increasingly carry more prestige over items and travellers share their holidays online. So to capitalize on this we wanted to encourage the use of a branded hashtag in social media posts. We agreed hashtags with Kathi to use throughout social media channels:

#BiosphereExperiences
#ShapingEcotourism
#UNESCOUK

Social Media Channels

Bloggers either write on their own site and share or write for your website and link to theirs. For the brief we agreed the use Watch Me See's travel blog website as the platform to share the article on Kathi's experience in our Biosphere' as Kathi's profile is much greater and we could then link to our website.

<https://www.watchmesees.com/blog/galloway-southern-ayrshire-biosphere/>

Impact

Social media impact was measured approximately two weeks after the experience took place.

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/watchmesees/>

The five posts on Facebook reached over 8,540 users and encouraged over 500 engagements. The video uploaded to Facebook in particular reached over 3,400 people and received well over 180 engagements.

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/watchmesees/>

Kathi's tweets reached over 10,500 impressions on Twitter, which resulted in over 350 engagements such as retweets, likes and hashtag clicks. The average engagement rate lies at 3.3%.

Instagram

Stories: <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18078162760131881/>

The four Instagram grid posts reached over 5,200 users, received 540 likes and encouraged more than 70 comments and interactions such as shares via direct messages and image saves. The Instagram stories posted during the campaign had over 17,000 impressions and 200+ interactions in total. Each reached between 300 and 600 people and provoked numerous direct messages, reactions and responses.

Among the questions and comments Watch Me See received across social media, there was a particular interest in what a Biosphere is, the bike hire and how the e-bike in particular enables more people to travel actively, the stargazing experience and the idea of Biosphere holiday packages.

YouTube Film Watch Me See

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbtWKjAqwP8>

Concluding Thoughts

Working with travel bloggers is a great way to reach new audiences on a personal level and convey an authentic point of view through creative and engaging content. Bloggers are the new media and some say the journalists of the new century, with specific characteristics such as freshness, immediacy, interactivity, and personality. Kathi from Watch Me fulfilled all those specific characteristics and more.

Case Study Two: New Start-Up Micro Tourism Business – South West Scotland Tours

<https://www.facebook.com/SouthWestScotlandTours/>

South West Scotland Tours, a new start up business located in Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere owned by Craig Murray, provides one- to three-day high-quality guided experiences within the Biosphere and beyond for groups of up to seven people. It offers wildlife spotting, industrial heritage and historical tours with itineraries customised to suit all needs and abilities.

The use of Social Media in small tourism company start-ups.

When you're starting up any small business with limited funds for advertising and marketing then the social media platforms are probably the best place to turn to try and get your brand out there. I'm going to try and cover two of the most popular social media that I have been using since I started South West Scotland Tours after completing the Biosphere Experience Guide Training: Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook

Facebook is, in my opinion, the best social media platform for the widest interaction. There are so many tourism groups that it's easy to join 30 or 40 and feed into your own page from there. Some don't like advertising, so expect a 30% ban rate if you share directly from your page. A way around that is to share from your personal account and engage with people who respond.

Ask your friends, family etc. to like and share your page the day you set it up then do it again every six months or so, it'll build up your page's profile over time. Don't be scared to ask people to do this.

Make sure your messages are turned on and set up an automated reply with another point of contact e.g. an e-mail address.

Use all sorts of eye-catching images. There's nothing wrong with phone snapshots, and, on the flip side, there's nothing wrong with manipulated images; a mix of both isn't a bad thing at all.

Interact with your post. If people comment, chat with them.

Instagram

Instagram, by nature, is a more visual platform than Facebook, with it being centred around photos rather than written script or captions. This leads to a tendency for people to over manipulate and filter images. Don't. A good, natural image can stand out more on this platform than one that been photoshopped to death and won't lead to disappointment when

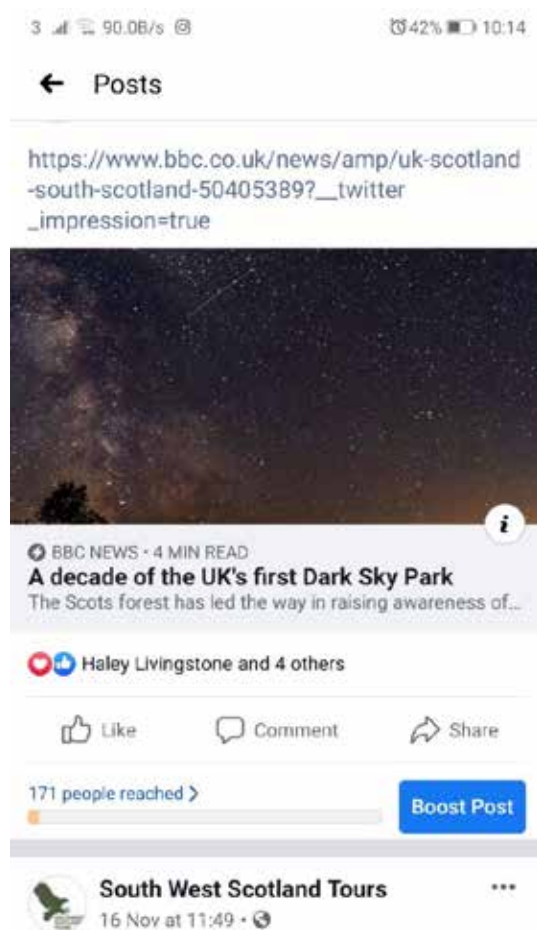
your customers see the real thing. Try telling a story – use 'stories' to promote up-coming events

It's the easiest platform to sell on at the moment, with business pages being able to add a "shop" button with very few followers.

The use of hashtags can extend your reach four or five-fold, but keep them relevant to your post. There is no point adding #phone to your post when your initial picture is of a river.

Again, interact with your post. Instagram algorithms appear to prefer longer than three-word replays or comments.

The first picture is a post that I put up on my own Facebook page without sharing. It reached 171 people in a week



The second picture is a Facebook post that I shared in two groups; that one reached over 5000 people in two days.