

# Why Use Social Media for Tourism and Hospitality Marketing?

Chances are that you've already heard of many social media sites – such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and YouTube. You might already read – or write – a blog and look up information on Wikipedia.

The term social media describes the technology and methods used by people to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives. It can take numerous different forms including text, images, audio and video. Social media is attracting millions of new users every day.



There are over 400 million active users on Facebook and more than 200 million users log on at least once each day. Ten hours of video is uploaded to YouTube every minute and an estimated 100 million videos are watched every day. Twitter has about 168 million global visits a month. Technorati indexes 112.8 million blogs and over 250 million pieces of tagged social media.

Whereas traditional media is about transmitting or distributing content to an audience, social media is more like a two-way conversation. Most types of social media thrive on their connectedness making use of links to other sites, resources and people. They encourage participation in the form of contributions and feedback and are open to voting, comments and sharing information.

There are seven main types of social media: Social Networks – Using personal pages, users connect with friends to share content and communicate. The main social networks are MySpace, Facebook and Bebo. Blogs – online journals. Wikis – the best known is Wikipedia with over 3.3 million English language articles. Many organizations have their own wikis where people can add information to, or edit a communal document or database. Podcasts – downloaded audio and video files, often only available by subscription to a service. Forums – discussion forums have been around for a number of years and are a powerful and popular element of online communities. Content Communities – such as those formed around photos in Flickr or videos on Vimeo.com or YouTube. Microblogging – bite sized blogs that are distributed online and through cell phones. Twitter is the main service.



## **How Is Social Media Different to Traditional Marketing?**

The way that we interact with the Internet has changed. Instead of simply getting information dumped to us, we're connecting with other people to hear what they have to say.

Social Media allow a tourism business to do many things for example:

Allows you to mix media - for example, your Facebook page can include text, audio, video and or photos. It is fast - you can update in seconds. You can link to relevant media and so provide and access more comprehensive information on what interests you. Allows you to reach a global audience, which gives you greater access to international travelers. Is accessible to everyone at little or no cost. Let's everyone participate by adding comments, instant messaging or even editing the stories themselves.

There is no limit for the number of fans you can have in Facebook businesses pages and the number of followers on Twitter is limitless. This means that hundreds of people can potentially hear your message. If you share your message with a few of those people, and they share it with their contacts, your reach can be expanded by the number of people in each of these networks.

## **What Are the Benefits of Social Media for My Tourism Businesses?**

There are numerous benefits to your travel business:

It's natural - you can reach large groups of potential customers in a spontaneous fashion. It's low cost for high returns - your costs are often limited to time and links that would typically cost you thousands of dollars are available for free. It complements your other efforts - social media doesn't interfere with any other methods of getting traffic to your website. It provides you with an identity.

You can create relationships with people who might not otherwise know about your accommodation or tourism experience. Social media makes you real to consumers. You can gain high quality links if you become popular on social news websites. Having plenty of links from trusted domains gives you authority.

Through using social media you can:

Cultivate a more significant community of frequent travelers. Share your expertise and knowledge about your region, country or the travel industry Tap into the wisdom of your consumers Enable customers helping customers

Social media helps you to build credibility, relationships and brand, expanding your sphere of influence as you connect with people who were previously unattainable. It can be fun, it's easy to do but like anything else worthwhile, it takes time and effort to implement it properly.

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