

# How the Tourism Industry Is Utilizing Social Media

The tourism industry has changed dramatically with the overwhelming emergence of social media platforms. Due to the nature of a travel product - it is experiential, and often a material commitment in terms of money or time - people have long shared their travel experience and social media just facilitates this.



Especially in the tourism sector, where most of the holiday-makers start with an internet research before they book accommodation an active presence in social is needed nowadays. Social Tools like TripAdvisor are becoming the number one research method to find a hotel due to trusted customer generated reviews and with more than 50 million reviews it covers pretty much any destination on this planet.

Social Media allows travel-based companies to quickly promote their product and brand, get the online community involved and motivated to travel, and specifically target key market segments. Ultimately, though, social media provides a way for users to deliver “word-of-mouth” marketing for businesses, which is one of the biggest influencers when it comes to consumers making travel decisions.

In this article we want to outline the latest trends in to social media and tourism industry and provide some best practice examples.

## **Trend 1: The mobile web and mobile apps**

Mobile is changing both the travel planning period and the in-trip experience. Particularly during the in-trip experience there is a ton of opportunity to make the traveler better informed, allow her to find the right restaurants and attractions tailored to her interests and time, and even provide special location-based features that can only be delivered via mobile.

Example: Vail Mountain Resorts mobile app, called EpicMix helps skiers keep track of how often they checked-in at certain resorts, vertical feet travelled, and milestones. The app was also integrated with social media, posting on Facebook when a user checked-in.

### **Trend 2: Location-based social media: making travel more relevant**

Location-based services allow leaving information, guides and other tips in locations for people to pick up with their mobile device. You can also curate advice from other travelers based on locations - for example find a restaurant near your hotel based on people who have stayed in your hotel before. This sharing, commenting and review via location will allow people to build personalized guides of places they are at and help them to build their experience beforehand but also whilst they are away.



Example: Any organization could start to build communities in this way, using tools such as Foursquare or Facebook to leave information and allow users to create their own guidebook that is tailored to them and their experiences as they travel.

### **Trend 3: Social Media Monitoring - listening to conversations**

What is being said about my company - how is the quality of my services perceived? To help shaping and improving the strategy around product and services travel companies can gain an “information

advantage” or utilize it as reputation management by closely monitoring the preferences of their guests, as well as the way they communicate these preferences on social sites.

Example: Almost all big hotel chains use tools to monitor and analyze the millions of guest reviews online and utilize them for connecting with fans and prospective guests to drive loyalty and sales.

### **Trend 3: Customer-generated review sites**

According to surveys more than two thirds of online travelers now cite traveler reviews websites as influential when planning their leisure trips. When it comes down to making the decision to book online, a positive review is almost as influential as price or special offers. With TripAdvisor having over 45 million visitors last month reading some of the 50 million reviews and opinions, reviews are essential to consumers in the travel-planning process.



Example: Arcor, Novotel and many more feature on their websites the TripAdvisor traveler rating and the most recent traveler reviews for each hotel, allowing customers to make more informed decisions based on fellow travelers’ feedback.

### **Trend 4: Social media platforms**

Anywhere from Facebook and Twitter accounts to reaching out to bloggers to gain popularity in the market are activities this industry is participating in. Using Facebook, both having a Facebook page to build brand awareness and using Facebook to display ads to build sales is an interesting strategy for travel companies.

Example: The award-winning Pure Michigan Facebook page showcases upcoming events in Michigan, offers sweepstakes, the ability to connect with Michigan’s tourism experts, and even an F-commerce extension with the ability to shop directly in the Michigan online store.

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Date: 2011-10-31

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-latest-trends-tourism-industry-utilizing-social-media-article1652>