SoLoMo – New Marketing Trend for Hospitality Industry

SOcial **LO**cal and **MO**bile media platforms were hot topics during the annual 2012 Search Engine Strategies conference in London. This particular convergence discussed how traveler's using mobile based devices such as smart phones and tablet computers are increasingly becoming "SoLoMO" customers.

Travelers are today being toasted with unique tour experiences courtesy of sleek and sophisticated mobile technological gadgets which are ushering new ways of delivering location specific rich information. This particular demand for location specific information, is presenting new marketing opportunities for players in various sectors and in particular the hospitality industry. Travelers demand information includes; overnight accommodation, dining, spa treatments, and other hospitality related services that is existing within certain geographical locations.

In order for players within the hospitality sector to fully benefit from this plethora of opportunities provided by the vast information super highway, the industry needs to consider ways of incorporating digital mobile technologies into their 2012 digital marketing initiatives because digital marketing endeavors are rapidly shifting towards mobile based devices.

Paradigm shift in search technology

According to information provided by Robert Rauch who is also the current president of R.A. Rauch & Associates, which is a San Diego based hospitality company, he notes that over 50% of travel bookings are today being conducted online, and an estimated 114 people conducts their travel related research online.

Robert continues to lament that what makes these bookings more interesting, is the manner these prospective clients normally conduct their travel related research, because it is now emerging that these individuals are shifting from using conventional desktop based systems towards portable digital devices such as smart phones and tablet computers.

Local Search

Internet access has already undergone a complete metamorphosis, and search engines are no longer exempted from this. This is because these very search engines have been forced to find ways of personalizing results, so that web users can be presented with factual information which is specific and relevant to their needs, and due to dynamism brought about by technology, location has emerged as one

of the new frontiers that search engines can use to personalize results.

Optimizing search engine based on local contents is hugely beneficial for local businesses, and there are already several researches from iconic organization attesting to this fact. To begin with;

According to the Kelsey group it is being estimated that approximately 74% of internet users mainly perform local searches

According to Google group, consumers perform more than 3 billion local searches every month, and among these, approximately 40% of the searches are conducted from a mobile based device such as a smart phone or tablet computer

In a separate study conducted by Pew Research center, it has been revealed that 53% of the respondents used search technology to obtain information pertaining to local restaurants, bar, and clubs.

A certain hotel management company located within Boston area also realized a 508% increase in reservations immediately after optimizing their website with local contents.

It is in view of such facts that establishments such as hotels cannot undervalue the importance of embracing local search technology that is optimized towards a specific geographic target. When hospitality facilities optimize their own website for locally searched terms, they are likely to claim listings on local search engine directories hence standing a much better chance of converting the search into leads hence sales.

With rapidly expanding mobile technology coupled with falling bandwidth prices and increasing number of internet hotspots, conventional systems such as desktops and laptops seem to be getting obsolete. Statistics already indicate that half of the adult population and approximately 80% of US based business travelers own smart phones and tablet computers. Google is also projecting that these mobile devices will soon surpass conventional PC's as the main gadgets fro accessing the internet.

According to an independent study conducted by Forrester research, mobile bookings quadrupled from 2008–2010, and according to Google, hotel mobile searches have increased by a whooping 3,000 percent from 2010 to 2011, and also according to e–marketer it is being projected that approximately 15 million people in 2012 will use their mobile devices to book hotel rooms.

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