

Social Media at the Frontline of Tourism Marketing Activity



Market Research Company Euromonitor International announced today the release of its 2011 World Travel Market Global Trends Report at the World Travel Market (WTM) event in London. The report highlights the eight key emerging travel and tourism trends worldwide, providing insight on how the tourism industry can entice the next generation of travellers despite looming economic uncertainty.

The global economy is on the brink of a double-dip recession, as the sovereign debt crisis engulfs Europe and other markets struggle to manage their own debt and economic deceleration. This leads to a greater need for new ideas from travel and tourism companies to capture consumers' imaginations, as detailed in this year's WTM Global Trends report. "With economic headwinds picking up, we aim to pinpoint pockets of opportunity for the global travel and tourism industry," said Caroline Bremner, Head of Travel and Tourism Research at Euromonitor International. "Travellers are seeking out fun, adventurous trips as seen by the popularity of mystery tours in the Americas, a new rent-a-garden concept in the UK and increased 'gamification' of travel," she adds.

The report focuses on six regions and two core strategies, highlighting the key tourism trends in each:

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Americas: | Mystery trips |
| • UK: | Rent-a-garden |
| • Europe: | Luxury without guilt |
| • Middle East: | Rebranding of Arab Spring countries |
| • Africa: | M-commerce |
| • Asia: | China's growing influence |
| • Global Village: | Social media |
| • Technology and Online Travel: | Gamification |

Americas: Mystery Trips

The desire to take the excitement of travel to the next level is fuelling a rise in mystery trips that are premium in price and tend to be for special occasions. The mystery trips range from customers bidding on packages with an unknown destination and hotel name to being handed a smartphone unveiling the itinerary day by day, according to their preferences and budget as discussed prior to the trip with specialists. Travellers pay only 50 percent of the sales price and suppliers benefit from selling excess capacity without undermining their brand.

UK: Rent-a-garden

With high household debt of five percent in 2011, the rent-a-garden concept provides extra financial support to cash-strapped homeowners. campinmygarden.com provides the opportunity for homeowners to rent their gardens, which can be used as campsites by travellers seeking to save money. The idea appeals to travellers wishing to experience the local community and go back to

traditional and modest forms of accommodation. Rental demand is expected to increase during the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Europe: Luxury without Guilt

After the global economic crisis, a new kind of luxury tourism is emerging in Europe - more authentic and ethical. Luxury customers now choose providers offering responsible holidays and trips respectful of the environment. Having given something back, consumers can happily enjoy a luxury break guilt-free. European travel retailers are expected to place greater emphasis on helping local areas, offering encounters with local craftsmen, musicians and communities.

Middle East: Rebranding of Arab Spring Countries

In 2011, political protests erupted across the Middle East amid calls for reforms and regime change, with clashes turning violent in some countries. Tunisia and Egypt have started to reinvent themselves in a new democratic era with a successful transition in place. However, Libya and Syria are far from recovery. The tourism rebranding process is complex due to each country's unique political, economic and social conditions, with the major challenge being how to send a positive message.

Africa: M-commerce

A region with 489 million mobile phone users, Africa is leading the world in m-commerce, which in turn is boosting demand for travel services. There are 7 million smartphone owners in Africa and 60% of mobile web users use phones to purchase goods. This mobile boom creates a demand for travel operators to develop mobile websites and applications to increase online reservations, raise brand awareness and promote destinations. Airlines will profit from implementing mobile capabilities, allowing passengers to customise their airport and in-flight experience.

Asia: China's Growing Influence

Spending by Chinese travellers on travel accommodation domestically and abroad is expected to increase by 20 percent over 2010/2015 to reach US\$67 billion, second to the US. Hotel companies are customising their brands in China, partnering with Chinese companies, and creating programmes to cater to the Chinese abroad. They plan to continue to expand in China and use their experience in the Chinese domestic market to feed best practices to properties abroad in key destinations for Chinese travelers.

Global Village: Social Media

In 2011, social media was at the frontline of tourism marketing activity, leveraging offline events to engage online audiences. Social media encompasses loyalty programmes, bookings, concierge and customer service and the aim is to capitalise on its power and friends/followers' influence to drive bookings and build loyalty. Hotels are rethinking their marketing strategies to reach online audiences in a more personalised and intimate way. Uncertainty, however, remains about how to determine the return on investment.

Technology and Online Travel: Gamification

Gamification, or the integration of gaming dynamics in non-gaming environments, started in the US

entertainment industry and is now spreading to the travel and tourism industry. By encouraging consumers to join competitions and share their experiences, photos and videos, the trend generate brand awareness and loyalty for travel companies. It works through the offering of points, badges and real-life gifts, with some websites allowing web users to explore the country's attractions, complete challenges and win trips to the desired country.

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About Euromonitor International

Euromonitor International is the world's leading provider for global business intelligence and strategic market analysis. We have more than 39 years of experience publishing international market reports, business reference books and online databases on consumer markets.

We deliver market research solutions to support strategic planning for today's increasingly international business environment. Our research offers in-depth market analysis on consumer goods and services industries worldwide, as well as economic, demographic and socio-economic data and insight on countries and consumers.

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