

WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

Tour and activity operators should read this eBook to learn

1

WHY YOU NEED SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media isn't a fad - it's here to stay: Learn how you can use it to benefit your business.

2

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Gain practical tips on using the most relevant social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

3

HOW TO USE REVIEW SITES

Review sites are the new 'word of mouth', making it essential for tours and activities. We teach you how to leverage TripAdvisor for your business.



SOCIAL MEDIA FOR TOUR OPERATORS

Edited by Simon Lenoir



Simon has over 15 years' experience as an IT professional. He also has extensive experience in the travel industry from being an around-the-world traveller and managing a dive centre in Southeast Asia for over 3 years. He was frustrated from spending too much time on paperwork and admin, and less time out diving, so he created Rezdy.

Now, Simon is fully dedicated to providing the best online booking solution for tours and activities operators; he is the brains behind Rezdy's online booking system.

Outside office hours Simon is a true activity addict - mountain biking, sailing, swimming, beach volleyball - just to name a few.

ONLINE BOOKING SOFTWARE FOR TOURS & ACTIVITIES OPERATORS

Rezdy's reservation software gives you all the tools to accept online and offline bookings, manage your customers and connect to your agents.



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CHAPTER 1 - GETTING STARTED

WHY IT'S TIME FOR TOUR OPERATORS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is here to stay. Learn why it's time to jump on the bandwagon!

Social media is increasingly popular, and you're probably wondering whether you should jump on the bandwagon or not. The one thing that's been holding you back is probably the fact that you doubt it's worth your time, thinking it won't impact your business in any significant way - and that's where you're mistaken.

Most tour or activity operators will justify their refusal to participate by saying that their prospects don't hang out there, so it would be an ineffective communication tool. But even if you think most of your customers aren't on social media networks (and even if you're right), there are still other reasons why you should be using them:



#1 Google loves social media.

#1 Cues from social media activities (like if someone shares, retweets or likes your update), are now being used by Google to help determine the relevance and authority of your site. The more relevant or authoritative your site is, the more likely it is to be closer to the top of those search results. This is called "organic search", because what's being displayed hasn't been paid for - instead, it's all according to Google's natural code, which has recently been updated to incorporate social signals.

So having social media accounts actually helps you rank on Google's search results page. There are obvious reasons why you want to be on that page for keywords related to your products or services; people trust Google, so more people will find you through it, and hopefully a large proportion of them will then make an online booking through your site.

#2 More control over your online image.

Your content is also more likely to get found by PR professionals, journalists, conference organisers, business partners, and future employees that way.

#2 At the top of the search results for your brand name, would you rather have sites which you don't have control over, or those which you do? The latter is obviously a better way to go - after all, you don't have much control over what review sites and the like are saying about you, and you can achieve that through your social media accounts:

[Frog Dive Scuba Centres](#)
www.frogdive.com.au
★★★★★ 13 Google reviews

B 395 Guildford Road
Guildford NSW
(02) 9892 3422

[Frog Dive Willoughby - Dive Instructor Training with Des Paroz](#)
www.divingidc.com/frogdive/

The **Frog Dive** SCUBA Centres are Sydney's most progressive Diver retail and scuba training groups. **Frog Dive** commenced operations in 1978 and now have ...

[Frog Dive \(@FrogDW\) on Twitter](#)
twitter.com/#!/frogdw

Sign up for Twitter to follow **Frog Dive (@FrogDW)**. Best Scuba Diving & Spearfishing Store in Sydney!!

#3 Effective marketing.

#3 Social media is awesome at getting the word out there. Here are some practical tips:

- Include 'follow us' buttons
- Include social sharing buttons
- Include content from your social media presence eg. 'Pin of the week' or 'Follower of the week'
- Add links to social accounts in signatures

Publish content from your site to your social media accounts (and if you don't have any, create some). We recommend starting with Facebook, Twitter, and especially Google+ (unsurprisingly, Google

favours it a lot in its code). It doesn't matter if you don't have a fan base, or if whoever shares it isn't a potential client. These things will come with time through consistency and momentum.



CHAPTER 2 - GETTING STARTED

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUR TOUR or ACTIVITY BUSINESS

Get inspired by three tour and activity operators who are doing it right.

It's no secret that social media is a great way to promote your business - or should we say place to promote your business - because that's where your customers are; social networks are their virtual hangouts. The problem is making sure you do it right. First of all, you need to commit to developing a sound understanding of:

- **How best to leverage the social network according to how it is being used.** There wouldn't be this many social networks around if all of them had the exact same function. Facebook and newcomer Pinterest are heavily consumer oriented whereas LinkedIn is much business focused. Where do your customers hang out online?
- **Each social media channel has its own cultural do's and don't's.** You should familiarise yourself with these quickly. In bad cases you can get yourself banned from a social network, for example if you are too spammy on Twitter you can get reported by disgruntled followers and your account may be disabled. Once you have a good feel for the environment's standard practices, and the tools you need to use, integrate your content accordingly.
- **How best to achieve your end goal; a positive web presence.** The reason any business goes social is to reach out to prospective and current clients in a way that reflects them in a good light. Being authentic and personal to show your human side works best in this context.

Social networks know that users value an informative, engaging, and visually-stimulating experience. Status updates that show you are active in your community, combined with visuals that create a 'feel' for your brand, complement each other perfectly. They give people an idea of what you're all about. Since your business is a tour or activity, there's an opportunity to be more visual than many other businesses...take advantage of it!



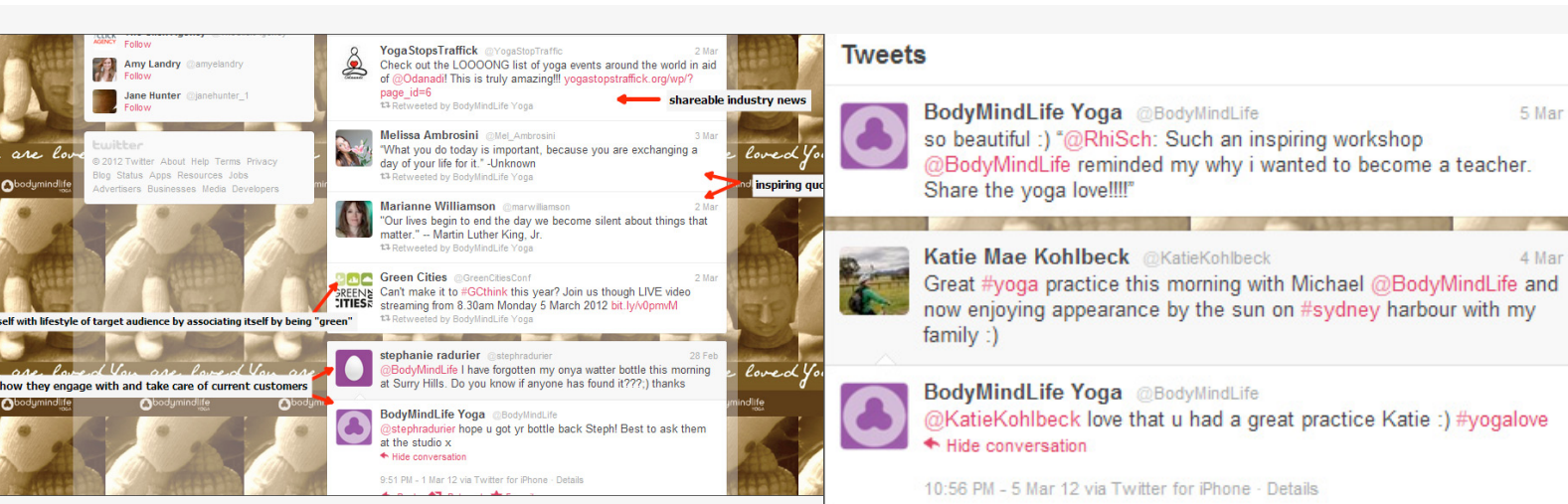
It's not secret
it's
SOCIAL



Here are three examples of how to do it right on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, using examples of three tour or activity businesses:

Twitter: Yoga Studio

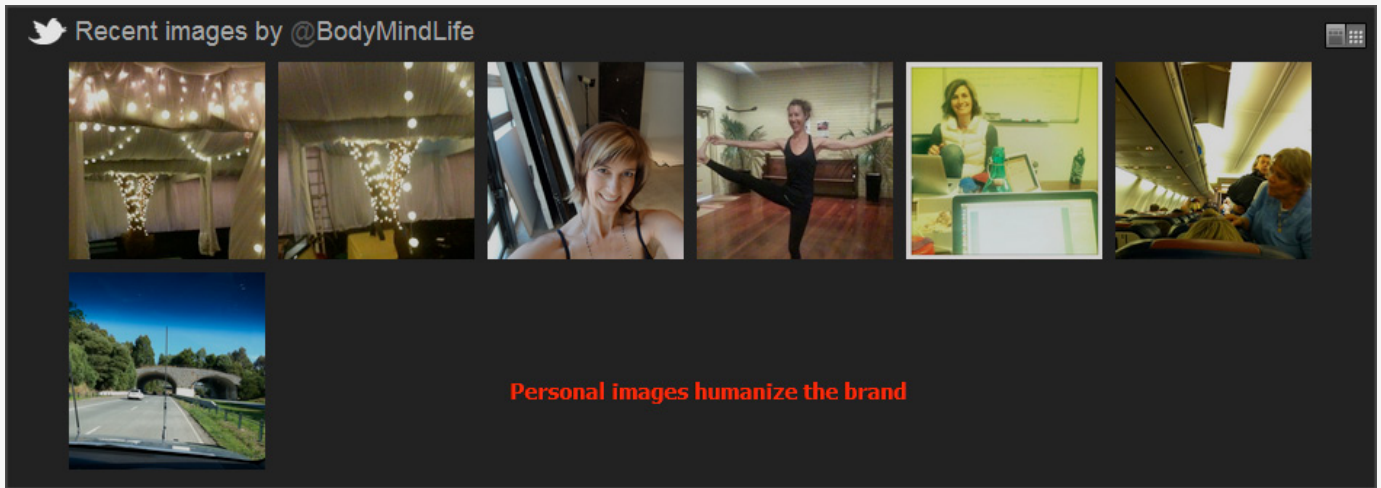
@BodyMindLife Yoga Studio in Sydney has a great mixture of status updates. With just a glance at their Twitter stream you have a good feel of what their brand is about - it isn't overly self-promotional and it's run by humans:



They integrate three different kinds of tweets here:

- #1** **Shareable tweets.** Industry news (yoga events around the world) and motivational quotes are great bringers of retweets, as long as they are of interest to your target audience.
- #2** **Brand-defining tweets.** By retweeting a post by Green Cities, they associate themselves with a value that a lot of their target audience identify with. Yoga is put in the context of an overall lifestyle that also includes being eco-conscious.
- #3** **Engaging tweets.** Retweeting and replying to positive mentions is Twitter's version of customer testimonials. By taking time to respond to each mention - no matter how trivial - this yoga studio shows that they care about each customer even after they sign up. It gives you a positive idea of how you will be treated should you decide to join.

Twitter is less focused on visuals than Facebook or Pinterest, since it's more about giving short, timely updates. Still, you should take advantage of their recent update that integrates image-posting for accounts:



The kind of images chosen here work to humanize the brand by giving you a look into what goes on behind the scenes. You instantly feel like you have peeked into a day in the running of the studio.

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

"We were able to more than double the amount of people we were able to service, from 470 to 1000 in just a one month period!"

Chuck Dixon - **Tulsa Helicopter**



Facebook: Scuba Diving Services

SubAquatics provides scuba diving services and education. To increase credibility on their Facebook page, they have one recommendation top-right, and start their defining sentence with “40 years of scuba experience!”

Besides their exciting visual content (videos of diving through shipwrecks and photo albums), they share more mundane visuals of their product - but not in a way that is obviously promoting it. Instead, they phrase it in the context of lifestyle, so that you imagine yourself diving with it:



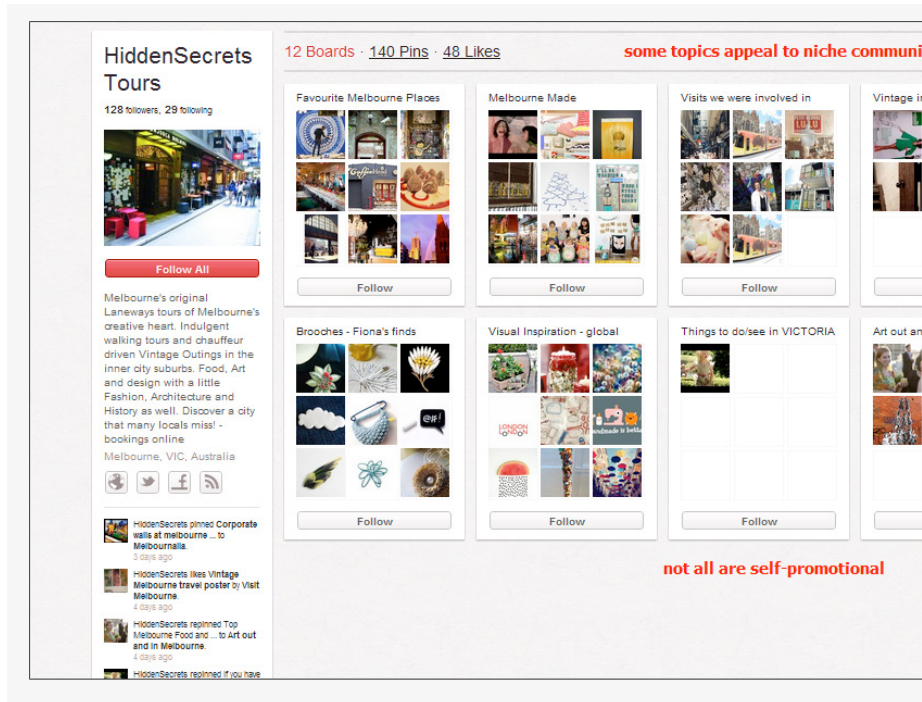
Another important development to note is Facebook’s ability to integrate with online booking systems, like Rezdy. Take advantage of this! Make sure the suppliers you use have easy integration with social media.

Pinterest: Walking Tour

Because Pinterest is highly visual in nature, there is so much potential for tour and activity operators to get in on it. Hidden Secrets Tours use Pinterest boards effectively by choosing topics that are broad (books we love, other experiences we love, global visual inspiration), as well as those that appeal to niche communities:

Niche board topics like vintage, arts, and brooches are good to target because they're so specific, and the people you attract will be passionate about them.

Make sure your social media accounts have elements which are educational, highly shareable and eye-catching. Focus more on how your products promote your audience's lifestyle rather than the products themselves.



DO YOU LIKE THIS EBOOK?

Once a week we blog about industry trends and useful tips for tour and activity operators. If you'd like to receive it direct to your email, please subscribe to our blog by clicking the button below. All we need is your email address.





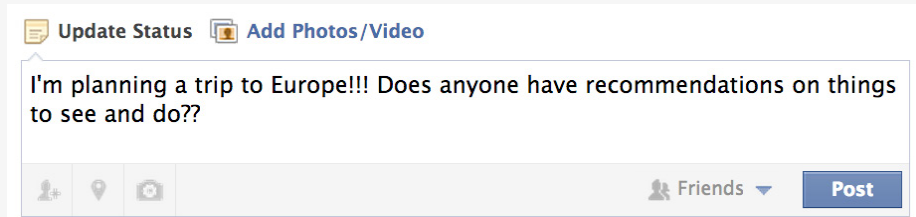
CHAPTER 3 - GETTING STARTED

HOW YOU SHOULD USE FACEBOOK FOR BUSINESS

If you don't have a Facebook page, you are missing out on a big opportunity.

If you run a tour and activity company in a particular area, and you don't have a Facebook page, you are missing out on a big opportunity.

More than half of the population of the United States has a Facebook profile now — and those people are using Facebook to plan their next vacation. It's not uncommon to hop on Facebook and see a status from a friend that says “Heading to Paris next month, what should I go see?”



Facebook is a cheap (as in, free) way to connect with your customers, generate buzz and increase your profits.

In 2011,

- more than 51% of travel brands that had a Facebook presence noted that they had an increase in business that year.
- Just about half of the travel brands on Facebook found that their bookings increased because of their presence on the large social networking site, and
- 71% of travel brands on Facebook found that they had better engagement and conversation with their customers.

This is an opportunity to hear directly from customers, to build excitement about what you have to offer and ultimately grow your business into the 21st century.

Facebook Page Essentials for Tours and Activities

You will want to make sure your Facebook page looks professional and provides valuable information to those who are looking to connect with you.

Cover Photo & Profile Picture

To start, add a cover photo and a profile picture.

Your cover photo is the main image that customers will see when they click on your page, and it spans the length of the browser. Choose a high resolution image that gets across a message about your business. If you provide tours of San Francisco, perhaps a cover photo of the Golden Gate Bridge taken on one of your tours is a good choice. It should be attractive and interesting, inspiring the customer to dig deeper into your Facebook page.

Here's a great example from Melbourne By Foot walking tours:



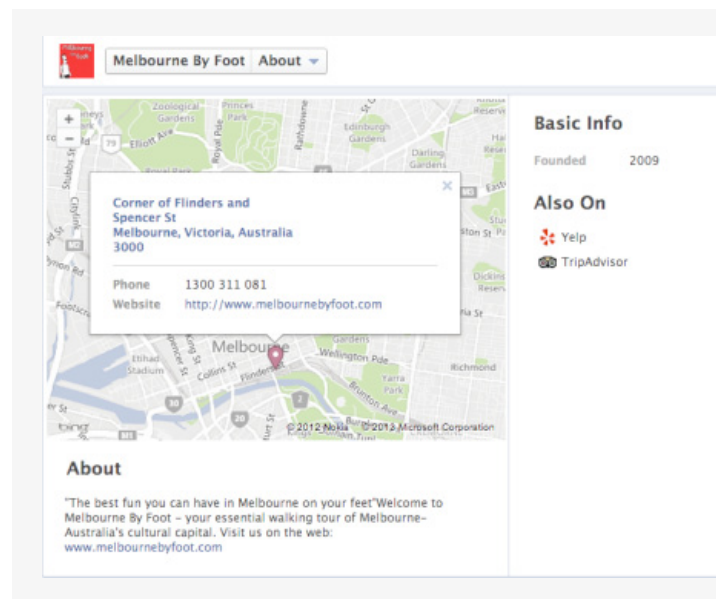
Your profile picture should consist of your brand name or logo — something the consumer can easily identify with when they are conversing with you on the site. The profile picture will show up next to any comments or status updates that you post on the page.

About Section

Be sure to fill out all of the relevant fields when building your profile.

You will want to include contact information such as phone numbers, e-mails and other social media accounts so that customers can easily stay in touch with you.

For instance, if you offer bike rentals on Mackinac Island, your about section could say “We rent out the best bikes of all shapes and sizes to visitors of Mackinac Island. You won’t find better prices or better quality bikes anywhere else on the island.” In the “About” section, provide a brief description of the services you provide.



Posting on Your Tour and Activity Facebook Page

Lee McCabe is the director of Travel, Global Vertical Marketing at Facebook, and he recommends that tour and activity operators spend their time creating light-hearted posts that help to engage potential Facebook fans.

Post Frequently

Be sure to post frequently to your page in order to stay relevant on your customer’s news feeds. Strike a balance because you don’t want to post too much. Once a day is perfect.

Interesting blog posts about the area work well, as well as industry news items. Asking your customers a question at the end of the post is a great way to get the conversation started, and interested customers will likely share your post with their own set of friends. This is the perfect way to get the word out about your business.

Post Visual Content

In addition to news items and interesting stories, you will want to post relevant photos and videos to your Facebook page.

For instance, as a tour operator, you will want to post plenty of photographs of recent tours. If you do walking tours throughout London and came across an interesting find one day, snap a quick photo on your iPhone and upload it to your Facebook page right then and there.

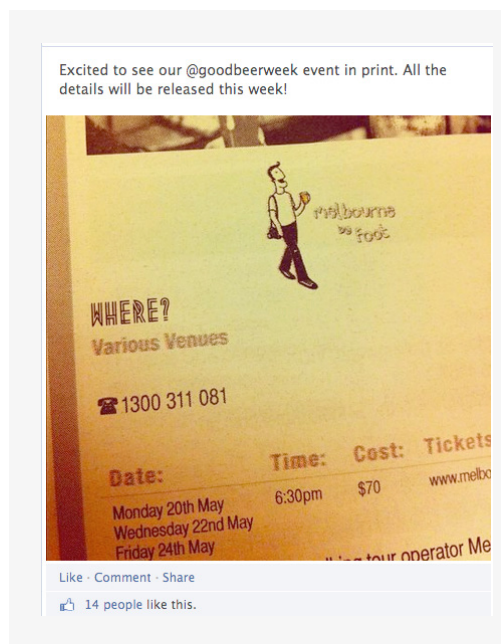
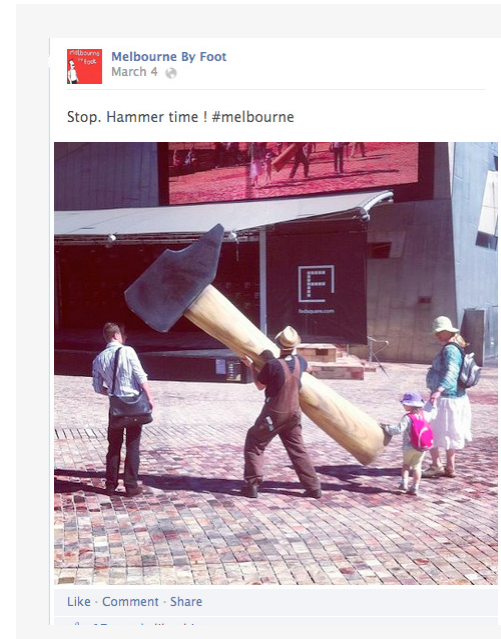
Your Facebook fans will love the instant updates and it will get them excited about their upcoming tours with you.

Promote Yourself

Also be sure to promote sales, specials and new products through status updates.

Again, see how Melbourne By Foot is doing it right:

Clever tour operator software vendors like Rezdy allow you to include links to your online booking software so that customers can quickly and easily make their reservations through your Facebook page.



Generating Buzz with Contests on Your Facebook Page

Contests are a great way to get a lot of fans very quickly, but it's important to recognize that these will not always be quality fans. However, the more fans you have the more likely other friends will find you and that increases your odds of securing quality fans in the future.

General travel contests often have a giveaway as a reward, such as a free tour or a discounted activity or excursion for someone taking a trip in that area. People love to get free stuff, so contests are always a hit. As part of the contest rules, ask your participants to share your status or promote the business on their personal pages. This will help you generate buzz and get more people to like your page.

Start Using Facebook Professionally

Once you get your Facebook page up and running, it is important to make it a part of your daily routine. You will want to update your Facebook page several times throughout the day, providing your friends with valuable information, interesting stories that are worth discussing and high-resolution photographs and videos.

Facebook is not only a great way to advertise the tours that you offer and the activities that people can participate in on their next vacation, but it's a wonderful way to connect with your customers on a personal level. It allows you to become a part of their daily lives and conversation, something that is not possible on any other medium available today.

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

"The booking system I was using before wasn't suited to tour operators, it was more for accommodation. It wasn't user-friendly or intuitive, and I couldn't access it remotely."

Dave Carswell - **Melbourne By Foot**





CHAPTER 4 - GETTING STARTED

GROW YOUR FAN BASE WITH FACEBOOK CONTEST

Use Facebook contests to increase the social reach of your Facebook page.

facebook

We've already talked about how you can use social media for your tour or activity business, so today we're going to talk about growing your tour or activity's Facebook fan base. It's become common practice now to run special Facebook offers through competitions and giveaways, but if you're new to it all, then here are a few examples that highlight the basics you must cover when running a Facebook contest.

#1 Promote your Facebook page

This may seem a little obvious, but it's amazing how many people simply forget to ask. How will anyone know you have a contest on if they don't know you have a Facebook page? Have a look at what Jackson Hole Eco Tours does; not only do they rightly link to Facebook on their "About Us" page, they name the page "Eco Tours on Facebook" which is good for search engine love:

The screenshot shows the website for Eco Tour Adventures. The navigation menu includes links for HOME, WILDLIFE TOURS, WINTER TOURS, ABOUT US, and EDUCATION. The 'ABOUT US' page is active, and a blue 'facebook' button is highlighted with a red arrow. A callout box shows the Facebook page name 'Eco Tours on Facebook' and another 'facebook' button.

ECOTOUR ADVENTURES
Wilderness. Connection. Sustainability
Jackson Hole, Wyoming

HOME WILDLIFE TOURS WINTER TOURS ABOUT US EDUCATION

About Us - Eco Tour Adventures **facebook**

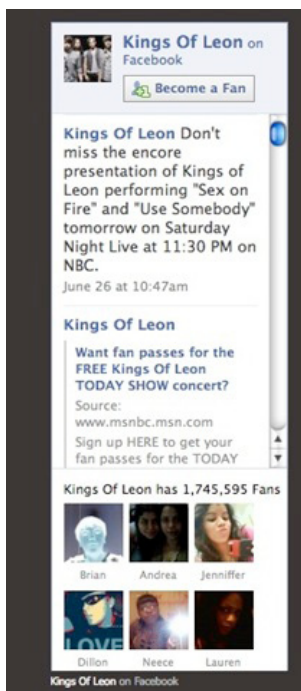
WINTER TOURS ABOUT US EDUCATION

facebook Eco Tours on Facebook

Eco Tour Adventures was created with the idea of helping people connect with the world through wildlife observation and natural history interpretation. We believe that one is more familiar with the intricate workings of the ecosystem, he or she has a deeper appreciation and connection with their environment. With this stronger bond we believe will make more environmentally sound choices in their day to day lives.

Eco Tour Adventures strives to be an environmentally friendly business. By using BioDiesel our vehicles we are decreasing our use of petroleum. Partnering with the Carbon Fund a carbon neutral business. Supporting our local economy is important to us; therefore, we use local services and products when possible. We feel that contributing through our Dollars for Conservation program our guests can give back to the landscapes that they have connected to and enjoyed during their stay in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. An additional goal of Eco Tour Adventures is to be a positive role model for other businesses. Our hope is that more organizations will make eco friendly choices.

You can also choose to put it on your home page like Adventure Kayaking SA does:



Or if you want to get fancy, you can install a free plugin like **WordPress' Facebook Fan Box**, which allows you to display a Facebook Fan Box on your website, like Kings of Leon did here:

Put it up on your most trafficked pages. We would recommend your Home Page, Blog (if you don't have one, it's time to start!), About Us, and Contact Us pages as the bare minimum.

3 Have clear Terms & Conditions

Though this is often skimmed over as “the boring bit”, you need to make sure that you’re clear on your T&C’s to cover your behind. Here’s how Gecko’s Adventures did it:

GOOD LUCK WINNING 2 GRANDS WORTH OF AWESOME! HERE'S THE NITTY GRITTY...

***Terms & Conditions for the Gecko's Facebook competition**

Prize: AUD\$2000 Gecko's voucher to be used towards Gecko's tours. Voucher can only be used for the land tour or voyage and cannot be used to purchase international flights, internal flights that are a part of the tour, permits, local payments in Africa or other ancillary costs including but not limited to pre/post tour accommodation and travel insurance. The voucher must be redeemed and travel completed by 31 December 2011. There are two prizes to be won, each worth AUD\$2000. Entry: to enter the competition, entrants must 'like' the Gecko's Adventures Facebook page and complete the online entry form in full prior to 31 March 2011. This is the only method of entry into the competition. The online entry form can only be accessed once the entrant has clicked the 'like' button on Facebook. Only one entry per person will be accepted. The random draw will take place on or before Friday 8 April 2011 at Gecko's head office in Melbourne, Australia and the winner will be notified by email. Gecko's takes no responsibility for any entries that are lost in cyber-space. If the winner resides in a country other than Australia, the value of the voucher will be converted into the winner's local currency on the day they begin the booking process. The currency conversion will be via www.xe.com and Gecko's takes no responsibility for and will not compensate for any changes or fluctuations in the exchange rate. Gecko's takes no responsibility for winners who do not redeem their voucher within the timeframe specified. No compensation or refund will be made to winners who do not redeem the full value of their voucher within the timeframe specified. Should the winner/s not acknowledge the email informing them that they have won by 30 April 2011, Gecko's reserves the right to award the prize to another random entrant. The winner/s can use their voucher towards multiple tours and if the tour cost exceeds AUD\$2000, the winner/s simply pay the difference. Entrants and travellers must be aged 18 years or over. Tours must be booked a minimum of 56 days prior to travel. Prize cannot be exchanged, transferred or sold. Winner/s must book their prize via the Peregrine Travel Centre in Melbourne. Contact details will be supplied to the winner. Gecko's lic no. 31009.

That way, upset entrants who won but failed to redeem their voucher can't blame Gecko's for awarding the prize to another random entrant. They should have read the fine print!



CHAPTER 5 -GETTING STARTED

TWITTER WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

"In 2011, about 62% of travel industry business had a Twitter profile. By 2012, that number had jumped to 75% and it continues to climb today." Frederic Gonzalo

“500 million twitter accounts”



#travel #tours #activites

Jumping into the world of social media can seem daunting, but as a tour and activity business in a tourist destination, it's an essential element to your marketing plan.

According to Frederic Gonzalo,

- Social media is one of the most successful ways to market your travel services, with more than 50 percent of direct bookings coming from social media accounts.
- Social media can reduce marketing costs by up to 24 percent, allowing your profit margins to increase significantly.

Twitter is one of the most important social networks to be a part of and have an active presence on, as it's one of the most widely used social networking sites.

Basically, Twitter is a forum where people can send out 'tweets' to their followers. A tweet is a short message that can be no longer than 140 characters (links get shortened), and people use tweets to share things they found interesting, make big announcements, voice their opinions and send a quick message to their friends.

Personal tweets range from discussing the meal plans for that evening to voicing a political opinion. Business tweets, on the other hand, should be structured a bit differently (hint: link back to

your website).

As a business in the tourism industry, you should join Twitter in order to connect with your customers on a more social level while also promoting your products and services.

Why Use Twitter for Business?

The popularity of Twitter is on the rise, specifically for businesses that are a part of the travel industry. In 2011, about 62 percent of industry businesses had a Twitter profile. By 2012, that number had jumped to 75 percent and it continues to climb today (Source).

Twitter is used by the travel industry for:

- Customer engagement. It's a way to connect with past, present and future customers. By joining the conversation, you will gain credibility as a business and develop a unique relationship with your customers.
- Customer service. Many travelers today want to be able to quickly and easily reach the companies and businesses they have booked with for their trips. You can use Twitter as an instant customer service line, allowing you to quickly and easily satisfy your clients.
- Promoting Brand Identity. Your Twitter account allows you to use an image as your signature photograph. Many companies opt to use a brand name or logo to increase brand identity among their clients. This image shows up next to all of the Tweets that you send out to your followers.
- Running competitions. This is a great way to interact with your clients and promote your business. Many Twitter contest rules involve retweeting a specific tweet and following a company. You can start your own contest to gain more followers and increase awareness about your tour and activity business.

Quite frankly, as a tour and activity operator, you need to develop a presence on Twitter to stay relevant to your customers and to compete in the industry.

Setting Up Your Twitter Account

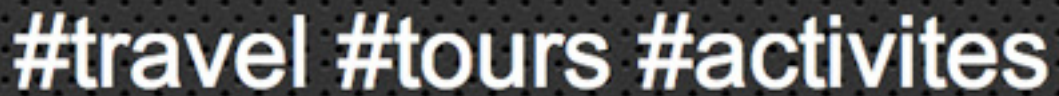
You will want to set up your Twitter account in a way that makes it both efficient and effective. The following tips will help you get a successful start on Twitter.

- **Name:** First you will want to create an account name. It's best to keep your Twitter name short, and avoid awkward and cumbersome characters. If at all possible, register your company's name in order to make it easy for your customers to find and identify.
- **Image:** For your profile image, it's best to choose a business logo. Make sure the logo will be visible in the tiny size that is on display when you send out a tweet. According to The Next Web, a monochromatic photograph is best. It's best to keep your profile picture uniform and use the same photograph from your other social media accounts.
- **Bio:** Your bio is one of the most important parts of your Twitter profile, because most users will read your short, 160-character description before deciding whether or not to follow you. You have to keep it short, so choose your words carefully and make each character count. Sometimes including contact information like a phone number is helpful.
- **Tweets:** The ultimate goal is to send valuable tweets that will lend themselves to retweets. When someone retweets what you have said, your message is circulated out to all of their followers. This allows your reach to increase exponentially. Keep your tweets diverse, send out links to articles, promotional information, interesting quotes, twit pics and events. Be witty and get creative — tweeting is meant to be light-hearted and fun but also valuable.
- **Photos:** Tweet at least two or three photos every day. Researchers have found that photographs get the most engagement on social media sites, as people love something visually interesting and appealing. By tweeting relevant photos about your tours and activities, you will generate interest and excitement about your business.



Choosing Hashtags

A hashtag, formerly known as the pound sign, is a way of tagging your tweet so that it's a part of a general conversation. It's one of the keys to getting noticed on Twitter, but according to Hash Tracking you will want to choose your hashtag wisely. Follow these steps to pick the best hashtags for your tour and activity operation.



#travel #tours #activites

1. Start by thinking about what your tweet is about. You will want to use a hashtag that is relevant to the content of the tweet.
2. Choose a hashtag that is trending, but keep it general. For instance, if you are a tourism company in Detroit using hashtags like #Detroit or #PureMichigan would help you promote your tweet.
3. Consider adding an additional hashtag to your post that is not trending as high but might help you reach more valuable followers.
4. Never add too many hashtags. You want your tweet to be easy to read, and you don't want it to be flagged for spam. You will want to strike the delicate balance between using a relevant hashtag without getting lost in the crowd.

Now that you know how to set up your Twitter account and you recognize all of the benefits it can have for your tour and activity operation, it's time to jump into the Twitterverse today.

When you immerse yourself in this social networking site, you will find that you can quickly gain followers who will retweet your information. This promotes your business and helps you advance within the social networking site, and more than likely your business will continue to grow.

In the 21st century world, people conduct their lives through social media — and they are relying on it more and more to plan their vacations and excursions. When you have a presence on Twitter, you will find customers can easily connect with your company and book a reservation for your tours and activities.



CHAPTER 6 -REVIEW SITES

THREE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE ON TRIPADVISOR

Learn why TripAdvisor is one of the top websites in the global travel industry's Destination sector - and how to take advantage of it.



In case you haven't heard, TripAdvisor Australia is about to become the number one website in the global travel industry's Destination sector. Their travel site lets travelers plan their trip through reviews of destinations, hotels and available activities. We've already talked about how tour and activity businesses can leverage TripAdvisor's Facebook app; Cities I've Visited. This week, we talk about why you need to make sure you have TripAdvisor (as well as other user review sites like it) on your radar, and how its power lies in its word-of-mouth recommendations (manifested in online reviews).

For tour and activity operators, TripAdvisor is a great vehicle for:



Gaining Exposure

It's easy to grasp the connection between site traffic and business exposure, especially if the site in question is a mega-hub for travelers. Right now, TripAdvisor's Australian site only has one website in its way; Wotif.

But TripAdvisor Australia is inching closer and closer to the finish line, with just a 0.12% gap in market share between them. In any case, if you list your business on sites like these, odds are you'll get found by lot of potential customers.

Also, if your online booking system is integrated with TripAdvisor and Facebook like Rezdy is (meaning they can book directly from your Facebook Business Page and connect to TripAdvisor's website), it's even easier for customers to share their experience with their friends. Since people value first-hand thoughts about an experience, such social media integration is good for business!

Rank	Website	Domain	Percentage of Visits	Previous Position
1	Wotif.com	www.wotif.com	5.99%	1
2	TripAdvisor - Australia	www.tripadvisor.com.au	5.87%	2
3	Booking.com	www.booking.com	5.49%	3
4	TripAdvisor	www.tripadvisor.com	4.13%	4
5	Stayz	www.stayz.com.au	3.46%	5
6	Hotels.com	www.hotels.com	1.96%	7
7	Agoda Australia	www.agoda.com.au	1.84%	6
8	HotelClub	www.hotelclub.com	1.66%	9
9	Totaltravel.com	www.totaltravel.com	1.34%	8
10	Lonely Planet	www.lonelyplanet.com	1.08%	-

#2 Earning Trust and Credibility


Funnily enough, people trust what other people say about you more than what you say about you! That's just a fact of life. No one instantly believes everything a business tells them about what they're selling - and since you're selling an experience, your prospects need to know they're not going to waste their time and become disappointed. TripAdvisor helps to satisfy this human need by ranking businesses according to user reviews. (first image).

Instantly the traveler knows that these are the top-ranked attractions in Las Vegas. They can also compare how the owner describes the experience to the last three reviews about it. This review section is great if what's said is positive, but it also means that you become prone to unhappy customer posts that reflect negatively on your service (Wings Day Spa image)

How compelled do you feel to check out Wings Day Spa the next time you're in Vegas after seeing that? Not very. In fact, reviews are so powerful that they even made one user hesitate in using tickets that she got for free:

Instead of finding out for herself, she posts on TripAdvisor's forum and asks others whether Chris Angel's magic show is worth going to. Even though the tickets were free, she would rather not go than be disappointed. People are willing to do their own research by engaging with others

Dig This map | dire

 #1 of 506 attractions in Las Vegas

 118 reviews

Owner description: America's first and only heavy equipment playground where YOU'RE in control. Re-live your sandbox days & being a child but this time it's for real. Huge Caterpillar bulldozer excavators await you in one of the most memorable experiences will ever encounter. < less

Attraction type Amusement/ Theme Parks; Educational Sites


Distance 5.4 km from city centre

"The never sleeping city!" 13 Mar 2012

"2nd Time Just as Fun" 13 Mar 2012

"Tonka toys on steroids- Awsome" 13 Mar 2012

World Class Driving map | dire

 #2 of 506 attractions in Las Vegas

 111 reviews

Owner description: Ever dream of driving a Ferrari and Lamborg Realize your dream with an exhilarating tour to the Hoover Dam through the amazing Red Rock Canyon. World Class Driving's flex exotic supercars includes technological marvels such as the all-n Ferrari 458 Italia and Lamborghini LP560. A great option to not j see the sights, but do it in style from behind the wheel of the greatest supercars ever produced! < less


Attraction type Scenic Drives

Distance 8.1 km from city centre

"Fantastic time and I would do it again!" 14 Mar 2012

"My husband never dreamed he'd ever get to drive..." 13 Mar 201

Wings Day Spa

 #16 of 16 attractions in Surfers Para

 29 reviews

Attraction type Spas

Distance 1.2 km from city centre

"Wings Day Spa" 26 Feb 2012

"absolute disgrace!" 16 Feb 2012 ←

"Useless" 7 Feb 2012 ←



CHAPTER 7 -REVIEW SITES

THREE QUICK WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR TRIP ADVISOR LISTING

Since your TripAdvisor listing will often be your first impression, it's important to make it the best it can be.

You probably have all the obvious basics involved with setup covered, like uploading brilliant photos and videos, providing up-to-date contact information, and actually getting your customers to post (hopefully good) reviews on your page. So today we're going to talk about those little extras that you can use to promote your tour or activity business in a positive light. Here are three quick tips you can use to improve your current TripAdvisor listing:



Embed TripAdvisor Widgets

These free widgets are essentially buttons that drive people to your profile on TripAdvisor. Typically, they're placed on your website's homepage, but feel free to get creative and place them wherever you feel they will compel the most action. Since there are different kinds of widgets available, you can match them to relevant pages on your site. Remember to also add them to your Facebook Business Page and any other social media accounts that your business has.

Use these widgets to ask for reviews, link to reviews, and link to your photos. You can even get a "Certificate of Excellence" widget to show off how many 5 star reviews you received:

Check out our reviews on Tripadvisor. We are the highest rated Dive Center serving the Similan Islands

Sure - we think we offer a good trip (actually we think we offer awesome trips), but why not check out reviews to see what other people think of us! We are very proud to be number one in Thailand (Khao Lak) and Indonesia (Labuan Bajo) and we always work hard to make each guest has a positive experience. We take your safety and comfort very seriously and it is our goal for you to join us again! Rather than just some holiday diving, we try to make each trip a memorable experience.



You can also take advantage of your current online booking system's social media capabilities. Some solutions, like Rezdy, allow bookings to be made directly from your Facebook Business Page, and connect directly to TripAdvisor's website.

#2

Monitor Reviews...

For Guideline Violators

We already talked about how TripAdvisor is a great way to get honest feedback from your customers. Sometimes, though, that feedback might violate TripAdvisor’s review guidelines. That’s why it’s so important to monitor your reviews at all times; you can report such cases straight away.

Fake travelers posting negative reviews should be your main concern in this case. TripAdvisor have a strict fraud detection system in place to weed those out, but you have to alert them to it first. The faster you report it, the faster it will be resolved.

For Critics

When it comes to unhappy customers, you should definitely get back to them. TripAdvisor allow for management response to each review, and advise management to structure their responses in this way:

The diagram illustrates a management response to a guest review, with callouts explaining the structure of the reply:

- Dear Guest**
- Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback regarding our hotel. I am certainly disappointed that your stay was not all that it could have been.** (Callout: The reply starts by thanking the reviewer, then apologizes for the less than perfect experience.)
- I would like to apologize on behalf of the hotel and its team for your stay. Our standard procedure in this event would be to offer an upgraded room to you on a different floor as we do try to always allocate all our families with children together on the lower floors of the hotel as this is where our interconnecting rooms are located. The interaction with our staff member with regards to your comments about the noise is certainly not typical and I will be sure to raise your experience with our entire service team as a training exercise. I am pleased that your contact with Steve was memorable and I will be sure to thank him personally for this.** (Callout: It addresses the reviewer's specific points.)
- Next, the reply addresses the staff complaint, making sure that potential guests know that he is acting on the feedback. He then reinforces the positive note around the good service provided by one staff member.**
- You may also be interested to learn that just this week we have started a full refurbishment of our guest rooms, as well as our lobby, bar and restaurant. Included in this refurbishment is brand new guest room carpet and a much thicker underlay which we believe will soften any noise coming into your room via any doorways. I would take pleasure in welcoming you back after our refurbishment is completed in February so that you could experience the hotel as it was meant to be. Please feel free to contact myself directly via the below details if you are travelling to Brisbane again so that I may personally take care of you and your next stay.** (Callout: He takes the opportunity to mention upgrades which will help resolve the room noise issue and enhance the communal areas.)
- Once again please do accept my apologies and I do hope that the remainder of your trip to Australia and New Zealand was** (Callout: He finishes with an apology and good wishes.)


CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

"We lose money when people don't turn up, because we might expect 10 students, but only 6 show up, but there are 2 coaches waiting."

Dan Frodsham - Newcastle Surf School



It's especially important to respond to those extremely negative critiques. Take a look at how West End Water Sports handled a worst-case scenario review:



mannyman30092
Atlanta, Georgia
2 reviews
2 helpful votes

"The most terrifying experience ever"
Reviewed April 1, 2011
2 people found this review helpful

Horrible experience. Faulty equipment. Almost drowned out there. My wife and I got married in st. croix and purchased a tour package in Frederiksted. We decided to try and get her over her fear of the ocean. We arrived at west end watersports only to be rushed on to a wave runner by a guy named "Dustin" . We recieved 1 min of safety and riding instructions and were sent on our way into the ocean. We have never been on a wave runner but thought hey, we're on our honeymoon. Within 3 mins of riding fun, we decided to stop for a sec and enjoy the view. The thing sunk to the side and knocked us off. My wife can't swim and started freaking out. I grabbed here and swam back to the runner and tried to flip it over. After that the thing was sunk. Another tourist came by and helped. "Dustin shows up 5 mins later and starts screaming about how much he just paid for the thing 3 days ago and so forth. 5 mins after that when my wife and I are on another riders runner he asks "are you ok?".....WTH !!!!! When we get back to shore, he's on the phone ignoring us threatening to charge us \$1000 for damages, because we didn't flip over the runner within 2 mins. While this guy claims he's a lifeguard and watersports expert, he seemed to act more like a claims adjuster. God forbid he asks why my wife is shaking. She'll never go out on any watercraft ever again. Thanks alot "Dustin" you'll be hearing from my attorney.

Visited April 2011

EEK! This bad experience might actually result in a lawsuit. This is what management replied:

tjacks20, Owner at West End Water Sports, responded to this review
August 23, 2011

Hello and good day. We are Brian and Scott the new owners of West End Water Sports located on the west end of St Croix on Rainbow beach. We are aware of this situation and would like to apologize that this happened to guests who visited this beach. It was due to situations such as this that the previous owners had a struggling business and were forced to sell. West End Water Sports is now a very professional and customer service oriented business dedicated to making your beach day one of the best you'll experience anywhere. We have all brand new machines and a 100% new staff on hand dedicated to making all riders from novice to expert feel comfortable on our machines in every way.

[Report response as inappropriate](#)

Hats off to Brian and Scott for addressing this issue in the right way. Not only did they own up to it (instead of ignoring it and hoping it goes away), they also clearly state that they're the new owners - which means it won't recur for anyone, because the business is being run by entirely new people. This lets those browsing their listing know they shouldn't fear being mistreated in the same way.



Join the Spotlight Destination Program

This program gets you some valuable screen time on TripAdvisor's homepage using a "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" method; you link to them from your homepage, and they give you a promotional placement on their homepage in return. However, not just anyone can join - you need to submit an enquiry which is then subject to approval.

It's important to note that this program does not help you in your SEO efforts (by giving you a good inbound link to increase your rank on Google's search engine results page). Its only aim is to increase traffic to your site.



CHAPTER 8 - REVIEW SITES

FOUR TIPS ON FACEBOOK TESTIMONIALS

Use these tactics to get your customers to give you glowing reviews on Facebook



You have your Facebook page all set up, so that everyone who is traveling to your area and wants to book one of your tours or activities can interact with you. You've picked out the perfect cover photo, and you have a great profile picture that showcases your brand name and logo. You have your contact information listed, a few photo albums posted and a witty status already on your Timeline.

Now the real work begins — you have to get your past, present and future clients to interact with you. But how?

The following tips can help you get testimonials from your customers and also help you encourage people to engage with you on this ever-popular social network.

1 Offer a prize or incentive for leaving a review of your company and its services.

According to Marketing Sherpa, some travel companies offer gift cards to the customers who leave the most beneficial, helpful and informative reviews.

People love Facebook contests, so making a contest about reviews and testimonials is a great way to promote your company while gaining a few reviews along the way.

Popular gift card choices include Amazon, Starbucks and Target.

2 Send out an e-mail survey and ask for a Facebook testimonial at the end of it.

Before you give a tour or provide an experience, be sure to get your customers' contact information. Have them include their full name, address, phone number and e-mail address. About a week after they have visited your location, send them an e-mail with a survey asking about their experience.

In addition to the standard questions you would ask in this type of survey, ask them to leave a testimonial for you to post on your business Facebook page. Many people are more inclined to leave a testimonial this way, so it helps you to get more reviews than you would if you simply asked for them on Facebook.

3 Advertise your Facebook page at the end of a tour.

Your customers are going to find your business through many different means. Some will receive your business name as a referral from friends and family, and others will find you simply by walking down the street.

Not everyone will automatically realize you have a presence on the largest social media network, so don't forget to remind them.

Simply inform them that you have a Facebook page and if they want to see photographs and get more information about upcoming tours and promotions, they should like your page. Of course, ask politely for them to leave a post about their experiences once they have found you on Facebook.

4 Simply ask for a testimonial through a status update or a photograph.

Sometimes getting testimonials on Facebook is as simple as asking for them. Every once in a while, post a short status update that asks clients to say what they love about your tours and activities.

The status update could simply read "Tell us why you loved the tour you went on with your company." You will be surprised how many people will take a few seconds out of their day to reminisce about their time spent with you and provide you with a kind testimonial.

ONLINE BOOKING SOFTWARE

For tours, activities, attractions, rentals, events, transports and all things to do.

- ✓ 30 minutes to setup
- ✓ Manage your availability
- ✓ Accept online bookings
- ✓ Instant payment to your bank account
- ✓ Commission free, no lock in contract
- ✓ Connect with your agents



GROW YOUR BUSINESS WITH REZDY TODAY.