

An Introduction to

Social media for tour operators

Learn why social media is so valuable and how you should use it for your tour and activity

Why you should read this book

Tour and activity operators should read this eBook to learn

- 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. Social media checklist Checklists that'll help get you set up with effective social media channels or ensure your current channels are following best practices.

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CHAPTER ONE

Why it's time for tour or activity operators to use social media



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

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

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



#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 favors 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 TWO

How to use social media for your tour or activity business

ALTOB



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 round 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 dont'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! 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:

- 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 imageposting 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.





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 that are educational, highly shareable and eye-catching. Focus more on how your products promote your audience's lifestyle rather than the products themselves.



CHAPTER THREE

How you should use Facebook for business



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 2019:

- 68% of Americans used Facebook.
- Of that, 74% visit Facebook daily.
- Worldwide, there are 2.41 billion active users.



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 highresolution 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

bout
HOURS
I Always Open
CONTACT INFO
🗞 Call 1300 311 081
河 m.me/melbournebyfoot
⊠ info@melbournebyfoot.com
http://www.melbournebyfoot.com
MORE INFO
About Welcome to Melbourne By Foot - your essential walking tour of Melbourne- Australia's cultural capital.
Melbourne By Foot is a locally owned and operated walking tour company. We specialise in small group tours that aim to unearth the cultural landscape of the city.
Our tours are fun, informative and personable – they are designed to highlight the city's past and present and are led by passionate Melburnians who are keen to share their city with you.
Tour Guide · Historical Tour Agency

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.

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.

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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.

Excited to see our @goodbeerweek event in print. All the

envodler

Time:

6:30pm

SOOF EC

Cost: Ticket

tour operator Me

\$70

www.melb

details will be released this week!

WHERE?

Date:

Like · Comment · Share

14 people like this.

Various Venues

2 1300 311 081

Monday 20th May Wednesday 22nd May Friday 24th May

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



Stop. Hammer time ! #melbourne



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 highresolution 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.



CHAPTER FOUR

Twitter what you need to know



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 280 characters (links get shortened), and people use tweets to share things they found interesting, make big

"326 Million Active Twitter Users"

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.

- 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.
- 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.





🛿 rezdy

Pinterest is an online pin board where users can collect images and bookmark links in an efficient, organized manner. The website has long been a favorite among Millennials, who have been using it for more than a decade to save recipes, collect decorating ideas, plan outfits and coordinate parties. In recent years, it has become the preferred social network of aspiring travelers, which makes it a valuable space for tour and activity operators to develop a presence.

Pinterest

Pinterest and the travel industry

According to Pinterest, travelers represent a large group of its users. The website's 2018 travel trends report notes that 75 percent of travel Pinners find Pins from travel brands to be useful and relevant. More than 40 million U.S. Pinterest users go on the website every month specifically to search for ideas for their upcoming vacation, and many will book an unplanned trip to a destination based on Pins that they discover. Those in the tour and activity sector should note that most Pinners are looking for local places to try new activities, skills-based travel opportunities and restaurants.

Pinterest tips for tour and activity operators

 Use the Place Pin feature to promote your tour company. Place Pin is one of the rich Pin features that is available to businesses and brands that use Pinterest. With Place Pin, you can create a virtual experience that your followers can enjoy while browsing Pinterest. For example, if you offer city tours of Sydney, you can take photographs of iconic attractions that your visitors will see on your tours, and use the Place Pin feature to create a map that includes those images.

- Link your Pins back to your tour and activity website. SEO statistics show that the average pin will drive at least two site visits and six page views per user, which means that Pinterest can be an easy way to drive traffic to your website. Users find that Pins are a great way for them to save links for places they want to visit again later, so it can be a cost-effective way to boost your unique visitors and increase your conversions.
- Showcase your Pinterest boards on other social platforms. Like many other social networks, you will want to create a following on Pinterest in order to maximize the potential of your account. In order to do this, you can link to your Pinterest boards from your other social profiles. For instance, if you are showcasing a beautiful photo that a user submitted on Instagram, link to your Pinterest board so that your Instagram followers can find more images that are similar from your brand.
- Recognizing the power of Pinterest, tour and activity operators should make an effort to develop a presence on this platform. Whether you are trying out Pinterest for the first time or you working to improve your visibility on the website, you can use these tips to reach the most motivated travelers on this social network.





Instagram for tours & activity operators

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International journal for Influencer Marketing Professionals. Tag us in your pics with @lebuzz_magazine to become a part of our stories

lebuzz-mag.com/en/fitness/weekly-dose-of-inspiration-winter-sports/ Am Nordbahnhof 3, Berlin, Germany

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562

Edit Profile



Instagram has quickly eclipsed many of the original social networks and has become one of the most powerful players in the social game. Users across all demographics have fallen in love with the simplicity of Instagram as well as its innovative sharing abilities. From posts to Stories, there are options for everyone on Instagram. For tour and activity operators, Instagram is an essential component of any social media marketing strategy.

Instagram statistics for tour and activity operators

Instagram is one of the largest social networking sites on the planet, boasting 1 billion users worldwide. The sheer size of it alone is enough to convince nearly any brand to get active on Instagram, but here are a few statistics that might mean even more to tour and activity operators:

Fully 88% of Instagram users are not located in the United States. This is important for tour and activity operators who attract a global audience.

Approximately 71% of Instagram users are under the age of 35. Since millennials and those in Generation Z are avid travelers, Instagram is a worthwhile platform for the tourism industry.

Some 38% of all Instagram users check their Instagram feeds multiple times each day. This means that there are several opportunities to capture the attention of your target audience on Instagram.

How tour operators can use Instagram to drive conversions

These are a few tips that tour operators can use to increase engagement on Instagram:

• Post vivid images frequently, and always use your brand hashtag when you post. You should post at least once or twice per day on Instagram, as users are known to check their feeds several times throughout the day. Your brand hashtag will help you establish brand recognition on Instagram and will allow users to immediately recognize your content.

- Use Stories to create engaging, interactive content. Stories are becoming the go-to form of content on Instagram, with many users opting to post short videos and images throughout the day that will disappear after 24 hours. You can use Stories to create compilations of content that showcase daily life at your tour and activity company. A daily Story might include a video from your tour operator, a few images that customers have tagged you in, and a link to the latest deal you are offering.
- Ask your travelers to tag your brand when they share photos from their experiences with your company on Instagram. In many ways, the content that other users create and post on Instagram about your brand is more valuable than what you share. Instagrammers are notoriously influential in convincing others to try a new experience, so it's important to encourage your travelers to share their photos after their tour is complete.

From vivid images to creative hashtags, there's always something to consider before you post to Instagram. These tips will help you build your base on Instagram and keep your followers engaged with your brand.





Facebook Audit 10 Item Checklist



Cover Image: Do they have one? Is it visually appealing?
Profile Picture: Does it represent their business? Is it high quality?
About Us: Do they have a page description? Is there a link to the website?
About Section: Are all fields completed?
Engagement Levels: Is there engagement over 2%? (engagement/page likes x 100)
Posting Frequency: Are they posting at least 5 times per week? Are they posting at the same time each day?
Responsiveness: Are they responding to all questions and comments?
Content: Are their posts interesting to their audience? Helpful? What are their themes?
Business Objectives: Are they sending people to their website?
Website Internation, De they have each linking to Each ask as their website of a
Website Integration: Do they have easy linking to Facebook on their webpage?

Instagram 15 Item Checklist



	Username: Are you using the same username across all social channels?
	Profile Photo: Is it the same across all channels and does it represent you well?
	Bio: Does it explain your missions and engage your audience?
	CTA: Do you have a call to action or link that leads to your website?
	Contact: Is there a way for your customers to get in touch with you?
	Comments: Do you reply to all comments?
	Engagement: Do you link to collaborators?
	Content: Do you post frequently?
	Content: Do you post at similar times?
	Content: Do you use a consistent color scheme throughout your feed?
	Content: Is it pleasing to view your content together as a grid?
	Hash Tags: Are you consistent with the amount of hash tags you use?
	Hash Tags: Are you using relevant hash tags on all your posts?
	Captions: Are they relevant? Do they build on your Know-Like-Trust factor?
\square	Community: Do you like and comment on your followers' photos?