Social Media Trends for Tourism Boards

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The social media landscape continues to shift and be influenced by users and shaped by marketers and brands.

Now is the time to take a step back and see how four main platforms have grown to compete for users and original content that needs to be platform-specific and what metrics actually matter. As users become more inundated with content, platforms and brands that don’t keep up with the changes will lose them to emerging platforms and other brands.

Monthly active users is a measure used by Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, whereas YouTube utilizes visitors instead of users, to illustrate how large its audience for brands. Although the word "active" has yet to be defined by those platforms, it is safe to say that any “action” in any frequency falls under this definition. YouTube uses monthly active visitors. Facebook celebrated its 10th birthday and is the oldest social media platform with 135 billion monthly active users (MAUs). In comparison, Instagram – the youngest of the aforementioned which was launched in October 2010 – already has 200 million MAUs. Pinterest was launched in March 2010 and has an estimated 53 million active users. Snapchat formerly known as Pictabook launched in July 2011 and has an estimated 100 million active users.

When looking at the travel verticals under the SkiftIQ lens, Airlines, Hotel Brands, Media, and Destinations have the strongest social media presence in terms of followers on all the four platforms. Airline and Media companies are way ahead in terms of acquisitions in part because they are content producing machines and create large momentum due to their large following. Destinations are beating Hotel Brands on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, and are neck-and-neck on Twitter.

Acquisitions are testament to the effect of engaging content and conversations that brands start and join. As users become more selective in what content they react to, their interactions are becoming more valuable in that they mean what they like, share, comment, and click on. To take it a step further, not all these social actions are equal because one is more impactful than the other.

With likes being important, shares or retweets being the most important, and comments and replies somewhere in between, establishing a weighted engagement metric internally will provide a more accurate metric of content performance to better inform return on investment (ROI), creation and curation, regardless of the volume.

As content and communities converge, brands need to stop looking at acquisitions and engagement figures separately and instead, start evaluating content efforts based on...
effectiveness and the quality of its community. Content effectiveness is total engagement divided by total posts and community quality is total followers divided by active users. These two metrics are key in establishing benchmarks to help brands gauge time and resources necessary to produce quality content and manage the community.

Destinations are at different maturity levels on social media and need to make relevant comparisons to have a sensible starting point in setting goals. Part of the presentation segments social media efforts made by Advanced, Integrated and Consistent tourism boards on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Averages in this chart were calculated from the top destinations from SkiftIQ. Visit California, Discover Los Angeles, Visit Philly, Tourism and Events Queensland, and Tourism Australia represented the Advanced group. The metrics for Integrated and Consistent tourism boards were adjusted lower.

In order to compete with Coca Cola, McDonald’s and Red Bull on social media, destinations need to forget social reach, keep an eye on engagement, and focus on the quality of its community. The investment in 2015 will be on resources that cultivate and manage interest-based communities.

"Social Media Trends for Tourism Boards," was presented by our data analyst Joyce Manalo at the Social Media Tourism Symposium in Nashville on November 19, 2014, and contains the state of social media, case studies from top six tourism boards, and upcoming trends.
Hello Nashville & SoMeT14US Guests!

- Social media landscape in 2014
- Which metrics matter now and why
- How tourism boards compete for visits on social
- What’s on the uptrend
### 2014 Social Media Platform Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Monthly Active Users (MAUs)</th>
<th>Status Updates / Day</th>
<th>Audience Outside U.S. &amp; Canada</th>
<th>Mobile MAUs</th>
<th>Mobile First Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facebook</strong></td>
<td>‘04</td>
<td>1.35 Billion</td>
<td>135 Million</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>1.2 Billion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instagram</strong></td>
<td>‘10</td>
<td>200 Million</td>
<td>60 Million</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>YouTube</strong></td>
<td>‘05</td>
<td>1 Billion</td>
<td>144,000</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Twitter</strong></td>
<td>‘06</td>
<td>284 Million</td>
<td>500 Million</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>120 Million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Pew Research Center

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What do today’s social media benchmarks actually mean for destinations?

- Flight to quality on acquisitions and engagement
- Each interaction DOES NOT have the same value
  - Likes, Favorites or Views < Comments < Shares or Retweets
- Acquisition and engagement figures DON’T MATTER SEPARATELY
  - Total Engagement ÷ Total Content = Content Effectiveness
  - Total Followers ÷ Unique Followers Who Interact = Community Quality
- Amplification rates are at least two times more than average
SkiftIQ: Destinations vs Top Travel Verticals

- Within the travel industry, Destinations bests Hotel Brands on social media presence
- Airlines and media lead in acquisitions

Source: SkiftIQ

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SkiftIQ: Social Media Benchmarks for Destinations

- Tourism Boards, DMOs and CVBs are at different levels of maturity on social media.
- Benchmarks need to be adjusted accordingly to set realistic goals.
- Be mindful of the quantity of active fans and quality of content.
- Determine a comfortable starting point.

Source: SkiftIQ
Forget social reach.
Keep an eye on engagement.
Focus on the quality of your community.
YouTube & Online Integration: DREAM365 & 24 Hours, 24 Dreams (Feb ’14)

Storytellers
- Bob Burnquist & Edward Sharpe

Results / Conversions
Website visitation lift two days after the YouTube takeover 306% in U.S., 165% in Canada, and 920% in UK

Source: Visit California and Google
DISCOVER LOS ANGELES
@discoverLA #LAstory

Branded Hashtags:
#LAstory, #LA365 #CarFreeLA #RedCarpetLA

Create and distribute discoverable topics on the everyday

Results: 200% growth in acquisitions and 12.5% engagement

Source: Discover Los Angeles
Facebook App and Quiz:
Towns of the Philadelphia Countryside
(May 2014)

Result: Entries account for 14% of its active audience on Facebook
Gaming Facebook:

Focus on creating quality posts to inspire quality comments

Reward fans for quality of interactions

Pure Michigan has the most active community on Facebook at 7.57%
Instagram InstaMeet: Queensland Ultimate Instameet (Oct ‘14)

Unify and scale content production with UGC

Results: 16,500 Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hashtags</th>
<th>10/3/2014</th>
<th>10/5/2014</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#visitsunshinecoast*</td>
<td>2,431</td>
<td>3,066</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#visitbundaberg*</td>
<td>1,386</td>
<td>1,638</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#exploretnq</td>
<td>5,777</td>
<td>6,414</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#meetmackayregion*</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>1,254</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#thisisqueensland</td>
<td>109,685</td>
<td>117,452</td>
<td>7,767</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Restaurant Australia (May 2014) International Campaign
Socially Integrated on Twitter and Instagram

Results: #RestaurantAustralia
TW: 27,800+ IG: 20,575+
Social Media Uptrends

- Users on Instagram @mention their friends more
- Users on Facebook comment with photos
- Targeting efforts are more sophisticated and accepted
- Destinations host more contests on Twitter and Instagram
- Content discovery push new hashtag considerations
Thank You
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