



Getting Started with Social Media

I'm not going to pull any punches here – when social media came bursting onto the scene 12 years ago, the world of marketing didn't know what had hit it!

Suddenly, everybody had the opportunity to become their own marketing agency, their own broadcaster – 10 years on and we can now produce videos, live streams, TV series, podcasts: we can be active users 24/7.

While it's an exciting new age for marketing, this can seem a bit daunting if you are flat-out running your own tourism business; where exactly are you supposed to get more time to market your own business?

So, the first question you may ask is: ***do you really need social media and online marketing?***

The answer is a massive yes and the reason for this is twofold:

1. **Personal Experience:** the audience is looking for social proof before they buy their experience, their travel and accommodation. Visitors now go straight to Google to search places to go on holiday, places to stay, things to do and places to eat whilst there. They are looking for evidence that they will experience great food, walks, views, and rooms – every part of what they perceive to be their perfect holiday. If you can show them first-hand experiences of this with social media, they will be more inclined to engage with your business and what you offer.
2. **Online Visibility:** it's simple really – if you don't get on board with your online marketing and your competition do, they will be more visible online to potential customers. Your respective customers may find you on tourism platforms and search engine booking sites but when they look for social proof on their favourite social media platforms, they will find the competition and be influenced towards those experiences, not yours.

The thing to remember is that social media is not about direct sales. It is very unlikely that you will get direct sales from social media but what you will get is leads – this means you can drive traffic to your website, generate conversations and relationships with people and you can humanise your business so that your accommodation or experience becomes the audience's destination of choice.

The second question you may ask is: ***which social media platforms should you use and where is the right place to be for your audience?***

This is what you need to know:

- To choose the right platform to start with, you need to know the audience that you want to attract and then be present on the platform where they hang out.
- Choose one social media platform and learn to do it well. This means learning how it works and then spending time practising so that you feel confident.
- The key to getting traction on social media is consistency. You need to be present, show up and take action. Social media is not magic – you have to work really hard to communicate and build relationships to start seeing results.
- Social media loves imagery so you're already in the best sector when it comes to attracting an audience. The better the imagery, the pictures, videos and the storytelling, the more successful you will be. Use the amazing scenery, your gorgeous accommodation, your quirky stories, your fabulous food and fantastic experiences to attract your ideal customers.
- The right tools make your life easier. For example, a good smartphone has everything you need – it takes quality photographs and videos which you can upload straight to your social media, plus you can edit video and add design elements to your image.
- Be prepared to collaborate with other people. If you're in accommodation, provide a link with restaurants and experience providers. Send a direct message to share one another's content.
- Remember that social media isn't broadcast media – this means you're not a documentary, or a press release, it's purely SOCIAL by its very nature. So, show your social side – humanise what you do. Try to relax, enjoy and have fun with your social media – the more personality you can give it, the better the reception from your audience.
- Remember that social media is a very 'giving' platform. By this I mean that you should look to offer help wherever possible with tips and advice. Share your knowledge, as the more you give, the more you get back.

Alison Teare - Simply Marketing