Ecotourism and Social Media

by

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Ecotourism

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Social media is creating a new trend in ecotourism by establishing a presence on various social networking platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. You can help out your favorite ecotourism establishments by following and friending them, share their updates with your friends, and find special vacation deals. The ability of information on these social media sites are endless; find information or see the destination prior to even stepping foot there.

In the article, The State of Social Media in Ecotourism, Sarah Mayer (2012) explains the general content available on ecotourism in specific social networks. Twitter is stated to not be a very popular hashtag (#Ecotourism); it was only used in minimal tweets and found that tourism agencies are using to deliver the news about recent events. Facebook has a more active presence on their page; there are several themes around locations, organizations, travel and leisure, companies, local businesses, and community page. YouTube is mostly sharing visual materials to attract audiences to hopefully turn into customers. There are 12000 YouTube results for ecotourism and most of the content of short amateur videos of travelers themselves (Mayer, 2012). These videos provide free advertisement for ecotourism destinations. Lastly, LinkedIn has an active ecotourism network group for tourism and related professionals. It seems to be a good way for social media marketers that are interested in the field to create contacts with companies.

The social media management tips for ecotourism business provided by Mayer (2012) are essential to make this platform successful. By listening to the community, spark interest, and tell stories visually there will be an influence to bring attention to both the destination and efforts.
This past year’s Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference 2011 in South Carolina the topic of Social Media Tools was very much a main topic (Rachwalski, 2011). Not only would this new media tool embrace the green world, it is very cost effective at the same time. The conference urged marketers to learn from leaders in green travel and sustainable tourism fields. Hastings states subscriber-based electronic newsletters as “a high-performing workhorse” that should be used strategically as part of the overall travel marketing mix (2011). In our increasingly social connected world, many tourism companies are rethinking their strategy and social media sites to be more reader friendly and spark interest.

The article on delightwave.com (2012) was interesting to have a perspective from an actual social media site. Managing and organizing social media posts is a big problem for most since it is not easy to find interesting and compelling content every day. Yet, the topic of responsible sustainable ecotourism should be a topic that needs to have attention on the importance of living in harmony with nature. There is no other marketing method that can canvas as large of an audience as social media. The advantages will overcome the disadvantages.

James Hendicott, in his article, Ecotourism 2.0 (2011), explains how ecotourism is an increasingly important aspect of the tourist industry. In many countries, its drives in party by customer demand. A green tourism group called the “Eco Preservation Society” has outlined its plan when it comes to pushing on, and making ecotourism still stronger (Hendicott, 2011). Social media has become a very strong part of the travel experience, by way of learning about others experiences, easy access to information, and communication. This would give people the ability to have hands on experience of the
location. Social media can also act as an important news feed for the location people have visited by giving updates, specials, and constant communication. This will keep the cause and location fresh in visitor’s minds to want to visit again.

A blog written by Guillaume Foutry titled, “Ecotourism: Taking pictures and leaving footprints” (2009) gave an overall idea of Ecotourism and Social Media. Social media gives people the ability to interact with people either before going on the trip or after the trip. Foutry (2009) established a list of some of the common social media sites as listed above, for example, Facebook and twitter, claiming both media sites to be an incredible tool to find information, discover events, meeting new people, and keep in touch. Foutry (2009) also listed some new social networks that visitors are starting to use more with mobile devices. Brightkite allows you to search for friends or persons you met while visiting a destination. Google Earth is incomparable to anything else out on the media market, the ability to view locations as if you were standing at the destination point is unbelievable. It allows future visitors to view the destination points prior to ever being there. Ning is a social media site is an open forum where people share information and opinions.

Social media and ecotourism is the new way of communication within the world. Throughout all of the articles the focus is the marketing aspect to canvas such a large audience to educate on ecotourism. The first theme was the focus of how tourists are looking for sustainable tourism and desire to keep in touch with destinations to see progress and updates. When following these media sites and sharing with your friends causing a viral effect by the fast flow of shared information. Second, is how social media is a great way to market to every avenue; the majority of companies and people
all use social media as ways of communication in their daily lives. The last benefit is the travel experience prior to ever visiting a location. The ability to read and view a location prior to actually going is a great option for both the destination and visitor. By promoting the ecotourism experience educates more people on the importance of sustainability and what they can do to help when traveling to these destinations. Social Media and Ecotourism is the new way of life.
References


