

Breakout Session Swiss Vacation Day 2019 - Lucerne

New Media Trips for a Changing Media World

Today's journalists often work for multiple media and channels. Many of them also are influencers and publish on their professional and private social media (Twitter, Instagram, blogs, etc). These "hybrid-journalists" have new and different needs that are not always covered by "traditional media trips" destinations prepare for them. What should be the characteristics of "new" media trips tailored to a changing media world?

**A Document prepared by Kristelle Gentina,
PR & Market Manager - Overseas Countries, Geneva Tourism**

Introduction & Travel PR evolution

Q: How can you describe the digitalization of PR?

- Working at Geneva Tourism for 6 years in Leisure Marketing dept.
- My background is PR agencies & Travel Tourism
- Since I have started my career as a PR, I have always seen the industry evolving very fast and can share that the switch from traditional PR to digital PR has started a long time ago
- Blogs, Facebook and Twitter did not even exist at that time (in 2000) but you could already hear from people having their own webpage (not even called blogs at that time), commenting on online forums and creating private content to share their opinions on brands, news and products.
- The PR industry was maybe one of the very first industry that was giving an online "voice" to individuals: at that time, only journalist were considered strong influencers.

Q: How does the tourism industry deal with this digital evolution?

- Social media has changed the way we travel. User-generated content has become a popular source of inspiration for modern travellers and often impacts the initial decision to make a trip.
- Due to the authenticity of user-generated content there has been a transformation in not only the travel buying process, but also in the post travel experience. From users discovering new destinations, deals, and places to stay through social media, to how their travels are shared visually.
- The traveller's journey has become very different than it used to be. Travelers no longer rely on guidebooks compiled by 'experts' with possibly out-of-date information or even paper maps to navigate. Instead, travellers now have instantaneous access to information across the web in the form of TripAdvisor reviews, blog posts and Instagram photos. This real-time access to relevant tips has ultimately changed the way travellers approach planning a trip from inspiration to booking. They turn to their friends, co-workers, and influencers within the expanding social media world to find travel and vacation inspiration.
- User-generated content is a powerful marketing tool in the travel industry. The question is no longer whether businesses need to use it (it is obvious they should), but how to maximize the impact of this content.
- We call them travel influencers, online travel media or KOLs, and they are the one leading the "inspirational" phase of any traveller's choice.

- Their common point is that their voice is stronger online (their voice is louder; the reach is wider and their target more precise)

Q: Over the last few years, and being part of a Tourism office, how have you seen the evolution of media trip requests?

- Taking into consideration the rise of the digitalization of the tourism industry, as any DMO we had to be agile and adapt our marketing strategy accordingly.
- If I have to focus my thoughts only on media trip requests, from traditional media trips to influencers' trips, the latter are developing fast and will keep on growing
- As an example, at Geneva Tourism:
 - o In 2013, more than 85% of our media trips were dedicated to print, tv or radio requests vs less than 10% for digital (online media & influencers)
 - o Without considering TV or radio visits, in 2017, 48% of our media trips were coming from printed media vs 23% from influencers
 - o In 2018, 41% print media vs 43% influencers
 - o Forecast for 2019: even a greater share for digital influencers and online KOLs

Influencer marketing & media/influencer visits

Q: What are the main challenges a destination such as Geneva is facing in dealing with this new influencers/digital trend?

Geneva's main marketing challenges

- Our destination has an issue with its image more than with its awareness
- Geneva is often considered only as a business destination not a leisure one
- Our hotels are mostly fully booked during the week but empty during weekend
- Having already a strong impact on the business travellers, we have to keep on promoting leisure travels (where we've got a larger evolution opportunity)
- The destination Geneva is a city and not the cute and beautiful mountain - Heidiland cliché of Switzerland
- **(1) SO, what do we do? Break clichés! Show the unexpected and invest on our strengths and DNA messages**
- As we are an expensive city, everyone thinks we've got an outstanding marketing budget but this is the paradox: WE DON'T and therefore we have to be creative to optimize our expenses:
 - o Developing win-win visibility partnership
 - o Observe the industry trends
 - o Tailor our targets vs trying to be everywhere (segmentation)
 - o And always question where our destination is likely to have the strongest impact (good advice for a small destination)
 - o And of course: Learning by doing, by experimenting always new things – and adapt the strategy accordingly.

Digital/Influencers & PR challenges

- Knowing those major marketing challenges Geneva is facing, we've got to be even more creative when we focus on our PR job (and of course our media & influencers trips)
- Influencers don't have the same interests and expectations than traditional media
 - o **Traditional media:**
 - Press trips are the media counterpart to Fam Trips offered to travel agents. The terms should not be confused, as reporters are usually much more demanding. What do journalists want? A good story.

- Pay attention to the fact that writers for different media have different needs. It's in your best interest to organize a trip that allow them to do their best work.
 - Some journalists and authors do not wait for a random press trip but will choose you. It is in your best interest to organize trips for independent media, particularly if you wish to build long tail exposure aimed at niche markets.
 - The bonus? Effective press trips and media relations build long-term continuity among media professionals and community leaders.
 - Don't show them the behind-the-scenes things that their readers can't see. They will always prefer to see a site as their readers would see it.
 - Think about the "fact box" that you are willing to read in their coverage and provide them with the full detailed information they might need to fulfil their readers expectations.
 - And don't wait for them to be in your destination to do it! Inspire them even before their trip, help them to be ready to experience your destination or product by providing with story angles and content ideas (anniversary dates, special facts & figures) > check out Geneva Tourism's [media corner](#)
- **Influencers:**
 - Adapt their program accordingly to the content they are willing to achieve and always have in mind that it has to be "visually" friendly.
 - As opposed to traditional media trips, they are willing to see and experience the behind-the-scenes side of any visits
 - Surprise them with unexpected experiences that might help them to get their coverage even more noticed
 - E.g.: a lovely pick nick in a vineyard instead of a lunch at the restaurant
 - Never consider them as a media / or journalist and adapt the vocabulary as well as their program accordingly:
 - E.g.: instead of a "Guided visit in the Old Town" where they can expect to have a traditional city tour, you can adapt it and say "Instawalk in the Old Town" where you will introduce them to major Instagram friendly spot of your destination
 - Be patient, understanding and give them more TIME than usual: shooting at the right spot, with the right angle, with the right light... It takes time!
 - Provide them with a "digital fact sheet" giving them full social media details on the partners they will meet during their trip and that could summarize the hashtag and official accounts their need to follow or tag in their posts
 - Think about WIFI access everywhere! Compared with some other destinations, Switzerland has an expensive access to internet once outside the hotel. Therefore, provide your guests with pocket wifi, or free access along their trip. They will always be thankful for it!
 - If you are organizing an influencer group press trip, create a what's app or Instagram group chat to communicate smoothly with them.
- To offer both influencers and traditional media a perfect media trip, the key is all about EXPERIENCES and EMOTIONS
 - Nobody wants anymore to do a boring attraction visit : the same way a 2019 tourist is no longer willing to "just do" a tour (but I am sure everyone in this breakout session is aware of that ☺)

- (3) Key is all about experiences you will provide them and people you will allow them to meet along the way!
 - Brief and select your local partners
 - promote the ones that are already active on social media if you plan to meet with influencers
 - if relevant, involve local bloggers/influencers too
 - Chose local partners that have a special story to share (think emotion)
 - Tailor made the selection of the partners link to the market of origin of your media or influencer guest – They will always feel more “connected” with them.

Media trip best practices

Q: What are the basics to know when hosting a media trip?

Before the trip

- **THINK FOOD** - Travelers enjoy eating ... and they want to sample the local cuisine. So as you plan food and drink, think of showing off the local food and drink. Be sure to ask participants if they have dietary restrictions.
- **DON'T PACK THE SCHEDULE** - Focus on the quality of the experience rather than the number of places visited. Allow participants as much free time as possible. Include several free hours each day as this is the best way to allow media professionals to do their job.
- **PREPARE A MEDIA KIT** - You will want to distribute a media kit including recent media releases. Prepare this ahead of time and seek new suggestions.
- **PREPARE YOUR VISITORS** - Let your guests know the places that will be visited, time spent walking or hiking. Provide a packing list and general weather information.
- **INFORM THE LOCALS** - Make connections with the local officials, but also allow opportunities for local engagement.

During the trip

- **INFORMATION PLEASE** - Provide background information, including manuals, fact sheets and maps before arriving at a destination. Keep the materials light. No one wants to carry around heavy bags of promotional materials.
- **DISTRIBUTE A MEDIA KIT** - Distribute the media kit as soon as possible.
- **BE FLEXIBLE** - If the media need to take a photo or make an unplanned stop, do your best to accommodate requests - without putting the entire agenda too far behind.
- **UNDERSTAND DEADLINES** - No point in hyping things that will be over before articles will be published.

After the trip

- **STAY IN TOUCH** - What did they enjoy most? Do they have any suggestions? Are they working on related projects and if so, do they need additional material?
- **PROVIDE ASSISTANCE** - Stay in contact and let participants know of updates that can assist their coverage.
- **ASK FOR INFO** - Request copies of their articles, presentations or other materials. Be patient. Some journalists will produce articles immediately. Others will recycle the materials for later articles and even books years after the trip.
- **DOCUMENT** - Document the results in a portfolio that can be accessed by office staff and local leaders. Demonstrate the value of inviting media. If articles are online, link to them from the official website.

Tips & Tools – working with partners

Q. How are you (and your partners) in Geneva adapting to this changing media world?

Geneva Tourism

- **(4)** Geneva tourism has decided to get support from external agencies (digital and PR) to select qualitative media and influencers (only on certain markets)
 - o For small destinations: why not partnering with others to split cost of an influencer trip (e.g., what Geneva Tourism does with Lake Geneva Matterhorn Region)
- Most of you might receive frequent requests from so-called influencers or bloggers
 - o Don't only trust their audience figures! Today it is easy to buy fans.
 - o Think about engagement rate! Check the number of comments and interactions they might have with their community
 - o Learn from the others – check if they have a blog, and if so, if they've already partnered with similar destinations or products than yours
 - o Ask external support and take advice from social media analysis platforms such as:
 - <https://socialblade.com/> (global digital influence analysis)
 - <https://hypeauditor.com/> (Instagram analysis)
 - <https://phlanx.com/engagement-calculator> (engagement calculator)
 - <https://www.inkybee.com/> (blogger outreach)
 - <https://www.alexa.com/> (website ranking)
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- **Learn from the Pros**
 - o A lot of great content can be found online on trends regarding digital and influencer marketing – surf on websites such as :
 - <https://skift.com/>
 - <https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019>
 - o Attend social media event such as:
 - Social Travel Summit - <https://thesocialtravelsummit.com/>
 - Digital Tourism Think Tank <https://www.thinkdigital.travel/dttt-global/>
 - o **(4)** Learn from the influencers you have already hosted!
 - Take the opportunity to learn from your new digital friends. Every influencer trip should be an opportunity for you to extend your influencer marketing knowledge

For local partners

- If you are a destination, support your local partners with detailed information about the influencer and the coverage expected as well as the digital value for them to support your trip
 - o Most of your small local partners don't have a strong digital knowledge – help them and train them when relevant
- The same way you would discuss the media coverage expectation with a publication or a writer – discuss with your local partners on what they can expect from an influencer or media trip
 - o A free hotel night yes, but set the ROI in return of this investment (link to website, social media tag, numbers of posts etc)
- When hosting an influencer trip
 - o Take every opportunity to make a video! Focus on entertainment, not promotion. Sharing your influencer trip story through a video might attract other local partners to get involved with you on another trip.
 - Eg. On Blog your Geneva video trip <https://youtu.be/M2NACxIGS30>

Markets & digital culture differences

Q: Are there any marked differences between influencers according to their culture/country of origin?

- The same way you are developing strategies according to market priorities, you have to adapt your media/influencer trip program according to the culture or country of origin of your guests (travel habits, food restriction)
- Each market have their own key social media platforms as well as their specific digital behavior and level of “influencer professionalism”
 - o China : Weibo, WeChat
 - o US – Europe : Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Youtube
 - o Russia: VK, Moi Mir, Ok.ru, Twitter
 - o GCC: Snapchat, etc
- Influencer fee & contract
 - o Again, this depends on the market of origins of your influencers
 - North America or China will frequently work along with you under contract, as well as sometime their own publicist or agent
 - Compare to other smaller markets such as in Europe where this habit isn't that common yet (but tend to be depending on the level of influence)