



“Chris Torres has the ability to execute marketing strategies that are unlike anything I’ve seen in the tour & activity industry. He and his team don’t just hit the bullseye, they blow it to pieces... again and again.”

Matthew Newton, Director of Marketing at PeekPro

HOW TO TURN YOUR ONLINE LOOKERS INTO BOOKERS

PROVEN STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE YOUR
TOURS AND ACTIVITIES BRAND – GENERATING MORE REVENUE

CHRIS TORRES

FOREWORD BY DOUGLAS QUINBY

INTRODUCTION BY PETER SYME

**HOW TO TURN YOUR ONLINE
LOOKERS
INTO
BOOKERS**

CHRIS TORRES





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First Edition

PRAISE

“Chris and his team have been instrumental in helping us grow the Gray Line Iceland brand. The extra bookings and revenue we have received from their marketing efforts have been nothing short of remarkable.”

Hrafnkell Konráðsson, E-commerce Manager at Gray Line Iceland

“Since I joined the tourism industry, Chris has been the go to guy for me. He always has his finger on the pulse and thinks one step ahead of everyone else when it comes to reacting to the latest industry developments. I've found his advice to be invaluable on several occasions.”

Russel Astle-Coates, Director of Business Development at TourismTiger

“Chris Torres has the ability to execute marketing strategies that are unlike anything I've seen in the tour & activity industry. He and his team don't just hit the bullseye, they blow it to pieces. . . again and again.”

Matthew Newton, Director of Marketing at PeekPro

“Having worked with Chris and his team for the last 6 months, I can confidently say there really is no other company that compares to their understanding of the tourism industry. A 36.7% increase in revenue from my previous year, and a 328% return from my Adwords spend says it all.”

Dylan David, Owner at Dylan's Tours

“Having worked with Chris on a number of projects over the years, and having the pleasure of hearing him speak at various events, there is no doubt he knows his stuff! If you need to get your tourism brand moving in the market Chris is definitely the guy to assist you.”

Will Plummer, Trust My Travel

“I am a huge admirer of Chris Torres and his Digital Tourism Show video series. The man gives away so much knowledge around increasing revenue for free. . . If I watched one of his videos I could have saved myself \$400!”

Shane Whaley, Former Director of Get Your Guide and Producer & Host of Tourpreneur

“Chris is an amazing resource. As a very small tour company, I was amazed by his honesty, openness, and immediate support of my requests. This is a gem of a human. . . a rare find.”

Justin Legge, Tour Director at Redwood Adventures and Elk Meadow Cabins

“Thank you for all the great things you have been sharing on your Digital Tourism Show group. Your ideas and insights have inspired improvements for 2019 that will help many of our partners. They wouldn’t have been the same without your input.”

Vangelis Andrikopoulos at Sigodu

“The world of marketing can often be a black hole. There are so many moving parts that can easily overwhelm you if you let it. This is where TMA truly excels. They removed the ‘guesswork’ and provided me with a clear and detailed work plan for the upcoming year. I would strongly recommend everyone to consider TMA to assist them with their marketing strategy.”

Michael Harris, Gray Line Washington DC

“There are 2 groups on Facebook that are keeping me informed about what is going on in the industry, and one of them is created by Chris. Every time we talk to Chris there is a moment of inspiration and a great brainstorming session. Happy to know a person who is an expert in this sector and will definitely keep following for advice and an exchange of ideas.”

Cavid Nadirov, Co Founder of GetGuided

“Chris is the first person I call upon with any tour marketing challenges. This book is a must read.”

Alex Bainbridge, CEO & founder - TourCMS, Autoura, DestinationCTO

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JOURNEY'S END

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FOREWORD BY DOUGLAS QUINBY

Why our industry deserves this book

When Chris told me he was writing a comprehensive book on digital marketing for tour and activity operators, one question reflexively came to mind:

“Why on Earth does this industry need a book about digital marketing?”

After all, who reads books anymore? Aren't we all just heads down in our little digital companions, consuming our Insta-Twit-Face feeds?

But then it reminded me of the questions I frequently got when I told people we were going to launch a conference and media service dedicated to operators of tours, activities and attractions:

“Why do we need another conference?”

“There are already too many travel and tourism conferences!” (OK, that's not a question, but I always felt compelled to respond to it.)

We are now three years in to Arival, and as I write this forward we are preparing for our fourth conference, this time in Bangkok, Thailand, to help operators across Asia Pacific advance their businesses.

Whenever I travel, I have a book that always comes along with me (right now I'm reading the excellent biography of U. S. founding father John Adams by David McCollough).

So why shouldn't our industry have its own book, to help chart a path for where we are headed and how operators should navigate that path to success?

And why would Chris, who has made it his profession to stay on top of fast-changing digital trends for tour and activity operators, choose a traditional medium, a format that inevitably means some of this content will soon be out of date as platforms change their products and tweak their algorithms?

Chris has done impressive work in providing background, strategic and tactics across the widest range of digital marketing practices and channels. The specifics he walks through here will provide operators with essential best practices, whether it's designing their own websites or marketing across Facebook, Google and more.

But it's much more than that. The investment you make in this book – not the money, but your precious time – represents something far more important: the necessity of continuous learning.

Your investment in this book is a symbol of your drive, your commitment to innovate, to stay on top of the latest trends, to grow your business, and to exceed the expectations of the many customers you have yet to serve.

Our industry – we call it the In-Destination Industry – is undergoing such extraordinary change. The advancements in technology, the continual emergence of new platforms and startups, the constant product changes and innovations of the likes of Google and Facebook, not to mention the numerous digital platforms and “Super Apps” emerging from Asia, present us with the only guarantee we can count in our businesses: constant change.

Your practical applications of the insights from Chris’ work here will not just give you specific guidance. It will force you to learn by doing and instil a practice of applying what you learn and adapting to the inevitable changes that marketplace innovation will inevitably throw in front of you.

So, whether you are just starting on your digital marketing journey, or you are far along on your adventure, use *Lookers into Bookers* as a guide to strategy and prioritisation, as a hands-on practical resource, as a checklist of best practices, but also as a companion on your never-ending path through the digital change that lies ahead.

Douglas Quinby
Co-founder & CEO, Arival*
arival.travel

**Arival is an event aimed at tours and activity providers. It is hands down one of the best tourism events I've ever been too and they're a must for anyone in the industry. - Chris*

INTRODUCTION BY PETER SYME

The tours, activities and experiences marketplace is, without doubt, the best part of the travel industry. Those that operate in it are privileged to go to work each day with the sole overriding objective of making people smile and have fun.

The vast majority of the industry is made up of small operators who are obsessed with their product, service and making their guests happy. To be able to do this, they have to attract guests to their business, and that involves marketing. With all the advances in this digital age — with new technology and communication channels, you would think that it has become more straightforward. The reality is that it has become more difficult.

A small operator now has to be a small media business with an in-depth understanding of a wide range of marketing and distribution methods. Including Google, SEO, SEM, PPC, Local. Social media marketing via networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube. communication channels that now include, phone, email, messaging apps, artificial intelligent bots. Distribution via direct and indirect use of global scale OTA partners which involves using reservation system technology with API connections.

Understanding the above language spaghetti is hard enough, never mind implementing it, and it was not why we operators got into this industry.

I have always taken the view that the customer experience begins before they meet the operator. The operator will deliver the best experience if they have had a direct relationship with the customer before hand.

Your website is your window to the World, and it is here that you want to spend the most time and effort making sure it is designed and structured in a way that is mobile responsive. If it is suitable for your business, taking online bookings is critical. To be found online, your site needs time and effort, and money has to be invested in SEO. I am personally still getting returns each year from SEO work we did over a decade ago. If you are in a niche — and many of us are — this is where your number one focus should be.

Once your website is the very best it can be and you are ranking well in search results and Google local, it is impossible not to pay serious attention to social media. And, in my opinion, Facebook is a hugely underused channel for small operators. You have to plan on continuous work producing content, and it never ends, but it does deliver. We have personally filled multi-day high priced expeditions exclusively from Facebook and driven thousands of day customers via the platform.

The sorry news, folks, is that you will have to start to understand all of this stuff if your business is going to grow and thrive. The good news is that the industry is full of knowledgeable people and companies who have been through the pain and are willing to help. Also, Chris and his team at the Tourism Marketing Agency have condensed thousands of hours of knowledge and skill from working with hundreds of operators across the world into this one book which is targeted 100% at helping small operators improve their businesses.

I wish I had this book 20 years ago. It could have saved me years of work and lots of failed marketing investments. I strongly recommend you read it. More importantly, I strongly suggest that you start to implement what it says and do not just put it on the shelf; it should be on your desk as a constant reference.

Pete Syme

1000 Mile Journeys & Splash White Water Rafting

rafting.co.uk

1000milejourneys.com

THE STORY OF MY ULTIMATE TOUR EXPERIENCE

The story I'm about to tell is a personal one. It's a true story, so bear with me. However, this tale helps set the tone and explain why I feel this book is a must for all tours and activity businesses.

Ever since primary school, I have always had a love of Japan. Its history, its culture, and its people. I have my father to thank for my obsession with Japan — and, as far as obsessions go, it's a pretty great one. One day, my primary school class was asked to create a mood board illustrating any point in history. I could see my fellow classmates were already considering the typical topics, such as the world wars and Ancient Egypt, but I wanted to do something different.

That night, when I got home, I walked into our lounge and started to flick through my father's books (this was pre-internet and Google could not help me!) My father was an avid book reader and subscribed to Reader's Digest, which delivered a set of books each month to our door. Once of the books instantly caught my eye: The Ancient History of Japan. The book had an image of a Samurai warrior on the cover, something I had never seen before; and the image of this impressive warrior in equally impressive armour immediately sparked my imagination, and my love for all things Japanese.

Fast forward 25 years and my wife and I decided we wanted to take a 'once in a lifetime' trip to somewhere special before we started a family. It was a choice between Canada and Japan. Suffice it to say, Japan won and we began planning our 2-week trip of a lifetime.

We knew we wanted to travel across Japan and see as much as we could so, after a quick Google search, we found one company who we felt could deliver what we wanted. Why did we decide this? Simple... content.

You see, this company went to great lengths to create good video content, and most of their high-quality videos were presented by their own tour guides. We could see the passion and enthusiasm the guides had for Japan and we knew they were "the one".

One such guide, Tyler Palmer, helped the most in selling the various sights we could see when we arrived in Japan. He helped us imagine these different places, so that we could prioritise the tours and activities that best suited us. One of these sights Tyler sold to us was the sunrise at the top of Mt Fuji. Not a chance, was my first thought. While we were fairly fit and healthy individuals, there was no way we could climb Mt Fuji. We were not athletes!

After a quick phone call with the company (yes, we spoke to someone... more on this later in the book), we were assured that — while there were no total guarantees — we would be able to reach the top of Mt Fuji as long as we didn't suffer from altitude sickness. With the prospect of seeing the sunrise on Mt Fuji and several other sights we simply couldn't miss, we extended our stay from two weeks to nearly a month.

When we finally arrived at Narita Airport, we were met by none other than Tyler Palmer, the guide from the videos. Because we saw his videos, meeting him at the airport was like meeting an old friend. It broke the ice and made us feel instantly welcome.

Our time in Japan was a first-class experience. We travelled around Japan, visiting many cities and towns, meeting locals and eating some of the best food I have ever had. The sense of accomplishment we also felt when we finally reached the top of Mt Fuji will be with us forever. And the view at the top is something words can't begin to describe.

At time of writing this book, nearly 12 years on, we have recommended that business, and Tyler, on many occasions. We are also still friends with Tyler and keep in communication through Facebook. He now also has a young family.

The reason I'm telling you all of this, is to get across that the real value of the tour company we chose in Japan wasn't just the time spent on the tours and activities, but the relationships and recommendations we've made since, many years later. Hey, I'm still sharing my experience with you now.

All off the back on one piece of video marketing, we did the following:

- **Extended our stay by a further two weeks** — generating the company more money.
- **Referred that business on to countless others** — many of which we know went on to book — thus providing more referral business.
- **Built a friendship with the tour guide and will go back to Japan once our kids are a little older** — thus providing repeat business (We've told Tyler he must be our guide!).

This all came from one piece of excellent video marketing. This is how powerful marketing can be if you tell your story in a genuine, honest way, with a cohesive strategy in place.

With this book, my aim is to provide you with the tools and know-how to build your own 'tribe' of loyal customers and brand advocates, promoting your business in the right way. I will not only provide practical advice, but worksheets and videos, to assist you along the way.

INTRODUCTION

I've tried to make this book an interesting book from cover to cover, but I know not everyone reads that way. This is also why the book is broken down into sections, allowing you to easily navigate to an area you're particularly interested in with this book, I will teach you how to:

- Define your brand.
- Lay the foundations of your online presence.
- Carry out important research to make informed decisions.
- Create a wealth of creative content.
- Create a cohesive marketing strategy.
- Set your marketing budget.
- Implement your strategy.
- Report and review your efforts.

Although you are free to jump to any section, I urge you to read this book from cover to cover as, even if you know how to manage one aspect of digital marketing, I may be able to provide some new insight that helps you improve your practice in some way.

As an additional bonus for everyone who reads this book, I will provide you with free access to an exclusive video series that goes into a little more detail about some of the topics addressed in this book, providing live examples. Look out for the video icon next to chapter heading.

To gain access to these exclusive videos, you can request access here:

<https://lookersintobookers.com>

Now, let's get started...

We made it!!!

Top of Mt Fuji.





High above the clouds

Sunrise at the top of Mt Fuji. . . a sight I will never forget.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is aimed at tours and activity providers worldwide as, to me, it is the best part of travel.

Okay, okay... I stole that line from Douglas Quinby, who is one of the founders of the amazing Arival events, but it is one that I also truly believe in. Visiting a destination, staying at a hotel or AirBNB, is not what consumers ultimately remember. It is what they do with their time at a particular destination that sticks in their minds.

Taking a bus or guided tour to see amazing sights and hidden gems, the events you attend, the people you meet... this is what sparks customers' imaginations and stays in their memories for years to come. Giving people unforgettable, meaningful experiences is what creates loyal customers, referrals, and repeat business. And loyal customers are much more likely to share their experiences online, both with reviews and on social media. But before winning the approval of loyal customers, you have to attract them to your tour or activity in the first place.

Whether you provide food and drink tours, bike tours, manage a zoo, run movie-themed tours, or provide a hop-on hop-off bus tour, the information in this book should help you better understand what it takes to market yourself in today's digital landscape.

Throughout this book, I will be using a fictitious (pretend) day tour business called FoodDrinkTour that I've created specifically for this book. By using FoodDrinkTour as an example, I hope it will allow me to succinctly demonstrate the practical applications of the various theories and ideas discussed throughout the book.

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL TOUR BUSINESS

The truth is... you do not run a tourism business.

What I mean is that you shouldn't just run a tourism business... at least not in the way you think. To create a successful tours and activity business in today's marketing landscape you must become more than just a tour operator...

YOU MUST BECOME A MEDIA COMPANY

By media, I mean articles, guides, videos, and anything else that adds value to people researching travel or just looking to be entertained. It's not enough to have expert product knowledge in your T&A niche if your potential customers don't know about it.

Becoming a 'media company' involves putting out meaningful content about your niche to drive traffic to your website or your off-site booking channels.

Making content takes time and money, but it's the only way to make yourself visible online, and to — ultimately — make yourself more visible than your competitors. Let's look at just some of the items you should have within a marketing strategy...

- Written blogs and travel guides
- Video blogs and travel guides
- Tour writing
- Social media management
- Facebook & Google Ads
- Remarketing
- Email list building campaigns
- Abandonment management
- Search engine optimisation

As you can see, with so much of digital marketing involving the creation of content, you need to change your mindset from being just a tour provider to being a tourism media company. You have to create and put out a huge amount of content that rises above the brand clutter that is already online.

While it is great to have so many available touch points and platforms to engage with your customers, it is also easy to lose focus and for your strategy to become disjointed. Believe me, I understand how easy it can unravel. Usually this is down to two things:

- No proper marketing strategy, informed by data, with clear KPIs.
- You are too quick to change your strategy.

It's extremely hard work to run your own T&A company, and business owners usually want to see instant results. Especially anyone who runs small, family-owned businesses.

I totally get it: cash flow is king and the money you put into marketing needs to provide clear advantages. In short, it's all about return on investment;. Because of this, sometimes perfectly worthwhile strategies are scrapped because they don't work straight away. However, where digital marketing is concerned, patience is a chief virtue.

Organic marketing takes time to build and requires a lot of patience, but it is more than worth the wait. In the meantime, however, paid ads can help you gain traction a little quicker, and this is usually one of the things my team at the Tourism Marketing Agency (TMA) implements in the short term. Paid ads can compete for vital traffic while we work on your organic marketing. Business guru Gary Vaynerchuk swears by being more patient and, with digital marketing, he is definitely right.

To give you an example of the patience required, my own video advice series, The Digital Tourism Show, took 6 months and nearly 150 videos (I was doing these daily!) before it finally broke through and helped raise my own profile and generate leads. There were times where I felt like giving up, but I urged myself to keep going and I am glad I did.

Even if I haven't fully convinced you yet, I hope you'll start thinking about the admittedly strange concept of transforming your business into a media company. And, while it isn't ideal, I hope I've convinced you that patience is an incredibly important part of the process.

Will you make mistakes along the way? Of course you will. With this book, however, my hope is you will make less mistakes and create a media company you're proud of — one that just so happens to sell and promote exceptional tourism experiences.

INTRODUCTION

SECTION ONE

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

THE EPIC TALE OF HOW ONE BUSINESS FAILED TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS

A true story

Around 11 years ago, in the early days of running TMA, I was approached by a company who ran a brick-and-mortar travel agency. They wanted to expand their offering, and increase their revenue by becoming bookable online. Up until this point, they had a brochure-style website, which was typical practice at the time.

After our initial meeting, which went well, I presented them with a proposal. This proposal not only included an expertly developed website (which it ended up being), it also contained a brand-development plan explaining how the business could move forward and how it would be promoted online through a content and social media strategy.

The company had not asked for this element to be included in the proposal, but I felt it was necessary to give them my honest opinion.

Unfortunately, the owner was very much in the camp of ‘build it and they will come’, which I sometimes call the field-of-dreams marketing stratagem. The owner also didn’t ‘believe’ in social media, dismissing it as a fad. Despite my best efforts to persuade them, we settled on simply developing the website and we would discuss marketing later.

Three months later, we launched the site but they still insisted that they didn’t want to pursue any online marketing. As much as this decision didn’t sit well with me; I can’t force anyone to carry out a marketing campaign — no matter how much I think they need it! I must have gotten through to the owner a little, however, as he decided to get his son and daughter to run the social media campaigns. Fast forward 11 months when the owner dropped by the studio, unannounced, demanding to speak with me.

He explained, in a very angry tone, that the site had not generated many sales. In fact, one of their competitors was, in his words, “Selling by the shit load”, even though they were more expensive. In his eyes, this was obviously our fault and he even demanded a refund. I calmly asked him to sit with me and to look through his website and his competitor’s website.

I always feel responsible for my clients, so I’d been watching his brand very closely; I really wanted them to make a success of it and I also knew what their main competitor had been up to. . .

THE EPIC TALE OF HOW ONE BUSINESS FAILED TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS

His competitor had accumulated over 11 million views on YouTube, over 5,000 Twitter followers, and over 8,000 Facebook likes.

When I asked what his son and daughter had produced in terms of marketing... The answer was nothing. Not a single post, video, or ad in 11 months. In Scotland we would say they'd done 'Hee Haw'.

The competitor had clearly, and correctly, developed a brand and marketing strategy. My client's children clearly had not. The competitor created many videos offering advice, destination guides, and customer reviews of the products they sold. They offered exclusive promotions to everyone who followed them on social media. What they did is what all businesses must do to survive in today's market: make your brand an 'authority' within your industry.

You see, the competitor knew who their target audience was. They knew the path they wanted the business to follow. And, more importantly, they put the building blocks in place that allowed them to become a successful brand and it showed in their sales.

Does this sound like a lot of work?

Well, I'm sorry to say that it is a lot of work. Launching a business is easy. Building a successful business is one of the hardest but most rewarding things you will ever do. However, you can make it easier on yourself in the long run if you take time to plan it out, in advance.

The simple fact is that my client could have easily had a very successful online business, much like his competitor, if he had simply put the time, effort, and money into developing content and managing his various social media platforms. I bring this up not as an 'I told you so', but as a cautionary tale of how a nice-looking website isn't nearly enough anymore — you need to get your brand in front of your target audience.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

When I ask someone “what is a brand?” the typical responses are:

- My logo
- My company image
- My products

Branding is about creating your identity, your ethos; it’s about defining how you perceive your company and, more importantly, how you want your customers to perceive you.

In the process of defining your brand, you’ll make many of the most important decisions you’ll ever make for your company – and it can make you stand out from the competition! However, ultimately, it’s not as simple as deciding how you’d like to be perceived; the consumer market, your customers, will also determine who you are as a brand, and the truth of that branding will determine your perceived value. A brand is not your logo, a product or service. . .

YOU DO NOT CREATE OR OWN YOUR BRAND

Let me repeat: you do not own your brand. In fact, some readers with their own company might not even have a brand yet. People, your consumers, create and own your brand.

You become a brand once you have become a trusted company. Once you have customers that follow your every move and sing your praises from the rooftops. This trust comes from meeting (and beating) customer expectations. Then and only then do you have a good brand.

You see, all you can do is try to persuade people to believe in your brand, but with a little thought and planning, ANY company can achieve this. . . even yours.

Ask yourself this...

- Where is your brand in relation to your competition?
- Are you offering different or better products or services?
- Can you target a different audience with similar products?
- Can you fill a current niche market or create a new one?

Is there a group or are there groups of people out there whose needs are not being met?

Clever marketing makes consumers try a product for a variety of reasons. Many of us will try a different product because of a special offer – but think about it: how often have you been disappointed by a product that was significantly cheaper than its competition? As my mother always says, “Buy cheap, buy twice”.

In the long-term, it's better to have a brand people trust as, when people learn their lessons about buying cheaper and inferior products, they will always gravitate back to better quality brands.

Once people have decided they like a product, and it does exactly what it says it does, and is priced fairly – then you usually have a customer for life!

Remember that your brand positioning is usually determined by consumers comparing it to your competitors' brands. Always keep an eye on what your competitors are doing, and strive to do it better.

No matter how good or established your products or services are, the way the world is viewing and buying experiences is changing constantly and it is opening new markets for those in a position to take advantage of them. To make your brand stand out your business must master the four disciplines of branding. . .

1. Your brand path
2. Your brand voice
3. Your brand personality
4. Your brand identity

Mastering these four disciplines will make the process of building your business far easier.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

There is one caveat to all this: if your business relies solely or heavily on an Online Travel Agent (OTA) like TripAdvisor or Get Your Guide, then you most certainly do not have a brand as you are hidden in the vast sea of other operators behind the OTA's identity (an identity that you are not in control of).

Are OTA's important... very much so. But I am a strong believer that if you market yourself properly, you can increase your cash flow and reduce the high commission you pay. But I digress, and I will cover more on this topic in the OTA section on page 127.

So, are you ready? Let's take the first step on your brand path. . .

WORKSHOP ONE

FINDING YOUR PATH



Downloadable
worksheets
available

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

When you go on an adventure walking tour, you take time to plan your journey. What equipment you need, provisions, where you will camp, or glamp, along the predefined route you selected. This is no different from running your business.

If you wish your business to grow and succeed you first have to know which path you need to take before setting out on your journey.

With a little research, you can define your core values, mission, and goals. Determine your audience(s) and analyse the competition. Establish your USP (Unique Selling Point) and what makes your company stand out from the rest. Why you? Why would someone want to buy from you versus someone else who sells the same thing?

I bet some of you will already want to put down “we are the cheapest”. Don’t. This is not really a USP as anyone can say this. If you compete on price you will always lose. Someone will always do it cheaper, driving your business, sector and cashflow down. If you compete on experience, exceptional quality and service, you can charge whatever you want.

In order to get to where you want to go, you need to make sure you’re heading in the right direction. Don’t just think of the here and now. Where do you want your brand to be in five years from now? What about in 10 years?

They say it takes five years to establish a strong business. If this is true, why do so many business owners only think about the short term? For example, many tour and activity businesses concentrate on putting something out in the public domain as soon as possible without thinking how this may affect their long-term business.

If you do not plan your brand path properly, you will end up with a poorly conceived, inconsistent, ineffective brand with no direction. And guess what? All this does is give the impression of an unattractive, poorly run business. And the only path that will be left open to you is the one towards insolvency.

Okay, that might seem extreme, but from my experience, it can definitely go like this if a company isn’t careful.

Now... take a deep breath and relax. Think about where you wish to be in five years time.

- You may wish to become a franchise.
- You may wish to build a business that you can sell on.
- You may want to become the number one brand in your niche.

Whatever it is, take the time to plan it right and you will take your first steps along the right path.

Now, let's get to grips with your business and find out where you are now and where you want to be...

YOUR BRAND PATH

To help determine your brand path, use the worksheets on the following pages. It's better if you and your staff complete these separately then come together to collate everyone's opinions on the business. I wouldn't be surprised if most people in your business have different views and ideas about where and what your brand is.

If you can, also create an online survey to ask some of your current customers to give their opinions. This helps give a fuller insight into how others perceive your brand. I recommend using either Survey Monkey, surveymonkey.com, or my personal favourite: Typeform, typeform.com. These offer free accounts for a limited number of survey completions and help collate, anonymous, feedback from your customers.

If you find your customers are mostly positive, or close to what you are trying to achieve, great, keep doing what you are doing, but if it is negative or completely out of touch, then you know changes must be made to make your brand more attractive.



Be desirable

Fill in the blanks below. The first should be your category, for example, 'Hop-On, Hop Off provider' or 'Axe Throwing Tour Company'. The second should be what makes your service or product different? What makes it desirable? And don't put 'the cheapest' as this is not a USP!

Work on your own for 10 minutes then discuss your findings with the rest of your staff (if you can). Appoint a group leader and write down each idea on a whiteboard or on Post-it Notes. This way, you can see what similarities and differences your brand currently perceives.

Discuss this with your staff and, as a group, select the one statement that you all feel is closest to what you want to achieve and is most likely to help you stand out against your competitors.

Our brand is the only

that

Determine your path

What is your current purpose? Your vision? How did you get here? You will need to understand your business and the direction you need to take it.

Fill out the sections below, independently (if you're in a group). Take around 20–30 minutes to fill in this worksheet, then share it with your team. Again, appoint your leader to present the findings.

If you find there are massive differences between each member, you need to take drastic action to solve them. Everyone must agree on five points they feel will help the business move forward. If you don't agree, then a constructive debate might help!

1. What does your business/product do?

This is not your corporate 'About' page. Instead, this should be your 60 seconds. Your elevator pitch. If you had just 60 seconds to explain your product to a customer, what would you say?

2. What problem do you solve, or what need do you meet?

What is the purpose of your existence (other than to make money)? If a business is not solving a problem or fulfilling a need for customers, then it will fail.

3. List your three main competitors*

What do you like and dislike about them? It pays to know who you're competing against and what the industry norms are. Know them, learn from them, but don't copy them. Do your own thing! For example: Website, product/service, marketing and brand image likes and dislikes.

**Actually, try and find around 8-10 competitors but only use the main three at this stage. We will use the rest later in the book.*

4. Why should your potential customers buy from you over your competitors?

Consumers today are spoilt for choice. Expand on your unique selling point (USP) and highlight any other aspect that makes you unique.

5. Write down the story behind your business, business name, and/or logo

People connect through stories. Storytelling is an effective way to create and sell a brand image. What is the story behind your business and its products.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

6. Share five adjectives or words that best describe your company

The words you choose should convey a lot of meaning regarding how you see yourself, or how you want to see yourself.

7. Describe your ideal customer? Is it B2B or B2C?

Selling to another business is different from selling to a consumer. The brand identity should take that into account. If you already have an ideal customer/client profile, put that down. If you're not sure who your ideal customer is, check your current customers/clients as this may give you a clue as to who you are currently attracting. Are you attracting the right audience?

8. What are your most profitable products?

You may offer many products, but a lot of businesses fall into the trap of promoting those they would like to sell rather than the ones that really do sell. Make a list of products that do sell and make you the most profit.

So, where does your business sit? Whether you're on your own or doing this as a team, I bet you found a few surprises in there. I suspect some of you even struggled to answer some of the questions, and that is not a negative. It is always hard to talk about yourself. However, taking about yourself makes you sit back and really take stock of what you think of your business... or at least what you thought your business stood for.

If you also got in touch with your customers, you may have discovered that what they think of your brand is way off your own ideas. If this is the case, then the messages you're putting out into the public domain (your brand voice) are not right for your audience.

If you are still struggling, here is an example using our dummy business, FoodDrinkTour. This is for guidance only; be true to your own business.

FoodDrinkTour Brand Path

Our brand is the only food and drink tour company that produces a free cookbook of our suppliers' signature dishes in Scotland.

Although this is just an example, how many food tour companies do you know that produce their own cookbook with recipes of some of the dishes on their tours? This is a great USP as it adds value to your customers' experience by giving them a low-cost keepsake from the tour — something to remember you by or to share with a friend. I'll discuss more on other uses and costs of this option later in the book.

What does your business/product do?

We provide food and drink tours in Glasgow, Scotland, that showcases our amazing local food and drink — such as our various craft beers and our world-famous tiple of choice: Whisky. Visit amazing eateries, sampling their top dishes, while enjoying an immersive, educational experience, packed with history and culture. Get the true taste of Glasgow with FoodDrinkTours.

This is short, to the point, and it highlights exactly what this company does. This is how you should clarify your own company's product on your website and any other marketing materials.

What problem do you solve, or what need do you meet?

Tourists visiting a destination want to experience the local culture, but they somehow don't know how to bypass the manufactured tourist experience to get to the authentic experience. Food and drink is one of the best ways of truly experiencing a culture and it also brings people together. Glasgow is such a welcoming city and it has a strong sense of 'togetherness'. Breaking bread with the locals, having a few drinks, and learning about the city is a great way to get to know the real Glasgow.

This answer highlights what tourists want from an authentic experience, and it describes what makes the FoodDrinkTours' Glasgow tour so special. It also begins to describe what makes Glasgow, and its people, so special.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

List your three main competitors

Once Upon A Whisky Tours (onceuponawhisky.co.uk) – Offer great, highly rated tours of Glasgow's best whisky bars, mixing in food with culture and history. They offer something unique, trying whisky with sushi or tying in with movie history. The other aspect is the main guide, Camilo, is not Scottish but hails from Columbia, so he offers a unique take on our famous drink.

Once Upon a Whisky has an easy-to-navigate website, focusing on only a few key products. They also offer gift cards. Not much content however so does not give a sense of their personality.

The Wee Food Tour (weefoodtour.com) – While this company only seems to offer one product, it takes the customer to six different restaurants and independent, family-run establishments, while enjoying local 'banter' (Scottish for good-humoured chat).

They also donate £5 from their tours to local food banks to help the needy.

I like this product a lot, but I'm afraid the website looks a little too much like a blog and the homepage does not sell their products in a clear way. They have a shop to sell gift-cards which is great but it also sells brooches, which seems a little irrelevant and off brand.

The Glasgow Food & Drink Tour (glasgowfoodndrinktour.co.uk) – Another highly-rated business with a near 100% 5 -star rating on TripAdvisor.

Nice modern website that is easy to navigate and to place a booking. One criticism with the website is that their book button on product pages is on the left but once clicked, the booking calendar moves to the right. This is a minor complaint, but it is quite a confusing mechanic. They also offer gift-cards as well as stag and hen-do tours. I love the logo!

Think about it for a second. You probably have an idea of who your competitors are... or think you do. It does not matter if you know of other businesses in your sector who you consider competitors, as it is what your customers find while searching in your destination

– those are your main competitors, so those who appear at the top of a Google search should be what you focus on. Revisit this every 3–6 months, as website rankings can and do change.

Also, remember that your competitors are not necessarily in the same line of business. These days, you are competing for your customers' spare time, so you are competing against other forms of 'entertainment'. Your customers have so much choice and can decide whether to take one of your tours, eat at a restaurant, or perhaps even go to the cinema. More on this later.

What is it about you — your background, your product or service — that sets you apart from your competitors? Why should anyone buy from you instead of from your competitors?

We may be more expensive than our competitors, but this is because we offer a peerless, truly unique experience. Our tour guides are all highly regarded chefs and sommeliers — some have even worked in Michelin Star establishments. We know that our guests already know a lot about food and drink, so it's vital to ensure that our guides are at the highest level and can offer extensive knowledge and insight into Scotland's rich culinary heritage.

We also give each of our guests a cookbook to take-away with them. This cookbook is a memento of their time with us and it's a tool to help them create some of their own incredible Scottish food. The cookbook also contains a discount voucher to entice guests to come back or to recommend our tour to a friend.

This business is truly offering something unique and exciting. They are focusing on a particular niche, adding a luxury aspect, offering the customer an almost once-in-a-lifetime experience. This elevated product allows the company to charge more. Imagine going on a tour with a Michelin-Star chef. Some of you may think this doesn't happen, but many people passionate about food pay thousands to take a cookery class with a Michelin Star chef. For example, Rosemary Shrager provides one-day cookery courses that cost a few hundred pounds per person.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Write down the story behind your business, business name and/or logo

We created the business out of our love of three main ingredients, food, drink, and Glasgow.

Glasgow has a reputation for being an unhealthy city; it's sometimes said that we all eat deep-fried Mars Bars... which is far from the truth (although deep-fried Mars Bars is a thing!). We have so many amazing restaurants and bars offering a fusion of dishes from around the world.

For example, Glaswegians love a curry and a favourite is Chicken Tikka Masala. This dish has become a worldwide phenomenon and one of the UK's national dishes. However, the beloved Chicken Tikka Masala doesn't come from India; it was, in fact, invented many years ago in Glasgow as the chef wanted to cater to a more western pallet. In Glasgow, we also have our world-famous haggis, which is best sampled at the Ubiquitous Chip, in Glasgow's West End.

Glasgow has a deep history with food and our food is quite unique because of the diverse cultures that reside here. It is this diversity and range of cuisines what we want to showcase to our tour guests.

Our brand name was almost an accident. When discussing what we should call the business, one of our team flippantly said "When someone food, drink, tour's...". We all stopped, looked at each other and almost simultaneously said "that's it!". It says exactly what we offer in a precise way. FoodDrinkTour was born.

Although it needs refinement, this is a great start and it's enough to get writing a compelling story for our customers. It highlights a little piece of Glaswegian history, how they want to help others experience the destination's real food and the passion for what they wish to achieve. The truth about how we developed the brand name also shows an organic, fun and human side to the business.

Share five adjectives or words that best describe your company.

Engaging, Innovative, Fun, Friendly, and Trustworthy.

What did you and your team put down?

If it is mostly the same, then that's great news: you all have the same vision and this will make creating your path a little easier. If you all wrote different adjectives to describe your business, then you all need to come together and discuss/debate what these five adjectives should be.

If you're the business owner, leave your ego at the door; allow your team to help mould the business. You will learn a lot and your staff will be more invested in your company. This will make your life a lot easier in the long run.

For FoodDrinkTour, the adjectives are what I would expect and hope from a business that provides high-end food tours.

Let's look a little deeper at each one:

Engaging — As they leverage their team's strengths, giving them different responsibilities, being the face of the company to engage with customers.

Innovative — Unique products and solutions to interact with customers.

Fun — Creating a culture that encourages interaction between guides and guests – a culture where the guides don't take themselves too seriously, without sacrificing professionalism.

Friendly — Always having a smile on their face and being open and approachable to customers.

Trustworthy — Customers trust the company because of how the tour guides treat them. Great reviews, earned by offering unforgettable experiences, also contribute to the brand's trustworthiness.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Whatever five words you have selected, these become the backbone of your business.

Describe your ideal customer. Is it B2B or B2C?

We cater for both types of customer as we offer tours to the general public as well as host companies taking staff on team-building experiences. We are happy to have both types of customer but the bulk of our revenue is from B2C.

This is a good answer as it highlights that FoodDrinkTour realises that both customer types are good revenue generators. A lot of tour businesses ignore the B2B market, which can help generate extra income — especially during quiet periods and seasonal dips.

In my opinion, there is no B2C or B2B; in this day and age, it does not exist. What I mean by this is that there is a human aspect to both B2B and B2C customers and that all marketing should take this into account.

This is cheesy, but businesses should cater for H2H. Human to Human.

I remember doing a talk at an event mentioning this very topic and I was challenged on it. Some people in the room said it was pointless to market to 'B2B' on B2C platforms like Facebook. After this was raised, I asked the audience a question... "Who here is a business owner?" 90% of the people in the room raised their hands.

I then asked, "Of those with your hands up, who has a Facebook account?" Pretty much everyone kept their hands up. And there is your answer. There are human beings behind 'B2B' and this should never be forgotten. You must tell your story in a meaningful way.

What are your most profitable products?

We have 3 products that are our best sellers:

- Glasgow City Culinary Experience
- West End Wonders
- Glasgow Whisky Trail

It's good to take a closer look at your business — to see what tours provide you the most profit. Now, these might not necessarily be the ones that sell the most tickets; they are the tours that have a greater profit margin for your business. These should be the products you promote through all of your marketing efforts as, the more you sell, the more profit you create for your business.

That is not to say that you should ignore your other products, but if you maximise the profit by promoting your most profitable product, you will have generated more money to help promote your other products.

FINDING YOUR VOICE

Your voice in business doesn't so much come down to what you are saying, but rather how you're saying it. Of course, what you say still matters, but if you aren't saying it the right way, your message will, no doubt, fall on deaf ears. This is why your brand voice is so important.

Your brand voice informs all of your marketing, and it should, therefore, be presented in a style and tone that reflects both what you do and the business you hope to attract. As this encompasses all the messages you send out, you better make sure you're targeting the right people with the right voice.

How do you find your voice?

We can all get a little lost for words sometimes, but it should be easy to find your brand voice. For starters, your voice should be made up of the core values of your business, but it should also be intriguing and unique enough to ensure that you stand out from your competitors.

Your brand voice represents the personality of your brand, so it's important to find distinctive and easily recognisable elements that can be automatically associated with your brand while being completely appropriate for your target audience and industry.

Think about what you wrote down for your USP, in the last section; consider how you can present that in an interesting way. By doing so, you will soon find yourself with stronger customer engagement, with a greater chance of pulling in new and repeat business.

Examples of good brand voices

Here are just a few companies that have perfected their brand voice and the values they have set out at the heart of it:

AirBNB — Straightforward, inclusive, thoughtful, spirited

Virgin — Warm, honest, fun, engage

Apple — Inspiring, personal, innovative, delight

BrewDog — Edgy, cheeky, fun, entertain

We instantly recognise these brands and can almost instantly associate their marketing with them, all without them having the need to sell at the heart of their voice.

When it comes to effective marketing, one thing you should never do is sell directly to your audience, as this rarely offers results. When you start to sell through marketing, you effectively engage in a price war, and this only ends well for you if you're willing to become the cheapest. However, if you offer something different, with a clearer and more effective brand voice, you will find that people will still buy from you, even if you're not the cheapest around.

When building your brand voice, it's vital that you are consistent. Consistency in your voice builds trust in consumers as they come to know what to expect of you. In addition, the familiarity becomes easier to process mentally, which means that people will not only feel at ease with your brand — they will also make connections instantaneously when they see your marketing either online or offline.

As the old saying goes, people may not remember what you say, but they will remember how you made them feel. The feeling customers get when they come into contact with brands is what either keeps them coming back or what turns them into the arms of competitors.

With this in mind, you need to be careful about the impressions you're forming on your customers. People are prone to changing their mind once they hear what you have to say, so be sure you're not giving them a reason to turn to a competitor.

You don't have to have the same sort of voice as competitors either. Although not tourism (it is always good to look for inspiration outside your sector), take BrewDog and Stella Artois — both brands fighting for a similar space within the drinks market, but both with a completely different voice.

In Stella Artois' brand message, they talk about their roots and origins, stating . . .

“At Stella Artois, we are extremely proud of our Belgian roots. Our story can be seen on every bottle of Stella Artois. If you look closely, hints of our origins are proudly displayed. So next time you see a bottle of Stella Artois, take note of the rich history paired with the rich flavor on and in every bottle.”

Compare this to BrewDog who trash the establishment . . .

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

“BrewDog is a post Punk apocalyptic mother fucker of a craft brewery. Say goodbye to the corporate beer whores crazy for power and world domination. . . Ride toward anarchy and caramel craziness. Let the sharp bitter finish rip you straight to the tits. Save up for a Luger, and drill the bastards.”

You can see that the two have very different tones while effectively marketing to very similar target audiences.

Both are extremes, though they can instantly be recognised in their own right thanks to their effective brand voice. Now, this doesn't mean that you have to swear like a trooper to stand out, but make sure what you say is what your target audience wants to hear. Remember that the point is to stand out while offering something interesting and memorable.

Now use the following worksheet and let's find your brand voice. . .

WORKSHOP TWO

YOUR BRAND VOICE



Downloadable
worksheets
available

FREE TOUR
BY LOCALS

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Using the answers you collected in part one, determining your path, you now need to decide how you want to be heard. Funny? Serious? Personal? Whatever it is, make sure you select the most effective tone of voice. Do not simply copy your competitors. Remember: you must stand out on your own. Do, however, learn from what competitors do.

What is the primary message do want to convey to your customers?



How do you want customers to feel each time they interact with your business?

How would you like to come across? Tick no more than one from each of the four areas below that best reflects how you want to be perceived by your customers.

Character/Persona

- Friendly Playful Warm Authoritative
- Inclusive Youthful Inspiring Professional

Tone

- Personal Honest Humble Direct
- Loud Cheeky Clinical Thoughtful

Now, select one from each that informs how you don't want your voice to be.

Language

- Complex Straightforward Savvy Fun
- Jargon-filled Insider Serious Whimsical

Purpose

- Engage Entertain Educate Delight
- Inform Promote Enable Amplify

FoodDrinkTour Brand Voice

Friendly, Personal, Fun, Entertain

For me this is the perfect choice because of the nature of the tours they offer. Food brings people together so that covers the friendly and personal aspects. The tour guides entertain their guests with history about the food, drink, and Glasgow as a destination. Glasgow, and Scotland, is also known for its sense of humour and not taking ourselves too seriously. That brings a sense of fun.

Now, select one from each that informs how you don't want your voice to be.

Authoritative, Loud, Complex, Promote

The reason why we do this is to inform your team on how they are not to communicate to customers. This is just as important.

Being knowledgeable about their destination is a key element but this can easily come across as being authoritative if it's not done right. Being loud seldom works and makes you the centre of attention rather than your customers. If your products are too complex, customers will switch off. Now promote; this is a tricky one. Your tour guides should always try to up-sell or cross-sell but not in a way that feels like a 'sales pitch'. It should almost be in passing or within a conversation.

For example, rather than this: "Thank you for being on my tour. If you like this I would love to offer you a discount to one of our whisky tours..." try dropping something like the following into a conversation: "I was doing a whisky tour last week where we tried an amazing 20-year-old Auchentoshan that would go well with this dish." Something like this can help make some people curious enough to find out more and it doesn't come across as a hard sell.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

WORKSHOP THREE

FINDING YOUR PERSONALITY



Downloadable
worksheets
available

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Now you have identified the tone of your voice, you now need to start thinking about your brand's personality. Is it formal or informal?

Being formal can be seen as authoritative and professional but it can sometimes come across as being cold and lacking in personality. Being informal is actually an easier route to take as your business can have more personality and offer a warmth that being formal simply can't achieve (hint, hint... for tourism informal and personal is pretty much a must!). Alternatively, being informal may be seen as unprofessional... if it's not done right.

This is why finding the tone, personality, and balance of each is vitally important to getting right.

An easy way to determine which direction you should choose is to take note of how you, or your staff, talk to existing customers. How do you sign off on emails? Yours Sincerely? Best Regards? Or a simple Cheers?

The tone and language you use on a regular basis should be used in your personality, unless your aim is to completely change your customer's perceptions of your business. The latter would be advisable if your current personality/brand is seen in a negative light.

Identifying and defining the identity and personality of your brand is crucial. Even if you don't define it, some sort of personality will come through. So it's best to think about it now. Who do you want your brand to be?

A brand personality is a set of emotional characteristics connected to a business or brand name. These things shape how people feel about and interact with a company. More often than not, a brand's personality should mirror that of the target customer base.

The idea of a brand personality applies to businesses big and small and to anyone with a web presence or even participants in public social media channels. Cultivating and harnessing that personality can be a key factor in your success.

So, what type of personality is the right fit? Start by thinking about your brand's story. If you were telling someone new, how would you describe your product, or website or business?

While the brand voice workshop should have helped you, at least, have an inkling of the personality your brand should take, the following workshop should help you define this...

YOUR BRAND PERSONALITY

Okay, I lied. This is not really a worksheet but a set of instructions on how you and your team can figure out your personality.

As human beings, we gravitate towards others who have similar values to our own. You can forge and build relationships with your customers if your brand follows a kind of human behaviour. Far too many businesses try to create a brand that is a fabrication of how they wish to be seen.

To be successful, genuine and trustworthy, you must be yourself.

Give every member of your team sticky notes and markers and have everyone write down an adjective that best describes your business, good or bad. Write as many as you like until you run out of ideas but don't make them generic. Remember, this is about your business and what makes you stand out.

Once you have a list, stick them all on a wall and throw away (recycle please) any duplicates.

Discuss with your team which is the least relevant to your brand and remove them. If no one can agree, the person leading the workshop has to make the final decision. Get the list down to around 20 then collate what is left and put them into categories. For example, "faithful" and "thoughtful" could be grouped together.

Once you have this down to around four to six adjectives, this will form the basis of your personality and should drive your public facing communications going forward.

To help you, here are some adjectives you could use but please, only put them down if they genuinely represent your business.

Adaptable, Adorable, Ambitious, Boundless, Brave, Calm, Cheerful, Classic, Cultured, Current, Dashing, Delightful, Delicate, Dynamic, Efficient, Enduring, Exuberant, Faithful, Familiar, Fearless, Generous, Gentle, Harmonious, Helpful, Honourable, Industrious, Instinctive, Joyous, Kind-hearted, Knowledgeable, Lovely, Lucky, Mature, Modern, Nice, Noble, Original, Peaceful, Pleasant, Quiet, Reflective, Romantic, Self-assured, Sincere, Spiritual, Thoughtful, Thrifty, Timeless, Unique, Vivacious, Wise, Witty, Wonderful, Zany, Zealous

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?



For a full list and their definitions, please download the guide.

FoodDrinkTour Brand Personality

Ambitious — as we have a strong desire to succeed and intend to deliver a high-level service.

Dynamic — as we adapt and change to our customers' needs & wants.

Kind-Hearted — as we care about our customers and want them to leave with a positive impression of Glasgow and its people.

Unique — as we truly believe we deliver a one-of-a-kind experience in Glasgow.

Witty — as we like to have fun and showcase Glasgow's sense of humour.

These are great and fall in line with the findings from the previous workshops. Whatever you come up with, make it define who you and your brand is. Just be true to yourself.

WORKSHOP FOUR

CREATING YOUR BRAND LOGO



Video help guide
available



Downloadable
worksheets
available

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Now, this is the one area that grates with me the most. In my opinion, having seen this happen far too many times, a lot of tourism businesses will go down the cheapest route when creating a logo and I always challenge them on that. Why?

Your logo, for the most part, is one of the first things your customers see. In your printed materials, vehicles, website, social avatars, and countless other points of contact with them. Why on earth would you want to create a cheap-looking logo that will do more harm for your business than good?

BY CREATING A CHEAP LOOKING LOGO, YOU ARE GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF A CHEAP LOOKING BUSINESS.

How many of you reading this now have created your own logo? How many of you asked your uncle's friend who knows a guy that has Photoshop? Be honest now.

Now, unless they are a great designer, 95% of the time it turns out to be a disaster. Put yourself in your customer's shoes. In fact, you have been a customer at one point in your life, so think about how you feel about other brand's logos you've come across.

Attention spans are much shorter these days. You have around two seconds to convince potential customers that your tour business is worth any consideration.

A logo can quickly grab their attention and communicate your core values in an interesting way. This is one of the reasons we have just gone through the brand workshop.

If you have a solid brand logo that speaks to your customers, the short attention span that causes consumers to judge your business by its appearance can work to your advantage. You have one chance to get this right.

As highlighted in the previous workshops, a successful brand is about telling a story that will influence customers' emotions... plain and simple.

Colours, style, fonts – all of this is determined by the story you're trying to tell your customers, and your logo sets the stage. These elements will later translate from your logo onto all of your branding materials – letterheads, business cards, website – everything! Dare to stand out and be different with your logo, because your company logo tells consumers why your business is unique.

For example, my agency, TMA, works with a lot of clients in Italy. We have found that most Italian tour agencies use the colour orange. This means that a blue logo will really stand out next to all that orange.

Another aspect of your brand logo that far too many get wrong is consistency. I have come across so many businesses that will use different colours and fonts across their marketing materials. This confuses customers. Consumers crave consistency. As your brand grows, your logo is going to become more familiar, and this helps create the perception that you're trustworthy and accessible.

Think about it for a second...

When you're out shopping for new sneakers and suddenly spot a pair of Adidas Sambas (If that's your thing... I love them) with the three strips, you're instantly ready to buy. Why? Because with Adidas you know you're in safe hands as it is a brand you can trust. Trust is as much built on a well-designed logo as it is on how you communicate with your customers or how you are known for your service.

Once they like and know you, customers are going to seek you out again and again, and your logo is the first thing they will look for.

YOUR BRAND LOGO



With this section, we are going to help you stand out from the crowd. I've invented a simple way of illustrating how well your competitors currently stand out. This method also shows how you sit alongside your competitors' logos.



First, download the colour wheel worksheet and print a colour copy. Then screengrab the logos from each of the 8-10 competitors I asked you to list in the previous section. Again, print each of these out and cut them out into individual logos.

Now, place the logos around the colour-wheel that matches the predominant colour used in their logos. Do you see any pattern to how your competitors are using colour? Let's look at the example below for FoodDrinkTour...



As you can see, the vast majority of FoodDrinkTour's competitors are predominantly in the blue/green spectrum, with a few close by and a couple of stand-outs. FoodDrinkTour also feature in the blue spectrum.

My advice to FoodDrinkTour would be to change the colour of their logo to the opposite side of the spectrum as this will help them stand out more. However, I would also suggest updating the logo, making it more modern — this will help it stand out further.

DESIGNING A LOGO

When it comes to creating a logo, you must adhere to some basics to make sure you create something that will work on many formats and at different sizes. Far too often, I've seen logos with intricate designs that simply don't print well at small sizes. Also, think of your logo as a badge. It should be a self-contained element that doesn't take up too much real estate. Let's look at elements you must follow.

Avoid following trends

When Apple designed the iOS system, every designer wanted to design a logo with gradients and drop shadows. Fast forward to 2019 and that look is dated. This is because design trends last only for a short time. You must create a logo that is contemporary and that will stand the test of time.

Look at Nike's swoosh. It's simple and it can work on any medium, against any colour.

Create your logo in black and white FIRST

When designing a logo it should look as equally good in black and white as it does in colour. You may also need to print your logo in a monochrome format when publishing in newspapers or when your logo is white on a solid colour.

Designing in black and white first helps you see how a logo looks more clearly as you do not get distracted by pretty colours. This also helps highlight any design issues.

It must scale — and don't use Photoshop!!!

Your logo should look crisp and sharp whether it's the size of a postage stamp or draped over the side of a building. Logos with small design elements will only get lost at smaller sizes. Remember, your logo could also be printed on pens or stitched on your company polo shirt, as well as on stationery and brochures. It should also be legible from various distances.

Top tip — Print your logo in the middle of an A4 sheet of paper. Pin it to your wall. Stand at the furthest away point at the other side of your room. Can you still make out your logo? Still readable? If so, good job. Your logo should be readable from a distance as it could be used on vehicles, billboards, clothing and other materials that customers may see on the move. If it is not readable, scrap it and start again.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Also, never, ever use Photoshop. Logos should be designed in vector format as this format can scale to any size. Scaling logos that have been designed in Photoshop can make them look pixelated at large sizes. Vector logos are also easier to change if used on different colour combinations.

Adobe Illustrator is the industry standard for vector logos so make sure whoever is designing your logo uses this format.

Be minimalistic

I remember back when the logo was designed for the Commonwealth Games, held in Glasgow, Scotland in 2014. It was not well received for a number of reasons. The design company responsible released a full explanation of what the logo represented. It read...

“The logo is an original piece of work whose broken circles represented ‘time, data and measurement’ - the basis of all sport. It is based on four numbers associated with the Games – the 20th time the event has been held, the 17 sports represented, 11 days of the competition and one host city. The second ring is 17/20ths of the outer circle, the third ring is 11/20ths and the G stands for Glasgow.”

While the thinking behind this logo was creative, they were trying to be too clever. If you have to create a full explanation that someone has to read to understand what your logo represents then, I am sorry, but you’ve failed. Your logo should be to the point and it should easily convey your brand. Remove all the excessive elements from a logo. Keep only those elements that are just enough to convey a message.

There is also no need to design an icon to go with your logo. A good typeface can be more than enough. A simple but strong logo will better catch the eye of your customers than something they need to spend five minutes studying to find out what it is.

Also, choose no more than one typeface and two colours within your logo. This helps give the impression as being more professional and helps with printing further down the line. And don’t use gradients unless you happen to be offering tours with an 80s theme.

Create brand guidelines

Armed with all the information from finding your path, voice and personality, take all of this, with your logo, and create a brand guideline book that will help you and your team

stay consistent. It is also handy when others use your logo as you can set some rules that they must abide by.

Your brand guidelines should include the design and layout of key materials, like your stationery, email signatures, typefaces and image use — to name just a few.

I have included an example brand guideline document in the download section to give you an idea how this should look. Your designer should be able to create this for you.

To summarise, your logo...

- needs to work in a singular colour
- needs to be scalable, therefore simple
- needs to be unique and different from competitors
- should be used in all different compositions and applications
- needs to tell the brand's message
- should be easy to remember.

New logo for FoodDrinkTour

With all that in mind, let's revisit the current FoodDrinkTour logo and design a more modern version that stands out from the crowd.

Here is the current logo...



WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The owner designed this logo. Now it's not 'bad'. I have seen much worse, but it does not work well at smaller sizes as the elements around the text get too thin and 'fill in'. The typeface also becomes a little hard to read. It is also using a subtle gradient which makes it look a little dated. I also find it too similar to one of her competitors.

To me, the words Food, Drink, Tour sound strong and matter of fact, so the logo should portray this in a similar fashion. A stronger typeface should be used in combination with a stronger colour pallet.

Here is what I have come up with (black & white first!) . . .



I have selected a stronger typeface to go with the strong-sounding name. I have also removed the graphical icons as they are unnecessary. The words alone convey what it is this company does without the need of a knife and fork. Let's choose a colour for the logo.

..



Notice that I have selected a strong colour, one that is from the opposite side of the colour spectrum from their competitors.



The new logo also works in various sizes...



For more examples of how the FoodDrinkTour brand works in various formats, please check out the downloads section for this chapter.

SECTION CONCLUSION

We have now looked at your brand path, helping you define the direction you should take. We have looked at your brand voice and how you should communicate — both with your audience and internally. We have also looked at your brand personality and the tone your voice should take. Finally, we have looked at the elements of a brand logo and discussed the approach you should take to create a long-lasting brand mark.

I hope you feel you are now armed with the information and knowledge to set the foundation of a successful brand. Without these elements your business does not have a chance of succeeding in the long term.

This is only the beginning, however. You now need the platforms to promote what you've just created. Next, we will look at everything from your website to the booking platform you should consider to what social platforms you should set up.

Ready for the next phase? Let's begin...

SECTION TWO

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

SETTING THE RIGHT FOUNDATIONS

Setting the right foundations before creating a strategy is the first important step.

The foundations I speak of include your website, social platforms, review systems, booking platforms, selecting the right online travel agent (OTA), etc .

Most businesses will jump straight into marketing mode, spending lots of money on ads or creating amazing content, but all this work cannot convert into revenue if their website isn't good enough.

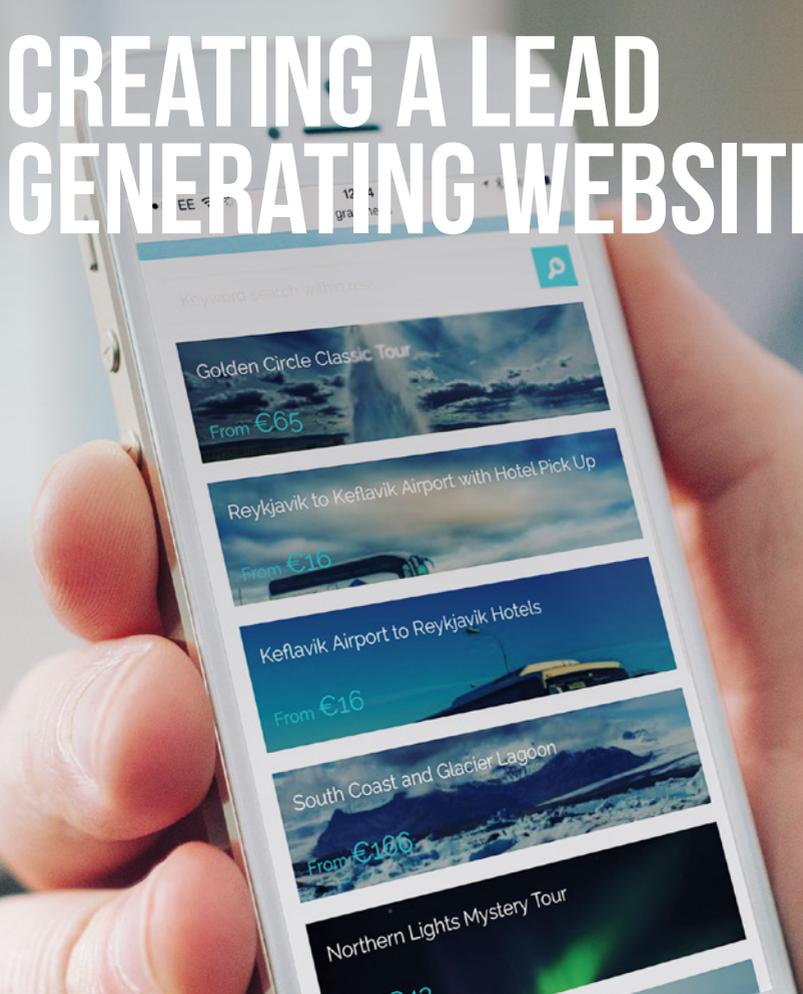
This section will take you through each aspect and advise you on how you can resolve the likely issues before you begin spending your hard-earned cash.

“Hey, I have all these things already” I hear you shout. If you do, great, but this section may highlight a few things you missed or did not know about. If you like, you can skip to the next section which is about research, as this may tell you some things about what you are currently doing that is damaging your sales conversions. However, I advise reading over this first.

Let's start with the first port of call... your website.

WORKSHOP FIVE

CREATING A LEAD GENERATING WEBSITE



The smartphone screen shows a travel website with a search bar and several tour listings. The listings include:

- Golden Circle Classic Tour (From €65)
- Reykjavik to Keflavik Airport with Hotel Pick Up (From €16)
- Keflavik Airport to Reykjavik Hotels (From €16)
- South Coast and Glacier Lagoon (From €186)
- Northern Lights Mystery Tour (From €123)

At the bottom of the screen, there are two icons: a play button and a lightbulb with a gear, representing video help and downloadable worksheets respectively.



Video help guide
available



Downloadable
worksheets
available

THE EXPERIENCE STARTS WITH THE FIRST CLICK

We now live at an age where information about a business (in fact, anything) is easily accessible at your fingertips. The 9-year-old inside me would be in heaven at the thought of a smartphone or an iPad (I was, and still am, a sci-fi fan).

From the first click on the site, your customer has an initial impression of your business firmly cemented in their mind and it can be difficult to change this later down the line. When it comes to the design and nature of the site, a well-made site can make all the difference to the customer.

From my experience, many businesses, almost consider their website as an afterthought. They will happily spend hundreds or thousands on branding their vehicles, clothing, office space or other materials and leave little to no budget for their website. To me, this is backwards. Spend more on creating a great-looking, high-functioning website that will drive bookings so that you have enough customers to fill your well-branded vehicles or see the logo on your clothing.

Although it can be tempting to skimp out on design, how you make potential customers feel about your brand should take precedence over price.

How many times have you purchased a tour, activity or experience that is a little more expensive than a competitor purely because they look and feel more professional? It happens more often than you think.

Now, I get that websites are getting cheaper and there are some great low-cost solutions out there. Some of these I will cover in this book. Just make sure you select or build something that will enhance your customers' purchasing experience rather than making something for you personally. Like branding, leave your ego at the door. At the end of the day, it does not matter if you love or hate the design of your website. What matters is that your customers love it and that it generates bookings.

Great design and branding, when paired with a website that boasts the same assets, will lead to successful year-on-year growth for your business.

Users can visit an average of ten different sites before booking, and they can switch over to other sites when they become annoyed by the site design. Poor web design can make a huge dent in the profits of a business as the online booker has all the power.

An effective website and brand voice will convert lookers to bookers. The key elements you must get right are:

- Consistent brand message across all channels.
- Simple-to-use design with user-friendly navigation.
- Clear design that highlights the prices a customer can expect — whether it's a high, low or mid-value offer.
- Media that shows the kinds of experiences you offer.

An analogy that is often used in the industry is that a website is essentially the best employee you could have. They don't take sick leave, need a pay rise or take days off – so make sure you value this tool and create the best one possible. Going down the cheaper routes can give customers the impression that your brand is cheap and poorly managed.

Now, let's nurture that employee. . .

CREATING A LEAD-GENERATING WEBSITE

If you currently have a website, this section may highlight areas for improvement. Our research section will also explain how you can conduct some vital health-checks yourself. For the sake of this section, we will assume you do not have a website or are in the middle of redesigning one.

Although my agency no longer develops websites, we were very successful at it for nearly 10 years. We also researched and tested customer purchase journeys extensively, thanks, in part, to working with some big players in the industry, the knowledge of which we now use to help our marketing strategies and advise customers on ways to maximise their booking potential.

To achieve the best customer experience, tourism companies need to accept everything about your tourism website matters. Absolutely everything.

My 6 golden rules

The banner is the most important element of your home-page. When a customer visits your site, they need to grasp exactly what experience you are offering from the images, video, and content they find.

1. Use video in your homepage banner

With few exceptions, you should use video as your banner for your desktop view. Video can tell your story much more effectively than images. Video can show your customers exactly the type of experiences you offer and it will ensure your offer is impactful and persuasive. Video will inspire them. Thanks to video, clients will connect more with your website, your brand, and your products.

These days producing video, even a professional one, does not need to cost the Earth. On page 267 I discuss ways you can produce great videos without great costs.

2. Title text for your homepage banner

Take a look at the following example from <https://lifeoftaiwan.com>. 'Private Tours of Taiwan' tells the user exactly what they're offering – and it does this without being sales focused.



3. The exception to the video rule

When it comes to tablets and mobile, swap the video on your website banner for an image. This is really important, as people on mobile internet are often annoyed that a website with an automatic video uses their mobile data allowance. This is even more relevant if the user is viewing a website from 'abroad' and they are trying to book a tour or an activity.

4. How to use imagery on the homepage

If you really can't use video, or don't want to then good photography is the next best thing. Full screen images can also work well but stay away from stock images. Unlike stock video, users can tell if the image is stock. This gives the perception that your website, your brand, and your products are false, and it can make your business seem false.

If you have an image-sliding banner, make sure you have no more than three slides. The vast majority of customers will not flick past the first three or four images. Sticking with three also helps with site speed — especially when using larger images. My recommendation, however, is to have one, static hero image.

5. Navigation

There is one feature all sites must have: your customers must be able to click your book or enquiry button by the third click on their journey through your website. For the most

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

part, this can be achieved by creating a simple menu system that allows users to find the booking button within just two clicks.

6. Search function

If you have many products or are multi-destination, your website must offer a tour search function, and this function must be prominent. Look at the most successful sites within the industry. AirBnB, Viator, Gray Line, Skyscanner etc, all have a prominent search function that makes it very easy for the user to find exactly what they're looking for.

But it's equally important that you refrain from offering too many options. Imagine the user viewing the search results on a mobile — can they read these results clearly and find what they're looking for? To make the results more manageable and accurate, offer a keyword search and an option to add in a 'To' and 'From' date parameters. The final thing to offer here is the option to search for a type of activity via a drop-down menu. Leave the rest to filters. If you offer too many options in the search, you risk disengaging the customer — do this and they'll walk away.

EXAMPLE WEBSITE STRUCTURE

I'm now going to show you my take on what makes a great website for the tours and activities industry. This is the desktop design I've created for FoodDrinkTour that contains all the elements you must consider before you build or re-design your website.



Your website should, at least, contain the following templates:



- Homepage
- Tour/Product list page
- Tour/Product page
- Blog List page
- Blog page
- General sub page (used for About us, terms, FAQs etc)
- Destination list page (if multi-destination)

FoodDrinkTour Homepage Template

Although your entire site should be well designed, your homepage is often your customer's first look at your brand. It is your shop window, so you have to get it right. The initial load of your home page — which appears 'above the fold' (what you initially see before you scroll) — should contain all the elements that will entice and excite your potential customers. It should also tell them everything about your brand and what you do. Let's take a look at what this, should contain, along with the rest of your homepage...

Initial load – above the fold

1. The main menu bar, with your logo, should not be complicated to navigate and a "book/enquire now" button. Depending on your booking system— if you have one — this will open a page that will list all tours available for booking.
2. The secondary menu bar should feature less important pages, such as your 'about us', 'blog' and 'contact us' pages. The bar should also contain your phone number and other ways customers can get in contact. If you make it hard for customers to get in touch, they trust you much less.
3. Full-screen image or background video* (no sound) with a main title (H1 tag) that contains your main keyword. If you have lots of tours or are multi-destination, you should also offer a search facility with a date selector. Customers tend to search by destination and/or activity and the date they are thinking of travelling. If you want to

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hello@fooddrinktours.com +44 141 221 2090 fooddrinktours

ABOUT US | SUPPORT | CONTACT

Our Tours | Blog | Meet Your Guides **BOOK NOW**

The Ultimate Glasgow Food & Drink Tours

Choose your Tour When would you like to visit? **BE INSPIRED**

1

3

4

Our Best Selling Tours

MOST BOOKED

Glasgow City Culinary Experience

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

5/5

£70 - BOOK NOW

ON SALE

West End Wonders

Was £60 - Save £10 Per Person

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

5/5

£50 - BOOK NOW

POPULAR

Cooking Classes with the Curries

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

5/5

£295 - BOOK NOW

VIEW MORE TOURS

Clydeside Distillery Tour Launched

Wander around the Dockside Story in the self-guided part of this tour. Discover fascinating tales about the birth of the whisky industry and Glasgow's history, featuring live footage and animation bringing history to life.

FIND OUT MORE

have a video ad with sound, make this clickable for the user to watch the video.

- Your trust builder. This can take different forms and it is something most tours and activities websites lack. Any platforms you use for reviews like TripAdvisor, Facebook and Google, should be displayed in the initial load of your homepage — on any screen size! How many of you have a TripAdvisor logo in the footer of your site? (If at all?) Why make it harder for a potential customer to see your great reviews? Be proud and display these prominently, as they greatly improve the chances that a visitor will consider you trustworthy.

As you scroll down the page

- Best-selling Tours — Highlight no more than three of your best-selling products. It's always better to promote a small selection of popular tours to drive sales. It's better to resist giving your customers far too many options at the beginning. You can change the products you display here, but I recommend always promoting the products that you know will sell better and provide the best profit margins.
- Promo Banner — By having a banner like the one shown here, you can promote a specific service or new tour.

The screenshot shows a website section titled "Our Best Selling Tours". It features three tour cards arranged horizontally. Each card has a header image with a status tag (MUST DO, ON SALE, POPULAR), a title, a short description, a rating of five green circles, and a "BOOK NOW" button with a price. Below the cards is a "VIEW MORE TOURS" button. At the bottom of the section is a large banner for "Clydeside Distillery" with a background image of the distillery interior.

5

Our Best Selling Tours

MUST DO

Glasgow City Culinary Experience

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

●●●●●

£70 - BOOK NOW

ON SALE

West End Wonders

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

●●●●●

£50 - BOOK NOW

POPULAR

Cooking Classes with the Curries

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

●●●●●

£295 - BOOK NOW

[VIEW MORE TOURS](#)

6

Clydeside Distillery

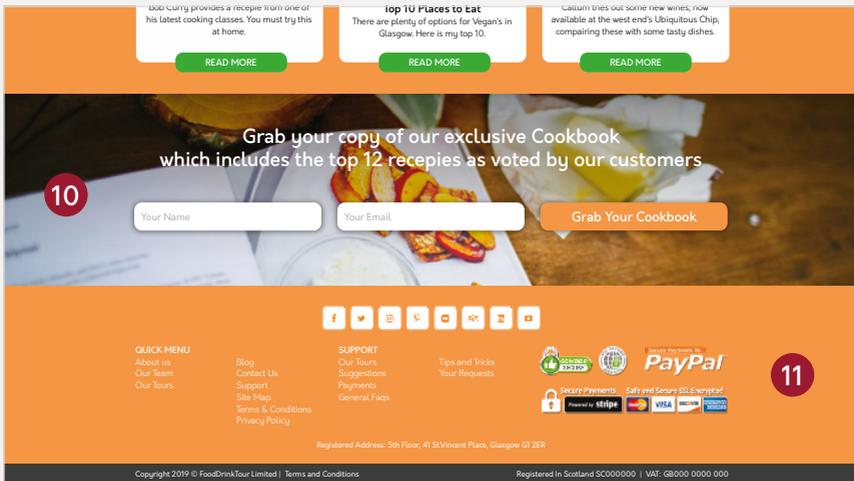
Tour launched

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

7. **Featured Tours or Destinations** — It's advantageous to use a panel to promote other products or to showcase featured destinations (if you are multi-destination). Again, keep this to three panels. You can always have a button underneath saying 'view all tours' or 'view all destinations'.
8. **Credibility panel** — This panel highlights some of your USPs and it help build further trust with the user. This can even highlight and promote one of your tour guides, as this shows you put people first and it underlines the personal touch your company provides to all its tours and activities.
9. **Latest Stories/Blog panel** — This panel highlights your latest blogs to keep your home page fresh and to lead customers to specific content. Google also loves new content and with this panel updating on a weekly basis (you should post at least once per week), it will help with rankings and drive traffic to your site.

The screenshot displays a website layout with three main sections. The top section, 'Featured Tours', contains three tour cards: 'The Finnieston Food Tour' (labeled 'MUST DO', £70 - BOOK NOW), 'The Merchant City Foodie Experience' (labeled 'MOST POPULAR', £50 - BOOK NOW, with a note 'Was £60 - Save £10 Per Person'), and 'The Indian Experience' (labeled 'MUST DO', £295 - BOOK NOW). A red circle with the number '7' is positioned to the right of these cards. The middle section, 'Credibility panel', features three green checkmarks with corresponding text: '8 Friendly Local Guides' (All our guides are local to the areas they run tours), 'Money Back Guarantee' (If you are not happy with our tour, we give you your money back), and 'ALL Food Included In Tour' (The prices shown include all food and drink supplied on the tours). The bottom section, 'Latest Stories', is set against an orange background and contains three blog cards: 'Cooking with the Curries' (by Bob Curry), 'Vegan Glasgow Top 10 Places to Eat', and 'Win Tasting with Callum' (by Callum). Each card includes a 'READ MORE' button. A red circle with the number '9' is positioned to the right of these cards.

10. Newsletter panel — Include an enticing newsletter panel that encourages customers enter their contact details for something in return. Check out the email list building section on page 317 for ideas.
11. Footer — This should contain important links, social icons and other trust-building logos. By law, in most countries, you should also display your registered business name, address, terms, privacy policy, and your VAT/Tax number.



A note on special offers and discounts

One other thing I do recommend is that you refrain from showing too many special offers on your home page (unless you run a discounted tour website). Why? Ultimately, this will impact your profit margins as customers only expect the cheaper offers from your range of tours and activities. Also, if the visitor to your site is a new customer, having this information up front will impact their expectations of you as a business. If discounts are the first things they see when they visit your site, they will regularly expect discounts from you.

The rule of thumb here is that you're trying to sell an experience, not tell customers you're cheap (unless being especially cheap is your main USP). However, it's important to recognise that poor quality is normally associated with 'cheap deals' and that may be how visitors perceive your brand.

Tour list – activities/destinations

Having separate graphical lists of all your tours, activities, and destinations is a great visual way to present information to your customers. Also, if you have lots of items to list in each category, this is a great alternative to having a very long, unfriendly navigation system.

On this page, I would recommend displaying no more than 9 items at a time, with pagination at the bottom. Some sites will load this information as you scroll down the page. This is called 'lazy loading' and it is supposed to help page load times, which it does. However, if you have a very long list and the user keeps scrolling down, they will never get to, or view, your footer, which is a massive pain and bad UX (user experience).

What should your tour lists contain?

There are two ways you can display your tour lists. Either 3 to a row, or a full row for a single product if you need to show a little more information. If possible, allow customers to choose how they need to view your tours.

It's also ideal to allow the customer to filter specific details on the tour list page. This makes it super easy for them to find exactly what they want, removing more obstacles between them booking a tour or activity on your site!

Let's look at what your tour list should contain. . .

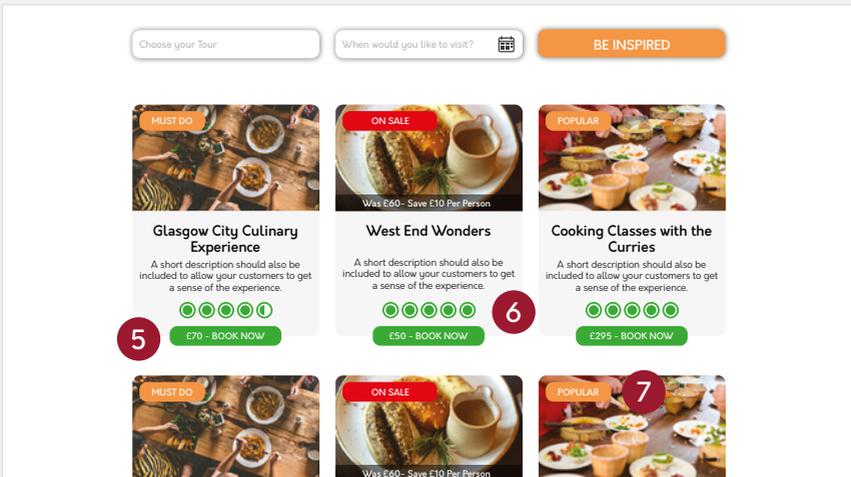
FoodDrinkTour Tour List Template

1. Keep your main navigation header and footer from your homepage and include a keyword-rich page title. A search bar function is also ideal if you also have lots of products/destinations. I suggest, however, that there is no need for a banner image or video. This will move your tours further up the page, making it easier and fast for customers to find your products. There is enough images loading on the page.
2. A thumbnail image should be present on each tour. The image should be enticing and highlight the experience. If possible, show happy customers on your tour – not just a destination shot. It has been proven that people will click an image with people more than images without people.
3. A tour title should be present and it should contain effective keywords. Do not make this overly long. This also helps with SEO.
4. A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience you are offering—two or three lines at most (150 characters). This also helps with SEO.

The screenshot displays the 'Our Glasgow Food & Drink Tours' page. At the top, there is an orange navigation bar with contact information and links for 'ABOUT US | SUPPORT | CONTACT'. Below this is a dark blue header with 'Our Tours | Blog | Meet Your Guides' and a green 'BOOK NOW' button. The main content area features a large heading 'Our Glasgow Food & Drink Tours' (annotated with a red circle '1'). Below the heading are two search filters: 'Choose your Tour' and 'When would you like to visit?' (annotated with a calendar icon), followed by a green 'BE INSPIRED' button. The tour list consists of three cards, each with a thumbnail image, a title, a short description, and a 'BOOK NOW' button. The first card is 'Glasgow City Culinary Experience' (annotated with a red circle '3'), the second is 'West End Wonders' (annotated with a red circle '2'), and the third is 'Cooking Classes with the Curries' (annotated with a red circle '4'). Each card also features a 'POPULAR' or 'ON SALE' badge and a row of five green circular icons representing ratings or reviews.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

5. A price should always included. There is nothing more annoying than having to click though to a page to see the price of a tour. Your customers will lose trust and switch off. If your product is on sale, make sure to also display the original price.
6. A star rating should also be present to help your customer's buying process.
7. Flash/banner — This should display any special offer text or promotion you are running. Keep these banners short!



Other items to consider

If your business provides multiple pick-up points or destinations, a map option like the one offered by AirBnB is a great tool for customers to find tours near their accommodation.

What should your tour/product page contain?

This is your main buying page. Whatever you do, do not include links that can take you off to a blog or another area of the site within your main tour descriptions. You want to lock customers into this page as much as possible, so the next call to action is to book or make

an enquiry. A lot of businesses do this for SEO reasons as internal linking is important, but I argue that your customers purchasing your tours and activities is far more important.

I remember one client I worked with in the past that wanted affiliate ads on their main buying page. Why would you encourage a potential customer go to another website to earn a small commission than buy one of your own products?

FoodDrinkTour Tour Page - Above The Fold

1. Keep your top bar and footer consistent across the website but on the product page, remove your newsletter sign-up panel. Lock them in to that page!
2. Include a large image banner showcasing one hero image or a video showing the experience. Don't make this autoplay. Allow the customer to click a button to view. Video on these pages can have a massive impact on your bookings. One test we produced increased bookings by 80%. See my video ideas section on page 267 for more details.
3. The tour title (using a H1 tag) should be present 'above the fold'.
4. The original price, reviews, and a link to 'view more photos' should also be included. We have only one image in the hero banner is to make sure your page loads quickly.
5. Also include your main call to action, encouraging users to book or enquire.
6. A tab or jump menu (preferably the later) to allow customers to go to different information on the page quickly. Please note, as the user scrolls, that menu, with the book button should stick to the top of the page to save them constantly scrolling up and down. This is why it's better than a tabbed system.
7. Include a short description of your product followed by a highlights list, what's included, and what's not included.

As you scroll down the page

8. A side panel, on the right-hand side of the page should contain a calendar, number of people, price, book now and/or enquire button*. This may not be possible with your booking platform. Even if you're not offering online bookings (enquiry only), a calendar notification and other information would be sent to you, making it easier for you to manage the enquiry. If possible, your side panel should be 'sticky' and stay in position as the user scrolls up and down the page.

hello@foodrinktour.com +44 141 221 2090 foodrinktour ABOUT US | SUPPORT | CONTACT

Our Tours | Blog | Meet Your Guides BOOK NOW



Glasgow City Culinary Experience

6 DESCRIPTION
HIGHLIGHTS
ITINERARY

Quick Description

7 You will walk through Glasgow City Centre with our tour, tasting the fabulous Scottish food and drink the city has to offer, enjoying the Glasgow patter and some Gaelic, while exploring the history and culture of Glasgow itself. No need for lunch – you will be well fed and watered!

Your local tour guide will show you interesting gems of the City Centre and recommend where to go and what to see while in Glasgow.

We will visit 4 amazing, independent restaurants, shops and bars where you'll interact with the locals, taste unique delicacies, sample some fabulous gin and enjoy a wee dram.

Highlights

You will walk through Glasgow City Centre with our tour, tasting the fabulous Scottish food and drink the city has to offer, enjoying the Glasgow patter and some Gaelic, while exploring the history and culture of Glasgow itself. No need for lunch – you will be well fed and watered!

Your local tour guide will show you interesting gems of the City Centre and recommend where to go and what to see while in Glasgow.

We will visit 4 amazing, independent restaurants, shops and bars where you'll interact with the locals, taste unique delicacies, sample some fabulous gin and enjoy a wee dram.

BOOK NOW

From £50

Was £60

DURATION: 2 Hours

12345

< **OCTOBER 2017** >

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

■ Selected
 ■ Available
 ■ Unavailable
 ■ offers

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Number of adults

Number of children (5 - 16 years old)

Number of infants (under 5s)

BOOK NOW

ENQUIRE ONLY

ITINERARY

Stop One

9 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur metus velit, porttitor quis tortor quis, vulpate facilisis ante. In tempor scelerisque sodales.

Stop Two

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur metus velit, porttitor quis tortor quis, vulpate facilisis ante. In tempor scelerisque sodales.

Stop Three

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur metus velit, porttitor quis tortor quis, vulpate facilisis ante. In tempor scelerisque sodales.

Stop Four

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur metus velit, porttitor quis tortor quis, vulpate facilisis ante. In tempor scelerisque sodales.

9. As you scroll down the page, you can then display a more detailed tour description and itinerary. Don't make this too long, however; it should be short enough to be easily read but long enough to provide enough information to entice them.
10. Highlight reviews for this particular product if possible. I talk a little on this in the review platforms section on page 119.
11. At the end of your page, just above the footer, should be a selection titled 'You may also like' or something equivalent. This should list a selection of three alternative tours and products similar to the one the customer is viewing. Although this goes against my advice of locking them into your buying page, it allows your customers to find a similar alternative product that might suit their needs more than the one they are viewing, but it still keeps them within the locked product page ecosystem.

"I took my wife and family here for a birthday treat on 15th May and was not disappointed. The food is first class."

● ● ● ● ●

Chris Torres, Glasgow

10

You May Also Like

11


Glasgow City Culinary Experience

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

● ● ● ● ●

£70 - BOOK NOW



West End Wonders

Was £60 - Save £10 Per Person

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

● ● ● ● ●

£50 - BOOK NOW



Cooking Classes with the Curries

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.

● ● ● ● ●

£295 - BOOK NOW

*The side panel can also contain optional extras that the customer can add to their experience. For example, a packed lunch or a transfer to and from their hotel. This can all be done in the side panel, if your booking system allows. Enquiry based sites can be developed this way. We did this for Gray Line and it helped generate extra revenue as it made it easy for their customers to see every feature.

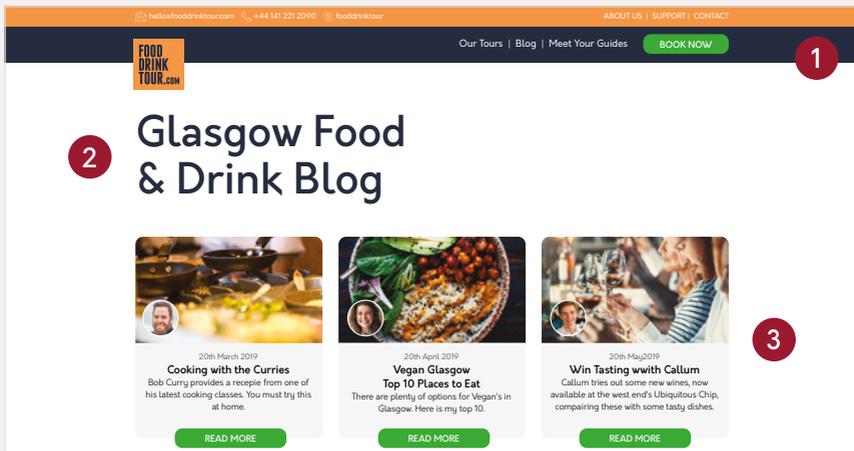
What should your blog list page contain?

Your blog list page should be laid out in a similar way to your tour list. Making it similar will bring a sense of consistency to your website for your customers, making it easier for them to navigate.

The most effective blogs are those that tell a story. Those that show the human side of your business. So, your blog list and main blog page should reflect this.

Here is a rough guide to laying out your blog list:

FoodDrinkTour Blog List Template



1. Again, same navigation and footer from the homepage. It is fine and advisable to add your newsletter panel back in here.
2. Include a keyword-rich page title. Don't just call it 'blog'; add something like 'Glasgow Travel Guides' or 'The Glasgow Guide'. Use your destination or a keyword that will help your SEO.
3. List around nine blogs with pagination (page navigation) at the bottom of these.

4. Each blog on the list should contain the following:
- Thumbnail image – Visually explain what the post is about
 - Title – Make it enticing and keyword rich
 - Short description – Enough to tell the reader what the post is about
 - Date – So your customers know if the information is relevant and up-to-date.
 - The author avatar and name – This makes it personal and more relatable. It also helps your customers easily identify posts from the same person whose style they may prefer.

rch 2019
h the Curries
 a recepie from one of
 sses. You must try this
 ome.
 MORE

20th April 2019
Vegan Glasgow
Top 10 Places to Eat
 There are plenty of options for Vegan's in
 Glasgow. Here is my top 10.
 READ MORE

20th May
Win Tasting w
 Callum tries out som
 available at the west en
 compairing these with
 READ M

How to lay out a blog page

Your main blog/article page should be clean and clear of clutter. Remember, this is something someone will read on a screen (probably a smart phone) so it must be easy to read – especially if it's a longer blogpost.

I recommend including the following elements on a blog page. . .

FoodDrinkTour Blog Page Template

1. A banner image (or video) will show what the article is about. This can be different from your blog list thumbnail.
2. The main title (H1 tag) and short description.
3. The author avatar and name and the date.
4. Your main article text, in dark grey, against a white or slightly off-white background. Having grey text instead of black has been proven to be more pleasing on the eye and makes it easier to read.
5. Intersperse text with images/video.
6. Use sub headings (H2 tags) to separate information.
7. Hyperlinks with anchor text within the text should stand out and be a different colour (one that fits with your brand)



2

Glasgow Food Tour

3  Bob Curry - 20th March 2019

4 **Explore Glasgow on our sightseeing food walking tour**

Get a taste for Scotland's biggest city on the Glasgow sightseeing food tour, available here at Food Drink Tour! Follow a local on a walking tour through Glasgow's best foodie spots and learn about the farming and culinary history of Scotland's largest city

If you're interested in our Glasgow food tour, you may also be interested in our equally delicious Edinburgh food tour — or perhaps you'd prefer to check out our range of UK food tours?

For the vegans out there, [Glasgow is the vegan capital of Europe](#), with **7** the most vegan restaurants per person than any other European city. You may like to consider our Glasgow [vegan food tour](#).

6 **The Tastiest Glasgow City Walking Tour**

If you're looking for the best food tour in Glasgow, look no further. You start your tour in Glasgow's famous Merchant City district, which is famous for its high-end cocktail bars and boutique stores. Learn about the city's history, about its rich merchants importing and selling products from all over the world.

No food tour of Glasgow would be complete without a good breakfast. In [Rose & Grants](#), right in the heart of Glasgow's theatre district, taste traditional Scottish breakfast food, such as tattie scones, square sausage, and haggis (that's right — haggis is amazing with a fried egg on top!). From there, your local guide will take you through the centre of Glasgow, giving you a little background about the city. After this, we take a short journey to the West End of Glasgow, and to the origin of one of the UK's most famous dishes...



5

The end of the article is a good place to highlight some products/tours you have that relate to the post in question. Alternatively, you can highlight similar blog posts elsewhere on your blog.

General subpage

This template should allow you to create a host of subpages that contain other important information but do not necessarily need to be in the main navigation. Most of these should be accessible on your website footer. This template can be used for the following pages (Note: this is not an exhausting list of the subpages this template can apply to):

- About Us
- Terms and Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Site Map
- FAQ
- Contact Us

The structure of these pages is usually laid out as follows:

1. Same header and footer from the homepage
2. Page title (H1 Tag)
3. Main content
4. A side panel to the right which could contain links to important sections, such as a “Why book with us” bulleted list and contact information

There is no set rule for these types of pages. Just keep them consistent with the rest of your website and make them easy for users to find what they're looking for.

How to lay out a destination list page

If your business operates in multiple destinations, then a destination list page essential. This page is, in essence, a page that automatically pulls in a list of your destination pages. This saves you having a long or a complicated dropdown menu system. In fact, if you have

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

more than 6 destinations, I would not use a dropdown menu. If you have less than this, you may be able to have each of your destinations on your main menu as long as you don't have too many other higher-level category pages on the main menu.

Your destination list should, at least, contain the following information:

1. Same header and footer from home page
2. Main page title (H1 Tag) – This should be just the name of your destination – such as 'Our Food Tour Destinations'.
3. Hero image of your destination.
4. Title of your destination (H2 Tag) – for example 'Glasgow'.
5. Short description of the destination.
6. Call-to-action buttons with something like 'View *Location* Tours' (or whatever your CTA is) where *Location* is each of your destinations.

What about mobile?

I can hear the web designers shouting at me saying I should have started with the mobile design. Don't worry, I speak a little more on this in the Website Audit section of the book.

Summary

In this section, discussed the various elements, formats, and structures your website needs to function properly.

Today, I still get asked "Is it better to click or scroll". I get asked this because many people feel web pages are too long and that they should try to fit everything onto one screen. The one-screen layout was prevalent in the early days of the internet, but technology and user habits (and expectations) have moved on significantly.

Because of the advent of tablets and mobile devices, users prefer to scroll rather than click their way through your website. The more clicks you present them with, the more opportunities you give them to leave your site. They may leave your site because it loads slowly from page to page or because your navigation is so confusing that they get lost. The added benefit of scrolling is that it feels like a more natural process – especially on smart phones and tablets.

Remember, no user should be more than three clicks away from buying your products ; the fewer clicks a user has to make, the better your site should convert.

In this chapter, I have discussed what I consider to be the fundamental elements of a great tour and activity website. Each business within the industry may have slightly different needs, but by adopting the advice I've gone through in this chapter, you'll be better placed to get your customers to trust in you, to engage with your brand, to have a positive experience on your website, and to buy from you.

WEBSITE OPTIONS — BUDGET OR BESPOKE?

There are now so many options when developing your website. You could purchase a very cheap website template or have a developer build you a fully bespoke, highly customisable website. Let me begin with the latter.

If you want to have a fully bespoke website with custom design, functionality, and possibly a custom content management system (CMS), then expect to pay anything between £15k-£100k +. The cost will depend on your specific requirements. I know of someone who created their own booking system because the vast number of pre-existing bookings systems did not meet their needs. If it were my business, I would change my processes to work with an existing booking system.

Back when my agency used to develop websites, we would range between £15k-£60k for a custom-built website. There was then a monthly fee for support, maintenance, and hosting. From experience, support is another area some business owners simply do not take into account, and they often feel that all updates should be included in the initial fee and that they are entitled to maintenance work for life once the website has been built. If you think this way, you are going to struggle with any web development company and you should re-examine your expectations.

However, most business owners simply can't afford a £15k-£60k website, so I will explain a couple of cheaper options below.

Purchase a template

Purchasing a pre-designed template can save you a lot of time and money. There are some outstanding templates available and I highly recommend looking at ThemeForrest, <https://theforest.net>.

ThemeForrest templates work with the world's leading CMS system (Wordpress*), so a quick Google search will help you easily find a developer who can help install your new website theme.

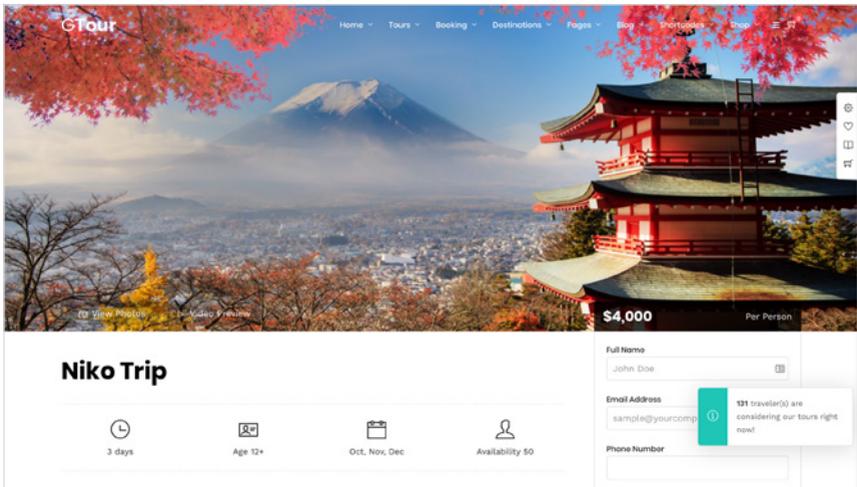
Here are five of the best templates I have found:

Getaway

https://themeforest.net/item/getaway-an-upbeat-travel-and-tourism-theme/20719616?s_rank=15

Getaway is a feature packed theme with a huge assortment of layouts for multi destinations, multi trips and tours, including destination list and single destination templates. It also includes an easy to use search filter, as well as the tour booking functionality with PayPal integration out the box.

Grand Tour



https://themeforest.net/item/grand-tour-tour-travel-wordpress/19264426?s_rank=8

Grand Tour is a modern theme for tours and activity operators. It is packed with features and one I highly recommend. The product pages alone follow the advice I gave earlier with a focus on conversions. PayPal and WooCommerce integration out the box but I am sure a good developer can integrate this with any booking platform.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Embark



https://themeforest.net/item/embark-wordpress-theme-for-tour-companies/20216095?s_rank=16

Great for all types of tour related businesses be it river rafting, whale watching, bus tours & sightseeing or walking tours. Has it's own built in booking and scheduling functionality with integration to PayPal, WooCommerce and Stripe. You can even feed your schedules into a Google, iCal or Outlook calendar.

Camping Village

https://themeforest.net/item/camping-village-campground-caravan-hiking-tent-accommodation-wp/14950641?_ga=2.266188815.1254091632.1554126476-1253941622.1542888325

A good theme for travel activities like caravan parks, camping and cottages. You can also manage accommodation with an integrated booking system.

Ecopark

https://themeforest.net/item/ecopark-wordpress-theme-for-tour-vacation-travel-resort/18730432?s_rank=21

A good theme for outdoor based activities with accommodation functionality built in. Also includes an AirBNB style map with filters. Integration with Stripe, PayPal and WooCommerce built in.

As you can see, these look great and cost no more than \$100 each!! Any good developer should be able to install this for you within a day, not including the time to add in all your content. A developer will also be able to easily change any colour schemes and provide small tweaks, if necessary, to fit more with your brand.

Some people do not like templates as they feel someone else may have the same site. While this is true, your videos, photos, content and branding will make this look a lot different.

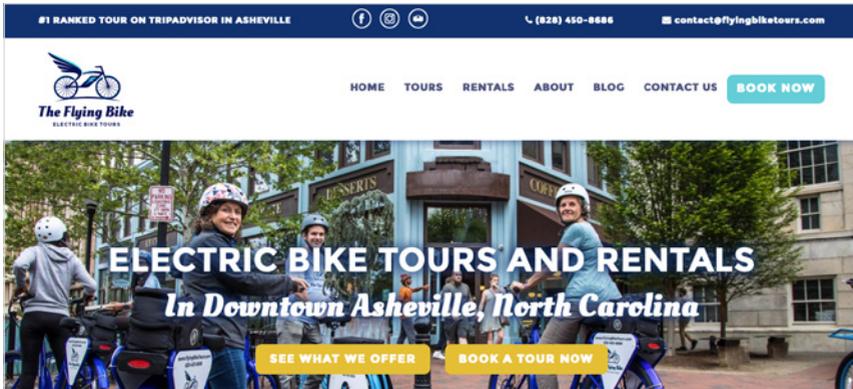
***Quick tip on Wordpress** – whatever you do, keep this up-to-date and be careful when installing plugins. Its popularity makes it a target for hackers. You should also always have a backup of your entire site on a separate domain (hidden from Google) that allows you to install and test updates and plugins before putting them live. This saves your live website going down if something you install was to break it. Again, if you can, use a developer to help you here. It will save you many sleepless nights.

TourismTiger

If you are looking for more hands-on web help and you need someone with a proven track record on tourism websites, then I highly recommend Tourism Tiger, <https://www.tourismtiger.com>.

When my agency stopped producing websites, we were still receiving enquiries from potential clients who needed a specialist tours and activities website. So, rather than accidentally falling back into web development, we looked at other agencies out there to recommend and we decided to settle with TourismTiger. TourismTiger follow a lot of my own thoughts on how websites should be designed, built, and then supported.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS



TourismTiger will cater for many budgets, starting from \$1,999. This is cheap for a well-constructed website. Their TigerCare will help support you and keep your site updated on an ongoing basis. It really is great value.

Other website development options

Again, you can go down the bespoke route but there are too many variables to go through in this book, so I won't cover that here.

A Google search will help you find local Wordpress developers or take a look at Fiverr, <https://www.fiverr.com>, or People Per Hour, <https://www.peopleperhour.com/site/referralaward?rfrd=393325.1> (use that link to get £30 towards your first project on me). There are many cheaper options available if you are willing to put time into vetting them. When working with a developer, make sure they have a strong portfolio and good reviews. For peace of mind, ask for references of past customers.

HOSTING, SSL AND CDN OPTIONS

I am not going to spend a great deal of time on these as there are too many options available. From experience, I can highly recommend Media Temple and their VPS hosting, <https://mediatemple.net/webhosting/vps/>. My agency used these guys for all our websites and a virtual dedicated server was really easy to manage and upgrade when necessary.

When it comes to hosting, please do not select one just because they're cheap. Cheap hosting is only good for low-performing, seldom-visited websites, not for a website that your business will rely upon for bookings.

When using cheap hosting, your website would be on what is commonly known as a shared server. This means that your website is on a server with hundreds (or even thousands) of other sites. Why is this bad? Well, if one of those sites is blocked for spamming or is indeed hacked, this can also affect your website. This is why I recommend a dedicated server, where your website does not share the server with any other website.

Dedicated servers are very expensive, usually starting at £800 per month, so I recommend a virtual private server (VPS). This gives you the benefits of a dedicated server but on a shared platform. This keeps your website separate from others and it is also way cheaper, starting from \$50 per month.

Good support is also key here, and things will always go wrong with websites. From experience, MediaTemple's support team was first class and this can make all the difference.

Content Delivery Network (CDN)

I also recommend that you take out a CDN. A CDN will help speed up your website while also protecting it. If your site was to go down, a version of it will stay online. Your site is also duplicated across multiple servers across the world, allowing your website to be served quicker to your customers as it will detect a server that is closer to their location. Think of it in terms of a satellite feed: the further you're away, the more of a delay you get. A CDN removes this delay.

You can check your website speed for free at <https://tools.pingdom.com>.

This allows you to select different servers and receive a report on the current speed of your website. Anything under 70% performance needs to be looked at with some urgency.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Also, don't try for 100%; it almost never happens as your website needs certain assets to function.

When it comes to CDNs, the market leader, and the easiest one I have used, is CloudFlare <https://www.cloudflare.com>. These guys offer a free version for small sites — however, I would recommend the \$20 per month package as this also protects your website from hackers.

SSL Certificate

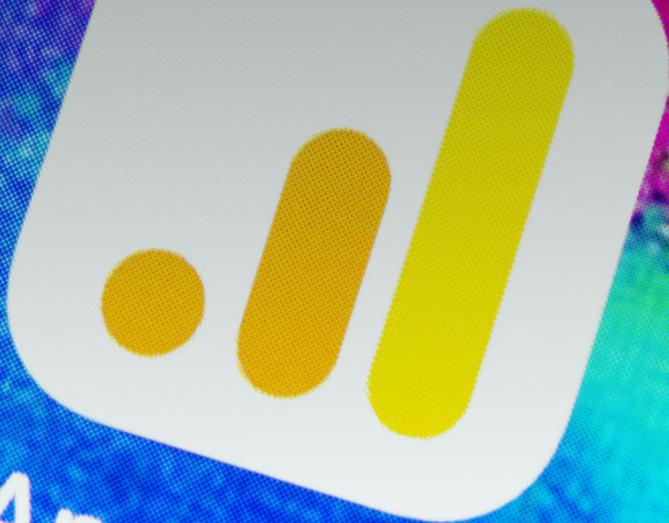
Make sure your website is secure for your customers by adding an SSL certificate to your website. This gives them peace of mind when using your website. It also has SEO benefits.

These days, most hosting providers provide an SSL certificate for free, using a service called Let's Encrypt. You can also visit <https://letsencrypt.org>. Some providers still charge for this service, but it should be no more than £100 per year.

A good agency or developer worth their salt can help you with all the advice I have given in this section.

WORKSHOP SIX

GETTING STARTED WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS, SEARCH CONSOLE & TAG MANAGER



Analytics

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

So, you now have a great lead generating website, or you are at least now armed with the knowledge to create one. However, having a website is not enough if you do not know who is visiting, where from, which pages are popular, or if your marketing strategies have worked. This is where Google Analytics comes in. And the good news is that Google Analytics is completely free!

To use Google Analytics, it must be set-up correctly, but if you're not technically minded, it can become a headache, so this section is designed to take some of that pain away. Even if you know how to use Google Analytics, this guide is also a good guide to help you double check you haven't overlooked something.

Search Console (previously Google Webmaster Tools) acts like a control panel that allows you to monitor how Google sees your website. For example, you've followed my advice and rebuilt your website and the URL structure has changed a little. If you don't tell Google you've done this, the next time Google crawls your site it may see your site as broken as you it can't find the pages it found previously. This would display what is technically called a 404 error.

Search Console alerts you to this and tells you which redirect you should put in place. Your web development team should be able to add what is called a 301 redirect (sorry, more error codes) so that your customers are automatically redirected to the new URL. This will also inform Google quicker that a change has been made.

Google Tag Manager is a free management solution by Google that essentially serves as storage space for all your website tracking codes. Trust me, you can end up with a lot: Analytics, chat bots, Facebook Pixels, etc. All of these would be added to your Tag Manager. Why?

If you set up Google Tag Manager, it will be the only time that you touch the codebase of your website. In fact, you will need someone with access to the codebase of your website (such as your webmaster). In the future, whether you want to implement additional event tracking, or add a new analytical service such as Hotjar (more details on page 219), you will not need to make any direct changes to your website code as you will do this directly in Tag Manager (which will automatically update your website). This also helps when you change developers or need to give a marketing company access. Makes life easier!

Okay. Let's begin with the first step... Analytics.

SETTING UP GOOGLE ANALYTICS

For those that are not used to Analytics it can seem a little daunting, however it is actually fairly easy to set-up. You can set up multiple websites/accounts under Google Analytics so all your data is in one place. This is handy if you manage multiple sites or landing pages.

IMPORTANT: Before you follow the guide below, please make sure you set up these accounts as this is something you should own, not your webmaster or agency. If you do not own this account, you risk losing your data when you stop working with that organisation.

First, you will need to sign up and create a Google account. Go to <https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/analytics/>.

After you sign up, you can set up your account and website information by entering your account name, website name, website URL, and industry category. Also, make sure you use the right time zone for your destination.

The screenshot shows the 'New Account' setup page in Google Analytics. The page is titled 'New Account' and asks 'What would you like to track?' with 'Website' selected. It includes fields for 'Account Name' (FoodDrinkTour), 'Website Name' (fooddrinktour.com), 'Website URL' (http:// fooddrinktour.com), 'Industry Category' (Travel), and 'Reporting Time Zone' (United Kingdom). There is also a 'Data Sharing Settings' section with a checked box for 'Google products & services'.

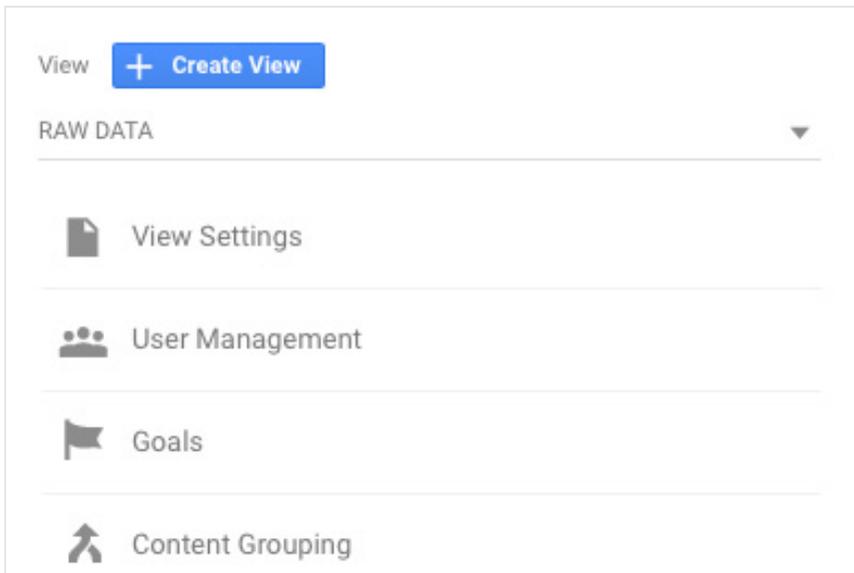
After setting this up, you will be directed to a page that displays your website tracking code. Copy this into a document or keep this window open.

See... how easy was that!

SETTING UP GOOGLE GOALS

Google Analytics is great for tracking your website visitors or for assessing information on how popular certain pages are. This is all well and good, but knowing if your website is converting visitors is the most important metric to consider. You have to tell Google Analytics to keep track of what's critical to your business and this is where Google Goals comes in.

To start setting up your goals, go to your Google Analytics dashboard and click on the 'Admin' on the bottom left. Click on 'Goals' under the view column then click '+ Goal'.



Google will display a selection of templates that you can select from. Buy tickets is a good starting one to use if you allow online bookings. Click 'Continue'.

Create a name for your goal. Make this goal obvious, as this will be used all over Google Analytics. Something like 'website purchase' is clear — or make it product specific, with something like 'west end food tour purchase'. You will also want to set a goal type. Select 'Destination' as we want to track the checkout complete page (this may be dependent on how your booking system works). Click 'Continue'.

In Goal details add the url from the last page you want to track. We will track the checkout

complete page, but this could be a newsletter sign up page or another trigger you want to track. Add the value of that lead/purchase.

If you like, you can even set the funnel you want to track, such as whether a lead comes from a specific blog or website. We will leave this for now. Once done, verify the goal and save.

Goal setup Edit
Template: *Buy tickets*

Goal description Edit
Name: *West end food tour purchase*
Goal type: *Destination*

3 Goal details

Destination

Equals to Case sensitive

For example, use *My Screen* for an app and */thankyou.html* instead of *www.example.com/thankyou.html* for a web page.

Value optional

ON OFF

Assign a monetary value to the conversion. [Learn more about Goal Values](#). For a transaction, turn the Goal Value off and use Ecommerce tracking and reports to see Revenue. [Learn more about Ecommerce Transactions](#).

Funnel optional

ON OFF

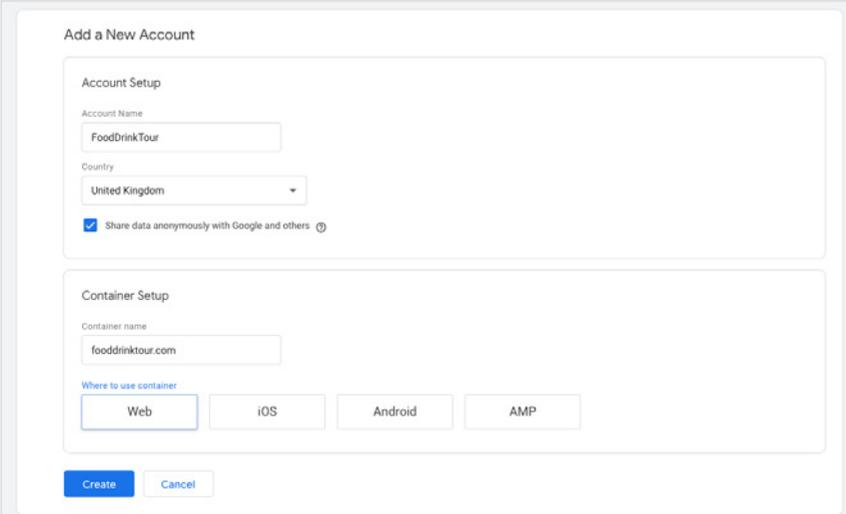
Specify a path you expect traffic to take towards the destination. Use it to analyze the entrance and exit points that impact your Goal.

Verify this Goal See how often this Goal would have converted based on your data from the past 7 days.

SETTING UP GOOGLE TAG MANAGER

To create your Google Tag Manager account, go to <https://www.google.com/analytics/tag-manager/>, and click the blue button on the top right corner that reads “Start for free.” Sign in with the same account you created above.

Follow the instructions on the screen to create your tag manager account and agree with the Google terms of service. You will be asked to create an account name and a container name (use your web address). Select ‘Web’ as the container use.



The screenshot shows the 'Add a New Account' form in Google Tag Manager. It is divided into two main sections: 'Account Setup' and 'Container Setup'.
In the 'Account Setup' section, there is a text input field for 'Account Name' containing 'FoodDrinkTour', a dropdown menu for 'Country' set to 'United Kingdom', and a checked checkbox for 'Share data anonymously with Google and others'.
In the 'Container Setup' section, there is a text input field for 'Container name' containing 'fooddrinktour.com'. Below this, under 'Where to use container', there are four buttons: 'Web' (which is highlighted with a blue border), 'iOS', 'Android', and 'AMP'.
At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'Create' (in blue) and 'Cancel'.

Once you follow those steps you will see a screen like the one on the following page containing your Google Tag Manager code — one for your website header and one to go immediately after the opening <body> tag. This must go across all your website pages (a single file for both your header and footer should be pulled into your website so you only need to insert this once). If you’re using Wordpress, or another CMS, you may be able to do this in the back end of that system. If you have a webmaster, ask them to paste the code snippets in the header and body sections of your theme/template file.

That should be the last time you need to touch your website code when adding tracking codes in the future. Now, let’s add your Google Analytics code to Tag Manager.

Install Google Tag Manager ✕

Copy the code below and paste it onto every page of your website.

Paste this code as high in the **<head>** of the page as possible:

```

<!-- Google Tag Manager -->
<script>(function(w,d,s,l,i){w[l]=w[l]||[];w[l].push({'gtm.start':
new Date().getTime(),event:'gtm.js'});var f=d.getElementsByTagName(s)[0],
j=d.createElement(s),dl=l!='dataLayer'?'&l='+l:'';j.async=true;j.src=
'https://www.googletagmanager.com/gtm.js?id='+i+dl;f.parentNode.insertBefore(j,f);
})(window,document,'script','dataLayer','GTM-WNJWGW5');
<!-- End Google Tag Manager -->

```

Additionally, paste this code immediately after the opening **<body>** tag:

```

<!-- Google Tag Manager (noscript) -->
<noscript><iframe src="https://www.googletagmanager.com/ns.html?id=GTM-WNJWGW5"
height="0" width="0" style="display:none;visibility:hidden"></iframe></noscript>
<!-- End Google Tag Manager (noscript) -->

```

Go back to <http://tagmanager.google.com>, and click the “New Tag” button. A tag has two elements: its ‘configuration,’ and its ‘triggering’. Configuration is the destination of the data — in this case Google Analytics. Triggering is the data from your website that you want to send to the destination — in this case, we wish to send all pageview data.

Begin with Tag Configuration. Click on the Tag Configuration button, and you will be presented with a menu of choices. Select Universal Analytics. Make sure ‘Track Type’ is set to ‘Page View’ and select ‘New Variable’ under the Google Analytics Settings option.

On the next screen, set up a variable called ‘Google Analytics’ and enter your Tracking ID code. This is found in the code you copied, or kept open, earlier.

Variable Configuration ✎

Variable Type

+ Google Analytics Settings

Tracking ID ⓘ
UA-12345678-1

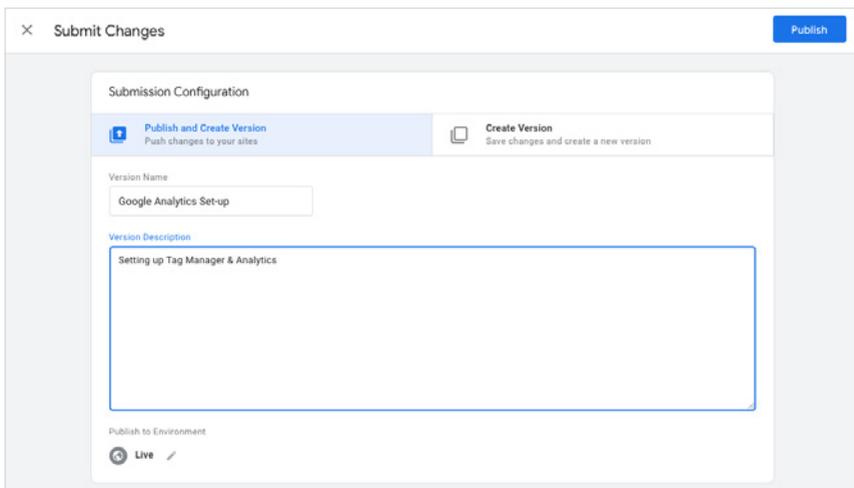
Cookie Domain ⓘ
auto

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Save this and then click on ‘triggering’.

Select the ‘all page’ option. Save and then you are all set. One final thing to do. . .

Click ‘Submit’ on the top-right corner and add any notes you’d like to describe the actions you took. I advise doing this so that you can track changes. As this is the initial set-up, simply type in “Google Analytics Set-up” (or words to that effect). Now you can relax. You have Google Analytics configured properly on your website.



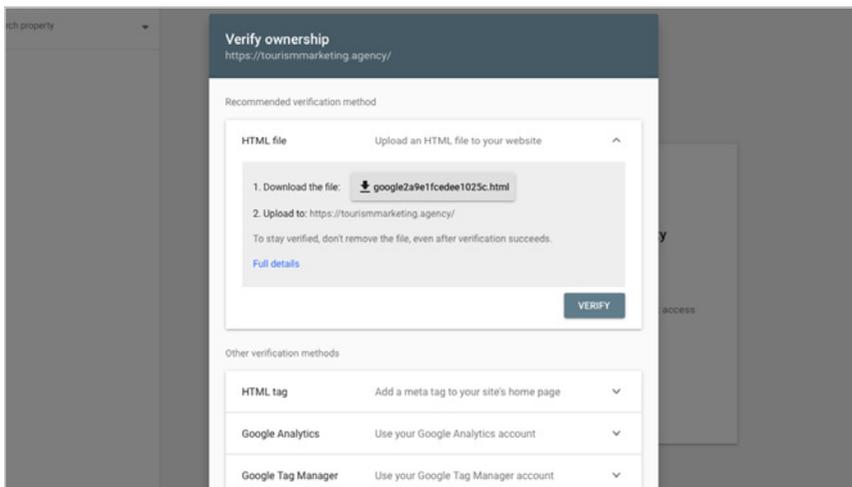
On page 381, I will explain what all the data you collate means and how you can use the results to manage and optimise your marketing strategies.

SETTING UP GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

In this section, I will show you how to use Google Search Console (GSC). First, you'll learn how to add your site to the GSC. Then I'll help you make sure your site is set up correctly.

How to add your site to Google Search Console

First, go to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/> and login with your Google account. Once in, click 'Add Property' and add in your full website URL. You will now need to verify that you are indeed the owner of your website.



There are several ways to verify your website and the easiest is to select 'Google Analytics' or 'Google Tag Manger'. Click 'Alternative methods' and select 'Tag Manager' and click verify. This should verify you are the owner of the website.

If, for any reason, this does not work, and it should, select HTML File or HTML Code Snippet (unfortunately, this would mean diving into your website codebase again. This is the last time, I promise)

You will need to follow those steps for both HTTP and HTTPS versions of your website.

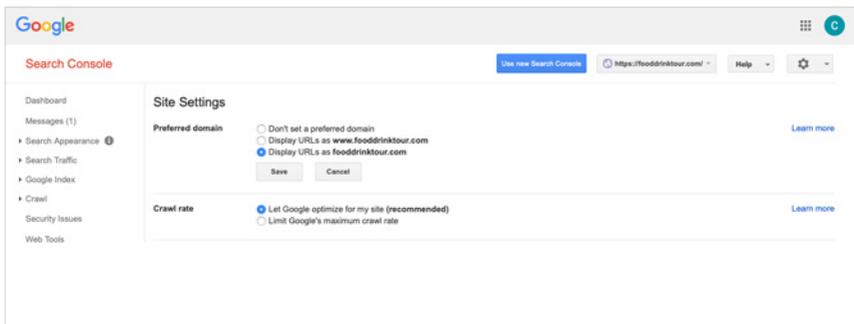
Your preferred domain

Now you need to decide on your preferred domain. Basically, you are telling Google to always use ‘www’ or non-www version of your site. I would advise not using ‘www’ as it is just cleaner. There are no SEO benefits either way, but whatever you do, select one and stick with it.

Search Console was recently updated and at time of writing this feature is currently supported only in old Search Console. You can switch between both so you can follow these steps.

Once you have switched, click the gear icon on the top of the page and select ‘Site Settings’.

Never select ‘Don’t set a preferred domain’ as this will impact your SEO as Google may treat the www and non-www versions of the domain as separate websites/pages, making your backlinks (places that link to your website) much less powerful from an SEO perspective.



Whichever one you select, your webmaster should add a redirect to your website that redirects traffic and links FROM your non-preferred domain name TO the preferred version. For example, all links that point to <https://www.foodrinktour.com/> automatically redirect to <https://foodrinktour.com/>. This is best SEO practice.

Setting your target country

Although Google can do a good job of knowing which country your site targets it is also better to set this just to be sure, however, if your tour business only targets in destination,

and one destination at that, then follow the next steps.

For instance, if your business targets customers from the US to the UK, my advice is to skip this step. Look at it this way:

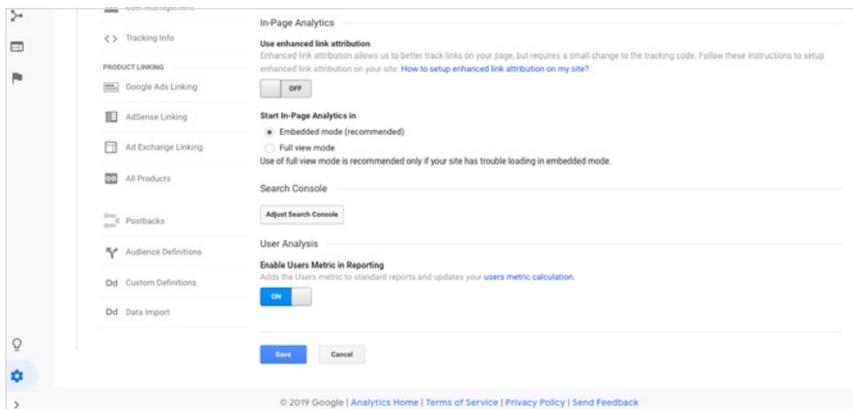
- If you have a separate website for a specific language. For example, you have a website in French targeting French natives, then set it to France. If not, it may increase your bounce rate.
- If your site has a global language, like English, and you want to target customers globally, then don't use this option.

Link Google Analytics with Search Console

You are now at the final step of this section. All this set-up will be worth it in the end; it will fuel your decisions further down the line.

Back in 2013, Google made the decision to switch all searches over to HTTPS. This had an adverse effect on website owners, as priceless keyword data suddenly vanished from Google Analytics, displaying 'not provided'. However, you can get some of that data back.

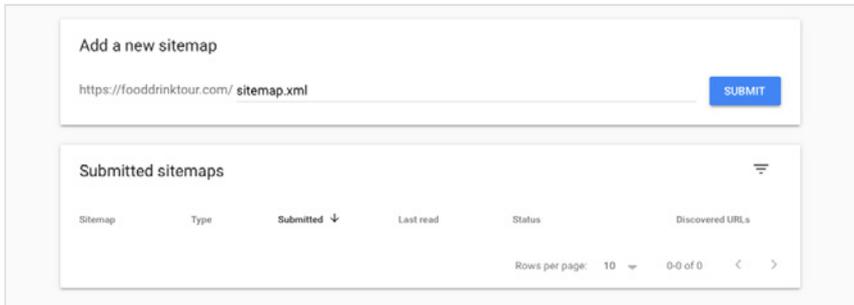
Open your Google Analytics account and select 'Admin' down at the bottom left and then click 'property settings' on the window that slides in. Scroll down until you see 'Adjust Search Console' and click it. If you do not see your domain listed below 'search Console Site', click 'add'. Scroll down until you see your website, check the box and click 'save'.



Finally, add your site map

If your site was built using Wordpress (Yoast Plugin) or another CMS system, then it should generate a sitemap.xml file that is saved onto the server your website is hosted on. This file is basically a list of all the pages on your website and helps Google find your pages faster.

Within Search Console, click ‘Sitemaps’. Where it says ‘add a new sitemap’ it should display your domain name with an empty field after it. Enter sitemap.xml and click submit. And that’s it. You’re done.



Now that you have all this in place, you can effectively track your website traffic and marketing efforts. You can even see where your customers ‘fall off’ during the booking process — more on this later!

WORKSHOP SEVEN

SETTING UP & OPTIMISING YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING

Food and drink tour

1,110,000,000 results (0.61 seconds)

The Glasgow Food and Drink Tour
<https://www.glasgowfoodanddrinktour.co.uk/>
Food and drink walking tour of Glasgow. You will visit 6 venues, tasting Scottish Food and Drink in the leafy west end. Learn the fascinating history and culture ...

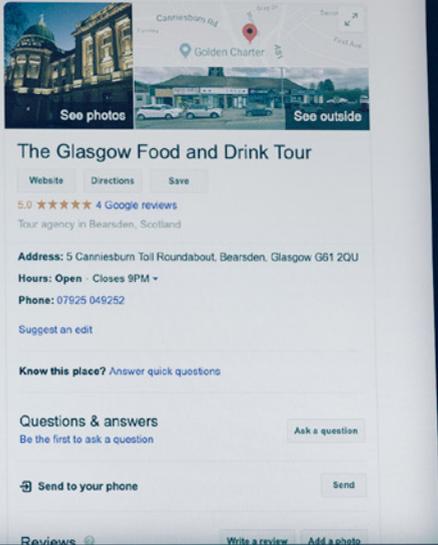
Food and Drink Tours | Holidays - Explore
<https://www.explore.co.uk/experiences/food-drink-tours>
Discover once-in-a-lifetime experiences from Food and Drink Tours by Explore. Start planning your next adventure now.

The Glasgow Food and Drink Tour - 2019 All You Need to Know ...
<https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk> ... > Scotland > Glasgow > Things to do in Glasgow
★★★★ Rating: 5 - 59 reviews
The Glasgow Food & Drink Tour, a foodie walking tour, set up to give you a great understanding of what makes Glasgow. On The West End Wander we will visit ...

Te and Tour NI: Award-winning Food and Drink Tours, Experiences ...
<https://tasteandtour.co.uk/>
Te and Tour NI offer food and drink tours and experiences in Northern Ireland including the Fast Food Tour, Gin Jaunt, Whiskey Walk, Brewery Tour and ...

Food And Drink Tours - Visit Belfast
<https://visitbelfast.com/collections/food-and-drink-tours>
Explore the food and drink of Belfast and the surrounding countryside with these tasty food tours.

The Craic'n Food and Drink Tour - Lough Neagh Tours
<https://www.loughneaghtours.com/craicn-food-tour/>
Craic'n Food & Drink Tour is perfect for foodies who want to sample delicious food & drink from the area surrounding Lough Neagh & its Waterways.



The Glasgow Food and Drink Tour

Website Directions Save

5.0 ★★★★★ 4 Google reviews
Tour agency in Bearsden, Scotland

Address: 5 Canniesburn Toll Roundabout, Bearsden, Glasgow G61 2QU
Hours: Open · Closes 9PM
Phone: 07825 049252

Suggest an edit

Know this place? Answer quick questions

Questions & answers
Be the first to ask a question [Ask a question](#)

[Send to your phone](#) [Send](#)

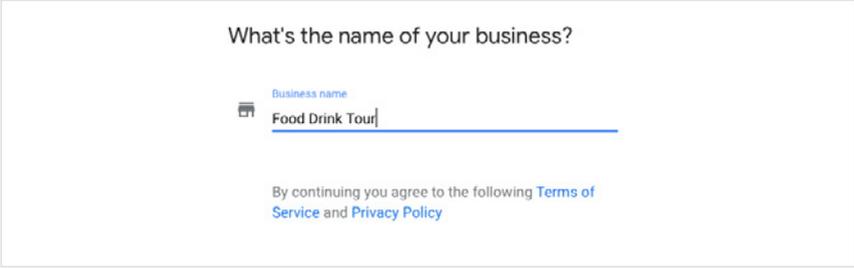
Reviews [Write a review](#) [Add a photo](#)

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

To improve your website's SEO, Google My Business is one of the most important steps to take. Why? When people search for a product or service near them, they're usually ready to make a purchase, so it's important that the information that displays about your business when your customers search is as accurate, complete, and as optimised as possible. This section will explain how you create your listing, verify it is your business, and optimise your listing.

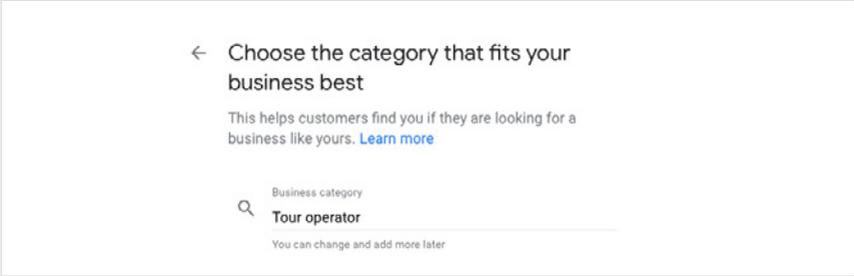
There is one requirement for using Google My Business: you must have some manner of face-to-face interaction with your customers. You will not be allowed a listing if you operate 100% online.

The first step is to login to <https://google.com/business> with the same account you created, or signed in with, in the Analytics section. When prompted, enter your business name and click 'next'.



The screenshot shows a form titled "What's the name of your business?". Below the title is a small icon of a storefront and a text input field labeled "Business name" containing the text "Food Drink Tour". Below the input field is a blue underline. At the bottom of the form, there is a line of text: "By continuing you agree to the following [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)".

Now enter your business address. This should be your main office address. The reason I mention this is that some tour operators I've come across added in a pick-up point of a tour rather than their address. This will only cause problems with your SEO further down the line. Some of those tour operators are now unable to create a proper business listing, so please don't add the pick-up point rather than your office address.



The screenshot shows a form titled "Choose the category that fits your business best". Below the title is a small icon of a storefront and a text input field labeled "Business category" containing the text "Tour operator". Below the input field is a blue underline. At the bottom of the form, there is a line of text: "You can change and add more later".

Now choose a business category. Choose the most appropriate one possible as you want to inform Google which customers should see your listing. Add in your business phone number and/or website.

You will now need to select a verification option.

Verify your business on Google

Google offers many ways to verify your business. . .

- Postcard (yes, really!)
- Phone
- Email
- Instant
- Bulk

The postcard method — According to Google, this should reach you in five days. I have seen this take much longer, so I would not recommend this option if you can help it. If you do select this, when you receive the postcard, it will contain a code. Enter this in the verify field in your Google My Business account and you are ready.

Phone method — Google will send you an automated message with the code for you to enter, so make sure your phone is nearby. Not everyone is not eligible for this option, however.

Email method — As the name suggests, you can also receive an email with a link to verify your account.

Instant method — If you have followed my previous steps, you should already be verified with Google Search Console, so you might be able to instantly verify your listing. Just make sure you are using the same account.

Bulk method — Does your business operate in more than one location? (Actual registered offices and not where you provide services) Google may allow you to upload these in bulk. If so, enter your business name and the destinations where you operate. Enter the contact names of everyone who will use the Google My Business account. You can also enter multiple phone numbers and email addresses for representatives and the Google Account Manager.

Optimising your listing

Now that you have set up your listing, you need to add content to help attract and inform your customers and help your SEO.

Within Google My Business, select 'info' and start filling out the information. I urge you to add as much information and media as you can at this stage.

Full business information — Add in your business hours, contact information, and any other information Google asks for.

Services — Google is giving you a place to add in your main services, with prices, so your customers can see this too. I would add in your top tours and products — tours with prices that do not change very often.

Photos & video — Google say that listings with photos receive 35% more clicks through to their website and 42% higher requests within Google Maps for directions. Just make sure they are high quality and not stock images! Google gives you categories for the types of photos and media to upload: 360, Video (30 seconds maximum), Interior, Exterior, At Work, Team, and Identity. Utilise them all!

Reviews — One of the best ways to build trust is through reviews. As part of your strategy, building up reviews on Google is essential. Also, responding to reviews, good or bad, is equally important as it shows future customers you are appreciative. More on the strategies behind this later in the book.

Posts — Yes, you can add blog posts to your listings and link these to the full article on your website. This is another great way of enticing potential and existing customers to your website.

Within the 'Become A Creative Content Machine' section of this book I go into a little more detail on how to utilise Google My Business further.

WORKSHOP EIGHT

SELECTING THE RIGHT BOOKING PLATFORM



Video help guide
available

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Over the last 5-10 years, the range of booking platforms available has grown massively (150+). With so much choice out there, many tours and activity businesses struggle to choose one that is right for their business.

You have PeekPro, Rezdy, Rezgo, FareHarbor, The Flybook, Regiondo, BookingKit, Checkfront, Booqueo, Bokun, Zau!, WeTravel, Sigodu, and dozens of others.

To help you select a suitable booking platform, we have partnered with Polymath to provide you a tool that allows you to select your requirements and display a list of booking platforms that fits your needs. You can access it here: <https://polymath.com/atlas/>



This section will assume that you would be using a booking platform to manage your online bookings and, later, I will run through some things you should consider.

Upfront, I will say that you shouldn't expect a system to have 100% of the functionality you need. Unlike the standardisation of Airlines, the tours and activities sector is fragmented, with each operator doing 'their own thing'; this means that it will take many years for true standardisation... if it ever happens. Believe me, people have tried and failed.

What you need to do is choose a booking platform that will do 90% of what you need and to work with the rest. In fact, I'd ever recommend changing your business processes to suit the booking platform as this will save you lots of time and money in the future.

Budget will, no doubt, play a big part in the platform you choose. I am a big believer in the maxim that 'you get what you pay for', and websites are no exception. Don't expect £20k-worth of technology with your own account manager when you pay £10 per month.

Some systems will charge a commission for the use of their booking system; some commissions are higher than others, but if you are receiving lots of bookings because they offer a great user experience, amazing 27/7 phone support and no downtime, then paying that bit more relieves some of the stress on your business.

Choose what is right for what you can afford. Make it work for you even if it means compromising on a few areas. Also consider that your products may simply not be compatible with a booking platform. If you run fully customised itineraries, then a booking system would not work for you. However, I would always advise that even if this is the case, it's a good idea to create two or three small tour products that your customers can buy online. This could generate you quick revenue while you work on the larger paying

customers with your custom tours.

Before you select a platform, discuss with your team and create a list of functions you need it to have and functions you'd like it to have. Finance, marketing, operations, sales — take stock of how these areas currently operate as this will help you narrow down a platform that will cater for most of your needs.

First, let's look at some of the advantages that come with using a booking platform...

Your time

Your time is as valuable as the money you make. How much time and money are you 'wasting' managing your bookings and processes? Work this out and multiply this by your hourly rate.

For example, say your hourly rate is £50 per hour and you spend, on average, four hours a week managing your bookings, customer information, itineraries, and payments. This is £200 every 7-day week (assuming you provide tours 7 days a week). This is approx £1000 per month.

Even if you pay one of the top booking platforms a flat fee of £300 per month or 6% commission on sales, for most of you reading this, I imagine this is more cost effective for your business. It also frees up your time to grow your business further. If you're still not convinced, it may be an idea to check your time/money ratio to see what you're spending.

Integrating your current tools

No matter what platform you use, you will also have other tools and software you use alongside it. CRM systems, email newsletter systems, payment gateways, etc If these tools are invaluable to your business and you simply can't do without them, make sure they can be integrated directly or through bridge software like Zapier or Automate. io.

Human error

It happens to the best of us. We all make mistakes, but if these mistakes are happening on a regular basis and costing you business or resulting in a few bad reviews, then you need to take action.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

What is the average value of your tours? Multiply this by the number of errors that have resulted in lost business over the past 12 months. Does this add up to more than a monthly fee for a booking platform? A simple mistake in an excel document can cost you more than you think.

Future growth

If you are a one-person business, you probably have every aspect of your business locked inside that brain of yours. If you want your business to grow and take on staff, then a centralised platform will make sales easier as you bring in staff members.

Everyone will have their own way of working, no matter how much you train them. Some will like to use Post-it Notes (my favourite), some will use Google Sheets, others a note pad. Using a booking system will force your entire team to work the same way and it will make life easier for your accountant too! Don't hold your business back.

Cashflow

You may find your booking process is so slow at closing potential customers that it is having a negative effect on your cashflow. Booking systems can help put money in your bank a lot quicker!

What booking platforms can, and should, do for you

Again, each platform is different. Some are better than others at doing a particular task, but the best ones should, at least, provide the following. . .

Tour builder

The platform should allow you to add full information about your products, including price, itinerary, short and long descriptions, excluded/included, discount/special offer pricing, maps, photos, video, etc.

This will allow you to keep all your products in one centralised system. Depending on your business, it's likely that the only regular updates you will need to make to your system will be to the prices of your products.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

You should be able to store and manage your customers' information securely, in a way that is compliant with GDPR. This will allow any member of your team to go into your system and see the status of a specific customer's experience.

If the platform does not have this and only provides a gateway to accept bookings, then make sure it connects effortlessly with the likes of Salesforce, HubSpot, Zoho, and other top-end CRM systems. A platform with its own CRM system would be best, however.

Payment gateways

Some platforms will only allow you to use the payment gateways they provide. If you are happy using these, then go ahead. I would advise, however, that you use a platform that will allow you to connect to a variety of payment gateways as this opens up much more choice and does not tie you in if you decide to move providers.

Some platforms will integrate with Spreedly, <https://www.spreedly.com>, which allows you to select from many gateways.

Trust My Travel, <https://www.trustmytravel.com>, is also a great option as it provides financial protection to you and your customers worldwide. Trust My Travel can also help with distribution of your finances to your suppliers and affiliates.

Provide a user-friendly interface

There is no point using a platform if you get frustrated with the user interface. Eventually, you will give up and not manage this properly. Look at a platform's from the perspective of both a business owner and a customer.

Is it easy for you to update and maintain? Is it easy to book your products using the platform? A good platform will save you time and money if it functions in the right way.

Easy website integration

Most platforms will provide booking widgets that can easily be installed onto a website. Widgets, however, are only good if their booking journey is a good one as you will not have much or any control over this.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Some platforms will also take your customer away from your website to finish the transaction. Try to avoid this type of platform as much as possible, as it makes tracking sales and marketing much harder (and sometimes impossible).

Some platforms provide an API (a way for websites/software to connect to them) which basically means a developer can create a booking journey that is seamless on your website and can be designed to be 'on brand'. This method is more expensive, however.

Provide customer support

Some platforms will offer phone support, while others will be an email ticket system only... Some will offer both. There is no right and wrong and what you should choose should come down to your own individual needs, wants, and budget. Whatever method you go with, just make sure they are responsive to your requests.

Ask, what is the turnaround for support requests. Do you pay extra for that support or is it included? Are they available 24/7 or only during office hours?

Email marketing software integration

Believe it or not, some platforms will not directly integrate with email marketing software like MailChimp. You may be able to export your customers to upload into MailChimp, which is fine, but some will automatically do this for you, which saves you a little bit of time. Just be careful with GDPR policies.

Reporting

As with any aspect of your business, reporting on the successes and failures allows you to make informed decisions and act accordingly.

A good platform will allow you to create in-depth reports about your sales, customers, itineraries, and other important statistics. Make sure the platform you use has a robust reporting system as it will make your life easier when you start your marketing campaigns.

Channel manager

If you want your products to reach a wider audience on the likes of Viator, Expedia, and Get Your Guide, then you will need a booking platform that connects to these and provides

a channel manager so that you can manage which products go where and adjust your availability on each channel.

A good platform will allow you to update your product information and distribute this in real time across the channels. You should also have the ability to change the product price per channel if you want to make them different on each.

I would advise using a channel manager as this opens your business up to new audiences — just don't build your business entirely on them.

Summary

Choosing the right platform for you will not be easy but if you follow my tips above, you can narrow your list down to help find a suitable one. Weigh up the costs and features and go with what you feel gives your customers the best experience. That should come before your own needs.

WORKSHOP NINE

WHICH REVIEW SYSTEM SHOULD YOU USE?



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Reviews are, hands down, one of the best ‘marketing tools’ you can use to encourage potential customers to select your business and purchase your products as it is the digital equivalent of word of mouth.

Some business owners I’ve spoken to are put off review systems because they don’t want to be rejected and deal with any negative reviews that will come in (and, believe me, you will get them as you simply can’t please everyone). I sometimes suspect that this kind of business owner may subconsciously feel they are delivering a substandard product.

Deep down, you know you need to improve the customer experience and you don’t want those negative reviews popping up on search results. You may also just be a perfectionist, but I’d like to remind you that nothing is perfect and the pursuit of ‘perfection’ can often get in the way of a good, functioning website.

The only way you can be sure that you are delivering an experience that your customers love is to give them a platform to tell you. Even if you receive some negative reviews, this can actually help your business.

Today’s customers are cynical; if they see a company with nothing but 5-star reviews they automatically think the reviews are false. But if you have a few moderate to negative reviews, and you have responded to these in a positive way, it helps show that you care about your customers’ feelings.

A study by TripAdvisor said that 93% of travellers say reviews are important in their purchase decisions. Reviews build brand trust which is incredibly important in the tours and activities industry.

When it comes to adding reviews to your website, use an external system like TripAdvisor, Yelp!, Feefo, TrustPilot, or Google instead of creating your own system on your website. Why? People put more value on reviews that are from an external source as they see custom-built review systems as less trustworthy as they are easier to manipulate. Remember what I said a few moments ago: people are cynical.

Reviews also have a positive effect on your SEO. It is said that reviews can account for close to 10% of your search rankings so it is worth considering when choosing your review platform.

So, with that in mind, which platform should you use?

WHICH REVIEW SYSTEM SHOULD YOU USE?

Before I explain which review platform I would personally use, I'd like to first look at the top four platforms.

Google

Since 2015, Google has enjoyed the biggest increase in the quantity of reviews compared to the other platforms on the list. This is due, in part, to native integration with Android mobile devices, making it easy for customers who are already signed in to their Google account.

In terms of your business, Google puts more value on reviews made on their platform than a third-party system. These influence your map listings and help your business rank higher in local search.

Don't get me wrong, reviews from TripAdvisor, Feefo, Expedia, etc all factor into Google's algorithms too, but native reviews hold more weight.

According to a MOZ study, <https://moz.com/local-search-ranking-factors>, the quantity of native reviews is a huge ranking factor, sitting at 15.44% at the time of writing...

Google also takes into account the following factors:

- How frequently reviews are coming in over time
- If reviews are positive or negative
- Keywords in reviews
- The actual star rating

Google also knows plenty of information about the person leaving the review as the reviewer needs to be logged in to Google. Therefore, Google knows if that customer has been on your website, searched for your type of tours or has been in your location.

Facebook

Facebook became an equally important platform for building reviews but this all changed in 2018. Reviews became recommendations, giving Facebook users a simple yes/no question. Any reviews you have built up will remain, but more 'weight' will be put on new recommendations.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

This was, in part, to make flagging fake reviews easier, which was a major issue on Facebook as it was easily manipulated.

Facebook also allows 'rich endorsements', enabling users to leave photos and comments. At time of writing, this is exclusive to coffee shops and eateries but I suspect this will roll out to all business types in the near future. This will become the Facebook equivalent to Google My Business which, in my opinion, will become incredibly important in the future.

Asking your customers to leave a recommendation will be a quick process as they are 'in app' already so when this becomes available to our sector, I would recommend you encourage your customers to use it.

Yelp

Yelp is still a major player, with over 135 million reviews — even though it has scaled back its focus on international markets to concentrate of North America after a huge drop in sales... and here lies the problem. No one outside of America would consider using Yelp.

Even if you only focus on 'in-destination' bookings, potential customers coming from the UK, Europe, or elsewhere would not even use Yelp to find your business.

My advice, if you are using Yelp switch your focus to something that will allow you to capture customers internationally. Go to where your customers frequent; don't force them to come to a platform you want to use.

TripAdvisor

Although Yelp has grown faster in the last year, TripAdvisor is the largest and still one of the most popular platforms for customer reviews. TripAdvisor can lay claim to a couple of amazing statistics:

- TripAdvisor contains over 600 million reviews
- 455 million customers visit TripAdvisor each and every month

Nearly half a billion people visit TripAdvisor every month. That is an incredible number and this is one of the main reasons why it is still widely regarded as the number-one review platform. But things are changing in the industry. Social media is creating a shift in the way travellers seek out reviews, recommendations, and tips to aid in their booking

WHICH REVIEW SYSTEM SHOULD YOU USE?

decision. How they search for this information is also a major factor.

To help combat this, TripAdvisor has launched its own ‘social platform’ within TripAdvisor to allow travellers to share their experiences. However, do people really want to use yet another social platform? Personally, I feel this will go the same way as Google+ and will be shut down in a few years. Time will tell.

The other thing TripAdvisor is also introducing is sponsored listings; this is something I wholeheartedly disagree with.

The whole point of TripAdvisor, until now, was to offer impartial reviews of tours, hotels, and activities. Now it seems to be moving towards a model where you can manipulate the results — where the review system you use (Bókun) influences your ranking and you can pay to jump ahead of your competitors.

By allowing sponsored listings, it provides an opportunity for those operators with inferior reviews (apparently a score of 3 and above qualify – but this should be higher!) to now promote their products above those who have great reviews. Does anyone in the tours and activities sector really think this is a good thing?

I understand that TripAdvisor needs to grow the business and make money. There’s nothing wrong with that. But the way they’re doing it, in my mind, spells the end of TripAdvisor as we know it. They seem hell bent on destroying the fundamental principles of what the business was built on. It is ripping the spine out of the brand to the detriment of the operators.

Can you tell I am annoyed? This is because I have been an advocate of TripAdvisor for many years and I now feel betrayed.

So, should you use TripAdvisor?

The answer is a cautious Yes! It is still an incredibly popular platform that your customers may visit (the reason I have a full section on how to rank on this platform on page 385), and it will provide your brand more opportunities. Just be careful and don’t make it your sole review platform.

So, which platform should you focus on?

I would usually recommend that businesses go where their target customers are. However, if I had to put my money on only one — the one that I consider ‘future proof’ — then it would be Google.

I say this for many reasons. As I mentioned previously, Google reviews have a positive effect on your rankings and most of your customers will use it to some degree, as it’s the largest search engine in the world. Also remember that Google owns the second largest search engine: YouTube.

However, these are not the main reasons why I’m suggesting that Google should be your main review platform. The main reason is because of Reserve with Google.

For those who don’t know, Google has been integrating directly with booking platforms and ‘schedulers’ to provide their customers with the ability to book directly in Google’s search results. This means that users can search for a tour or activity and book it without even clicking off the Google results page to visit the website!

This is why I mentioned earlier that you should always have some sort of booking tour/product in your inventory. It will allow you to use it as an upsell opportunity as your business could be found more easily if integrated this way.

You do need to be on a booking platform, however. Peek Pro was one of the first providers to be integrated into Google’s new system, with Fareharbor following soon after. Many others are now following suit.

In my opinion, these changes by Google will put the control back into the suppliers’ hands — the tour operators’ hands. It also means that the high commissions that some of the Online Travel Agents (OTAs) currently take from suppliers will be bypassed. Whether or not this is good news to you depends on how much, or how little, you currently rely on OTAs to sell your tours and activities.

Google’s big changes have caused panic in many OTAs; is it any surprise that the likes of TripAdvisor and Booking.com have been acquiring booking platforms? They are trying to make themselves as big and influential as possible — transforming themselves into comprehensive tourism hubs.

WHICH REVIEW SYSTEM SHOULD YOU USE?

However, what I do find interesting, if a little strange, is that the likes of TripAdvisor Experiences will also be integrated into Reserve with Google. For me, having an OTA integrated with Google in this way is bad news for suppliers.

Think about it for a second...

Google will eventually update Google Ads (formally Adwords) to allow suppliers to have sponsored listings that will be bookable on the search engine results page (SERP). For suppliers hooked up directly through the likes of Peek Pro, this is great news, but for those who rely on an OTA for most of their business, you are, in effect, paying twice: first for the cost-per-click for any Google Ads, then you're paying the high commission to the OTA. This, combined with operating costs and other outlays, means suppliers will be receiving even less revenue from the products they sell. This will almost certainly drive up prices for the end consumer, as this is the only way for suppliers to make enough to sustain their business.

Of course, that may not happen, but it is a strong possibility.

Ultimately, the benefits of using Reserve with Google totally depend on the nature of the product you're selling, its location, and its price. It also depends on the quality of your website. If you're selling a tour or activity product that is already quite well known, then giving users the opportunity to book on a Google search engine results page can be a great way to add another touch-point between you and your customer. It can make it even easier for busy (or lazy...) customers to book your product without the added time required to click through one or two pages on your website.

Reserve with Google is also ideal for small businesses based in great locations, as the ability to book on Google Maps means that they can compete on Maps in a way they perhaps can't compete for the top ranking on Google Search.

Let's say you sell Vatican Tours in Rome and you're based incredibly close to the Vatican. When people look for tours on Google Maps, they are perhaps more likely to find your business than some of your biggest competitors. This could make the address of your business into a huge asset and reviews will have a massive impact on this.

Another benefit to Reserve with Google is that it may convert users better than your site if your site looks a little old-fashioned or if its design and UX is less appealing than your competitors' websites. Everyone's listing on Reserve with Google looks the same, so it puts

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

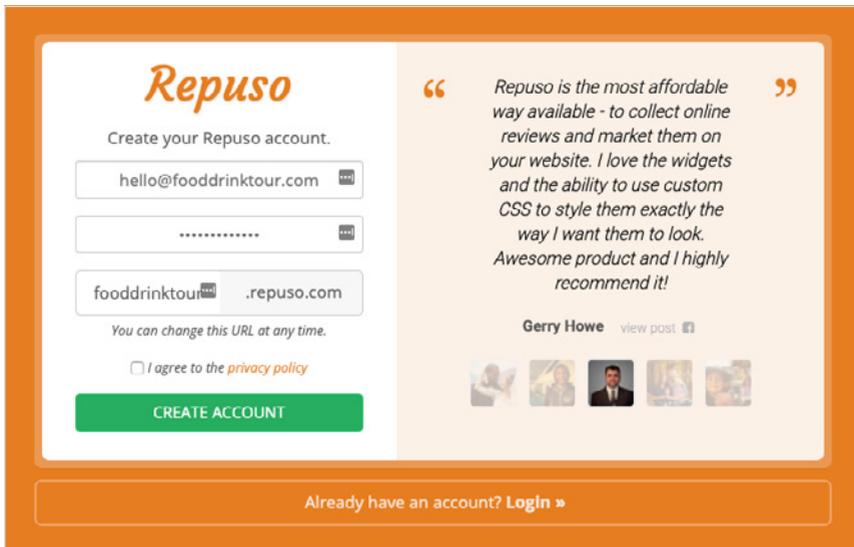
all brands on an even playing field.

The last benefit we'd like to discuss is that Reserve with Google is absolutely free at the moment, with no commission going to Google. This will probably change in the future, so we recommend taking advantage of it while it's free.

This is why I suggest that your main review platform should be Google. If you have time to manage other platforms, TripAdvisor and Facebook are the other two I would suggest, but drive the bulk of your reviews through the largest search engine on the planet.

Managing & displaying multiple review systems on your website

While writing this book, I came across a tool called Repuso, <https://repuso.com>, which monitors all your social media channels, including review systems like TripAdvisor, Google and Yelp. Repuso will pull in all reviews from these channels, allowing you to select your favourite and collate these into a handy widget that you can add to your website. It will not, however, allow you to respond to reviews.



This is a good option if you want to display reviews from multiple platforms.

WORKSHOP TEN

SHOULD YOU USE AN ONLINE TRAVEL AGENT?



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

I get asked about Online Travel Agents (OTAs) all the time and I usually say yes... if you are not at capacity and you treat it as nothing more than another marketing channel, then OTAs can be really useful. I would, however, say no to an OTA if you are already at, or close to, capacity through your own marketing channels.

For those who do not know what an OTA is, it is an online travel agent. Expedia and Booking.com are two of the best known OTAs, but there are countless others. They sell your products within their platform to a wide audience who know their brand more than they know yours.

However, you can't send your product descriptions to OTAs and forget about them. Just like marketing on Google Ads, you need to constantly monitor if the OTA 'marketing channel' is generating more revenue than you are spending (i. e. the amount of commission you pay them). I specifically mention profit margins as most business owners look at the turnover generated from OTAs and that means nothing if they are taking a large chunk of your profits.

By using an OTA, or multiple OTAs, it can help your business reach an audience that you may not be able to reach normally. This is especially important if you're just starting out. Customers are also more inclined to trust a brand like Get Your Guide or Expedia as they are large, established businesses. There is a flip side, however.

If your business's revenue is predominantly generated through an OTA. . .

YOU BASICALLY DO NOT CONTROL YOUR BUSINESS.

In a way, it could be said that you don't even have a business if all your revenue comes through an OTA. The OTA owns 'your' customers' data and it is their brand that is seen by the customers you serve, not yours.

For example, I know of one business who relied so much on TripAdvisor that when they changed their algorithm on how they display and rank listings, that businesses sales dropped by 45%. Never build your business solely on an OTA. As I said, if you do, you

SHOULD YOU USE AN ONLINE TRAVEL AGENT?

don't truly own your business or the data, effectively working as an employee of that OTA.

However, if you make an OTA only 10-20% of your business and use it to help promote your business and/or to help fill spaces in your tour that may otherwise be empty, then you should be fine. The other 80% should be through your own website as this is the only way you will grow a sustainable brand.

OTAs also take a large chunk of commission from your bookings, which is normally 20% or higher, and these are likely to increase to help cover their operation costs as well as paying back the large investments these companies have received from backers.

You also get little to no brand visibility and exposure which will make it extremely hard for you to stand out on your own. Whatever happens, OTAs are here to stay and they will only get bigger as customers get more and more familiar with their brands.

Scale and capacity

Because of the many empty seats you have, especially during any low seasonality, an OTA can help scale your business, helping you reach full capacity, making you a small profit rather than a big loss.

When it comes to OTAs, I would even suggest that you create a product that is specific for those platforms. Something that is low cost to your customers but is high in profit for you. This could be a cut-down version of an existing product that can be given in less time while still giving the customer a great experience.

By creating a 'cheaper' product (I know I said never compete on price, but please bare with me!), one that takes you less time and resources to manage, you can increase your profits while also opening your brand to new customers. That way, when they come back, they go directly to you and not the OTA.

As I said at the start, treat an OTA as nothing more than a marketing channel, a resource to help build your brand.

FoodDrinkTour Example

To give you an example, FoodDrinkTour has created a 'taster' menu product that is only £25 per person. This allows the customer to take a tour that lasts no longer than 35min sampling food from three different venues (all within five minutes of each other). This is great for people who simply wish to try a quick tour before committing to something more substantial.

FoodDrinkTour have kept costs down by creating partnerships with other eateries to keep the sample menus under £2.50 each. Each of these establishments provide a voucher for a free drink or a starter for free if that customer liked what they tasted and wanted to book a proper meal. Great way to build up the local community. If the customer did book, the £2.50 fee that FoodDrinkTour would pay them was waived.

The tour guide was also paid £10 each time they took that person on tour so they were left with between £7.50-£10 profit. Might not sound like a huge profit but remember, this is a lead-in product in the hope they will take a larger tour. Even if they don't, you are still making a small profit that could help fund your marketing budget!

Summary

OTAs are not for everyone, and sometimes their commission rates are simply too expensive for certain products. Do a quick search on these platforms for your type of products. If there are many listed it probably means it is a popular system for your market. If not, look elsewhere.

Some OTAs are geared towards day tours, some are more food based, and others, like TourRadar, <https://www.tourradar.com>, are great for multi-day tours. Shop around and select one that is right for you. But remember: use OTAs to help grow your business, don't let your business be defined by them.

WORKSHOP ELEVEN

09:47

SETTING UP TRIPADVISOR

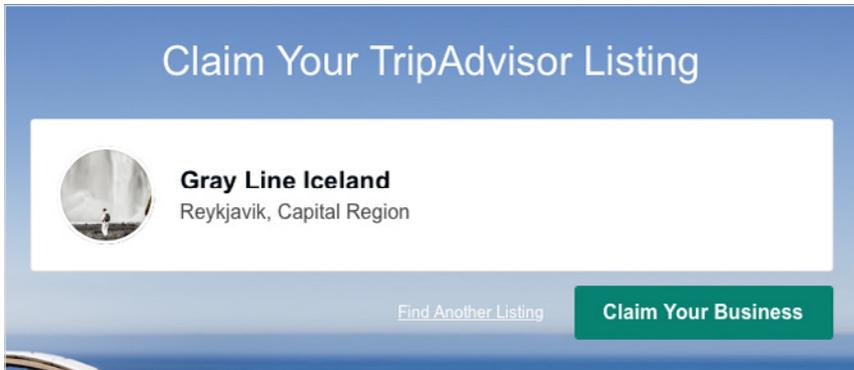


LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Although I suggested earlier that Google should be your main focus for reviews, TripAdvisor is still a very influential platform and it would be crazy not to use it. Claiming your business on TripAdvisor is easy and allows you to grow your presence online, generating unique opportunities.

This guide will explain how to set up a new listing but you may already have a listing that was created by a past customer who already reviewed your business. Check to see if you are already listed by going to <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Owners> and search on your business name.

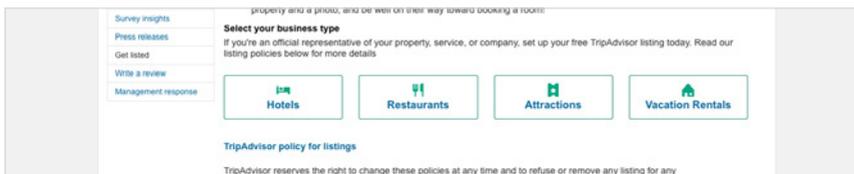
If you find that your business appears, you already have a TripAdvisor page. Simply click the 'Claim Your Business' option to sign up for TripAdvisor's Management Center.



If your business does not show, I shall now go through the best way to set up your listing...

First, visit: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/GetListedNew> or click 'get listed now' under the search bar.

The next page is where you need to choose your business type. I will assume most of you reading this will be tour and activity operators, so select 'Attractions'.



Now select what best describes your business. Are you a...

Supplier – A company or individual that provides a product or service to help travellers experience a place or point of interest – e. g. Big Apple Food Tours, Open Road Bike Rentals

Point Of Interest – A location or attraction that travellers see or visit – e. g. Impressionist Art Museum, Oceanfront Theme Park

Travel Agency – A company or individual that receives commission for booking travel experiences for clients. Selecting this option allows you to sign up for the Viator Travel Agent Program.

Again, most of you reading this will be suppliers, but select the option that suits your needs. You will then be asked to create an account, so enter your business email and set a password.

0% Complete

SUPPLIER TYPE

Select type

PUBLIC INFORMATION

PRIVATE INFORMATION

How would you describe your business?

We'll use this information to help you build your profile and set your availability later on.

 We have multiple employees, tours and activities providers
Two or more providers offer our products (e.g we have multiple tour guides, instructors, drivers).

 I am the only experience host
I always personally offer the experiences (e.g. I am the experience host, tour guide, instructor, driver).

[Next](#)

You will now be asked if you are an individual or if you have multiple employees. Select the option that suits you.

On the next section, fill out your company's details, entering your public business name, contact details, etc. Fill out everything TripAdvisor asks for, including a good company description that includes some important keywords. The description, or USP you wrote in the brand path may be suitable. As this should act as your 60-second elevator pitch.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Email Address
Travelers will be able to email you here if they have questions.
hello@fooddrinktour.com

Company website
This won't appear in your listing, but it helps us verify your account.
https://fooddrinktour.com

Write a short company description
Introduce your company with a few sentences about your history and expertise. ?

FoodDrinkTour.com provide food and drink tours in Glasgow, Scotland, that showcase our amazing local food and local tippie — such as our various craft beers and our world-famous tippie of choice: Whisky. Visit amazing eateries, sampling their top dishes, while enjoying an immersive, educational experience, packed with history and culture. Get the true taste of Glasgow with FoodDrinkTours.

Next

Next, upload a cover photo for your listing and any other supporting images. You can upload a cover photo first and upload more later if need be.

You will now be asked to enter your location and opening times. Fill these in and move to the next stage.

Now you will be asked what types of product(s) you provide. FoodDrinkTour provides both tours and activities, so they have selected both and picked the sub-categories that best suit their products.

50% Complete

SUPPLIER TYPE

PUBLIC INFORMATION

- ✓ Company information
- ✓ Company photos
- ✓ Office information

Product types

PRIVATE INFORMATION

What's the main type of product you offer?
This will help us categorize your supplier listing on our site. You'll be able to create products in any category, no matter which option you select here.

Tours
Guided visits to one or more sites ?

What kind of tours do you offer?

Beer Tastings & Tours x Coffee & Tea Tours x

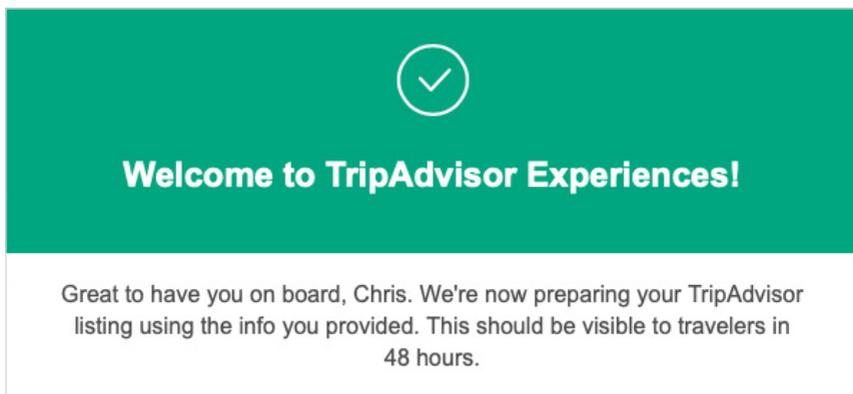
Distillery Tours x Food Tours x

Wine Tastings & Tours x

Activities
Instructed, hands-on experiences ?

What kind of activities do you offer?

TripAdvisor will now ask if you currently use a reservation (booking) system. If you have already selected one then choose yes. Don't worry if you have not yet. If that is the case, select no.



Add in your personal details, agree to the supplier agreement and submit. It can take 48 hours for your listing to become available if you are approved and meet their guidelines. In the meantime, you will now have the ability to add in products and bank details to start promoting your products. I won't go through that part in this guide, as every business has their own individual needs but if you follow the steps TripAdvisor provides, you can't go wrong.

You will also get the opportunity to sign up for Bókun, the booking/reservation platform TripAdvisor acquired. If it is suitable for your business by all means go for it. Just do your homework first.

When uploading your products to TripAdvisor, remember to use inspirational photography and enticing content. Spend time getting this aspect right prior to adding your products to TripAdvisor.

WORKSHOP TWELVE

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS YOU SHOULD MASTER AND HOW TO USE THEM



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

With so many social media platforms out there, it can be daunting to think that you need to manage them all. “Where would I find the time?!” I hear you cry. For better or worse, social media plays a huge role in a customer’s journey towards making a purchase, especially when it comes to tours and activities. Social media platforms are pretty much geared towards the types of customers you seek: those looking to experience something different and one they can share with friends and family.

Social media is the digital equivalent of word of mouth, which has always been one of the best forms of marketing. Think about it: a recommended brand or product by your peers has such a huge impact in your buying decisions because you tend to trust the source it came from.

Luckily for you, it is easy to find out which platforms your customers are more likely to use. Good research will highlight this, and I will explain how you can find your target market in the research section of this book, however, the following is a general overview of the types of demographics that use each of the popular platforms with an explanation of how you should use each of them.

The following stats provided by

<https://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>

Facebook

Nearly 2 billion active users per month use Facebook (32% of the World’s population). So, this is the ‘daddy’ of all the platforms — in the western world, at least, and is a place where millennials and Gen Xers share content, lots of content. In the US alone, one in five online page views is on Facebook. One in five! Just take a look at the demographics. . .

Gender

Female	52%
Male	48%

Age groups

18-29	88%
30-49	84%

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS YOU SHOULD MASTER AND HOW TO USE THEM

50-64	72%
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65+	62%
-----	-----

Income range

Under £30k per year	84%
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£20k-£49k per year	80%
--------------------	-----

£50k-£75k per year	75%
--------------------	-----

£75k+	77%
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Time on Facebook

Average minutes per day	35
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Devices used

Desktop	90 million Users per month
---------	----------------------------

Mobile	179 million Users per month
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Facebook is no longer a tool you should think about using; it is an absolute necessity. But you also need to use it in the right way to make the most of it. Far too many operators will go for the hard sell on Facebook which never works.

If you take a look at all of the best-managed brand Facebook accounts, you'll probably notice one thing they all have in common: they spend most of their time and effort engaging with their followers — not merely selling to them. In its purest form, this is the difference between marketing and advertising: advertising sells to the audience, while marketing engages with the audience by offering some content they want, need, or are interested in.

It's important to remember that anything your audience sees from your Facebook account will be mixed into their timeline, along with their friends' status updates and shared videos about cats. People almost never solely come to Facebook to buy something or to shop around. This means that your Facebook posts have to slot smoothly into their timeline. Focus on grabbing your audience's attention and engaging with them by sharing content they are likely to appreciate (perhaps it's funny, interesting, useful, newsworthy, etc).

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Facebook is a storytelling platform. It is for sharing experiences, pivotal moments in someone's life and 'showing off' to your friends and family. It is the most effective way to connect with your customers. When managed right, it should engage with them to the point that they must interact with you.

Just like I advised in the brand voice section of this book, you must tell your story in an honest and authentic way, as this will allow your target customers to get to know you better and eventually trust you enough that they want to do business with you.

A good storyteller will also respond to his or her audience. In marketing, I am a huge fan of the give, give, give, ask (never take) method, and Facebook is the ideal platform for you to achieve this with your customers.

Back in 2014 the Facebook Marketing Science team (yes, that is a thing) published a study (view here: <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/insights/the-value-of-storytelling-on-facebook-for-marketers>) that highlighted that those brands that told stories, without asking the user to take action like buy or sign up for a newsletter, performed much better than content that asked the user to take action.

Here are five rules I suggest you follow for effective storytelling on Facebook:

1. Never use Facebook for the hard sell

Facebook is regarded as a fun, social platform, so posting repeatedly about a specific tour product or service will result in less follows and engagement. Your customers will simply switch off and unfollow you.

2. Focus on your brand voice

Facebook is a platform for people, not for a faceless business. When you post on your business page, write in a style that is likable and relatable. A style that shows you are a real human being. Do not use business jargon!

3. Post regularly to keep your brand relevant

Imagine yourself as a can of beans in a supermarket aisle. One amongst the sea of cans from other competitors. The more cans you have on the shelf, the better the chance you will be seen, and purchased.

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS YOU SHOULD MASTER AND HOW TO USE THEM

Some experts say you should post at least once per day and I would agree with them. However, only do this IF you have something interesting to say. No point in damaging your brand with posts that do not engage your customers.

4. Get interactive

You want to post stories and interesting experiences from your customer's point of view, but mix this up with contests, surveys, and games to drive up engagement rates and bring your page to life.

5. Nurture your followers

As in life, building long lasting relationships takes time, so you must be patient and build these on Facebook too. Engage in conversation with your customers, providing as much free advice and time as you can spare. It will benefit your business further down the line, and many times over.

Instagram

Instagram has arguably taken over Facebook as the largest platform for the tourism industry, with engagements 10 times higher than Facebook. Around a third of all internet users own an Instagram account with approx. 95 million photos posted every day.

That stat is amazing in itself, but if you also take into account that nearly 50% of all Instagram users rely on content posted on the platform to help them decide what their next travel destination will be, it really does enforce how popular this platform is.

If you are in the following destinations (or target them), consider that the top three countries that use Instagram are the United States (121m), India (71m), and Brazil (64m).

Here are the stats for Instagram. . .

Gender

Female	58%
Male	42%

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Age groups

18-29	59%
30-49	33%
50-64	13%
65+	8%

Income range

Under £30k per year	38%
£20k-49k per year	32%
£50k-£75k per year	32%
£75k+	31%

Time on Instagram

Average minutes per day	15
-------------------------	----

Devices used

Desktop	21 million users per month*
Mobile	91 million Users per month

*This is a huge surprise considering it is a mobile app.

Instagram is another must-use tool for tours and activities because of the nature of this sector. Experiences, locations, hidden gems, sights... all are perfect for Instagram's image and video content.

This is a platform where your photos and videos do the talking and because most of you reading this book will live in amazing destinations with beautiful and interesting sights, it should be easy for you to take good photographs and make great videos. Hey, that thing you have in your pocket that you occasionally use to call people probably has a great camera built in, capable of filming in 4k resolution or taking stunning images. There is no excuse not to regularly take new videos and photographs!

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS YOU SHOULD MASTER AND HOW TO USE THEM

You should use Instagram for brand, destination, and experience awareness. The visual nature of the platform allows you to show your customers having a great time. It can help highlight how good your tour guides are and the experience they can provide your customers. Your guides should become the ‘personality’ on your Instagram account, each with their own hashtag, as Instagram is a very person-focused platform.

Here are five tips to follow when it comes to Instagram:

1. It’s about the team behind your brand

You probably want to make your business seem bigger than it actually is; you think this will make customers trust you more. Well, it doesn’t. No one cares if you are a one-man band or employ 1000 staff as long as you deliver an exceptional product.

Utilise the people around you that can help tell your story and showcase your business from the ground level. This up-close look at your products is ultimately what your customers want to see. Your customers will remember the guide more than your business name so make them front and centre of your Instagram account.

2. Share customer experiences

By using hashtags (more on hashtags on page 293), invite your customers to share their photos and videos. Help them tell other customers how you have helped transform that person’s life for the better. Your customers are your best storytellers.

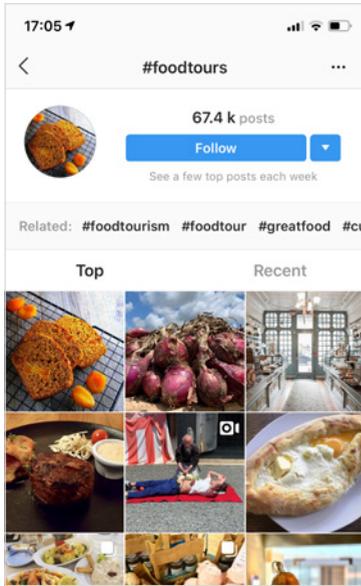
3. Write the story behind the image

Instagram may all be about the visuals, but you should also accompany this with a good caption alongside your hashtags. Instagram allows you 2200 characters, which is plenty of room to tell an effective story.

4. Create a branded hashtag

Hashtags (#) are the quickest and easiest way for your images to be seen on Instagram. Users can search locations, hashtags, and accounts (some of which feature their own hashtag for visibility) for relevant images they want to see. Next is a screenshot to demonstrate this:

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS



Creating customer-generated content is not possible without a branded hashtag. For example, Nike has #justdoit which ties in with their brand moto. #wanderlust is the most popular travel hashtag, with over 70 million uses, so your content could potentially be seen on lots of feeds.

If you do use popular hashtags, make sure you combine this in with one that is unique to your brand. FoodDrinkTour for example may use #myFoodDrinkTour so their customers can tag their content.

4. Use the same visual theme across all content

When it comes to your own generated content, don't post up content of varying quality and styles. With photos, make sure you keep a similar visual style between them all. For

example, if you are inclined to use a filter on your images, use the same filter for all of them. This gives your content consistency and helps followers and potential customers recognise you easily.

Twitter

Twitter is a funny old platform that comes with its own unique advantages and disadvantages, as it serves a very different purpose to the likes of Facebook or Instagram. Twitter is a noisy social channel which makes it extremely hard for your tweets to reach your audience. There are approx. 500 million tweets posted each day. That's 5,787 tweets every second. Here are Twitter's demographics. . .

Gender

Female	47%
Male	53%

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS YOU SHOULD MASTER AND HOW TO USE THEM

Age groups

18-29	36%
30-49	23%
50-64	21%
65+	10%

Income range

Under £30k per year	23%
£20k-49k per year	18%
£50k-£75k per year	28%
£75k+	30%

Time on Twitter

Average minutes per day	2.7
-------------------------	-----

Unlike Facebook, Twitter provides a real-time feed of posts from everyone you follow. This means that Twitter users' feeds are populated with constant updates, as and when they're posted. This real-time aspect is drastically different from Facebook, where its algorithm will curate the various posts, ads, and sponsored posts based on what it thinks users want to see.

The real-time aspect of Twitter can make things difficult for tour companies trying to promote their brand and connect with their audience as tweets can disappear very quickly, lost under the endless pile of new tweets coming afterwards.

The lifespan of a tweet is around 18 minutes; so, to be seen on this channel you need to be posting and re-tweeting good, engaging content constantly. This means that most tweets will be lost after a very short amount of time, with the exception of those that go completely viral. If you have a message that you feel is vital to get across to your audience, you may need to find several different ways of writing it, so that you can tweet about it regularly. This will work a lot better than trying to make one tweet do all of the work.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

One of the issues tour companies have when they use Twitter is that they are up against larger companies in their industry. Competition is always going to be a factor. Larger companies have dedicated employees who manage their Twitter account all day and it's almost impossible to tweet as often or to put as much time and thought into your Twitter activity as the big competitors do.

In my opinion, Twitter is not best used as a tool for 'social' engagement (it can be but it is extremely hard to do and you need to be on it 24/7). Twitter is best used as a customer service or concierge service. It is a place for your customers to ask for assistance or updates on your services. For example, you may offer tours to see the Northern Lights in Iceland and you need to inform those who booked if it is going ahead that night or the following night.

If a customer has an issue with a product or service, they can tweet the company to ask for assistance. This is a quick and easy way of contacting a company and the public nature of the communication adds pressure on the company to reply quickly and for their reply to resolve the original problem. If they mess up this exchange, the public will see exactly what happened!

For small tour operators this can be an issue as you may not have the time or resource to reply quickly to inquisitive potential customers or somewhat disgruntled current customers. So, if you do wish to use Twitter for customer service, make sure your account is managed at all times.

Here are five tips on using Twitter:

1. Optimise your bio

You only have 160 characters in your bio, so make it count. Explain what you do in a short sentence. Make it fun and add your main hashtag.

FoodDrinkTour – they created the following...

“Amazing eateries, top dishes, immersive, educational experiences, packed with history & culture. A true taste of Glasgow with FoodDrinkTours. #myFoodDrinkTour”

2. Tweet during peak hours

There are certain days of the week and times of day when Twitter users are more active, meaning they'll actually be more likely to engage with your posts. Social tool Buffer, <https://buffer.com/resources/best-time-to-tweet-post-to-facebook-send-emails-publish-blogposts>, created a study that tweets posted on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday have higher CTRs than those posted during other days of the week.

3. Unlike Instagram, keep hashtag use to a minimum

If your tweet contains a hashtag, it will probably achieve two times the amount of engagement of tweets that do not. However, using more than two hashtags can see a drop in engagement by as much as 17%! So use relevant hashtags for your business and don't overdo it.

4. Use photos and video for more engagement

Images and native Twitter video outperforms tweets that are only text based. They are also more noticeable in Twitter's feed. Your content is up to six times more likely to be retweeted if it contains an image or a video. .

5. Go beyond the 9 to 5

As mentioned above, Twitter is a full-time social platform. Going by Buffer's stats, weekends are often the busiest times, yet I am amazed that many operators' Twitter feeds are not staffed during this time — especially when used for customer service. It is a 24/7 platform.

YouTube

As I mentioned at the start of this book, video marketing is a very powerful tool in tourism, so it should come as no surprise that YouTube is very high up on my list of recommended platforms.

YouTube is the second largest 'search engine' next to Google — and it also happens to be owned by Google. It is a research tool used by your customers. Nearly 80% of travellers use this platform to search for travel ideas, with a massive 67% of them not having selected a destination yet.

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Search activity on YouTube for tourism peaks in July, with small spikes in March and October. The bulk of these searches occurring earlier in the travel-planning process.

Here are the general statistics for YouTube...

Gender

Female	45%
Male	55%

Age groups

18-24	11%
25-34	23%
35-44	26%
45-54	26%
50-64	8%
65+	3%

Time on YouTube

Average minutes per day	40
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Devices used

Desktop	82 million Users per month
Mobile	31 million Users per month

When it comes to creating content, most tourism businesses head directly towards blogging, which is important, but videos are one of the easiest ways to connect with, inspire, and engage with customers. The best types of content your customers will engage with, in order, are:

1. Travel vLogs
2. Official branded channels
3. Tour footage

4. Reviews and tips
5. Networks and publications

YouTube should be an important part of your content marketing strategies, however; you will need to set aside time to plan, film, edit, market, and analyse the content you wish to create, as it all needs to fit into your brand voice. If you can devote time and energy into this platform, you'll be able to create engaging, shareable content for your growing audience and drive leads and bookings. I shall explain some of the strategies you can create in the 'Become a Creative Machine' section of this book.

Here are my five take-aways for YouTube:

1. Understand your audience

The key to being successful on YouTube is to really understand your audience. Have a good think about this and make sure you know exactly who they are. This will help you determine the content they want to see. A couple of ideas to get you started:

- Are they young adventure-seekers or are they middle-aged food fanatics?
- Do they enjoy visiting historic sites or do they enjoy reading by the beach?

You see, these are quite different markets and will therefore, be attracted to different types of video. You want to get it right for your target market. Make it relevant. The research section of this book will help you determine your target audience.

2. Plan your video content

If you really understand your audience and what they engage with, then you are already half way there. It's just about coming up with content on a regular basis that will satisfy this want.

So, drawing from the examples above, perhaps they are adventure-seekers who enjoy more extreme activities. They would be interested to see people paragliding over the Alps, high above the ground or perhaps people wind-surfing on the Med. Perhaps they are a real foodie. If so, you will want to appeal to that and show them the food that they could experience and taste. A video showing how a pizza is made the traditional way, from gathering ingredients to tossing it in the air.

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There's actually a huge trend in food tourism videos that focuses on the story behind the food, rather than showcasing the food itself. People want to see where the ingredients have come from, where it was grown or foraged, and how it has been prepared etc. It's a great opportunity to get across your destination's beauty in another way. Here are some food tourism video examples by Skift.

<https://skift.com/2016/08/04/todays-best-food-tourism-videos-highlight-people-and-place-more-than-the-food/>

3. Build a personality

When we think of brands, there's usually a single name or image that is synonymous with much more than just a product or service. The Coca Cola brand automatically conjures up the Coke logo, along with consumer loyalty, a quality product, and a sense of familiarity with the brand, all just by the mention of a name.

We are undoubtedly exposed to a large number of huge brands every single day, but it's still important to create a personal brand, as this can be a hugely effective marketing tool both for your career and that of your business.

The reasoning behind a personal brand is that this gives you and your product or service the ability to stand out amongst a potential sea of competitors, all trying to sell a similar product. If you can market yourself as something different from the rest, you are more likely to see quality results. By carving out a personal brand, you also eliminate the need to compete for business based on price, as you are offering something different and better than just a cheaper version of what everybody else is offering. Remember Tyler from the start of this book? Creating content and building a brand personality from the resources around you will do wonders for your business.

4. Go behind the scenes

Travellers want to see beyond just the usual. Can you give them something unique? Perhaps a behind-the-scenes chat with a local about the best things to do in the destination? Or is there an expert chocolate-maker that you visit on your tours? Why not create a video of them making the chocolate and telling you a bit about the process she goes through to make the 'World's Best Chocolate'.

5. Focus on audience retention

If you find that your audience is closing your videos after only viewing 15 seconds, then you need to consider how to make the video more interesting. If they are leaving the video halfway through, this may indicate that your content is too long and they have lost interest. Play about with lengths of 30, 60, and 180 seconds and see what performs best for your audience.

Pinterest

Similar to Instagram, Pinterest is a visual social platform that focuses on high-quality images. Where Pinterest differs to Instagram, however, is that it is a daydreaming platform — a platform where your customers are actively looking for travel inspiration. During this highly influential moment of the buying journey, you have the ability to pull potential customers towards your brand.

Content about travel and tourism makes up nearly 25% of all activity on Pinterest and this platform arguably has way more content than TripAdvisor has reviews and opinions.

There are over 175 million active users on Pinterest, with the majority being women. And, as most men know, it is the women who do most of the travel planning. Here are the demographics:

Gender

Female	60%
Male	40%

Age groups

18-29	36%
30-49	34%
50-64	28%
65+	16%

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Income range

Under £30k per year	30%
£20k-49k per year	32%
£50k-£75k per year	31%
£75k+	35%

Time on Pinterest

Average minutes per day	14.2
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Devices used

Desktop	27 million users per month
Mobile	70 million Users per month

The benefit Pinterest has over Instagram is that it provides a fully working desktop version of the platform, making it multi-platform. Instagram also does not allow backlinks, except for one in your profile description. This may, and probably will change in future.

With Pinterest, you have the opportunity to highlight different parts of your tour business, showcasing how your experience is unique and exciting. You can create 'mood boards' for each tour, guide, location, and landmark.

Another great way to build your credibility on Pinterest is to re-pin boards from other brands. This helps build relationships and possible partnerships with others at your destination.

Here are my five tips for Pinterest:

1. Pinterest is not a social network (I know it's in the social section!)

Pinterest users do not interact with each other as they do on other social platforms. Think of Pinterest as a social search engine or an online scrapbook for keeping inspirational content. In a way, this is good as all you need to do is manage the content you publish and you don't need to worry about commenting and engaging with users.

2. Get descriptive

Just like Google, your customers need to find you on Pinterest, so the text content around your pins needs to be optimised, using keywords relative to your business. Descriptions also give more information about what the pin is, which will help convince your customers to click.

Using between 150–300 words seems to be the sweet spot for Pinterest descriptions.

3. Focus in image height

Although Pinterest automatically scales your images to the same width, each pin can have a different height and vertical pins perform better.

4. Use ‘Place Pins’

If most of your business comes from in-destination bookings, then you should use Place Pins. These can include a map of where your business is, an address, and a phone number in the description. It shows users exactly where a place is located, and it can even be added to the users’ saved places.

With place pins, users can also discover you if they’re checking out a nearby place pin. This feature alone is worth adding place pins to your content when possible. This is great for customers looking for a tour nearby, so I recommend doing this whenever possible.

5. Let your followers help guide your content

When someone follows you on Pinterest, you can then view their profile, which will allow you to see what other interests they have. This can help you build buyer personas of your target customers, which can then inform your marketing strategies.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn? Really?!?

Yes, LinkedIn can provide plenty of opportunities that you probably did not realise. Ask Peter Syme; he is a prime example of how this can work. Peter has generated over six figures by using LinkedIn the right way.

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Let me be clear: LinkedIn will only work for certain businesses. If you are a day tour operator, forget it. But if you provide a luxury brand or offer multi-day expeditions like Peter does, then LinkedIn can become a good platform to master. Peter knew that the demographic who would be more likely to take a 1000-mile expedition would be business owners and professionals on a particular income, looking for a challenge.

What is even more exciting with what Peter achieved is that he did this with no paid advertising. Although you could argue that it was all paid for with time.

LinkedIn works best if you optimise your profile in the right way and post up lots of relevant, interesting content. Think of LinkedIn as the BBC of social media, with Twitter as the local news station.

As LinkedIn is not a channel that most of you would utilise, I am not going to go into much detail on this platform in this book. If you want to hear how Peter created six figures, watch his video in the download area for this book.

However, here are five quick tips for LinkedIn, if you are interested:

1. Forget LinkedIn Ads

LinkedIn Ads simply do not work. Not for me or anyone else who I know has used them. I would love for them to work but I feel LinkedIn is a platform where its users switch off when they see an ad. Not only that — the last time I published an ad on LinkedIn, which I know was set up correctly, it sat awaiting approval for over a week, so I cancelled it. Don't waste your money.

2. Never connect and sell

This pisses me off and it happens far too often. Someone wants to connect with you and when you accept, the first message they send you is one telling you how good they are and what services they can offer you. Get a grip!

Like in real life, you need to nurture your network, strike up conversations, build your relationships and gain trust. If you try and sell from the get-go, don't be surprised if you say bye bye to that connection.

3. Create actionable content

LinkedIn users are ‘news hounds’ so you need to be posting regular content that is relevant to your industry. Don’t just use the post facility; create full-blown, meaningful articles using the ‘Write an article’ feature and create a separate post to link to this article.

4. Leverage groups

Join and contribute to LinkedIn Groups. This gives you a captive, targeted audience for your content. Comment on other posts and make yourself an authority in what you do (probably already are).

5. Forget InMail

InMail is a paid feature that allows you to directly contact anyone you are not directly connected to. Sound great, yeah? Unfortunately, no one responds to InMail messages. Some experts say it has a three times higher response rate than email. I am yet to be convinced it is worth the monthly fee. There are much better ways to spend your money.

So which social media platforms above would I recommend?

If I only had to pick one, it would be Facebook, hands down. However, use the stats above and go where you feel your customers are more likely to hang out.

Successful businesses create ‘buyer personas’ that they use to define the various types of customers in their audience. On page 243 I explain how you can create these personas and how you can use them to define and drive your marketing channels.

For most tour and activity businesses, however, I would recommend starting with Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Starting with these platforms will give you a good starting point on which to grow and nurture your followers. Once you have these platforms mastered, you can then, and only then, look at the likes of Pinterest, Twitter and the rest.

Regardless of the social platform you choose for your company, building a large group of followers will take time and patience. There are no ‘quick wins’, especially when just starting out, as you need to gradually build up your followers, earning their loyalty. Do this, and you’ll have someone to market to.

LET'S TALK WECHAT

"What is WeChat" I hear some of you say. I'm not surprised if you haven't heard of WeChat but if you're looking to grow your tour business in China, where Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram are banned/inaccessible, then you must be on WeChat.

I'm not going to go into great detail on WeChat as most of you reading this will not be looking to target there. This may change in the future, however, and if it does a revised edition of this book will include an extended version of this section. However, I will at least give you an indication of what WeChat is and does so that you can decide for yourself whether it's something you take advantage of.

WeChat is an all-in-one app that is used by over 900 million active users each month. The app is used in just about all aspects of daily life, from sending messages and hailing taxis to purchasing tours. WeChat has millions of verified accounts from brands, celebrities, and even the local vet, and all of them receive mobile payments through the platform. WeChat is a digital wallet, communication tool, and social platform that has become ingrained into everyday life.

"WeChat's reach and influence is unrivaled in China's online space," said research firm China Skinny. "It touches everything from consumers communicating with their nearest and dearest, to sharing their most special moments, to buying everything from cinema tickets to taxi rides, flights and tours."

Because of the popularity of WeChat, mobile payments are now more common than carrying and paying with cash. China is now a fully-connected destination. Basically, if you want to target Chinese travellers and you are not using WeChat, then you are not doing business in China!

WeChat offers so many ways you can connect with potential customers...

- Messaging
- Video calls
- Moments (micro-blogs)
- Interest groups
- Online payments
- Official company accounts
- Advertising options

Tourism is a big aspect of what WeChat is focusing on after creating the CityExperience

Mini Program which already boast partnerships with VisitBritain, Tourism Australia, and Dubai Tourism, allowing them a platform to better connect with Chinese Travellers. With outbound Chinese tourists set to double by 2021, WeChat's CityExperience is going to play a major part on tour companies growing their Chinese customers.

Take Tourism New Zealand as an example. In a recent article in The Drum Magazine, <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/01/14/how-tourism-new-zealand-used-wechat-drive-china-s-high-spending-travellers-middle>, Kieran O'Donnell said, "Tourism New Zealand targeted consumers using WeChat's Ad Moments and followed them across the Tencent / WeChat ecosystem to retarget them, driving a 236% increase in active visits, as well as a 254% surge in referrals."

But, he did also emphasise how hard cracking the Chinese market is:

"One of the big things to note about the China market is that only 10% of the population have passports, and there's a lot of competition trying to attract those outbound travellers. New Zealand attracts just 0.3% of China's outbound travelers, which is around 400,000 visitors annually so targeting that section of the market in China is like finding a needle in the haystack."

You also need to open a legal company in China to open a WeChat business account. Also remember that the primary language used in WeChat is Chinese and so you will need local assistance to manage your business account.

If you put time, money and effort into WeChat and the Chinese market now, it will pay dividends 5 years down the line as this market is only going to grow — and grow substantially. Something to seriously consider if you are willing to work on it.

How will this affect Facebook?

For me, it is a matter of time before Facebook creates their own functionality that is similar to WeChat. It will have to, as WeChat is planning to enter the American market — and the world, for that matter. Facebook already has over 2 billion users, so combining payments and becoming its own version of 'Apple Pay' would transform it into an incredibly powerful consumer and business tool.

In fact, I'm going to go one step further... I strongly believe that Facebook will eventually dominate the tours and activities sector. In fact, I think Facebook will buy the likes of

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

TripAdvisor. To me, this makes perfect sense. Is this why they added an 'Appointments on Facebook' option on your business page button?

Facebook has already got a clear interest in tours and activities, with its City Guides and its AI technology for virtual guides called FAIR (Facebook Artificial Intelligence Research). It is trying to figure out how to use the wealth of information it has at its fingertips. Imagine, TripAdvisor reviews fully-integrated (there is already some) with Facebook and the ability to book directly within the platform. Allowing users to write reviews and publish photos and video that they have already uploaded during their time at a destination.

On the 17th September 2018, the news broke of TripAdvisor's new facelift and social aspects they are introducing to the system. I think it is no coincidence that the new design looks similar to Facebook's layout. Read more about it on Skift's article, https://skift.com/2018/09/17/tripadvisor-digs-deeper-into-social-travel-with-a-personalized-recommendation-feed/?utm_content=77213683&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook. This shift towards social media functionality shows TripAdvisor's intentions and suggests an ongoing social-media-driven trajectory for the tourism-and-hospitality reviews platform.

If Facebook were to buy TripAdvisor, and the two platforms were to fully integrate, Facebook would likely automatically notify a tour provider's customers, asking them to leave a review. All of this would occur within the one app. Imagine this alongside their virtual guide and VR capabilities. It could see the end of traditional websites as it would all be combined within the Facebook-TripAdvisor App.

Advertising within Facebook would also become even more nuanced and accurate; it would track users' preferred destination choices automatically, be it city tours, beach holidays or food and drink tours. Facebook users would also become major influencers with the followers gained and reviews they leave. Facebook has the potential to become the largest Online Travel Agent (OTA) in the world and I believe it will happen eventually (I said in 5 years, so by 2024! Time will tell).

With our own marketing research, we can already see that users dislike leaving the Facebook app and prefer to contact companies through messenger, or at least to fill out an enquiry form directly within the app.

This is just my opinion and Facebook will need to do something to keep its dominance before China takes over the world.

WORKSHOP THIRTEEN

SETTING UP YOUR FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGE AND FACEBOOK GROUP

Password

Log In

Forgot Password?

Back

OR

Create New Account

SETTING UP YOUR FACEBOOK BUSINESS PAGE

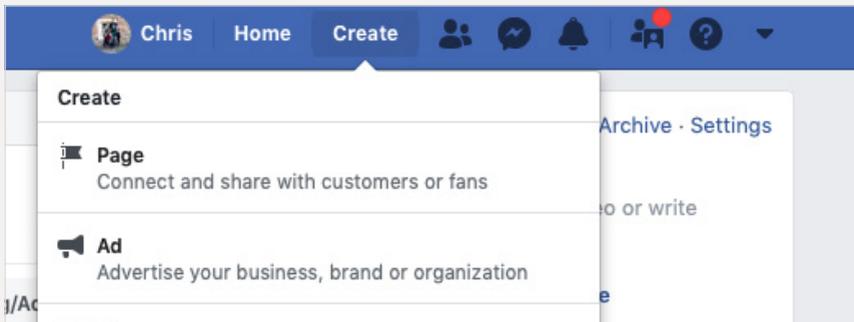
Setting up your Facebook business page is fairly straightforward, however. It must be linked to a personal account, so if you are the business owner, make sure the page is linked to your account and not that of a marketing agency or staff member. If that staff member was to leave, or you stop working with the agency, then you will have to jump through hoops to get control of your own business page, especially if you leave on bad terms.

Follow these 10 steps to learn how to create and optimise a Facebook business page. Again, we will use FoodDrinkTour and an example.

FoodDrinkTour Facebook Business Page

1. Create your page

You will need to first log in to your Facebook account. In the right-hand side of the blue toolbar, find and click the 'Create' button and select 'page'.



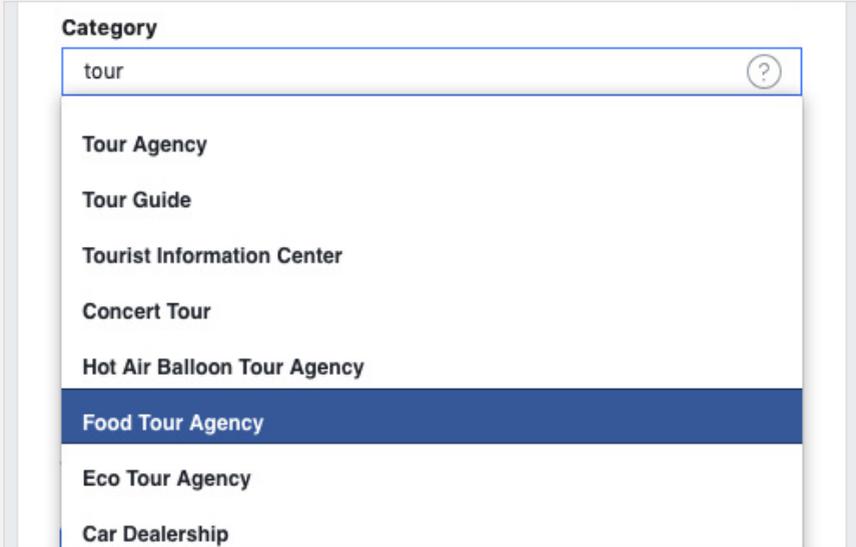
2. Choose a category

As this is for your tour business, select business or brand.

3. Enter your business name and information

This should be the same as your actual business name. Then, choose a business category that best represents what your business is. For example, for FoodDrinkTour we have

selected 'Food Tour Company'. Select which one fits your business. Once selected, a field will appear to enter your business address.



4. Upload your profile picture & cover photo

Choose a photo to upload as your business page profile picture. I would recommend your logo. Be sure that your image is clear and doesn't get cut off. Remember, it will be contained within a circle.

For your cover photo, pick something eye-catching and relevant. Don't do what some businesses do and add text to this as it will appear small on some devices.

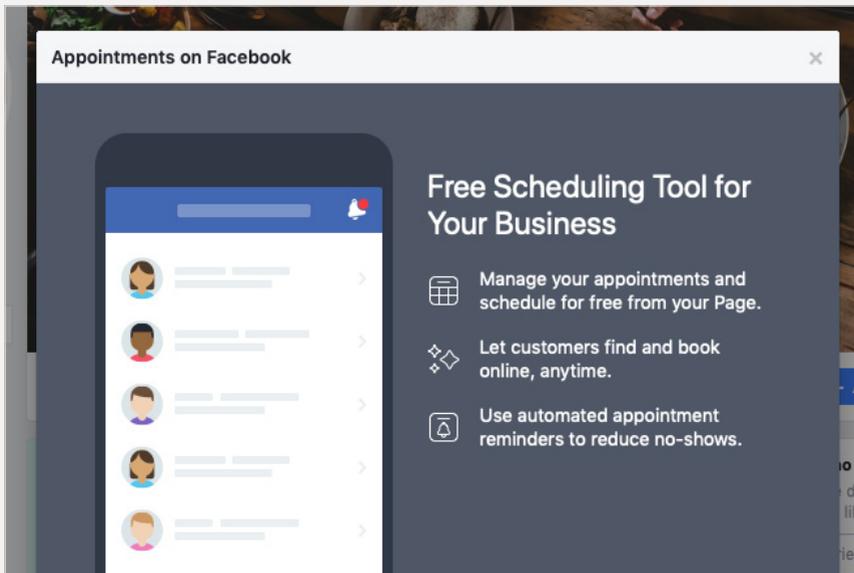
5. Add a button to your page

This acts as your call-to-action (CTA) and is free to use. Including a relevant one to your business can help generate more leads and, in return, increase sales. I would personally make this either a 'Book with us' or 'Contact us' button.

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Facebook has added 'Appointments on Facebook' which allows you to manage appointments and schedule them for free, so customers can make a booking request directly. Facebook will even remind those users who have booked through the platform, and that has been approved, that their booking is coming up.

As this is just a booking request, it allows you to check your availability to inform them if their requested time is available or to sell them another time slot. There is a manual element to this, but if you receive lots of requests it can be worth the effort. Go through the set up steps and add in a product.

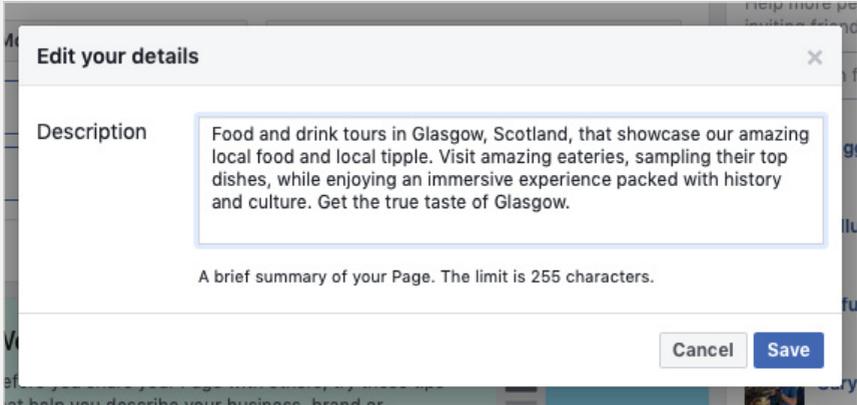


6. Invite your friends.

Facebook will prompt you to invite your friends from your personal account to like your new business page. This helps create a good initial base of likes for a new Facebook business page, so it is advised to go ahead and do this.

7. Add descriptions and page info

Click the 'add a short description' option to add a brief description of what you do. Insert FoodDrinkTour 'elevator pitch' from the brand workshop.



You will then be prompted to add in more page information like your website URL and email address. Fill out as much detail as possible.

8. Customise some more

Click 'See All Page Tips' under your welcome message and extra options will pop up.

Create a username by using your business name.

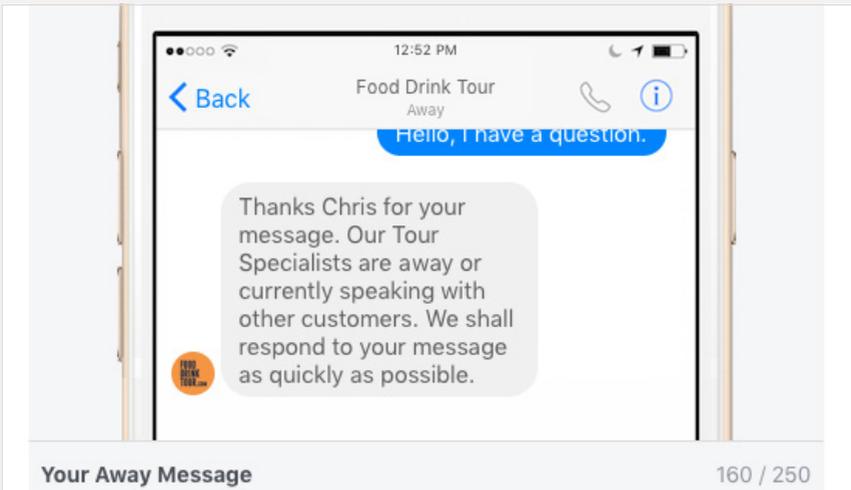
You will then be prompted to create a Facebook Group. Feel free to do that now or leave until later. The next section will take you through this.

9. Instant messages

Facebook allows you to set up automatic responses to customer messages over messenger. I am dead set against 'bots' to handle conversations. They give the impression

that you can't be bothered speaking to a potential customer. However, I would use them to ask simple questions prior to you speaking to them, like name, email, and phone number.

Click 'Turn on Instant Replies'. For FoodDrinkTours, I created the following reply when someone submits a message:



“Hi Chris, thanks for contacting us. We’ve received your message and appreciate you reaching out. Please wait a moment while we bring a Tour Specialist online to speak with you...”

You can also set up responders when you're not available or as an initial greeting.

10. Refine a little further

I have gone through the main elements of how to set up your Facebook business page, but Facebook gives you great tips and advice on how to optimise your page further. Go through these at your leisure as the more information you include, the easier it will be for your customers to find your information — and book!

SETTING UP A FACEBOOK GROUP

You may be wondering why you would need to set up a Facebook Group when you have just created a business page. Well, while you will receive some engagement on your business page and can promote your brand on it though organic and paid means, a Facebook Group allows you to be super targeted in your communications with existing customers, suppliers, and VIPs.

Groups are a great way to build more engagement with those who are really interested in your business as they made the effort to join your group to learn more. Think of it along the same lines as signing up for a newsletter; it must offer something that is enticing to make people sign up.

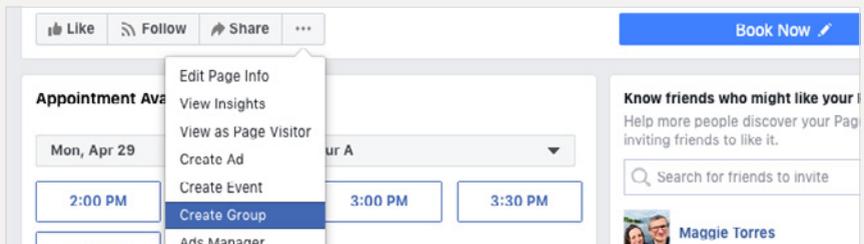
For example, on my group, The Digital Tourism Show, I provide over 200 videos of free marketing and industry advice. It is also where I frequently spend my time online, answering and asking questions to and from the community.

For your business, this could be a place where your guides ‘hang out’ and directly communicate with those group members, providing pre and post-trip advice. You could also use it to publish travel guide videos of your own to help build and inform the community.

FoodDrinkTour Facebook Group

1. Create your group

Go to your Facebook Business page and click the three dots next to the share button and select ‘create group’.



2. Select group privacy type

The pop up will automatically pull in some information from your business page. You can add more admin members at this stage.

You can also select the group privacy type. The options are:

Public – Anyone can find this group and see who is in it and what they post.

Closed – Anyone can find the group and see who owns it but only members can see who is in it and what they post.

Secret – Only members can find the group and see who is in it and what they post.

I would personally select a closed group as you want a sense of exclusivity to make members feel special and to make non-members feel they are missing out on something (encouraging them to join). This setting allows people to find the group and request access.

3. Add a cover image, location, and description

Like your Facebook business page, you can add a cover photo. On the side panel on the right-hand side, select your location and create a description of the group. Under your description, also define any group rules. One such rule might be: no promotional posts from members.

4. Edit group settings

Select ‘... more’ and click ‘Edit Group Settings’. Select a group type. For FoodDrinkTour, ‘Travel’ was selected.

Select ‘Choose Colour’ and pick the colour closest to your main brand colour.

Create a ‘web address’ for the group. This is a direct link to your group.

The screenshot shows the Facebook Group Setup interface for a group named "Food Drink Tour Group". The group name is displayed in a blue box with a dropdown arrow. Below it, the group type is set to "Travel", with a "Change" link. A note states: "Group types help people see what the group is about." The description field contains the text: "The FoodDrinkTour group is reserved for customers and VIP members who can speak directly with our tour guides, chiefs and partners." Below the description, a note says: "Potential members see the description if privacy is set to public or closed." The location is set to "Glasgow, United Kingdom" with an "Edit Location" button.

For membership approval, make sure only admins can approve new members.

If you like, you can set up some pre-questions prior to new members signing up. This gives you some indication whether they will be worthwhile members. Also make sure you approve all posts by members so you can filter out any spam or unfavourable posts. Story posting should be reserved for admins only.

The screenshot shows the Facebook Group Pre-questions setup screen. It features three pre-questions, each with a minus sign icon on the left and a question mark icon on the right:

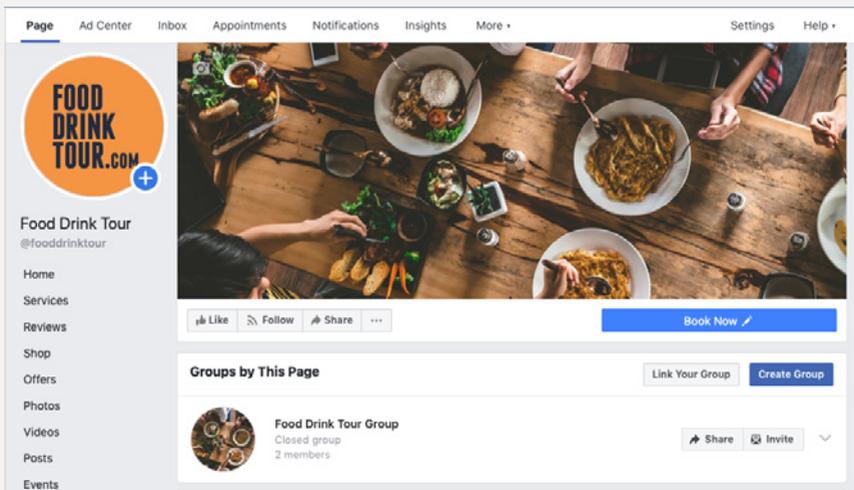
- What is your favourite food type? (Ie, Chinese, Italian, Scottish)
- What alcoholic drink is your favourite
- Why do you wish to join this group?

At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Save".

5. Link your group to your business page

If you followed the steps above, your business page will show up in your group. You can also show your group on your business page.

Click on your business page and select groups from the left-hand menu. If your new group does not show here, select 'link your group' to do so.



Well done. You have now set up your Facebook business page and group. All you need to do now is create a strategy around how to effectively use them. Luckily for you, I will explain some of the ways you can do this on page 285.

Before I go through how you set up a Facebook Business Manager and ad account, we will first set up your Instagram as this will make it easier for you as we will connect both.

WORKSHOP FOURTEEN

SETTING UP INSTAGRAM



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

As mentioned previously, Instagram is a mobile app, so you can set this up on your smartphone. However, I will show you how to set this based on the experience of using a desktop/laptop computer as it is easier to upload your logo for your profile picture.

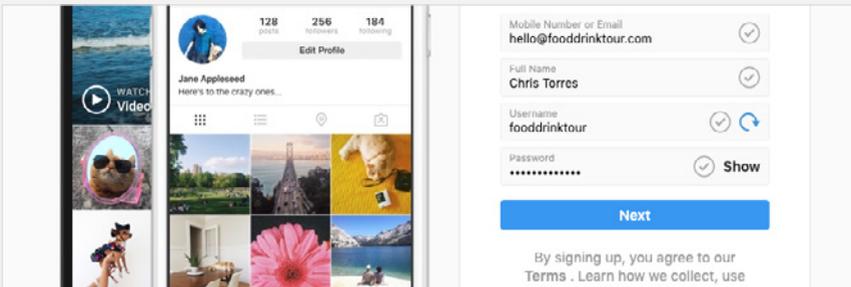
There are two types of Instagram accounts that can be set up: personal and business. You will want a business account as this gives you more analytics features.

Here are five steps for setting up Instagram. Remember, make sure it is the business owner who registers this account.

FoodDrinkTour Instagram

1. Creating your account

Visit <https://www.instagram.com/> and enter your details. Do not sign up using your Facebook Account as you do not want to make this personal. Once your details are entered, click next. It will ask you your age.



2. Set up your profile

The next screen will ask you to select some people to follow. You do not need to do this, so just click the profile icon at the top. Click 'Edit Profile'.

On this screen, add in your profile photo (your logo) website address, short description (same as your Facebook business page but cut down to 150 characters), and phone number. Click submit when complete.

The screenshot shows the Instagram profile editing interface. On the left is a sidebar with options: Edit Profile, Change Password, Authorized Applications, Email and SMS, Manage Contacts, and Privacy and Security. The main area displays the profile for 'fooddrinktour' with the following fields:

- Name:** Chris Torres
- Username:** fooddrinktour
- Website:** https://fooddrinktour.com
- Bio:** their top dishes, while enjoying an immersive experience packed with history and culture. Get the true taste of Glasgow.
- Private Information:**
 - Email:** hello@fooddrinktour.com (with a 'Confirm Email' button)
 - Phone Number:** 01412212090
 - Gender:** Not Specified
 - Similar Account Suggestions:** Include your account when recommending similar accounts people might want to follow. [?]

At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Submit' and 'Temporarily disable my account'.

Do not confirm your email yet as this only works through the app.

3. Download the app, login, and confirm account

Download the app to your smartphone. This is available on Apple and Android app stores. Once downloaded, login to your account.

At the top, you will see a button called 'send confirmation'. Do so and you will receive an email. You have to confirm on the same device, so make sure your email is on your smartphone.

4. Update to business account

Click your profile photo on the bottom right to display your profile page and click 'edit profile'.

Click 'get more tools' to bring up the options to become a business account. Follow the steps. It will ask you to link to a Facebook business page, do so. Once you complete those steps you have a business Instagram account.

5. Select people to follow

Complete your profile by following people in your industry. This can be suppliers, friends, competitors etc. Just make sure they are relevant to your business. On page 291 I will discuss how to build up your followers and the types of content you should post.

WORKSHOP FIFTEEN

SETTING UP FACEBOOK BUSINESS MANAGER, AD ACCOUNT & PIXEL

Facebook makes it easy to
capture their attention and ge

Create an Ad



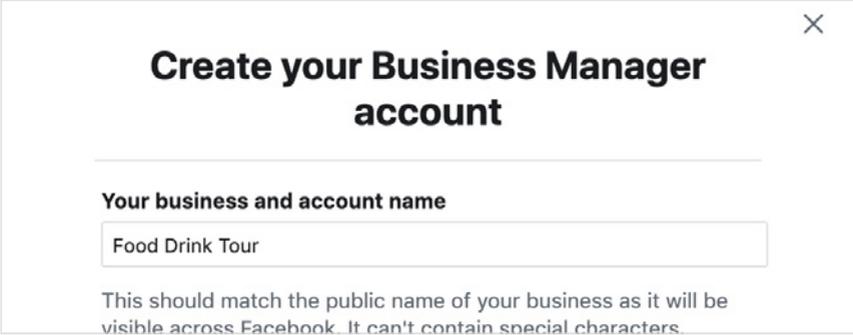
LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Once you have set up your Facebook page, I advise setting up a Business Manager account as you will need this for running and managing ads. Facebook Business Manager will allow you to manage your business page, ad accounts, and pixels all in one place. Follow these steps:

FoodDrinkTour Facebook Business Manager

1. Create your business account

Visit <https://business.facebook.com> and login. Click 'Create Business' to get started. You will be asked to enter the account name (use your business name), name, and business email address. Click 'Next'.



The screenshot shows a white modal window with a close button (X) in the top right corner. The main heading is "Create your Business Manager account" in bold black text. Below this is a horizontal line, followed by the label "Your business and account name" in bold. A text input field contains the text "Food Drink Tour". Below the input field, there is a note: "This should match the public name of your business as it will be visible across Facebook. It can't contain special characters."

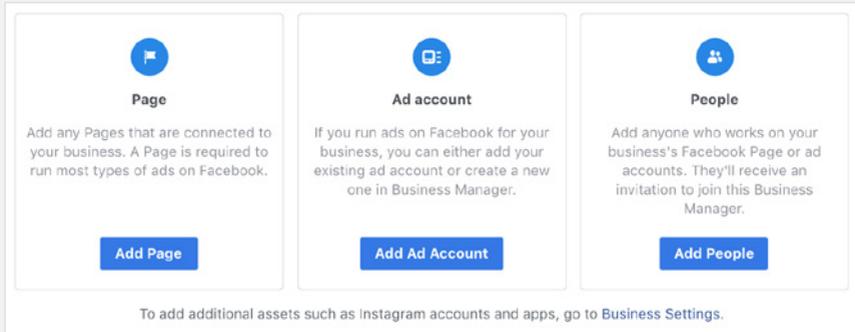
Enter the rest of your business details and select 'Promote its own good or services'. Once complete click 'Submit'.

2. Add your page, create your ad account and users

Click the 'add page' option from the first of the three panels.

Start typing in your business page name and you should see this pop up. When it does, select it.

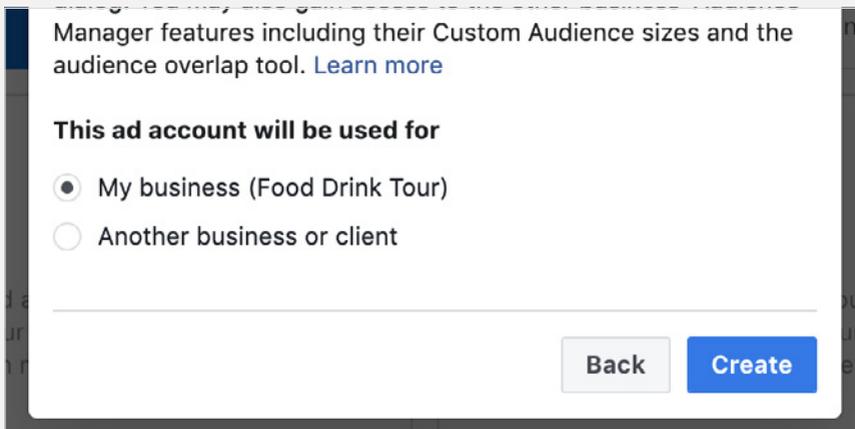
SETTING UP FACEBOOK BUSINESS MANAGER, AD ACCOUNT & PIXEL



Connect your Instagram account when prompted as you run Instagram ads directly from within Facebook's Business Manager.

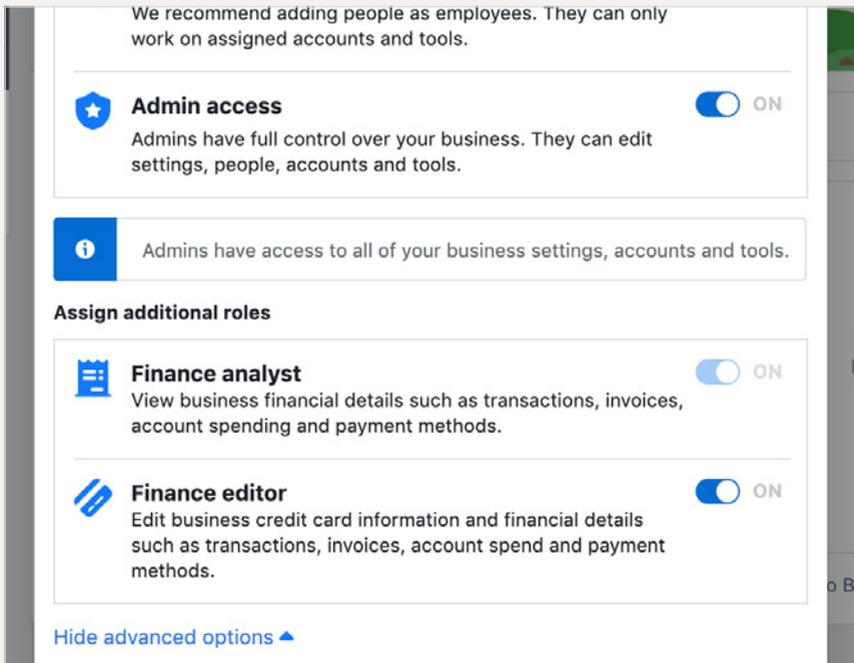
Next, you want to create an ad account. Click 'Add Ad Account' on the second panel. As we are creating a new account, click 'Create Ad Account'. Enter the appropriate details then click 'next'.

When prompted about what the account will be used for, select 'My Business'.



If you wish to add more users to help manage your account, select 'Add People' from the third panel. If you want to give someone admin access, select this. I advise doing so if someone else in your business, or an external agency, is managing your ads as it gives them more freedom. Just make sure you trust them.

Under advanced options, if that user is allowed to manage your financial information — like credit cards, etc — select this. Click 'Next' when done.



Under Pages and Ad Accounts, allow the user to manage both. Once done, click 'Invite' and that user will receive a notification by email that they have been added.

That's you set up! We will revisit this when I run through Facebook Ad strategies.

WORKSHOP SIXTEEN

SETTING UP A YOUTUBE CHANNEL



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Because we set up a Google account earlier, setting up a YouTube channel will be easier. Here are the steps:

FoodDrinkTour YouTube Channel

1. Creating your account

Head over to YouTube.com and click 'sign in' in the top right-hand corner. Login using the Google account you created earlier for Tag Manager.

2. Create your channel

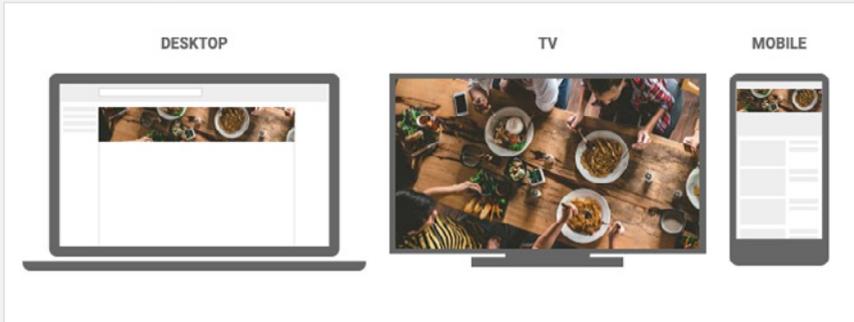
In the top right corner of the screen, click on your profile icon and then select 'Settings'. On this screen, select 'Create a channel'.

On the pop-up window select 'Use a business or other name' option. Add your business name.

3. Customise channel

Select 'Customize channel' at the top of the screen.

Click 'Add channel art' to upload a banner image. This needs to be 2048px x 1152px. You will see a preview. Adjust the crop if necessary. Click 'Select'.



Add your profile logo by clicking the pencil icon on the profile icon and uploading the image.

Click 'About' and edit a channel description, email address, and location.

Add links to your business. I suggest your main website and social platforms. Once complete, click 'Done'.

4. Add a channel introduction

As soon as visitors land on your channel, you want to give them a sense of what you are all about and why they should follow you. A video introduction is a great way to entice them to subscribe. A channel intro should grab attention as soon as it starts and also represent the type of content you plan to create and share.

Here is a great example of an intro:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLlzaWC9oRztRk4css-XmEw>

5. Update your channel URL (eventually)

Eventually, you will be able to change your YouTube channel from this:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4QAdkmdSGJ11BDZY09kb1w>

to this: <https://www.youtube.com/c/FoodDrinkTour>

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

To do so you have to pass YouTube's eligibility first. The requirements for this are:

- Have at least 100 subscribers
- Be at least 30 days old
- Have an uploaded photo as a channel icon
- Have uploaded channel art

If you cover ALL of these points, then you can change your YouTube URL. Once you pass these, click your profile icon and select 'settings'.

On this screen, select 'advanced settings'. Once you are eligible, you will see, 'You're eligible for a custom URL'. Once you do, click this and enter your business name (same as the account).

That is you set up and ready for publishing videos. Again, on page 267 I shall run through some ideas you can use to create good, engaging video content.

WORKSHOP SEVENTEEN

SETTING UP TWITTER



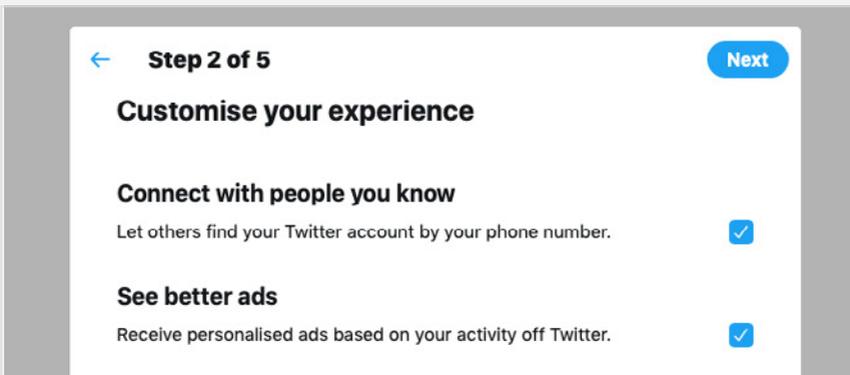
LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Although Twitter is not one of the three social media platforms I recommend setting up initially, it is a platform I would suggest looking at if you have time to manage it. I imagine you will eventually set one up at some point, so here is a guide on how to best to do this. Again, make sure you use the business owner's details.

FoodDrinkTour Twitter

1. Creating your account

Visit twitter.com and click 'sign up'. Enter your business name and mobile number. A mobile number is best as you can validate the account easier. Select both options to make it easier for people to find you on the platform.



Click 'sign up' and you will be asked to verify by mobile. Click OK and enter the validation code when you receive it.

Enter a password and click next.

Upload your logo for the profile photo.

Add your bio. Feel free to use the same description as your other platforms. You have 160 characters to play with. Select any Interests or click 'Continue' if you like.

You will then be asked to select followers. Twitter will automatically select a bunch for you. Deselect these and continue.

Turn on notifications as you do not want to miss any opportunities.

2. Edit your profile

Click 'Edit Profile' and add your banner image, location, website address, and your date of birth. Click 'save'.

3. Change username

When you enter your business name Twitter will automatically assign you an @ handle. You can check this, and edit, by clicking your profile icon at the top right and selecting 'Settings and Privacy'.

Check the username for FoodDrinkTour. It is @drink_tour which is not great. Click the username to edit. Change this to something more suitable.



That's you done. You are ready to make your first tweet. However, my advice would be to go through your friends, suppliers, and partners to follow and ask them to follow you back. A little later I will go over some Twitter strategies.

WORKSHOP EIGHTEEN

SETTING UP GOOGLE ADS

Google AdWords

Overview

Benefits

How it works

Costs

Over a million users

on Google AdWords

Get your business found

Whether you're looking to attract new website visitors
get the phone calls

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

This is one platform where I urge you to take caution. Anyone considering working with Google Ads will probably be overwhelmed by the various guides and articles about PPC best practice. These guides range from genuinely helpful to utterly incomprehensible.

I actually asked myself if I should include this section as, to me, this is one area no business owner should contemplate tackling themselves without at least 2-3 years training and knowledge. It is the one area that you must set-up and maintain properly — otherwise, you'll watch your money spiral down the drain... quickly!

Google Ads is a little like the stock market. You must watch your campaigns at least every few days to make sure they are generating a good return. Not only this, your Ads 'quality score', which affects how well they perform and convert, is also determined by the website landing pages, content, and other aspects that you need to manage.

If you are reading this and you set up Google Ads and just left them to run, stop them now and check how they are performing.

So, do you really want to manage Google Ads? This is one area I suggest you pay an expert for. Not because I also run a marketing agency that manages Google Ads, but because it takes a lot of time and money to get right.

Still here? OK. Don't say I didn't warn you.

With this guide, I will at least show you how to set up a Google Ads account as whoever runs your ads, it should be under the owner's account. Later in the book, I will run through some of the strategies you can use to make the most of Google Ads.

FoodDrinkTour Google Ad Account

1. Creating your account

Again, using the same Google account you used earlier, head over to <https://ads.google.com> and login with your account details. This will display the following screen. . .

What's your main advertising goal?

Ads that focus on a specific goal help you get the results you want

 Get more calls	▼
 Get more visits to your physical location	▼
 Get more website sales or sign-ups	▼

2. Select main goals

You will be asked to set up campaign goals so select the one you feel is suitable to your business. For most of you, this will be 'Get more website sales and sign-ups'. Click 'Next' to enter your business name.

3. Where are your customers?

On this screen, select where you want your first campaign to target. As FoodDrinkTours is Glasgow based, and most bookings are made in destination, they will select Glasgow with a 5-mile radius to be super targeted. Adjust the radius to your own catchment area. Click 'Next'.

4. Define your products

This is where you set your ad products and criteria. Select a language that you want to target. Select the business category that best suits you. FoodDrinkTour has opted for 'Tour Packages'.

Ad your main product types. FoodDrinkTour entered, Food Tours, Drink Tours, Cooking Classes, and Whisky Tours. Feel free to select some of Google's suggestions but only if they are relevant. Click 'Next'.

What specific products or services do you want to promote in this ad?
We'll show your ad to people searching for similar terms on Google

Food Tours	X
Drink Tours	X
Cooking Classes	X
Whisky Tours	X

[+ ADD ANOTHER](#)

Suggested for you

[+ vacation packages](#) [+ holiday packages](#) [+ europe tour packages](#) [+ travel tours](#)

[+ andaman tour packages](#) [+ international tour packages](#) [+ travel tour](#) [+ nepal tour packages](#)

[BACK](#) [NEXT](#)

5. Write your ad

Write your ad by giving it a headline, secondary headline, and description. Make it product specific so you can target one product. Google will show you an example of the ad and some tips and samples on the best structure. If you wish, you can create more than one ad, but I advise sticking with one for now — especially if you are new to Google Ads.

The URL that these ads goes to is very important. Never just link to your homepage. This should be a product-specific URL, so enter the product you are promoting. Click 'Next'.

6. Add images

You now have the option to add images to your ad, which will display on certain networks. Add a good image or three of your tour/product and your logo. Click 'Next'.

Let's write your ad

Highlight the products and services you offer, and what makes your business unique

Get tips and view sample ads

Your Business Name | Great service guaranteed

<http://example.com>

Open 24 hours a day. Call now and get 20% off.

Unique product or service

Highlight what makes your business, product, or offer unique

- Free shipping? Large selection? Tell people!
- Highlight features or areas that make your business stand out from the competition.

Ad #1

Headline 1
FoodDrinkTour.com 17 / 30

Headline 2
Glasgow Food Tours 18 / 30

Description
eateries, sample top dishes, packed with culture. Get the true taste of Glasg 88 / 90

Your ad preview

FoodDrinkTour.com | Glasgow Food Tours

<http://fooddrinktour.com>

Amazing eateries, sample top dishes, packed with culture. Get the true taste of Glasgow.

[SEE HOW YOUR AD WILL APPEAR](#)

7. Set your budget

This is where you need to set your ad's daily budget. Google will suggest what this should be based on how competitive the keywords you've chosen and the industry you are in. You will notice a thicker faded blue line behind the slider. This indicates the budget threshold for your ad. The more budget you put in per day, the more chances you have of people visiting your site and getting a lead/booking. I advise you set this midway, to test the ad first, then adjust accordingly, after a few days.

Set your budget

£ 20.00 per day average

£608.00 monthly maximum

Typical competitor budget range

Estimated performance

52,697 - 88,008 impressions per month

591 - 987 clicks per month

This estimate is based on businesses with similar ad settings and budget.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

You will notice that Google also estimates the number of impressions and clicks you may get. Click 'Next'.

Review your ad and, if happy with it, click 'Next'.

Enter your billing details and launch your ad.

That's the easy part out the way. As I advised earlier, the hard part is looking over your analytics, tweaking the ad(s), monitoring budgets, amongst other things. I have not even covered aspects like 'negative keywords' for example. There is much more to Google Ads than what you see on the surface, so please be careful and watch your ad(s) closely.

Later in the book, I will run through some ad strategies you can take.

WORKSHOP NINETEEN

SETTING UP MAILER LITE, MAILCHIMP, & ZAPIER



LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Email marketing is still very important, but only if you do it the right way. We are all inundated with so many emails and spam on a daily basis that businesses must stand out and cut through this noise.

There are two email services I recommend, each with their own amazing features (and drawbacks). Allow me to give you my opinion on both first.

MailChimp

Mailchimp, <http://eepurl.com/gp7ZhX>, is the industry standard and it is an amazing piece of software. The great thing about MailChimp is that it connects with just about every booking platform can connect with it.

MailChimp allows you to send out and track individual campaigns, set up automated sequences, and create landing pages and pop-up forms on your website.

At the time of writing this book, the drawback of MailChimp has over MailerLite is that it is about double the price of MailerLite and its automation tools are not as good, in my honest opinion. Also, the pop-up forms feature does not lend itself to cart abandonment situations quite as well. It lacks certain features that MailerLite provides.

But, as I say, it is the most popular and the industry standard. And for good reason. *Free for up to 2000 subscribers, then \$30 per month for up to 2500 subscribers.

MailerLite

MailerLite, <http://bit.ly/2DNZ1ha>, provides similar tools to MailChimp, allowing you to create single campaigns, landing pages, forms, and automated email campaign strategies.

Like MailChimp, you can also create pop-up forms that act as part of an abandonment cart strategy. But, unlike MailChimp, you can set this popup to appear under different scenarios simultaneously.

For example, you can make this pop-up appear after a defined amount of time, once the user scrolls to a particular spot on your page or if they are about to leave — all at the same time. MailChimp only allows you to select once scenario per pop-up. You can even set it to show at specific times of the day or hide on desktop, mobile, or tablets. The choice is completely up to you.

The automation tools are also more robust. MailChimp will allow you to create a stepped email sequence, which is great, but MailerLite allows you to add conditions to this automated sequence, so you can send separate email campaigns depending on whether that user has read or clicked on and email or not. This automation functionality can be very powerful.

MailerLite is also about half the price of MailChimp is for the same amount of subscribers and more functionality (Free for up to 1000 subscribers, then \$15 per month for up to 2500 subscribers).

The main drawback is that it's not the industry standard, so not as many systems connect with it instantly, so customer data would not automatically be added to it, as is the case with MailChimp.

There is a workaround however, called Zapier, and it is free. . .

Zapier

Zapier, <https://zapier.com>, is a tool that allows you to create a bridge between one piece of online software with another. Many CRM systems use this as it saved these companies creating API links themselves.

With, Zapier you can create a bridge between MailChimp and MailerLite that will automatically send signups from MailChimp to MailerLite, allowing you to use MailChimp as a feeder for MailerLite. This gives you easy integration while using a superior, less expensive tool.

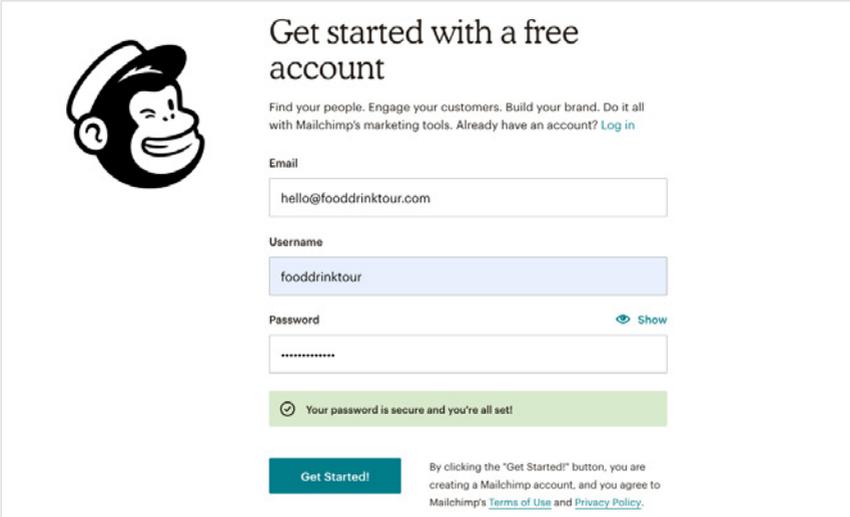
Again, this is just my opinion and you may already use and love MailChimp and if you want to continue using it, you are still in good hands, but my aim for this book is to offer advice based on my experience, and I would choose MailerLite over MailChimp. Never mind the fact that it's cheaper, it also has greater functionality.

I shall now show you how to set up MailerLite, MailChimp, and Zapier. With Zapier, I will show you how to connect the two platforms so that one passes information to the other. Also, to give you advanced warning, when I run through email marketing strategies on page 317, I will be using MailerLite. But you can, for the most part, replicate these strategies with MailChimp.

CREATING A MAILCHIMP ACCOUNT

Visit MailChimp, <http://eepurl.com/gp7ZhX>, and click 'Sign Up Free'. Fill in your details and click 'Get Started'. You will receive an email confirmation that you will need to click before you continue.

Once you have done that, enter your name and business details.





Get started with a free account

Find your people. Engage your customers. Build your brand. Do it all with Mailchimp's marketing tools. Already have an account? [Log in](#)

Email

Username

Password 👁 Show

✔ Your password is secure and you're all set!

[Get Started!](#)

By clicking the "Get Started!" button, you are creating a Mailchimp account, and you agree to Mailchimp's [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

MailChimp will ask if you have subscribers to upload now. Select 'No' (for now).

You will then be asked if you want to connect your social platforms. Feel free to do so or if you wish, ignore for now as you can do this later. Click 'Continue'.

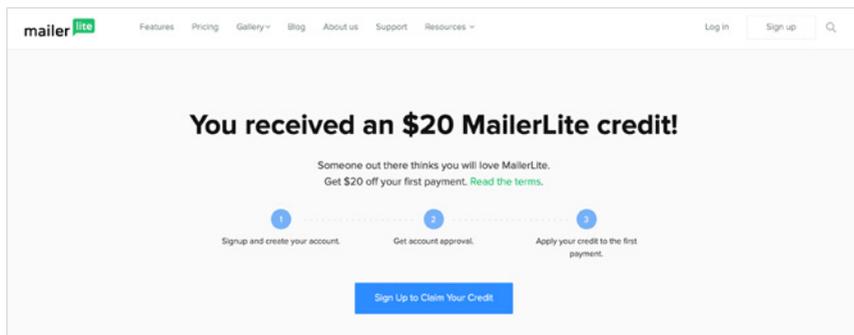
You will now be asked to 'Find your marketing path'. Again, ignore this for now by clicking 'Not Right Now'.

If you wish to subscribe to MailChimp's advice series, then feel free. It may provide some more insights.

That is you. MailChimp will automatically set up an audience for you. If you set things up and your booking platform provides this functionality, this is where your customers will be added by your booking platform.

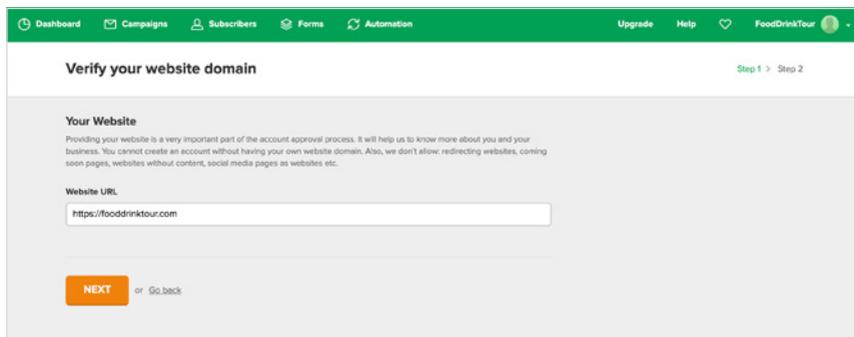
CREATING A MAILERLITE ACCOUNT

Visit MailerLite, <http://bit.ly/2DNZ1ha>, and click 'Sign Up to Claim Your Credit'. A wee gift from me to you.



Fill out your company name, email, and set a password. Click 'Create My Account'.

Select 'Complete Your Profile' and enter your details. Once complete, click 'Save'.



MailerLite will need to verify your website domain. This is to make sure you are the domain owner. Click 'Verify your website domain'. Enter your domain name and click 'Next'.

Enter your email address and click 'Next'. You will receive an email to confirm your account.

Next, you should create a subscribers list. Click 'Subscribers' on the top menu. Like MailChimp, MailerLite will put all subscribers into one overall list, but I recommend that

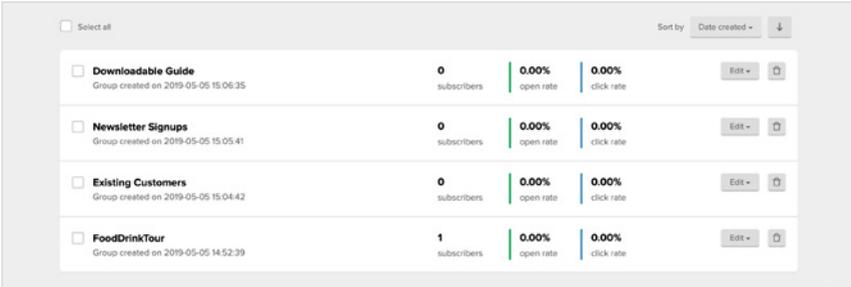
LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

you create a 'group' to help separate specific users and manage future campaigns. Click 'Groups' at the top of the page.

Click 'Create New Group'. Call this 'Existing Customers' as you will want to add any customers you may already have. If you are reading this and you are a new business, still create this as you will have customers at some point.

Follow the above steps again and create two further groups that will capture newsletter signups. Call one 'Newsletter Signups' and the other 'Downloadable Guide'. This will make more sense later in the book.

You should now have four lists.



The screenshot shows a table of marketing groups. At the top left is a 'Select all' checkbox. At the top right is a 'Sort by' dropdown menu set to 'Date created' with a downward arrow. The table has four rows, each representing a group. Each row includes a checkbox, the group name, the creation date, the number of subscribers, the open rate, the click rate, and 'Edit' and 'Trash' buttons.

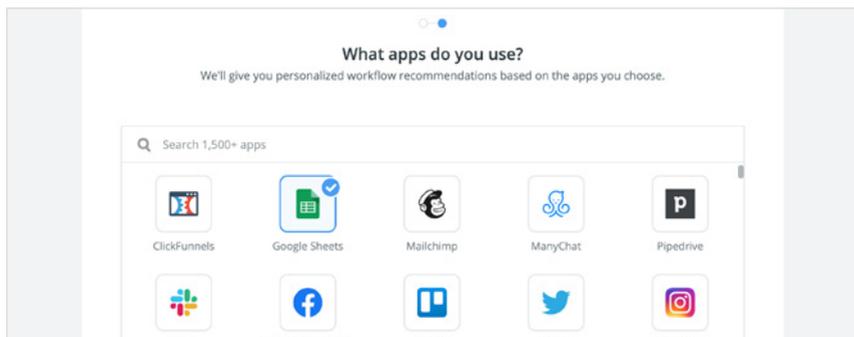
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group Name	Created	Subscribers	Open Rate	Click Rate	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Downloadable Guide	Group created on 2019-05-05 15:06:35	0	0.00%	0.00%	Edit + Trash
<input type="checkbox"/>	Newsletter Signups	Group created on 2019-05-05 15:05:41	0	0.00%	0.00%	Edit + Trash
<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing Customers	Group created on 2019-05-05 15:04:42	0	0.00%	0.00%	Edit + Trash
<input type="checkbox"/>	FoodDrinkTour	Group created on 2019-05-05 14:52:39	1	0.00%	0.00%	Edit + Trash

SETTING UP ZAPIER

Visit Zapier, <https://zapier.com>, and create an account using your Google account we created earlier.

Zapier will ask a couple of questions. Answer these and click 'Continue'.

You will then be asked to select the apps you wish to use. Lucky, MailChimp and MailerLite are available for free. Search for MailChimp and MailerLite and click 'Finish Setup'.



Because you selected both, Zapier will provide you with a pre-made connection, called a Zap. Click 'Use This Zap'.

Zapier will auto select this option when a new subscriber is added to a list. Select this and 'Continue'.

You will need to connect your MailChimp account. Do so and follow the steps.

A screenshot of the "Connect Zapier to your account" form. The title is "Connect Zapier to your account". Below the title, it says "Zapier makes it easy to connect 100s of web applications directly to MailChimp, no coding required!". There are two input fields: "Username" with the value "foodrinktour" and "Password" with masked characters "*****". A "Log In" button is located at the bottom of the form.

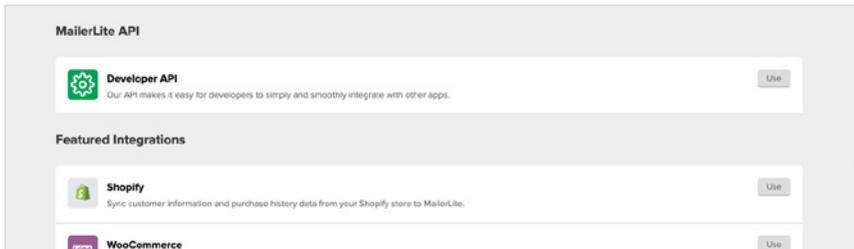
LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Click 'Test' to make sure the connection is working. If it's working, click 'Save & Continue'.

You will now be asked to select the MailChimp list to import subscribers from. Select the list MailChimp created for you. There should only be one. Click 'Continue'. On the next screen, select 'continue'.

You will now be asked to connect your MailerLite account. Follow the steps to do so.

MailerLite requires an API key. Keep this window open and open another window for your MailerLite account. Under your username, select 'Integrations'.



Click on 'Developer API' and copy the API key. Go back to Zapier and paste this in. Click 'Continue'.

Test the connection and, if it's working well, click 'Save & Continue'.

Select the list you want to connect. As we are using MailChimp for existing customers, select this list. Click 'Show Advanced Options' and go to the name field. From the drop-down menu on the right-hand side, select 'Fname' for first name. Go to last name and select 'Lname'. The email will already be set. At the bottom of the page, click 'Continue'.

On the next screen select 'Send test To MailerLite'. Once complete, click 'Finish'.

The last step is to turn the Zap on. That's you now connected to both MailChimp and MailerLite. Well done!

TOURISM MARKETING WITH GDPR IN MIND

Ah! GDPR. This was the Y2K bug scenario all over again. To be brutally honest, managing your customers data should be common sense and GDPR is simply putting this common sense into law. Those businesses in a panic were the ones that GDPR was aimed at to make them accountable for customer information.

There is so much information about GDPR out there that it's a little overwhelming to process and figure out exactly what's required of your business. So, in the hope of offering clarity, I shall attempt to cover what exactly GDPR is, what your business must do to be GDPR compliant, and how GDPR specifically affects the tourism industry.

What is GDPR?

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into full effect on the 25th of May 2018 and it has profoundly affected the way companies record, process, and store data acquired from their customers and employees.

GDPR was actually first established in 2016 and has been part of the EU's proactive attitude towards internet security and data privacy. However, the Cambridge Analytica scandal is a timely reminder of the risks associated with data protection and it should serve a stern warning to any person or business unwilling to prioritise their customers' right to privacy.

To be GDPR compliant, your company must be able to prove it has met the following data-processing conditions:

- Data must be collected transparently
- Data must be used only for the purpose stated when it was collected
- Data must be accurate and up-to-date
- Data must be adequately protected from hackers or third parties who may try to access it
- And data must be completely deleted when the relationship with your customer/client/employee ends.

Basically, if you purchased a marketing list (which you should never do anyway) or manually collated contact details to send those people marketing emails, calls, or communicated by any other method, without that person's consent, then you are not GDPR compliant.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

If you have not thought about GDPR yet, then follow these steps...

Step 1 – fully audit your current data

Organise all of your data to figure exactly what you have. Once you've taken stock of your data, figure out if you'd asked customers/guests for consent to keep the data. Do you have a record of this consent?

Step 2 – getting consent for data

Any customer making a booking will have to enter their data and you don't need an additional consent form for this. However, if you plan to use this data later on, for marketing purposes, then you will require record of consent for it.

For past data, you would have had to have reached out to your previous customers and asked to keep the data, explaining what it's for. If previous customers have had a positive experience with your company, they will probably be happy to be contacted by you again. However, this outreach to previous customers had to be done before the May 2018 deadline. After that, you may simply have to delete any data you don't have explicit consent for.

For new data, make asking for consent part of your booking process to cover you in the future. Make the language as clear and explicit as possible and perhaps ask for legal advice to get the wording just right.

Step 3 – assess and update your security

As a vital part of GDPR involves providing adequate security for your customers' data, it's important for you to assess your company's data security. Is your database secure? Do you have the latest firewalls and internet security programs?

An additional concern specifically for the tourism industry is that we often have to share customers' details with suppliers if we're working with various different services. Be very careful with this, and make sure that everything you share is secure. If you have a few regular suppliers, you could get in contact with them and ask what they're doing to ensure they are GDPR compliant too.

How does GDPR specifically impact the tourism industry?

As I said above, GDPR affects any company that offers goods or services to people within the EU. This might not affect some industries outside of the EU, but it's pretty much guaranteed to affect everyone in the tourism industry, regardless of your niche. This is because your target audience hopefully pulls from many countries from around the world, including people living in the EU.

However, one area where the tourism industry has a very notable advantage over most other industries is customer goodwill and interest. Most people are happy to be contacted about possible discounts on hotels, flights, tours, etc. Holidays, and travel in general, are of high interest to potential customers all-year-round, so you may find past and future customers are more than happy to provide consent for you to use their data to offer them special deals and holiday promotions. Tourism is often one of the only industries where people are happy to receive regular marketing communications.

GDPR simply isn't as scary as some of the other scare-mongering articles on the net are letting on, but you will need to adjust the way your company records, stores, and shares data.

I have included a GDPR Checklist in the download section of this book.



SECTION CONCLUSION

I know you are just itching to learn more about marketing campaigns, ideas, and strategies, so setting up the items in this section may have been a laborious task for some, but it was important to make sure you have a solid foundation to build those creative ideas on. Without this foundation, you will not be heard or found online.

I am going to have to hold you back a little longer as I cover the next important step in the process. Research. Research will allow you to make sure you are targeting the right people, optimising your site for the right keywords, or finding out who your main competitors are.

Let's get stuck in.

SECTION THREE

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR

(AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

WHY IS RESEARCH SO IMPORTANT?

In this section, I will cover some of the research tasks you can carry out to find out more about your customers, your competitors and, if you already have an online presence, how you fair online.

For a lot of tour businesses, this is one area they probably have never conducted systematically — or, if they have researched their competitors, it was only in relation to certain aspects of their business. I totally get it. When you first think of a great idea, the last thing on your mind is spending many hours on market research. Most people would rather start creating and selling tours right away than think about the value of marketing research.

Any tour business needs sales and customers as quickly as possible, and market research will help ensure that those opportunities keep coming to you.

Here are five tips (out of many) on how research can improve your business.

1. Know your competitors

Researching your competitors will help you find their strengths and weaknesses, allowing you to determine how your own creative marketing strategy can exploit any gaps they may have. This is key to the success of your business.

2. Know your customers

Who is your ideal customer? Who will actually be interested in your experience? What do your customers expect? The more answers you have to these questions, the better your chances are of getting those bookings. Taking the time to fully understand your customers will also let you know the real size of your target market; if it is too small, you can expand your product offering; if it is very big, you just need to find a way to appeal to as much of this market as possible.

3. Know your problem areas

If you are already established but find that your sales are decreasing, you need to know why this is happening. There is no point in merely speculating that it is due to extra competition, political climates, or poor service. Research will help you know exactly what it is and how to fix it.

4. Know where to direct your marketing

A lot of tour operators have limited budgets, so you need to make sure you are getting the best value and return from your marketing campaigns. Research can help ensure that you are reaching your target audience on the platforms they are most likely to see your message.

5. Helps you stay focused

With the proper research in place, you can use this information to create a cohesive strategy that allows you to focus on what will help raise your brand awareness and, ultimately, what will bring you bookings. A strategy informed by thorough research helps you make a list of priorities that you need to accomplish; this, in turn, helps you in managing your time more efficiently, only putting marketing time and effort into the right areas.

To summarise, research provides you with information that will help you identify what the market needs, your customers, and your competitors. The following sections will allow you to conduct some of this research yourself.

All the tools I will suggest in this book are free to use or free for a period of time. I could explain some of the tools agencies like TMA uses but these can be expensive, which often means it's usually not worth it if you're not using the tools to manage multiple different business.

Let's start with the first one... a Competitor Analysis.

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

WORKSHOP TWENTY

CONDUCTING A COMPETITOR ANALYSIS



Downloadable
worksheets
available

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

As the name suggests, this section will give some insight into how you can analyse your competitors, understanding their weaknesses and their strengths.

Performing a competitor analysis can be a complicated process, so I'm going to attempt to break this down into three steps.

1. Identify your competitors

You have already identified this list when you went through the brand section of this book. I will summarise this step here, but the full description can be found in the brand section of the book. Revisit this if you skipped this section earlier.

Do a Google search on your main keyword/phrase(s) and see which competitors pop up on the results. Whoever is above you (or just below you), they are your competitors. Remember, this is how your customers will first look for your tours. Remember to only select those businesses that relate directly with yours.

When conducting the search, use a private or incognito window to stop browsers skewing your results based on your personal search history.

List the names of your competitors in the document I have supplied in the download section of this book. Take note of their website and social media URLs. This document also has a FoodDrinkTour example section to make it easier for you to understand.



2. Detail each competitor

This will be the longest part of this process, but it will be well worth the time and effort. With this, you should look at the following aspects of your competitors' businesses:

1. How are their products priced compared to yours?
2. What, if anything, do their products have that your products do not?
3. Are they only online or do they also have a brick-and-mortar shop?
4. Do they offer online booking?
5. How do they compare to you on social media? How many followers?
6. How does their website compare to yours?
7. What keywords are they targeting?
8. What type of marketing content are they producing?
9. Who is their target audience? (Is it identical to yours, or is it a little different?)

Let's look at the first four points. . .

How are their products priced compared to yours?

Unless you want to, I would not list every product your competitors sell — especially if they have hundreds of them. List the ones that are closely related to yours to begin with. This will allow you to focus on these and not get overwhelmed. You can always revisit the other products at a later date, which I advise you do as it can give you some inspiration for new tours.

List 5–10 of your competitors' products and their prices. Set this next to your own similar products and price structure. If applicable, make this a mix of low and higher-cost items.

What, if anything, do their products have that your products do not?

Add any notes on the major differences between your products and competitors' similar products. For example, FoodDrinkTour noted that one of their competitors' products contained a Chinese speaking tour guide and theirs did not.

Are they only online or do they also have a brick-and-mortar shop?

This is a relatively simple task. If they do have a brick-and-mortar shop, they have another opportunity to target passersby. However, this may drive up the cost of their tours to cover the expense of the rent, staff, and upkeep that come with running a physical store.

Do they offer online booking?

Look through your competitors' products and take note of whether they offer online booking. Also note if their product pages contain a tour enquiry option. If they offer a mix of both, mark this down too.

We will now look at the other points I mentioned..

5. How do they compare to you on social? How many followers?
6. How does their website compare to yours?
7. What keywords are they targeting
8. What type of marketing content are they producing?
9. Who is their target audience?

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

As these are larger research elements within a Competitor Analysis I will break them down into separate sections.

WORKSHOP TWENTY ONE

CONDUCTING A SOCIAL AUDIT



Downloadable
worksheets
available

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

A social audit allows you to see what you are up against and it gives you an idea of the target market that is out there. This is especially important if your business is just starting out.

If you have just started out and have only recently set up your social accounts, you won't be able to carry out a social audit on your own social platforms, but it will be very useful to conduct a social audit on your competitors.

Look at your competitors' websites and list which social platforms they use. For this book, we will assume they use Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, YouTube, and Twitter.

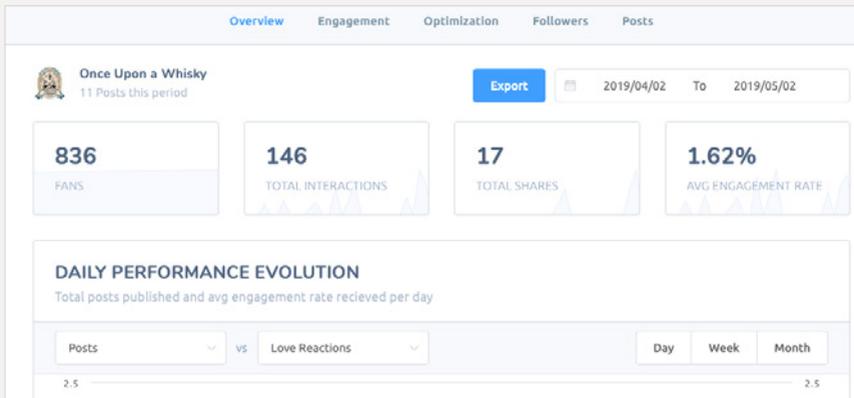
We are going to use an online tool called Seek Metrics, <https://seekmetrics.com> for most of the social channels. Head over to Seek Metrics and create a free account. Let's start with the daddy of social media: Facebook.



FoodDrinkTour Social Audit – Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube

Once you have created a Seek Metrics account, copy the name of a Facebook business page as it appears in the URL (including the forward slash). FoodDrinkTour has selected 'Once Upon A Whisky' as one of its competitors, so we have taken '/onceuponawhisky' from the Facebook business URL.

If you follow this step, you will be presented with an overview of your competitor's Facebook page. Here, you can view engagement levels, optimisation tips, follower info, and best performing posts. Generate a PDF report to come back to later.



Seek Metrics will display your competitor's top posts for the date range selected (which you can change). This offers insight into which content has worked for your competitors, and which content has not worked. Take what works and what doesn't work for your competitors and apply it to your own content strategies.

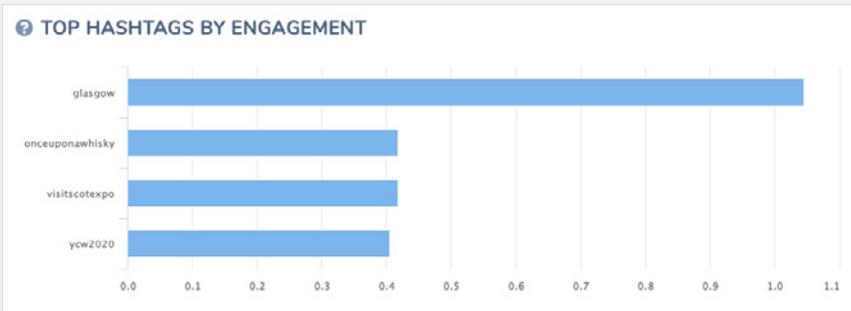
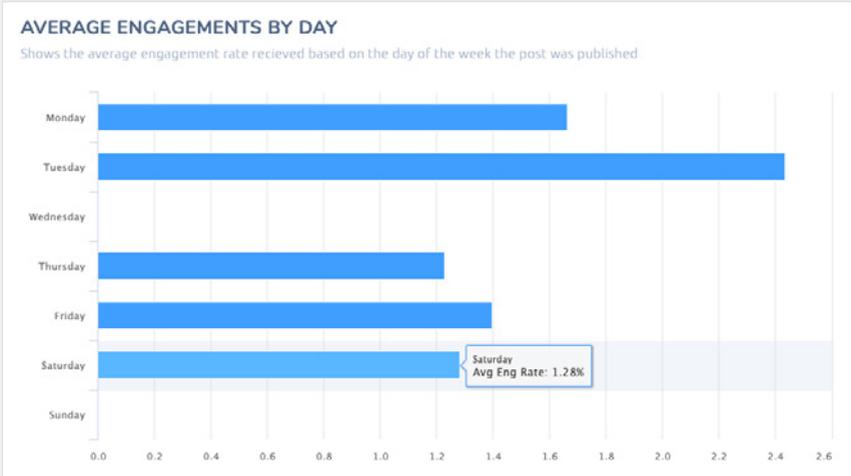
Notice that under 'Engagement' Seek Metrics provides information on average engagements per day and the top hashtags used. This will become important when you create your own targeted strategies. Copy some of the metrics mentioned into the document I have provided.



Using the same tool, analyse your competitors' Twitter accounts. This will provide a lot of the same information as the Facebook report, but with some Twitter-specific information, such as post types and the types of media used in posts.

Again, copy the metrics mentioned into the document I have provided.

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)



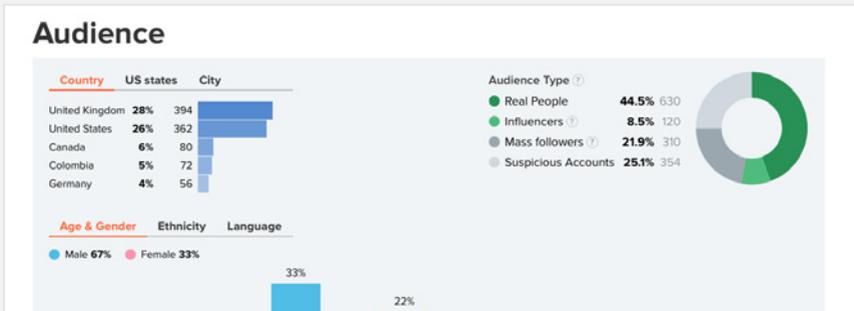
The YouTube report will give you statistics on engagement rates, video performance, and the best performing videos by watch duration (good indication as to how long your videos should be).

Copy the metrics mentioned into the document I have provided.

FoodDrinkTour Social Audit – Instagram

For Instagram, we are going to use another great free tool called HypeAuditor, <https://hypeauditor.com>. Most online tools only allow you to add your own account, or those you own, but this tool allows you to check your competitors' accounts. One drawback, however, is that this will only work for accounts with 1000 or more followers. If your competitors have less than 1000 followers, then you will need to collate some of that information manually (or use a paid tool).

HypeAuditor will show you valuable information on your competitors' Instagram audience, including which countries and cities are they are from, age, gender, ethnicity, and language. This is great for developing one or two customer personas.



HypeAuditor also highlights 'suspected accounts', HypeAuditor flags these as fake accounts.

Again, copy the metrics mentioned into the document I have provided.

If you have to do this manually, then look at your competitor's Instagram account and take note of the number of followers and any other details, then enter these details into the document. You can look at their last 30 days of posts and add up the number of likes and comments. Divide these numbers by the number of posts to work out their engagement rate ratio.

TripAdvisor

Unfortunately, there are no tools like HypeAuditor or Seek Metrics for TripAdvisor (I sense an opportunity!). TripAdvisor does offer its own analytics tools, which you can play about with.

For TripAdvisor, record the following information:

- Total number of reviews, broken down into the five categories, from terrible to excellent.
- Look at the last 20 reviews and make a note of how many reviews they have responded too.
- Look at the dates of these 20 reviews and see how many were made in the last month.
- Also note the position of their listing. For example, The Glasgow Food & Drink Tour are number 10 out of 33 in the category 'Food & Drink in Glasgow'.

Add these figures to your document.

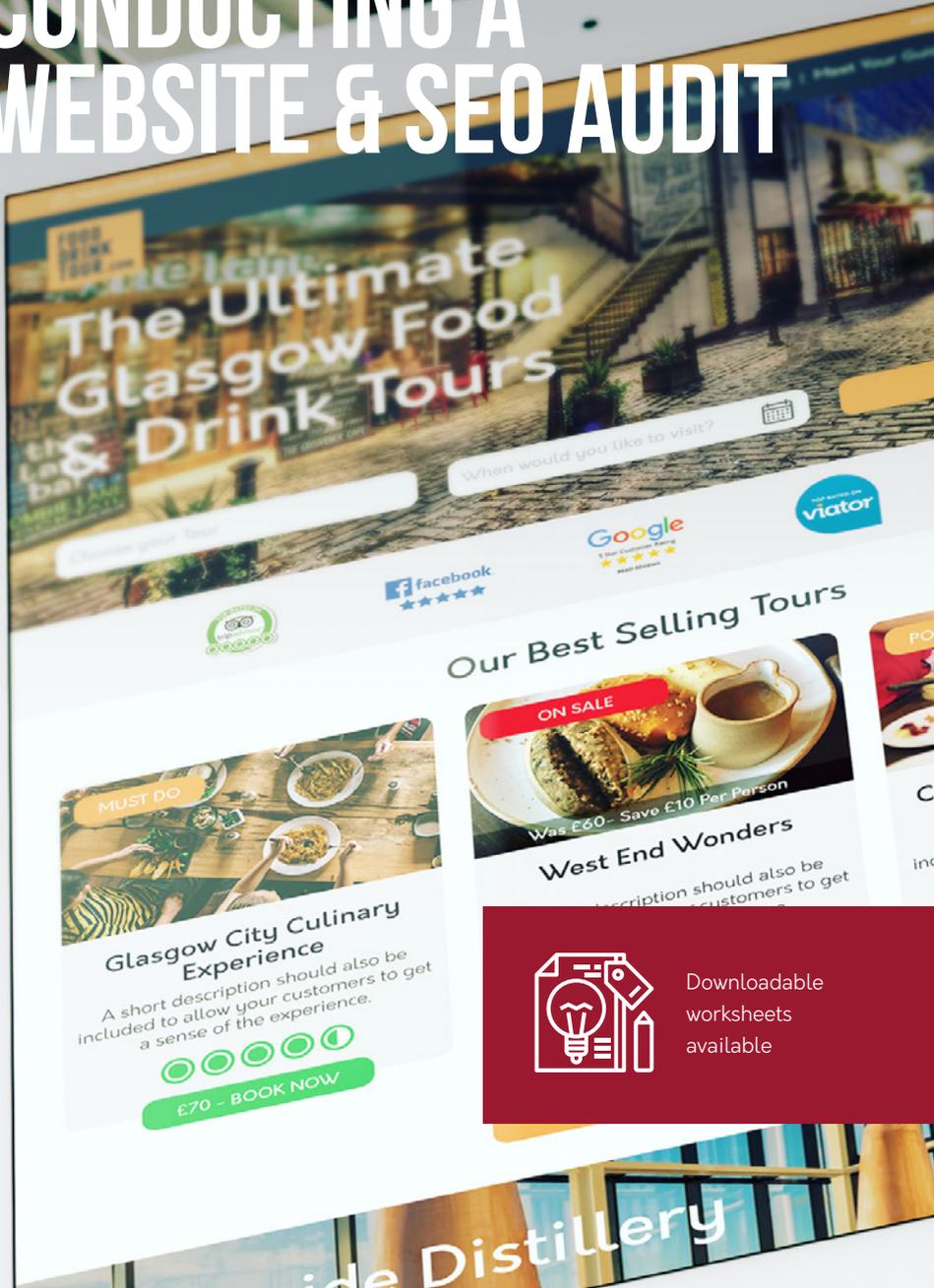
Summary

You have now collated your competitors' information and you can use this to inform any marketing strategies going forward. We will use some of this later in this section, and in future sections, but you should start to notice key findings from this research, such as pricing structures and target audience groups.

Suffice it to say, whether you already have an established social presence or not, run these tools on your own platforms to add your figures next to your customers. If you are new and zero is your starting point, then the only way to go from here is up.

WORKSHOP TWENTY TWO

CONDUCTING A WEBSITE & SEO AUDIT



Glasgow City Culinary Experience

A short description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.



£70 - BOOK NOW

Our Best Selling Tours



ON SALE

Was £60 - Save £10 Per Person

West End Wonders

Description should also be included to allow your customers to get a sense of the experience.



Downloadable worksheets available

ide Distillery

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

Conducting a website audit is a must — whether you have a new site or not. A site audit identifies problems with website architecture, issues that may be hindering your customers purchase journey, and SEO problems that Google may penalise. Hopefully, if you followed my website guide earlier, then you will not have any of these issues.

I strongly believe that any website must be fully optimised prior to any marketing strategy being undertaken, as sending lots of traffic to a website that will not convert is just wasting your time and money.

A Website Audit helps you identify key areas of success and things to improve; this, in turn, helps to improve your chances of converting customers.

An audit should look at the following aspects...

User experience & design — A website health audit looks at the architecture and usability of a website. It helps identify potential gaps in content structure, technical issues, and the speed of the website.

Mobile friendliness — Your website may work on mobile, but how optimised is it? This audit will help identify any issues with mobile compatibility.

Conversion optimisation — This examines how call to actions (CTA) are positioned on your website, and if this placement is resulting in lost sales. The process informs the design and layout of your main landing pages.

SEO & rankings — Is your website optimised for the best keywords and phrases for your products? This audit will highlight any issues.

Performance & security — This audit will identify any speed issues that will impact your SEO and your customers' purchase experience.

Let's take a look at each aspect and how you can find out this information yourself. Again, all the tools I will suggest are free to use or free for a period of time.

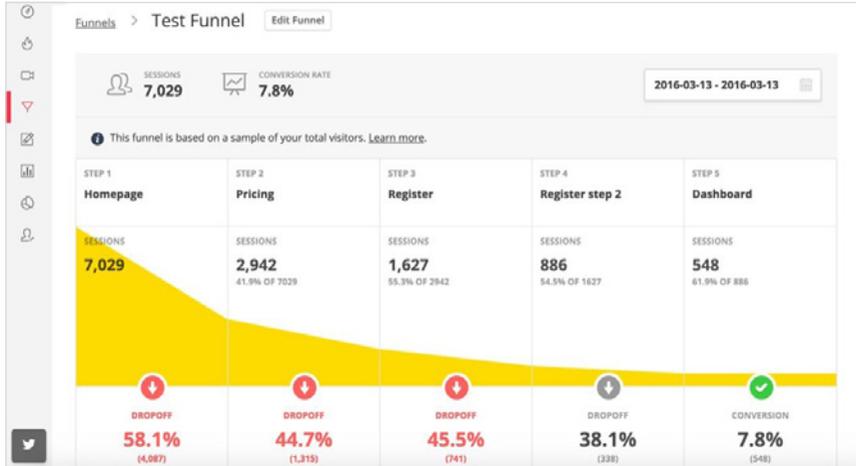
Note: Don't worry about your website being 100% perfect in all areas. Some of the software will highlight issues that you simply can't fix. Just make it as good as you possibly can and don't stress when you can't attain perfection. No one can.

User experience & design

Does your website take your customer to your checkout within 3 clicks? Is the layout of your website so confusing and busy with information that they leave as soon as they arrive? This will result in high ‘bounce rates’ – more on this later.

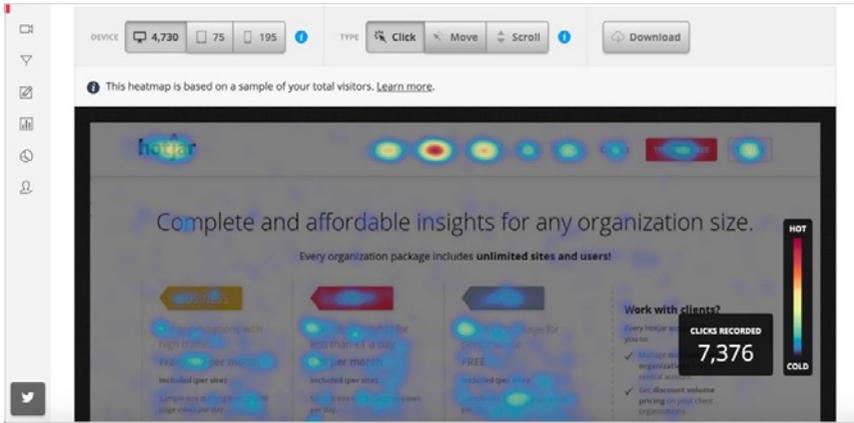
The user experience often becomes a secondary thought over the aesthetics of a website. Business owners can get preoccupied with the ‘shiny shiny’ design elements, but aesthetics mean nothing if your customers don’t convert. Usability first, design second. This always applies — and this is coming from someone who has been a designer and marketer for 26 years.

One way you can determine whether your website is confusing is to install a small piece of code to your website using the tool HotJar, <https://www.hotjar.com>. You can add this to the Google Tag Manager you set up earlier. HotJar is free for the first 100 visitors, which is enough to give you some insight into website performance for most small tour businesses.



This tool will allow you to view heatmaps of the most, and least, clicked areas of your site. If you find some sections are seldom clicked, remove them. If these are important pages, then they are not being seen. If your book button is not being clicked very much, then that will be the reason why your bookings are suffering.

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)



HotJar will also record user interactions, so you can watch them back later. This is very ‘Big Brother’ but it does serve a purpose: it can highlight major issues with your user journey. It will show you how far your customers scroll down your page. This is important as they may be getting bored early on, leaving long before making a purchase. Or, they may stick with your site the whole way through to the checkout, then leave. This would tell you that there is something frustrating or off-putting about your checkout process.

The aspects to look at when conducting an audit on user experience are as follows:

Website design — Your customers’ experience starts with the first click. Today’s online visitors are savvy and they will judge your whole business by what they see in the first 3 seconds. Make your first impression count! Follow my website design guide from earlier in the book. You will find this on page 65.

Home page headline — Your headline should be attention-grabbing, and your page copy should be clear and concise. It should effectively explain what you do, who you do it for, and why they should buy.

Home page products — Your home page should contain great images that sell your key products and/or the destinations you operate in. These should display an image, title, price, available dates and, if possible, a short description. If a product is on offer, it should also display an offer flash across the product (usually the image).

Main navigation — A simplified navigation system will intuitively help your website visitors know where they are on their site, where they can go, and how to get back again. Your book button should be no more than three clicks away.

Images — High-quality, relevant images can increase user engagement on your website, improve your position in search engines like Google, and help build your brand.

Product pages — Do your product pages contain enough information? Too much information? Are call to actions clear enough? HotJar will help highlight any issues, and my guide on website design earlier in this book should also help.

Mobile friendliness

On average, visitors now spend more than half of their online time on a mobile device, and this is only set to increase. This means that a mobile friendly website is now a critical part of your online presence (it has been for quite some time, really).

In fact, from our experience, we see an increase in bookings by around 40% just when creating a mobile friendly experience for our clients' website visitors. 61% of users will also have a better opinion of brands if they have a site that is responsive and easy to navigate on mobile.

Google will also rank a mobile-friendly website above those that are not, so if you want to be visible on search engines, you must optimise your website for mobile.

For this, I recommend using Google's own mobile-friendly tool. Feel free to try it for yourself: <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>.

This tool will highlight any page load issues that your website developer can look at.

The aspects to look at when conducting a mobile audit are as follows:

Mobile navigation — Optimising the user journey on mobile is hugely important. Your menu needs to be clean and simple to use.

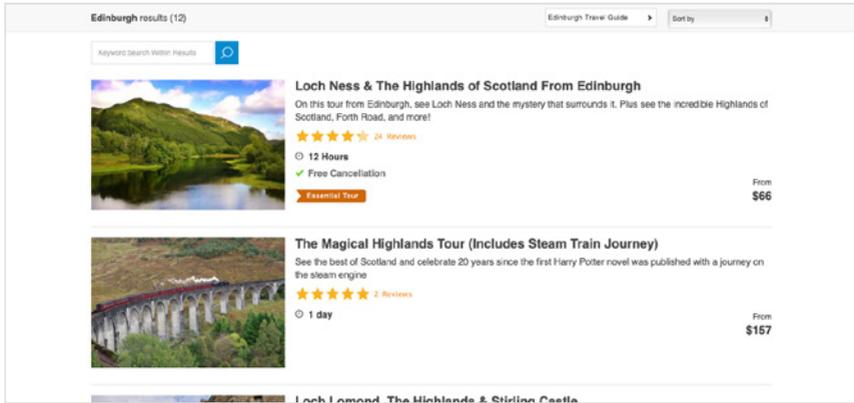
Mobile page length — When it comes to mobile, the most common mistake involves stacking page elements into a single column, keeping all page elements from the desktop version. This is the wrong tactic as it results in overly long pages. This does not mean that

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

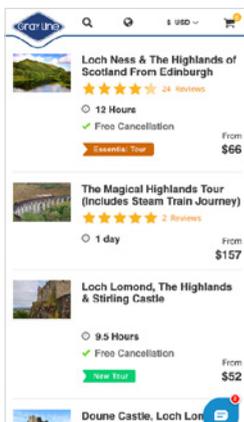
you should create shorter pages and give the user more clicks. That would be equally wrong.

When it comes to mobile, your website must be ‘app like’, offering only key information to make the buying process easier. Let’s take a look at an example of what I mean.

Back when we my agency used to develop websites, we created the website for Gray Line. Let’s look at the tour list page on desktop:



As you can see, this lists a selection of tours. Now let’s take a look at this on mobile:



Notice how it displays only the vital information, removing the description, allowing more tours to be displayed on the smaller screen.

Go through your website design on mobile and ask yourself, does it really need to be there.

Mobile footer — On average, around 5-10% of users will use the footer as a navigation tool. This means that it’s highly recommended to include the following features on your footer: branding elements (such as your logo and accreditations), summary text on your business, and key navigation pages.

Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)

Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO) is the process of making it easier and more appealing for a user to make a booking or enquiry on your website. More than any other aspect of digital marketing, CRO is focused on turning lookers into bookers — website visitors into paying customers. Let's say your site is doing brilliantly in many areas: traffic is coming your way via an effective SEO, paid search, social or content strategy. Unfortunately, though, let's say that the people visiting your site aren't converting.

A 'conversion' may not necessarily be a purchase, although more often than not it can be. A conversion can also be an email sign-up or the completion of a survey. Whatever the ultimate point of your website is, a conversion is the successful completion of that action.

Conversion Rate (CR) is a key metric in ecommerce as it reveals the percentage of your site's total traffic completing a specific goal. The higher the conversion rate the better.

Let's look at the main aspects of conversion rate, and take into consideration that a lot of these were also covered in my website design section.

Call-to-actions — A call-to-action asks visitors to take a specific action on your site – buy, contact you, learn more, and so on. Every webpage needs at least one effective CTA in a noticeable place.

Newsletter sign-up — Newsletter sign-up forms are great for building up a list of potential customers that can be marketed too, but to receive a sign-up, you must first offer something valuable in return.

Trust factor — Reviews help convince people to buy; this is because they are honest recommendations from people your visitors trust the most: other customers.

Phone number — Your website should display your phone number in a prominent place. The top-right corner of your website is a good space. Wherever you decide to place your phone number, it should make it easy for web visitors to contact you.

Product enquiry form — An intuitive enquiry form will help you capture potential customers who are just not ready to buy yet as they may have a question or two. An enquiry form keeps that lead warm and in touch with you, rather than allowing them to leave your website.

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

Form testing — This seems obvious, but you will be surprised at the amount of websites I have come across where the online forms do not work. I remember one business we tried to help received 800 enquires in 6 months through their website, as they were recorded in the back end of their website, but no one had bothered to look or check if emails were coming in at their end (they were in their spam folders). They had all been ignored! Imagine how much business they lost!

Whether it is your main enquiry form, standard contact form, or a newsletter signup, these call-to-actions should work across your site. Check them regularly.

Online chat — Live online chat can help to capture customers by answering their questions quickly; it can also drive more leads by reaching out to prospective customers before they leave your website. The availability of live chat assistance has been found to decrease sales cart abandonment by up to 30%.

There are many tools you can use to add an online chat to your website. Here are three I would recommend:

PureChat, <https://purechat.com>, is a free tool (paid options available) that provides a back-end management system and mobile app to answer on the go.

Intercom, <https://www.intercom.com>, offers free and paid options with back-end and mobile-management tools.

Facebook Messenger, <https://developers.facebook.com/docs/messenger-platform/discovery/customer-chat-plugin>, is in beta but it is already used by a lot of businesses. I highly recommend considering this option as it will allow for more Facebook Ad targeting. Customers will need a Facebook account, however.

Website abandonment — From our studies, tourism businesses can receive more bookings and leads by providing an abandonment offer to their website users. As the customer looks to leave the site, a window displays offering them the chance to receive a discount code. Your website should provide this.

Facebook Pixel — This is a code Facebook provides that goes on your site so that you can show ads on Facebook to people who have visited your site. It also tracks actions that can be used for optimising your Facebook ads.

You can check if your website has one by downloading a Chrome plugin called ‘Facebook Pixel Helper’, <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/facebook-pixel-helper/fdgfkebogiimcoedlicjlajpkdmockpc?hl=en>.

SEO & rankings

SEO gives you an edge over your competition by bringing more prospects and customers straight to your website from searches they make on platforms like Google.

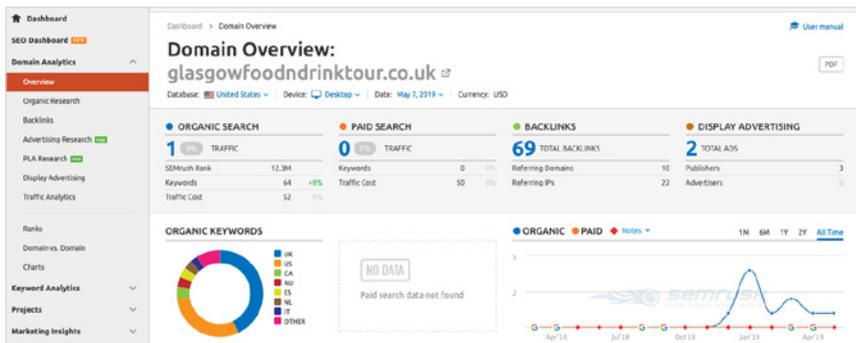
There are some free tools you can use to check your rankings and highlight any issues you may have. I will list these later on in this chapter.

Main keyword ranking on page one — When your site shows on the first page of the search engines, it puts your business in front of more prospective customers. This leads to increased visibility, traffic, and revenue. Let’s check how you rank and what your main keyword currently is.

Visit SEMRush, <https://www.semrush.com>. This is an amazing tool that can provide lots of information. It is a paid tool, but the initial use is free (up to 10 Requests) and the free version is all you need at this stage.

Enter your domain name and click ‘Start now’. Again, we have used <https://www.glasgowfoodndrinktour.co.uk> for this example. And, if you’re interested, you can check on your competitors with this tool!

Fill out your details to continue.



KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

The dashboard that loads will show some key metrics, including the top organic keywords.

The top keyword here is ‘food tours scotland’ which accounts for 100% of organic traffic. It will also give you an average Cost Per Click for paid Google Ads for that keyword. Also notice that it gives you an indication of your main organic competitors.

Keyword	Pos.	Volume	CPC (USD)	Traffic, %
food tours scotland	8 (8)	40	2.35	100.00
stag do glasgow	77 (77)	10	0.00	0.00
scottish food restaurants glasgow	51 (51)	10	0.00	0.00
tours in glasgow	27 (27)	30	1.76	0.00
walks around glasgow	98 (98)	40	0.00	0.00

[View full report](#)

Now, this may show you the top keywords you rank for, but this does not mean these are the right keywords to optimise for. The Keyword Audit section on page 233 will help you determine which are the best keywords to focus your digital marketing efforts on.

WWW Resolve — Search engines consider example.com and www.example.com to be different. Unless you use a WWW Resolve, you could be penalised for duplicate content. Whether you use www or not (I prefer not), you must make sure that whatever one you use, the other points to it. Your website hosting or website Content Management System (CMS) should allow you to set this up.

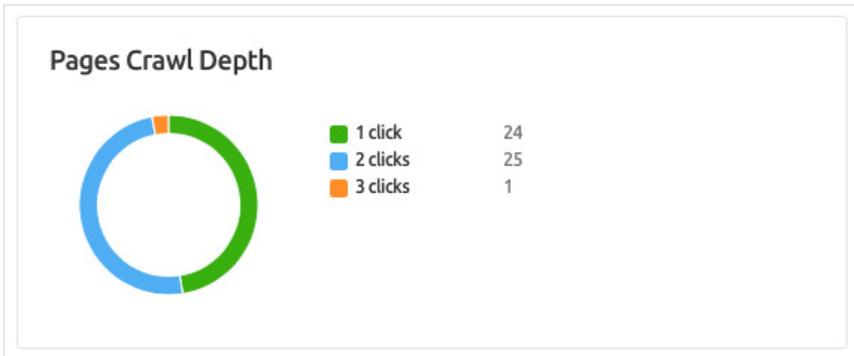
Crawlability — How easily Google and other search engines are able to crawl your site is vitally important. They must be able to read your pages easily. You should take into account page crawl depth, broken links, and any design elements that might impede a search engine’s journey through your site.

To check your own website, go back to SEMRush and click on ‘Projects’ then ‘Site Audit’ in the side menu. Enter your domain name again and click ‘Start site audit’. This will take a few minutes. Once done, click the panel to view more details.

For the site you see on the next page, it has a 93% crawlability rate, which is fantastic. Click on this to view more details.



What you want to check first is the page crawl depth. One of the other reasons I advise keeping to the ‘three-click rule’ is that Google will ignore, or give less value, to pages that are beyond three pages deep. The example shows that this company has done a good job in keeping their pages within 1–2 clicks.



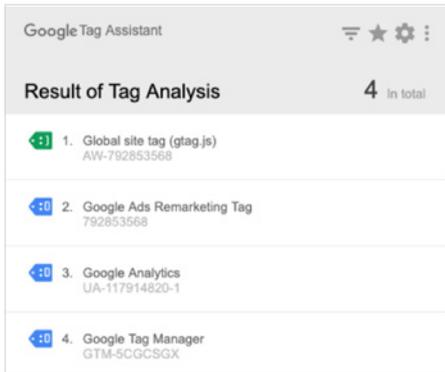
Broken Links — Broken links can cause a web page to return an error status. This can occur due to an incorrect or malformed URL, or because the page the link is leading to is broken or it no longer exists. Multiple broken internal links may discourage users from visiting other pages on your website and, as a result, your website rank may be downgraded.

SEMRush can also give you this information or you can use Broken Link Check, <https://www.brokenlinkcheck.com/broken-links.php>.

If you have any broken links, fix these issues by creating redirects on your website. This is

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done through a file called htaccess that your developers will have access to. You may also be able to set these in your website's CMS.



Google Analytics & Tag Manager —

Analytics help you better understand your visitors and customers, and this understanding helps you improve engagement, usability, and drive sales. You need to have Google Analytics and Tag Manager installed, as I advised earlier.

If you have an existing website, you can download a Chrome plugin called Google Tag Assistant, [https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/tag-](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/tag-assistant-by-google/kejbdjndbnbjgmefkgdddjlbokphdefk?hl=en)

[assistant-by-google/kejbdjndbnbjgmefkgdddjlbokphdefk?hl=en](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/tag-assistant-by-google/kejbdjndbnbjgmefkgdddjlbokphdefk?hl=en), which will inform you if you have these installed.

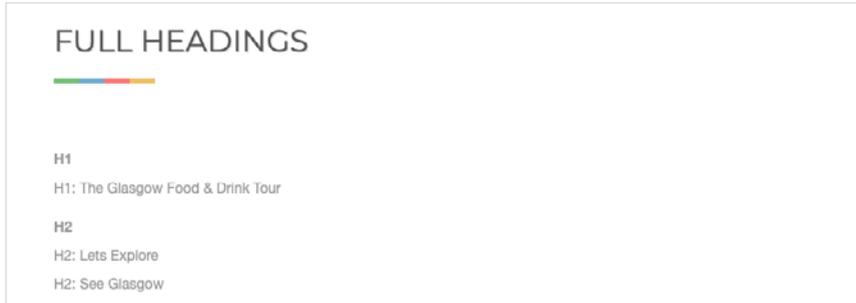
Sitemap.xml — A site map is a file that lists the pages in your site to help search engines find them easily. You can easily check this by visiting your domain in your browser adding '/sitemap.xml' to the end of the domain. If you see a list of xml files or pages on your site, then you have a site map. You need to keep this updated regularly — especially if you add/delete pages. Your website's CMS should allow you to generate your site map, or you can use a plugin like Yoast, <https://yoast.com>.

Blog/travel guides — An effective blog can improve your search engine position, drive more traffic to your website, position you as an industry leader, and help generate more leads and customers. Make sure you have one and that you keep it up-to-date. Check some of the strategies I provide on page 279.

Heading 1 (H1) Tags — H1 tags can help improve your site's search engine ranking. They are also a best practice for accessibility, and they help potential visitors determine your page's content.

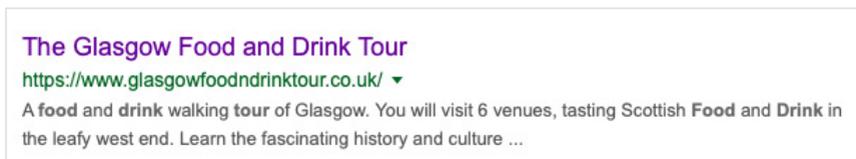
An H1 tag is code used to create the main headline text of each page. You should only have one H1 on a page at any time. Visit SEO Review Tools, <https://www.seoreviewtools.com/html-headings-checker/> to do a quick check. This tool will show you what text is

used for each header type. You can have multiple headers for H2s, H3s, and onwards.



Meta Titles & Descriptions — Meta titles are an important factor in your search engine position. Note that search engines often only show about the first 70 characters of your title on their search results.

Meta descriptions describe your page in a little more detail. A meta description's maximum length is usually 156 characters. A good description can convince people using search engines to click on your link.



You should also use your relevant page keywords as searchers will see the keyword bolded in search engine results page. This will increase your page's prominence and visibility, and will likely lead to more visits from the search engine results page (SERP).

Schema Markup — Schema markup code helps search engines return more informative results about your business to users and boost your website rankings.

To check if your website contains this, or to check that it has been implemented properly, visit Google's own tool: <https://search.google.com/structured-data/testing-tool>. If it says zero items, then you do not have scheme markup on your website. I would advise speaking with your developers to add this in.

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ALT Tag attributes — This piece of website code is used to tell visually impaired people what an image is about. It can also help SEO and search engines understand why you are using an image.

You should add the ALT attribute to all of your images. This may depend on your CMS and/or require code changes. This also helps screen readers as images are easily legible and descriptive.

Open Graph markup — Open graph tags allow you to control how and what content shows up when a link from your site is shared on Social Media sites like Facebook or Twitter. This code sits at the top of each page and looks something like this:

```
<meta property="og:title" content="<enter title>" />
<meta property="og:type" content="website" />
<meta property="og:url" content="<enter page url>" />
<meta property="og:image" content="<enter shareable image>" />
<meta property="og:description" content="<enter description>" />
```

Visit Open Graph Checker, <https://opengraphcheck.com>, to see if you have this installed.

og:url	https://www.glasgowfoodndrinktour.co.uk/
og:type	website
og:title	The Glasgow Food and Drink Tour
og:image	https://www.glasgowfoodndrinktour.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/20190422-130838-e1555945230313-1200x630.jpg
og:image:secure_url	https://www.glasgowfoodndrinktour.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/20190422-130838-e1555945230313-1200x630.jpg
og:image:width	1200
og:image:height	630

Internal linking — Internal links are valuable for two reasons. Firstly, they guide users through your website, encouraging them to book, or visit your contact page, or to read about a product that may be better suited to them. Secondly, internal links are a good way to tell search engines crawling your website that specific pages should be related to specific keywords. Internal linking helps both SEO and CRO.

Low text ratio — Your text-to-HTML ratio indicates the amount of actual text you have on your web page compared to the amount of code. If your ratio is under 20% then you need to add more content to the page. Search engines have begun focusing on pages that contain more content. That's why a higher text-to-HTML ratio means that your page has a better chance of getting a good position in search results.

Visit Small SEO Tools, <https://smallseotools.com/code-to-text-ratio-checker/>, to check your ratio.

RESULTS			
Page Size	Code Size	Text Size	Code To Text Ratio(%)
91 KB	82 KB	9 KB	10 %

Website URLs — Does your site have URLs of excessive length due to keyword stuffing? Do they contain session IDs and other codes that are not ‘plain English’. In some cases, these URLs are difficult for search engines to index and result in lower clickthrough rates from search results. Your URL structure may depend on your website CMS or booking platform, but try to make URLs as readable as possible. For example, rather than:

<https://yourdomain.com/cat/?cid=7078> you would want something like: <https://yourdomain.com/destinationname/tourname> instead.

You also do not want to stuff URLs full of keywords. This, for example, is far too much:

<https://fooddrinktour.com/whiskey/irish-whiskey/jameson-irish-whiskey/jameson-irish-whiskey-history>.

Instead it should look like this:

<https://fooddrinktour.com/whiskey/irish-whiskey/jameson-history>

Performance & security

The speed and security of your website will also impact your search rankings and conversions. 47% of consumers expect a web page to load in two seconds or less. A one-second delay in page response can result in a 7% reduction in conversions.

To check your website speed, you can visit a free tool called Pingdom, <https://tools.pingdom.com>, and enter your domain name. Select a test area close to your destination if that is close to where most of your customers would find you from.

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The screenshot shows the 'Your Results:' section of a Pingdom report. It includes a thumbnail of the website 'lets Explore' and a summary of performance metrics: Performance grade B 83, Page size 2.1 MB, Load time 1.45 s, and Requests 54. Below this is a table titled 'Improve page performance' with columns for 'GRADE' and 'SUGGESTION'.

GRADE	SUGGESTION
F 45	Add Expires headers
F 50	Use cookie-free domains
E 60	Reduce DNS lookups
D 70	Avoid URL redirects
C 78	Compress components with gzip

Pingdom will highlight any speed issues. It will also provide a performance grade, the size of your homepage in MB, and the load time. If you receive a grade of B or above, you are doing well. Give this report to your website developers to see if they can make it even better.

Here are a few more performance and security aspects to consider:

SSL certificate — Your website must also contain an SSL certificate as this does two things: One, It gives your customers confidence when purchasing. Two, It also provides SEO benefits, as Google will give ranking preference to sites with an SSL certificate over websites without one.

Terms & policy — By law, all websites must have terms and conditions, privacy policy, and a registered business name in the footer, along with the address and the VAT/Tax number.

Cookie policy — If you do business in the EU, whether you are based here or not, your website should contain a Cookie Policy. Your website doesn't need a cookie policy if you live outside the EU, your website is hosted on a server outside of the EU and you are targeting consumers anywhere outside of the EU.



To help you with conducting your own website audit, I have included a checklist in the download section of this book.

WORKSHOP TWENTY THREE

KEYWORD RESEARCH & CONTENT AUDIT



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I can't stress enough how important this step is. Keyword research is much more than a simple check on Google of the most popular keywords and phrases in your industry. Keyword research can (and should) inform various aspects of your digital strategy, from SEO and PPC, to content marketing and CRO. Because of this, my own agency puts a lot of necessary time and effort into both keyword research and content optimisation.

As there is often some confusion about both of these aspects of digital marketing, I would like to take a few moments to explain how they add value to any digital marketing strategy.

What is keyword research?

Keyword research underpins the vast majority of digital marketing activity. Put as simply as possible, it is a process of identifying product-related words and phrases that users put into search engines (primarily Google) in order to try and discover the answer to a particular search query they have.

Keyword research is important because it allows digital marketers to identify the most product-relevant words and phrases based on users' search behaviours. It also highlights the number of average monthly searches that each keyword gets based on predetermined target market locations and informs us how difficult it is to potentially organically rank for these commonly searched terms.

Researching this information allows you to strategically identify and target words and phrases to utilise throughout a website and its content, making sure that a website/webpage stands the best chance of ranking for these terms and connecting you with the most relevant audience, increasing the chances of maximising website conversions.

Put simply, keyword research lets you figure out exactly what to call your products so that your potential customers find your website on Google instead of a competitors' site.

Keyword research example: Glasgow Food Tours

Consider this: there are 110 UK-based average monthly searches (AMS) for 'Glasgow food tour' and 0 searches for 'Glasgow foodie experience'. While a business owner might want to call their tour 'Glasgow Foodie Experience', it is better to use the term 'Glasgow food tour' in key SEO ranking locations on their webpage. Put simply: keyword research tells us that there are 1,320 searches per year for 'Glasgow food tour' and 0 searches per year for 'Glasgow Foodie Experience'.

Similarly, research shows that there are 1,300 average monthly searches (AMS) for ‘Glasgow sightseeing’ and, while this isn’t as relevant as ‘Glasgow food tour’ is to the core product offering, it does have a much higher search volume and is still relevant enough that some users who search this term may also be interested in taking a Glasgow food tour.

So, what you should do is try to include this secondary keyword in one or two places to potentially pull in a larger number of users. This has to be done carefully so as not to confuse or dilute a webpage’s relevance. You should never try to trick a user onto your website, but it is fine to tap into similar products or keywords a user may be interested in.

Given the power of keywords, and the essential role they play in SEO, content marketing, and PPC, my agency endeavours to create as comprehensive a keyword list as possible before we create a digital strategy for clients. This ensures that any consequential digital marketing efforts are built on strong, data-driven foundations.

However, it isn’t simply a matter of finding the important keywords with high search volume.

Keyword research also involves finding out which keywords your website has the best chance of ranking for, taking several elements into consideration:

- The different levels of competition from other websites currently ranking for the same key terms.
- Which keywords you should NOT try to rank for.
- Identifying any similar or adjacent keywords that you should consider ranking for in the future or at different levels of the consumer buying funnel.

TOP TIP: Occasionally, if the search volume dictates it, I have even seen astute clients create new tours and activities to specifically tap into a proven audience for specific keywords.

To search for relevant keywords, you can use Google’s own Keyword Planner Tool, <https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/>, and login with your Google account. This needs to be linked to your Google Ads account for it to work.

You can also use SEMRush, which I prefer. Go back to the SEMRush account you set up previously and click the ‘Keyword Magic Tool’ under keyword analytics. Enter your

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preferred keyphrase and country and click search. We have used ‘Glasgow food tour’ and selected ‘UK’.

The screenshot shows the SEMRush Keyword Magic Tool interface. The search term is 'Glasgow food tour' and the country is set to 'UK'. The match type is 'Broad Match'. The results table shows the following data:

Keyword	Volume	Trend	KD	CPC	Com.	SERP Feat.	Results in SERP
wee food tour glasgow	70	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0.11	n/a	n/a
glasgow food and drink tour	30	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0.11	n/a	n/a
food walking tour glasgow	20	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0.25	n/a	n/a
glasgow food tour	10	[Trend Line]	n/a	0.81	0.17	n/a	n/a
glasgow food walking tour	10	[Trend Line]	n/a	0.63	0.27	n/a	n/a
the glasgow food and drink tour	10	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0.06	n/a	n/a
the wee food tour glasgow	10	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0.57	n/a	n/a
food tour in glasgow	0	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a
food tour of glasgow	0	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a
food walking tour of glasgow	0	[Trend Line]	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a

As we are using the free account, SEMRush will display the top 10 keywords and their search volumes. Use this information to determine which keywords are best suited to your products and your digital strategy.

Content optimisation

Content optimisation is perhaps the best example of how keyword research can be applied to improve a website’s digital presence. The data from the keyword research stage should dictate the best way to optimise your website’s content. It is no longer helpful to overload a webpage with keywords, but it is still useful to include keywords in specific page elements that Googlebots crawl and use as part of their ranking algorithm. These specific page elements are as follows: the title tag, headers (h1, h2, h3 etc.), image alt text, anchor text, and the body of content itself.

Side note about the Meta Description:

While the meta description isn't a ranking factor for Google, it can convince a user on the search engine results page (SERP) to click through to your website, so it should also contain the primary keyword (and secondary keywords if possible) as this reassures the user that they have found the right webpage for their search query. I don't want to confuse you with too much theory, so, with the help of my team, I have written up an example to demonstrate how keyword research informs some of the SEO-based content optimisation we do.

FoodDrinkTour example

Below, I have used the phrase 'Glasgow food tour' and highlighted the primary and secondary keywords found during keyword research and then how these keywords inform the content optimisation process and how they look in a search result. AMS = Average Monthly Searches.

Primary keyword: Glasgow food tour (110 AMS)

Secondary keywords: Glasgow sightseeing (1300 AMS) – Glasgow tours (880 AMS) – Glasgow walking tours (880 AMS) – tours in Glasgow (170 AMS) – Glasgow city tour (320 AMS) — any word cluster including 'food tour'

Internal/external links will be denoted by blue text

URL: <https://fooddrinktour.com/glasgow-food-tour/>

Meta title: [Glasgow Food Tour](#) | Food Drink Tour

Meta Description: Explore Glasgow's history, food, & culture on [the Glasgow food tour](#) available from Food Drink Tour. Walk & taste your way through Glasgow City. Find out more

Here is how it would look on the search engine results page (SERP):

Glasgow Food Tour | Food Drink Tour

<https://fooddrinktour.com/glasgow-food-tour/>

Explore Glasgow's history, food & culture on our Glasgow Food Tour available from Food Drink Tour. Walk & taste your way through Glasgow City. Find out more

Here is a breakdown of the website code to help you visualise the best code structure (good for your developers)...

```
<h1>Glasgow Food Tour</h1>
<h2>Explore Glasgow on our sightseeing food walking tour</h2>
<p>Get a taste for Scotland's biggest city on the Glasgow sightseeing food tour, available here at Food Drink Tour! Follow a local on a walking tour through Glasgow's best foodie spots and learn about the farming and culinary history of Scotland's largest city. </p>
<p>If you're interested in our Glasgow food tour, you may also be interested in our equally delicious <a href="https://fooddrinktour.com/edinburgh-food-tour/">Edinburgh food tour</a> — or perhaps you'd prefer to check out our range of <a href="https://fooddrinktour.com/uk-food-tours/">UK food tours</a>?</p>
<p>For the vegans out there, Glasgow is the vegan capital of Europe, with more vegan restaurants per person than any other European city. You may like to consider our <a href="https://fooddrinktour.com/glasgow-vegan-food-tours/">Glasgow vegan food tour</a>. </p>
<h2>The Tastiest Glasgow City Walking Tour!</h2>
<p>If you're looking for the best food tour in Glasgow, look no further. You start your tour in Glasgow's famous Merchant City district, which is famous for its high-end cocktail bars and boutique stores. Learn about the city's history, about its rich merchants importing and selling products from all over the world. </p>
<p>No food tour of Glasgow would be complete without a good breakfast. In Rose & Grants, right in the heart of Glasgow's theatre district, taste traditional Scottish breakfast food, such as tattie scones, square sausage, and haggis (that's right — haggis is amazing with a fried egg on top!). From there, your local guide will take you through the centre of Glasgow, giving you a little background about the city. After this,
```

we take a short journey to the West End of Glasgow, and to the origin of one of the UK's most famous dishes...

<h2>Glasgow Food: the Birthplace of Chicken Tikka Masala!</h2>

<p>The foodie geeks out there will already know that Glasgow is the birthplace of the now world-famous chicken tikka masala. The story goes that Pakistani chef and proprietor of the Shish Mahal Restaurant invented the dish when improvising with yoghurt and spices. Visit the birthplace of one of Britain's most famous dishes on this Glasgow food tour!</p>

<p>There are many different tours in Glasgow to choose from, but there's nothing quite as tasty as our Glasgow food tour. We hope we've whetted your appetite enough to book the tour below; just choose a time and date that suits you, and please get in touch if you have questions for us. Start planning your big Scottish food tour today!</p>

Keyword placement

Ensuring that a piece of content is optimised for strategically selected keywords is essential for SEO success. However, where the keywords appear in the text is also an important factor to consider in relation to how the text is read by users. The attention span of online users is continually declining, with recent research suggesting that it is now as little as eight seconds. In other words, if you haven't convinced a user that the webpage they have landed on fulfils their search query, then you run the risk of them bouncing from your website.

Taking this into consideration, the placement of keywords within a body of content is key to keeping a user on your website and, consequently, it affects whether they take the time to digest your content. When analysing how people read online content, research has shown that most users will scan a piece of content in an F-shaped pattern to appraise whether or not the content is relevant to their search intent. As such, it is essential to ensure primary and secondary keywords appear in these key locations, maximising the chances that users will be reassured that they have found the right website.

Next, you will see the above 'Glasgow Food Tour' content illustrating this exact point...

Glasgow Food Tour

Explore [Glasgow on our sightseeing food walking tour](#)

Get a taste for Scotland's biggest city on the [Glasgow sightseeing food tour](#), available here at Food Drink Tour! Follow a local on a [walking tour](#) through Glasgow's best foodie spots and learn about the farming and culinary history of Scotland's largest city.

If you're interested in our [Glasgow food tour](#), you may also be interested in our equally delicious [Edinburgh food tour](#) — or perhaps you'd prefer to check out our range of [UK food tours](#)?

For the vegans out there, Glasgow is the vegan capital of Europe, with more vegan restaurants per person than any other European city. You may like to consider our [Glasgow vegan food tour](#).

The Tastiest [Glasgow City Walking Tour](#)

If you're looking for the best food tour in Glasgow, look no further. You start your tour in Glasgow's famous Merchant City district, which is famous for its high-end cocktail bars and boutique stores. Learn about the city's history, about its rich merchants importing and selling products from all over the world.

No [food tour of Glasgow](#) would be complete without a good breakfast. In Rose & Grants, right in the heart of Glasgow's theatre district, taste traditional Scottish breakfast food, such as tattie scones, square sausage, and haggis (that's right — haggis is amazing with a fried egg on top!). From there, your local guide will take you through the centre of Glasgow, giving you a little background about the city. After this, we take a short journey to the West End of Glasgow, and to the origin of one of the UK's most famous dishes...

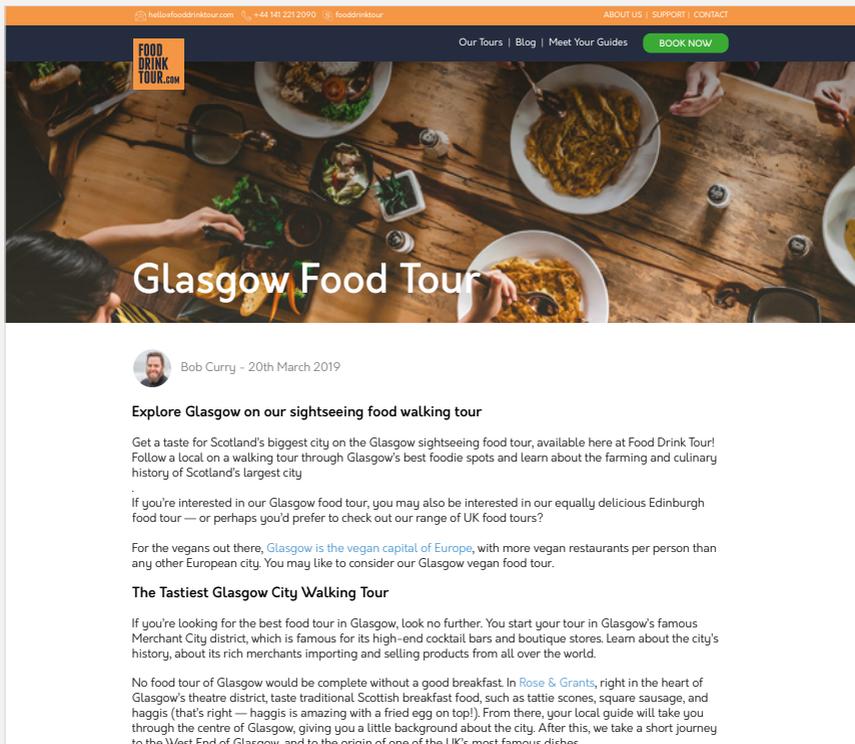
[Glasgow Food](#): The Birthplace of Chicken Tikka Masala!

The foodie geeks out there will already know that Glasgow is the birthplace of the now world-famous dish: chicken tikka masala. The story goes that Pakistani chef and proprietor of the Shish Mahal Restaurant invented the dish when improvising with yoghurt and spices. Visit the birthplace of one of Britain's most famous dishes on this [Glasgow food tour](#).

There are many different [tours in Glasgow](#) to choose from, but there's nothing quite as tasty as our [Glasgow food tour](#). We hope we've whetted your appetite enough to book the tour below; just choose a time and date that suits you, and please get in touch if you have questions for us. Start planning your big [Scottish food tour](#)!

The finished article

So, now that you have some idea of the thought processes and stages you should consider when creating content, it may be useful to see how content looks, live on a real website, after it's gone through this lengthy process.



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FOOD DRINK TOUR

Glasgow Food Tour

 Bob Curry - 20th March 2019

Explore Glasgow on our sightseeing food walking tour

Get a taste for Scotland's biggest city on the Glasgow sightseeing food tour, available here at Food Drink Tour! Follow a local on a walking tour through Glasgow's best foodie spots and learn about the farming and culinary history of Scotland's largest city

If you're interested in our Glasgow food tour, you may also be interested in our equally delicious Edinburgh food tour — or perhaps you'd prefer to check out our range of UK food tours?

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When done right, content optimisation speaks Google's language and is still appealing for human users to read. Content needs to increase a website's overall traffic, but it also has to convert that traffic into sales. You achieve this delicate balance by approaching content creation and optimisation not only with the content you write, but with a little science behind it too.

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WORKSHOP TWENTY FOUR

CREATING A CUSTOMER PERSONA



BUILDING AUDIENCE INSIGHTS IN FACEBOOK

Before creating a customer persona, we can do a little bit of leg work to help find out the demographics of your current followers on Facebook. You can do this through Facebook's 'Audience Insights'.

If you have just set up in business and you have no current customer information, I would advise setting up a survey that you can promote through a paid ad on Facebook targeting who you feel is your ideal customer. Ask about hobbies, their job, what type of tours they like, and use this information to build your profiles.

Comment on competitor Facebook groups and pages and ask other followers questions by pretending to be a potential customer. You can even go a step further and take out tours from your competitors and take notes on what they do and the type of people who take their tour. If you get the opportunity, ask what they do and how they are enjoying their stay. Just do this in a natural, conversational way (I would advise doing this whether you have a new in business or not).

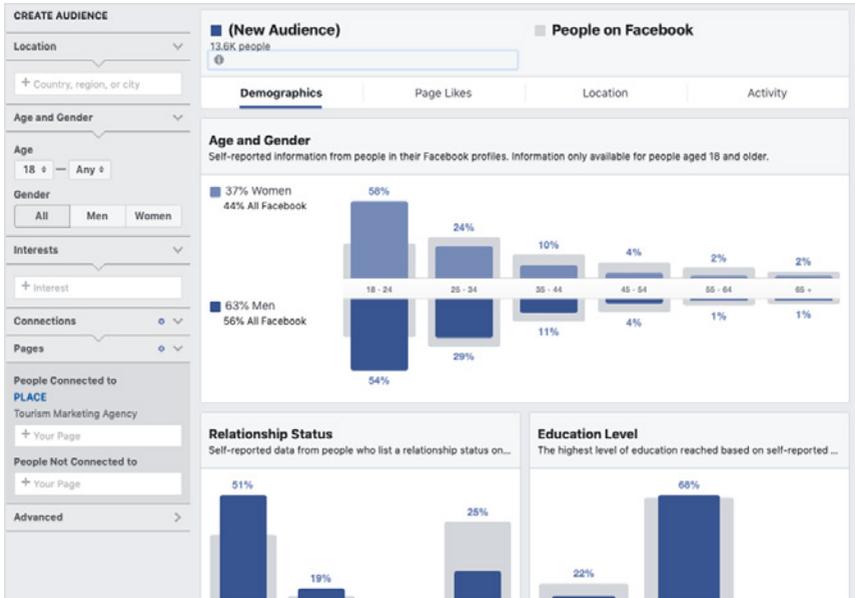
If you have an established Facebook page, I'll now show you how to generate these valuable insights.

Head over to your Facebook Business Manager and select your add account. Click 'Ads Manager' in the top left and select 'Audience Insights' under the plan section of the dropdown. Select 'People connected to your page'.

★ Frequently Used	☰ Plan
Page Posts	<u>Audience Insights</u>
Business Settings	Campaign Planner
Ads Manager	Creative Hub

In the box, select the page you want to connect. For this demo I have selected my agency; FoodDrinkTour is a made up business so this element would not work.

By default, Facebook will select 'All United States' under 'Location'. If you want a full view of your Facebook Page fans, click on the cross to make it global.



Here you will see various statistics of your current followers from age, gender, lifestyle, relationship status, education level, and job title, amongst others. Here, I can see that 51% of our followers are single, 68% have a college degree, and 63% of our followers are male.

Under the 'Page Likes' tab, you can get information on the top categories that your fans might like as well as other pages that your fans might like. This is great info for future ad targeting and it helps you understand which pages you should consider following, building a relationship with brands that help expand your profile.

Under the 'Locations' tab, you can see top cities, countries, and languages.

Under 'Activity' you can see how active your community is and what devices they use.

If you click the 'advanced' dropdown in the side panel, you can add and select other criteria to look at. For example, you can check those who are just in a new relationship, have an upcoming birthday, have children, or are in a long-distance relationship. These will be important for your tour business as you can create targeted campaigns for these demographics in your ads.

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The screenshot shows the Facebook Audience Insights interface. On the left is the 'CREATE AUDIENCE' sidebar with filters for Location, Age and Gender, Interests, Connections, and Pages. The main area displays '(New Audience)' with 13.6K people. Below this is a table of 'Top Categories' with 10 rows, each listing a category and associated pages.

Demographics	Page Likes	Location	Activity
Top Categories			
1	App Page	Ziyara GPS • Dreamfora	
2	Religious Organization	Miracles, Healing and Prayers Online • Abundant Life Church Simi	
3	Community	PhoneModo • Best Homes at the Shore • Unequal Scenes • Million Friend Network	
4	Consulting Agency	New View Concepts • Dronepreneur101	
5	Computer Company	SpartanTec, Inc. • Minerz.Jo	
6	Jewelry/Watches	Watch Coalition	
7	Coach	Adele Anderson Life Coach Adele • Scott Blessing	
8	Entrepreneur	Jay Dhillon • MeRobin Stephon • Derek Hargrove • Eric Shafer • Gary Keesee	
9	Athlete	Shannon O'Keefe Fan Page • Achyut Raj Uprety	
10	Website	Coinpsy • WatchfulEye • TalentNext	

This screenshot shows the 'Advanced' filter menu. It lists various demographic and behavioral categories with expandable arrows. The 'Life Events' category is expanded, showing a list of checkboxes for specific events.

- Advanced
- Language
- Relationship Status
- Education
- Work
- Market Segments
- Parents
- Politics (US)
- Life Events
 - Away from family
 - Away from hometown
 - Long distance relationship
 - New job
 - New relationship
 - Recently moved
 - Upcoming birthday

Think Valentine’s Day or a get-away trip for a couple at the beginning of their relationship. Tap into an audience that is more susceptible to ads encouraging them to take romantic trips with their partners. Or put your ads in front of families looking for tours that are kid friendly.

Under ‘Interests’ you can view how many of your followers are interested in what you offer. For example, we can view how many followers have listed food & drink as an interest.

This tool doesn’t just give you insights to help build personas and gain knowledge of your audience; it also allows you to save the selections you make to create audiences that you can use in future Facebook Ads.

Take a moment to think how powerful a tool this is.

CREATING A CUSTOMER PERSONA

Customers are the lifeline of your business. Without them, you would not have a brand, remember? This is why you need to spend the time and use various resources to develop a better understanding of your customers.

By creating a customer persona, you can better inform yourself, your team, and your marketing strategies of who your ideal customer is — or who you'd like it to be. This makes it a lot easier to tailor your content, brand messaging, and product information to the specific needs and wants of different groups.

The strongest buyer personas are based on the information you gather from your current customer base. You can do this by creating a simple survey to send out to your customers using the tools like Typeform that I mentioned before. Or you can do this once they have booked a tour if you are the sort of business that needs lots of information for insurance purposes.

Some hotels ask for interests and hobbies as they use this to enhance and personalise the customer's stay. You can add a similar process to enhance your customer's experience while also using this information to educate yourself for future targeting.

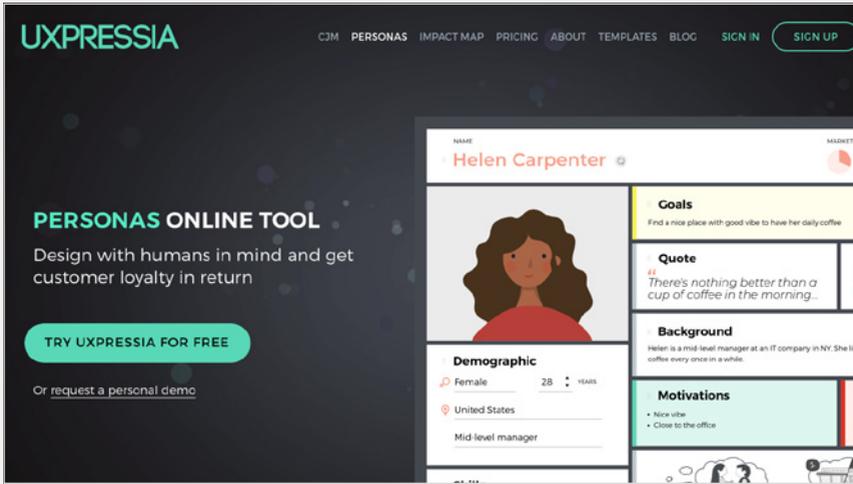
You need to factor things like location, age, sex, hobbies, marital status, and income. All of these play a role in determining your company's target audience. You can take some of this information from the worksheets you completed for the brand workshop and the audits you carry out.

There is a great tool from Uxpressia, <https://uxpressia.com/personas-online-tool>, that allows you to create a buyer persona. Creating one persona is free, so if you need to create more, produce one, print it out and simply change it for any others, repeating the process. Open a free account using your Google account.

Using FoodDrinkTour as an example, allow me to run through a persona. . .

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

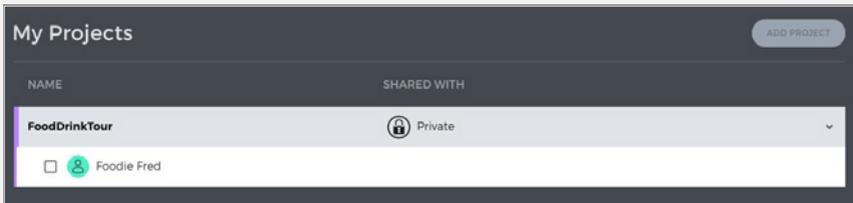
FoodDrinkTour Customer Persona



Start by adding a project by clicking 'add project'.

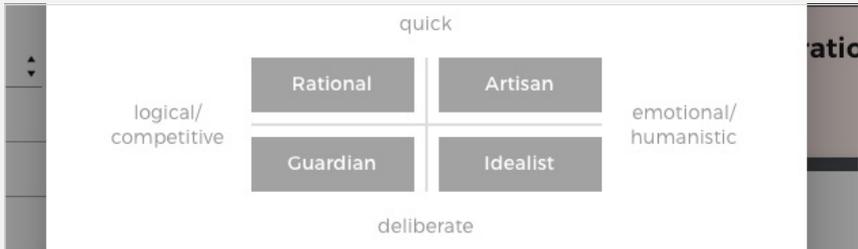
Enter a project name, I would use your business name, and then click to create a 'persona'. This will create your persona file.

Name your buyer persona with your customer in mind to make it easier to remember, like Backpacker Mary or Foodie Fred. Once you've done this, click that persona.



First, upload a photo or use one supplied as this allows you to humanise the persona. While the persona is an abstract hypothetical, it represents real people.

Add a personality type for the persona. Uxpessia provides ready-to-use examples, but you can add your own. You can determine your persona personality by looking at the types of customers you currently attract, or that your competitors currently attract. Personality types, in regard to sales and marketing, tend to fall into four main camps:



Rational — Needs proof that your product is the best. Rationals are searching for the most effective solution. Provide plenty of reviews to build that trust and don't be too pushy in your sales process.

Artisan — Needs proof that your product is quick or easy to use. Everything needs to be visual. Use high-quality images with short descriptions and clear calls to action. Personal service will also appeal to this archetype.

Idealist — Needs proof that your product is trustworthy. Make sure company's values are in line with your persona's values. Show how your product helps other people. Embrace personal communications.

Guardian — Needs detailed information about your product so they can compare it with other providers. Develop Guardians' trust by showing your product is safe to use.

Add in the demographic for this persona. Again, if you already collect customer information you should have a lot of this already. If your booking platform, or CRM system, does not collate this for you, manually go through your last 100 customers to get a sense of what this could be.

You can also look at any social media platforms you may already be on for age groups and locations, etc.

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

FoodDrinkTour has added the location of France as Glasgow receives a lot of French tourists and we know they like to try out local food and drink.

Under 'Quote' add a customer testimonial or survey quote in which you asked them what they hoped to get from the experience. Another great method is to add a message you received from a potential customer as this may highlight new areas that you can target. Here is an example of a message FoodDrinkTour received on their Facebook group...

"Hey guys, we are staying in Glasgow for a few nights, if anyone could recommend any authentic food spots and dishes to try. I am a French chef, so super interested in trying local food and cool bars/clubs to go to. I am not really interested in backpacker pub crawls and that scene. I had an amazing time in Edinburgh with local people and found some really sick bars and underground music scenes so would love a similar experience in Glasgow. Would be amazing if anyone could give some feedback, I've tried doing research online but I think it's best to get advice from people who live there!"

This is invaluable information as it gives you a sense of what other interests that person has, their job, where they are from and what experiences they like — all of this helps you better understand the type of customers you can attract.

The image shows a digital customer profile card for 'Foodie Fred'. At the top, it displays the name 'Foodie Fred' in red, a 'MARKET SIZE' indicator with a circular gauge and '0%', and a 'TYPE' field set to 'Artisan' in a red box. Below the name is a profile picture of a man with a beard and a red beanie. The card is divided into sections: 'Goals', 'Quote', 'Demographic', and 'Background'. The 'Quote' section contains a testimonial in red text. The 'Demographic' section shows 'Male' and '28 years'. The 'Background' section is currently empty.

In 'Background', add some profile information to add a little more detail to who this 'person' is. Look at your Facebook insights to get a sense of your current demographics. Also, send surveys to your current customers.

For FoodDrinkTour, they created the following persona background...

'Foodie Fred is a French millennial, travelling to Scotland for a few months with friends. He has never been to Glasgow before and will be spending a few days there. He is a chef and looking for a real feel of Glasgow's food and culture, and would prefer to avoid the tourist and backpacker scene. He would look for information directly from locals and is less inclined to book directly from a website if there is no referrals or good reviews of similar-minded people.'

For 'Goals', I would re-title this 'Wants' and add an overview of what this person wants from an experience. For FoodDrinkTour they have chosen...

"A comprehensive and authentic food tour and market experience of Glasgow, where he will be able to learn about the products, basic recipes, and cooking methods of Scottish food in a relatively short time frame."

Remove 'Motivations' and 'Frustrations' and click 'Add Section' at the top of the page and select 'Text section'. Move this above 'Brands and Influencers' by clicking and dragging the 6 grey dots. Rename this 'Challenge'. You can make this a longer panel by clicking the right-hand edge and dragging to the right.

In 'Challenge', add some of the challenges you face with this persona. FoodDrinkTour decided the following was the challenge for this persona:

'Would like to stay away from the touristy food tours and is likely to find the information by himself to create his own personal experience.'

Looking at your Facebook Insights, add some of the brands and pages they follow and like. Foodie Fred, he likes music, travel, and personalised tours. . .

KNOW THY NEIGHBOUR (AND YOUR CUSTOMERS)

<p>NAME</p> <p>Foodie Fred</p>	<p>TYPE</p> <p>Artisan</p>
	<p>Wants</p> <p>A comprehensive and authentic food tour and market experience of Glasgow, where he will be able to learn about the products, basic recipes and cooking methods of Scottish food in a relatively short time frame</p>
<p>Demographic</p> <p>♂ Male <input type="text" value="28"/> years</p> <p>📍 France <input type="text"/></p> <p>Single <input type="text"/></p> <p>Marketing Manager <input type="text"/></p> <p>£40k <input type="text"/></p>	<p>Quote</p> <p>“Hey guys, we are staying in Glasgow for a few nights, if anyone could recommend any authentic food spots and dishes to try, I am a French chef so super interested in trying local food and cool bars/clubs to go to. I am not really interested in backpackers pub crawls and that scene. I had an amazing time in Edinburgh with local people and found some really sick bars and underground music scenes so would love a similar experience in Glasgow. Would be amazing if anyone could give some feedback, I've tried doing research online but I think it's best getting advice from people who live there!”</p>
	<p>Background</p> <p>Foodie Fred is a French millennial, travelling Scotland for a few months with friends. He has never been to Glasgow before and will be spending a few days there. He is a chef and looking for a real feel of Glasgow food and culture, and would prefer avoiding the tourist and backpacker scene. He would look for information directly from locals and is less inclined to book directly from a website if there is no referrals or good reviews of similar-minded people.</p>
	<p>Challenge</p> <p>Would like to stay away from the touristy food tours and is likely to find the information by himself to create his own personal experience.</p>
	<p>Brands and influencers</p> 

You can delete the other unused panels unless you really want to add the devices and browsers they use.

Export your persona and you will have completed your first customer persona. This helps you focus on your ideal customer and use this information when creating targeted marketing strategies.

It's a good idea to create at least three customer personas for different demographics as one persona will not fully encapsulate your main market. Play about with the tool, using the insights and customer information you have gained to create others.

SECTION CONCLUSION

I realise it has been a long road to get to this stage, but if you have followed all of the steps and advice so far, you should be armed with real insights and knowledge about your business. You should also know how to take this insight and use it to create some amazing strategies and, ultimately, grow your tour company. I have helped you lay the foundations and you are now ready to take the next, fun and creative step: actually marketing your business.

Are you ready? Let's do this...

SECTION FOUR

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP TWENTY FIVE

CREATING CONTENT IDEAS



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

This section could have also been titled ‘Storytelling Opportunities’ as this is what I hope to convey. This does not involve coming up with blog titles (not yet, anyway), but it does involve working out what opportunities and resources you have around you that you can use to tell stories about your brand, products, and destination.

Remember, earlier in the book when I advised that being true to yourself and telling your stories was the best way to communicate with your customers. Well, this section relies on this same principle.

Ideas are all around us. Sometimes we need to sit back and focus on order to bring these ideas to the fore, and sometimes we need to dive a little deeper. These tactics should help you and your team find your best brand content ideas.

Look close to home

Before we begin, I understand this chapter may be overwhelming for some, especially if you struggle with writing content or you do not have a creative bone in your body. If you are one of these people, then this is when you must hire an agency or bring someone into your business to help create the content for you. Don't let this put you off reading the advice I'm about to give, as it will help you understand and direct whoever you hire to help with your content.

The first step I would take is to list every member of your team, including you. Then, underneath this list, write down the main skills each person brings to your business. Use Post-it notes, paper or a spreadsheet – whatever you are comfortable with. I always prefer Post-its as they offer a more visual, more tactile way to organise and present information.

FoodDrinkTour listed the following...

Position	Name	Skills
Founder & Owner	Bob Curry	Former Chef, Former Tour Guide
Owner	Lisa Curry	Former Chef, Finance
Tour Guide	Simon Bacon	Food Tour Expert
Tour Guide	Maggie Baker	Food Tour Expert, Speaks French
Tour Guide	Ali Ale	Beer Tour Expert
Tour Guide	Kyle Cask	Whisky & Gin Tour Expert

Although I have only listed a few main skills, feel free to be as detailed as you like.

So, FoodDrinkTour have two former chefs, two food experts, a beer expert and a whisky expert. Hopefully you also have people who have relevant expertise in your business, or at least expertise you can use. Let's break this down further by comparing each area of the business by listing the main tasks involved in each role. The top row of the table above contains the various roles within FoodDrinkTour, with the tasks for each role underneath.

Owner & Chefs	Food Tour Guide 1	Food Tour Guide 2	Beer Tour	Whisky & Gin Tour
Running the business	Taking customers on Food Tours	Taking customers on Food Tours	Taking customers on Beer Tours	Taking customers on Whisky & Gin Tours
Business Development	Specialises in Glasgow West End	Specialises in Glasgow City Centre	Developing new tours	Developing new tours
Taking Cooking Classes	Born and raised in Glasgow's West End	Manages French Tourists	Beer tasting expert	Whisky tasting expert
Managing External Cooking Classes	Qualified Sommelier	Is Vegan so can guide tourists with this in mind	Pairing beer with food	Pairing Whisky & Gin with food

There are some great skills here, and most of them can be used or turned into storytelling content in some way. Let's do the same exercise but for your destination and any partners you have.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

For destination, list the main sights, places, and hidden gems of your destination. For partners, list them down with the skills/people that add to your experience.

Destination

Glasgow City Centre	Glasgow West End
Glasgow Cathedral	Byres Road
George Square and the Merchant District	Ashton Lane
Buchanan Street	Finniston
The Lighthouse	Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
Glasgow School of Art	Riverside Museum and Tall Ship
Necropolis	The Clydeside Distillery
Tennent's Brewery (Drygate)	The Mackintosh House
	A Play a Pie and a Pint
	SEC & Hydro

Partners

Ubiquitous Chip Restaurant & Bar	Ox & Finch Restaurant	Tiki Bar	Swing Jazz Bar
Large whisky bar	Large gin bar	Massive rum bar	Music: jazz, blues, soul, and funk
Chef Ramsey provides cooking classes	Tapas-style food	Provides a cocktail bar	History of jazz
Callum Mackay is a top sommelier	Owned by the former chef of the McLaren F1 team	Fun venue — more for the millennial market	Owner, Frank, is a jazz historian
Has three bars in one premises	Has private dining area	Provides their own flaring classes	Provides a cocktail bar
JK Rowling supposedly based Diagon Alley on Ashton Lane	Chef MacDonald provides cooking classes	Near King Tuts and King's Theatre	Flaring

I hope you can start to see opportunities for marketing content from the lists you have created. Throughout this chapter, I will explain how you can use this information to create amazing content that you can share on your marketing platforms.

Tools you can use to find content inspiration

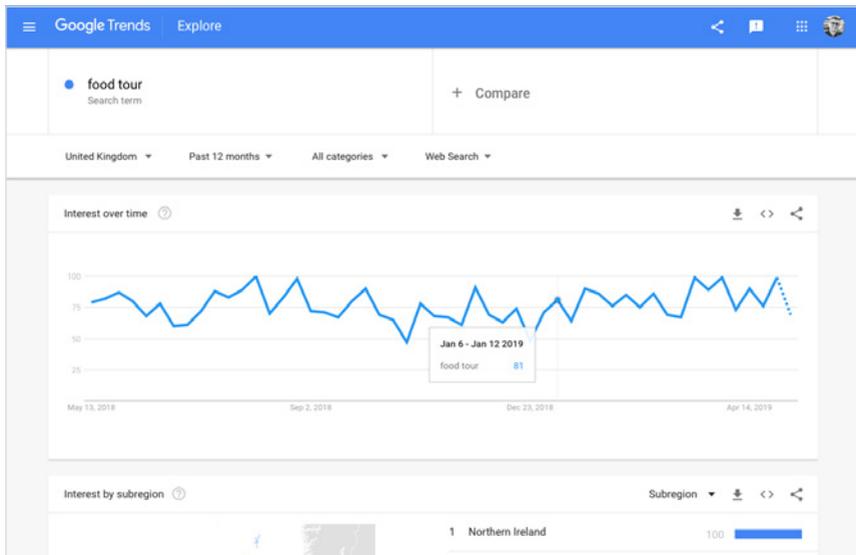
Because you have already done your keyword research, you can use this information to find topics and ideas that you can use to create content. There are various free tools you can use to find the top content from competitors, current trends and what your customers are searching for. Let's get started...

Google Trends

With Google Trends, <https://trends.google.com>, you can type your main keywords and Google will return any trends in and around that phrase. Try a combination of specific and broad terms. If you find the term is too specific, then Google will display no results. For FoodDrinkTour, we will try the broader term 'Food Tour' and select 'United Kingdom' as the destination.

You can see from the results that Scotland is in second place for this term. Great news for Glasgow-based FoodDrinkTour. The term also receives a steady amount of searches each month.

One term that this highlights as popular is 'secret food tours'.



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Link Explorer

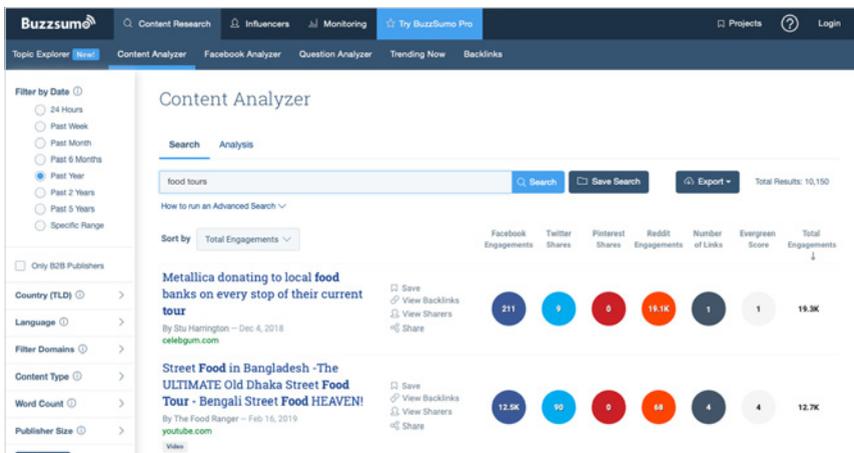
Using a free tool from MOZ called Open Site Explorer, <https://moz.com/link-explorer>, we can search the most popular pages on your competitors' sites. Let's add a competitor of FoodDrinkTour. You will need to create an account to get access.

This will display the top pages that receive the most backlinks and traffic. From this you can see what blogs and product pages are the most popular. This may help you create content (or tours) of a similar nature.

The tool we used earlier, SEMRush, will also provide similar information on your competitors' top pages.

BuzzSumo

BuzzSumo is a great tool to view the most popular pages from your competitors and to find other topics that you can use with your own content.



This will give you some topics from across the world that are currently popular. This does not mean that you should do a blog or create a tour around Metallica because it's popular, but this may inspire you to create content around local music that is more appropriate for your destination.

On the side panel, you can narrow this down to a country, but you need to pay for this feature. There is a workaround by doing a search on a local competitor. This will display their most popular pages.

Answer the Public

This is a fun, simple-to-use tool. You will be mesmerised by the old chap in the video they use. Add keywords and search terms to generate all of the highest search terms worded as questions: 'how to...' 'where is the...' 'Is it better to...' etc. This allows you to generate all of the questions people are asking the internet about your products. If you can write content that answers these questions, you will be helping your target audience and tapping into extremely relevant search traffic.



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

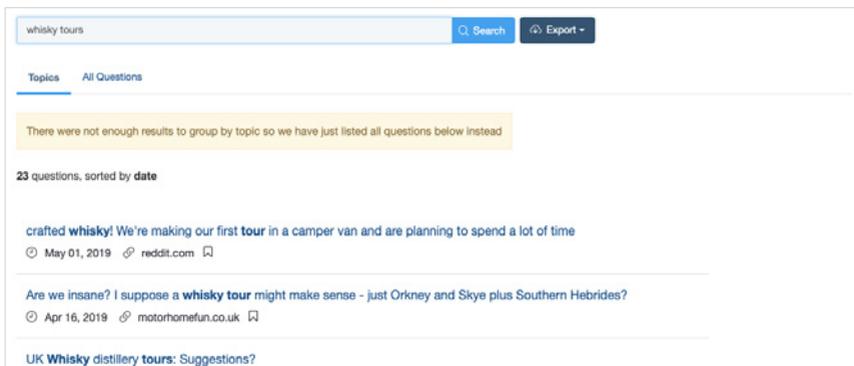
FAQ Fox

This tool scrapes Q&A sites to find questions related to your keywords. This is fantastic as it highlights questions that customers are asking. Click some of the categories and it will populate this with websites it will search through.

You will have to dig good topics out of a sea of nonsense, but it can highlight some gems.

Question Analyser

Question Analyser is similar to FAQ Fox but built by the same team behind BuzzSumo. You will need to create a 7-day trial account. Here is what is displayed when we search for 'whisky tours'...



Google Alerts

Google Alerts can send you a daily email with articles from your destination, or around the world, relating to your business. Enter a keyphrase you wish to monitor and Google will do the rest.

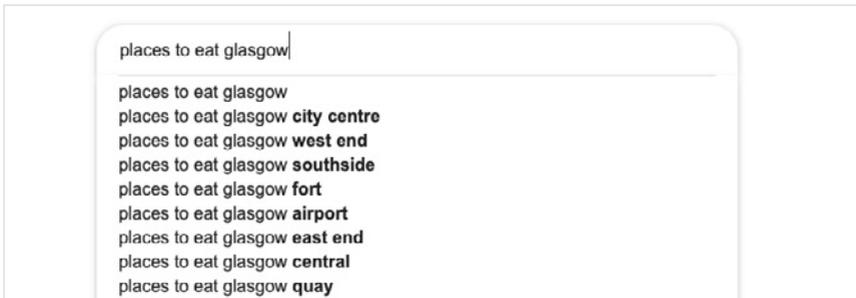
Headline Analyser

This tool analyses headlines and titles and provides feedback on length, word choice, grammar, and keyword search volume. If you have an idea in mind, run a few title options to see how you could make it stronger, and to move your idea further along in the brainstorming process.

Google Suggest

When you start a Google search and don't hit enter! As you start typing different target keywords, Google will give you a list of the most common variations. This may highlight some topics you can use.

Try adding in some questions too. The results will be similar to what you get from Answer the Public.



Google Correlate

This is a little-known tool from Google that allows you to see what keywords share the same search volume patterns — this is basically what other searches are searched after your keyword. Here, we searched 'walking tour'.



Notice how people also search for 'best places to eat' when people search walking tour.

WHAT IDEAS DID YOU CREATE?

So, what topics and ideas do you have that you can use for content? Here is a list of what FoodDrinkTour have. . .

Subjects from close resources

Access to world-class chefs	A non-local perspective of Glasgow
Access to qualified sommeliers	Many sights we can use in content and products
Food experts	Culture and history
A beer-tasting expert	Links to Harry Potter
A whisky expert	Access to top bars and restaurants
A gin expert	Top music venues
Vegan knowledge	Flaring experts and classes
Local knowledge	Rum experts
French speaker	

Subjects and topics from keyword searches

Glasgow, Scotland: the best pubs, restaurants, and places	Crafted whisky
Secret food tours Glasgow	What are some good whisky tours in Scotland?
Vegan food tours Glasgow	Tour of whisky distilleries in Scotland
Food walking tour Glasgow	Scotch whisky tour — Any good suggestions?
Scotland tours with Indian food	Scotland whisky tour — Any thoughts or ideas?
Should I visit Edinburgh Or Glasgow?	Food tour with an 11-year-old — Does anyone have any suggestions
Glasgow bus tour	Flaring experts and classes

If you spend some time looking at what is close to you, making some quick online searches, you can create a list that will provide inspiration to create a marketing strategy. I will now use some of this information to highlight what types of content you can create and I will start with my personal favourite: video.

WORKSHOP TWENTY SIX

VIDEO STRATEGIES



Video help guide
available



Downloadable
worksheets
available

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Remember my story at the start of the book? It should come as no surprise that I feel video is one of the most powerful tools you can use. It also is one of the hardest things to get started for your tour as business owners think it's difficult. It is not as difficult as you might think. Before I share tips to get started using video, allow me to explain why it is important.

For me, video is, hands down, the best platform for storytelling. It allows you to engage with your customers on a deeper level. It provides a platform for your tour guides and staff to shine and show their passions. This builds your brand reputation and helps your customers on their journey towards trusting your business. Also, as I mentioned in my story, it can help build lasting relationships too.

I hate throwing too many stats at people, but the following stats help enforce my point. This is all at time of writing, of course.

The average user watches 32 videos per month online – This is around one per month and it is only going to climb.

What does that mean for you? With the platforms available, like Facebook or YouTube, you already have a captive audience. People are actively looking for videos — particularly ones based around destination or travel. Here are the numbers:

79% of travellers will search YouTube for ideas – This is a huge number. Nearly 80% of the world's travellers will go to YouTube to look for inspiration.

67% of those travellers have yet to select a destination – This is an important statistic. This means that nearly 70% of those travellers looking for inspiration have yet to decide on a destination. I shall come back to this later!

There is one stat however that really blows me away. . . According to research compiled by 3M*

http://web.archive.org/web/20001102203936/http%3A//3m.com/meetingnetwork/files/meetingguide_pres.pdf,

PEOPLE PROCESS INFORMATION WITH VIDEO 60,000 TIMES FASTER THAN WRITTEN FORM.

Stop and let that sink in for a second. This means that a potential customer will process your information and potentially click your book or enquiry button 60,000 times faster than if you only used written content. Think of what that can do to your profit margins.

Video on any budget

Video does not need to be hard. It does not need to be expensive either. Your smartphone is one of the most powerful computers ever created and it fits in your pocket! All are capable of recording HD footage or even 4k video.

Filming on a smartphone is one of the easiest and quickest ways to produce video. Your tour guides no doubt have smartphones as they take your customers on tour. Utilise this and create videos about your destination, experience and/or customer testimonials. There really is no excuse not to capture and use video.

Small-to-medium budgets

Here is an example of a great tour guide video from Gray Line Iceland's Dee Dee. They simply use a smartphone to film, edit, and produce a tour guide story series to promote on their social platforms.

<https://youtu.be/qQ7grO5EGK4>

This is a great example as it shows the fun aspect of the tour guide, humanising the brand. It also provides a small look into the Icelandic culture and language.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE



Another ‘budget’ option is to use customer videos. Using footage from visitors to a destination can provide a sense of authenticity and build that all-important trust.

What I’m going to provide now is a selection of home videos I took when my family and I visited Barcelona. This was all filmed on a GoPro with their Karma Grip — a popular device that many people take on their travels. Don’t worry, I don’t expect you to sit through all seven episodes. . .

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/4648681>

These are the types of videos that your customers may be filming right now. You can ask permission to use these videos to cut your own ads to promote your tours. How do you ask customers? Well you can simply ask but they will probably forget, so you need to entice them to do so. Check out the competition section of this chapter for some ideas on this. Another option is to use stock footage. Yes, stock footage. I would not use this extensively, but for certain circumstances it is more than fine if you have limited by budget.

Stock footage can be used for a background video on a website like this one we created for Ciao Italy:

<https://vimeo.com/190241236>

I am a big fan of background videos as it holds your customers attention a little longer, persuading them to stay.

You can also use stock video content to create quick Facebook Ads. Here is another example using entirely stock footage and a stock audio track. Now this is very rough but it should give you a sense what I mean.

<https://vimeo.com/303383840/2c73b5f175>

As I say, this is very rough but we managed to find footage of the same two girls on the Amalfi Coast which helped provide continuity and the feeling of following friends on their experience. If you are looking for good places to find stock footage, I recommend the following resources:

Big Stock Photo, <https://www.bigstockphoto.com>, packages are from \$60 per month and this allows you to download 10 videos per day. They also have the same package for stock photos. There are no long-term contracts.

Video Blocks, <https://www.videoblocks.com>, allows you to download unlimited videos for \$149 per year. Sometimes the quality is not great, but you can find some real gems.

Pond 5, <https://www.pond5.com>, is the most expensive of the three, with £250 as a starter to buying credits. However with this higher price comes a higher calibre of video footage. It's well worth it if you plan to make a lot of videos as it gives you a little more quality and shine to your videos.

Medium-high budgets

If you can afford it, hire an expert to create a high-quality advert for your business. Even hire them to produce an itinerary video for each of your products.

Itinerary videos are super important as this is where you want to capture that sale and a good video can be a tremendous help. I tested this on a client's website, on a tour with no video and the same tour with an itinerary video: the one with the video saw an increase in bookings of around 80%. Video can make all the difference.

Here is an example of a great itinerary video: Gray Line Iceland's Golden Circle Tour. . .

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

https://grayline.is/tours/reykjavik/golden-circle-classic-tour-8706_9/

Even if you do not have the budget for a high-end video like this, produce a video using a mixture of your own and customer footage.

Hiring an expert can bring a different visual style and tone to your videos. Most experts these days will have drones that can take sweeping shots of your destination/experience. Here is a video my team produced for an adventure-based company called Ace Adventures:

<https://vimeo.com/222355613>

There is no right or wrong method when creating video. Sometimes you want the polish of a professionally produced video, other times you want a quick-and-dirty video filmed in the moment. As all that matters is that you are telling a compelling story.

You can create the following different kinds of content with video:

A video series with tour guides — Staff and guides deal with your customers on a day-to-day basis, so they should have stories to tell or they should be knowledgeable about your particular destination. **Tip:** if your guides can not get across their passion or tell a good story on video, then should they be a tour guide for your business?

Itinerary videos — This is a great way to showcase your products and persuade customers to book with you.

Destination videos — This is one of the easiest ideas for content and probably one you have already used. It works great as an advert for your destination, with shots of the scenery, the places to see and things to do. It's all about creating an immersive experience that will make people feel like they are there and that they absolutely have to visit now! Remember, 67% of people don't know where they want to go yet.

Expert series — Say you run whisky tours and have an expert whisky taster at your disposal, use this knowledge to create a monthly video series about whisky, offering tasting notes, food pairings, etc, with a soft sales tie-in to your tours.

Customer videos — Run video competitions for the best footage of your tours. (More on this later.) Use this footage to create social ads as it helps bring a sense of authenticity

to your brand and it will also allow your potential customers to picture themselves on your tours.

Customer testimonials — Can you create a testimonial video of one of your visitor's experiences? A video diary with everything they did on holiday. This creates a more personal and unique approach to the campaign, which will really engage the viewer. People also trust their peers much more than overt marketing content.

Interviews & bloggers — Can you get a travel blogger to do a video interview or review your destination? This will help you to reach a much larger audience and create more unique and varying types of content. Royal Caribbean executed this idea perfectly, getting a video from the blogger's perspective to appeal to a younger market.

<https://youtu.be/BNrJOoJKY0Y>

Behind the scenes — Travellers want to see something completely new. Can you give them something unique? Perhaps a behind-the-scenes chat with a local about what to do in the destination. Or is there an expert chocolate-maker that you visit on your tours? Why not create a video of them making the chocolate and telling you a bit about the process that he goes through to make the 'World's Best Chocolate'? Use your partners as they will welcome the extra exposure.

Other video ideas

I had the pleasure of being a speaker and judge at Landing Madrid, <https://landing-madrid.com>, which ran in conjunction with the FITUR Conference, http://www.ifema.es/fitur_06/, and the best thing about attending Landing was that it gave me the opportunity to meet some really impressive filmmakers who created videos for the tourism industry.

These videos focus heavily on storytelling and here are a few of my favourites:

Incredible Hospitality of Crete

<https://vimeo.com/63723869>

This video, directed by Theo Papadoulakis, a filmmaker at Indiego View, helps highlight the amazing hospitality of the people of Crete in a fun, heartfelt way.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Dinner with Georgia

<https://youtu.be/czZ0F6t5vW4>

'Dinner With Georgia' was produced by the talented Ringailė Leščinskienė of Funky Production House. It was a fantastic piece of storytelling with a very creative concept to back it up. The video tells the story of how they identified the six millionth visitor to Georgia, arriving by airplane, and caught him by surprise, giving him VIP treatment and dinner with the Prime Minister. It puts the customer front and centre of your story.

Now, I am not saying you should organise a dinner for your customers with own head of state, but it is this out of the box thinking that makes you stand out.

The World's Most Honest Tourism Video

https://youtu.be/1P_IMA7DAiE

'The World's Most Honest Tourism Video' was one of my favourites. It highlighted Madhya Pradesh in India. This video used a series of real tourist photographs in an amazing, creative way. I challenge you not to smile during this video. Such a fun, entertaining promotional piece.

I showed my children this video and, days after seeing it, they were still singing the theme tune. That is a mark of a great video! It also shows that you can create videos using other mediums, like photos, and it will still be compelling.

For me, all of these videos are great for their own reasons. Incredibly creative, and they both make fantastic use of storytelling to get their messages across.

So how would you implement any of these options into your own strategy? Well, to help you get an idea, let's use some of the information we collated about FoodDrinkTour in the previous section and list what types of video can be created for each. Please note, I have not listed itineraries as an option as this is determined by your product offering. Let's take a look...

Expert Series	Expert Series	Partners	Behind the Scenes	Customers
Cooking with the Curries	Harry Potter & Glasgow	Cooking with Ramsey	How we create our tours	Testimonial videos
Whisky Tasting with Kyle	Explore Glasgow's West End	Wine Tasting with Callum	Meet the team	A customer's guide to Foodie Glasgow
Gin Tasting with Kyle	Explore Glasgow's City Centre	Pouring with Style — Art of flaring	Selecting only the finest eateries	A customer's vegan tour of Glasgow
Vegan Glasgow with Ali	Glasgow, the Gateway to the Highlands	Tis the Season — Seasonal food from the Ox & Finch	Why Glasgow?	A customer's whisky tour of Glasgow
Glasgow - a Parisian's guide	Secret Glasgow	Soul Food – Glasgow music and food from Swing		A customer's gin tour of Glasgow
Craft Beer with Ali		Cocktail hour — How to make the perfect cocktails at home with the Tiki Bar		A customer's beer tour of Glasgow

Each one of these videos can be an ongoing series that you produce once per month. You can create these as individual 'shows' or as part of an overall show. Personally, I think individual shows give you more flexibility.

There are lots more I could list, but I hope that, so far, I have provided enough information to get your creative juices flowing. It is amazing how many content ideas can come from looking at what is around you.

The good thing about creating this list is that it provides multiple content options that you can implement over time; I will highlight this in more detail a little later.

Video editing

Now, it would involve writing another book on how to edit video if I were to do this topic justice, so I am not going to cover nearly everything here. I advise heading over to uDemy; it is an online platform that contains courses on many different topics, including how to edit footage. Here is a list of courses:

<https://www.udemy.com/courses/search/?src=ukw&q=video+editing>

What I will do is highlight a few of the tools available.

Apple Final Cut Pro X — This is a video editor aimed at the professional market, but it isn't needlessly complicated and can be easily mastered. This is my tool of choice. It is only Mac-based however.

Adobe Premiere Pro CC — Arguably, Adobe Premiere is the industry-standard video editor and getting the most from it will require an investment of time as well as cash. This tool is good but there is a very steep learning curve. Works on both Mac and PC.

PowerDirector — PowerDirector is a feature-packed video editor but it's also easy to learn and good for beginners. PC only.

Lightworks — A great alternative that is completely free. It can be a little tricky to master but being free is a big plus. Available for Mac and PC.

There are many more, including many apps available for mobile devices, but if you are serious about video, doing this on your desktop will be far easier and offer greater flexibility.

What I now want to show you is how one piece of storytelling video can be used to create over 100 pieces of content to be posted across your various platforms. Yes, over 100!

THE VIDEO CONTENT PYRAMID

So, what is a video content pyramid? This is a guide I have created to highlight how many pieces of content you can post out to the various platforms at your disposal. Although you do not need to consider all of these platforms, the more of these you do use, the more opportunities you have to put your brand and your products in front of your customers.

Let's start with creating a long format advert of around 2–3 minutes, highlighting your experience and destination. I know you have probably heard videos 'should be 30–60 seconds long' and I will come to that, but in my opinion if someone complains that a video is too long, it simply means it was not compelling enough.

The video you create can be posted onto various channels, like Facebook, YouTube, your website and Instagram TV (IGTV) — so you have one video going to at least four platforms, creating four content opportunities.

Now, using the best elements of this footage, we take that 2–3 minute video and edit this to create two one-minute videos, four 30-second videos and six 15-second videos.

The one-minute videos can be published on Facebook, Facebook Ads, Instagram, Instagram Ads, Twitter, YouTube, and even LinkedIn (if you are B2B). The 30-second videos can be published on Facebook, Facebook Ads, Instagram, Instagram Ads, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and as a background video on your website (with no sound!). The six 15-second videos can be published on Facebook, Facebook Ads, Instagram, Instagram Ads, Instagram stories, YouTube, and SnapChat.



Between those platforms and the previous one, you now have created 13 videos ready to be published across the various platforms, creating 68 content opportunities. See where I am going with this? Let's continue...

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

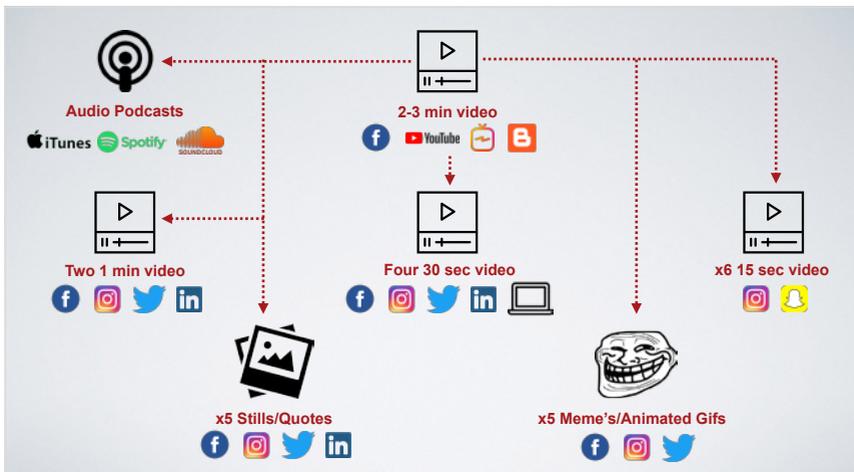
You can take this a step further and take stills from your video to create five inspirational shots, overlaid with quotes. You can also take your footage to generate 5 animated GIFs and 'boomerang' type videos. An online tool called EzGif, <https://ezgif.com/video-to-gif>, can help you create animated Gifs from your videos.

With all the content and channels so far, we have now created around 103 content opportunities. We are not finished yet.

Last, but not least, the audio track from your videos may be suitable for audio podcasts. This is especially relevant if you create an expert series that can still make sense without the visuals. These can easily be distributed to Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Soundcloud, RadioPublic, Stitcher & TuneIn (there are many more).

I do exactly this with my own video series, The Digital Tourism Show, <https://digitourshow.com>, using a service called Audioboom, <https://audioboom.com>, which distributes to most of these platforms for me. It will even provide analytics on how many people have listened to your podcast. It is a paid service, however, but worth it if you plan to do them on a regular basis.

By adding in podcasts, you now have approx 110 content opportunities. If you were to post up one per day, it would take you around three and a half months to publish it all. All of this from one piece of storytelling footage.



A man with a beard, wearing a blue button-down shirt and a hat, is looking down at a small notebook he is holding in his hands. He is also holding a camera and sunglasses. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

WORKSHOP TWENTY SEVEN

BLOG STRATEGIES & STRUCTURING THE PERFECT BLOG

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Although I am a huge fan of video, this does not mean you should put any less effort into written content. Not only can blogging drive relevant traffic to your site and help your SEO massively, it can also drive conversions, convincing people to book with your company.

One blog post may be a guide for people planning to visit your destination, another might be an informative piece about your local cuisine, another might even go into the history of a major tourist attraction in your destination. All of these blogs are interesting and valuable, but for different reasons, and their structures can and should represent these differences.

The main difference between various blogs will be their intended function. Are they simply providing information about the city? Are they explaining your service, or are they offering practical information? Ask yourself what need your blog is meeting in your potential audience and you'll have a good idea what kind of blog it is. Once you know this, you should allow this format to dictate the structure.

For instance, a how-to guide should have very clear language and it should have neatly set-out steps that are easy to follow. An informative piece can have a more relaxed structure and an aspirational piece can talk directly to the reader, even asking them questions. Allow me to explain this as simply as I can below.

The perfect title for a blog post

The title of a blog is the most important element. While it's important to draw people in with a good title, there's no point in overselling your content. If you imply your blog post does more or is more helpful/interesting than it really is, you may frustrate readers, and many will bounce back as soon as they realise they've been misled.

Instead, try to make your titles as obvious as possible, with a little less razzle-dazzle and a little more clarity. Most people are using Google to find specific information, so using specific language to communicate exactly what your blog is about will encourage more people to click through from their search engine results page.

Remember the research we did for FoodDrinkTour and one of the topics that came up was 'Secret food tours Glasgow'? Well, title your article 'Secret Food Tours of Glasgow'. This will have more of a chance of being seen by people searching for that exact topic, and who are obviously interested in a food tour.

The intro or hook

Hopefully, the title has pulled a few people in, and the intro or hook should keep them there. In the hook, quickly and succinctly tell the reader what the blog is about, making it appealing without overselling it. Think of this as an extension of the title, where clarity is still the highest priority.

Blog subheadings

A well-organised blog, with orderly subheadings, helps some of the more impatient readers scan through for the information they're looking for. It also reassures readers that they're in good hands, reading a blog post written by someone who has taken the time to organise their thoughts and arrange them in a way that makes sense. However, subheadings are also a great way of including relevant keywords and optimising your content for search.

It's always better to include a keyword in your subheading — unless it's wrenchingly awkward. For example, the subheading for this section could simply be 'Subheadings' and it would be fine. However, 'Blog Subheadings' is also fine and it taps into any search volume for people Googling about writing blog subheadings.

The trick here is to find a balance and to always ask yourself if including the keyword is too off-putting. However, most of the time you'll probably find that it's perfectly reasonable to include a keyword.

Linking in blog posts

Links are an important part of any blog. Chances are, you're writing about something you're trying to sell, or the blog's topic is at least relevant to something you're trying to sell, so it's vital that you link carefully and tastefully to your service/product pages. Linking too much can put off readers as they've come to the page for information and it's unpleasant if there are too many links within the body of content. Overlinking can also be penalised by Google, but only if it is incredibly unnatural.

Internal links can improve your website's ranking by spreading any authority through to the rest of your website. Internal links are also a great way to point readers to relevant pages on your website that they may be interested in — which is why the best practice is to always ensure your links are helpful to the reader.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

External links are also beneficial. Not only will linking to other, helpful websites massively improve the reader's opinion of you, but it can encourage other websites to link to you — which improves your rankings and increases your website's potential audience.

Google's algorithm also acknowledges and rewards a small amount of external links as this is viewed as natural and inherently useful for the reader.

The conclusion

The conclusion of a blog post should be as clear and concise as the introduction, summing up everything you covered in the blog. However, if you don't think your blog post needs a conclusion, then it's fine to leave it out.

Blog content ideas

Let's take another look at the content we created for the videos.

Expert Series	Expert Series	Partners	Behind the Scenes	Customers
Cooking with the Curries	Harry Potter & Glasgow	Cooking with Ramsey	How we create our tours	Testimonial videos
Whisky Tasting with Kyle	Explore Glasgow's West End	Wine Tasting with Callum	Meet the team	A customer's guide to Foodie Glasgow
Gin Tasting with Kyle	Explore Glasgow's City Centre	Pouring with Style — Art of flaring	Selecting only the finest eateries	A customers vegan tour of Glasgow
Vegan Glasgow with Ali	Glasgow, the Gateway to the Highlands	Tis the Season — Seasonal food from the Ox & Finch	Why Glasgow?	A customer's whisky tour of Glasgow
Glasgow - a Parisian's guide	Secret Glasgow	Soul Food – Glasgow music and food from Swing		A customer's gin tour of Glasgow
Craft Beer with Ali		Cocktail hour — How to make the perfect cocktails at home with the Tiki Bar		A customers beer tour of Glasgow

Most of these topics would make great, regular blog articles. Better still, these can accompany the videos you create and be part of the same content piece.

From the table above, FoodDrinkTour could create approximately 12 monthly blogs generating 144 pieces of content over the year...

- Cooking with the Curries x12
- Whisky Tasting with Kyle x12
- Gin Tasting with Kyle x12
- Vegan Glasgow with Ali x12
- Glasgow — a Parisian's guide x12
- Craft Beer with Ali x12
- Explore Glasgow's West End x12
- Explore Glasgow's City Centre x12
- Cooking with Ramsey x12
- Wine tasting with Callum x12
- Cocktail hour — How to make the perfect cocktails at home with the Tiki Bar x12
- Behind the Scenes Series x12

This does not take into account the other topics we found when searching for keywords. So many content ideas are in front of you, ready for you to take advantage of.

Now I know what you're thinking: this is a lot of content to consider, especially when you take into consideration the videos you should create, but that is my point. To stay relevant, you must keep producing content on a regular basis as long as it is to a high standard and tells your story. Remember, you must become a media company.

Even if you only do half of what I suggest, even a quarter, it is better than doing nothing and this will at least get you started.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP TWENTY EIGHT

FACEBOOK STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Sharing good content on a regular basis is the best way to make sure you can engage with your followers and gain new ones. What constitutes good content is highly debatable and mostly subjective. A blog post or video that appeals to one user might not appeal to another. However, if you are posting regularly, and with a consistent voice, you're bound to post content that appeals to the majority of your followers.

Think of it this way: the more often you talk to your Facebook followers, the more likely they are to hear you. While this is certainly true, you can obviously talk too much and irritate your followers. The trick is to find the right balance.

It is vital that you create a calendar, or some form of routine, that helps you share regular content on your Facebook page (don't worry, I provide this later for you). If this sounds challenging, start off small, only giving yourself small tasks each week. However, if it becomes apparent that you simply don't have the time to manage your brand's Facebook page, it may be worth the additional budget to pay an agency to do it for you, or to ask an employee with a smaller, more manageable workload.

Creating a calendar needn't be a huge logistical nightmare. Look at a few competitors' pages and make a note of the kinds of content they share, and whether there is a rough weekly pattern. It's a good idea to have certain days designated to certain types of content. Perhaps you share a weekly blog on Mondays, for example, and a weekly news article on Sundays. Perhaps Wednesday can be reserved for sharing beautiful images related to your brand (perhaps an impressive image of your tour, for example). Allow the structure of your content calendar to gradually evolve into something more concrete and reliable. While you can always deviate from your calendar when you want to, it's reassuring and useful to have one to rely on when you're not feeling especially creative.

Facebook posts

As highlighted above, when it comes to posting content, you want a mixture of content that you've planned in advance while also allowing space to post spontaneously when the situation calls for it. First, let's take a look at the various types of organic Facebook content and how you can best use each one:

Status posts — This is the simplest form of communication on Facebook, but it can sometimes be the most powerful. It allows you to add larger text for shorter messages with the option to add a coloured or pre-made graphical background.

Image posts — Posts with images drive 2-3 times more engagement. Make sure your image post is accompanied by well written content too.

Video posts — Native video on Facebook drives even more engagement than images. However, only around 15% of Facebook videos are watched with sound, so make sure your videos have subtitles where possible.

Linkposts — There is no harm in sharing blog posts or other content that takes the user off to another website. Just don't do this with all your posts. Links are perfect for sharing industry news and your own blog content.

Facebook live — Facebook Live can provide up to three times more engagement. In-the-moment content is growing in popularity, so how about taking the challenge of filming one of your tours on Facebook Live?

Facebook stories — Like Facebook Live, this is best used for in-the-moment content that only stays online for 24 hours. So, if you have content you want your followers to see for a longer period, don't use this feature.

What I would like to do now is take some of the content ideas created for FoodDrinkTour and implement this into a fixed schedule. I will limit this to 3 posts per day.

Monday

10am	Behind the Scenes Series – Video
12noon	Tour Highlights of The Week – Image
2pm	Meet the Team – Image

Tuesday

10am	Gin Tasting with Kyle – Video & Link
12noon	Inspirational Photo from a Tour – Image
2pm	Top Restaurant of the Week – Link

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Wednesday

10am	Vegan Glasgow with Ali – Video & Link
12noon	Inspirational Photo from a Tour – Image
2pm	Advice Blog – Link

Thursday

10am	Cooking with the Curries – Video & Link
12noon	Inspirational Photo from a Tour – Image
2pm	Partner Blog – Link

Friday

10am	Whisky Tasting with Kyle – Video
12noon	Secret Glasgow Weekly Blog – Link
2pm	Friday Cocktails with The Tiki Bar – Image

Saturday

11am	Inspirational Photo from a Tour – Image
12noon	Tour/Company update – Status
2pm	Inspirational Photo from a Tour – Image

Sunday

11am	Glasgow – a Parisian's guide – Video & Link
12noon	Customer Story – Image
2pm	Sunday Roast Recipe blog – Link

As you can see, I have included the times of these posts to illustrate my point, but Facebook Insights will provide guidance on the optimal times your followers engage with

you. However, as a general rule, social platform Sprout Social says that the following times of the day are best for Facebook posts:

- Thursday is the best day to post.
- Noon and 2pm on Wednesday and 1 to 2pm on Thursday are the times of day with most engagement.
- You're safe to post weekdays between 10 am to 3 pm
- Saturday is the least engaged day of the week.
- The least recommended times include early mornings and late nights.

These timeslots are a good starting point but monitor your Facebook Insights in case you need to make changes to your schedule.

Now, you may be looking at this schedule and thinking “Six weekly videos?!” But don't panic. Start off with one or two and build on these. In fact, before you start posting, I would advise creating enough content for at least one month prior. I did this when my Digital Tourism Show used to be a daily video. Yes, I really did a daily video advice series. I got to episode 186 before I decided to make them more than 60 seconds long. I filmed 30 videos before I started releasing them each day, while I recorded more to top this up.

By creating content in advance you can manage and plan your schedule a lot easier and save yourself the stress that comes from constantly racking your brain to create new content. You can do this as long as that content does not have a shelf life. To get a better sense of how all of this fits into an overall marketing strategy, I will explain more on page 371.

Facebook post length

If you search on Google you will be told that the optimum post length for effective Facebook posts is 40–50 characters, which does work, but on the other hand, if you listen to business guru Gary Vaynerchuk, he will suggest long tail posts work extremely well on Facebook. So who is right?

In my opinion, you need a mixture of both. Smaller content works well for quick updates, especially if you can be succinct with your messaging. However, I have seen Facebook posts as long as blog posts that work extremely well. Longer posts can work better if you want to drive leads to your business or increase your marketing lists as it helps get rid of the time wasters and possibly give you a better quality of lead. Experiment with the

length of your Facebook posts to see where the sweet spot is for your audience.

Facebook engagement

You hopefully now have a good idea of the types of content you can post on Facebook, but this is just half of the job; you also need to spend time engaging with your audience to build up those relationships. This involves taking the time to reply to your followers' comments but there are other ways you can spark a conversation.

Engaging with your audience on a daily basis not only helps build your brand's reputation, it also builds word of mouth, increasing your page likes, increasing your marketing reach. Let me run through some of the best ways you can do this...

Run a poll — Engage your followers by asking questions about what they love about your destination, the types of tours they like or if they prefer guided or self-guided, for example. You also get to do some free market research in the process.

Competitions — These are always popular. Competitions are a great way to massively build your engagement levels while increasing your marketing lists and followers. There are strict rules you must follow, which I will discuss in more detail later.

Lists — Lists are quick and easily digestible. Lists are a great way to provide recommendations and inspire engagement. Start by creating your own top 10 list of your destination's highlights but ask your followers if they'd suggest other highlights instead. This could also work as a poll.

Milestones — Has TripAdvisor awarded you with a recommend badge? Have you won an industry award? Any major milestone your business achieves should be posted on Facebook using their Milestone functionality. This can build your brand trust and follower engagement as your valuable followers will take time to congratulate you.

Photo poll — Post up 2-4 photos and ask the audience to vote on their favourite by clicking either the like, love, wow, or haha emojis. It is a quick way for your followers to interact with your content and you can use this to get a sense of which images your audience likes.

These are some of the quick ways you can create further content to engage with your customers on Facebook. There is no fixed rule, so experiment and see what type of content

WORKSHOP TWENTY NINE

INSTAGRAM STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

60% of millennial travellers are active on Instagram so this is a must use platform if you are involved in tourism in any way.

Like Facebook, Instagram is adding more and more features that tour and activity brands can use to generate bookings and enquiries. Their ‘call-to-action’ feature will allow your followers to book an appointment on one of your tours. This will eventually become a fully-fledged booking platform in its own right. Once Facebook and Instagram go down this route, the large OTAs who have invested millions will play second fiddle to these social powerhouses.

Because I am emphasising the need for storytelling content, most of the strategies I have already suggested for Facebook will also work on Instagram, with the addition of more hashtags in your content, but I will highlight some additional strategies that work well on this platform.

User-generated content — Around 9 out of 10 of the most engaging posts on Instagram come from user-generated content. This is content you can share with your own audiences. Make a point to advertise your main hashtag so this content is found under your brand. You can also run photo competitions to create more content and engagement on your account.

Consistent image design — Think of your Instagram as a curated gallery that should best represent your brand’s ideas and values. Your account will live or die on this consistency. Take a look at Hidden Scotland’s Instagram account, <https://www.instagram.com/hiddenscotland/>. There are consistently high-quality images that all have a similar tone and feel to them. Check out their engagement rates!

Engage with other followers and brands — Want to build brand awareness on your own brand? Search with hashtags that relate to you and follow and comment on the accounts that you like and on accounts that have high followers themselves. Set aside time each day to do this as this will help build your own followers and reach.

Add a location — This goes for Facebook too. Remember that you are working in tourism and you must promote your destination at all times. By adding a location to your Instagram posts, you can increase engagement by as much as 79%. By doing so, you are making it easier for customers to find your content.

Posting on Instagram

On Instagram, you can post both live pictures and videos taken directly from your device. I am not going to run through how you generate a post as the Instagram App guides you through it, step-by-step. All I will highlight is that when you come to select a filter for content, use the same filter for all your content as this will keep some of that consistency I was talking about.

If your images are of high quality, then do not be tempted to use filters and destroy the beauty of the images you have.

What I will explain now is how powerful hashtags can be...

Hashtags on Instagram

Hashtags (#) are the quickest and easiest way for your images to be seen on Instagram. Users can search locations, hashtags, and accounts for relevant images they want to see. Here is a screenshot to demonstrate this:



Keywords such as 'waterfall' 'scotland' and 'nature' are used (each hashtag you use, you must manually add the # prior to the word. Instagram will produce a pop-up window with information on the number of posts related to that hashtag. The more posts, the more popular the hashtag.

Try to limit your general hashtags as your image will likely be lost in amongst the rest of the traffic for this hashtag. More refined hashtags produce better visibility. However, popular photo sharing pages were used in the hashtags too such as '#insta_scotland'

and '#visitscotland', combined with more general terms such as '#outdoorphotography' to maximise visibility amongst the target audience.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Instagram limit posts to 30 separate hashtags and will only post the image (with no caption or hashtags) if you exceed this limit — meaning you will have to start again.

Hashtags are also clickable, so it is worthwhile clicking some to have a look at other users posting with these hashtags to generate ideas for new hashtags to be used in the future. For this example, I am going to move away from FoodDrinkTour as this better demonstrates the reach a hashtag can have. Below, is an image of the Amalfi Coast in Italy. I have provided some hashtag ideas that could be useful for an image such as this:



#amalficoast

This has over 1 million public posts to date, so it has relatively high traffic. However, this is fine for this image as it is the image's location.

#Italy

This has over 65 million public posts, so it is a VERY high traffic hashtag. Visibility here is likely to diminish very quickly as more posts are added. That's almost 25,500 posts EVERY day being uploaded for this hashtag! Again, however, this is fine for a location-based image such as the one above.

#ig_amalficoast

This has over 150,000 public posts, so a lot less than the previous two. It is linked to a photo-sharing Instagram account of the same name. Visibility with this hashtag is likely to be sustained for longer as the traffic is lower than that of the two mentioned previously, so it will remain in the search of this hashtag for longer.

#unescoworldheritagesite

This has over 117,000 public posts, so again, moderate traffic. The benefit of a hashtag like this is that there are many UNESCO World Heritage Sites around the globe, which means this hashtag will create visibility with people who haven't necessarily been looking at Italy or the Amalfi Coast specifically. To make the most of your hashtags, spend some time trying out different ones (maybe try some in Italian!) and find which ones have a relatively high traffic rate and are more likely to draw people in.

Note – A good hashtag doesn't make up for a poor image!

Instagram is a platform to show off your destination and tell your story. It is a platform that demands time and effort, probably more so than any other social platform, so dedicate time to it. If you can't, don't bother until you can as you will not build a large following until you find that time. If you can, pay an expert to build up your audience for you, it will be worth it.

APPROACHING INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS

Although this section is all about creating content ideas, I wanted to briefly chat about Influencers and how you can approach them as they can boost your brand with their own content strategies and... well... influence. Influencers have been getting a bad rep of late, and in some cases some of these so-called influencers deserved it, but we should not tar everyone with the same brush.

I remember speaking to Kathi Kamleitner of Watch Me See, <https://www.watchmesees.com>, about this very subject at a Travel Massive Event here in Glasgow. Kathi was very insightful and many of her ideas inspired the following section.

There is no such thing as an Influencer

Influencer is a term that has been overused. It is no different than someone at the early stages of their career calling themselves an 'entrepreneur'. You have to earn these titles. For me, the term Influencer should simply be 'content creator' or better still, 'thought leader' as this is basically what they are.

However, for the sake of this section I will use the term 'Influencer' as this is the term you are probably used to.

Most of you will probably think that all 'influencers' want free stuff in exchange for a few posts on their Instagram account. This is not the way to look at this. Don't get me wrong, some self-proclaimed 'influencers' will approach companies asking for freebies in return for coverage. This actually happened and caused a lot of controversy. You can read about it here: <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/hotel-bans-influencers-instagram-social-media-stars-elle-darby-the-white-moose-cafe-a8166926.html>.

Long story short, a hotel owner posted online the email he received from a travel blogger who asked for a free stay which happened to fall on Valentine's day. In return she would promote the hotel to her (80k) followers. He posted a very sarcastic reply, rejecting the request.

The way she approached the hotel owner was very wrong. It devalued her own 'product' by chancing her arm for a free stay on an important time of the year and it makes the owner of the hotel feel angry as he could see she was trying to manipulate him. Being an 'influencer' is much more than product placement and a recommendation.

Like any other aspect of business, including nurturing your own customers, the best and

most successful campaigns come from relationships you have built over months and years.

A good Influencer will help you create and implement a good content strategy which may include written blogs, video diaries, image posts, etc — all of which help you engage with your audience. They will get to know every facet of your business. This would typically be on location.

Working with influencers/bloggers/content creators should only be done with purpose and a strategy. Businesses need to think about what they want and why they want it.

Influencers are free

No influencer should offer their services for free. Just like you should pay a web design agency for a website or expect a customer to pay for one of your tours, pay an 'influencer' for their time and hard work and also expertise. They will enjoy working with you more, if they agree to work with you at all, and in turn you will receive a better standard of content from them. Remember, you're not just paying for a photo on Instagram or a blog post, you are paying for the expertise that enables that post to reach people.

For example, a blogger does not just upload an Instagram post, they spend a significant amount on storytelling (writing a caption), hashtag research, photo editing, analysing their IG followers (like finding the best time to post), community management (responding to comments and messages) etc. It looks like a 5-minute job, but it's not.

As another example, imagine that an influencer is invited to try and review a 4-hour tour. It takes them four hours to participate in the tour and gather material plus several hours to write SEO-optimised content. Add time for keyword research, competitor analysis, photo/video editing, posting to social media, and then on top, the time it took from first contact to signing a contract. As this book has already shown you, these things take time.

Anyone can open and run a blog but not just anyone can open and create a successful, professional blog – there are many layers of quality, expertise and professionalism. Not every blogger or influencer offers the same return, but they are often all put in the same box.

I know of many businesses that pulled out of projects because they suddenly realised that they were being charged fees for content, and now they want to work with bloggers

who do it for free. You must appreciate the value a good content creator can provide for your business.

Bigger is better

Again, this is another myth. The girl I mentioned who approached the hotel had over 80k followers and you may think this would give you amazing exposure. Again, no guarantees it would and it is actually highly unlikely. Who is to say that all those followers were not 'bought' or that a large chunk of them aren't fake? Remember, you can check this using the HypeAuditor tool from earlier.

Even if they are genuine accounts, who is to say they are your target audience? Someone could advertise themselves as a travel influencer, but all their followers are plumbers. Okay, extreme example but you get my point. Finding those with a niche following is far more effective. If you do food tours, find someone who is all about food. If you offer bike tours, find someone who is an avid cyclist and utilise their following. Niche is the way to go and a good strategy will help you find that niche.

Do they have to be at your location?

Once again, they do not need to be at your location. While in some circumstances this is advisable it is not always necessary. Remember, FoodDrinkTours receives a lot of French tourists on their tours. They could find a French native who can help them reach the local market more effectively than what you could through a targeted Facebook ad.

Whatever you do, research someone before you approach them. Spend a few weeks getting to know how they communicate with their current followers and if they have helped anyone in a similar sector to your own. Then, and only then, approach them. And whatever you do, let them advise you on how you should market your brand to their followers; as long as it fits with your own brand voice, you should follow their lead.

WORKSHOP THIRTY

FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM ADS THAT DRIVE TRAFFIC, BUILD EMAIL LISTS & BOOST SALES



Video help guide
available

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

If you haven't paid for an advertisement on Facebook or Instagram in the past, you may be a little intimidated by it. I hope this guide will help you feel more confident about setting up your first social ad. I also hope this guide will help you make informed decisions about the kinds of advertisements you create and pay for on Facebook.

I shall be using Facebook as the main platform for any examples I show you as to have your ads display on Instagram, you need to go through Facebook's ad platform anyway. As always, I will provide a practical example, using FoodDrinkTour to show you how you can create a Facebook ad funnel even on a low budget.

Facebook has made it incredibly easy to target specific types of people. In fact, I'm not aware of another advertisement platform (not even Google) that allows brands as much control over the audience their ads target.

It's impossible to ignore the efficacy of precisely choosing your audience on Facebook Ads, especially given that accurately targeting the right audience on Facebook has been proven to triple the ROI. You don't need to shout about your brand with a megaphone when you can whisper it clearly in your audience's ear.

The Facebook Ads system allows you to precisely choose your audience's location, language, age, gender, behaviours, interests, and so much more. It even allows you to select what time of day you'd like your Facebook ad to run. If your target demographic tends to spend more time browsing Facebook in the evening, then you can set your ad to only run in the evenings.

The more detailed and specific you can be, the better your ad will perform. However, don't worry about overdoing it and making your audience too small: if your audience is too specific, Facebook will notify you. Facebook also tells you if the audience you've selected is too broad. It's the best audience-targeting system out there and it's extremely user-friendly.

Different kinds of Facebook ads

Once you've accurately identified your specific Facebook audience (using the same tool we used to create your Customer Persona), you need to decide what you want to show them! Given that advertising is Facebook's main source of revenue, it has put a lot of work into offering brands plenty of advertisement options. I could write an entire guide discussing the different types of Facebook ads, but that's not what this section is about. I

will discuss many of the main ad types below — stating the benefits and purpose of each type — but I also recommend a little experimentation on your part.

Boosted posts — This is perhaps the best ad to start with as it's the simplest. A sponsored post takes a normal post on your brand's Facebook page and pushes it out to people who aren't your followers. This is a good way of gaining new Facebook followers or promoting a specific product or sale. There's nothing dynamic or complicated about a sponsored post; it normally includes a line or two of text and an image. It's a good idea to have one call to action on a sponsored post — anything more and you might confuse your audience.

Carousel ads — Carousel ads allow users to click on the arrows either side of an image to look at a variety of images. This kind of ad can be really impressive if you have particularly good images. A carousel ad allows your audience to browse through several of your stories or products and click through to the relevant pages on your site as each image can have a different URL.

Single-image ads — This type of ad is similar to carousel ads but it will only allow you to show one main image. On this format, I would recommend using a square image as your ads will appear bigger on Facebook's timeline.

Lead ads — Lead ads work a little differently to the other kinds of Facebook Ads as rather than trying to encourage users to click through to your website, lead ads allow users to download a file (a PDF of a leaflet or guide, for example) without having to click off Facebook. Many users prefer to not click off their Facebook timeline, so this is a good way to connect with your audience without asking them to do something they don't want to do.

Video ads — There's something undeniably eye-catching and compelling about videos and they can be a great way to impress and inspire your Facebook audience — especially for brands working within the tourism industry. In fact, Facebook has recently reported that its users spend three times longer watching videos than reading and engaging with text-based content.

Video ads are perfect for the tourism industry, as images and videos are always going to sell a beautiful location better than writing ever could. The right video can wow your audience, giving them the push they need to book a tour they didn't even know they wanted.

There are other formats but the ones above are more than enough to get started with.

Facebook marketing objectives

Facebook provides you the tools to run ads with specific objectives. This could be to gain more page likes, generate conversions, or increase video views. Here is a rundown of the main objectives you can use:

Brand awareness — This campaign objective is a good option if you'd like more people to find out about your brand. Use this objective to drive more traffic to your website.

Reach — Use this objective if your goal is to reach the maximum number of audience members repeatedly over a short period of time. This option can be good when promoting limited-time offers or when creating remarketing campaigns.

Traffic — Select this objective when your goal is to drive people to your website or blog and there are no specific actions you want them to take.

Post engagement — With Post Engagement, Facebook will show your ads to people who are the most likely to like, share, and comment on your post. This is what Facebook uses when you boost a post.

Video views — These are great for generating brand awareness. Video can be used across most ad types, like generation and conversions.

Lead generation — This is the option if you want to capture your targets' contact details from within Facebook's own forms instead of visiting your website. This is good for downloadable content or building an email list.

Conversions — This is the most popular campaign objective as it is optimised to deliver you new leads or bookings.

Messages — As the name suggests, this objective focuses on driving conversations across Facebook messenger.

There are other campaign objectives but the ones I have just listed are the main ones you are more likely to use.

How to set up a Facebook like campaign

Without a Facebook audience, you have no potential customers to engage with. If you have just set up your Facebook page or have an existing one with little to no followers (you want at least 1000), then you will first want to run a Facebook Like campaign to build up your audience.

You must be targeted here, though. It is easy to build up 20k followers on Facebook in little to no time if you target your product interest type (foodies, bike enthusiasts, etc) in low-ad-cost countries like India or Indonesia. If this happens to be your target market then you're very lucky, but if you are like FoodDrinkTour and your target market is foodies visiting Glasgow, then you will receive low-level engagement on your Facebook page. Having a large number of Facebook followers may look impressive, but it will damage your future targeting and your reach.

This is the easiest type of ad you can run, but, as I just highlighted, it can also be the most damaging if mismanaged. Allow me to show you how to set up a Like ad:

FoodDrinkTour Like Campaign

While in your Facebook Ads Manager click 'Create Ad' and select 'Engagement'.

When you make this selection and scroll down the page, you can then select the option 'Page Likes' and set your budget. Turn on 'Campaign Budget Optimization' and I would set your budget to £5-£10 per day, initially. Name the ad something you will easily remember. Click 'Set Up Account'

The screenshot shows the Facebook Ads Manager interface for setting up a campaign. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Post engagement', 'Page likes', and 'Event responses'. The 'Page likes' tab is selected. Below the tabs, there is a 'Campaign Name' field with the text 'Engagement'. Underneath, there are two toggle switches: 'Create A/B Test' (which is turned off) and 'Campaign Budget Optimization' (which is turned on). Below these, there is a 'Campaign Budget' field with a dropdown menu set to 'Daily Budget' and a value of '£10.00'. At the bottom, there is a small note: 'Actual amount spent daily may vary.'

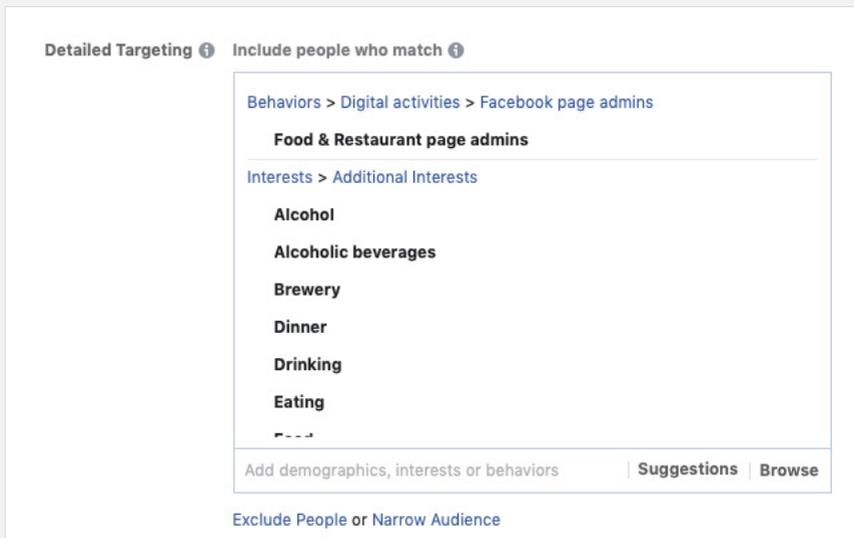
BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

If you have never set up an ad before, you will be asked to select your desired country, currency and time zone. Do so and click 'Continue'.

Now you can create your targeted audience. First select your Facebook Page from the dropdown.

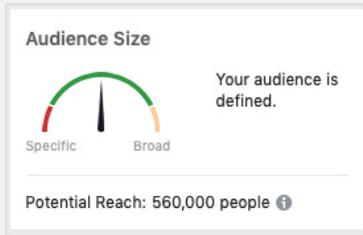
Now we will select a destination. For FoodDrinkTour I have selected a 25-mile radius around Glasgow. I have selected the age range of 24-44 as I know this is the optimum age range going by their Facebook Insights. Select 'All' for gender, unless you run all-male or all-female tours. Select your optimum language.

Under detailed targeting, you can start inputting your customers' interests that best relate to your business. For this example, we have selected various food and drink interests. Also notice that you can select admins who run similar pages that relate to your business. This may help with your targeting. If you wish, you can narrow your audience further or exclude particular interests.



FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM ADS THAT DRIVE TRAFFIC, BUILD EMAIL LISTS & BOOST SALES

Under connections, exclude people who already like your page. Once complete. Click 'Save This Audience' as this will allow you to use this audience in future campaigns.



Notice your Audience Size on the right-hand side. This is a gauge of how defined your targeting is but I suggest ignoring the graphical gauge. The important statistic is 'potential reach' as you want to reach as big an audience as possible. This is completely fine as long as you have set your targeted customer interests. You can see from the example below,

FoodDrinkTour can potentially reach 560,000 people who are interested in food and drink. Don't go too narrow or you will reach no one.

Make sure 'Automatic Placements' is selected by default and click Continue'.

Now you can create your ad. For this example, we will make this a single image ad, but feel free to use video as long as it is around 30 seconds long and the story is good. Upload an image or use the image Facebook has pre-selected.

The screenshot shows the Facebook ad creation interface. On the left, there are options for conversion tracking, including 'Facebook Pixel' and 'Food Drink Tour's Pixel'. Below that, it says 'Your Facebook Pixel is Not Active' and provides a link to 'Learn more'. At the bottom left, there is an 'App Events' section with a 'Set Up' button. On the right, there is a preview of the ad. The ad features a photo of people eating at a table and the text: 'Food and drink tours in Glasgow, Scotland, that showcase our amazing local food and local tipple. Visit amazing eateries, sampling their top dishes, while enjoying an immersive experience packed with history and culture. Get the true taste of Glasgow.' The ad is sponsored by 'Food Drink Tour'.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Now you can add content to your ad. Facebook will show you a preview of how your ad will look prior to publishing it. Add text — I suggest your elevator pitch — with some eye-catching emojis, two or three will be enough.

Make sure your Facebook Pixel is selected and when you're happy click 'Confirm' to put your ad live. If this is your first ad, you will be asked to enter your card details. Facebook will store these for future campaigns.

Well done! You have set up your first ad. These are the steps you take for creating future Facebook or Instagram ads.



The Facebook Ad Funnel on a budget

Now I'd like to show you a Facebook Ad funnel I've created that will explain how you can run ads to increase website visitors, build your email marketing lists, and lead a potential customer to make a purchase, even on a tight budget.

For this you need to make sure you have followed my earlier advice and created a Facebook Business Page, set up your Business Manager and created and installed a Facebook Pixel. Let's take a look at the structure of the funnel:

Brand awareness ad — This is an ad to basically tell your target customers that you exist. Its aim is to drive your target audience to your website and raise brand awareness.

Free value ad — This is an ad that provides something of value to your customers: a free piece of advice, for example, or exclusive content.

Trust ad — This is to help build trust in your brand.

Sale ad — As the name suggests, an ad to 'ask' for the sale without being overly 'salsey'.

I shall now explain each one in a little more detail.

The Facebook Ad Funnel on a budget



Brand awareness ad

The purpose of this ad is to drive targeted traffic to your website to raise brand awareness. Take a look at this ad I created for FoodDrinkTour:



This is just a single-image ad that promotes your business and I have used their ‘elevator pitch’ as the main text content, mixed in with some emojis to make it more friendly. It has a strong image that could be portraying customers enjoying food in a relaxed atmosphere. We also display an eye-catching title, emphasising that they have won awards.

We want to use an ad like this to drive those customers you have targeted to your website to build up your targeting options for the next step in the funnel. I shall explain this in more detail shortly.

I have set the targeting of this ad to a 15-mile radius around Glasgow, targeting people interested in lunch, eating out, beer, wine and food matching, food & wine, drinking, local dood, food, wine tasting, alcohol, dinner, alcoholic beverages, restaurants, foodie, and wine & spirits.

The reason we are selecting these targets is that, for most day tour operators, bookings will happen in-destination. Yes, some customers may have found FoodDrinkTour while researching back at their home, in a different part of the world, but most travellers do not want to be tied down to a day tour until they have landed and got their bearings. Things happen, plans change, and they may like refrain from booking until the day of the tour, or the day before.

So, by targeting your destination, you can hit people as and when they are searching in destination, exactly when they are more likely to book.

The budget for this ad can be as little as £\$€5 per day, so it does not need to be overly expensive. I would always advise starting at this budget to see how it performs and then ramp it up if you like.

Free value ad

The purpose of this ad is to provide your potential customer with something of value in exchange for their email address. You are effectively buying their permission to market to them.

15% DISCOUNT CODE INSIDE

FOOD DRINK TOUR.COM

THE GLASGOW
COOKBOOK
LOCAL RECIPES FROM 12 OF GLASGOW'S TOP CHEFS
THAT YOU CAN EASILY MAKE FROM HOME

UBIQUITOUS CHIP • CAFE GANDOLFI • OX & FINCH • ROGANO • STRAVAIGAN

The item of value can be a PDF download, a video, or a discount code. My favourite is a PDF download as you can create a guide around your destination's top ten places to eat, a map showing events happening in the area or, as I have created here for FoodDrinkTour, a downloadable cookbook which contains the top-12 recipes from their tours, as voted by their customers. This is a fantastic way to entice newsletter sign ups as very few people will sign up to a newsletter just for news updates.

By building up your email lists in this way, you can market to them not only through email newsletters, but you can upload these into Facebook to target specific ads too!

For this ad we would target only those customers who visited your website from your first ad. This allows you to be doubly targeted and know that you are targeting people who are interested in what you offer. Because we are targeting website visitors, we do not need to set any location or interests on the ads.

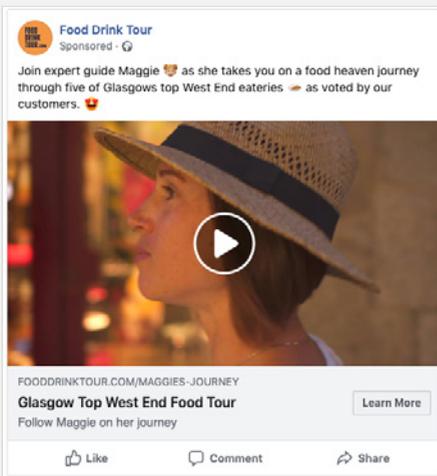
BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

I would set the budget for this ad at around £\$€10 per day. Again, this depends on how competitive your destination is but it is a good starting point.

In terms of allowing customers to sign up, either take them to a landing page on your website or you can set your Facebook ad to allow users to fill out a form directly in Facebook. Using Zapier, you can connect this to services like MailChip to direct those signups to your email service.

Following on from this, you can send your customers an automated email campaign providing further value. FoodDrinkTour sends further recipes, tips from their tour guides, and other storytelling content. Don't overly promote your products with these emails; suitably add references and links to them. Later in the book, I will highlight the best method to set up your emails.

Trust ad



The purpose of the Trust ad is to do exactly that: build further trust in your brand. For this, I would advise using a 3-minute video in which one of your guides takes the viewer on a quick tour of one of your experiences. This humanises your brand and helps get across their passion. Mixed in this video will be shots of your customers providing testimonials of their experiences and showing how much fun they're having (I hope).

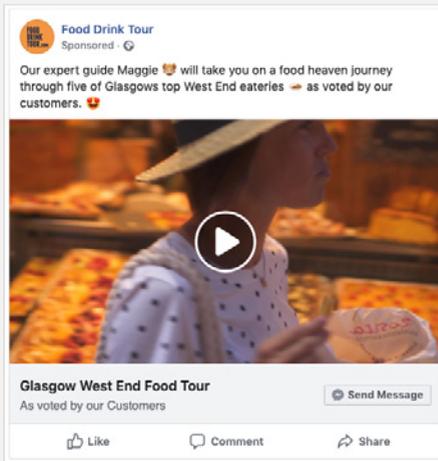
For this ad, I would target visitors to your website and those who downloaded your guide. Again, making

sure you are doubling down on your targeting. Once again, I would set the budget for this ad at around £\$€10 per day, increasing as needed or desired.

Sale ad

With a Sale ad, you are continuing build brand trust while also asking for the sale.

Again, I have used a video for this ad, but a 30-second version of the first video, or you can use a completely different video, but I would use the same guide as this makes it easier for your customers to relate too.



Like the first ad, you are humanising your brand by mentioning your guide by name, explaining what this tour is all about and even mentioning that the tour is based around your customers' feedback and votes. This last part emphasises that you listen to your customers and that their feedback matters, thus building more trust with them.

Notice how we do not mention price. Nor do we use a generic photo or video of your product. And we aren't putting any 'time limits' on it to pressure them or make it salesy in any way.

Targeting for this ad would be set to visitors of your website and those who downloaded the guide or watched the video in your last ad. You can even set this to target past customers by uploading their data into Facebook and targeting ads to them. This may encourage repeat or referral business. Again, I would set the budget for this ad at around £\$€10 per day, increasing if so desired.

One thing you may have noticed on the ad above is that it does not say 'book now' but 'send message' instead. The reason for this is from our own research and Facebook's own research.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Facebook users, for the most part, do not like to leave the app if they can help it. They would prefer to stay within that platform's ecosystem. By allowing them to quickly message you, asking to book your product, you may find that you receive more bookings than using a book-now button that takes the user off to a page on your website. This does require more work from your sales teams as you need someone to manage this channel.

I advise testing both methods and going with what works best for your business. If you find it is close to a 50/50 split, keep running both!

Funnel summary



To recap: you should run a brand awareness ad that leads into a free value ad, a trust ad and, finally, a sales ad. All of these ads would run simultaneously unless you are a new business. If you are new, then run the first two ads for a period of time to allow you to build up your website visitors and your email marketing lists first.

When running simultaneously, the daily budget can be as low as £\$€35 per day. The cost of one low-cost day tour so more than worth the effort.

There are many other types of campaigns you can create and run on Facebook, some of which I highlight in the download section. Once you are comfortable using Facebook ads, experiment a little. Testing and measuring are always required as it allows you to see opportunities that may work wonders for your booking rates, and which ads you should never run again.

Low-budget Facebook ad countries

Warning — while I am about to provide with you a list of countries that you can target in Facebook Ads, do not target them if they are NOT your target destinations. It will damage your brand and future campaigns. If you are lucky enough to run tours in the following destinations, you can do so from as little as £\$€0.01 per engagement.

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, UAE, Venezuela, Vietnam

What about Instagram ads?

The funnel I mention above can also be published to Instagram, from within Facebook's Ad Manager, with the exception of the 2/3-minute video because of Instagram's time constraints on video. Simply shorten the video for this platform to compensate. The type of content you post on Instagram would be similar to Facebook, with more emphasis on video and inspirational photos and, of course, storytelling.

For me, Instagram is more a brand-awareness tool but this is going to change dramatically. At time of writing, Facebook announced it will allow businesses to be able to sell products from within Instagram, without the need to take users off Instagram and onto your website. This is a great move and it is the first step in Facebook moving in the direction of platforms like WeChat. It will become a one-stop platform for inspiring and engaging your customers as well as taking payment in app.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP THIRTY ONE

TWITTER STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

In the previous sections, I have covered Facebook and Instagram as these are the main platforms I feel you should concentrate on, but if you want to look at Twitter, here is a brief overview of how you can best use this channel.

As I mentioned before, Twitter is a noisy platform that you must dedicate a lot of time too. It is great, however, for small, bite-sized chunks of information on your business. If you want to make good use of Twitter, here are some points you must consider:

Frequent posting — To try and cut through the noise, you must post lots of content per day. Once per day simply won't give you the reach you would like. However, the more engagement you receive, the longer the lifespan and the greater the reach your tweet will have.

Real-time communication — Twitter is a real-time communication channel— hence why I advise that your Twitter account is managed at all times. As a brand, you have to communicate quickly. Twitter is great for the 'fun' aspect of a brand voice as humour works well on this channel. Although, as you have probably seen, it can go dramatically wrong if you post the 'wrong thing'.

People commonly message or tweet accounts to find out more information about a destination or tour. They like easy access to information and quick answers, and that's exactly what Twitter was built for. For me, it is more of a support and customer service channel and should be used as such by your entire team. Think of it as a digital concierge.

Promotions — Twitter is a great platform to post exclusive discounts on. In fact, this is one of the prime reasons people follow brands on twitter. Only make these offers available to your Twitter followers to give them a sense of exclusivity.

Get visual — Post an image or video with every tweet. It will have a better chance of being seen and this will increase its chances of being retweeted.

Storytelling works here too — Utilise some of the storytelling content we have created for other channels and post these on twitter too. Just remember you can only post up to 280 characters, including your links and hashtags, so you need to be to the point.

If you like, it is perfectly acceptable to post a series of content over a number of tweets. Just number each Tweet at the start of your content so your customers can easily follow it.

WORKSHOP THIRTY TWO

CREATING COMPELLING EMAIL CAMPAIGNS



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

A few of you have probably heard rumours that email marketing is dead. Well, it's far from it. It just needs to be done right.

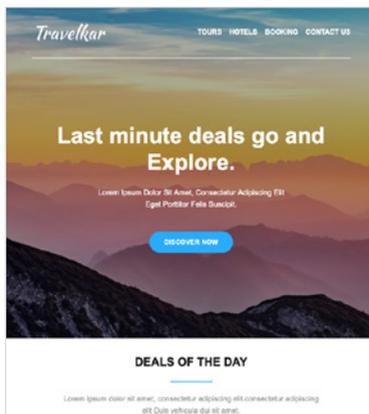
Far too many email campaigns simply rehash content that has already been posted on blogs, but what they should do is offer real value to the readers receiving them.

The downloadable guide I provided in the Facebook Ad Funnel is a prime example of adding value to a newsletter signup. But what do you do to keep that momentum going? Well, using tools like MailChimp and MailerLite will help you set up an automated sequence that tells the story of your brand and your destination in such a way that you are not directly selling to them.

For this section, I am going to use my tool of choice, MailerLite, to show you how to create an automated sequence that will better engage with your customers. But before I do, let me quickly give my advice on a debate I seem to have on a regular basis: HTML or 'plain text' emailers?

HTML or 'plain text' email campaigns?

First, allow me to show you the difference between the two. Here is a great example of a typical HTML emailer:

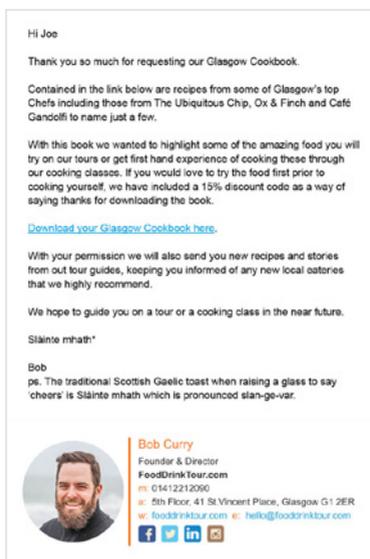


Using the template: <https://themeforest.net/item/travelkar-responsive-email-for-travel-70-modules-stampready-builder-mailster-mailchimp/21828797>

This is probably what you expect to see arrive in your inbox. An image-heavy emailer that is used more as a selling tool than a customer-engagement tool. This type of emailer has its advantages and disadvantages.

On one hand, it can be a great visual aid to effectively get across your message and hopefully inspire your audience, but on the other hand it can be slower to open and have more of a chance of being tagged as spam.

A plain text email is very much like a real email you would send out through your email software:



This type of email also has its advantages and disadvantages. The customer will feel you have taken the time to personally reach out, but that same customer will have to read the content to know what message you are trying to relay.

So, which is best?

From the research we have conducted with our own customers, my choice would be to send a plain text email as it has proven, in most cases, to provide better engagement.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

A few years ago, Hubspot also conducted a survey and what they found is that nearly two thirds of consumers said they prefer to receive HTML newsletters but what the stats showed is that they are more likely to open and click on a plain text emailer. In fact, an A/B test showed the HTML newsletter had a 25% lower open rate. That is significant.

These are our findings and in some circumstances the figures reversed. So, as with any other marketing channel, test and measure against your own audience over three months of emailers and see what performs better.

Automated email campaigns

Whatever you choose, I advise setting up an automated sequence that you know will be sending in the background. Taking the time to do this upfront helps as it saves you from scrambling around looking for content for that month's emailer. You can always top up this automated series with the odd single emailer.

FoodDrinkTour Automated Email Campaign

To set up an automated email chain, first plan out what content you wish to send to your customers. I advise making this email series based on a theme. For example, for FoodDrinkTour I would set up a series of emails that provided further recipes and top food and drink tips from your guides. Whatever you do, do not make this content available on any other channel. Make this content exclusive to this channel only.

Here is a 12-part series I have created for them (13 if you include the welcome email). To entice these signups, I have used the cookbook from the Facebook Ad Funnel.

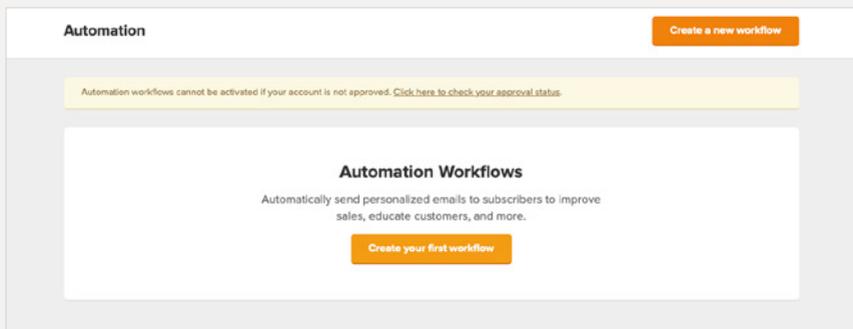
1. Welcome Email
2. Recipe One – The ultimate haggis pakora
3. Tasting Notes – The best Scottish craft beers to accompany your haggis pakora
4. Recipe Two – How to make our famous donuts
5. Tasting Notes – Best whiskies to wash your donuts down with
6. Recipe Three – The ultimate cucumber sandwich
7. Tasting Notes – Gin and juice recipes with Kyle
8. Recipe Four – Vegan pizza to die for
9. Tasting Notes – Champagne and pizza – an amazing combination

10. Recipe Five – Tequila-cured sea trout
11. Tasting Notes – White wine that fish wish they can swim in
12. Recipe Six – Sticky icky toffee pudding
13. Tasting Notes – Dessert wine to end the night with

We assume they have created content for each email. The email can contain the content itself or provide a link to download a PDF. I prefer this option as you can add other subtle upsell opportunities within it. Or, if you can, have these on your website, hidden from normal users (and Google).

Now let's set up the automation:

Head over to MailerLite and login to your account. If you have not set one up yet, please follow my guide from earlier. Click on 'Automation' and click on 'Create your first workflow'.



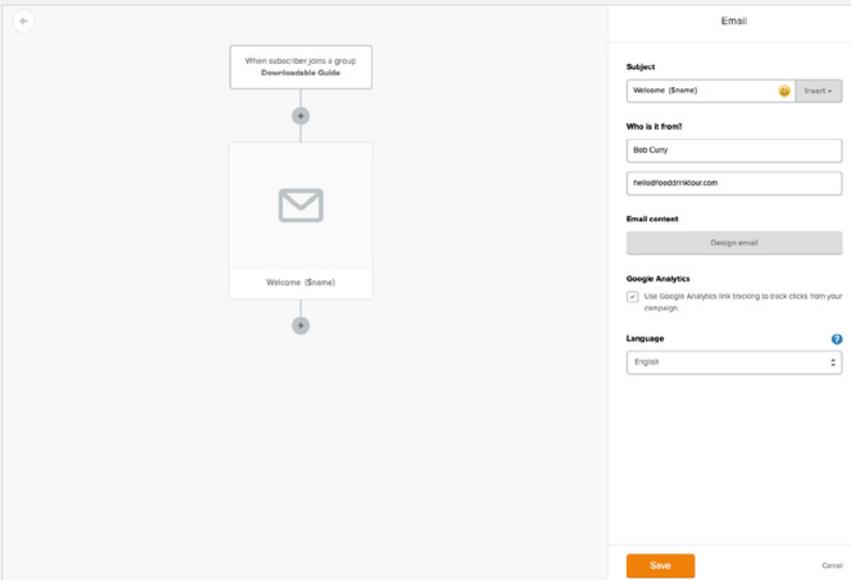
Name your workflow something easy to remember and select an appropriate trigger. I have chosen 'when subscriber joins a group' and the list 'Downloadable guide'. Click Save.

Now we want to set up the initial email that someone will receive when they sign up. Click the '+' icon and select 'email'.

In the side panel, you can enter a subject line for the email and the email it comes from. Enter these details. Make sure your subject line is clear and to the point. Include your

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

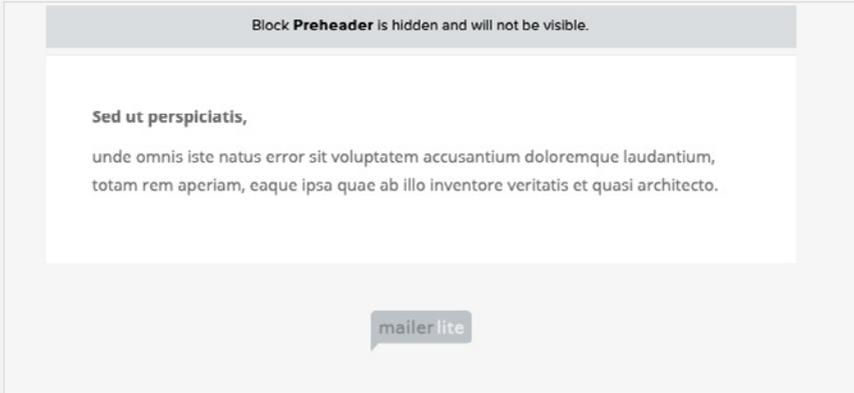
customer's first name to personalise it by clicking 'insert'. Check 'Google Analytics' to enable tracking.



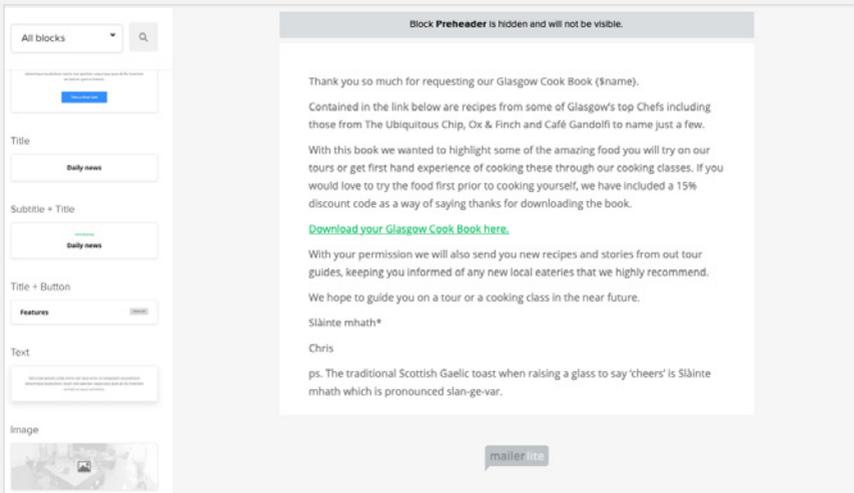
Now click 'Design email' to create our welcome email. You will see various options open to you. Select the 'Template Gallery' and find the template titled 'Reconfirmation' and select this (please note templates are only available on the paid account).

Now what we are building here is an HTML email template, but we will give it the look of a plain text emailer as this gives you a few more styling options.

First, remove the preheader, logo header, blue button, signature area, and footer area until you are left with this:



Click on the text area to bring up the editor and start adding in your content to thank and welcome the customer to your email series. Start by saying hello and personalise it, using their first name. You should have something like this:

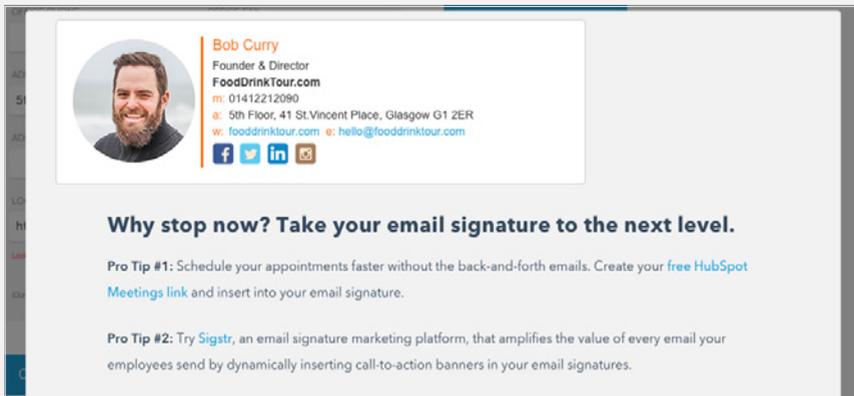


Once done, click 'Save'.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

You now want to add an email signature to the emailer to make it seem like you have sent it personally. Keep your MailerLite window open and create a new browser window.

Hubspot provides a free tool to create a professional email signature. Visit, <https://www.hubspot.com/email-signature-generator>, and follow the simple steps to create an email signature. I prefer using the 'Image Left - Compact' theme. Add any social links you wish and humanise it by adding your photo (you can only link to a photo online). Once complete you should have something like this:



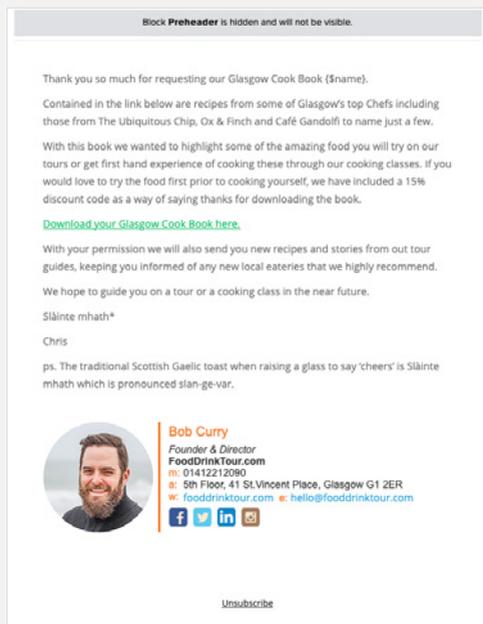
Click 'create signature' and select 'Get Source Code'. Copy all the code in the window provided and head back to your MailerLite window.

To add our signature to the emailer, select a text block from the left-hand side and click and drag to position under the main text. Click this area to view the content window. Click the '<>' icon to show the source code and replace this with your signature code and click 'save'. You should have something like this:

We have nearly completed this template. On the right-hand menu, click 'background' and make this white. This helps make it look less like an HTML email.

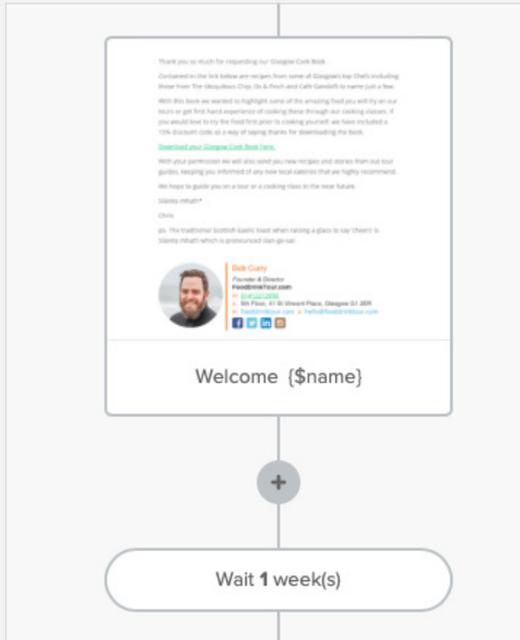
Now, as this is an email series, we must add an unsubscribe button — most platforms will insist on it. Go back to the left-hand menu and select ‘Footer 3’. Drag this to position under your signature. Now we want to remove most of the items here.

Select this panel and click ‘settings’ in the right-hand panel. Select ‘share settings’ and hide icons. Click content and remove your business name and address. Do the same for the text content in ‘Unsubscribe’. You should now be left with something like this:



You've now created your email template. In the main navigation, click on ‘Actions’ and select ‘Save As Template’ as this will allow you to reuse this template for your other emails. Once saved, click ‘Done Editing’. This will take you back to the automation screen. Here, click the ‘+’ icon and select ‘Delay’. This will allow us to set the length of time the system will wait to send out the next email. For a series like this, I would recommend weekly.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

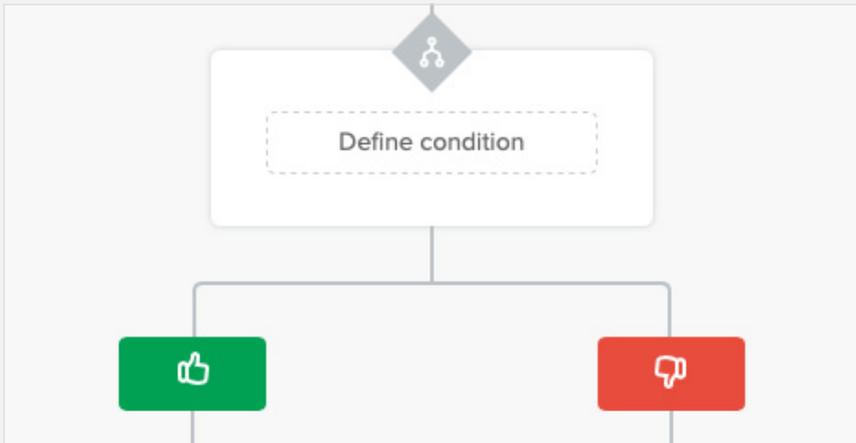


Follow the same process until you have added all the emails in your sequence. Once you're happy, you can turn on your automation by clicking the on/off button on the top right.

Finally, we will want to remove the 'MailerLite' logo from your emails (If you have paid the subscription). Go to the main dashboard and click your username on the top right. Select 'Account Settings'. At the bottom of this page you can click the on/off button to remove the MailerLite logo.

Well done! You have set up your first automation. You do have other options when creating an automation. 'Condition' allows you to direct your customer to different outcomes depending on whether they interact with your email or not.

For example, you can send a reminder email if they did not view your original message. If they clicked on a link in your email, you can then send them another email with a discount code. Or, better still, if your email had 2–3 links to specific blogs or products, you can send them another email that relates to the link they clicked. This is powerful if you offer various different products.



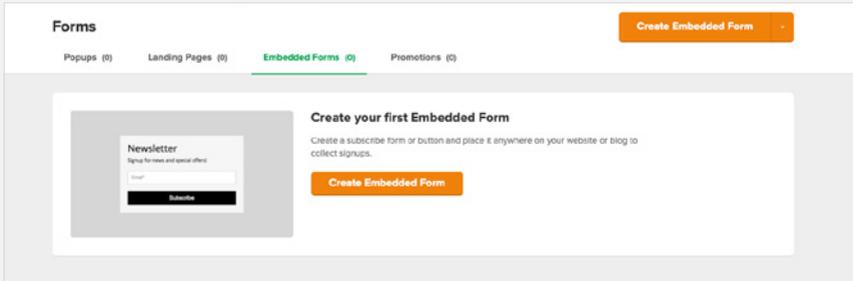
For example, for FoodDrinkTour the email could contain links to a cooking class, a food tour, and a whisky distillery tour. If the customer clicks the distillery tour, then you can send them an email about whisky tasting. You can create powerful automation combinations with MailerLite.

Now that we have set up the automated sequence, we now need to create the sign-up form. If you already have a newsletter sign up like MailChimp, follow my Zapier guide from page 191 to link it to MailerLite.

MailerLite does allow you to create forms and even landing pages. For this, I will show you how to create a form that you can add to your website.

In the top navigation, select 'Forms' and then click on 'Embedded Forms'. Select 'Create Embedded Form'. Give your form a name and continue.

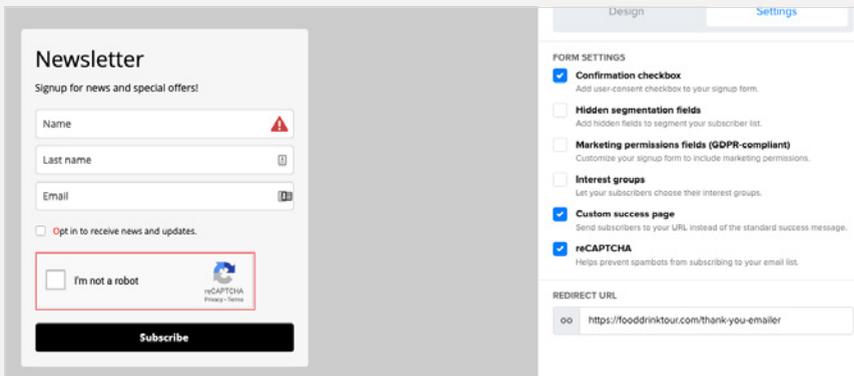
BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE



Select the list you want your customers to be assigned to and continue.

Click the email field to bring up the editor on the right-hand panel. Click 'Add new field' to add name and last name. Drag the fields so email is last. Make sure they are all required fields. Click 'Save'.

Now click on the 'settings' tab and select 'Confirmation Checkbox' and a 'reCaptcha' to give you some spam protection. If you can, also select 'Custom Success Page' as you can direct your customers to a thank you page on your website. I highly advise this as you can then better track in Analytics and Facebook how many signups you have had by using the thank you page as the analytic trigger. Enter the URL of your custom thank you page. Click 'Next' when you're done.



Back in the dashboard, you will see the embed code at the bottom of the page. You have three options. Your website developer will advise on which version would be best for your website. From experience, HTML code will allow you to style the form to be in line with your website style.

You are now set to receive emails and add value to your customers.

Other campaign ideas

One of my favourite ways to build an email list and engage with customers is to create a downloadable guide backed up with an automated email series; once it's set up, you can just leave it running. However, you may also wish to send the occasional email on its own. Here are some brief alternative campaign options that you can consider:

And the award goes to... — If you were recently given an award or an outstanding testimonial, share it with your community.

New tours — Created a new tour product? Tell your subscribers about it. Better still, if you have a separate list of past customers, ask them to try it out by providing a discount code. This can help you iron out any kinks prior to a full launch.

Happy birthday — It is likely that you have the date of birth for all your customers. Set up an automated email for those customers adding a small gift of a discount code or, in FoodDrinkTour's case, a free bottle of Prosecco when they come back on a tour. (You can also do this on Facebook!)

Exclusive deals — If you have a sale, let your subscribers know. Just don't make this every month as your deals should seem exclusive and rare.

Surveys — Gauging customer satisfaction is the perfect way to use your subscriber list. Send out a survey or poll to learn from your customers.

There are many options open to you; just make sure the messages you put out are not all about you and that you often put your customers front and centre.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP THIRTY THREE

GOOGLE AD STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

As I mentioned previously, you should be extremely careful with Google Ads. On one hand, it is one of the best platforms to drive sales and leads for your business but without serious skill, planning, and time, you will find your money quickly drains away.

It would be impossible for me to give you a step-by-step guide on creating every type of Google ad in this section as that would require a full book of its own. But, what I will do is provide an overview of the PPC in general.

What is PPC?

Put simply, pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is a particular kind of digital advertising where you only pay when a user clicks on your ad; if someone sees your ad and doesn't click, it's free. While it can get a little complex further down the line, PPC can be split into three not-so-complex categories:

Paid search — This puts your ad on Google's search engine results page (SERP), just above the natural, non-paid Google results. I am sure you will have noticed these paid listings at the top of your Google results pages.

Display advertising — This puts your ad on the Display Network, across a range of different websites. You can use display to prospect new customers who Google has identified as potentially interested in your service or product, or to retarget people who have been to your website previously.

Ever feel like a particular website or brand you like is following you across various different websites? Well, it probably is, and this is because the brand is using retargeting.

YouTube ads — This refers to the ads that play before you get to see the video you want to watch, as well as the banners that appear across and alongside YouTube videos. You can choose how long your video ad is, whether it's skippable, and when in the target YouTube video your ad will play.

Benefits of using Google Ads

- It allows you to reach your target audience immediately, without all of the time and effort that goes into organic search marketing (SEO) or various forms of offline advertising.

- You can set your own ad budget, ensuring you never spend more than you can afford. This can be as little as a penny, and you can pause your campaigns whenever you like.
- The results, successes, and failures are very easy to measure and analyse. Every click is counted and the user's journey is tracked through the site. If they convert as a result of your ad, you'll be able to tell. This can help you get a clear idea of which ads are performing best for your target audience, allowing you to fine-tune your ads over time.
- Data gained from Google Ads can actually inform other aspects of your business as the keywords and search volume data can improve and streamline your SEO and content marketing strategies.
- You can specify when and how you'd like your ads to appear, allowing you to target your desired audience at specific times of day or specific devices when they are more likely to make a purchase or enquiry. For example, while people may browse on their phone during the morning commute, they are perhaps more likely to book a holiday on their laptop in the evening, after a conversation with their partner.

How does Google Ads work?

Google Ads can work for a variety of reasons and there is no quick answer to this question. There are several in-depth answers, however, and we'd like to go into more detail below.

PPC offers control

One of the most attractive features of PPC is the level of control it offers. It really is designed to be as flexible as anyone needs it to be. You have control over your budget, the time of your ad display, the location of the user you're targeting with your ad, the type of device your target audience is using, etc. And, with PPC, you can turn it off and on at the click of a mouse. Instantly. If something isn't working, or you don't want to waste any more budget on a specific ad campaign, you can stop it immediately.

There are various other ways to control how and when your ads display:

Control your audience with PPC — PPC ads also affords you absolute control over the audience you'd like to target. The Google Ads system is incredibly precise, allowing you to specify your demographic to extremely exact dimensions. Choose gender, age, location, interests, browsing history, and so much more. This is perfect if you know exactly who you want to target, but it's also great if you don't and you'd like to experiment with different demographics. Try out a few variations and see which ones work.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Retargeting with PPC — Retargeting could also be considered to be a sub-category of the audience section above, as it is the process of targeting someone who has previously visited your website — perhaps they even made their way to the checkout on your site but abandoned it at the last minute. Retargeting is a great way to reach an audience who has already proven they are interested in your products or services.

There are different types of ads to suit your campaign — PPC allows you to choose the specific kind of ad you need to suit your purpose. You can choose specific content, images, and other ad features. Rather than all ads just linking to your website, your advertisement can link to your app, your phone number, or include directions to your business. While it's good to bring users to your site, it's worth saying that it's better to put fewer obstacles between your audience and what they're looking for.

Giving them your address or a phone number on the SERP will make their user journey easier, which makes it more likely that they will convert or at least have a positive, streamlined experience with your brand.

Measurement and data analysis

It's also worth noting that Google Ads offers an incredible amount of data you can use to analyse your PPC campaigns and plan for future campaigns. By integrating with Google Analytics, you can track users' journeys through your site and figure out if there are any weaknesses in your website's user journey. Google Ads' interface is also full of search volume data about keywords specific to your industry and your specific products. You can use this data to inform your PPC campaigns, but you can also use it to supercharge your other digital marketing activities.

PPC is great for building brand awareness

Because PPC works so well as a direct response channel, its power as a branding tool is often be overlooked. A large part of building awareness for your brand simply involves exposing your brand name and logo to as many people as possible. There are various theories out there claiming that people need to see a brand several times before they become a known entity and are given a certain level of trust. Trust is an important part of every user's journey to your digital checkout. If they don't trust you, they will shop elsewhere.

This is where the display advertising part of PPC comes in, as display advertisements are

significantly cheaper than paid search advertising. This is because paid search advertising includes a certain amount of intention by the user to find a product, so the chances of conversion are much higher and the cost per click reflects this.

For display advertising, all you're doing is getting little ads (with an image and some text) onto various websites and videos within Google's display network. The best part is that you only pay for what users click on — not what they see — so you may be getting the brand exposure you need for free in some cases.

What you should know before starting your first PPC campaign

There are plenty of factors to consider before you start your first PPC ad campaign:

Set your budget

Decide on a budget you're comfortable with and align this to seasonality. For example, travel searches explode after Christmas, when people start thinking about booking their holidays, and the summer months see spikes in searches for last-minute deals. Every business will have nuances to their seasonality, so make sure you not only know your busy periods but also your lead times, as you want to show your ads to people when they're researching, not just when they're ready to book.

Set your goals

You must know what you're looking to achieve with your campaign. Is it a specific number of enquiries or bookings per month? Do you want phone calls, newsletter signups? Is there a certain cost per conversion you want to achieve? Understand your goals first because they will affect how you set up and manage your campaigns.

Research is key

Lucky for you, I have already covered these items in previous sections... However, I'll briefly cover how they relate to PPC.

Keyword research — Find the most relevant keywords people are typing into the search engines to find your product. Plan to spend quite a few hours on this; it's the foundation of your campaign, and your entire marketing strategy.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Competitive research — Study the companies bidding on these keywords. SEMRush can provide a ballpark figure of what your competitors have spent over a period of time. Watch who is consistently ranking at or near the top of search results. Take a note of their ad content, click on the ads to view the landing pages, sign up for their mailing lists. And, if you can, purchase their products to see how their sales funnels work.

Research your audience — Where are customers buying and reviewing products like yours? Check your customer personas that you have created. Read competitor reviews. What do they love or hate about your competition? What are their desires? While researching them, look for great quotes you can use for ad copy.

Your landing page is massively important

Did you know Google Ads have a quality score of 1-10? Google takes into account the ad you create and the keywords you are targeting, but it also looks at the landing page of that ad. In fact, the landing page is around 40% of your overall quality score.

Quality score is important as the higher the score you receive, the lower the cost per click (CPC) you need to pay, meaning you get more bang for your buck.

Your landing page must be relevant and specific to the product you are advertising. Don't simply send customers to a homepage of a list of all your tours, send them to a specific product. Here are some things to consider:

- Is your content original and unique to your landing page?
- Do you give enough information to be considered trustworthy? Business address, phone number, and social media profile links should be present.
- Do you make it easy to navigate and to make a purchase?
- Does your landing page allow the Google bot to easily crawl your text?
- Is your landing page quick to load?

If you cover these basics then you are in a prime position to increase your quality score.

Use exact match keywords

If you are just starting out with Google Ads, keep your keyword list to a minimum. 5-10 keywords should be enough to keep you and your ads focused. Add these keywords to your campaign as Exact Match keywords. This means that your ads will only show when

someone types that exact term in Google. Over time, you can eliminate the keywords that aren't converting well and expand on the ones that are converting.

For example, if 'Food Tour Glasgow' works well, add more Exact Match variations of it to the campaign. Do this by pairing the word "food tour" with post/zip codes, nearby cities, and by using variations like "food tours near Glasgow" and "Food Tours in Glasgow".

Create ad groups

Ad groups contain your keywords, the messaging for your ad and the landing pages customers will be directed to when clicking on an ad. Google watches your customers' interactions closely and displays ads it feels are more relevant to that individual customer based on their position in the purchase journey.

Ad groups help you structure your campaigns to maximise the effectiveness and profitability of those ads. To do that, your ad groups need to be focused on specific keywords and audiences.

For example, say you offer food, cycling, and boat tours (extreme, I know, but I'm trying to make a point). If one of your customers is only looking specifically for food tours, they are not interested in your other products so an ad group stops irrelevant ads displaying to that customer.

Segment your ads

Search is different to a Display Network campaign. Mobile traffic can be vastly different than desktop or even tablet users. One destination is different from another. Segment the types of traffic that are most important to you into their own campaigns. Give them their own budgets, landing pages, keywords, etc.

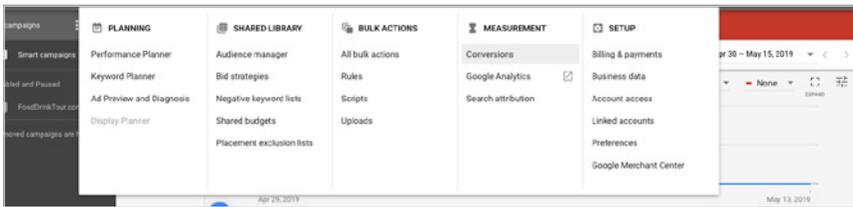
Keep an eye on your ads each day

Track and monitor your results on a daily basis. Did you receive the conversions you wanted? Is one ad group converting better than another? If phone calls are what you're after, use a call tracking service (more on this later).compare your results on a regular basis and make the necessary adjustments to your campaign.

Setting up Google Ads Conversion Tracking

Setting up conversion tracking will involve generating more HTML code that will be placed on your website, so ask your developers or marketing agencies to help you. To enable conversion tracking you will need to click on the spanner icon and switch to the advanced mode.

Once in the advanced mode, click the spanner icon and select 'Conversions' under the Measurement section then click the +Conversion button to create your first conversion.



You will then be asked what kind of conversions you want to track. Your choices are:

Webpage — If you want customers to complete an action on your webpage, such as an online purchase, contact form submission, or page visit.

Call on-site — If you want customers to call the phone number on your site from a mobile device. (More on this in the Call Tracking Section)

App download — If you want customers to download your app.

Import — Allows you to upload conversions from other systems, similar to Facebook custom audiences.

For this guide, we will select 'Webpage'.

You will now be asked to select a conversion action, sign up, lead, page view or purchase. I will select, purchase. Give the conversion a name and set the value of this conversion (how much your tour costs).

1/2 > Your ads aren't running. To resume serving ads, please verify your payment method.

1 Create an action — 2 Set up the tag — 3 What's next

Create your website conversion action

After you set up your conversion action, you'll get a conversion tracking tag that you will need to install on your website. [Learn about what's required in the Ads Help Center](#)

<p>Category</p> <p>Select the action you'd like to track</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Purchase A person buys your product or service</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Lead A person interested in your product or service shares contact information</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Page-View A person views a particular page on your website</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Sign-up A person registers for an event or newsletter</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other</p>	<p>You can use these categories to segment your campaign reports.</p>
<p>Conversion name</p> <p>West End Tour Promo</p> <p>19 / 100</p>	<p>Example: "June newsletter sign-ups", "Manager job applications", or "Big cookie sales"</p>
<p>Value</p> <p>Measure the impact of your advertising by giving conversions a value</p> <p><input checked="" type="radio"/> Use the same value for each conversion Each time a conversion happens, the same value is recorded. Enter the value that should be used for this conversion British Pound (GBP £) → 50</p>	<p>If you track leads, enter the average value from each lead.</p> <p>If you only sell one type of product, enter the value of each sale. For example, if you sell only one product for \$25, assign a value of \$25. For each <small>other conversion type, you will need to...</small></p>

For count, go by what Google recommends. In this case, it is 'every' click. Once done, 'click and continue'.

You will now be asked to set up the code to be placed on your site. As we set up our Google Tag Manager previously, select this option and click 'next'.

You're done! Easy.

Summary

Google ads are an extremely powerful tool when done right. One of my own customers generated over €2.4 million in sales within a year directly from Google Ads, accounting for 22% of their entire online sales for that period. I was proud of my team's achievements and the client was suitably impressed, as you can imagine.

Feel free to try and experiment with Google Ads as you will get a better understanding of it and even failing at it will help you learn, allowing you to eventually turn Google Ads into a platform that works for you. Just promise yourself that you will monitor it daily, so you don't blow your entire marketing budget.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP THIRTY FOUR

ABANDONMENT CART STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Cart abandonment happens. You spend time and money driving customers to your website and these customers add items to their cart and then they don't complete the purchase. A study by Optinmonser revealed that around 75% of customers will abandon their carts. This does not mean, however, that the sale is gone for good. They may simply be looking to discuss their purchase with a family member or friend, or to look at your reviews before making the final decision.

There are some great ways you can decrease your abandonment rates, and I'd like to offer several strategies below.

Your online point of sale needs to offer a positive experience for the customer: simple, speedy, and secure — Base your online checkout process around these three qualities.

Help the customer to make the purchase quickly — Make your checkout process a one-form, one-step process. It means that customers won't need to wait on multiple pages reloading and they will feel that the process is quick.

Indicate what stage of the checkout process they are at — It's a good idea to have a step indicator on your page to show what stage they are at in the check-out process. People will be reassured that they are moving through the process at pace.

Make any form filling painless — From billing details to personal details – always, always make your online forms easy and error free. Ask as few questions as possible as you can always ask for more information after the sale.

Have a clear call to action at each step — Help customers understand what you need them to do at every stage. Have a clear and visible call to action. For example: 'Please enter billing details', or 'Please enter your delivery address details'.

Think about returning customers — Ensure repeat customers don't have to enter their delivery details on every visit. Encourage guests to register at a later date so they can make their next visit even quicker.

Manage expectations — Always be up front about the price. Make this clear as soon as the item is viewed and selected. And make sure that there are no surprises during the checkout process.

Dangle a digital carrot — Introducing promotional codes can be advantageous. As can the offer of free shipping and delivery, or other discounts. Each of these offers will maintain your customer's attention and will encourage them to process their basket (more on this in a moment).

Show your safety and security credentials — Online shopping is now part of our everyday life, but you are only ever as good as your last sale, and you need to reassure customers that your site is safe and secure. Show your credentials clearly.

Offer help throughout the process — Have your contact details and a list of easy-to-read frequently asked questions visible so customers can either contact you or read the FAQ themselves if they need to.

Live chat is even better! — My experience has shown that having a live chat function on your website will really help secure a sale or process a basket.

Immediately follow up the sale with a confirmation email — Reassure the customer that the sale has gone through with a fast-loading confirmation page. Then, immediately send them an email confirming the sale and tour dates/details. Again, include contact details.

Putting these steps into practise on your website will definitely help you avoid a portion of your basket abandonment.

Automated strategies

You can have the best performing website and booking process in the world, but some customers will still abandon the purchase. To help persuade them to come back (or not leave), there are tools available to help retain that customer and make the sale. These tools are paid, however.

You have probably seen them. A window will pop up on the website as you are about to leave, offering a discount code if you make a booking. These can be very powerful and help you capture these extra sales. However, a tweak to this method is far more effective and gives you greater marketing opportunities. This is called an abandoned cart email strategy.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

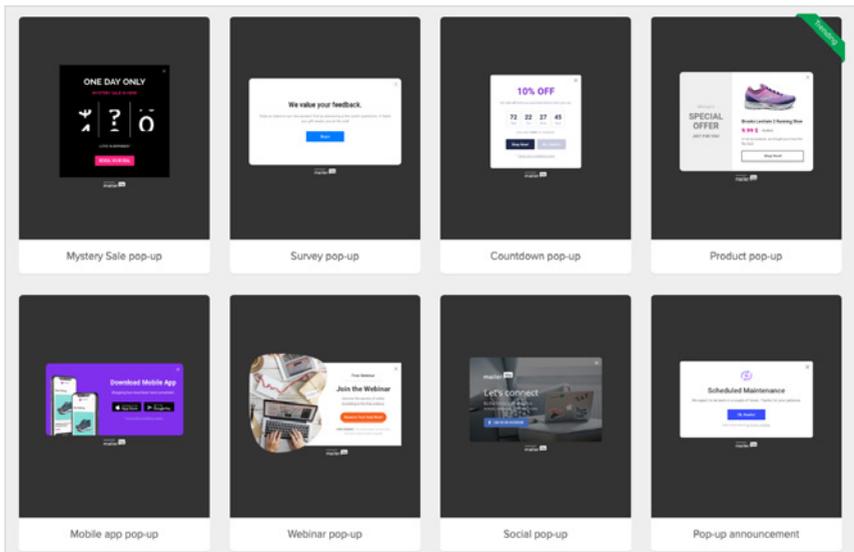
Abandoned cart email strategy

This strategy is similar to the one described above, but with one key difference. Your customer will still see a pop-up offering a discount on your site as they are about to abandon a purchase, but the difference is that they must enter an email address to receive that code.

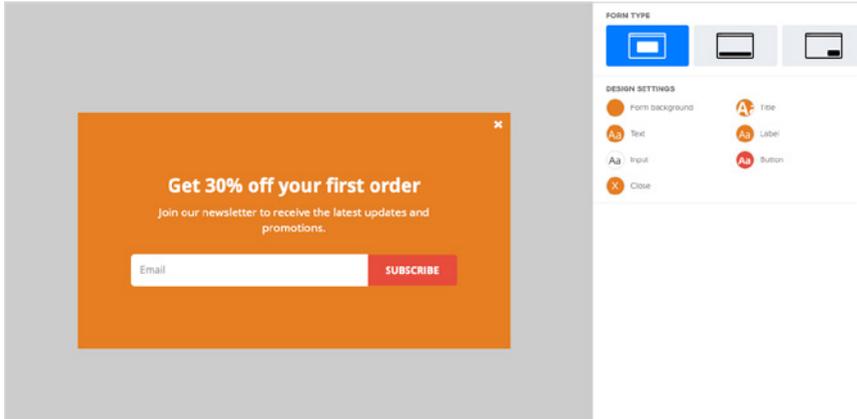
This gives the customer the code to persuade them to make the sale while giving you an email address that you can add to your email campaigns (if they opt in) or to your Facebook Ad audiences. For me, this is far more valuable in the long run and worth a 10% discount.

Optinmonster, <https://optinmonster.com>, is a great tool for anyone taking their abandoned cart email strategy seriously. Optinmonster provides many tools and templates that you can choose from. However, MailerLite can also do this for you with their popups option. Let me show you how to set this up:

Click 'Create Popup' under the promotions tab and give it an appropriate name. Once saved, you will be asked to select the list you want these signups to go into. Do so and continue.



You will now be presented with a few template options. For this walkthrough, I will use the 'E-commerce' template. You will be presented with this:



Notice how you can change the pop-up to be in the centre of your website, to the right bottom corner or as a bar along the footer of your website. Choose whichever you feel works best for your website.

I would also advise that you only ask for an email address here as your customers are more inclined to sign up for the code.

Click the main text area and add in your headline and supporting content. Make it fun and approachable. Save this.

Click into Settings' and select 'Confirmation checkbox' to allow them to opt-in. This is very important for GDPR.

Click on the email field and change the button text to something appropriate. Choose an action for this button. Once you are happy, click 'Next'.

You now have various options as to when this pop-up will display. Feel free to play about with this, but I will set this to 'Show before closing page'. You can set how frequently the customer will see the message. Set this to anything other than daily, as a daily pop-up will only annoy people.

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Choose when you want to show the popup.

Wait seconds before showing the popup

Show when user scrolls to

Show before closing page

Frequency

Set the period when you want to show the popup to the same user again if he or she didn't subscribe.

Visibility

Set which pages and/or devices to show pop-up.

Show always

Hide on specific pages:

Only show on specific pages:

List URL of each page in separate line

Apply strict equality

Hide on desktop

Hide on mobile devices

Hide on tablet devices

Visibility is very important. If you like, you can have this pop-up display no matter what page(s) they are on, but I would set this to specific pages prior to a successful purchase, like your main products or checkout pages. You even get the option to show on a particular device.

Once you are happy with the set-up, save and continue to get the code for your website. Copy this and place it into your Google Tag Manager to make it live on your site. Now you just watch your email lists and hopefully bookings will increase!

The image shows a preview of a popup form on the left and its design settings on the right. The popup has an orange background and contains the following text: "Have A Tasty Treat On Us", "Before we start putting our cooking utensils away, enter your email below to receive £5 off any tour with us.", an "Email" input field with a red warning icon, a "GET MY TASTY TREAT" button, and a checkbox for "Opt in to receive news and updates." The design settings panel on the right includes: "DESIGN SETTINGS", "Form background" (orange circle), "Text" (Aa icon), "Confirmation" (checkmark icon), "Button" (Aa icon), "Title" (A icon), "Label" (Ap icon), "Input" (Aa icon), and "Close" (X icon).

WORKSHOP THIRTY FIVE

COMPETITION STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

Running competitions and giving away prizes are just a couple of the top reasons people engage with brands on Facebook and other social platforms. Your goal with a competition is to drive new leads and increase engagement with your target audience but it is also a sure-fire way to quickly build up your marketing lists, build brand awareness, and maybe pick up a few sales along the way.

I have just shown you how to create an abandonment cart pop-up, but you could also use this same tool to promote a competition to your website visitors to entice them to enter. You do, however, need to have a prize that makes the competition worth entering.

The prize offering

Any prize you offer should relate to your business. It should be about your products and your destination. Let's look at an example:

FoodDrinkTour Competition

FoodDrinkTour are about to run a competition, offering a free flight for two to Scotland with a West End food tour and a cooking class with a top chef. Everyone who enters will also receive a 10% discount code to use on any tour.

I can hear some of you now thinking that this is an expensive competition – but is it really? Let's weigh up the costs and the benefits:

- Flights (including return three days later) — £350 per person
- Tour — £50 per person
- Cooking Class — £100 per person
- Facebook Ad budget — £500 for the month

So you can run this competition for around £1500 for two people, depending on where that customer is flying in from. Let the customer sort out their own accommodation. If you wish, you can always put a top value of up to £300 per person and the customer pays the rest, just mention this in your competition T&Cs.

Let's now run through the benefits of what that £1500 can bring your business:

- **Brand awareness** — Running a competition like this will raise the profile and awareness of your brand.
- **PR opportunities** — Get your local press involved to spread your story.
- **Build your marketing lists** — Quickly build your marketing lists and potential.
- **Increase your social followers** — If you are running an ad to promote this tour on Facebook, you will probably see an increase in followers which, in turn, increases your marketing reach.
- **Story-driven content** — Why not create a video diary of the winners' time at your destination. In fact, I would make this stipulation part of the competition. The winners must provide photos and video of their time which they share with you so that you can use this as a marketing opportunity. Or you can have someone in your team follow them around on the tour.
- **Testimonials & reviews** — This can obviously go either way but you must bend over backwards for the winners, making their time with you an experience to remember. In turn, ask them for a review.
- **Extra bookings** — For those who did not win, they may still book a tour with you as they can use that handy 10% discount code you gave them.

These are just some of the benefits a competition can bring your business. A well-run competition — even with an expensive prize — can work out cheaper, and bring a better ROI, than a standard digital marketing campaign. Even if you only received 200 sign ups. That is only £7.50 per lead to potentially receive the sort of exposure than you can usually only dream of.

If you don't go to this type of expense, think about what types of prizes you can offer. For example, you can run a daily competition to win a day tour that you run at a specific time of the day on Facebook or Instagram. This could involve answering a specific question that relates to your product or destination. It shouldn't be too easy, but still easy enough that everyone can enter. The first person to provide the correct answer wins a tour on that day.

This is a fun way to engage your audience without the need to run ads as you can do this for potential customers in-destination. In fact, I would run an ad to promote the daily competition to build up your Facebook or Instagram followers. Whatever you offer as a prize, just make it something that the winners can experience that is part of your business.

Competition types

Here is a brief overview to help you decide what other types of competitions you can run:

Like-to-Win Contests — This is the simplest type of competition to run because you're simply asking people to follow your account and like a post.

Recommend A Friend — In this, followers are asked to leave a comment and tag a friend in your post for a chance to win.

Post a Picture, or Selfie or Video — Ask your customers to post a picture or video while on tour, using an appropriate hashtag. This is a good way to build image and video libraries that you can use in future marketing campaigns. You must stipulate that you will do this in your T&Cs.

Ask a Question — Ask your customers a question related to your business. Like 'what is your favourite food'.

Vote to Win — Ask your customers to upload a photo or video to enter a competition and ask your customers and social followers to vote on their favourite. Great for increasing engagement.

Caption Contest — Post an image and ask your customers to add a caption to it. This can result in some hilarious results and it adds a sense of fun to the proceedings.

Challenge Contest — Come up with a challenge that your customers and followers must meet. FoodDrinkTour could challenge people to an eating contest, for example.

Whatever option you decide, it must be fun and engaging for your audience.

Competition rules on Facebook and other platforms

To make sure your business page doesn't get suspended, you must follow the guidelines and rules Facebook and other platforms stipulate. For most platforms, as well as a general rule, you must..

- Make it clear that there is no purchase necessary.
- Tell entrants that making a purchase does not increase their chances of winning.

- Tell entrants when the contest begins, ends, and how long it will run.
- Tell when and how a winner will be chosen by spelling out the judging criteria for the contest.
- Explain who is running or administering the competition.
- Clearly describe the prizes. This is important, since many territories require clear descriptions of prizes. Go onto as much detail as possible.
- Include in your terms that you can use any user-generated content that is needed for the contest, as well as future marketing campaigns.
- State that the competition is void where prohibited.
- Make sure Facebook, or the platform you are using, is in no way a sponsor.
- Purchasing a lotto ticket to enter a competition is NOT allowed.

Carefully reading the rules when running a competition on a platform like Facebook takes a bit of extra time and consideration. It can mean jumping through a few more hoops than simply posting a competition on your page. However, it's very important that you take the time to make sure that you are following the rules. Otherwise, your business account could be suspended, or worse!

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP THIRTY SIX

SEO STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

SEO, or Search Engine Optimisation, is the term used to describe the process of influencing the visibility of websites and web pages in unpaid online search engine results. The traffic gained through this is often referred to as 'organic' traffic.

Organic searches are crucially important, as the searchers are actively seeking specific terms, so if you can rank highly for the correct search terms, your website will gain more traffic.

SEO has evolved in recent years, with updates to algorithms used by popular search engines meaning that a much wider variety of factors contribute to the ranking of a website or page within a search engine results page (SERP).

Gone are the days when great content, descriptive tags, and relevant links would have your website ranking highly in searches; nowadays, page loading speed, quality of backlinks and mobile optimisation are all additional factors Google considers when determining the ranking of your page.

Writing to optimise your placement with relevant search terms and keywords will increase your chances of being ranked higher and, ultimately, gaining more website traffic, but all affecting factors must be considered to ensure as high a ranking as possible.

If you have great content but are not optimised for mobile viewing, mobile users won't stick around on your pages for long. In an age where more and more sales are being made through mobile devices, this factor should be embraced.

You must also keep in mind that whilst your key recipient will be humans, search engines will also 'read' the content. Therefore, it must be adjusted appropriately for the search engines to understand. In the section, 'Keyword Research & Content Audit' I provided lots of information that will go a long way to helping you in this regard, showing you how to construct the perfect blog.

What is Google trying to achieve?

Understanding Google's motives is key to understanding SEO; after all, what we're really trying to do with SEO is get Google's attention. Ultimately, Google is trying to encourage people to use its search engine over all of the others. If it achieves this, it can continue to sell ads and make inordinate amounts of money.

The more people use Google, the more money it can make from its ads. Google has spent a lot of time and money developing an algorithm that reads websites and categorises them in relation to words or phrases people might search for them.

Google has more users than any other search engine because it provides users with more relevant, higher-quality websites in its results pages than its competitors. And it's Google's on-going attempt to provide high-quality websites relevant to a user's search query that sits at the heart of SEO.

SEO involves giving Google what it wants

Ignoring all of the confusing jargon, SEO can be viewed as simply giving Google what it wants to give its users: a good website relevant to what they're searching for.

For example, if you're selling whisky tours in Scotland, then your website (and a specific page, really) has to be clearly, unambiguously, about whisky experiences in Scotland.

You can achieve this best by placing some version of the term 'whisky tours in Scotland' in the meta title (the text that appears in the SERP or on your tab), the page heading (the H1), some of the subheadings (H2), and dotted throughout the body of content on the page. Think of each keyword as a Post-it note for Google, telling it exactly what the page is about — reminding Google at each level of the page that it is about whisky tours in Scotland.

Google also ranks the quality of the writing and is clever and nuanced enough to reward a website with well-written content full of industry-specific vocabulary. Put simply, if you ensure that your website talks explicitly about 'whisky tours' and that the content is full of relevant information, Google will notice this and it will reward you for it.

SEO & content highlights

Allow me to highlight some more points that will not only boost your SEO but the readability of your content...

Be clear and concise

Keep your content clear and concise and ensure your content flows. Try to avoid long, drawn-out sentences. But do ensure the key ideas are emphasised and maintain a definite focus to the content you're writing. Tangents, or parenthesis, will often distract

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

and they will likely cause readers to become uninterested. For four pages, consider using bullet points to emphasise key info higher up the page, adding more detailed information further down. Grab the reader's attention with the bulleted info.

Subheadings

To maintain reader focus, make use of subheadings (H2, H3, H4) to group paragraphs into specific topics. Using these types of subheading makes it easier for search engines to read your pages. Doing this will also allow your reader to easily identify the information they are looking for, improving readability. Walls of text are not user friendly. Clearly label each section with a subheading.

Formatting

Avoid unnecessary formatting. Using excessive bold, italic, or underlined text has the potential to make your content appear messy, unprofessional, and it may also confuse readers.

Tone of voice

The tone of voice must be reader focused and it must be consistent. Get it wrong and readers will disengage. Know your customers, know your readers, but, most importantly, know your brand and promote it well through the tone of voice used in your content.

Spelling and grammar

Your online page content is what represents you as a brand. For many customers it may be their first reference point for your brand and first impressions are very important. Content that includes spelling and/or grammatical errors can easily put someone off spending any more time on your page.

Spelling and grammar mistakes will come across as unprofessional, and that's the last thing you want potential customers to think about your brand. Are they going to book with a company whose content pages are littered with typos and poor grammar? Unlikely.

Always proofread and double check content, then have it looked over by someone else. Don't assume that the first copy (or the second, for that matter) will be perfect. Try to proofread from the intended reader's point of view. Ask yourself if the article is relevant

for the user's needs? Has it provided the information it was intended to?

Linking structure

A well-implemented internal linking structure will benefit both the search engines and the users who have landed on your page. Internal links will alert search engines to the important pages on your website. For tour companies, the tour pages themselves will be the most important, as this is where customer decisions are made and bookings are placed, so always link these from relevant blog articles.

This will also direct users to relevant pages, improving their experience and supplementing their search behaviour. In turn, this will result in an increased number of page views across the website.

Try to spread your links evenly throughout the page, and to maintain readability by not overdoing the internal links. A good rule of thumb is to include around one link per 100-150 words, and to always ensure the links are relevant to the content and useful to the user. Don't link out to something totally unrelated to the content's focus.

Links should also open in a new tab, keeping the reader on your site and on the page they chose to visit. If they click a link that they then find irrelevant — and this has opened in the same tab as the page they have landed on — they are likely to click close, rather than clicking back to the previous page.

Anchor text

When linking within text, the text that becomes clickable is known as anchor text. This text should be simple and relevant to the destination page whilst remaining understandable to both your human readers and the search engine algorithms. If you are targeting the key phrase 'Food Tour Glasgow', for example, the anchor text reads better as 'Private Food Tours in Glasgow'.

Unique content

The internet is awash with an infinite amount of online resources and content, so you need to set yours apart from the rest. Ensure your content is relevant and unique, but also beneficial and engaging for the reader. Unique content has a number of benefits:

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- **Creates authority** — Boost your reputation as an industry expert by creating content that is original and well researched. This authoritative voice will help to expand your customer base, while also building brand trust and loyalty. You want people to keep coming back for more.
- **Drive organic traffic** — Unique content will help to drive organic traffic to your website. Simply reposting old content or creating similar content to other websites will not set you apart and you'll be lost in the sea of available online content. Make your content stand out from the rest.
- **Build reputable links** — Having external sites linking back to your pages is great; however, gone are the days when building links with just anyone will rank your pages higher. Search engines take the domain authority of the sites linking back to your content into account when determining the legitimacy and relevance of your pages. They also take the relevancy of the linking domain to your own website. Unique, well written content is much more likely to be picked up by sites with higher domain authorities, meaning any backlinks will reflect better in the search engine algorithm evaluation of your site.

Page titles

This is the most significant piece of information in a search engine results page (SERP) and it should be a strong, relevant summary of the page content, encouraging users to click through to the page from the SERP. Page titles, or title tags, will have an impact on both user interaction and search engine performance, so get them right and try to best match a user's search query with the relevance of your webpages.

Meta descriptions

Your page title will grab the user's attention, the meta description will give them the information they need to determine if your webpage is indeed relevant to their search.

A strong page title is great, but without an equally strong and relevant meta description, users will not click. Meta descriptions are not an SEO ranking factor, however they are important for improving click through from SERPs.

A call to action in your meta description is crucial. The aim here is to encourage click through, and a call to action alerts the user that there is an opportunity to make a purchase on the page they are clicking onto.

Page structure

When it comes to websites and ranking on search engines, I have seen many small tour operators add all their products on one page with a brief summary of each tour. This makes it nearly impossible for Google to rank these pages as it will contain a wide range of different keywords and phrases.

If your site has this structure (or lack of structure), it's essential that you make each product a separate page containing its own unique content and keywords. This will have a much better chance of ranking.

Compress your images

As your website grows in size, you will undoubtedly add more images, videos, and media. These visual assets are great at retaining your visitors' attention, but all the file sizes add up and can slow down your website if not optimised properly.

Sites like TinyPNG, <https://tinypng.com>, make it easy to compress images in bulk. However, I personally prefer Google's own Squoosh service, <https://squoosh.app>, as it can dramatically reduce images to amazingly small sizes while retaining very high quality.

How long does it take to rank #1 on Google?

This is a question I get asked a lot. Let me be up-front: getting to position one for a competitive term on Google will be near impossible for most as you will be competing against the likes of Wikipedia and other large, content-heavy websites that have probably been running for years. That is not to say it never happens.

SEO tool Ahrefs', <https://ahrefs.com>, conducted a study where they took two million random keywords and pulled data on the top 10 ranking pages for each of them. Here are some highlights from the report:

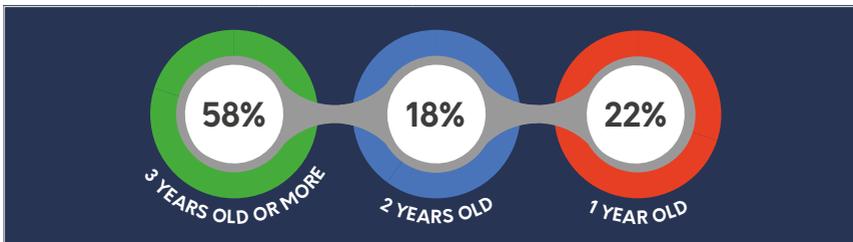
Page age

First off, Ahrefs tried to find out how old the current top-ranking pages on Google are.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE



As you can see, most pages that rank on the first page (top 10) are two years old. Pages that are ranked #1 are three years old. In fact, Just 22% of pages that have managed to rank on Google's first page (top 10 ranking) are one year old or younger.



Now, let's break down the top ten ranking pages by domain rating...



It's clear that high domain authority (DA) pages rank far better on Google than pages with a low DA. (Domain authority measures how popular and trustworthy search engines consider your website.)

So, what does this all tell us? It tells us that organic SEO, while important in the long run, will take many months and possibly years before you rank on the first page. It requires you to publish a steady stream of good, valuable content. And this is hard work, with very few ways to cut corners.

Some home truths

I am going to tell you some home truths. I can say this with some authority as I run a marketing agency.

Any agency who says they guarantee number one, or even top-10 rankings on Google, are lying to you. No one can guarantee this. If we could, we would all be doing it.

They are also lying if they say you need to optimise your content on a monthly basis. Once you have optimised your existing content for your chosen keywords, leave it. Yes, monitor how the pages are ranking and make tweaks accordingly but I would only make changes to existing content every 4-6 months as you need to give Google time to properly index your pages. Once you have optimised your content, adding new optimised content should be your strategy going forward.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

WORKSHOP THIRTY SEVEN

CALL-TRACKING STRATEGIES



BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

You may be wondering what call-tracking strategies are doing in a digital marketing book.

In the world of digital marketing, one aspect that seems to be forgotten, or left as an afterthought, is a good old-fashioned phone call. But phone calls are as important as they have ever been.

Some customers may just need that extra bit of reassurance that they have made the right decision — and speaking to someone on the phone can put them at ease. However, I feel it is more powerful as a customer service opportunity.

When someone books a tour with you, call them to say thanks. This also gives you an opportunity to help them further by suggesting other places they should visit that are not products you sell. This helps add value and the customer will remember that you took the time to help them. It can also help you with upsell/cross-sell opportunities.

According to a report by Invoca, <https://www.invoca.com/call-data/>, 65% of customers find it more convenient to contact businesses by phone; this contrasts with only 24% who prefer to fill out a web form. That is why any digital marketing strategy must combine data for offline call conversions and web-based conversions. The combination of both shows a clearer picture of business and online advertising performance.

But you can't track calls, right?

Well you can and it is a powerful tool when combined with your other marketing analytics.

Call tracking allows you to see who has called you, which marketing campaign they came from, and what keywords they used. Some services will even record the call too.

How it works

Basically, your customers will be presented with a unique phone number that directs them to your actual phone number. The caller is tracked during their interaction with your business as your website will also contain a tracking code from these services.

When they call you, you can see what they are already interested in as the analytics will tell you what product pages they have been on. It will even show which keyword they used to arrive on your site. If you find that keyword is used a lot, use it in ads and for your SEO strategies.

Call tracking allows you to examine the referral value of your website's landing pages more fully, revealing which pages drive the greatest results and which ones are struggling.

Improve your sales team & processes

With most paid services, you can listen back to conversations you and your sales teams have had. By recording phone calls, you're able to determine how effective your sales process is, helping you identify improvements. You will also be able to better qualify leads and determine which customers require that little bit more hand holding in order to make a purchase on your site.

There are a few tools you can use, some are free, but the main ones are all paid services. However, if you receive a lot of calls or want to add more value to your customers, it is worth the additional cost.

Call tracking tools

There is a whole host of tools available out there. A Google search will provide plenty of options for you, but here are two I recommend:

Google Ads

Using Google Ads' Conversion Tracking tool*, you can set up and display a phone number on your website to customers who came to your site from a Google Ad. This will show you which search keywords are driving the most calls and it will provide performance breakdowns by demographics and location. It will also demonstrate your placement's general positioning in search results.

**See my Google Ad section on page 338 on setting up Google Ads Conversion Tracking.*

Callrail — <https://www.callrail.com>

Callrail was built specifically for marketing campaigns. Callrail helps you record calls originating from both traditional and online advertising.

Callrail will provide campaign tracking, keyword and visitor tracking, call recording, live call dashboard, custom call flows, conversation intelligence, Google Analytics integration, Google AdWords integration, and live call monitoring.

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

It offers a free 14-day trial with plans starting from \$30/month at time of writing.

Which to choose?

Whether you're a one-man band or have a full team behind you, call tracking provides many powerful features that help you track the success of your marketing campaigns to ultimately improve booking rates. It allows you to monitor customer behaviour to gain a better understanding of your target audience which can inform future marketing communications.

Feel free to select either one of these or any other you come across. If you are unsure or just want try it, start with the Google option only IF you intend to run Google Ads. If you don't intend to run Google Ads and you still wish to track all your calls and monitor good your sales team is, you can't go wrong with Callrail.

SECTION CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explained how easy it is to create a massive amount of content ideas from what is around you. I have shown you how to use these ideas in blogs, videos, Facebook ads, email list building campaigns, and SEO strategies. I have also shown you how to generate ideas from the many free tools online.

Even if you still struggle to come up with and implement ideas of your own, I hope you will use the knowledge gained from this section to better inform yourself when talking to marketing agencies. Having a greater level of understanding will make the process of working with an agency a lot smoother, empowering you to be assertive and challenge the agency's methods.

Now, go forth and start telling the world how amazing your brand is!

BECOME A CREATIVE CONTENT MACHINE

SECTION FIVE

IMPLEMENTATION

BEST METHOD FOR SETTING YOUR MARKETING BUDGET

You now have the tools, the means, the content, and the desire (I hope) to kick your marketing up a few gears but before you do, we have a couple more steps to cover and the first one involves setting your marketing budget.

Any budget should be a percentage of your overall revenue and I recommend a starting budget of 7%. This obviously assumes that your business currently generates revenue.

If you are just starting out in business, then I would suggest spending as much as you can in your first 12 months. If you really do not have any money for marketing, then the only route for you is to forget paid advertising and use many of the free organic methods I have mentioned in this book. This will take longer but as you make sales, set aside some of that revenue for paid marketing further down the line.

Being a business owner myself, I had a second job at the early stages of my business and that money was used to help give me a marketing budget. Do whatever it takes to build up your tour business; it's worth the effort and the sacrifice.

Let's say each one of your tours is £\$€50 and you make 1 sale per day (hopefully more). That gives you a 31-day monthly revenue of £\$€1,550 so your monthly marketing budget would be £\$€108. Not a lot, but you must start somewhere.

The good thing about sticking to a percentage is that your budget goes up or down depending on the revenue at the time. This model gives you the flexibility and peace of mind that you have this money set aside and that it will not cause you cash flow issues if you make no sales that day.

In the download section, I have included a handy marketing budget calculator you can use to work out what your spend should be.



WORKSHOP THIRTY EIGHT

CREATING A MARKETING CALENDAR & TIMELINE



Downloadable
worksheets
available

IMPLEMENTATION

Before posting any content, you need to have your marketing strategy written down in a calendar/timeline format as this will help you keep track of who is responsible for what content and how much content you can realistically produce. Without one, your strategy will end up being an incoherent mess.

To avoid this, you need to create a marketing calendar to make your brand communications tangible and visible. Then it's far easier to hold people accountable for them.

A well-organised marketing calendar identifies who is responsible for each individual marketing strategy. If your business allows, I recommend that you assign one person to manage the content marketing calendar itself, keeping it up to date, maintaining its structure, and ensuring that deadlines are not missed. This person will become your go-to if you have any questions. It also helps you plan and track upcoming marketing initiatives. You should schedule blog posts and ad campaigns at least a month in advance, giving you and your team time to prepare. As I advised earlier, create content at least a month in advance. Once created, your marketing calendar will help set the path your brand will take.

It will also allow you to see how individual marketing efforts work together. For example, does a blog post tie in with a local event? Taking the time to contemplate and plan a marketing calendar helps keep you organised and it allows you to maximise your marketing efforts — not necessarily by working harder, but by working smarter.

Tools you can use

Creating a marketing calendar may seem overwhelming — especially if you're planning a strategy an entire year in advance. However, there are many tools you can use to create your strategy calendars. Google Calendars and/or Google Sheets are a simple, free way to do this. If you are a small business with only 1-3 staff, a Post-It Note wall can also work well.

I like to use a tool called Airtable, <https://airtable.com>, as it is a highly flexible way of creating and viewing your marketing schedules. Tesla even use Airtable to track inventory of vehicles as they leave the factory. It provides a free version with paid versions starting at \$10 per month.

At first, Airtable may seem like a glorified spreadsheet — and in a way it is — but this is just a small part of it. It can store information in a spreadsheet that's visually appealing

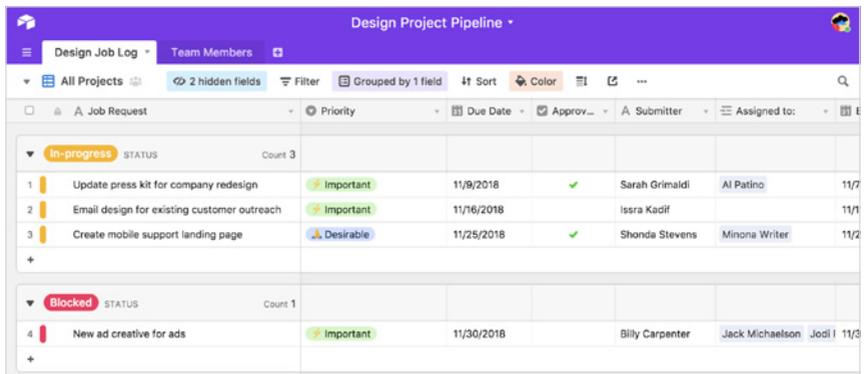
CREATING A MARKETING CALENDAR & TIMELINE

and easy-to-use, but it's also powerful enough to act as a database that businesses can use for customer-relationship management (CRM), task management, project planning, and tracking inventory.

Airtable has both paid and free options as well as a whole host of ready-to-use templates that allow you to get stuck in. There are templates for marketing campaigns, content calendars, video production, and many more.

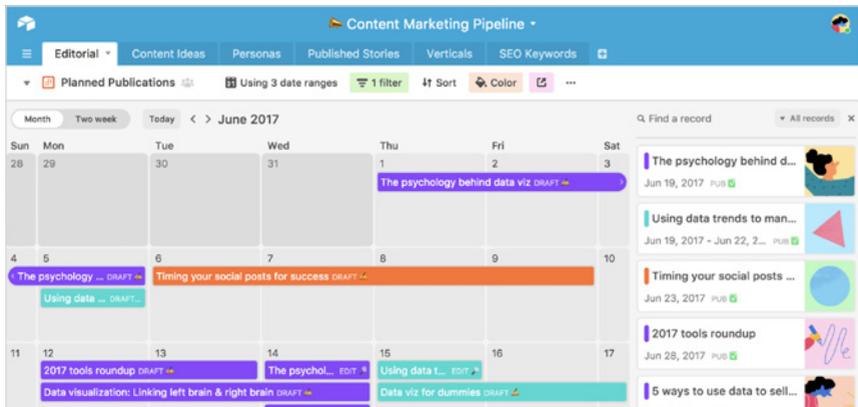
What I love about Airtable is that you can view your data in many formats, including...

Grid View



	Job Request	Priority	Due Date	Approv...	Submitter	Assigned to:	
In-progress STATUS		Count 3					
1	Update press kit for company redesign	Important	11/9/2018	✓	Sarah Grimaldi	Al Patino	11/7
2	Email design for existing customer outreach	Important	11/16/2018		Issra Kadif		11/1
3	Create mobile support landing page	Desirable	11/25/2018	✓	Shonda Stevens	Minona Writer	11/2
Blocked STATUS		Count 1					
4	New ad creative for ads	Important	11/30/2018		Billy Carpenter	Jack Michaelson Jodi	11/3

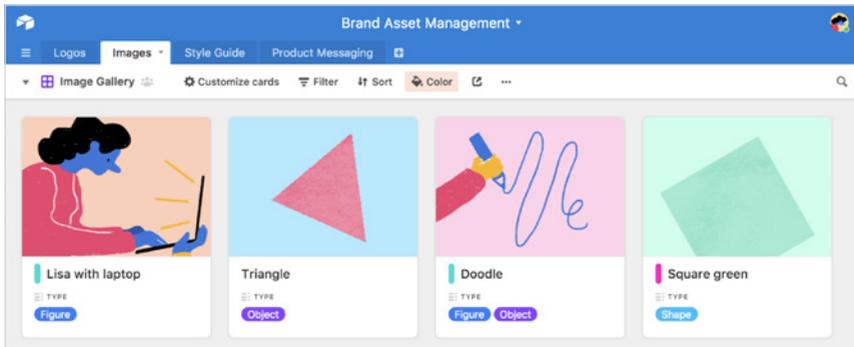
Calendar View



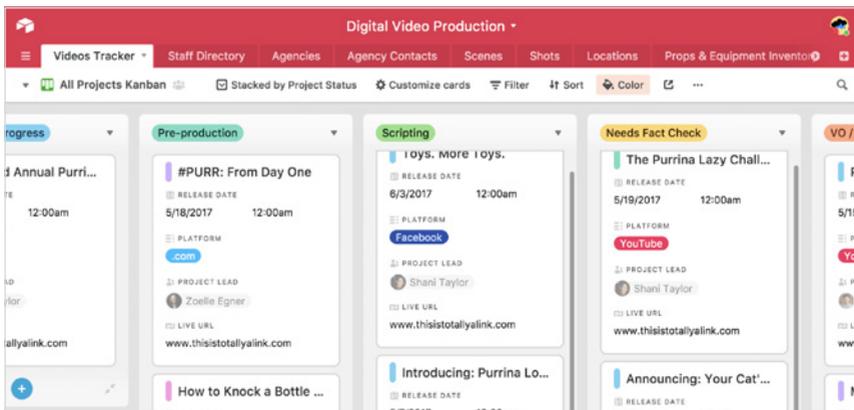
Month	Two week	Today	< June 2017						Find a record	All records
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat				
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	The psychology behind data viz DRAFT	The psychology behind d...		
							Using data trends to man...	Using data trends to man...		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	The psychology ... DRAFT	Timing your social posts ...		
							Using data ... DRAFT	Timing your social posts ...		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	2017 tools roundup DRAFT	2017 tools roundup		
							Data visualization: Linking left brain DRAFT	Using data t... EDIT		
							Data viz for dummies DRAFT	Data viz for dummies DRAFT		
								5 ways to use data to sell...		

IMPLEMENTATION

Gallery View



Kanban View



You can even create forms for data collection!

The other good thing about Airtable is you can integrate this with Zapier and directly with social platforms, CRM systems, and email providers like MailChimp.

As you can probably tell, I like Airtable. It is a great tool that is much more flexible than a Google spreadsheet. It will help keep everything organised and in one place.

Although Airtable provides many templates, I have created a specific one for this book to give you a helping hand. Feel free to copy this for your own use.



SECTION CONCLUSION

If you have followed everything so far, then you are ready to start marketing your business. It has only taken 375 pages to get there but trust me, all this hard work will be worth it in the end.

This is what is required to market your business and become that media agency I spoke about. If anything, it also highlights how much work external marketing agencies 'should' be doing. So, if they're not, kick them into line. If you are using a service that only charges \$99 per month, don't expect miracles as they will only scratch the surface on all of this.

I really want to know how you get on so please, keep me up to date on my Digital Tourism Show Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/digitaltourismshow/>.

IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION SIX

**REPORT. REVIEW.
REPEAT.**

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

Just as you can't create a brand and marketing strategy without proper research, you can't make informed decisions on the success (or failure) of your strategies without proper data.

There are so many metrics you have to consider:

Purchases tell you how many bookings or sales leads you've received as a result of your marketing efforts.

Customer acquisition cost tells you of how much you've spent to acquire a specific number of customers.

Return on investment lets you know if you're generating (or losing) more than you're spending on your overall marketing.

Social influence is the number of shares, likes, comments, engagements, etc. that you receive. High social engagement indicates that your content is good and that people appreciate it.

Email open rate is an essential metric for gauging how effective your messaging is at engaging your target audience.

Email click-through rate tells you how persuasive/alluring your email content was at encouraging your audience to respond positively..

The metrics listed above barely scratch the surface but the data is there; you just need to know where to look and know how to understand it.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR AND WHEN TO ACT

The one trap that most businesses fall into is that they see a bad statistic and rush to make changes to their campaigns and strategies — or they stop their campaigns altogether. You should be more patient. For example, just because a Facebook Ad campaign doesn't perform well in a 48-hour period, it doesn't mean that it won't perform well over the course of 1–3 months.

In fact, unless you're losing thousands of pounds each day (or month), it's a good idea to leave a campaign for 3 months, as this will give you a good amount of data to determine why something is working (or not working). Public holidays, seasonal changes, weather, terror attacks, and volcanoes erupting in Iceland can all affect how successful a marketing campaign is.

Take the time to review your entire marketing strategy once every six months to ensure all of your objectives, target demographics, market research, and marketing activities are going well. However, I advise you to meet with your team at least once per month to discuss that month's marketing activity. Discuss what worked, what failed, and what you need to do to keep on track.

Marketing campaigns with specific end dates need to be evaluated to see how well they performed. Use this data to update similar marketing campaigns in the future. For example, if you one of your videos goes viral, you know this type of content worked well and that you should make more of it!

I have already shown you how to understand Facebook Insights to inform the creation of your marketing strategies and the creation of your buyer personas. Use this same tool to determine how successfully you are engaging your audience.

Tools like SEM Rush will help you see how well your organic SEO is performing and it will help you compare this performance against your competitors. I will now provide you with a brief overview of Google Analytics; this is one of the most useful tools in any digital marketer's toolbox.

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

WORKSHOP THIRTY NINE

UNDERSTANDING GOOGLE ANALYTICS



Video help guide
available

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

Google Analytics is a powerful tool that you can use to get an overview of how effective your website, marketing, and paid advertising is. And the best part is that it's free!



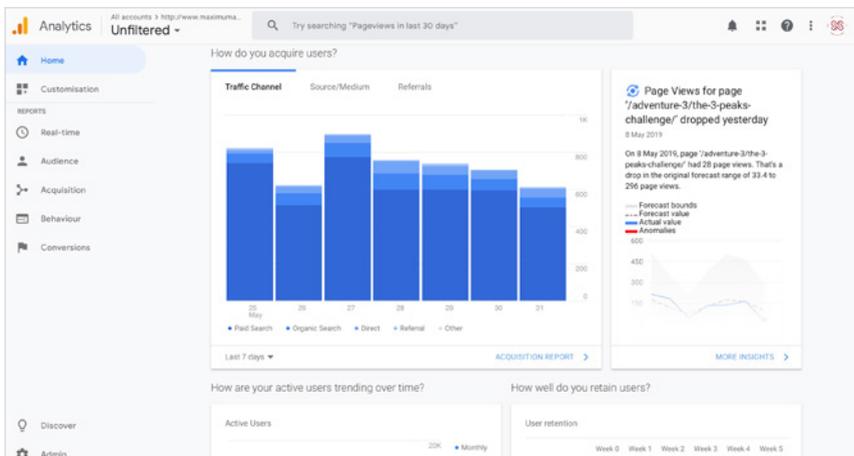
I will not overwhelm you with detail here as, again, I could write an entire book on this topic alone. Instead, allow me to give you a brief overview. I have created a video that you can view in the download section that goes into more detail.

Overview of Google Analytics

Analytics will show you...

- How many people visit your website
- Where your visitors live
- What device they're using when they visit your site
- What websites send traffic to your website
- What marketing tactics drive the most traffic to your website
- Which pages on your website are the most popular
- How many visitors you have converted into leads or bookings
- What blog content your visitors like the most
- And much more

Google Analytics provides a dashboard overview of how your site is performing. How many visits, bounce rates (more on this later), location, and time spent on site.



Here is a quick summary of some of the important aspects of Google Analytics that you should learn to understand:

Audience — This tells you everything you want to know about your visitors. Age, gender, what their interests are, their location, what language they speak, how often they visit your site, etc.

Acquisition — This will tell you everything you want to know about how visitors find their way to your website. Your traffic is broken down into categories and sources. You can learn about traffic from social platforms, PPC campaigns, and organic search traffic.

Behaviour — This gives you everything you want to know about how your content is performing. The top pages on your website, and the top entry and exit pages on your website.

Conversions — If you set up goals within your Google Analytics, you can see how many conversions your website has received and which URLs they have clicked. You can even see the path visitors took to complete the conversion or the pages they dropped off from. This is great for identifying which pages may not be working for you or whether you have a broken booking process or not.

Live Engagement — Google Analytics will show you who is on your website in real time so that you can monitor whether or not a campaign launch is successful. This feature is great for time-sensitive campaigns.

Understanding bounce rates

I want to quickly discuss bounce rates as they are normally seen as a bad thing if they are high. This is not always the case. Let me explain. . .

Put simply, a bounce rate is the number of visitors to a website who only look at the landing page and then leave.

A high bounce rate is typically viewed as being negative, however not everyone who only looks at the landing page should be so easily be categorised as a 'bounce'. It is, therefore, vitally important to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the statistics to ascertain the full picture.

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

For example, say 'Dave' visits a landing page, hates that it's an outdated website, and jumps back to his search results after just five seconds – this is a bounce to be worried about!

Dave then visits a second landing page where all he's asked to do is enter his email to sign-up for the weekly newsletter. It takes him just 5-seconds and he jumps back to his search results. Some marketing data may deem that as a bounce but as gathering that email may have been the primary goal of the landing page surely it doesn't deserve to be categorised as a 'bounce'?

Are your bounces due to wrong traffic problems?

If the marketing of your website and its products and services is not well-targeted, then it is likely to produce a high bounce rate. However, it is not always possible to control traffic sources and some un-targeted visitors can play havoc with bounce rates.

An example of this would be if your website has attracted unwanted attention, such as people admiring your website's design with no intention of buying your products. As these people aren't visiting you for what you sell, it is likely that they won't buy anything and will have a negative impact on your analytics.

When you discover an un-targeted traffic source like this, it is good practice to ignore it when analysing your data.

Google is great at showing you what pages your website visitors land on and then leave. If you see your customers visit 2-3 pages before exiting then they are probably a real customer, or a competitor checking you out.

Keep an eye on your bounce rate as it is very important, but make sure you look deep into your analytics to make sure any action you take based on bounce rates is for the right reasons.

Summary

Google Analytics is an extremely powerful tool providing you with great insights. Take the time to fully understand each aspect as this will improve your entire online marketing strategy.

WORKSHOP FORTY

HOW TO RANK ON, AND MANAGE, TRIPADVISOR

RECOMMENDED

ON

THE WORLD'S LARGEST TRAVEL SITE



tripadvisor®



Video help guide
available



Downloadable
worksheets
available

I have done many workshops on this topic, one of which I have included in the download section, so I wanted to cover this in my book too as it is important. Some of the information I provide will be suitable for other review platforms too.

TripAdvisor algorithm update

Back in March 2018, TripAdvisor made a huge change to how their algorithm worked, affecting many tour operators' rankings in the process. Some operators who were sitting pretty at position one suddenly saw their listing drop completely. Others had more favourable outcomes.

March's update focused on ensuring that new businesses can't jump to the top of the rankings because they receive a higher rate of positive reviews when they first start out. Previously, new companies could skyrocket to the top, surpassing older, established companies who had earned their TripAdvisor rankings.

Here is what a TripAdvisor spokesperson had to say about it:

"In this recent update, the aim was to do a better job of measuring consistency, so that all types of properties – large or small, independent or centrally managed – have the same opportunities to succeed on TripAdvisor. This means that business owners will see shifts in the positions of their hotels – some moving up, some moving down in the rankings, depending on how the businesses around them are shifting."

So, if you're an older, more established company, with consistent reviews on TripAdvisor, you are probably going to be alright. You might have even noticed a small spike in rankings. Younger companies may have noticed a drop, especially if they had enjoyed a relatively fast climb to the top previously.

TripAdvisor has always considered the quality of the reviews, and the quantity of the reviews, but the new algorithm adds a greater emphasis on the recency and consistency of reviews to make sure no one is jumping the queue unfairly.

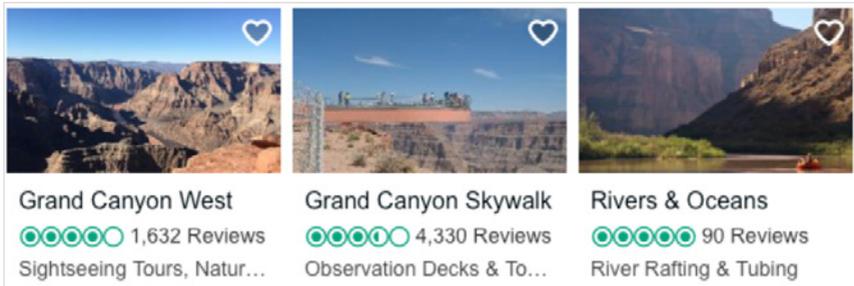
How to improve or optimise your TripAdvisor ranking

TripAdvisor looks at three main aspects: quality, recency, and quantity. . .

Quality

Basically, the more 4-5 star reviews you have, the higher you will rank. Your reviews must also have more than one word or just a short sentence; they must have meaning. Here is an example:

I did a search on ‘things to do in Las Vegas’ and I was presented with these three tours:



Company one has 1,632 reviews, company two has 4,330, and company three has 90 reviews. So, why does the company in position one rank before that of position two? You may notice that it has an average 4-star rating while the other has only a 3.5-star rating. Let’s look a little deeper...



You will notice that company two has far more 4/5-star reviews BUT they have more terrible reviews than very good reviews. In fact, they have 957 1/2-star reviews. This nearly wipes out their 5-star reviews! If I was a potential customer, what this would tell me is that they are very inconsistent with their customer service.

The company in position three simply does not have enough reviews to rise to position one. However, if they keep up their good work, I see that happening soon.

Reviews must also be more than one-word reviews or a short sentence. They must

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

have meaning. For example, here is a 5-star review that does nothing to help or inform potential customers:

OCT 26 2016 TOURACTIVITY
Las Vegas Combo Tour: Grand Canyon Helicopter Flight and Colorado River Float Day Trip
Las Vegas, Nevada

My Rating
★★★★★

My Review
Great trip and combination of helicopter and boat trips.

Think of it in the same vein as Google rankings. The better the content, the better your chances of ranking. This is harder to manage, however, as you must rely on your customers writing the reviews. Here is a great example of a good review:

★★★★★ Reviewed 5 weeks ago via mobile

Driver made the tour-full day tour

We chose to do this tour the first full day we were in town so we could see all the sites and decide we would want to revisit. We were very happy with our driver Per (Pronounced Pair). He was very knowledgeable, friendly, and funny. He really made the tour great. We were driven all throughout the San Francisco areas with stops at several places. Unfortunately, it was a bit foggy that day, however we still had a great time. I was apprehensive about booking full day tour thinking it would be too long. I am very glad we did book the full day as we got to see them your words and Sausalito. The entire day went by quickly and I really got a good feel for the city. Because our group was consistently on time getting back to the bus we had a little extra time to do an extra stop for a great view of the Golden gate Bridge from the other side near Sausalito. There were plenty of stops to get out of the bus and take breaks to go to the bathroom. Lunch in Sausalito was very nice and our driver gave great suggestions where to eat. We had 14 in our bus and it did not feel too big at all. We had a great day and I do recommend using Dylan's for your tour.

[Show less](#)



The customer goes into a little detail and even mentioned the tour guide by name (I will talk a little more on this aspect later). Even though this customer experienced an issue with a fog bank that impeded their view of some sights, the guide helped make it a great experience. All of this helped earn the business a 5-star rating. You can't ask for better than that.

Also notice that the review comes with photos. Photos are incredibly important in reviews as people buy people, so make sure to encourage the inclusion of photographs from your customers.

Recency

Recency is easy to explain. Basically, the more recent the reviews the more ranking weight TripAdvisor awards the review. So it is vitally important you keep asking for reviews. Again, just like with Google rankings, publishing regular content will make your brand seem active (rather than dead)!

You also don't need hundreds or thousands of reviews. You just need more 4/5-star reviews, and fewer negative reviews than your competitors.

Quantity

This was one of the main changes in the algorithm. The change was introduced to stop new businesses rising quickly with a few good reviews. You need a number of good reviews but you don't need to have thousands of reviews, and having one more than a competitor will make no difference.

What I am about to explain is my take on how to look at the figures on TripAdvisor rankings. It is a good indicator on how they will rank your business.

Company one has a total of 887 4/5-star reviews and a total of 245 1/2-star reviews. Subtract both and this leaves us with 642 good reviews. Company two has a total of 1,616 4/5-star reviews and a total of 957 1/2-star reviews. Subtract both and this leaves us with 659 good reviews.

So, even though company two has a whopping 957 1/2-star reviews, the sheer number of 4/5-star reviews has pushed them in front by a factor of 17. This is where average reviews comes in. Although TripAdvisor classes them as rank 3, think of it as the baseline of your reviews. Let's look at the figures:

COMPANY ONE	COMPANY TWO
Total 4-5 Star Reviews: 887	Total 4-5 Star Reviews: 1,616
Total 1-2 Star Reviews: 245	Total 1-2 Star Reviews: 957
Subtract both: 642	Subtract both: 659
Total after deducting average reviews:	Total after deducting average reviews:
526	278

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

Company one has 116 average reviews while company two has 381, a difference of 265 average reviews. For me, this is why company one ranks above that of company two.

How to generate TripAdvisor reviews

If you don't ask you don't get – It may sound pretty obvious, but this happens more often than not. At the end of your tour, ask your customers for a review.

Automated emails — Some booking platforms or your CRM system can be set up to send out a 'thank you' email at the end of that customer's tour. Use this opportunity to ask for a review.

Facebook ads — Upload your customer data to Facebook and run a £\$€5 per day ad reminding them of the fantastic time on your tour asking if they can leave a review.

Make it personal — When asking for a review, make it personal. Remember this review:

Driver made the tour-full day tour

We chose to do this tour the first full day we were in town so we could see all the sites and decide we would want to revisit. We were very happy with our driver Per (Pronounced Pair). He was very knowledgeable, friendly, and funny. He really made the tour great. We were driven all throughout the San Francisco areas with stops at several places. Unfortunately, it was a bit foggy that day, however we still had a great time. I was apprehensive about booking full day tour thinking it would be too long. I am very glad we did book the full day as we got to see them your words and Sausalito. The entire day went by quickly and I really got a good feel for the city. Because our group was consistently on time getting back to the bus we had a little extra time to do an extra stop for a great view of the Golden gate Bridge from the other side near Sausalito. There were plenty of stops to get out of the bus and take breaks to go to the bathroom. Lunch in Sausalito was very nice and our driver gave great suggestions where to eat. We had 14 in our bus and it did not feel too big at all. We had a great day and I do recommend using Dylan's for your tour.

[Show less](#)

This review mentions the guide by name. Why is this important? People are more likely to leave a review for an individual than a business as they want to show their appreciation for the specific tour guide. Play on this. Have your tour guide joke about how they are hoping for a wage rise and how a good review may help his cause. Make it fun and humorous.

Show your TripAdvisor badge everywhere — Whether it is on your website, vehicles, email signatures, or social media, show your TripAdvisor badge everywhere with a link to your account.

How to respond to reviews

Responding to reviews is very important. Those businesses that respond to over 65% of their reviews receive an average rating of 4.15; compare this to the 3.81 rating for businesses who ignore their customers.

Responding to Bad Reviews

When responding to bad reviews, do not take it personally. It can be hard to keep your cool — especially if you know that customers is being nasty or unfair. But you must stay positive and be seen as helpful — even to these unfair reviewers — as a potential customer reading that review, and your reply, won't see the bigger picture. They won't know why the review is unfair or uncalled-for, and an angry or defensive reply will almost certainly turn this potential customer away.

Look at this example of a customer's bad review...



frank11
Amsterdam

👍 👎 👤

Grotty and dirty

Review of The Georgian House

👤👤👤👤👤 Reviewed 10 October 2013

As we frequently visit Glasgow, we stayed in various guest houses in the West End. The location of The Georgian House is great. It is just off Byres Road and thus on a great location for a good night out.

Apart from the location, there is absolutely no positive remark we can make about The Georgian House. We booked a room for 2 nights at a rate of 75 GBP a night for two persons. Upon arrival at the hotel we did not get welcomed at all, but were directed straight to the payment terminal by the hotel manager.

After we paid for 2 nights we were directed to the top floor of the hotel (if I recall correctly room 8). What a dirty and grotty this room was; it looked like it has never been cleaned at all: piss stains on the bathroom floor (I kid you not, see the pictures!), holes in the bathroom floor and dirty marks everywhere. Furthermore, although the room was on the main drag (which is Great Western Road; a very busy street) the windows simply did not shut (see pictures). You will therefore be kept awake all night by traffic noises etcetera.

The room did not get cleaned at all during our stay (which is not really a surprise as they do not seem to bother cleaning at all) and we did not get clean towels.

We do not recommend anybody to stay at The Georgian House. There are many other great hotels in the surroundings of The Georgian House that are better (and mostly cheaper as well!).

[Show less](#)

Scathing! I come from Glasgow and I'm embarrassed by this. Glasgow is known for its friendly, welcoming nature.

This review was not what made the Georgian House famous online; it was the owner's response (this is very real):

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

georgianhouse1000, Owner at The Georgian House, responded to this review

Responded 30 December 2013

With only one person to look after the place what do you expect. Think about what you paid.

[Report response as inappropriate](#)

This response is the subjective opinion of the management representative and not of TripAdvisor LLC

Although I laugh every time I read this, what it tells future customers is that this business is understaffed and that they will treat you with contempt if you happen to pay a lower rate. Ouch! Here is the right way to respond to bad reviews:

Shaun S, General Manager at High Roller, responded to this review

Responded 17 May 2017

Dear IfOnlyIKnew,

Thank you for sharing your experience with us. I am very sorry to learn about your experience with us on the High Roller. That is certainly not to our standard and we wish to speak with you directly concerning your time with us. Please feel free to contact us at HighRollerCustomerCare@Caesars.com at your earliest convenience.

The customer left a 1-star review which, upon reading, you realise was not really the business's fault, but that of a fellow customer who was 'on drugs'. Even though it was not the business's fault, the manager took ownership of the situation, expressing an interest in speaking to the reviewer and resolving the issue. Perfect response.

When it comes to bad reviews, you MUST respond to each and every one. Ignoring them just highlights to potential customers that you do not care.

Responding to good reviews

Responding to good reviews and taking the time to say thank you is simply good customer service. By not responding it shows future customers that you are happy to take their money and then forget about them. Depending on your tour or activity, there is also the possibility of repeat business to consider!

Here is a good response to the review from Dylan's Tours I showed you earlier:

Dylan D, Owner at Dylan's Tours, responded to this review

Responded 4 weeks ago

Hey Karen, it sounds like you had a BLAST with Per! Sorry to hear that Karl the Fog was hanging around during your tour, but glad it didn't ruin that bonus stop of the Golden Gate ;) Thank you so much for taking the time to let us know how your experience on our Famous Tour was -- it really is helpful in making sure our future travelers have as much fun as you!

This is a great response as Dylan made it personal. He mentioned the customer's name, the tour guide's name, made light of the fog but emphasized that they bent over backwards to provide an alternative route and mentioned the tour by name. This is a fantastic way to respond.

This kind of personalized, considered response to good and bad TripAdvisor reviews is important as far too many businesses simply copy and paste the same response time and time again. Put some time and effort into your responses and you'll stand out far above the competition.

Summary

There are no cheap and dirty tricks to improving your TripAdvisor rankings, but that can certainly be seen as a good thing if you consider that your competitors can't do any tricks to jump ahead either. Just as Google's service has gotten better and better as it has refined its algorithm, TripAdvisor's service is improving. If you want to improve your TripAdvisor ranking, you'll have to play the long game.

Firstly, make sure you encourage customers to leave reviews — especially anyone you're sure has had a positive experience of your service. And perhaps don't remind that inevitable angry customer to leave a review.

Also make sure to communicate with your staff, telling everyone who works for you just how important your customers are. Remind them that your business is only as good as its reputation and that TripAdvisor reviews are the most tangible representation of your reputation. Remind staff that one negative experience can lead to a damaging review, so they need to provide excellent customer service at all times. If briefed and managed correctly, your staff are the main way you can ensure your TripAdvisor rankings will improve.

REPORT. REVIEW. REPEAT.

Take a positive, proactive approach when a customer is clearly not happy. Mistakes will always happen and there will always be customers who are unhappy with some aspect of your service. If you respond sensitively and respectfully, however, you may be able to turn the situation around — perhaps even securing a positive review! A big part of resolving a potential bad-review-in-the-making is to empower your staff to offer complimentary drinks, meals, discounts, etc.

Lastly, it's always good practice to monitor your reviews. Take note of the positives and pass them on to your staff (as morale is everything in the tourism and hospitality industry) and make sure you respond to the negative reviews as soon as possible. Even though your response might not negate the damage the review made to your overall TripAdvisor ranking, it will reassure anyone reading the bad review that you are a fair and pleasant company, willing to make amends if something goes wrong.

TripAdvisor will continue to update its algorithm, so the only way to ensure you continue to climb up the rankings is to ensure your service is better than your competitors. This is good news to most companies who want to be rewarded for their consistent hard work. Keep up the work and keep one eye on your TripAdvisor page!

SECTION SEVEN

JOURNEY'S END

JOURNEY'S END

If you have read this far, I commend you. I would also like to thank you as I appreciate the time and effort it takes to stick with a densely packed book like this. When I first set out to write this book, my intention was to help highlight why branding, digital strategy, and creative thinking is a huge part of becoming a successful tour business. What I ended up writing, however, is a practical, [hopefully] useful guide to help tour operators succeed in many aspects of digital marketing and brand development.

I have spoken to many who said, "Why are you doing this? You run a tourism marketing agency? You will damage your business!"

However, I don't believe this will damage my agency at all. For me, tours and activities are the backbone of the tourism industry. The amazing experiences operators provide help to break down barriers, wipe out prejudices, and create new friendships. This is why I love doing what I do, and it's why I want to help as many small and medium businesses as I can working in the tours and activities sector.

I know my business will be fine and that it will continue to thrive by helping many tour operators grow their businesses. I just wanted to provide you with the tools to either try this yourself or at least be better informed when you are ready to approach an agency like mine.

NEXT STEPS

I know that you will thrive if you follow the steps in this book and I can't wait to hear your stories and successes. Let me know at The Digital Tourism Show Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/digitaltourismshow/>

If you would like to know more about me, my agency and my fantastic team, visit any of the following links. . .

Tourism Marketing Agency

<https://tourismmarketing.agency>

Chris' LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/torreschris>

Digital Tourism Show YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/c/DIGITOURSHOW>

Digital Tourism Show iTunes Podcast

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-digital-tourism-show/id1274453169>

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Digital Tourism Show Google Podcast

<https://podcasts.google.com/?feed=aHR0cHM6Ly9hdWRpb2Jvb20uY29tL2NoYW5uZWxzLzQ5OTAyNjJucnNz>

I would love your feedback

Whether you have loathed or loved this book, I would welcome your feedback. Remember this book is to help you and your business succeed so help me make it even better. Also, Let me know if there is anything you would like to see me add in future editions.

<https://tmagency.typeform.com/to/gEwLSG>

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to the following businesses who have helped publish this book . .

Arival

<https://arival.travel>

The Arival conference is the only event dedicated to the Best Part of Travel, assembling the brightest minds from companies large and small from our industry: Tour, Activities & Attractions.

GetGuided

<https://getguided.net>

GetGuided is focused on changing the way the world is booking private tours and activities by offering specialised and focused technology for different players. By building digitalised solutions and capturing the data that is currently not tracked and offline we can provide the tours and activities industry with essential data for smart decision making.

My Guide Botswana

<https://www.myguidebotswana.com>

My Guide Botswana is focused on offering unrivalled levels of local information. This is what we pride ourselves on, and it's our promise to our users. Botswana is run by a team on the ground who have their fingers on the pulse and write from a first-hand experience.

Palisis AG

<https://www.palisis.com>

Palisis AG provides of comprehensive sales and operations solutions for tourism and transportation businesses around the world.

Peek Pro

<https://www.peek.com>

A fantastic online booking & reservation management platform for tour, activity, and rental operators.

Put Foot Rally

<https://www.putfootrally.com>

Any car, Any route, 6 Countries, 6 Checkpoints, 6 Parties, across Southern Africa over 9000km in 19 days!

Sigodu

<https://sigodu.com>

Booking software and services for bike rental shops. Get more customers with online bookings, easily manage and maintain your fleet.

TourismTiger

<https://www.tourismtiger.com>

TourismTiger do one thing and one thing only, build beautiful tour and activity websites designed and proven to increase your bookings. Get in touch today for your free consultation and see why we are the clear choice for your tourism or travel website.

Travel Business Success

<https://www.travelbusinesssuccess.com>

Tourism Tim Warren shares his best practices on how-to start, grow and succeed with your travel business and career.

Travel Maker Tours

<https://travelmakertours.com>

Provides small-group tours from Bucharest, Romania.

Travel Massive

<https://travelmassive.com>

Travel Massive is the go-to network for travel industry founders, leaders and creators to be successful. We provide the resources and tools for startups, tours and activities, and creatives in the tourism industry to build connections, learn, and share their stories.

Book download area

<https://lookersintobookers.com>

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK

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Finally, to my family — My wife Maggie and my two kids Heather and Kyle. Thanks for all your support and putting up with me during the writing of this book. Everything I do is for you guys.

FINALLY... WHAT ABOUT FOODDRINKTOUR?

Good question. I have been thinking about this as I like the dummy brand I have created in the writing of this book. I am intrigued by this business's potential.

I don't have the time or the desire to run tours myself but what I am going to do is take this brand forward and create a real business out of it. I will use the brand to promote other food and drink tours I feel provide their customers with an amazing experience from around the world and I will use the methods in this book to promote it.

Watch this space...



CHRIS TORRES — A BRIEF BIO

Like many people who end up owning their own business, Chris left school at 16 and instantly jumped into the world of work. He began working as an illustrator for a company that made children's education books and this job gave him a love for design. From there, he began teaching himself graphic design, web design, and marketing (both traditional and digital). Every skill he has developed over the years has been self taught — and being self taught has suited Chris' personality as it allows him to think outside of the box when executing marketing campaigns.

26 years later, Chris has now accumulated a vast amount of experience working in brand development and marketing, and has spent the last 13 years running his own company, Senshi Digital, which began as a web design company with additional SEO services. Soon after they launched, Chris realised that Senshi had a flair for marketing and that they loved working with tourism brands. One of their very first customers was a small adventure company called Macs Adventure, run by Neil Lapping.

Tourism interests Chris because it is a vibrant, ever-changing industry; it's about traveling, meeting new people, and learning about other cultures. Gradually, Senshi became a dedicated web design and digital marketing company for tourism brands. Then, as marketing came to the fore, Chris sold Senshi and the Tourism Marketing Agency (TMA) was born. It was also easier to explain the name!

Around 80% of TMA's customer base is now outside the UK and they have worked with some of the biggest players in the industry, including Gray Line, the oldest and largest sightseeing company in the world.

TMA helps businesses from all over Europe, The Americas, Asia, and even Antarctica. This has given Chris and his team vast knowledge and expertise of marketing to, and within, multiple destinations.

Chris and TMA have won numerous awards over the years, such as Best Tourism Website, Best Digital Agency and Scottish SME Businessman of the Year 2018. Chris speaks at numerous tourism events each year, such as the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) conferences, several Gray Line conferences, and the best tours and activities event of them all: Arival! Chris felt it was a tremendous honour to speak at both Arival Las Vegas and Arival Berlin.

For well over a decade, Chris has lived and breathed marketing for the tours and activities sector, and this book is his attempt to compile most of what he's learned into a practical resource for anyone who needs some help turning those lookers into bookers.

tma.

"I am a huge admirer of Chris Torres and his Digital Tourism Show video series. The man gives away so much knowledge around increasing revenue for free. . . If I watched one of his videos I could have saved myself \$400!" **Shane Whaley, Former Regional Director of Get Your Guide and Producer & Host of Tourpreneur.**

If you are a tours and activities operator, you are in a unique position. Be it walking tours, cycling tours, bus tours or an axe throwing experience (amazing, you must try it), you have the opportunity to enhance the life of someone who experiences one of your amazing products. But before you can do this, people first need to know that your business, and your product, exists. For this, you'll need to put some time and thought into your digital marketing.

INCLUDES
DOWNLOADABLE
WORKSHEETS
AND VIDEO GUIDES

When you begin working on digital marketing in the T&A sector, it can be easy to get lost in the sea of social media platforms, online travel agents (OTAs) and Google rankings, but bad digital marketing is normally down to just one thing — a poorly conceived or non-existent digital strategy.

With this book, Chris Torres will help you figure out where your tours and activities business currently sits, and the path it needs to take to grow. Chris will also provide the tools to get there by offering practical advice, worksheets, and videos. Ultimately, the aim of this book is to help turn your online lookers into revenue-generating bookers.

This book will help you...

- ✔ Define your brand path and voice
- ✔ Provide best practices for setting up your website
- ✔ Select the right booking platform
- ✔ Rank on TripAdvisor
- ✔ Conduct a competitor analysis
- ✔ Create a strong marketing strategy
- ✔ Create effective Facebook Ads on a modest budget
- ✔ And so much more...

Chris Torres is the director and founder of the Tourism Marketing Agency and has 26 years' experience in brand development, design & marketing. Chris also produces a video series called The Digital Tourism Show, creating over 200 videos of free tourism marketing advice.

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