

Quadra Island

T o u r i s m

CTO 2016

Social Media Strategy 2016

Social Media is now a part of our every day lives and it's also part of our community's face to the rest of the world. As part of Quadra Island Tourism's efforts to market our island as a visitor destination we are active with key social media platforms and are seeking ways to enhance, improve and increase our online presence.

In part because the Community Tourism Opportunities (CTO) programs is funded by Destination BC, and in (large) part because working with large-scale partners just makes sense Quadra Island Tourism looks to DBC for guidance and innovation in our marketing efforts including social media tactics. Important background reading in understanding QIT's social media and overall approach to marketing can be found in Destination BC's Marketing Strategy: www.strategy.destinationbc.ca/our-marketing-strategy/

Finding effective ways to showcase our Island and engage potential visitors and new residents takes creativity, some hard work and a bit of luck - you never know when that viral magic will strike. To build an effective social media campaign for 2016 Quadra Island Tourism considers the following:

An effective social media campaign will:

- Consolidate visitor loyalty by profiling the experiences available to our upcoming and returning visitors in a way that plays to our markets sense of pride-of-association.
- Cement our brand as a year-round, regional destination for outdoor activities with an emphasis on building shoulder and off-season visits by emphasizing imagery and experiences available during those time frames.
- Leverage visitor social media use to expand the reach of our message.

We can achieve these goals in a way that reflects our community & tourism product accurately and efficiently:

- By actively circulating strong brand imagery/ video that repeats core consistent messages
- By engaging with visitors throughout their planning, providing useful information and emotive motivation.
- By encouraging a commitment from locals to collaborate on specific campaign themes.

We can measure the success of our strategy?

- Likes, Mentions, Shares etc...
- Anecdotal observation of notable social media interactions

Where are we today?

At the start of 2016 our social media efforts have built a profile that looks something like this:

Trip Advisor: Accommodation 900, Vacation Rentals 36, Things to Do 300, Restaurants 475.

Twitter: @VisitQuadra: ~1,200 Followers & Following @QuadraIsland: ~1,300

FaceBook: ~1,000 Likes, 'Check-Ins' most popular interaction (1,500)

Pinterest: 22 Followers 6 Following

We also have a series of videos on YouTube, a presence on Flickr, a neglected WordPress blog along with a collection of more active local bloggers. The most obvious platform to include and expand upon is Instagram.

Action Plan

At a social media workshop/think-tank January 14, 2016 the above was presented and discussed and a list of action items and campaign themes developed, including:

- Putting emphasis on building Quadra Island's presence on Instagram.
- Compile a list of consistent community hashtags and external tags and users to associate with. Tags suggested include: #quadraisland, #myquadraisland, #quadralife, #quadrarocks
External hashtags: #Vancitylife, #explorevancouverisland, #explorebc, #pnw etc...
- Including key hashtags on other marketing collateral.
- Encourage cross-posting of posts of general interest (ie: non-competitive business posts)
- Encourage posts that include local, personal stories
- Bring people with large social media followers to Quadra Island.
- Identify quintessential Quadra Islanders and profile them.
- Childhood unplugged as a theme.
- Follow up with a second workshop to review and discuss implementation of the above.

Campaign Themes for 2016 and Beyond

Based on the above discussions and ideas Quadra Island Tourism now has an Instagram account @visitquadra to act as a direct outlet for Quadra Island Tourism related content and to link with associated content from other tourism partners eg: Destination BC, local community businesses etc...

In addition two core social media campaign themes have been developed.

#myquadraisland - is celebrates and showcases our Island with a broad scope designed to both act as a showcase for generated content and to encourage locals & visitors to participate with their stories, pictures & experiences. The hashtag #myquadraisland can be used with photos on Instagram, FaceBook and Twitter posts and other social media platforms incorporating hashtags.

Instagram photos posted with the #myquadraisland hashtag will be amalgamated onto a web page at www.myquadraisland.ca and also on the Instagram tab on the Quadra Island FaceBook page.

#peopleofquadra - profiles people throughout the community showcasing their work, community involvement and passion for our Island. The project is being spearheaded by local photographer Philip Stone but any contributors can participate by posting to the People of Quadra Island FaceBook page or by using the hashtag #peopleofquadra on Instagram or Twitter.

The idea with this campaign is to celebrate our community and to put faces to the places that newcomers and visitors meet when they arrive, putting a personal touch to the Island.

Both these campaigns have multiple potential benefits that ideally will fulfill the founding intent to enhance our community's online profile but going further; will have knock-on SEO enhancements for participating users and businesses inter-linked throughout the generated posts.

Follow-up Workshop

A follow up social media workshop/think-tank will be held in the early spring (April) to discuss the progress so far with these two projects and to brainstorm other ways to promote them and perhaps develop additional themes & campaigns to enhance our community's social media presence and for participants to better understand how they can benefit from them and other social media avenues.

For International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing,

Social Media allows a Tourism Destination Marketing Organization to:

- (1) interact directly with visitors
- (2) monitor and react on visitors' opinions and evaluations of services
- (3) To remain competitive

An attractive destination reflects the visitor's feelings and opinions about the destination's ability to satisfy their needs and deliver individual benefits (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981)

Destinations offer an integrated experience to the visitor; the purchase of the tourism product is accompanied by increased levels of emotional and irrational factors, emphasis on the word of mouth advertising, and increased demands on its uniqueness. Destination's visitors, therefore, trust the opinions of family and friends more than others and are more cautious to approaches of traditional mass advertising market

Some schemes seem to work better than others: novelty, chance to win, celebrity involvement, uniqueness, unexpectedness, competition, consonance or interesting graphical design.

Visitors do not trust advertising that focuses on the advantages and special features of the destinations. Visitors require a personal approach, intelligent, creative, interactive, communication and messages including empathy and emotions. They want to participate in the creation of tourism products and want to buy based on relationship. Social media can help destinations to remain competitive if they present interesting content, use creativity and support and motivate interactive communication.

The most frequently claimed objectives of the social media campaigns can be summed up as follows:

- (1) creating/increasing awareness of the destination;
- (2) reaching global publicity;
- (3) encouraging visitors to plan their journey;
- (4) strengthening the destination image as a favourite destination;
- (5) targeting new/specific market;
- (6) increasing number of visitors;
- (7) creating buzz around the destination;
- (8) increasing the number of email subscribers;
- (9) increasing the number of Facebook fan base;
- (10) changing the position of destination in the mind of visitors;
- (11) bringing back the destination as a favourite one for visitors.

The most frequently used form of the studied social media campaigns (and their combinations) is

- (1) competition;
- (2) interactive campaign (involving celebrities and online influencers);
- (3) PC games;
- (4) trip planner.

The most used social media are Facebook;

Youtube; Google; Google Street View; Instagram; Twitter; Flickr; Blogs;

Most of the studied campaigns were interactive, involving participants' creativity.

Participants were encouraged to use geolocation tools, create augmented reality, play internet games, create quizzes, write guide books, blogs, articles, and stories, create postcards, photos, videos, travel and shopping plans.

Emotions play an important role in most of the studied campaigns. They were used especially:

- (1) to strengthen the romantic factor of the destination;
- (2) to make visitors love the destination;
- (3) to make visitors need the destination;
- (4) increase holiday bookings.

The emotions were connected to destinations by:

- (1) stories;
- (2) rendezvous;
- (3) romance;
- (4) customized, cute characters (avatars);
- (5) positive and negative referrals;
- (6) handing over the official tourist board channel to public;
- (7) helping visitors to meet real destinations' residents.

As most of the social media campaigns include a kind of competition, they also offer a prize to the winner/winners:

- (1) a dream vacation/vacation packages;
- (2) a dream job;
- (3) remake;
- (4) publicity.

The benefits for the destinations can be summed up as follows:

- (1) ROI;
- (2) increase of the number of visitors;
- (3) increase of positive awareness;
- (4) increase of destination preference;
- (5) awards;
- (6) publicity;
- (7) rise of website hits;
- (8) increase of number of website and Facebook referrals;
- (9) increase of number of Facebook fans;
- (10) user generated content;
- (11) acquisition of new ambassadors for the destination; (12) public relations

The success factors of the destination's social media campaign can be summarized as follows:

- (1) in-depth understanding of social media;
- (2) allocation of resources for planning, production and promotion;
- (3) clear identification of goals based on analysis;
- (4) timing;
- (5) online and offline promotion of the campaign including advertising and strong public relations;
- (6) innovation (focus on alternative social media channels);
- (7) creativity (e. g. web buzz, virality, augmented reality, PC game, competition, mobile applications);
- (8) focus on emotions;
- (9) novel approach that uses a different tone of voice; (10) benefits to participants (e. g. prizes, publicity);
- (11) provision of relevant information on the destination in all stages of visitor's decision making process (before, during and after visit);
- (12) visitor relationship and support services;
- (13) identification of destination's ambassadors;
- (14) continuous monitoring and assessment of all components of the campaign;
- (15) implementation of corrections if needed.