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## Travel industry embraces Social Media Marketing

Sep 24, 2010

Social media usage among adventure tour operators is pervasive, while its efficacy remains relatively uncertain, claims a new report from the Adventure Travel Trade Association.

'Travel, Tweets & Trends' explores opportunities, concerns and best practices about social media usage within the adventure tour operator industry - an industry where adoption of social media is relatively new and immature among tour operators, many of which view social media as experimental at this time.



Among its peculiar findings, representing input from 220 adventure tour operators across five continents, the study revealed that 48% of North American travel tour operators participate in social media on a daily basis, and 77% participate in social media at least weekly.

It also discovered 69% of companies are spending 10 hours per week or less on their social media programmes.

However, despite widespread usage of social media, operators are uncertain about its impacts on business, with only 43% of respondents citing social media as quite or extremely important to business success, and 18% reporting they do not know yet whether social media has bottom-line impact.

Just 13% of companies cite social media as generating 10% or more of their revenue, but 75% of respondents indicate that their budgets (including human resource wages) for social media will increase in the next 12 months.

Uploading videos to YouTube is a growing trend among those embracing social media, however blogs remain an important, yet under utilized tool.

Monitoring, 'listening' and responding to traveller review sites appear to be lagging behind what would be expected, though tour operators outside North America are more prone to do so.

Additionally, survey respondents indicated their primary objectives of social media usage include, in order of priority, generating consumer awareness (83%), connecting with existing customers (70%), connecting with current customers (61%), and sending out special offers (53%).

Meanwhile, only 32% of respondents are using social media as a customer service tool, which, according to industry experts, is a missed chance to reduce customer service costs while satisfying customers.

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