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New study reveals pervasive social media use within Adventure Tourism



Representing the most current and comprehensive social media usage study yet conducted within the adventure tourism trade sector, the **Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA)**, **Resmark Systems and Convince & Convert today** released, **Travel, Tweets & Trends**, a report indicating that social media usage among adventure tour operators is pervasive, while its efficacy remains relatively uncertain.

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,
- 69% of companies are spending 10 hours per week or less on their social media programs,
- 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,
- blogs remain an important, yet under utilized tool,
- uploading videos to YouTube is a growing trend among those embracing social media,
- monitoring, 'listening' and responding to traveler review sites appear to be lagging behind what would be expected, though tour operators outside North America are more prone to do so, and
- 75% of respondents indicate that their budgets (including human resource wages) for social media will increase in the next 12 months.

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.

Travel, Tweets & Trends offers narrative interpretations of social media usage trends, numerous adventure tourism tour operator case studies, plus prescriptive measures for how the adventure tourism trade can become more effective at using social media to improve business results. The executive summary

is available for free, while the complete, 42-page whitepaper is available for purchase (\$50) at www.adventuretravel.biz.

Commissioned by tour operator software company **Resmark Systems** and the ATTA, the study was conducted by **Convince & Convert**, a social media consultancy led by **Jay Baer**, one of the world's most accomplished social media experts. Further analysis was provided by the ATTA, Resmark and tourism, digital media and marketing industry professionals. Review board participants included: Kevin Johnson, Deluxe Digital Media; Alexia Nestora, Lasso Communications; Kathy Dragon, TravelDragon; Jason Reckers, Adventure Travel Trade Association; Christina Heyniger, Xola Consulting; and Chris Noble, World Nomads.

Theodore Koumelis - Monday, September 27, 2010