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Digital marketing

“Digital platforms are often the most direct way of speaking to your audience and can provide great value for money when done well. It takes a big time commitment, but the benefits of a strong, personal relationship with your audience are enormous.”

Zoë Rutherford, PR & Communications Manager,
The Cotswold Distilling Company Ltd

What is digital marketing?

Digital marketing (also known as eMarketing, online marketing or internet marketing) is a type of marketing that focuses on the electronic environment and incorporates the following:

- Online advertising
- Search engine marketing and Search engine optimisation
- Social media marketing and user generated content
- Videos, podcasting and videocasting
- The use of mobile phones to search the internet
- Geo search maps
- Website promotions
- Email and viral campaigns



Some of the benefits of promoting your product online include:

- Access to a global audience of potential new customers
- Low cost of entry
- Cost effectiveness compared to traditional forms of marketing
- The ability to measure and analyse results from marketing activities
- Automated processing of enquiries and bookings



For a full digital marketing toolkit see the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub:

[visitengland.org/onlinemarketing](https://www.visitengland.org/onlinemarketing)
[visitbritain.org/business-advice/introduction-pr-toolkit](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/introduction-pr-toolkit)

How to market effectively via your website

It is important to maintain an online presence for your product. Your website should reflect the personality of your business and clearly communicate your experience and unique selling proposition (USP) to market your product effectively.



Points to consider when developing your website:

- Ensure the site is quick to load and easy to use
- Secure a domain name that is easy to remember and if possible, keep it simple
- Use a search engine optimisation (SEO) service to improve consumers' ability to find your website
- Provide clear navigation paths and group information in a way that is relevant to consumers
- Use clear and simple copy - consider language barriers
- Provide accurate, high quality and up-to-date information
- Use geo search maps to assist the consumer to find your location
- Set up links to social networking sites
- Use a blog and social media channels
- to develop a two-way rapport with your customers and communicate with them positively and regularly
- Include video, video-casts/podcasts and images on your website
- Show clear validity dates on your rates
- Provide links to your site from major tourism organisations, dedicated travel websites and complementary product sites in your region
- Provide an interactive way for consumers to discuss/review your product – user generated feedback
- Offer simple booking processes and secure payment technology so users feel comfortable entering their payment details

Are you active in social media?

Social media is an umbrella term used to describe online technologies that facilitate interaction and exchange of information online. Social media is an entire online environment built on people's contributions and interactions, connecting groups of people together.

Businesses are using social media as a tool to reach customers and to build or maintain their reputation. As social media continues to grow, the ability to reach more consumers globally has also increased.

One of the greatest benefits of social media is its immediacy – updates provide real time information to anyone interested in your product. For example, smaller and quicker updates that aren't enough for a media or trade release could be used for updating your social media networks. In all instances, social media posts should inspire and contribute to the community, not spam them with unwanted advertisements. Remember on social media channels you are competing against people's family, friends, other brands they like, news organisations etc. It is a crowded world, with there being 4.75 billion posts created on Facebook every day! So make sure what you are putting out there is interesting and something that your audience would actually want to see.

It is also important to be wary of the real possibility social media users may use this platform to complain or discredit your product; a commitment must be made to invest the time required to stay on top of content, as well as customer feedback.

Here are some of the more popular networking sites and ways you can incorporate them into your tourism business:

Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. With over 2.91 billion active users worldwide, Facebook's fastest growing demographic is the 45 to 54 years age bracket. A free platform, it can be used to provide updates on your product as well as interact with clients and obtain feedback. However, to fully utilise the platform, it is recommended to try and create a budget for promotion and advertising.

If you are a business owner you can set up a dedicated Facebook page that represents your business - this is a place to house all the pertinent information about your company, as well as the more fun, daily updates. You can update information regularly and easily, and the fresher your content, the more you will engage people.

Instagram

Instagram is an app based photo and video sharing social networking site. It's a fun and quirky way to communicate your business offering through a series of pictures, stories (pictures and videos that exist for 24 hours and then disappear) as well as video products, such as Reels (up to 60 second video clips). There are a range of filters that can be used to enhance photos and it allows you to share snapshots of your product and region in real-time. It is possibly now the most used social platform in the travel vertical and is the home of travel influencers as well as travel brands.

Twitter

Twitter is a popular social networking service. It enables people to send short 280 character messages to Twitter using a web or phone interface. If people are interested in a user's messages (called tweets) they may decide to follow this user and therefore be informed every time they send a new tweet. As a tourism business you can use Twitter to keep up with industry news, build industry contacts, monitor your online reputation and easily share quirky facts and updates about your business in real time.

TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform focused on video content. TikTok currently has over 1.2 billion active users logging into the service. The platform hosts a variety of short to medium length user created videos, with a host of genres such as trends, dance, entertainment and more. Typically videos featured on TikTok range from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. TikTok was ranked as the third fastest growing brand in 2020.

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing site with over 2 billion active monthly users and is the second largest search engine in the world after Google. You can create quality short videos about your product or tour that showcase the kind of experience that your guests can have. Videos that work best are those that are not overly commercial and show the highlights or quirky parts of your product offering in a captivating and visual way. Use keywords in your video title to help people find your videos through search.

Pinterest

Pinterest is an online virtual pinboard where users can create their own boards and share beautiful images they love such as travel destinations. There are 431 million active Pinterest users, the majority of which are female. You can set up a business page to visually represent your product and/or region by creating your own themed boards and pinning high quality photos from a range of sources.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-to-business social networking site with over 810 million users. Users create an account, which allows them to create their own profile with their full work history and connect with other profiles. LinkedIn is great for networking with colleagues and leaders in the tourism industry and for staff recruitment. It is a good idea to create a business page that covers basic information about your business. If your customers spend time on LinkedIn then you are able to spend time building relationships and connecting with people.

Google My Business

Google My Business is a free tool that can help you manage the information that people see when they search Google for your business or the products and services that you offer. It acts as a dashboard for your business online and interacts with others Google tools such as maps, analytics, and Google+ (the social network created by Google).



Social media can vary globally – China case study

It is important to do your research specific to the country you are targeting, as social media channels can vary per country, for example let's look at China.

China has the most internet users in the world and is one of the most engaged countries on social media. One out of five global internet users is from China and over 98% of urban Chinese internet users visit social media sites regularly. Being online in urban China generally means that you use social.

So, not surprisingly the internet has become an extremely influential medium in China – but the Chinese internet is different. Many popular western social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are not available to Chinese internet users due to the “Great Firewall of China” (government internet censorship).

Therefore, local Chinese equivalents of these platforms rule the digital space, and the number of websites and platforms is staggering and growing. Social media, media advocacy and word-of-mouth are becoming more powerful sources of information to assist Chinese travellers with planning and purchasing travel.

England as a destination has a presence on China's social media platforms through the activities of VisitBritain/VisitEngland.

The use of social networking and blogs has implications for the tourism industry and the way that the Chinese consumer searches for information. Reading blogs and forums is becoming more commonplace, and information and reviews on destinations are becoming more accessible, providing Chinese consumers with a way to compare travel options. It is therefore worthwhile considering the use of Chinese social media to promote your business.

Any tourism business looking to reach Chinese consumers needs to leverage the internet and social media landscape in China.





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