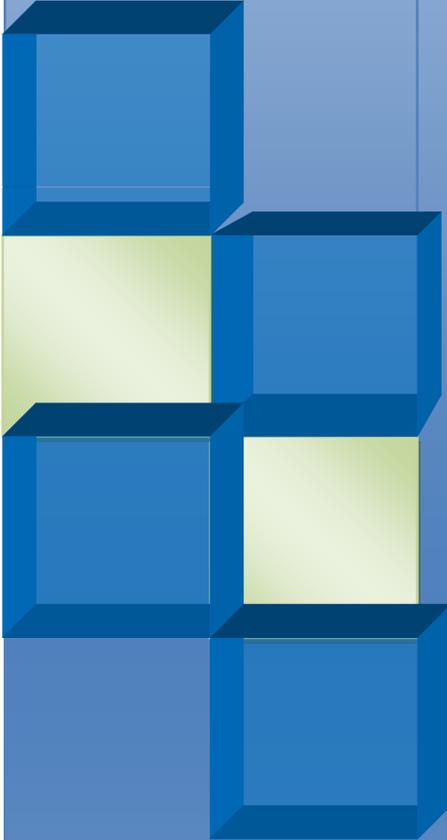
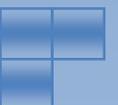


July
2010



**Let travelers smell your rich media content:
*Are you seen & heard by the travel shoppers?***

By Vineet Singh



Abstract

Travel and Tourism industry is driven by the visual impulse and inclinations of its consumers. Visual impulse is catalyzed by the use of rich media techniques and not surprisingly, Rich Media is at the center of the decision making as far as the modern day traveler is concerned. Creation and distribution of professional rich media segments is the cornerstone of the marketing strategy for the leading players in the industry. While the need for a visual presence is recognized by everyone, consistent high quality rich media content coupled with pinpointed propagation is the need of the hour.

So, if you are an aspiring player in the Tourism sector, an intelligent collaboration with a tier one rich media production company and a global media distributor should be on the cards. Global proliferation of internet has made English the minority language on the web, which points towards the indispensability of multi-lingual content generation and distribution. In essence, if you can tickle your audience with your visual creativity on a consistent basis, your advent into the tourism sector is on a solid footing.

Travel shoppers – An insight

For ancient travelers, it was all about compass, Solar and lunar movements, and their personal instincts. The modern tourist dislikes unpredictability and majority of their shopping decisions are governed by the gadgets in their armory. The prevalence of online videos is only matched by the upstaging of print media by the electronic media. According to a recent media survey by Global Web Index – “Almost 75% of the internet users in US watch video clips monthly, thus making video bigger than blogging or social networking”. That emphasizes the marketing value of rich media distribution channels like YouTube, Yahoo Video, Flickr, Photobucket, Metacafe and Vimeo.

So, why are modern travelers so hooked on the search engines?

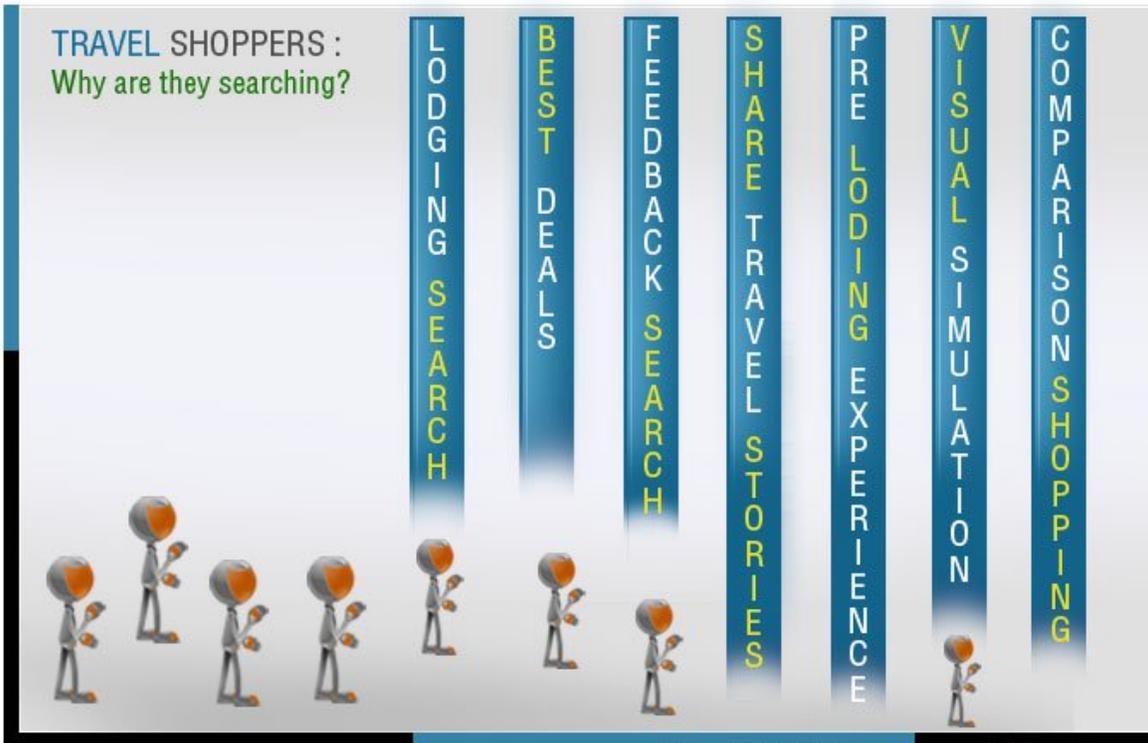
Planning plays an important part in the modern man’s life with internet taking center-stage. Travelers are considered to be one of the savviest shoppers from time immemorial and the advent of search engines as a research and comparative analysis tool has added a lot of firepower to their planning process. Even the technologically primitive of traveler dives into search engines like Google, Yahoo or MSN (almost 35 – 40%) when short-listing their dream destinations. The more Google-savvy kinds explore the specific destination-based sites or the travel authority sites like Expedia, TripAdvisor, Travelocity and Orbitz.

One very apt quote from Bill Clinton strikes the chord – “When I took office only high energy physicists had heard of World Wide Web...Now even my cat has a home page“

The search engine usage within the traveler community has almost doubled between now (67 -70%) and 2000 (35%). Most of the web strategists would concur with me that travel shoppers are the most avid search comparison fanatics. So the question is where are they clicking and why are they? As an aggregation of many reliable surveys, the most popular search activities among the traveler community are...

- Search for an airline, bus or train
- Hunting for the best deal on a lodging
- Comparison shopping for an annual vacation, return fair, dream hotels etc.
- Search for actual photographs of the destination...Pr-lodging or Pre-vacation experience is a major factor in the decision making process
- Gather feedbacks on a hotel, travel destination or an airline
- Search for a corporate travel deal
- Share the travel stories or pictures – A recent poll shows that almost 50% of travelers share their travel details on the social networks

Targeted online visibility in Tourism sector



Copperbridge Media : www.copperbridgemedia.com

The fact that traveling stimulates the visual senses, pre-travel visual engagement is a major strategic concern for savvy marketers. Capturing the imagination of a potential tourist starts with a visual engagement agenda.

Before the purchasing cycle begins...Where are your customers peeping?



Copperbridge Media : www.copperbridgemedia.com

Rich media content – Adopt or perish...

Travelers are not only tickled by rich media content, but it is also a major influencer in the decision making process. Most of top tier hotels have pioneered the art of “pre-lodging experience” to whet the imagination of its potential guests. A captivating depiction of the premises and the in-room amenities goes a long way towards ensuring a booking frenzy. Video newsletters and virtual tours have replaced blogs and article marketing as the standard customer persuasion methods in the Travel & Tourism segment. Majority of the Tourism sector powerhouses have a thriving portfolio on rich media based networks like YouTube, Vimeo, Yahoo Video, Flickr and Photobucket.

Virtual video tours and 360* videos are the most popular and sought after rich media content by travel shoppers. The essence lies in the higher level of ‘usability’ and ‘realistic simulation’ of the actual experience. Virtual tours are a panoramic reproduction of a destination by stitching together video images, music, narration, text and sound effects. Video tours represent a higher degree of rich media integration created by actual video sequencing at a walking pace. Some of the other flavors of rich media that is prevalent in the tourism sector are...

- Sharable web-based streaming video
- Interactive Flash presentation
- Interactive photo slideshow
- CD / DVD format presentation

As the new breed of internet users are lapping up the rich media content like never before, the war for a better content and a bigger distribution area is heating up in the tourism sector. In essence, it is not only the technology and process of the rich media that is of importance, but also the strategy and channel utilized for integration and distribution that is critical to the success of the campaign.



Copperbridge Media : www.copperbridgemedia.com

Targeted online visibility in Tourism sector

Rich Media Ad and content creators like PointRoll are at the center of marketing strategy for some of the most respected travel industry brands – This completes one half of the picture. Once a suit of rich media creatives are on the table, the distribution strategy take centre-stage. VFM Leonardo, one of the largest distributing channels for rich media content, is central to the marketing ROI for a large number of hotels and resorts.

So, the mantra for marketing your goods in the travel world would be – Create a rich content and shout it out – In the right place and at right time.

Online panorama – Is your business there?

While market visibility and customer inquiry is central to every kind of business, travel and tourism business units have their lifeline attached to 24x7x365 visibility. Customer engagement and dialogue defines the visibility program for most of the success stories in this sector. Although the rules of market accessibility remain the same, the customer engagement protocol does take a different route for the travel industry. The efficacy and impact of multi-media messages have been recognized and leveraged by online marketing community for quite some time now. The decreasing attention span of online travel shoppers combined with the plethora of options creates a very competitive marketing mix – to say the least.

So, how can the travel industry players get their message and image across to the potential customers? What is the appropriate message format? Which content platform is best suited for the travel and tourism industry?



Copperbridge Media : www.copperbridgemedia.com

As the internet economy reaches a stage of virtual maturity, the above questions are still being evaluated by online marketers in the context of travel segment. An entrenched survey of the travel marketing content floating across the web does give us a definitive direction – both as a business owner as well as an online marketer.

Videocasts: Podcasting has caught the fancy and lifestyle of upwardly mobile population – who also happen to be the biggest spenders in the travel segment. While audio podcasts has its own fan-following, it is the videocasts (Video Podcasts) that is making heads turn. A professionally made videocast can accelerate the decision making by more than 150% - Who needs it more than the travel industry?

*Who needs it more than the industry where visual stimulus is everything?
Some travel-worthy videocasts worth a mention here are...*

[a] **Hotel Coffee - a pilot's travel experiences:** Who says that pilot's can only see straight ahead? A creative and techno-savvy airline pilot at Horizon airlines recalls interesting flying time between the smaller airports of western US – and to make it spicy, Dan does sprinkle his videocast with some good melodies.

[b] **Savory New York:** It is well known fact that New York thinks and sleeps food and this problem of plenty does leave the gastronomically inclined people indecisive at most times. To take a bite out of this, Savory New York creates videocasts of restaurants by actually talking to the person in charge – the famous chefs of this landmark city. These videocasts are lapped up like hot cakes by the food roving eyes of the city dwellers as well as the visitors.

[c] **Betty in the Sky with a Suitcase:** Traveling out of your suitcase is no fun after a couple of months, and one needs a really humorous streak to get the fun going. That's what Betty's videocasts do – capture the tickling and humorous moments from across the world. Now, that's called a great trip.

[d] **The Travel Show:** The Travel Show is a podcast and blog page hosted by Dr. Martin Fluker at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. His podcasts take "you on a virtual tour of the world, exposing you to places you've never been and taking you back to the places you remember fondly."

Video Blogs (vlogs): With the ubiquity of broadband and the increasing bandwidth, the textual content is fast substituted by videos and graphics. Travel industry is one of the biggest proponents of video blogs and also one of the biggest consumers, and rightly so. A peep into "**Two guys around the world**" vlog and you will be craving to convert your own prolific blog into a video blog.

Localized video production and online distribution: That's great. Now you have an eye-popping video created by a stellar digital agency. You can take it solo and spread the word and video the best you can and on the best networks but will you be maximizing your presence for every video comes out of your stable? Surveys and online research (Forrester 2009) have proven that visuals and videos of a hotel or resort instill a lot of confidence in consumers and reassure them about their purchasing decision. One of the largest distributors of videos and images for the Travel industry is VFM Leonardo (www.vfmleonardo.com) – VFM ensures a targeted distribution to 30,000+ travel websites including all four Global Distribution Systems, Pegasus, Travelocity, Expedia, Orbitz and more for all visual content media including photos, virtual tours, flash presentations, and video.

Targeted online visibility in Tourism sector

Now that's a quick marketing decision – putting your video into the hands of a global distribution network like VFM.

Social media Channels: Localized in 22 countries – covering 24 different languages – More than 2 billion views per day – 24x7x365 video upload time... Now that's an impressive platform to launch the video campaign for your new hotel. And you have tons of snaps that are shouting for attention, and then let them be on Flickr – visited by approximately 14,733,241 unique visitors daily - approximately 25,493,704 page-views daily. Combine them with your Facebook and Twitter accounts and your Rich Media content has covered majority of the human Diasporas.

So, what happens next? How does your rich media content make a difference?

How does your new content make a difference to your business dynamics?



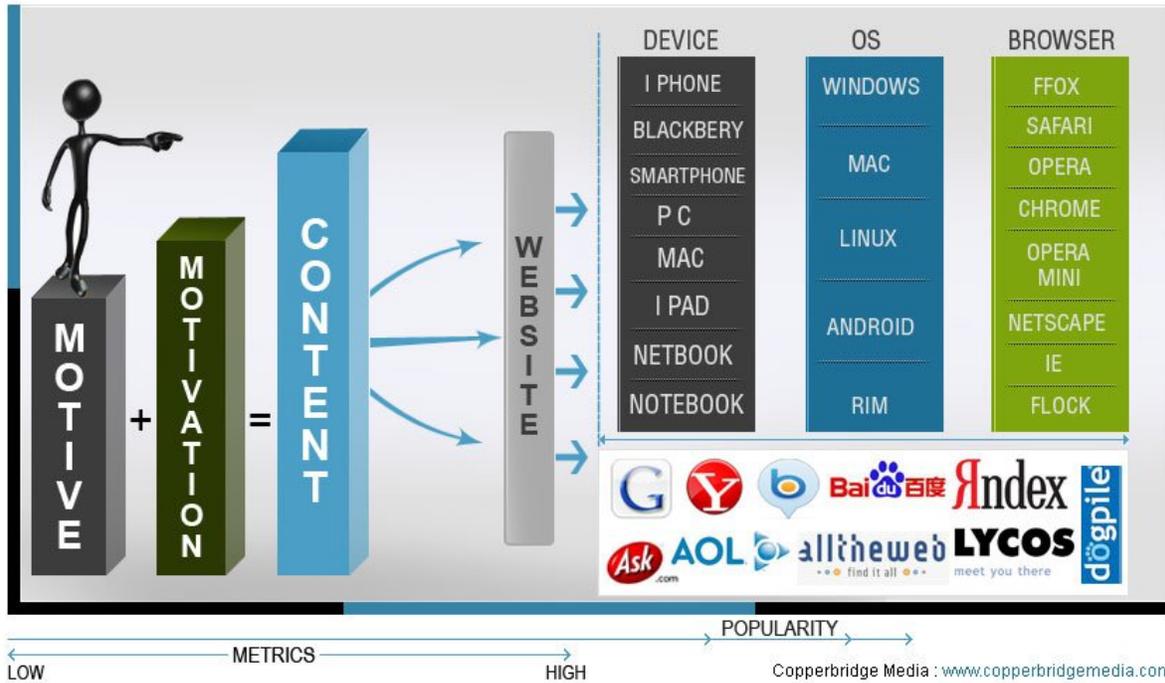
Reach out to the travel shoppers

Obsessive connectivity and extreme mobility defines the lifestyle of modern human race. PCs and laptops have given way to iPhone, PocketBooks, BlackBerrys and Android based phones. The good news for marketers is that these roving types are still searching non-stop – for a better deal, for an exotic destination, for the best to dine with their date....

So, is your business ready to catch their eye? Are your video, graphics, and website compatible with mobile operating system?

Targeted online visibility in Tourism sector

The cycle of customer conversion in these fluctuating market conditions can be maneuvered to a great extent by investing in compelling rich media content – and then pushing these content through the best networked distribution system. When Juan Carlos Madriz, President and General Manager of Virtual Works decided to collaborate with VFM Leonardo as their global distribution partners for their premium rich media content, he had exactly this in mind.



Panoramic promotion which is not only metric-based but also affordable is a challenge for most of the hotels and resorts. It might be a simple marketing exercise to engage rich media firm for your daily dose of promotional, but the ROI of this marketing endeavor can only be assessed if real time and relevant metrics is garnered.

Motive...Customer Motivation...Metrics - is the heart of Rich Media Campaign.

Conclusion

Hotel literature and glorified brochures are no longer sought after by savvy travelers. Emphasis on pre-lodging and surrogate vacation experience has resulted in the surge of rich media content on the web. Travel industry marketers are in a hurry to create and publish the best episodes and video tracks of their hotel and resorts. Social media network and multi-media distribution platforms are utilized by even the novice marketing teams in order to send a visual message to its potential customers. The challenge for the hotel owners is not to create the most eye-popping videos, but to deliver these videos to their customers segment at the right time of the buying cycle.

About the Author

Vineet Singh

Vineet is a seasoned marketer and experimental entrepreneur. He is the founder and CEO of CopperBridge Media (www.copperbridgemedia.com). He is a passionate teacher and environmentalist and is also the founder and Managing director of Green Arth (economy) (www.greenarth.com) and PaperTip (www.papertip.com).

About Copper Bridge Media

CopperBridge Media (www.copperbridgemedia.com) is a global marketing strategy firm and business enabler. It relies on its high intelligence data capture and analysis to cater to the conversion and ROI centric demands of its clients. It offers Corporate Branding, Multi-Channel Marketing, Research and Analysis and pervasive Search marketing solutions to its clients.

PaperTip (www.papertip.com) is the content marketing arm of CopperBridge and is vital to the success of its client's online business strategy. CopperBridge Media takes its social responsibility very seriously and has recently launched GreenArth (www.greenarth.com) – as a platform to conserve the natural resources and safeguard the environment.

Get In Touch

22 Welekar layout, Manewada Rd.,
Nagpur 440 027,
Phone: +91.712.327.0556 Email:
info@copperbridgemedia.com

Phone: 845-704-1772 Email:
usa@copperbridgemedia.com