

Marketing Fundamentals

Digital Marketing, Content Strategy, and Customer Engagement in Tourism

A Case Study of Tourism Australia

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1. Executive Summary:

Digital marketing has become an important part of the tourism industry because travellers now use digital platforms throughout almost the entire travel decision-making process. Tourists can discover destinations through social media, compare alternatives through websites and reviews, communicate with tourism businesses through digital channels and finally make bookings online. This means that tourism organisations can no longer depend only on traditional advertising. They need to create useful content, communicate with customers through different digital channels and build trust before, during and after the trip.

This report examines digital marketing, content strategy and customer engagement in tourism using Tourism Australia as a case study. Tourism Australia is a useful example because it operates as a destination marketing organisation and has developed large-scale international digital campaigns. Its Come and say G'day campaign uses storytelling, social media, digital advertising, partnerships and localised content to promote Australia to international markets. The second chapter of the campaign, launched in 2025, introduced market-specific talent in the United States, United Kingdom, China, India and Japan. Tourism Australia reported increases in consideration and flight searches during the development of the campaign. 

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The report analyses the changing behaviour of digital travellers and explains how social media, user-generated content (UGC), online reviews and influencers affect destination perceptions. It also applies the Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (STP) framework to identify suitable digital traveller groups for Tourism Australia.

The report proposes a 12-month digital campaign based around four content pillars: Inspiration, People and Culture, Experiences, and Traveller Stories. The strategy combines short-form video, long-form storytelling, UGC, influencer partnerships, search marketing, email communication and digital advertising.

Finally, the report proposes measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), including engagement rate, website traffic, video completion rate, conversion rate, customer acquisition cost and return on marketing investment. The main recommendation is that tourism organisations should not treat digital marketing simply as online advertising. Instead, digital channels should be used to create a continuous relationship with travellers from initial inspiration to post-trip advocacy.

2. Introduction

Tourism is an industry where consumers often make decisions before they physically experience the product. A traveller may see a destination on Instagram, watch a YouTube video, read reviews on a booking platform and compare prices before deciding where to travel. This makes digital marketing particularly important because tourism products are

largely intangible and customers cannot fully evaluate the experience before purchasing it.

Digitalisation has changed the relationship between tourism businesses and travellers. In traditional tourism marketing, organisations mainly communicated information to customers through advertising, brochures, television and travel agencies. Today, travellers can also create and share their own content. Photos, videos, reviews, comments and recommendations can influence other travellers and contribute to the image of a destination.

Research has found that social media is used during several stages of the traveller journey, including information search, comparison of alternatives and sharing experiences after travel (Hu & Olivieri, 2021). ♦ This means that digital marketing should not focus only on getting a customer to click an advertisement. It should support the complete customer journey.

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Tourism Australia provides a relevant case for studying this development. As Australia's national destination marketing organisation, Tourism Australia promotes the country in international markets. Its Come and say G'day campaign combines traditional advertising with social, digital and content marketing. The campaign was initially launched in 2022 and later developed into a second chapter with local talent for different international markets. ♦

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The purpose of this report is therefore to examine how digital marketing and content strategy can be used to improve customer engagement in tourism. The report focuses on Tourism Australia but also considers wider tourism industry practices.

The main objectives are:

To examine changes in tourism consumer behaviour caused by digital media.

To analyse the digital customer journey.

To apply segmentation, targeting and positioning to tourism marketing.

To evaluate UGC, social media and influencer marketing.

To develop a practical digital content strategy.

To identify suitable KPIs for measuring marketing performance.

To propose a 12-month digital campaign framework for Tourism Australia.

3. Market and Consumer Behaviour Analysis

3.1 Changes in tourism consumer behaviour

Tourists have become more independent in the way they collect information. A traveller no longer needs to depend entirely on a travel agent to decide where to go. They can search for destinations, flights, hotels, activities and restaurants from a smartphone. This has increased the amount of information available to consumers, but it has also made the decision-making process more complicated. Travellers may have to compare hundreds of videos, reviews, prices and recommendations.

Social media has become particularly important during the inspiration stage. Tourism Australia itself uses platforms including Instagram, Facebook and TikTok and encourages travellers to share content using hashtags such as #SeeAustralia. Its social media programme also uses significant amounts of user-generated material. 💎

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Recent industry research also shows the importance of social media in travel planning. Expedia Group's 2025 Traveler Value Index reported that more than 60% of surveyed travellers used social media for travel inspiration, while 73% said influencer recommendations had affected booking decisions. The research covered more than 11,000 consumers across 11 markets. 💎

expedia

This shows that tourism marketers need to understand not only demographics but also digital behaviour.

3.2 The importance of visual content

Tourism is naturally suited to visual marketing because destinations can be communicated through landscapes, food, wildlife, culture and experiences.

Video has become particularly important. Expedia Group's 2025 travel content research reported that 71% of surveyed travellers said video influenced their travel decisions, compared with 24% for static images. 💎

expedia

For Tourism Australia, this provides an opportunity to show the destination rather than simply describe it.

For example, instead of an advertisement saying:

"Australia offers beautiful beaches and wildlife."

a short video could show a traveller walking along a beach, visiting wildlife, eating local food and interacting with local people.

This type of content can communicate emotion as well as information.

3.3 The role of trust

Trust is an important factor in tourism because the customer is often paying for an experience that will happen in the future. Online reviews and recommendations can reduce uncertainty.

UGC is especially important because it comes from actual travellers rather than directly from the organisation. Recent research describes UGC as valuable because of its perceived authenticity, immediacy and relatability

Taylor & Francis Online

However, UGC also creates risks. Fake reviews, inaccurate information and negative experiences can damage reputation. Tourism marketers therefore need to monitor online conversations instead of only publishing positive content.

4. The Digital Customer Journey in Tourism

A useful way to understand tourism marketing is through the customer journey.

The journey can be divided into five stages:

Awareness → Consideration → Booking → Experience → Advocacy

Awareness

At this stage, the traveller may not have decided where to go. Content needs to create interest.

Examples include:

Instagram Reels

TikTok videos

YouTube videos

Destination photography

Influencer content

Search advertising

For Tourism Australia, emotional storytelling can be used to make Australia memorable.

Consideration

The traveller now starts comparing destinations.

They may search for:

Cost

Attractions

Weather

Transport

Accommodation

Activities

Reviews

Safety

Travel time

At this stage, Tourism Australia should provide detailed website content, itineraries, videos and links to tourism businesses.

Booking

At the booking stage, the organisation needs to reduce friction.

A customer who has become interested in Australia should be able to easily move from inspiration to useful planning information and booking partners.

Clear calls to action are important.

Examples include:

"Plan your trip"

"Explore Australia"

"Find your experience"

"Start your itinerary"

Experience

Digital marketing should not stop when the customer books.

During the trip, visitors can receive useful information through websites, apps, email and social media. They can also be encouraged to share their experiences.

Advocacy

The final stage is when customers become potential promoters.

A visitor who posts a positive travel video can influence other potential travellers.

This creates a cycle:

Brand content → Customer experience → UGC → New customer awareness

This is one of the main reasons customer engagement is so important in tourism.

5. Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (STP)

5.1 Segmentation

Tourism Australia operates in multiple international markets, so one single message cannot work equally well for every traveller.

The market can be segmented using four main approaches.

Demographic segmentation

This can include:

Age

Income

Family status

Occupation

Education

However, demographic segmentation alone is not enough for digital tourism marketing.

Geographic segmentation

Tourism Australia can target customers based on their country or region.

For example, the organisation can develop different campaigns for:

United States

United Kingdom

India

China

Japan

Germany

Tourism Australia's current campaign specifically uses local talent in markets including the US, UK, China, India and Japan. ↻

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Psychographic segmentation

This focuses on lifestyle and interests.

Potential segments include:

Adventure travellers

Luxury travellers

Nature lovers

Food-focused travellers

Cultural travellers

Family travellers

Wellness travellers

Sustainable travellers

Behavioural segmentation

This focuses on how people behave online.

Examples include:

Frequent international travellers
First-time Australia researchers
Website visitors
People watching travel videos
People interacting with tourism content
Previous visitors
Customers who abandoned a booking
Behavioural data allows tourism marketers to create more relevant messages.

5.2 Target market

For the proposed digital campaign, the main target group will be:
Digitally active international travellers aged approximately 18–40 who are interested in experiences, nature, culture, food and adventure.
This segment is suitable for a digital campaign because it is likely to use social platforms and online video when researching travel.
A secondary target group would be families and older travellers who are interested in nature, comfort, food, wildlife and high-quality travel experiences.

5.3 Positioning

Tourism Australia's positioning should focus on Australia as a destination that provides memorable real-world experiences rather than simply famous tourist attractions.
The proposed positioning statement is:
“Australia is a destination for travellers who want to experience nature, culture, people and adventure in ways they will remember long after the trip.”
This positioning is broad enough to work across international markets but can be adapted to local preferences.

6. Digital Marketing and Content Strategy

6.1 Content strategy

A successful content strategy should answer three basic questions:
Who are we speaking to?
What do they want to see or know?
What action do we want them to take?
For Tourism Australia, the proposed strategy would use four main content pillars.
Pillar 1: Inspiration
This content is designed to make people want to visit.
Examples:
Sunrise and sunset videos
Beaches
Wildlife

Great Barrier Reef
Australian cities
Road trips
National parks
Short-form video would be particularly important.

Pillar 2: People and Culture

Tourism is not only about landscapes.

Content should introduce travellers to:

Local communities

Indigenous culture

Australian food

Artists

Chefs

Local tourism operators

Australian lifestyle

This makes the destination feel more human.

Pillar 3: Experiences

Instead of only showing locations, the campaign should show what tourists can actually do.

For example:

Diving

Hiking

Surfing

Wildlife experiences

Food tours

Road trips

Wine experiences

Cultural activities

Pillar 4: Traveller Stories

This pillar would use UGC.

Travellers could share:

Their favourite Australian experience

Their itinerary

Unexpected discoveries

Food experiences

Local interactions

Short travel stories

Tourism Australia already encourages businesses and travellers to share content through hashtags such as #ComeAndSayGday and #SeeAustralia. ♦

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7. User-Generated Content, Social Media and Influencer Marketing

7.1 User-generated content

UGC can be a powerful tool because it gives potential travellers access to other people's experiences.

For example, a traveller might trust a 30-second video from another tourist showing a real experience more than a professionally produced advertisement.

However, marketers should not assume that all UGC is automatically more effective. A 2026 study of destination social media found that destination-generated content could have a strong influence on destination image and electronic word-of-mouth, while the effect of UGC can vary depending on the destination and context (Hervás-Cortina et al., 2026). 

MDPI

Therefore, the best approach is to combine:

Professional content + UGC + useful information.

7.2 Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing has become important because influencers can communicate travel experiences in a personal format.

Research on travel influencers has linked influencer trust with different stages of the travel decision process, including information search, evaluation and purchase decision Springer

However, follower numbers should not be the only selection criteria.

Tourism Australia should consider:

Audience relevance

Engagement rate

Credibility

Content quality

Previous travel content

Geographic audience

Brand fit

Disclosure of commercial partnerships

A smaller creator with a highly engaged travel audience may provide more relevant communication than a celebrity with millions of unrelated followers.

7.3 Platform strategy

Different platforms should have different roles.

Platform

Main Purpose

Example Content

Instagram

Inspiration & community
Reels, photos, Stories
TikTok
Discovery & entertainment
Short videos, challenges
YouTube
Information & storytelling
Travel guides, documentaries
Facebook
Community & older audiences
UGC, destination information
Website
Information & conversion
Itineraries, planning
Email
Relationship building
Personalised travel content
Search
Intent capture
Destination and activity searches

The key principle is that Tourism Australia should not simply publish the same content everywhere.

The content should be adapted to each platform.

8. Customer Engagement and Brand Trust

Customer engagement means more than receiving likes

A person who watches a video for three seconds is engaging differently from someone who saves the video, visits the website and eventually books a trip.

Therefore, engagement should be considered at different levels.

Low-level engagement

Views

Impressions

Likes

Medium-level engagement

Comments

Shares

Saves

Profile visits

Website visits

High-level engagement

Itinerary creation

Booking

Repeat visits

UGC creation

Recommendations

The final objective should be to move customers from passive consumption to active participation.

Recent research on UGC-based tourism platforms found that usefulness, personalisation, enjoyment and trust can influence traveller satisfaction and continued engagement (Yap et al., 2026). 

Taylor & Francis Online

This suggests that Tourism Australia should focus not only on producing attractive content but also on making the digital experience useful.

9. Measuring Digital Marketing Effectiveness

Digital marketing should be measurable

A tourism organisation should not judge a campaign only by how many views it receives.

9.1 Key Performance Indicators

Reach

Measures how many people were exposed to the campaign.

Engagement rate

Measures interaction relative to audience size.

A simple formula is:

$$\text{Engagement Rate} = \text{Total Engagements} \div \text{Total Reach} \times 100$$

Video completion rate

This measures how many people watch a video until the end.

It is particularly useful for evaluating storytelling.

Click-through rate

Measures how many people click a digital advertisement or link.

$$\text{CTR} = \text{Clicks} \div \text{Impressions} \times 100$$

Conversion rate

Measures the percentage of users who complete the desired action.

For example:

$$\text{Conversion Rate} = \text{Conversions} \div \text{Website Visitors} \times 100$$

Customer acquisition cost

This measures how much marketing spending is required to acquire a customer.

$$\text{CAC} = \text{Total Marketing Cost} \div \text{Number of Acquired Customers}$$

Return on marketing investment

A simplified formula is:

$$\text{ROMI} = (\text{Marketing-attributed Revenue} - \text{Marketing Cost}) \div \text{Marketing Cost} \times 100$$

For a destination organisation, direct revenue attribution can be difficult because Tourism Australia does not personally sell every flight, hotel or activity. Therefore, the organisation should also measure intermediate outcomes such as destination consideration, searches, website engagement and referrals to tourism partners.

Tourism Australia's own reporting provides an example of using indicators such as consideration and flight searches to evaluate campaign effects. Its 2025 announcement reported a 10% increase in consideration in the US, UK and China and a 22% increase in flight searches during the period covered by its campaign

11. Implementation, Budgeting and KPIs

The following budget is a proposed planning budget for this academic report, not a claim about Tourism Australia's actual internal budget.

Activity

Proposed Budget

Percentage

Social media advertising

AUD 2.0 million

25%

Video/content production

AUD 1.6 million

20%

Influencer/creator partnerships

AUD 1.2 million

15%

Search advertising

AUD 1.0 million

12.5%

Website/SEO/content

AUD 800,000

10%

Partnerships

AUD 800,000

10%

Analytics/testing

AUD 400,000

5%

Contingency

AUD 200,000

2.5%

Total

AUD 8 million

100%

The proposed allocation places the largest amount into social media and content because the campaign depends heavily on video and digital storytelling.

The budget should remain flexible. If one platform produces significantly better results, spending can be shifted towards it. However, Tourism Australia should avoid depending completely on one platform because algorithm changes can reduce organic reach.

12. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Build content around the customer journey

Tourism organisations should create different content for awareness, consideration, booking and advocacy.

A person who is dreaming about a holiday needs different information from someone who is ready to book.

Recommendation 2: Combine UGC with professional content

UGC can increase authenticity, while professional content can provide consistency and high production quality.

The two approaches should therefore complement each other.

Recommendation 3: Use local creators in international markets

Tourism Australia's current campaign already demonstrates this approach by using market-specific talent in countries including India, Japan, China, the UK and the US.  tourism.australia.com

Local creators can communicate cultural references and language more naturally.

Recommendation 4: Focus on quality engagement rather than vanity metrics

Millions of views are not automatically equal to millions of potential customers.

Tourism marketers should examine:

Saves

Shares

Website visits

Search behaviour

Planning activity

Booking referrals

UGC

Sentiment

Recommendation 5: Make the website the centre of the digital journey

Social media is excellent for discovery, but the destination website should provide deeper information.

The website should offer:

Itinerary tools

Destination guides

Activity information

Transport information

Accommodation links

Planning advice

Personalised recommendations

Social media should bring people into the ecosystem, while the website helps them make decisions.

Recommendation 6: Monitor reputation continuously

Tourism organisations should monitor comments, reviews and online conversations. Negative feedback should not simply be deleted. Genuine complaints should be acknowledged and, where appropriate, directed towards customer-service channels. This is important because social media can spread both positive and negative experiences quickly.

13. Conclusion

Digital marketing has changed tourism by giving travellers greater access to information and greater control over the travel decision-making process. Tourists can now discover destinations through social media, compare alternatives through reviews and websites, interact directly with tourism organisations and share their own experiences with large online audiences.

For this reason, tourism marketing needs to move beyond traditional advertising. A successful digital strategy should connect content, customer engagement and measurable business outcomes.

Tourism Australia provides a strong example of how a destination marketing organisation can use digital communication. Its Come and say G'day campaign combines storytelling, social media, digital advertising, partnerships and market-specific communication. The organisation also actively encourages user-generated content through social platforms. 💡

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The proposed “Your Australia Story” campaign builds on these principles. It uses four content pillars—Inspiration, People and Culture, Experiences, and Traveller Stories—to communicate Australia's destination image while encouraging travellers to participate in the brand.

The main lesson is that digital tourism marketing should not be viewed simply as posting attractive photographs or running advertisements. The strongest approach is to create a connected customer journey in which a person can discover a destination, become interested, find useful information, make a booking, enjoy the experience and eventually become an advocate.

UGC, influencers and social media can help build trust and emotional connection, but they need to be supported by useful destination information and strong customer experiences. Research also shows that factors such as trust, usefulness, personalisation and enjoyment can influence continued digital engagement. 💡

Therefore, Tourism Australia should continue developing an integrated digital strategy that combines creativity with data. By measuring not only reach and engagement but also website behaviour, consideration, referrals, UGC and conversion-related outcomes, the organisation can make its marketing more effective and more responsive to changing traveller behaviour.

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15. Appendix A – Proposed Customer Journey

Awareness

↓

Social media / Influencer / YouTube / Search



Consideration



Website / Reviews / Itineraries / UGC



Booking



Travel partners / Airlines / Hotels / Tour operators



Experience



Digital information / Social interaction



Advocacy



UGC / Reviews / Recommendations



New Traveller Awareness