

User Generated Content ? need to get your hands on some?

Mon, Nov 24, 2008 | Posted by [Jeremy Head](#)

I spent a couple of very interesting days at the [World Travel Market](#) recently- the annual industry convention in London.

I spent one day at the Eye For Travel Seminar ? [Online Content and Conversion Strategies](#). One of the most interesting speakers was Severine Philardeau. She?s Senior Manager of Brand Distribution at [TripAdvisor](#). She quoted some stats about the value of User Generated Content (UGC) from an [eConsultancy](#) survey. From a sample of 360 website owners across all sectors (not just travel)

- 56% say it lifts conversion levels
- 77% say it increases traffic
- 42% say it increases the average spend on site

Often UGC is what tips the balance and makes someone move from engaged looker to full-on booker ? according to Severine.

I think she?s right. Increasingly the most important next step for Travel websites is adding real customer reviews. Some are embracing it already, but many have yet to take the plunge. **There?s nothing more powerful than an unbiased endorsement of your product from another satisfied customer.** (And a few less complimentary ones shows you?re serious about letting customers give their opinions and by extension care about them and their opinions.)

But all too often you see ?Add your comments? boxes at the bottom of trip or product descriptions and nothing there. Announcing to the world that no one could be bothered to review your holiday is a pretty awful admission.

I mentioned UGC in my [previous post about the future of Travel Content](#). Trip Advisor?s lead as stand alone provider of UGC for travel is pretty unassailable (20 million reviews, more being added at a rate of 4 per minute). So adding a feed from Trip Advisor to your site with reviews for the hotels and tours you offer would seem an easy way to add this kind of content quickly and build critical (pun intended) mass.

But this got me thinking?

I went on a great holiday this summer with a niche Turkey and Cephalonia operator [Exclusive Escapes](#). At the end of my trip they gave me a questionnaire to fill out. And I did? in great detail. I don?t think I?m unusual in that context. If you?re asked at the right time for your opinion you?re generally happy to give it ? particularly if the format of the feedback is organised for you.

Of course the good old fashioned feedback form has been around since the days before the internet. It?s an integral part of any decent company?s customer service and, if used properly, new product development too.

But it?s also user generated content by a different name. Any travel company worth its salt has been probably generating loads of user generated content without even realising it!

So? here?s an idea.

Instead of handing out the form, email your customer as soon as they get home with an easy to complete formatted form and ask them to rate their holiday. Maybe even incentivise them to do it with a prize draw or discount of their next holiday.

Move your customer feedback process on-line? and get yourself UGC at the same time.

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