

Attracting the North Holidaymaker to Ireland Using Social Media Channels: An Irish Marketing Strategy

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Abstract : In tourism, engagement has been found to boost awareness of a destination and subsequently increase visits. Customer engagement in this industry is now facilitated by social media. This phenomenon is not very well researched in relation to Ireland and the North American tourism market. The objective of this paper is to present research findings on two related topics; the first is an investigation into the effectiveness of social media channels as components of a digital marketing campaign when promoting Ireland as a brand in North America. Secondly, this study reveals how Irish marketers have embraced social media platforms and channels with an innovative strategy that has successfully attracted growing numbers of US and Canadian holidaymakers to Ireland. A range of methodological approaches was applied in order to achieve the study's objective. The methods used were both quantitative and qualitative, and the data was obtained from both Irish marketers and North American holidaymakers. Surveys of these holidaymakers in the pre, during and post-trip phases revealed their attitudes towards social media and Ireland as a destination. Semi-structured interviews with those responsible for implementing relationship marketing strategies for this segment provide insight into the effectiveness of social media when used to capitalise on the cultural link between Ireland and North America. Further analysis involved using Nvivo 11+ software to investigate the activities of the Irish destination marketer (DMO) and the engagement of the US and Canadian audiences through a detailed study of social media platform content. The findings from this investigation will extend an under-researched body of literature pertaining to Ireland as a destination and the successful digital marketing campaigns that have achieved exponential growth in this sector over the past five years. The empirical evidence presented also illustrates how the innovative use of social media has assisted the DMO to engage with the North American holidaymaker as part of an effective digital marketing strategy.

Keywords : channels, digital, engagement, marketing, strategies

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