

## TIP SHEET #12

# WORD OF MOUTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Word of mouth, including social media, is the most influential and trusted form of marketing, making it the best way for travellers to find out about destinations and experiences. Free Spirits, Cultural Explorers, and Authentic Experiencers tend to be advocates who like to share their vacations with friends, family, and their social networks.

Turn visitors into your greatest advocates! Encourage them to share on social media before, during, and after their experience.

### SOCIAL SHARING

Visitors love to share special moments that delight them! Having the right mix of activities in your experience increases its appeal to your target traveller's interests. Create WOW moments and lasting memories they'll want to share with friends and family.



## GENERATE POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH

**Before & after visitor engagement:** Connect with your guests before they arrive to share important details or reminders and your excitement to welcome them as a guest. After visitors return home, reach out with a memento like a photo from their experience. Even a quick, personalized message expressing how great it was to meet them can mean a lot. Encourage guests to submit online reviews too!

**Help capture "shareworthy" photos:** Many travellers love posting photos online, so ensure there are opportunities for sharable shots. Point out favourite viewpoints or unique features and offer to help visitors capture great experience photos and stunning landscapes.

**Deliver the unexpected:** Unexpected moments create a 'WOW' factor! For example, visitors may know

that a meal is included as part of their hike but imagine their delight when they round the bend to see a bonfire crackling seaside with lunch cooking over the open fire. Or maybe it's an unexpected wharf-side picnic with a local fisher who helps you prepare a family chowder recipe, served in a bowl from a local potter, which guests can take home. Curate special moments for visitors to create excitement about sharing their experience.

**Create champions:** What do people in your region know about your business and experiences? Invite regional partners and local businesses to get to know your business and your experience, first-hand. That way, they can provide authentic recommendations and will be more likely to promote your offering.



## ACTIVATE SOCIAL MEDIA

Being active on social media can create awareness and build advocacy for your business and experiences. Social media is a strong channel for generating awareness and consideration. As you approach your experience delivery date, look for ways to generate bookings by creating a sense of urgency. For example, let your audience know your experience only has four spots left. For the days following, you could share favourite photos of unique elements your experience provides visitors.

It's important to remember that social media is a place to let your brand and authentic vibe shine through. Consider incorporating these tips into your organic (unpaid) social media activities:

**Use hashtags (#):** Make your posts searchable and part of relevant online discussions. The '#' symbol turns adjacent words into a searchable keyword, such as #VisitNovaScotia or #NovaScotiaEats. Create a hashtag for your business, use it in all your posts, and encourage visitors to use it too! Research hashtags with relevant and large followings to use in your posts. While hashtags are most commonly used on Instagram, you can also use them on Facebook and Twitter to search for relevant conversations.

**Follow hashtags:** Follow hashtags relevant to your tourism business to see what's trending, find examples of photos with high levels of engagement, and conversations you can join.

**Get a chance to be featured:** Follow Tourism Nova Scotia: @visitnovascotia and use hashtag #VisitNovaScotia in your Instagram posts for a chance to have your photo featured. Destination Canada markets Canada internationally. Follow Destination Canada: @ExploreCanada and using their hashtag

#ExploreCanada to increase your chance to be featured.

**Leverage user generated content:** Sharing visitor photos on your channels is called, "user-generated content." When visitors post photos using your hashtag, those authentic visitor photos become part of your business' searchable content. It's recommended that you ask permission with a direct message, a comment on the photo, or by communicating on your profile how you intend to feature user-generated content when visitors use your hashtag, before sharing user-generated content on your social channels.

**Tag relevant accounts:** In addition to hashtags, you can tag accounts by using the '@' symbol and their account name. For example, on Instagram you can tag Tourism Nova Scotia by typing in @VisitNovaScotia.

**Post your photos:** Capture photos of guests enjoying a meal, taking part in an activity, wildlife that they may see, the view at the end of the hike, or a stunning sunset. Just be sure to get your guest's permission.

**Have fun with photo captions:** Captions for photos don't need to be complicated – they can be fun! Use social media to let your business' personality shine through. Short and sweet is best for social media.

**Engage in conversations:** Travellers are likely to research your business before booking. In addition to having a strong social media presence, be sure to engage in conversations happening on review sites like Google, Facebook, and TripAdvisor (the #1 user-generated online travel review site). Claim your listings, update content, and engage with visitors by encouraging and responding to reviews.

**Post often:** Consider posting a couple of times per week on social channels, depending on your business' goals, the amount of time you're able to spend on your social marketing, and the amount of good content you have. Delivering two to three strong, engaging posts per week is better than posting less engaging content more frequently. Be creative with your messaging during different times of the year or by engaging in relevant, current events. For example, December posts could be framed as, 'a great gift idea.'

**Promote your experiences all year:** Keep social promotion going even if your experience sells out. Let visitors know that it's sold out for this year. This shows travellers that your experience is in high demand, which can lead to even more interest. Let them know how they can reserve their seat to take part in your experience when offered next, or what other great offerings your business has available.

**Sync your social:** Look for ways to maximize your social media efforts and results. For example, if you link your Instagram and Facebook accounts, you can share a post on Instagram and with one swipe of your finger, have it upload to Facebook too! Or, plan in advance and schedule multiple posts on Facebook.

As your business and experience offerings grow, you can explore tools such as [Hootsuite](#), where you can manage all your business' social media from one dashboard, engage with your audience, schedule posts, and track your performance.

## SOCIAL INSIGHTS AND ANALYTICS

Want to know how your posts are performing and which photos were most engaging? Facebook and Instagram provide insights on Business Pages, so you can see just how well your social efforts are engaging your audience. Find out about the best time of day to post for better reach, audience demographics, and more!

