

content that travels

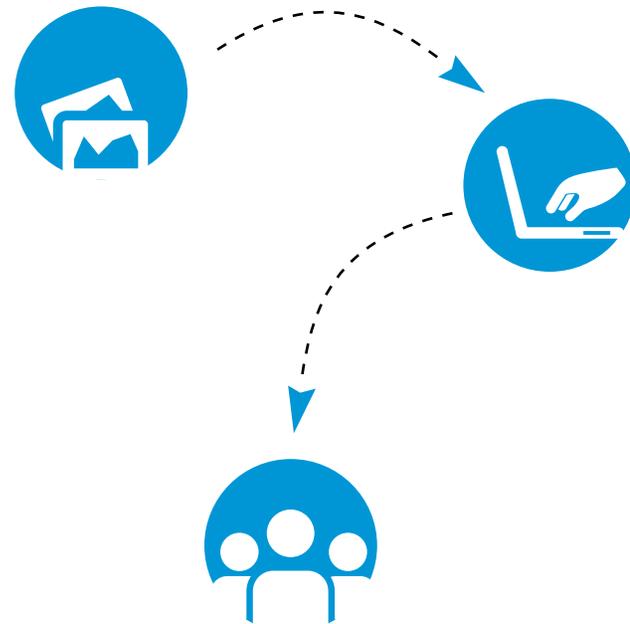
Content Marketing Best Practices

Overview

- The 8 Essentials of Successful Content Marketing
- Content Distribution with the Hyper-Informed Traveler
- Top Tips for Content that Travels Well
- The Three Broad Channels of Content Marketing & Distribution

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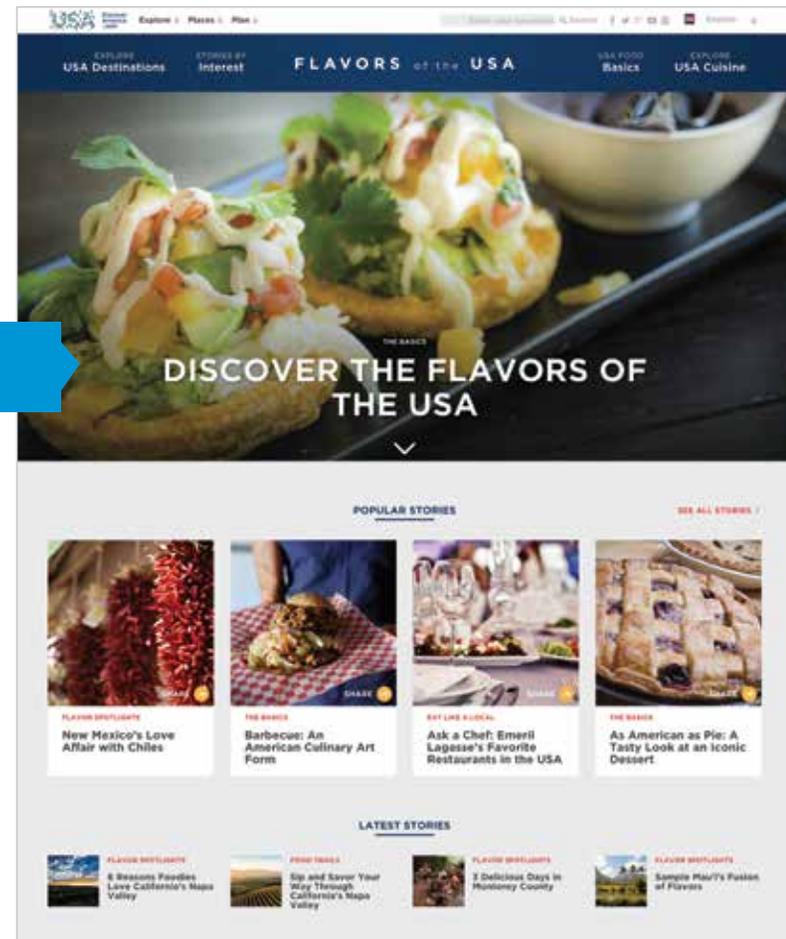
A Practical Introduction
to **Distributing Your
Online Content** Across
Owned, Earned and
Paid Channels.



I. THE 8 ESSENTIALS OF SUCCESSFUL CONTENT MARKETING

Content tells stories –

Stories about your destination, your lodging property, activity or attraction. Why should I visit? What experiences can I expect? What is new and different? What about practical issues? Great stories grab attention, create interest and generate bookings.



Content is especially important for international visitors, who are less familiar with US destinations and what makes them unique and different. Shown above, Brand USA, the national tourism marketing office for the US has a range of international and foreign language coop content programs, including Cuisine, in which businesses can participate.



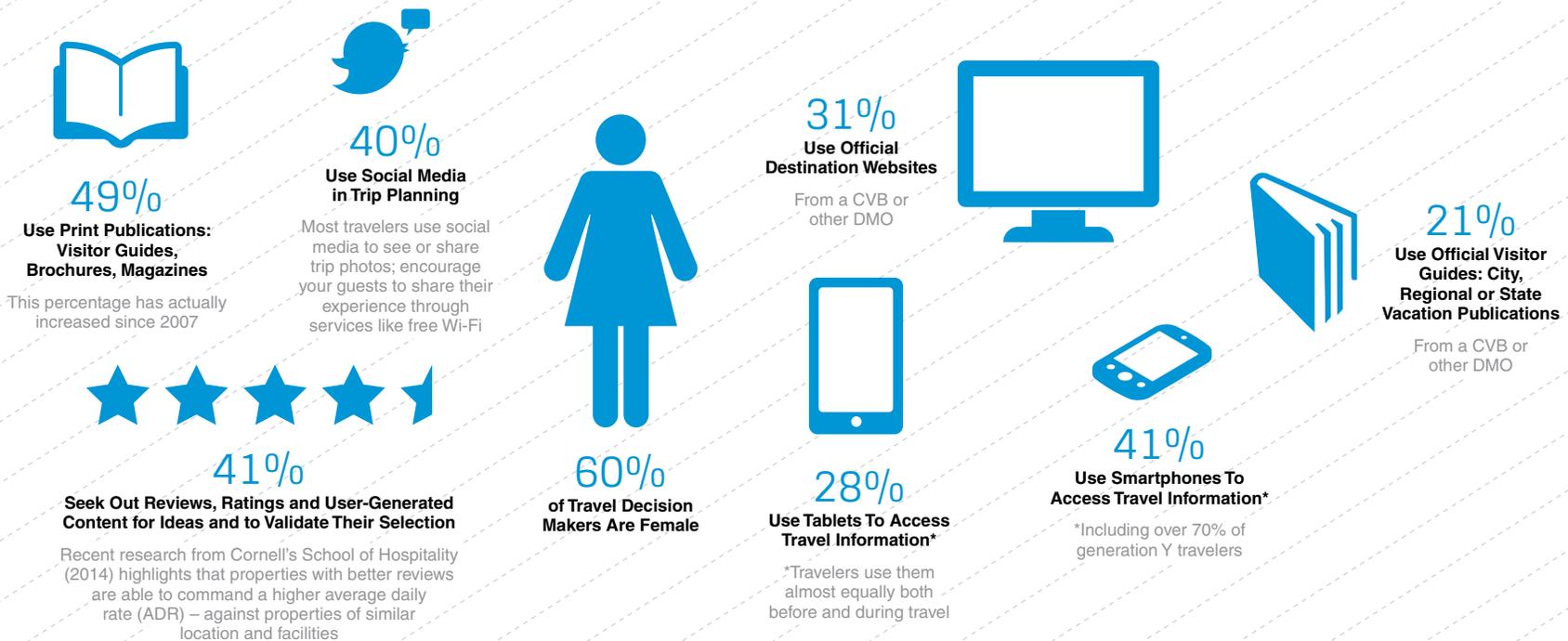
Successful content marketing is built on a solid foundation – use the checklist at right to see if your content distribution strategies are covering the essentials.

- HAVE A CONTENT PLAN**
A minimum of 5 percent and up to 20 percent of a campaign's budget should be spent on content and landing page optimization related to the campaign. Invest this budget throughout the campaign period, and determine the size of the investment based on the relative budget, reach and length of the campaign.
- CREATE CONTENT**
Tell the story of your destination/business in words, pictures, video
- CURATE CONTENT**
How others tell your story is often far more impactful (e.g. visitors and locals)
- OPTIMIZE CONTENT**
Make sure your content can be easily found in search engines
- SHARE CONTENT**
Use social media and PR to share your content
- PROMOTE CONTENT**
There are ever more precise and targeted ways to promote content
- MONETIZE CONTENT**
Consider if there are opportunities to share costs/grow your budget
- MEASURE & REFINE CONTENT**
Use analytics to continually review and update your plan

II. CONTENT DISTRIBUTION WITH THE HYPER-INFORMED TRAVELER

The traveler in 2015 uses more information from more sources than ever before in history. The average U.S. and International traveler uses literally dozens of websites (via desktop, tablet and smartphone) plus a range of offline media – notably print publications. The infographic below from the February 2015 “**State of the American Traveler**” highlights this information-rich environment.

Your content distribution needs to be set for success with this Hyper-Informed Traveler marketplace.



Source: Destination Analysts, "The State of the American Traveler," February 2015

III. TOP TIPS FOR CONTENT THAT TRAVELS WELL

1. Think cross-channel content:

Your content should be available across a wide range of online channels, be available for mobile users (e.g. via a responsive website and mobile ads) and also in more traditional media.

TIP: Develop a content plan that creates and curates content ready for this complex multi-media world – and make sure that online and offline content complement each other.



2. Pictures tell a thousand words:

While editorial content (listings, descriptions, itineraries) are important, great images and engaging video are increasingly central to content that travels well. Images and video are impactful and engaging, easy to promote and share (e.g. via social media or embeddable videos) and tell your story quickly and powerfully. Images also (usually) tell the same story regardless of the language or origin of the traveler.

TIP: Make sure your content creation and curation efforts include a continuous stream of engaging, impactful images and video – both your own and rich media you solicit from guests, visitors or locals.



3. The power of 3s:

When publishing or sharing content through channels that you directly control or manage – think “3s.” This feeds the cross-channel needs of the hyper-informed traveler and also gives content several opportunities to engage and to be shared.

TIP: Plan to publish or share that content in at least three places – quickly repurposed for each, such as on your website, via one or more of your social media channels and in your email. Look for content that starts to gain traction (via website views or shares/comments/retweets, etc. on social media) and consider other channels including paid promotion.



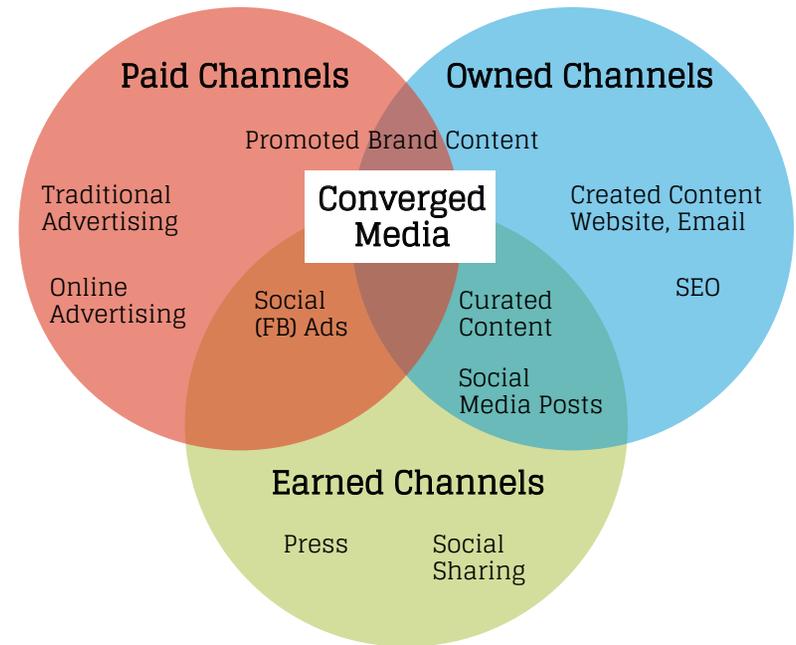
IV. THE THREE BROAD CHANNELS OF CONTENT MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION

Now it's time to roll up your sleeves and start specific, more tactical content marketing efforts. Content marketing opportunities can be divided into three broad types – **Owned, Earned** and **Paid**.

Owned Channels are those you directly control, manage and own. These include your website(s), email newsletters and offline brochures, etc.

Earned Channels are channels that you don't "own" but can directly update, optimize, manage and influence. Examples include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter – as well as partner or media sites that can be used to generate organic reach. Note: Some articles on content marketing make a distinction between "Earned" Channels and "Shared" Channels. In this summary we are combining them into one.

Paid Channels. Finally, you can distribute content on a paid basis through a huge range of online advertising channels including social media sites such as Facebook (which has migrated to a "pay to play" platform) and Twitter, plus Google's Display Network or specialist content marketing networks such as Outbrain and Taboola.



It is critical to plan, execute, manage and measure your content marketing efforts across all three of these channels in a coordinated fashion. Content should be complementary, reinforce the same key messages, yet capitalize on the advantages of each channel.



A. Owned Channels – Distribute Content on Your Website/Email

Online channels that you control and manage should be the centerpiece of your online distribution efforts.

Here are four quick essentials for content that maximizes your organic (unpaid) reach online.

1. **Mobile Ready.** Make sure your website is mobile friendly – either via a mobile-specific website or, better still, a responsive website that can be viewed across the full range of digital devices. Google recently announced that more than 50 percent of search engine queries for travel across more than 10 countries (including the U.S.) are now conducted on mobile devices. With the recent (April 21, 2015) major update to Google’s search algorithm, your content will be difficult (if not impossible) to find for these half (or more) of site visitors on mobile devices.

TIP: Check that your website is mobile-ready by using Google Mobile Readiness Online Test. Go to: <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>

2. **Optimize Your Content.** Organic search makes up 50 percent or more of the traffic to almost every travel and tourism website. You want to maximize this traffic by following some essential and relatively simple rules in making content easy to discover and index by search engines. Treat Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as a critical part of great content and invest time and resources, balancing organic search growth against paid search (or other online advertising).

TIP: Use the Essential SEO tool kit on page 10 and invest in optimizing your content. Make sure all your content has search engine-friendly elements including a Title Tag, H1 and H2 headings and a Meta Description. It can appear complicated but these elements are simple descriptors that tell search engines (and online users) what your content is about.

INTERNATIONAL.

For multilingual content you need to optimize against the keywords and search terms that are appropriate in that country and language. Ask your international contributors/editors to supply suitable international/multilingual SEO elements (e.g. Title Tag and Meta Description) with the rest of the copy.

You can also research content topics and search behavior across all international markets by using the Google Global Market Finder.

More: <http://translate.google.com/globalmarketfinder>

Sharing is caring!



3. **Make Your Content Easy to Share.** Make sure your website and emails have “Sharing Icons” that are easy to find – empowering users to share engaging content with their friends or family across social media networks or via email, etc. There are a range of these tools that can be easily integrated into your website with prices ranging from free to modest. Monitor analytics to see which content is most “shareable” – an important measure of the type of content that you want to invest in.



More: Download the YouTube Creators Playbook for a detailed summary of ways to create, optimize, distribute and promote videos.

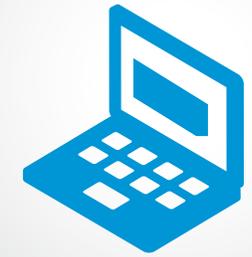
More: www.YouTube.com/playbook

4. **Optimizing Video.** Videos also need some simple attention to ensure they are optimized against the descriptive phrases and search terms that online users are likely to use. Here are some simple steps for optimizing video on major video channels:
 - » **Optimize the Title, Description and Tags.** Using your knowledge of the viewers and the subject and the keyword research tools noted on page 10, discover the terms and descriptive phrases that will be used to search for content. Use these in the Title, Description and Tags that you can add to your video.
 - » **Include Video in your XML Site Map.** If you have lots of video, a search engine-friendly video site map (“XML” sitemap) is critical for search engines being able to easily discover and index the video. (More at <http://budurl.com/GoogleXMLVideo>)
 - » **Create Compelling Thumbnails.** Pictures tell stories. Even the small thumbnail video images used on sites like YouTube in search results (on Google and Bing) are often critical in a user deciding to click through to view.
 - » **Localize Your International Videos.** For videos aimed at international audiences (especially multilingual or videos with subtitles), make sure you localize the title, description and tagging to the appropriate language – and include this video in the XML site for your international site.
 - » **Don't Forget Facebook.** Facebook has grown to rival YouTube for audience and video views in the US and some international markets. As with YouTube, test both its organic (shared) content and paid promotional reach.

ESSENTIAL SEO TOOL KIT:

1. Track your organic search levels via Google Analytics: FREE
www.google.com/analytics
2. Research keyword opportunities via the Google Keyword Tool, which offers all major languages: FREE
<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>
3. Make sure your website has a XML site map that includes all your site content (web dev Req.):
<http://sitemaps.org>
<http://budurl.com/GoogleXMLSiteMaps>
4. Monitor crawl errors, inbound links and more at Google Webmaster Tools and its new Search Console: FREE
www.google.com/webmaster
<http://g.co/SearchConsole>
5. See who is linking to you and/or your competitors via the Google Search Console (above) or a link management tool:
www.opensiteexplorer.com
6. Consider more advanced SEO management tools (fees apply, starting around ~\$75 per month):
www.brightedge.com
www.moz.com
www.gshift.com
www.conductor.com



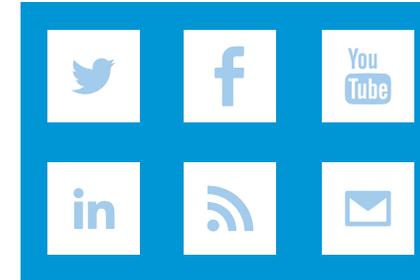


B. Earned Channels – Tips for Sharing via Social Media and More

If you have compelling content you can leverage a wide variety of channels to seek “earned” exposure. This channel of content marketing is essentially a new take on the age-old art of “Public Relations” – putting content in front of new audiences through social media and more traditional media outlets. This marketing takes skill, time and effort but may not require a specific media budget.

Here are 8 tips for maximizing the reach of your “earned” social media channels:

- 1. Create an official hashtag** for your destination or business and promote it. This gives you a place around which to listen for brand mentions and curate user-generated content. Try to stick with one or two tags. More will create clutter and fragment your audience.
- 2. Know what works.** Spend time weekly in Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics to see what’s generating interest and engagement. Do more of what works and less of what doesn’t. Page- and tweet-level interactions don’t always give the full story.

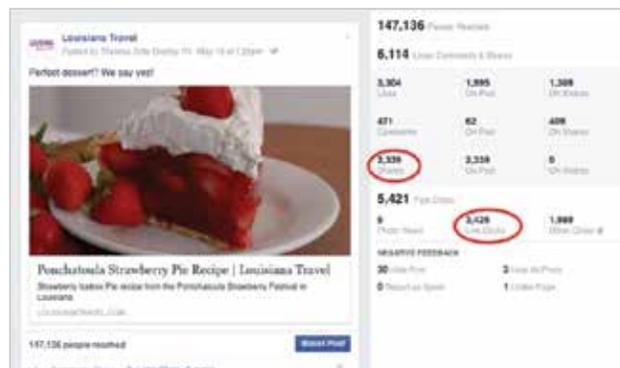


- 3. Consider promoting engaging organic content.** In Facebook Insights, pay special attention to shares and link clicks in the post level data. Consider boosting or advertising popular content.

- 4. Visual content** is especially engaging on social media. Include images whenever space allows on Twitter for much higher click rates.

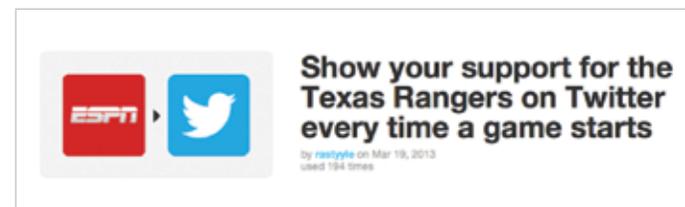
- 5. Short videos usually work best** (:15 to: 30) as they have the highest view-through on social channels such as Twitter and Facebook. Focus on video that will drive retweets and shares or comments on Facebook.

Focus on deeper measures of engagement and social sharing in assessing the performance of earned media, especially how many people shared the post and/ or clicked on the link.



6. **Facebook is weighting video higher** in newsfeed distribution. Load videos directly to Facebook for broader distribution.
7. **Don't forget the Rule of Three.** If you create a piece of content, share it at least three times for maximum exposure. For example: Blog post > share to Facebook > Tweet with bit.ly (or other URL shortener) > share on Google+ > share photo on Instagram with link to blog post in profile.
8. **If content is evergreen, share periodically throughout the year.** Content doesn't always have to be "new" to have appeal and interest to new users. Refresh blog posts and articles with updated information and images and re-share.
9. **Reach out to international influencers** such as bloggers, travel writers or other influencers in that source market for content that appeals to international audiences. This is especially simple for imagery or video – plus of course for multilingual editorial. These influencers should include visiting media you are hosting. Most domestic or international travel media are also now active on social media and are often happy to post or share content related to their visit and story.

10. **Save time with IFTTT.** IFTTT stands for “IF This Then That” – and allows condition-based actions to be included in your online marketing. The content of your posts can change dramatically based on events, weather, sporting results or the day/time. This is a more advanced online marketing step that adds real responsive change to your content. Start by creating “recipes” to share conditions-based content across multiple channels. ESPN's IFTTT channel (see below) has been an early leader in showing the impact of this type of responsive online content marketing.



TIP: Start with this favorite for posting Instagram images to Twitter as native Twitter pictures: <https://ifttt.com/recipes/164569-post-your-instagram-pics-on-twitter-as-a-picture-not-a-link>

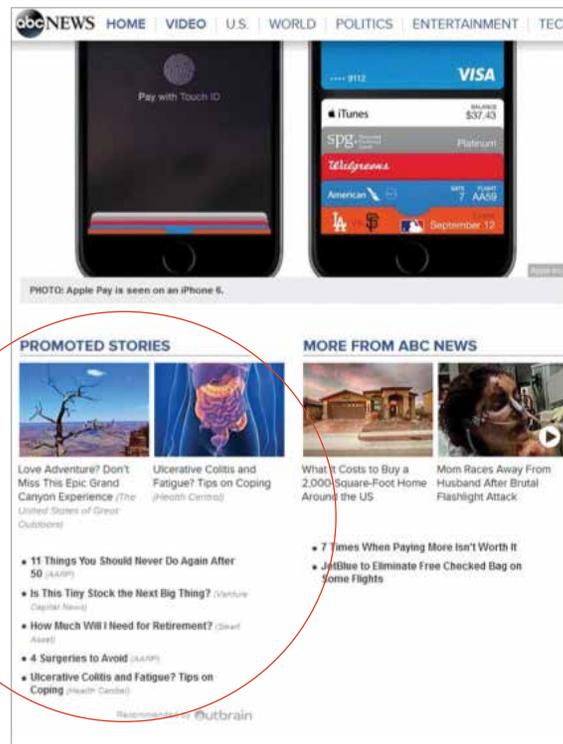
More on IFTT: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IFTTT>

More: ESPN's IFTT Channel: <https://ifttt.com/espn>



C. Paid Channels – Essential Elements of Effective Paid Promotion

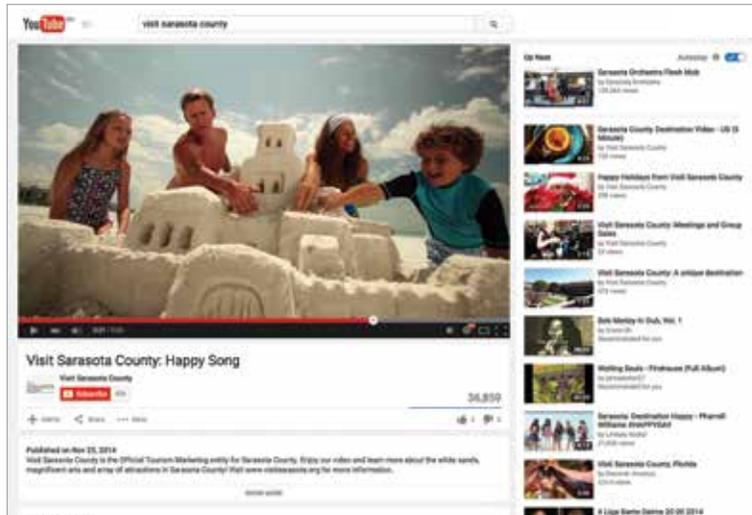
Finally, you can boost, amplify or otherwise promote your content through a huge range of paid advertising and sponsored content channels. Whether you work with Miles, another agency or manage it yourself, here are a few essential tips in planning the paid distribution part of your content marketing strategy.



1. **Leverage Engaging Content from Owned and Earned Channels.** Look for content that is generating strong interest and engagement on your website, via email or on social media. Then include this content in your paid marketing efforts. Remember on Facebook, now a largely pay-to-play platform, boosting or amplifying this content is a critical part of reaching your own online followers as well as new audiences.

Paid content marketing includes sponsored content opportunities through networks such as Outbrain and Taboola on a huge range of popular websites including major media sites. This content can be targeted based on context, location or behavior across the network.

There are a wide range of promoted video opportunities via content marketing networks, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and networks such as Rocketfuel.



2. Measure and Refine. As with all your content marketing, identify clear objectives from your paid content marketing. Is your content primarily about brand and awareness or are you looking for specific actions (e.g. watching a video to completion or checking pricing or availability)? Use campaign tracking codes to integrate reporting with your site's own analytics and measure and refine your paid content marketing efforts continually based on these results. For online video, assess the analytics for video completion and abandonment rates – as well as the demographics of the audience. From these results, change or edit your content or move your content between the various paid content marketing channels based on which are working – and which are not.

3. Develop a Campaign Brief. Successful paid content marketing programs usually start with a clear plan and brief on what you want to achieve and how you want to manage your program. Develop a campaign brief that identifies your campaign objectives, defines the content types to be used, tracking and measurement issues and the landing pages you want traffic to go to. This is particularly important if you are working with an agency or have multiple partners to coordinate.

4. Budget for Refining your Campaign. Make sure



your promotional budget allows for the opportunity to refine and update your paid marketing program. Results should improve through your campaign as you learn what content is most engaging and you

allocate more resources to what is working – and to change or remove content that is failing to excite. Make sure your budget and timeline allows for this optimization process.

more resources

- » Miles “How We Think” Library of White Papers and Blogs
www.MilesPartnership.com
- » YouTube Creator’s Playbook Version 4
www.youtube.com/playbook
- » Destination Analysts’ State of the American Traveler 2006-2015
www.destinationanalysts.com
- » Skift – Content Marketing Tips for Innovative Tourism Boards
www.skift.com (subscription)
- » Shareaholic: 8 Content Distribution Tips
<https://blog.shareaholic.com/content-distribution-tips/>
- » Think with Google
www.Google.com/think

stay in touch with us



↗ Website

MilesPartnership.com

This is the place to meet our team, learn more about the services we offer, peruse our in-depth research library and check out our latest blog post.



↗ Blog

MilesPartnership.com/blog

More than two dozen Miles employees post regularly about new trends, industry insights and best practices in online, mobile, print and integrated content marketing.



↗ Research

MilesPartnership.com/library

We stay at the forefront of tourism trends, conducting independent studies on leisure travel and publishing our semiannual findings in a variety of outlets.



↗ Email

Miles Forward

We believe that proactive communication is a key to continuous engagement, so we send out monthly emails to keep our clients and industry partners in the loop.

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