

What travel marketers need to know about Facebook's News Feed change

By  Natalia Rosa

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In your dual role as travel marketer and Facebook consumer, the news that Facebook is going to 'clean-up' your News Feed will likely be met with a mix of joy and despair.



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Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg announced last week that the social media giant would be revamping the ordering algorithm behind its News Feed to boost “meaningful” posts from friends and family members, at the expense of posts from brands and news companies.

“...this will have far-reaching effects on the way travel companies market themselves – the words Facebook Armageddon, apocalypse and death knell have been circulating in social media and marketing spheres...”

I don't know about you, but sometimes relevant, entertaining and informative news from a brand is far more “meaningful” for me than what my cousin twice removed had for breakfast, but I guess we're still quite far away from Facebook delivering a good balance of both, instead of cutting the one to make way for the other.

Inevitably, this will have far-reaching effects on the way travel companies market themselves – the words Facebook Armageddon, apocalypse and death knell have been circulating in social media and marketing spheres following the announcement.

Brand posts aren't going to disappear from a Facebook user's News Feed completely, however. Users can customise their feed to include pages they want to follow by selecting 'See First' in News Feed preferences. As a result, page posts will still appear in the News Feed, but there will be fewer of them.

So how will the changes impact travel marketers?

Facebook users will see less public content, including videos and posts from businesses, brands and media. Although this will be rolled out gradually, pages will start to see their reach, video watch time and referral traffic decrease substantially.

The nub of it – it's going to get harder and harder to get any traction organically.

Pages that post content that Facebook users generally don't engage with will see the biggest decreases in distribution, so your mantra in future definitely needs to be about quality, not quantity. Travel brands will have to stop scheduling posts through Hootsuite, Buffer and other scheduling tools that are simply 'fillers'.

Posts that will hit the Facebook sweet spot will be those that spark conversations and meaningful interaction between people. Posts that people are likely to share and react to like those that provide useful advice or recommendations.

The **changes bode well for travel influencers** who typically enjoy much higher levels of engagement on their Facebook posts than some brands do. Travel brands should, therefore, consider partnering with influencers who enjoy a loyal following, leveraging their ability to extract engagement among their followers and post meaningful content on behalf of partner companies. So, start thinking seriously about including influencer marketing in your travel marketing strategy.

The impact of Facebook's new algorithm will differ from page to page and be driven by such factors as the type of content produced and how people interact with that content. The less interaction your posts and page receives, the biggest decrease in organic traffic you're likely to see.

In theory, a travel marketer that has a small Facebook following could have better organic success if they focus on content that has high engagement than one that has a large following if the latter serves up social media junk food.

Finally, for those of us who are used to low organic traction and used to pay to reach a wider audience, expect to start paying more for your Facebook advertising as CPC costs rise due to increased competition at auction time – especially in a space as competitive as travel.

ABOUT NATALIA ROSA

Natalia Rosa is the MD of Big Ambitions, a specialist travel and tourism communications and marketing organisation which helps tourism and travel organisations connect with their members and customers.

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