

Tourism tribe, let's be more intentional in 2022

By  Natalia Rosa

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Like a toddler on a sweetie binge, 2021 served up an unending frenzy of opportunity and devastation. Sometimes the only thing separating these have been a few blissful hours of ignorance, particularly if you work in the travel, tourism and hospitality sector.



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It's a noisy space, this tourism industry. When times are good, we're all shouting from the rooftops about how our destination, our experience, is unlike anywhere else in the world.

When times are bad, and boy have they been bad, we're fighting to get off red lists and dealing with the long-term reputational damage of having a bunch of switched-on scientists who keep finding variants and saving the world. It's enough to make you hide under your bed and binge eat Kit-Kats.

Admittedly, tourism has always been one of the only industries in the world that almost every country can lay a claim to in terms of having some sort of differentiated edge; a value proposition that appeals to someone. It's also one of the industries that experiences disruption, quite often through no fault of its own. Hence the noise.

And it's getting harder and harder to break through that noise, particularly as we're continuously told that 'content is king' despite 4.4 million new blog posts, 350 million new photos uploaded to Facebook and one billion hours of YouTube watched every day.

But the tourism PR, comms and marketing world has changed in times of Covid. Dark social platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram groups have taken over as small online communities are formed around every conceivable niche interest – hiking in Stellenbosch, flower lovers of the Namaqualand, best routes to 4x4 with your bestie in Limpopo, etc.

We may be a global village but living la vida lockdown seems to have messed with our brains. We're actively choosing to shrink our communities to smaller, more personalised, more thoughtful online spaces. And we're certainly not brimming with trust for brands that sit outside that space.

Content may be king, but if it isn't niched down enough to fit the needs of these micro-communities that are growing at the speed of Japanese bullet train and delivered at the right time, a lot of it just adds to the noise. People aren't paying attention. They don't care that you want to tell the world you just launched a new spa range to die for.

According to Manifest, 5% of content generated 90% of engagement, which means 95% of our content is a random act of content. That's right, folks. We've been running rings around ourselves like those sugar-high toddlers to push content out that nobody is reading.

Calling all content writers, PR professionals and marketers in the travel, tourism and hospitality sector as the new year arrives: Let 2022 be the year we get more intentional about the content we create. Let's focus on the targeted content that shows those niched audiences we know them; we care about what they care about, and we value their precious time.

Let 2022 be the year of less is more, of emotionally driven content that really connects with the heart of our travellers; that enables and inspires the right customer at the right time to act on behalf of all those travel brands that have borne the brunt of Covid as we've lurched from wave to wave, crisis to crisis. Lurched – past tense because here's hoping 2022 will be different.

Not only do they need the best version of us now, more than ever. But also, because everybody deserves to travel, to become a better version of themselves when they do, and because we need to have a reason to get out from under that bed in the morning.

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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