4 Inspired Travel Campaigns Using Social Media

With more competition than ever, today's travel companies have to work hard to secure those holiday-goers. But how do you sell a vacation on social? We take a look at four very different campaigns that leverage online media to promote their brand...

KLM use Twitter to say Thank You

One of the world's oldest airlines is one of the most active on social media.

With 9 million fans on Facebook and 1.7 million on its official Twitter account, KLM boasts a 24/7 customer service — contactable via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Sina Weibo and WeChat to help you (in 14 different languages) with any travel problems.

With the 2010 marketing campaign 'KLM Surprise' demonstrated its simplistic yet innovative attitude when it came to social media marketing.

Using the Tweets and FourSquare locations of KLM passengers, staff browsed profiles to come up with a suitable gift for the passenger and their trip. Surprising a select few with small presents (iTunes vouchers, a Nike+ SportBand) the aim was to turn airport boredom into happiness.

The 'Surprise' campaign targeted 40 people, therefore 40 people who Tweeted — generating more than 1 million impressions on Twitter alone.

This campaign didn't cost the earth and was relayed as a simple YouTube video, but the kind-hearted gestures got people talking about KLM on Twitter.

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Airbnb Teams Up with Brands to Offer Innovate User Experiences

Airbnb has revolutionised the way that we travel and their social media efforts are just as impressive.

Today, instead of a bog-standard hotel, you can stay in a tipee, mountain lodge or rooftop appartment; all booked from the ease of your mobile.
In August 2014, Airbnb teamed up with Ikea to offer a one-night-only stay in its Sydney outlet. Channeling a popular scene in the film *500 Days of Summer*, hundreds signed up to spend the night in Swedish home store.

In the morning, the selected guests were woken up in a series of novel ways; from puppies climbing on the bed, to being serenaded by a string orchestra.

A few months later, in November 2014, Airbnb joined forces with the aforementioned KLM to turn an aircraft into a luxury pad for the night.

The two concepts proved to be insanely popular — crowdsourcing not only fans of Ikea and KLM but also appealing to anyone who wanted to be part of an alternative experience.

As KLM impressed with goodwill, likewise Airbnb have used the same angle with the #OneLess Stranger campaign.

Putting $1 million towards the project, they gifted 100,000 of their customers with $10, asking them to donate the money to a random act of kindness.
The 'pay it forward' scheme aims to connect strangers, simulating Airbnb's concept of hospitality and uniting different communities.

**Expedia Maximise on Dreams and Nostalgia**

When it comes to inspiring fans on social media, Expedia has it down pat.

Every Wednesday on Twitter travel lovers gather, sharing their bucket list holiday wishes with the hashtag #ExpediaChat.

Posting photos from around the globe — ranging from places they've been to and loved or ultimate travel locations —, #ExpediaChat has turned into a real, active community based around a common theme: travel.

In return for this hub of consumer knowledge, Expedia rewards the wishlists with holiday giveaways.

Naturally, these work as great incentives for fans to join Twitter for #ExpediaChat on a regular basis.

Once again maximising on the nostalgia induced by the #tbt hashtag (Throwback Thursday) Expedia created the ThrownBackThursdays campaign.

Asking Instagram and Twitter followers to post beloved travel memories and to tag their photos with #ThrowMeBack.

Every week they picked one lucky winner, and sent them back to the photo destination to recreate the moment.
Expedia might have to factor in large costs for each prize, but their return on investment in terms of loyalty is enormous.

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Using a Brand Ambassador: Travelocity’s Roaming Gnome

We’re not sure whether it was inspired by the film Amelie or not, but Travelocity’s Roaming Gnome has been part of the family since 2003.
In the Roaming Gnome, it has a **brand ambassador**, a comical angle to engage fans, and a way to showcase their services worldwide. To boot, Roaming Gnome is multi-channel; with accounts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook — accumulating travel fans across the social airways.

Similar to Expedia’s #throwmeback campaign, Travelocity asked fans to share their ultimate travel destination with #iWannaGo.

A competition like this gets Travelocity a month of awesome **data**, plenty of **hashtag exposure** and a collection of **videos to be shared** and kept on their YouTube channel.

By using a likeable (and an easily transportable) personality to **animate and offer travel advice to fans**, Travelocity gain the kind of popularity that will **encourage people to follow them on social**, and book their next holiday with them.

*As you can see, the best travel marketing campaigns haven’t had to go out-of-this-world elaborate to attract potential customers. Using the nature of social media — hashtag chats, nostalgia, media sharing — brands have been able to gather audiences, utilising their love of travel as a sturdy foundation. After all, you used to show everyone your travel pictures when you got back from holiday, now you can do it online — during, after, any time you wish.*