

Travel Republic celebrates its first birthday on Google+ and reaches 1 million followers



About Travel Republic

- Online travel agent
- Over 185,000 hotels, 100 airlines flying to over 650 destinations
- Headquartered in Kingston-Upon-Thames, UK

Goals

- Reach an international audience
- Easily share rich media content to encourage engagement
- Drive traffic to the Travel Republic website

Approach

- Created Google+ page
- Emphasised great imagery in content posts
- Added G+ badge to website and email communication
- Took advantage of communities feature
- Linked from posts back to brand's blog

“Our central goal in using Google+ is to communicate to a wide international audience. It’s an effective marketing tool for both brand awareness and customer acquisition, which fits in perfectly with our plans for international expansion.”
- **Sophie Manning, Marketing Executive, Travel Republic**

Background

Travel Republic is an award winning online travel agent, with over 2 million customers booking annually. Featuring over 185,000 hotels and over 100 airlines flying to over 650 destinations, Travel Republic offers a huge range of affordable holidays. Thanks to this huge range of accommodation, Travel Republic caters to all budgets, appealing to a wide and growing audience.

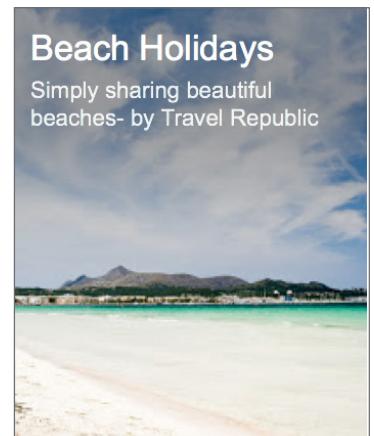
In its marketing Travel Republic uses a wide array of channels, with particular focus in social media. “We integrate our campaign messages within social media, using the platforms to communicate our current promotions and encourage conversations around key destinations which we are focusing on,” explains marketing executive Sophie Manning. “For us social media is a way for us to engage with our customers and share interesting travel content. Its main purpose is to create engagement and brand awareness, but it also is used as a customer service channel for current customers and to provide useful information to potential customers.”

Drawing an international community through Google+

The company learned about Google+ and soon set up a strategy for creating its own page. “We were drawn to Google+ by the publicity surrounding its initial launch and our positive experience as users of the service,” Sophie says. What was the motivation for setting up a presence on the platform? “To engage with existing and potential customers. We saw the opportunity to speak to a wide audience, extending even beyond our current source markets.”

Travel Republic took advantage of the Google+ badge to build its follower base, installing it on the brand’s website. “Having the badge on the site shows our impressive +1 following, which has encouraged others to join our page. We also have a +1 button on our email marketing, which uses the very useful Google+ custom URL.”

According to Sophie, the platform offered several unique benefits to Travel Republic. “Unlike our other social media accounts, Google+ enables us to reach a widespread international audience, engaging with those who wouldn’t necessarily have heard of the brand before,” she says. “We’ve just started to get involved in communities as well, which lets us tap into new and relevant audiences.” Travel Republic’s inaugural community is called ‘Beach Holidays’. “We’re excited as it gives us the opportunity to tap into niche audiences and gain brand exposure on relevant topics.”



Bringing travel to life through fantastic imagery

Given the highly visual nature of travel, it’s not surprising that Travel Republic has embraced the easy-to-use rich media functionality of Google+. The ability to quickly upload images to the brand’s Google+ feed is seen as a key benefit. “We believe that posts are much more successful with photos, and Google+ enables us to upload high quality full sized photos which encourage more shares,” Sophie explains.

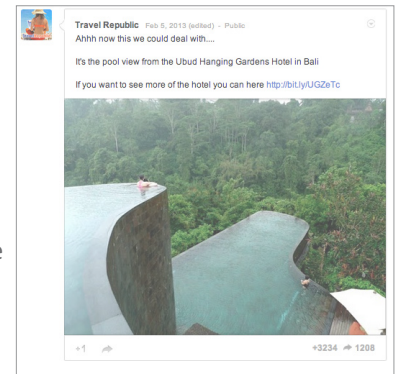
Travel Republic has been careful to listen to its audience in honing its strategy around visual content. “After experimenting with several types of images we’ve found that striking or unusual images tend to get a lot more attention. As we have such an extensive collection of accommodation we like to share some of the more unusual, beautiful and unique hotels. We also like to share fun destination photos which tend to be very popular.”

The Google+ results

- Followers obtained in less than a year: **over 1 million**
 - Most clicks from a post to the website: **over 8,000 clicks**
 - Most shared post: **1,404 shares**
 - Most +1's recorded in a single post: **4,257 +1's**
 - Traffic to some hotels went up by as much as **633%** following a Google+ post
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This constant refinement of content has helped Travel Republic gain an advantage. “Since using Google+ we have completely altered the type of updates and posts we use. It has showed us that by including unique content and sharing interesting images and news means you get much more exposure. Now a lot more thought and care is put into the type of posts we do, making sure that it’s fresh and interesting and stands out from other travel pages.”

The impact is tangible, with the visual content clearly driving interaction. “This has to be one of the key features of Google+, as the ability to upload rich media has meant that our posts have high shareability. We have had several posts which have achieved over **3,000 +1's** and hit the maximum comment limit, which we believe is down to the high quality photography used.”

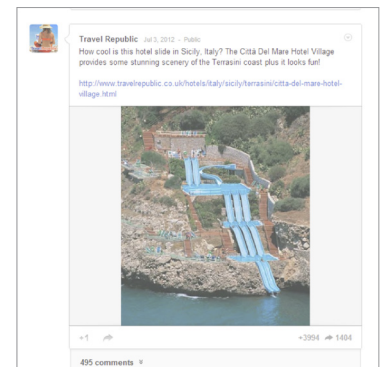


It all adds up: Google+ drives traffic, followers and engagement

Travel Republic keeps an eye on the numbers in order to conduct future optimisations, and the team is happy with what it sees so far from its Google+ activity. “We currently measure social media success by the amount of engagement and conversations our posts receive. We also measure how much traffic social media platforms send to our main website, and the subsequent conversion of that traffic,” Sophie explains.

“We’ve now reached over **1 million followers** on our account in just a year. Google+ is by far our most popular social media channel and our most shared posts have resulted in a remarkable amount of traffic clicking through to our main site. Another great achievement is having several of our posts featured on the ‘What’s Hot’ recommendations, which again have resulted in increased traffic and followers.” Sophie has been impressed with traffic numbers to the brand’s blog too. “Since using the platform to share our blog content, we’ve seen an increase in page views on our blog, with Google+ being one of its top referrers.”

Have there been any particularly surprising outcomes? “Probably the most surprising result was the amount of traffic that an update can send to your site if it goes viral,” she says. “For example, one post we did on the Ubud Hanging Gardens in Bali received **3,241 +1's** and our link to the website had **7,450 clicks.**” Another post on the picturesque Citta Del Mare Hotel Village won **3,994 +1's** and **1,404 shares**, while sending **over 8,000 clicks** to the Travel Republic website. And a post about the Villa Seminyak Estate in Bali recorded **4,257 +1's** with the link from Google+ to the site producing **4,224 clicks**. Traffic for individual hotels has increased by up to **633%** from a single post. “It just shows how powerful Google+ can be at driving traffic if you get the content right,” Sophie says.



Arrivals, departures: what the future holds

While the Travel Republic team could rest on its Google+ laurels, instead it’s looking forward to the next challenge. “We’re hoping to use the page to specifically target our international audiences and separate our posts by language by using the upcoming geo-targeting option,” Sophie reveals. The circles feature in Google+ is set to play a key role in this. “We are planning to create circles for each of our international markets so we can ensure that our messages are targeted to the right audience.”

Backed by the brand’s successful use of Google+, she’s happy to share her advice with others. “Experiment with different types of posts and images as you’ll soon learn which is the most appealing to your audience; it’s important to remain relevant to your topic and brand. Make sure when posting on your page to think beyond just your local customer and consider international audiences; not everyone is suffering with bad weather for example!”

About Google+

Linking your site to your page unifies your +1's across, search, your Google+ page, and your homepage. Google+ pages let you share your content with new audiences and connect with them in more engaging ways. To learn more about Google+ pages, visit www.google.com/+business

