

2010 marketing strategies for guesthouse owners

It's a little more than six months before the 2010 Soccer World Cup and very few South African guest house and B&B owners have adopted new social media such as Twitter and Facebook to promote their businesses. True, you are the owner or manager of a guest house or B&B and the Internet and social media are not your field, but you can use them to attract clients to your establishment.

By [Johan Horak](#) 30 Nov 2009



You may say you are not interested but I have some news for you... Many years ago Western Union was offered the exclusive rights to the telephone, and they responded by saying that the device was inherently no value to them. Enough said... I am not saying that you should do *everything* I suggest today, but start with something.

I have created a list of 14 online marketing tools that can help guest house owners to attract more guests. The idea is that you create trusting relationships and get people to amplify your story, using simple ideas and free online tools.

As I said, most guest house owners are not using these online tools. I searched for - 2010 "guest house" Twitter, there were only six tweets that included this phrase. Searching Google for 2010 "guest house" for that there were 944 000 web pages with related info. Clearly, this indicates that South African guest house are not using social media marketing strategies to promote their businesses.

There's a problem and an opportunity here. If you are not on Twitter or on any social media site yet, then get on, because even though your opposition is not using social media yet, the 2010 fans are.

Many guest house owners use their own websites and list with online guest house and accommodation portals, but unfortunately they are not actively publishing new information about their guest houses. And they are not getting involved in a discussion with potential guests.

I believe that social media allows guest house owners to create relationships with potential guests by becoming a trusted expert. For example, South Africa gets had a lot of negative publicity, and guest house owners can help to reverse that.

Online marketing tips

Here's a list of online marketing tips for guest house owners that may just ensure more guests arriving at your guest house during the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup.

1. Start writing relevant press releases, on things to do in your area, the food you provide, and so on. The idea is that you share relevant and interesting angles.

For example, there's a story about the German soccer team being advised to wear bullet proof vests when they leave their South African hotels. If you are in a safe town like Simon's Town write a press release with a heading, *2010 Simon's Town Guest House Guests Can Leave Their Bullet Proof Vests At Home: Simon's Town Is Safe.*

Many overseas newspapers are talking about 2010 guest houses and hotels ripping soccer guests off. Why not write a press release on how to establish if guest houses are inflating their prices? The idea is that you must be seen as a trustworthy expert. Publish these articles on your blog, Twitter, Facebook and at free press release sites. Here's a South African free press release site I have used in the past www.pressportal.co.za.

2. Publish guest house articles. For example, many people visit Simon's Town guest houses because they want to watch pelagic birds. Why not write an article about pelagic birds, the how, when and where to stay, and publish it to a personal guest house blog, and on free article distribution sites (visit www.wilsonweb.com/linking/wilson-article-marketing-1.htm for a list of article distribution sites).
3. Distribute: When publishing an article, press release or blog post, distribute these guest house updates using Social Marker (www.socialmarker.com/). "Social bookmarking is a powerful tool in promoting an article or website. But going through all of those social bookmarking sites is very time-consuming. That's where SocialMarker.com comes in, the free service is designed to reduce the time and effort needed to socially bookmark and share a website. The first time around will take time but then it will be a breeze.
4. Integrate the publishing of blog articles with Twitter, Facebook and [FriendFeed](#) accounts. The latest social media blog sites allow users to auto-post updates to these social sites. Therefore, if a guest house owner has a blog integrated with social media sites, any that are updated will be auto-published on 10 or more social sites.
5. Get daily 2010 soccer news: Subscribe to Google Alerts, Google News and Twitter alerts. These alerts can bring the guest house owner all the relevant 2010 soccer news. The idea is that these alerts be used as seeds for new and related stories for guest houses.
6. The 2010 Fifa World Cup draw will be held on 4 December 2009 in Cape Town so make a note of the date. Guest house owners should ensure that they know where the different soccer teams will be based and where they will play. This is critical info' because owners can then use this information to "keyword target" these teams, and their supporters. Consider an example; if the English soccer team is based in Cape Town, then the guest house owner needs to set up news alerts for "Cape Town" + "English Soccer team", because the English guests will look at guest houses close to the stadium, at things they can do, pubs to visit, and at safety issues. The idea is that owners write stories about the English soccer team playing near a particular guest house, and how safe the area is for these English soccer supporters.
7. Find targeted keywords. Guest house owners can use Google Suggest to find relevant keywords. Here's a video www.bmyers.com/public/945.cfm?sd=30 on how to use Google Suggest.

8. Use keywords. After all the relevant keyword phrases are written down, owners can start using these phrases, as primers for a specific blog story or twitter update. It's important that such updates include least one keyword phrase in the title of the blog post or tweet, then also use the phrase in the first paragraph, and sprinkle it throughout the rest of the article. Use the keyword phrase again in the final paragraph. Creating a click-through link, using such a keyword phrase, is also a good idea. Using specific keywords when writing stories will ensure that the story has relevance to searchers and not only readers, because Google can now match a story's keywords with the term used by the searcher.
9. Be accessible: potential 2010 soccer guests will be sceptical or are, so in order to counter these perceptions, owners must start a conversation. This conversation is not conditional. It's free. You should invite questions and answer them from the heart. Social media allows your guest to even answer on your behalf. [Seth Godin](#) said, "People don't believe what you tell them. They rarely believe what you show them. They often believe what their friends tell them".
10. Be sticky: everyone who visits a blog, comes to visit because the blogger did something correctly. The problem that the blogger has is how to keep these visitors in under his or her sphere of influence (sticky). Although your ultimate objective is to get more people to your guest house or business it takes time to cultivate a relationship. To be sticky your intermediate objective is to get blog visitors to subscribe to your blog updates. Therefore, a compelling reason must be given to these blog visitors to subscribe to blog updates.
11. Make it easy to subscribe to updates: social media sites, like Twitter make it easy for people to follow become sticky - but a blog may be another story. Therefore I recommend that you should add a newsletter subscription box using Feedburner.com, a free Google product. When you publish a story all your subscribers get an automated email with the new story.... helping the *once off* visitor *stick* to your blog updates.
12. Narrow your market: When you write a story or a tweet, using the keyword phrase "guest house" alone is a waste of time, but an article using the keyword phrase "guest house in Cape Town" is closer to the narrow-market or niche propose. An article on "Guest house in Cape Town 2010" is even narrower. People are also searching for "2010 travel good show". Why not write a story (or a few stories) about good shows using "2010 travel good show" as a keyword phrase, telling soccer fans where to stay when they watch the show?
13. Leave a spoor or scent. The idea is that you leave an easily detectable online *e-spoor*. This spoor, although it may have a narrow focus, must be spread throughout all online media. Points 1, 2 and 3 covered some of the tools designed to leave a spoor. Other ideas include having a digital signature. A digital signature includes your blog address and your social profiles for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and others. Another simple idea is that you become a member of travel forums, focusing on 2010, and start answering questions. Most of these forums allow members to add a signature, that's published below your name.
14. Have fun: If you cannot have fun doing this then you may as well not even start it. However, if you enjoy marketing then start today, the adventure will be great and the results amazing.

A real success story comes from Gary Vaynerchuk from Wine Library TV (tv.winelibrary.com/). Garry said, "I took six months before people took any notice of me. Today my online marketing strategy helped grow our family wine business from US\$4 million to US\$60 million".

Online marketing is free and effective, but, as we have seen with Garry, it will take time. Guest house owners have a little more than six months before the world cup. Start today because it will make a difference even after 2010.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Johan Horak lives in Simon's Town, a historical naval village close to Cape Town, South Africa. Online collaboration is one of his passions, sharing tools and ideas with the community to communicate common issues. Johan is a VMEB 2.0 marketing expert and freelancer using social media to assist small businesses in creating online marketing and discussion tools that work. You can read his blog *The Fisherman's Secret: Cultivation*, follow Johan on Twitter and receive his free online marketing newsletter here. Contact him at 0860 263333.

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