

Anna Piltonen

What are the key elements required for a successful and effective word of mouth tourism marketing campaign? – Case analysis

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<p>The purpose of this thesis was to further study what are the key elements for successful and effective word of mouth marketing campaign in tourism. The objective was to identify the key elements by analysing a real life case provided for this thesis where a tourism board used word of mouth as part of their marketing campaign to increase awareness of the destination and drive tourism in the destination. The case was analysed with the support of secondary research conducted around the topics of word of mouth marketing, tourism marketing and digital marketing. It was found that the key elements for a successful word of mouth marketing campaign in tourism are to engage with the customers, design a sound marketing plan that incorporates word of mouth and digital marketing in the integrated marketing communications plan, understanding the needs and wants of the target consumer, develop a marketing mix that meets the wants and needs of the target consumer, work with the local authorities as well as other businesses, and measure the performance of the campaign with suitable metrics.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Word of Mouth (WOM) in marketing is an old concept. People have always been talking about products and services and the brands associated with them. Why has it not been utilised in marketing communications more then? There is a lot of literature regarding WOM but for some reason more traditional marketing tools are being used. WOM occurs naturally amongst people daily, there are face to face conversations happening right not around the world about the offerings of companies. It cannot be stopped but companies can try tapping into those discussions, to find out what is currently said about them. The tourism industry has been chosen for this thesis as it is of particular interest of the author. Tourism is multi-layered, offering vast amount of possibilities for businesses and consumers alike.

There is not a lot of earlier work on WOM marketing and tourism combined, however, the earlier research done on WOM seems to be saying the same thing. Earlier research notes that WOM is a powerful way of communicating when consumers need advice regarding what to buy and this is true for all industries, not just tourism. WOM can be harnessed by companies in many ways, usually through loyal customers who become advocates for the companies. It can help build and increase brand loyalty and attract new customers.

This thesis aims to determine what are the key elements in WOM marketing that are needed for a WOM marketing campaign for a tourism related company to be successful and effective. As there has not been many cases where success of a WOM campaign has been studied, this thesis aims to shed some light on the topic.

The research will analyse a real life case where a WOM campaign as created to build awareness of a destination in the United States of America. The analysis is supported by current marketing theories and WOM theories. At the end, the discussion will bring together the findings of the analysis as well as the theories to conclude what the key elements for tourism wanting to utilise WOM marketing are.

2 Literature review

In order to answer the thesis objective: What are the key elements required for a successful and effective WOM tourism campaign from the consumer's perspective, it is important to review the basic theories of marketing and how word of mouth marketing is generated. As the focus is on the consumer perspective, the relevant theories to include and to be reviewed in this section are related to consumer behaviour, and marketing. Also, measurement practices of campaign's success and effectiveness will be reviewed.

2.1 Marketing

It is always beneficial to start with defining the largest concepts, in the case of this thesis it is marketing. The definition of marketing has evolved over time as the practice and theory have been updated in accordance to the changes in the business environment. Dr Philip Kotler (2015) on his own website, defines marketing as: "... The science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit." He carries on by adding that a department in an organisation executes it and it examines the desires of customers, identifies and measures the correct target audience, designs and promotes suitable products to the appropriate segments of those markets.

American Marketing Associations (AMA) definition of marketing is slightly broader. According to AMA (2013), marketing is an "activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." They have included a broader range of audience than just customers.

Additionally, professor Christian Grönroos (1989: 57) from the Swedish School of Economics in Helsinki, in his article in European Journal of Marketing, emphasises the customer relationships side of marketing. Marketing creates, maintains and commercialises the long-term relationships between different parties so that the all their objectives are met.

Therefore, when looking at these definitions, a conclusion could be made that nowadays marketing is market and relationship oriented activity, where the objectives of the company and its target audience are met by creating, communicating and delivering appropriate offerings.

As the aim of marketing is to meet the objectives of both the company and the consumer, the companies need to be able to understand the customers' wants and needs. Correctly identifying a need that is not being satisfied offers new opportunities for companies. Also, correctly identifying changing wants and needs of their current customers can help companies adapt their product or service offering and assist at retaining their loyal customers. Customer needs will be examined next.

2.2 Hierarchy of needs

It is important for companies to understand customer behaviour and the motives behind their actions. There are several theories on the subject but one of the most known theories is Hierarchy of Needs. Abraham Maslow developed the theory in 1940s where these motivations are examined (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 133).

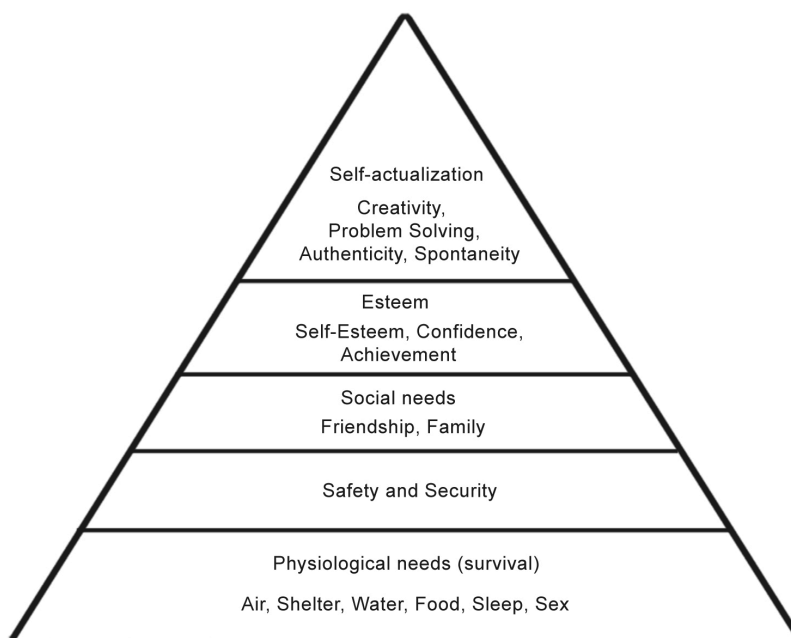


Figure 1. Hierarchy of Needs.

Hierarchy consists of 5 categories: 1. Psychological (the basis, fundamental, needs for survival, such as food, drink). 2. Safety (protection from the unexpected). 3. Belongingness and love (to feel important to and accepted by those who we love). 4. Esteem and status (wanting to achieve high position related to others). 5. Self-actualisation (desire for self-fulfilment). This model has received a lot of criticism but is still widely used in management teaching (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 133). It arranges the needs from least to most urgent; the basic needs (food, drink and shelter) need to be met first before a person will even start thinking about satisfying the other needs (Kotler et al. 2012).

2.3 The Marketing Mix

After understanding what the customer's wants and needs are, companies usually turn to develop their marketing mix, otherwise know as the 4-Ps, product, price, place and promotion (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 19). There are varied versions of the 4-Ps, some would include them to have even 7-Ps in the service industry (people, process and physical evidence, in addition to the 4 earlier) presented in the figure 2 below, but the core 4 provide a base which guides the company through their marketing decision making (Blythe 2014: 13; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 259; Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012:19). Marketing mix enables companies to have a competitive advantage over their competition (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 21). The marketing mix model has been wildly criticised not only because it is internally oriented and tends to overlook the external marketplace, but also because it lack personalisation (Constantinides cited in Blythe 2014: 13).

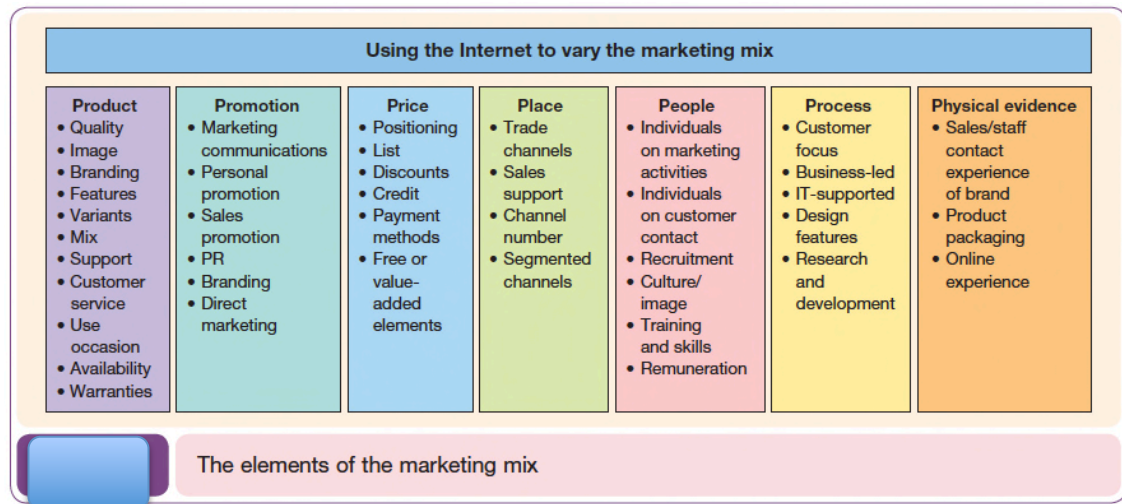


Figure 2. The elements of marketing mix. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012.

Product includes everything regarding the decisions which products (and/or services) the company should offer to their customers, that satisfy or exceeds their needs (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 264; Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 19). One important aspect of this is product development as the technology and tastes of customers are fast changing. The need for product development is crucial because of the fact that if the company cannot offer products with new features this will give an advantage to the competition which can lead to them winning over market share (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 19).

Price is a key-element of the marketing mix as it represents the income the company receives for the product or service they are offering; other elements represent costs (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 19). Marketers need to consider the pricing objectives closely, and determine which pricing models would be the best option for certain products (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 278; Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 19).

The third P in the marketing mix is usually called "place", or to use another word that is possibly a bit more accurate, distribution. Generally the objective for place is to make suitable decisions in regards to the most effective distribution, so that the products and services are spread and available in the required areas while taking into account the costs of distribution (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 288; Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 20).

Coming to the last P in the marketing mix is Promotion. Word of mouth can be seen as part of the promotion P in this thesis as it aims to answer the question of what is needed for word of mouth campaign to be successful. Promotion includes the decisions regarding what kinds of channels are used to promote the products or services: advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, public relations, direct marketing or online selling (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 20).

As companies look to satisfy their customers' wants and needs by having an appropriate marketing mix in place, it is important to note that they will not focus on all of the potential market but will select more appropriate segment or group of consumers to target which is known as market segmentation. Market segmentation is going to be examined next.

2.4 Market Segmentation

Rarely one product or service is able to satisfy the whole market; hence, companies will divide the large and diverse market into smaller markets that have similar characteristics and/or needs (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 264). This is called market segmentation. This way companies are able to target the correct consumer base with similar wants and needs more effectively and efficiently with their products and/or services (Kotler et al 2013: 204). They will be able to create a single, tailored marketing mix for each segment according to the segment criteria. This is called target marketing (Kotler et al 2013: 203). Segmenting the vast market will help companies in multiple possible ways, for example differentiation of offerings which will help the company gain competitive advantage, or producing a possible new emerging market other companies have not yet been addressing, which would also help the company gain competitive advantage (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 265). The main purpose of segmentation is to identify behavioural patterns that have significant effect on marketing decisions (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 266).

Types of segmentation	Demographics	Geographics	Geodemographics	Psychographics	Behavioural
Variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age ● Sex ● Lifestage ● Type of residence ● Income ● Occupation ● Education ● Religion ● Ethnic origin ● Nationality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Postcode ● City, town, village or rural ● Coastal or inland ● County ● Region (often based on television regions) ● Economic or political union/ association ● Country or continent ● Population ● Climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The segmentation of consumers where they live – using demographic data to classify neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Values, attitudes, motivations ● Interest, opinions, hobbies (lifestyle) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Benefits sought ● Purchase occasion ● Purchase behaviour ● Usage ● Perceptions and beliefs

Figure 3. Types of Segmentation, Pickton and Broderick (2005) Integrated Marketing Communications: Second Edition.

There is no one single way of segmenting the vast market. Figure 3 above demonstrates the most common ways of segmenting markets and describes these variables in more detail.

The three broad groups of consumer segmentation criteria are behavioural segmentation, psychographic segmentation and demographic/geographic segmentation. These groups are then divided into more specific characteristics. However, marketers rarely use only one of the variables but will mix and match to determine the most homogenous customer segment in regards to the group’s wants and needs (Blackwell et al. 2006: 42; Kotler et al 2013: 210). Basing company’s market segmentation solely on demographic characteristics or geographic characteristics will not limit the market enough for companies to be able to serve the market efficiently enough and to find the much wanted competitive advantage, which is why it is important to remember that behavioural segmentation together with demographic variables is much more efficient (Blackwell et al. 2006: 44).

To start the segmentation process, companies need to understand the wants and needs as well as other characteristics of the individuals and/or companies that comprise the market. Here companies usually use market and social research (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 265). Next a company would look at their marketing strategy

and determine which characteristics would serve their objectives the best (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 265).

2.5 Buying decision process

Delving deeper into customer behaviour, examination of consumer decision-making and how their needs can affect the process is necessary. Marketing scholars Blackwell, Engel and Kollat, have developed a 5-stage model for consumer buying decision process. The 5-stage model starts with recognition of need or an awareness of a problem, then continues to information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and finally post-purchase behaviour (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 118; Kotler et al. 2012: 270).

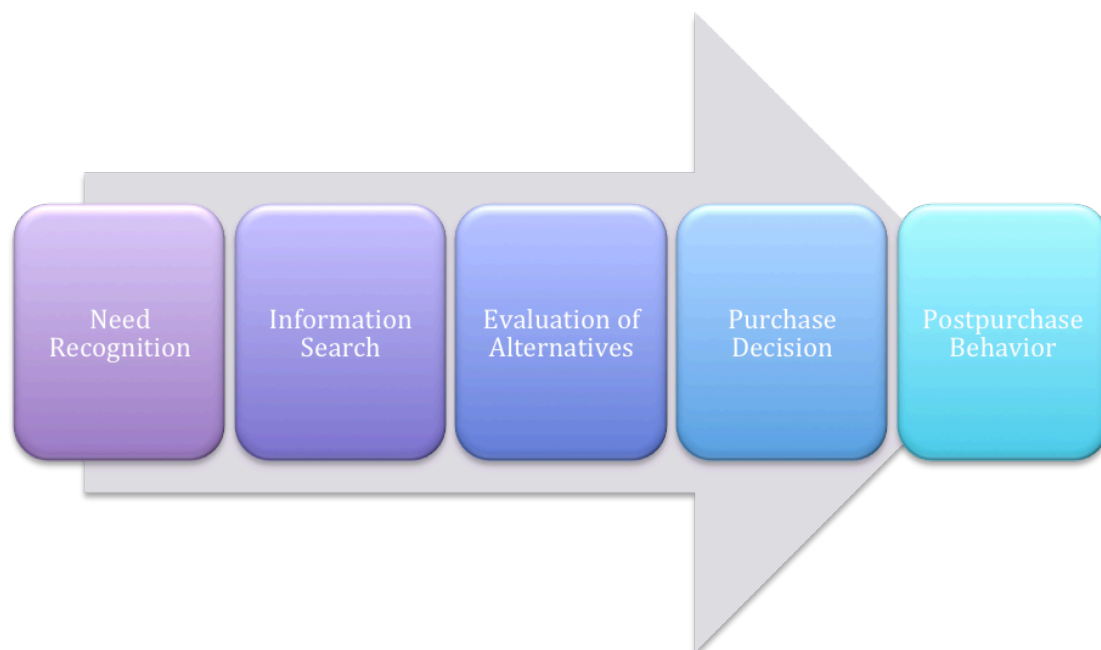


Figure 4. Consumer buying decision-making process. Kotler et al. 2012.

The model offers a basic outline to the consumer decision-making process (Blythe 2014: 63). Consumers do not always follow this process, as they might skip certain stages or reverse some depending on the product or service they have a need for (Kotler et al. 2012: 270).

2.5.1 The need recognition

Recognition of a need or problem is the first stage. It can arise from internal or external stimuli, depending on whether it is triggered by a person's internal need or external stimulus like seeing an advertisement (Kotler et al. 2012: 270). Marketers rarely have any power over the stage of the consumers and what their needs and desires are. However, the changes in the stages are often an outcome of marketing activity such as advertising or even word-of-mouth (Blythe 2014: 65).

2.5.2 The information search

The second stage of information search can be skipped if the need is something very basic, for example buying shampoo or laundry detergent as familiarity of the product will guide the consumer to choose a brand/product they have always used (Kotler et al. 2012: 271). The objective of information search is to gather an awareness set, a larger selection of brands that could be the solution for the original problem (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 121). There are two different possible types of search, either internal or external. Internal is naturally the starting point as it involves the use of information from memory. With internal search, consumer relies on previous experiences regarding the product or service and might provide them with the needed information (Schiffman et al. 2010: 485). When internal search does not conclude in satisfying solution, external search begins. This includes personal sources such as family, commercial sources such as advertising, third party reports such as blogs and product-testing reports, and personal experiences of trying out the product (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 120). The degree of how much time and effort consumer puts in the search stages is dependent on how important the purchase is to the consumer and how much prior knowledge they have of the product (Schiffman et al. 2010: 485). Consumers gather information most commonly through Word of mouth (WOM). Recommendations from friends and family are highly valued over any marketing material companies produce. Word of mouth is the most effective during the information gathering stage as it will help determine which product the consumer will be most likely to go for. Word of mouth will be studied more closely later in this thesis.

2.5.3 The evaluation

The third stage is Evaluation. Many times consumers have previous experience or notions of products and brands but sometimes consumers might not want to rely on previous experience, if for example they feel that maybe their knowledge is out-dated (Blackwell et al. 2006: 132). In these instances and of course when consumers do not have previous notions of brands, they will turn to create new evaluations to help them decide between the few possibilities (Blackwell et al. 2006: 132). The level of involvement of the consumer will determine how extensively they will evaluate the products and services (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 122). "Involvement is the degree of perceived relevance and personal importance accompanying the brand choice" (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 122). Highly involving products and brands are usually very important to consumers, which will lead to comprehensive information gathering and problem solving. Low involving brands are not so important to consumers and thus will provoke less information search and problem solving (Schiffman et al. 2010: 229). High involvement purchases are usually the kind that are associated with high personal risk, and high cost to the consumer. Low involvement purchases on the other hand are the opposite; they usually do not hold a lot of risk, or high costs, which leads to simple pre purchase evaluation (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 122). It has been suggested that the consumer goes through a different type of evaluation process depending on if it is a high involvement or low involvement purchase for them (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 122). It could be argued that tourism products can be seen as high involvement purchases as there is usually a high personal risk or cost to the consumer, for example travelling to a whole new country can be risky as well as expensive.

As tourism products could be seen as high involvement purchases, Fishbein and Ajzen's (1980) model of reasoned action suggests that attitudes towards the brand as well as subjective norms, will affect the purchase decision for high involvement purchases. According to the model, consumer's own beliefs about the brands attributes is one part of the evaluation process, however, the consumer will also consider the opinion of others that are closest to them (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 122). They are highly involved in the purchase decision, as they will evaluate the product itself, but also take into consideration the approval of others (Jobber &

Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 122). The framework of central and peripheral routes to persuasion suggests that for high involvement purchases, central route to persuasion would be most effective, as it requires careful thought and cognitive processing (Schiffman et al. 2010: 231). In the light of this route, marketers should consider the message and advertisement for high involvement purchases to contain a lot of useful information about the attributes of the product or service, hence providing the consumer with the satisfactory information and a positive image of buying the product (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 123).

2.5.4 The Purchase

After recognising the problems or need, searching for possible solutions for it and finally evaluating the few selected solutions; the consumer finally makes the purchase.

2.5.5 The post-purchase evaluation

After consumer has made the purchase and used to product or service, they will be making a post-purchase evaluation. What determines whether or not the purchase decision was satisfactory is the relationship between consumer's original expectations and the product's perceived performance (Kotler et al. 2013: 163). To make sure consumers are satisfied with their end purchase marketers need to focus on researching the possible expectations customer have about their products or services and meeting or even exceeding them (Kotler et al. 2013: 163). Satisfied customers will repeat their purchase, will be happy to recommend the brand and the product to their friends and family, and will be loyal customers with whom the company has been able to form a solid relationship with (Blackwell et al. 2006: 212; Kotler et al. 2013: 163).

WOM has been proven to have a large impact on consumer behaviour, which can also be seen from this model (Kotler et al 2013: 149) and this kind of communication can be a useful marketing tool (Solomon et al. 2006: 368). In the next chapter, WOM and WOM marketing will be defined and examined in more detail.

2.6 Word of Mouth and WOM marketing

The Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) has defined Word of Mouth (WOM) and WOM marketing as follows:

Word of Mouth: "The act of consumers providing information to other consumers."

Word of Mouth Marketing: "giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, and making it easier for that conversation to take place." (WOMMA, cited in Solomon et al. 2013: 427)

Word of Mouth refers to the informal communication between two people who are sharing their opinions and experiences as well as information about products and services (Solomon 2015: 523). Studies have shown that WOM is much more powerful than advertising as people tend to nowadays trust others' recommendations and information about products received from other users rather than the marketing material the company itself provides (Solomon 2015: 524).

In one survey, 69 per cent of interviewees said they relied on a personal referral at least once over the course of a year to help them choose a restaurant, 36 per cent reported that they used referrals to decide on computer hardware and software and 22 per cent got help from friends and associates to decide where to travel (Solomon 2015: 524).

WOM is very important component of business life nowadays as it is often the reason why companies get business, like seen in the previous chapter (ThinkDigital Travel, 2013). It is the primary factor in 20 to 50 per cent of purchasing decisions and is the most influential when the product category is unfamiliar or the product is expensive (Bughin et al. 2010). Consumers have become overloaded with messages in the era of the Internet and prefer to make purchasing decisions free from the influence of company driven advertising and marketing (Bughin et al. 2010). Moreover, studies have shown that even though advertising and other marketing materials are important when creating brand awareness, consumers still rely on WOM in the evaluation stage of the buying process and in adoption stage of the product life cycle (Solomon 2015: 524).

The people around the targeted consumers have a great influence on the decision making of customers and as such, businesses are required to monitor and participate

in the discussions to their best ability and many companies are promoting and/or controlling WOM as well as tracking it (Solomon et al. 2013: 422). This kind of communication can be an effective marketing tool (Solomon et al. 2013: 422). When positive word of mouth is a result of a marketing message that consumers have started to spread around, it will also trigger higher campaign reach and influence (Bughin et al. 2010). Andy Sernovitz (2009) provides examples of this in his book called "Word of mouth marketing – how smart companies get people talking". He gives advice and examples on what are the concrete steps companies can take to utilise WOM. However, there is plenty of literature on WOM and how companies should utilise it to improve their marketing and performance. Another book called "The Passion Conversation" (Phillips et al. 2013) talks about understanding, sparking and sustaining word of mouth marketing, like the book's subheading states. A third example is "Purple Cow" by Seth Godin (2002). In this book, he makes points on how companies can transform themselves by being remarkable, by being different and how to achieve that in today's busy markets.

The word of mouth specialised research and consulting company Keller Fay Group notes that 90% of all word of mouth communication happens offline (Kotler & Keller 2012: 547). They point out that even though companies have always known that the conversation has been going on, they have not been able to do much about it, until the rise of social media outlets, which still only represents 10% of all of the conversations (Fay & Thompson 2012: 24).

WOMMA explain that WOM marketing techniques are based on the key concepts of customer satisfaction, two-way dialog between the business and the consumer and transparent communications (Cited in Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 536). The WOM authors mentioned earlier, all agree on the basic elements WOMMA has listed that are considered to form the basics of WOM marketing:

- Educating people about the company's products and services
- Identifying people most likely to share their opinions
- Providing tools that make it easier to share information
- Studying how, where and when opinions are being shared
- Listening and responding to supporters, detractors and neutrals (Sited in Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 537).

In the end, all the material comes together and will say exactly the same thing about WOM marketing: start creating your strategy by focusing on your target market, how, why and when they talk about you (Fay & Thompson 2012: 26).

How these elements are brought together in a WOM marketing campaign that utilises social media is examined later in this thesis. The next chapter studies digital marketing and how WOM relates to it overall.

2.7 Digital marketing and eWOM

WOM is a strong component in marketing in general as established in the previous chapter. However, the rise of digital marketing has created new opportunities for companies and consumers alike to spread and utilise WOM. As it is possible for thousands of consumers to spread WOM in the digital world, especially on the Internet, the impact of WOM can be ten fold. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012: 10) define digital marketing as "Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies". These technologies still need to be combined with more traditional media such as TV, print and direct mail to ensure that the objectives can be successfully met. This is what academics and professionals call a multichannel marketing communications (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 10).

Chaffey and Smith (2013) suggested that the online marketing tools would be divided into 6 main groups of which social media marketing is the last one. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012) explain that viral marketing or online WOM is closely related to this group as it helps to drive the customer response and build awareness. The companies using social media marketing do it to reach and communicate with their target customer (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 29). According to Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012: 30) there are many benefits with social media; however, to be able to harness those benefits the most important thing for companies to do is to start participating in the conversations their customers are having online.

As WOM marketing emphasises participation in the conversation and creating a suitable environments for those conversations to happen, digital marketing can help companies to do that. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a part of WOM where the

word of mouth happens online. Hennig-Thurau & Walsh (2004: 39) define eWOM as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet." Digital marketing can enable companies to more effectively monitor and participate in eWOM conversations and respond to negative statements that could affect the company's brand image.

2.8 Social media campaign strategies

Social media campaign planning happens quite the same way as typical marketing planning (Tuten & Solomon 2015: 46). For the companies to be able to take full advantage of the benefits of social media, companies need to start and participate in the conversation the customers are having online (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 535). Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) argue that creating the social media strategy to align with the integrated marketing communications plan and the company's e-business strategy can be challenging since to be able to communicate and interact with the customers online, the company needs to give up some of its power over the messages and content that is shared about it and with it online, to be able to effectively communicate with the customers.

2.9 Services & Tourism Marketing and WOM

As this thesis looks at WOM in the tourism industry, tourism marketing needs to be examined. When discussing tourism marketing, it is important to look at how services are marketed, as most of the goods tourism industry companies produce are services rather than tangible products. In services marketing, the emphasis is more on creating value by forming long lasting relationships between the company and their consumers (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 358). This is also something word of mouth marketing emphasises.

Tourism can be categorised into the hospitality, travel and tourism sector of the services industry where travel and hospitality does not include the actual transportation element as it can be categorised as separate (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 360). Hospitality and tourism include for example restaurants, pubs, hotels,

theme parks and wine tastings, travel agencies and online or offline operators (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 360).

There are 4 distinguishing characteristics of services that separate them from goods; these are: Intangibility, Perishability, Variability and Inseparability (Solomon et al. 2013: 345). The first, probably most common characteristic is intangibility, which means that services cannot be seen, or touched or smelled before they are bought and it is difficult to evaluate the purchase before hand because of it (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 363). The challenge for marketers is to use tangible cues to market the intangible service (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 364) to try to minimise the uncertainty factor, which comes with inability to evaluate the purchase beforehand (Solomon et al. 2013: 345). This could be the uniform of the hotel staff, brand logos, and outlook of the store/facility for example.

The second characteristic of services is inseparability. This means that it is not possible to separate the production of the service from consumption (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 364; Solomon et al. 2013: 347). This is why the service provider plays a key role in the delivery of the service and customer experience. This would be the aspect of which the customer's are most likely to talk about offline, as well as online. This characteristic also relates to relationship marketing, how to retain customers by forming a relationship with them to lower the costs as it is cheaper for a firm to retain existing customers than attract new ones.

The 3rd characteristic is variability. As services are usually conducted by people with different characteristics, such as motivation, tiredness, interest which makes quality checking difficult and even impossible to do between production and consumption (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 365). Because the service providers and customer vary greatly, it is difficult to standardise services. In fact, that might not even be desirable (Solomon et al. 2013: 347). However, sometimes companies try to achieve it. This will pose some challenges as it usually means that the companies need to invest in extensive selection, training and rewarding of employees (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 365). A few examples of systems used by service providers are evaluation systems and employee empowerment schemes (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick

2012: 365; Solomon et al. 2013: 347). These can be used to help standardise and evaluate the quality of delivered services.

The last characteristic is Perishability. Perishability of services means that they cannot be stored for later consumption; consumption and production happen simultaneously (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 365; Solomon et al. 2013: 346). Therefore it is important to try to match supply and demand to make up for not being able to sell at later date (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 365). The usual tactics for hotels for example is to try encouraging demand with incentives such as discounted prices, offering deals linked to leisure activities such as golf or hiking or spa treatments (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 365). For times when the demand is high but providers are struggling to supply, companies have created several strategies to try to ease the possible inconvenience the over demand can cause to the consumers (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 365).

These 4 characteristics form the basis of services, where the customer experience is put forward as one of the main indicators of quality and therefore success. As the consumption happens simultaneously together with production of the service, customers are the key resource for service providers for feedback.

WOM in tourism has been recognised to be a powerful tool for marketers as so many of the customers rely on opinion leaders and friends and family recommendations on so many tourism products (Litvin et al. 2005: 7). Litvin et al. (2005: 7) quote several research which have found that WOM has both positive and negative influences on tourism products, for example Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott's (2003) study on New Zealand found that negative WOM can have an overwhelming impact on a destinations brand image and Shanka, Ali-Knight and Pope's (2002) found that most of Western Australian destinations customers selected, were based on WOM communication.

2.10 Digital Tourism marketing and eWOM in tourism

Like many other industries, tourism has also benefitted from the development of Internet and Web 2.0. The Global Trends in Online Shopping report published by

Nielsen showed that 25% of all Internet users worldwide make bookings for hotels tours online (Cited in Labbé 2011: 26). Similarly, a study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers indicated that the web is the primary source of information for 65% of the European Internet users when they are preparing for travel (Cited in Labbé 2011: 26). With the support of such studies, Labbé (2011:26) states that whether the customers are travelling for business or leisure, travellers will seek information first from the Internet, which would indicate that if a business in the tourism industry wishes to be competitive, it needs to have an online presence of some sorts, whether its own website or partnership with a broker such as booking.com.

eWOM was defined as a comment made by current, old or potential customer, that is available to many to read via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh 2004: 39). Hence, eWOM is a big part of digital marketing in the tourism industry. Earlier in this thesis it has been established that the companies wishing to tap into the potential of WOM need to actively monitor and participate in the conversations customers are having. Nowadays, the simplest way of doing this would be to monitor the eWOM conversations in for example social media such as Facebook.

Litvin et al. (2006: 10) argue that as travellers are using search engines such as Google to find travel information, it is going to change the structure and accessibility of travel information and inevitably travellers' knowledge and perceptions of various travel products. What Litvin et al. (2006:10) call "Google bombing" is nowadays known as Search Engine Optimisation. Companies harnessing the power of Google searches and trying to optimise their site link position in the search results when travellers type in certain types of key words.

2.11 Measurement of successful digital campaign

After looking at digital marketing, services and tourism marketing and what are the key aspects to creating social media campaigns, it is important to examine different ways to measure and improve those campaigns. What makes them successful? What are the measurements companies use to measure the success of their digital marketing campaigns?

The most common marketing metric which all marketers measure and the management is interested in is Return on Investment (ROI). ROI has been the most important marketing metric in 2010 along side with brand loyalty, customer retention and positioning/differentiation (Strauss & Frost 2012: 66).

The term web analytics was developed because the measurement and improvement of digital marketing became very important to companies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 556). Included in web analytics are digital marketing metrics. The definition of digital marketing metrics is: "Measures that indicate the effectiveness of digital marketing activities integrated across different channel and platforms in meeting customer, business and marketing objectives." (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 558).

For measuring digital marketing effectiveness and success, there are several analytics tools online that companies should be using. All of the major social media sites will offer some form of tracking and metrics tools to help companies measure the effectiveness of posts and other messages. Google analytics is possibly the most widely used tool for website traffic and other metrics (Cleverism 2015). The basic measurement types are ad impressions and ad reach (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 524), where ad impressions are the times the ad (or web page) is viewed by a person and ad (or web page) reach is where a unique individual sees the ad or web page. Cost of advertisement is usually calculated by CPM cost-per-thousand as impressions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 524).

Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2012: 440) list several types of relevant metrics the marketers also need to measure the effectiveness of digital campaigns. Figure 5 below demonstrates some from least sophisticated to most sophisticated metrics.

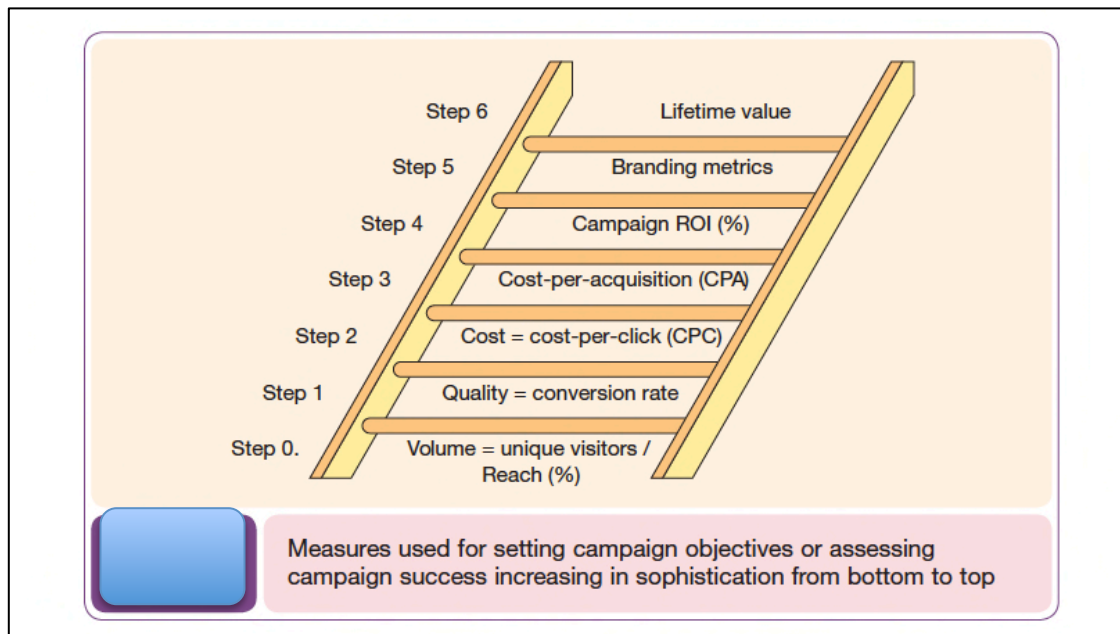


Figure 5. Measures used for setting campaign objectives or assessing campaign success.

Possibly the most important measure is Return on Investment (ROI) as it is used to assess the profitability of any marketing activity, or any investment for that matter (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 442). There are several ways of measuring ROI, depending on which variables are selected, for example if CPM and conversion rate are used (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 442).

3 Research Methods

This chapter delves deeper into the methodology applied to the study in this thesis. Firstly, the research design that best fit the objective of this thesis is explored, after which the qualitative research is explained in a bit more depth. As the thesis is based on case study analysis, this is looked at later on in this chapter and finally, the reliability, validity and limitations of this study are examined at the end of the chapter.

3.1 Research Design

The objective of this thesis is to determine what key elements are required from a WOM marketing campaign for it to be effective and successful. As previous knowledge of the subject was limited, the author needs to explore the subject

further. Hence, the research design for this thesis is exploratory research. As its name states, the objective of exploratory research is to explore the subject further and it is usually used to help solving ambiguous problems (Mooi & Sarstedt 2011: 13).

3.2 Qualitative Research

Research methods are often divided into two different types, qualitative and quantitative research. These two methods use different types of methodologies and gather different types of data as well as focus on different types of research questions (Mooi & Sarstedt 2011: 21). Quantitative research produces quantitative data, which is in the form of values, whereas qualitative data is in all other forms such as words, audio or visual (Mooi & Sarstedt 2011: 31). As the purpose of this thesis is to explore the key elements of WOM marketing campaigns to see what makes them successful and effective, qualitative research will be conducted in the form of a case study analysis and, however, quantitative data will also be analysed to gain further insight to the case.

3.3 Case Study Analysis

To try to answer the thesis objective, a case study will be analysed. As the thesis focuses specifically on WOM, a case study was chosen where a WOM specialised advertising agency had a project which aimed to improve one city's brand image and create awareness of it as a tourism destination by designing a marketing campaign for them which incorporated WOM as part of the initial research for the campaign as well as part of the campaign structure. The company is called Brains of Fire, and it is a US based advertising agency focusing on WOM specifically. The full case study can be found from Appendix 1 and the statistics for it can be found in Appendix 2.

In a case study, a single or small variety of cases about individual, group, organisation or a situation is explored (Robson 2011: 135; Matthews & Ross 2010: 128). Robert Yin (cited in Robson 2011: 136) defines case studies as: "Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence". What can be gathered from this quote, is that case study is a strategy

rather than a method, it is concerned with research, empirical in the sense that it collects evidence about what is going on and it is using multiple methods of evidence or data collection (Robson 2011: 136).

To support the case study analysis, a thorough literature review of current theories and phenomena relating to digital marketing, WOM, consumer behaviour and tourism was conducted. This background information will be used to analyse the case study chosen for this thesis.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

It is important to note the reliability and validity of the thesis research. Reliability refers to the consistency of the research results (Robson 2011: 85). This for fixed research methods this would mean that the research is reliable if others can replicate the study and the results (Matthew & Ross 2010: 53). However, this can be difficult with qualitative research as there are no set instruments or formulas how to measure the reliability of the study. This can be overcome by making sure that the terminology is consistent and that the procedures used for the analysis are also consistent (Matthew & Ross 2010: 53; Robson 2011: 85).

Validity refers to the accuracy or correctness of the research results (Robson 2011: 156). As it is difficult to measure the accuracy or correctness of qualitative research, Robson (2011: 156) suggests that researchers focus on the credibility of the work instead. Credibility can be tested with for example setting the researcher's interpretation of the data alongside existing theory (Matthew & Ross 2010: 53). In this thesis credibility will be demonstrated with using the theories presented in the literature review and comparing the case to them to find out an answer to the thesis objective.

3.5 Limitations

This thesis is based on solely on the findings from one case study; hence, the major limitation in this research is data collection. Only one case study is analysed which can only provide certain amount of information to the researcher, which limits the

possible interpretations. By analysing one case study, it is not possible to make generalisations on the phenomenon. Another major limitation to the study is that an interview with the case study company was not possible. An interview with them would have helped to gain more insight to the research question. However, as an interviewee was not available due to the lack of time, it was not possible.

4 Case Analysis Results

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the case was chosen because it incorporates WOM marketing in the overall marketing campaign. As the objective of the thesis is to analyse what key elements are required for a successful and effective tourism WOM marketing campaign, this case was seen to provide the best basis for the analysis. This chapter includes the analysis results of the case and the next chapter will try to answer the thesis question of what are the key elements for a successful and effective tourism WOM marketing campaign with recommendations.

4.1 Summary of the case

This is a short summary of the case to be analysed. The full case and its results can be found from Appendices 1 and 2.

The Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau approached Brains on Fire, a local advertising agency specialised in WOM marketing, to create together a brand identity to the city. The original business problem defined by Brains on Fire was the general lack of awareness of the destination of Greenville, South Carolina. Brains on Fire identified several elements that added to the challenge they faced with this campaign. One of the main elements was the fact that there are in total 36 Greenvilles in the United States, so the agency needed to find a way to stand out without relying on name recognition. After the initial search to find out what the current talk about the city was saying, the agency found that it is the people of Greenville that was the main attraction. As there already was consistent WOM going on about the city, Brains on Fire used that to their advantage in their integrated marketing communications campaign. The agency decided to help this talk along online based on the fact that most people nowadays book their travels online. A

social media campaign alongside more traditional media campaigns were run over a period of time. It has been a huge success to the city.

4.2 Research Results

4.2.1 Consumer Needs

The needs of the tourism consumer as well as the tourism industry itself have evolved greatly over time. There have been several factors that have contributed to this change. Labanauskaitė et al. (2014: 104) list several factors such as increase in GDP, lifestyle, increase in leisure time and so on. In their research, Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2006: 8) add technology changes and how consumers adapt to it as one factor that contributed to the change in the needs of the travel consumer. When relating travelling to Marlow's hierarchy of needs, the consumer who travels is seeking a certain fulfilment, a new experience (Labanauskaitė et al. 2014: 105). In the Maslow's pyramid, this would most likely be part of the top of the pyramid, self-actualisation.

Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2006: 8) argue that the consumer has become a "co-producer of meaningful experiences" and a storyteller that wishes to share his/her experiences with others. They emphasises that the Internet has enabled this changes in many ways. This can also be seen in the case. The agency has decided to utilise the storyteller in the tourism consumer and is enabling this by creating a significant online experience for all of the stories that have been shared, to come together in one place.

Moreover, Labanauskaitė et al. (2014: 104) note that the change from mass tourism to more individualistic one has been going on since the 70s. This relates back to the marketing definition of companies aiming to achieve differentiation with marketing as well as forming meaningful relationships with their customers. Labanauskaitė et al. (2014: 105) argue that as the tourism consumer has become knowledgeable, more experienced and has much more higher expectations from the products and services

they consume, as they are such individuals, it is difficult to allocate someone to a traditional segment.

4.2.2 Segmentation

The largest possible segment for this campaign is of course the tourism market. The campaign aimed to create awareness for the city of Greenville amongst the travel market. The travel market can of course be divided into several different segments as we have seen previously in this thesis. The case campaign used locals' and their friends' and family's recommendations and evaluations of the town as the basis for the campaign. As the tourism board of Greenville did not have the means or resources to advertise in national level, the campaign focused on people travelling locally. The campaign aimed for the people living locally to voice their opinions and experiences online, and for the visitors to do the same. The three possible segments this campaign was aimed at can be demonstrated with a Venn diagram as per below. The main segmentation methods mentioned were behavioural, psychographic and profile segmentation. As stated before, rarely just one of these categories will bring out a market that is homogenous enough in its needs and wants. Hence, it could be argued that this campaign has combined profile segmentation but also psychographic segmentation, as one of the aspects in psychographics is the interests and opinions of consumers.

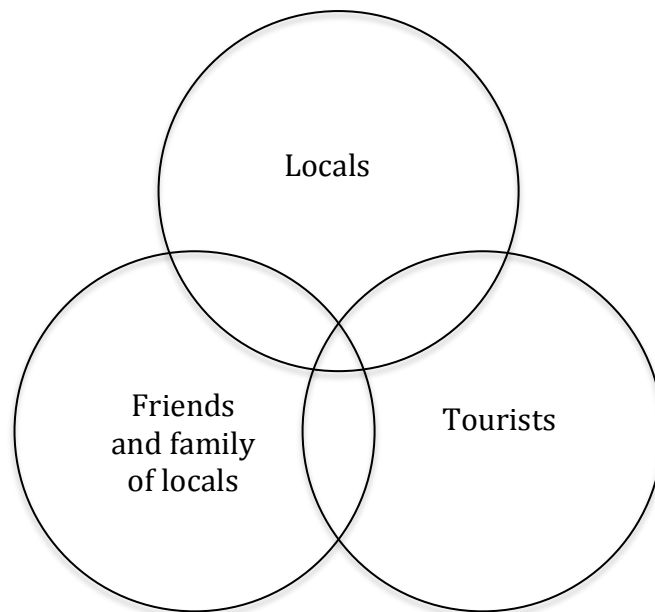


Figure 5. Broad segments for Greenville campaign

In the figure 5 above, we can see how all three different segments intersect with each other. The campaign utilised the consumer-generated contents, which all three groups were providing in their campaign. As for the initial research for the campaign, the agency used word of mouth to find out what people were saying about Greenville. They wanted to find out what the opinions and interests of different geodemographic segments were in relation to Greenville. After finding out the trends in opinions and interests, the agency was able to create a campaign that utilises them in the campaign itself, in the form of WOM as well as with traditional marketing tools such as TV and magazine advertising. This way they were able to target different segments with the limited budget by utilising the contents the segments were already creating.

4.2.3 Decision Making Process

Looking at the decision making process of the targeted consumers, the purchase decision clearly is that they have decided to travel to Greenville. This part of the analysis will focus more on the information search, evaluation and post-purchase evaluation stages of the decision making process as this is where the case campaign relies on its consumers. Gretzel et al (2006: 8) say that the travel consumer invests time in the pre and post purchase evaluation of the service.

The idea behind the campaign is simple: use the customer advocacy to Greenville's advantage and let the locals and visitors "advertise" on behalf of the city. What was established earlier in the literature review and is again demonstrated in the Figure 7 below regarding consumer buying decision process, in the information search stage of the process, the consumer will either find options with internal or external search. The campaign tries to help the consumers who need to rely on the external search, either for example online, or by WOM with asking friends and family for recommendations.

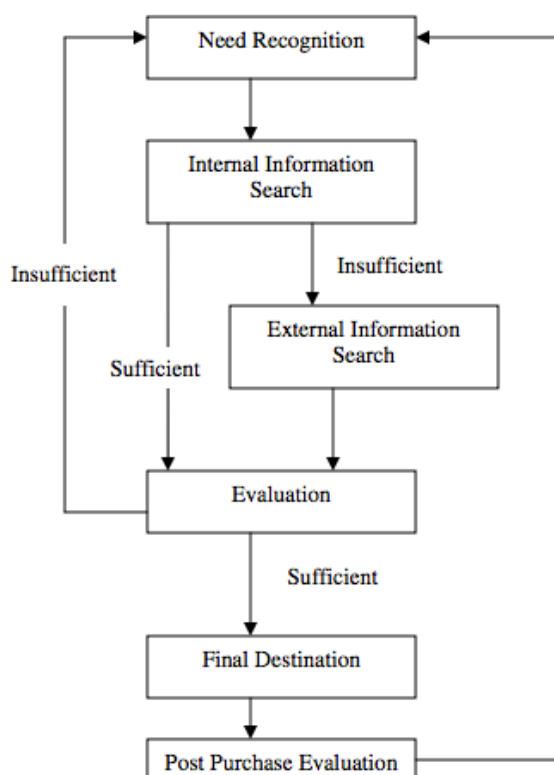


Figure 7. Travel Information Search Framework (Fesenmaier, Werthner, & Wober, 2006)

The aim of the campaign is to gather positive evaluations of Greenville for the online experience and to ensure that potential customers will be able to see the evaluations and use them in their own buying decision process, in their initial information search stage as well as later in their post purchase stage after they have visited Greenville.

As tourism purchases could be seen as high involvement purchases, and considering that with high involvement purchases consumers will spend a lot of time evaluating a service, the campaign needs to be able to provide the customer with a lot of information about the characteristics and qualities of Greenville so it will help the consumers gather information they need to make the purchase decision. By using the existing customer attributes together with traditional advertising media, the campaign is able to fulfil this as the target consumer can find necessary information in different channels as well as in one place (the city website) if needed.

4.2.4 Marketing Mix

When considering the 4 Ps in the traditional marketing mix, and how they could be determined from the case, the first point is to consider the tourism product. As the product in the tourism industry is any offering that can satisfy the target customer's want or need and the need the tourism consumer has is experience, the product in the 4 Ps is nowadays the experience. Experience encapsulates all of the aspects of tourism under one heading. In this case it is the experience of Greenville and more specifically what the city has to offer for its visitors.

Moving on to the promotion P of the marketing mix, promotion is the way for a company to inform the target customer about the product that is available. In this case, the agency and the tourism board of Greenville aim to create a brand image and increase awareness of the experience the city has to offer. The campaign aims to promote the product in an original, creative way, by utilising the customer experiences in connection with traditional advertising media.

Place in tourism, or distribution as it is also known, is complex, as it required various aspects to make the tourism product, experience, available to the customer. It is not just possible to put in the shelf of an intermediary's store but it requires several operators and agents etc. Looking at the Greenville case, the experience of Greenville includes everything Greenville has to offer to the customer, food, culture, and other activities. All of this has been made available to the customer via the tourism board's website. All booking can be done via one site. This makes it easy for the target

customer to view the offerings and plan their trip accordingly. It will also help their buying decision making process mentioned earlier.

4.2.5 WOM and digital tourism marketing

As already stated in the WOM chapter of this thesis, WOM is an important aspect for businesses for multiple reasons. WOM will help bring business for a company no matter what the industry is. WOM marketing was defined as "giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, and making it easier for that conversation to take place." (WOMMA, cited in Solomon et al. 2013: 427) As can be seen from the case, this has been the underlining principle of the whole campaign. The campaign has brought up what the people are talking about the city's offering and have made it easier for that conversation to happen. By combining the digital technology with more traditional marketing techniques such as TV and magazine advertising, the objectives of the campaign can be more successfully met. Advertising will help increase brand awareness, which is why the agency behind the case campaign has chosen to combine the two, however, WOM has been main objective. The case has utilised WOM in many stages of the campaign: in the initial research phase, in the advertising phase as well as later on when WOM continues to flow as visitors share their experiences of Greenville.

First of all, WOM was utilised in the initial research phase to find out what the visitors were currently saying about Greenville, what their experiences were before the campaign. The aim was to find that aspect of differentiation, which is the basic objective of most marketing; what made Greenville special. The agency spoke to different people, locals, tourists, and business visitors to gather as much WOM about the city as possible to find clear trends in what was said and shared because even though people share their experiences and opinions online, most of the conversations happen offline, face to face. Secondly, WOM has been the product of the marketing activities of the agency as well. Visitors have been sharing their experiences online since the campaign launched and the tourism board website has been accommodating them by gathering a lot of the WOM in one place.

As tourism products are mainly services, the services marketing 4 characteristics intangibly, perishability, variability and inseparability apply, especially in this case perishability. Because consumption happens simultaneously with production, services providers rely greatly on the customer feedback they receive, during and after consumption. With Greenville, the city has wanted to offer this feedback opportunity digitally to the customers. Bringing in the evaluation stage of the consumer and combining that with services marketing, we can see that because of the intangibility of services, and tourism, products, it is difficult to evaluate the product before purchase. When considering this, it is important to see the connection with WOM as previously discussed in the analysis regarding the evaluation stage of the buying decision process.

Furthermore, it has been established that with digital marketing, social media campaigns and eWOM play a crucial part in an organisations marketing strategy and especially in their integrated marketing communications. All of these aspects have been taken into account in the case campaign. As Greenville did not have a ready established brand image, the agency created one with this campaign, which meant updating the social media accounts and creating a hashtag that visitors and residents alike embraced.

4.2.6 Measurement

Finally looking at the statistics of the campaign. The statistics shown in Appendix 2 are as of the campaign launched in 2013 until summer 2015 when the company provided the case for this thesis. When analysing statistics, critical evaluation needs to be kept in mind as when looking at the statistics, quite many of the figures are in percentages.

Accurate analysis is not possible when the original figures are not available, however, the percentages will give indication of growth or decline. What can be seen from Greenville's campaign's figures, is that the campaign has achieved growth for the city in the sense that tourism has grow, the hotel occupancy rates as well as visitor rates have increased. However, the main objective of the campaign was to create awareness of the city of Greenville as a potential tourism destination. Looking at the

social results of the campaign, it could be argued that the campaign has been successful in increasing awareness for the city. All social media interactions have increased by a great percentage, and the memberships to the revamped web portal more than doubled.

The statistics state that the campaign used \$3.8 million on press coverage for the campaign and they have managed to get a return on investment of over 4000%. Looking at the social metrics of total reach was 15,555,509 and total impressions were 70,000,000.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this thesis is to answer the question of what are the key elements for a successful and effective word of mouth marketing campaign in tourism. The conclusion and recommendations in this chapter are based on the secondary research on relevant theories related to the question and the analysis of a WOM marketing campaign.

The first, possibly the most important step for tourism companies wishing to utilise WOM in their marketing, is to integrate it to their marketing strategy. Companies need start with the basics and make a plan, a strategy, to make sure that the marketing objectives are met as well as any desired objectives for the campaign itself. Looking at the case campaign, the agency had a clear structure to achieve their objectives. Without both of these, the campaign would not have a clear purpose or clear direction and at the end of it nobody would be able to measure if it has been successful or not. Furthermore, in today's digital world, companies need to be aware of the vast possibilities and opportunities digital marketing can offer. Making sure that a digital aspect is incorporated to the plans is essential because as established in this thesis previously, nowadays people like share their experiences and evaluations of products and services online.

To be able to make a strategy for a WOM marketing campaign, companies need to understand their customers. They need to be able to understand what is currently

said about the company but also understand the decision making behind the customer's buying behaviour and understand their wants and needs. The case agency conducted effective market research regarding both of these, they wanted to know what was said about Greenville already, and they wanted to also find out what it was the customers came for, what the motivation, the need behind their buying was. As it has been established that WOM is most effective in the information search stage of the decision making process, companies should take that into account whilst designing their campaign.

Additionally, after creating a proper marketing plan that takes into account the target consumer and their behaviour, as well as integrates WOM and digital marketing, companies need to consider their marketing mix. Focusing on each of the P's when designing a new product or service is key to achieving competitive advantage, that marketing efforts usually aim for. The service has to align with the overall business objectives as well as the marketing objectives and designing all four P's will aid in that. As the product in tourism is the experience, that'll be the starting point for companies trying to figure out suitable pricing strategy and suitable marketing communications plan.

When considering the Promotion P, companies have already decided on utilising WOM marketing. The case campaign has proven that WOM marketing can be very effective if it has been planned and researched properly. The case shows that companies should not be afraid to be in contact with their target customer, that they could actually achieve greater awareness of the brand if they find loyal customers who have the desire to share their experience on the specific tourism service.

Looking at the Place P, or distribution, this is difficult to try to generalise for the overall tourism industry as it is vast and comprises of so many different operators in different areas of business. However, what could be concluded from the case, is that if companies are able to work with the local government, or other local businesses together to attract visitors to the area, this way costs could possibly be kept down and all businesses related to tourism would benefit from it.

Another key element for a successful campaign is to participate in and monitor the conversations consumers are having about the company. Digital marketing and social media have made it easier for the companies to monitor and participate in the conversations people are having online. When a company is able to respond fast to negative statements, it will help their brand image and reputation. Looking at the Greenville case, digital media has been vastly utilised. They have created a sense of community with the social engagement approach. They have even organised events such as the one-year launch party and an Instagram meeting.

The campaign managed to achieve a high adoption rate for the hashtag #yeahTHATgreenville, the case of Greenville, which already tells about the success of the campaign, WOM wise. It is not the company themselves using the hashtag; it is the visitors and locals who have taken it for their own. Looking at the last page of the Appendix 1, where there is a demonstration of one of the Instagram posts of Greenville, one person who's recently moved to Greenville and seen that people are using the hashtag a lot, commented: "Do I have to use the #yeahTHATgreenville tag since I live here now?" to which someone responded: "Yep. It's a requirement :P" This is a good example how well the hashtag has been adopted and how people recognise it.

WOMMA had listed the basics for WOM marketing as follows:

- Educating people about the company's products and services
- Identifying people most likely to share their opinions
- Providing tools that make it easier to share information
- Studying how, where and when opinions are being shared
- Listening and responding to supporters, detractors and neutrals (Sited in Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012: 537).

Looking at the Greenville campaign, they have clearly followed this guideline. They have provided the tools for their customers to have conversations about their service, they have educated people about what Greenville has to offer through the advertising campaign but also through engaging locals and visitors via social media, they have also studied where, how and when opinions have been shared as they have included the social media engagement into Greenville's main web portal. They have also listened and responded to the customers as they firstly listened in the initial research

for the campaign and responded by providing the loyal locals and visitors an opportunity to share their experiences.

Lastly, looking at the metrics and statistics of the campaign to determine what companies should be looking at when the campaign has finally finished, to establish how successful marketing campaign it has been, it at all. The statistics provided for this thesis indicate that combining WOM with advertising will indeed increase awareness and hence the local tourism industry has experiences a boost. The case advertising agency seems to have focused on the hotel occupancy rates that have sky rocketed since the launch of the campaign, out performing the national average even. Moreover, the other metrics included in the statistics are ROI on press coverage, which seems to be quite a success, as the original budget 3.8 million dollars, and ROI was 4966%. More specific metrics on WOM are related to the social media engagement. The case agency has focused on reach and impressions and how many posts there have been since the campaign launched.

All in all, what has been found out from the secondary research of academic and professional literature relating to WOM marketing and by analysing the case of Greenville, what could be concluded is that the key elements for successful and effective WOM marketing campaign in tourism are:

- Making a WOM marketing plan that can be integrated with the company's digital marketing as well as marketing communications plan to achieve the overall business objectives as well as more specific marketing objectives;
- Understanding the tourism consumer, their wants and needs as well as their buying behaviour;
- Developing a marketing mix to meet those wants and need;
- Work with the local authorities and/or other businesses in the area to achieve maximum awareness;
- Remember to listen to what is being said and reach to it, respond to both the loyal customers but also the people who do not have nice things to say;
- Measure the performance of the campaign with appropriate tools and metrics.

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Appendix 1. Case study

#yeahTHATgreenville



BUSINESS PROBLEM

When the Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau approached Brains on Fire, their tourism efforts were in need of a new focus and unifying spirit. While Greenville, South Carolina is a gem of a destination, there was a general lack of awareness. Greenville, South Carolina wasn't in people's travel consideration set unless they had been here to visit friends and family or lived here themselves. Prior to launch, there was no brand identity for Greenville, and existing communications tools didn't live up to the destination experience.

Upon digging in, we unearthed several factors that were contributing to the overall challenge:

- **Too many Greenvilles.** With 36 Greenvilles scattered throughout the United States, people didn't know where our Greenville was, let alone what it had to offer.
- **No defining feature.** When most people think about a tourist destination, they go straight to brick-and-mortar landmarks and attractions. The Golden Gate Bridge. Disney World. The Statue of Liberty. Without any spectacular landmarks of note, we needed to find a way to spotlight and showcase the subtle things that make Greenville remarkable.
- **We weren't on anyone's radar.** Our primary obstacle to success was a lack of awareness. Many longstanding destination brands had years of spending power to tell their story. Greenville didn't. In fact, Greenville had never been to market before.
- **Limited financial resources.** With a limited advertising budget, Greenville was unable to compete in a national ad campaign. We needed a way to capture eyes, ears and attention without a big spend.
- **Many Stakeholders.** Our challenge was not only figuring out what we were selling, but also finding a way to connect stakeholders consisting of government councils, hotels, restaurateurs and local businesses. Only once we had everyone on board and excited would we have the resources and momentum to get something good off the ground.

INSIGHT

Despite the destination's general awareness problem, we did know that people were visiting Greenville. We wanted to explore what brought them here, what they told people after they headed home and what inspired them to keep coming back. We wanted to talk to people who lived here and had friends that visited to find out what folks were saying when they arrived and left.

Over the course of our conversations with hand raisers and interviews with people on the street, we came to the conclusion that wherever happy people gather, something good must be going on. That happy place, it turns out, is Greenville, SC. We quickly learned that while other destinations may offer iconic attractions, what inspired visitors to fall in love with Greenville was the unexpected "people energy" they

found here. Our locals love tourists. They're proud of the city they call home, and want to share their favorite places to go and things to do with others. As a result, whether people were visiting for the first – or fiftieth – time, we kept hearing how Greenville felt like home. People didn't feel like strangers in a new town, they felt like they were coming back to a place they knew and the welcoming embrace of friends.

Other folks we spoke with expressed how much they enjoyed being able to do whatever it is they love in Greenville – from hiking the foothills to dining at world-class restaurants along Main Street. With something for everyone, Greenville feels personal to people. Instead of relying on a traditional marketing approach to come up with a unique value proposition, we embraced this diversity from each visitor's and resident's unique perspective. Over and over again, people mentioned their favorite things about Greenville, punctuating their sentiment with the same statement: "THAT'S what I love about Greenville." From festivals to food, hiking to biking, it quickly became apparent everyone has a THAT – a personal passion - and our goal is to celebrate all of them in THAT Greenville. We realized that the favorite attraction we thought Greenville was missing was here all along – it's our people.

SOLUTION

We heard several stories from people who came to Greenville on business, fell in love with the city, came back for a visit and eventually decided to move to here. The big question became: how do you share and celebrate a love story like that?

Identity

Instead of avoiding the fact that there are dozens of other Greenvilles, we created a destination identity that played off it. We aren't just any Greenville; we're THAT Greenville. Yeah, THAT Greenville, VisitGreenvilleSC.

yeah,thatgreenville™
visitgreenvillesc.com

WOMMY | Engagement Award 

Social

Since most people go online to book travel, we knew we needed to create a remarkable online experience that made the most of Greenville's "people asset." In order to do that, we would need to transport the spirit of the people of Greenville from our sidewalks and streets to our website. We focused on engagement through a social web approach, recreating the Greenville experience through the eyes and hearts of those who know it best. From locally-authored custom itineraries to thousands of crowd-sourced photos shared across Instagram using the #yeahTHATgreenville hashtag, the destination was brought to life online by those who love it most. Social media gave an outlet and a voice to those who surged with pride.

Advertising

Rather than leading with Greenville, SC, we wanted to recreate the sense of unexpectedness and surprise so many people spoke of when talking about Greenville. The print and outdoor advertising campaign relied on unexpected imagery and an engaging question of, "Where is THAT?" instead of a traditional headline. Television commercials played on the concept that "People are talking behind our backs" and shared notable accolades. Rather than boasting about the destination ourselves, we let the things people were already saying about Greenville do the talking for us in our ads, and on billboards, radio and television.

RESULTS

Since launching the Yeah, THAT Greenville campaign in March of 2013, Greenville has seen some serious success – both in terms of tourism performance for the organization and the social engagement level. Greenville, SC is running at a 68% occupancy rate as compared to an average 58% for South Carolina as a whole. This is a great performance marker given that it was the first time to market. For every 1% increase in hotel occupancy, \$29 million dollars are generated. In twelve months, occupancy rose 3.1% in Greenville SC, resulting in close to 90 million dollars in NEW visitor spending to the community.

Tourism Results

- The Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau (GCVB) was so embracing of the new engaging destination identity that they also officially changed their name to its own call-to-action: VisitGreenvilleSC.
- Greenville hit its highest average hotel occupancy ever at 68%, outperforming the nation (62%), the region (60%) and the state (58%).
- Inquiries to VisitGreenvilleSC (phone calls, requests for Visitors Guides, etc.) increased 300%.
- Membership to VisitGreenvilleSC increased 124%.

WOMMY | Engagement Award 

Web Results

- VisitGreenvilleSC.com became the first CVB website in the United States to integrate social feed image import onto their homepage, spotlighting the user-generated experiences and photos of residents and visitors as identified by #yeahTHATgreenville.
- Since launching in 2013, thousands of photos have been shared by Greenville residents and visitors. As of August 2014, 30,531 images had been tagged with #yeahTHATgreenville on Instagram.
- On average, more than 100 photos have been uploaded to Instagram using the #yeahTHATgreenville hashtag each day (over the past 245 days).

Social Results

Visitors and residents eagerly embraced #yeahTHATgreenville on social media – to the tune of more than 100 photos tagged and uploaded to Instagram each day. But our success didn't stop there. In VisitGreenvilleSC's fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014), Greenville's social footprint and engagement rates have skyrocketed across every social platform, which just goes to show that when people feel represented in something – they want to share it.

FACEBOOK

- 129.45% increase in followers
- 806.33% increase in shares
- 953.04% increase in likes
- 1071.59% increase in comments

TWITTER

- 72.04% increase in followers.
- 102.72% increase in mentions
- 130.42% increase in RTs of our content
- 6,224,571 total potential reach
- 43,238,301 total potential impressions

YOUTUBE

- 104.17% increase in shares

PINTEREST

- 2,113.95% increase in followers
- 2,424.4% increase in repins
- 1,230.38% increase in likes

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INSTAGRAM

- 58,776 individual engagements (a 1,313.56% increase from FY13)
- 1,370.26% increase in likes
- 1,217% increase in comments
- 539.73% increase in following

HASHTAG ADOPTION

Greenville advocates have embraced the new identity by taking the official #YeahTHATGreenville hashtag and making it their own. It's not uncommon to see people tagging photos and posts with #eatTHATgreenville and #bikeTHATgreenville. Even Tex-Mex restaurant Chuy's tipped their hat to #yeahTHATgreenville when they launched their Greenville store with the hashtag #yeahTHATchuy's.

1. Yeah, THAT Greenville "Happy G Mark"

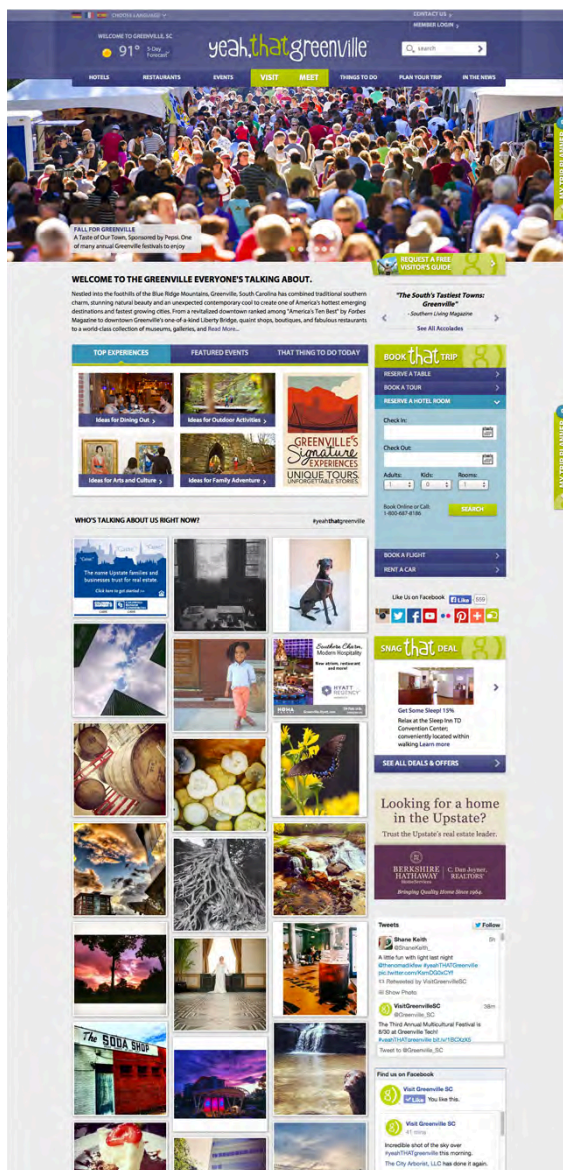


2. Yeah, THAT Greenville Web Portal (visitgreenvillesc.com)

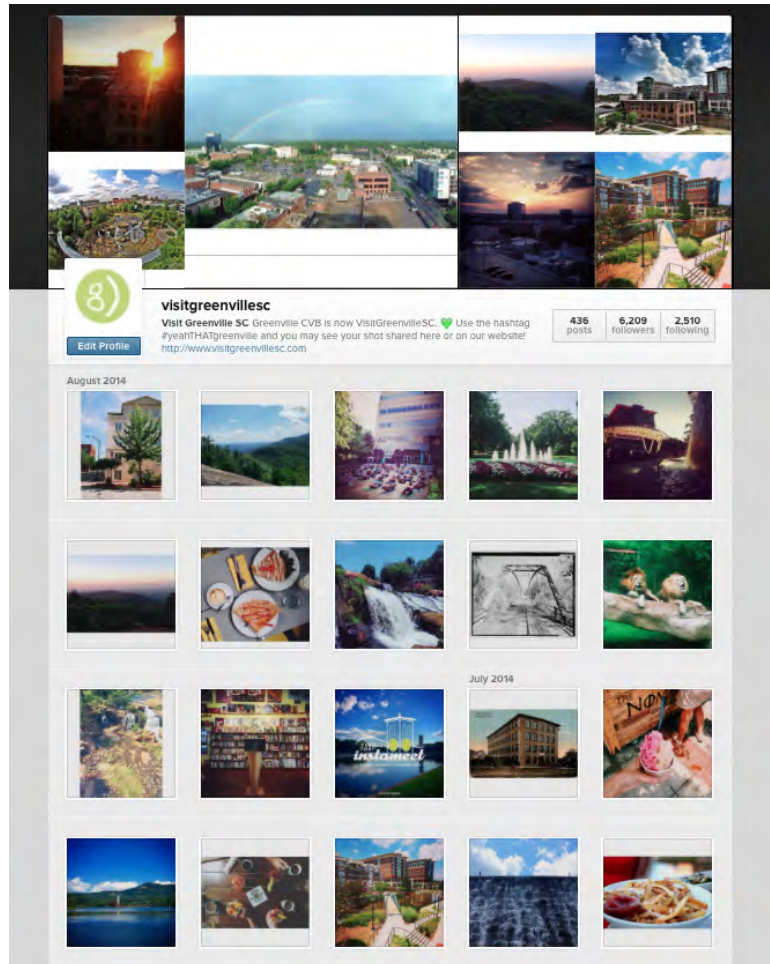


WOMMY | Engagement Award (P 17)

2. Yeah, THAT Greenville Web Portal (visitgreenvillesc.com)

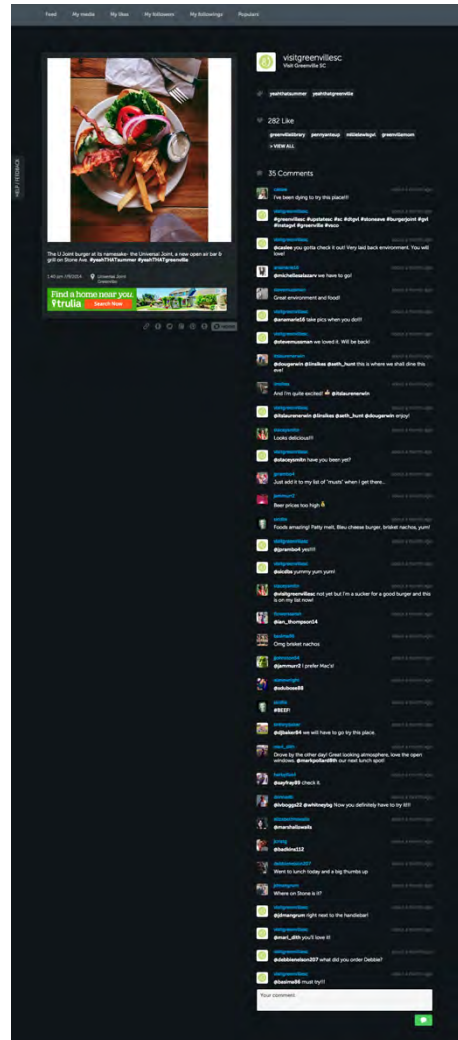
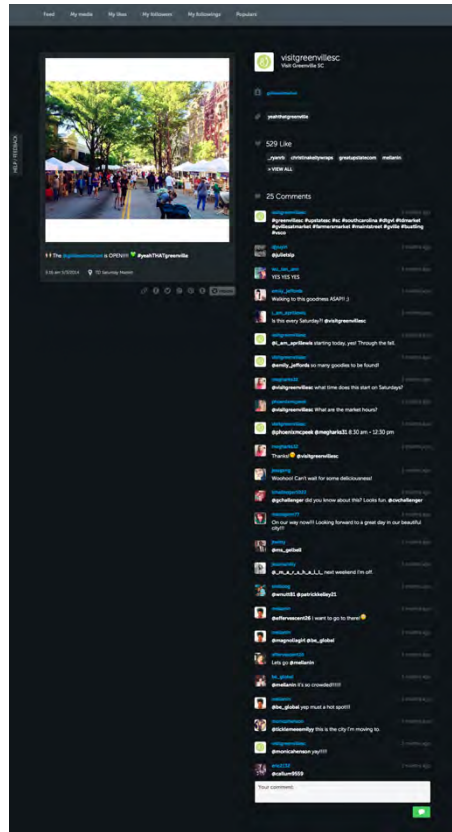


3. visitgreenillesc instagram page

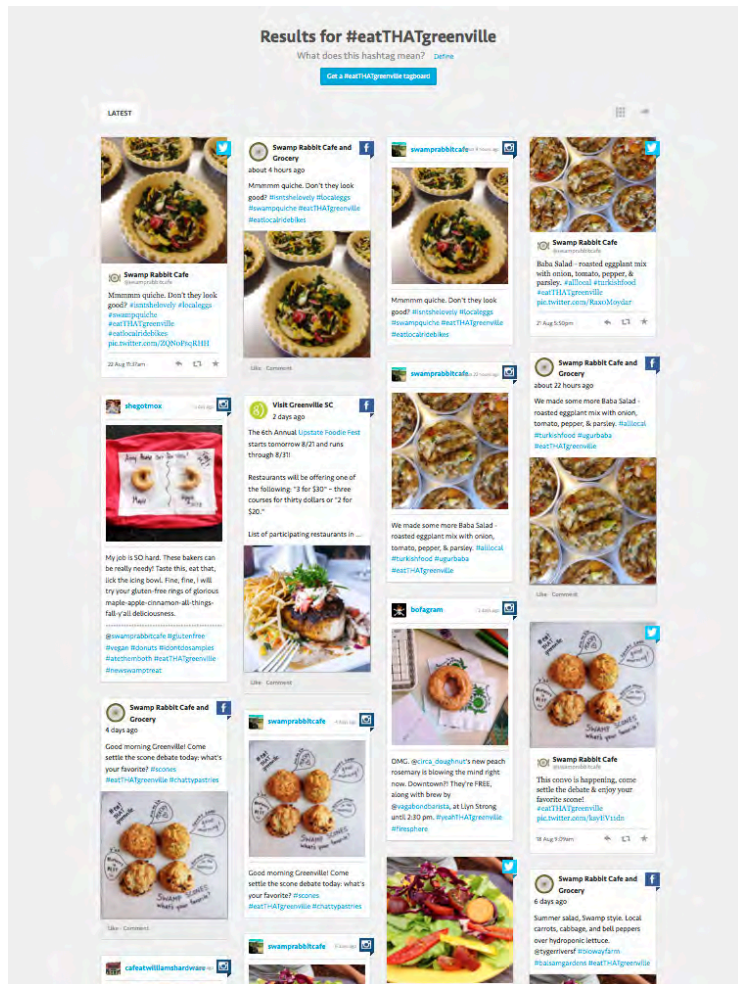


WOMMY | Engagement Award (P 9)

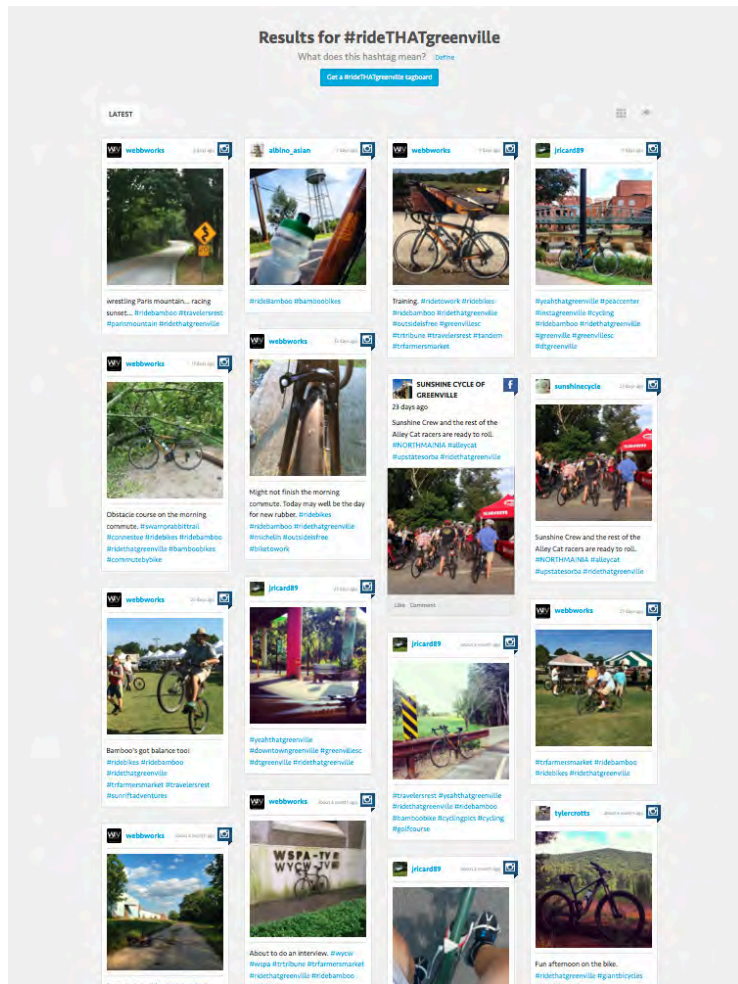
3. visitgreenvillesc instagram page comment streams



3. visitgreenvillesc instagram / twitter tagboard results

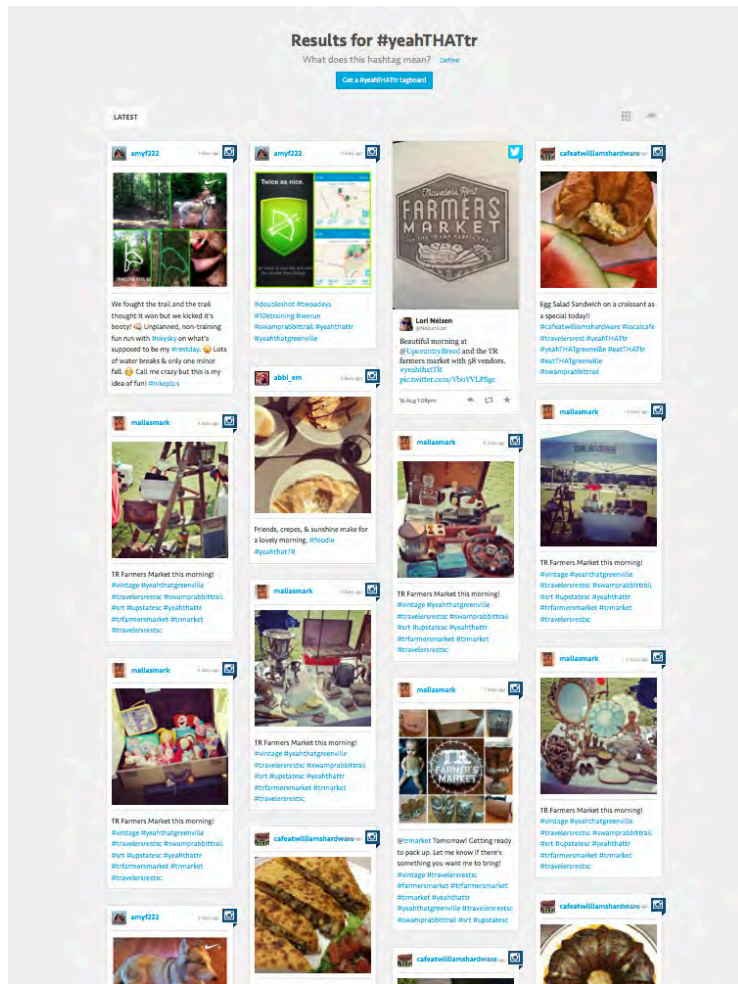


3. visitgreenillesc instagram / twitter tagboard results



3. visitgreenvillesc instagram / twitter tagboard results

Even neighboring towns are using “yeah, THAT”



4. visitgreenillesc advertising magazine



Where is that?

yeah, that greenville™
visitgreenillesc.com

Main Street in downtown Greenville

We understand that families come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. With miles of walking paths, pet-friendly hotels and a walkable downtown where you'll discover more than 100 restaurants nestled along Main Street, our goal is to put a wag in your tail and a smile on your face. Whether your family takes life on two wheels or four, you're welcome here. For more information, call 800.717.0023.

visitgreenillesc.com

visitgreenillesc



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4. visitgreenillesc advertising magazine

Where is that?

Take Horseshoe Road to Jumpin' Off Road overlooking Lake Keowee

We've never understood why people refer to "an uphill climb" like it's a bad thing. There's breathtaking and then there's taking time to breathe. With scenic views, state parks and pristine lakes all around us, you can go from downtown to a breath of fresh air (way up there) in no time at all. From our hip, urban offerings to the natural splendor surrounding Greenville County and the Upcountry, welcome to a little slice of heaven right in our backyard. *To plan your life-is-beautiful getaway, call 800.717.0023.*

yeah, that
greenville™
visitgreenillesc.com

South Carolina
Just right.

visitgreenillesc

WOMMY | Engagement Award (P 15)

4. visitgreenvillesc advertising outdoor

America's 9th Best Park
- TripAdvisor
VisitGreenvilleSC.com

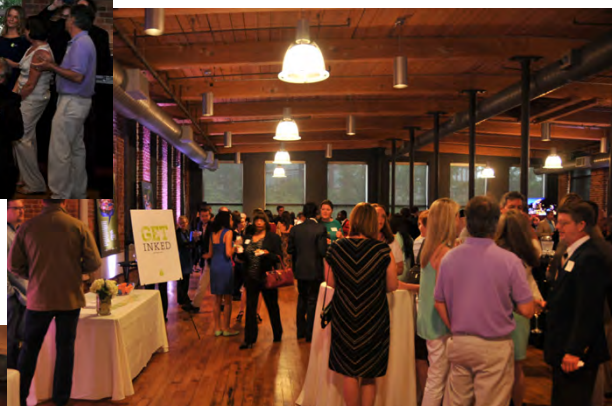
America's Coolest Towns
- Men's Journal
VisitGreenvilleSC.com

South's Tastiest Towns
- Southern Living
VisitGreenvilleSC.com

Top 10 Downtowns
- TripAdvisor
VisitGreenvilleSC.com

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5 . visitgreenvillesc event - 1 year anniversary THAT PARTY



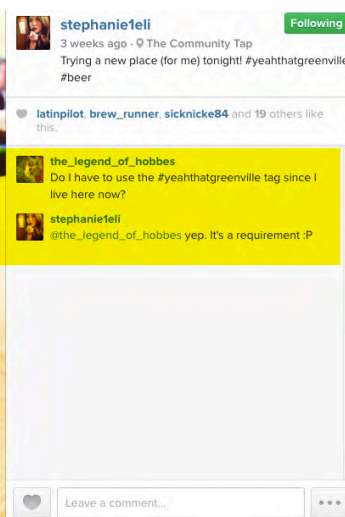
WOMMY | Engagement Award (P.17)

5 . visitgreenvillesc event - instameet in the park



WOMMY | Engagement Award P 18

6 . visitgreenvillesc hashtag adoption



WOMMY | Engagement Award P 19

Appendix 2. Case Study Results

STATS 2015

PAID MEDIA

- 274.9 MILLION times the VGSC message was seen - that's 51% increase over 2014
- 5,060 television spots, 12 markets, 25 networks
- 93,500 cinema spots shown in 6 markets
- 1,705 radio spots, 24 cities
- 494,340 digital billboard spots, 9 markets
- 12,692,244 impressions from digital banner ads
- 159 magazine ads, 23,020,527 total circulation

PRESS COVERAGE

- Press coverage = \$3.8 million dollar value
- 100+ media stories in 12 months
- 4,966% ROI

SOCIAL

- 103,000+ social posts (423% increase over 2013)
- 15,555,509 total reach
- 70,000,000 total impressions

WOWs

- Media coverage up 4,966%
- Social up 423%
- Inquiries up 81% (show visual of Visitor's Guide cover)
- Web traffic up 90%
- Mobile traffic up 481% (show website)
- 289.8 Million opportunities for our message to be seen in 2014 – up 59%
- 240,000 member website referrals from VisitGreenvilleSC.com

IMPACT

- 3.9 MILLION visitors
- 71% weekend vs. 69% weekday "Yeah, we're here to stay!"
- Greenville SC hits highest hotel occupancy rate EVER: Greenville 70%; US 64%; Southeast 63%; SC 61%
- Greenville SC hits highest daily rate EVER: Greenville up 6.3%; US up

- 4.6%; Southeast up 4.6%; SC up 5.4%
- 64.5 MILLION visitor, state and local tax collections
- Over 1.1 BILLION in visitor spending right here at home!

Handful of recent accolades:

1. top 6 hot spots for travel (in the world) 2015 - *CBS This Morning*
2. top 10 best in the U.S. 2015 - *Lonely Planet*
3. surfacing. greenville, S.C. - *The New York Times*
4. the south's tastiest towns - *Southern Living*
5. #2 U.S. metro for highest community pride – *Gallup*
6. the 10 places you have to visit in 2015 – *MSN Travel*
7. travelers rest - 4th coolest town in U.S. – *Budget Travel Magazine*
8. the hippest little city in S.C. - *Garden & Gun*
9. favorite unexpected vacation destination - *O, The Oprah Magazine*
10. 2nd best town ever - *Outside Magazine*
11. top 10 best downtowns 2015 - *Livability.com*
12. top 10 america's best main streets - *Parade*
13. the next big food city of the south - *Esquire.com*
14. top 10 parks in america - falls park – *TripAdvisor*
15. this year's great southern food destination - *Esquire.com*
16. top 10 america's best downtowns – *Forbes*
17. top 10 fastest growing U.S. cities - *CNN Money*
18. america's 5th most fun, affordable cities - *Bloomberg Businessweek*
19. top 10 america's greatest main streets - *Travel & Leisure*
20. #1 micro city of the future - *fDi Magazine*
21. top 18 coolest towns in america - *Men's Journal*
22. america's quirkiest towns - *Travel & Leisure*
23. top 10 america's greatest main streets - *Travel & Leisure*
24. top 10 prettiest southern streets for a stroll - *USA TODAY Travel*
25. 5th best U.S. cycling town – *USA TODAY Travel*
26. top 10 best active towns in america – *Outside Magazine*
27. top 5 unexpected culinary destination – *Celebrated Living Magazine*
28. #3 best weekend get-a-way – *Men's Journal*
29. #3 best arts festival – *USA TODAY Travel: 10Best*