

# The number 1 skill for travel marketers in 2019

By  Natalia Rosa

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A passion for user experience has become the key driver for global travel and tourism marketing roles, as a seamless and pleasant end-to-end customer journey becomes a way for travel brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors in a noisy online space.



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For many years, content has been king when it comes to marketing travel and tourism brands. This is changing. Companies are increasingly realising there's no point in driving and paying for traffic to their website if the online journey is poor and not intuitive.

We see it every day with large and small travel brands. They spend marketing budgets on driving traffic to their websites, but place little to no focus on the user experience the customer is going to have once they've arrived – broken links, no call to action, spelling mistakes and poor search functionality.

## Brands, customer journey

A former colleague, who now runs the Leisure and Tourism Division of specialist travel recruitment agency Progressive Travel Recruitment in the United Kingdom, confirms that travel brands globally are looking at their entire customer journey – investing in PPC, inspiring customers to visit the website and then delivering an excellent online journey with graphic- and video-rich content to generate enquiries.

Fiona Morrison-Arnthal says Progressive Travel Recruitment is seeing travel brands investing significantly in improving the customer journey by recruiting UX- and UI-driven marketers.

Digital and eCommerce marketing roles have also been increasingly popular in 2019. Travel companies now know they need to be more proactive in their attraction of new customers, while also remaining visible when their repeat and referral customers shop around.



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These travel and tourism marketing roles require more focus on ROI and measurement which is why employers are starting demand strong analytical skills as part of the role.

Interestingly, social media marketing has not been a particular driver for any of the digital marketing management roles, says Morrison-Arnthal.

“ *With the right people (and budget) every travel company has the opportunity to be clever with their marketing spend.* ”

But as is so often the case in the travel and tourism sectors, we have Ferrari tastes and Chevy Spark budgets. Travel companies want the best marketers, but as salaries are so much lower in travel, they struggle to attract candidates from other industries.

Progressive Travel Recruitment Director, James Roberts says some travel brands will also only consider marketers who come from the travel industry, which limits the size of the talent pool and the opportunity for candidates to bring fresh ideas from other industries.

Travel is also so massively competitive that hiring a strong marketing team is essential if you're going to stand out from the crowd. In travel, we want the best, indeed we need the best, but we often can't afford the best.

## So, what's the way forward?

According to Roberts, innovation is going to key in the travel marketing space. With the right people (and budget) every travel company has the opportunity to be clever with their marketing spend.

Renowned author and psychologist Neil Rackham suggests brands will need to choose one thing and really focus on getting that right by resourcing it properly. That may mean digging deeper into your pockets and hiring someone world-class to get your UX top-notch. Travel brands will have to pick the right opportunities and decide which they want to invest in, instead of trying to do it all.



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As a person who lives, breathes and eats content for breakfast, lunch and dinner, my money sadly is on getting your UX right, even before you start thinking of travel content.

Even I will admit that the value of good content is diminished if the journey to find it is fraught with broken links, pixelated images and awful design.

Let's get the horse groomed before we get the cart fixed, shall we?

## ABOUT NATALIA ROSA

Natalia Rosa is the MD of Big Ambitions, a specialist travel and tourism communications and marketing organisation which helps tourism and travel organisations connect with their members and customers.

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