

# TRAVEL

**Digital Marketing for your travel agency business**

---

## SIXTH STORY

**The Creative Growth Agency®**

<u>Introduction</u>	page 3
<u>Know your customers inside and out</u>	page 4
<u>Be true to your brand</u>	page 6
<u>Understand the customer journey</u>	page 8
<u>Putting the insights to work</u>	page 10
<u>Key takeaways</u>	page 12
<u>Where next?</u>	page 13

Sixth Story  
21A Victoria Works  
Graham Street  
Birmingham  
B44 0AD

haveacuppa@sixthstory.co.uk  
0121 773 6257

# INTRO- DUCTION

The reasons people travel haven't changed. But in our new digital world, the way your customers research, plan and buy their holidays has undergone a huge evolution. Running a travel business today can be as much about writing blogs as it is about making bookings. It's an exciting place to be – even [Google's](#) joining in.

However the process of getting your travel agency to just where you want it can feel a bit like a long haul flight: it takes a while and can get a bit bumpy. If you're looking for an inspiring read to make the journey pass a little quicker, this ebook is for you.

# KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS INSIDE AND OUT

## Create a customer window

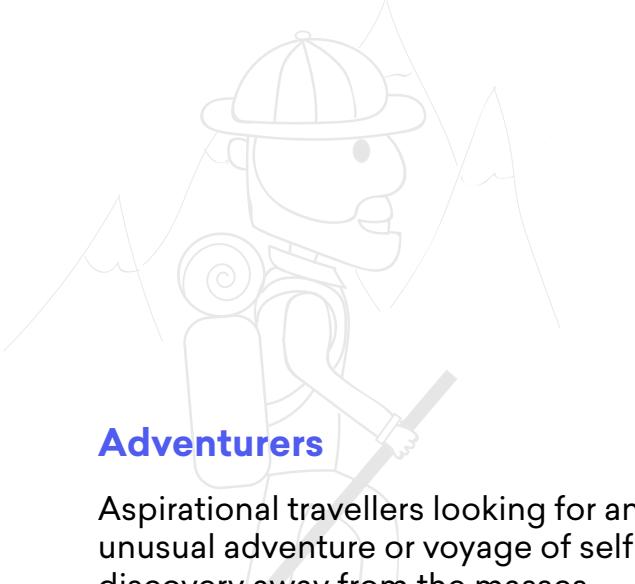
The most important part of marketing any business is being clear about exactly who you're talking to. Who are the customers you want to attract? Where are they? What are their reasons for travel? Why do they need you?

The best way to be clear, is to write it down. That way you can keep referring back to it.

If you've been in business a while, an exercise like this might feel like going back to basics. But it's definitely worth it. By identifying the different customer types that are most important to your business, you can begin to get an idea of the kind of marketing messages that will resonate with them.

You may find that it also highlights a gap between who you think your customers are and who's really using your services.

So use our worksheet, or grab a pen and start creating some [customer personas](#). Three to five is enough, then prioritise them in order of value. Use all the information you have at your disposal. We've done a few to inspire you.



## Adventurers

Aspirational travellers looking for an unusual adventure or voyage of self discovery away from the masses. They have an urge to travel and will want to do their homework to find a path less beaten. If there's a brochure for it, the destination isn't for them.



## The Escapists

A fugitive from the familiar, they'll try anything and go anywhere, as long as it involves a little luxury. Everything must be taken care of. And even though they don't know where they want to go, they're certain they'll be sharing their travels all over social media.



## Time-pressed parents

Working parents who could be CEOs, business owners, executives and top level managers. They have demanding careers and find it challenging to make time to go away with the family. So when they do, they're looking for certainty. Everything must be perfect.



## Empty nesters

Mature couples and retirees with the time and money to enjoy life. They want the reassurance of being able to pick up the phone and speak to someone with a friendly voice, who understands what they want and can arrange it for them.

# BETRUE TO YOUR BRAND

## Audit your current collateral

Once you're clear about the customers you're trying to reach, you can determine if you're speaking their language and sending them the right messages.

Aesthetics set expectations. So take the time to think about the image your business is portraying on your website, through your social media channels, in your emails and across all your marketing materials.



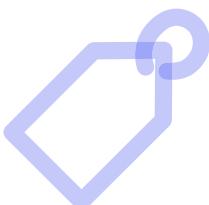
### 6.9 MILLION VISITS ABROAD

UK residents made 6.9 million visits abroad in July alone this year



### £4.5 BILLION WHILST ABROAD

UK residents spent £4.5 billion on their visits abroad in July 2017



### OVER 70,000 TRIPS ABROAD

UK residents have made over 70,000 trips abroad in the last 12 months

It's vitally important that everything you do is consistent with the way you want your customers to feel about you. Saying luxury in one place and being low budget in another isn't going to build trust in your brand. Your customers need to be clear about what you stand for.

***It's vitally important that everything you do is consistent with the way you want your customers to feel about you.***

## And tune up your tools

While you're undertaking your audit, there are a few other things you should consider to make sure you're getting the most from your current marketing tools. Even if you do nothing new, toning up what you've got could make a big difference. So:



***Regularly update your website.*** It could be as simple as adding a new blog every week or so. But if there's nothing new, there's nothing to entice people back.



***Optimise your user experience for desktop and mobile.*** These days plenty of people search holiday destinations on their phones or tablets. If your site only looks good on a desktop, you're already on the back foot.



***Check how successful you are on Google's search.*** Find what terms your customers are using to search and make sure your website copy features them.



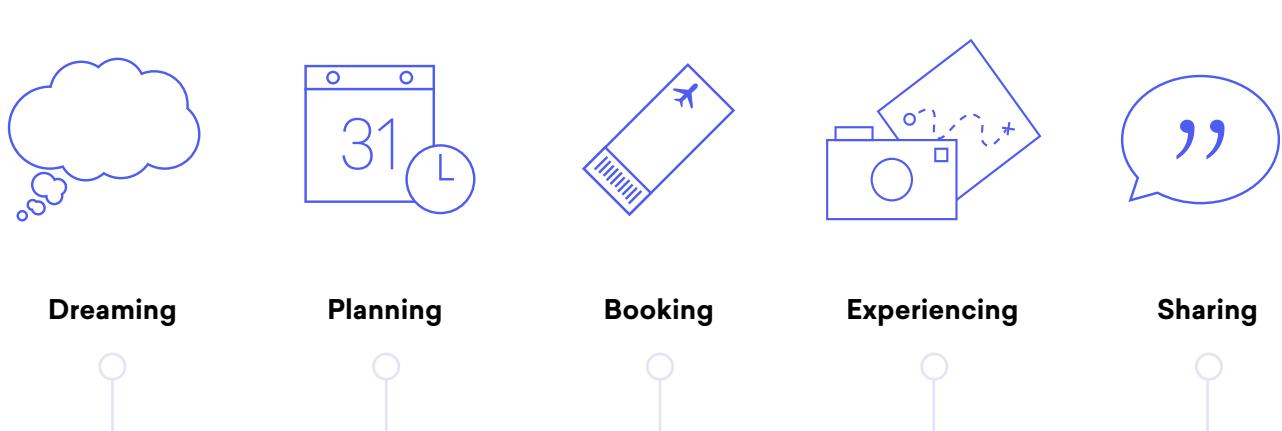
***Track where your leads are coming from and which ones are being converted.*** That information alone could unearth some valuable insights and a mountain of untapped opportunities.

# UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

## So you can invite yourself along

To market your business successfully, there's something important you need to admit to yourself. As your potential customers set out on their quest for a holiday, almost none of them are looking for a travel agent.

According to **Google's Five Stages of Travel** (and who are we to argue with them), before travellers even think about booking accommodation or arranging the flights, they're dreaming about where they're going to go and planning all the amazing things they can do there. And believe it or not, that's a huge opportunity for you.



It's during these early stages of the customer journey that you can inspire, add value and help to narrow down the choices. Because according to more Google research, **67% of people are more likely to book with a brand that provided useful information on the destinations they were considering.**

So return to your customer personas and think about where they might be travelling to and where they're doing their research. But most importantly, look at where you can get involved with timely advice, irresistible offers and compelling content – like the kind we'll talk about on the next page.

Of course you shouldn't just limit your thinking to the first two stages of travel. There are plenty of ways you can get involved in the customer journey of people who've already booked with you to increase the chances they'll come back again.

# PUTTING THE INSIGHTS TO WORK

## Setting out on your own journey

### Develop relevant content that shows up in searches

If you know your customers as well as you should, you can get a good idea of the questions they may be asking early on in their journey. “When is the best time to travel to South Africa?” for instance, provides you with plenty of blog ideas and ample opportunities to optimise your copy for long tail search.

### Inspire, don’t sell

The early stages of the customer journey are about dreaming and discovery. Be part of that by creating content that feeds your user’s imagination and helps them to picture what their trip could be like. Video is becoming a vital marketing tool. If you have it, use YouTube to post films of your destinations, or Instagram to show inspiring photography.

## **Increase your touch points**

From the dreaming phase to the booking phase, potential customers might visit hundreds of websites looking for inspiration and ideas. You can't be everywhere, but your brand should be visible in as many of those touch points as possible. Google, Instagram, affiliate websites... The better you know your customer, the more chance you have of understanding where they'll go to be inspired.

## **Make it easy to get in contact**

As a travel agent, your selling point is that you're there to offer advice. So be available. *Know how your customers like to communicate, and make it as easy as possible for them to reach you*, whether that's via web chat, social media messaging or even WhatsApp if it's where your customers are. And keep evolving your communications channels as your customers do.

***Know how your customers like to communicate, and make it as easy as possible for them to reach you...***

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## We'll get you there

Here's everything we've just been talking about in a simple plan. Every travel business is different, so use this as a guide and not a map, and there's every chance it'll lead you to an exciting new destination.

### Short term

Use Google PPC to drive traffic to your website. You can get very specific around the paid search terms and increase or decrease your 'cost per click' limits during peak times.

Don't neglect social media advertising. Facebook and Instagram allow you to drill down into a huge level of detail when creating targeted ads. It's a great way to reach a lot of people with a smaller budget.

### Medium term

Make sure that your brand, your marketing collateral and your target audiences are aligned. Know your customers and build your campaigns around them. A content strategy to reflect the things your users are searching for can provide a huge return on investment.

And think mobile. Mobile search is climbing and it's where most users do their research before booking.

### Long term

Keep adding fresh content, blogs and information to your website to assist with search engine optimisation. Make sure you have Google analytics installed so you can track your visitors.

Don't forget your current customers. Getting in touch after a trip to ask for reviews and travel photos isn't just a good way to build up a bank of content, it also helps build a relationship and provides a unique opportunity to ask for referrals.

# WHERE NEXT?

This ebook was produced by **Sixth Story, the Creative Growth Agency®**. We help businesses to ignite growth through authentic branding, world-class websites and purpose driven marketing. We're experienced in the airline and travel industry. We work with brands across the UK and around the world, and we'd love to work with you.

If anything in this ebook has caught your attention, please don't hesitate to get in touch to discuss your thoughts.

If you like what you've read, here's where you can go next.

## 01

### **Work on your customer personas and value propositions**

We have another book titled 'Content Pizza' with worksheets to help you through the process.

## 02

### **Map your customer journeys**

We recommend repeating this for each type of customer persona. Grab a white board, post-it notes, your team and go from start to finish. How/when would the customer start searching for a holiday through to booking and coming home.

## 03

If you'd like help with persona development, your brand/website audit or user journey mapping, we offer a Brand Mastery workshop and will be more than happy to facilitate.

Email [sian@sixthstory.co.uk](mailto:sian@sixthstory.co.uk)  
[www.sixthstory.co.uk](http://www.sixthstory.co.uk)

Created by

**SIXTH STORY**

**T** 0121 773 6257

**E** [haveacuppa@sixthstory.co.uk](mailto:haveacuppa@sixthstory.co.uk)

**A** Unit 21a, Victoria Works,  
Graham Street, Birmingham,  
B1 3JR