



ROUTE 2.0

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ROUTE 2.0 Module Unit: The art of writing for Social Media communication

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE WRITING CONTENT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Nowadays, businesses in tourism sector need to be more proactive in their approach in order to reach new customers and keeping existing and new customers interested in their products.

Anyone who is involved in social media, knows that there is a specific way of generating the content in order to have more success. Social media is a great tool for businesses to pull out more information for their target audience.

This module provides to attendees all the practical information needed for the writing content of social media. The attendees will learn how to use the best writing social practices for their businesses.



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1 OVERVIEW MODULE UNIT: THE ART OF WRITING FOR SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

1.1 For Whom

- Businesses' owners
- Anyone responsible for marketing or business development in its organization
- Corporate marketing managers and directors responsible for charting the course for the next generation of marketing in their organization
- Business to business marketers seeking to develop a community with their clients and leverage social media to grow their vertical market share
- Business to Consumer marketers seeking a competitive edge by understanding and mobilizing their customer base on the internet through social media vehicles.

By the end of this session the trainees should be able to:

Objectives	Topics
1. Adapt their writing for web and social media sites	Principles of Effective Social Media Writing
2. Apply different approaches for writing for social media so as to allure the online audience	Principles of Effective Social Media Writing
3. Revise a writing sample to make it more appropriate for the web	Principles of Effective Social Media Writing
4. Make their intranet sites, tweets and status updates more valuable and interesting to their readers	Principles of Effective Social Media Writing
5. Produce short pieces of writing that employ the principles of effective web writing	How to Write for Facebook How to Write for Twitter
6. Understand how people read online and how to emphasize the most important information	How to Write for Facebook How to Write for Twitter
7. Make messages more scannable so that readers pick up on key points in just a few seconds	Principles of Effective Social Media Writing
8. Encourage participation and interaction from their readers	Principles of Effective Social Media Writing
9. Employ safely and effectively a range of social media	Story telling
10. Produce content as part of a team.	Story telling



1.2 Structure of the Module Unit

- Introduction
- Regulations of Competent Writing in Social Media
 - Creating content:
 - Relevant, Useful and Interesting
 - Easy to understand and share
 - Friendly, conversational, engaging
 - Action-Oriented
- How to Write for Facebook
 - Profiles and Pages
 - ways to making your Facebook posts succeeded
- How to Write for Twitter
 - Twitter Syntax
 - Best Practices for Writing Tweets
- Story telling
- Questions
- Glossary
- FAQ
- Further Readings
- References



2 INTRODUCTION

«...Social media are fundamentally changing the way travellers' search, find, read, and trust, as well as produce information about tourism suppliers, destinations and experiences.¹ They also radically change the relationships travellers have with other travellers as well as with tourism and hospitality providers. By browsing user-generated-content and social media, the travellers are becoming co-marketers, co-designers, co-producers, and co-consumers of tourism and hospitality products and services, as they get inspired and motivated to select and design their personalised travel itineraries, share and amend them amongst their social networks while also commenting on them and disseminating e-word-of-mouth after experiencing them in real life.² The tourism and hospitality industries are simultaneously confronted with a substantially different information ecology, communication paradigm, distribution landscape, and competitive environment. This creates a need to redefine business models, informationalising management processes, and rethinking operational practices that exploit the business opportunities offered by social media by integrating customers, their social networks and user-generated-content into the business value chain.³ This paradigm shift requires intricate knowledge of social media affordances, their users, their uses and their by-products such as user-generated-content, market intelligence and social networks.... »

2.1. REGULATIONS OF COMPETENT WRITING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Due to the huge amount of information that Social media provides, there is a specific way of writing in order to attract more and more readers.

To ensure that the reader take the time to read your messages, social media writers should:

- Understand of the audience they are trying to reach.
- Apply tourism literacy principles.
- Use plain language.

¹ Sigala, M., Christou, E. & Gretzel, U. (2012). [Social Media in Travel, Tourism and Hospitality: Theory, Practice and Cases](#). Surry, UK: Ashgate.

² Sigala, M. (2012). The impact of geocollaborative portals on group decision making for trip planning. *European Journal of Information Systems*, Vol. 21, N. 4, pp. 404-426.

³ Sigala, M. & Marinidis, D. (2012). Web Map Services in Tourism: A Framework Exploring The Organisational Transformations and Implications on Business Operations and Models. *International Journal of Business Information Systems*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 415-434.



Here are some basic principles of plain language:

- Quickly engage the reader.
- Limit use of jargon, technical, or scientific language.
- Write in active voice.
- Keep messages short.
- Write in a friendly but professional tone.
- Choose words with one definition or significance.
- Use data that are well known of your audience.
- Choose well known terms, and use them consistently.
- Use acronyms with caution.
- Use numbers when they help you make your point.
- Consider using alternatives to words expressing mathematical concepts, such as risk, normal, and range, if those words do not have meaning to your audience.
- Use social marketing concepts to improve communications.

2.1.1. CREATING CONTENT

Social media content should be:

RELEVANT: information can be based on time, geography, audience and interests.

USEFUL: When people can use social media information to see their lives in new ways, change behaviour, or learn something they didn't know before, it's useful. Make information useful by suggesting practical steps or citing convincing statistics or report findings.

INTERESTING: To capture a reader's attention, create content that piques curiosity. Interesting social media content is more likely to be shared. Of course, content should always be professional and relevant to a touristic topic.

EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND SHARE: In social media channels, your message competes fiercely with others for your readers' attention. That is why it's important to use plain language and craft your message so the information you present is easy to understand. Also, consider how easy your message is to share or "like" on Facebook or "retweet" on Twitter. If users must modify your message to share it, they might get frustrated and quit or change the message so it's not as accurate as the original.

Here are some ways to ensure that your messages are easy to understand and share:

- Put relevant, intriguing information at the beginning of your post. Can you ask a question?



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- Use fewer characters than allowed to make sharing easy.
- Keep messages short but relevant.
- Test your message on a cold reader. Could someone “get it” in less than 2 seconds?
- Provide enough context so your message can stand alone.

FRIENDLY, CONVERSATIONAL AND ENGAGING: It’s no surprise that social media is, well, social! Social media content generally has a more informal tone than other communications. That’s not to say social media messages are not also professional. Here are some ways to help you achieve a balanced, conversational tone.

- Use contractions (can’t, don’t, haven’t).
- Write in first or second person (I, we, you).
- Avoid colloquial language (y’all, ain’t, you guys).
- Avoid trendy abbreviations (UR for “you are”).

ACTION-ORIENTED: You can use social media tools to help build awareness and direct readers to take action or find more information. Social media messages should have a call to action, urging people to take the next step. Here are some ways to make your messages actionoriented:

- Use action verbs such as “learn,” “watch,” or “join.”
- Include links to Web content that offer more detail or supply a phone number or e-mail address, but not e-mail addresses for individuals.
- Use ALL CAPS sparingly, for emphasis only.

Social media is most effective when the content relates to a particular interest or desire of a specific group of people.

2.2. HOW TO WRITE FOR FACEBOOK

Facebook is the largest and one of the most prominent social networking applications today. In October 2012, Facebook passed the 1 billion user milestone⁴.

2.2.1. PROFILES AND PAGES

Facebook is structured with two different audiences in mind. 1) Individuals have profiles where they upload status updates, pictures, videos, and links for others to view.

⁴ <http://thenextweb.com/facebook/2012/10/04/facebook-now-has-600-million-monthly-active-mobile-users/>



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Individuals grow their networks by adding friends or liking pages. 2) Public-facing organizations, such as nonprofits organizations, businesses, and government agencies have special profiles designed for the public. These two Facebook audiences can update their pages with new posts that display in the “news feed,” which is the main page a user sees after logging in.

2.2.2. WAYS TO MAKINK YOUR FACEBOOK POSTS SUCCEEDED

- **KEEP IT SHORT**

Facebook offers more space to create content than Twitter or text messages. Each Facebook post can be a maximum of 420 characters plus a link. However, a shorter length is recommended; we recommend that Facebook posts be 250 characters (or shorter) to allow the post to be viewed completely in the newsfeed.

Buddy Media research shows that posts with less than 80 characters are 23% more engaging than longer posts. More than that can hurt interactions. Since Facebook is a visual medium, large blocks of text just aren’t as appealing as short, snappy statements.

- **CONTENT**

All posts written for Facebook should use consumer-friendly, action-oriented messaging. The posts should be interesting and compelling and include a specific call to action. Posts should include one link to a Web page, photo, or captioned video.

- **KEEP YOUR TONE FRIENDLY AND POSITIVE**

Because Facebook is a platform for people to share what’s going on in their lives, the tone is naturally casual but professional. Use a consumer-friendly voice when crafting your messages. If your post is directed toward lay people, avoid or define jargon.

- **TAG SOURCE (WHEN APPLICABLE)**

The next time you’re typing a tourism sector partner’s name in your post, add the @symbol in front of it. This will trigger the tagging feature in Facebook, automatically creating a link and displaying the post on the partner’s page.⁵

- **GET FANS INVOLVED WITH QUESTIONS**

Posts that contain questions or that request input get 70 per cent more comments than those that don’t specifically ask for input. Posts that contain the word “like” gets 240 percent more likes than those that do not.

Questions should be simple and brief. Ask for simple, one-word responses.

⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/help/124970597582337>



2.3. HOW TO WRITE FOR TWITTER

What can be expressed in 140 characters or less? More than you would expect. Twitter has grown to become the largest “micro-blogging” platform, with a reported 200 million registered users as of June 2011. Twitter promotes events in real time.

2.3.1. TWITTER SYNTAX

The Twitter community has created its own short-form syntax. When communicating on Twitter, you'll need to know several essential terms:

Message (or tweet): Messages are composed of up to 140 characters of text or links.

Username (or handle): Twitter users identify themselves by their username or “handle.”

Retweet: If a tweet (or message) from another Twitter user is relevant, the retweet function allows you to forward their message to your network.

Mention: Twitter enables users to automatically link to each other by putting the @ symbol in front of the username in a message.

Hashtag: Similar to a mention, a hashtag is created automatically when you put the # symbol before a word. Using a hashtag enables other people to join in a larger conversation on a topic or find information quickly.

Hashtags are essentially a simple way to catalog and connect tweets about a specific topic. They make it easier for users to find additional tweets on a particular subject, while filtering out the incidental tweets that may just coincidentally contain the same keyword. Hashtags are also often used by conference and event organizers as a method of keeping all tweets about the event in a single stream, and they've even been used to coordinate updates during emergencies. You can create a hashtag simply by appending the hash symbol to a word, like this: #hashtag.



2.3.2. BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING TWEETS

TWEET 120 CHARACTERS OR FEWER: Although Tweets can be up to 140 characters⁶ (including spaces and punctuation), we recommend that tweets be less than that to allow for other text to be added when the tweet is retweeted. Keep tweets to 120 characters or less including a shortened URL (around 20 characters). This leaves about 100 characters for your message. Writing tweets of 120 characters or less makes it easier for followers to retweet your message without having to edit it to make it briefer. To calculate the number of characters in a draft tweet, use the character counting tool in Microsoft Word.

SHORTEN YOUR LINKS: When including a link in your tweet, be sure to first shorten it through a free service like ow.ly or bit.ly. Shortened links are beneficial because they a) allow more character space for your tweet and b) are trackable, enabling you to see the number of clicks generated by your link. Shortened links also make you look like a savvy user (in contrast, posting full links will make you look clueless). Note that the native Twitter app now shortens links automatically.

ABBREVIATE THE ABBREVIATIONS: Try to write concise tweets that don't require abbreviations. Sometimes, because of the character limit, abbreviations are necessary. Only use standard abbreviations that are easily understood, and do not change the clarity of the message. Some appropriate abbreviations follow:

- Info for information
- & for and
- 1PM for 1 p.m.
- IMPT for important

Limit abbreviations to commonly recognized abbreviations such as those listed above and avoid "text speak." It's best to avoid abbreviations such as:

- 2 for to
- 4 for four
- U for you
- UR for your

It can be challenging to stay within Twitter's 140-character limit. But abbreviating your way through a tweet is not the answer. A tweet with pervasive abbreviations is difficult to read,

⁶ <http://blog.ringcentral.com/2012/05/twitter-speak-101-a-guide-on-twitter-syntax-and-manners-for-execs-and-newbies/>



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especially if the abbreviated words are not immediately recognizable. If you absolutely can't trim down your tweet, send two separate ones. End the first tweet with "con't" (as in, "continued") followed by an ellipsis (...), and start the second one with an ellipsis followed by "con't."

TWEET WITH GRAMMATICAL INTEGRITY: Twitter is a public forum and thus, you are what you tweet. Be careful of typos, spelling errors, homophone errors, etc. So remember to proofread your tweets!

TONE: As with all social media, messages crafted for Twitter should be reader-friendly and action-oriented. Ask a question, highlight a key statistic, or provide a specific call to action

USE HASHTAGS : Hashtags, denoted by the hash symbol #, is a way of tracking and organizing specific topics discussed on Twitter. The advantages of a hashtag are: a) it makes tweets around that topic easily searchable and b) it increases the chances of that topic being a trending one. Another way of looking at hashtags is that they are great for tracking and participating in conversations about a specific topic. You can click on a certain hashtag and engage in conversation around the corresponding topic. Conferences and events are great examples of hashtag usage.

HOW TO REPLY OR MENTION SOMEONE ON TWITTER: When someone asks you a question or gives you a compliment by mentioning you (denoted by the @ sign followed by your username), be sure to reply with an answer or a thank you. Ideally, you should reply within an hour. If it takes you a few days to reply, that's better than not replying at all. And if you'd rather not interact regularly with people on Twitter, then convert your account into a private one.

RETWEET OTHERS: Retweets are a way of sharing great tweets posted by others. In the world of Twitter, retweeting another person's tweet is a complimentary gesture. When you retweet someone's post, it means you think their tweet is interesting enough to be shared with your followers. That's why measuring how often your tweets are retweeted is a good way to measure the quality of your twitter content. Retweets are denoted by "RT" followed by the originator's username, e.g., RT @jasonfalls. This gives credit to the original tweeter.

There are two main ways to retweet:

a) Click the Retweet option from any Twitter tool. Above is an example from the native Twitter interface, which automatically truncates the retweet if the original is too long. Other interfaces will require you to manually shorten the retweet if it surpasses 140 characters.



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b) Cut and paste the original tweet, then prepend with “RT.” If you have extra character space, add commentary to your retweet.

MENTION OTHERS: If your tweet mentions another Twitter user, be sure to include that user’s username in proper Twitter syntax, i.e., with @username. Like retweets, mentions can be a way to give a shout-out to another user (it can also be a way to complain about/to another user). The rule of thumb is to compose a tweet with a mention much like you’d compose a normal sentence.

PROVIDE REFERENCES : If you are tweeting out a link or quoting somebody, provide a reference. This is important because a) it’s courteous and a best practice to cite sources b) your tweet shows up in the referenced person’s Twitter stream (if your citation mentions @ someone) c) if your reference is a recognizable source, e.g., Mashable, it may increase the likelihood that people will take notice.

The above example is the standard way to cite a reference: title of the article, followed by the shortened link, then “via” and the source. If the source of your link or quote isn’t on Twitter, then just include the name of the source with the “@” sign, e.g., via FoxNews.

HOW TO SEND A DIRECT MESSAGE ON TWITTER: Direct Messages (DMs) send your contacts private notes through Twitter. You can send a DM only to a Twitter user who’s following you (but you don’t have to be following that user), which helps cut down on spamming and other unwanted messages. You can DM someone from within the native Twitter interface by clicking in the upper right corner of the screen, selecting “New Message,” and typing the recipient’s name. Alternatively, you can visit the recipient’s Twitter page and select “Send a Direct Message” from the upper right corner.



3. STORY TELLING⁷

In this section are been presented big and small companies that have implemented their innovative social media marketing in order to transform their online presence.

1: Martell Home Builders

Martell Home Builders is an Atlantic Canadian custom homebuilder. By their online marketing and blogging strategy, they have created a direct – to – consumer model where they were no longer reliant on a middleman to bring them business. Martell offers a great customer service such as GPS on their contractors' vehicles giving the opportunity to their customers to know where their contractor is when on job. They also use the Facebook Like Box that, on the one hand shows the number of people have Liked their page and in the other hand faces of your Facebook fans. As a result, people become your fan without leaving your company website.

#2: Zappos

Zappos is an online shop that sells shoes, clothing and accessories. It is known that they attempt on creating real relations with their fans and customers. As a result of their marketing strategy, they first ask you for the Like button so you can get access to exclusive content, videos and special promotions and secondly to join in their mail list.

On their custom welcome tab are included where your posts and comments about their products will post, at the same time, to your profile or page so all your friends or fans get into what you like most about Zappos.

More than that, the “Fan of the Week” contest, part of their Facebook strategy, encourage the viral communication between fans and customers.

#3: Giantnerd

Giantnerd®, a company that sells sport equipment as for biking, hiking and snowboarding, tend to be a social shopping community. Their social network, completely different than Facebook or Twitter, offers, a discount to all new members with their “Nerds save 5%” promotion, by the one-click process to join their network. They also offer exclusive deals and promotions to their fans that use the Like button.

⁷ <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/9-companies-doing-social-media-right-and-why/> article by Amy porterfield



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In addition to the above, they provide WikiNerdia, whereby nerd community answer potential customers' questions about the products increasing brand trust for them.

#4: Ford Motor Company

Ford uses social media in their marketing strategy in a unique way. By adding a new blog post, all the comments of their readers uploaded to the first page of their website. By their blog, The Ford Story, they get new innovative ideas from their fans and customers in order to advance the technology in their next generation cars.

They also use Flickr widget, upload their latest photos attracting new viewers and drawing in existing audiences.

#5: Convince & Convert

Convince & Convert is a social media and content consultancy, helping companies to get better at social media and content marketing. As a social proof mechanism, the owner of the company place a link to all of his comments at the top of each blog post. He also includes social share buttons at the top of each post in order to share the content with more people. He also includes The LinkedIn Share button to his site increasing the amount of traffic from LinkedIn.

#6: Cree

Cree is an industrial lighting company that sells Leds. In their web page and especially in "Cries for Help" section, encourage companies to present their terrible light in a fun way. In their blog there are a lot of interesting articles that attract their audience attention. Cree also builds a viral community with the members of their environmental movement so it gets, through this, a great viral exposure.

#7: Emmy's Closet

Emmy's closet is an online store that functions as an extension of the e-commerce site, Etsy. Com. So it uses Etsy's application that allows you to browse and buy their products directly through facebook. Their fans, by using social share buttons, upload their favorite products on their Facebook profile. In this way their items reach on their potential customers. They have also created social buttons to reflect their brand so they personalize the social experience.



#8: San Chez Bistro

San Chez Bistro is a tapas bistro and restaurant in West Michigan that uses social media in order to reach to customers in their local community. San Chez encourages them to use Twitter to reserve a seat at their restaurant by the application Tweet-Ahead Seating. Providing easy access to their restaurant, they create a marketing campaign online so they can reach even more potential customers.

Moreover, by using Foursquare, allows people to inform their friends where they are by checking in the restaurant so San Chez Bistro succeed to increase its presence in the local market.

4. QUESTIONS

Question 1: How do you write effective Facebook posts?

Someone can write effective Facebook posts considering the following tips by:

- Writing short and simply messages according to his audience
- Asking questions
- Uploading posts with photos
- Adding suitable for your audience links
- Mixing up posts in links, questions, polls
- Choosing the right time e.g. weekends
- Responding to the questions of his audience

Question 2: How do you write effective tweets?

Someone can write effective Twitter posts considering the following tips by:

- Writing short clear messages (twitter don't publish updates that are longer than 140 characters)
- Writing tweets that have a purpose to serve
- Have a unique voice and personality
- Replying to your followers
- Be professional

Question 3: What kinds of information should I post on social media?

Relevant and useful information that keeps your followers interested in. For example:

- Photos of products or events you've hosted
- Coupons or sales
- Hosted link for your email
- Interactive questions
- Tips or tricks for using your product or service



5. GLOSSARY

5.1. FACEBOOK TERMS

Comment: A person's written response to a post.

Friend: A person you have invited to be a "Friend" or a person whose Friend invitation you have accepted. A Friend will be able to see your Page or Profile.

Like: Clicking "Like" under a Facebook post indicates that you enjoyed it. Your "Like" is noted beneath the item and posted to your Wall.

Page: An organization's professional presence on Facebook.

Post: To write or publish content on an organization's or individual's Facebook page. A Post can include images, text, and hypertext links.

Profile: An individual's personal Facebook page, which may contain status updates, photos, videos, a list of friends, and recent activities.

5.2. TWITTER TERMS

Direct message or DM: A private message sent via Twitter between people who follow each other.

Follow: To receive an individual's Twitter updates.

Hashtag or #: A way to categorize tweets on a particular topic.

Mention: A Twitter update that contains @username anywhere in the body of the Tweet.

Retweet or RT: Sharing another user's tweets with followers.

Tweet: An individual Twitter post.

6. FAQs

- How often should you post or tweet per day?

It depends on what your customers expect when they start following your business. Twitter, for example, is fast moving so you'll want to have at least a couple of tweets per day, while on Facebook you may only post once per day or even a few times per week.

7. FURTHER READINGS

Lon Safko & David Brake, *Social Media Bible (2009)* 840 pages, LibraryThing, Catalog 800+ pages of information on nearly every social media network and Web 2.0 product as of 2009. Although the focus is on businesses, this book provides detailed information far beyond blogs and Facebook. Information includes podcasts, virtual worlds and



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videocasting. Short entries, critical reviews, easy to read style and a wide reach make this a great reference for Web 2.0 technology. Finally there are many weblinks scattered generously throughout the book to illustrate points and introduce the reader to new ideas.

Joel Comm, Twitter Power (2009), 248 pages, LibraryThing, Catalog

Practical and filled with screenshots Comm's book offers step by step guidance on how to create a Twitter account, etiquette, what makes a good tweet and how to attract followers. This may seem simple but the book provides great advice on how to avoid common problems with simple solutions. Need to build followers? Consider placing your Twitter name in your email signature.

Steve Holzner, Facebook Marketing (2008), 288 pages, LibraryThing, Catalog

Another business book! But your online branding is your business. You may not be selling widgets but you are selling yourself. This guide offers a guided tour of Facebook complete with screenshots and easy to read non-technical writing. Written in 2009 it is already dated in some areas but still a useful resource. Fun fact: when the book was written in 2008-2009 Facebook had 80 million users in June of 2010 it now has over 400 million users.

Jan Vermeiren, How to Really use LinkedIn (2009), 187 pages LibraryThing, Catalog

Never used LinkedIn? This book includes more information than you ever thought possible on the sophisticated career-focused network.

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