



Good Practice Story Title: Pafos Region – International Digital Marketing Campaign

Destination: Pafos

Country: Cyprus

Submitting Organization: Pafos Regional Board of Tourism

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

Located on the southwest coast of the island of Cyprus, and sheltered from the north by the majestic Troodos Mountains, Pafos boasts a temperate climate and one of the healthiest lifestyles in the Mediterranean. Pafos region comprise 4 municipalities, 100 villages, the National park of Akamas Peninsular (Natura 2000 Network) and the Pafos Forest a vast area on the north-western slopes of the Troodos Mountains. The forest extends over 10,000 hectares from sea level up to the peak of Tripilos Mount at 1,352 metres. Both the national Park of Akamas and the Pafos Forest are highly protected areas and is home to a diverse collection of flora and fauna, while they host a variety of interesting attractions. The Region claims over 75km of coast with a total of 27 beaches 18 of them awarded with the Blue Flag awards and the entire coast zone is awarded with the Quality Coast award.

Pafos claimed the titles of European Capital of Culture in 2017 and the European Capital of Smart Tourism in 2023. The region is well connected with the most European countries via the Pafos International Airport and provides an excellent road network and access to rural areas but also to the rest of Cyprus. The population of the region according to the last census is approx.. 120,000 inhabitants with the vast majority living in the 4 municipalities.

Pafos region is ideal for basking in the sunshine all year round, and experience the hospitality of its people wherever you go. Plunge into the sparkling warm waters of the Mediterranean in summer, or venture out on a splendid nature trail and observe fields blanketed in wildflowers in the spring; visit ancient and historical landmarks in autumn, and keep fit with a plethora of outdoor activities in winter. Whichever way you look at it, Pafos is a year-round destination caters for all types of vacationers in search of something unique, while revelling in the local culture, traditions and gastronomy.

Pafos as a tourism destination has recognised the importance of digitalization in order to significantly improve its competitive advantage and the experiences offered to visitors thus according to the digital strategy followed by the region the destination is implemented several actions with the use of latest technological tools.

Apart from the investment in smart technologies for the interpretation of monuments, places of interest, century old trees and more the destination invests in new technologies for digitally promoting the destination.

Summary of Good Practice Story:

Pafos Regional Board of Tourism (PRBT) having appraised its digital presence in several European source tourism markets, has identified a gap which was mainly "light" presence of the destination in the online Travel environment (low destination awareness) thus a need to overcome this problem has arisen. Then the main stakeholders (local hoteliers), the airports operator (HERMES), the Deputy Ministry of Tourism and Hellenic Bank under the coordination of the Pafos Regional Board of Tourism have agreed to implement an international digital campaign. An ad hoc committee has been formed and the amount of €280,000 has been secured. Then a provider has been selected which is one of the top 10 global Travel Intent Data Providers and Platforms.

Travel data and real time data are collected via Sojern Traveller platform from over 80 partners, including airlines, OTA, Hotels and more, 1 billion cookies and devices available and over 350 million traveller profiles.

Selection of travel markets have been agreed mainly based on frequency of flights to Pafos, as well as based on predefined travel interest product match. Then KPIs have been set and campaign designs layouts and videos in three languages have been created. The campaign started in May 2021, and continues until today.

Powered by artificial intelligence and traveller intent data, we have activated multi-channel marketing solutions to drive direct demand. The digital campaign was targeting potential travellers (B2C) with real travel intention, travellers based on interest and travel behaviour as well as travellers based on location.

The Pafos region's digital marketing campaign, in collaboration with Sojern, is highlighted in the recent "State of Destination Marketing 2024" report. This campaign is part of a broader strategy adopted by our organisation to navigate the rapidly evolving travel industry landscape.

Key elements of the campaign include:

1. Ability to secure resources successfully was the number one key factor of success
2. Year-Round Investment in Digital Media: Like 58% of DMOs globally, Pafos is likely to adopt an always-on approach, ensuring continuous engagement with potential travelers through paid media. This strategy helped us to maintain a constant presence in the market, maximizing "reach" and effectiveness
3. Focus on Social Media and SEM: The campaign emphasizes social media advertising and search engine marketing, recognized as highly important by 96% and 95% of DMOs respectively. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook are prioritized for their ability to engage users and drive traffic

4. AI Integration: The use of AI for predictive analysis, data interpretation, and content personalization is a growing trend among DMOs. Pafos's campaign leveraged A.I to optimize marketing efforts and create personalized content to attract visitors

5. Data-Driven Strategies: With 54% of DMOs valuing data in their marketing planning, Pafos is focused on leveraging demographic and behavioral data to guide its strategies.

6. Sustainability and Diversity Initiatives: Reflecting broader industry trends, the Pafos campaign will also emphasize sustainability and inclusivity, aligning with the priorities of many European DMOs. This includes promoting environmentally friendly tourism and enhancing accessibility for diverse visitor groups. By aligning with these global trends and utilizing Sojern's expertise, the Pafos region aims to enhance its appeal to a wide range of travelers and adapt to the changing dynamics of the travel industry.

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Issues faced:

Digital marketing campaigns, such as those for the Pafos region in partnership with Sojern, can face several challenges. Here are some of the key issues typically encountered:

1. Getting all stakeholders to understand the importance.

2. Convince them to allocate resources for common benefit

3. Algorithm Changes: Platforms like Google and social media networks frequently update their algorithms, affecting how content is ranked and displayed. Marketers need to stay agile and continuously adapt their strategies to maintain visibility and engagement. Closed monitor of results gives us the opportunity to manage changes.

4. Measuring ROI: Determining the return on investment for digital marketing efforts can be complex due to the vast amount of data available and the varying significance of different metrics. Effective ROI measurement requires clear goal-setting, precise data analysis, and ongoing adjustments to campaigns.

5. Integration Across Channels: Ensuring consistent messaging and branding across multiple digital platforms can be challenging, particularly as each platform may require different strategies and content formats. Effective integration demands a unified strategy and the use of cross-channel marketing tools

6. Rapidly Changing Social Media Landscape: New social media platforms emerge regularly, while established ones frequently update their features. We had to decide which platforms to invest in and how to allocate resources effectively amidst these changes

7. Data Privacy and Compliance: Stricter data privacy regulations and the need to comply with laws such as GDPR can complicate data collection and usage practices, requiring DMO to implement robust compliance measures

8. Creating Quality Content: Producing high-quality, engaging content consistently is time-consuming and resource-intensive. It requires thorough research, creative execution, and regular updates to stay relevant and effective

9. Retaining Customers: Keeping existing customers engaged and converting them into repeat buyers is a significant challenge.

We have understood those challenges and we have implemented strategies to address them, such as leveraging analytics, focusing on content quality, and staying updated with industry changes, digital marketing campaign for Pafos has proven effective and achieved better results.

Solution:

To address the various issues faced in digital marketing campaigns, here are some effective solutions we have provided:

1. Adapting to Algorithm Changes:

- Continuous Learning: We have stayed updated with the latest algorithm changes by following industry news, blogs, and attending webinars.
- Diversification: We have not relied on a single platform. We spread our efforts across multiple channels to mitigate the impact of changes on any one platform

2. Measuring ROI:

- Clear Goal Setting: We have established clear, measurable goals for each campaign to track performance against specific metrics.
- Advanced Analytics Tools: Utilize sophisticated analytics tools to gather comprehensive data and insights. We have used platforms like Google Analytics, Sojern, which provide detailed reports on campaign performance.

- Attribution Models: Implement multi-touch attribution models to better understand the customer journey and the impact of different touchpoints on conversions
- 3.Integration Across Channels:**
- Unified Strategy: We have developed a cohesive strategy that aligns messaging and branding across all channels.
 - Channel Tools: We have used marketing platforms that support cross-channel campaigns to ensure consistency and streamline management
- 4.Managing Social Media Changes:**
- Selective Engagement: We have evaluated the potential of new platforms before committing significant resources. Claim our brand's handle and monitor the platform's growth and audience engagement.
 - Adaptability: We have closely monitored platform performance and user behavior. Regularly we have reviewed and adjusted our social media strategy to stay relevant
- 5.Data Privacy and Compliance:**
- Compliance Training: The team is well-versed in current data privacy laws and best practices.
 - Transparency: Maintain transparency with customers about data usage and obtain clear consent for data collection.
 - Data Management Tools: We have utilized tools that help manage and secure customer data, ensuring compliance with regulations such as GDPR
- 6.Creating Quality Content:**
- Content Calendars: Develop and follow a content calendar to streamline the content creation process and maintain consistency.
 - Outsourcing: Consider hiring freelance writers or content marketing agencies to produce high-quality content when in-house resources are limited.
 - User-Generated Content: Encourage and leverage user-generated content to enhance authenticity and engagement
- 7.Retaining Customers:**
- Personalization: Use personalized marketing strategies to engage existing customers based on their preferences and past behavior.
 - Customer Engagement: interacted with our customers through social media
- By applying these solutions, digital marketers can effectively navigate the challenges and enhance the success of their campaigns.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

To effectively tackle the challenges in our digital marketing campaign, here are detailed methods, steps, and tools applied:

1. Adapting to Algorithm Changes

Methods:

Stayed updated with algorithm changes through industry blogs, forums, webinars, and official announcements from platforms like Google and Facebook.

Regularly test different strategies to see how changes affect your campaigns.

Steps:

Subscribe to newsletters from platforms like Search Engine Journal, and Google Webmasters to monitor updates.

Use tools like Google Analytics to assess how algorithm changes impact your site's traffic and rankings.

Modify SEO and social media strategies based on insights gained.

Tools:

- Google Analytics: For traffic and behavior analysis.

2. Measuring ROI

Methods: - Clear KPIs: Establish specific, measurable goals for each campaign.

Steps:

1. Define Goals: Set specific objectives such as increasing website traffic, lead generation, video, CTR etc.

2. Track Metrics: Use analytics tools to measure performance against KPIs.

3. Report Results: Regularly review and report on campaign performance to stakeholders.

Tools:

- Google Analytics: For tracking website and campaign performance.

3. Integration Across Channels

Methods:

Develop a cohesive strategy that aligns across all channels.

Use platforms that support integrated campaigns.

Steps:

Create a unified marketing plan that outlines how different channels will work together.

Use a content calendar to ensure consistent messaging.

Monitor performance across channels to ensure alignment.

Tools:

- Google Analytics: For tracking overall campaign performance.

4. Managing Social Media Changes

Methods:

Evaluate new platforms before committing significant resources.

Regularly review and adjust social media strategies.

Steps:

Assess new platforms for potential ROI.

Secure your brand's name on emerging platforms.

Track engagement and adjust strategies as needed.

5. Data Privacy and Compliance

Methods:

Be clear about data collection practices.

Use tools to manage and secure data.

Steps:

1. Policy Updates: Regularly update privacy policies to comply with laws.

2. Data Audits: Conduct periodic audits to ensure compliance.

3. Customer Communication: Inform customers about data practices and obtain consent.

Tools:

- Google Tag Manager: For handling tracking tags compliantly.

6. Creating Quality Content

Methods:

Use of AI Tools

Hired freelancers or agencies inhouse, resources were limited.

Steps:

Plan content topics and publishing schedules.

Research and Creation: Research topics thoroughly and create high-quality content.

Engagement: Use visual elements and interactive content to engage users.

7. Retaining Customers

Methods:

Use personalized marketing strategies.

Loyalty Programs: Implement programs to reward repeat customers.

Steps:

Segment your audience based on behavior and preferences.

Create targeted marketing campaigns for different segments.

Collect and act on customer feedback to improve retention.

By following these methods, steps, and utilizing the appropriate tools, DMO's can effectively navigate and overcome the challenges faced in digital marketing campaigns.

Achievements and Results:

The digital marketing campaign for the Pafos region, implemented with Sojern, achieved notable results and milestones. Here are some key achievements and results of the campaign:

1. **Increased Reach and Engagement:** The campaign significantly boosted the visibility of Pafos as a travel destination, reaching a broader audience through targeted digital advertising. The use of programmatic advertising and real-time data allowed for precise targeting and high engagement rates.
2. **Enhanced Website Traffic:** There was a marked increase in traffic to the official Pafos tourism website. The campaign's effective use of search engine marketing (SEM) and social media advertising contributed to this surge, drawing more potential visitors to explore what Pafos has to offer.
3. **Improved Conversion Rates:** The campaign contributed to improvements in conversion rates, indicating that more users who interacted with the ads proceeded to book trips or engage with tourism services. This was facilitated by personalized ad content and strategic placement across various digital channels.
4. **Effective Use of AI and Data Analytics:** AI tools were employed for content personalization and predictive analysis, enhancing the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Data-driven insights helped in optimizing ad placements and crafting compelling narratives that resonated with the target audience.
5. **Strong Social Media Presence:** The campaign leveraged platforms like Instagram and Facebook effectively, where Pafos's cultural and natural attractions were showcased through visually engaging content. This resulted in higher interaction rates and a stronger online community presence.
6. **Sustainability and Inclusivity Focus:** The campaign also prioritized sustainable tourism and inclusivity, aligning with broader trends in destination marketing. This approach not only attracted eco-conscious travelers but also highlighted Pafos's commitment to accessible tourism.

Overall, the collaboration with Sojern allowed the Pafos region to modernize its marketing strategies, utilize advanced technologies, and ultimately attract a diverse and engaged audience, contributing to a successful digital marketing campaign.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

The campaign primarily targeting travellers with active Intention to travel to competitive destinations, but also the ones that has real time intention to visit Cyprus. Moreover, as a secondary targeting the campaign recognise the Travel Interest of the users i.e. Family Vacationers, Beachbound Travelers, Foodies, Cooking Enthusiasts, Outdoor Enthusiasts, Culture/historical sites, Sports &, Fitness / Outdoor, Cycling, Golf, Running or Relaxation.

The digital campaign targeted users within a radius of 100 Km from airports in the source markets selected, airports with frequent direct flights to Pafos International Airport and also retargeted foreign users who visited Pafos region website.

This digital campaign used Multi-Channel Strategy methods and tools to create awareness and engage the users.

For awareness: Video ads reach users in the research phase showing interest in traveling

For engagement: Display ads reach users that have already shown interest to travel to our destination or competitors but undecided.

1. Importance of Data-Driven Strategies:

- Lesson: Utilizing data analytics for targeting and personalization significantly enhances campaign effectiveness. Data-driven decisions help in understanding audience preferences and behaviors.

- Advice: Invest in advanced analytics tools and regularly analyze data to tailor your marketing strategies. Ensure you are collecting and leveraging both first-party and third-party data to gain comprehensive insights

2. Adaptability to Platform Changes:

- Lesson: Staying agile and adaptable to changes in social media algorithms and digital advertising platforms is crucial for maintaining campaign effectiveness.

- Advice: Continuously monitor platform updates and be ready to adjust strategies. Diversify your marketing efforts across multiple channels to mitigate risks associated with changes on any single platform

3. Sustainable and Inclusive Marketing:

- Lesson: Incorporating sustainability and inclusivity into marketing campaigns resonates well with modern travelers who value these principles.

- Advice: Highlight your commitment to environmental sustainability and inclusivity in your marketing messages. This not only attracts a broader audience but also builds a positive brand image

4. Effective Use of AI and Technology:

- Lesson: AI and machine learning can greatly enhance content creation, personalization, and predictive analysis, making marketing efforts more efficient and impactful.
- Advice: Embrace AI tools for various aspects of your marketing, from automating repetitive tasks to personalizing user experiences. Stay updated with the latest technological advancements and integrate them into your strategies

5. Consistent Brand Presence:

- Lesson: Maintaining a consistent brand presence through year-round digital marketing efforts ensures continuous engagement with potential travelers.
- Advice: Adopt an always-on marketing strategy to keep your brand in front of the audience consistently. This can help in building long-term relationships with your target audience

6. Engagement Through Visual Content:

- Lesson: High-quality, visually appealing content, especially on platforms like Instagram and Facebook, drives higher engagement rates.
- Advice: Invest in creating visually compelling content. Use professional photography and videography to showcase your destination's attractions and experiences effectively

Advice for Future Campaigns

1. Focus on First-Party Data: With increasing data privacy regulations and the impending end of third-party cookies, focusing on collecting and utilizing first-party data is essential. Build direct relationships with the audience through newsletters, surveys, and loyalty programs
 2. Holistic Content Strategy: Develop a comprehensive content strategy that includes blog posts, social media updates, video content, and interactive experiences. Ensure that all content aligns with brand's voice and goals
 3. *Regular Performance Reviews*: Conduct regular performance reviews to assess the effectiveness of your campaigns. Use A/B testing to refine the strategies and identify what works best for the targeted audience.
 4. Collaborate with Influencers: Partner with influencers who align with your brand values and have a significant following among your target audience. Influencers can provide authentic promotion and increase your reach organically.
 5. Customer Feedback Integration: Actively seek and integrate customer feedback to improve your offerings and marketing messages. This helps in building trust and loyalty among your audience
- By incorporating these lessons and advice into future digital marketing campaigns, destinations can improve their marketing effectiveness, enhance customer engagement, and achieve better overall results.

Recognitions and Additional References