



CASE STUDY: INSPIRED BY ICELAND

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ABSTRACT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Iceland was hit by a volcano that halted most flights and threatened tourism at a critical moment. With tourism generating around 20 percent of the country's foreign exchange and bookings plummeting, government and tourism officials decided to launch "Inspired by Iceland". The campaign was widely successful 22.5 million stories were created by people all over the world – and ensuing bookings were dramatically above forecasts. [2]

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION:

Iceland is a Nordic island country located at the juncture between the North Atlantic and the Arctic Ocean. The country has a population of 325,000 and a total area of 103,000 km, which makes it the most sparsely populated country in Europe. In April 2010, the now-famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano erupted in Iceland. [2] This event not only turned air travel upside down (briefly), but also did some longer-term damage to Iceland's image as a safe travel destination. Icelandic tourism numbers plummeted by 30%. [7] "Inspired by Iceland" was then initiated by the government and stakeholders in tourism mainly to show and assure prospective tourists that everything was OK in Iceland, and the eruption did not disrupt tourism. [2]

CHALLENGES:

Already reeling from some of the biggest losses in the global financial crisis in 2008, Iceland faced more misfortune when dormant volcano Eyjafjallajökull unexpectedly erupted in April 2010. [2] Its enormous plumes of ash created the largest air-travel disruption since World war II, resulting in a wave of negative press and bad feelings throughout Europe. The negative stories spread online and the country was left with a huge shortfall in tourism revenue. The numbers of flights and tourists were rapidly decreasing. Although Iceland had previously been one of the top travel destination for foreign tourists, the major challenge was to rapidly increase tourism numbers and save the country from economic disaster.

THE OUTCOME OF A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

All the parties agreed on a campaign based around the concept of 'Inspired by Iceland'. Ad agencies were also involved. The idea was to invite Icelanders and tourists to tell a story about the beautiful country of Iceland. The efforts were focused to harness all that pride for the nation and visitors' positive feedback about how they had been 'Inspired by Iceland'.

According to Inga Hlín Pálsdóttir, Director, Tourism & Creative Industries at Íslandsstofa, "Inspired by Iceland" was saying the same story in different channels across all countries and one doesn't need different messages for different channels and countries. [2]

THE SOLUTION

New web site was launched, unique content was written and distributed in 7 languages focusing on key stakeholders such as journalists, travel agents and the general traveler raising awareness of Iceland. [2]

ICELAND INSPIRES

In 2010 the first task was to remove negative opinions from people's mind. A traditional tourism campaign would have seen as a desperate propaganda effort from a struggling country. People around the world posted stories on Facebook and Twitter. The 'Inspired by Iceland' website featured videos of famous Icelanders and live webcam streams from top tourist destinations. This website

had for 1.5 million video downloads within 1 day, the team held a live web concert featuring singer-songwriter, musician and record producer Damien Rice and many others. [2]

HONORARY ISLANDER

The next year, the goal was to increase tourism during the winter period. In order to kick-start the campaign, the team called on every Icelander to open the doors into their lives for visitors. Even the president invited guests to visit his residence and have pancakes with him! It gave the campaign a very personal touch. [4]

TWO DISTINCT AUDIENCES

Video, visual and digital content reaches a young generation very effectively, but for Iceland, targeting the older generation was equally important. Traditional posters and other offline advertising were used across key European and US markets. [4]

'ISLANDER' DOCUMENTARY

The Promote Iceland team partnered with AOL and the Huffington Post. Together they created a unique content platform to share stories with their fans. 'Inspiration', section of The Huffington Post UK's which allows brands to communicate with consumers through video, blogs and social media. An exclusive 11-minute documentary called 'Islander' was published via this platform. [1]

THE RESULT

The campaign swore by quite heavily on Icelanders' national pride and readiness to become 'brand ambassadors' for their beloved country. Of course, they were proud to contribute for their nation. The 'Honorary Islander' campaign became successful in convincing people from 57 markets that Iceland is a truly great winter destination. In fact, this was the most successful winter of country ever for inbound tourism. On a comparatively modest spend of £1.25m, the campaign generated a ROI of 61:1, contributing an additional £71m to the Icelandic economy which was astounding. This story attracted global media coverage, driving further visits.

In terms of numbers,

- 22.5 Million stories spread worldwide
- 60 Million people responded
- £138.7 Million in additional tourism revenue through the remainder of 2010

Information about "inspired by Iceland" was viewed over one hundred million times through this multi lingual multi-channel approach.

CONCLUSION:

This type of tourism campaign could only work with a small country and democratic government. 'Inspired by Iceland' is really about to share one's country's story and work together for a better future. The only 'must-have' is a sense of pride in one's homeland. To this extent, any country could do it. 'Inspired by Iceland' served as a good example that one strong message can work across multiple

geographic markets. Different age groups were taken into consideration by partnering with tour operators, attending trade shows and putting up posters. The innovative online content effectively engaged the younger target, featuring bands, celebrities and a distinctive minimalist design.^[1]

It was also a smart move to work with agencies from several countries who provided a 'visitor's viewpoint' of the Iceland campaign.

REFERENCES:

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