

6 essential SEO tips for tourism businesses

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Whether you run a guest house, a game farm, an eatery, an adventure attraction or a transport service, the national lockdown has probably been hard on your tourism or travel business. As the country's lockdown restrictions ease to level 1, you are no doubt looking forward to being able to welcome guests back to your destination.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Just ask one of our customers, Vinolia Masera, founder of travel and leisure portal, Limpopo Guide, who says:

"Having a small start-up business in the tourism industry has been challenging during lockdown. With the easing of lockdown restrictions to level 1, a lot of businesses will be able to bounce back and start making money again, so they will potentially have the means to invest in marketing again."

After the long hiatus, you may have deactivated many of your marketing plans and campaigns. One place where travel and tourism businesses can help their business to be more visible online is from search engine optimisation (SEO). Here are some helpful tips on how you can move your website to one of the top spots on Google and other popular search engines result pages.

Optimise your listing

One way to help ensure your business is listed within the top search results online is to optimise search engine visibility. That means using keywords on your website that accurately describe your business. Search engines like Google or Bing will pick up those keywords and match them to your site in their results.

The right keywords are among the factors that help push your listing closer to the top of the results page. GoDaddy, for example has developed an SEO tool integrated with Website Builder, that automatically reviews your website and includes relevant, high-value keywords and phrases to help improve your website's search results ranking.

Google My Business (GMB) is another tool that helps your travel business appear on Google Search and Maps. This concept called 'local search marketing', is a form of SEO that helps businesses show up in relevant local searches when someone searches for a business in a particular geographical location.

For example, if someone searches for "restaurants Long Street Cape Town" or simply searches for venues nearby when they are in the area, your establishment will appear in the top search results. Here are some tips to optimise your listing:

- Tools like Google Analytics and GoDaddy's SEO Services can help you better optimise your online presence on search engines.
- Ensure that all the necessary information for your business listing has been captured, including operating hours and contact details (NAPU - name, address, phone number, URL).
- Look at your FAQs section and answer questions that come in from customers. You can also add your own FAQs to cover the details that matter to your customers.
- Check that your company name and details are up-to-date and correct everywhere on the web, including your GMB profile, TripAdvisor, bookings and accommodation sharing sites, your website, social media pages and other web directories or tourist related websites.

Create great content for your website

One of the best ways to get a higher search ranking is to offer content that genuinely engages visitors rather than including a lot of keywords in the hope that your site will rank favourably by search engines. For example, if you run a guesthouse in Mpumalanga, you could consider writing a visitor's guide about the best attractions around the Kruger National Park. Or you could write a blog post about how to spot a leopard.

The key here, is that you want to create good content that people will want to share and link to it from other sites. And once you've attracted them to your website via search, you want them to engage with likes, shares or comments on social media.

Focus on mobile-friendliness

It goes without saying that your website must be mobile-friendly – in other words, your website must look as good and be as functional on a smartphone as it is on a traditional desktop browser or laptop device. With mobile-first indexing, search engines predominantly use the mobile version of the content for indexing and ranking.

So, to get the most from search - especially in a mobile-first country like South Africa - you want to have a mobile optimised website. You can test this using Google's Mobile-Friendly tool.

If the results are not favourable, consider redesigning your website with the help of a mobile-friendly tool like GoDaddy Websites + Marketing. For a business that wants a more complex site and richer, more bespoke design options, consider building a website with a responsive theme on a content management system (CMS) like WordPress Hosting offered by GoDaddy.

Submit your sitemap

Your sitemap helps search engines index your website faster. If you're not using a CMS like WordPress, it's a good idea to submit your sitemap to Google and Bing. Start by using a tool like XML sitemap generator to build your sitemap. Then upload it to your website. Next, head to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools to submit your sitemap's URL.

Secure your website to build trust

A key aspect of effective travel business SEO is user trust. Search engines prefer websites that are better protected from a variety of cyber threats. How do you build trust? One way is to offer HTTPS security. Search engines rank https-encrypted websites higher in their search results. An example of this is installing an SSL Certificate for your website. This helps to protect the transmission of personal data to and from your website.

Having authenticated SSL security installed on your website can help to establish trust between your audience and your site, as they can see that you take their online protection seriously. If your audience notices that your site isn't secure, and Google has marked a 'not secure' message in the URL line for your website, (or if their browser gives them a warning when they're visiting your site), you could miss out on boosted search rankings and valuable traffic that could result in increased visits to help you grow your business.

Use site optimisation tools

There are plenty of useful online tools—some of them free—that can also help you with SEO:

- SEOCrawler allows you to do a basic, one-click SEO audit. It gives you data on the page speed, duplicate tags, duplicate content, keyword optimisation and broken links. Fixing these issues can do wonders for your ranking on Google.
- PageSpeed Insights will measure the loading speed of the pages on your site and help you fix any issues.
- You can use tools like Google Keyword Planner or Keywords Everywhere to find relevant keywords that online visitors enter when searching online.
- The Screaming Frog SEO Spider is a website crawler that helps you improve onsite SEO by extracting data and auditing for common SEO issues.

Closing remarks

A robust SEO strategy is a cost-effective way to help showcase your tourism offering and build recognition in your target market, especially as the borders reopen to tourists from abroad. Making it easy for travellers to discover your business can help to translate into more visitors at a time when the industry is working hard to recover from the national lockdown.

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