

Topic | Social Media

Tutorial 43

Facebook For Tourism

Learn how to use Facebook the most popular social network with a user base of over 840 million. It is vital for your business to have a managed Facebook Page.

Reading time: 25 minutes

Prerequisite: Social Media for Tourism



1. What is Facebook and how can it help my tourism business?

Launched in February 2004 as a network for university students, the social media phenomenon which is Facebook has been described as the fourth wave in computer networking platforms following the establishment of mainframe computers in the 1970s, the beginning of PCs in the 1980s and the introduction of the Internet in the 1990s.



FACEBOOK STATISTICS REVEAL THAT THERE ARE 845 MILLION MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS AND OVER HALF OF THESE PEOPLE ACCESS THE SITE DAILY MAKING IT THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORK.

a) What are the benefits to my business?

There are a number of benefits for using Facebook, both at the personal and business level:

1. It provides your business with a web presence on a platform where there is a large potential audience in an instant, at no cost
2. It is super easy to use (as user-friendly as an iPhone!)
3. It is very quick to set up

From the point of view of small business operators in the tourism industry, the main benefit of **Facebook is in the more focused (and business-oriented) Facebook Pages**. The advantage of this account is the ability to connect with some of the many people now using the Internet to search for information on holiday destinations.

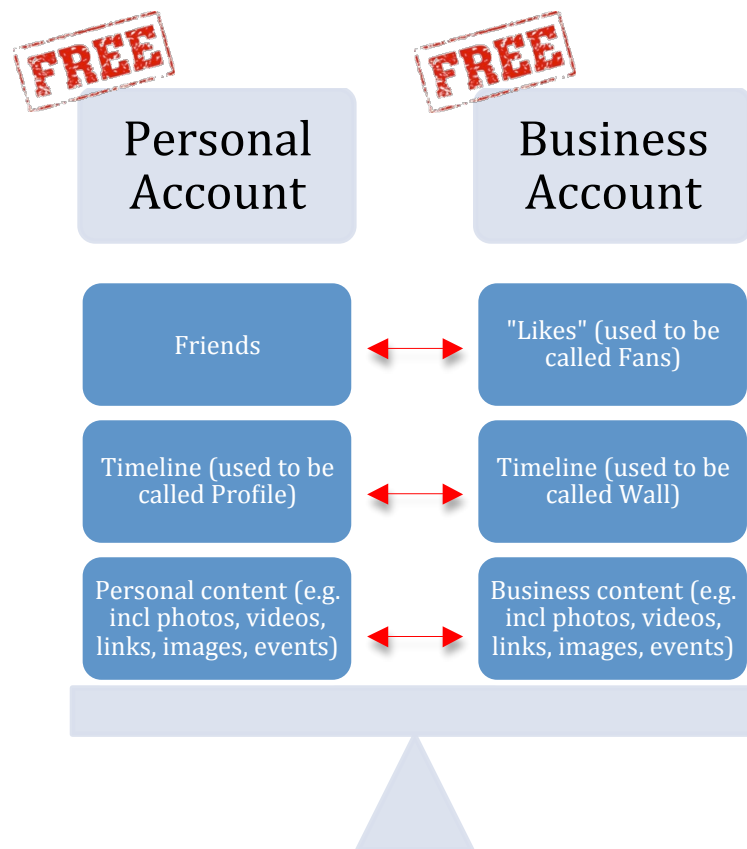
A WELL-STRUCTURED, INFORMATIVE FACEBOOK PAGE REPRESENTING YOUR TOURISM BUSINESS CAN BE A COST-EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WAY OF PUTTING YOUR COMPANY'S NAME BEFORE POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS. IMPORTANTLY, AS WELL AS PROVIDING QUALITY INFORMATION AND UPDATES, IT WILL ALSO ALLOW YOU TO RESPOND TO QUERIES QUICKLY AND WITH EASE.

b) In a few words, how does Facebook work?

Facebook users can add their personal profile, follow friends, share links as well as publish images and videos. **The central updating facility in Facebook is its newsfeed, which continually updates posts from friends, subscriptions and Pages which then can be sorted as Top Stories or most recent.** The right hand ticker is a new feature that has been added to further support the newsfeed and displays activities as they happen in real-time.

Private messages (those not shown in the public news feed) and a chat facility are also combined in this versatile social networking platform.

Facebook also allows businesses to create a business Facebook Page (referred to as a Facebook Page or Page) and do similar things to the personal profile, but at a business level. The diagram below offers a simple comparison:



2. How to set up my personal profile?

A Facebook Page can be opened through either a personal (individual) profile or a business account. Facebook now allows access to its Pages through a business account if the account holder doesn't already have a Facebook personal profile and wishes to use it purely for administering business Pages and ad campaigns. However restrictions do apply and business accounts have less functionality than a personal account. **It is strongly advised that you set up a personal account even if you only use it to manage your page and not connect with other users.** See this help article <https://www.facebook.com/help/?page=721> for further details.

1. Go to Facebook's homepage www.facebook.com
2. Fill in the requested details at the right hand side of the page using your personal details (not business details) and click "Sign Up"
3. Follow the prompts to fill out your Facebook profile (including adding a profile image, personal details and finding friends who already have a Facebook account through your email address)
4. You're there! Now go ahead and connect with people, update your status and start sharing images, links and videos with people who have accepted you as a Facebook friend. Note: these connections are personal ones. Read below for how to set up a Page and connections for your business.

3. Facebook Pages

A Facebook Page is like a mini website set up with an updating newsfeed designed to contain content, advice and conversation relevant to a business — an excellent way for a small tourism related business to advertise their presence to Facebook users. If visitors are interested in your business they will tend to “Like” your Page by clicking on the “Like” button.



Screenshot copyright: Facebook

The key to an effective Page is to:

- Share relevant and engaging content
- Interact with your readers promptly, answering questions and providing information if sought

As social media engages the customer in a two way conversation, the style usually most effective for a Facebook Page is quick, concise updates provided in a relaxed, conversational (even witty) tone.

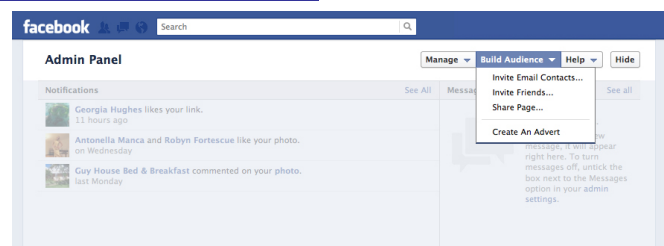
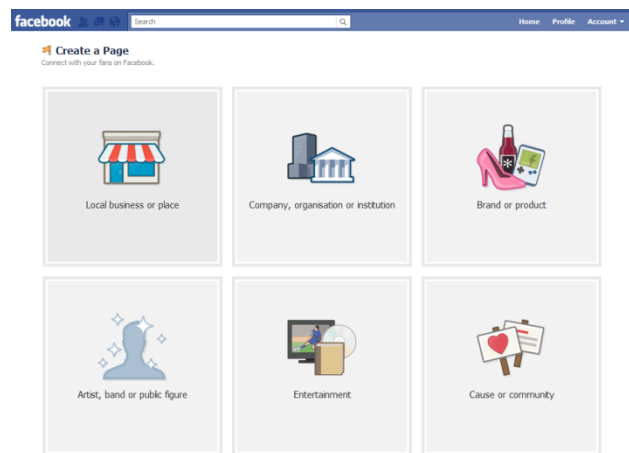
Big Cat Green Island Reef Cruises www.facebook.com/pages/Big-Cat-Green-Island-Reef-Cruises/85148529495 is an example of a popular and effective Facebook Page that uses these techniques. (Note: this operator isn't using a vanity URL).

The layout of Facebook Pages, known as Timeline, is filled with interactive features to help you publish more engaging content about your brand.

a) *How do I set up my Facebook Page?*

From your personal profile on Facebook (see above), go ahead and create your Facebook Page using these steps:

1. Go to www.facebook.com/pages/create and select the most relevant type for your business (99 % of tourism businesses will use “Local business” or “Place”)
2. Fill in the requested details about your business, click on the box to accept conditions and create your Page
3. On your new Page, upload your profile image (preferably your logo) and a cover image (a great picture that represents the business), fill out all of the fields in the Info page, create photo albums showcasing your business and its people, write your first status update and Like your Page. Make sure you go back and edit your Page details and assign a custom URL (also called a vanity URL) so people can find you at www.facebook.com/YourBusinessName as opposed to the standard lengthy Facebook URL. E.g. www.facebook.com/ThalaBeachLodge
4. Click on the Build Audience link in the Admin Panel of your Page and select a method of telling your friends and family all about it – this is a great first step to start getting “likers”
5. You now have a Facebook Page!
Post engaging updates regularly and share your Page with past and future guests

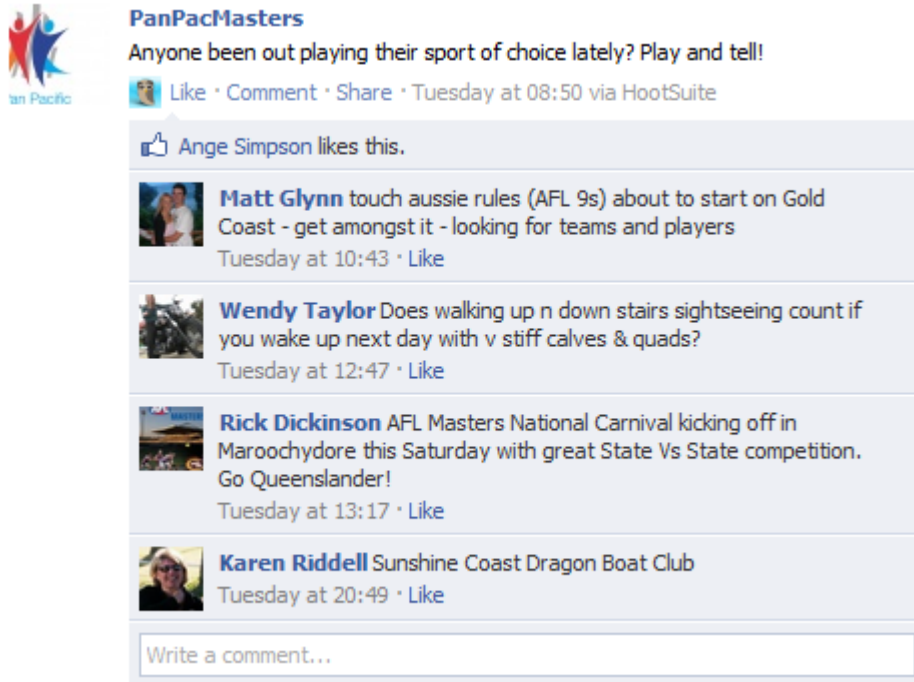


b) *Creating Facebook content*

What type of content would appeal to people who have “liked” your Facebook Page? From a small tourism perspective, captivating content may include the following:

- images of local scenery
- advice on dates of local events of interest (such as festivals), sporting fixtures

- videos of local interest (such as a tour of local wineries)
- fact sheets
- newsletters
- updates relating to matters of historical interest
- open ended questions to create interaction of your Page (example below)



PanPacMasters
Anyone been out playing their sport of choice lately? Play and tell!
Like · Comment · Share · Tuesday at 08:50 via HootSuite

Ange Simpson likes this.

Matt Glynn touch aussie rules (AFL 9s) about to start on Gold Coast - get amongst it - looking for teams and players
Tuesday at 10:43 · Like

Wendy Taylor Does walking up n down stairs sightseeing count if you wake up next day with v stiff calves & quads?
Tuesday at 12:47 · Like

Rick Dickinson AFL Masters National Carnival kicking off in Maroochydhore this Saturday with great State Vs State competition. Go Queenslander!
Tuesday at 13:17 · Like

Karen Riddell Sunshine Coast Dragon Boat Club
Tuesday at 20:49 · Like

Write a comment...

Screencapture credit: Facebook

Links to news items and other status updates of interest can be added by simply typing or pasting the link into the status update bar, located at the top of the Page (see example below).



Easterfest
Just in case you missed our announcement earlier today...MercyMe Music are coming to Australia for the first time for Easterfest 2012!

Easterfest 2012 — Artist — Easter Music Festival, Easter 2012, Gospel Music, Australian Music
www.easterfest.com
6-8 April 2012, Toowoomba. Easterfest - a festival about Easter at Easter. Australia's largest drug and alcohol free festival

Like · Comment · Share · Monday at 16:34

32 people like this.

Nicholas Plant seriously get back to work
Monday at 16:35 · Like · 1 person

Jackie Healy Thats totally awesome!Looking forward to it!
Monday at 16:37 · Like

Thomas McNamara who??
Monday at 16:38 · Like

Michael Senior Yay!!! I don't have to keep it a secret anymore :D
Monday at 16:40 · Like

David Stewart YEAH!!!!!!!
Monday at 17:54 · Like

Shannon Wilson YAY!!!!!!!
Tuesday at 11:51 · Like

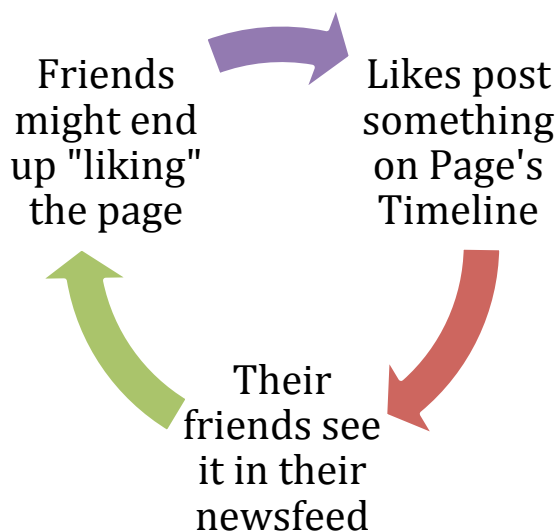
Write a comment...

Screencapture credit: Facebook

c) Promoting my Facebook Page

Social media thrives on interaction. The Page offers an excellent opportunity to interact with people who are considering using your product or service. As interaction works both ways, promoting it is about seeking “likes” (the button located at the top of your Page) which means getting people to take enough of an interest to follow your updates.

So, once you have set up your Page, how can you encourage people to like your Page? There are many ways you can do this, but the most important one is very simple:



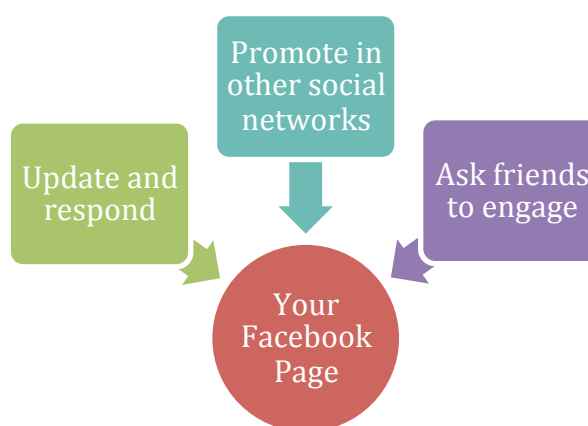
KEEP YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE UPDATED!

Each time you interact with your “likers,” you increase your chances of this interaction showing up in their friends’ newsfeeds. Facebook uses a formula to decide whose news shows up in the feed however some actions such as questions, videos and pictures are more likely to show up since they require more interaction; Facebook previously confirmed this as part of a F8 presentation.

When users interact with your Page by selecting an option in a Question (using the Questions tool not just a status question) this news will go out to their friends because it is something that Facebook deem to be newsworthy. The main thing to remember is that your posts should entice “likers” to interact with you by liking, commenting or sharing with you. Don’t just post for the sake of posting.

Once you have mastered the first step of keeping your content updated you could for instance:

- Utilise other social networks (e.g. Twitter) to share relevant Facebook posts
- Ask friends for their support



This article from My Web School provides more information about Timeline and its features: <http://www.mywebschool.com/blog/social-media-2/10-ideas-to-get-your-business-ready-for-facebook-timeline>

This article from Social Media Examiner provides more information on other ways to grow your Facebook Page following: <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/10-ways-to-grow-your-facebook-page-following>.

This article from Facebook provides a help article on Questions: <http://www.facebook.com/help/?faq=216076778415953#What-is-Facebook-Questions?-How-do-I-use-it>

4. SEO for my Facebook Page

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the science of tweaking your website so that search engines such as Google will rank them higher in their results. Since Google acknowledges social signals highly, your Facebook Page can help to boost your search engine ranking. For this reason it is important that the information on your Page is clear and concise, with a clever use of keywords and links back to the website.



Facebook Pages are now being utilised more and more by small businesses. A well-maintained Facebook Page providing clear and engaging updates has the potential to be a powerful, cost effective marketing tool for small tourism industry operators.

There are two key areas that you should carefully populate:

- The fields in your **Basic Information** tab – fill out all of these fields using keywords and links back to your website and product places
- The **Notes** tab – Notes get indexed in Google just like a website page, each time you have a news story or blog post publish a note with great content and a link through to your website for more information

5. Key learning outcomes

- Facebook is one of the most popular social networks available
- It offers a free opportunity for time-poor tourism businesses to market themselves
- It is important you set up a personal account to then set up a Facebook Page
- There are simple steps you can take to promote your Page and increase interactions with your “likers”
- Above all, you need to ensure your Page is optimised for search so it appears in Google and other search engines. Simple keyword principles apply.

6. Related material

a) *Related tutorials*

- Search engines 101
- Social media for tourism

b) *Related websites*

- Facebook help: www.facebook.com/help
- Facebook DIY tips: www.mywebschool.com/tag/facebook