



10 Travel PR Trends for 2011

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1. Measurement, measurement

PR will be further pressed to provide ROI to employers and clients. Reporting will not just include coverage, engagement, quality of relationships, influencers and opinion makers reached, brand awareness and the success of key messaging, but also, influence on sales revenues. With more and more analytical tools coming to market, firms will need to demonstrate stronger results for clients.

2. Ideation

There's been an explosion of new travel product and with it comes more competition. It has become more important than ever to communicate the uniqueness of a product, setting it apart from the pack. Traditionally, PR has been viewed as publicity, primarily a promotional conduit for communications and building relationships with the media. What will be realized is that the right PR firms can be a creative powerhouse for the generation of ideas for new products, features and services that can add value to the consumer experience, generate press coverage and revenue.

3. Confluence of marketing disciplines

A trend to watch for the near term is the growth of unified services to help deliver on ROI. Ultimately, businesses need to meet their business objectives and some don't particularly care whether it's with the help of PR, advertising, or digital marketing, as the lines are blurring between disciplines. Final decisions come down to results and budget, and there's a perceived value element in bundled services. It's becoming increasingly important to have all the tools in the marketing arsenal – a fully integrated package that's readily available for clients. Expect to see more of these disciplines coming together via mergers, acquisitions or formal alliances that provide total integration.

4. Print media is rebounding

While audiences will still turn to social channels where they can discuss with their peers, it's important to remember that social media is still only one slice of the media mix. 2010 proved to be the year magazine publishers took hold of the reins by integrating print and digital ad sales counterparts. As a result, magazine sales are up for the first time since 2007: magazine ad sales revenue **was up 3.1% in 2010**, a turnaround from an **18% decrease** in 2009. For affluents in particular, while they are digitally savvy, they still expect a luxury brand's presence in print because it's still regarded a credible source. Savvy PR and marketing pros will recognize that there are buoyant and effective growth markets to be found in print, i.e. niche, community and industry media.

5. New corporate PR position - Director of Content

Just as editorial directors across the country have been told to see themselves as content providers, so too should PR professionals. Corporate PR Directors, already wordsmiths, manage strategic messaging and they collaborate with marketing. So who better to create, manage and deploy content across a portfolio of channels – print, digital (website content, newsletters), and social media (blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). Perhaps this new Director of Content will report to the Chief Content Officer (formerly the Chief Marketing Officer)?

6. Travel industry will wake up to the importance of images, video

Too many hotels just don't seem to get it –their websites are typically second generation sites that have graduated from brochures to e-commerce platforms (i.e. reservations), and have not yet embraced social media, quality images and video that engage and help reinforce brand attributes. 2011 needs to be the year of the "a-ha moment" as to the value of engaging content, and a willingness to commit a large portion of the marketing budget to it. Hotels are in the experience and memories business; they must create an initial experience that provokes the "I love it!" response.

Likewise, PR strategists will spend more time developing the visual aspect of news and take advantage of today's video consumption boom. It attracts attention, entertains, informs, increases visitor engagement and motivates consumers to sample or buy product. Moreover, YouTube ranks first in Google's search results.

7. Service content rises in prominence

As consumers increasingly turn for guidance and how-to's online, opportunities are increasing for companies and executives to get added exposure through service-oriented articles providing education and thought leadership. At the other end of the spectrum, with social sharing of news, whatever grabs attention and is controversial will stand out from the crowd and more likely to be shared on Twitter and Facebook. Also, expect more research data from PR firms, made possible by the ease of online surveys.

8. Public relations continues to rise in value

The adage "out of sight, out of mind" applies now more than ever. After the recent Great Recession, it's imperative that brands and companies be visible by announcing that "we're still here for you" (and haven't gone out of business like so many others). Moreover, the PR pros of today are working outside of the traditional PR box, and have become quite skilled in creating their own video and digital content for clients. They have become socially interactive in online communities and are speaking directly to mass audiences in their language.

9. Storytelling drives engagement

Facts are great, but a story is better. PR is in the storytelling business. The storytelling approach is the most powerful driver of engagement in social media, where the media, consumers and influencers alike are connecting, interacting and sharing content. Moreover, good stories give your consumers an excuse to spend, create an affinity with the product, and help consumers feel more educated about your product.

10. Freelance media back on PR's radar screen

With the steady downturn in the number and circulation of print media, freelance writers have watched their markets dwindle. As a result, they're branching out, expanding their outlets by becoming authors, bloggers, providing content for mobile apps, varieties of new 'lifestyle' travel guides (e.g. [Louis Vuitton guides](#), [Gucci's Little Black Book](#)), and for hotel/destination websites, which are increasingly providing more travel and local information for browsers. With this in mind, PR Pros who are looking for new approaches and places to get their clients visibility will be turning to freelancers.

About KWE Partners

For over 30 years, first in New York City and now in Miami, [KWE Partners](#) has been an [award-winning](#) strategic marketing and public relations firm that specializes in luxury travel, lifestyle and real estate.

Creator of the [KWEst PROCess](#) for strategic market positioning and product development, we develop innovative solutions for industry [brand leaders](#), from global hotel brands, boutique hotels, spas and resort developments, to destinations, airlines, cruise lines and travel technologies. Whether it's rebranding an established business or destination, or launching a new product or service, we get results. We do this by identifying and developing marketing strengths, tapping into lifestyle trends and opening doors for strategic alliances.

As thought leaders in the travel industry, we go to great lengths to identify emerging trends so clients can benefit from changes in the marketplace. We deliver the latest travel industry analysis and forecasts through our internationally syndicated [Luxury Travel & Lifestyle Trends newsletter](#) and [blog](#).

Agency President & Chief Strategist, Karen Weiner Escalera is a sought after [speaker](#) and member of the Luxury marketing Council's International Advisory Board.