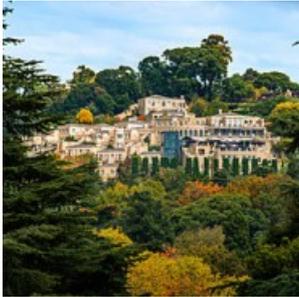


INTERNET

Four Seasons learns from guests, unveils interactive city guide

November 18, 2015



Four Seasons Johannesburg

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Four Seasons Hotel The Westcliff Johannesburg is enticing consumers with an interactive map and city guide meant to highlight the property's convenient location for sightseeing.

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Thisisjoburg.com will point consumers to the best dining, outdoor recreations, museums and other desirable locations that allow the consumer to experience the Johannesburg of her choice. The Internet and third-party developers have saturated the market with city guides, meaning a strong in-house option helps to make the Four Seasons experience more encompassing and essential.

"People are seeking more experiential travel, and this new website takes advantage of this ever-growing trend," said Tiffany Dowd, founder and president of [Luxe Social Media](#) and [Luxe Tiffany](#), Boston."

Ms. Dowd is not affiliated with Four Seasons, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Four Seasons was unable to respond by press deadline.

City of Gold

The Web site begins as a scrolling panoramic view of Johannesburg, with icons illuminating the Apartheid Museum, the Cradle of Mankind and Constitution Hill along with various restaurants, the Four Seasons Hotel and other attractions.

Clicking on an icon will open a short video showing a time-lapsed drive from the hotel to that location, followed by distance and time estimates. The page for the location includes a description, a list of categories the location fits, from shopping and dining and outdoors to museums and design and tours, and a series of photographs.



Johannesburg neighborhood market

The site currently includes 13 attractions but will continue to grow. The time and distance estimators subtly hint at the hotel's convenient location, which is within close proximity to nearly all the locations currently listed.

Had Four Seasons decided to launch thisisjoburg.com as a mobile application instead of a Web site, there would be a chance that consumers would not want to clog their phone with an app that is only useful for the duration of the trip. The responsive Web site includes the convenience of having a guide accompany the patron without the drawbacks of an app.



Apartheid Museum

Sites such as TripAdvisor and numerous online publications are accessible resources for many and often include city guides, and a number of apps do the same. Distinguishing one consumer guide from others is therefore especially important.

Taking advantage of a traveler's desire to feel like they are part of something in a city, thisisjoburg.com is inspired by previous guests.

"The content of thisisjoburg.com was actually written by Four Seasons guests in a way," said the hotel's concierges in a collective brand statement. "Most of our guests are experienced global travellers who find Jozi captivating, vibrant, essential. So we wanted new visitors to share these experiences, and enable our guests to make the most of their time in the city."



Cradle of Humankind

Consumers are receptive to word-of-mouth recommendations, so by incorporating the recommendations of previous guests into the Web site, Four Seasons delivers both a branded experience and one that places the consumer at front-of-mind. The focus on consumers contrasts with many city guides and apps, which rely on

"insiders" and "experts" to curate recommendations.

"This is a unique site in that the content has been curated in many ways by the hotel's very own well-traveled guests," Ms. Dowd said. Rather than the hotel trying to determine solely what the guests want, the hotel has listened to guests and created a guide that speaks to its travelers.

"It is important for hotels to listen to their guests and provide a sense of place," she said. "This type of creative guide can take the guest experience to the next level. As a result, it creates brand loyalists."

Power to the people

Four Seasons has made consumer content a hallmark of its brand.

For example, Four Seasons Hotel and Resorts is leaning heavily on user-generated content with its new visual education series.

"Focus on Four Seasons" will offer tips to take the perfect photograph and curate the best images captured at Four Seasons hotels by professional photographers and the average Instagramming consumer alike. Meeting consumers on a platform they enjoy in a rewarding fashion helps keep a brand visible and attractive to consumers ([see story](#)).

Other city guides seek to connect the consumer to the hotel more directly while relying on expert recommendations.

Upscale hotels and their clients recently found a new ally in mobile concierge application Porter & Sail.

Porter & Sail uses insiders and experts to curate dining and shopping locations, arts and culture experiences and provide original written content and photography. The mobile app will improve a guest's stay by giving her the peace of mind and convenience associated with a hotel even when venturing into the city ([see story](#)).

If the site is successful, it seems like a good bet for an expansion to other Four Seasons hotels.

"It would be very interesting to see more Four Seasons branded guides in different locations, and perhaps then it would make sense to create a multi-city app for guests to download," Ms. Dowd said.

Final Take

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