



January 2019

Hospitality Hotline

Connecting the industry through
Advocacy, Education and Partnerships

News from...

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Welcome New Members

Allied Members:

East Coast Construction

TASC – Total Administrative Service

Corp

February Dinner Meeting

We have changed our original dinner meeting date and place for February. With Valentine's Day and the Chamber's Expo, we needed to shuffle our date; therefore, the new official date is Wednesday, February 20th. The location is Ropewalk on 82nd Street. Maryland Tourism Coalition Director, Ruth Toomey will be our guest speaker. Please mark your calendars!

MD Tourism Day

Each year, the Maryland Tourism Coalition organizes a legislative advocacy event which brings together tourism professionals from all across the State. This year's date is February 15th and we need your participation! This is an opportunity for the industry to meet with their individual legislators and share stories about their businesses and the impact they have on Maryland's economy. A luncheon follows these meetings. Space is limited so register for Tourism Day asap to reserve your space and lunch for just \$15 (\$25 for nonmembers). For complete info, check out www.mdtourism.org.

45th Annual Trade Expo

SAVE THE DATE ~ March 3 & 4
~ Planning is underway for the Association's annual tradeshow and this year there will be plenty of opportunity to sip, sample & source, so mark your calendars!



CELEBRATING MARYLAND'S CRAFT BEER

We are happy to announce that once again, FeBREWary is Maryland's official month-long celebration of craft beer, and with craft brew events on tap across the state, it's the perfect time to capture some business. Last year, the Shore dominated the State's site with events, hotel packages, and more. This is a Maryland effort, but Shore Craft Beer will promote ALL craft beer related events and activities in our region. We are working to get those bars, restaurants, breweries, and hotels that see the value in our promoting this region as a craft beer destination to help us make the Shore dominate this February tourism effort once again.

Shore Craft Beer will be promoting "FeBREWary" stories: Love stories that revolved around craft beer; Kitchy beer names with a love or hate theme; Events featuring craft beer; Food and beer pairing events; Love On Tap at Seacrets - an event co-produced by Shore Craft Beer and Seacrets.

The Ocean City Office of Tourism, as well as, the Maryland Counties will also be promoting these events and activities. We will ensure that everybody gets information including the State. Please send any promo you are planning to do in February so we can help bring you business!

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Happy Retirement to **Jeff LeVan**, and welcome to **Donnie Donovan** who will be replacing him at **Delmarva Now**. Congratulations to **Pam Gregory**, named the CEO of the **United Way Eastern Shore**. Congratulations to **Sara Simon, Harrison Group**, on birth of her son, Smith. Welcome to **Shawn Campbell**, who joined the team at **MAD Design Group**.

Condolences

Condolences to the **Torrey Family, Happy Jack Pancake House**, on the loss of mother and grandmother. Condolences to **Ruth Waters, Harrison Group**, on the loss of her mother, Janet Byrne.



The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Partnership had a great time painting and planning at T.C. Studios Arts & Entertainment Group. A lot of great ideas were discussed and we are excited to expand the partnership and further improve Ocean City Tourism!!



January 11, 2019 2019 Mayor's Prayer Breakfast

Keynote Speaker: David Akers

6 Time Pro Bowler- NFL Record Holder - Minister- Author



7-9AM, CLARION RESORT FONTAINEBLEU HOTEL- CRYSTAL BALLROOM
CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO PURCHASE TICKETS



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REST EASY: *Lodging industry trends*

By: Michael Del Gigante, Hotel Online

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY MARKETING BUDGETS FOR 2019: 4 TRENDS TO WATCH

As you dive into 2019 budgeting, what trends should you be thinking about? Which approaches, platforms, and tools should be top of mind for travel and hospitality marketers? The team at MDG Advertising recently analyzed a host of recent analyst reports and industry surveys to find out.

What came from that deep dive are these four key trends trends that every travel and hospitality firm should be watching closely in the year ahead:

1. The Power of Search

When it comes to travel and hospitality marketing, search has become the digital workhorse. Newer channels may get more buzz, but it's search that continues to most consistently deliver audiences, engagement, and bookings. Some 48% of all US travelers say they begin trip planning with a search engine and 57% of travelers ages 18–34 go to a general search engine to check accommodation prices. In addition, travel and hospitality advertising on search is especially effective: 36% of consumers overall recall viewing a travel ad on a search engine and 50% of consumers ages 18–34 recall viewing a travel ad on a search engine.

Moreover, search is becoming more important, not less important. Due in part to News Feed changes made by Facebook, search engines overtook social media as the top referrer of traffic to content sites this year.

Given all that, make sure to budget well in 2019 for the tried-and-true (and highly effective) approaches of search engine marketing and search engine optimization.

2. The Value of Visual Content

Travel and hospitality has always been an especially good verticals for visual content. What's changed in recent years is that images and videos have become more central to digital platforms, enabling consumers to more easily access these pieces.

Today's trip planners engage across formats and channels: 49% say they look at travel content sites, 30% look at social media, and 23% watch videos. In other words, it's now highly likely that audiences will encounter—or will even seek out—images and videos related to your brand before finalizing travel plans. Visuals are also increasingly a key part of advertising: consumers rank images as the most memorable element of online travel ads, ahead of prices/deals and personalized features.

This combination of organic and paid potency makes visual content a win-win for travel and hospitality brands: pieces can be utilized in different ways across different channels, engaging multiple

audiences effectively.

3. The Rise of Instagram

The Facebook-owned social network has been experiencing tremendous growth over the past few years and now has more than 1 billion active monthly users. The combination of scale, a visual-based feed, and receptive audiences has made Instagram especially important to the travel and hospitality industry. Moreover, influencers say Instagram is far and away the social network they use most, as well as the social network that's most effective for posting content.

Put simply, Instagram is a perfect fit for travel and hospitality marketing as it's an ideal showcase for visual content, is prized by younger travelers, has highly effective advertising capabilities, and is where influencers can wield the most weight.

4. The Popularity of Deal- and Impulse-Based Travel

Travelers have always sought out deals and procrastinated planning. However, the rise of digital and smartphones has made it easier than ever to shop around and take last-minute trips. When Google did an in-depth study of modern travelers earlier this year, it discovered these interesting behaviors:

Loyalty isn't a given: Just 9% of US travelers "always" know which brand they want to book with prior to researching and two-thirds of US elite hotel loyalty program members say they would pick a different hotel for a better price. Instant gratification is on the rise: Some 60% of US consumers say they would consider an impulse trip based on a good hotel or flight deal, and most US travelers plan to take more short getaways (three nights or less) than longer vacations (more than three nights) in the next 12 months.

Again, this behavior isn't new, but it does seem to be becoming more widespread. That's why brands shouldn't rest on their laurels next year and assume they'll have loyalty: it'll be more important than ever to compete for travelers' dollars based on price and timely prompts.

Ultimately, the takeaway from all of these trends is that travel and hospitality marketers shouldn't be complacent in 2019. To succeed in the marketplace in the year ahead will require continuing to engage on established channels such as search, investing in fresher approaches such as visual content and Instagram, and remaining ever-vigilant about shifts in travelers' behaviors.



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THE DISH: Restaurant industry trends

TECHNOLOGY AND EXPERIENCES WILL SHAPE THE 2019 RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Our currently robust economy, which is expected to remain strong through 2019, has only increased American consumers' desire for new and interesting dining experiences. According to the National Restaurant Association, roughly half of Americans' food dollars go toward eating out. Why are Americans spending so much on dining? First, a majority of adults report they prefer to spend their money on experiences rather than tangible goods. Where better to spend time with loved ones (and spend disposable income) than at a restaurant? Second, consumers, especially millennials, value convenience above all else. Whether dining in, picking up takeout or ordering delivery, fast food and casual dining chains are thriving, but where consumers are choosing to go is fundamentally changing.

This convenience also makes restaurants competitive with grocery stores. As reported by Supermarket News, when consumers do grocery shop, they spend a significant amount on pricey prepared foods that rival the cost of a restaurant meal, so savings are minimal. In addition, eating in restaurants reduces the waste associated with food preparation at home. Restaurant meals can be tailored exactly the way a diner wants, with no leftover ingredients to spoil. Considering that, restaurants can be a good value, even when compared to grocery shopping.

Overall, service retail shows no sign of slowing down, and restaurants are leading the pack in this category. Owners and operators should feel confident that demand will continue but should pay attention to factors that could impact success.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE CONVENIENCE FACTOR

Whether technology has created a demand for increased convenience or vice versa is a bit of a chicken-or-egg question. Regardless of the answer, technology has fundamentally changed how restaurants operate and how diners interact with them. While full tables are a good problem to have, restaurants must continue to refine their management of reservations, notification of available tables, optimization of table turnover and access to the restaurant to increase revenue.

Reservation apps, which came onto the market in 1998 with the release of OpenTable, have made it significantly more convenient for customers to dine out. Users can compare restaurants, find specials and reserve tables with just a few taps, removing virtually every barrier that might prevent a diner from booking a table. Evidenced by new reservation start-ups that have gained popularity in the last year, which include features like being able to select a restaurant and time to eat, order the meal and pay in advance, it's clear these apps will continue to be an important resource for consumers.

Reservation apps also give restaurants valuable marketing

and data tracking opportunities. From how many tables can be filled in a night to what discounts motivate a consumer to dine at a particular restaurant, owners should take advantage of the insight apps provide.

Ridesharing services like Uber have affected the restaurant industry in perhaps the most far-reaching and unexpected ways. A study initiated by Lyft showed that in the short time these services have been available, they have already reduced individual car ownership, and the number of car owners will only decrease further. This has significant implications for restaurants, ranging from a potentially reduced need for parking to an increased demand for alcohol, since diners who aren't driving tend to drink more.

Enabled by ridesharing and compounded by consumers' demand for convenience, home delivery is on the upswing. Off-premises dining is expected to grow 12 percent per year over the next five years, and there has been a proliferation of delivery service companies, like Uber Eats, which allow restaurants to take advantage of the demand even without in-house drivers. Expect to see more of the Uber Eats delivery concept, especially in major cities where consumers want to enjoy food from their favorite restaurant without braving traffic and lines of people to get it. This is also a strategic marketing tactic for restaurants that may only have one or two locations and want to extend their visibility and reach to consumers that don't live in the same neighborhood and wouldn't hear of or visit the restaurant otherwise.

MARKETING AND MENU TRENDS TO WATCH

As always, chains have the advantage of brand recognition and bigger advertising budgets. Franchises also generally have more money to invest in technology like online ordering systems and proprietary apps. Still, independent restaurants can create an edge with unique and unusual menu offerings, which can be added quickly and without much hassle. Independents can also take advantage of social media marketing, which can reach thousands of people at a very low cost.

As far as menus go, there will always be a market for mainstream menu variety. However, diners, especially millennials, are more open-minded than ever. Consumers are happy to try new flavors and ethnic cuisines, a mindset made clear by recent menu trends like poke and global street food inspired items. Americans are also increasingly looking for healthy options as they become more aware of the effects of eating red meat, dairy, sweets and fried foods. Younger consumers, in particular, are interested in organic, sustainable and local foods, and often include them in their definition of "healthy." This trend doesn't seem to be waning, so it's good practice to have at least a few healthy options on the menu.

[Read the entire article here.](#)



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DECEMBER DINNER MEETING

[Click here for all the photos!](#)



Michael & Marilyn James, Lana Cook, Georgette Smith,
Carousel Resort Hotel Group



Courtney West, Salty Social, Becky Snyder, Go Glass,
Audra & Brandon Ely, Ripley's Believe it or Not!



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