



Travel trends'

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SoLoMo: one well-informed tourist is worth his weight in gold

What does SoLoMo mean? Well, it means "Social Local Mobile". Basically, it's when a tourist with nothing but a bottle of water and a Smartphone, consults the social networks as soon as he/she arrives in a new location. It's a simple way for tourists to obtain information about activities in their area and for tourism professionals it's an efficient way of letting the tourists know that they are there, and happy to welcome them! SoLoMo, which is half-way between technological word-of-mouth and a marketing technique, has become a "must". We take a close look at this travel device that provides help for tourists on every street corner.

SoLoMo, so easy

There are those who will find the word somewhat churlish and admit they have no idea what it means, and yet, the device is already being used by many people and many more are likely to come across it during their holidays.

SoLoMo first originated with the coining of the term by famous American venture capital investor, John Doerr of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers. Then French blogger and entrepreneur Loïc Le Meur made it available to the masses at the LeWeb 11 conference. Above all, SoLoMo is the contraction of three words that are doubtless more familiar: Social, Local and Mobile.

Traders want to use SoLoMo to make themselves known to consumers. They can now pull this off, since by using the social networks (So), geo-location (Lo) and mobile devices (Mo), everyone can now find exactly what they need, both close to home or when travelling.

For example, after a beautiful walk through the streets of Rome a couple wants to find a restaurant. Using their smartphone (Mo) and an application like Google Maps, Foursquare or Yelp, they will find a nice place and the perfect way to end to their romantic stroll. The application will list several restaurants in the vicinity (Lo), but which one should they choose? They will definitely choose the one with the best ratings (So).

1st stage: he came here

In the tourism sector, which is the leader in e-commerce, SoLoMo has therefore become a "must". In fact, we will no longer talk of "e-tourism" but of "connected" or "digital tourism". A recent Google survey revealed that the number of mobile users who find trip information with their smartphones will increase 51% this year.

The social aspect of SoLoMo represents several advantages, notably regarding the choice of destination. Before the Internet, word-of-mouth was the equivalent of today's social networks. But in those days it was impossible to get the opinions of 200 friends in just a few seconds.

Nowadays, thanks to the social networks, word-of-mouth has become organized. According to a survey by Skyscanner, 52% of Facebook users are directly influenced by the photos posted by their friends and 46% of them have already organized or been invited on a trip via this network which boasts 800 million active members. Traveler recommendation sites are also useful for advice and/or warnings. For example, every month TripAdvisor, which boasts over 50 million comments, enables 40 million internet users to make well-informed choices.

2nd stage: you will go there

Tourism industry actors have everything to gain with SoLoMo, which enables them to increase both their notoriety and customer loyalty. For example, the Accorhotels.com Smartphone application informs geo-located smartphone users of the hotels in the vicinity (it lists 3,000 Accor brand hotels worldwide), and allows them to calculate their itinerary, record their preferences, access promotions, see presentation videos and lastly send precious information to their contacts.

SoLoMo continues to accompany tourists once they have reached their destination. Indeed, the local and mobile aspects of the system come into their own once the tourists have arrived: about 30% of internet requests are geo-located. There is no respite for tourists: they must see, taste, and enjoy everything straight away!

They can often do this in just a few clicks or use an application like Wenzani, whose name comes from a Zulu word meaning "what are you doing?" Wenzani is a location-based mobile guide published by Lonely Planet that also uses other sources (Time Out, BBC Travel, Eyewitness Guides, etc.). Like Twitter, its users can "follow" experts or friends, access their recommendations, and ask for their advice to prepare the next leg of the trip.

For even more fun and variety, tourists can use Internet site TripXP to meet locals and live their very own memorable experience: from a round of the best tapas bars in Barcelona, a jog through Maastricht's old city, kayaking in the Stockholm archipelago... there are a whole host of opportunities for great memories and SoLoMo!

3rd stage: will you go back?

SoLoMo users are never alone; they are part of a community. What is more, they have really become tourism industry actors. In a restaurant, when the customers asks for the bill, the restaurant owner will in turn ask for a rating, as the rating given by the consumer-actor

is increasingly what determines future connected customers' choices. This new dimension is often an opportunity for traders, who, whatever their sector, are now increasingly numerous in advocating SoLoMo. Everyone benefits, since, like Accor, other brands offer consumers promotions and personalized deals. Sometimes, they go even further. Indeed, one of the most original SoLoMo initiatives was when Starbucks teamed up with Foursquare, the check-in system application that rewards users with a collection of badges and discount vouchers, in an fund raising operation to fight AIDS in the USA and Canada. From last June 1 to June 10, for every Foursquare check-in at one of its stores, Starbucks donated one dollar to AIDS fighting organization RED. This was certainly a very SoLoMo, very successful "social good" operation.

NB: Article on hotel industry trends drafted by the Accor Group's communication department