

## **THE SECRET WEAPON OF AN eSUPERBRAND**

### **Summary**

MyTravel was one of the largest names in the UK travel sector and now part of the Thomas Cook Group.

Three years ago, MyTravel was underperforming online with just five per cent of MyTravel business coming from the internet, compared to double figure percentages of its competitors.

Over the last three years MyTravel has seen a 400 per cent plus increase in the percentage of business being booked online. Passenger volume and revenues are also up by 400 per cent plus and MyTravel has now also been recognised as an eSuperbrand.

Additionally the campaign implemented by Ambergreen and MyTravel's other Search agencies has resulted in a projected cost saving in excess of £600K and much greater search spend efficiencies.

### **Challenge**

MyTravel's primary goal was to be recognised as an online centre of excellence, delivering sales at an acceptable distribution cost.

To achieve this MyTravel needed an integrated search engine marketing strategy that would increase the online 'shelf space' of the groups' operators and increase share of voice on the search pages.

This integration would only be realised through a close working partnership between MyTravel's digital agencies and its inhouse team, so transferring knowledge to and developing inhouse skills.

The campaign had to ensure that all MyTravel brands would be found for search terms that would convert to bookings and increase online sales. When Ambergreen joined MyTravel it was only being found for its brand name, effectively stifling its growth.

Finally, the rise of user generated content and consumer review sites like YouTube and MySpace, was threatening the natural positions of all major travel operators. MyTravel quickly recognised that providing the user with a wealth of information on all destinations, resorts and hotels would add real value for the user. In turn this would help build a relationship between brand and consumer, potentially leading to repeat purchase.

### **Solution**

When Russell Gould joined MyTravel three years ago he first developed a strategy that defined and built a best in class programme for every single marketing activity. With his team he then put into place an operational plan to achieve 'best in class' across the board. Search was one of the activities identified and he immediately brought Ambergreen in as experts in this field.

Working closely with MyTravel and its other agencies, Ambergreen created a highly targeted, integrated search campaign for natural listings but including pay per click (PPC) (managed by another specialist agency, MVI). Working with MVI, Ambergreen, were able to allocate value across the entire sales cycle, on average seven visits precede one booking, enabling the agencies to reduce spend on paid search by optimising the most common sales paths to ensure all marketing channels were utilised in a cost effective way, resulting in projected cost savings in excess of £500K.

In addition to the traditional optimisation techniques of writing web content and supporting the content with meta data and titles, Ambergreen introduced new online SEO techniques relating to video, feeds and blogs to really boost natural results.

If a brand is only listed for its name, it will have nine other competitors on the page. By having a YouTube video, a holidaymaker blog and a review at the top of the results, MyTravel, gives users better content and results and so a more rounded, objective picture of a holiday.

Deeper, richer content on all destinations was created to provide the user with a valuable source of information. Destinations, resorts and hotels were researched to provide content that would enhance users' time on the site creating greater 'stickiness'.

Ambergreen created a MyTravel channel on YouTube and uploaded MyTravel travel guides, optimising the videos so they would appear on the search engine results for targeted terms.

Ambergreen developed a training and development package for the MyTravel inhouse team. MyTravel has 1,000s of pages and by training and coaching the inhouse team in best practice, a project plan to optimise every page was developed. By making sure all internal pages were indexed and found, the search engines were able to serve the most relevant results to the searcher. Ambergreen's task was to take the searcher directly to the right page in one click, so cutting down the time taken to research and eliminating drop off rates.

The campaign was structured around the travel industry's annual booking cycle. The search engines are a vital tool for travellers to research their holiday. Ambergreen geared activity towards capturing searchers during the peak research times, before the researchers convert to bookings.

If a brand is only found for its name, it cannot increase sales. MyTravel had to make sure the site was found for generic category like "cheap holidays" and "cheap family holidays" and destination specific terms like "cheap holiday ibiza".

Ambergreen has a unique relationship with Yahoo! as one of a handful of agencies accredited to provide Yahoo! trusted feeds (Site Submit Pro) giving Ambergreen clients competitive advantage. When running a feed campaign for MyTravel Ambergreen made a return of investment on 30:1 well within its target of 5.5:1.

Ambergreen initially carried out keyword research to identify generic and destination traffic driving search terms that would get MyTravel found by the search engines. Additionally, the agency helped to eradicate technical barriers, including excessively long URLs, that were stopping the search engines from accessing the newly developed content.

Designing and implementing a three-tier optimisation campaign Ambergreen first optimised the home page, then the top level pages, before working with the inhouse team to help optimise every destination page.

## **RESULTS**

Ambergreen has worked with MyTravel for three years. The company's willingness to embrace new ideas has created an online centre of excellence and it is now recognised as an eSuperbrand.

Published by the Superbrands organisation, the world's leading independent arbiter on branding, eSuperbrands profiles over 40 of the UK's leading online brands and has a comprehensive index of the UK's top 300 websites, as voted by the eSuperbrands Council. The eSuperbrands Council is a group of 13 industry specialists, who judged over 1000 brands.

The eSuperbrands programme was founded with the aim of paying tribute to the UK's strongest ebrands, whilst also providing consumer insight and guidance into the best brands and sites within the huge online market. MyTravel's recognition as an eSuperbrand is independent testimony to the success of its internet marketing strategy.

Today the campaign is delivering almost 350,000 visitors a month and natural search bookings have increased by 387 per cent since the start of the campaign. Conversion rates have increased by 65 per cent and customer acquisition costs have decreased by 25%. Spend on paid search campaigns has been further reduced by migrating brand terms from paid to natural search. Resulting in additional projected cost savings of over £100K with total cost savings amounting to in excess of £600K.

Russell Gould and his team are now tasked with achieving the same transformation for Thomas Cook and Ambergreen has been retained to support that campaign.

Russell Gould, Thomas Cook's Director of eCommerce comments: "The key to Ambergreen's achievements has been that they work collaboratively. Not prescriptively or remotely. They work as part of the team here to get things done. We are now facing similar challenges with Thomas Cook and with agencies like Ambergreen involved we will succeed."

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