

WTMA19: Marketing minimalism, do less, but do it better

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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Day one of World Travel Market Africa 2019 saw Natalia Rosa, director promotions division for Big Ambitions, take us back to basic travel marketing principles; sharing how to build and roll out the right marketing strategy and move away from the vicious cycle of task-driven travel marketing that has left many stumped in their tracks.



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Before, as long as you had a message, you could put your message out there and sell and you didn't have to worry about where your message went. Things are a lot more complicated now – the world has changed.

How has it changed?

What do we have now that we didn't have in the 1970s? With the advent of mobile phones, selfies, online apps and virtual reality, we now have what we didn't have in the 1970s, says Rosa. "You didn't have an idea of the destination or what it looked like; now, however, you can see the destination, the hotel, the place that you are going to before you're actually there – how powerful is that?"

Life has changed a great deal. "In my experience, I have discovered that in the tourism industry what we do a lot of, however, is tick boxes. Big companies, not just small companies, are more focused on ticking the box when it comes to their marketing, their PR, their social media, because it makes sense to post three Facebook posts a week – but do you know why you are doing it?"

Rosa says that for most brands, they think that it's a good idea to post three Facebook or Instagram posts a week without any real understanding of what you are trying to achieve and because your competitor is doing it is not a good enough excuse.

There has to be some sort of measurement and strategy, but if you don't have any idea why you're doing what you're doing, then what is that you actually have? Are you communicating to your audience as effectively as you should – do you know your audience as effectively as you think you do?

"What do we know about people? They want to have fun, they want to feel real joy when they go on holiday, they want to experience something that they wouldn't ordinarily experience. They want to have time with their families. They want to spend meaningful time with their friends and family.

"They also want to spend meaningful time with getting to grips with the destination and the people in that destination; so they want to experience the destination that they wouldn't necessarily experience at home – they really want to get to the nitty-gritty, they want to dive under the skin of things."

They want good value.

What is good value?

Good value is important. Rosa suggests thinking about what sort of value you can bring to your target market.

"They want to be out of their comfort zone, they want to do something that is challenging that they wouldn't ordinarily do at home. Something that they can boast about, something that they can say: 'I achieved something'."

With the above in mind, Rosa says to get back to basics, the questions you need to ask yourself is the:

- **WHAT**
- **WHO**
- **WHY**

"Those are the three questions that you have to answer before you actually get to do your marketing."

Rosa says that quite often travel marketers look at the how, i.e. how they are going to communicate with the customer, also known as the marketing strategy.

BUT. Your HOW might create awareness (after your six ads in a publication, or X number of posts on Facebook), which isn't a bad thing, but what it doesn't do, says Rosa, is create awareness with the right target audience – this fundamentally does not translate into a meaningful outcome.

Empathy and your audience

It helps to have a really meaningful measure in your business, says Rosa. Yes, you can post on Facebook and tick your box, but what has that really done for your business? Rosa adds that many people have zero problems explaining what their what is, but that they fall short when it comes to actually plotting it down when conveying it to their target audience.

In this way, Rosa says, you need a level of empathy.

"Empathy is a very strong word and you need to think about this very carefully – marketing is all about being able to take your shoes off, to switch those shoes with the person you are speaking to and really understand why it is that they are coming to you for whatever pain they have and/or have come for and how you'll be able to solve that pain for them."

When marketing, you need to ask yourself: who it's for and why they should care, says Rosa.

Imagine you have someone who prefers hotels over guest lodging (your product being a guest lodge) – you're marketing to your guest, spending time and money on someone who never stays (as they'd rather stay in a hotel). It's important to know who you are speaking to and why.



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"Why should they care? Why should they care about what you have to offer? At the moment what you are doing is, you're telling them what your why is, but your why is not important, their why is important."

Rosa says that you need to turn your what into your why, and ask yourself, what the why is about your why. Basically, what is it about your what that is going to resonate with a customer.

Using a photography company as an example, Rosa highlighted how storytelling would be important for customers as they'd be able to go away with stories.

For the guest house, for example, with its beautiful views, Rosa asked what the why for that person would be? That you need to delve into your product and ask if it's, for example, to connect with nature or maybe its about getting from A to B safely if you have a transfer company.

It's about the sort of language that you use says Rosa, and once again, empathy. It's not about you. Anything that you communicate to your target audience needs to be in their interest and not yours.



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Referring to her own experience, Rosa made mention of a photographic safari she joined with Pangolin Photo Safari. They offer their target markets the chance to go out in nature, learn photography and get close as possible to wildlife.

"They know that their target audience would want to boast about their experience, especially if they've actually gone ahead and captured it (and are proud of what they have captured), and to share their new skill. In this way, they have provided Pangolin Photo Safari with organic marketing, just by posting and tagging Pangolin Photo Safari in their posts."

Their products appeal to both amateur or seasoned photographers.

"The point is the target market is clearly defined for Pangolin Photo Safari. They know who they are trying to reach, but it's not so small that they run out of leads. They're niche enough to know what to focus on.

"It's a very delicate balance – you cannot be everything to all people so you need to find out what your niche is, who your

audience is; your target market is. It doesn't have to so broad that you're trying to reach every single international market, because not everyone can be the best at what they do."

"The people they are targeting, whether or not you are a pro, is anyone who wants to learn, or connect with the wildlife in Africa and wants to be in nature. You don't necessarily have to be a photographer to do that – they want people who want to develop a skill, and do something different. "They want someone who wants to spend time with friends and family, out in nature."

What Pangolin Photo Safari's why is

What do they do?

- To help connect with wildlife and to capture it on photo and to make every person on their boat or on their vehicle a photographer.

"That is their why. Because they know their why so well, it's easier for them to really talk to their customer base."

The lesson here is that once you figure out WHAT your business is, and WHAT it is really for, the WHY, and who is going to want to engage with you, because of your unique WHY, enables you to start telling your story to them.

And only once you have done that, can you start knowing where you are headed in your travel marketing endeavours. "You now know what how your target audience will benefit and why your business is different – that needs to underpin everything that you do, it needs to be consistent.

"Pangolin Photo Safari made me believe that I can be a photographer. That's powerful stuff. They know exactly who they are and they know exactly who their target audience is and they know exactly how they, as opposed to someone else, can help their target audience."

That's all that matters, says Rosa.

"They get their customers to say how awesome they are, instead of saying how awesome they are themselves." Your story is way more powerful when your customers are communicating on your path, adds Rosa.

Your why needs to be communicated across everything not just your marketing platforms. If a brand is promising you something, but they are not consistent across all spheres, it's a problem.

Be sure to have your story communicated in the same manner. Only once you have achieved all of this, you can start talking about the tactics and the HOW.

Rosa shares the following takeouts to consider when asking yourself the WHAT, WHO and the WHY:

- Start monitoring what's working, i.e. what would be a meaningful measure.
- Are three posts bringing you success?
- A site hit is nice but how meaningful is it really?
- Define what it is that you need to do.
- Ask yourself why you exist and why you should be relevant and who your customer is.

That is more important at this stage.

Click through to our [World Travel Market Africa](#) section for more.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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