

HOMEAWAY | EXPEDIA GROUP

# HOMEAWAY SWEET HOME CAMPAIGN



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**PREPARED BY**

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# ABOUT HOMEAWAY



[HomeAway](#) was founded in February 2005 by Brian Sharples and Carl Shepard and is one of the leading vacation rental websites globally with rentals in over 190 countries. There are over two million rentals that can be booked on HomeAway making it one of the easiest websites to book the perfect rental for any vacation. HomeAway was acquired by the [Expedia Group](#) in December 2015 and now is a versatile piece in their portfolio of travel brands.

HomeAway strives to help travelers find the perfect vacation rental, often for less than what a traditional hotel would cost, and to create lasting memories whether people are traveling as a group or solo.

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# SITUATION ANALYSIS AND KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

According to HomeAway, the average traveler is a 35 to 50-year-old woman who travels with her family (a group of four or more) with an average stay of seven nights. However, travel trends show that solo travelers are growing, especially within the millennial demographic as more people seek to spend their money on unique experiences versus material goods. This trend is expected to continue year over year. We have [had campaigns in the past focusing on the family traveler](#), but for our *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign, we will focus on the millennial demographic. Individuals in this demographic specifically are using social media to share their travel photos and experiences. However, over 75% of US adults in this age group use social media with Facebook and Instagram being the top two platforms.

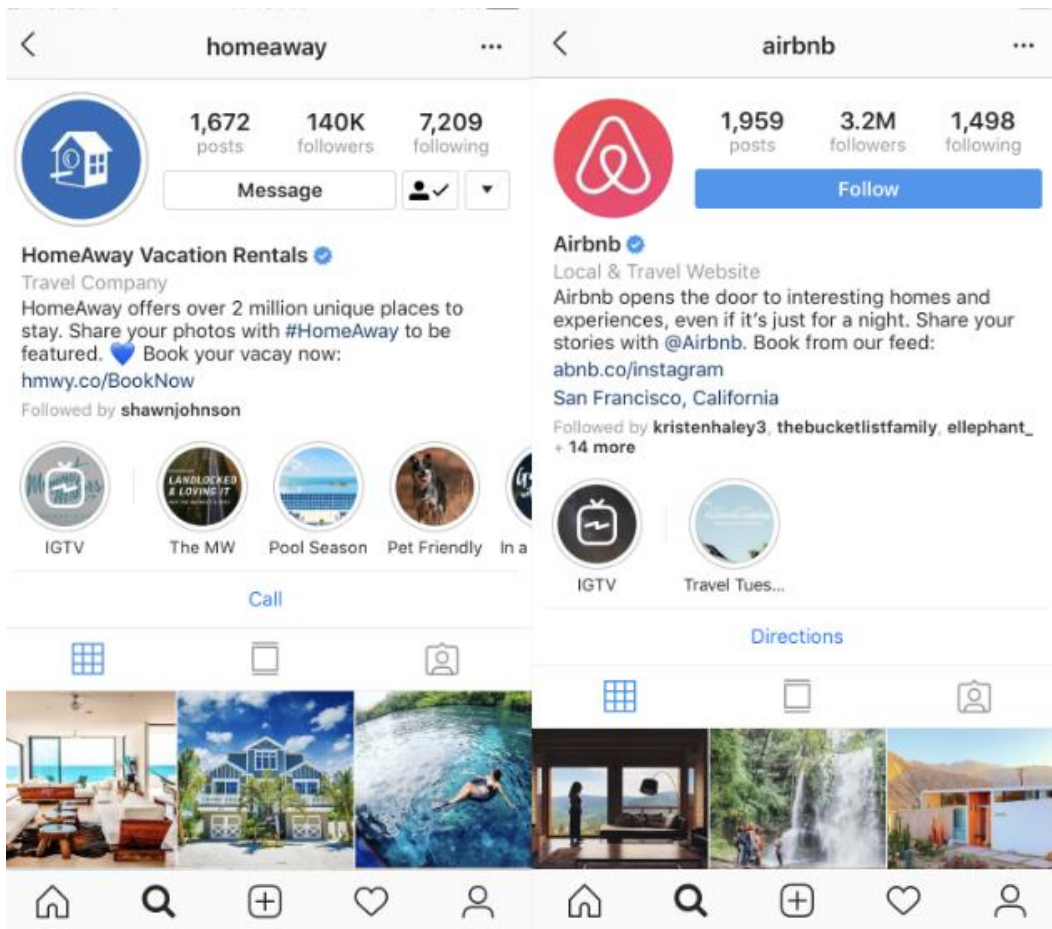
Our largest competitor is Airbnb. Airbnb has a huge social media following with over 14 million followers on Facebook alone, compared to HomeAway with 3.6 million. They also have a large following on Instagram with 3.2 million fans versus 140,000 for HomeAway. Airbnb is active on many of the same platforms as HomeAway including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Both companies have very similar content catering to comparable demographics. Airbnb seems to have a slightly more youthful vibe and shares more user-generated content whereas HomeAway has a slightly more sophisticated vibe. Both companies use social media as their primary marketing and promotional platform but still run television ads, most notably during the Super Bowl.



HomeAway Commercial (2011)



Airbnb Commercial (2017)



HomeAway Instagram vs. Airbnb Instagram (August 2018)

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There are a number of trends to consider when analyzing our approach to social media marketing for HomeAway. When we look at our consumer in the millennial target audience (further details about our target audience in a future section), we know that they are more digitally savvy than previous generations. We also know that they prefer to spend their money more on experiences (mainly travel) versus material goods. Millennials, especially those who graduated college during or around the economic recession or the younger millennials, have less extra money to spend. These individuals are looking to get the most out of their money. Millennials are more open to learning and interacting with people of different cultures. Culturally, there is an expectation (at least in the United States) that young adults after college, enter immediately into the workforce. This expectation may not allow many individuals to travel like they wish or rely on work vacation benefits that offer limited time away from the office.

With all of these external considerations in mind, we were able to put together an effective social media campaign to target the millennial population and raise brand awareness for the HomeAway brand.

## **INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

Internally as a company, HomeAway is already active on many social media platforms with a sizable following. We have policies and procedures in place for our social media activities and for our employees to follow. In addition to our internal social media team, we work with [Crossmedia](#), a social media marketing company with offices in seven locations around the globe, to help manage and plan our social media efforts. Our goal is to be transparent, sincere, and “humanize” the HomeAway brand more than it is currently being portrayed.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has maturity being in the market longer than many competitors and has built brand recognition and respect.</li> <li>• Easier for property owners to list their homes on the website compared to other vacation rental websites.</li> <li>• Has over 2 million properties in 190 countries on 50 websites in 23 languages! Huge global reach.</li> <li>• * Large portfolio of brands under the HomeAway and Expedia Group umbrella including VRBO and VacationRentals.com.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller social media following than competitors, specifically Airbnb.</li> <li>• Competing with other brands for the same target audience demographic.</li> <li>• Customer service concerns.</li> <li>• Customer concerns stemming from a myriad of lawsuits affecting renters and owners, including in San Francisco.</li> <li>• Only deals with rental properties whereas competitors are allowing customers to also book excursions and other activities along with their accommodations.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand on the existing customer audience, specifically millennial travelers.</li> <li>• Create a more dominant social media presence by varying content across all platforms.</li> <li>• Take advantage of the boom in video platforms, such as YouTube, to “show, not tell” the target audience about the brand and the different destinations they can travel to.</li> <li>• Engage with social media followers to increase and strengthen brand loyalty.</li> <li>• Grow mobile app to drive more “on-the-go” bookings from individuals traveling at the spur of the moment.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased competition from other vacation rental websites such as Airbnb and Flipkey.</li> <li>• Travel is often seen as a luxury and many people may not have the money to spend on travel.</li> <li>• Growing number of lower cost, but high-quality accommodations globally including hotels and hostels.</li> </ul>

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# KEY OBJECTIVES

## BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- To be the leader in the vacation rental industry worldwide.
- Create an easy and hassle-free booking experience for travelers.
- Increase website traffic by 30% by the end of FY19.
- Continue to develop our property listing service to add 15,000 new properties around the world by the end of FY19.
- Reduce website bounce rate by 50% by the end of FY19.
- Increase usage of the HomeAway app by 55% by end of FY19.

## COMMUNICATIONS/ PROMOTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Increase bookings on HomeAway.com by 40% (with 25% of those being first-time bookers) during the four-month campaign, compared to the same period in 2017.
- Inspire travelers to explore beautiful locations around the world and share their HomeAway from Home photos and videos on social media platforms. Generate 10,000+ user-submitted media to share across all social platforms.
- During the four-month *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign:
  - Increase brand awareness by 20% compared to last year.
  - Increase number of social media followers across all platforms by 30%.
  - Increase user engagement across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube by 15%.
  - Increase customer satisfaction score by 3 points captured through pre and post-campaign surveys.



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# TARGET AUDIENCE

HomeAway strives to offer the best and largest vacation rentals across the globe. With over two million properties in 190 countries, there is a vacation rental almost anywhere on the planet. HomeAway strives to make vacationing easier and more comfortable.

According to the U.S. Travel Association Travel Trends Index for May 2018, travel to or within the US grew 3.4% compared to May 2017 and international travel is expected to grow 3% through November 2018. While business travel continues to grow, leisure travel still remains dominant. According to a Booking.com survey, 1 in 3 (or 33%) of travelers prefer to stay in a holiday rental over a hotel.

HomeAway's customers share one thing all in common: an adventurous spirit and the desire to explore new places.

Our target audience demographics:

- *Age range and education:* 21-35; high school or higher.
- *Relationship:* Single or in a long-term relationship. Primarily travels alone but may travel with a significant other or friends.
- *Purchasing habits:* Loyal to brands, but also looking for the best deal. May seek alternatives if the "name brand" is too expensive. This audience looks around on different websites to find the best price and ask family and friends for their opinions before making a purchase. They often purchase items via mobile phone app including airfare, hotels/ accommodations, and travel essentials.

Our *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign will focus primarily on the millennial traveler (21-35). We will use the following buyer personas as a reference when we plan our communications effort.



*Maci:* Maci is a 28-year-old, part-time graduate student and recently quit her full-time job to travel. She plans to backpack solo around Europe for six weeks this fall and is looking to use a combination of vacation rentals and hostels for her accommodations. She is an avid social media

user with Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and YouTube accounts. She is most active on Instagram to share photos of her travels but is also developing a YouTube channel to document her experiences further.



*Mark:* Mark is a 35-year-old social media guru. He travels with friends but prefers to travel alone. He is planning to drive across the country in search of the best chocolate donut in each state for his YouTube channel, “Foodie USA,” which has over 150,000 subscribers. He has used both HomeAway

and Airbnb in the past to book rentals for family vacations and bachelor party weekends. He is planning to book rentals in the different cities he is stopping in during his trip. He is passionate about travel, social media, and of course, food.



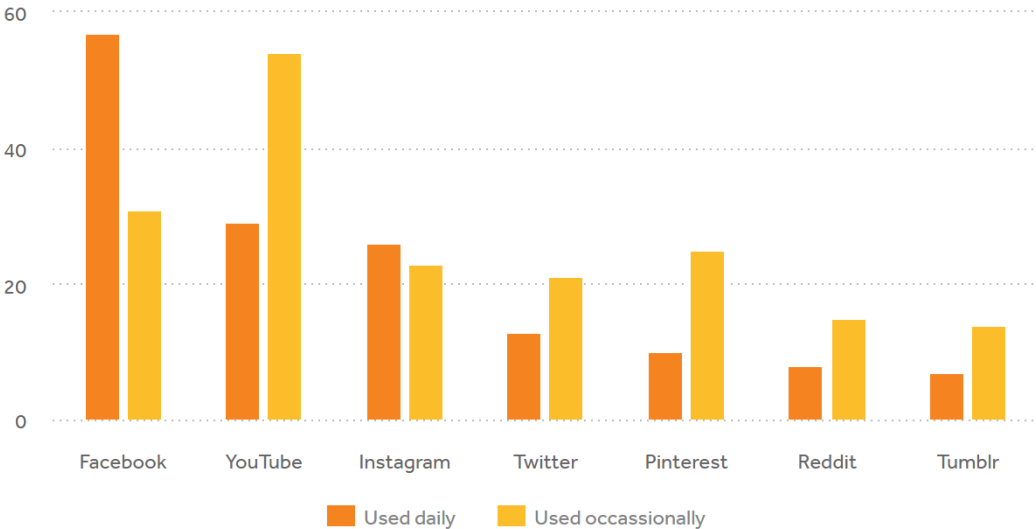
*Caleb:* Caleb is 22 and a recent college graduate. He will be moving to Washington, D.C. in September to start a job working at a non-profit organization. He is planning a last minute trip with his friends to Costa Rica to relax before he begins his new job. Caleb is on a tight budget but wants to get the most

out of his week-long trip. He has been to Costa Rica before but would like to explore other areas of the country.

Social media is a large part of the millennial traveler’s life. The younger members (21-29) of this audience are more active across a number of platforms using an average of 3.7 social networks versus the older members (30-34) who use 2.9, but everyone is technologically savvy. Millennials grew up during the internet explosion and have always had digital technology in their day to day lives. While social media did not become popular until later, many millennials had access to computers and other digital forms of communication from early adolescence and quickly adapted to social media and the constant connective world that we live in today. Social media is an integral part of the identity of millennials and they love to share their experiences, interests, and everyday lives on various platforms. Millennials often hear about news on social media with the American Press Institute reporting that 88% receiving news from Facebook, 83% from YouTube, and 50% from Instagram. More and more in this age group are “cutting the cord” in favor of streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video.

## Facebook dominates as a social media platform for news and information

Question: How often, if at all, do you get news and information from each of the following?



Source: American Press Institute, 2015

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# SOCIAL MEDIA ZONES

To further understand social media, it is easy to envision it divided into four different zones: community, publishing, commerce, and entertainment. Each of these zones has specific activities and strategies that provide guidance and insight into how a campaign should proceed.

The *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign will primarily reside in two of these zones: social community and social publishing. HomeAway already has a sizable social media presence but needs to be further developed to compete with other brands.



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## **SOCIAL COMMUNITY ZONE STRATEGIES**

Our campaign is focused on cultivating the current community of fans and followers we have on all of our social media channels, but also to expand our community by sharing, socializing and conversing with our fans. We will go into further detail in section six, but our focus is to improve response time on all of our social media platforms to address customer service concerns, respond to positive and negative feedback, and engage with our fans. Our main focus is to connect with our fans on a deeper level and show that HomeAway is a real and human brand.

## **SOCIAL PUBLISHING ZONE STRATEGIES**

Within social publishing, we are focused on further developing the messaging and content we share on our social media channels and company blog. We already share beautiful images, but want to connect deeper with our audience and encourage user-generated content. The marketing, social media, and public relations departments will work symbiotically to create an effective communications calendar to ensure the content we create is relevant, consistent, and engaging for our target audience. The highlight of our content will be user-generated images and video, which fans will be encouraged to share for the #HomeAwayFromHome contest. By showcasing real images from real fans, we hope that this raises brand awareness for HomeAway and encourages more bookings. We will primarily utilize Facebook and Instagram, but will also share images on Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube.

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# EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

Our analysis of our target audience, internal, and external factors, including social media channels, provide us with valuable insight into how we will activate the *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign. Further details on the specifics of our activation are in the next section, but this section will cover the overall experience we hope to achieve through our efforts.

- HomeAway has an active social media space, and we would like to further develop our efforts. We are working with our out-of-house social media marketing team at Crossmedia to further define where our target audience is spending the majority of their time on social media. We have identified that Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube will be the primary focus of our efforts, but we are also integrating Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. We will utilize some of the new features that these platforms offer (notably IGTV) to further develop and expand our social media strategy and use.
- Our overall key message for our campaign is as follows:
  - Your home sweet home (that's away from home) can be anywhere, whether it's your favorite coffee shop down the street or your favorite travel destination across the world! HomeAway is committed to making your next vacation as memorable, easy, and comfortable as possible. HomeAway meets this need with over two million properties in 190 countries around the world at all price points. Our website and mobile application make booking your next vacation home quick and enjoyable.
- To align with our chosen social media zones, we will incorporate social media reminders in paid or boosted posts and sponsored videos and blog posts on travel influencers social platforms.

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- A major part of the *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign is our #HomeAwaySweetHome contest. This contest encourages travelers to share their travel photos for a chance to win prizes. This will encourage engagement with our brand on social media. Additionally, we will be collaborating with travel influencers for videos, blog posts, and other interesting content that will all have a call to action to encourage engagement through comments, likes, and shares. These influencers will also have the opportunity to host small giveaways on their platforms for their audience to further aid in brand awareness for HomeAway.

Overall, we want to encourage millennials to engage with HomeAway and have fun doing so. Travel can be fun and exciting and we want to highlight these adventures. We want to show that we can help to reduce the stress of travel by offering vacation rental homes for any budget all across the world. Our main focus is to build brand awareness and inspire other travelers.



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# ACTIVATION PLAN

Many people have heard the saying, “a home away from home” meaning a place where someone is happy and comfortable. Our home away from home can be a friend’s house, our favorite coffee shop, or even a place halfway around the globe. Many have also used the phrase “home sweet home.” Through our *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign, we want to encourage travelers to find their “home sweet home” that is away from their home!

## **TIME FRAME**

The *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign will take place from August 1- December 1, 2018, with the option to do a follow-up campaign beginning in January 2019 if necessary. The primary goal of the campaign is to raise brand awareness and bookings within the millennial target audience, but further campaign and business objectives are outlined in part II.

## **BUDGET**

Our budget for the *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign, inclusive of all contest prizes, sponsorship deals, social media ads/ promotion, and outside help from Crossmedia is \$300,000.

## **STRATEGY AND TACTICS**

One of the main objectives of our campaign is to raise brand awareness and generate excitement among the millennial population. To achieve this, we are going to put much of our efforts into where this audience devotes much of their time every day, on social media. We will leverage our current social media platforms to generate awareness for the campaign and expand on our fan and audience base.



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The main focus of our campaign is our #HomeAwaySweetHome social media contest that will primarily be run on Facebook and Instagram from August 1- September 15, 2018. The contest encourages fans to share their travel photos showcasing their “home sweet home” that is away from their physical home. To enter, fans will share their photo and an explanation of what their “home sweet home” is on either Instagram or Facebook using the hashtag #HomeAwaySweetHome for a chance to win a one week, all expenses included trip to the destination of their choice for themselves and a friend (valued at \$10,000). There will also be second and third prizes as well which include a \$2,000 and \$1,000 HomeAway credit that can be used towards any rental on our website. All the winners’ photos will be featured on our social media channels in addition to any honorable mention posts as well.

Winners will be chosen by a panel of travel influencers and will be announced on September 17, 2018. The grand prize winner and their friend will take the trip within the first few weeks of October. Their trip will be recorded for a series of videos to be uploaded to various HomeAway social channels throughout November until the conclusion of the campaign on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Our social media platforms will be enhanced throughout the campaign, including during the contest entry period. Our in-house social media marketing team will work alongside with the public relations team and our outside social media team at Crossmedia to carry out the campaign on our current HomeAway social platforms. A social media calendar will be developed to ensure that the campaign aligns with our overall marketing plan and business goals. We plan to use each platform in the following ways:

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### Facebook:



- Promotion of the #HomeAwaySweetHome contest and weekly reminders to enter.
- Posts with user-generated content such as video and photos showcasing HomeAway properties.
- Paid promotional posts.

### Instagram:



- Promotion of the #HomeAwaySweetHome contest and weekly reminders to enter. Most of the reminders will be on Instagram Stories.
- Posts with user-generated content such as video and photos showcasing HomeAway properties.
- Utilizing the new IGTV feature to post teaser trailers for our YouTube series.
- Paid ads.

### Twitter:



- Promotion of the #HomeAwaySweetHome contest and weekly reminders to enter on Facebook or Instagram.
- Posts with user-generated content such as video and photos showcasing HomeAway properties.

### YouTube:



- A weekly series of videos produced by HomeAway collaborating with some of the top YouTube travel influencers (including [HeyNadine](#), [Vagabrothers](#), and [Feather and the Wind](#)) showcasing beautiful travel locations, travel tips, and other fun and engaging content.
- From November 1- December 1, 2018, weekly videos showcasing the #HomeAwaySweetHome contest winner's vacation.
- Sponsorships with other YouTube travel influencers (videos to be posted on the influencers own channel) discussing important travel topics and catering to the millennial audience. These influencers will also host small giveaways (prizes supplied by HomeAway) to encourage engagement and further brand awareness.

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### **Pinterest:**



- Expansion of current boards to include reference to the #HomeAwaySweetHome contest.

### **LinkedIn:**



- Weekly articles catering to the young, business traveler, including tips as to how you can still have fun and explore a new city while on a business trip.

## **TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **In-house social media team:**

- Creation of social media posts for all platforms.
- Work with videographers to film YouTube videos.
- Initial travel influencer identification for the campaign (follow-up communication to be done by the Crossmedia team).

### **Public relations team:**

- Editing and review of all verbiage to be used on social media and in press releases.
- Assistance with measurement and evaluation of campaign during and at its conclusion.
- Keep media site updated with images and collateral for use by media agencies.

### **Out-of-house Crossmedia social media team:**

- Management of paid social media including Facebook promotional posts and Instagram ads.
- Communication with travel influencer collaborators.
- Assistance with measurement and evaluation of campaign during and at its conclusion.

# EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

## Facebook

 **HomeAway**  
Sponsored Like Page

Your home sweet home (that's away from home) can be anywhere, whether it's your favorite coffee shop down the street or your favorite travel destination across the world! Share your home sweet home with us by submitting a photo using the hashtag #HomeAwaySweetHome by September 15th for your chance to win the trip of a lifetime for you and a friend anywhere in the world!



   8.9K 131 Comments 729 Shares

 Like  Comment  Share

 **HomeAway** @homeaway 🌐


A picture is worth a thousand words and could also be worth the trip of a lifetime! Share your favorite travel photo showcasing your home sweet home with us. More details at <https://tinyurl.com/homeaway>. #HomeAwaySweetHome





  232  2.5K 

 Promoted

## Twitter

 **HomeAway** ✕





Sponsored ⋮

## Instagram Story video

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# MANAGE AND MEASURE (EVALUATION)

To measure the true impact of the *HomeAway Sweet Home* campaign, we will continually monitor our efforts during and after the campaign. We utilize a number of different evaluation and measurement tools to measure the success of the campaign. We will use measurement and evaluation tools such as Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Hootsuite, Unmetric, and Radian6.

## 1. Engagement rate

- Number of comments on social media postings.
- Number of likes, retweets, and reposts across all platforms.
- Watch time on YouTube videos.
- Paid ads- the number of main website visits through links shared on HomeAway social media platforms. Also, the number of button clicks (“buy now” or “learn more”) on Facebook and Instagram.
- Number of photos shared on social media using the #HomeAwaySweetHome hashtag.

## 2. Social media sentiment

- Is the sentiment positive, negative, or neutral?

## 3. Website/ mobile application traffic

- Overall website traffic. Did it increase, decrease, flat line?
  - Is there a reduction in bounce rate?
- Overall mobile application downloads

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#### **4. Sales conversion**

- Are there more bookings on the main website or mobile application?
- Are people booking properties from the links shared on social media?
- Are we seeing repeat bookings from current customers?

#### **5. Brand awareness/ customer satisfaction**

- Through pre and post-campaign surveys, we will monitor and compare the increase in brand awareness and also gauge customer satisfaction.

In taking all of these different metrics into account, we will be able to gain the best perspective into if our campaign efforts were successful. From here, we can evaluate if we need to do a follow-up campaign or proceed forward with a new campaign with updated objectives.

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