

Golf tourism



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Contents

Introduction	160
Branding	162
Advertising	163
Sales promotions	168
Public relations	172
Direct marketing	179
Personal selling	182
Internet marketing	184
References	197
Index	200

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

7 The Marketing of Golf Tourism: Marketing Communications

Spotlight: Embracing social media: Kiawah Island Golf Resort



Kiawah Island's [KiawahMoments.com](http://www.kiawahmoments.com) web page

Located just south of Charleston, South Carolina, Kiawah Island Golf Resort is rated as one of the country's top golf resorts by *Golf Magazine* and *Travel + Leisure Golf*. It includes The Sanctuary – an AAA Five Diamond and Mobil Five Star-rated, 255-room hotel and spa – and 600 private villas and luxury homes. The resort has five championship golf courses, including The Ocean Course where the 1991 Ryder Cup, the 2007 Senior PGA and 2012 PGA championships were all hosted.

In June 2008, Kiawah Island Golf Resort and Kiawah Development Partners (KDP) – the island's master developer and real estate company – launched a new interactive website. [KiawahMoments.com](http://www.kiawahmoments.com) was created by Dana Communications, the resort's agency of record.

This unique site brought Kiawah Island into the realm of social web media by inviting resort guests, property owners and residents to share their Kiawah Island experiences online. Dana's challenge was to meet diverse marketing goals – from

7: The Marketing of Golf Tourism: Marketing Communications

attracting leisure guests to supporting luxury real estate sales – with a campaign that seamlessly promotes one destination. Dana developed [KiawahMoments.com](http://www.kiawahmoments.com) to integrate a social marketing forum into the campaign and reach a wide audience of Kiawah's target consumers.

KiawahMoments.com was designed to provide a place to capture and post real-life special moments for others to see and enjoy. Both the resort and the real estate company KDP used a 'Capture Your Kiawah Moment' advertising theme to portray memorable experiences, tell a story and prompt readers to visit [KiawahMoments.com](http://www.kiawahmoments.com) for the rest of the story. The engaging, interactive site invites users to upload and share their experiences via videos, photos and blogs. The campaign won a 2008 Magellan Award from *Travel Weekly*, which honours best practices in travel. [Capture Your Kiawah Moment](#) was a Gold Award Winner in the Destinations–Advertising/Marketing Campaign category.

Thos Paine is a partner and president of Dana Communications. 'Statistics showing that already about 50 per cent of travellers use online social media in some way to research their plans. Advertisers and marketers are pressed to take advantage of the emerging opportunities this new media presents,' said Paine. 'Social networking, or word-of-mouth advertising, is becoming key to staying on the leading edge of communication between advertisers and consumers, as it allows for a more credible, widespread message. Recognizing the importance of this revolutionary pattern in the hospitality and travel industry, Dana created [KiawahMoments.com](http://www.kiawahmoments.com) to provide travellers not only with resources for important resort and real estate information but also with personal touches that enable them to relate to existing customers' experiences'.

The new website also encourages visitors to share Kiawah moments with others by submitting friends' e-mail addresses. As an incentive for spreading this viral word of mouth, participants can enter into a draw for a weekend at Kiawah that includes a two-night stay in a villa or Sanctuary guest room, one round of golf for two, and a one-hour spa treatment for two. The site also operates as a reservations platform, with links to golf vacations and packages, and allows online visitors the opportunity to join the Kiawah email list – thus helping to build customer databases for lead prospecting.

Kiawah Island Golf Resort is also active on Twitter (www.twitter.com/kiawahresort) and has a presence on Facebook. 'We're just on the beginning stages of taking advantage of social media,' said Michael Vegis, Public Relations Director, in May 2009. 'We have about 500 followers on Facebook and only about 100 on Twitter. We've just started putting links to those sites on any e-blasts that go out to try to corral more followers'. On the Facebook site, visitors can keep up to speed with events on the island, download promotional literature, look at restaurant menus, and check out special promotional offers.

Sources

E-mail communication with Michael Vegis, Public Relations Director, Kiawah Island Golf Resort, 28 May 2009

News releases on <http://www.danacommunications.com>
www.kiawahmoments.com, www.kiawahresort.com.

Chapter extract

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