



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

Getting Discovered on Google: Crafting Your E-Marketing Plan

By this topic, you'll understand exactly how your tourism business can be found on Google. We'll also guide you through the process of creating an effective e-marketing plan.

What is Google My Business?

Google My Business is a free and easy-to-use tool that allows businesses and organizations to manage their online presence across Google, including Search and Maps. Think of it as your digital storefront on Google.

With a Google My Business profile, you can:

- **Showcase essential information** about your tourism business in Your country, like your address, phone number, website, and operating hours.
- **Appear in local search results** when people search for businesses like yours nearby. For example, if someone searches for "restaurants in Kampala" or "safari tours Uganda," your listing could appear.
- **Engage with customers** by responding to reviews and answering questions.
- **Share updates, photos, and special offers** to attract more visitors.

Essentially, Google My Business helps your tourism business **get found by potential customers** exactly when they're looking for what you offer, making it a critical tool for visibility in today's digital landscape.

Le Bobotie on Google My Business

(This section implies an example of how Le Bobotie, Masi's restaurant, leverages its Google My Business profile. It would typically showcase how their profile looks and functions, highlighting the features mentioned above.)

Description

Ibra: Hi Masi, wow, you guys are really busy tonight!

Masi: Yes, that's really great. The digital marketing activities had a great impact, but we are facing a new challenge. I just noticed that Le Bobotie is listed on Google, but I haven't completed the profile yet... what's next?

Ibra: Ah, in this case you have to claim your business. That is actually quite simple. All you need is a Google My Business account, which is free, by the way, and you're ready to go.

Masi: That sounds good. Ok, walk me through how to do that step by step.

Ibra: Quite simple. If you have created a Google My Business account. Then scroll down the entry for your business. Just a little bit more... there. Claim your business.

Masi: Okay and what's next?

Ibra: Next, Google's verification process starts. This ensures that not just anyone can claim the business. The verification is usually done by email, and you're guided through the process step by step.

Masi: Perfect. Then that's all set up now. Le Bobotie can then be found more easily now?

Ibra: You can do so much more than just give your address and opening hours. Google My Business is a tool that allows you to manage your business across all Google products. This includes Google Maps and Google Search. We are talking about reviews, star ratings, links to your website, photos and much more.

Can Your Tourism Business Be Found on Google?

Masi quickly grasped the immense value of a Google listing, and you should too. Tourists heavily rely on Google to **search** for accommodations and activities, read **reviews** to find the best places, and use **Google Maps** to navigate to restaurants, shops, and other points of interest once they arrive at their destination.

If your tourism business in Your country isn't already listed on Google like Le Bobotie, don't worry! You can easily create a **Google My Business account** and register your business yourself.

What You Can Do with Google My Business

Google My Business offers three main benefits for your business:

- **Provide Contact Information:** Tell Google your essential details, including your operating hours, website, phone number, and location (whether it's a physical street address, a service area, or a place marker on the map).
- **Interact with Customers:**
 - **Post photos** that showcase your business, products, and services.

- **Collect and respond to customer reviews**, building trust and demonstrating engagement.
- **Attract New Customers:**
 - **Improve your online visibility**, making it easier for new customers to discover your business.
 - **Direct customers to your website**, if you have one, to learn more or make bookings.

By utilizing Google My Business, you put your tourism business directly in front of potential customers who are actively searching for what you offer in Your country. What's one piece of information about your business you'd prioritize highlighting on your Google My Business profile?

Enhance Your Google Presence: Add Photos and Manage Reviews

Now that your tourism business is listed on Google, it's time to make a stellar first impression. As Ibra advised Masi, leveraging photos is key.

Make a Great First Impression with Quality Photos

You should definitely add your own business photos to showcase your offerings, but remember your customers can also contribute their photos and videos.

Important: Your photos won't appear on Google until your business listing is verified.

Here are the types of photos you should upload:

- **Logo:** Help customers easily recognize your business on Google by adding your official business logo.
- **Cover Photo:** This photo highlights your page's personality. While setting it as your preferred image doesn't guarantee it will always be the first one displayed, it tells Google your preference. Choose a captivating image that represents your business well.
- **Additional Photos:** Add a variety of photos to spotlight features customers consider when making booking decisions.
 - **Exterior photos:** Show your business's facade and surroundings.
 - **Interior photos:** Give a glimpse of your welcoming spaces.
 - **Product photos:** Showcase your unique tour experiences, delicious food, or comfortable accommodations.
 - **Team photos:** Introduce your friendly staff, building trust and personal connection.

Master Customer Reviews

You've probably noticed the star ratings on Google. Your business listing allows people to post reviews from 1 to 5 stars. Customer reviews are a vital part of digital marketing. Masi has some great insights on how to handle them effectively:

Should I Respond to Reviews?

Yes, absolutely! When you respond, you show both existing and potential customers that you value their feedback and business. Future customers will read these reviews and your replies to help them decide whether to choose your tourism business in Your country.

Can I Ignore Negative Reviews?

While a rude or defensive response is the worst approach, **not responding at all is also detrimental**. When you reply honestly and with empathy, it demonstrates that you genuinely care about customer satisfaction and are willing to address issues.

How Should I Respond to a Negative Review?

Mistakes happen, and occasionally, a customer will leave a bad review. How you respond can turn the situation around, and might even lead to the reviewer changing their rating.

1. **Start with an apology and thank them** for sharing their thoughts.
2. **Acknowledge the negative experience** so they know you fully understand what happened. If appropriate, offer a brief explanation, but avoid making excuses.
3. **Explain what actions you'll take** to address the problem and prevent it from recurring.
4. **Thank the reviewer again and apologize** before signing off.

How Can I Get More Reviews?

Encourage your happy customers to post reviews! If a customer compliments you in person or via email/message, directly ask them if they'd be willing to share their positive experience online. You can also display a poster in your business that encourages reviews.

What's one thing you'll implement this week to encourage more positive Google reviews for your tourism business?