

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

NOTE FROM OUR CEO & FOUNDER:



JOANNA LANDAU

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2016 was a remarkable year, with so many unexpected developments, wasn't it? For us at Vibe Israel, it was a whirlwind of a year too!

We started the year with the launching of Vibe Biz – a new project aimed at the Israeli business sector. The project includes marketing material about Israel's business eco system, to be used at conferences, with business missions, and by chambers of commerce on their websites. El Al, Birthright-Israel's "State of Mind" visitors' center and the Export Institute all use our resources, giving us full credit and raising awareness for Vibe Israel among this important sector.

Of course, we continued doing Vibe Tours throughout the year, with 7 tours in total, generating 13.5 Million positive conversations about Israel, especially among Millennials.

In July this year, we held a unique event called the "Shorty Stories Tel Aviv". The "Shorty Awards" are best known as the "Oscars of social media", and they are awarded at a star-studded event in New York every year. We partnered with the Shorty Awards team to bring the first ever Shorty Stories event (a sub-branded production) outside of the US, to Tel Aviv. Especially for the event, we hosted one of the most influential online influencers – Thomas Sanders (over 14 million followers!), who told a buzzing audience in Tel Aviv about his Internet journey. The event we held in Tel Aviv was very highly publicized in Israeli newspapers and garnered a lot of attention in Israel. But more importantly, we know that just that evening, a million and a half people around the world tuned in to see Thomas in Tel Aviv!

November was an exciting month for us at Vibe Israel, not just because of our annual VibeFest event in New York which you can read about in this report but also because we were nominated for the Best Use of Social Media for Place Branding Award, by the British-based City Nation Place, a global forum for place branding experts! I was so honored to have our work recognized by such a prestigious organization.

Thank you so much to all of you who support us, follow our work, lend your advice and "have our back". We couldn't do it without you! 2017 – bring it on!

With gratitude and good vibes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanna". The script is fluid and cursive.

Joanna Landau

NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF US OPERATIONS & DEVELOPMENT



JULIA
BEN SHALOM

Dear Vibe Israel Donors, Friends and Supporters around the Globe,

I have been blown away this year by the outpouring of support as Vibe Israel continues to grow. In 2016, we made the biggest impact in Vibe Israel's short history reaching millions of Millennials around the world with an uplifting message about Israel. We would not have accomplished anything this year without the incredible donations of all of you and we are truly grateful.

We have grown our advisory board this year, expanded our donor base and connected new people across the world to how we approach Israel advocacy. I am also thrilled to announce that Vibe Israel is now officially a registered 501c3 charity in the United States. Our staffing and organizational structure will not be changing in any way only now donations in the US can be made directly to the organization. As we move into 2017, we are looking forward to creating even more partnerships and expanding our work further all due to the generosity of all of you who believe in how we affect change.

Of note, I would like to thank the Vibe Israel advisory board and our major donors for everything they have done this year to expand our outreach. We would not be where we are without your support!

All my thanks,

Julia Ben Shalom



SUPPORT OUR WORK

Vibe Israel's work is only possible through the generous contributions of our supporters around the world. Donations of all sizes make an incredible difference in making our programs a reality. Vibe Israel is a registered tax-deductible charity in the United States and Israel. Please visit our website, www.Vibelsrael.com to make a contribution today or for further information on how to make contributions from your country.

Thank you!

A NEW CONVERSATION ABOUT ISRAEL



DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY



Following our strategic decision in the last few years to focus our efforts on connecting Israel with the Millennial generation, we further decided to commission a report about the trending topics online for Millennials, so that we can better define the scope of our work. Once we are better aware of what Millennials care about most by monitoring their online chatter, we can then decide what Israel has to offer that will be most relevant to them. In December, 2016, we commissioned a report from the company we use to monitor the viral activity our tours generate, and these were their findings:

2016 TOP 10 TRENDING TOPICS

1. Social Causes
2. Nationality
3. Athletes as National Heroes
4. Augmented Reality Games/Entertainment
5. Civil Rights/Issues
6. Food as a Lifestyle
7. Women Leadership for a Cause
8. Environmental Impact/Climate Change
9. Millennial-Style Travel
10. Outdoor Activities

SELECT EXCERPTS FROM THE TRACKX REPORT:



NATIONALITY

Across the United States, Europe, and even in Australia, the chatter around topics such as Election 2016, Trump and Brexit provide insight into Millennials and their growing interest in their own nationality, ethnic history and family cultures. Since this generation has lived with its parents more so than others, it has close family ties and is passionate about representing where they come from. They brought their backgrounds into politics in 2016, but are likely to continue to be interested in things like family history and culture as we move into 2017.



SOCIAL CAUSES

Also, because of the 2016 elections, Millennials on all sides of politics are increasingly taking action to support causes they are passionate about. They are using sites like etsy to make crafts where the donations go to support organizations like Planned Parenthood and ProPublica. While this trend is more likely to be seen in the U.S. and Australia than Europe, the nationality sentiment was consistent across these countries. Pursuing topics such as social justice, socially responsible investing, etc. are likely to trend upward this year as individuals seek out where to contribute.



WOMEN LEADERSHIP FOR A CAUSE

Women, at least fictional female characters, found themselves at the center of a globally popular TV series, "Game of Thrones." What started out as a fantasy genre with an audience of mostly men ages 18-29 has turned into a 50/50 split on social media between men and women. Why? It's likely due to the girl who has three dragons at her command and is now ruling much of the empire, but it's also their multidimensional characters –unprecedented in this scale at this production level. It is now an Emmy and Golden Globe-winning show. Speaking of Hollywood, the Oscars found itself at the center of a social media firestorm in 2016 for a couple of reasons related to our hot topics. These topics were already trending in social media, so this event's connections served as a catalyst (and catapult). The hashtag #OscarsSoWhite was shared by celebrity influencers who also shared the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. Complaints about a lack of diversity among award recipients and nominees continued long after the program ended leading to a record breaking minority Oscar nominations in 2017.



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Clothing retailer REI started using the hashtag #optoutside for a Black Friday campaign to encourage people to go hiking instead of going shopping. Since Millennials already have a propensity toward investing in experiences over consumer goods, it's no surprise this is trending. Their love of the outdoors, concerts, festivals, road trips, camping and more is expected to continue.



FOOD AS A LIFESTYLE

Millennials do not silo their lives either. They believe in lifestyles more than trends. If there is something they can do to lessen the impact on the environment, such as not use plastic bottles, they will do it. And part of getting outside is a healthy lifestyle, which includes eating organic food. It's no secret Millennials are obsessed with food, but it's important to understand they see themselves as "paleo" or "vegan" and they understand the direct connection between eating too much red meat and excess methane gas in the atmosphere.



AUGMENTED REALITY GAMES/ ENTERTAINMENT

The augmented reality (AR) game PokémonGo exploded in the U.S. with 21 million active daily users, not including those in Europe, Australia and other countries. Tech news outlets are heralding its popularity as the official start of widespread AR use. Players are likely eager for more in 2017.



SHIFT TO VIDEO

Finally, there is also the format of these social media communications to be considered as video, particularly live video, brings in exponentially more engagement than text or even photos. Facebook is pushing the use of live video among its users. Its algorithms show preferences for live video feeds, pushing that content out to more fans/ friends newsfeeds.

NEXT STEPS

We passed on these findings to Prof. Riebstein, the William Stewart Woodside Professor of Marketing at the Wharton School of Business, who publishes an annual ranking of country brands called the Best Countries Index, in association with U.S. News and BAV, a subsidiary of Young & Rubicam. In 2016, Israel ranked 25th overall out of 60 countries. However, this particular index has a sub-index called "Millennials' Picks", where Israel ranked 42nd out of 60 – a much more worrying indicator of where Israel will stand in the near future, since the Millennial generation is the largest generation to date, and by 2020 will comprise half the world's workforce! Prof. Riebstein as a consultant to Vibe Israel, who is currently looking at the breakdown of the perceptions of Millennials' towards Israel and correlating these with the online trending topics findings, will submit a recommendations report to Vibe Israel on the day the Best Countries 2017 is published – March 7, 2017.

STAY TUNED...





As many of you know, our flagship project to date has been Vibe Tours, our weeklong, subject-matter-specific tours that we offer to online influencers with millions of followers. In the last 5 years we conducted 27 tours, brought 135 influencers to Israel from over 20 countries, and generated over 50 million positive conversations about Israel worldwide. After another incredible year, we are proud to report that we have maintained our 100% success rate, never having a tour participant have anything less than an amazing experience. One of our participants even loved Israel so much she moved to Israel for 3 months using Tel Aviv as the base for her travel blog and organizing trips for other influencer friends!

In 2016 alone we can confirm we reached over 13 million people around the world with positive, third-party endorsements by the 35 Vibe Tours participants.

7
Tours

35
Opinion Leaders

13,500,000
Potential Reach

\$294,655
Project Cost

\$0.02
Cost Per Person Reached

TOPICS OF GLOBAL INTEREST:

This was the year of the video, and we did our first tour that was just aimed at video content. We also included vloggers (video bloggers) and not just traditional, text-driven, influencers.



JANUARY - #VIBEFood

This wasn't our first food tour, in fact it was our third, but it feels like the culinary offering in Israel just seems to be getting better and better! This time we brought 6 writers from 5 blogs, and we spanned 4 continents; the U.S., Europe, Africa and Asia! We always say that every #VibeTour is a food tour, because the food in Israel is so diverse and tasty, but when it really is a food tour – well, that's a whole other story.



MARCH - #VIBEFITNESS

If you haven't been asleep or on Mars in the last few years, and you know Israel a little bit, you'll know that the fitness scene here has gone crazy! Marathons, triathlons, extreme sports, swimming, bicycle riding and what not... so we figured now's the time to do a tour focusing on fitness. For this tour we hosted 5 fantastic online influencers, from Spain, the U.S. and Canada, who of course were very high energy, inspiring people so we had an amazing week with them. We partnered with the Jerusalem Municipality for the Jerusalem Marathon, then we spent a day at the Dead Sea chilling out and relaxing, and we ended the tour with a couple of days in Tel Aviv. It was awesome!



MAY - #VIBEARCH

The first time we did an architecture tour was in 2013 and it was so successful we knew we had to repeat it. So 3 years later we revisited some of the incredible sights we experienced last time, like the refurbished Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum with Architect Irit Kohavi, and discovered the same areas through a different perspective, such as a tour of the brutalist architecture in Tel Aviv and Haifa. Our week began in Jerusalem where we participated in the 2016 Wolf Prize ceremony at the Knesset, after which we joined the President of Israel for a dinner and cocktail at his residence, and we managed to chat with the world-renowned architect, Phyllis Lambert, recipient of this year's Wolf Prize for architecture. We ended the week in Tel Aviv, having visited Haifa over the weekend.

LAST TOUR

#VIBEECO



#VIBEECO

Strategists from around the world agree that “Israel is a laboratory for eco-innovation and can serve as a platform for larger countries looking to harness sustainable technology” (Jerusalem Post article). That is exactly why we decided to invite more online influencers to another Eco Impact tour, 3 years after our first sustainability tour. The 5 influencers from Taiwan, Italy and the USA were all super knowledgeable and curious to learn about Israel’s eco innovations first hand. They were so impressed, some of them started publishing their stories even before the tour was over! We concluded the tour with a special farewell event, in collaboration with MIT Forum and “Entrepreneurship on Tap”, providing a chance to learn back from our influencers on the global eco trends coming up in 2017.



JULY - #VIBEVIDEO

This was a unique tour for us – the first time we focused on video influencers. We partnered with the Shorty Awards team in NY who reached out to top Viners and 4 incredible influencers accepted the invitation. Differently from our tours, which focus on a specific area of interest, this week was filled with unique experiences for our guests to share with their millions of followers. Mostly on Snapchat, but there were some Vine clips along the way as well. From rappelling down the Tower of David, to a one-on-one session with YouTube singer and phenomenon, Shefita, and an interview on national TV conducted inside a little beat up truck, our guests had an incredible week in Israel, which ended with the Shorty Stories Tel Aviv event, more about which you read in the Vibe Events section.



SEPTEMBER - #VIBETRAVEL

The spirituality of Jerusalem, the serenity of the Dead Sea, the vivacity of the city of Tel Aviv, the excitement and historic richness of the Galilee region and the Golan Heights – this is Israel! A diamond in the rough of pure touristic pleasure, that most people think about but not enough have visited. To share what our country has to offer to anyone with the travel bug, we brought 5 great influencers to Israel who write and share their content on a variety of platforms, from personal blogs with hundreds of thousands of followers, to Instagram pages with a million followers, to online platforms of well known travel magazines such as Condé Nast and U.S. News.



NOVEMBER - #VIBEWELLNESS

Our first Wellness tour was exactly 2 years ago, and we were as overwhelmed as our guests to discover how Israel is truly leading the way in introducing wellness concepts into mainstream awareness. For this tour, we brought 4 influencers from the USA, with a specific interest in the nexus between healthy eating and wellness. We discovered together that Israel remains at the forefront of the healthy eating revolution, and that the world can learn a thing or two from what we’re doing here in this regard.

MEASUREMENT



SurveyMonkey

Our last tour of 2016 highlighted Israel's contributions to the field of sustainability and ecology. One of the participants was a writer for Inhabitat, a highly respected online magazine on the topic of sustainable lifestyle, with a monthly following of 5 million worldwide. The blogger wrote five articles about her experience, one of which included a clip that reached 900,000 views on Facebook! Upon her return home, she completed our post-tour survey, and ended it with the following statement:

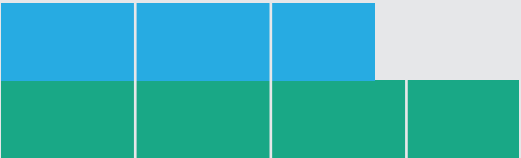
"I've come away from this experience with a greater appreciation of Israel and would say Vibe Israel did a great job in doing that. I'm looking forward to adding to the growing number of voices that provide a more positive and alternative view to Israel than what's communicated in mainstream media."

This is exactly what we had hoped to achieve, and this is why we have been conducting pre- and post-tour surveys for several years now, using the popular online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. Our pre and post-tour surveys help us understand and evaluate the impact of our tours. Specifically, we want to know if we are changing perceptions by providing these online influencers with first-hand, informal experiences of Israel. It is not enough for them just to know what Israel has to offer, the question is – does this knowledge translate into a positive emotional connection that changes their perception of Israel? On the opposite page you can see an excerpt from the 2016 results for yourself.

PRE TOUR
POST TOUR

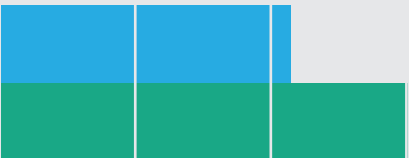
PERCENTAGE
INCREASE

ISRAELIS ARE
WARM AND
CARING



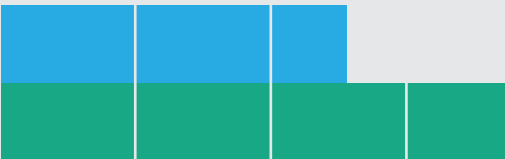
63%
86% ↑ 36%

ISRAELIS
BELIEVE IN
WESTERN
VALUES



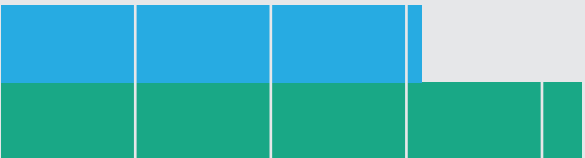
47%
66% ↑ 40%

I FEEL
ISRAELIS
ARE LIKE
US



58%
83% ↑ 43%

ISRAELIS
ARE VERY
CREATIVE AND
INNOVATIVE



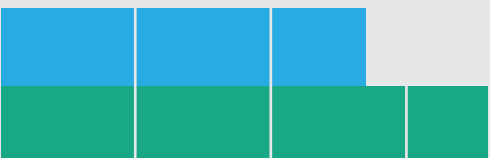
71%
97% ↑ 36%

ISRAELIS
HAVE A CAN-
DO SPIRIT I
ADMIRE



63%
100% ↑ 59%

ISRAELIS
MAINTAIN
HIGH MORAL
STANDARDS



61%
83% ↑ 36%

0 20 40 60 80 100

ISRAELIS ARE ACCEPTING OF ALL RELIGIONS, GAYS, MIXED
MARRIAGES AND MANY ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES



34%
97% ↑ 185%

0 20 40 60 80 100

In 2016, Vibe Israel expanded its Vibe Events program, partnering this year with the producers of the Shorty Awards (the NY-based “Oscars of Social Media”) to bring the first ever Shorty Stories event outside the U.S.! On July 9th, 2016 we hosted the Shorty Stories Tel Aviv 2016, in the presence of local online opinion leaders and content creators, and marketing and advertising professionals. The keynote speaker of this exciting event was Thomas Sanders, winner of the Shorty Awards for Best Viner of 2015, with 14 million followers! To celebrate the Shorty Stories coming to Israel, Vibe Israel flew in 4 more leading international social media stars, who together have almost 6 million followers, for a #VibeVideo tour which took place during the week leading up to the Shorty Stories Tel Aviv 2016 event. We ended the event by awarding Vibe Inside Awards, in the spirit of the Shorty Awards, for Israeli online content creators.



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vibe
ISRAEL



THOMAS S
Viner

1
Event

300
Local Participants

5
Opinion Leaders

1,430,000
Potential Reach

\$37,456
Project Cost

\$0.26
Cost Per Person Reached

vibe

BIZ



In 2016 we launched the VibeBiz program working with Israeli businesses to promote a positive image of Israel amongst Millennials in the workforce around the globe. The project includes presentations about Israel's business eco system, and a short clip that we produced which is downloadable for free from our website, to be used at conferences, with business missions, and by chambers of commerce on their websites.

The video has now been translated into multiple languages and has been used by El Al on inflight entertainment, by the Ministry of Economy, Birthright-Israel's "State of Mind" visitors' center, the Israeli Export Institute, and a wide range of chambers of commerce, business organizations and multi nationals based in Israel.

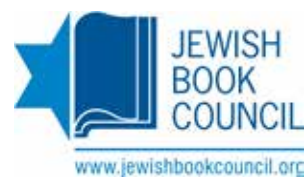
vibe

FEST 2016

VibeFest is an annual celebration of Israeli innovation and creative energy in New York City hosted by Vibe Israel supporters in New York, and other organizations we partner with. The event is designed for participants to be able to experience Israeli innovation first hand and feel the creative energy that we always speak about at Vibe Israel. This year we held 3 main events: a VIP Power Breakfast with a Shark-Tank style pitching session of Israeli startups based in NYC, hosted by our Advisory Board member, David Sable, at his headquarters of Young & Rubicam; an After Hours Party for young professionals in partnership with the AICF, IAC Dor Chadash, and the Schusterman Reality program; and an All-Day Event on Sunday, in partnership with many American non-profits promoting Israel, and Israeli businesses.

An extra special thank you to all our partners who made VibeFest 2016 possible this year! Through the Israeli music, authors, artists, companies, designers and food, we were thrilled to see everyone connecting with the Israeli innovative spirit. Thank you to everyone who joined us at the various events during the festival in November!







“Young people need to be asked what matters, not be told what matters.”

*- Jeff Martin
CEO & Founder
Tribal Brands, Inc.*

CHALLENGES

As like every other year, one of our biggest challenges in 2016 was keeping up with whirlwind technological advances in how people, especially Millennials, communicate. For example, Snapchat, which was not as widespread just a year ago, is now the biggest craze, requiring us to adapt our own social media channels and presence. The biggest problem with it is that it can't be tracked like other platforms and so we are unable to quantify its reach and engagement. Also, as social media now takes precedence over the blog or magazine, we need to adapt our tour content to suit soundbites and photos, rather than just text. In addition, the trend towards heavier use of video means influencers often want to bring a crew which increases our costs.

Five years ago, influencers were not offered the opportunities that they are being offered today, such as free trips. Every year, the power of social media influencers increases tenfold and with that power comes many opportunities and invitations. In the past, it was novel and exciting for a blogger to be invited on a press trip. Now they not only take their time to respond because of the multitude of offers they receive but many also ask for a fee, which we cannot offer. The good news is that Israel has that "exotic" appeal that bypasses this issue (many influencers have told us that this is the only trip they agreed to go on for no fee).

Lastly, Vibe Israel has been around now for 5 years. We have experimented with new and exciting projects and have now reached a point where we have a clear and decisive growth plan. We will essentially be transitioning over the next few years from a start-up to an established organization. While making this transition, it is very important to us that we always aim to maintain cost-effectiveness while providing the highest quality offering.



ADVISORY BOARD



RICHARD BERNSTEIN

Richard N. Bernstein lives in Miami where he is of counsel at Greenberg Traurig, one of the largest law firms in the world. He is an active Jewish community activist serving on a number of boards.



ARIEL HALEVI

Ariel Halevi co-founded Debate Company (now Vayomar) together with Gur Braslavi back in 2003. Ariel holds an MA in Homeland Security and Counter Terrorism and a BA in Government and Diplomacy from the Interdisciplinary College in Hetrzlia (Israel). Prior to his studies, Ariel founded and managed several Israel hi-tech companies.



SUSAN PERNICK

Susan Pernick, a native New Yorker, serves as the President of the American Committee of Shenkar College and a Vibe Israel board member since 2016.



MARK REISBAUM

Mark Reisbaum serves as the Chief Philanthropy Officer at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. He is a seasoned nonprofit manager and recognized Jewish community leader. He most recently served as Senior Director of Philanthropic Engagement at the San Francisco-based Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund, which he joined in 1997.



DAVID SABLE

David Sable is Global CEO of Y&R, one of the world’s leading global marketing communications companies, with 186 offices in 90 countries. An active philanthropist, he was just named the Chair of UNICEF’s New York Board.



DOROTHY TANANBAUM

Ms. Dorothy Tananbaum is former Principal of the Vanderwoude Tananbaum Gallery, New York. She is Co-Chair of Jewish Funders Network; founding member of the Center for Public Careers, Harvard College; Chair of the board of the Jewish Education Project, New York; and a board member of the Israel Campus Coalition.



JANE WEITZMAN

Jane Weitzman was the executive vice president of Stuart Weitzman and the first vice president of Stuart Weitzman retail. She spearheaded philanthropy for the company by generating funds to support breast and ovarian cancer research and awareness.



HARPER SPERO

Harper Spero is leading Vibe Israel’s Young Leadership initiative on the board. She is a business owner, certified professional coach (CPC) and a graduate of the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (IPEC). From music to beauty, social good to health and wellness, she has spent the past ten years leveraging brands through marketing, public relations, event production, and digital media.



JUSTINE ZWERLING

Justine is an expert in assisting businesses to achieve their goals of global growth. Working with private sector businesses with global aspirations she examines, defines and successfully implements market entry strategies utilizing the skills and the connections in her extensive professional network. Justine held an executive position at the UK Trade & Investments department of the British Embassy in Israel, and recently took on the role of Head of Primary Markets at the London Stock Exchange in Israel.

SUCCESS IN THE PRESS



Home Page > Tourism in Israel

Opinion leaders share their view on Israel in pictures

Throughout 2016, opinion leaders from all over the world visited Israel thanks to the Vibe Israel organization. They visited famous sites and shared their unique experiences on social media.

Dec 31, 2016, 3:37PM | Nuphar Shidlovsky

Topics: Israeli Art, Israeli Food, Israeli Pride, Social Media

LIKE SHARE TWEET GOOGLE+ EMAIL REDDIT

Capturing Tel Aviv's unique street art and graffiti Photo Credit: Vibe Israel/Channel 2 News

Vibe Israel, a non-profit organization that brings opinion leaders from all over the world to Israel, released a picture summary of the organization's trips, highlighting the visitors' experiences.

Jerusalem Post

SHORTY STORIES TEL AVIV & VIBE ISRAEL: SPOTLIGHTING SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN ISRAEL

BY MARTHA BIALEK / JULY 11, 2016 18:15

Vibe Israel CEO's, Joanna Landau, expressed to us the importance of this event and the special connection it had to this tour of Vibe's superstars.

TEL AVIV - The Shorty Awards held their first Shorty Stories event ever outside of America, giving Shorty Award winner Thomas Senders a chance to tell how he built a following of 14 million people on social media to an Israeli audience.

City / Nation / Place

Awards

Best Use of Social Media Israel

THINK CREATIVE ENERGY

Israel is not like most countries. It is embedded in a long-lasting conflict with its neighbors that few visitors can avoid, and no one can ignore when it's going to end. Under these impossible conditions, for decades Israel governments and pro-Israel advocacy organizations have focused their efforts on explaining and justifying Israel's policies in the eyes of an enormous audience, which has left little time to do anything else. It's time to do it right. Recognizing that this is a unique and challenging situation, fashion, gastronomy, photography, social entrepreneurship, environment, and more. Our tours are intimate with 4-6 participants only, in order to deepen the personal connection and experience. The heighten the personal connection and experience. The uniqueness of the tours' strategy compared to other similar branding initiatives is twofold: - Niche marketing: We have adopted the niche marketing approach rather than highlighting Israel's brand as a whole. We seek out pockets of communities that are deeply interested in a specific topic, and build our tours to offer influencers who write about that topic the most creative and innovative content.

KC

"The BDS Busters"

BDS Busters - Channel 10 Segment about Vibe Israel

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

For visiting bloggers, a 'remarkable' 21k run in Jerusalem

"This was one of the most challenging courses I've ever been on," says one obstacles expert

By JESSICA STENBERG | Nov 22, 2016, 4:38 pm | 2

The 21K fitness bloggers and their guides after a day of cycling, hiking and swimming in the area of the Dead Sea (Courtesy: Redstone Rescue Services)

WITNESSES

A record 2,500 foreign visitors joined the pack of some 25,000 Israeli runners at last week's Jerusalem Marathon. Including a team of North American (and one Spanish) fitness bloggers who ran the 21-kilometer half-marathon that is part of the roster of Jerusalem Marathon events.

Q&A

with Joanna Landau
Founder and CEO of Vibe Israel

How would you briefly describe Israel's international reputation?

The inevitable associations with the Middle Eastern conflict heavily influence Israel's international reputation. Israel is considered a strong leader, with a daring and confident spirit, but at the same time, it is perceived to be a very militaristic society, dominated by war, religion and war. Very little is known about its many attractive and resilient qualities. Having said this, Israel's strength and resilience began positively into its economic reputation, drawing also on its ability to withstand economic turbulence, making it attractive for economic purposes and as such, it is considered a good place to invest in and do business with. This is also a direct result of its innovation based economy, which is strongly supported in its high tech sector.

However, casting aside the heavy veil of the conflict, and exposing Israel's true character and advantages, Israel's brand can be summarized as "Creative Energy". There is an energy to Israel that is literally palpable and is absolutely linked to the fact that its citizens live in a state of conflict. As a place embedded in a conflict, with limited natural resources and unstable conditions, Israelis have had to be very creative, resilient and active in order to ensure their survival. As a result, the Israeli people are extremely innovative and entrepreneurial.

If Israel were a person, its personality would be: bold, energetic, spontaneous, straight-talking, argumentative, analytical, outgoing, warm, fun.

How does innovation and entrepreneurship contribute to Israel's nation brand?

Innovation and entrepreneurship are key components of Israel's brand. The world is desperately seeking nations that are able to constantly think out-of-the-box and find solutions to global challenges, and when such solutions arise, to act upon them, be fearless in the face of potential failure, and see things through. This is what Israel can offer for world, which increases its brand value tremendously. For Israel, which as previously mentioned, has a controversial and complicated brand, innovation and entrepreneurship are important positive components that improve its global reputation.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“

Amanda Brooks, Fitness blogger, Colorado: The world is filled with more places that I want to see than is likely possible before I die. Israel was not part of that list. I didn't know much about it other than what I'd seen on the news, which let's be honest is usually only when something awful happens. But when the invitation landed in my inbox for a fitness focused trip around the Jerusalem Marathon I was open to the idea. A couple quick Google searches showed me that there might just be more to this country than I knew, but I was still nervous. Was it really safe?... So I said yes. I was rewarded with an experience that I'm still struggling to put in to words because it was so much more than a sightseeing trip or a race, thanks to the serious effort by Vibe Israel to introduce us to locals and give us experiences you'd never have on a tour or likely on your own.

Mindy the Lion, Travel blogger, Vancouver: Israel has been existing under the tension of conflict for years and years. And yet, away from the borders and sites of friction, there are booming cities filled with vibrance and life and amazing food and beautiful people riding bicycles while drinking champagne and creating art and having babies. All countries have their issues, and all countries have their light. Israel is a very complex nation, and is no different. I am so, so grateful to have experienced it first hand because there is much more to this place than a lot of people understand – and whether Israel is on your to-do list or not, the lesson here is that nothing can be judged with any kind of accuracy until you've had the experience for yourself... And until that time, that space should be held with an open heart, and an open mind.

**BETTER
FOR YOU.
BETTER
FOR
ISRAEL.**



www.vibeisrael.com