

# The Complete Guide to UGC for Resorts & Hotels







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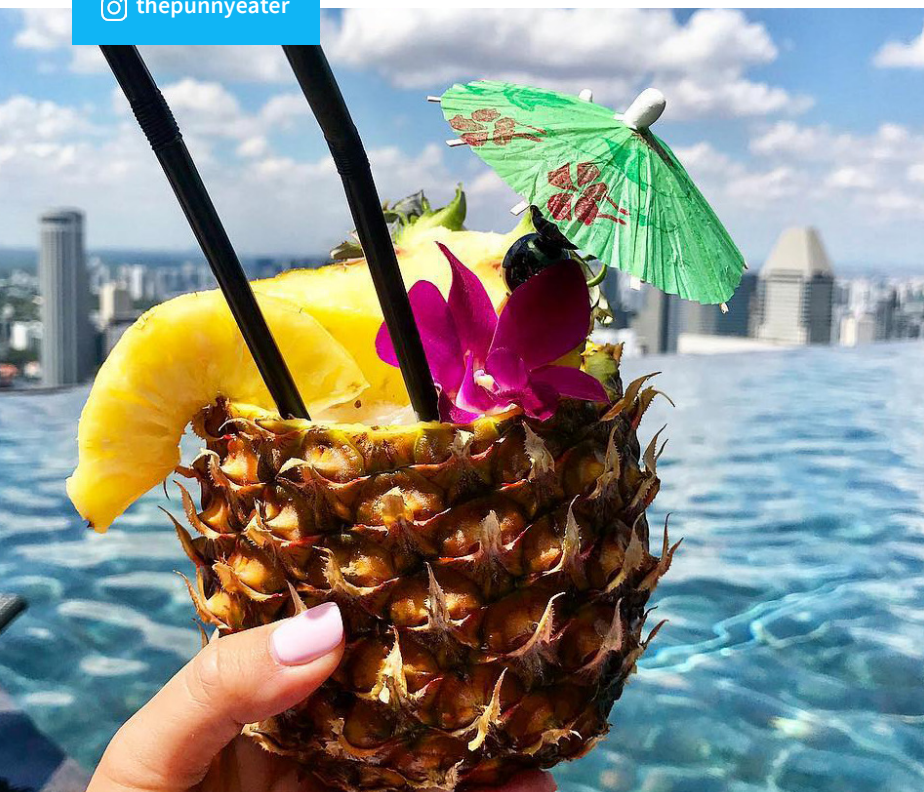
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Tips, Tricks & How-Tos:

# User-Generated Content



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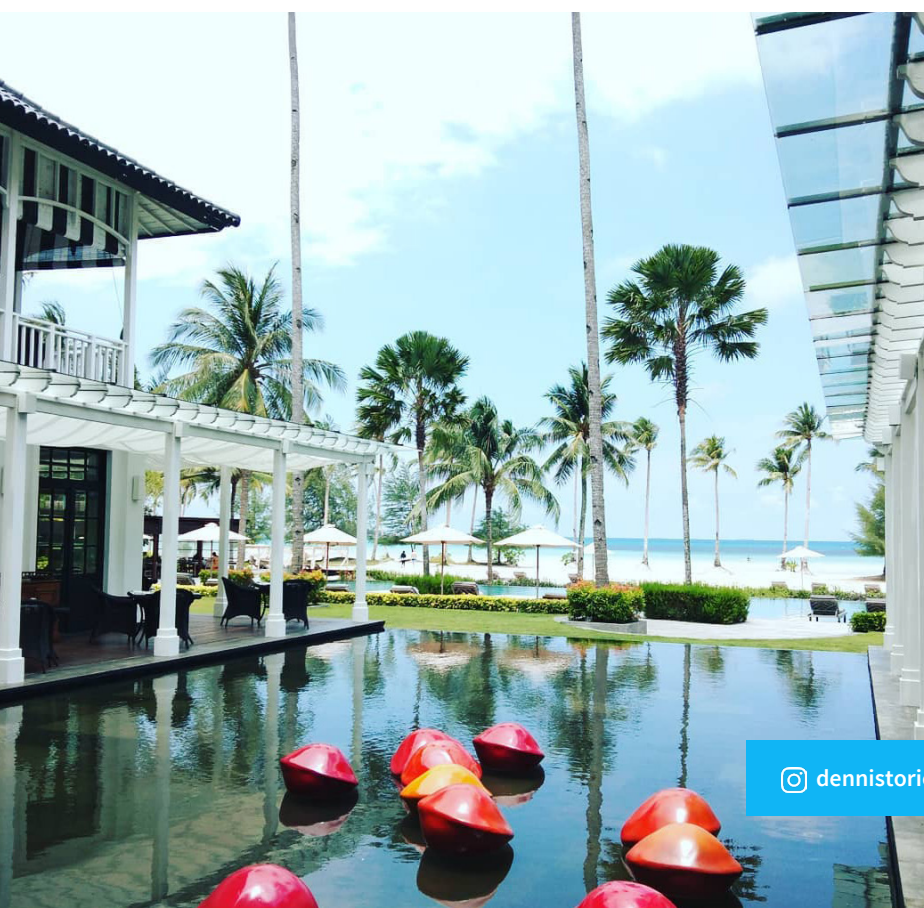
# What is UGC?

In today's digital world, user-generated content is being created in extraordinary volumes and is an essential part of every marketer's toolkit.

**But what exactly is user-generated content and why is it so important?**

User-generated content (UGC) is any content that is created and shared by your guests about your brand, all on their own. UGC can be both visual and textual. It includes any photos posted on social media, as well as reviews and testimonials posted by guests on your own website or third party sites, like Google, Yelp, or TripAdvisor.

Countless numbers of user-generated visuals are created and shared by your guests and greatest brand advocates every day. From a guest lounging poolside to a honeymooning couple taking a selfie, these visuals can have a huge impact on the value of your brand, using happy customers to authentically tell your story.


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# Why you Should be Using UGC in Your Marketing

Visual UGC is a powerful tool for any hotel or resort marketer. Let's explore the four main reasons why you should be including it in your marketing efforts.

## 1 UGC is trustworthy and credible

Today's travelers are visual decision-makers. Now more than ever, they rely on authentic imagery to make decisions about where to go, what to do, and where to stay. Two-thirds of consumers trust the opinion of other people online, and 83% of consumers trust the opinion of people they know.<sup>1,2</sup> So, user-generated content is incredibly effective because it is implicitly trusted by other consumers, as it's viewed as an unbiased and credible source. In fact, 92% of consumers trust word of mouth and UGC more than other forms of traditional brand advertising.<sup>3</sup>



## 2 Tell an authentic brand story and engage with your audience

Using your own guests' photos in your marketing allows you to tell a more authentic and relatable brand story, and makes guests feel more connected to your brand. UGC is social proof from other consumers about your hotel, the experience you offer, and gives viewers an idea of what they can expect when they stay with you. Seeing beautiful photos of real people enjoying your resort is more likely to resonate with your audience than stock imagery.

Utilizing UGC also allows you to engage with brand advocates and the wider community. These are the people who are already voluntarily sharing their experience with your brand just because they want to, and are a highly valuable source of content.

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Source: <https://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/niensenglobal/apac/docs/reports/2015/nielsen-global-trust-in-advertising-report-september-2015.pdf>





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### **3** Showcase fresh content that never gets stale

Do you ever feel like you're using the same photos over and over again? With UGC, that's no longer an issue. Every day, user-generated visuals are being created at a volume that is simply unmatched by marketing teams. There is an abundance of relevant and beautiful visuals available, so your website and marketing materials are always fresh and exciting.

### **4** Stretch your budget

Commissioned photography can be expensive and time consuming to create. UGC gives you a cost-effective way of acquiring original and impactful photos that can supplement the owned content you already have. With user-generated visuals, there's no more need for actors, equipment, or waiting for a day with perfect weather to get your shot.





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# 11 Ways You Can Use UGC In Your Marketing



# 1 Include UGC in your social media strategy

If you're new to UGC marketing, social media is one of the best places to get started. It's easy, budget-friendly, and super effective.

Sure, an Instagram feed full of professionally-shot, branded visuals might catch a traveler's eye, but UGC is what will drive them to begin planning their stay.

Why? Because UGC makes it easier for travelers to picture themselves at your resort in that moment. Social UGC is so effective that 32%-39% of millennials won't book a hotel or travel experience that doesn't use UGC marketing.<sup>1</sup>

Featuring UGC in your social feed helps build deeper connections with your audience, convert more viewers into customers, and adds a sense of personalization to your brand.

## Share guest photos and videos on your own social media channels

Your guests are already uploading tons of inspiring visuals on social media. By reposting their photos, videos, and Instagram Stories to your own feed, you can tap into the unique perspective that can only be found in authentic UGC.

Plus, by involving your guests in your marketing, you're nurturing your customer relationships and building an engaging story around your brand.<sup>2</sup> You're also building a relationship with your target audience, your existing customers, and their followers as well.

So, the next time you come across fantastic UGC on Instagram, leave a comment asking for permission to repost it. Once approved by the creator, share the visual to your own channel.



## Bonus Tip:

### Promote your social media hashtag and handle

On top of encouraging guests to share photos on social, remind them to use your hashtag and tag your account in their post. The more often your audience sees your branded hashtag in action, the more likely they are to use it for their own photos – which will expand your reach and give you access to a wider variety of UGC.

**Real-World Example: Southernmost Beach Resort reposts a wide variety of guest photos to their own Instagram account, showcasing their property and the diverse experiences they offer visitors. They leave a kind comment on the original post when asking for permission, and then credit the creator when they share the photo.**

<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://medium.com/@zipstrr/if-youre-in-the-travel-industry-user-generated-content-is-your-next-big-break-1d3f195f08e2a>

<sup>2</sup>Source: <https://www.shopify.ca/blog/user-generated-content>



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## 2 Incorporate UGC into your ad campaigns

Social media isn't the only place you can use UGC to make an impact. Visuals captured by your guests can be used effectively in traditional ad formats, including digital campaigns, print, and OOH ads.

### Digital Ads

Consider this: digital ads featuring UGC see a click-through rate 4X higher than traditional advertisements.<sup>1</sup> Social media users are so accustomed to ads at this point that they often tune them out. UGC makes your ads more authentic and compelling, and can capture user attention in a way that traditional ads might not. So, if you know your audience responds to authentic imagery, why wouldn't you use it in both your paid and owned media? Try experimenting with different digital ad formats, and make sure to include a strong call-to-action in each one.

Instagram Stories, for instance, are a fantastic resource for UGC related to specific activities or events that you can build campaigns around.

Not only are Stories wildly popular (over 500 million people post Instagram Stories every single day!<sup>2</sup>), but they offer a fun, authentic peek into a day in the life of your guests. You can tap into the power of your guests' Stories (with rights, of course) by repurposing them in your digital ads.

<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://www.socialtoaster.com/user-generated-content-21-stats-ugc/>

<sup>2</sup>Source: <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/instagram-stories-is-now-being-used-by-500-million-people-daily/547270/>



## Print or Out-Of-Home Advertising

There are plenty of places you can use UGC beyond the digital space. For instance, it can be effective in traditional advertising channels, like print and out-of-home advertising. This is an unexpected, impactful, and eye-catching way of utilizing user-generated content in your marketing.

Think outside the box and use UGC in unexpected places, like on a billboard (which can reach 71% of consumers who drive by) or bus shelters (which also have an impressive reach, with 92% of consumers seeing one each week).<sup>1</sup> Note that for OOH or print advertising, you must acquire the rights to UGC photos before you use them. Remember to specify where you intend to use the visual, whether it's in a print campaign, visitors guide, or OOH ads.

For extra peace of mind when requiring rights for large-scale campaigns, you can always direct people to your terms and conditions before they agree to grant you rights. You can read all about how CrowdRiff facilitates this process later on in the eBook.

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**Real-World Example: When Loews Hotels ran their #TravelForReal campaign a few years ago, they used UGC to power a full-blown marketing campaign. They turned individual photos into ads and created a microsite to display guest photos.**

<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://airoutdoor.co.uk/blog/outdoor-advertising-stats/>



### 3 Feature UGC in your blog, magazine, or newsletter

Your guests are creating UGC that is versatile and powerful enough to be used in every marketing touchpoint. UGC contributes to the overall perception of your brand by adding interest, personality, and a sense of legitimacy to your marketing.

By placing authentic UGC alongside your owned visuals, you get the best of both worlds: inspirational, authentic snapshots from your guests paired with aspirational, professional images.

If you run a blog, send out a newsletter, or produce a magazine for your brand, you can incorporate UGC to keep your content fresh and engaging all year round. This also allows you to take every opportunity to highlight niche activities and interests that position your brand as more than just a great place to stay.

Featuring UGC in your blog or magazine allows you to attract specific audiences with different visuals. For instance, you could showcase guest photos in blog posts about niche activities offered in your destination or at your hotel. Or simply feature a different Instagram “photo of the week” on your blog or in your newsletter.

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## 4 Incorporate UGC in direct mail

Despite the rise of digital marketing, direct mail is far from dead. In fact, almost 50% of consumers say they take action after receiving a piece of direct mail.<sup>1</sup>

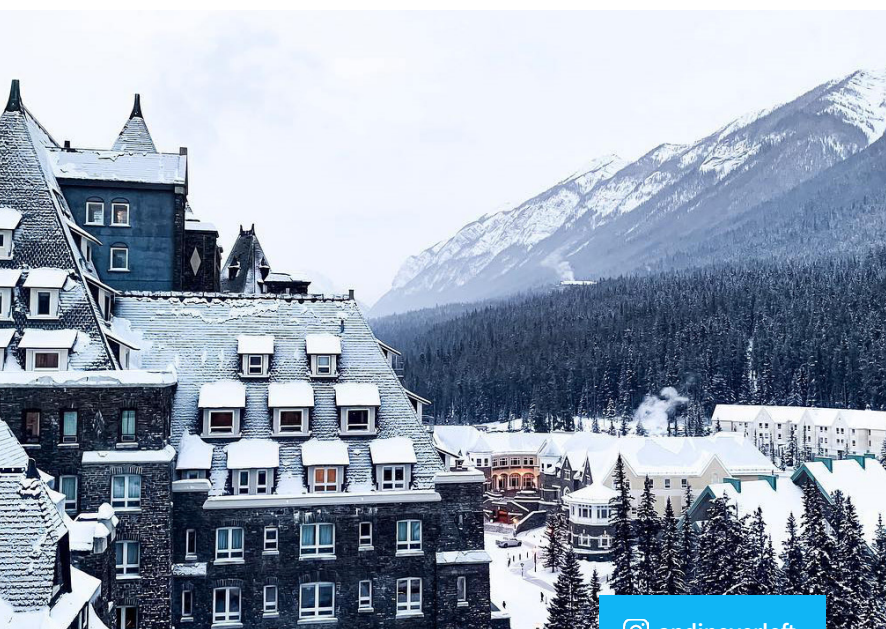
You can breathe even more life into your direct mail pieces by combining UGC with branded messaging. That's right, UGC isn't reserved just for digital marketing. It can be powerful when used in printed materials as well.

By combining UGC with more traditional forms of marketing, you can use it to build an authentic relationship with a wider pool of potential customers. More specifically, you can use UGC to create impactful, beautiful direct mail.

These can be made entirely with UGC, or with a combination of UGC and commissioned photography.

### Bonus Tip:

To measure the effectiveness of each mailer, try including a unique offer or booking code associated with the piece, so you can directly track the impact of your visuals and messaging.



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<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://kennedymarketinggroup.com/8-statistics-that-prove-direct-mail-is-still-relevant/>



## 5 Keep your website content fresh with UGC galleries

Your website is a go-to resource for potential guests to learn more about your hotel or resort, and is a perfect place to incorporate UGC galleries. They give visitors an authentic view of your property and the experiences you have to offer, and brands that feature UGC galleries on their website can increase time-on-site by up to 90%.<sup>1</sup> Plus, it's relatively easy to implement, since you can directly link back to the original digital post, meaning you don't need to request the rights to use these photos.

With such a large quantity of UGC visuals at your fingertips – and new

photos being shared every day – you can easily keep your website visuals current by regularly updating the images featured in your galleries.

### Cater to niche interests with targeted galleries

Each gallery can be tailored to highlight specific activities and experiences. This can help you connect with a wider range of audiences, appeal to guests with diverse interests, and keep visitors engaged on your site for longer.

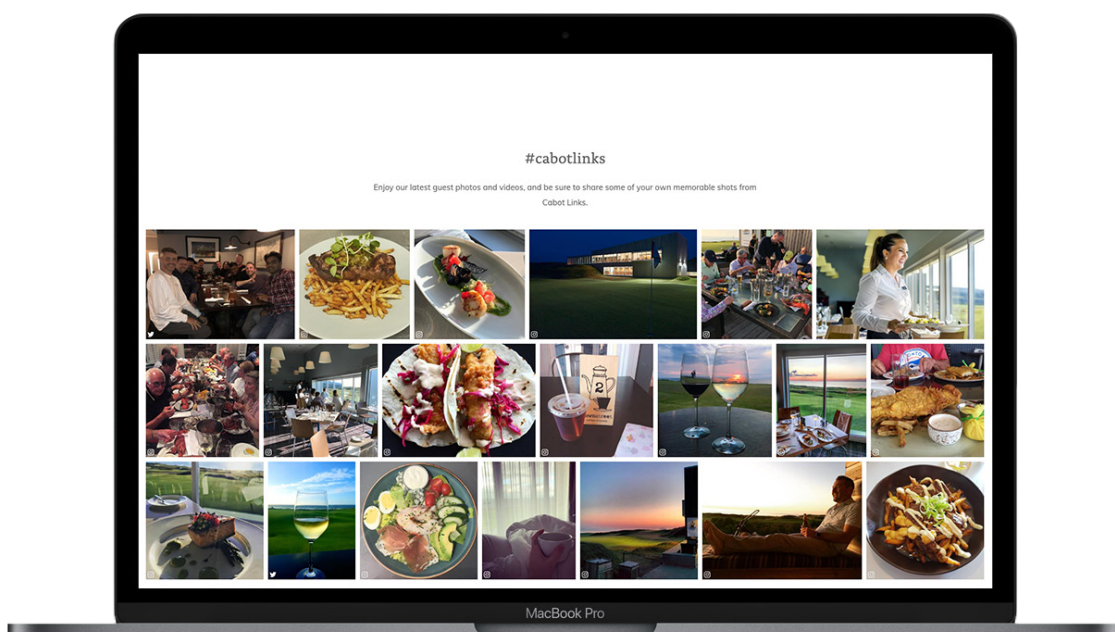
If you want to attract a new market, you can create a gallery designed

specifically to reach that audience. For instance, if you're known primarily as a ski resort but want to shine a spotlight on your fabulous spa or summer activities, build a UGC gallery dedicated to just that!

### Market to specific demographics

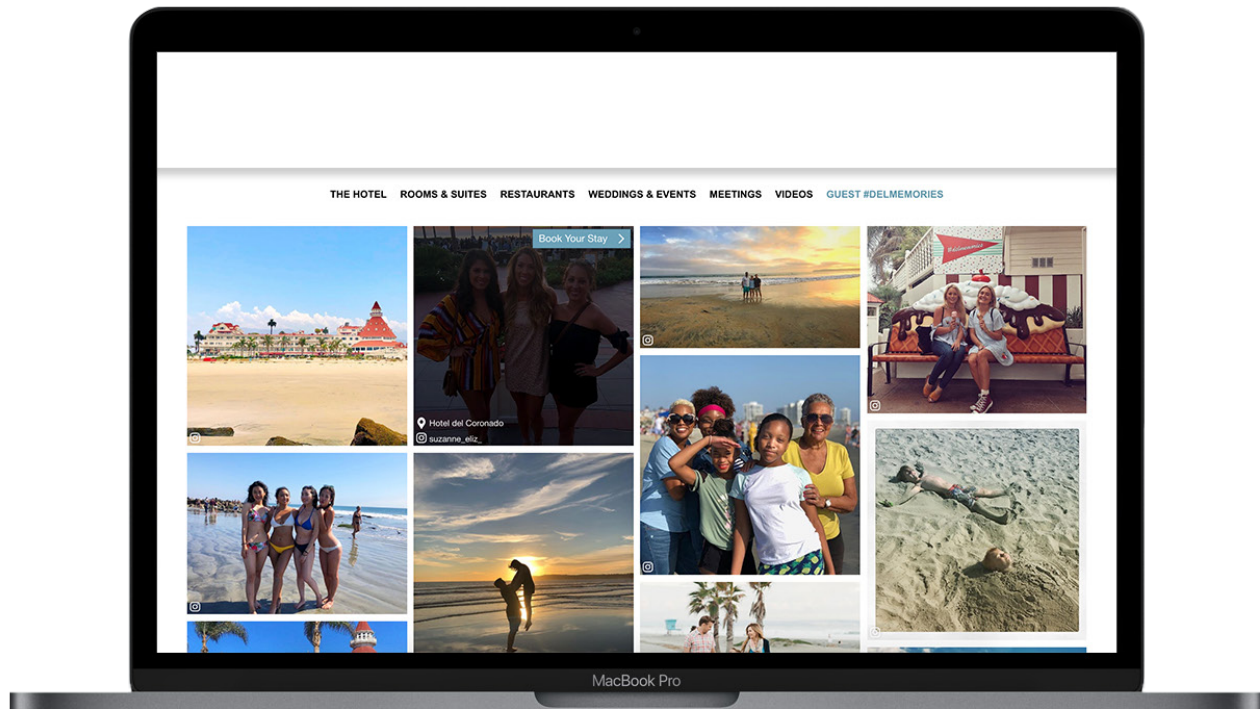
UGC galleries can also be used to target specific demographics or visitors from certain regions. Potential guests should be able to visualize themselves in the scenarios and visuals depicted on your website and in your marketing.

**Real-World Example: Cabot Links, a golf resort in Cape Breton, uses custom UGC galleries related to featured activities on different pages of their website. For instance, their “Food & Drink” page includes a gallery of guests’ dining experiences, which highlights the fact that Cabot Links has more to offer than just beautiful golf courses.**



<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2016/02/user-generated-content.html>





## 6 Drive action and bookings by adding CTAs to your visuals

If you want to drive more bookings (which, of course you do), why not combine direct calls-to-action with those inspirational UGC galleries on your site?

You can prompt visitors to book or learn more by adding CTAs directly to your UGC as overlays on specific images. Imagine this: a potential

guest sees a beautiful photo of someone lounging poolside at your hotel. When they hover over the image, they see a “Book Your Stay” CTA, and can click directly over to your booking page. This places the next step right in front of potential guests and encourages them to take action at the exact moment they’re feeling inspired by your visuals.

Whether you link to another page with more information, a partner website, or a booking portal for your hotel or local excursions, CTAs can bump up your conversions or direct booking revenue.

Plus, you can track which CTAs drive the most action, so you always know which specific visuals or types of images are most effective.

**Real-World Example: Hotel Del Coronado has a gorgeous gallery dedicated to guest photos shared with the #DelMemories hashtag.<sup>1</sup> When visitors hover over any of these images, a clickable “Book Your Stay” CTA appears and links directly to their booking portal.**

<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://hoteldel.com/photo-videos/>



## 7 Digital Displays

Digital displays are a great way to showcase timely visuals and provide in-the-moment updates for guests and potential visitors. Plus, seeing UGC displayed prominently around your property encourages more guests to share and tag their own photos for a chance to get featured.

### **Use photo walls to showcase fresh UGC**

Your guests love seeing their photos on display around your resort. It adds something special to their experience and makes them feel personally connected to your brand.

Digital displays also provide an idea of what other guests are currently experiencing. This can give new guests ideas for what they can do for fun or relaxation and inspire followers to imagine themselves in those same scenarios.

Photo walls also remind your guests to take more photos of their trip and to post their content using your hashtag on social media – which means you'll have even more amazing UGC to promote your brand.



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## 8 Run a photo or video contest on social media

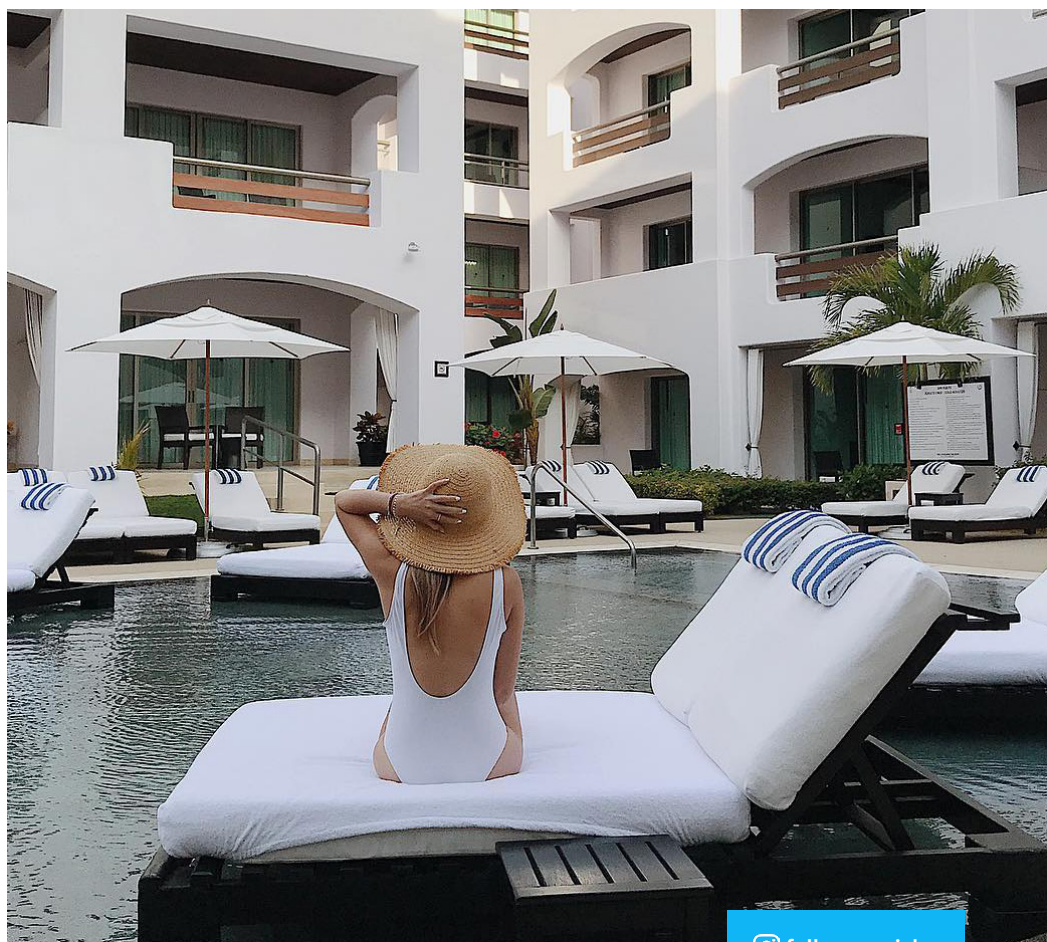
Social media photo contests are a fun way to engage with your audience and build a stronger community around your brand.

By encouraging guests to share more visuals with your hashtag, hosting a photo contest helps generate a huge amount of UGC that can be used in your marketing. Throughout the contest, you'll also extend your brand's reach to include participants' audience and followers.

Your contest can be purely photo-based or, if you're hoping to surface more video content of your resort or hotel, try launching a contest solely for UGC videos instead.

Whether you want participants to share photos, videos, or both, make sure you outline and communicate the rules in advance, so your followers know how to enter.

Now that you're eager to host your own photo contest, here's how to do it.



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### How to run a social media photo contest

1. **Decide on a hashtag.** You can either use your branded hashtag or create a new one specifically for the contest.
2. **Set guidelines** for how guests can enter and how you'll choose a winner. A good practice to follow is linking to the rules and regulations in your social media bios, so they are easily accessible to participants.
3. **Choose a prize related to your resort or hotel.** This could be a complimentary stay at your hotel or a pair of passes to a nearby attraction. Whatever prize you choose, promote it!
4. **Get the word out** on social media and your website to encourage people to enter.
5. **Boost engagement throughout the contest** by reposting some of the best entries on your own social media accounts.
6. **Pick a winner!**



## 9 Promote your local area or tourism partners with UGC

A fantastic stay at your hotel or resort is a major aspect of your guests' overall travel experience – but it's not the only aspect.

A memorable vacation is also about the sites, attractions, and activities your guests enjoy while they're in town. This is why so many hotels and resorts choose to promote their local tourism partners and the area around their property.

It's also another great way to incorporate user-generated content on your website. You can use UGC to showcase the destination and nearby experiences enjoyed by those who stay at your hotel or resort.

So rather than posting overused stock photos of key sites and attractions, you can give your website a more authentic vibe by using traveler photos. By leveraging UGC, your guests can see what other visitors are actually doing at your destination, and you can inspire them to explore the local area and uncover hidden gems.



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### Bonus Tip:

#### Showcase your local area with a UGC photo trail

Highlight the most social-friendly sites and local attractions by creating a photo map for guests to follow. You can incorporate UGC content on the map itself and encourage guests to post their own photos with your hashtag when they visit these locations.



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# 10

## Connect with influencers and host “FAM” trips at your property

Inviting influencers to stay at your property and post UGC about their experience can be a huge endorsement for your hotel or resort.

Not only does partnering with influencers result in a ton of quality content creation for promoting your brand, but it also allows you to expand your reach significantly. That’s because you instantly gain access to the influencer’s audience. More importantly, you get to tap into the influencer’s reputation and take advantage of the uniquely authentic relationship they have with their followers.

Maybe that’s why influencer marketing grew by almost 40% in 2018?<sup>1</sup> And that upward trend is likely to continue, as Instagram remains one of the most popular social spaces for sharing visuals and Stories with friends and followers.

### Micro-influencers are major players in UGC marketing

Don’t overlook the value of micro-influencers who cater to smaller, niche audiences. This includes travel influencers, food bloggers, photographers, or other social media influencers with an engaged community of loyal followers.

It all depends on who you’re trying to target. Whether that’s families, guests from specific parts of the world, or travelers with a passion for kitesurfing, partnering with micro-influencers can be an effective way to market to specific audiences.

To make the most of your partnership, organize a “familiarization” (FAM) trip for influencers with followers you want to reach.

### How to organize a FAM trip

1. **Decide who you want to target.** What specific audience or segment are you trying to reach?
2. **Reach out to influencers** who cater to your target audience, and whose social feeds mesh well with your brand and visual story. You should also consider the size of their following, so you know how big your potential reach will be.
3. **Invite influencers to come and stay** at your property, so they can personally capture and share the experience with their followers.
4. **Create an itinerary** that will allow visiting influencers to enjoy the best aspects of your hotel or resort, including dining experiences, local entertainment, or activities related specifically to the influencer’s niche.
5. **Discuss what type of content they should post.** For instance, do you want a certain number of photos shared to their social channels or would you prefer a takeover of your branded account? Do you want to highlight specific activities, interests, or events? Or do you want them to write a blog post about their experience? These are details you can work out with influencers you consider partnering with.



<sup>1</sup>Source: [https://blog.klear.com/instagram-influencer-marketing-trends-2019/?utm\\_source=homepage](https://blog.klear.com/instagram-influencer-marketing-trends-2019/?utm_source=homepage)



# 11 Give virtual tours of your property built with UGC

Virtual tours are all the rage these days – and it’s easy to see why.

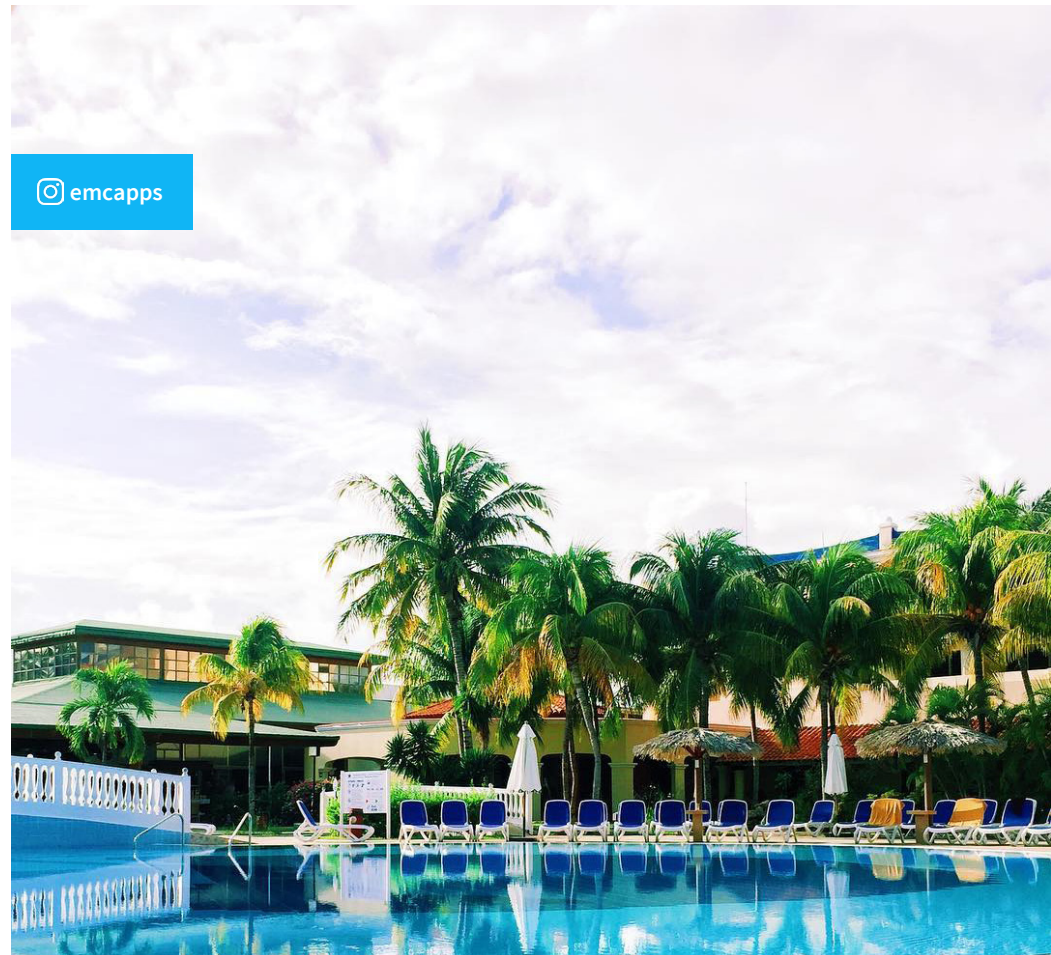
A virtual tour provides a 360-degree view of your property for an added perspective that’s not always possible with photos alone.<sup>1</sup> Potential visitors and future guests love these tours because they’re an interactive way to explore your resort or hotel online.

Plenty of resorts and hotels offer virtual tours of their pool deck, guest rooms, and other spaces around the property – but how many of them build these tours using UGC footage?

You can reimagine virtual tours by compiling guest videos that highlight areas of your property you want to show off. Whether you use individual videos or a selection of videos stitched together, a UGC-fueled virtual tour creates an engaging, user-friendly view of your hotel or resort.

This ups the authenticity level even more by showing guests exactly what they’re getting. Plus, it’s a fun, immersive way to show off your property and your brand.

Look for inspiration anywhere your guests post videos (Instagram Stories, Facebook Stories, YouTube, etc.) and choose from content shared by current, recent, and past guests who have posted about your property. To go one step further, you could partner with an influencer to produce a virtual tour during an organized FAM trip.



<sup>1</sup>Source: <https://www.hotelspeak.com/2019/01/how-360-imagery-can-help-your-hotel-stand-out/>



# Everything You Need to Know About UGC Rights

When it comes to using photos and videos from social media in your marketing, it can be tricky to figure out what you're allowed to do, and what you aren't. Follow these guidelines to learn more about user-generated content rights and when you do and don't need to ask for permission to use a guest's photo.

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## When you do not need rights to use a photo

If you're displaying a user-generated photo through a social network or through an API partner, you don't need rights. Essentially, if it's clear who the original creator is, and you can easily direct viewers back to the original content, you won't need permission. This includes:

- Embedding a Tweet or Instagram photo onto your website or blog. If you use the embed code provided by the social network, you don't need to request the rights to the photo.
- Displaying content through an API partner, like with CrowdRiff galleries. Since CrowdRiff uses Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook's API to display photos, and abides by all of their separate Terms & Conditions, you do not need explicit permission to display photos.

## When you do need rights to use a photo

You need to request rights to photos anytime you take the photo off of its social network, without a direct link back to the original content. You need to request rights if you are:

- Reposting a photo or video to your own social media accounts.
- Using the photo in digital or print ads.
- Displaying the photo on your website without a link back to the original photo.
- Displaying a modified version of a photo.



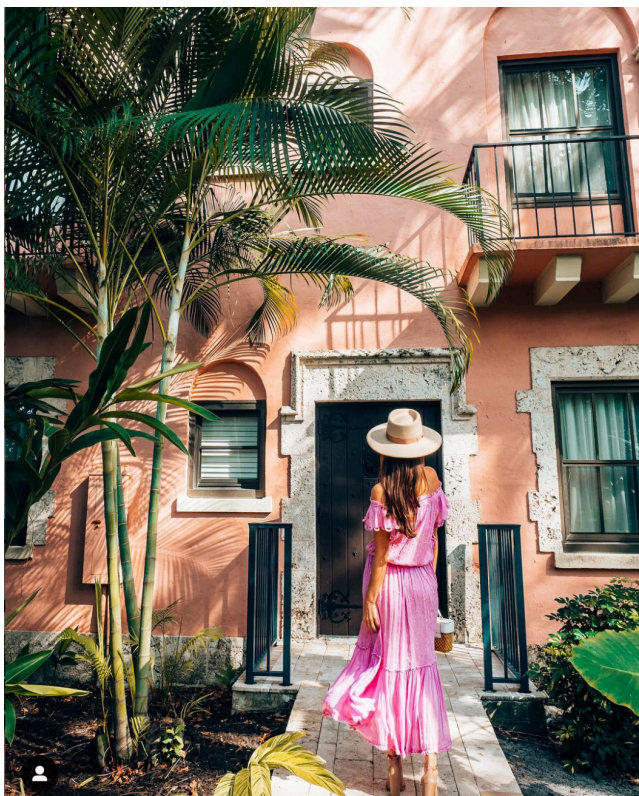
# Best Practices For Getting Rights to UGC


Asking for permission in a comment is the best way to request rights to a photo.


Generally, people are quite flattered when they're asked to share their photo, and are usually happy to say yes when asked nicely.




When crafting a comment, follow this checklist.


1. Leave a nice comment that shows appreciation for their work.
2. Tell them how you want to use their photo.
3. Give them a way to explicitly say "yes". Let them know what hashtag they can use when they respond back to you.















 **khemric** • Follow  
Palm Beach, Florida

**bocaresort** This is a stunning shot, Kristi! If we have your permission, we would love to share them on our social pages. Please reply with [#WaldorfMoment](#) to agree. Terms of Use: <http://HiltonIGrules.com>. Thank you! 

**elegantly.jackie** Love this color!!!   Such a great shot 

**nazyfarnoosh** I need to live here! 



**thelifeofgracia** Beautiful! I love Florida  

**yentlkeuppens** Damn this is so good! Love your edit sweets          

**alba.gc.m**    love your IG!! 

**khemric** [@bocaresort](#) [#waldorfmoment](#) 

**aliceandtrixie** Beautiful!  

**letravelcanvas** Such a beautiful shot and that color looks great on you  



2,833 likes

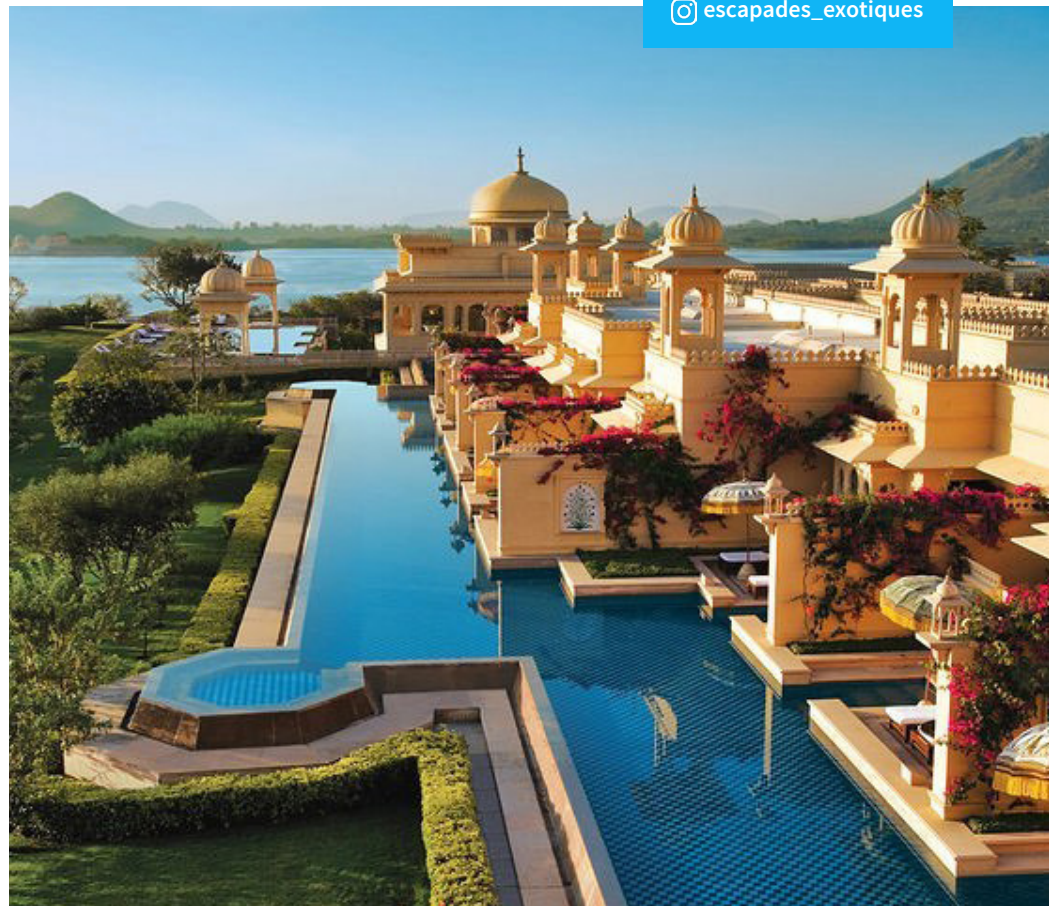
JANUARY 27

Add a comment...

## Link people to your terms & conditions

Invite people to view your terms & conditions when you request rights to photos. You can link to your terms and conditions in your profile, and direct users to review them before they agree to grant you rights.





# How CrowdRiff Manages User-Generated Content Rights

Resorts and hotels use CrowdRiff to automate the rights request process, shaving hours of manual searching off the work week.

**We keep track of your requests.** When you're manually requesting rights to UGC, it's extraordinarily hard to keep a record of which photos you've requested and who has responded. CrowdRiff automates all of that.

**We retrieve the high-resolution version of any photo** immediately after someone gives you rights. No more emailing back and forth - when they approve, you get the photo instantly.

**We take a screenshot each time someone responds with "yes"**, and archive it so that you can have a record of every interaction.

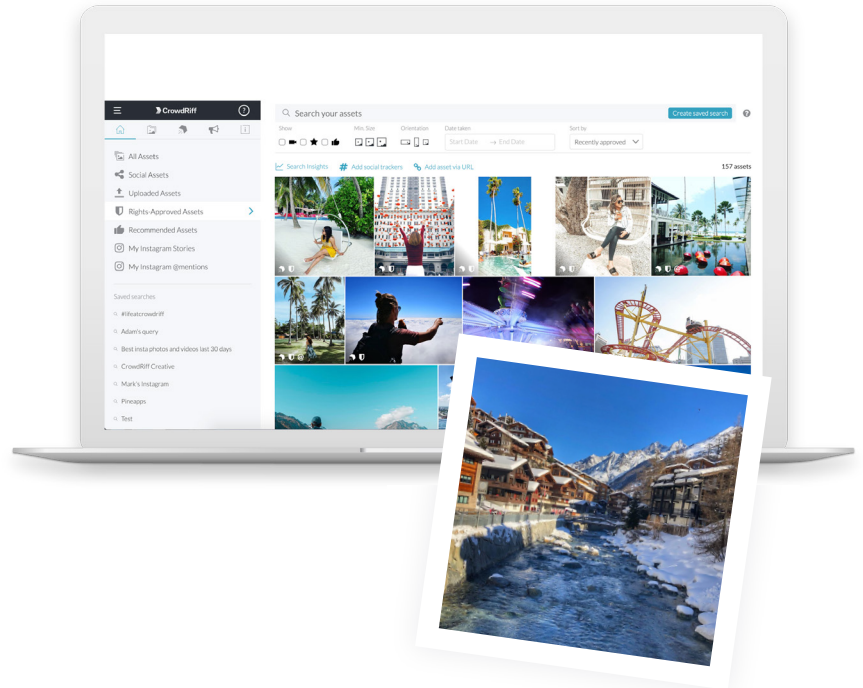


# What is CrowdRiff?

CrowdRiff is an AI-powered visual content marketing platform that enables marketers to discover, collaborate on, and deliver top-performing visuals across every channel.

Hotels and resorts use CrowdRiff to:

- Automatically source new guest photos in real-time from social channels.
- Expand their image libraries by getting rights to UGC.
- Deliver impactful imagery across their website, social channels, print materials, digital ads, and more.



# Discover the most engaging social media photos from your hotel or resort

We work with over 500 leading travel and tourism brands worldwide. Let us show you what CrowdRiff can do for you.

To learn more, visit [www.crowdriff.com/resorts-hotels](http://www.crowdriff.com/resorts-hotels)

