Visual Marketing Report:
The Gap Between Travel and Hospitality Brands' Priorities and Practices

CrowdRiff

What's Inside

The Gap Between Priority and Practice

Travelers pay attention to visuals. Though, when it comes to using them in your marketing, do you stick to the status quo, or do you innovate? We surveyed over 200 travel and hospitality marketers to find out.

How do you choose what type of visuals to use in your marketing? How do you measure the performance of your visuals? How are you driving visitors to take action?

These are just a few of the questions we asked travel marketers across the globe during the months of September and October 2019. The results are in the following report.

Marketing leaders are more likely to apply a data-driven mindset to their digital marketing practices, yet we found only a fraction of respondents are measuring visual content beyond leading indicators such as the number of views or likes a particular asset received. This represents an opportunity for travel marketers to start using visual content to its full potential to drive greater economic impact, conversions, and direct bookings.

Read this report to find out how you compare to other marketers in your industry, discover opportunities to stand out, and attract more travelers to your destination or travel experience.
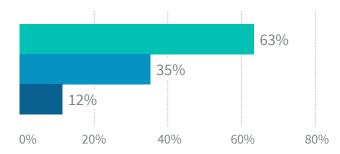
Julia Manoukian
Senior Content Marketing Manager

brendaraa

the_bags_are_packed

Executive Summary

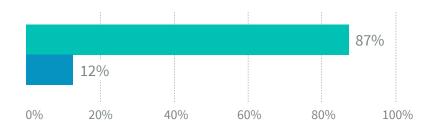## 1. A gap in travel brands' priorities and practices

Of all the respondents, 63% say the primary goal of their visual marketing strategy is to increase conversions across their marketing channels, yet only 35% measure visual performance by what's converting. And, only 12% of all marketers can accurately say the visuals they use influenced overall revenue, either by multi-touch or last-touch attribution.

2. Revenue-focused travel brands are not using visual content to its full potential

Hoteliers and tour operators both say the primary goal of their visual marketing strategy is to generate revenue via direct bookings (64% and 65%, respectively). However, only 12% of hospitality brands and 16% of tour operators are measuring how visuals contribute to this number on their websites. In both sectors, almost half aren't measuring their website's visuals at all.

3. The vast majority of travel and hospitality brands surveyed (87%) don't have a solution for storing and organizing their visuals. Digital asset management (DAM) tools are well-known to improve your team's speed, efficiency, and results.
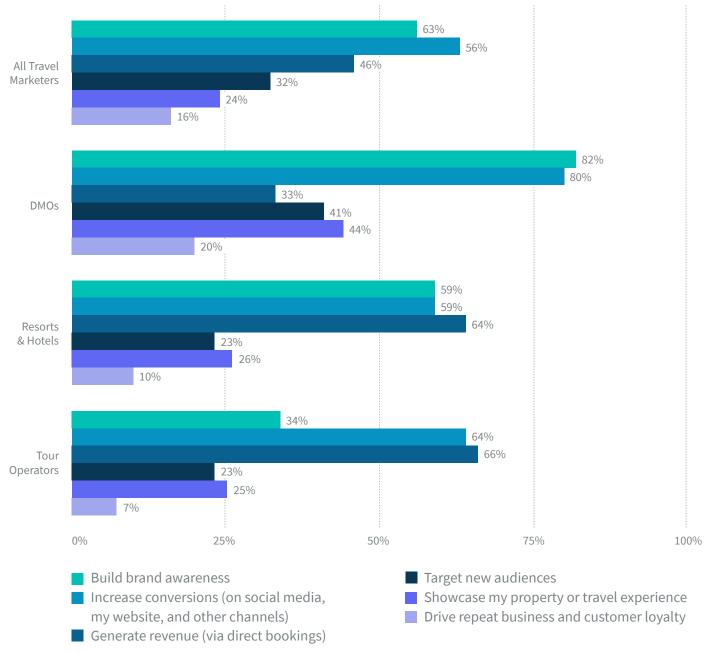

■ Google Drive, Dropbox, external drives, or similar
■ We use a digital asset management tool to keep our visual content organized

Visual Marketing Goals

Conversions represent the largest visual marketing priority for all verticals. However, generating revenue via direct bookings is a top priority for both hoteliers, at 64%, and tour operators, at 64%. Building brand awareness is the most popular priority for DMOs, at 82%.

Definition: Visual marketing is the process of using photos, graphics, videos, and other visual content to market a product or service.

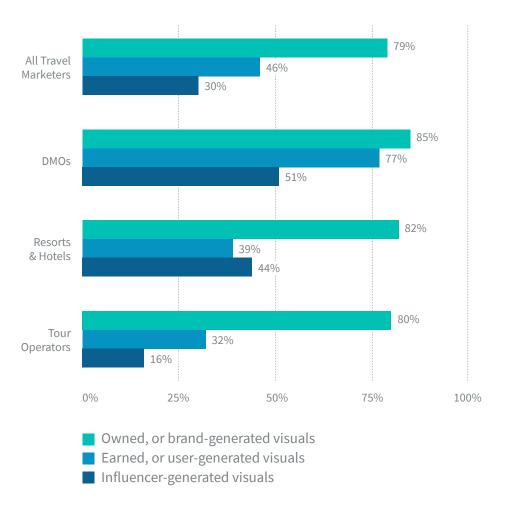## Q: What are the primary goals of your visual marketing strategy?

All Travel Marketers
- Build brand awareness: 63%
- Increase conversions: 56%
- Generate revenue: 46%
- Target new audiences: 32%
- Showcase my property or travel experience: 24%
- Drive repeat business and customer loyalty: 16%

DMOs
- Build brand awareness: 82%
- Increase conversions: 80%
- Generate revenue: 33%
- Target new audiences: 41%
- Showcase my property or travel experience: 44%
- Drive repeat business and customer loyalty: 20%

Resorts & Hotels
- Build brand awareness: 59%
- Increase conversions: 59%
- Generate revenue: 64%
- Target new audiences: 23%
- Showcase my property or travel experience: 26%
- Drive repeat business and customer loyalty: 10%

Tour Operators
- Build brand awareness: 34%
- Increase conversions: 64%
- Generate revenue: 66%
- Target new audiences: 23%
- Showcase my property or travel experience: 25%
- Drive repeat business and customer loyalty: 7%

Legend:
- Build brand awareness
- Increase conversions (on social media, my website, and other channels)
- Generate revenue (via direct bookings)
- Target new audiences
- Showcase my property or travel experience
- Drive repeat business and customer loyalty

Sourcing Visual Content

The preferred way of sourcing visual content across all sectors is content that is created by the brand, or paid for through a stock photography site. DMOs, in particular, use of UGC (77%) is almost on a par with their use of owned visuals (84%).

Considering that there are almost three billion social media users this year, there's an opportunity for all brands to tap into the content people are creating about their brands every day.[2] User-generated content (UGC) can help supplement your branded content, drive engagement and conversions, and put your customers front and center.

Q: How do you source your visual content?

All Travel Marketers	79% / 46% / 30%
DMOs	85% / 77% / 51%
Resorts & Hotels	82% / 39% / 44%
Tour Operators	80% / 32% / 16%

Scale: 0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

- Owned, or brand-generated visuals
- Earned, or user-generated visuals
- Influencer-generated visuals

Definitions:

Owned, or brand-generated visuals: We pay for visuals, either through a professional, an agency or stock photography site. This includes on-site photographers.

Earned, or user-generated visuals: We source and get the rights to photos and videos that other people are already posting online about our brand.
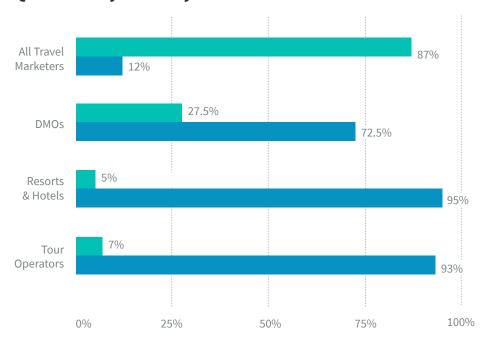
Influencer-generated visuals: We use influencers to create visual content for us based on their experiences with our destination, property or travel experience.

Storing and Organizing Your Visuals

Do you use a digital asset management (DAM) tool to store and organize all your brand's photos and videos? We found that only 12% of marketers we asked have one in place. The rest are using Google Drive, Dropbox or computer drives. Imagine you were looking for a particular photo and you couldn't find it. At the end of the day, DAMs help marketers to save money, time and work smarter.

Just over one quarter (27%) of DMOs are using a DAM. That number is even less, 10%, when it comes to hoteliers and tour operators.

Q: Where do you store your visuals?

Category	Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.	DAM tool
All Travel Marketers	87%	12%
DMOs	27.5%	72.5%
Resorts & Hotels	5%	95%
Tour Operators	7%	93%

■ Google Drive, Dropbox, external hard drives, or similar
■ We use a digital asset management tool to keep our visual content organized
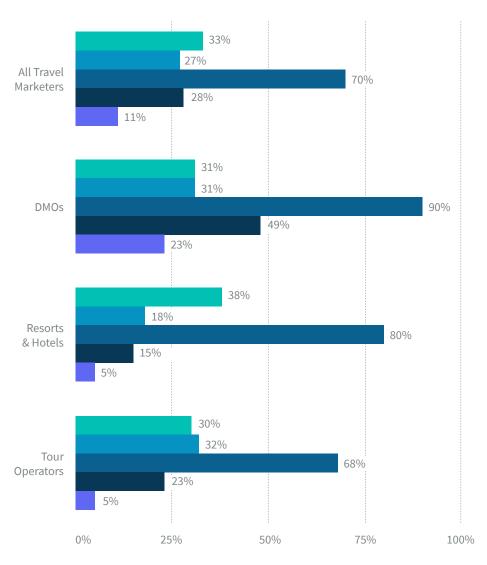
@ mihaelafedoseev

Choosing Your Visuals

It should be no surprise that the majority of travel and hospitality marketers are selecting photos and videos to distribute across channels based on how they align with brand standards and content needs.

What is surprising is how few marketers are leveraging data to inform their visual marketing decisions. Marketing leaders are 1.5 times as likely as laggards to apply measurement learning to digital marketing and media investment in near real time.[3] Why, then, aren't more marketers applying these practices to their visual marketing strategy?

When it comes to using data to help them make decisions, DMOs lead the pack, with 48% repurposing best-performing visuals across channels. Hoteliers lag behind, with almost 40% of resort and hotel marketers relying on their gut to choose photos and videos.

Q: How do you choose what type of visuals to use in your marketing?

All Travel Marketers
- It's a gut feeling: 33%
- We use whatever's available: 27%
- We choose them based on how they align with our brand standards and content needs: 70%
- We repurpose best-performing visuals from other channels: 28%
- We use data and software to predict what will perform best: 11%

DMOs
- It's a gut feeling: 31%
- We use whatever's available: 31%
- We choose them based on how they align with our brand standards and content needs: 90%
- We repurpose best-performing visuals from other channels: 49%
- We use data and software to predict what will perform best: 23%

Resorts & Hotels
- It's a gut feeling: 38%
- We use whatever's available: 18%
- We choose them based on how they align with our brand standards and content needs: 80%
- We repurpose best-performing visuals from other channels: 15%
- We use data and software to predict what will perform best: 5%

Tour Operators
- It's a gut feeling: 30%
- We use whatever's available: 32%
- We choose them based on how they align with our brand standards and content needs: 68%
- We repurpose best-performing visuals from other channels: 23%
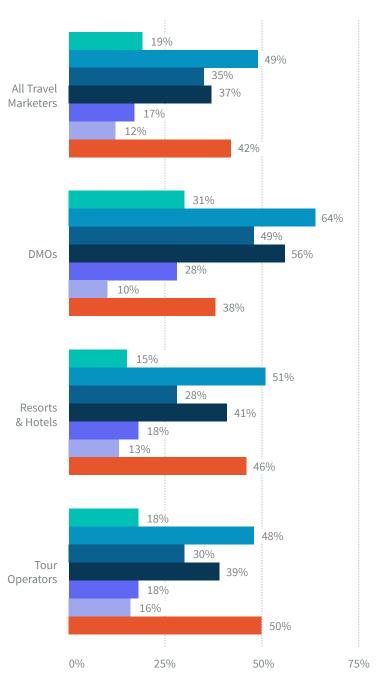- We use data and software to predict what will perform best: 5%

Legend:
- It's a gut feeling
- We use whatever's available
- We choose them based on how they align with our brand standards and content needs
- We repurpose best-performing visuals from other channels
- We use data and software to predict what will perform best

Measurement and Performance

Q: How do you measure the performance of your visuals, specifically on your website?

When it comes to visual content, many brands are still reporting on them from a top-of-funnel perspective. Views, or no measurement at all is the norm: 49% of brands say they measure visual website performance based on views, and 42% don't measure visual website performance at all.

Despite prioritizing conversions, only about 1/3 of hoteliers and tour operators are measuring conversions. What's more, even fewer of these marketers are tracking the influence of visuals (12% and 15%, respectively) in their revenue funnels.

Similar to other sections in this report, DMOs are innovators in this space, with almost half (48%) measuring conversions as a visual KPI.

- **Anecdotal:** People tell us they like our use of visuals
- **Views:** Number of views/likes a particular asset received
- **Conversions:** Clicks on a particular asset
- **Engagement rate:** Clicks divided by the number of views
- **Influence on conversions:** Visitors who interact with your visuals vs those who don't
- **Influence on revenue:** Visitors who interact with your visuals vs those who don't
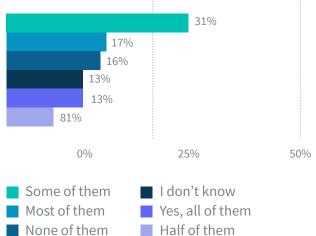- **We don't currently measure the success of visuals on our website**

Calls to action

Calls to action (CTAs) are a key element in capitalizing on visitors' interest and pushing them to the next stage of your marketing funnel. Despite this, only ⅓ of marketers say 75% of more of their website visuals include CTAs.
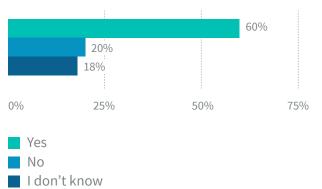
For those who do include CTAs on their visuals, 60% say the CTA messaging is customized to the content of the visual.

andrepaolo

Q: Do the visuals on your website include calls to action?

- 31%
- 17%
- 16%
- 13%
- 13%
- 81%

■ Some of them   ■ I don't know
■ Most of them   ■ Yes, all of them
■ None of them   ■ Half of them

Q: Are these calls to action customized to reflect the content of each visual? For example, if you're a tour operator showcasing visuals of a specific travel experience such as kayaking, the CTA will drive visitors to book that kayaking trip.
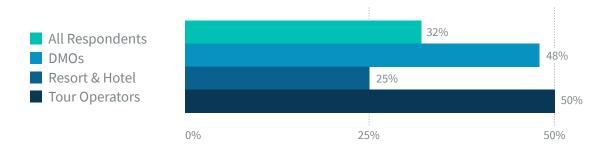

- 60%
- 20%
- 18%

■ Yes
■ No
■ I don't know

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A/B testing

For any marketer, constant testing and optimizing is the key to cracking great conversion rates. Destination and tour operator marketers understand this well; almost 50% of respondents say they're regularly testing their photos and videos across channels. Compared to these sectors, hoteliers lag behind, with only ¼ using A/B testing in their marketing.

Q: We regularly A/B test the visuals we use, either via ads, on our website, or on social media.

All Respondents	32%
DMOs	48%
Resort & Hotel	25%
Tour Operators	50%

0%   25%   50%

Key Visual Challenges for Travel and Hospitality Marketers

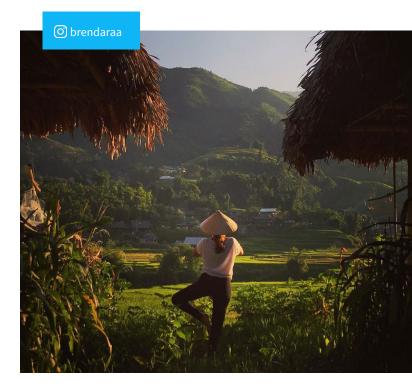### 1. Bridging the gap between priorities and practices

Visual marketing deserves as much attention as your PR, brand or channel marketing strategy. With ⅔ of respondents saying conversions are their number one priority, there's a significant opportunity for brands to improve the way they measure and analyze photos and videos across marketing channels. This will help them find ways to drive more conversions on their website, social media channels, and more.

2. Tapping into the full potential of data-driven visuals

Forty-two percent of marketers say they don't measure the success of visuals on their website. Without a data-driven approach, brands are not only overlooking a key way to improve the bottom line, but also a great way to increase the value per website visitor or booker.

3. Improving the efficiency of visual marketing across channels

A good majority of brands don't have a system in place to organize, store and share visuals with third-party partners. This poses roadblocks in time management, efficiency and, for larger brands, security. If brands want to get their visual marketing in order, a DAM is a good place to start.

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What Can You Do About It?

1. Take a look at your current vs future state

If you want to close the gap between your visual marketing goals and efforts, start by reviewing your current state. Are there any missed opportunities? For example, you might already know your best-performing photos on social media, but what about on your website? And, is there a way you can find, create and publish more photos like the ones that are already performing well for you?

If your goal is to increase conversions, doubling down on what's working visually is a great place to start. Like any strategy, remember to be specific about the results you'd like to achieve.
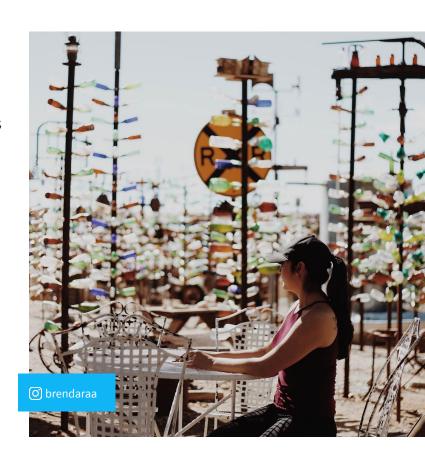
2. Are you using the right visuals to attract and convert travelers?

In many cases, consumers find user-generated content more trustworthy than professional photos and videos. As you review your current state, check to see how much photography puts your customer front and center. When you use the content your fans and visitors produce in your marketing, you're letting their voices tell the story for you.

3. Figure out if technology makes sense

Unless you already have a solution to measure and store your photos and videos, consider a visual marketing platform. A good visual marketing platform gives you performance analytics for your visuals across channels so you can make more informed decisions around visual content. It can also help you to store your visual content, from user-generated to professional photos and videos.

Finding a good partner is key—you need someone who will support your business goals and understands your brand. Review the partner's capabilities, history and previous clients, and don't forget to ask for references.

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Research Methodology

This survey was done throughout the months of September and October 2019. In total, 220 travel and hospitality marketers responded including tour operators, destination marketers, resorts and hotels, digital agencies and more.
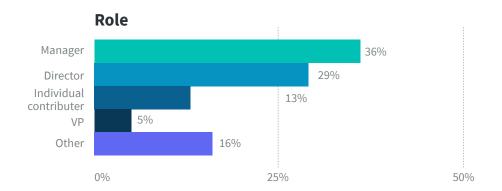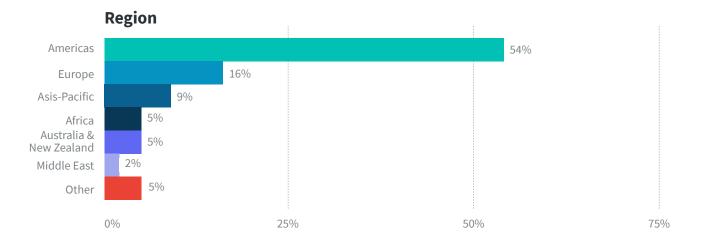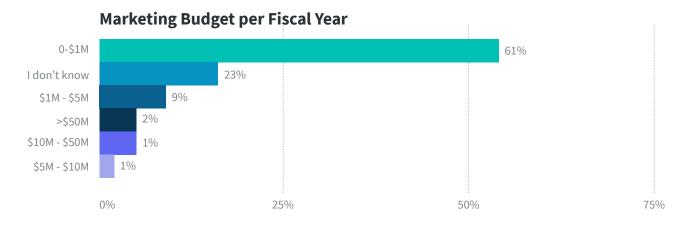
Top 5 Industries
20% tour operators
18% destination marketers
18% hotels or resorts
17% "other" - transport, airline, attraction, travel agent
9% digital agencies

Role

Manager	36%
Director	29%
Individual contributer	13%
VP	5%
Other	16%

0%　　25%　　50%

Region

Americas	54%
Europe	16%
Asis-Pacific	9%
Africa	5%
Australia & New Zealand	5%
Middle East	2%
Other	5%

0%　　25%　　50%　　75%

Marketing Budget per Fiscal Year

0-$1M	61%
I don't know	23%
$1M - $5M	9%
>$50M	2%
$10M - $50M	1%
$5M - $10M	1%

0%　　25%　　50%　　75%

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About CrowdRiff

CrowdRiff is a visual content marketing software solution for digital and social teams at travel and hospitality brands. CrowdRiff can help you source, distribute and optimize the photos and videos that will attract and influence visitors.

We help travel brands at every step of the campaign process:

- **User-generated Content:** Discover authentic, high-quality photos and videos shared by visitors

- **Digital Asset Manager:** Manage all your visuals in a modern, intuitive AI-powered platform

- **Media Hub:** Easily share UGC and branded visuals with journalists, PR agencies and bloggers

Powering the world's most successful travel & hospitality brands

Watch A Demo