



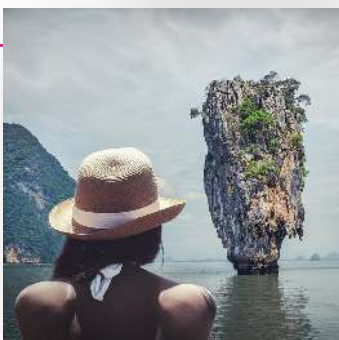
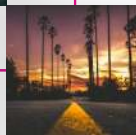
A MIAPPI UGC SURVEY

THE STATE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT IN TRAVEL MARKETING



INTRODUCTION

IT'S NO SECRET THAT TRAVEL MARKETING IS THE PERFECT INDUSTRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT. AFTER ALL, WE'VE BEEN TAKING AND SHARING HOLIDAY PHOTOS SINCE WAY BEFORE THE INVENTION OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB. WE LIKE DOING IT. WE EVEN GO OUT OF OUR WAY TO TAKE THE BEST PHOTOS WE CAN.



So it seems like straight off the bat, there's a huge amount of potential for travel brands to tap into user-generated content. It's certainly true that user-generated content is big business with conversion rates for shoppers who interact with UGC being 90% higher.

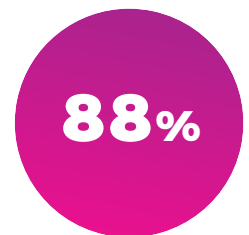
And that's just for brands in general. When we look specifically at travel and tourism brands, nearly three quarters (73%) of people say that UGC increases their purchasing confidence. Visitors to hotel websites that include UGC galleries spend 90% more time on those sites and luxury hotel brands that source more than half of their posts from user-generated content receive 2.6 times higher engagement than brands that don't.



Travel and tourism contributes \$7.61 Trillion dollars to the global economy.



Of travellers agree that reading user-generated content increases confidence in making travel decisions



Of travellers thought that UGC was important for deciding where to stay

THE OPPORTUNITIES

FOR TRAVEL BRANDS, USER-GENERATED CONTENT HAS AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF POTENTIAL. BETTER STILL, AS THE DEVICES THAT WE CARRY AROUND BECOME MORE AND MORE POWERFUL, THE QUALITY OF THAT CONTENT WILL GET BETTER AND BETTER TOO. IT'S EASY TO IMAGINE A TIME NOT TOO FAR IN THE FUTURE WHEN WE ALL HAVE 4K CAMERAS INSIDE OUR SMARTPHONES.

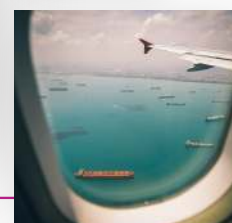
Travel brands are already starting to take advantage of UGC, as is evidenced by some of the examples we'll explore later. An example worth an honorary mention is Air New Zealand's #AirNSPacked campaign which asked travellers to upload photos of their packed suitcases so people could try to guess where they were going. Another is Momondo's "Bright Colours of the City" campaign, which aimed to encourage more people to travel by booking through their flight and search engine.

"THE THING THAT ACTUALLY BREAKS THROUGH ALL OF THE NOISE IS WHEN YOU SEE REAL USERS SHARING REAL CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA."

- DOM GARRETT

A common theme amongst the travel brands that have successfully used user-generated content is that they've highlighted the lifestyle elements of travel, rather than the destinations themselves. Ultimately, if you have a hotel in New York City, there's only so much you can say about the hotel. But if Brandon Stanton's [Humans of New York](#) blog has taught us anything, it's that New York City is full of stories just waiting to be shared, and savvy travel and tourism brands are tapping into that.

After all, it's important to remember that when people make travel decisions, they think with their heart as much as with their minds. It's important to still create branded content, of course, but there's no reason you can't hit their heads with branded content and their hearts with UGC. It's a double whammy that allows both tactics to live up to their full potential. They're more powerful together than they ever are apart, especially if the UGC ties in with your overall messaging. If you're a luxury hotel brand, UGC that shows people living in luxury says so much more than anything you could create yourself.



EXAMPLE #1: HILTON HOTELS

“ACHIEVEMENT SEEMS TO BE CONNECTED WITH ACTION. SUCCESSFUL MEN AND WOMEN KEEP MOVING. THEY MAKE MISTAKES, BUT THEY DON’T QUIT.”

- CONRAD HILTON

Hilton was embracing user-generated content as far back as 2014, when they deployed it as part of a wider social media marketing campaign. The brand adopted the #HiltonStory hashtag to encourage guests to share their travel stories. By amplifying these messages, they were able to humanise travel while simultaneously promoting their hotels as the perfect place to stay for a variety of different types of traveller. It helped that they showed the destinations in a positive light too, of course.

Part of Hilton’s success came down to the fact that contributors were incentivized with a free two-night stay being given away every week to someone who shared their Hilton story. The best thing about this is that it encouraged customer loyalty by rewarding people who have already stayed at a Hilton hotel.

To make the most of the opportunities that UGC created, Hilton turned to Instagram to share their visitors’ photography, helping them to hit over 100,000 followers. More importantly, their engagement went through the roof, and it built relationships with their visitors as well because they were given full credit for the stories they shared.



EXAMPLE #2: EXPEDIA

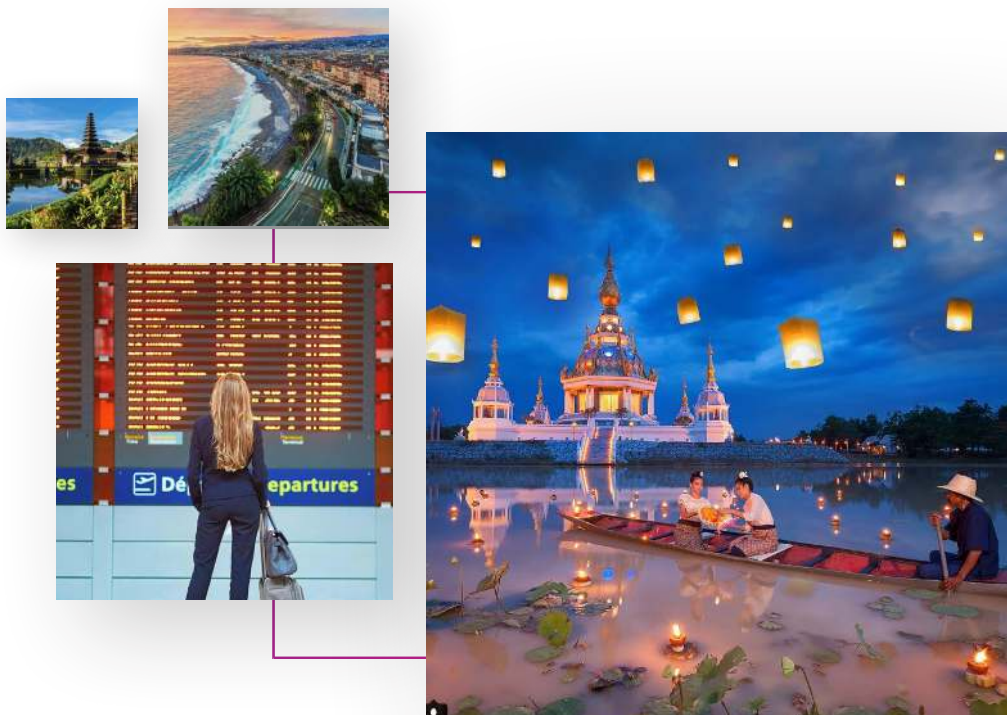
“WE HELPED CREATE ONLINE TRAVEL, BUT OVER THE COURSE OF TIME, THE PERSONAL TOUCH HAD BEEN LOST. THE FIND YOURS CAMPAIGN ENABLED US TO CAPTURE THE MAGIC OF TRAVEL AND TO MAKE TRAVEL PERSONAL AGAIN.”

- NOAH TRATT, GLOBAL SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF EXPEDIA

Expedia realised that while user-generated content is powerful on its own, it can be made even more effective if it's deployed in partnership with other marketing activity. That's why they created their "Find Yours" campaign, which highlighted user-generated videos in an attempt to build engagement with multiple different audiences, from employees and shareholders to customers and business partners.

They did this in a similar way to Hilton, asking people to share the travel stories that had changed their lives and then sharing that content on whichever platform seemed most appropriate. According to Noah Tratt, Expedia's global senior vice president, they wanted to tell the story of why they do what they do instead of just telling people what they offer.

User-generated content was a huge part of this, including sub-campaigns like "Find Your Strength", a video that aimed to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. It told the real story of a cancer survivor called Maggie Cupit, generating more than 1.8 million views on YouTube and a huge amount of attention.



EXAMPLE #3: AIRBNB

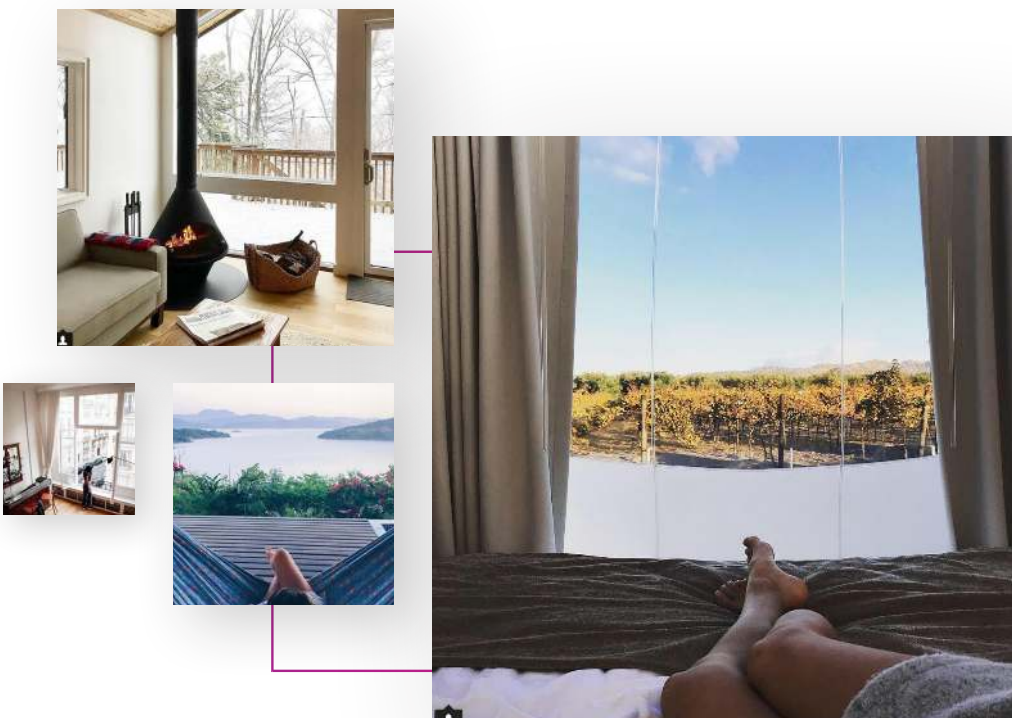
“YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR CUSTOMERS, ARE THE BEST MARKETING ASSET YOU HAVE.”

**- JAMES MCCLURE, NORTHERN EUROPE
GENERAL MANAGER AT AIRBNB**

Airbnb's entire business relies to some extent on user-generated content because if people don't add listings to the site, they have no way of making money. Luckily, millennials are particularly likely to engage with user-generated content, and it's millennials that make up the majority of Airbnb's customer base.

In fact, Airbnb is so keen on UGC that 77% of their Q4 2016 Instagram content was user-generated, and 80% of their Instagram engagement comes from UGC. This user-generated content could come in particularly useful for Airbnb, because word of mouth brings in both new property owners and new guests, which is how Airbnb makes its money. At the same time, the use of UGC boosted their Instagram follower count by 13%, which worked out at over 170,000 new followers.

The UGC strategy is clearly one that works for Airbnb. They've realised that the content that their followers share could turn out to be their most powerful marketing asset, which is why they turned to their audience and asked them for permission to share their content. In the final quarter of 2016, half of their top ten Instagram posts were regrams of user-generated content.



EXAMPLE #4: TOURISM QUEENSLAND

“NOT SINCE WILLY WONKA AND THE GOLDEN TICKETS HIDDEN IN CHOCOLATE BARS HAS SOMETHING COME ALONG LIKE [THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD].”

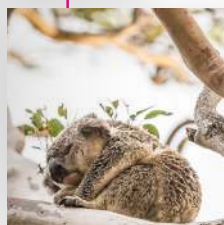
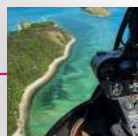
**- MARTIN IVENS,
EDITOR AT THE SUNDAY TIMES**

This is one of those user-generated content campaigns that everyone’s heard of because it crossed over into the mainstream and received major press coverage. The genius behind this campaign was the potential reward. Their “Best Job in the World” campaign launched as far back as 2009 and allowed people to receive the chance to win a dream job – in this case, a caretaker position on Hamilton Island, just off the Great Barrier Reef.

The campaign had the goal of showing the world how Queensland is a must-visit location, particularly for people who like adventure, stunning scenery and water sports. And perhaps most interesting of all is the fact that the winner of their competition would win the caretaker job along with a salary of \$150,000 AUD. To be in with a chance, people had to upload a short, 60-second video explaining why they wanted the job, and over 30,000 people did just that.

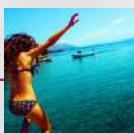
The real success of this campaign is difficult to measure, but with international press coverage both online and via traditional media, we can speculate that they more than made their money back. And that’s without counting the earned exposure from people sharing the campaign – and the videos they created to enter the competition – on their social media accounts.

The job was ultimately given to 34-year-old Ben Southall, a British charity events organiser. During his tenure, he took part in more than 450 interviews and posted more than 60 blogs at a total of 75,000 words, visiting around 100 Queensland destinations and generating 2,000 photos, 47 video diaries and over a thousand tweets. Not bad!



CONCLUSION

BY NOW, YOU SHOULD HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF HOW EFFECTIVE USER-GENERATED CONTENT CAN BE FOR TRAVEL MARKETERS. BETTER STILL, THE QUALITY OF THAT CONTENT IS GOING TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AS DEVICES GET BETTER AND BETTER AND OUR TECHNICAL LITERACY CONTINUES TO IMPROVE. EXPEDIA'S USE OF USER-GENERATED VIDEO GOES TO SHOW THAT IT'S NOT JUST PHOTOGRAPHY THAT WE - AS MARKETERS - CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF.



In the future, then, we can expect user-generated content to continue to be big business, and the travel brands that fail to take advantage of it will quickly get left behind by their competitors. That's because people trust the collective views of other people ([the wisdom of crowds!](#)) more than they trust the brand's own messages. The social proof conferred on brands via user-generated content is hugely valuable. It's the kind of resource that it's hard to find elsewhere.

So if you haven't already, future-proof your brand by getting on board with user-generated content. After all, if your brand is involved in travel and tourism then the chances are that people are already creating that content. All you need to do is find those nuggets of content then let the travellers tell your story for you. Good luck.



ABOUT MIAPPI

AT MIAPPI, WE SPECIALISE IN HELPING YOU TO DISCOVER, CURATE AND DISPLAY THE VERY BEST OF YOUR USER-GENERATED CONTENT. SINCE 2012, WE'VE BEEN HELPING OUR CUSTOMERS TO IDENTIFY THEIR MOST VALUABLE CONTENT AND TO DISPLAY IT WHEREVER IT HAS THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON THEIR AUDIENCE. REQUEST A DEMO TO FIND OUT MORE.

REQUEST A DEMO



VISIT US ONLINE
www.miappi.com
CONTACT US BY EMAIL
info@miappi.com
OR CALL US ON
+44 (0) 203 6374360

