Harness the Power of
User-Generated Content

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You've heard it before: content is king. LinkedIn reports that internet users produce over 4.6 billion pieces of content daily, and much of that content is posted on social media websites. Publishing on social media helps boost your company's visibility and increase engagement with audiences. Did you know that some of the most compelling content that can drive social media users to you is already created? User-generated content is the newest secret weapon for marketers.

Over half of Facebook users report that friends' photos inspire their travel plans. What other people are saying and sharing online about a hotel matters in influencing future travelers. To capitalize on existing content about your hotel, you must find and share user-generated content (UGC) that will captivate your audience and spread the travel bug.

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What is
User-Generated Content?

Simply put, UGC is content that people create and share about their experience with your brand. 70% of people update their social media status or share photos while they're on vacation, so there is plenty of UGC shared every day. When someone checks-in to a place on Facebook, posts a geotagged photo on Instagram, or Tweets about an experience, UGC has been created. Paying attention to what's posted online near and about your hotel is called Listening.

While listening on social media gives you an important opportunity to provide customer service, you should also be using social to seek out content created by guests while staying at your property. Sharing UGC is instrumental in inspiring your online following to book a trip, and it's easy to integrate with your brand-created social media content.

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Why Does UGC
Matter?

The reason UGC is so vital for a brand is because a person is putting their own stamp of approval on something they share. The major benefit of UGC is that consumer-shared content is more trusted than brand-created content. By providing a stellar hotel experience, you can earn public endorsement online from your guests.

According to Nielsen, earned media is the most trusted form of advertising – it beats out all forms of traditional paid advertising and online advertising. In fact, 85% of users find visual UGC more influential than brand photos or videos.

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How to Share
User-Generated Content

It's easier than ever to find content shared from your brand. Here are a few common ways to find what people are sharing about you:

Facebook: On your business page, navigate to Notifications > Activity to see Check-Ins and Mentions. Use the Share button to share as your page. Just make sure you're sharing to your page as the business, not as your personal account.

Instagram: Use the search bar to type your hotel name to find photos posted from your location. Also, try searching for a variety of hashtags (try: #hotelnamecityname).

Twitter: Search for your company name in the Twitter search bar just as you would on Google (try different variations, such as "hotel name city name"). Anything people Tweet with those words will come up, even if they didn't use hashtags or @mention you. Use the Retweet button (two arrows) to share a Tweet.

Having a hard time finding photos shared from your hotel? Search for local restaurants, attractions, landmarks, and natural areas to use to encourage travelers to visit the area.

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How to Share
Instagram Content

While Twitter and Facebook make it easy to share content with the Retweet and Share buttons, Instagram operates a bit differently.

If you're sharing from an Instagram account to your Instagram, you'll need to use a third-party app like Repost or Buffer. These will automatically fill in credit to the original poster when you use the apps to share photos.

To share photos from Instagram to other websites, you'll simply need the post link. On mobile, just click the three dots on the top-right of any post, and click Copy Share URL. On desktop, right click to open an image in a new tab. The URL in the address bar is the direct link. Paste this in a Facebook or Google Plus update to share.

If you want to add Instagram photos to a blog or website, find the Instagram post you want to share from a desktop computer. Then, click the three dots and choose the "Embed" option. Just copy and paste this code in any HTML editor to publish.

Because Facebook owns Instagram, they integrate beautifully. However, an Instagram link shared on Twitter will only contain the caption text and a link to the Instagram post without the actual photo.

To share an Instagram post on Twitter, first get permission from the creator. Screenshot the photo from Instagram, crop down to just the photo, and upload directly to Twitter, providing proper credit to the source.

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Sharing
Best Practices

Once you've found these photos and videos, you might be tempted to simply save the content and share it on your profile. However, there can be weighty consequences for violating digital copyright laws by misusing online content - even when you're taking something that was shared publicly. Follow these rules, and you'll be in the clear:

Go Direct.
When possible, share directly from the source – that means copying a direct link to the content and pasting it in your update on your own social media. Direct sharing gives direct credit to the content poster and a link back to the original source.

Get Consent.
It's always a good idea to directly ask to use the content for your business. Comment on posts or send a direct message with clear language of what you would like to use the photo for, and respect the wishes of the poster.

Give Credit.
When you do share content, give credit to the person who created it with either their name (for Facebook) or their username (from Instagram and Twitter posts).

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Encourage
Social Sharing

If you want more and better content to share with pre-approved permission, then all you need to do is ask. Prompting people to share their photos will yield better photos, more to choose from, and take out the legal complications by building in sharing rights.

According to Adweek, more than half of consumers want some direction to share content. Consider adding a line in your social media bio asking for people to share photos from their trip with you. Choose a unique hashtag (#hotelnamecityagree or #hotelcitynameyes) and state that users can use this hashtag to have their photos shared on your account. Providing a link to terms and conditions will ensure social media users know exactly what they're opting in to when they use your hashtag.

Contests are another smart way to build up a library of content you can use throughout the year. Your legal team can help build a set of rules that gives you the right to use photos submitted for the contest in all media forms and for all purposes.

User-generated content is an affordable and effective means of setting your hotel apart from the other hotels in your local market. Only 16% of brands actively encourage customers to share content with them, even though UGC is more engaging and more trusted than brand-created content. Carefully curating and sharing content will help build credibility for your hotel and entice visitors to your property. Get ahead of the competition by integrating UGC into your social media marketing strategy.

Get Started on
Social Media

Sharing UGC is just one component of a robust social media strategy. Kick-start your social media profiles with personalized graphics, engaging posts, and strategic advertising with our Social Media Services. Manage all of your social media accounts in one place and allow our specialists to create exciting content that boosts your following and encourages direct booking.

Learn more about our social media solutions for hotels and contact us for a free consultation and demo.

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