

An illustration of three people sitting at a table. In the center, a man with short grey hair and a beard, wearing a teal shirt, is smiling. He is holding a glass of orange juice with a straw and a slice of watermelon. To his left, a woman with long dark hair is seen from the back, wearing a yellow top. To his right, another woman with long dark hair is seen from the back, wearing a pink and yellow top. They are all holding similar glasses of orange juice with straws and watermelon slices. The background is a simple grey and teal color scheme.

SKIFT TRENDS BRIEF: **THE POWER OF HUMAN INFLUENCE IN TRAVEL**

How the travel industry can transform travelers' personal experiences into social successes

Skift.

+

UrLife°

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As social media and user-generated content (UGC) becomes ubiquitous, the travel industry must embrace these consumer behaviors to attract, retain, and reward their clientele.

Brands must be proactive in engaging consumers, finding opportunities for the brand to become part of the conversation.

People expect more from their precious vacation time, and it's crucial to find special and unique ways to connect with them.

Cutting-edge brands are staying ahead of the curve by finding ways to personally connect with travelers through UGC and social, with a personal touch. One premier example of this is UrLife, a new travel-tech and media brand that utilizes Hollywood editing to create high-quality videos of vacations, family trips, and special events from consumers' own photo and video content.



THE FUTURE OF UGC WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM **HOLLYWOOD**

URLIFE IS A NEW INDUSTRY PARTNER
THAT **CUSTOMIZES AND INTEGRATES** YOUR
PREMIUM MARKETING ASSETS WITH YOUR GUEST'S UGC

OUR EDITORS SEAMLESSLY BLEND THE TWO TOGETHER,
CRAFTING AN **AMAZING NATIVE AD** FOR YOUR BRAND

ALL CUSTOMERS BECOME **AMBASSADORS AND EVANGELISTS**,
ARMED WITH HOLLYWOOD QUALITY CONTENT
FOR THEIR FRIENDS TO ENJOY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

START CURATING YOUR CUSTOMER'S CONTENT, THE NEW WAY

CONTACT **RYANH@URLIFEMEDIA.COM**
FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION





Technology is ever-evolving and will remain mission critical for efficiency (for both companies and consumers). Needs will change, systems will adapt, and machines will continue to be deeply integrated into our industry, our workplace, and our personal lives. So as computer-driven automation becomes the baseline for good business, it is people—especially the way they use technology to socialize—that have the power to elevate (or compromise) a brand's reputation. Let's dive into a few key ways the travel industry can connect with consumers and inspire them to share their experiences.

LET'S GET PERSONAL

Research giant Ipsos found that 52% of consumers who had a bad experience told their friends, family, or colleagues about it, while 56% shared their positive experiences.

In addition to priority benefits like boarding and upgrades, United's Global Services (an invitation-only status for the airline's biggest travelers and spenders) members are often greeted by name and with a handshake by a United crewmember.

Personal courtesies are wonderful, and should really be a standard of service. But creating memorable experiences that customers are inclined to share require much more thought and planning on the brand's part.

Flashback a few years ago to when Coke launched its "Share a Coke" campaign. The 130-year-old brand contemporized itself not through a new product, but by creating a personal connection with consumers. In the 2015 2.0 iteration of the program, the company printed cans and bottles with 1,000 of the most popular names in the US. People were so excited to find their name on the iconic product, they posted photos of themselves with their namesake Coke to social media—often before they'd even left the store. This content creation was organic and completely separate from the brand's social media activations.



Suzanne Brose Gagui with Russell Gagui.

July 1, 2016 · San Diego · 🌐

Lincoln is a movie star! [UrLife Media](#) creates shareable, Hollywood-quality movie trailers to document vacations and experiences -- and Russell and I were lucky enough to enjoy a perfect weekend at the legendary [Hotel del Coronado](#) creating our own.



👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

👍❤️ 163

View 11 more comments



Lori Brent Cutest. Fam. Ever.

Like · Reply · July 1, 2016 at 1:46pm



Dawn Triemstra Seymour This is too cute!

Like · Reply · July 1, 2016 at 3:01pm



Ali Lundberg Looks amazing! Makes me want to go!

Like · Reply · July 1, 2016 at 7:24pm



Carmit Gutman He was always a star in my eyes ❤️❤️

Like · Reply · July 2, 2016 at 8:54am

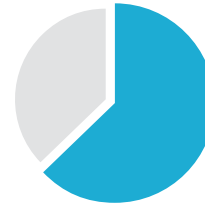
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

User-generated content (UGC) is the holy grail for brands. When smartly used, it can be one of the most influential marketing tools.

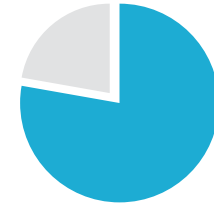
Because UGC relies on consumers' own words, personality, and, frequently, photos or videos, it has an inherent authenticity that instills confidence. When people have an especially good (or bad) experience, they often feel compelled to share their point of view. And others pay attention: According to an Olapic Global Study, 70% of Americans say they're more inclined to make a purchase after seeing a relatable consumer post. Consumers rely on others who have experienced a destination, product, or service in order to get a personal perspective that brand marketing can't easily provide.

Amazon's incredible consumer loyalty was built in large part on the peace of mind their millions of reviews provide consumers. You can buy that new pantry organizer, comforted by 5,389 people giving it a cumulative 4.8 stars and knowing that if you get it and don't like it, you can return it for a full refund (true for most products sold directly by Amazon).

REAL PEOPLE MAKE A REAL IMPACT

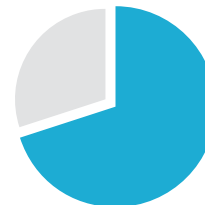


63% of consumers look to social channels when booking a vacation



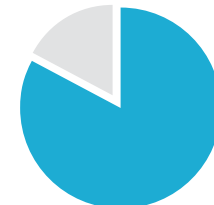
78% of brands that employ UGC strategies

(Content Marketing Institute, October, 2015)



70% of Americans express they're more inclined to make a purchase after seeing a relatable consumer post online.

(Olapic global study)



83% of people say the most credible form of advertising comes from the people they know and trust

(Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Report, September 28, 2015)

EARNED MEDIA, EARNED LOYALTY 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍

Travel purchases tend to have much higher stakes than almost any other purchase: limited time to travel, higher price points, and heightened expectations, make consumers rely even more heavily on those who have gone before them.

“Our guests add to the narrative and provide real examples of life in our hotels. We find the more real a photo is, the better. Glossy, polished photos are great as inspiration, but these days, Millennial consumers especially want to see real life, real people, real experiences—things they can see themselves doing and a lifestyle they want to emulate. Our guests and future guests are our brand advocates and we celebrate them through social media and other touch points,” said Amy Sherman, the Senior Director of Digital & Social Marketing, Lifestyle Brands for Marriott.

Catching people further up the consideration funnel—possibly before they are even in market—is much trickier. The new travel-tech and media company, UrLife has developed a product that ingeniously enables travel companies to reward their consumers, capitalize on travelers’ desire to share their travel experiences across social media, and ensure the content is compelling and brand safe. Imagine a “movie trailer” of your last vacation, created by a Hollywood film editor. UrLife takes travelers’ photos and videos along with brand assets from a travel partner (hotel, cruise line, travel agent, etc.) and creates a personal short video that consumers will want to share with their social networks as well as keep and replay for years to come, creating invaluable earned media.



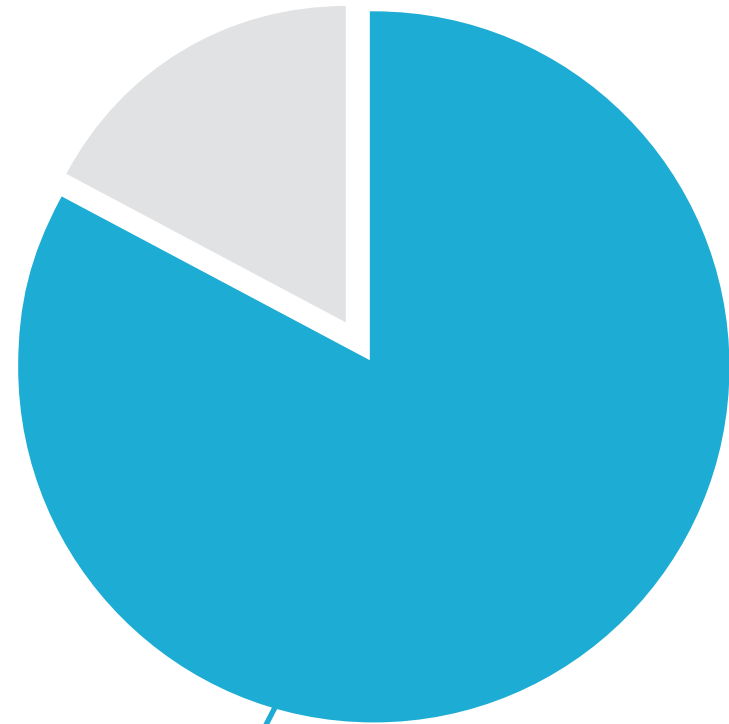
THE FATAL FLAWS OF UGC

Real consumers spreading the word about your brand is great... until it isn't. The pitfalls of UGC can be stomach-churning:

- One bad experience can influence thousands of consumers
- Even positive content can be bad for a brand (poor lighting, distasteful language, compromised behavior)
- A brand must dedicate resources to monitoring—and responding!—across UGC platforms

To mitigate these challenges and create a more brand-safe environment, travel companies may work with UGC companies like Bazaar Voice to aggregate appropriate reviews, add contextual filters (like language, relevancy), and then feature those reviews on a brand's owned and operated site. This is one effective strategy, especially for brands that already have a high volume of web traffic.

But there is no substitute for being actively engaged. There is no single technology that can be set and forget. Content is not just a strategy, it's a way of life, and it needs to either inform, entertain, or both.



83% of consumers trust earned media above all other forms of advertising

(Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey, Q1 2015)

SIGHT, SOUND & MOTION

According to the Guardian, video is the future of content marketing; it's no wonder that has extended to UGC. A study by Ascend2 and its Research Partners found customer testimonials to be the most effective form of video marketing content—but also one of the most difficult to execute.

This has also led marketers to increase their focus on video with eMarketer estimating US Digital Video Ad Spending to have been \$9.84 billion in 2016 and leaping to \$16.69 billion in 2020.* While a lot of video dollars are dedicated to digital content platforms like YouTube and Hulu, eMarketer also predicts that 71% of US marketers plan to spend on social video.*

Video is ubiquitous on social media. Facebook claims to have more than 4 billion video views every day, and 5 billion on Youtube.

At the end of the day, it comes down to storytelling. Video is one of most entertaining and effective ways to communicate—whether it's a film narrative, an ad, or a testimonial. Nothing can replace the impact of sight, sound, and motion.

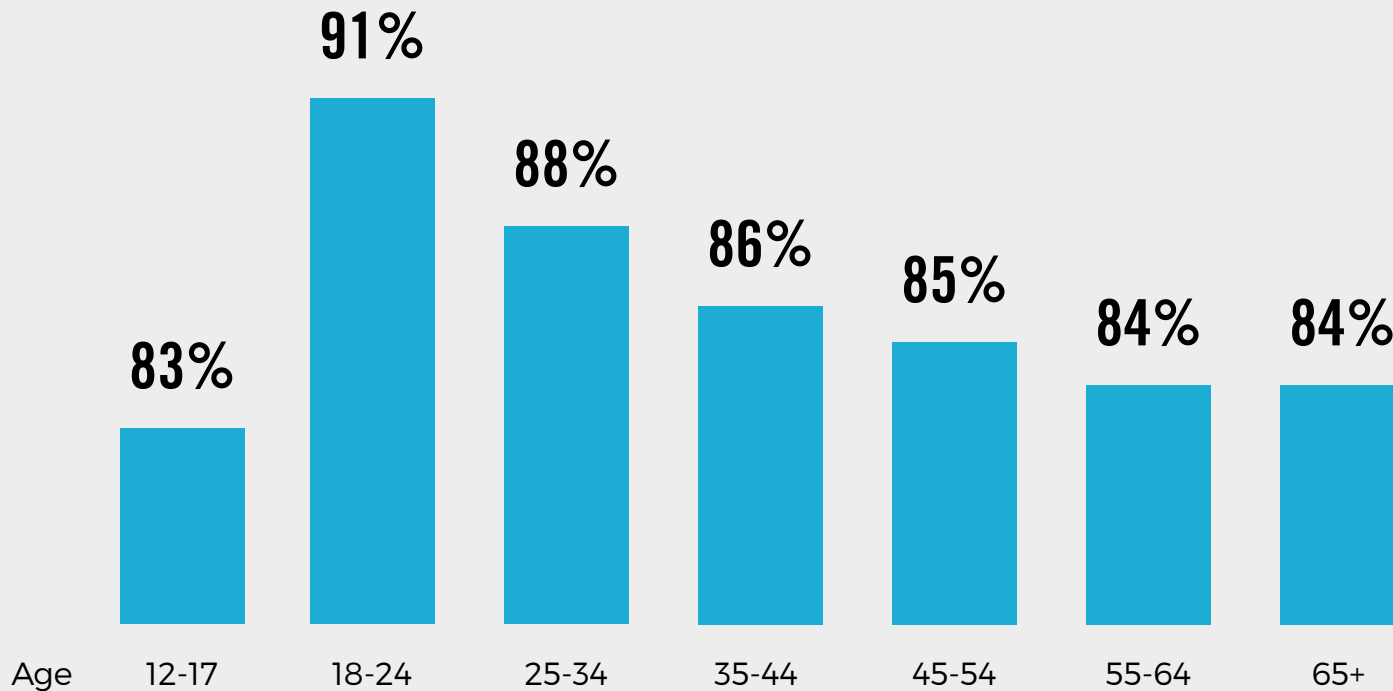
*eMarketer, March 2016

**STORYTELLING, WHEN DONE RIGHT,
TAKES A PRODUCT THAT SHOULD
HAVE SOLD \$100 MILLION WORTH
OF STUFF AND SELLS \$1 BILLION
WORTH OF STUFF.**

**- GARY VAYNERCHUK,
ENTREPRENEUR MAGAZINE**

EVERYBODY WATCHES ONLINE VIDEO.

Consuming videos cuts across all age demos—everybody is watching video online.



Source: comScore

SOCIAL CURRENCY

If it feels like your friends are taking more vacations than ever—it's probably an optical illusion. According to Project Time Off's report on The State of the American Vacation 2016, a whopping 55% of Americans didn't use all of their allotted vacation in 2015. This may be why vacationers feel especially compelled to document and share experiences on social media; this vacation really needs to count.

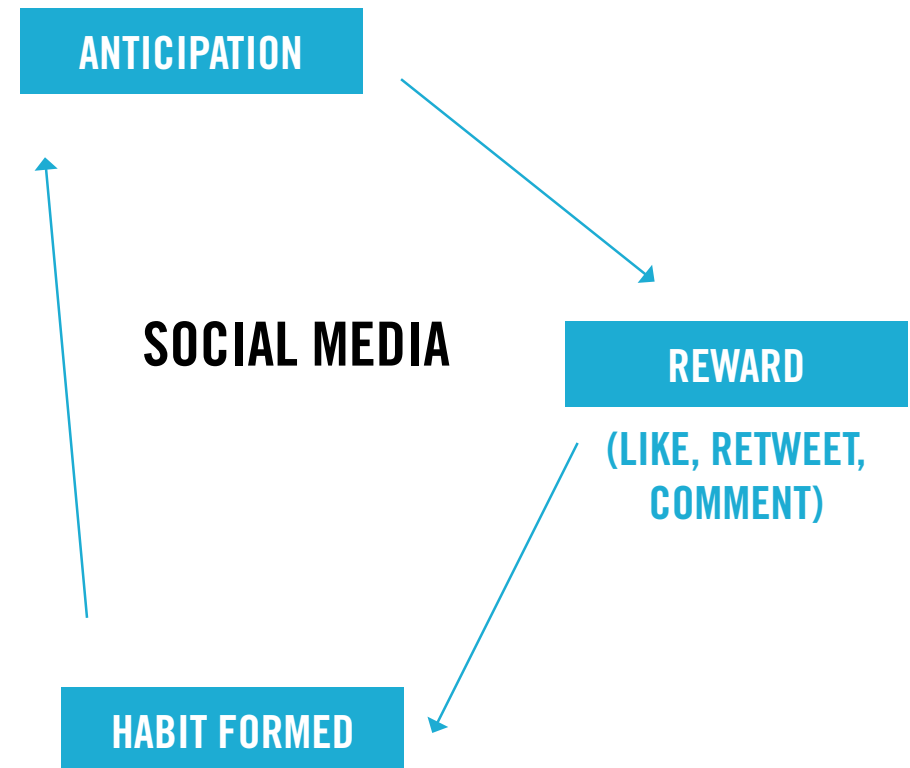
So, here come the dozens of posts about the flight, the hotel, and attractions. And while friends and family may be "liking," in truth, they may be fuming as The New York Times claimed in "The Tyranny of Other People's Vacation Photos." Other people's feeds can create warm feelings of engagement or negative feelings of jealousy and frustration. Experts suggest consolidating photos into an album or single video, but that behavior hasn't generally been adopted.

"It's not easy for travelers to curate their vacation photos and videos into one experience that highlights the excitement of their trip. By editing their memories into one short trailer with Hollywood-style voiceover and storytelling, we give them a custom, easily retrievable video they want to watch over and over. This engages instead of overwhelms their social network," says Jack Giarraputo, Co-Founder of UrLife.

For brands that want to be more than just a backdrop, it's important to think about how your consumers are creating content—and become a true collaborator in that process.

HAPPY TO SHARE

Multiple research studies show that people get a shot of dopamine from sharing (and receiving likes) on social media.



SHIFTING CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

With so much information at their fingertips, travelers are especially conscious of maximizing each experience. And with customers prone to share good and bad experiences, it's no wonder that the IT research and advisory company Gartner claims that this year, 89% of marketers expect customer experience to be their primary differentiator.

Consumer service means something different for every consumer, and that's where personalized customer experiences become so important. Whereas budget travelers may be most satisfied with special deals or freebies upon arrival, luxury travelers may be more prone to experiences that are not openly available for purchase.

When the NFL returned to London for three games in 2016, it got into the travel game as well. In order to entice fans to purchase special packages to the games, including accommodations, premium seats, and even a meet and greet with players, the NFL partnered with UrLife to create a special video that captured the highlights of the entire experience for their VIP customers. Customers provided their favorite photos and videos, and a bit about themselves and their travel companions. Then, after their trip, they were provided with a stylized "movie trailer" to share with friends and family.

Not only could they brag about meeting some of their favorite players, but that their best moments were encapsulated in a movie trailer by a Hollywood movie editor. And you can bet that super-fans will be lining up for this opportunity when the NFL partners with UrLife again for Super Bowl LI in Houston!

It's this kind of surprise-and-delight experience that can turn a customer into a brand advocate, while still representing the brand in a positive light.



THE TAKEAWAY

If you help create memorable experiences you will turn your customers into brand advocates and their feedback into valuable earned media.

Make it Personal

Find ways to make your customers feel they are in a personal relationship with your brand.

User-generated Content

UGC is pervasive. Make sure you are creating special experiences that your customers will want to share.

Social Media

Social media is more than a technology platform; it's a big part of how we communicate with friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers.



IMAGINE: IF YOUR CUSTOMER SHARED EVERY EXPERIENCE THEY HAVE WITH YOUR BRAND—WOULD YOU CHANGE ANYTHING ABOUT THAT EXPERIENCE? IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD DO TO MAKE YOUR BRAND STAND APART?

EXECUTIVE LETTER

User-generated content (UGC) has proven to be much more than a marketing buzzword or passing trend in the travel industry. As the Skift Humanity Returns to Travel Megatrend points out, real loyalty, the kind where you become a brand advocate, isn't a data point but is an emotional connection or personal experience. Friend referrals and UGC are significantly more influential in vacation-booking decisions than traditional advertising. But UGC can still be hard for brands to get their heads around—how do you successfully get in on the action?

Before co-founding UrLife, we produced dozens of major Hollywood films and created the marketing campaigns that helped them gross box office billions. Inspiration struck when, in our personal lives, we were left with hundreds of photos of our families on our phones—from vacations to soccer season—but even as a producers and editors, we didn't have a tool to easily turn those memories into a fun recap. It's like if Jack shot all the scenes in *Happy Gilmore*, then just didn't show them to anyone.

We figured out how to unlock the memories stuck in our phones with a high-quality product that has the look and feel of Hollywood while being easy to use and inexpensive to purchase. And we realized that travel brands could feature their content seamlessly, maximizing the UGC that guests eagerly post on social networks. How? We expertly blend your guests' favorite vacation photos and videos with your marketing assets—drone footage, HD sunset shots, cool signage. It's a premium-quality, mini movie trailer that they can't wait to share on social media with friends.

The possibilities are endless for hotels, resorts, destinations, cruise lines, even travel agencies. We can be the sought-after resort amenity or the distinct add-on to a consumer package, working with budgets of all sizes—from individual properties to global brands.

As a new industry partner, we're ahead of the trend and our goal is to turn your valued guests into priceless micro influencers. Most travelers post a few pictures and videos to social, but they leave 99 percent of your best marketing assets on their phone. By letting UrLife handcraft your guests' memories, you have a new media mix that embraces a growing trend while making your traditional marketing much more effective.

— Jack Giarraputo and Ryan Hegenberger, Co-Founders of UrLife