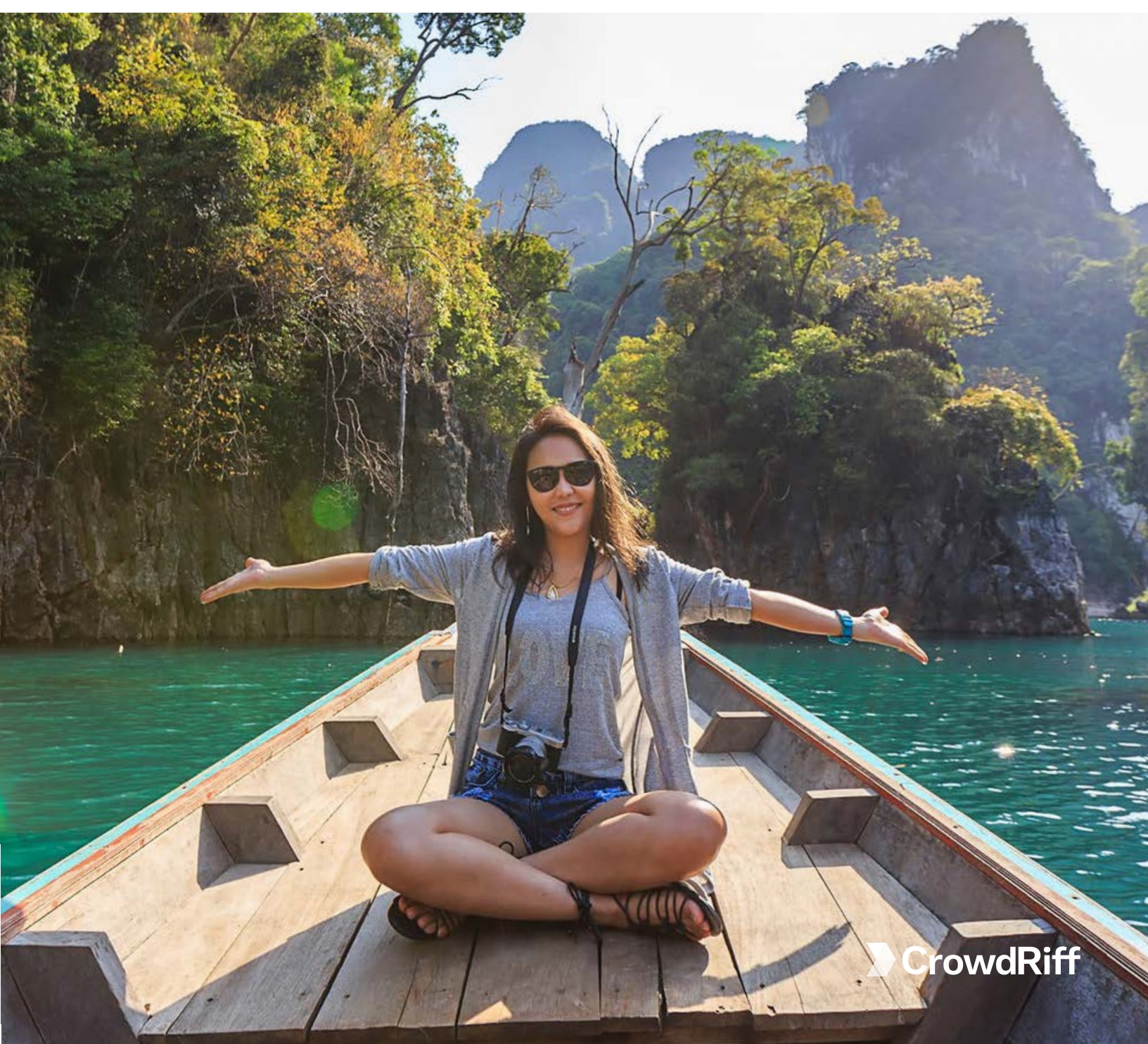

12 Unique Tourism Marketing Campaigns from Small and Medium-Size DMOs



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01

What Creative Things Are Other DMO Marketing Teams Doing?

Destination marketing is always an experiment in progress. Just when you think you've discovered the right strategy that yielded a successful marketing campaign, it's time to head back to the drawing board. Consumer behavior and technology change each day and with that change comes the need to communicate with your audience via their natural, digital habitats be that Facebook, YouTube, TV, or their inbox.

Our team regularly keeps tabs on the best visual marketing campaigns in travel and tourism, and we've rounded up 12 of the best from the last year. All of the DMOs featured have budgets under \$5 million, and some have less than \$1 million in funding. Some of the campaigns were done by CrowdRiff customers while others are simply fun examples of visual marketing that we hope will inspire you to think outside the box and take a bold approach.

A survey of more than 500 destination marketing organizations that was completed during May 2019 revealed that more than 64% of respondents said that they had budgets under \$5 million, and nearly 25% had budgets under \$1 million.¹ The survey was part of Destination International's DestinationNEXT Futures Study 2019, and included DMOs from 55 countries including Australia, Canada, China,

Japan, the United States, and several European DMOs. Suffice to say, the DMOs in our list are in great company when it comes to marketing budgets and there are many creative possibilities for creating a compelling campaign that is cost-effective and reaches your target markets.

Whether it's an interactive fall foliage map on a website, a Facebook Live series that puts viewers in the driver's seat, or heart-shaped sculptures that visitors can't get enough photos with, the campaigns we highlight give you a taste of what's worked well for your peers and what can be achieved with some imagination, grit, and a sense of adventure. We hope you feel empowered to keep trying different strategies and platforms and exploring new frontiers just like your visitors.



Julia Manoukian

Senior Content Marketing Manager
CrowdRiff



02 Video

Few other mediums can connect with travelers the way video can. Travel stories are exciting combinations of words, images, and life experiences and the video campaigns that follow are examples of how DMOs can stay true to who they are while getting help from partners.

Visit Winona's Award-winning Facebook Live Series

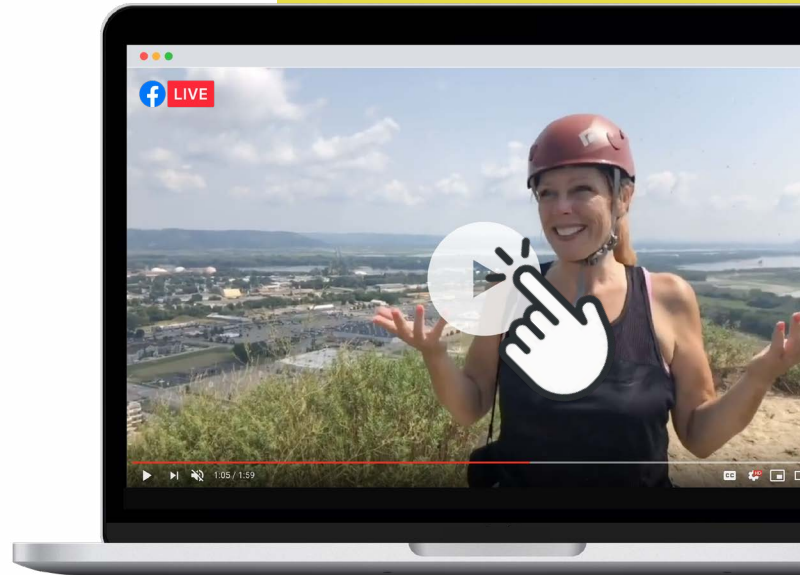
Power to the people

Audiences clamor for reality TV shows for the more authentic portrayals of people and places versus drama TV and movies. Visit Winona didn't take to TV screens, but it did roll out a Facebook Live series in 2018 that took viewers into the heart of their favorite sites and attractions throughout the destination.

About 85% of Visit Winona's Facebook fans don't live in Winona and the organization wanted to remind followers of their favorite places and introduce attractions they might not have heard of before.

Each week, Facebook followers voted for which location they wanted the organization to go to, such as a new ice park wall or farm to milk a cow. The campaign generated 330,000 impressions, 182,000 views, and 48,200 engagements during the past year at virtually no cost at all.²

Facebook and Instagram Live videos work well for DMOs with staff who aren't camera shy and have eclectic personalities. You need people with a sense of humor and also those who know the destination inside and out. Live videos can also help build trust with your audience. In an age when travelers can get their destination info from anywhere, putting faces to the name of your DMO can help convert the travel planner to a travel booker.



[click to watch](#)



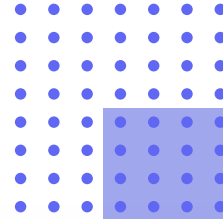
Go Lake Havasu Partners with Matador Network

Arizona's adrenaline capital

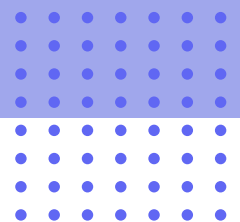
As Arizona's playground, Go Lake Havasu needs video that brings all the play time to life. Luckily for the small DMO, it partnered with Matador Network in 2019 to produce an influencer video campaign that didn't break the bank.

Go Lake Havasu worked with Matador Network to create and distribute the video to inspire more than 13 million people in the 25-45 age group who are interested in the kinds of adventures offered by the destination, such as water sports, off-roading, boating, and hiking. The video is hosted by Matador filmmakers, Kati Hetrick and Kelly Noecker, who give viewers a big taste of why Lake Havasu is worth a trip during which they can let their hair down and get that adrenaline rush that's good for the soul.

The campaign received more than 1.8 million impressions, which helped Lake Havasu City acquire brand recognition as an exceptional adventure destination in the American Southwest. What's more, its content that will also be available on Matador Network's platforms which reach millions of followers. For a DMO with a very limited budget that wants to make more of a name for itself, partnering with an established media partner like Matador Network will help it tell its story and reach swaths of potential visitors they wouldn't otherwise have access to.



click to watch



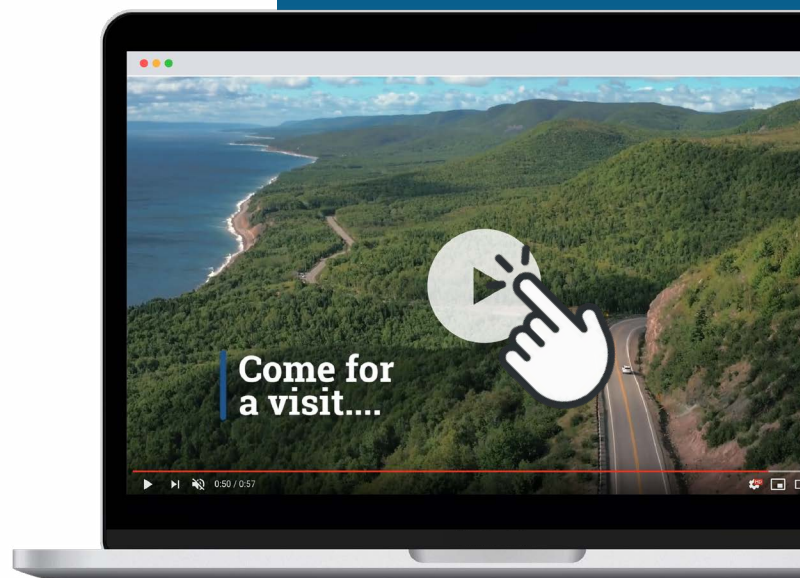
Cape Breton Island Capitalizes on Being Voted the #1 Island in the Americas

The power of free press

When a destination is voted #1 of anything, a DMO doesn't wait around to spread the message. Destination marketers use every tool in their arsenal to shout it from the rooftops and devise creative ways to demonstrate why they earned the ranking.

Canada's Cape Breton Island recently snagged the #1 spot in Condé Nast Traveler's 2019 Readers' Choice Awards.³ The Destination Cape Breton Association created a video highlighting some of the reasons why they believe travelers awarded them the top spot, such as a unique music and dance culture and the largest historical reconstruction in North America. The DMO also has links on its homepage that provide more information about the places shown in the video and uses UGC to share what travelers enjoy most about the island.

As a small DMO, Cape Breton and others rely on rankings and "where-to-go" media lists for essentially free marketing. This kind of press coverage adds a stamp of approval from publications that hold destinations to high standards.



click to watch



³Condé Nast Traveler



03 Social Media

UGC helps DMOs understand what they're doing right and where their blind spots are. Social media is everything for a small DMO working to expand its audience, and the following campaigns are examples of how to leverage platforms' full potential and let UGC be part of your brand identity.

The Colors of Carlsbad:

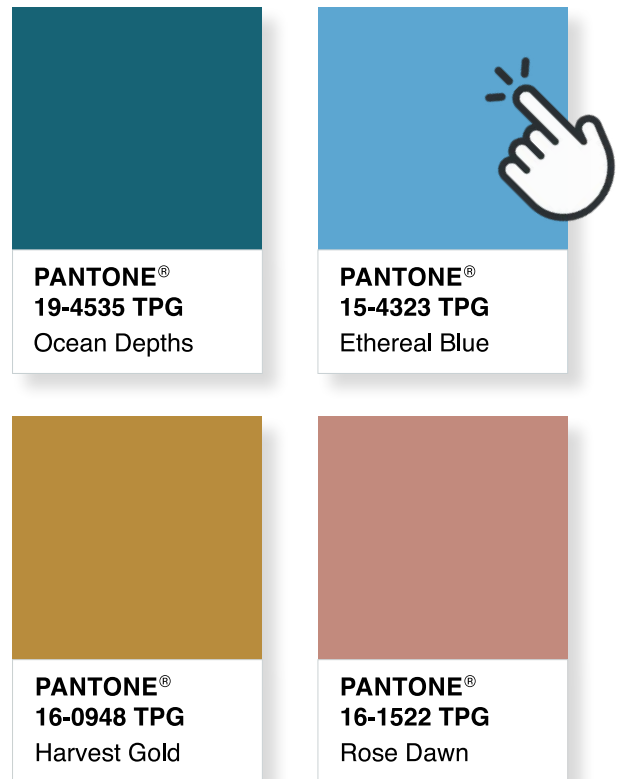
Using Instagram Data to Create A Pantone Campaign

Some destinations are more colorful than others, and it's as if Carlsbad, California was built to anchor every rainbow.

Carlsbad, a coastal resort city located about halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego, combed through travelers' social media photos to see which colors resonated most with visitors. Perhaps the city isn't as familiar as its neighbors in either direction but plenty of travelers have noticed Carlsbad's earthy and calming hues and shared them on platforms like Instagram.

Visit Carlsbad partnered with the Pantone Color Institute for a second year in a row in 2019 to determine the trending colors that most appealed to visitors for its "Colors of Carlsbad" campaign. Both organizations worked with Fohr, a quantitative influencer marketing platform, to analyze 75 Instagram influencers' travel photos. Five Instagram photos with the most engagement were chosen for each influencer which helped to determine the four most common colors that visitors were sharing. Four colors were chosen to represent the destination, which included Pantone 16-1522 Rose Dawn (a dusty pink hue) and Pantone 15-4323 Ethereal Blue (an open and expansive blue tone). The city's restaurants, resorts, and businesses tailored their offerings throughout the year to align with this color palette.

Destinations of any size can keep an eye on social media to observe colors that frequently show up in the background and refresh their brand's color palette every so often to help visitors see why they should take another look.



colors of
carlsbad

Staunton's Spring Bucket List Campaign

Building a relationship

A spring bucket list doesn't have the same ring to it as its cousin, summer, and many destinations are putting more strategy behind growing visitation during their shoulder seasons to help local businesses.

Staunton, Virginia is a prime example. Visit Staunton promoted a "Staunton spring bucket list" across its social media platforms using UGC images. The photos showcased travelers participating in each bucket list activity and were shared across Facebook Instant Experiences, Instagram, Facebook slideshow videos, Instagram stories, and Facebook lead gen retarget. Viewers spent about two minutes on average engaging with the Facebook Instant Experiences content.

The DMO generated 1,200 newsletter sign-ups (an 18% increase in subscribers) with the help of the campaign by giving away a free trip to a new newsletter subscriber. The campaign also generated more than 21,000 clicks, 850,000 impressions, and over 500 referrals to partner websites.

"The best way to describe this campaign is scrappy and highly successful," said Katie Campbell, Group Sales & Marketing Manager at Visit Staunton. *"It was an excellent proof that you can accomplish a number of strategic goals and create a number of unique ad formats without blowing your budget on extremely expensive professional photography."*

Social platforms provide some affordable ad options for smaller DMOs that can lead to big pay-offs when new relationships are born via newsletter subscriptions. Building a newsletter audience ensures that a DMO has a direct line of communication to its audience, controls the relationship, and has even more possibilities for targeting and personalizing content.

Staunton's Spring Bucket List:



1. Chase ghosts
2. Spend the night locked in a room
3. Hike the Appalachian Trail
4. Stay at Virginia's Newest Luxury Hotel
5. Watch a movie under the stars at a classic drive-in
6. Attend a Music Festival
7. Explore a cave
8. Root for the Staunton Braves
9. Visit the Augusta County Fair
10. Attend a small-town Independence Day Celebration
11. Get a tattoo!



Grand Junction's Annual Photo Content Goes Digital

Set it and forget it

Visit Grand Junction knew the community's annual calendar photo contest didn't pass the sniff test for the digital age when it started working with CrowdRiff in 2018.

Each year, the City of Grand Junction, Colorado hosts a photo contest to showcase its natural beauty, inviting citizens to submit their best photos of the region for the opportunity to have them featured in the City of Grand Junction's annual calendar, which is mailed to all city residents. Though, in previous years, participants had to print their photos, write their information on the back, include a flash drive with the photos, and submit them in person at City Hall. In the past, the contest was also mainly limited to professional photographers or those with access to photography equipment.

The city decided to partner with Visit Grand Junction for the 2019 calendar contest, allowing the DMO to automate the submission process for the first time. This year the contest was also opened up to the broader community with the help of a Public Uploader tool that lets people submit their contest entries through a simple upload portal.⁵ Those photos were then fed directly into Visit Grand Junction's visual content library.

The impact was immediate! In previous years, the contest received around 200 entries on average; this year it saw over 750.

"It saved us quite a bit of time, made the process fun, and it took the pressure off City Hall's administrative staff who spent an exorbitant amount of time managing the old submission process," said Leslie Dysart, the Social Media Specialist at Visit Grand Junction. *"It was kind of just set it and forget it; we created an ad and an organic post on Facebook, put it up, and a few days later we had hundreds of photos submitted."*

The DMO now utilizes UGC for most of its marketing campaigns. Dysart said that travelers trusted these kinds of photos as they established more credibility, and many were breathtaking. She pointed to a blog post and video slide show that used UGC from the contest that had more than 7,600 click-throughs and over 100,000 views as proof.





04 Experiential

Experiences are a given in travel. Sure, many people take vacations specifically to lie on a beach and rest, but they're also eating and spending quality time with family or friends. Everything is an experience and some come unexpectedly, which can be the best part of the trip. These campaigns largely focus on offline marketing to drive travelers to share their trips online and spread a DMO's mission, and have made a big splash doing it.

How Visit Frisco Uses UGC to Promote Its City

Sculptures spread the love

Travelers love feeling happy and, well, love taking pictures of love. That sentiment led Visit Frisco, the DMO for Frisco, Texas to launch its #iHeartFrisco campaign in 2016 that encouraged visitors to post photos of themselves at their favorite attractions throughout the destination on social media.⁶

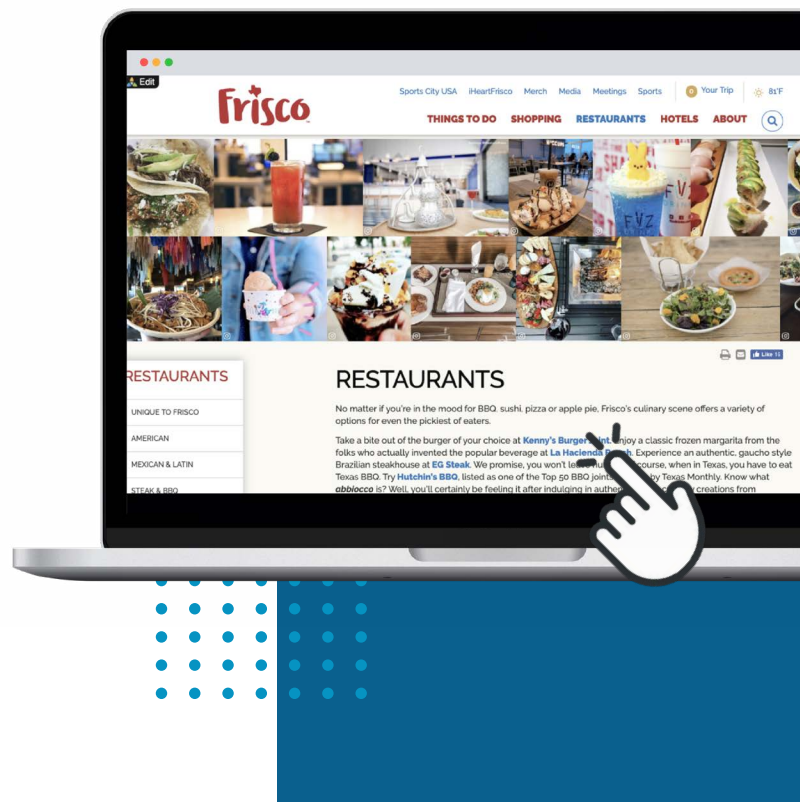
The purpose of the campaign was to inspire those who live, work, and play in Frisco to share their love for the city, and to inspire people to travel to this growing and exciting destination. The DMO eventually acquired six heart-shaped sculptures throughout the city to keep the campaign alive indefinitely by giving travelers cute photo opportunities.

“It’s more than just brand advocacy; we think of it as ‘the gift that keeps on giving’ because people are still sharing content with that hashtag three years later,” said Wesley Lucas, Communications Manager for Visit Frisco. *“It’s really picked up and taken off, and we no longer consider it to just be a campaign anymore—it’s part of our annual strategy and we continue to share that message.”⁷*

The DMO is currently redesigning its website to give the UGC galleries on each page more prominent placement rather than as a footer.

The sculptures help UGC spring eternal and don’t require much additional investment as the DMO looks to let visitors inspire potential visitors.

Lucas also said that CrowdRiff has helped the DMO to use UGC to connect with more local tourism partners through CrowdRiff’s new connected business account feature. *“Not only has it increased the number of assets we see, but has allowed us to better connect with our business partners and better enforce the message of who we are and what we do,”* she said. *“We’ve been able to connect with partners we weren’t yet connected with.”*



How Visit Rancho Cordova Uses UGC for Offline Marketing

From Instagram posts to old fashioned photos

Driving travelers to offline, real-life experiences is often the goal of any digital marketing campaign, including those that utilize UGC.

Visit Rancho Cordova created a large banner of about 200 Polaroid-style UGC photos that it takes on the road to trade shows and also brings along to community events. The DMO doesn't have a large budget for professional photography, but found that using UGC gives it a diverse set of assets that works well in piquing interest in what other travelers have done.

Bridging online and offline is an increasing focus for DMOs as visitors seek to replicate photos at the sites and scenes they see shared across social media platforms. Keep in mind that many travelers visit an attraction or area specifically to snap a photo and then move on. By sharing those photos both online and offline, a DMO shows travelers that their perspectives are valuable and that their visit matters to the community.

The banner has inspired people to take selfies in front of it and post them on social media platforms, creating even more UGC, said Lena Riggs, Marketing Manager for Visit Rancho Cordova.

“At first, it just kind of looks like a collage of different colors, but when you get closer you really get to see the details and realize that this is someone’s Instagram post,” she said. “We hear people saying, ‘oh, I think I know that location. Oh, I’ve been there. Oh, I haven’t yet.’ It really does bring people in, as opposed to a big large statement that people just walk right by and say, ‘Oh, okay, those are pretty pictures’ but they don’t do anything with them.”



VISIT
**RANCHO
CORDOVA**
CALIFORNIA

Visit The Faroe Islands’ “Preservolution” Campaign

Voluntourism marketing

The Faroe Islands saw a tourism boom coming – the attention on social media, more restaurants popping up interested in serving tourists, and more direct flights from mainland Europe – but it still found itself in a reactive position when it decided to close the country to tourists for a weekend in April 2019 as part of its ongoing “Preservolution” campaign.⁸

Popular tourist sites were closed for the April weekend and instead 100 volunteers from around the world were hosted to help clean-up and work on tourism-related infrastructure projects. Some 3,500 people applied for the 100 spots, which was a clear sign to the DMO that visitors are also interested in protecting and preserving the Faroe Islands.

The country currently welcomes about 100,000 visitors per year, roughly double the population, and although Visit the Faroe Islands feels it hasn’t reached the point of overtourism it wants to keep the destination undisturbed and mostly undiscovered.

More than half of the respondents to a DMO-run survey said that they “strongly agree” that the Faroe Islands are “unspoiled, unexplored, and unbelievable,” and more than 77% said they were “very satisfied” with their visit.⁹ This data has been the catalyst for the DMO’s successful campaigns in the past few years, including “Sheepview” (which strapped cameras onto sheep to mimic a Google Street View vantage point of the islands), and Faroe Islands Translate (which used local volunteers to provide live, custom translations to curious visitors).¹⁰

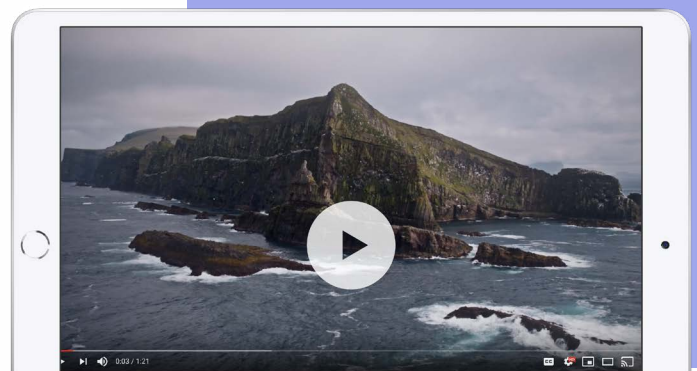
The Sheepview campaign garnered more than 7,000 news stories that reached more than two billion people. Not bad for a bootstrapped, yet resourceful, DMO!

“We’re lucky enough to be able to work proactively to be able to prevent damage on nature,” said Guðrið Højgaard, the Director of Visit Faroe Islands Tourist Board, speaking at a Skift Global Forum in September 2019. *“We don’t yet have overtourism, but like in other places we do see a change in opinion in tourism...tourism keeps remote places like ours alive despite global urbanization...Destinations like ours need to manage tourism, before it manages us.”*¹¹

The DMO plans to hold another “closed for maintenance” weekend in 2020 and has already had travelers inquire about getting involved. The destination’s unique approach to addressing tourism management takes shape at a time when global conversations around nature and the environment have reached a boiling point, and has tapped into visitors’ fledgling desire to be part of the solution, not the problem.

⁸Visit the Faroe Islands, ⁹Visit the Faroe Islands, ¹⁰Skift, ¹¹Skift

click to watch





05 Website

There's been a lot of debate in recent years regarding how much a DMO invest make in its website. Travelers get their news and information from many sources and a DMO site might end up being an afterthought in the trip-planning process. Though, a website is where a DMO can control their brand and their relationship with visitors versus a platform where they don't own the audience. Here are two campaigns that know how to get creative with their websites and give travelers a compelling reason to bookmark and regularly visit them.

West Virginia Tourism Office's Live Fall Foliage Map

Leaf peepers

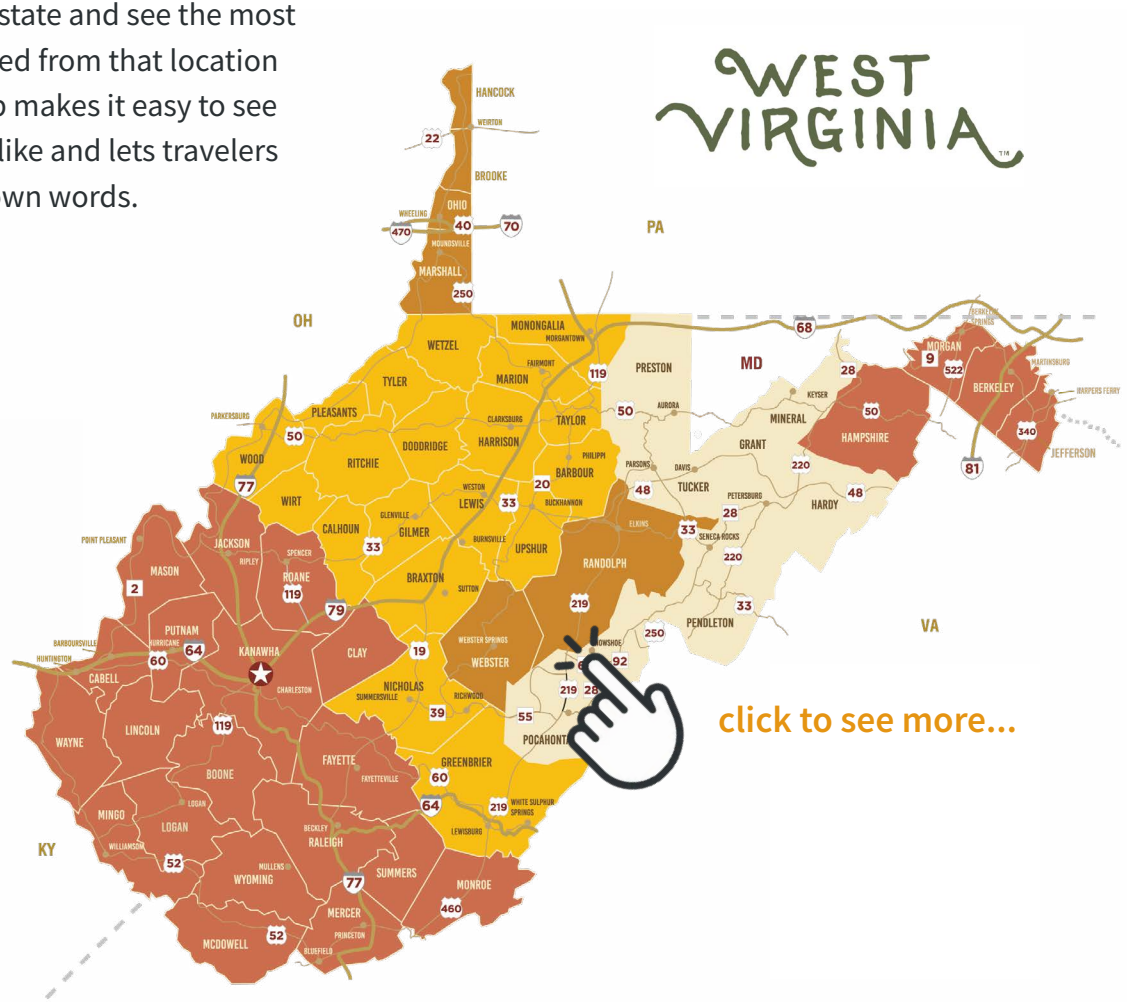
It's as if fall foliage was created specially for the social media age, with all the vibrant colors that make for the perfect photo backdrops. But the annual cycle has been occurring since time immemorial and West Virginia Tourism Office has been around the block enough times to know how to use fall leaves to its advantage.

The DMO used CrowdRiff's API to build its live fall foliage map in 2019.¹² Visitors can click on various locations across the state and see the most recent Instagram photo posted from that location showing the leaves. The map makes it easy to see what current conditions are like and lets travelers describe the leaves in their own words.

Because the fall foliage timeline varies from year to year and leaves can change so suddenly, putting travelers' own foliage reports and photos to good use is a lesson for any DMO to let travelers handle the day-by-day updates and let your staff concentrate on marketing events and an attraction's ecosystem around the leaves.

LEGEND:

- Late September
- Early October
- Mid October
- Late October



¹²West Virginia Tourism Office

Tourism Burnaby Embraces its Diverse City

Being Vancouver's little cousin

Smaller destinations surrounding metropolises or historical/cultural capitals sometimes have difficulty getting travelers to venture beyond downtown and check out a different area only a few minutes away.

Burnaby, British Columbia is only a few miles from downtown Vancouver, one of Canada's most diverse cities (about half of the city's population speak a language other than English or French). It realized that some of its larger cousin's diversity and culture has spilled over to its own streets over the years and created an altogether different, yet inclusive and welcoming, culture.

Tourism Burnaby created its "Diverse City" campaign in 2019 to convey to visitors that everyone is welcome and that if you're visiting Vancouver, you should consider venturing a few steps further to see what makes Burnaby an adventure all on its own. Focusing on diversity makes sense for Burnaby and the campaign has legs that could extend indefinitely and be applied to different trends and activities, rather than a message that visitors might not seem as compelling after a few years.



[click to see guide](#)



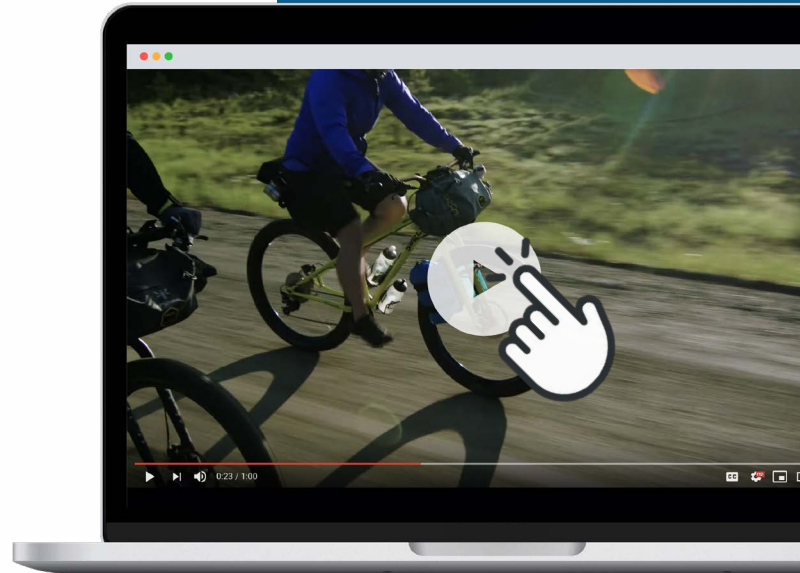
Explore
Burnaby

Cranbrook Tourism Goes Bikepacking

New take on biking

Bikepacking, or backpacking but with bikes, has become popular during the past decade as visitors look to cover lots of ground in limited time. Cranbrook Tourism made a simple, but effective, video that explains the thrill of bikepacking and what it offers versus exploring the area in a car. “Visitors are empowered when they’re on a bike,” the narrator says, “and biking allows you to feel more in control of your vacation or visit.”

Winter and biking aren’t often used in the same sentence, but in Cranbrook bikepacking is a year-round activity. Cranbrook Tourism has a strong collection of biking-related content on its website which broadly appeals to avid outdoor adventures and thrill seekers. The DMO also features a lot of UGC biking photos across its social media and spotlighting biking demonstrates the adventurous identity of the destination that will appeal to a growing number of active travelers who want to spend their leisure time doing something, instead of just relaxing.



click to watch



06

How CrowdRiff Helps Small DMOs Create Great Tourism Marketing Campaigns



Source and get the rights to UGC

- Keep up with your content demands by tapping into an unlimited source of high-quality user-generated content.
- Securely acquire rights to UGC worry-free.
- Use the industry's most intelligent image search to find on-brand UGC quickly.



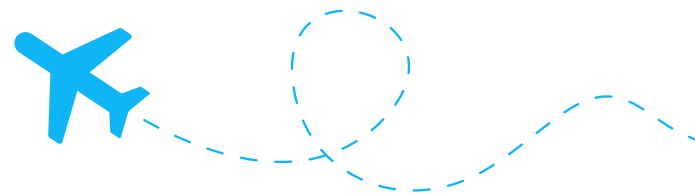
Easily distribute UGC across platforms

- Put UGC to work on your website, social channels, ad campaigns and more.
- Enrich your images with Google Locations so website visitors can easily find the information they need to visit.
- Add calls to action to your UGC imagery that take people to your booking pages, partner websites or deeper into your website.



Pick better visuals for your ads

- Discover which assets are driving the most conversions and revenue.
- Make better ad decisions every day by serving up data on visual content.
- Use these insights to help you choose your ad creative and watch your conversions improve.





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](#)

