

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark patterned shirt, is looking upwards with a sense of wonder. He is in an aquarium, with a large shark swimming in the background and several smaller fish in the foreground. The scene is brightly lit, with sunlight filtering through the water.

The Essential Guide to User-Generated Content



Hello!

Every day, people visiting your attraction are sharing hundreds of photos and videos online, amplifying the reach of their experiences.

These user-generated visuals are a powerful influencing factor in someone's decision to spend a day at your attraction. That's why we built CrowdRiff: to help attractions and travel brands discover the best visuals and deliver them throughout their marketing to inspire more visitors.

This publication contains helpful information on user-generated content marketing, acquiring the rights to UGC, as well as a selection of stories from attractions we work with. All the UGC images that you'll see here were sourced from social media and rights-approved through CrowdRiff.

I hope this will give you a better understanding of what CrowdRiff does, and the value it can bring to your attraction.

Special thanks to Pete Owens at Dollywood and Jillian Enterline at Bright Red \ TBWA for inviting me to share this content with you at the 2018 IAAPA Annual Conference.

Enjoy the read!



Amrita Gurney

VP Marketing at CrowdRiff



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Tips, Tricks, and How-Tos

User-Generated Content



Why UGC is One of the Most Effective Visual Marketing Tools for Attractions

What do amusement parks, zoos, aquariums, and other attractions all have in common? Your visitors can't resist taking and sharing photos and videos of their experiences... meaning there's a ton of user-generated content (UGC) created around each attraction every single day. Let's explore why visual UGC is becoming such a powerful marketing tool for top attractions – and why you need to start featuring more social imagery in your own marketing.

1 Social proof is highly influential

Have you ever come across a friend's vacation photo online and thought, wow I want to go there! Thanks to social media, visual decision-making is more common than ever.

When future visitors are making plans (and even when they're just casually surfing online!), they're inspired by social UGC shared by their friends and peers.

That means seeing a photo or watching a video taken at your attraction can generate interest and spark visitors to take action – perhaps by reading up on your attraction, starting to plan their visit, or even grabbing tickets online.

Did you know?

85%

of consumers find UGC more influential than brand photos or videos

84%

of millennials report that user-generated content has some influence on what they buy

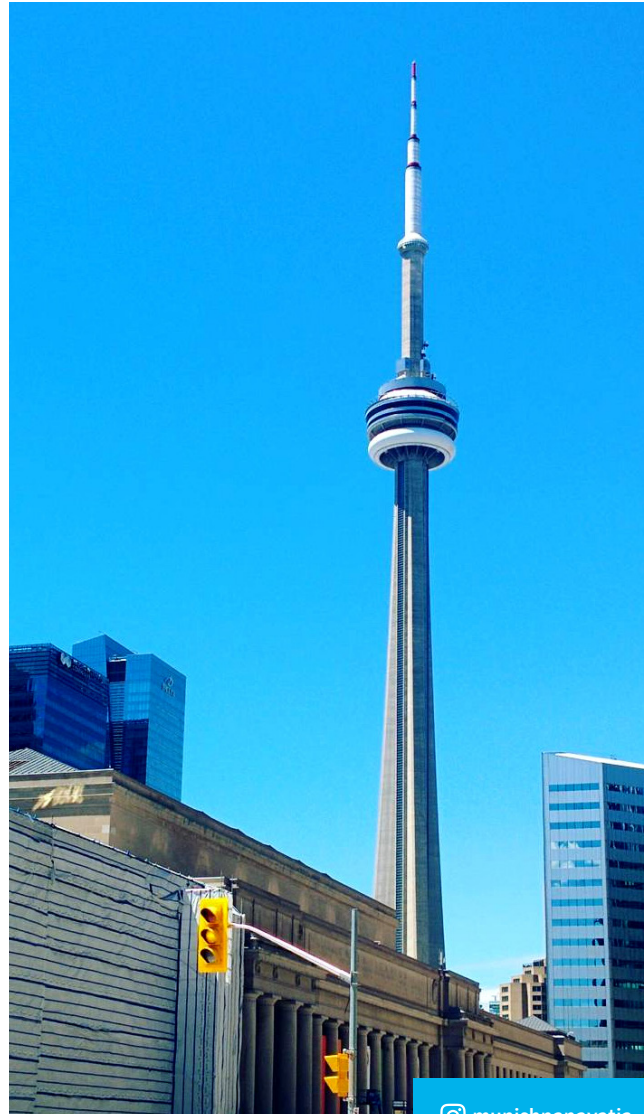
70%

Instagram users are 70% more likely to purchase a product online





luc.luxton



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2 Trust is the most powerful currency

People across ages and demographics trust UGC more – and that’s because it’s created by people who simply love your brand. People who post photos at your attraction are sharing their genuine experiences.

When Discover The Palm Beaches launched their “Friends Trust Friends, Not Ads” marketing campaign, produced purely with authentic rights-approved social media imagery, they found a significant increase in ROI when compared to their past campaigns.

They saw a 35% increase in web conversions, a 51% increase in display ad acquisitions, and a 23% increase in visitors.

When you use user-generated content, you’re letting your past and current happy customers tell your story for you, in their words.



3 No other visuals are more abundant

One of the greatest things about using UGC as a source for marketing visuals is that there is just so much of it, and the volume keeps increasing.

Tapping into UGC provides you with more content than ever – which means you can choose the very best visuals that represent what your brand is all

about, instead of being confined to the few visuals that may conveniently be on hand. What's more, since every day your visitors are posting new photos, you have constant access to new and up-to-date visuals.

Displaying UGC alongside your branded assets also brings a breath of fresh air to your marketing, as it allows you to showcase your attraction through the perspectives of a range of visitors – not just your own.

User-generated content is ultimately a vote of confidence

Your attraction's biggest fans are snapping photos, writing reviews, and sharing their experiences online – often without any prompting. This is the content your guests are producing and the content your guests love seeing.

It's time to take the next step, and incorporate UGC into your marketing.

5 Steps to Drive Increased Ticket Sales with UGC

So you want to dive deeper into UGC – where do you start? We took inspiration from some of the attractions we work with to show 5 ways you can use user-generated content in your marketing. From beginner tips – perfect for attractions just starting out with UGC – all the way to advanced tips for optimizing UGC, this article has it all.

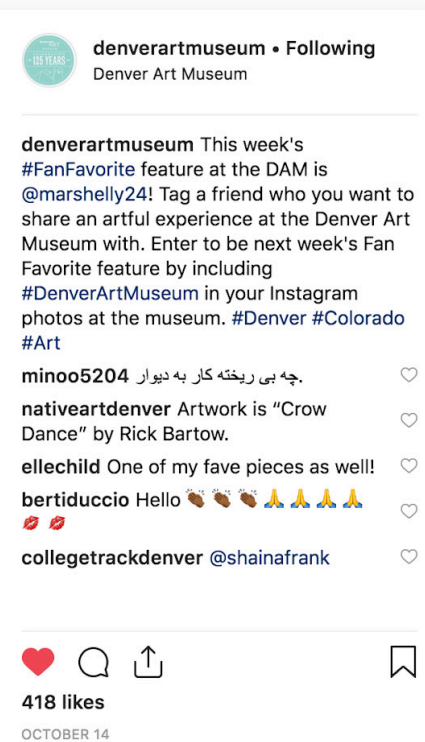
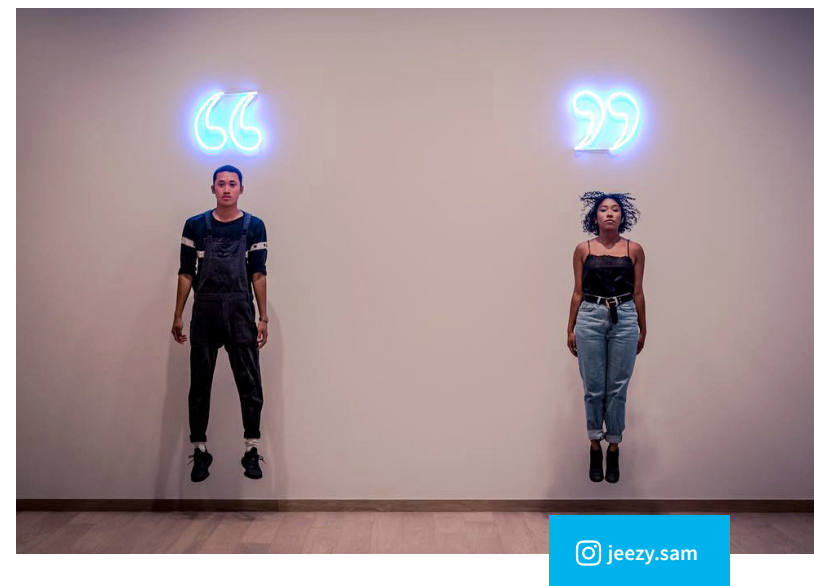
1 Repost guest photos to your own social media feeds

One of the first ways attractions dip their feet into the world of UGC marketing is by reposting great guest photos on social media.

Whenever you come across a photo you love, you can ask for permission to reshare it on your own feed.

Some attractions build their feeds entirely out of visitor photos, and others mix it in with their own photos. The Denver Art Museum, for example, has a weekly series on their Instagram where they post a #FanFavorite photo.

Incorporating guest content onto your own feed shows that you're engaged with the community too, listening to what your visitors have to say, and appreciating the content they post.



2 Gather insights on your most effective visuals

Through your analytics software you can get granular on how people are interacting with the visuals on your website, and what is actually moving the needle.

For example, these insights would be worth investigating:

- Discover which visuals are driving the most ticket sales with international and local visitors
- See which specific CTAs and photos are directly linked to ticket sales
- Compare the percentage of ticket sales from people who have engaged with a gallery vs. those who have not

This allows you to make data-driven decisions on the type of online experiences, actions, and visuals that can be used to trigger more sales. You can also apply these insights in other areas of your marketing, like repurposing particularly impactful visuals in targeted digital ads.

Tip: If you use CrowdRiff, because of the Google Analytics integration, setting yourself up to get this data is much easier.



 foodfashionandchill

3 Embed calls to action directly on your visuals

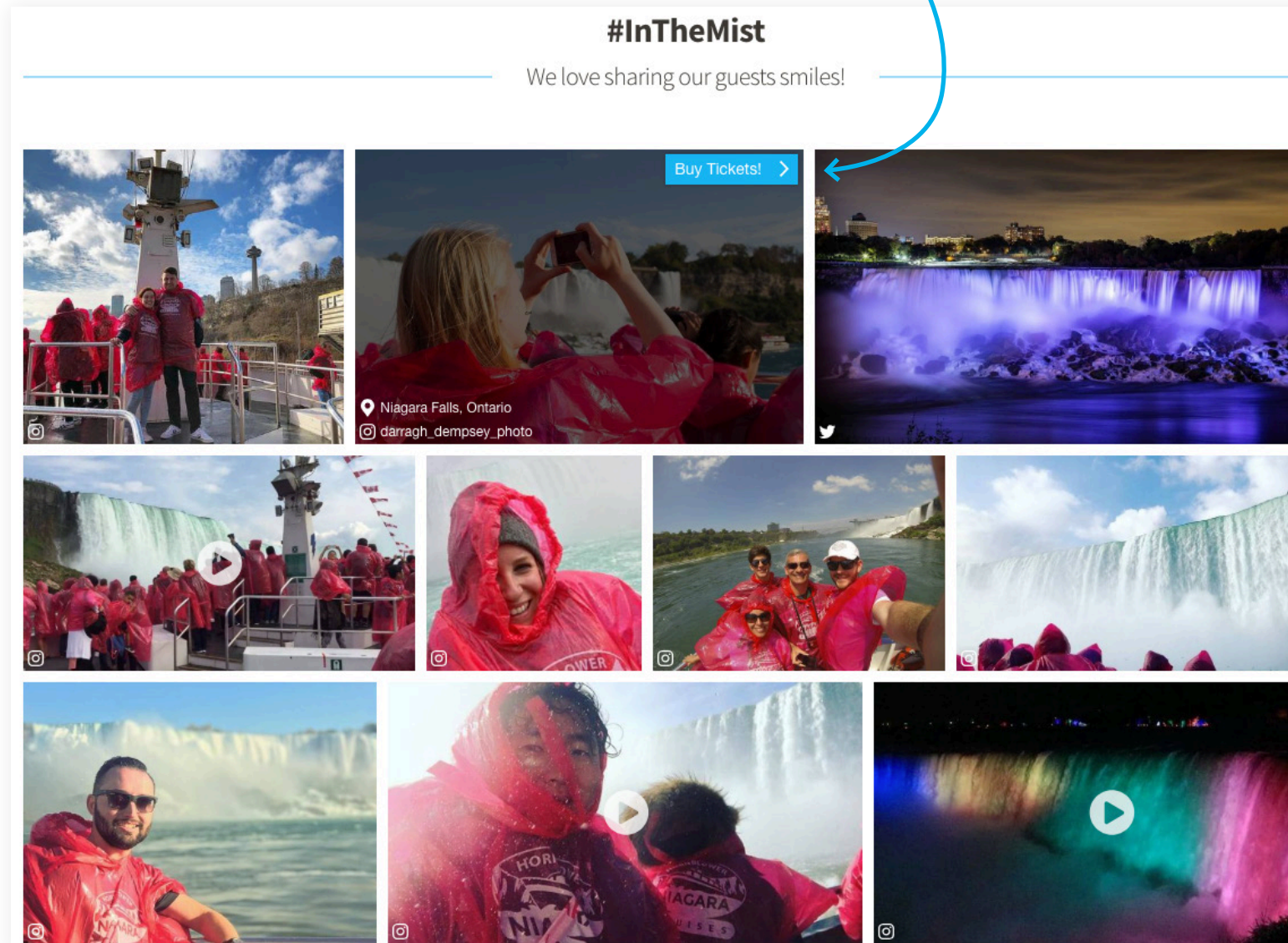
As your web visitors are exploring the user-generated content on your website, you want to make sure the next step (ie. purchasing their ticket!) is right in front of them.

A great way to do this is to add clickable captions, or CTAs, that link to your ticket sales page.

For example, Hornblower Niagara Cruises, a boat tour operator in Niagara Falls, uses CrowdRiff to overlay clickable CTAs on the UGC galleries throughout their website.

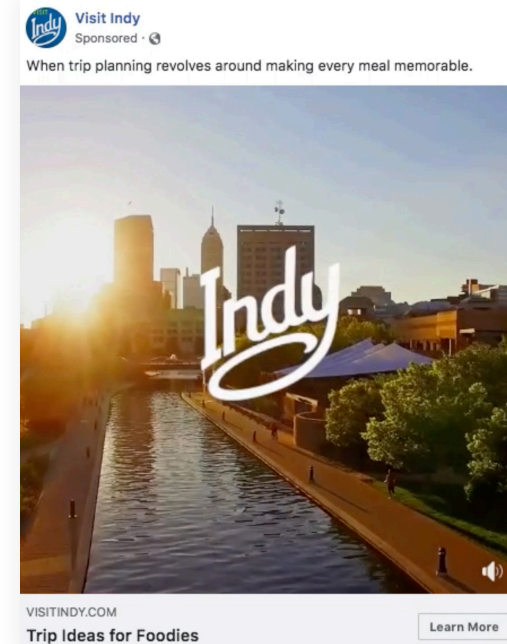
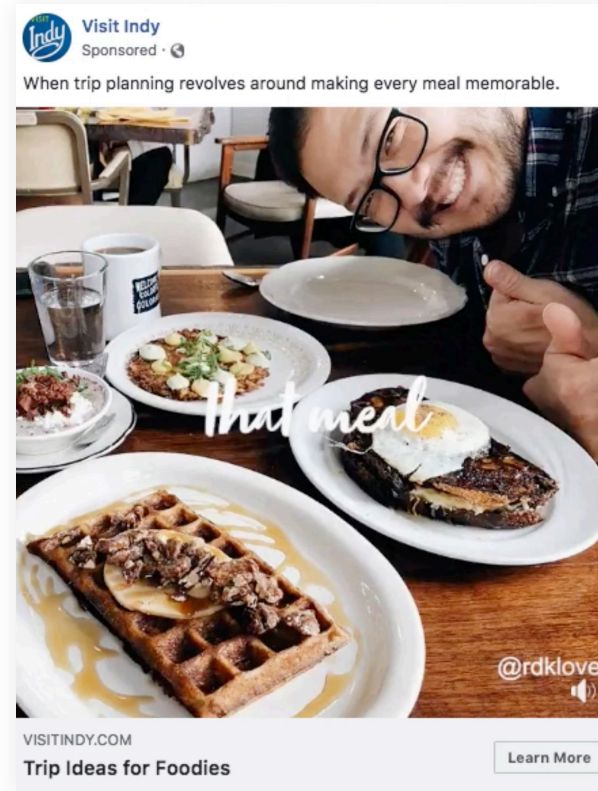
When a visitor clicks an image they like in the homepage gallery, they not only receive more context – including the location, caption, and name of the Instagram user who posted it – but they're also prompted to buy tickets through a CTA that leads right to the tour sales page.

Call-to-action





VISITINDY.COM
Trip Ideas for Foodies



4 Get rights to UGC to use in ads

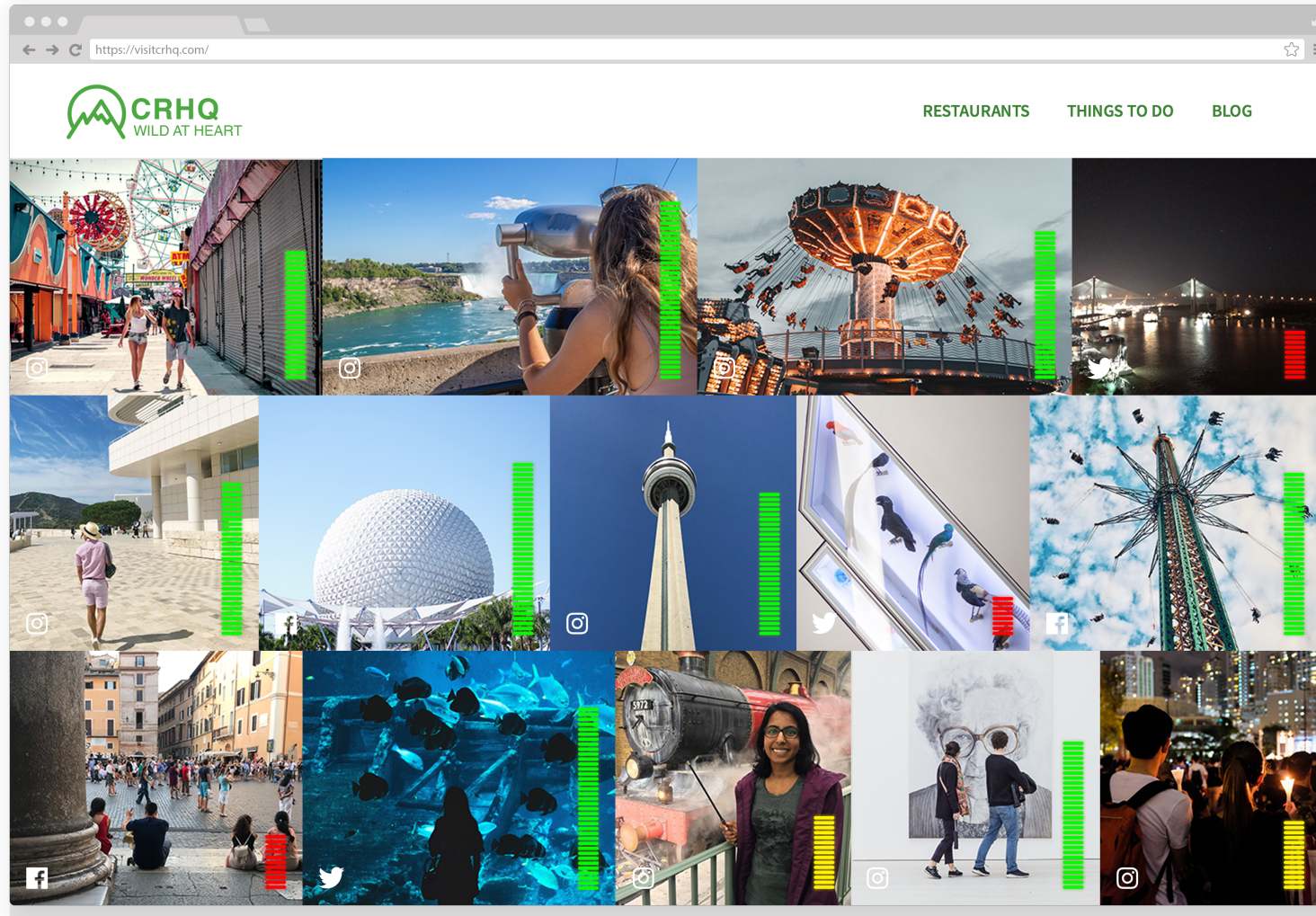
We know that UGC performs best on websites and social, so why not take it to ads?

More attractions and travel brands are getting rights to UGC and starting to experiment with it in their ads.

For example, earlier this year, Visit Indy launched a new Facebook and Instagram ad campaign that featured a series of

UGC videos (shown above). Each video was made up of authentic photos and videos from visitors to Indianapolis, and stitched together in a video. These UGC-powered ads got a 3x stronger click-through rate than their other ad creative.

Today, Visit Indy exclusively uses UGC visuals in their ads.



5 Optimize UGC galleries to show the most engaging content

If you really want to take your UGC marketing efforts a step further, you can consider running continuous tests on the imagery in your UGC galleries, to find and display the most effective combination.

Tech-savvy attractions are already using CrowdRiff's self-optimizing galleries to automate all of the monitoring, tracking, and testing of their visuals...

Using artificial intelligence, CrowdRiff's UGC galleries automatically test and update your visuals to maximize performance and conversions. This includes prioritizing visuals that get the most engagement and switching out the ones that don't. CrowdRiff galleries will always be optimized to present the most effective content first.

Cheat Sheet: Everything You Need to Know About UGC Rights

When it comes to using social photos and videos in marketing, it can be tricky to figure out what's "ok" to do and what's not.

While this cheat sheet won't replace professional legal advice, we'll try our best to demystify the questions you might have around user-generated content rights!

When you do not need rights to use a photo

If you're displaying a user-generated photo through a social network or through an API partner, you don't need rights. This includes:

- **Embedding a Tweet or Instagram photo onto your website or blog.** For example, if you use the embed code provided by the social network.
- **Displaying content through an API partner, like with CrowdRiff galleries.** Since CrowdRiff uses Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook's API to display photos, and abides by all their separate Terms & Conditions, you do not need explicit permission to display photos.



When you do need rights to use a photo

First ask yourself this question: Am I taking the photo off of its social network? If so, then the short answer is yes, you need rights. This includes:

- Reposting a photo to your own Instagram account. (This requires downloading the photo and uploading it again).
- Using the photo in digital or print ads.
- Displaying the photo on your website without a link back to the original photo.
- Displaying a modified version of a photo.



 [melissacoblephotography](https://www.instagram.com/melissacoblephotography)

Best practices when asking for rights to UGC visuals

Ask for permission explicitly in a comment

Here's a checklist to help you craft a good comment:

1. Show that you appreciate their work with a compliment.
2. Tell them how you'd like to use their photo.
3. Give them a way to explicitly say "yes".

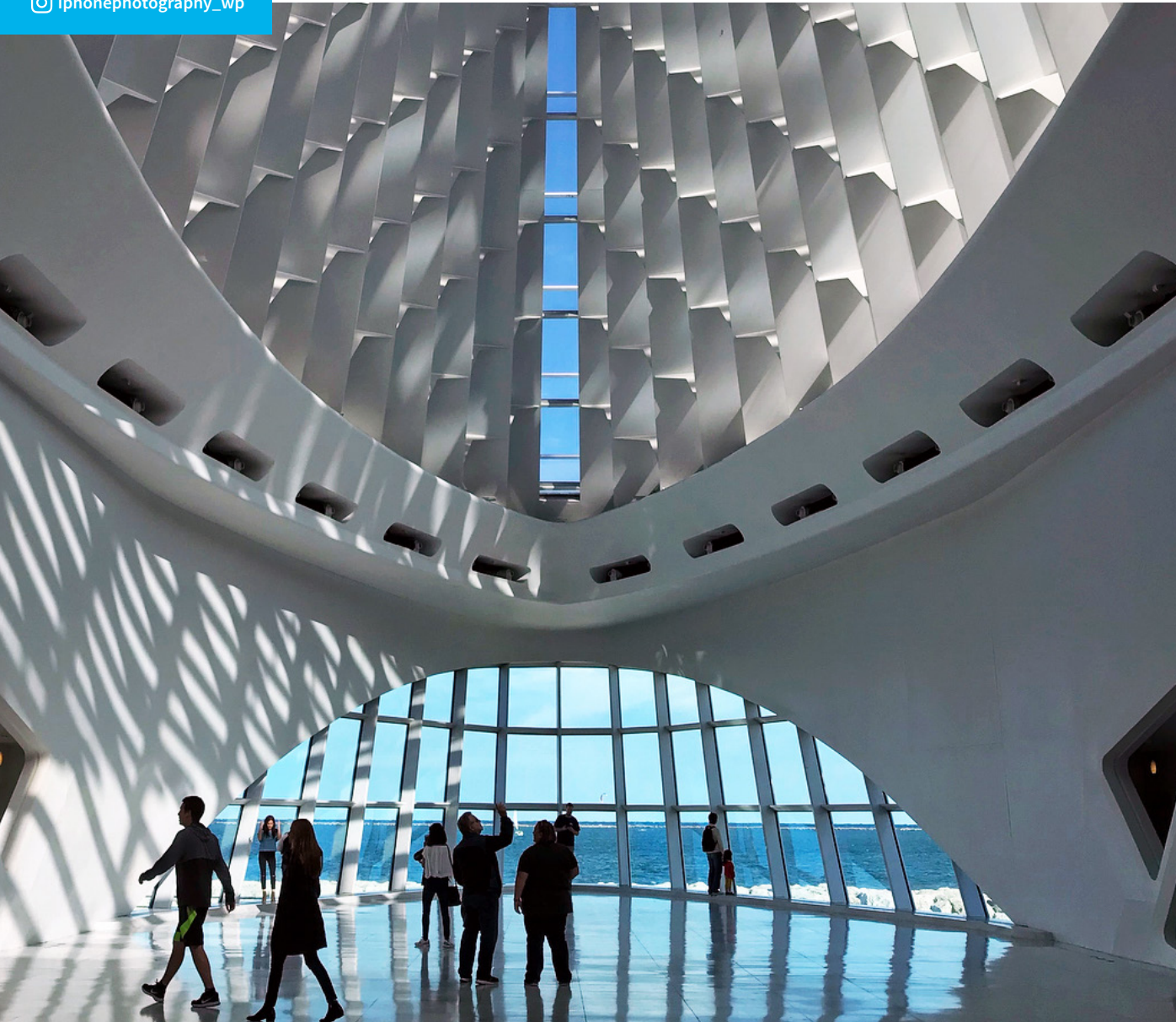
Here, Tourism Toronto uses CrowdRiff to send out these comment requests.



Invite people to agree to specific Terms & Conditions

You can choose to link your Terms & Conditions in your profile, and direct people to that link when asking for rights, before they agree.

Above, Louisiana Travel uses CrowdRiff's Advanced Rights Management feature to show people (from whom they've requested photos) a seamless experience from agreeing to terms to granting permission for Louisiana Travel to use their content.

 iphonephotography_wp

How CrowdRiff manages user-generated content rights

Attractions use CrowdRiff to automate the rights request process, shaving hours of manual searching off the work week.

- **We keep track of your requests.**
When you're manually requesting rights to UGC, it's extraordinarily hard to keep a record of which photos you've requested and who's responded. CrowdRiff automates all of that.
- **We retrieve the high-resolution version of any photo** immediately after someone gives you rights. No more emailing back and forth — when they approve, you get the photo instantly.
- **We take a screenshot each time someone responds with “yes”,** and archive it so that you can have a record of that interaction.

Success with UGC:

Attractions Leading Through Innovation



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20,000 Photos in Two Weeks: How Hornblower Niagara Cruises Used CrowdRiff to Build an Enormous Visual Content Library

By Melissa Cartaginense

Each year Hornblower Niagara Cruises takes millions of visitors from every corner of the planet on an absolutely breathtaking tour of one of the world's natural wonders: Niagara Falls.

Prior to May 2017, the widely popular tourist attraction spent about \$10,000 a year to produce visual marketing content — yet couldn't quite capture that quintessential reaction of seeing the world's largest waterfall up close for the first time.

Even though tens of thousands of visitors were sharing their experiences on social media, Hornblower Niagara Cruises only had the rights to showcase about 30 or 40 images.

"I was trying as best as I could to actively search for things, but it was really difficult, because searching through Instagram doesn't work very well," said Chelsey Harasym,

the Social Media Coordinator of Hornblower Niagara Cruises. "I was tracking everything in a spreadsheet, and I had to take screen captures of the rights request approvals, and then link that through Google Drive to the spreadsheet, and it was just a mess."

Getting rights to user-generated content at a massive scale

Sourcing user-generated visuals remained a labor-intensive process until one day Harasym noticed a comment from Niagara Falls Tourism on a social media post, requesting rights to the photo using CrowdRiff's Hashtag Rights feature. Niagara Falls Tourism was able to secure rights to the image by simply asking the user to reply to their comment using the hashtag #yesNFT if they wanted to give permission.

"When I saw that I thought something was going on, and I wanted to know



what they were doing,” said Harasym. “Niagara Falls Tourism gave me a demo of how they’ve been using CrowdRiff, and they raved about it, so I started researching it myself and it was probably less than a week after that that I signed us up.”

Suddenly Hornblower Niagara Cruises was able to access all the photos and videos their visitors were sharing, and request rights to them through CrowdRiff.

“Within the first two weeks I had requested the rights to over 20,000 [images and videos], and I received the rights to about seven or eight thousand.”

Though it’s hard to put a number to it Harasym predicts that Hornblower Niagara Cruises would’ve had to spend about \$20,000 to \$30,000 over a couple of months to match the sheer magnitude of visual content they’ve acquired with CrowdRiff — and that’s without considering the diversity of imagery they get from social media too.

Visuals that appeal to international travelers

With rights to a total of over 14,000 user-generated visuals secured since starting with CrowdRiff last year, Harasym says new possibilities are available to the organization, especially when it comes to advertising in key foreign markets.

“We do marketing in a lot of specific countries with Destination Canada and our partners in those countries,” she said, adding that sharing visual assets



Instagram: jessieglitters



Instagram: courtneyhaley



has become easier through CrowdRiff's UGC Partner Network. "Being able to give them assets that specifically showcase people that have visited from those countries, being able to break that barrier, is invaluable."

Using AI to surface high performing visuals and optimize website performance

Hornblower Niagara Cruises also features authentic social photos in galleries on their website, which are self-optimizing. The CrowdRiff-powered galleries showcase a pre-selected group of images and self organize based on which are receiving the most engagement online.

"That's something we just got recently, and that has just blown my mind," said Harasym. "Now we're able to see the images that are getting the most engagement, and we're able to find which images in our galleries deliver the best ROI."

Breaking visitor attendance records

Harasym adds that Hornblower welcomed 2.3 million visitors aboard last year, far surpassing all previous attendance records.

Moving forward Harasym intends to integrate more user-generated content into print materials, and continue growing its network of partners around the world. However they choose to use the platform in the future Harasym says she's most excited to see what features it offers next.

"I've been working with it for less than a year, and in that time the growth in development I've seen is really why I love CrowdRiff," she said. "That to me is priceless, because I'm paying for something that evolves as quickly as social media and digital marketing is evolving."

"We'd have to have 10 groups of models to cover every country and ethnicity we we're looking to represent, whereas with CrowdRiff we can capture images of guests who have come from those countries," she said. "Models have their place and they have their purpose, but these [UGC] photos are invaluable because we can't recreate these people's reaction to seeing The Falls for the first time."



How Dollywood Drove \$90,000 in Ticket Sales with User-Generated Content Galleries

By Sandra Rzasa

Dollywood is an attraction that means many different things to many different people.

The iconic destination is home to a theme park, waterpark, two dinner theatres, a luxury resort and spa, private cabins, festivals, shows and plenty of entertainment. It's also popular amongst a wide range of visitors; from the elderly to children, and a wide range of markets; from the cities and towns that surround Pigeon Forge, Tennessee to the furthest reaches of the country and beyond.

Finding a better way to communicate the variety of experiences Dollywood offers

"There is so much to the overall experience – how do you communicate that?" asked Pete Owens, the Vice President of Marketing and Public

Relations for The Dollywood Company. "It's a rather competitive world for vacation dollars and time for families to visit. Cutting through that clutter in regard to what we have to offer compared with other parks is a challenge."

Owens explains that not only is it difficult to sum up the experience to potential visitors in a concise manner, but that elevator pitch changes depending on the audience member.

This past spring Owens and his team turned to user-generated content, or the visuals their guests share on social media, in hopes of helping themselves stand out.

"The major change for us is how we look at our digital environments, both owned and in our social environments, when we present ourselves," he said. "Now we're presenting ourselves through

the eyes of the consumer, rather than the way we see ourselves, and it's a much more authentic view of who we are."

User-generated visuals help Dollywood tell a more complete brand story

Over the summer Owens updated Dollywood.com to incorporate more social media photos on their website, through CrowdRiff galleries. He explains that the new photo galleries on their website are able to demonstrate the full range of experiences available through the eyes of the visitors that enjoy them.

"What CrowdRiff has allowed us to do is find great images and great experiences from visitors that really illustrate the story we're trying to tell," he said, "and that helps us break through the clutter."

"Instead of having two or three or four key marketing images that we've agreed to and people see over and over, it allows us to pull real images of real people to show what otherwise would look staged."

Owens adds that he was originally interested in the platform for the Rights Management feature. "It really simplified what we would have or could have done ourselves," he said. "To me, that was the deal closer on the platform."

In addition to requesting rights to user-generated content regularly, Owens says he and his team have found





other ways to improve the effectiveness of their marketing efforts using the platform. The variety of website gallery layouts, the number of different ways to source new UGC (via a combination of hashtags, locations, and usernames), and the way they're now able to discover new imagery every day has changed the way the team works.

"We now have a much larger library of images that we can use," Owen said. "More than we would have had ourselves, and that provides more dynamic and fresher content."

To date, the UGC galleries on the site have driven \$90,000 in ticket sales

Implementing more guest photos throughout their website has dramatically increased website performance and conversions in the past 5 months of using CrowdRiff.

The team at Dollywood uses CrowdRiff Calls-To-Action, which embed links over imagery that lead to the ticket sales page.

"Just from our home gallery, clicks converted to nearly 100 transactions

After using CrowdRiff to add a UGC gallery to the homepage, Dollywood.com saw engagement on the page increase by 25%. A UGC gallery also resulted in a 28% increase in engagement on the website's waterpark page, and a 42% increase in views and interactions on the "Rides and Attractions" page.



SUCCESS WITH UGC

within a 60-day period that accounted for almost \$30,000 in revenue, just by using UGC to push them further down the funnel more quickly,” said Owens. “That was surprising. Originally we anticipated [CrowdRiff] would be a successful way for us to showcase the brand, but I don’t think anybody really realized we’d be able to drive that kind of conversion – especially so immediately.”

What’s more, Dollywood puts a focus on delivering a mobile-friendly website experience, and notes that mobile conversions on these galleries come in at 1.52%, driving nearly 85% of the ticket sales. To date, they have attributed \$90,000 in ticket sales to CrowdRiff.

Next steps: finding more ways to put their guests front and center in their marketing

Though Dollywood has only been utilizing CrowdRiff for a few months Owens says the brand is already looking for ways to incorporate more user-generated content into its wider marketing strategy.

“I think we’ll explore the opportunity to see if we can use it in other channels to try and obtain the same benefits we’re seeing in the digital space, just by showing real people doing real things,” he said.



Discover the most engaging social media photos from your attraction

Are you keeping track of your attraction's best user-generated content?

Because we are and we'd love to show you what CrowdRiff has found for your brand.

Get in touch to discover your brand's top UGC.

go.crowdriff.com/top-photos

What is CrowdRiff?

CrowdRiff is an AI-powered visual content marketing platform that enables marketers to discover, collaborate on, and deliver top-performing visuals across every channel.

Attractions large and small from all over the globe use CrowdRiff to:

- Automatically source new visitor photos in real-time from social channels
- Expand their image libraries by getting rights to UGC
- Deliver impactful imagery across their website, social channels, print materials, digital ads and more

