

# How Leading Travel Companies like Virgin Holidays, Air France, and Expedia Turned Lookers Into Bookers with UGC-led Marketing Strategies



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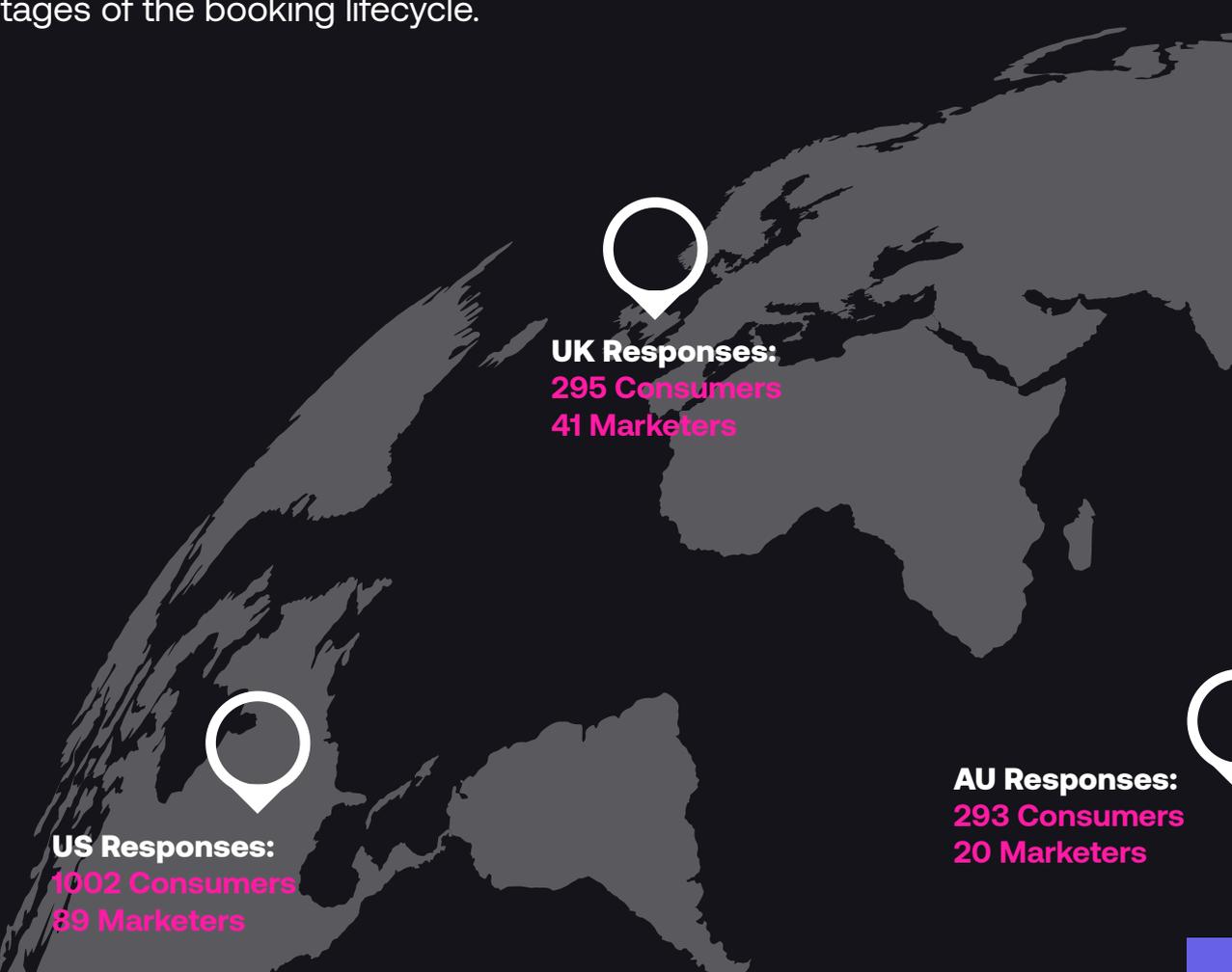
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# Consumers Look to Social Proof for Travel Inspiration & Validation

It's hard to understate the impact social media has had on the travel industry. Nosto's data report, called "[Bridging the Gap: Consumer & Marketing Perspectives on Content in the Digital Age](#)," found that people increasingly look to user-generated content (UGC) for travel inspiration and validation—effectively uncovering that UGC is now the most influential content throughout all stages of the booking lifecycle.

**86**  
PERCENT

Of people have become interested in traveling to a certain destination after seeing social images from friends, family or peers



**UK Responses:**  
295 Consumers  
41 Marketers

**US Responses:**  
1002 Consumers  
89 Marketers

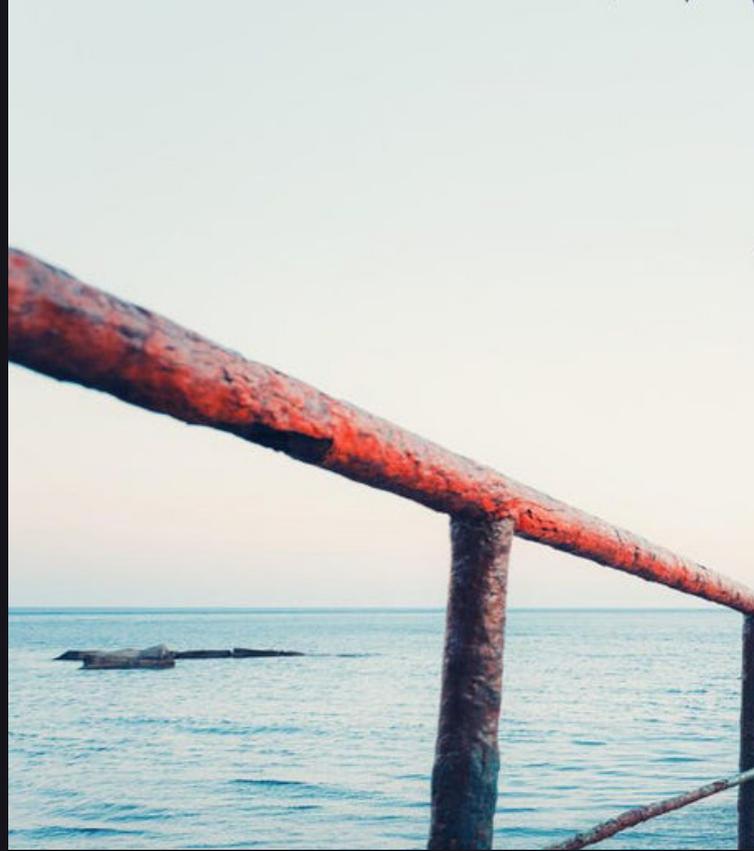
**AU Responses:**  
293 Consumers  
20 Marketers

# Travel Inspiration

Our survey found that the top source of travel inspiration for consumers across all ages is user-generated content from friends, family or peers on social media.

In fact, 86% of consumers have become interested in traveling to a specific destination after seeing UGC visuals.

Conversely, only 48% of people say social content from a celebrity or influencer has sparked their interest in traveling to a specific location—making UGC 1.8x more inspirational than influencer content.



## People who have become interested in traveling to a specific location based on the following content sources:



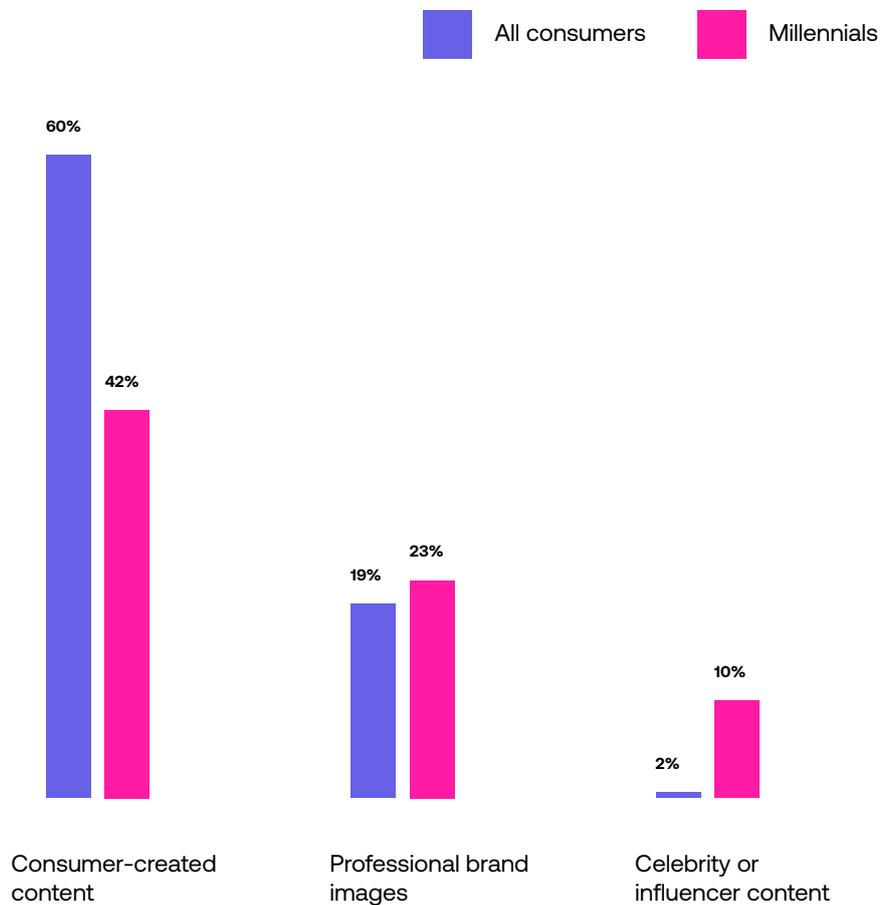
## Travel Research

Most people reference user-generated visuals on social review sites (59%) and social networks (54%) when planning travel. Yet, only 12% reference celebrity or influencer content as part of their planning process.

And when we asked which type of content was **most influential**, 60% of people said UGC—up from 42% in 2017. Again, the influence of influencer content is minimal and diminishing. In fact, 38% of people went so far as to say that influencer content **never** impacts which hotel or resort they choose to stay at when traveling.



### The most influential content to consumers when planning travel:

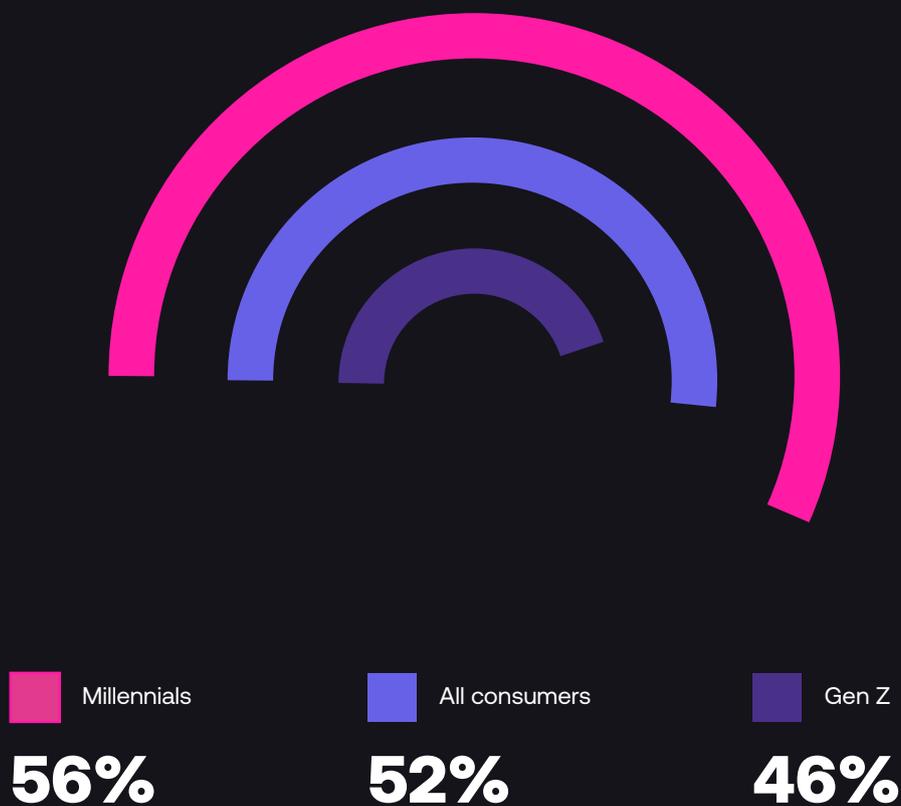


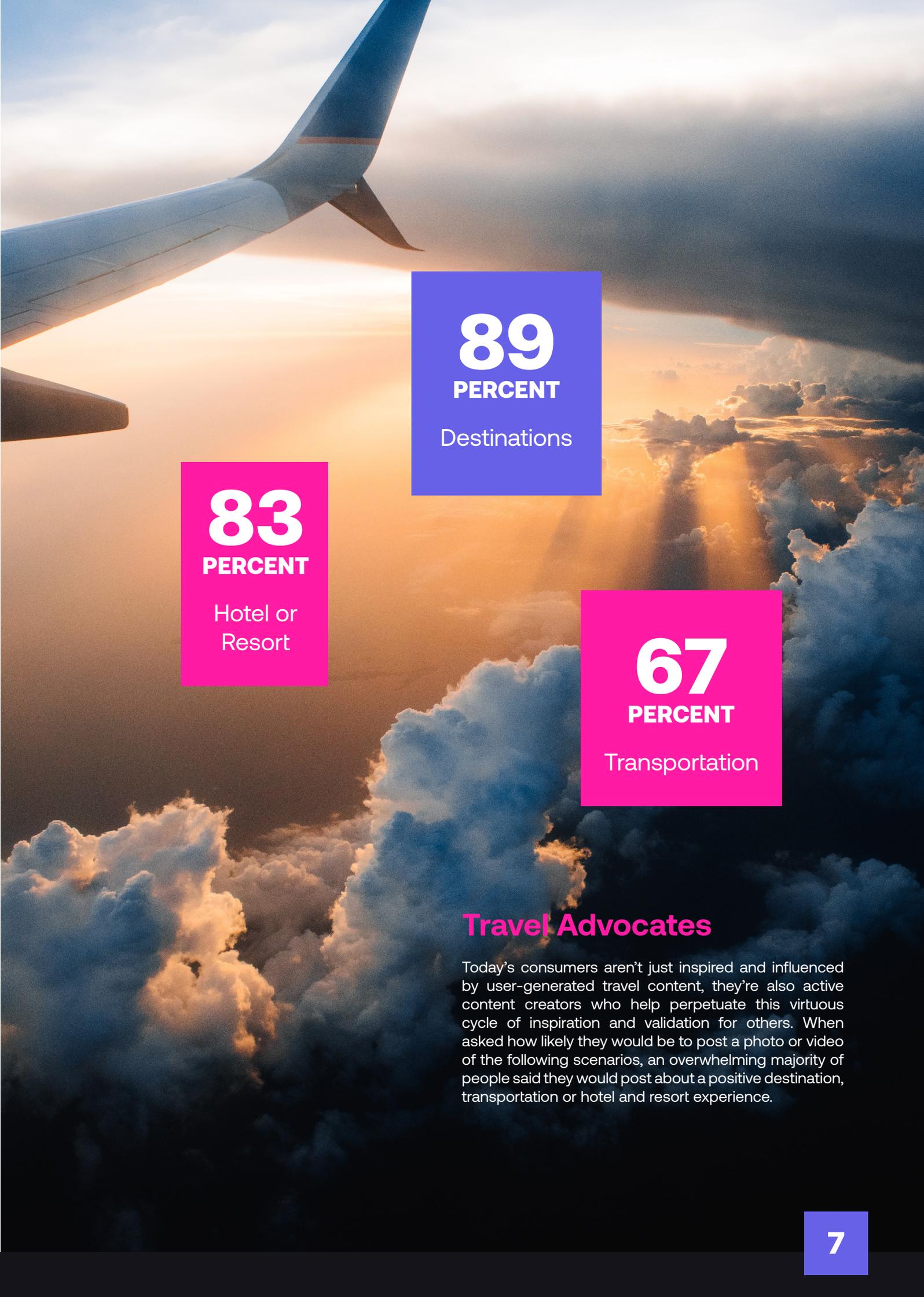
## Booking Travel

Consumer-generated images aren't just theoretically influencing people's travel decisions, they're directly driving bookings—and in greater volumes than in the past.

Over half of consumers (52%) say they've made plans to visit a specific destination based on an image or video they saw from friends, family or peers on social media—up from 43% in 2017.

**People who have made plans to visit a certain location after seeing user-generated photos on social media:**





**89**  
**PERCENT**

Destinations

**83**  
**PERCENT**

Hotel or  
Resort

**67**  
**PERCENT**

Transportation

## Travel Advocates

Today's consumers aren't just inspired and influenced by user-generated travel content, they're also active content creators who help perpetuate this virtuous cycle of inspiration and validation for others. When asked how likely they would be to post a photo or video of the following scenarios, an overwhelming majority of people said they would post about a positive destination, transportation or hotel and resort experience.

## Putting Consumers to the Test

We put consumers to the test, showing them two photos side by side: one was a piece of UGC and the other was a piece of stock photography — both featured women smiling with their arms raised in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.

Given the choice between the two images, the majority of people said the user-generated image (Photo A) was:



**Most authentic**



**Most likely to make them trust the brand that posted it**



**Most likely to click on if it was featured in an ad or social post**

# How Travel Brands are Creating Authentic Experiences with UGC

## Busabout

Popular tour operator, Busabout, completely transformed their brand, making 99% of the visuals on their website user-generated—with interactive calls-to-action and map visualizations—as well as designing 95% of their print brochure with authentic traveler images.

**33**  
PERCENT

Boost in direct bookings

“

*We wanted to inspire potential travelers by showing just how experience-rich our trips are—from the classic European landmarks to the social atmosphere that is inherent to Busabout. Visual UGC’s map functionality allowed us to visually represent our unique Hop-on Hop-off coach network through the eyes of our passengers.*

**Duncan Robertson**  
Managing Director, Busabout

**65**  
PERCENT

Content cost savings



## Leading Hotels of the World

Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) leverages UGC across their property pages and homepage—helping to inspire visitors and shorten the path to purchase by placing interactive calls-to-action on each authentic visual.

“

*By taking advantage of UGC, we've expanded the amount of content we have to best tell our hotels' remarkable stories. When it's truly a guest having that special moment and sharing it from their unique perspective, it's incredibly powerful and has shown great impact to LHW.com visitors.*

**Jose Canelos**

Director of Digital Product Development,  
LHW

A man with a beard and curly hair, wearing a black and white striped shirt, is taking a selfie with his smartphone. He is smiling and giving a thumbs up. The background shows a pool area with lounge chairs and palm trees.

**33**  
PERCENT

Increased efficiency with stackla

**3X**

Increase in time on the site

## Expedia

Looking to engage travelers while expanding their asset library with compelling images, Expedia Singapore launched the #EyeWanderWin contest, asking people to submit their best travel photos for a chance to win a free trip. Visual UGC Powered by Stackla allowed them to seamlessly host this social contest on their own site, instead of a third-party social network, helping them achieve their content and SEO goals.



**34**  
PERCENT

Increase in traffic  
month-over-month

**4350+**

Photo submissions

“

*We were able to get photos from people in places they truly care about visiting, and they were unique. We can better localize our online experiences for our Asian markets with this large library of authentic traveler content.*

**Rebecca Pinnavanam**  
SEO Specialist, Expedia Singapore

## Air France

With hundreds of destinations around the globe, Air France struggled to produce enough engaging visual content to capture Facebook ad audiences' attention. To quantify the performance of UGC against their branded iStock photos, Air France ran several A/B tests, finding that UGC consistently achieved higher conversion and engagement rates than their expensive branded content.

“

*We wanted to diversify our visuals and offer a more relatable perspective to our audiences. Visual UGC allowed us to create engaging ads for our destinations by fueling them with readily available UGC images, removing the need to purchase thousands of images.*

**Chloé Marchand**

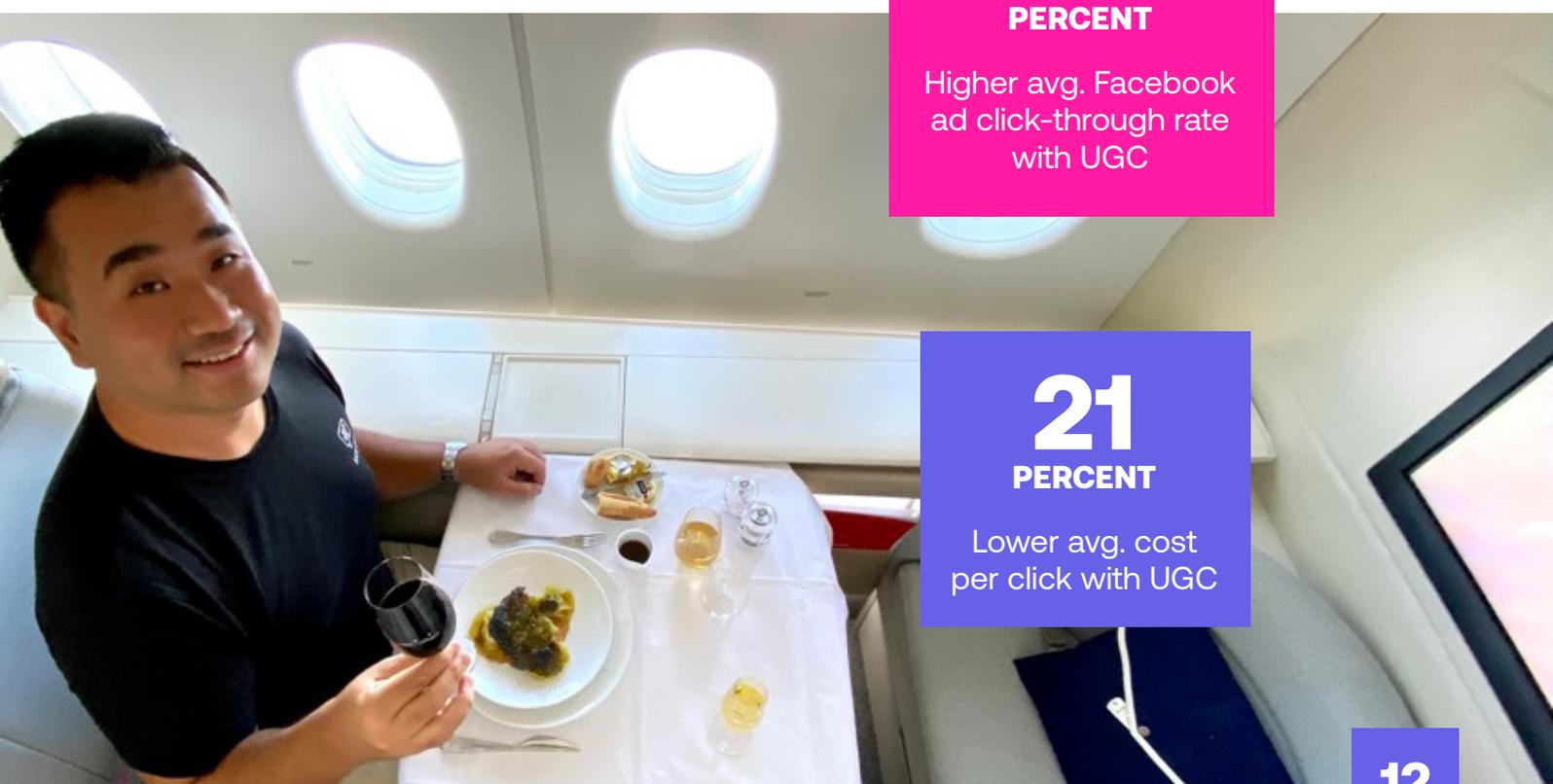
Director of Social Media, Air France

**11**  
**PERCENT**

Higher avg. Facebook ad click-through rate with UGC

**21**  
**PERCENT**

Lower avg. cost per click with UGC





**260**  
PERCENT

Increase in online bookings

**64**  
PERCENT

Lift in passengers year-over-year

## Virgin Holidays

To showcase the content their customers were posting while on holiday around the world, Virgin Holidays used Visual UGC to find, rights approve and publish #SeizeTheHoliday videos and images on their website and across digital billboards throughout the UK. They also created a live TV ad featuring real-time customer experiences in 18 global destinations.

“

*We really wanted to take it away from the celebrity ether and root it in real people doing authentic things on holiday. Using social for sales has proven to be incredibly effective and definitely something we'll continue doing in the future.*

**Claire Cronin**

Virgin Holidays Vice President of Customer and Marketing

# LET'S GO

## Helloworld

Helloworld launched a great the world's first Instagram relay, partnering with influencers great extra content the to kickstart the #helloworldRELAY and encourage others to post their favorite travel photos over the 36-hour event. Using Visual UGC, they aggregated, rights managed and displayed the relay photos on an interactive online map, as well as in emails and on digital billboards in Sydney bus stations.

“

*It's great to have lookers, but we needed them to become bookers. We used the #helloworldRELAY as a catalyst to create better content online. We couldn't be more proud of the results that we have seen.*

### **Kate Shilling**

Head of Marketing Strategy & Partnerships, Helloworld

**20k+**

Pieces of travel content created

**10k+**  
PERCENT

Sales enquiries in 7 days

## Wendy Wu Tours

To inspire and engage people across their website, Wendy Wu Tours began featuring real traveler images on their destination and tour pages, as well as in emails. They even created an interactive inspiration wall with clickable calls- to-action and a map visualization showcasing their travelers' global adventures.

“

It's hard to understate the importance of grabbing people at the moment of inspiration. Nosto's Visual UGC lets us link customer photos and videos from our inspiration wall directly to our destination pages, effectively putting them on the path to purchase.

**Jeremy Barber**

Digital Marketing Manager,  
Wendy Wu UK Tours



## VisitScotland

Looking to entice Millennial Londoners to book a Scottish holiday, VisitScotland created the world's first Instagram Travel Agency—displaying authentic traveler posts from across the country on floor-to-ceiling digital screens where visitors could select their favorite UGC photos to curate their ideal Scottish holiday.

“

*It was important for us to use real people's memories and experiences of being in Scotland in a really visual and creative way. Nosto helps us curate UGC and allows us to segment that content by themes. This helps to showcase a breadth of regions and the wealth of things to see and do in Scotland.*

**Laura Mitchell**

Assistant PR Manager,  
VisitScotland

**34**  
PERCENT

Lift in visits to Scotland  
by London-based millennials

**23**  
PERCENT

Instagram follower growth  
month-over-month

## Hamilton Island

To celebrate one million visitors to their Great Barrier Reef attraction, Hamilton Island used Visual UGC to run a 3-week competition, asking past guests to share their memories using the hashtag #HIREmemberWhen, then displayed all the submitted memories across their website.

“

We hoped that by asking past guests to reminisce about their experiences we would evoke a feeling of nostalgia that would compel them to re-visit the island and inspire new visitors to book a Hamilton Island holiday. We never envisioned the campaign would be so successful.

**Aida Merdovic**

Director of Online, Hamilton Island

**50**  
**PERCENT**

Boost in  
bookings  
from blogs

**4X**

Increase in  
average  
web traffic

## Outrigger Hotels & Resorts

Wanting to better inspire and motivate site visitors to book a stay at one of their 37 hotels, Outrigger Hotels & Resorts created customized visual social galleries across all their webpages, providing ‘See Resort’ and ‘Book Now’ buttons on every piece of UGC to effectively take people from the point of inspiration to point of purchase.

“

*We want to drive the energy and desire to travel and visit the destinations that you’re seeing in the UGC. We’ve been able to tie that revenue to the ‘Book Now’ links we have featured.*

**Laura Essenberg**

Social Media Strategist,  
Outrigger Hotels & Resorts



# Start Fueling Your Marketing with Visuals that Convert

Visuals have become vital to modern marketing, but they're notoriously difficult and costly for brands to create at scale. Instead of wasting tons of time and money creating picture-perfect visuals for all your marketing activities, you could be tapping into the wealth of photos and videos your customers share online everyday.

Nosto's Visual UGC is the world's smartest visual content platform, helping marketers discover, manage and publish the best authentic consumer content across all their marketing touchpoints—from ads and emails to websites and events.

With an AI-powered user-generated content (UGC) platform and asset manager, Nosto sits at the core of the marketing stack, enabling brands to build a rich library of visual content by actively discovering, recommending and rights managing content from across the social web to fuel personalized content experiences at scale.

Book a demo today:

<https://www.nosto.com/products/visual-ugc/>

## ABOUT NOSTO

Nosto enables online brands to deliver authentic, relevant, and personalized experiences at every touchpoint, across every device.

An AI-Powered Commerce Experience Platform (CXP) designed for ease of use, Nosto empowers brands to build, launch, and optimize 1:1 omnichannel marketing campaigns and digital experiences without the need for dedicated IT resources or a lengthy implementation process.

Leading brands in over 100 countries use Nosto to grow their business and delight their customers. Nosto supports its clients from its offices in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Berlin, Stockholm and Helsinki.



**Visual UGC**  
powered by Stackla