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



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01

What Are Other DMOs Doing?

Destination marketing is always evolving. 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.

Our team regularly keeps tabs on the best visual marketing campaigns in travel and tourism, and we've rounded up 10 of the best. We hope you enjoy these fun examples of visual marketing and that they will inspire you to think outside the box and take a bold approach.

The DMOs featured in this eBook prove that whether your marketing budget is big or small, there are many creative possibilities for launching compelling campaigns that are cost-effective and reach your target audience.

Whether it's an interactive fall foliage map posted on a website or a Facebook Live series that puts viewers in the driver's seat, the campaigns highlighted here give you a taste of what's worked well for other DMOs. It also shows what can be achieved with some imagination, grit and willingness to experiment.

We hope you feel empowered to keep testing different strategies and platforms, and to explore new frontiers, just as your visitors do.

The CrowdRiff Team



02 Video

Few other mediums can connect with travelers the way video can. Web 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.

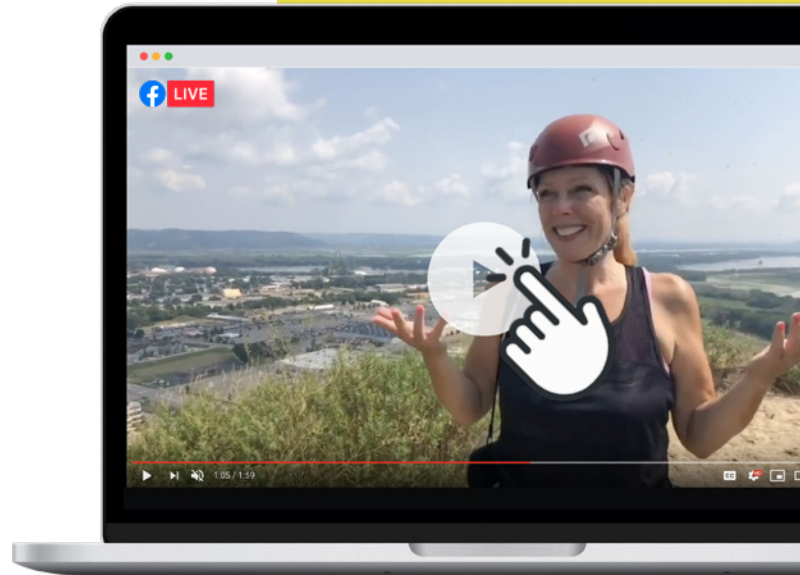
Visit Winona's Award-winning Facebook Live Series

Audiences gravitate toward reality TV shows for the more authentic portrayals of people and places, versus drama TV or movies. Visit Winona didn't take to TV screens, but it did roll out a Facebook Live series 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, their Facebook followers voted on a location they wanted the organization to showcase. E.g., a new ice park wall or a farm, where they showed how 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 eccentric 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](#)

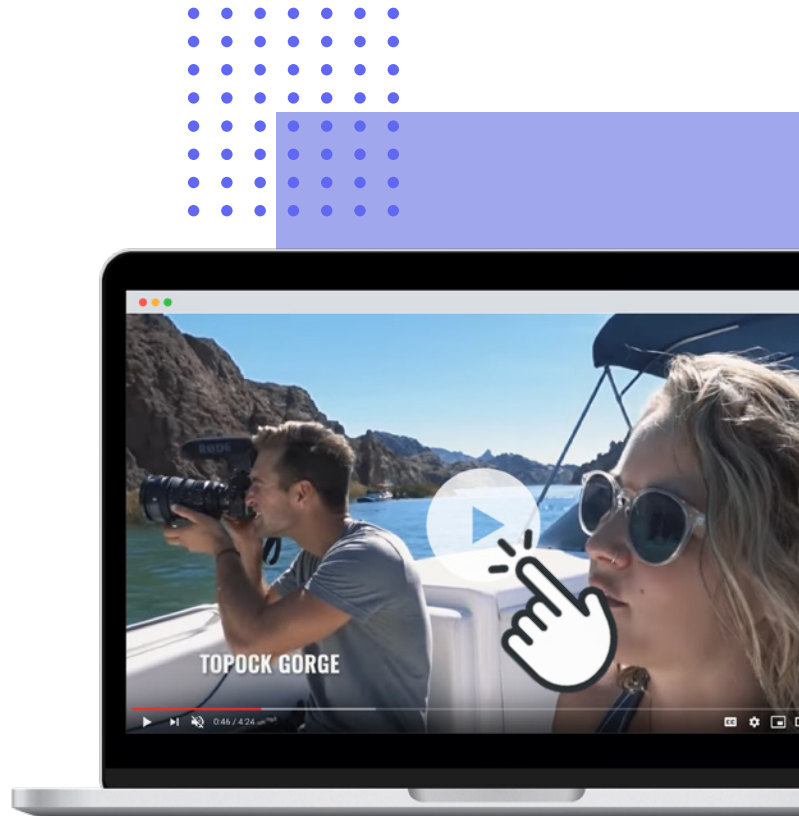


Go Lake Havasu Partners with Matador Network

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 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 and inspire more than 13 million people aged 25-45. The video featured various adventures offered by the destination. E.g., water sports, off-roading, boating and hiking. The video was hosted by Matador filmmakers Kati Hetrick and Kelly Noecker. They capture the beauty of Lake Havasu and show why it's worth a trip to see it in real life.

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, the video content that will also be available on Matador Network's platforms, which reach millions of followers. For a DMO with a very limited budget and a desire to make a name for itself, partnering with an established media partner like Matador Network was a smart strategy. Now, Lake Havasu can tell its story to a much wider reach of potential visitors that they wouldn't otherwise have access to.



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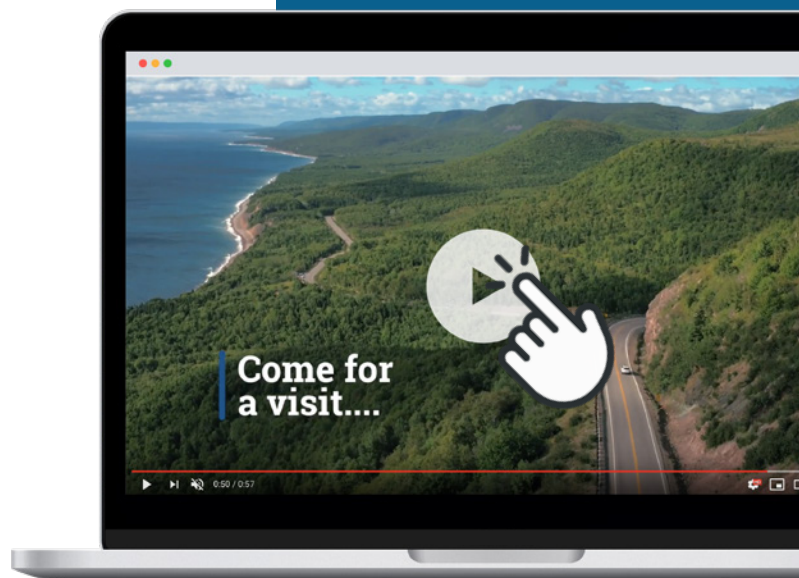


Cape Breton Island Capitalizes on Being Voted the #1 Island in the Americas

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.

When Canada's Cape Breton Island snagged the #1 spot in Condé Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards, the small DMO created a video highlighting why they think they got the top spot. E.g., 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. This kind of press coverage adds a stamp of approval from publications that hold destinations to high standards.



click to watch





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. The following campaigns are example of how to leverage the full potential of social media platforms and incorporate UGC into your brand identity.

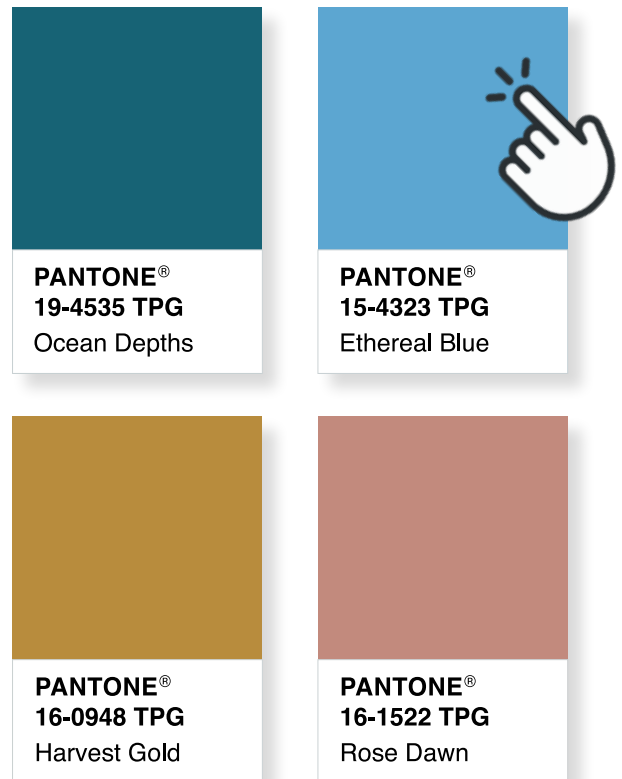
The Colors of Carlsbad

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 well-known as its adjacent neighbors, 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 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. They selected five Instagram photos that received the most engagement from each influencer, and this helped them determine the four most common colors that visitors were sharing. These four colors were chosen to represent the destination: Rose Dawn, Harvest Gold, Ocean Depths and Ethereal Blue. 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

Many destinations are putting more thought into growing tourism during shoulder seasons to help local businesses, and Staunton, Virginia, is a great example of a DMO leading the charge.

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.

Through this campaign, Visit Staunton generated 1,200 newsletter subscribers (an 18% increase) by promoting a free trip to their subscribers. 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, Former Group Sales & Marketing Manager at Visit Staunton. *“It was 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 Contest Goes Digital

Each year, the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, hosts a photo contest to showcase its natural beauty and invite citizens to submit their best photos of the region. The winner of the contest gets to have their photo featured in the City of Grand Junction annual calendar, which is mailed to all of its residents.

In the past, participants had to print their photos, write their information on the back, include a flash drive of the photos and submit them in person at City Hall. The contest was also mainly limited to professional photographers or those with access to photography equipment.

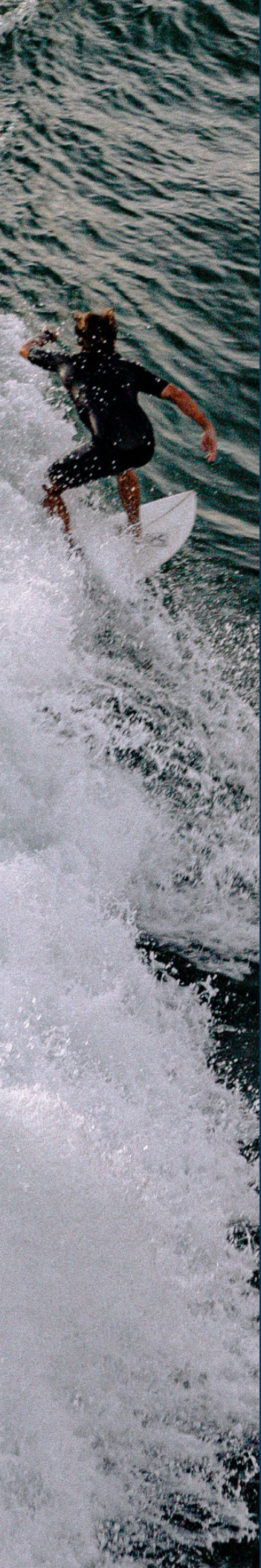
In more recent years, the city decided to partner with Visit Grand Junction, allowing the DMO to automate the submission process for the first time. The contest was also opened up to the broader community with the help of CrowdRiff Collector, a tool that lets people submit their contest entries through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

The contest received over 750 entries, compared to a 200 average in previous years

"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, spread a DMO's mission, and make a big splash doing it.

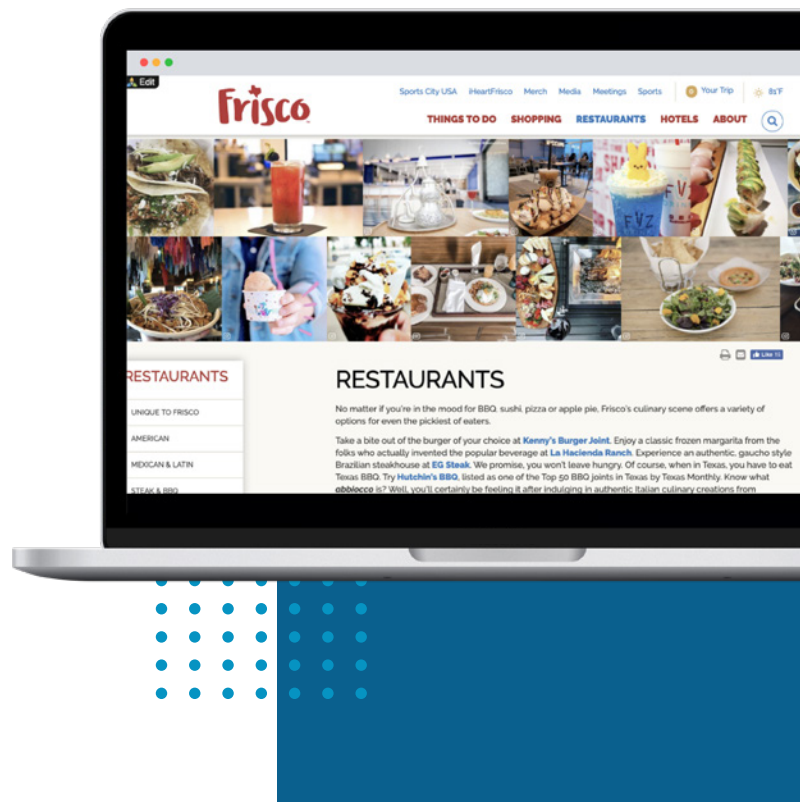
How Visit Frisco Uses UGC to Promote Its City

Travelers love feeling happy and, love taking pictures of love. That sentiment led DMO Visit Frisco, in Texas, to launch its #iHeartFrisco campaign, which encourages visitors to post photos of themselves on social media at their favorite attraction in the destination.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*

Lucas also said that CrowdRiff has helped the DMO to use UGC to connect with more local tourism partners through CrowdRiff’s 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

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 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 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

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 one April 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 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 mimick 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

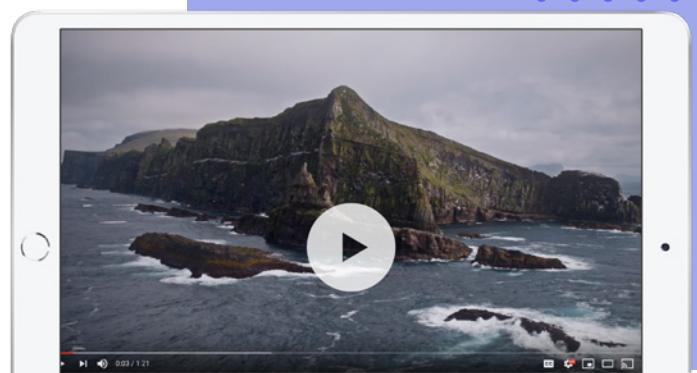
The Sheepview campaign garnered more than 7,000 news stories that reached more than two billion people. Not bad for a bootstrapped, yet resourceful, DMO!

“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. *“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 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

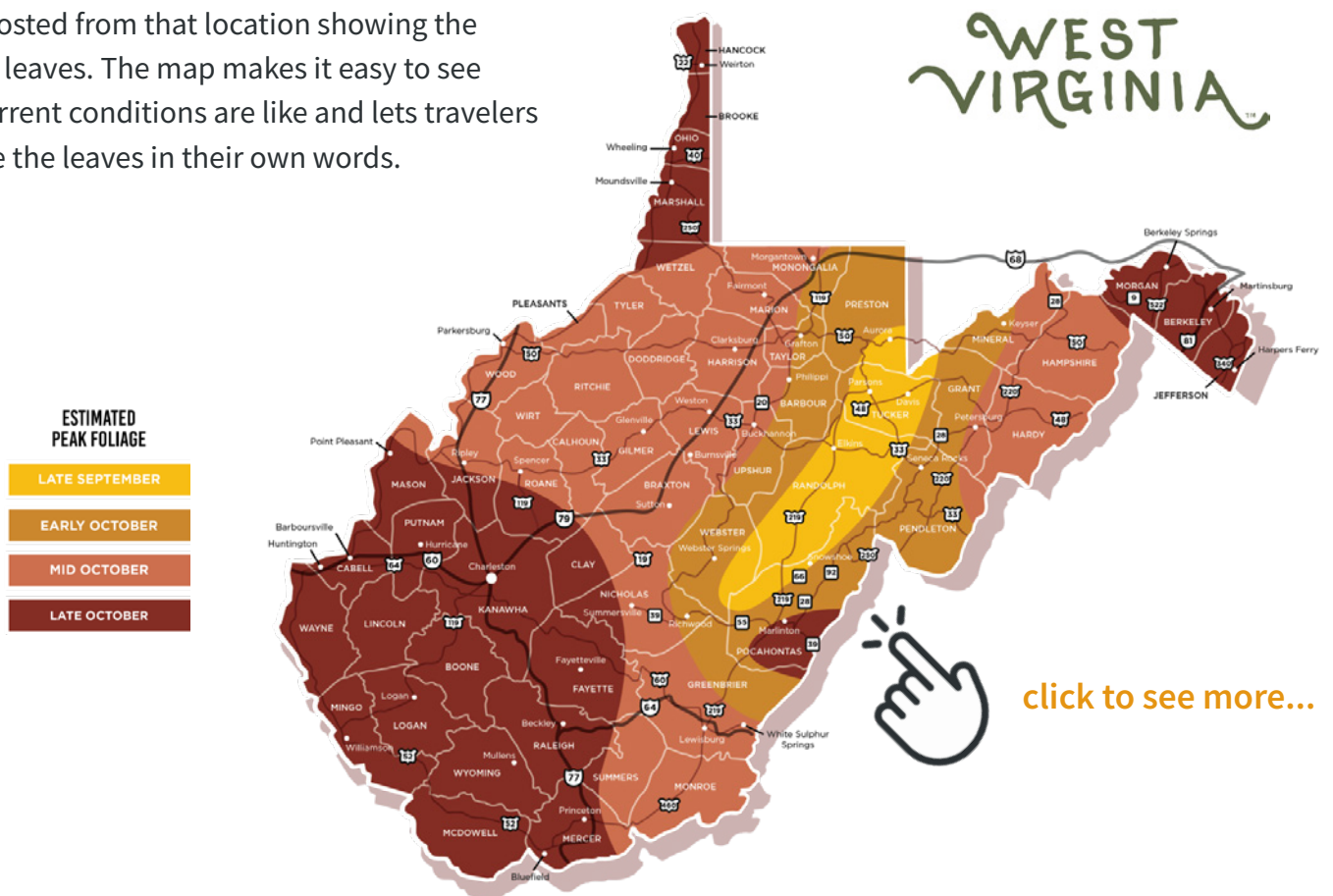
While a DMO website may be an afterthought for travelers planning their next trip, it's still a crucial marketing channel. Your website is where you can control your brand and your relationship with visitors. Here are two campaigns that get creative with their websites.

West Virginia Tourism Office's Live Fall Foliage Map

It's as if fall foliage was created 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.

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.

The DMO used CrowdRiff's API to build a live fall foliage map.¹² Visitors can click on various locations across the state and see the most recent Instagram photo posted from that location showing the autumn leaves. The map makes it easy to see what current conditions are like and lets travelers describe the leaves in their own words.



¹²West Virginia Tourism Office

How CrowdRiff Manages UGC Rights

Over 500+ travel and tourism brands 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 has 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 every interaction.



 [thebackpackingcouple](#)



What is CrowdRiff?

CrowdRiff is a visual content marketing platform that empowers destination marketers to source, share, and scale original content that connects with today's travelers. With tools for user-generated content discovery, digital asset management, and custom short-form video, our platform is built for the most authentic and engaging storytelling in travel and tourism. That's why 900+ travel and tourism brands globally trust CrowdRiff as their visual content marketing partner.

Want to learn how CrowdRiff can help you take your marketing efforts to the next level? [Get in touch with our team](#)

