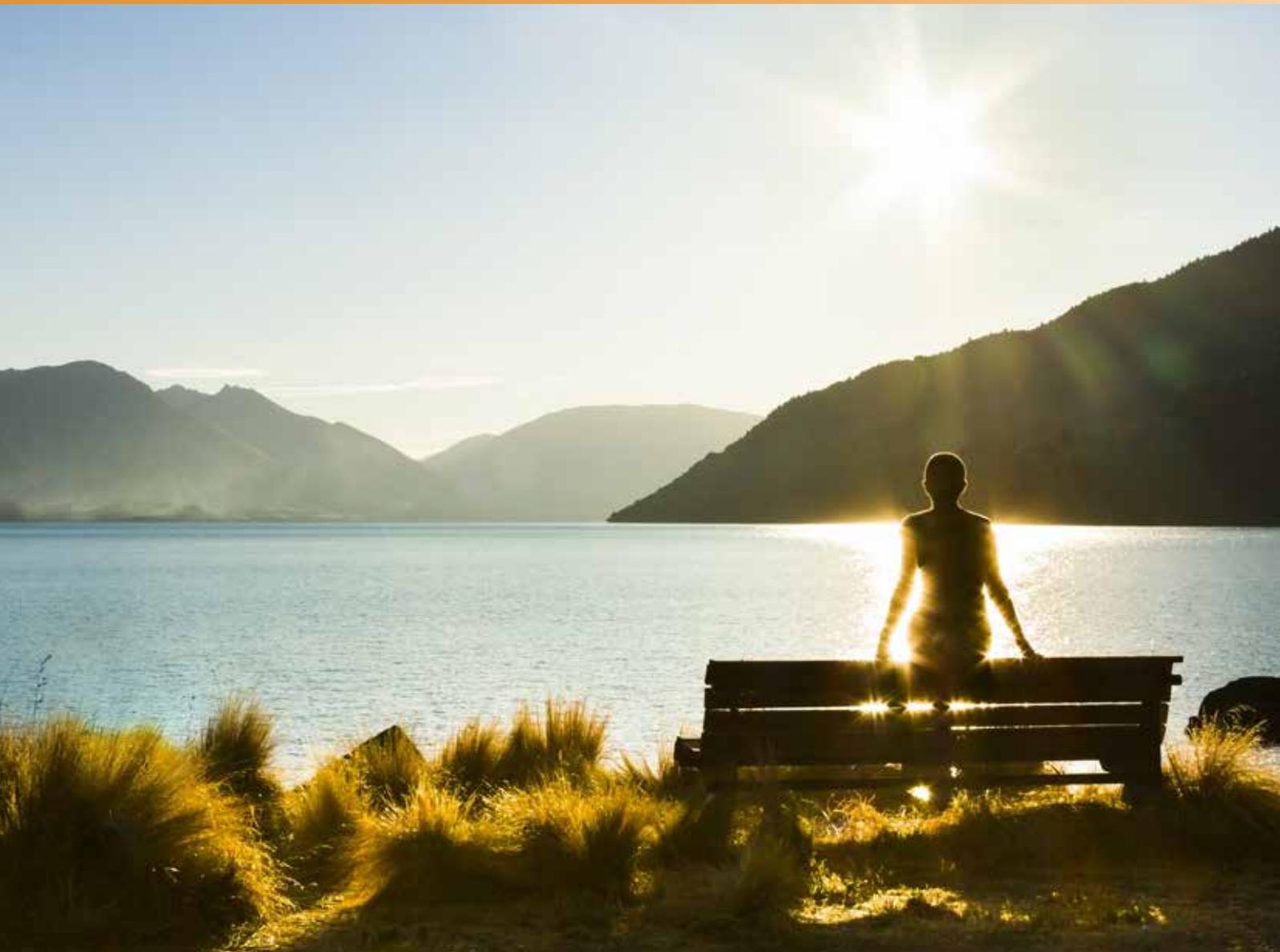


DIGITAL DESTINATIONS

# USING CONTENT TO MARKET YOUR DESTINATION

FROM DIGITAL TO DELIGHT



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# WHAT IS GOOD CONTENT?



**Good content is both inspiring and useful. It is content that meets both your visitors' needs and your business goals.**

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## **Inspiring content**

Inspirational content represents a shift from selling, to sharing experiences and amplifying conversations about your destination.

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## **Useful content**

Useful content will trounce generic content every time. Useful content helps your visitors plan their trip by anticipating and answering their questions.

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## **Using content to market your destination**

This guide covers data-driven content planning, a fail-safe process for creating useful content, personalising content to your visitors' needs, integrating User Generated Content, and repurposing your content.

When you commit to a content driven marketing strategy, realise you're in this for the long haul. Content marketing is the most effective marketing tool you have. But it's no quick fix. It takes years to build an effective web presence. So take a deep breath, and then stick with it.

# START WITH THE DATA

We work through this process to create good content.



## AUDIT YOUR SITE AND REVISE

### LEARN TO LOVE YOUR DATA:

- Review your most popular pages.
- Review pages that have a high bounce rate or a high exit rate.
- Review your mobile, tablet and desktop stats separately. They'll likely differ.
- Discover how people use your site – use Google Analytics to understand where people are clicking and what content keeps them moving through your site.





## WHAT DOES THE DATA MEAN?

High traffic pages with low bounce rate and exit rate, where people spend a long time on the page, are providing your visitors with good content.

Ask yourself if you can improve the content in any way. Monitor the results of any changes carefully. Consider A/B testing pages with high visitor numbers.

Pages with high traffic, but low time on page and/or high bounce rate and exit rate are likely to be topics where people want information, but the information you are providing isn't useful or engaging. Compare these pages to your top performing pages. Look at ways you can improve the content. Track the results of your improvements.

Pages with low traffic and low engagement may be suffering from three failure factors. The content may be too hard to find, or weak, or your visitors simply don't care. Ask yourself which is the case. If this content is valuable to your visitors, or strategically important to your business goals, then ask yourself how you can make it more compelling and useful. Otherwise, consider dropping it from your content plan.

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## ASK YOUR PEOPLE ON THE FRONT LINE

Ask the team in your visitor information centres what your visitors want to know. These people speak to your visitors every day, and they're likely asked the same questions over and over again.

Talk to your members about their customers, and ask what questions they get asked. It will all help you understand your visitors more. Plus, your members may share their own visitor data with you.

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## SOCIAL DATA & SOCIAL LISTENING

There's plenty more digital data out there on your visitors. Social media is a rich lode of information on your customers.

Pull together:

- **Facebook analytics.** 71% of online adult users are on Facebook with 1.7 billion monthly users (about half of those are over the age of 30).
- **Instagram** claims 500 million monthly users. Instagram business stats are too basic to offer much insight, but tools like Agora Pulse allow you to dig deeper into your follower demographics.
- **Twitter analytics.** 23% of online adults are on Twitter with 313 million monthly users.
- **Pinterest analytics.** 28% of online adults are on Pinterest (strong female bias).
- **Use Ad Planner** to review audiences for your competitors' digital advertising activity.
- **Use Facebook** advertising tools to assess pools of prospects by demographic and interest.

What are people saying about your destination online? Do a monthly eavesdrop of your peers' social pages. What are the hot topics of conversation? What questions are people asking? A monthly social listening report can be a great source of ideas for digital content.

*Stats from Pew Research Centre, Social Networking Fact Sheet, Pew Internet Project*

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## ASK YOUR MUM

Or do some focus group research. Boomers may not all be using social media, but they do travel and traditional word of mouth is still the most powerful influencer.

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## DO YOUR KEYWORD RESEARCH

Review the organic search terms currently bringing people to your site and look at other keyword opportunities. This feeds into your content strategy as well as your Search Engine Optimisation, as keywords may provide inspiration for digital content.

Remember that algorithms are getting more and more sophisticated and machine learning is on the rise; keyword research is no longer a one-off action.

Think about how you can beat Google at its own game. What do you ask Siri or type into your browser's search box?

Do keyword research for every main content area and you'll note similarities and differences. Although those looking for meeting venues will probably be looking for different things to someone planning a family reunion, both will be searching for 'group accommodation' or 'best group activities in your destination'.

## CREATE A CONTENT PLAN

Make a comprehensive list of all the topics your visitors want and need information on. Then review your content to see how it matches your visitors' questions and your business goals. You may find that you have duplicate content, redundant content, and gaps in content. Group the content you plan to retain into useful categories, and identify areas where you lack content.

## PRIORITISE CONTENT

Creating inspiring, useful content takes time. Prioritise the most important content first. Rank content by how important it is to your visitors and to your business goals.

### THAT'S RETURN ON CONTENT INVESTMENT, ME HEARTIES



Visit Florida's visitor research discovered that visiting families wanted ideas for fun Florida day trips with kids. They created and promoted five Pinterest boards full of ideas for expeditions with little adventurers. Smart features of the boards ensure that they not only relate back to the Visit Florida website, but also carry key destination messaging to keep it top-of-mind for vacation planners.

Their Pirates & Forts board, with only eight pins, has a whopping 7.5k followers. The entire project has 59.7k of followers. That's useful content for you.

[pinterest.com/visitflorida/pirates-forts/](https://pinterest.com/visitflorida/pirates-forts/)

# HOW DO YOU CREATE USEFUL CONTENT?

For every piece of content that you produce, answer the following questions.



## **What question does this content answer?**

Refer back to your comprehensive list of questions from your visitors.

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## **What visitor need does this meet? Why should someone want this experience?**

Understanding the motivations of your visitors can help you create more engaging content. If you understand why someone is drawn to an experience, you can describe the experience in a way that resonates more powerfully. We recommend developing personas for your key groups of visitors.

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## **What format fits these needs best?**

You may find video, User Generated Content and reviews, or images do a better job of conveying the nuances of an experience, than an article. That's not to diss the poor old long-read. Despite the rise of video, a good long form article is still a mighty powerful conversion tool. But you need great imagery to go with your well chosen words. And remember to show and share, don't tell and sell.

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## **How do I convey clearly what this experience is like?**

Map out the structure for your content, to ensure you cover off all the key points. Your visitors may want to know everything from, "What should I wear?" to, "How will I feel when I do this?"

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## **Who is the best person to create this content?**

You can tell when someone is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about a topic. The content they create feels more real. It's more experiential, and because they're sharing a passion, as opposed to selling a destination, it's more engaging.



**Examples of authentic voice in action:**

- An article on local foodie destinations. Ask a food blogger or a local artisan food producer to write it.
- Article on family day trips. Send a family blogger out with their kids and get them to film and photograph their adventure.

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**How do people get this experience?**

Tell people how, where, and when. Sounds obvious, but we've lost count of the number of articles we've read that don't have detailed booking information. And remember you're writing for people who aren't familiar with your destination. So logistics are very useful.

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**What do I want people to do after they've consumed this content?**

What's your call to action? Is this call to action linked to your key metrics?

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**What is my keyword for search?**

For each page on your website, choose a unique keyword that matches the main topic of the page. Choose keywords that have a good search volume and try to use different keywords for each page on your site, to avoid competing with yourself for organic search traffic. Some other things to consider:

- Avoid 'keyword stuffing' (cramming lots of keywords on a page or on-page SEO element). Use keywords appropriately and in context as keyword stuffing can result in search engines penalising your website's ranking.
- Repeat the use of the chosen keyword throughout the page, but do not overdo it.

**AUTHENTIC VOICE IN ACTION**

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***Uwishunu.com***  
An insiders' guide for visitors to Philadelphia.

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***Discoverlosangeles.com***  
L.A. Tourism's Listography has top things to do in L.A., suggested by locals, who just happen to be celebs.

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***exploregeorgia.org/georgia-explorers***  
Georgia Explorers seek out the best things to see and do across the state.

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***theguardian.com/travel/2016/oct/15/best-autumn-walks-uk***  
Walks with pubs, chosen by nature writers. It's not by a DMO, but we love this article by the Guardian, and it's authentic voice at its best. We dare you to read this and not want to put your walking boots on immediately.



- On each page, aim to include the focus keyword in the following:
  - H1 heading
  - First paragraph on the page
  - Two to three times in the main body copy
  - Metadata (Meta Title and Meta Description)
  - Image Alt tags

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## Where should this content live?

Where is the best place for this content to sit on your site?

- Is it a landing page?
- A blog article?
- An itinerary?
- How can you make this easy for people to find? Do you need to add it to your navigation, or will it be indexed in other ways?
- How will you link this to related content?

It's also worth noting, that if this content is for a new website, and replaces an existing page, be sure to set up your 301 redirect from your old page, to maintain any search engine equity.

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## How will I measure this content's success in meeting my business goals?

You can measure the success of your content marketing efforts in a number of ways. Choose metrics that demonstrate how well your content meets your visitors' needs and your business goals.

- Organic traction.
- Engagement with content. This may include engagement across social platforms.
- Be sure to set up 'signals of intent' goals within your analytics, as this will give you a greater understanding of how people are using your site.
- Actions taken as a result of the content.
- Conversions linked to your business goals.
- Was the content useful to your visitor?

Once you've established your metrics, check your stats regularly. Hubspot's 2015 State of Inbound Report indicated that marketers who check their metrics three or more times a week are over 20% more likely to achieve positive ROI. This makes sense. Marketers who are this engaged with their content are more likely to be trialling, testing, refining and improving continually, and it's that cycle of continuous improvement that gets results.

# PERSONALISING CONTENT

Personalising content to your visitors' needs and interests.

**Tailoring content to the interests of your website visitors, prompts recognition and greater engagement, with your visitors recognising that your destination offers an experience for them.**

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## WAYS TO PERSONALISE CONTENT

### **Encourage exploration and discovery with guided search functions**

Offer a guided experience through your site, with progressive calls to action inviting your visitors to choose the style of holiday that appeals to them.

### **Invest in research and robust visitor personas**

Tailor content to the interests of your key personas. Track and measure performance of this content to validate and evolve personas.

### **Serve up personalised content based on location, time of day and browsing history**

Measure visitor behaviour and serve up content based on that behaviour.

Content cues include:

- What time of day is it?
- Where are they from?
- Has the visitor been to your site before?
- How long have they spent on your site?
- How frequently do they visit?



### **Match the content trigger that brought them to you**

A personalised landing page strategy matches keywords, imagery and experiential cues used in digital marketing, to the content your visitor discovers when they arrive on your site.

### **Create related content**

Tag by topic, so it's easy to serve up more content linked to topics browsed by user. Interacting with your site becomes a journey of delightful discovery, where each click leads to more related content and there are no dead ends.

### **Tools to help you personalise content**

Start simple and scale up if your personalisation efforts are a success.

You can track a number of key visitor metrics including country of origin, time of day, and number of visits to the site using cookies, and serve up appropriate content.

If your content personalisation efforts are a success, you may wish to consider investing in a customer relationship management tool.

# EXAMPLES OF PERSONALISATION IN ACTION

**Situation:** User is in the UK.

**What do they want?** They're dreaming or planning their next trip.

**Personalised content:** Serve up inspiring content, content that helps them plan their trip, like advice on getting to your destination from the UK, links to places to compare and buy flights, and ideas for accommodation.

**Situation:** User is on the ground in destination. It's the afternoon.

**What do they want?** They might be thinking about dinner and what to do the next day. Plus, they're in a good space to share their experience socially.

**Personalised content:** Serve up dinner suggestions near to them, ideas for local activities and social sharing calls to action.

**Situation:** User clicked to the site from a Facebook advert about tramping.

**What do they want?** They're interested in hiking.

**Personalised content:** Serve up content about tramping, and cross sell other topics followed by users who interact with hiking content.

**Situation:** User has visited the site several times and interacted with content about things to do in your destination.

**What do they want?** They may be planning a trip to your destination.

**Personalised content:** Move them nearer to booking with suggestions for itineraries, inspiring User Generated Content and articles, and deals.

## PERSONALISED CONTENT INCREASES BANNER ADVERT CONVERSION RATE



St Pete Clearwater in Florida created a personalised digital campaign to promote deals for two local attractions. The campaign is activated by user interaction with articles about the Chihuly Collection and the Clearwater Aquarium. Banner adverts fly in after the user has been on page for a certain period of time. This ensures users are engaged and don't feel bombarded with offers straightaway. The advert creative is linked to the imagery and key messaging in the article. Finally, the offer is geo-targeted to visitors in destination and in markets within driving distance. The Chihuly fly in has an 8% click-through and the Clearwater a 6.85% click-through.

[visitstpeteclearwater.com/article/chihuly-collection](http://visitstpeteclearwater.com/article/chihuly-collection)

[visitstpeteclearwater.com/article/sea-life-clearwater-marine-aquarium](http://visitstpeteclearwater.com/article/sea-life-clearwater-marine-aquarium)

# USER GENERATED CONTENT



**Word of mouth is still a top influencer when it comes to travel. People ask their family and friends where they should go and what a destination is like. And these conversations are increasingly taking place on social media.**

## WHY IS USER GENERATED CONTENT SO CAPTIVATING?

Your destination seen through the eyes of your visitors has an emotional authenticity that your official destination website can't replicate. But you don't have to, because you can integrate User Generated Content (UGC) into your digital storytelling.

UGC is social media content generated by local influencers and by visitors to your destination. It's a compelling content stream you can harness to inspire people to visit your destination, and with a plethora of UGC integration tools to choose from, there's a solution for every budget.

We encourage you to think beyond a simple hashtag feed on your homepage.

### ACTIONABLE INSPIRATION

#### ***BCExplorer.com***

This site curates Instagram images of British Columbia, sorts them into topics, and makes them an inspiring gateway to more digital content. It combines favouriting functionality with maps and social sharing. Destination BC built the tool to encourage people to collect the photos they're really interested in, and then take that inspiration to the next level by using the photos to start planning their trip.



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## Here are some things to consider when evaluating UGC as part of your digital content strategy.

- Can you amplify a conversation already happening online? Using an existing hashtag shows openness and appreciation of your visitors. It's smart and humble.
- Try to curate multiple strands of UGC to enhance the key stories that you tell about your destination. Most UGC tools allow you to search for content by hashtag, keyword, author and geographic location.
- How can you do more with your UGC? Can you tag UGC with links to other content, so that the social content becomes a gateway to more information. Can you show UGC plotted on a map so your visitors start to get a feel for where attractions are in your destination? Can you include saving and social sharing so your users can save their favourite images?
- Can you integrate your digital content strategy with your social marketing strategy?
- Most quality UGC integration tools include an automated rights release request from the image creator as part of the curation process. However, consider more dialogue with your image creators, by letting them know in person if you do use their image on your site, or in your digital marketing. This shows your appreciation, strengthens your social community and increases the likelihood of your UGC integration efforts being amplified by an appreciative network of content creators.



# REPURPOSING CONTENT

**So you've spent all this time creating and curating compelling content. Now your content is live you'll want to spread the word as far and wide as you can, so that people come from near and far to engage with your great content.**

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## PROMOTING YOUR CONTENT

**Remember the rule of three. Once you've posted your article promote it in at least three places.**

- If you're sharing on social media try the comment sandwich to extend your reach. Research indicates that if you comment before and after posting, your posts get more likes and shares. Makes sense, right? But be sincere in your interactions, and don't comment about your own post. No one likes a comment stream hijacker.
- Facebook's look-a-like approach and Google Customer Match allow you to reach new audiences who share similar interests and it's easier to replicate one campaign across multiple channels.
- You can repurpose your content for e-newsletters, and if you can segment your email databases to match your personas, so much the better. Moving forward try to include some questions in your digital data-capture that allow you to segment prospects to match personas.
- You can send automated welcome emails to people who sign up to your e-newsletters, with content matched to the page they were on when they signed up for your newsletter. For example, if they were prompted to sign up for your newsletter by a page about skiing, it's a good bet that they might enjoy more content about winter sports in your destination.
- You can also repurpose your most popular content for print collateral. Measuring digital interaction with your content is a great way to create print publications, as you can select the content that performs best online. Be sure to refer readers of your publications to your website – if it's an article about cycling, be sure to indicate that you have more of this great content on your website. "Love riding? Then read more about our tracks at [mydestination.com/cycling](http://mydestination.com/cycling)".
- Set up a key influencers list of members, bloggers, and media contacts who you email each week with a round-up of new content. If you can segment these by persona, so much the better.



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## YOUR DESTINATION CONTENT EXPERTS



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