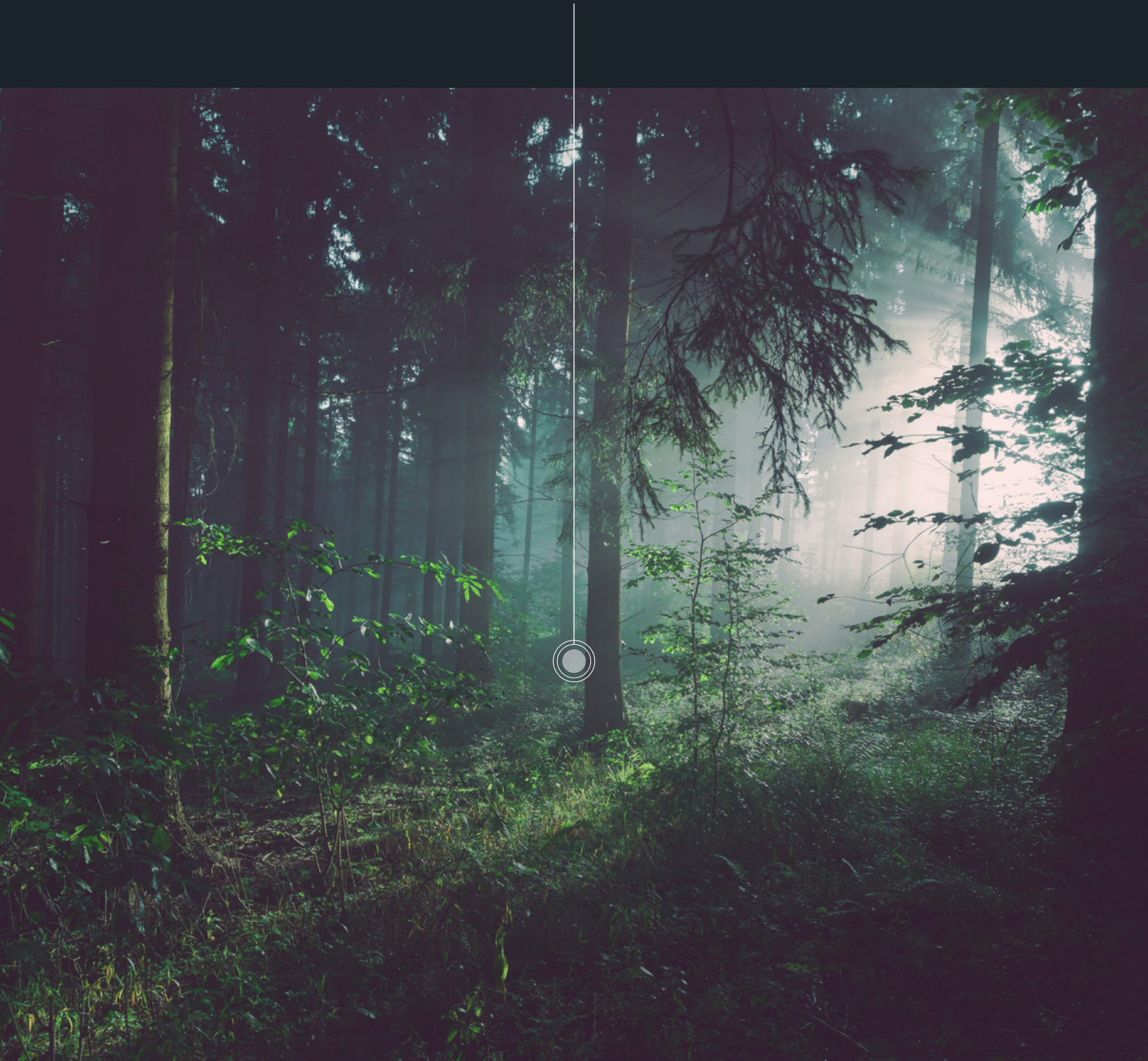




How to Win with Hospitality Content Marketing



BY JANINE YU

The State of Hospitality Content Marketing

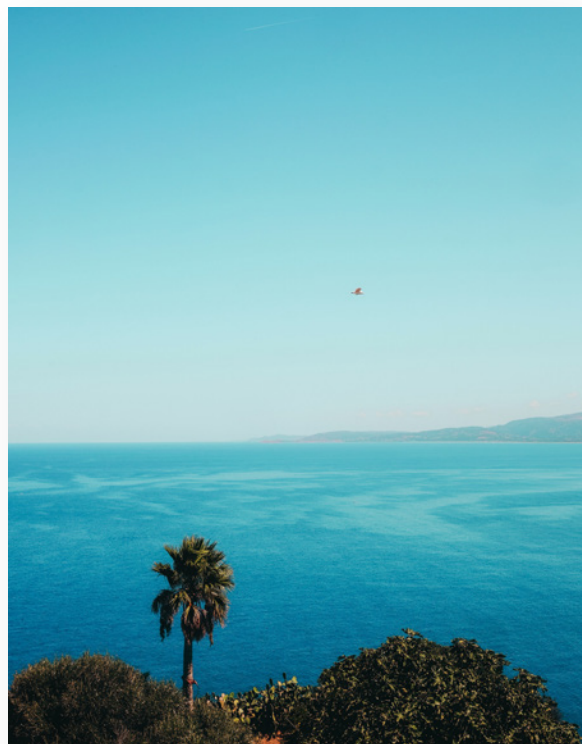
Hotels and vacation rentals know they must produce and deliver original and creative content to stay competitive, but only a surprising few know how. When you think about your own experience in searching for and researching a property, you pay attention to all the signals that lead you to booking: **What's their online presence like? Is their website compelling? Do they have offers that speak to my interests? Do they have a blog/ Instagram/ Facebook page that provides more helpful information and images that would compel me to book?**

Content marketing in hospitality seems so obvious but it's actually quite difficult to execute. It requires a lot of care and thoughtfulness to foster brand engagement and deliver storytelling that reaches your target audience. "The best hospitality businesses connect with their guests when they're on the property, and when they're off the property," says Cody Putman, Field Marketing & Sales Development Manager at NAVIS. "When COVID kept guests at home, savvy marketers learned that they had to connect with their guests in new ways. While COVID protocols and safety information became standard content for most, some properties took it a step further by trying to bring some of the onsite magic to wherever their guests were."

Casey Munck, Senior Director, Marketing at NAVIS, agrees. "Content marketing has definitely stepped up as a result of the pandemic," she says, adding "Many brands used it as an opportunity to entertain and connect with guests virtually. It allowed them to keep the property-to-guest connection alive and nurtured."

The pandemic has been a chance to shake things up and create content designed to reach a wider audience. "Some really creative things emerged with hotels hosting live-streamed "concerts" or sunsets on social from their spaces, or mixology and cooking lessons from bartenders and chefs for guests stuck at home."

"Keeping guests engaged when they aren't with you should become a standard practice," says Putman. How? Through impactful content.



User-Generated Content for the Win

"I've really been loving seeing user-generated content," says Putman, adding "It brings so much authenticity to the content."

- **What is it?** User-generated content occurs when hospitality brands leverage social posts from guests on Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms. The guests feel special to be featured or tagged, and the hotel wins by sharing authentic content from a guest who is vouching for the great experiences they can have on-site.
- **Give me an example.** [Flip.to](#), a NAVIS partner, provides a social platform for guests to share and promote their hotel experience with their personal networks.

Who else is winning with their content?

"Guests have a lot of options when they travel, and content is a really great way to set yourself apart from the pack both pre-and post-stay," said Putman. "Your content should reflect the experience you provide onsite and should continue to build the relationship you have with your guests, ultimately creating a greater sense of loyalty and repeat stays." The NAVIS team identified some properties who are really killing it with their content game:



- [Miraval Resorts](#) does an excellent job of highlighting their staff and collaborators on Instagram, with short features on interesting individuals including a muralist and activist, and live virtual experiences with their Wellness Travel Experts. Their feed is a veritable trove of health and wellness advice and advocacy.

- [The Wigwam](#) in Arizona has a dedicated blog on their website that not only features their latest specials and offers but also has tips on how to best enjoy their property in different seasons and spotlights on their different accommodations.



- [Ojai Valley Inn's](#) social media game is strong, with lots of beautiful images of their property that include their staff and guests. Featuring guests' original content is a surefire way of extending your reach to their personal networks with built-in authenticity.

Hot Tips on Creating Impactful Content

TIP #1

Craft a to-do list.

This puts your staff's local knowledge at the forefront and offers an added value to a guest's stay. Almost all travelers are going to be doing research on activities for the area they're visiting before they arrive (sometimes even before they book!) Creating keywords and phrases to get those Web surfers to your content gets them one step closer to a booking with you.

TIP #2

Focus on keywords that drive SEO and are authentic to your brand.

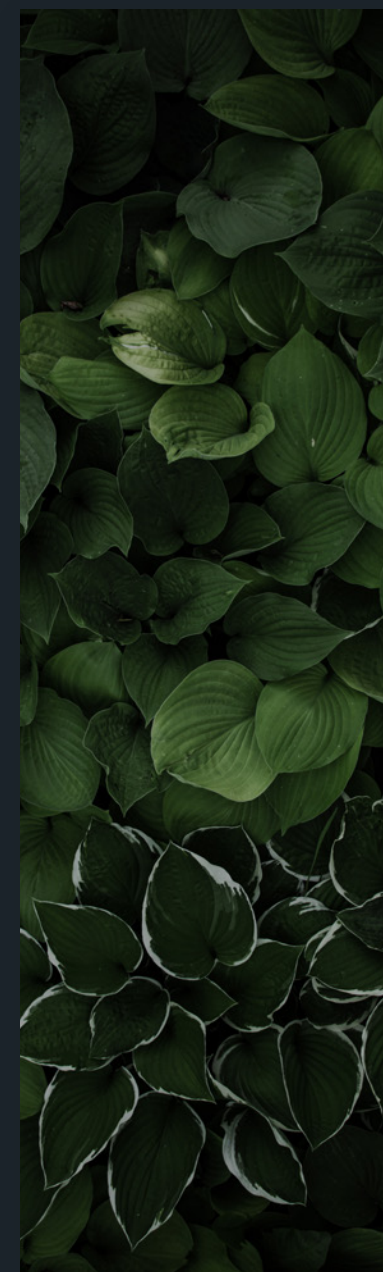
Use natural language and the phrases people most associate with the hospitality experiences you are known to provide. You want people to associate your brand with those key search terms, so they can connect the dots for what they are ideally looking for in a stay to your property as being the best option.

"I'm a big Instagram user, so seeing the guest experience translated through authentic images and short stories helps me not just daydream about booking a trip, but also helps me see myself there."

– CODY PUTMAN

"I love to see hotels highlighting social causes they support as a brand, whether that be a local animal rescue group with events onsite or supporting the LGBTQ+ community vocally. Brands are realizing that it's actually a lot deeper than just a box with a bed for most guests these days – customers are looking for hospitality brands that have shared values and philosophies on the world."

– CASEY MUNCK



TIP #3

Create your own content!

This is extremely important, and a make-or-break situation for hospitality brands, according to Munck. Don't just co-opt existing content or copy what other brands are doing. Beyond winning over first-time guests, properties should focus on whether they are inspiring repeat visits. The impact to the bottom line is guest loyalty, to which the majority of sustained revenue is attributed.

TIP #4

Include the staff – let them shine!

There's never been a better time to recognize the people who keep a property running than now. Hiring for hospitality jobs has been harder than ever, and the ones who stayed through the pandemic experienced the despair of few to no bookings (or having their doors shuttered) to a sudden onslaught of inquiries as soon as travel interest rebounded.

Organic ways of showcasing your staff could be publishing the hotel chef's recipes, or a video demonstration on how your bartender makes a signature cocktail or short profiles and interviews with housekeeping staff whose dedication and bravery have been keeping everyone safe during a pandemic.

TIP #5

Keep it professional and on-brand

“Some of my personal pet peeves are stiff, corporate tone on copy and cheesy stock photography,” says Munck. “It shows brands are not on point.” While marketing copy and images should always be professional, brands should aspire to show their personality and stand out from the competition. “Brands are finally realizing how important content is and paying the right wage to creators,” Munck said.

Choosing the right voice comes down to knowing and understanding your target audience. You need to know how to address them, what topics they would want to hear about, and what style they would be receptive to – all while staying true to your brand.

If you’re a grand dame hotel trying to reach a younger demographic, be careful not to come off as inauthentic by trying too hard with Gen Z slang. Know your brand identity first and foremost, then learn how to reach your audience in a way that feels natural. Similarly, be mindful of your messaging across different channels – there are nuances to communicating over email, social networks, a blog, and your hotel website.



TIP #6

Target and segment for custom content

Segment according to personas (don’t send spa content to people who only want golf content or room deals) and deliver inspirational content. Properties can more effectively send personalized content by grouping customers according to identifiable characteristics, such as demographics or personal interests. By targeting wine lovers, for example, a hotel can send automated emails for a special offer. To personalize the communication, hotels can refer to available customer data such as whether a guest prefers Pinot Noir. [NAVIS Marketing Suite](#) helps simplify guest personalization with segmentation features, automation, and comprehensive data collection.



Thoughtful Content Leads to Bookings

Remember that the ultimate objective of creating hospitality content is to drive bookings and ideally guest loyalty. It's not just a "nice to have" when it's a real and proven lever for increasing brand engagement and building customer trust. The quality of the content matters, with authenticity and personalization being the most important features, but so does the frequency of delivering your content. Munck believes that huge time gaps between posts show brands lack care when it comes to digitally nurturing the guest experience.

Additionally, Putman argues that content isn't just about aesthetics. "Are they still important? You bet! But guests want to see more than a well-designed suite, or a pristine pool in a picture, they want to see themselves there. Make your content personal. Tell stories, share guest-generated content, and segment the guests you're targeting so you can reach them where they're looking," he says.

Finally, make sure to acknowledge and reciprocate – your biggest advocates are guests who have stayed at your property and felt compelled to share their experience to their social network. "A huge, missed opportunity is not liking and engaging with guests who tag hotels or vacation rentals in their social posts," says Munck. "That's just so wrong to ignore someone who's expressing so much love in a public forum for your brand. Pass the love and recognition back and you'll be rewarded tenfold."

Contributors

CASEY MUNCK

Senior Director, Marketing

Casey leads the NAVIS Marketing team. Her strategic guidance and natural storytelling abilities set the tone and pace for the NAVIS brand. Her leadership fosters authentic, trusted relationships across fences and lend a nurturing force to the organization. Prior to joining NAVIS, Casey led strategic marketing efforts for Cendyn in the Americas, previously leading the marketing communications team at Amadeus North America. She started her career as a reporter for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. Casey holds a BA in Journalism from the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, and enjoys hiking and exploring in Bend with her Sheepadoodle, Max.



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As Field Marketing and Sales Development Manager at NAVIS, Cody develops and executes strategic marketing and sales programs that bring the NAVIS magic to hospitality teams across the Americas.

Cody holds a BA in Marketing from Linfield University in McMinnville, OR, and worked in the Willamette Valley Wine industry, carrying hospitality, sales, and marketing roles prior to joining NAVIS. A native Oregonian, he spends his time enjoying all Bend has to offer, fishing, skiing, hiking, and spending time on the water.



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