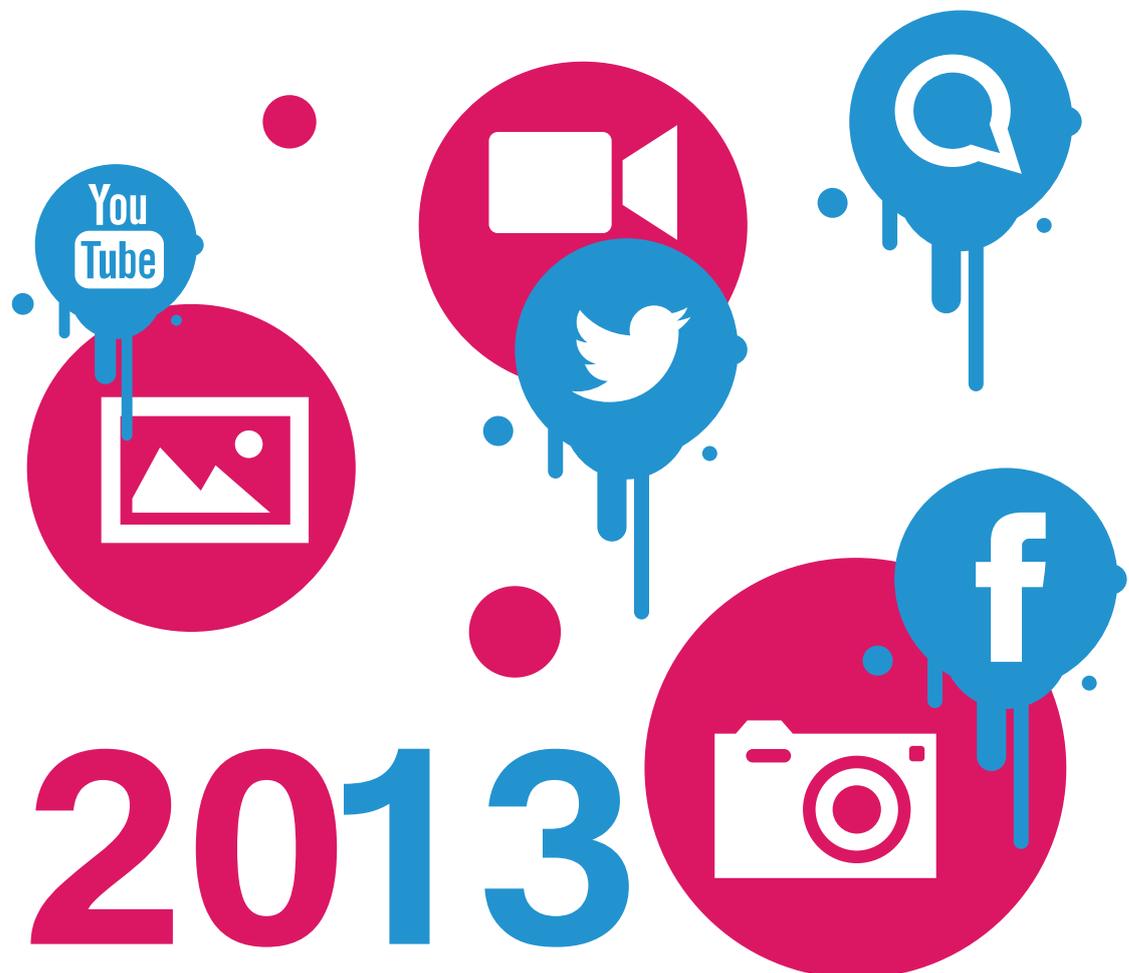


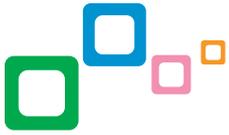
The Hoteliers Ultimate Guide To Visual Storytelling on Social Media in 2013



Tweet this

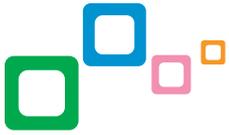


Email this



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Introduction

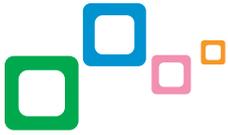
How do you create an online experience for travel shoppers that helps them understand just what it would be like to stay at your hotel? If your answer is “show them” – then you’re on the right track! Visual storytelling is the future of online marketing.

Considering the impact the internet has had on the way we interact with the world around us, there are more methods of delivering visuals than ever before. With all of the modern marketing tools, channels and tactics available, it can be tough to figure out the most effective – and affordable – way to begin.

Telling your visual story via social media is a great place to start. Social networks such as Facebook and Pinterest are cost-effective and visually-driven, making them ideal channels for hotels looking to interact and engage with travelers.

In this guide, we’ll take a look at the basic concepts of visual storytelling, and how you can use these concepts to help tell your hotel’s story on five of the most popular social networking channels.





Visuals: The past, present and future of storytelling

Our eyes serve as portals to the world around us. What we see informs our thoughts, feelings and decisions more than any other sense.

When it comes to forming a narrative, using visuals is an incredibly effective storytelling method. From pictograms on ancient caves to children's storybooks to multi-million dollar feature films, people have been using visuals to tell stories for thousands of years.

“Visual storytelling” is simply a method of forming a narrative with a sequence of images. Whether illustrations or photographs or video, visual storytelling is an incredibly effective, efficient and memorable way of delivering your message to your audience.



For hoteliers, visual storytelling can be leveraged in a number of ways. From panoramic room images to slideshows of your property's amenities, from infographics spotlighting local attractions to full video tours, visual storytelling allows you to show off your property in a way that makes visitors feel like they're already there.



Why social media?

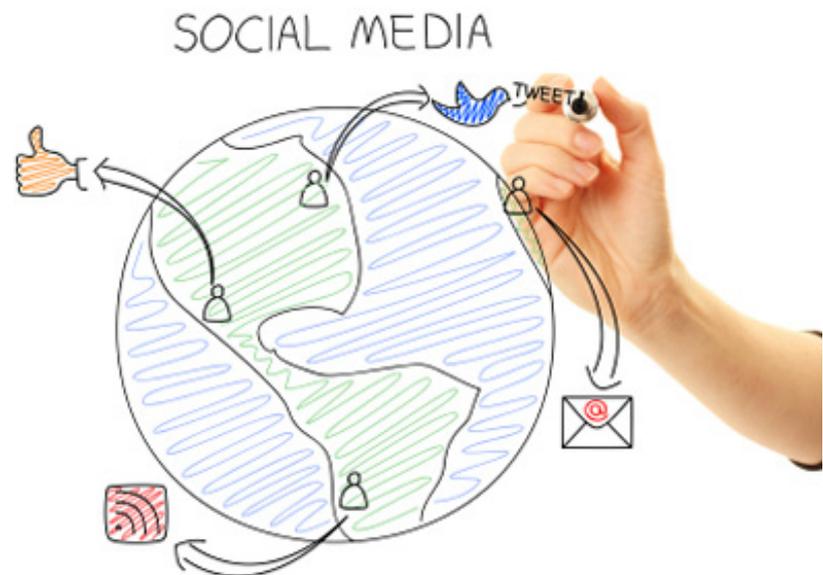
If using visuals is a great method of storytelling, using social media is a great platform for your hotel's story. Taken as a whole, today's social networks create a storytelling "ecosystem" wherein you can tell your story in your own words – and pictures – and your guests in turn can share their experiences with you, and with other consumers.

In fact, social media has become one of the common ways that society connects in the 21st century. While we can debate the meaningfulness of those connections, the power of social media to attract users can't be denied. And despite the fact that social media and social networks aren't the new thing anymore, they are still experiencing steady – and in some cases rapid – growth in use. In the U.S. alone, users spent more than 520 billion minutes on social media in 2012 – that's a 21 percent increase over 2011¹.

A big part of that growth has been driven by the growth of mobile computing and the proliferation of mobile devices. People love to use social media on the go. While 20 per cent of users' time spent online is spent on social networks, that number jumps to 30 per cent on mobile. And when it comes to mobile apps, growth is unprecedented – social apps saw almost 86 million unique users in the U.S. in 2012, and users spent a whopping 76 per cent more time on social apps in 2012 than they did in 2011².

Users spent
more than
520 billion
minutes on social
media in 2012

Nielsen



Combining visual storytelling and social media

As social media channels have matured, they've become increasingly driven by visuals. YouTube, with its millions of videos, has always been visually driven, but Facebook, which was once mostly text-driven, has evolved to include more and more photo and video sharing features; its recent "Timeline" upgrade is much more visually-driven than the previous news feed.

While Twitter remains mostly the province of 140-character info-bites, there are increasingly more photo and video sharing features available. Although Twitter's recent "lockout" of Instagram seemed like a step back, the company soon responded by launching its own set of mobile photo filters. And beyond photos, re-tweeting links to videos is one of the most popular activities on the site, with over 700 YouTube videos shared on Twitter every minute³.

Pinterest's entire interface is inherently visual-based, with boards and pins represented by images. Despite its relative infancy – having launched in 2010 – photo and video posts on Pinterest are already referring more traffic than Twitter and LinkedIn combined.

Overall, evidence suggests people are more intrigued by visual posts than text posts. On Facebook, videos are shared 12 times more (and photos "liked" two times more) than text links⁴; the company's purchase of Instagram (for \$1 billion) is a sure sign that Facebook recognizes people can't get enough photos in their timelines.

Let's take a look at Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram – and find out how you can use them to tell your hotel's story and attract and engage potential guests.



Facebook: The granddaddy of social media

Fast facts:

- Over 1 billion active users⁵
- 78 million users of the Facebook mobile app every month (and an additional 74 million mobile web users)⁶
- An average of 20 million apps are installed on Facebook every day⁷

Facebook is the largest and most well-known of the social networks. Recent updates have included several visually-driven changes, including the visually-rich “Timeline” view, large “cover” photos on each user/company’s page, and larger photo uploads. Consider the following when building and maintaining your property’s Facebook page:

Do:

- Make use of the cover photo feature. Your cover photo is a great way to establish your brand in a big, bold way. And given its prominence on your page – and the simplicity of updating it – you can change it regularly, to tie in to promotions or to give seasonal views of your property.
- Take advantage of the Facebook app infrastructure. There are over 7 million apps and websites that integrate with Facebook⁸. Using apps is a great way for you to leverage the Facebook platform while telling your story the way you want to tell it – and the way that engages your customers most effectively. With apps, you can customize your Facebook experience to your hotel’s brand, display multi-media, add loyalty programs and offers, enable booking and more.
- Be responsive. More and more, people are using social media as a support platform. One-third of users report they’d rather ask a company a question via Facebook than by telephone.⁹ If you have guests and prospects asking questions on your wall, write back promptly (and politely!).

Don’t:

- Constantly change your “profile” picture. This is the image users see in their news feed every time you’re active on Facebook – it should be something recognizable and familiar, so that everyone knows right away who you are.

Videos are shared 12 times more than text links on Facebook

Hubspot



Examples

The [Georgian Terrace Hotel](#) has developed a strong community on Facebook through visual storytelling. They update their cover photo and post interesting images to their timeline on a regular basis. They also link people to multi-media driven apps, like Instagram, YouTube, multi-media tour, and their videos page on Facebook to drive engagement and spread their story.

facebook

Email or Phone Password [Log In](#)

Keep me logged in [Forgot your password?](#)

The Georgian Terrace Hotel is on Facebook.

To connect with The Georgian Terrace Hotel, sign up for Facebook today.

[Sign Up](#) [Log In](#)

ORGIAN TERRACE HOTEL
ANTA'S MODERN CLASSIC

MODERN ICON.
"EXPERIENCE THE BEST IN MIDTOWN ATLANTA HOTELS"

The Georgian Terrace Hotel

3,409 likes 276 talking about this 16,754 were here

[Like](#) [More](#)

Event Venue Meeting Room Hotel

659 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA.

(404) 897-1991

Always open

About

Photos

Twitter

Notes 3

Likes

Highlights

The Georgian Terrace Hotel
Yesterday

Happy Holidays from our family to yours!

Recommendations [See All](#)

Denise Vachon Kaufman
My husband and I hosted our daughters wedding and ...
last Friday

Dawnja McCormack
We stayed at GTH a year ago and absolutely LOVED it! ...
[Like](#) about a week ago

Wakirisana Eehosi
Thank you soooooo much!!! to the Staff at the Georgian...
about a month ago

Tamatha Patterson
i love this hotel its even beautiful for a wedding
about a month ago

[See More](#)



Tweet this



Email this

YouTube: The most share-friendly place on the web

Fast Facts:

- The average YouTube user spends 15 minutes per day on the site¹⁰
- 100 million users take “social action” on videos every week¹¹
- Viral sensation “Gangnam Style” was the most watched video of 2012 (more than 530 million views)¹²

YouTube revolutionized online video sharing with its introduction in 2005. Quickly bought by Google, YouTube now sees 800 million unique users – watching more than 4 billion hours of video – every month¹³. YouTube is an extremely important part of every hotel’s social media strategy:

Do:

- Create a YouTube channel for your property, and use an avatar and background image. As with your Facebook profile picture, your YouTube avatar is what people will use to identify your brand – make sure it’s memorable and distinct. Your background image, on the other hand, can change as your activity changes.
- Consider the global audience. YouTube is localized in 43 countries and 60 languages worldwide, and 70 percent of the site’s traffic comes from outside of the U.S.¹⁴. Include videos that have global appeal to attract worldwide travelers.
- Share videos other than your own. You might not have the resources to create new videos every week, but that doesn’t mean your YouTube channel page should sit idle. Consider the types of videos your guests and followers might like; showcase local events and other travel videos.

Don’t:

- Share completely unrelated videos. While it’s tempting to share the latest hilarious video you see making its way through social media, be careful not to dilute your message: stay on brand and give your visitors only the videos that relate to your property’s image and identity.

Hubspot

**100
million**

*users take “social
action” on videos
every week*



Examples

- The [Four Seasons](#) YouTube channel is approaching one million video views. Its videos take you on a visual voyage through the unique experiences at their hotels and resorts.

Four Seasons Videos Subscribe 1,130 subscribers 896,601 video views

Featured Browse videos Search Channel

Uploads Playlists Likes Feed Comments View

About Four Seasons Videos
For those who know and appreciate the very best, Four Seasons hotels and resorts are a true home away from home - extending a caring welcome to some of the world's most inspiring destinations.
Welcome to the Four Seasons YouTube Channel. Here you...
by fourseasons
Country Canada

Four Seasons Resort Sharm El S...
2 videos | 3 weeks ago

Four Seasons Maui | Awesome ...
4 videos | 1 month ago

A TASTE of Four Seasons
33 videos | 1 month ago

Beverly Wilshire, A Four Seasons...
21 videos | 3 months ago

Dallas | Weddings at Four Season...
4 videos | 4 months ago

Singapore | City In A Garden
3 videos | 5 months ago

- The [May Fair Hotel's YouTube channel](#) includes all kinds of videos that a potential guest of the hotel might want to watch: an awesome foray into the penthouse suite, a one-on-one session with the hotel's personal trainer, and even exclusive interviews with VIPs.¹⁵

HotelChatter *come play.* DOWNLOAD THE OFFICIAL MAUI TRAVEL GUIDE. MAUI MOLOKAI · LANAI VisitMaui.com

SECTIONS >> SEARCH THE WORLD Search HotelChatter SEARCH

SEND US A TIP

Hotel Videos / London Hotels / YouTube / → All Tags

The May Fair's Youtube Channel is Actually Watchable

Where: Stratton Street, London, United Kingdom, W1J 8LT

October 16, 2008 at 12:58 PM | by Jenna | Comment (1)

voiceFIVE [Privacy Policy](#) [Close](#)

Are you aware of the following electric razor/trimmer brands?

Gillette Schick
 Braun Philips Norelco

1 of 5 Only 5 questions? Easy. Too easy.

Popular Stories

Hotel News
Philippe Starck Will Take The Stairs To Bali In 2014

HotelChatter Contest
And the Hottest GM Finalists Are...

Hotel Openings
Costa Rica's Sexiest Sustainable Hotel Opens Tomorrow

In their everlasting, always admirable and at times embarrassing quests to reach out to the "Facebook Generation," hotels often venture onto the interwebs to create blogs and [Tweeters](#) and what have you. On occasion, we rip on them when they're done poorly -- who wants to read a blog full of lame plugs for a hotel or watch a YouTube channel full of commercials? -- but sometimes they do it up right and warm our

Twitter: Only 140 characters, but a picture says 1,000 words

Fast Facts:

- 750 tweets are sent every second¹⁶
- Google is the most-followed company on Twitter (over 4.5 million followers)¹⁷
- Twitter launched its mobile photo filters feature on iPhone and Android in December 2012

Twitter's quick bursts of information are ideally suited to our time-crunched, on-the-go, increasingly mobile society. They've recently embraced more visual storytelling features as well, including header photos, photo streaming/swiping on mobile apps, and new photo filters for mobile uploads.

Do:

- Use your background! Sure, you can just pick a color or a repeating tile image. But you don't want your Twitter page to be the same as everyone else's; use an image that says something about your property, or that shows off what you have to offer. Also consider the way your background image "splits," with your timeline in the middle. Why not have a photo of your hotel on the left and photos of your pool, business center and restaurant on the right?
- Re-tweet. As with other social sites, sharing is a huge part of Twitter. Follow local businesses and other Twitter users that may be relevant to your guests, and re-tweet anything you think has value.
- Add photos to your tweets. A no-brainer! To engage visually, augment your tweets with photos – of your property, of your guests enjoying themselves, of your chef's latest creation. And while Twitter no longer supports Instagram, the company's new mobile filters allow you to add a similar retro-like feel to your images.

Don't:

- Worry if your tweets don't get a response! Only 23 per cent of tweets get a re-tweet¹⁸. Avoid focusing on re-tweets; instead, focus on making your content engaging and relevant to your followers.

750 tweets
are sent every
second

MediaBistro



Examples

The Opus Hotel in Vancouver [@OpusHotels](#) sets a great example of how hotels can leverage Twitter. One, they share style tips via Twitter. Lifestyle information can be very popular on Twitter and helps define the image they are building.¹⁹ Two, [they post images regularly](#) that show what's going on in and around the hotel.

OpusHotel
@OpusHotel
Opus Hotel is the premier boutique hotel in Vancouver.
Vancouver, BC Canada · <http://www.opushotel.com>

5,131 TWEETS 9,212 FOLLOWING 9,617 FOLLOWERS [Follow](#)

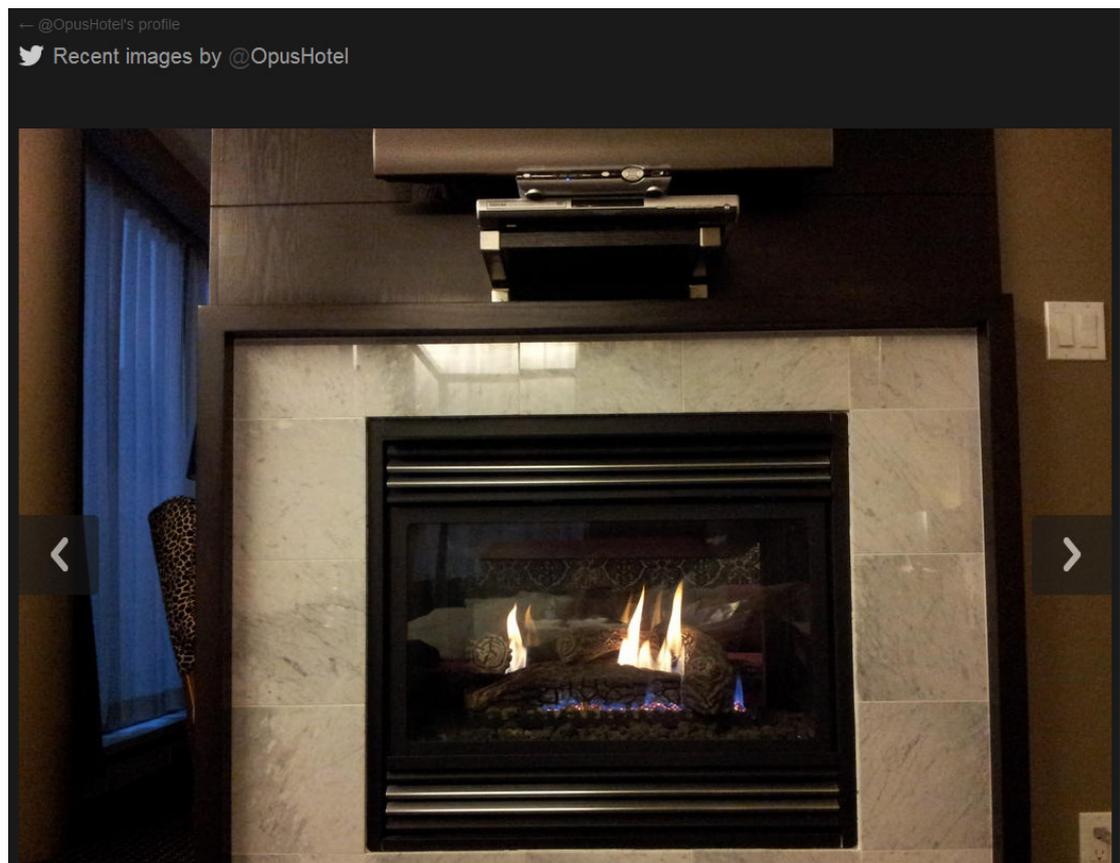
Tweets

OpusHotel @OpusHotel 2h
"[@vanfoodster](#): My review of La Pentola Della Quercia [ow.ly/gn9KM](#) in [#yaletown](#) [@La_Pentola](#) in the [@OpusHotel](#) [fb.me/1HG0oLHy9](#)"
Expand

OpusHotel @OpusHotel 8h
Are you on The List? [ow.ly/gmHWI](#) [#OPUSNYE](#)
Expand

OpusHotel @OpusHotel 12h
BOXING DAY SALE. Now's your perfect chance to book an OPUS Vancouver getaway [ow.ly/gmCq1](#) cc [@myvancouver](#) [@visitseattle](#)
Expand

OpusHotel @OpusHotel 25 Dec
[@flyman112](#) good effort Mike! Fingers crossed!



Tweet this



Email this

Pinterest: Opening up a personal side of your business

Fast Facts:

- Pinterest users follow more brands than users on Facebook or Twitter²⁰
- 80 percent of users are women²¹
- 70 per cent of Pinterest users report taking an offline action related to something they experienced on Pinterest²².

One of the fastest-growing online channels in history, Pinterest had the largest year-over-year increase in audience of any social network in 2012.²³ That makes 2013 the perfect time to integrate Pinterest into your visual storytelling strategy.

Do:

- Stay organized: Pinterest makes “pinning” cool photos and links a breeze, but your board can quickly become cluttered. Keep your pins neat and streamlined by creating different boards for different aspects of your property, such as rooms, guests, the grounds, local attractions, and events. Since sharing food ideas and recipes is one of the more popular activities on Pinterest, also consider a board showcasing your property’s restaurant or bar offerings, or local restaurants.
- Be a content curator: Remember social media is a two-way conversation, be sure upload and repin relevant images that others post about your hotel and surrounding area to contribute to your hotel’s story through the eyes of guests.

Draw people to your content: Put a “Follow Me on Pinterest” button on your website and periodically post Pinterest content to your other social networks to create awareness and interest. You can link to specific boards which gives you an opportunity to segment your followers in ways relevant to your business.

Don’t:

- Ignore the past. If you have old photos lying around, put them to use! Nostalgia drives many pin boards; your guests might enjoy seeing what your property looked like over the years, before and after renovations, or seeing how the neighborhood around you has changed.

Nielsen

Pinterest had the largest year-over-year increase in audience of any social network in 2012



Examples

- Outside of the hotel industry, Lowe's does a nice job of segmenting their followers in ways relevant to their business. They have created seasonal boards (the Big Game, Valentine's Day), themed boards (Craft Ideas, Unique Pet Projects), and boards that tie to specific merchandise areas (Lighting, Bedrooms, Bathrooms) and have added "Follow Me" buttons in the appropriate places.²⁴

Within the hotel industry, the [King and Prince Beach Resort](#) has a number of boards that include images of their own as well as images pinned from other sites and Pinterest users.

The King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort
Beautiful historic Resort located on the ocean's edge of St. Simons Island, GA
St. Simons Island, Ga

Repins from
Apryl Thomas
Colleen N. Ruska
Explore Georgia

25 Boards 570 Pins 34 Likes Activity **Follow All** 187 Followers 117 Following

Hotel Rooms 13 pins
Beach Villas 6 pins
Around The Resort 19 pins
Explore St. Simons Isla... 37 pins

King's Tavern Food 18 pins
Recipes 30 pins
Fun Food 32 pins
Quotes 67 pins

Golf Course 13 pins
Weddings 158 pins
Drinks 29 pins
Grillin' Out 11 pins



Tweet this



Email this

Instagram: Photo-sharing on the go

Fast Facts:

- More than 100 million users, uploading more than 50 photos every second²⁵
- Apple's "App of the Year" in 2011
- Purchased by Facebook in 2012

With its retro filters and snap-and-upload simplicity, mobile photo-sharing phenom Instagram has proven extremely popular with users. Originally launched on Apple's iOS, Instagram has expanded to the Android platform and continues to grow rapidly, gaining a new user every second²⁶.

Do:

- Show visitors the human side behind the counter. While you never want to make your marketing all about you, it never hurts to show off the faces behind your business. It can help humanize your property and remind potential guests that your property is more than just a brand.
- Show off the surrounding area. Unless you're an inclusive resort, your visitors want to know what else your neighborhood offers beyond the hotel doors. With its filters and special effects, Instagram is a great way to make local restaurants and attractions look fun and appealing.
- Take lots of photos... and then take some more. While you want to keep your Facebook albums tight and focused, Instagram is all about photos. Your followers will expect regular updates, or they'll quickly forget why they follow you.

Don't:

- Get too personal. While it's great to show your staff hard at work and your guests enjoying your property, you never want to embarrass anyone. Awkward and embarrassing photos will create a negative image of your property in a user's mind that you may not be able to shake.

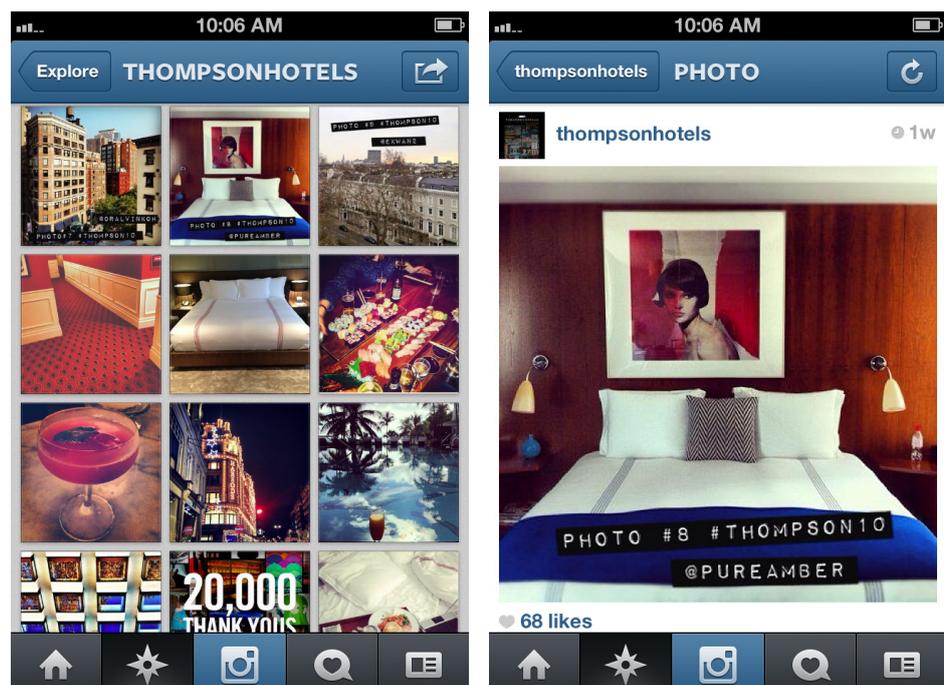


Examples

- Morgans Hotel Group (*Instagram: morganshotels*) is a shining example of a hotel company doing Instagram right. With a following of over 3,200, they currently have over 625 photos many of which have received multiple likes and comments.



- Thompson Hotels: (*Instagram: thompsonhotels*) is definitely up there with Morgans on their Instagram ability. With over 550 gorgeous and interesting photos, they post frequently and visually catalogue the cities just as much as their own hotels. This has helped them grow a following of 3,800.



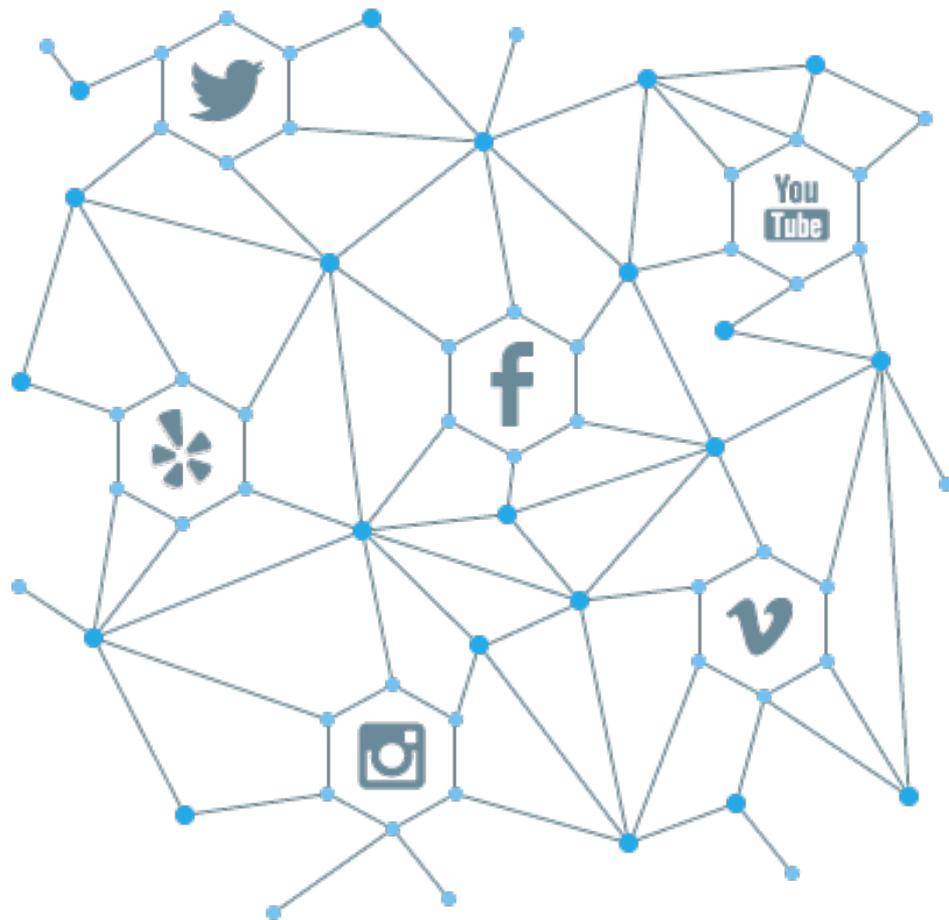
- Four Seasons Los Angeles: (*Instagram: fslosangeles*) is clearly representing the beauty of their hotel with over 200 photos of everything from their pool at dusk to mini sliders at their Fourth of July barbecue.²⁷



Social means sharing

In lauding all the stats about users and uploads, it's sometimes easy to forget the "social" part of social media – the sharing and connecting between individuals, businesses, brands and more, worldwide.

People like to share – what they're doing, who they're following, the news they're reading, or the latest viral video. Facebook sees 2.7 billion "likes" every day, and has 37 million pages that have 10+ likes²⁸. 92 per cent of Twitter users say they re-tweet "interesting content."²⁹ Pinterest, of course, is driven mainly by pinning shared content; Instagram sees 575 photos liked every second³⁰. And the fact that the phrase "viral video" has entered our lexicon is proof of YouTube's shareability!



We share because we like that feeling of connection. Whether it's with our best friends on Facebook or unknown expanse of the "Twittersphere," social media is a 21st-century expression of human interaction: social media drives word-of-mouth in a far greater way than anything seen before. Whereas word-of-mouth was previously limited to people you spoke to directly, social media has no such limitation – you can converse with anyone, anywhere, about anything.

Word-of-mouth has always been an important factor in a traveler's decision-making process, and that's certainly still true today. More than 50 per cent of Facebook users say that friends' vacation pictures inspire them to book a trip to the same place³¹, while more than 30 per cent say they've changed their hotel preference after looking it up on social media³².



Thus, as a hotel marketer, it's extremely important that – no matter where you focus your marketing efforts – you make your activities shareable on social media, and make your activities interesting enough for people to *want* to share them. In addition – since sharing is by its nature a two-way street – it's important for you to share interesting items that others have produced that are relevant to your hotel's story and your customers.

Here are four quick tips to increase your chances of shares, likes and re-tweets on social media:

1. Always include social sharing widgets with your web marketing – especially on mobile – so that when someone sees something they want to share, it's fast and easy to do.
2. Keep your content visual, relevant, up-to-date and fresh, giving people a reason to share it. Use photos and video whenever possible, and don't let your content stagnate.
3. Drive people to connect with you through contests and promotions; for example, you can offer a restaurant voucher for the most-liked photo taken at the hotel and posted on Facebook.
4. Encourage your guests to connect and share during their stay! Make sure you let your guests know you're available on Facebook and Twitter and that you welcome their contributions.



In conclusion

The age of social media has given rise to hyper-aware consumers. No longer limited to what we can see and experience directly in front of us, we can now virtually tap in to a worldwide network of fellow consumers to gather information, thoughts, reviews, details and more. We're also more aware of ads and sponsor-driven content; we've developed better "filters" to weed out the content we don't want, and we're better equipped to search out the relevant, engaging content we do want. And – coming full circle – we want to share that content on social networks.

For hotels, visual storytelling on social media is an ideal way to connect with potential guests in a very real, personal way. More than just a TV ad or a "brochureware" website, social media gives you the chance to tell your hotel's story in a visually compelling manner, and show off your rooms and amenities, as well as your people and your guests, with impactful visuals, quickly and easily, across multiple channels. By connecting with guests and allowing them to help you tell your story, you're allowing future guests the chance to see, first hand, the true experience of staying at your property. You're inspiring confidence that their visit to your hotel will match what they see online, not just what they've read online.

VFM Leonardo helps hotels like yours develop and amplify their visual stories reaching prospects with engaging content across various channels. With powerful visual storytelling features and an easy-to-use web interface, VFM Leonardo's VBrochure™ software suite is an ideal solution for hotels looking to deliver consistent, visually rich, optimized online experiences (stories) to travel shoppers.

[Visit VFM Leonardo online](#) to view a demo, or contact us today to learn more about how VBrochure™ can help you leverage social media to tell your property's visual story.



About VFM Leonardo

VFM Leonardo is a technology and online media company for the global hospitality industry. We provide e-marketers at hotel brands, management companies and hotel properties with technology, sales conversion tools and a global travel media network that enables them to better visually merchandise their hotels to millions of in-market travel shoppers monthly. Our core products, the VScape® Digital Asset Management System and VBrochure™ Online Merchandising System, leverage the VNetwork™ - the largest media syndication network in the industry. It includes all major search engines, Global Distribution Systems, online travel agencies, travel research and supplier websites, search portals, review, travel editorial, local directories and major social media and video sharing sites. Taking advantage of VBrochure's mobile and social media platforms, hotels can ensure that their rich visual presentations reach consumers on their mobile devices and through their social graphs.

For more information about VFM Leonardo, [visit www.vfmleonardo.com](http://www.vfmleonardo.com).

 [@VFMLeonardo](https://twitter.com/VFMLLeonardo)

 www.facebook.com/vfmleonardo

 blog.vfmleonardo.com

 www.vfmleonardo.com



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