

TRENDS 2025

Marketing Trends and
Predictions for DMOs

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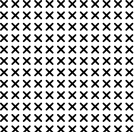
WELCOME TO THE 2025 TRENDS REPORT

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With internet trends evolving at the speed of Kim Kardashian's relationship status, it can be hard for destination marketers to keep up. While you don't have to stay on top of every single trend, it's still important to know the larger directions the industry is trending toward.

Hence, the second edition of the CrowdRiff Trends Report! Last year's was a huge success, so we thought, why not do it again immediately after our biggest and most time-consuming event of the year? (Shoutout **SEE2024!**)





To support our research, we surveyed over 200 destination marketers to learn what's working, what they're looking forward to, and what's on the cusp of being the next big trend. Here's a quick look at who we spoke with and the destinations they represent:

Marketing team size

Over 38% of respondents work with teams of five or more people, while about 22% come from teams of two.

Job function

Survey respondents work in various roles, from interns to social and content marketing managers to VPs.

Destination size

32% of respondents represent destinations with 100,000-500,000 people, while just over 21% are from smaller destinations with populations of 3,000-50,000.

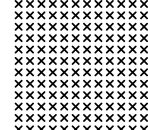
Marketing budget

Over 27% of respondents work with a budget of \$1M or greater, 17.3% work with a budget of \$200K-\$400K, and 19% work with a budget of less than \$100,000.

Location

No biased perspectives here—our results capture perspectives from Australia, Luxembourg, and other far corners of the world.





While some things remain consistent from last year (e.g., IG dominating your marketing strategies, video reigning supreme, and authenticity triumphing), we loved seeing the tiny shifts coming in 2025—marketers are finding ways to use AI thoughtfully, influencers are getting the cold shoulder, and organic and paid strategies are starting to align.

We hope this report gives you new insights into your marketing strategy and helps you keep travelers curious, engage and expand your local communities, and show the world why your destination is so special.

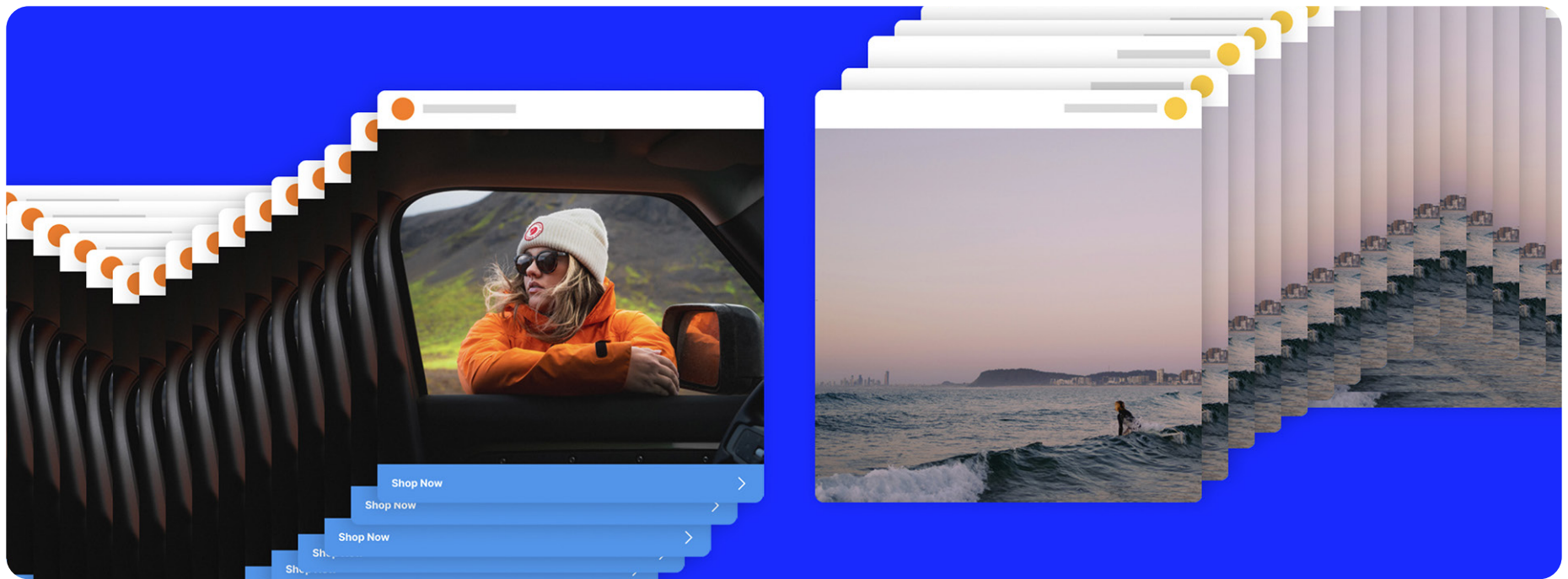
Sincerely,

Hannah Grant
Head of Marketing



+ + + 01 SOCIAL STATUS: PAID VS ORGANIC

Destination marketers are constantly refining their social strategies, with a noticeable shift in the focus between paid and organic channels from year to year.



On a high level, organic social media pays off when you're looking to build brand awareness, establish an authentic, authoritative presence, engage with your audience, or have a limited budget. A robust archive of content can help support your strategy, and planning months in advance will keep you ahead! Many destination marketers we spoke with reported planning as far as 12 months ahead and generally not less than three. *(Struggling to get ahead of content planning? Our [2025 DMO content calendar](#) can help!)*

When you have the budget, putting your efforts toward paid social can get extra eyes on specific content or a timely event or promotion. For example, if

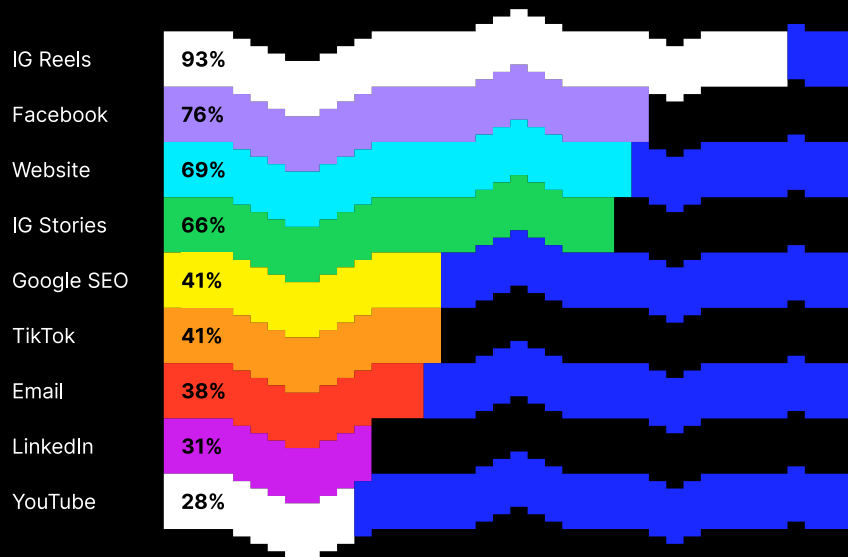
you're trying to draw attention to local businesses on [Small Business Saturday](#) and have a local biz listicle or a specific business spotlight to share, you could allocate dollars towards promoting it to the right audience. Paid social can also help expand your reach and get new followers.

Both channels highly depend on content volume. Nearly 50% of the destination marketers we surveyed create new content every day, and 46% share content on social media daily. This daily demand for social content likely influences how marketers carve out their paid and organic strategies by channel.

Digital marketing channels destination marketers are prioritizing in 2025

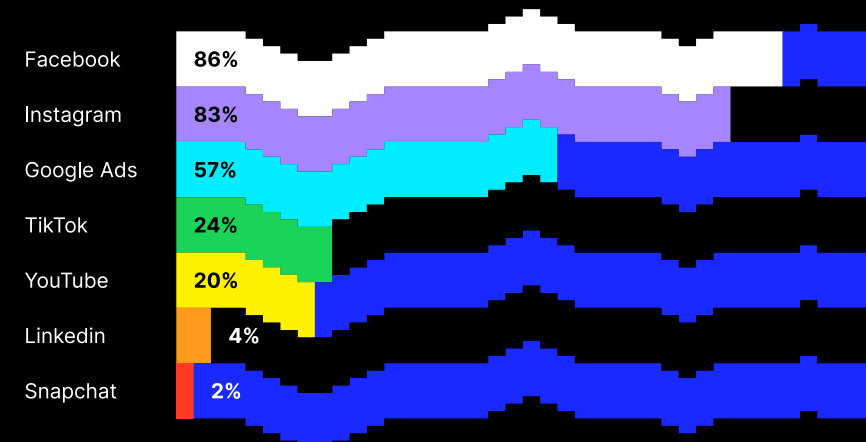
Organic

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Paid

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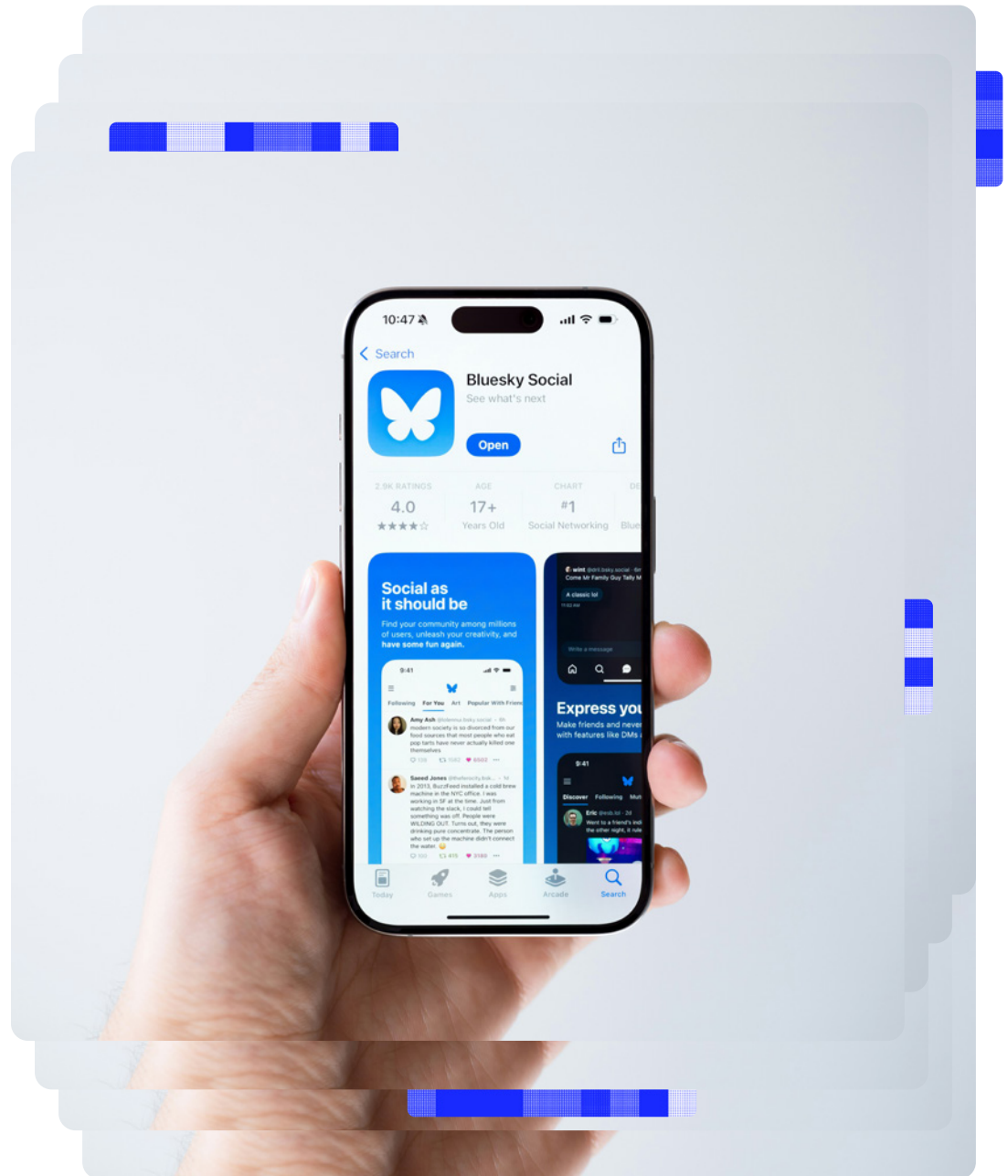


Instagram and Facebook are clear winners, yet the numbers are a bit lower than last year (98% said they ran paid ads on Instagram last year)! 50% of the respondents last year really thought YouTube Shorts was going to see its moment, but clearly, YouTube is losing its popularity.

What's coming, what's going

We, of course, have to mention the looming [TikTok ban](#). While its popularity for organic marketing has crept up since last year, the ban may mess up marketing strategies worldwide. Keep an eye out for new alternatives, and get ready to double down on Reels (or, dare we say it, YouTube Shorts).

As you may have heard, [some are touting Bluesky as the shiny alternative to X](#), with lots of stats on publishers seeing a [3-4x bump in engagement](#). Many of its top posts feature photos, so will it have more popularity with DMOs than X? It's too soon to tell, but marketers are keeping an eye out, so be ready to jump on it!



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Social channels and strategies are evolving fast, but Facebook and Instagram don't seem to be going anywhere for both paid and organic. Keep TikTok part of your plan for now, especially if you're not in the US, but get ready to pivot if necessary.



02 KEEPING UP WITH CONTENT

Video continues to be the most popular type of content for nearly 89% of the destination marketers we surveyed! Anecdotally, we know there's a greater demand for short, snackable videos, mainly because they can be remixed and repurposed for nearly every marketing channel.





With videos performing so well, the need to keep them up is high, so DMOs are turning to UGC to fill their libraries. Not to brag, but [the new CrowdRiff experience](#) makes it easier than ever to discover new user-generated photos and videos (we worked hard on it, we should brag!).



Which content formats perform best for your destination's marketing goals?

89%

Videos

67%

Photos

58%

User-generated content (UGC)

55%

Blog posts

7%

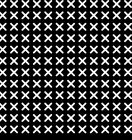
Infographics

50% use an even mix of UGC and professionally produced photos and videos.

47% think having enough content to stand out and satisfy algorithms is their biggest social media challenge.

45% of respondents post content daily. Demand for fresh content, from photos to vertical video, is high.

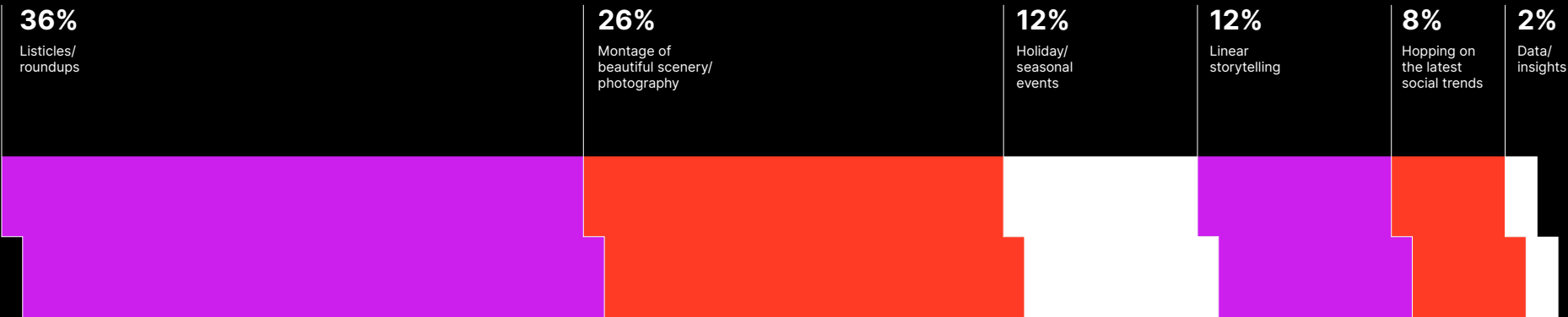




A focus on local stories

DMOs are posting on social media daily, increasing the demand for fresh, local content. Many are balancing professional shoots with UGC content sourced from CrowdRiff's platform, and lots are collaborating with CrowdRiff Creators. They're drawn to the quality and authenticity, and 92% say they'd recommend it to other DMOs!

What's your #1 most engaging type of social content?

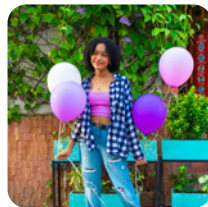


Loving the listicles

While we can't put a date to it, we definitely saw a boom of listicles used in looped videos this year. More loops mean more views, which tells the algorithm people like it and prompts it to share with even more people. Plus, they're very saveable since they're a goldmine for traveler inspiration. We're honestly quite surprised to see social trends rank so low, but hey, maybe that means less doomscrolling for ideas in 2025.

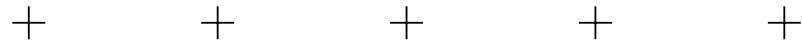
CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Feed social demand by keeping your content archive on point with a mix of UGC, professionally shot, and locally produced videos (CrowdRiff UGC and Creators are always here to help)! Give old videos new life with highly engaging listicles and montages, too.



03 MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Success measurement can often feel scary or even arbitrary. From KPIs to ROI to WTFs, what are DMOs looking at to track performance in 2025?

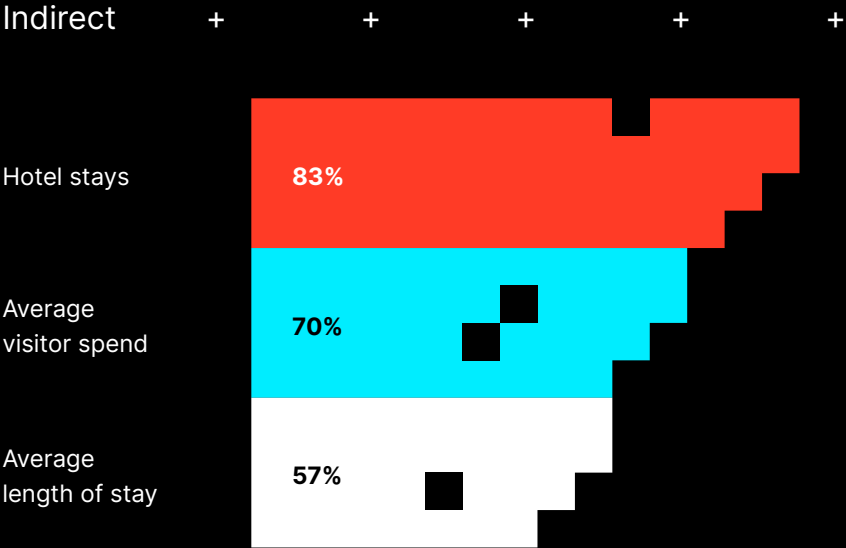
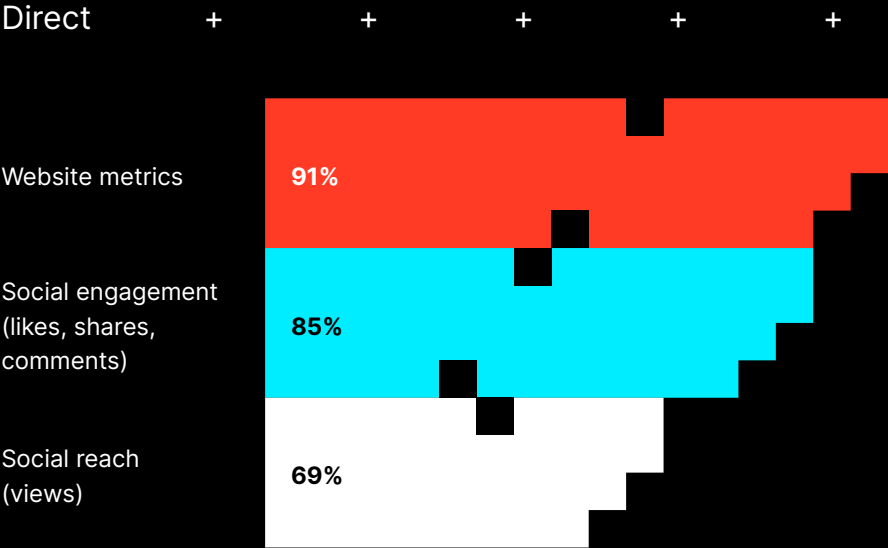




We can clearly see social media engagement, web traffic, and direct bookings are essential metrics for DMOs. They should all play into each other to create a seamless user journey, no matter where their first touchpoint is.

While SEO and link building are a given, the DMOs that are performing best have incredible partnerships with stakeholders. These connections not only drive up all those top KPIs but also build stronger communities and create better, more authentic experiences for visitors.

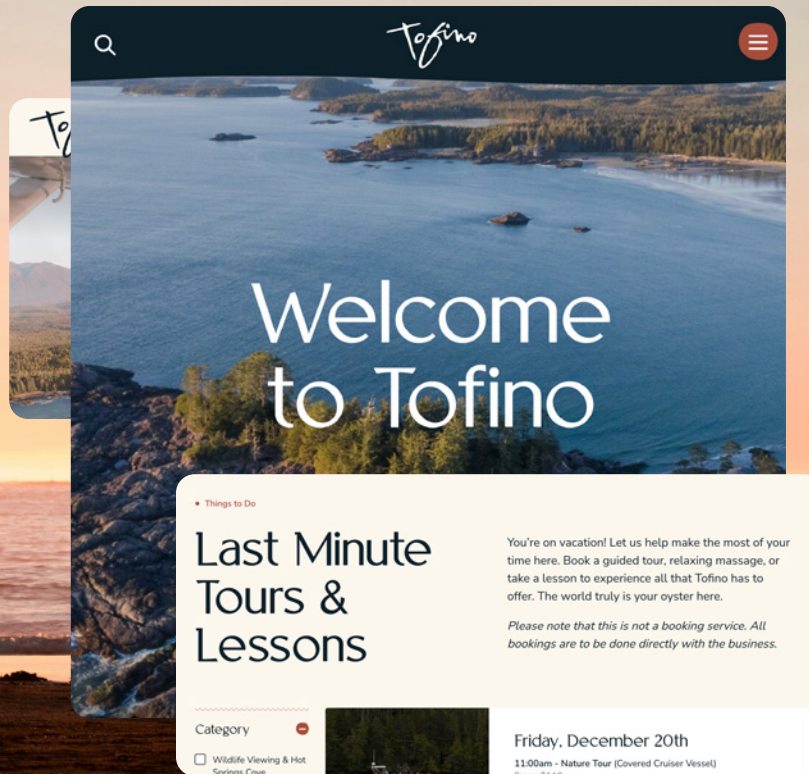
Top success metrics



Is your website click-worthy?

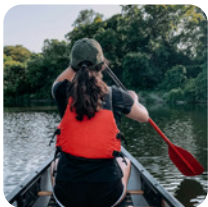
With websites vital to DMO success, it should be as fresh and enticing as a bakery display case. Hubspot offers tons of [great suggestions for upgrading your site](#)—it can be as simple as adding a CTA to the homepage, making your navigation easier to find, or updating the color scheme so it doesn't look like it was built in 2009 (even if it was).

Looking for inspo? We *love* what Tourism Tofino has done [with their website](#). The visuals alone are enough to get anyone booking a trip, the navigation is super easy to follow, and so many links offer something new to learn. We're also obsessed with their [Last-Minute Tours and Lessons page](#). There are so many ways for visitors to engage with the site and partners!



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

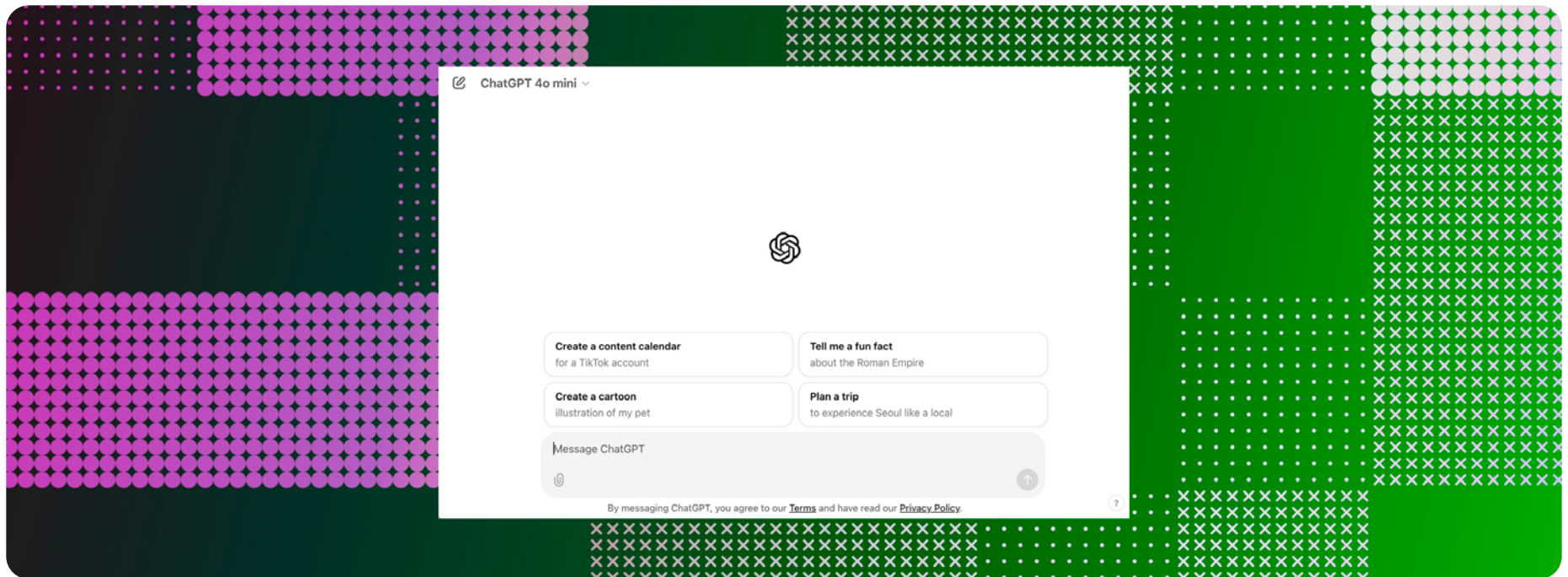
Thinking holistically can help you reach the widest audience and stay top-of-mind. Create content on your own or through partnerships with hotels and local businesses, and use social media to amplify it. And remember, web content continues to shine as a home base with unlimited evergreen opportunities. Keep it fresh.



04 AI: ANXIETY AND PROMISE



AI is already a big piece of DMO marketing strategies. While it doesn't come without concerns, 64% already use some form of AI in their marketing department and 31% are gearing up to use it, while only 6% don't plan to engage with it.



A big chunk of destination marketers are concerned about data accuracy, half are struggling with ethical issues, and 43% worry about a loss of creativity. But with [ChatGPT-5](#) on the horizon and more new AI tools coming out weekly, you might as well jump on the bandwagon now so as not to fall behind.

How DMOs foresee AI supporting their teams over the next year

77%

Writing social or website copy

49%

Campaign planning

48%

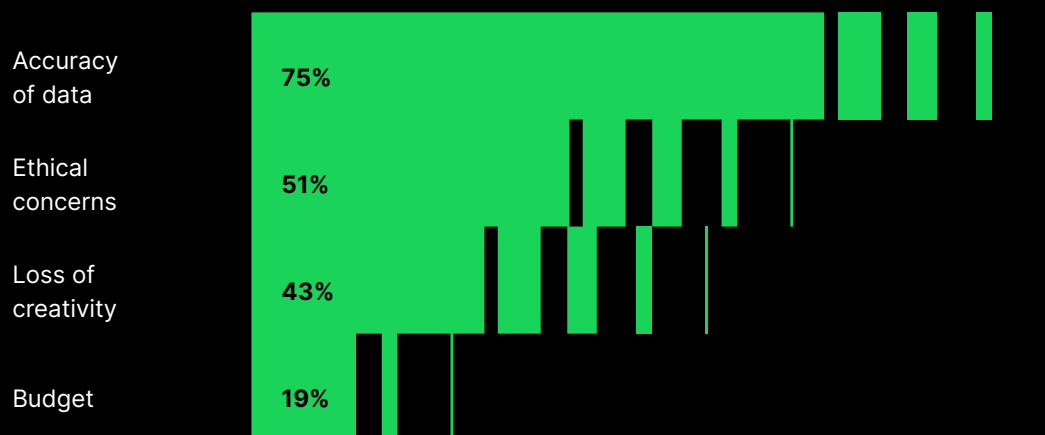
Visitor data analysis

26%

Content creation



Biggest AI concerns



Are your coworkers, manager, C-suite, or even you not convinced yet? Here are some ways to address the biggest concerns surrounding AI implementation:

Keep it vague

We've heard that a lot of companies are worried about giving AI too much confidential information. Avoid including valuable company or customer information in your prompts, and you're in the clear.

Perfect your proofreading

It's tempting to give a writing task to AI and copy and paste, but giving it a good proofread and fact-check will cover your you-know-what later.

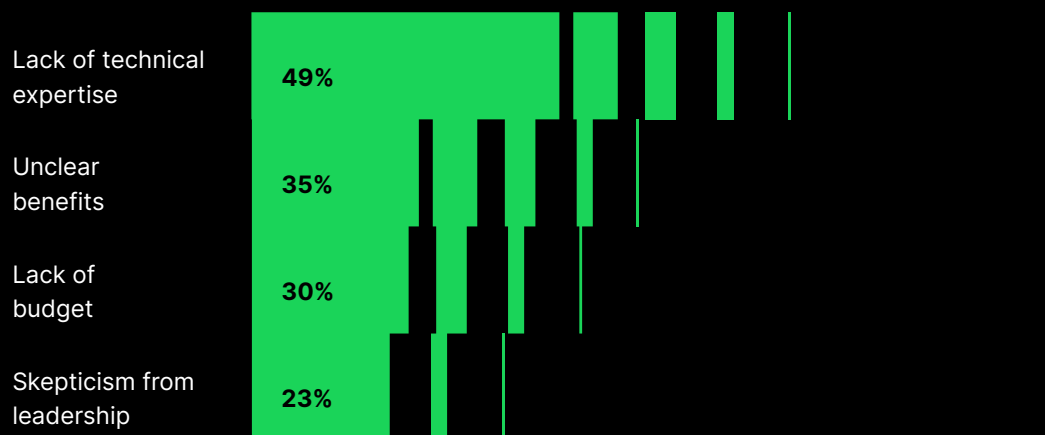
Apply thoughtful ethics

Nearly every tech advancement has had its share of ethical dilemmas, but it doesn't mean it's all bad. Use your due diligence when choosing what to prompt and which content to use, and look into the AI tool's privacy policies to get a deeper picture.

Use it as a tool, not a replacement

AI doesn't have to replace anyone. Instead, it can make your work easier and give you more time to focus on strategy. For example, you can use AI to take a summer photo to fall by giving your subject a sweater. Capturing the original content authentically is still a must, but this can help avoid a reshoot and give the content a longer life.

Challenges to AI adoption



CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Despite many valid concerns and challenges to organizational adoption, **AI is helping destination marketers save money and accomplish goals more efficiently—especially around content creation. Like with any technology, it's our responsibility to address concerns and approach them ethically.**



05 THE ART OF STAYING AHEAD

For most destination marketers—73% of those we surveyed—staying energized and on top of trends is “very important” to planning an effective marketing strategy and achieving their team’s goals. They’re inspired by conferences and team brainstorming sessions, and they keep up with trends via newsletters and, again, conferences (we love conferences too)!



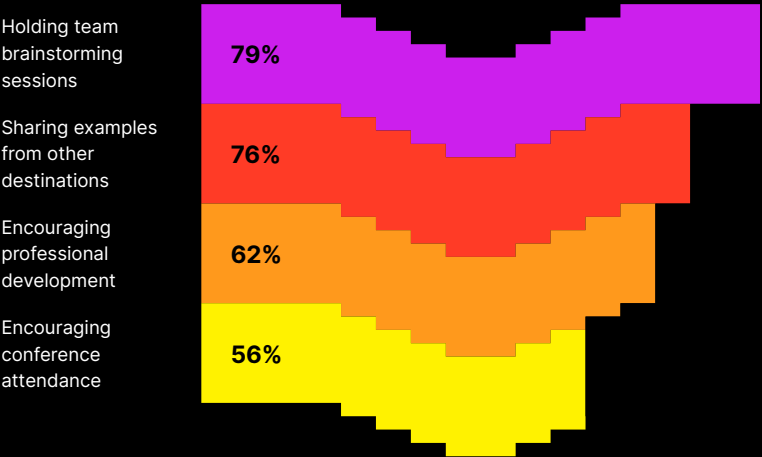
The “return” of the e-newsletter

It seems like every few years, marketers across industries proclaim “e-newsletters are back.” In 2014, WIRED said newsletters were “usable,” a year later, Harvard Business Review called their return “triumphant,” and we’re still seeing new articles pop up claiming they’re bigger and more popular than ever.

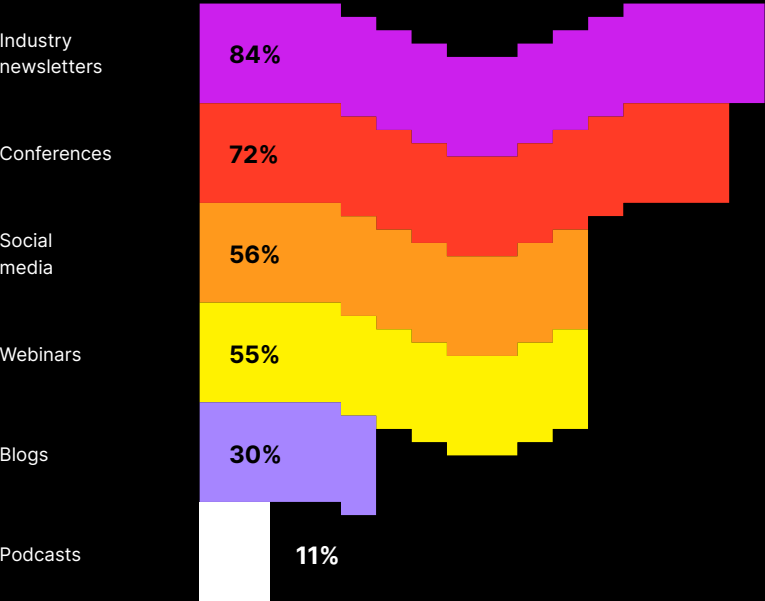
People want content free of algorithmic bias, and newsletters have the ability to feel personal and helpful. With a distinct and authentic voice, you can drive traffic, provide thought leadership, and get people excited about your destination.

From a broader marketing perspective, at the end of 2024, Constant Contact shared a Strata survey reporting that global e-newsletter users totaled 4.48 Billion in 2024, with experts projecting an additional half-billion by 2027. Also, in 2024, 53% of US, Canadian, and Australian small businesses used emails as the most frequent strategy for brand awareness and customer retention.

How leaders are inspiring their teams



How DMOs stay on top of trends and industry news





Events ramp up: A new life for IRL marketing

We're seeing a steady return to in-person events since the pandemic. According to a [report by Bizzabo](#), 52% of event organizers saw an increase in in-person events from 2023 to 2024. [A study by Allied Market Research](#) anticipates that the worldwide events industry, valued at \$1.1 trillion in 2019, will increase to \$2.1 trillion by 2032.

Events can also help foster new connections between teams who work remotely. At CrowdRiff, we know it well. Last fall's SEE conference in Austin, Texas was full of magical keynotes and breakout sessions that helped many of us make new connections and expand the work many of us do remotely. (Psst... have you bought your ticket to [SEE2025](#) yet?)

What's so special about the destination marketing community is everyone's generosity. Speaking with so many DMOs daily, we've learned that many attend conferences and events to learn from each other, sharing tips and strategies with friendly, no-competition vibes.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Smash that subscribe button on some industry newsletters to stay in the know.

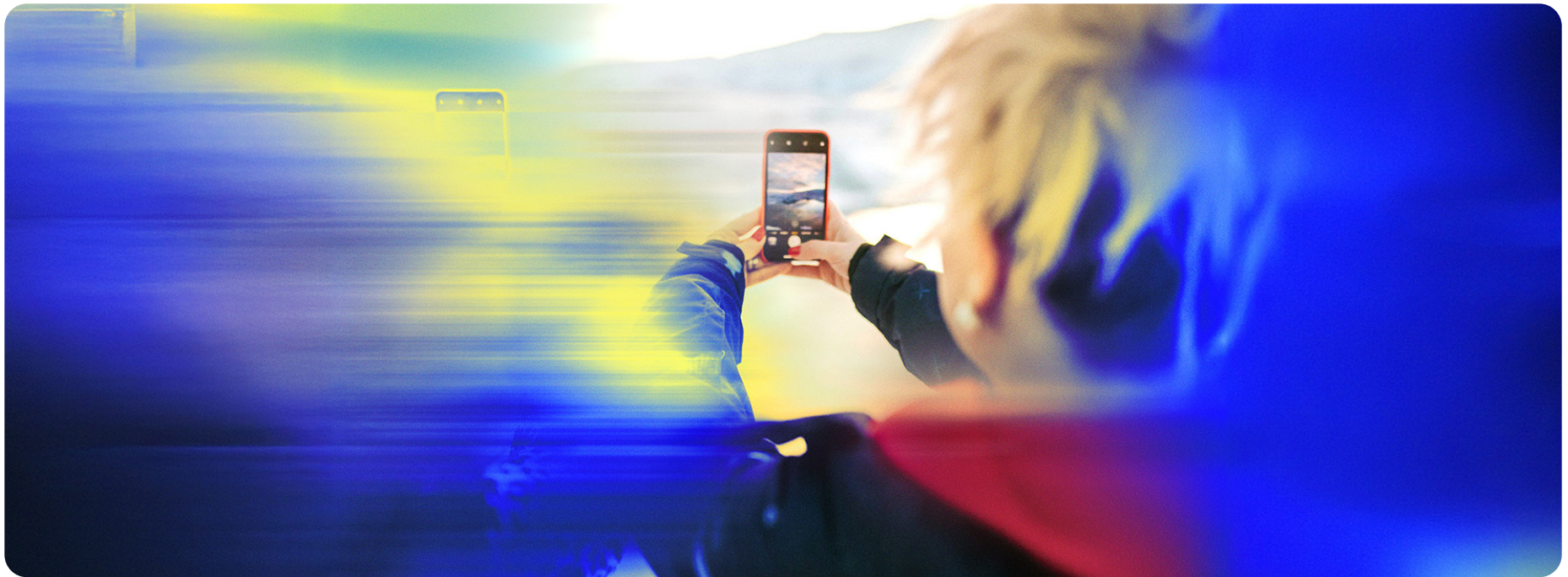
Get into more brainstorming sessions with your team, exchange ideas with other organizations, and do some professional development (like taking a skill-building class or attending conferences like SEE).



06 2025: GETTING REAL

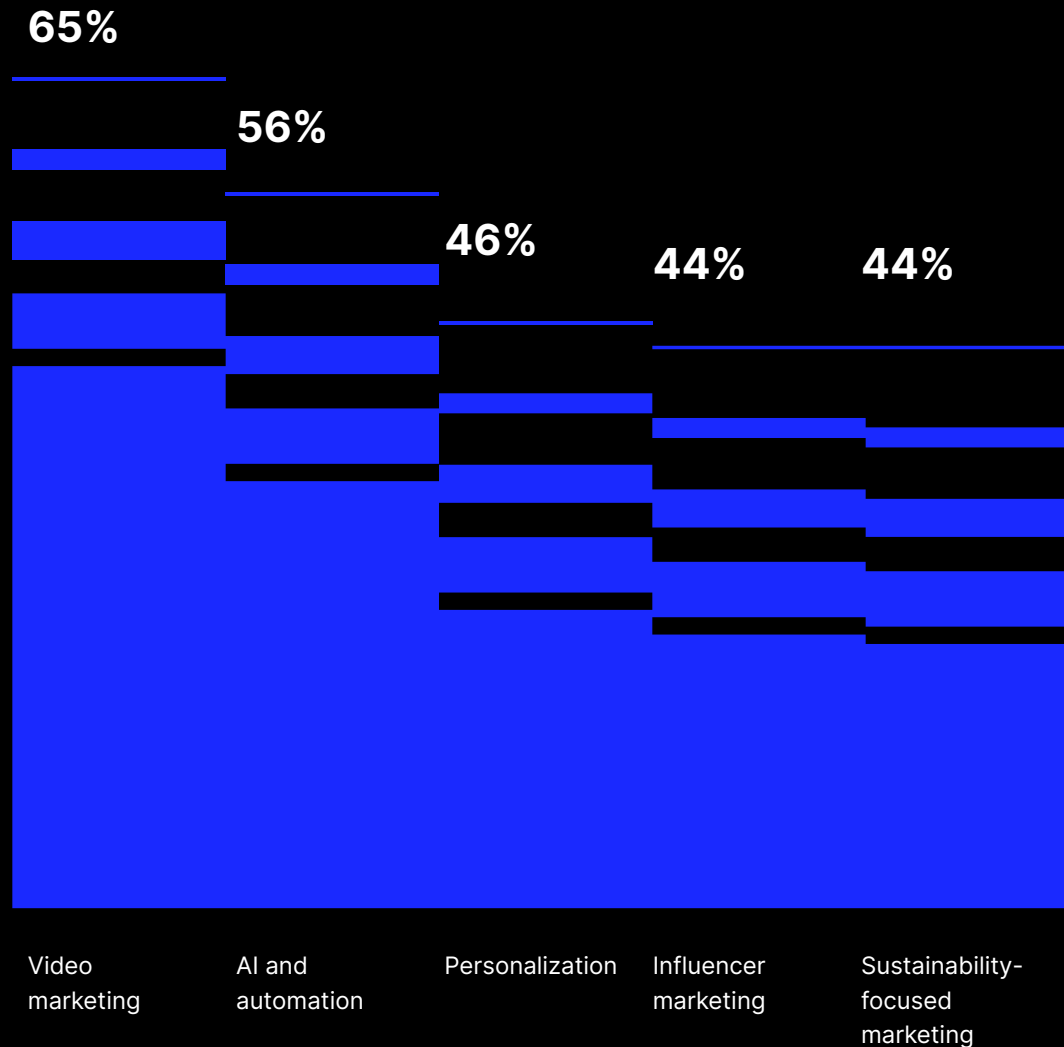
One of the most interesting stats that will shape so many angles of destination marketing strategies this year is the drop in influencer, well, influence. In our survey, we learned that **44%** of respondents think influencers will be important in the coming months, down from a whopping **90%** last year.

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Which digital marketing trends will have the biggest impact on destination marketing in 2025?

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A 2023 study shared by [The Drum](#) found that 86% of surveyed American consumers were more likely to trust a brand that shares user-generated content vs 12% who are likely to purchase something promoted by an influencer. [In the TikTok world](#), 55% of users say they're more likely to trust brands when they hear about them from creators vs ads in their feed.

Here are a few more reasons we can attribute to this major shift:

Oversaturation

We're all constantly seeing influencers in our feeds—their celeb status has lost its impact.

The need for authenticity

People want to see real stories with a real perspective. Influencers getting paid to hock a product can feel as cringe as 90s product placement.

The rise of UGC

Real people from your destination—not celebrities—are the best at showcasing all there is to love about the place.

Marketers used to rely on influencers and ad targeting to reach their audiences. But with the changing trends and tighter data regulations, there's a need for smarter personalization. [AI and automation are key for user journeys](#), but UGC is a great way to showcase diverse POVs that resonate with different audience segments and draw them in.

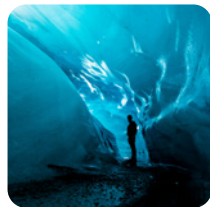


Going green

We love to see DMOs prioritizing sustainability. We all want to keep our homes in good shape, and working in this kind of messaging can serve as a great reminder to both locals and tourists to be mindful of their impact. A few suggestions from [The European Travel Commission](#) include showcasing low-impact walking or cycling activities and promoting community development initiatives.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

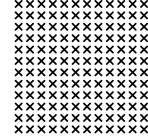
When getting travelers to consider your destination, *authentic voices beat celeb status any day*. Embrace authentic UGC, tailor experiences to individual travelers, and champion sustainable initiatives to truly connect with your audience.



FINAL TAKEAWAYS

Marketing strategies are constantly changing, and you've got to be ready to adapt. We can't expect the tactics we used last year to work this year—channels come and go, and trends change in the blink of an eye. What has stayed true, though, is the importance of building an honest, authentic connection with your audience and community to tell consistent and relatable stories about your destination throughout the year.





Based on our findings, we have a few suggestions to make 2025 your best-performing year yet:

Keep stockpiling that video

The demand for daily posting across channels means you need more content than ever.

Whether it's UGC, professionally shot, created in-house, or from CrowdRiff's Creators, having a large library of evergreen and editable video will ensure non-stop engagement.

See what's possible with AI

Many are skeptical of its ethics and accuracy, but AI is proving to be an effective tool for learning, gaining industry insights, and helping destination marketers work smarter. As it continues to integrate into every aspect of our lives, you'll want to stay ahead of the curve rather than fall behind.

Get ready to shift your social strategies

With platforms coming and going, be prepared for change in 2025. Instagram's reign will likely continue, Threads and Bluesky may be new viable platforms for DMOs, and TikTok's possible ban could mean a big change in how marketers create and share content.

Go beyond algorithms

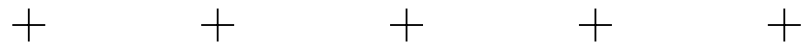
While social media continues to dominate, traditional marketing channels like newsletters and in-person events can help you engage more deeply with colleagues, industry peers, locals, and potential travelers.

FUEL YOUR CONTENT MARKETING IN 2025

CrowdRiff's visual content marketing platform 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, custom creator videos, and local event and business insights, CrowdRiff supports the most authentic and engaging storytelling in travel and tourism. That's why 900+ brands globally trust CrowdRiff as their visual content marketing partner.

Want to see what's possible for your DMO?
Get in touch with our team today.



LEARN MORE