

A person wearing a blue cap, a blue and black backpack, and orange shorts is walking away from the camera on a dirt path through terraced rice fields. The landscape is lush and tropical, featuring several tall palm trees and dense greenery. In the background, there are stone ruins on a hillside. The overall scene is vibrant and scenic.

# Build Influence with Visuals

 CrowdRiff





## Hello!

Whether a traveler's mother tongue is English, Chinese, Spanish, or German, the one language you can be sure everyone understands is the language of visuals.

The photos and videos of your destination are a powerful influencing factor in a traveler's decision to come take a trip. That's why we built CrowdRiff: to help travel and tourism brands discover the best visuals and deliver them throughout their marketing to inspire more travelers.

This publication is a selection of stories on how the DMOs we work with are tackling different destination marketing challenges with authentic visual content.

All the UGC visuals in this book were sourced and rights-approved using the CrowdRiff platform.

I hope this will give you a better understanding of what CrowdRiff does, and the value it could bring to your organization.

Enjoy the read!

Team CrowdRiff

# 350+

## Destinations, Attractions, and Museums Around the World Use CrowdRiff





Image: Explore Georgia

## How Explore Georgia Positions Itself as the Most Pet-Friendly State With Puppy Pics

By Sandra Rzasa

**W**hile spending some time relaxing with her dogs Doc and Baxley by the lake last summer, Explore Georgia's Digital Content Specialist, Parker Whidby, began thinking about how she travels with her pups just about everywhere, and wondered if others did the same.

"I found that 37% of pet owners take their dogs on the road, especially millennials," she said, adding that pets can be found in 68% of American households, and one in 10 has its own social media account.

**"In 2016 people spent \$67 billion dollars on their pets, so there's a big market we hadn't even tapped into with this demographic."**

As a DMO that primarily caters to visitors driving in from neighboring states, and with a social media strategy targeting millennials, Whidby found the perfect way to turn her passions for pet ownership and social media into a unique digital campaign.

**"What we wanted to do with this campaign was bring millennials into the state, and since so many travel with their pets and their pets are like their children, we wanted to inspire them to bring them to Georgia."**

### The cutest way to market to millennial pet owners

As the fall travel season approached, last autumn Whidby got to work positioning Georgia as the most pet-friendly state in America, producing social media content, travel guides, giveaways and blog posts targeting the millennial pet owner.

For example, the state's visitor centers, which see 14 million travelers per year, now distribute Frisbee-shaped brochures with pet-related information, along with plastic water bowls. Whidby also created pet-friendly city guides that list, for example, the pet policies of each microbrewery in the state, outlining which ones designated a place for furry

 woofitsdansby

 jordan\_mahan

**“We’ve built this relationship with all of these local photographers and videographers, where we share their content and they send us photos for free. It’s been low budget and focused on building relationships with photographers and followers.”**

friends to wait outside and which ones welcome them on the tours.

### **The primary focus of this initiative, however, was on social media**

Though it wasn’t a total takeover, the DMO’s social platforms, which boast a combined 600,000 followers, featured a new puppy picture each week using the hashtag #ExploreGeorgiaPup.

Whidby began by posting pictures of her own dogs and, before long, pet owners and furry influencers started reaching out directly. Eventually each of the state’s cities earned its own puppy mascot, which would appear regularly on social media next to the area’s local attractions.

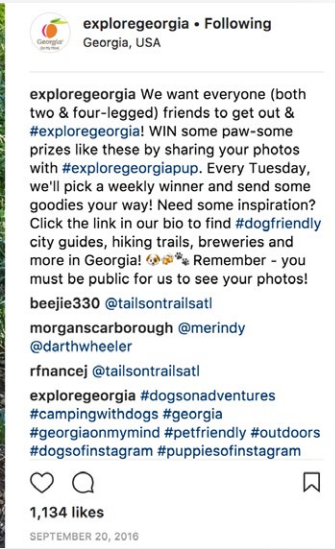
### **Collaborating with partners and rewarding people for sharing photos**

Whidby was also able to stretch her budget further by working with local hospitality partners. A Georgia-based pet-friendly resort, for example, helped host a contest that provided the winner and their furry friend with a free two-night stay, which received over 2,400 entries.

Whether a professional photographer or local pet owner, anyone that is featured on Explore Georgia’s social media accounts receives a personal, handwritten card from Whidby along with a park pet kit.

The kits include a portable dog bowl, chew toy, and puppy-sized bandana with the words “Explore Georgia Pup” printed on it.

“We pick a weekly winner, feature their photos and send them a park pet kit for



Explore Georgia Pup contest

their pup with a handwritten thank-you note, and it was crazy how many people shared photos of the packages on social media, so it spread the brand, because other people wanted one.”

### A great puppy photo sparks high social media engagement

While the DMO has a strong presence on Twitter and Facebook, Instagram holds a special place in Whidby’s heart. “Instagram is definitely my favorite, it’s my baby,” she said. “Since I started in September 2015, we’ve grown organically from 32,000 followers to almost 120,000.”

During that time the hashtag #ExploreGeorgia has reached nearly a quarter of a million tags, while the puppy-specific hashtag has been used over 3,000 times in under a year.

According to Whidby the key to a

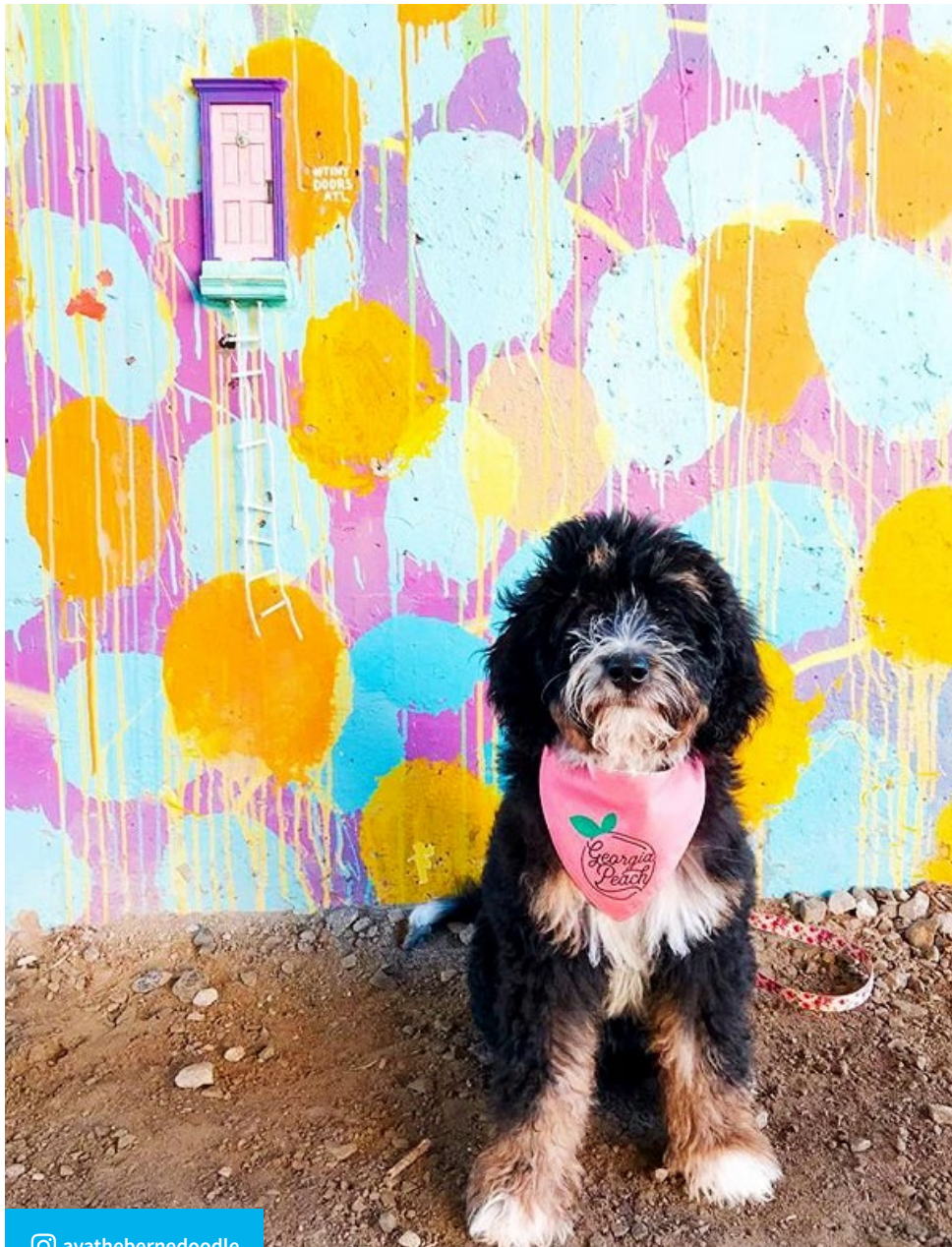
good puppy picture is a happy-looking pet positioned in front of a Georgia landmark or attraction without any humans in the way.

The DMO also set up a Pinterest board featuring pet-friendly travel advice, and has reached 10,000 followers.

**“Pictures with dogs but without people do better. For all of those destinations [we feature], you throw a dog in there and everyone likes the picture more.”**



© murph\_the\_doodle



Instagram icon avathebernedoodle

### Moving forward with a new social campaign (and a tool that saves them hours finding visuals)

With the success of #ExploreGeorgiaPup, the DMO is now using a similar approach for #ExploreGeorgiaFarms, to promote the local agritourism industry in the run up to pumpkin and apple picking season.

The biggest difference between the two campaigns, explains Whidby, is that this year the DMO has signed up with CrowdRiff, which she said allows her two-person team to do much more with less.

**“Last year when I was doing this I spent hours and hours just searching online for photos. Being able to use CrowdRiff personally has been a huge help and time saver in letting me search locations, find great photos and automatically get rights requests.”**

For example, Whidby found the perfect photo of pumpkins growing in a field to kick off the campaign through CrowdRiff.

“That amazing photo was posted last year, and I wouldn’t have been able to find that as easily without CrowdRiff,” she said, adding that the #ExploreGeorgiaFarms images are also being turned into a live gallery to be featured on screens in some of the DMO’s visitors centers, using CrowdRiff.

### Puppies have made a lasting impact on Explore Georgia’s marketing

These low-budget yet highly engaging social media campaigns have led 14,000 followers from social media to the DMO’s website. The #ExploreGeorgiaPup campaign reached 1.1 million Facebook impressions alone with a 2.3% engagement rate, as well as an average of 2.15% engagement on pet-related tweets.

“Our Explore Georgia community has become this whole dog community, and I still send people park pet kits and all of that, even though it’s not our main focus anymore,” she said.

**“Even though the campaign is technically done, we can still promote that throughout the year. I don’t think pet-friendly travel is going anywhere; it’s only going to increase.”**



## CASE STUDY

# Travel Kansas

How Travel Kansas Promotes Kansas State Through UGC and Photo Contests

**85**LIVE GALLERIES  
ON WEBSITE**18k**

VISUALS PUBLISHED

**233**RIGHTS APPROVED  
ASSETS ACQUIRED  
ORGANIZATION

## Organization

Kansas Tourism is in charge of promoting the State of Kansas as a worthwhile travel destination. Boasting small-town charm and big-city attractions, Kansas has something for bird watchers and urban foodies alike.

## Size of Marketing Team

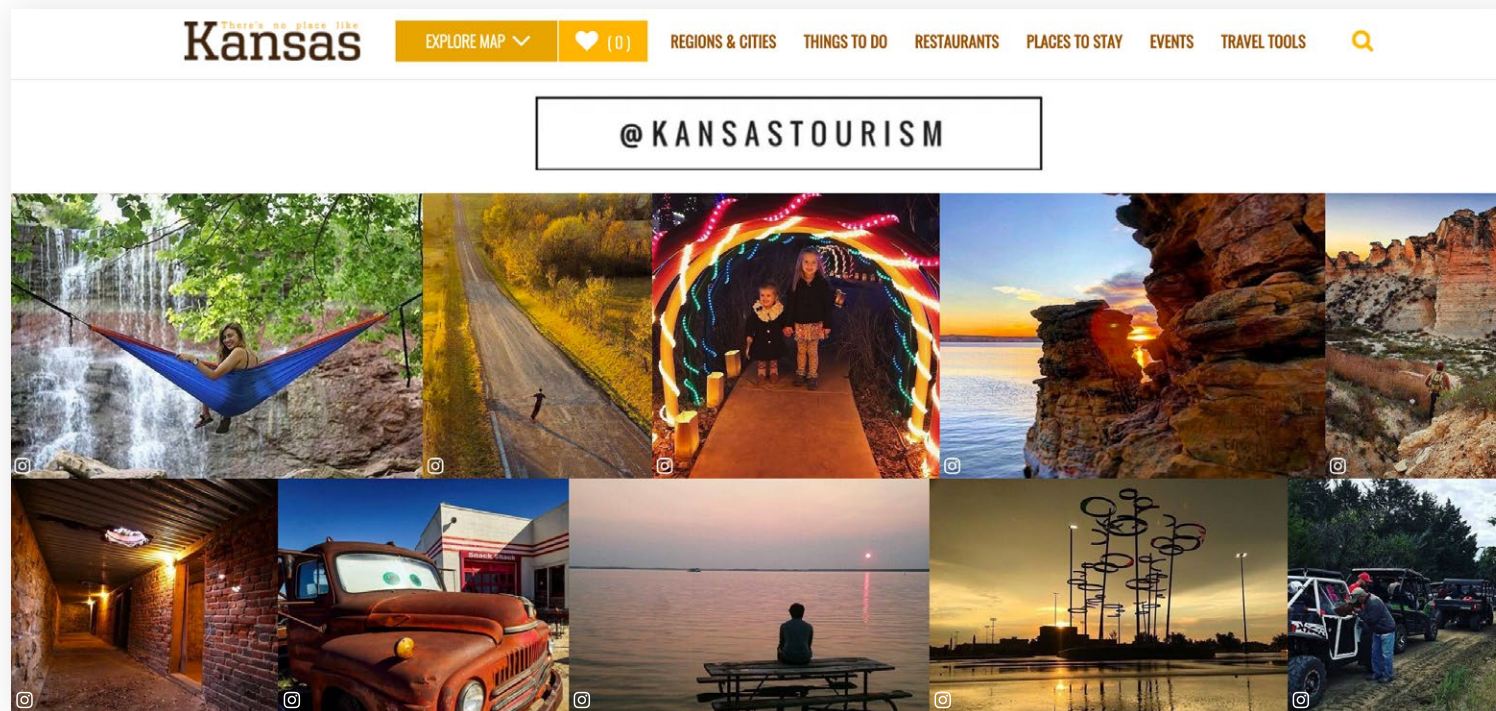
1 + Agency Partner

## Key Benefits

- Diversifying their brand voice by complementing it with user-generated content
- Easily identifying, tracking and reaching visual influencers to work with
- Saving hours of manual work organizing and managing photo contests

**W**hat do a seasoned hunter, an avid history buff, and a competitive cyclist have in common? They all have something new to discover in the State of Kansas.

But with destinations that range from outdoor adventure to leisure, local to international and family fun to those more popular with Boomers, Travel Kansas and its advertising agency, Jones Huyett Partners (jHP), have had to get creative and strategic when determining how to use their limited and unpredictable budget, which is set annually by the State government.



Website gallery on Travel Kansas homepage

Kansas is many things to many people, and each of the experiences available in America’s heartland entices a drastically different audience member. Sometimes jhP and Kansas Tourism are looking to promote the upcoming turkey season to the international hunting community. Other times they’re challenged with introducing local Kansans to parts of the state they might not yet be aware of. They are also tasked with inspiring millennial travelers from across the country to the state’s burgeoning culinary scene and uniquely, authentic experiences.

“It is so broad working as a state to connect with each one of them on an intimate level and capture their

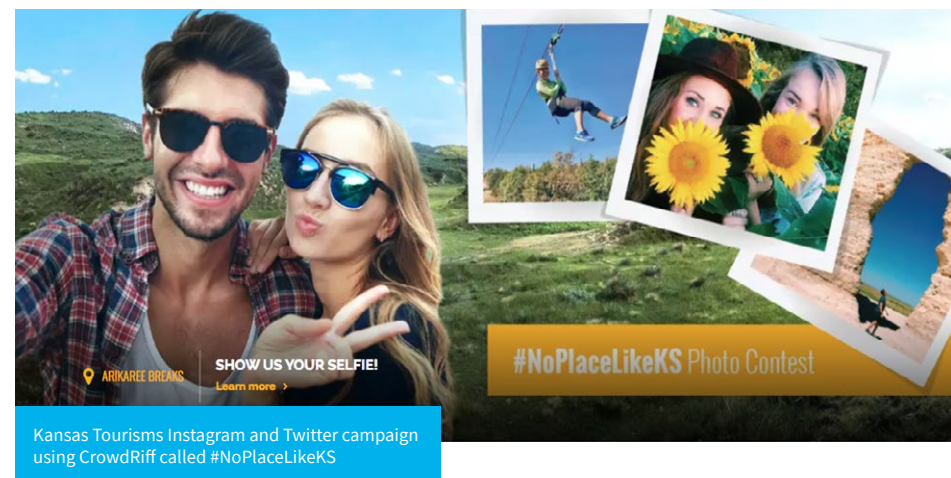
attention,” said Logan Hildebrand, the Digital Media Manager of Kansas Tourism for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

To speak to each of these unique audiences in their own language, Kansas Tourism’s website homepage allows visitors to choose the “persona” that best describes their travel interests, ranging from “Bird Watcher” and “Family Traveler” to “Hunter” and “Angler.”

“The persona determines where we market,” said Charles Morgan, the Kansas Tourism Account Coordinator for jhP. “Some we know to push out nationally because we know people will make a trip out of it, versus something that we may keep in state or closer-by.”

**Everybody loves user-generated content; it’s more authentic. Whether it’s visitors or citizens, you have other people voicing the great things that there are to do here, so it definitely helps spread the brand further, and that was definitely a big component of going with CrowdRiff.**

— Charles Morgan  
Account Coordinator, jhP



Kansas Tourism's Instagram and Twitter campaign using CrowdRiff called #NoPlaceLikeKS

Whether visitors travel from across the country for the state's famous hunting season, or from across town to explore a new restaurant or gallery, Morgan says each persona and demographic wants to see people like them engaged in activities that are easily accessible, rather than branded and carefully staged messaging.

Kansas Tourism, in partnership with jhP, have used the platform to target influencers, grow their social media following, gain strategic insights on each of the personas they're targeting and launch a number of social media campaigns.

Last year, for example, Kansas Tourism announced an Instagram and Twitter campaign using CrowdRiff called #KSbucketlist. A list of must-see attractions was nominated and selected to be the top 70 in Kansas. Users were

then asked to post pictures of their travels to those locations, and Kansas Tourism chose a random monthly winner from the pool of users that posted from one of the listed locations, using the hashtag. This year's campaign, #NoPlaceLikeKS, is more open-ended, and encourages their followers be a little more creative. It also takes the contest component one step further.

"This time we're asking people to go on there and vote, and the winner with the most number of likes monthly will be contacted, and their photo will be used in some kind of advertising, and that is where we begin to push user-generated content into our other marketing pieces," said Hildebrand.

The winning images are used across a range of marketing materials, including newsletters, online and print ads. "Anything that can involve an image from a consumer rather than something that we go out and take ourselves," she explained.

The marketing team is also using social media campaigns to help expose locals

**“We had to find people to come [to the Instameet], and if we didn’t have CrowdRiff we’d have to go through Facebook and Instagram searching for hashtags hoping to find people. CrowdRiff cuts the time down dramatically, and we’re able to find people with the content that we want to target.”**



Kansas Tourism’s Route 66 Instameet

**I can’t stress enough the amount of time it saves, and the amount of opportunity it gives us.**

— Logan Hildebrand  
Digital Media Manager  
Kansas Tourism

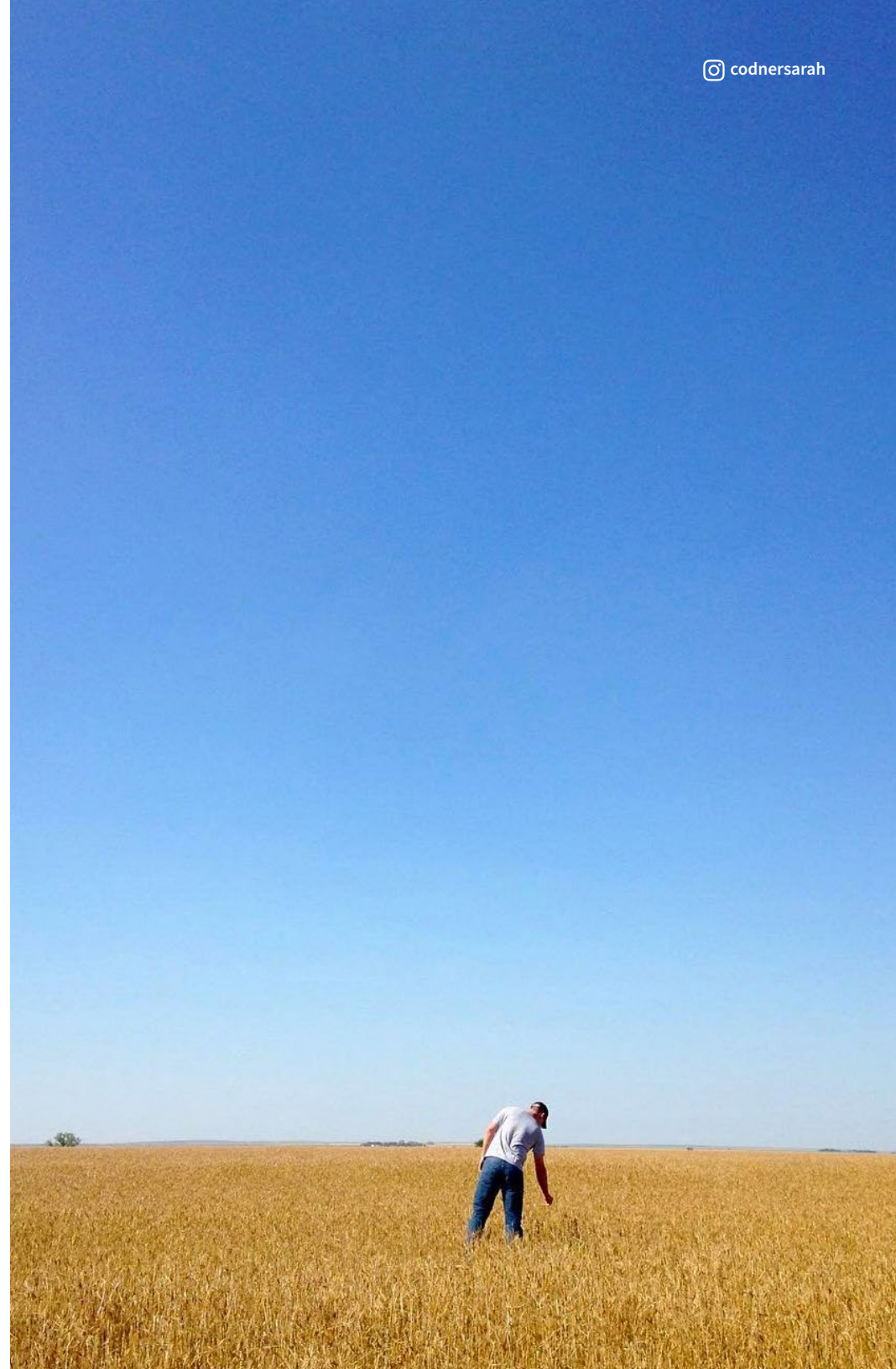
to lesser-known corners of the state that they may not discover otherwise. Morgan explains that they have begun organizing Instameets, wherein groups of social photographers gather in person to meet fellow enthusiasts and post pictures to their accounts. While the first meet-up took place in Lindsborg, the Kansas Tourism team has been encouraging more Instameets in smaller and lesser-known locations as well as locations not often captured by travelers.

“It also helps us push out content with a greater reach to our consumers, which we can obtain through partnering with influencers.”

Morgan added that before CrowdRiff, organizing and measuring the success of these social media campaigns would have been nearly impossible, especially with the limited resources available.

Though their budget is often limited and never guaranteed, Morgan and Hildebrand are able to identify, track and reach the highly varied personas that flock to the state for drastically different reasons and at various times of the year.

“Instead of having the Kansas brand voice, you get hundreds of thousands of voices from user-generated content to help spread the message,” said Morgan.



## CASE STUDY

# Discover The Palm Beaches

Increasing Web Conversions, Ad Effectiveness, and Heads in Beds by Using CrowdRiff

## 51%

INCREASE IN DISPLAY AD ACQUISITIONS

## 23%

INCREASE IN OVERNIGHT VISITS COMPARED TO NON-UGC CAMPAIGNS

## 35%

INCREASE IN WEB CONVERSIONS

### Organization

Discover The Palm Beaches is the official tourism marketing corporation for The Palm Beaches, Florida. In order to target millennial travelers, the DMO decided to refresh its approach to their marketing materials, and so it turned to user-generated content, sourced and deployed through CrowdRiff.

### Key Benefits

- Gaining access to a library of user-generated content
- Breaking through to connect with millennial travelers by using authentic imagery in advertising
- Aligning internal teams by centralizing different workflows to one platform

### Size of Marketing Team

13 people

**C**omprised of 39 cities and towns along the tropical shores of southeast Florida, The Palm Beaches offer residents and visitors a diverse array of opportunities and activities; so diverse that regular visitors may still only experience a small fraction of what America's First Resort Destination® has to offer.

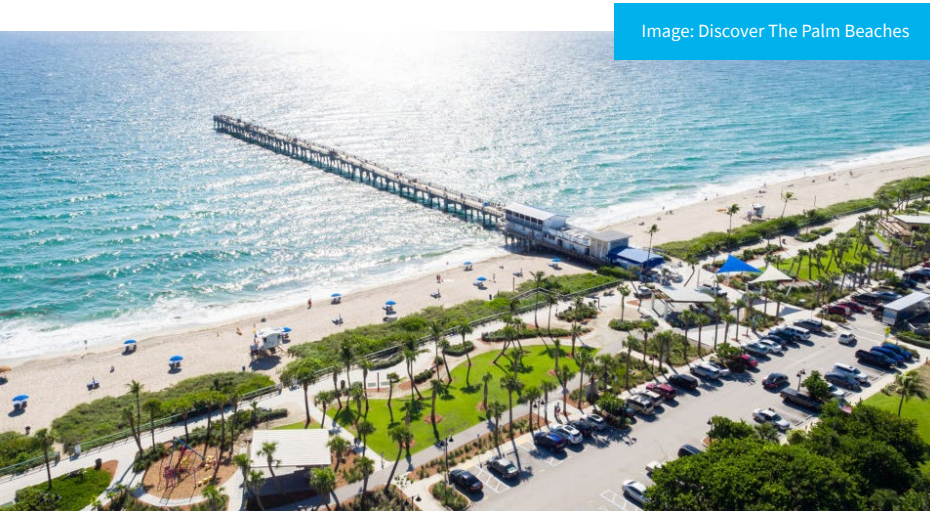


Image: Discover The Palm Beaches

Palm Beach County, commonly referred to as “The Palm Beaches,” is the largest county east of the Mississippi River stretching close to 2,300 square miles, which measures to approximately the same size as the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined. While the county remains a popular destination for sophisticated snowbirds flying south for the winter, its tourism marketing organization — Discover The Palm Beaches — wanted to expand the lens of its visual assets from primarily aspirational sites to a broader scope, as diverse as the cities and towns that make up the destination.

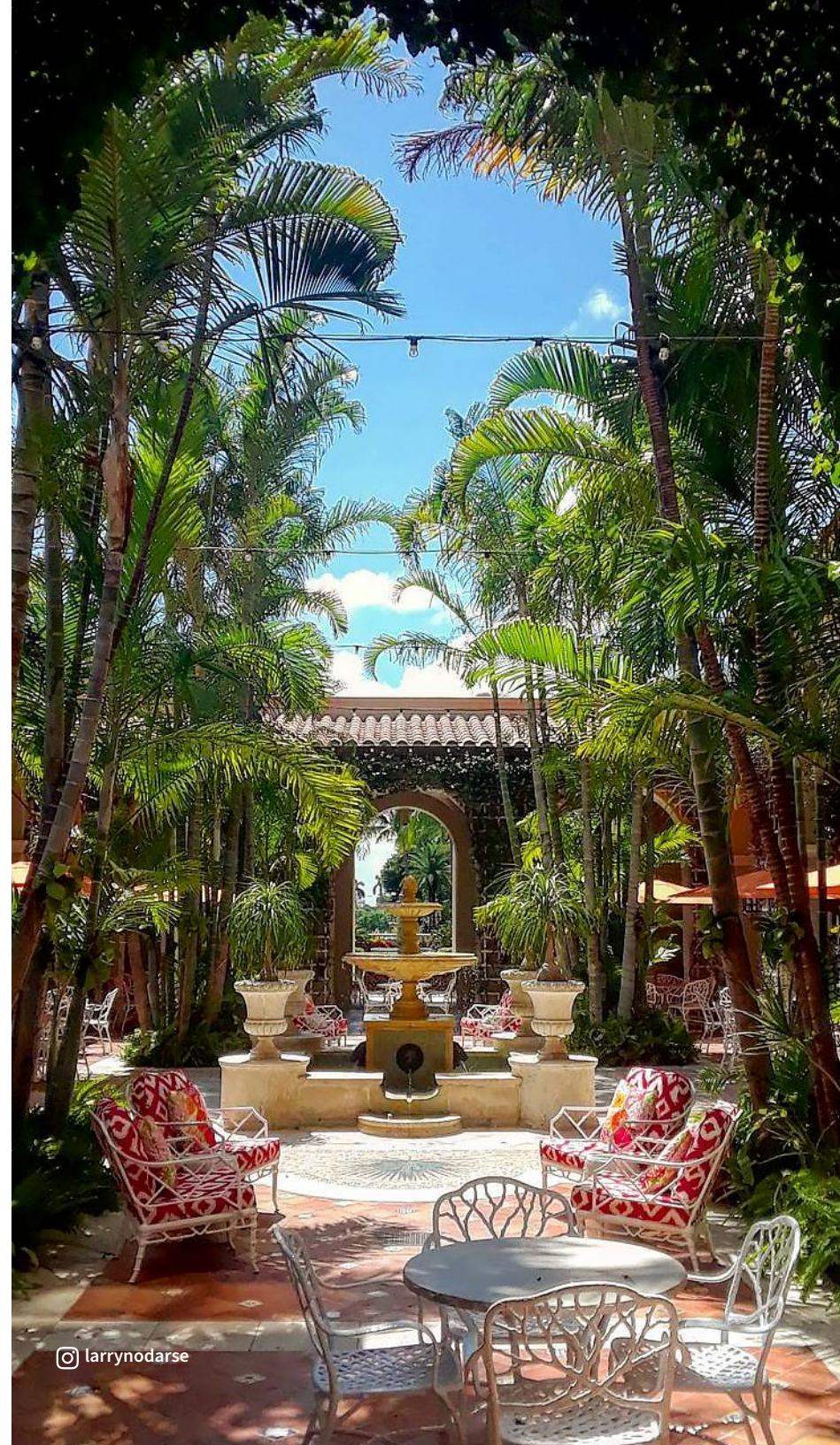
With a new marketing team in place and an innovative vision to promote the iconic destination, Discover The Palm Beaches deployed a strategy that included a refresh of its website, among other visual marketing campaigns.

“We were in the final stages of rebuilding our website in the fall of 2016, when our digital agency of record, Miles, presented the idea of utilizing CrowdRiff

as part of our website,” said Rich Basen, the Senior Vice President of Marketing and Leisure Sales for Discover The Palm Beaches. “After reviewing the platform, we were pleased to learn that it would efficiently complement our efforts to manage the user-generated content we aimed to incorporate through our integrated marketing initiatives.”


Tasked with showcasing real experiences to a younger demographic and armed with the new visual marketing capabilities provided by CrowdRiff, the marketing team began considering ways they could leverage the platform.

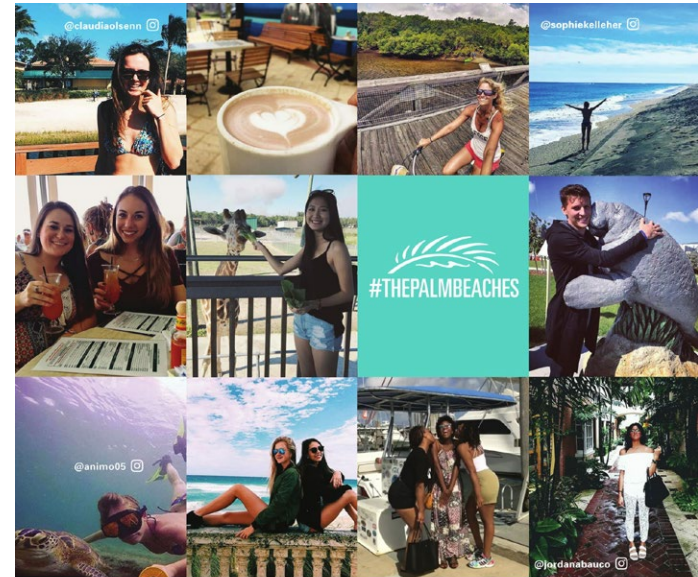
Nielsen studies have reported “recommendations from friends remains [the] most credible form of advertising among consumers.” According to an MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers® study commissioned by Discover The Palm Beaches, it was revealed that travelers interested in visiting The Palm Beaches spend close to two hours a day on social media, and



larrynodarse



 thebraziliancourt



**FRIENDS TRUST FRIENDS.  
NOT ADS.**

We could go on and on about all there is to see and do in The Palm Beaches. Fact is, though, most people won't believe our ads. So instead, we asked real people to share real experiences via their social media photos and videos. See for yourself just how much there is to discover at [#ThePalmBeaches](#) or see some of our favorites at [ThePalmBeaches.com](#)

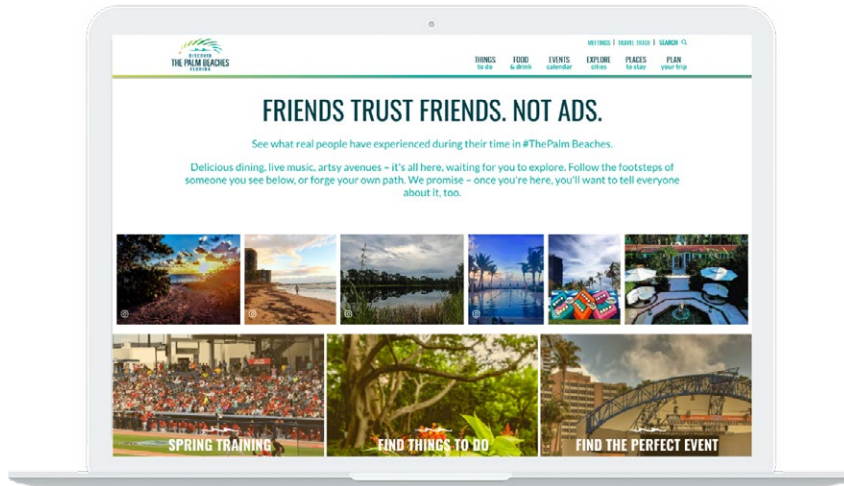
“Friends Trust Friends” Campaign  
by Discover The Palm Beaches

one-third of these individuals selected a vacation destination based on what they have seen on social media.

The resulting campaign uses an abundance of authentic imagery, acquired through CrowdRiff. The tagline “Friends Trust Friends” leverages user-generated content, word-of-mouth marketing and the power of social media to combat advertisement fatigue. Instead of staged images using paid models and actors, the new campaign features compelling visuals and first-

hand experiences captured from the lens of visitors and residents.

“The natural canvas of The Palm Beaches compels many of our visitors to share their experiences online with friends,” said Basen. “When we see these guests having the time of their life, it is the greatest endorsement we could hope for. Our goal in amplifying these experiences through an integrated marketing approach is to reinforce and establish trust in our brand promise: The Palm Beaches are the best way to



Discover The Palm Beaches, the Friends Trust Friends campaign

experience Florida.”

The resulting advertising campaign generated a 51% increase in display traffic acquisitions, compared to the previous campaign. The Friends Trust Friends campaign has gone on to generate an estimated 23% increase in overnight visits to the destination, compared to a non-UGC driven campaign in 2015. What’s more, digital impressions from the Friends Trust Friends campaign were found to be 66% more effective at driving a visit.

Since the launch of the new and improved website, ThePalmBeaches.com, the DMO has also seen a 10% increase in the average session duration and a 35% increase in conversions.

Perhaps the most unexpected outcome of utilizing user-generated content, according to Aime O’Keefe, the Manager of Advertising and Promotions, is the instant feedback loop that results from tagging advertisements with the social media handles of the users that

posted them originally.

“It’s rewarding to see individuals comment on the UGC images we feature and acknowledge how they inspired them to visit The Palm Beaches,” said Aime O’Keefe. “That’s a first-hand way of connecting with people on a personal level.”

In other words, a year and a half after building the campaign, its underlying message has been confirmed. People really do trust other people more than traditional ads.

**By utilizing CrowdRiff, the platform has simplified our marketing team’s strategic workflow for pulling UGC assets.**

— Rich Basen, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Leisure Sales

**“CrowdRiff created a simple way for us to integrate user-generated content into a variety of verticals,” said Basen. “We now use the platform to support the visual content we use for our print and digital advertisements, social media posts, collateral and more.”**





360viewphotography



“The transformation that has happened since we incorporated user-generated content into our website and our advertising campaigns is very obvious,” said Basen. “When we transitioned from paid media to our own assets, it wasn’t only a seamless experience, but it’s also increased the engagement we see from users.”



henryknightny

# Why Visit Oakland Uses UGC and Crowdriff to Highlight the Unique Spirit of Their Local Community

By Natasha Kubura

**O**akland is a popular destination not because of tangible, concrete structures, renowned institutions or iconic landmarks — but because of its people and their passion. Whether art or music, sports or social justice activism, Oakland is a destination that attracts visitors because of the unique spirit of its people; something its destination marketing organization had long sought to portray in its visual content.

As a result Visit Oakland has relied on user-generated content to showcase the best of what it has to offer, though the destination marketing organization has learned in recent years that not all visual marketing software are built the same.

## Switching from a UGC tool to Crowdriff

After experimenting with a number of other platforms, the DMO signed up with Crowdriff just under a year ago, and according to its Social Media Specialist Paul Lim, the difference was felt immediately.

Lim explains that after a number of months using a UGC platform, he was

**“We took into account the dedicated amount of daily/weekly time necessary for each of the UGC platforms we were comparing,” said Lim. “With our biggest issue being bandwidth, Crowdriff made it possible to achieve more, and allowed us to work smarter. We actually have FUN being on the platform.”**

introduced to Crowdriff in 2016 by one of the company’s team members, Lucas Luxton.

“Lucas’ continuous presence at the different conferences I attended helped me build trust toward Crowdriff as an industry vendor, and also with him as a friend,” he said. “Lucas emphasized Crowdriff’s efficiency as a platform, and highlighted how much time we’d be saving. That was the biggest difference for us.”

**A more intuitive and efficient design meant accomplishing more in less time than previously**

Upon using the platform for the first time, Lim said he was struck by how much cleaner and more intuitive the user interface was compared to the other platforms Visit Oakland had used and investigated in the past.

“The biggest difference I first noticed when we moved over to CrowdRiff was that the platform is more aesthetically pleasing and well organized,” he said. “I really like things clean and organized, and it was just better than the competition.”

**Using CrowdRiff on their Simpleview website was easier than expected**

Though he was impressed by CrowdRiff’s user interface and bulk rights request feature, Lim initially feared that it would be too tedious to switch platforms, as their CMS, Simpleview, was partnered with their previous UGC platform.

“It was just a copy and paste into the backend of our website,” explained Lim, adding that using CrowdRiff wasn’t any harder. “It was so much easier than what we envisioned it being.”





Since switching to CrowdRiff nearly a year ago, Lim said he and his colleagues have been able to accomplish everything they relied on their previous platform for, and more, in less time and on a more intuitive interface.

**Visit Oakland is branching out with new ways of using user-generated content in their marketing**

“Since we had all this extra time from switching over to CrowdRiff, we were able to experiment adding UGC into our email newsletters, and it allowed us to be more authentic and personable with our consumers,” Lim said.

Visit Oakland has also started incorporating the photos of their community beyond their digital channels — namely, in big screen displays. “With CrowdRiff we also were able to put the UGC we captured into photo walls for various events. We even have a dedicated photo wall in our Visitor Center pulling photos from our hashtag, #oaklandloveit.”

Lim added that utilizing more features

on CrowdRiff to help plan and promote community events is a priority for the DMO moving forward.

“The Photo Wall feature works really well for conferences/meetings hosted by our Sales team. We use it to bring awareness to our Instagram account, and showcase other photos posted to the event-specific hashtag,” he said.

While Visit Oakland has begun integrating more user-generated content into its emails and live events, the bulk of the user-generated content they feature can be found in galleries on its website, [visitoakland.com](http://visitoakland.com).





“UGC just adds authenticity to our website, which shows visitors the perspective of people who have experienced Oakland already,” said Lim. “There’s a lot of pride within the community of Oakland in general, so we try to highlight their stories through UGC, which we can’t do with photography we take ourselves.”

# What is CrowdRiff?

CrowdRiff is an AI-powered visual content marketing platform that enables marketers to discover, collaborate on and deliver top-performing visuals across every channel.

To learn more, visit [www.crowdriff.com](http://www.crowdriff.com)



“CrowdRiff created a simple way for us to integrate user-generated content into a variety of verticals. We now use the platform to support the visual content we use for our print and digital advertisements, social media posts, collateral and more.”

— Rich Basen,  
Senior Vice President of Marketing and Leisure Sales,  
Discover The Palm Beaches

