

HSMAI SPECIAL REPORT

# Innovation in Hospitality Advertising, Digital Marketing, and Public Relations

*Insights and Best Practices From Winners  
of HSMAI's 2019 Adrian Awards*



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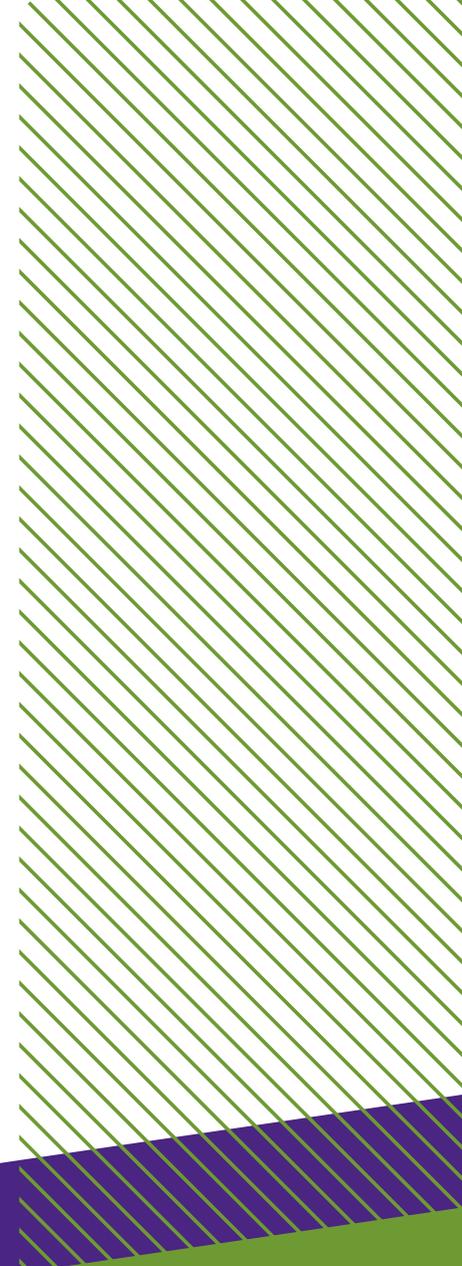
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*By Robert A. Gilbert, CHME, CHBA, President and CEO,  
Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI)*

Every year, HSMAI's Adrian Awards competition honors hospitality brands and agencies for creative excellence in advertising, digital marketing, and public relations. A relatively new addition to our program is the Innovation category, which spotlights work in all three areas that is doing something new, different, or both.

In this HSMAI Special Report — made possible with the support of HSMAI's Organizational Member companies — you'll find short profiles of Gold winners for Innovation from the 2019 Adrian Awards. Our hope is that they'll inspire you not just with their imaginativeness and originality but with their frequently modest size and scope. You'll see that innovation can happen at any level and any price, and often blurs the lines between traditional advertising, marketing, and PR.

Congratulations to all of our 2019 Adrian Award winners! It's thanks to you that we keep finding new ways to tell the story of hospitality.



### ABOUT HSMAI

Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) is the hospitality industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. HSMAI provides hotel professionals and their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue through programs such as HSMAI's Revenue Optimization Conference, Marketing Strategy Conference, Sales Leader Forum, and Adrian Awards. HSMAI offers organizational and individual membership, with more than 7,000 members in four global regions — the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. — [hsmai.org](https://www.hsmai.org)

# Travel Happiness Survey

## GOAL

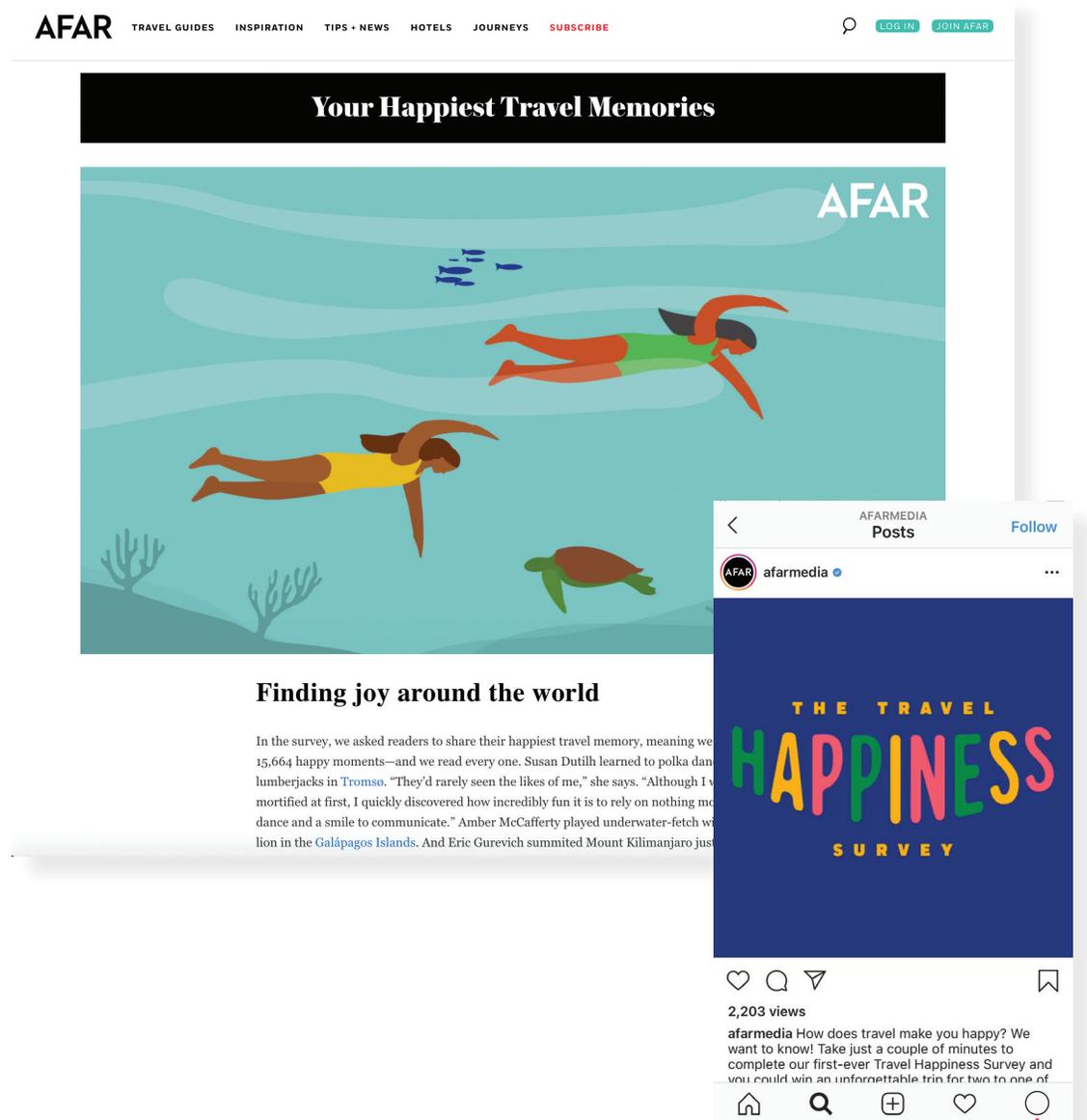
The Aruba Tourism Authority partnered with AFAR travel media platform to survey visitors on what makes them happy in order to make them happier and increase visitation, particularly among an affluent base in key U.S. markets.

## INNOVATION

The Travel Happiness Survey launched with newsletters, emails, social media, and website takeovers. More than 15,000 people took the survey, the results of which were revealed on Afar.com and in *AFAR* magazine's 10th-anniversary "Happiness Issue," with an Aruba sponsorship print ad introducing the results spread. Aruba also used the survey results to better target visitors.

## RESULTS

The project exceeded benchmarks in many categories, including 30,000 page views, 15,000 entries, and five minutes or more spent on the survey page. Email blasts were 69 percent higher than the AFAR benchmark, while newsletters were 99 percent higher. What's more, a total of 12,000 emails were added to the Aruba database, U.S. visitation is up by 9 to 10 percent in 2019, RevPAR is up 7.8 percent, and on-island spend is up 5 to 6 percent.



# YouTube Director Mix

## GOAL

In 2018, Best Western partnered with Google to leverage an innovative, personalized video program, YouTube Director Mix, and sought to build off the success of its first year in 2019. YouTube Director Mix allows advertisers to easily create a high volume of customized videos at scale, reaching prospective customers in a meaningful way. Best Western sought to deepen customer engagement and increase awareness, as well as position the company as an industry leader.

## INNOVATION

The campaign promoted Best Western's summer offer with each video ad to "Get a \$20 Best Western gift card after their first stay" by personalizing the ads based on users' specific interests. Best Western's 2019 YouTube Director Mix campaign used contextually relevant messaging and video variation to bring awareness to Best Western and the summer promotion.

## RESULTS

Using a mix of targeting and retargeting tactics, the campaign delivered 40 video variations to users based on real-time data and contextual relevance to their online habits. Video completion rate was at the high end of the travel benchmark.



# TerraneaLife Journal

## GOAL

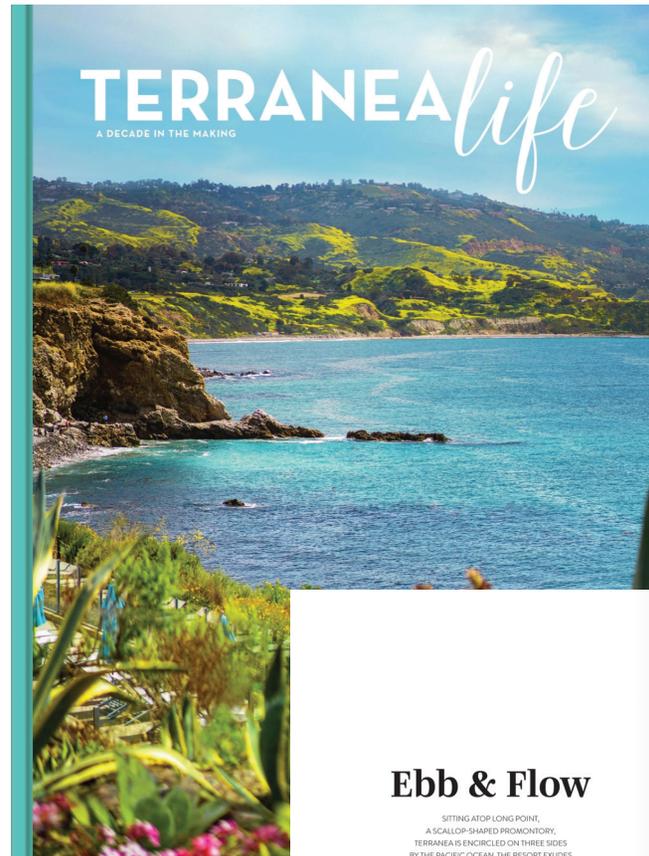
*TerraneaLife Journal* provides an innovative method for guests to learn about Terranea resort and cross-promotes TerraneaLife content by directing readers to TerraneaLife.com. For the Journal's 10th anniversary, Terranea produced a special anniversary edition.

## INNOVATION

The resort sought to expand its TerraneaLife.com digital platform and create a printed magazine that further celebrated the best of the West Coast through story and photography, showcasing the authentic California experience. The 10th-anniversary special edition is photography-heavy, anchored by five 10-page features, each highlighting one of the five Terranea pillars: celebration, epicurean, wellness, community, and discovery.

## RESULTS

The *Journal* is provided to more than 250,000 guests annually and showcased within the Los Angeles community; this year, 15,000 copies of the softcover journal and 100 commemorative hardcover editions were produced. From May to July 2019, the digital versions of the *Journal* stories released have garnered nearly 73,000 engagements, 413,909 impressions, and 112,259 views on social media.



# Augmented Reality Mobile App

## GOAL

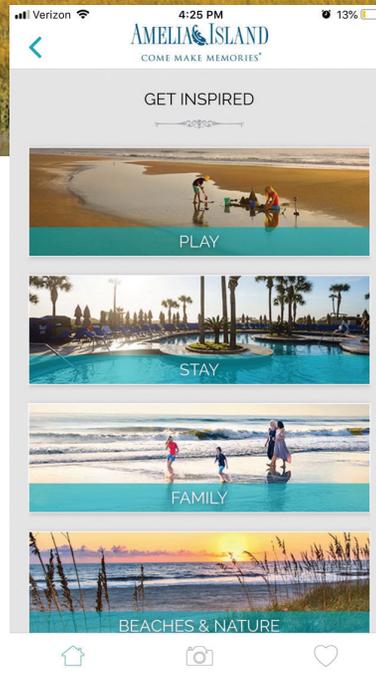
The Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau created a customized mobile app as a high-tech, high-functioning product to help visitors connect with the destination through augmented reality (AR), boosting visitation and spend. The marketing strategy also aimed to influence visitors' experiences by targeting specific locations throughout Amelia Island, intended to disperse visitors beyond the beaches.

## INNOVATION

The Amelia Island CVB was one of the first DMOs to use AR to dramatically enhance the way visitors interact with a travel guide and experience the destination. Within the app, users are encouraged to order the visitor guide and scan any of the 11 AR markers found within it. They can explore an interactive map with location-aware and Bluetooth beacon technology, and virtually traverse one end of the island to the other.

## RESULTS

The soft launch of the app resulted in 1,900 unique users. In the first month of the paid promotion (July 2019), there were 3,541,798 impressions, which were attributed to 253 arrivals for a combined economic impact of \$249,964. The number of visitors to Amelia Island has increased by 6.4 percent.



# United Stories

## GOAL

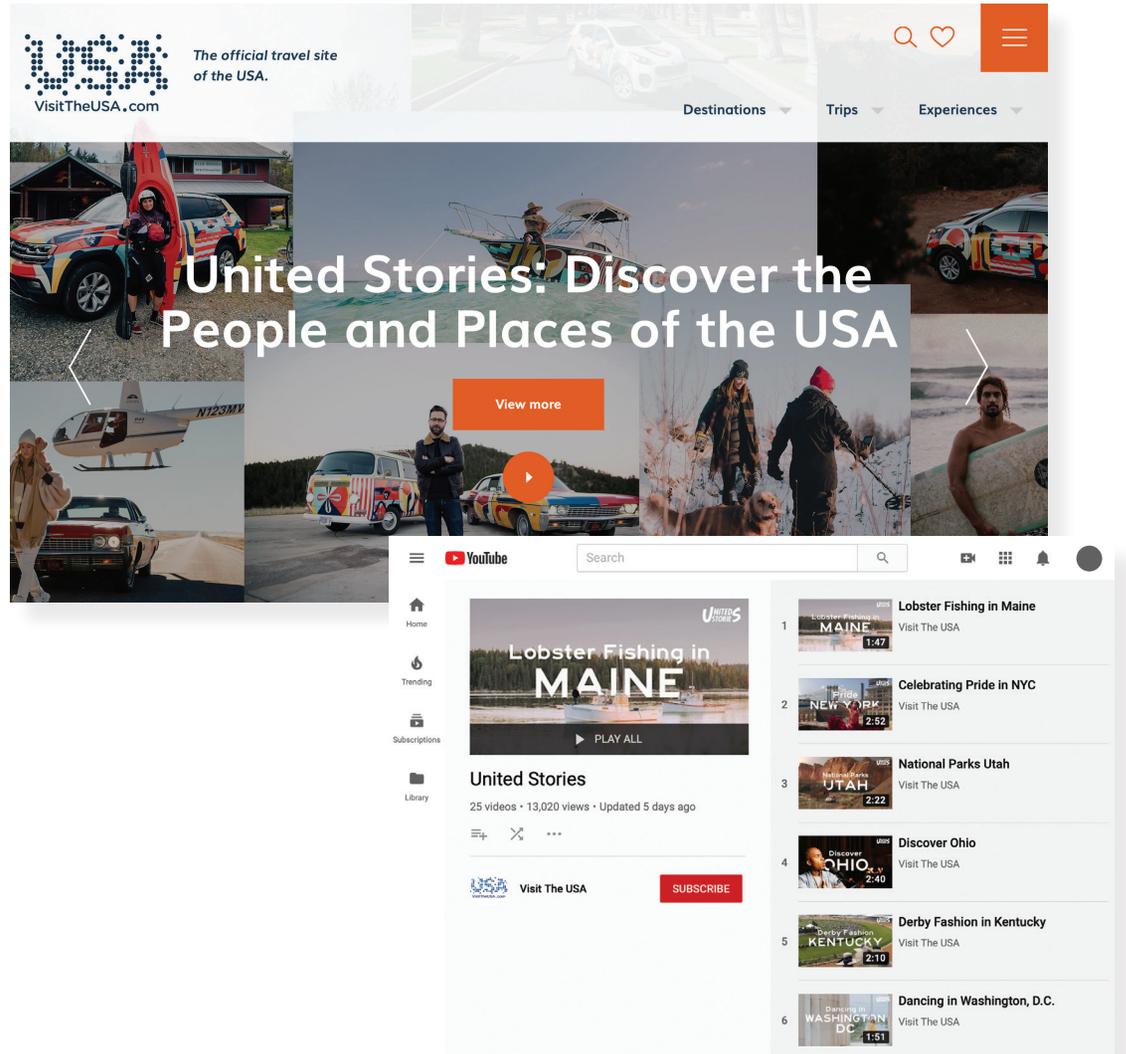
Brand USA's goal was to build affinity for the United States by driving deeper engagement. To achieve this, the organization launched a Mobile Content Studio to generate real-time content at scale at the pace of consumption, with the objective of creating 600 pieces of digital content showcasing 25 different destinations — each of them adding a different dimension to the larger story of the United States.

## INNOVATION

The Mobile Content Studio gives Brand USA the agility and flexibility to travel across America and showcase a variety of destinations, and the ability to capture authentic stories in real time. The challenge was showcasing the breadth and depth of U.S. offerings in a way that appeals to a broad audience with different interests. Brand USA analyzed real-time performance to fine-tune the storytelling each time for the next trip.

## RESULTS

A total of 25.1 million minutes of video content has been viewed, with 615 million social media impressions and 2.3 million engagements — leading to a 130-percent increase in engagement compared to past campaigns.



# GoUSA TV

## GOAL

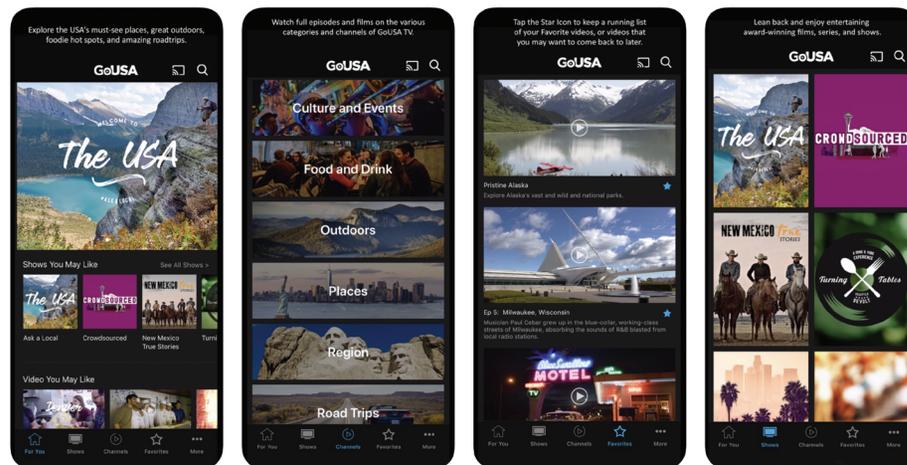
Brand USA created GoUSA TV to showcase the diversity of destinations and experiences you can only have in the United States. The online channel focuses on storytelling with a distinct sense of place. Specific goals were to attract international visitors, spotlight unique places throughout the country, and reach cord-cutting consumers in a way that traditional advertising can't.

## INNOVATION

GoUSA TV is the first effort by a DMO to leverage streaming behaviors as a marketing channel. For the first time, viewers are in complete control of how, when, and what to watch in a digital always-on world. GoUSA TV focuses on entertainment-led storytelling to get consumers to feel positive affinity for a variety of destinations and drive tourism. Stories are about friendship, self-discovery, love, achievement, and adventure. Customers can subscribe to the channel to watch and engage with the content.

## RESULTS

GoUSA has more than 29 hours of content and is still growing. Between December 2018 and May 2019, there was a 15-percent growth in video views.



## Back of House Season 2

### GOAL

Mohegan Sun launched the second season of *Back of House*, an online TV series showing the resort's inner workings in an entertaining and organic way, in order to increase exposure, create connections with guests, amplify employee pride, and attract new visitors.

### INNOVATION

After a successful first season, *Back of House* returned to demonstrate how Mohegan Sun treats guests in one-of-a-kind ways — in a one-of-a-kind environment. With longform video showing off Mohegan Sun's architecture and amenities, viewers watched as employees pulled together for a WNBA game, celebrity appearances by Martha Stewart and Snoo Dog, and a Britney Spears concert.

### RESULTS

Social response to *Back of House* was positive. The show was viewed in 10 countries and had 5.8 million video plays, including a 60.47-percent completion rate. It received awards from several competitions, including Telly, Communicator, and Vega, and also led to increased booking rates, including more than 3,000 through Book A Room, as well as more than 3,000 tickets and gift cards purchased.



# Schema Deployment

## GOAL

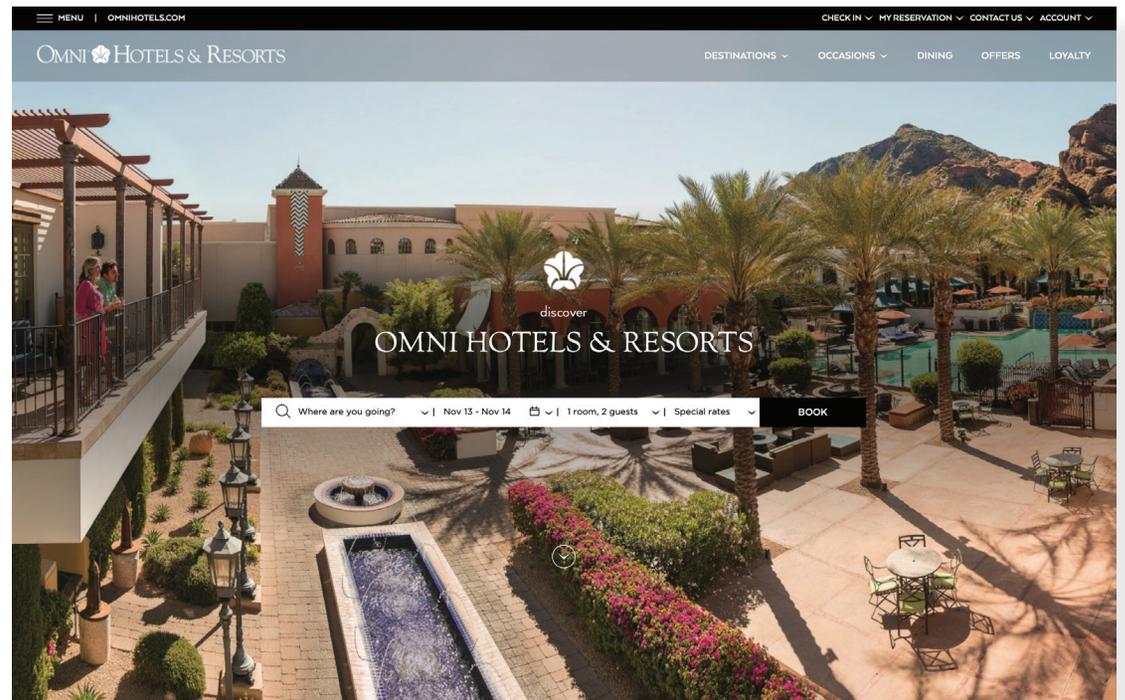
Omni Hotels engaged Milestone to deploy schemas across all of Omni's websites, so search engines better understand the content on the website, help with indexing and voice searching, and increase organic search traffic and visibility.

## INNOVATION

The schemas were deployed using a cloud-based implementation without any involvement from Omni Hotels' IT team. The schema deployment can be implemented within as few as two weeks, compared to a timeline of several months to a year if conducted with internal resources.

## RESULTS

To implement and maintain the schemas, Omni was originally using manual tools, a difficult, resource-intensive process. The goal was to use a tool and a service that automates the process of schema implementation and makes regular updates and error correction. Milestone schema products have enabled Omni to keep its structured data error free and add new schemas for voice search and other major initiatives.



# Using AI to Create More Impactful Content

## GOAL

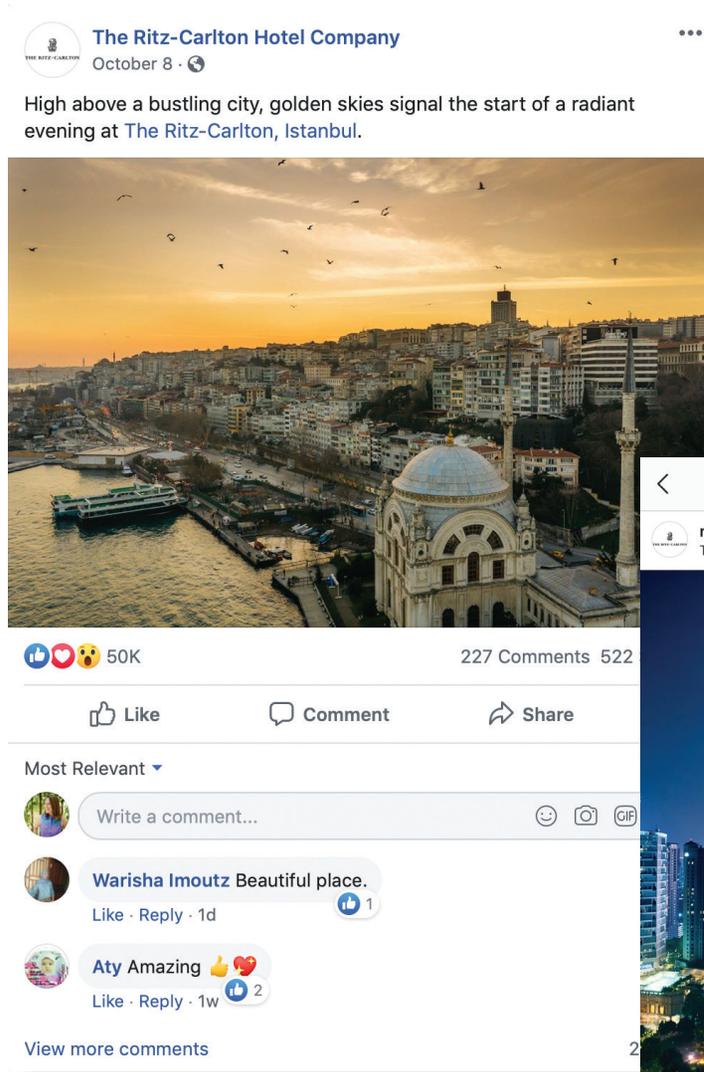
Ritz-Carlton set out to use artificial intelligence (AI) to make a high volume of social content without sacrificing the quality of the content. The company wanted to better understand and predict what content resonates with a luxury hospitality audience in order to better attract and serve them both on and off property.

## INNOVATION

Ritz-Carlton partnered with Cortex to conduct three AI-powered studies looking at Ritz-Carlton content as well as content from the entire luxury hospitality industry over the past two years. The AI reports discovered patterns of content that resonated with the luxury hospitality consumer along with what content fell flat. Ritz-Carlton then adjusted its content strategy by putting greater emphasis on visuals, which led to better performance on each channel.

## RESULTS

On Facebook, social media interactions rose 450 percent, with the engagement rate increasing nearly 900 percent. On Instagram, total interactions rose by 20 percent, with a 16-percent increase in the engagement rate.



# Ask Rosen

## GOAL

Rosen Hotels & Resorts came up with an Amazon Alexa skill called “Ask Rosen” to help answer meeting planners’ real-time questions about Rosen’s properties. The main goal of the project was to differentiate Rosen and get the company noticed in the meetings industry, leading to more bookings, with a secondary goal of positioning itself as an innovative, technology-focused brand.

## INNOVATION

Rosen purchased 300 Echo Dots and 300 Echo Plus devices, wrapped them in branded packaging, and shipped them to prospects along with a brochure with hotel and device information. Rosen also developed a unique URL, AskRosen.com, with information about the skill; planners also could suggest additional questions. A two-email series was developed to tease and follow the mailing.

## RESULTS

The campaign has been recognized by other colleagues in the industry as being unique, which helps raise the Rosen profile. The company met its sales goal due to business booked due to the exposure of the Ask Rosen technology.



ALEXA, ASK ROSEN WHY I SHOULD CHOOSE  
ROSEN HOTELS AND RESORTS  
FOR MY ME

# VISIT FLORIDA Travel Pro

## GOAL

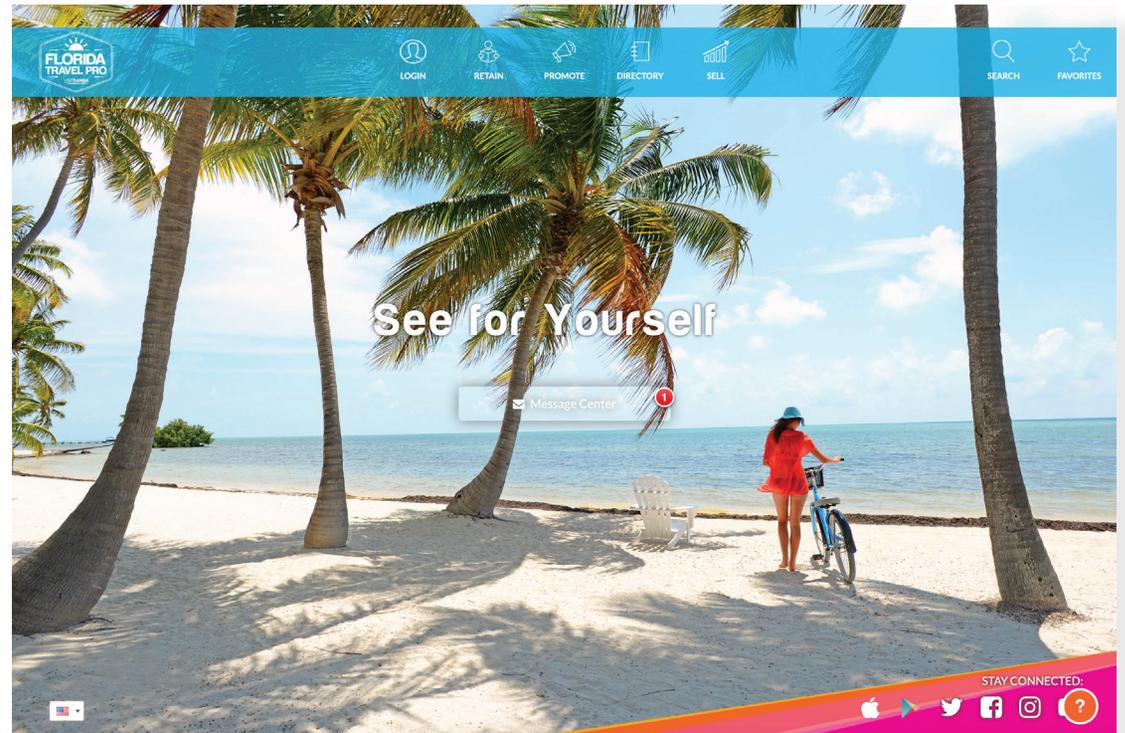
VISIT FLORIDA sought to activate travel trade sales simultaneously within 10 key global markets, positioning Florida as a premier U.S. travel destination. TravPRO Mobile was hired to provide a sales activation platform to engage with global travel agents who sell to the United States.

## INNOVATION

Designed for mobile first and available on all iOS and Android devices as well as on the web, TravPRO Mobile's VISIT FLORIDA Travel Pro app provides multiple learning options, unlocking new offline touchpoints and offering content that can be downloaded to individual travel agents' phones. The app's Sales Companion tool breaks down barriers to information by providing anytime access to information.

## RESULTS

After three months, 5,200 registrants had used the app, 36,000 pieces of content had been shared, and VISIT FLORIDA was getting close to its original goal of 100,000 total queries in the directory — and had nearly \$2 million in bookings attributable to the program.



# X GIPHY

## GOAL

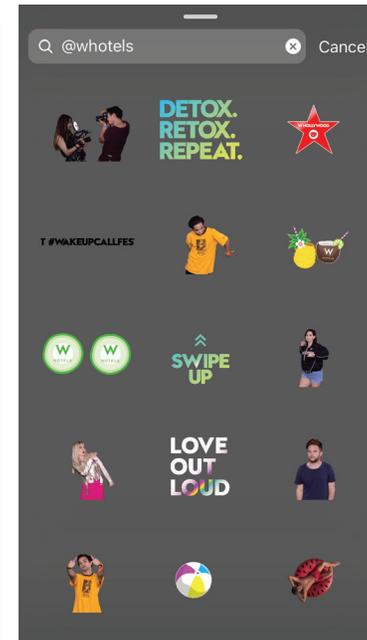
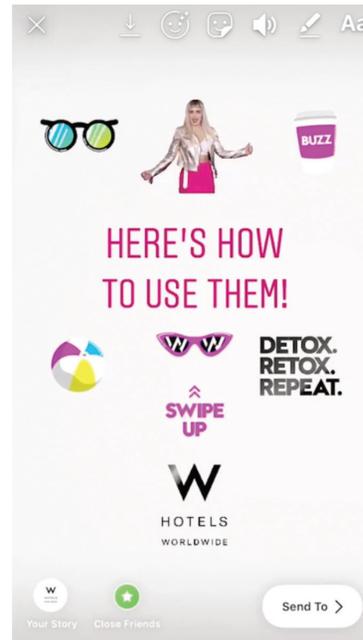
In 2018, W Hotels partnered with GIPHY to create GIFs, reaction GIFs, and GIF stickers, slipping its brand logo, hotels, and fonts into them. Building off that work, in 2019, W Hotels and GIPHY created GIFs to drive awareness for Wake Up Call (WUC), a W Hotels music festival, with the hopes that people would use the GIFs before, during, and after the event.

## INNOVATION

W spent \$10,000 to create the GIFs and another \$150,000 to advertise them on the GIPHY platform. The GIFs were distributed via GIPHY Search Keywords, Search Categories, and Trending Rotational placement, capitalizing on search terms related to “wakeup calls,” music, and key emotions related to WUC — namely excitement. W Hotels and GIPHY also engaged VIP festivalgoers by allowing them to produce their own personalized GIFs and GIF stickers at WUC.

## RESULTS

W’s 133 GIFs have amassed 1.5 billion organic views across GIPHY and its API partners, including Instagram, Snapchat, FB Messenger, and iMessage. The campaign’s paid media component generated 27.3 million views of WUC-related GIFs and drove a 3.5-percent engagement rate on GIPHY Search (compared to W’s 1.89-percent benchmark), and a Nielsen Brand Lift Study showed lifts across all attributes.



# IBM Watson Ads

## GOAL

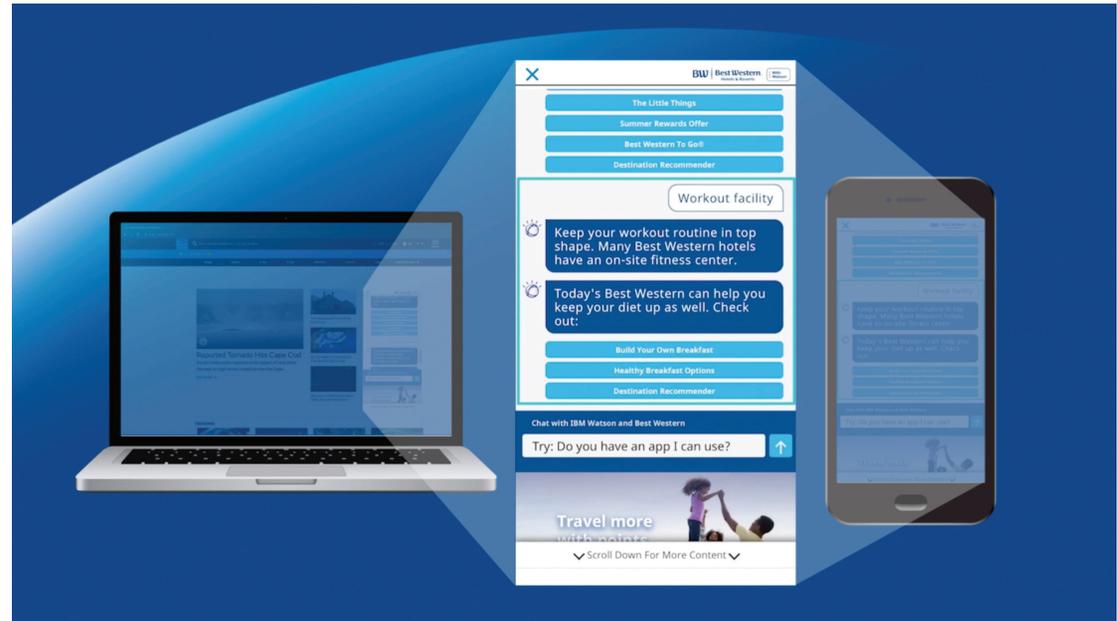
In 2018, Best Western partnered with IBM Watson Advertising to create an interactive ad campaign powered by artificial intelligence. The partnership was enhanced in 2019 to deepen customer engagement, increase brand awareness, and deliver meaningful, dynamic interactions to enhance the user experience.

## INNOVATION

The ads personalize travel planning by driving one-on-one conversations with consumers through machine learning. Using Watson's AI technology, the ads provide travel tips, destination recommendations, special offers, and more based on the user's questions and preferences. For 2019, newly scripted FAQs showcased the brand's membership perks, amenities, and accommodations throughout the experience. Trained on questions unique to Best Western, Watson Ads can translate user intent and respond accurately with personalized, brand-safe answers.

## RESULTS

Best Western's FY19 Watson Ad experience delivered more than 27 million impressions, 8,100 user inputs, and 1,875 branded one-on-one conversations. The total number of user inputs per conversation is the highest IBM has seen with Watson, while the in-ad video experience drove the completion rate 130 percent above the Watson benchmark.



**IBM Watson Ads**  
Connecting consumers with Best Western on a 1:1 level, using AI-powered technology.

**HOW WATSON ADS WORK**

- Watson Ads Understand**  
Trained on questions that are unique to Best Western, they listen via Natural Language APIs to translate user intent and ensure a smooth dialogue.
- Watson Ads Reason**  
They think before giving consumers a response by reasoning through training based on Best Western's body of knowledge, including FAQs.
- Watson Ads Interact**  
Personalized, brand-safe responses are natural and intuitive - driving conversations based on needs, deepening engagement and driving loyalty.

**INTELLIGENT CONVERSATION**  
IBM Watson helps to increase brand awareness for Best Western by providing travel tips and links, leading to recommendations that allow users to explore and prepare for their summer plans. Users engage with Watson via text, voice or quick click.

**EXTENDED ENGAGEMENT**  
As a user scrolls, they can explore additional content including an in-ad video warning and important of available Best Western Rewards and Offers, the Today's Best Western is More Rewarding video, and they can find the closest Best Western location.

**CAMPAIGN DETAILS**

- ✓ The Best Western Watson Ads campaign runs on The Weather Channel digital properties and across Best Western's digital media campaign from 6/13/19-6/30/19.
- ✓ Inclusive of the mobile integrated measure, 200,000 creatives on mobile and log web, and 200,000 creatives on log web.
- ✓ Audience targeted to all travelers like including leisure travelers, last minute travelers, urban millennials, users looking for recommendations in the city, and those who are looking to travel to Canada.

# Pure Sounds of Michigan

## GOAL

*Pure Sounds of Michigan*, an ambient album, was created to showcase the sounds of Michigan through its state parks and inspire travel to these locations by highlighting diverse elements of the Wolverine State, including local artists.

## INNOVATION

*Pure Sounds of Michigan* was produced with Assemble Sound, a Detroit-based media company, which sponsored a media tent showcasing the album at the Movement Electronic Music Festival in Detroit. Three singles were promoted via outlets including *Billboard* magazine and the website Stereogum, with paid audio ads on streaming platforms used to drive traffic to michigan.org. At Shinola Hotel in Detroit, vinyl copies were distributed.

## RESULTS

After debuting at number nine on *Billboard*'s New Age chart, *Pure Sounds of Michigan* has been streamed/downloaded more than 88,000 times on Spotify and Soundcloud, while paid campaigns on Soundcloud, Pandora, and Spotify delivered more than 3 million impressions. More than 190 media placements led to an additional 10 million impressions, with social media posts producing another 4 million.

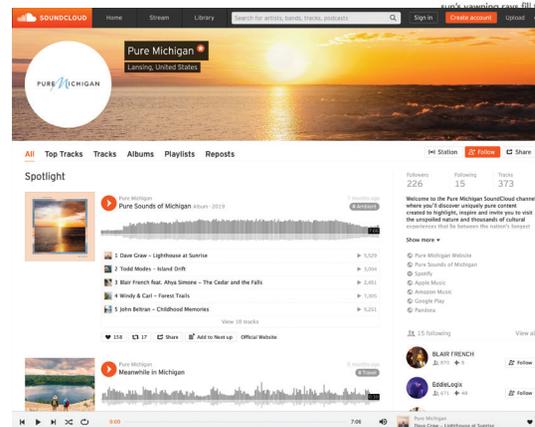


### LIGHTHOUSE AT SUNRISE

Dave Graw

Dave Graw - Light... @soundcloud

Nature awakens to the chirping, frolicking birds hitching rides along the brisk and gentle breeze. The distant sound of waves keep perfect time in a relaxing lull. The sun's low glow fills the lake with light while the... stay with the... views



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