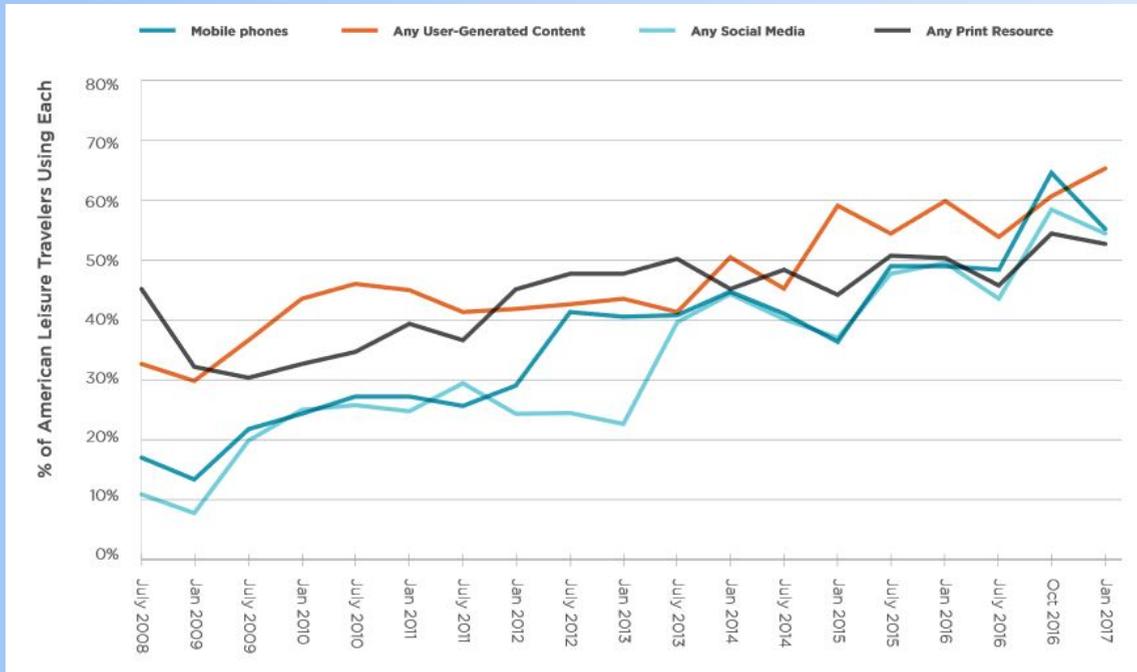


Hyper-informed travelers are feasting on knowledge sources

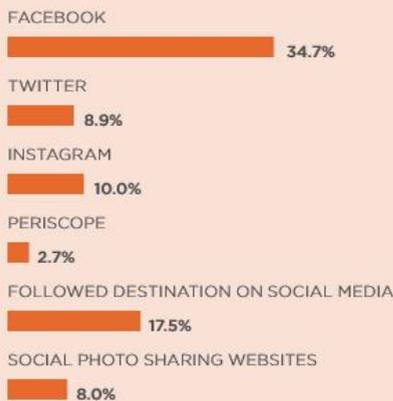


There are more resources than ever available to consumers as they look to plan and book travel. And they're not just choosing one; they use them all.

According to the Destination Analysts' State of the

American Traveler Destination's Edition, usage of all sources continues to grow. And while the growth of online sources predicted the demise of print, usage of physical planning tools has also grown.

54.7% Used Any Social Media



And while destinations are allocating significant resources into social media, only 17.5% of travelers indicate they follow a destination on social media. Given the results of the report, destination marketing organizations would be better served by working with the industry to encourage visitors to complete reviews on user-generated sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp.

65.0% Used Any User-Generated Content



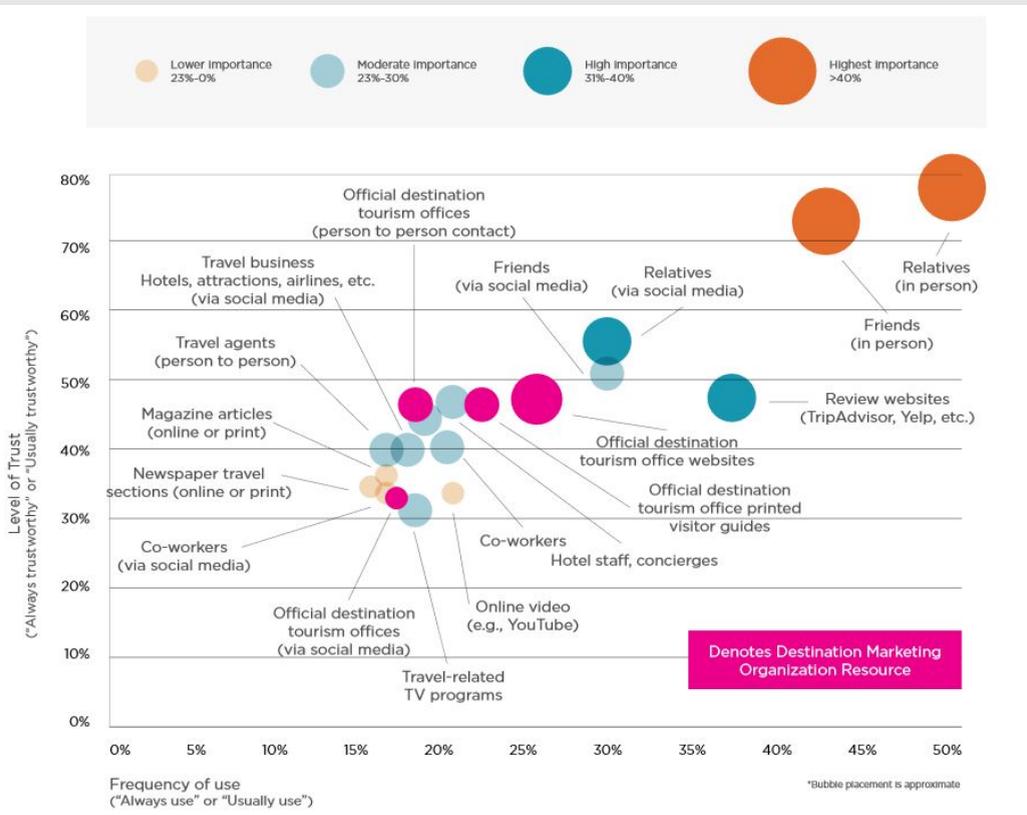
Besides those hotel and restaurant review sites, 27.1% of consumers indicate they turn to user-generated content for reviews of travel destinations in general.

Consumers trust the content on review sites

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Source: State of the American Traveler, Winter and Spring 2017

Personal sources of information are the most trusted for travelers



Source: State of the American Traveler, Winter and Spring 2017

Not only do consumers use review sites, they trust the content. In the Spring 2017 State of the American Traveler, Technology Edition, word of mouth of friends and relatives remains the most used and most trusted source of information.

However, review sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp fall just below this, making them important sources for DMOs to monitor and encourage visitors to post experiences.

Social media is tempting but carries risks

“Going viral” can be extremely positive, but we all know plans can sometimes backfire in unexpected ways.

West Virginia tourism recently tried a Facebook live stream and was pleased by the “good” viral reaction.

The Division of Tourism and National Geographic Travel partnered on a Facebook live stream of the catwalk beneath the New River Gorge Bridge, which turned into the organization's No. 1 performing Facebook live feed of all time, with more than 369,000 views since its

June 20 debut.

“We're thrilled,” West Virginia Tourism Commissioner Chelsea Ruby said.

The Bridge Walk live stream was part of the Division's viral social media campaign encouraging “all those who love West Virginia ... to share photos on social media” using the #AlmostHeaven hashtag.

In just two weeks, the campaign reached an audience of more than 15 million, with over 415,000 directly participating in the effort.



Photo: West Virginia Division of Tourism

Ruby said the social media campaigns, coupled with the paid advertising they're doing to promote summer activities in West Virginia, “are multiplying the effect of our advertising, it goes hand-in-hand.”

Source: The State Journal

Celebrities can be welcoming ambassadors if used properly

Many destinations are using celebrities to promote themselves both on the domestic tourism market as well as internationally. The truth is that it is an expensive matter, but the effect on visitors is amazingly big. It is a great way to spread the word about your destination's brand to much wider audiences.

Many travelers have favorite movies, TV shows or singers and destinations want to give them a face to remember, too. As mentioned, these tourism ambassadors are paid to promote destinations. The aim is to personify cities or countries and convince people to book trips there. However, it is all not so simple and for the results to arrive, the promotion must be done properly.

A celebrity's endorsement and promotional efforts are valuable if the person remains trustworthy and out of trouble. These ambassadors ideally have universal

appeal – at least across the key tourism markets for a destination. They are also often the face of marketing campaigns. Ambassadorships can be short or long-term but usually last a few years at most, so that the destination does not seem stale.

One of these promotional “failures” was Pitbull's ambassadorship in the state of Florida from 2015 to 2016. In fact, Pitbull's campaign was a success, but its aftermath was a huge blow.

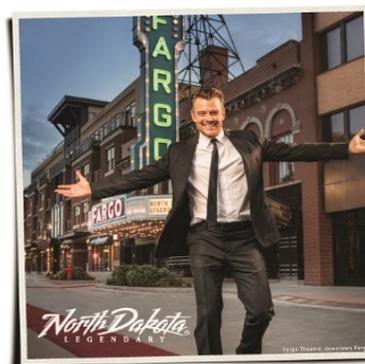


Pitbull

The singer used VISIT FLORIDA's hashtags and made music videos as a part of the marketing campaign. But the sponsorship became a point of contention with the state's legislators, leading to the departure of VISIT FLORIDA's leadership and significant budget battles.

But many ambassadorships have also been an overall success. For example, Taylor Swift in New York, James Cameron in New Zealand, Rihanna on Barbados or Josh Duhamel in North Dakota. Some countries such as Japan also used cartoon characters or creatures such as Hello Kitty and Godzilla to promote tourism to the young generation.

Source: Tourism Review



— Josh Duhamel —
OFF-OFF BROADWAY
Off Off Broadway is shown in cities across the state. North Dakota native Josh Duhamel enjoys one of a kind dining, shopping and entertainment in our vibrant downtown. Visit us online to discover Josh's favorites and start your weekend escape.
LEGENDARYND.COM

Josh Duhamel is featured in North Dakota advertising.

International arrivals buck sentiment and show year-over growth

International arrivals in May grew 5.2% from the same month the previous year, bucking predictions.

The U.S. Travel Association's President Rodger Dow attributed the growth to the tourism marketing efforts. “There is widespread talk of daunting challenges to the U.S.

travel market—perception of the country abroad is mentioned most, but the strong dollar and slowing global economy are factors as well—yet the resilience of our sector continues to astound,” Dow said.

But while there was strong year-over-year growth, there are signs

that international travel is slowing, attributable to administration policies but also a strong dollar. The USTA's recently-released Travel Trends Index continues to anticipate both three-month and six-month losses for international arrivals.

Source: U.S. Travel Association