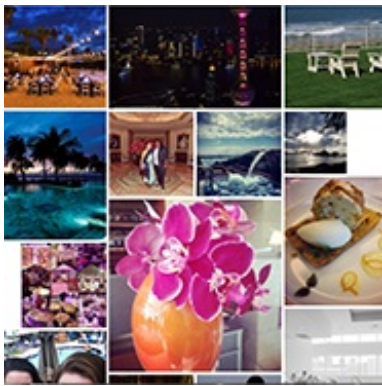


INTERNET

The Ritz-Carlton aggregates UGC to scale memories campaign

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"Your Memories" section on The Ritz-Carlton Web site

By JOE MCCARTHY

The Ritz-Carlton is giving consumers a central location to share brand memories that will likely spur more social media interaction.

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Luxury Daily

The newly minted "Your Memories" section on the brand's Web site aggregates social posts with the #RCMemories hashtag and invites manual uploads from consumers. As consumers see the images of other engaged Ritz-Carlton travelers, it may foster a sense of community.

"We noticed that our guests were using #RCMemories so often but only our team was seeing all of it," said Clayton Ruebensaal, vice president of marketing at [The Ritz-Carlton](#), Washington. "Posts were coming in every day from Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, Instagram, but the outside was only being exposed to small slivers of it.

"We saw a tremendous opportunity to republish this content, as much for how well it showcases The Ritz-Carlton brand as for how it showcases the world of travel," he said.

"The images are personal, and artistic, and playful, and many are simply breathtaking. We thought more people should see them. Pulling all this content onto ritzcarlton.com's 'Your

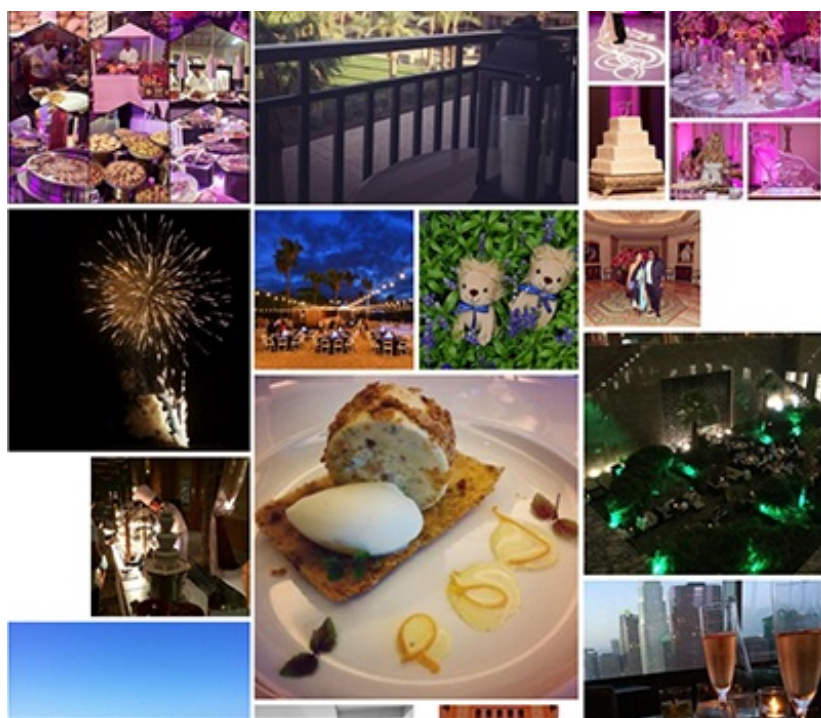
Memories' section gives people one place to see it all."

The post factor

The new content hub was initially powered by social media submissions that have appeared on Twitter and Instagram with the #RCMemories hashtag since the campaign's launch last year.

Fans had posted a sufficient number of images since the launch for the brand to develop a respectable mosaic of images. Oftentimes, brands will unveil user-generated content hubs and end up with a woefully inadequate number of submissions that can cast a withering light on the brand.

From this perspective, The Ritz-Carlton was smart to wait before developing the Web page.

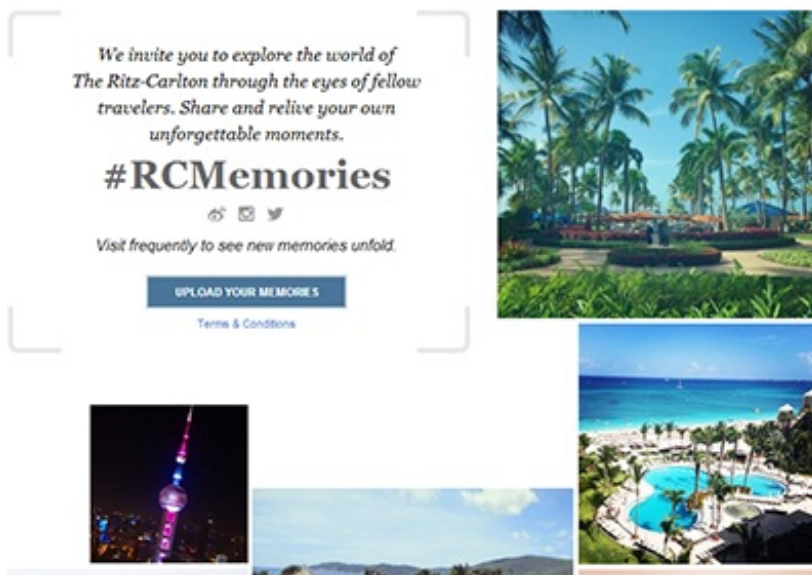


The Ritz-Carlton "Your Memories" page

Also, fans who visit the new page may be inspired by the displayed images to share their own experiences, thus creating the contagious atmosphere that is truly the engine of all UGC campaigns. When fans feel compelled to participate in a campaign, without prize incentives, the brand wins.

Images displayed in the mosaic rotate and move around.

For fans that want to earn a spot on the wall, they can post images to social media with the appropriate hashtag or upload directly to the page. The brand will then vet all images to ensure that they do not depict anything averse to the brand's values.



The Ritz-Carlton "Your Memories" page

Visitors to the "Your Memories" mosaic can also share images on their Facebook, Twitter and Sina Weibo pages.

The page can be viewed [here](#).

Getting comfortable

The Ritz-Carlton recently invited fans to submit six-word stories that capture brand-related memories that were then shared in various forms on social media.

Taking their inspiration from Ernest Hemingway and a popular flash fiction genre, eight "Six Word Wows" appeared over the course of a few weeks. The hard-to-decipher brevity of the six-word stories are remedied by a microsite that delves into the guest tales ([see story](#)).

Brands are beginning to leverage UGC with greater felicity, realizing that it represents a gold mine of useful material.

For example, Italian fashion label Versace aimed to drive in-store traffic with a new club designed around its studded sunglasses line.

Versace's Studs Ladies Web site asked consumers to go to a Sunglass Hut store, snap a photo of themselves trying on the brand's eyewear and then post it to Facebook, where was picked up by the label and added to a wall of user-generated content. Many brands are wary of incorporating user-generated content on their own Web sites, but it can be beneficial for brands to have consumers' voices as part of their digital presence ([see story](#)).

In some cases, a UGC initiative surges immediately and consistently.

"#RCMemories has tremendous value to us because we have been using it consistently for two years," Mr. Ruebensaal said.

"Our aim is to own that hashtag the way other brands own taglines," he said. "That way our guests will become accustomed to using it every time they capture a memory during a

Ritz-Carlton experience.

"The hashtag on average gets over 500 hits a day and we are nearing the half million mark for total uses."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, staff writer on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/nkahYiYxw-w](https://www.youtube.com/embed/nkahYiYxw-w)

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