

RESEARCH

Talk-worthy, shareable content key to word of mouth amplification: report

August 14, 2015



Exterior image of The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago

By JEN KING

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company leads online conversation among hospitality brands in the United States, according to a new report by Engagement Labs.

[Sign up now](#)

Luxury Daily

While word of mouth is still important among high-end goods and services, online conversation, hashed out on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, is steadily becoming a strategy for brands aiming for consumer retention. In Engagement Labs' first "Total Social" ranking, Ritz-Carlton ranked the highest on social media, but fell when it came to recommendations made by offline word of mouth, presenting an opportunity for the hospitality brand.

"Social media is becoming more important, but not at the expense of word of mouth," said Bryan Segal, CEO of [Engagement Labs](#), Toronto.

"There is no substitute for face-to-face conversations, and hotel experiences are an important topic of conversation," he said. "The most successful marketers should have a twin social strategy that embraces both online and offline.

"That's why Engagement Labs and Keller Fay are working together to develop Total Social

measurement tools. Independent research has shown that word of mouth drives 13 percent of consumer sales equaling \$6 trillion of consumer spending, of which \$2 million is related to online communication and \$4 million to offline."

Engagement Labs looked at nine popular hotel chains, ranging in price and positioning, using its Total Social tool. Total Social is a combination of Engagement Labs eValue online social media measurement score and Kelly Fay's, recently acquired by Engagement Labs, word of mouth conversation measurement TalkTrack.

Social bookings

Through the data collected, Engagement Labs found that Ritz-Carlton ranks number one in online conversation on both Facebook and Twitter. The eValue score is determined by engagement, impact and responsiveness metrics that track a brand's level of interaction on a specific social network, the reach of branded content and how much, how fast and how well the brand in question responds to conversations with users.

Although Ritz-Carlton Hotels fared the best in terms of Facebook and Twitter the brand's word of mouth score drops to number six with Hilton Hotel & Resorts claiming the number one slot.

With Ritz-Carlton not placing well in terms of word of mouth, the hotelier has an opportunity to amplify the offline conversation. Engagement Labs suggests doing so through content generation that will increase the power of its offline communications to drive a greater impact on sales.

"There are many ways to do this, but content and creative are imperative to amplify word of mouth. There is now a higher bar being set for content and messaging—it needs to be talk-worthy and shareable, or else it will get lost," said Brad Kay, cofounder of [Keller Fay](#), New Brunswick, NJ.

"Also, it's important to treat your customer base as a key marketing asset—and focus on ways to increase the frequency of conversation and advocacy for the brand," he said. "Give your customers a reason to recommend you, and remind them to do it often."



Ritz-Carlton Georgia

Ritz-Carlton's parent company Marriott Hotels fared similarly with its International portfolio being second among word of mouth rankings and number three on Facebook. The hotelier's Marriott Hotels was also third in terms of Twitter interactions.

Although Marriott Hotels was among the top five in all three categories, there is room to improve its engagement and responsiveness scores on social. To become leaders in both online and offline conversations, using Ritz-Carlton as a case study may be beneficial.

For example, Ritz-Carlton is celebrating the art of scenic photography by sponsoring Trey Ratcliff's photo walk across the U.S.

During Mr. Ratcliff's 13-city journey, which kicked off Aug. 6 in New York, the photographer will invite consumers to join him on a guided walking tour in the city with the intent to have them capture and share their own images. While this event is not tied to a specific Ritz-Carlton property, being a part of this campaign reflects Ritz-Carlton's social efforts that prompt user-generated content surrounding its brand ([see story](#)).

Ritz-Carlton often turns to digital and mobile touchpoints to engage with guests even after their stay is over.

For instance, the hotel brand is celebrating a FourSquare campaign that has been ongoing for several years and recently reached its 1,000th post.

In 2011, the company launched World Concierge FourSquare and has been offering tips and ideas for guests since. The 1,000th post celebrates the campaign and the redirects consumers' attention to the Foursquare account, a social media platform that may not be frequented by guests ([see story](#)).



THE RITZ-CARLTON®

Chevy Chase, MD

Our destination tips are chosen with care by our concierges for global travelers, collectors of memories, and lovers of luxury.

[f](#) [t](#) [e](#)

1,000	15,922	0	88
Tips	Followers	Following	Locations

Ritz-Carlton's FourSquare account

Ranked

With a high ranking in social conversation, Ritz-Carlton also boasts highest in hotel guest satisfaction.

Hotels are leaving guests with less to complain about, leading to the highest all-time levels of consumer satisfaction, according to research from J.D. Power.

During 2015, 20 percent less guests noted a problem during their stay, representing the lowest occurrence since 2006. Guests' perceptions of a hotel have a strong impact on whether they will recommend a property to friends or stay with the same brand again, so it is in a hotel's best interest to cater to their customers' needs from booking to check-out.

In the luxury category and across all price points, The Ritz-Carlton has the highest satisfaction index results, with 892 points ([see story](#)).

Striking a balance between online social media and offline conversation is important for brands in any sector.

"Overall, brands should understand that just focusing on online social media or offline word of mouth is not enough," Engagement Labs' Mr. Segal said. "Driving attention to the combination and how both combined can amplify the message and drive sales."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/PEvE5vFdgak>

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.