

MOBILE

Starwood Hotels transforms social influencers into travel agents

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Social influencer La Revue De Kenza lounges in her Parisian hotel room

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Starwood Hotels & Resorts' Tribute Portfolio brand has partnered with shopping platform LiketoKnow.it, enabling travelers to browse social influencers' curated content on Instagram, tap a photo and receive a link via email to book a stay at a featured property.

Two of Tribute Portfolio's newest Parisian hotels, Le Metropolitan and Le Dokhan's, are now bookable through social media, an innovative feat likely to prompt other major hotel chains to consider tapping into the growing popularity of influencers, bloggers and mobile shopping platforms. LiketoKnow.it, which is owned by publisher monetization service rewardStyle, allows users to sign up for its platform, like various Instagram photos and have the featured products emailed to them with purchasing links, filling a void left by Instagram's ban of clickable links in picture captions.

"LiketoKnow.it enables Tribute Portfolio to provide a seamless path to purchase in a place where consumers are discovering daily inspiration but at the same time, this also allows us to work with an established team of content publishers that will tell the brand's story organically while tapping into not just our networks, but their networks as well," said Dave Marr, global brand leader for [Tribute Portfolio](#).

"Of course we hope to see increased bookings as a result of the partnership but it is more of a secondary goal. We partnered with LiketoKnow.it primarily to drive new brand awareness and engagement for the brand's target demographic: the socially-connected, independent-minded traveler."

The new travel agents

Tribute Portfolio, which is Starwood Hotels' tenth brand, is entering into an exclusive partnership with LiketoKnow.it as it ramps up to entice mobile savvy travelers to book stays at two of its Parisian hotels via Instagram.

The brand has teamed up with five major social influencers Alex's Closet, La Revue De Kenza, J'aime tout Chez toi, Elles en Parlent and Marie Luv Pink belonging to LiketoKnow.it's community of content creators.

Tribute Portfolio understands consumers' growing tendency to gain travel inspiration from influencers such as celebrities and bloggers, consequently prompting those individuals to become the new travel agents.

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LiketoKnow.it simplifies the experience of browsing and shopping from Instagram posts

LiketoKnow.it currently maintains more than 1.6 million users, 95 percent of which have proven to have high purchase intent while browsing their Instagram feeds. Consumers who have signed up for the service are able to like a desirable Instagram post and have all of the featured items emailed to them with shoppable links.

While Instagram does offer "shop now" buttons, marketers not using them are at a disadvantage when attempting to close a sale with Instagram followers, since the photo-sharing app does not allow clickable links within photo captions.

Therefore, LiketoKnow.it users can simply double tap on a photo and complete the purchase through their emails. This also makes it easier to track the effectiveness of particular social influencers or posts.

Travel fans who spot one of the influencers' photos tagged with a LiketoKnow.it-enabled shopping link, @tributeportfolio and #independentmoments will be able to test out this new functionality.

After the shoppable email is sent to them, they will be able to visit the respective hotel's mobile site, where they may book their stay.

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Marie Luv Pink peruses the room service menu in one Instagram shot

Several of the chosen influencers' uploaded images show them lounging in bed, reading at a table and enjoying room service.

LiketoKnow.it has previously made a splash in the retail sector, but is now branching out into the travel industry, which will likely be a lucrative decision.

"Google and Ipsos recently did a study that found approximately 77 percent of travelers are using their smartphones for travel inspiration in spare moments, such as waiting or commuting," Mr. Marr said. "With this in mind, the partnership with LiketoKnow.it is an ideal way for us to reach travelers who are using Instagram to source vacation inspiration, build exciting itineraries and find hotels.

"We're helping them directly translate their wanderlust into a room booking by simply double tapping a photo, instead of the usual process of searching for our homepage after admiring their favorite influencer's vacation on social media."

Social media frenzy

A growing number of hotel brands are heavily tapping into the major marketing potential of social media platforms and are diversifying their efforts across a slew of platforms.

For example, Hyatt is showcasing guests' photographs on a new social media site replete with experiential filters in a big bet on the power of user-generated content to drive discovery for travelers in search of their next destination ([see story](#)).

Meanwhile, Tribute Portfolio is encouraging customers to shoot their own content when staying at its properties and upload it to social media via the #independentmoments branded hashtag. This form of social crowdsourcing will also help the brand populate its own networks with user-generated material that shows off distinct experiences and details not easily found on the hotels' Web sites.

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Marie Luv Pink posted an envy-inducing photo of her breakfast spread

Tribute Portfolio is relaunching its Tumblr page to showcase #independentmoments aggregated from all of its properties, as well as featured content from other partnerships.

The hospitality marketer will also make its first appearance on Snapchat during the Coachella music festival with a property geofilter set to celebrate its pop-up radio event held in conjunction with Pitchfork. The event will take place at The Riviera Palm Springs, one of the brand's resorts.

"This is an industry first that we're excited to be a part of, but Tribute Portfolio has had a very specific social strategy from the start, so this partnership truly aligns and fits with the brand," Mr. Marr said. "Social media has been at the core of our brand since the start.

"We always announce our new property signings and openings/conversions on social media first."