

INTERNET

Waldorf sets dreamers to work for storytelling campaign

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A photo of Olga Kuylenko from Waldorf Astoria's story campaign

By JOE MCCARTHY

Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts is harvesting guest stories in the latest extension of its storytelling campaign by asking fans to describe what a dream experience at one of the brand's properties entails.

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Luxury Daily

The "Unforgettable Dreams" effort calls for fans to get creative for a chance to win a five-night stay at any Waldorf property. Brands across categories have been tapping the creative potential of consumers and fans to both build connections and more colorful campaigns.

"Waldorf Astoria's Facebook fans have embraced our newest campaign, 'Waldorf Astoria Unforgettable Dreams,' and have been eager to share their dream experiences based on our 26 iconic destinations around the world," said Stuart Foster, vice president of marketing at [Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts](#).

"Fans of the brand have been submitting their most unforgettable experiences at Waldorf Astoria properties, from Dubai and Beijing to Amsterdam and Jerusalem," he said.

"It must be wedding season as the majority of the entries submitted have focused on

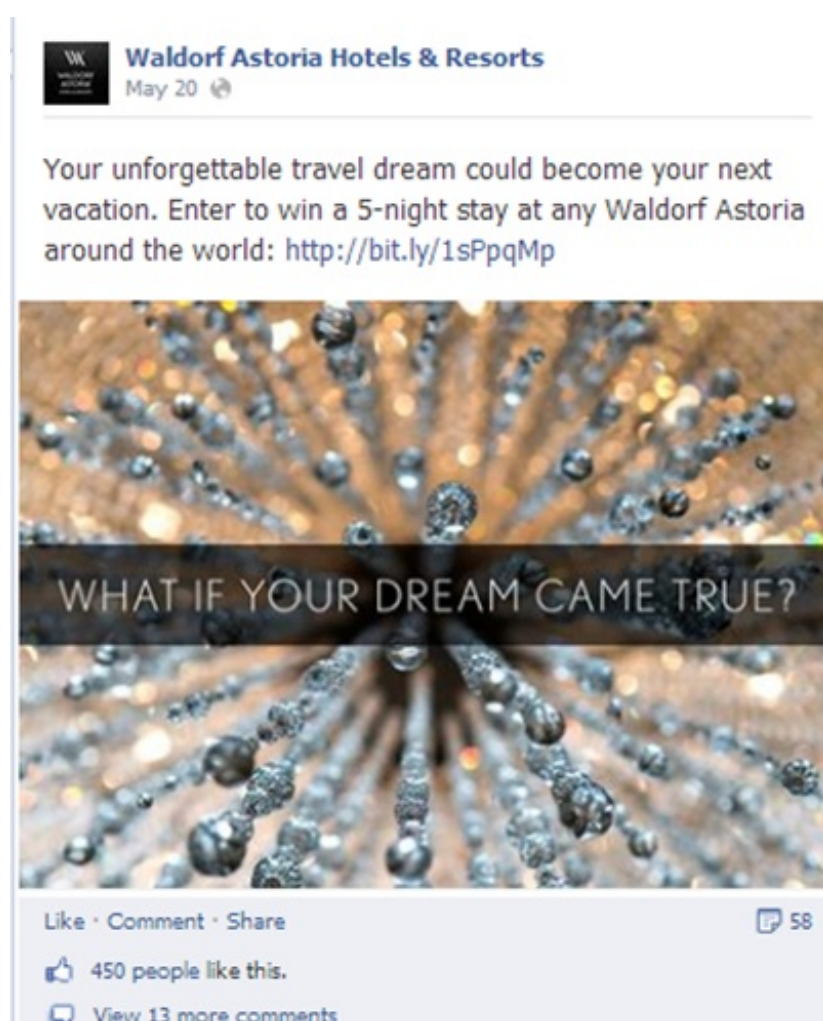
extraordinary Waldorf Astoria Weddings or honeymoons."

Vacation blues

Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts previously enlisted British author Simon van Booy to pen a short story with the hotel as both a setting and a player for its latest ad campaign that raises awareness about various properties.

The story, titled "The Escape Artist," is set against the backdrop of the Waldorf Astoria's Chicago property, and follows fictional fashion designer Alexandra, played by actress Olga Kurylenko, who travels to the hotel to get inspiration for her latest collection ([see story](#)).

Now, the brand is reviving the campaign to ask for a fresh round of stories. Followers of the brand's social pages are invited to tell a story, either imagined or real, about a dream experience at a Waldorf property.



To inspire fans the hotel produced a brief video that expresses common hotel notions such as great service, food and ambiance.

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/qgmrmxAP70U>

A Dream That Came True video

Fans can also access a trove of stories told by Waldorf staff.

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/8CBkqj4H83A>

The Spirit of a Gladiator

The length of submissions must be between 100 and 450 words. Fans in the United States, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Fiji, Germany, Guam, India, Japan, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mexico, New Zealand, South Korea, Indonesia, Ireland and the United Kingdom can participate.

Mr. van Booy will choose the winner June 6 who will receive five "Be My Guest" certificates that can be exchanged for one-night stays in a standard room at any Waldorf Astoria hotel. The grand prize is worth approximately \$1,875.

"Although this contest ends on June 2, the social media channels of Waldorf Astoria enable the brand to engage with our guests and to inspire their unforgettable dreams," Mr. Foster said.

Spinning tales

Storytelling helps to sell goods, but brands must learn the story of the collective "me," according to a panel discussion at the Luxury Summit 2014.

The "Art of storytelling" panel brought together the bespoke travel and design sectors to share with summit attendees how they look to consumer motivators when marketing. Channeling personal experience into narratives allows for a broader, yet familiarizing approach that will be appreciated by affluent individuals ([see story](#)).

Brands from all over are mining the massive reserve of stories out there.

German automaker BMW is unifying owners around the world with a global campaign that celebrates driver stories.

The brand is weaving together stories from fans, professional drivers and important figures in the company to give a full sense of what it means to be a BMW driver. Today's campaigns seem inadequate without a strong user-generated content component, and many brands are responding to this development by leveraging the voices of followers ([see story](#)).

However, will the sheer abundance of stories eventually drain them of their power? Brands have to ask themselves this question as they continue to solicit user-generated content.

"Content is crucial for any brand that is trying to cultivate a community online," said Taylor Rains, account executive at [Rawle Murdy Associates](#), Charleston, SC. "With this latest extension of the Unforgettable Dreams campaign, Waldorf is shifting the focus to user generated content.

"When executed properly, this kind of content strategy can be extremely effective, because it not only curates valuable content for the brand but engages the online community," he said.

"These consumer-generated stories also bear significantly more weight in the eyes of

prospects, who are more likely to relate to a first-person account than something produced by a brand."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/EU1MF8-RRpA](https://www.youtube.com/embed/EU1MF8-RRpA)

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