

In the millennial, social-media-centric age, Instagrammable hotels stand out

by [Chris Anderson, White Lodging](#) |
Sep 19, 2017 2:35pm



Photo credit: AdrianHancu//Getty

Given the intense competition in the hotel industry with legacy companies like Marriott International seemingly creating—or buying—new brands each year, being Instagrammable is a must. Instagram boasts over 400 million daily active users of which 50 percent make at least \$50,000 annually. Hotels that want to interact with this hyper-engaged community of affluent users should step back and view their space through the lens of Instagram—or visual storytelling—and assess their level of innovation and inspiration from the consumer perspective. In short, are you Instagrammable?

How does your hotel translate to the world of compelling images and interesting captions? Do you have the capacity to connect with your consumers through sharing emotionally rich images or providing opportunities for them to tell their own meaningful stories about your brand?

Instagram and inspiration go hand in hand. When someone uploads a picture, regrams your post, or comments on a photo, chances are they are inspired. They are so excited about something beautiful, unexpected or uplifting that they feel compelled to draw people into their world for a game of digital show and tell, or to talk with others about what they are seeing. Pictures invoke feelings. Pictures generate conversation. Pictures build bonds. Pictures are inherently emotional. As

such, Instagram is fertile ground to engage in meaningful interactions with customers through the sharing of emotional content to lock in their viewership and eventually their loyal patronage.

The hotels that have mastered the Instagrammable moment concept understand that the meaningful Instagrammable moment can be anything, but it can't be everywhere. It has to be specific to your hotel or your corner of the world. And, consumers want to discover it on their own, as if they were on a treasure hunt. An Instagrammable moment is an opportunity for consumers to let a lot of people in on a secret or to bring delight to someone's day. This is how Instagram users build social status.

Staging the Scene

Orchestrating an Instagrammable moment begins with setting a mood through lighting, décor, customer service, music and other scenographic elements that carry through to little details that inspire big reactions in guests. Some hotels are excelling in this area by thinking about inspiring visual moments during the development and design phases. For example, the Westin Austin Downtown earns a lot of user-generated Instagram posts with their brilliant ATX lobby sign that makes everyone want to snap a picture as if they are the latest music star in the city. A lot of their guests also post pictures of themselves at their rooftop pool with sweeping views of the city in the backdrop.

Any Instagram strategy needs to keep top of mind what drives consumers to act on Instagram. Largely, consumers are looking for something beautiful, fun, cool, or calming—something that makes them happy or makes them feel like they are behind the scenes.

Just look at Google's page. It's dogs, doodles and their employee's good deeds and consumers can't get enough. Intel takes their Instagram followers behind the curtains with intriguing pictures of video gamers with grit using their equipment. Too Faced, a cosmetic brand, has a distinctive voice with peach and pink-filled photos that capture as many as 200,000 likes at times. Even the U.S. Army has created awesome engagement on Instagram, stirring the emotions of the thrill-seeking tough guy or girl in all of us with their exciting action shots that have drawn almost 1 million followers into the fold.

Another hotel under our umbrella is located in the candy capital of the world, so they give customers Milkduds. While candy instantly puts customers in a sharing,

giddy mood, the story behind the gift is the pixie dust needed to make this gesture Instagrammable and integrates the hotel into the story. Another hotel features the inventor of the first outboard motor.

But, you don't need a historical connection to get your guests snapping a flurry of pictures and that might not work for the type of guests who you attract to your hotel anyway. At the JW in Austin they serve drinks in full-sized pineapples and another hotel slings them in spooky Polynesian mugs. If your hotel gives off a quirky vibe you can hang a frame from the middle of the ceiling and sit back and watch people take pictures with it. Sometimes something simple and fun facilitates the perfect Instagrammable moment.

When you create an Instagrammable moment at your hotel, you are helping your customer write the story of their life and make meaningful connections with the people they care about. Not only do you increase your digital presence, but you win good will with customers, which translates to sales in this industry. If you're wondering if you have enough Instagrammable moments at your hotel, walk around and look at your hotel through the lens of Instagrammable moments and see if there are opportunities to make some magic happen.

Chris Anderson is SVP and Chief Revenue Officer of the Full-Service division at [White Lodging](#). Anderson, author of ["I'm Not Buying It"](#), specializes in branding, consumer behavior and emerging trends.