

How to use travel fams in the COVID recovery period

Turn user-generated video into authentic stories that reassure potential visitors



COVID-safe fam trips are gold

Destination marketers can educate future visitors through advance parties on fam trips

Familiarisation trips are a great training tool for expanding product knowledge among suppliers and travel media.

But in changing times, they can also be harnessed to create educational video content for destination marketing.

As destinations change their product to be COVID-safe, famil trips are a way for those on famil trips to experience the new product first hand. Through the power of video, these experiences can be shared with potential visitors.





Famil trips are an effective way to showcase COVID-safe practices and activities in destinations

Familiarisation trips provide an excellent way to get information about COVID product changes out through the media. They can also be a great way to get fresh, authentic and affordable marketing content for your destination.

They are also a way to communicate COVID-safe flight options, transfers, local activities and hotels.

However, famils can be expensive, given shaved marketing budgets. So how can you get the best return on investment for the time that hosted guests travel to your destination?

The first hurdle is ensuring those on the famil are also available to produce content for your marketing. Most freelance media will accept side commissions.

Showcase your destination's COVID-safe activities to rebuild trust

As the tourism industry rebuilds after the impact of Coronavirus, it does so in uncertain times. Airlines have been grounded, borders closed and many venues and attractions are now off limits. But there is plenty still to show off, with product changes crucial to reassuring nervous visitors.

“At this stage, it is impossible to forecast how travel will rebound. It seems likely that the lifting of restrictions will lead to an explosion of holiday bookings ”

Henry Wismayer, Travel journalist

Many observers predict a rush to book holidays again once travel restrictions are lifted. The logic goes that pent up demand among the furloughed middle class will translate into solid forward demand in travel and tourism. However, not all potential travellers will jump back on a plane. The marketing collateral you produce now needs to **reassure**.

Remember the opportunities for brand communication of your destination's key suppliers. If they have good news to convey in terms of COVID-safe practices, remember to feature these in the itinerary.

Keep in mind when planning to showcase your destination that a full itinerary is critical for contact tracing. It will also give reassurance to participants.

Another idea is to use staff or local ambassadors to make video walkthroughs to showcase without any air travel.

Case Study: Real estate video walkthroughs

Faced with buyer uncertainty, a reluctance to visit open home inspections and, in some cases, health restrictions banning home inspections, the real estate industry had to swing into new technologies to show interested parties around properties.

High-end properties were already using video production to market, but during COVID, mid-level real estate agencies also jumped onto video walkthroughs.

Video conferencing tools worked well for one-on-one home tours, but for pre-sale marketing and rentals, agents used Vloggi to create video walkthroughs easily and quickly. These contained branding and contact details.



TOURISM'S POST-COVID RECOVERY

- People are beginning to anticipate and crave travel, with a focus on new experiences at safe destinations within driving distance or shorter flights.
- International travel may not return to previous norms until a vaccine and/or an effective treatment for COVID-19 is widely available.
- Using 9/11 or the 2007 recession as a reference, and assuming a vaccine is available in 2021, tourism should recover by late 2022 or early 2023.

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Your audience requires more authentic language in the post-COVID times

Post-COVID, the kind of destination marketing content that consumers want has changed. Destination marketing during these times requires sensitivity to what's going on in people's lives as well as flexibility to keep up with swift changes to travel restrictions.

There is opportunity in the chaos too. Some 76% of consumers picked up new habits and routines during COVID-19. Most said they plan on keeping some of their new habits.

For destination marketers, this provides a new potential market of visitors, who would usually travel further afield, who will consider domestic holidays in 2021.

The content you provide needs to be framed with empathy and sensitivity, but also highlighting the COVID-safe aspects of your destination. The best way to show empathy is by ditching glossy marketing and embracing real user feedback, user reviews and user-generated content.

Tip: ensure famils adhere strictly to health guidelines and protocols



Creating or sourcing new content can be challenging post-COVID

Everything has changed. Your product has changed due to health restrictions and your target market has changed due to a desire to stay closer to home.

But your marketing assets were all carefully planned and created pre-COVID. So how to rapidly recreate a library of updated collateral?

The good news for destination marketers is that potential travellers are more likely to trust the recommendations of “micro-influencers” such as trusted travel journalists. This means you can use your family trip reports as part of your content marketing.

After COVID, potential travellers are increasingly looking for social proof for inspiration. The impact social media has had on the travel industry is transformational. Travellers in all age groups look to user-generated content (UGC) for guidance and ideas. Photos and videos posted by friends, family or peers on social media are the best inspirations.

But the advice of trusted travel media is almost as valued, especially to more nervous individuals whose reservations agents travel are higher. Consumers want to talk to people who have real experience of the accommodation and transport they will be using. Education trips provide DMOs with an arsenal of material that could be used for marketing.

But with domestic travel predicted to be the main benefactor in the post-crisis recovery, family trips can be harnessed to produce updated attraction reviews, COVID-safe transport blog posts and video content for your library. Journalists and trade participants simply need an easy way to upload their video clips and images for you to use in marketing.

“Domestic travel – especially road trips – will increase as COVID-19 restrictions are removed. Combined with a pent-up demand to get away, and a desire for safety, demand for local travel will be even stronger than it was prior to the crisis”

Allan Schweyer, Chief Academic Advisor, Incentive Research Foundation

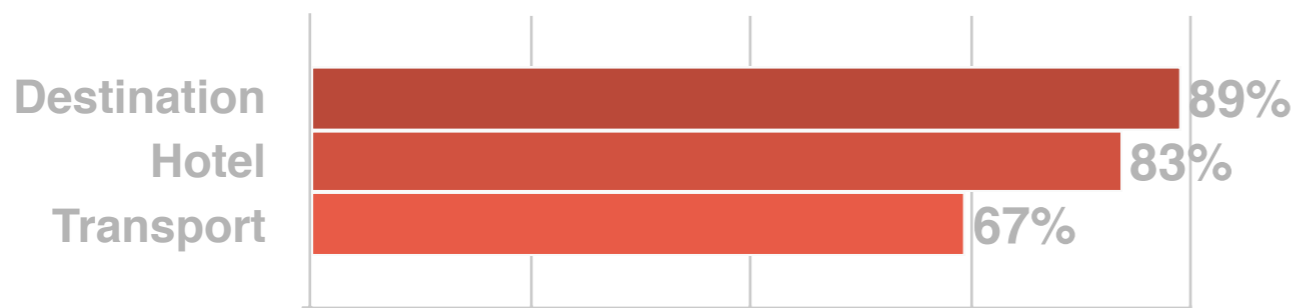
The importance of authenticity in post-COVID destination reviews

According to research by Stackla, 86% of people say they've become interested in a specific destination based on visual social proof. Noticeably, the type of social content matters; consumer-created photos are 1.8 x more likely to interest people in travel than images from a celebrity or social influencer. This is particularly true post-COVID.

Of the travel content published on social media, destinations lead, with 89% of respondents saying they would post an image online. But next is hotels and transport, with airlines the top sub category. The power of UCG is a real person, having a real experience, with a real smile – we can relate to this more than a staged photo or video created by a brand.

Of the six types of social proof, referrals from existing customers of a product comes first, followed closely by the advice of experts and referrals from friends.

Posts of travel experience, by category



6 Major Types of Social Proof



In fact, guest-generated content like TripAdvisor reviews is trusted seven times more than paid content. Plus the reward is non-monetary, unlike paid influencers, 87% of TripAdvisor reviewers “just want to share good experiences”

But there is a new kid on the block in the form of video blogging. Today YouTube videos are now more trusted than TripAdvisor reviews, due to the authenticity of the people creating the content. Large travel brands already partners with vloggers, but smaller companies can do so now too.



How to use fam trips to source visuals for your recovery campaign

Sourcing marketing content can be expensive and resource-intensive. Businesses are predominantly getting their content from a range of sources – both internal and external. The majority of businesses always or very regularly use internal design and creative teams to create visual content for their brand, as well as marketing agencies, in-house photography, user-generated content, and stock photography. The annual cost for your marketing content can be very high.

In-house user-generated content from fam trips can reduce your annual marketing cost dramatically and provide great return on investment

For destination marketers, fam trips can provide a great source of free and authentic new content for your marketing needs. Recent research has shown that when given the choice between two visuals – user-generated or brand-generated – the majority of people said the user-generated images were the most authentic, and more likely to make them trust the brand that posted it, and the most likely to be the image they would click on if both were featured in an ad or social post. Most marketers believe authenticity is the most important component of effective content.



Post-pandemic, this maxim is particularly true. Ad-weary audiences are increasingly looking for authenticity. Using your in-house team to provide visuals - video and photography from their fam trips will reduce your annual marketing costs dramatically and provide better results.

The kind of COVID-safe visual content travel staff should be collecting while on trips includes:

- Videos of socially distanced hotels
- COVID-safe product updates on preferred suppliers
- Safe attractions, sightseeing and experiences
- Videos of travellers at events wearing masks

Focus on local experiences when re-using as marketing collateral

For years, destination marketers have built itineraries around overseas travellers. Showcasing the kind of hero attraction and site seeing photo opportunities that a once-in-a-lifetime traveller would enjoy. These are also often the most profitable visitors, with high-spending habits.

However, for 2020 and 2021, the bulk of travellers to your destination will be domestic or short haul. These travellers will want to see different things to long haul travellers. As a consequence, your famil trips for domestic or short haul media need to reflect this trend.

By asking participants to upload their video and images to your gallery, they can do their bit to help tourism survive. Remind them that they are doing their bit to help.

“Even before fam trip participants fly home, they will be thinking about how to present their experiences.”

Linda Katharina Klein, Famil manager, Pro Sky

A 7-point guide to the perfect COVID fam trip

Familiarisation trips are crucial to get the revised conditions under which most destinations operate out to the wider public. Here are seven tips to ensure a successful trip maximises both earned and paid media.

1. Understand your target audience - domestic travellers
2. Be the host with the most - ensure masks and sanitiser are available for all those who require at all stages
3. Pack in the action - there is so much updated product to take in, write about, photograph and video
4. Prompt participants to take visuals as they travel. A picture is worth 1000 words and a video a million!
5. Ask participants to share their visual assets either on a voluntary or remunerated basis, to build your post-COVID image and video library
6. Focus on COVID-safety - It will be important to capture visual assets of social distancing, cleanliness procedures and other COVID-safe travel product updates
7. Most importantly, make it clear that you will credit participants' work if you go on to use their content in marketing activities. This could be repurposing their written content on your blog posts or their video clips in compilation destination reviews.



Visual content draws the crowds

The importance of visual content and especially the use of video in online marketing and social media has exploded in recent years. A Facebook executive has predicted that the social media platform will be all video by 2021*.

YouTube is now the world's second largest search engine and second most visited site after Google. It is also the second-most popular social media platform with 2bn users.

But many of the kind of travel-related searches on either Google Video or YouTube go unanswered as travel videos tend to be generic, whereas searches are specific. Travel companies now need to incorporate video in their social marketing strategies to reach those searching YouTube.

- Images are the single biggest content type on social media for travel channels (Ofcom, 2017)
- 100 million hours of video content are watched on Facebook daily (Facebook, 2016)
- 20% of people will read the text on a page, but 80% of people will watch a video (MyMSN, 2017)
- After watching a video, 64% of users are more likely to book a tour or attraction online (Forbes, 2017)
- Studies show that people have the ability to recall 65% of the visual content that they see almost three days later (Hubspot 2019)

*Hubspot - video marketing trends report 2019

Which social media tools to incorporate into your fam trip?

There are various tools that can be used in capturing visuals by fam trip participants. Some easy to use and some require more effort. Here's a round-up of some of our favourites.

Instagram

Instagram can be a fun way for participants to share pictures while they travel. It's also easy because everyone already has it. But photos and videos you share to your Instagram story disappear from your feed, profile and direct message tab after 24 hours, unless you add it as a Story Highlight.



Memories in Photos on iPhones

Memories is a neat new feature for compiling photos and videos into short movies or slideshows. The photos included in these short movies are added based on the time and place they were taken. Users can set a mood for the accompanying music and speed up or slow down the transitions.



Creating albums based on different trips is an easy way to organise and find photos. However, photos and videos take up a lot of memory. A good idea would be to transfer them to your laptop to free up your phone's memory.

Options for Android

If you want to make videos compilations of your trips with your Android smartphone or tablet, there are several Android apps for capturing, video making, video editing and enhancing your final movie right from your mobile device such as Kinemaster (free) and Wevideo (free) Check out Google Play Store for details.

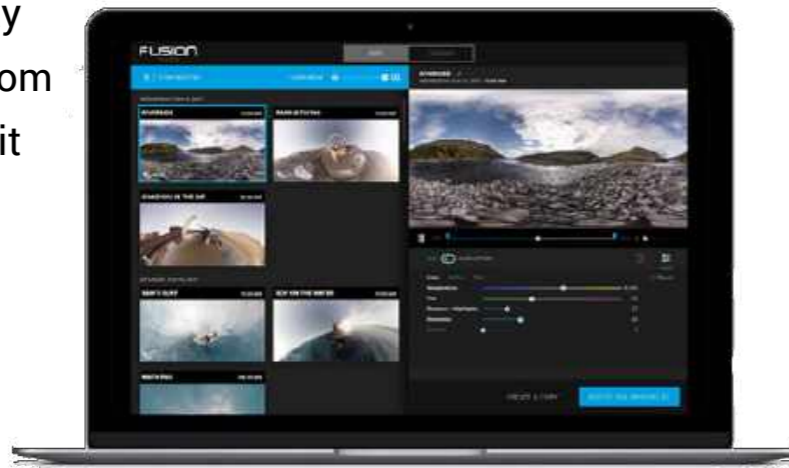


Desktop video editing platforms for marketing professionals

When your participants have sent you their videos from their phones, editing them together can be simple with a few browser-based video editors. Here's a sample of the best.

GoPro Fusion Studio

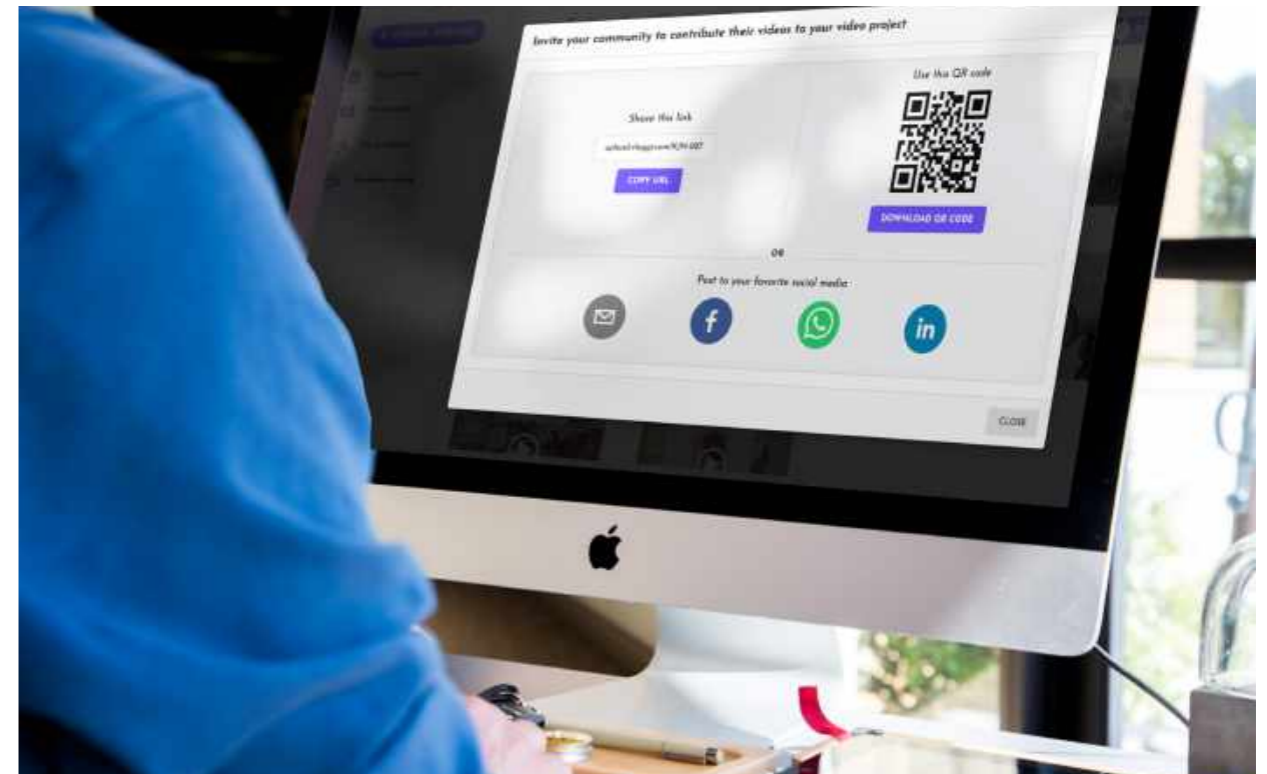
Provides a simple way to transfer footage from a GoPro and convert it to a longer video and add effects. It plugs into professional editing software like Adobe Premiere.



Promo



Promo provides a platform to create marketing videos with footage, music, and editor included. Use preset templates to create video adverts.



Vloggi

Vloggi is a collaborative video platform for marketers. It combines a crowdsourcing engine with a simple video maker.

Vloggi's suite of tools makes it easy for DMOs to source, brand and use video content created on famil trips.

Its technology automatically edits and brands, so you don't have to. The Vloggi uploader is an easy-to-use video upload tool for anyone to contribute video clips.

The platform also has a built-in video list, video diary and location detection capabilities, enabling you to make social media videos based on themes, dates or places.

When, what and how to post videos to social media

How often you should post depends on what platforms your audience is on, their schedules, and the kind of content you're posting. A great tool is an [editorial calendar](#).

Creating an editorial calendar will help save you time and manage your presence. You can keep track of what you need to post and what's already posted. It is important to choose a routine, be consistent and always offer value. Make sure you schedule posts to coincide with the content that will be generated from fam trips.

Here some guidelines of the length of video to be used in social media and some tips on posting. Why does video matter?

When it comes to social -- video is king. 90% of consumers say video helps them make buying decisions in 2018. Viewers who watch the first three seconds of a video are most likely to finish it. Videos with informative captions work best.

Make sure your videos are visually stunning so they can easily grab the attention of viewers. You can use apps like [Hyperlapse](#) or [Snapchat](#) to create fun and engaging video formats. Be sure to use plenty of relevant hashtags to facilitate easier discovery of your videos.

INSTAGRAM: 30 SEC

Random or disjointed content confuses your audience. Maintain a consistent brand aesthetic on your Instagram account. Post videos six times per week and include captions on videos for phone viewing.



TWITTER: 20 SEC



Twitter currently has a 30-second limit for video content. The average lifetime of tweet is only 18 minutes so post 10 times daily. You can upload animated GIFS for the best effect to automatically play in news feeds.

FACEBOOK: 90 SEC

Post once a day or less. If you have a large audience, you could probably get away with posting twice. Be selective about what you publish and create more engaging posts. You can post video series for consistency and to create a loyal following of fans.



YOUTUBE: 2 MINS



On YouTube, audiences engage the most with videos that are around two minutes. YouTube videos should be to cover a concept that would take a blog post 1,000 words to explain, making it perfect for trip reports or destination briefings.

How to publish videos to maximise your search engine optimisation

Once you have created a few videos, make sure you publish them correctly to reach customers.

Best practice is to publish first to YouTube or Vimeo, the two largest video distribution channels. From here, embed the link in your blogging software or newsletters. This ensures your video content appears not only on your channels but also when potential travellers search a term.

Every time you publish a blog post, it's a new opportunity for someone to find your destination. By investing in the creation of engaging content that helps answer questions for your target customer, you're establishing trust.

The same is true of video blogging. When you are clear who the kind of niche your destination is targeting, you can start creating video content tailored towards them. So if you want to reach gluten-free or female travellers, make them a series.

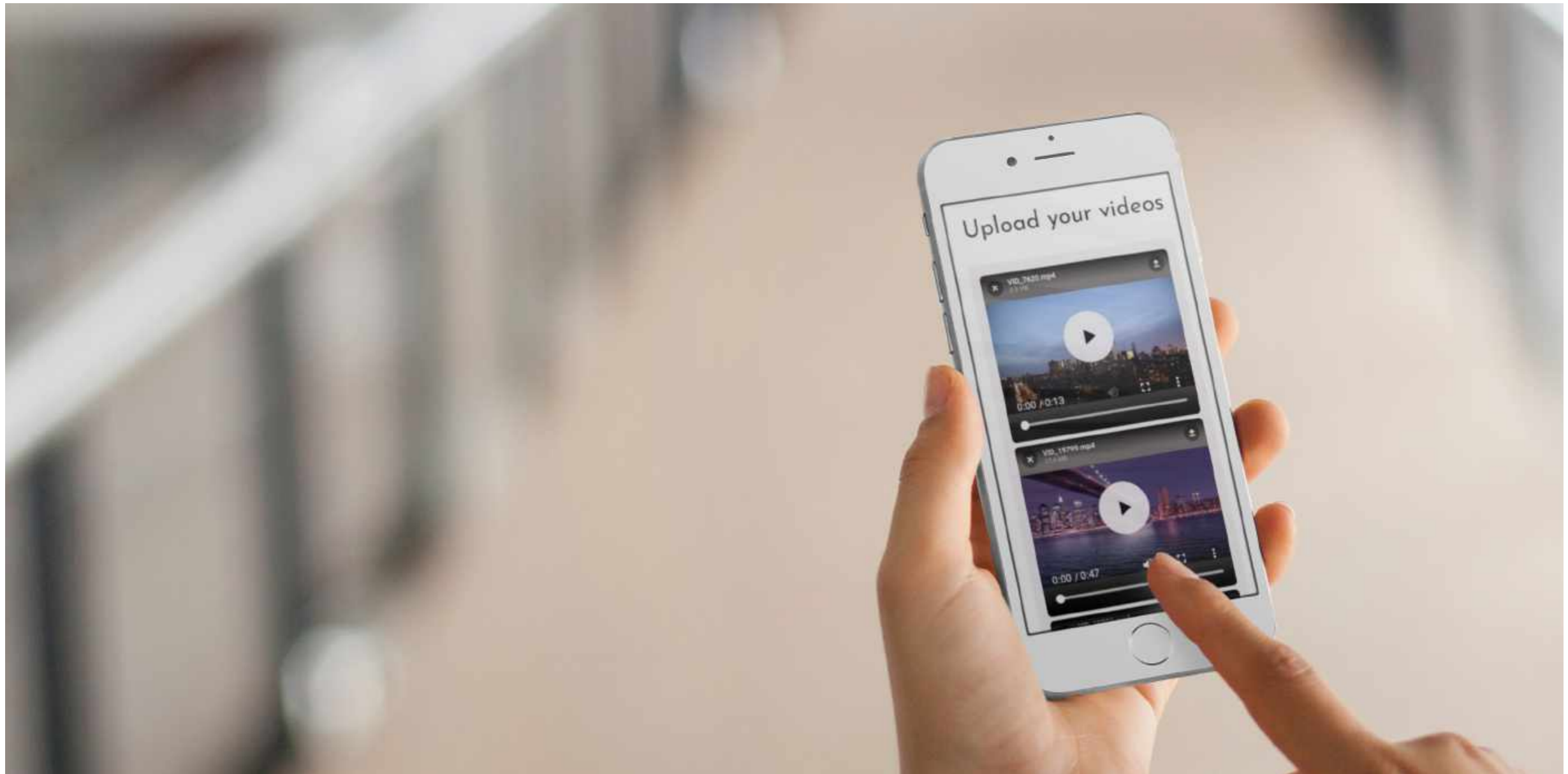


Combine multiple participant's clips

One of the most compelling content trends to appear in recent years has been the listicle. People like to group ideas and presenting in a list form make it easier to read.

Until now video lists have been hard to achieve. Vloggi makes that process easy, by automatically sequencing video clips from multiple locations or contributors together into short form branded video content.

From a single fam trip, you can source all the clips you need across many locations. The software also automatically creates a credit screen listing the contributors. Your participants will get a thrill out of seeing their video content used in your marketing, but you can remunerate or add a prize in order to incentivise participants to upload.



The Vloggi uploader works like a social media app, allowing anyone to upload video clips as they travel, together with caption and location

Vloggi is a tool designed for crowdsourcing.

The simple-to-use upload tool allows novices to record short video clips and add a caption as they travel. The destination marketing team can use the clips from the moment they are uploaded, or wait until the end of the trip to quickly build multiple buzz reels of the all the best bits for use communicating to their audience.

Contact us

To find out more about crowdsourced video for tourism, head to vloggi.com/tourism or contact Vloggi sales for a demo at sales@vloggi.com

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