

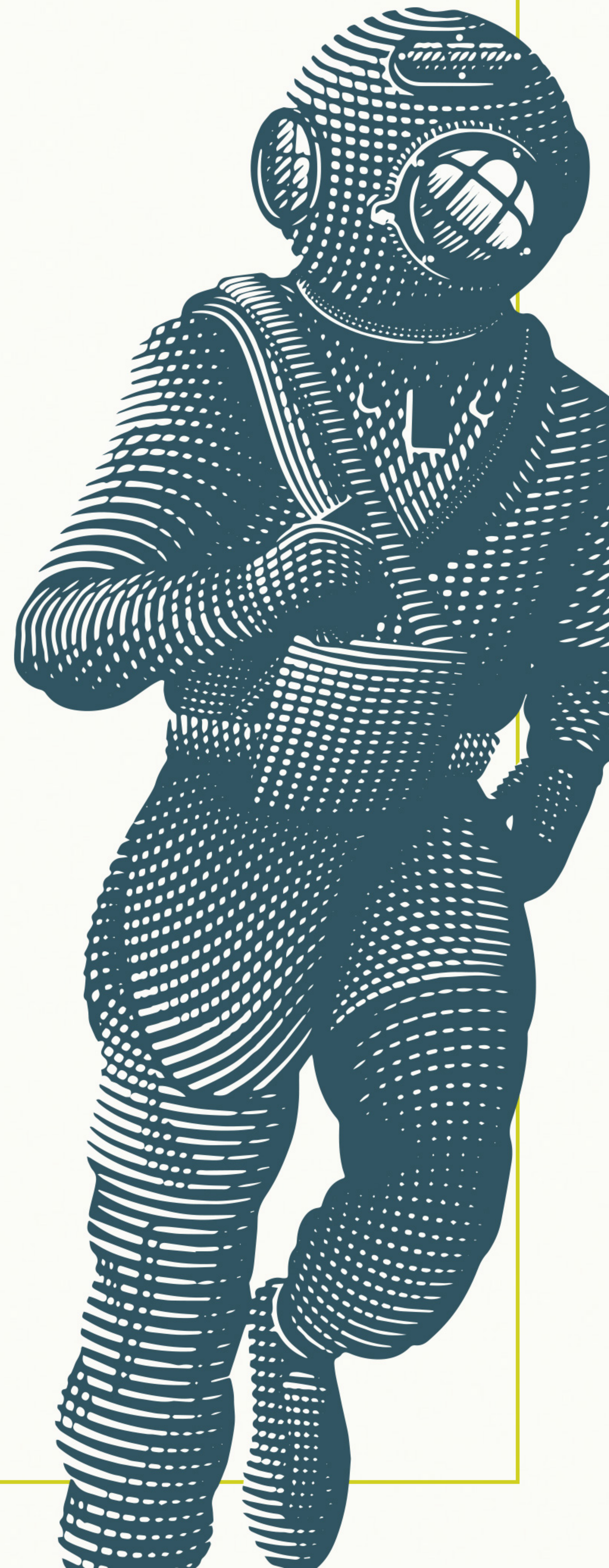


Key Storytelling Tactics to Drive Both Brand Awareness and Search

May 2017

PACIFIC

**THE
DISCOVERY
AGENCY**





Introduction

If you'd rather see something in action before clicking "book" or "buy now," you're not alone. Marketers create vivid narrative and context around brand messages to help you imagine how an experience with a product or service would play out in real life. This type of storytelling is essential to the buying and selling process.

At PACIFIC, we're all about curiosity and discovering new ways to connect brands and consumers. Through research, cultural awareness, and our own love of a compelling experience, we've integrated storytelling into our methodologies. Telling stories is an ancient and international custom, and the most effective digital marketing tactics.

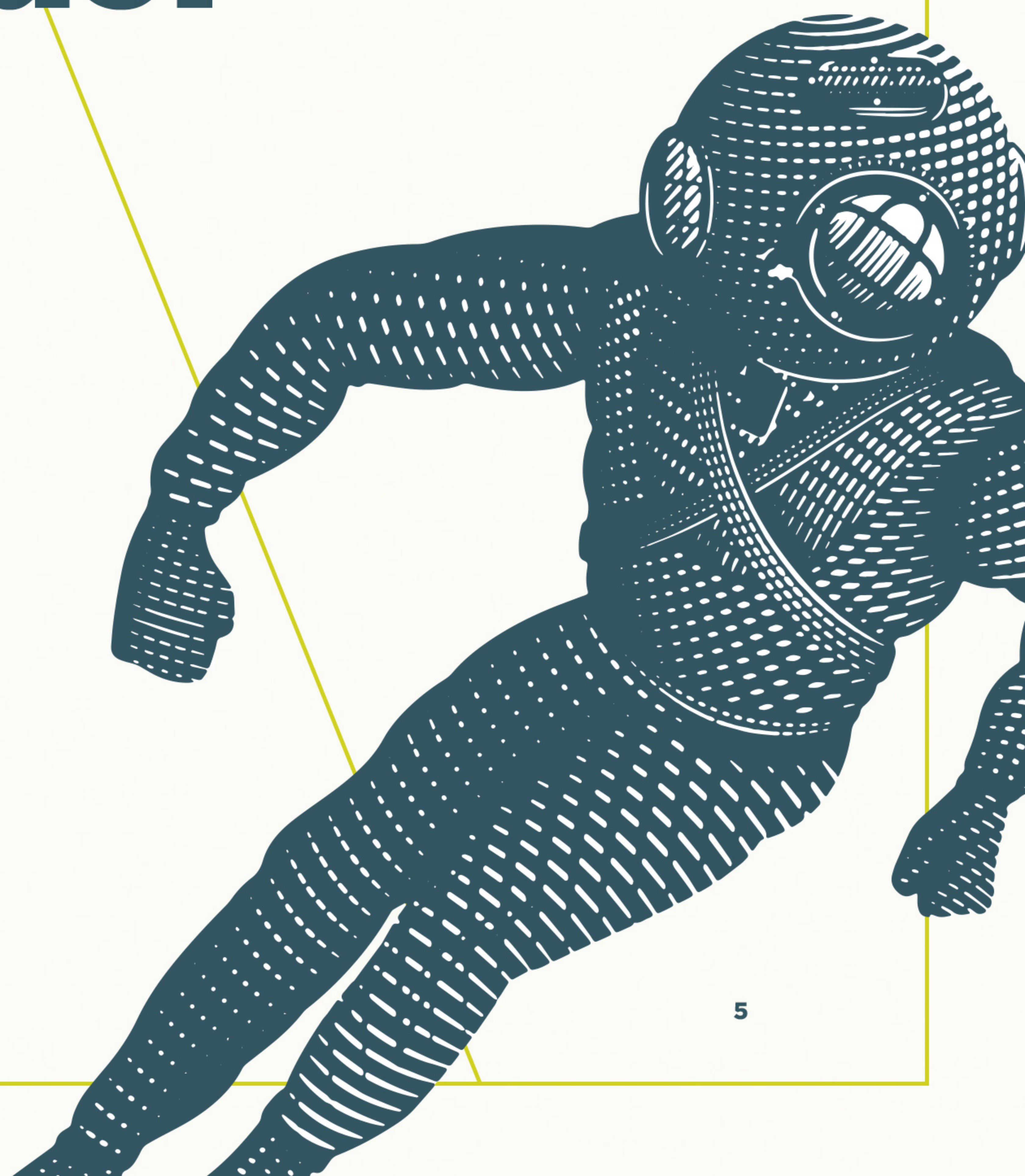
Storytelling raises SEO value by building brand awareness and authority, while appealing to consumers' desire for an experience they can get lost in, rather than a product that sits on the shelf.

Narratives Storytelling also offers a unique opportunity to incorporate local perspectives and cultural nuances, making a campaign or project more relatable and emotionally engaging.

In this article, you'll get insights into how building stories that are infused with cultural relevancy can drive traffic as much as brand awareness.



1. How Does Storytelling Raise SEO Value?





Gone are the days of endless product pages—and with them hundreds of ways to describe the same features—and here to stay are experience-centric stories.

This shift from sales pitch to framing a brand in a story has picked up traction in the past decade, and content marketers have integrated commerce with everyday life. Storytelling raises SEO value in several important ways:

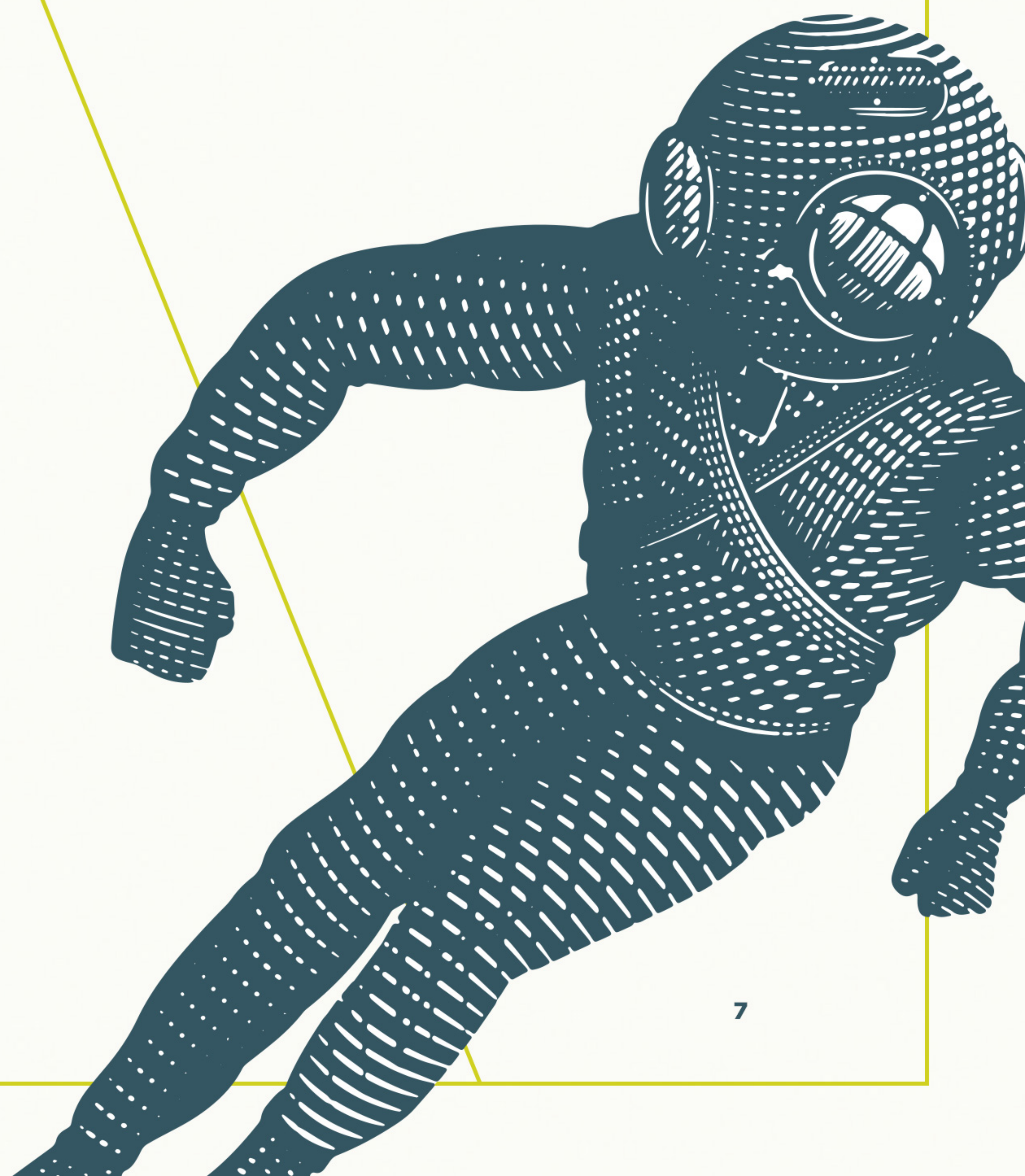
- **Storytelling is versatile.** In digital marketing, stories take many forms, from videos and photo journals to written narratives and user-generated content. They can be told from many perspectives and contexts, across all offline and online channels.
- **Storytelling elicits a positive physiological response.** In October 2014, Paul Zak reported for the Harvard Business Journal that when people experienced an advertisement in the form of a story, their bodies released cortisol and oxytocin, leading to an emotional and behavioral response: increased attention and a vested trust in the brand.

- **People enjoy the consumer journey more when they're told a story.** By 2014 Adam Weinroth at one spot reported that 92 percent of consumers prefer to experience an advertisement as a story.

- **Storytelling puts consumer experience first.** In May 2016, [Greg Hadden](#) wrote for Fast Company: “More than any kind of storytelling, content marketing gives powerful reasons to believe and to belong,” by blurring the distinction between products and the stories used to talk about them. Hadden calls this blending “marketing Zen.”

- **Storytelling is personal and relatable.** Many anthropologists today—including G. Brown at University of Arizona and B. Baltes, N. Maldonado, and M.M. McCullum at Walden University—posit that storytelling is integral in not just sharing experiences, but forming cultural identity.

2. Storytelling in Many Forms





Brands need to find a space in the digital sphere that works for them and fill it with stories. Take, for example, these brands, who use their medium of choice to create immersive experiences...and it pays off big time:

Promoting a Lifestyle

Storytelling often takes the form of aspirational copy, like you’ll see promoting Bkr water bottles:

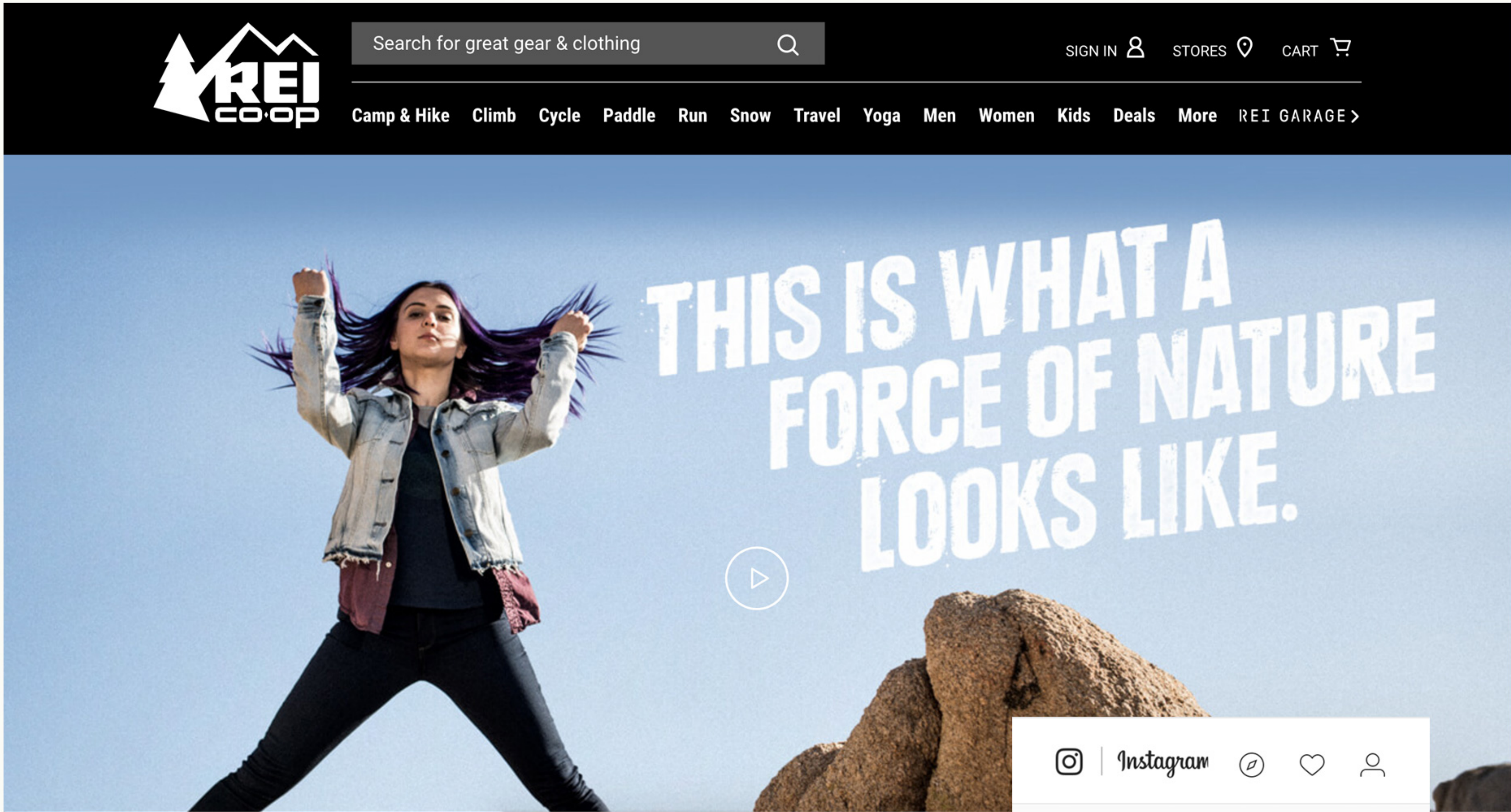


Inspired by the mazel of having the most gorgeous “I woke up like this” hair and that truly being the case, a razor-sharp wit combined with a beautifully unique aesthetic, architectural footwear, a giant tote full of secret treasures including a change of clothes and a journal, eating at Tim Ho Wan in a voluminous yellow smock and then cradling a Grüner Vetliner at a poetry reading on the LES, accepting and embracing individualism, a disinterest in perfection. If you’ve never eaten while crying you don’t know what life tastes like.

In the product copy above, a description of the water bottle in question is completely absent and saved for a drop-down tab. Rather than putting product details first, bkr is promoting a lifestyle and a scene. That water bottle is a key piece in a coveted experience, and it sells.



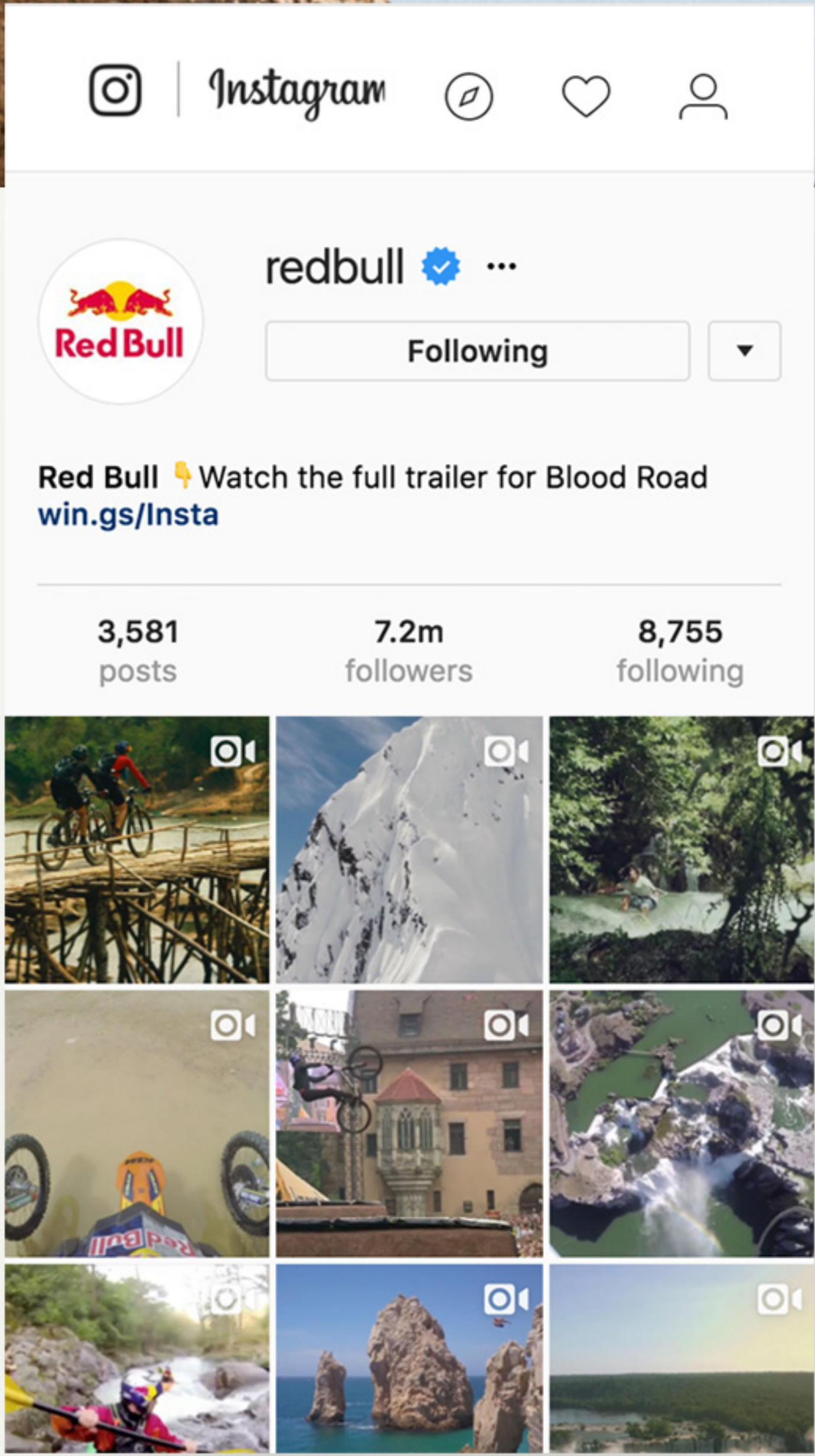
Fashion-forward water bottles may be a niche market, but bkr isn't alone in their approach. Outdoor experts, REI, have dedicated 2017 to featuring women outdoors, front and center. Rather than stacking their deck with product recommendations for women, their current campaign, **Force of Nature**, is a collection of first-person stories by women, for down-to-earth adventurers.



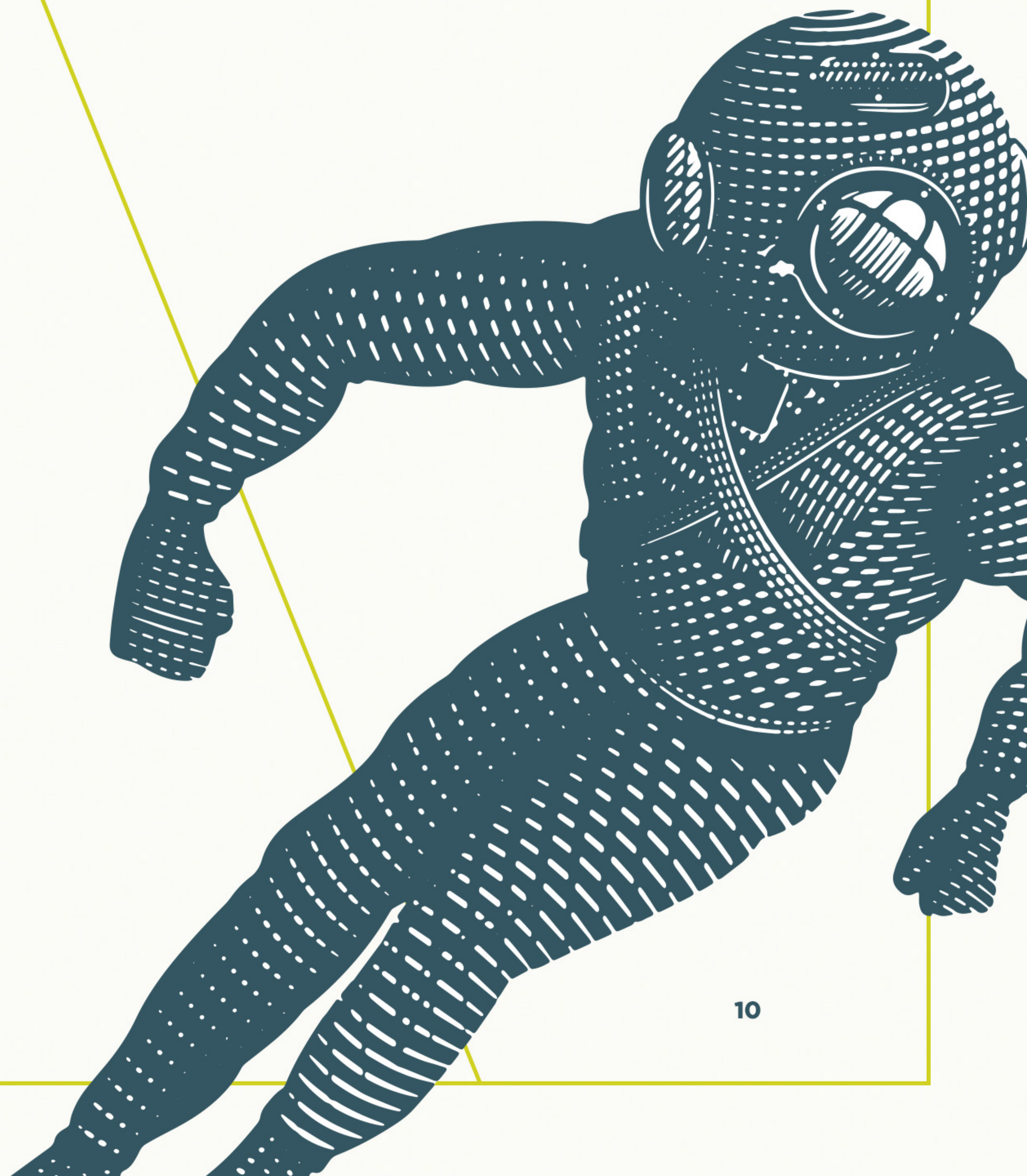
**Images sourced from REI co-op Website*

Using Shareable Visuals and Video

A few minutes spent scrolling through **Red Bull's Instagram feed** and YouTube channel, will confirm what we all know to be true: Visually captivating platforms are bothclickable and sharable. Red Bull isn't your finals-week breakfast of champions anymore. The brand shares videos and images ofprofessional and amateur athletes in action—snowboarding, mountain biking, climbing glaciers, jumping from space, and more—with the implication that these adventures are all fueled by Red Bull, and yours could be, too. The brand's 7.1 million followers dig it.



3. Use Case: Creating a Baja Story





A multimedia, multi-sensorial tour through the Baja Peninsula, Expedia Mexico's Baja Menu microsite was designed to inspire Mexican tourists to consider and book their next vacation.

Prior to building this campaign, Expedia Mexico had a big, multifaceted goal:

- to drive both domestic and international online traffic toward Expedia Mexico
- to convert clicks to bookings to the Baja Peninsula, an area that Mexicans don't usually see as a desirable travel destination
- to build a trustworthy online presence and authoritative travel brand

Engaging social listening and keyword research, showed that food tourism is on the rise around the world. This makes perfect sense, as sharing cuisine is one of the most immersive ways to experience a culture and connect with a community.

As we researched the Baja Peninsula from a foodie perspective, the Expedia Mexico team found a missed opportunity: the little known, but amazing cuisine and wine scene in Baja California.

Although international favorites, like the Caesar salad, margaritas, and fish tacos, were born in Baja, **Mexican travelers tend to see the state as a tourist destination for Americans, and less as the domestic cultural hub that it is.** It was clear we needed to tell a new, food-forward story about Baja, and we needed local voices to help us tell it.



Unique Brand Challenges

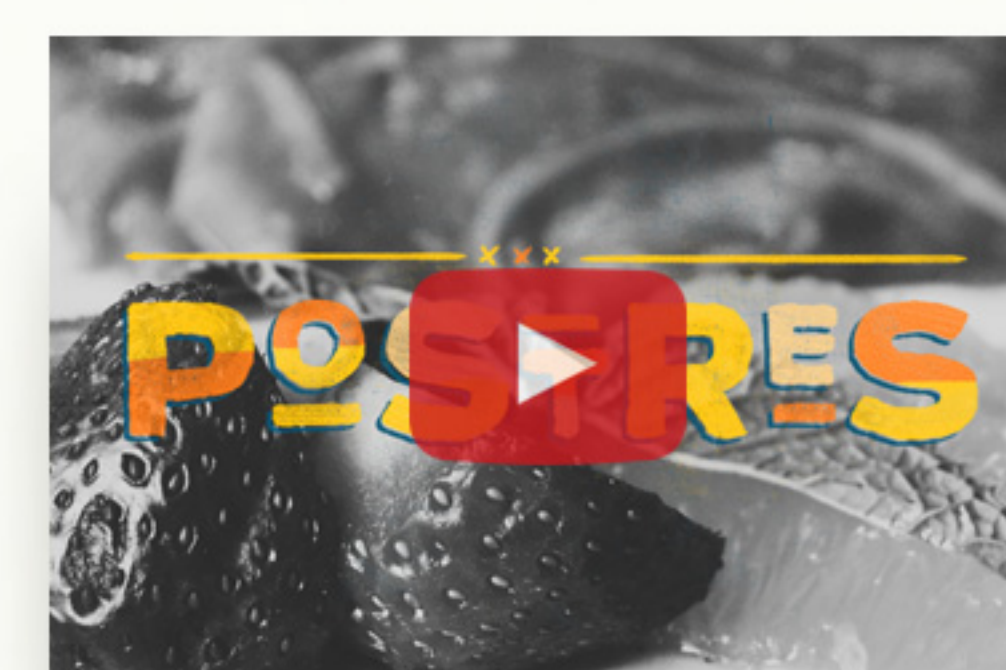
Expedia Mexico has faced an ongoing challenge—to build trust among Mexican travelers in addition to driving brand discovery and bookings.



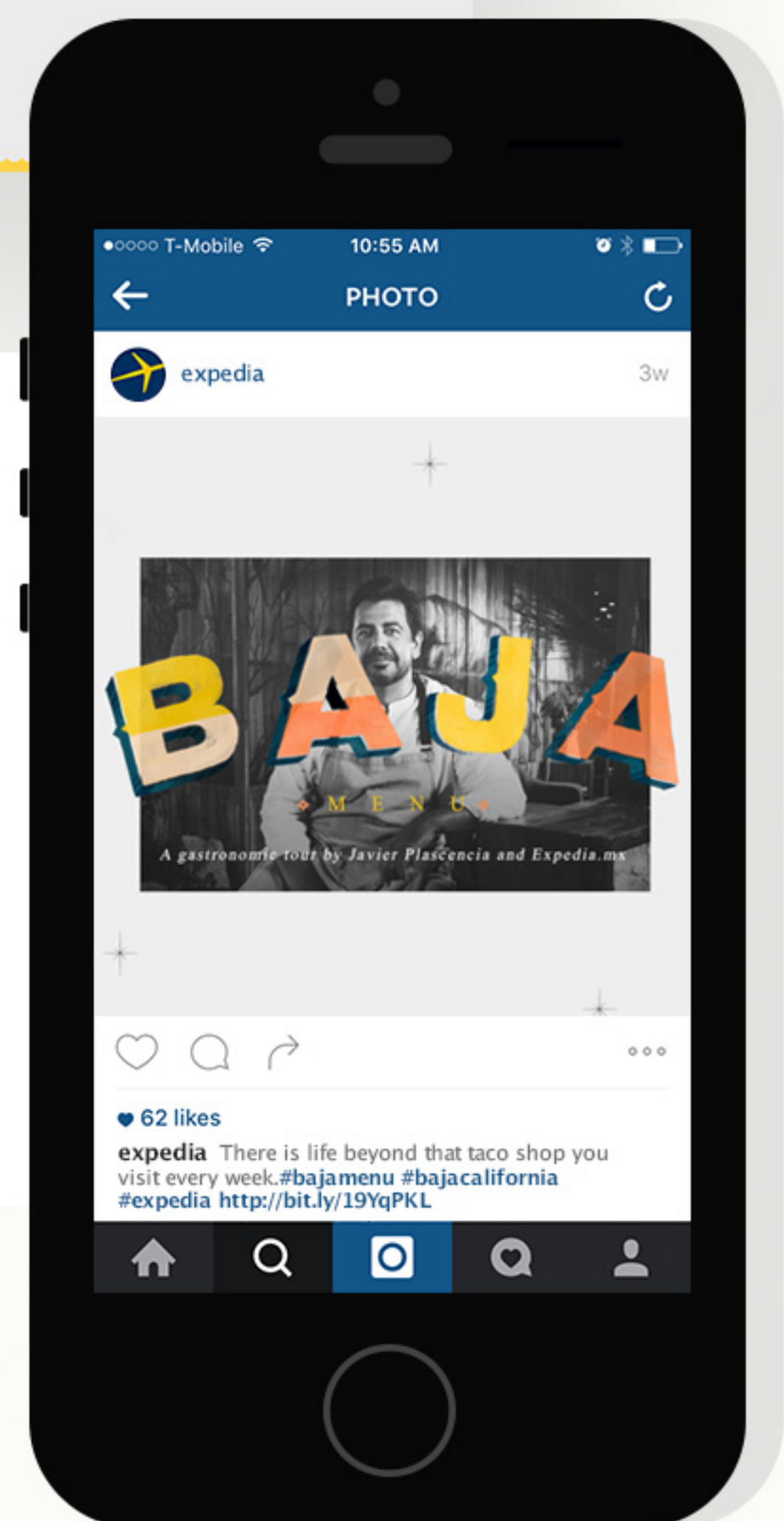
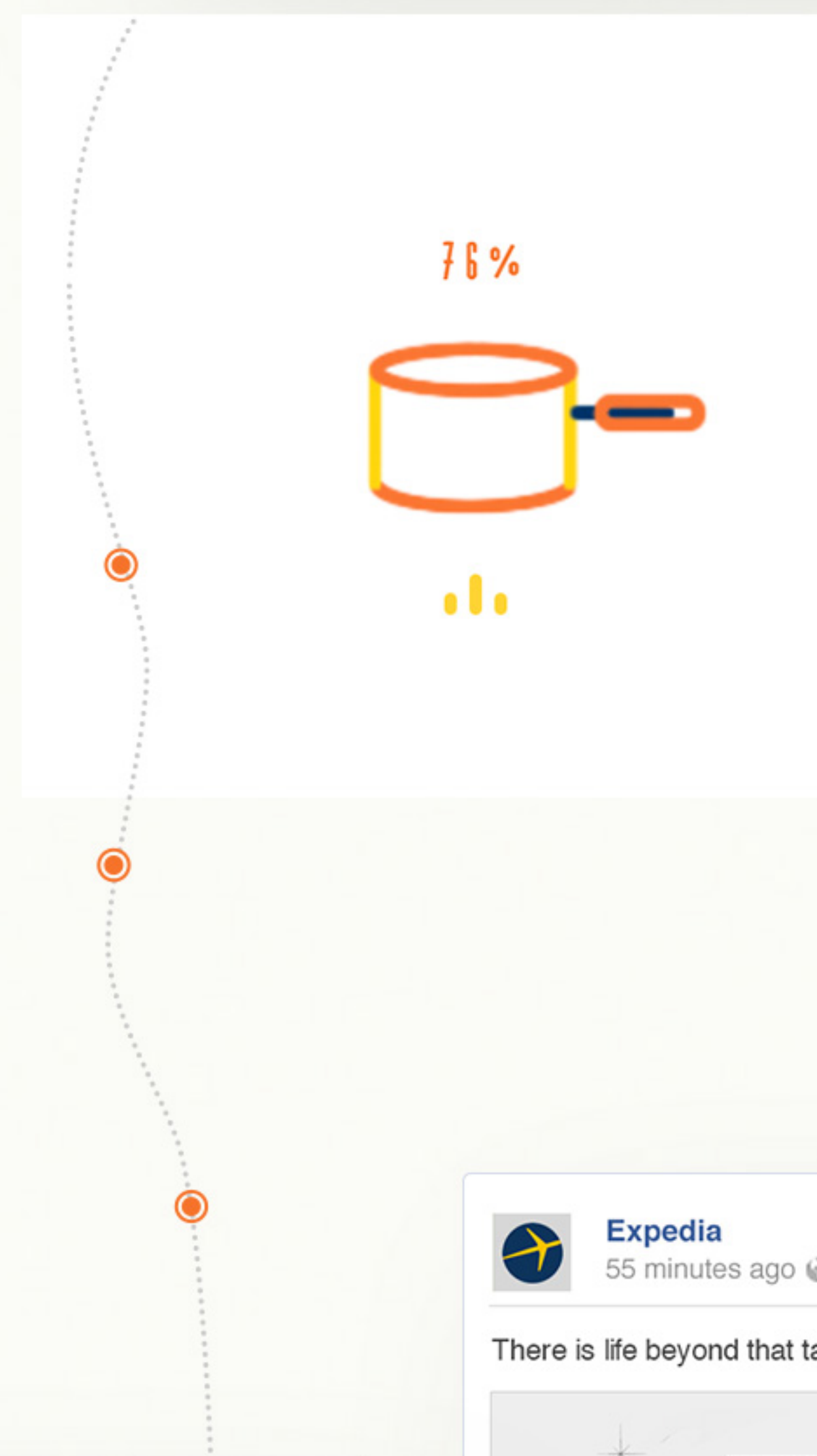
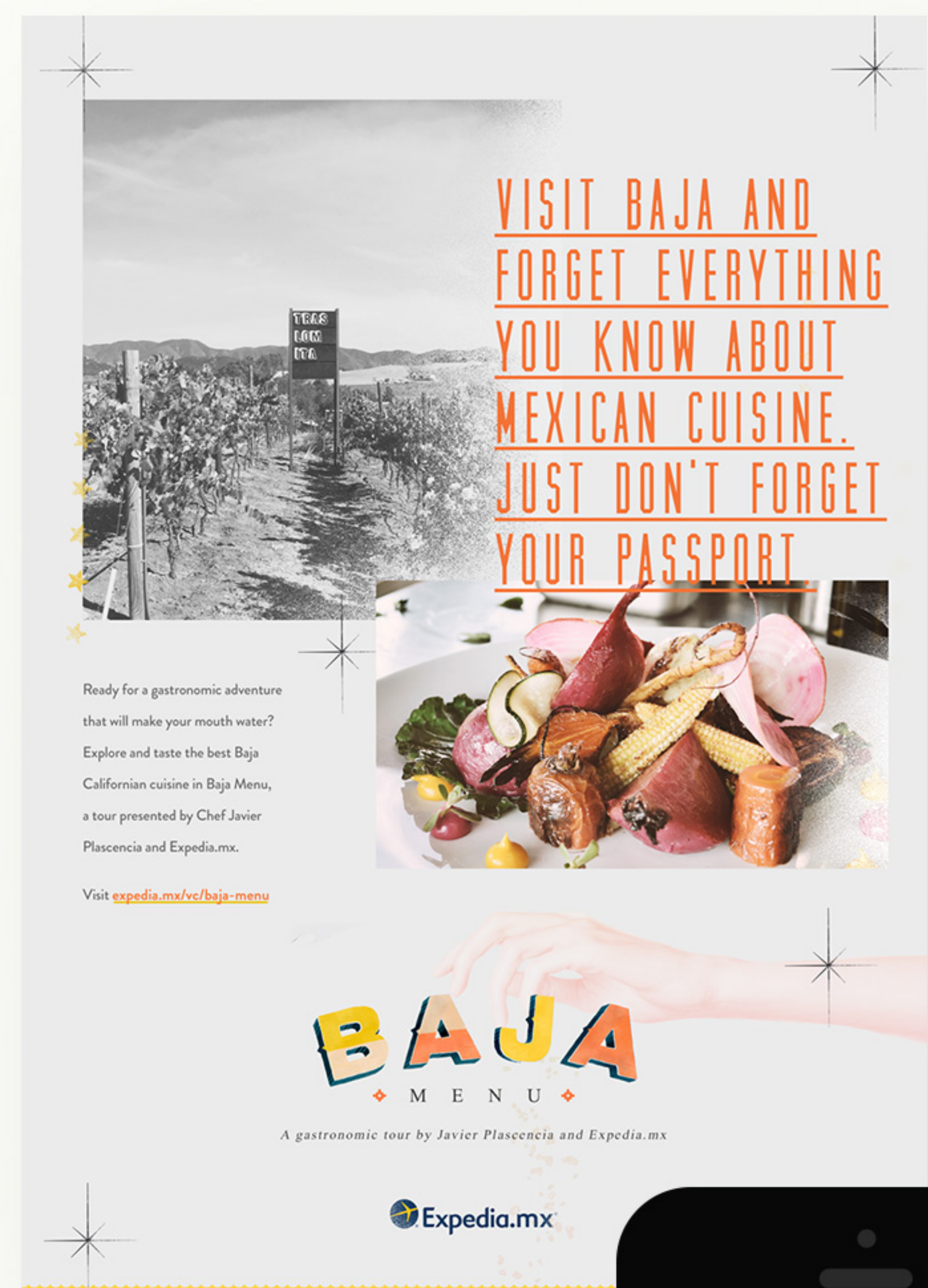
To develop this trust, we partnered with world-renowned chef and Tijuana native, Javier Plascencia. We approached the Baja Menu campaign with an interdisciplinary collaboration that we call the **PACIFIC One Story** process. Together, with multi-channel research and Plascencia's expertise and local perspective, we built more than a travel campaign.

Utilizing custom video guides, vibrant graphic designs, and personably written content, **Baja Menu became an interactive and engaging resource on the region's culinary history and innovation.** Potential consumers experienced Baja's food and culture through the personable and knowledgeable perspective of a local legend.

Check out the videos below:



Storytelling may have the connotation of spinning tall tales by the fire, but this content strategy drives both **SEO value and reader engagement.** Baja Menu incorporates well-placed keywords in the context of engaging content.



Content is king. If you have interesting, compelling content, you'll get a following and attract interest... People are much more interested in reading a story than reading a sales pitch.

- Andrés O'Donnell, **PACIFIC SEO Manager**



Surrounded by so many possible ways to engage with Mexicans, **our team, including culture experts and Baja locals, chose to combine visual, video, and written media to tell a multifaceted, immersive story.** As PACIFIC Communication Specialist Sayori Vasquez points out, “You go to one page and you have everything there.”

Baja Menu is a full meal. Not only did our SEO practitioners and UX developers categorize the journey by courses in a meal, but they very carefully selected locations according to search priorities that would bring readers to the page and guide their linking on the site.

Travel along with Javier Plascencia’s expert advice on a gastronomical tour through food cart parks, established restaurants, and working kitchens alike.



By showcasing local chefs, ingredients, and vendors in a “real-life” context, Plascencia helped create a story that was unmistakably for Mexican travelers.



More than a social influencer, Javier Plascencia is also a gastronomical thought leader, which moved consumers toward Expedia’s campaign and to the brand as a whole.

As for measuring the results of Baja Menu, the goals and outcomes were less focused on ranking, and much more reputation-centric—qualitative more than quantitative. Because Expedia’s goal was to drive traffic and booking within the Mexico market, raising brand awareness was a foundation-building step.

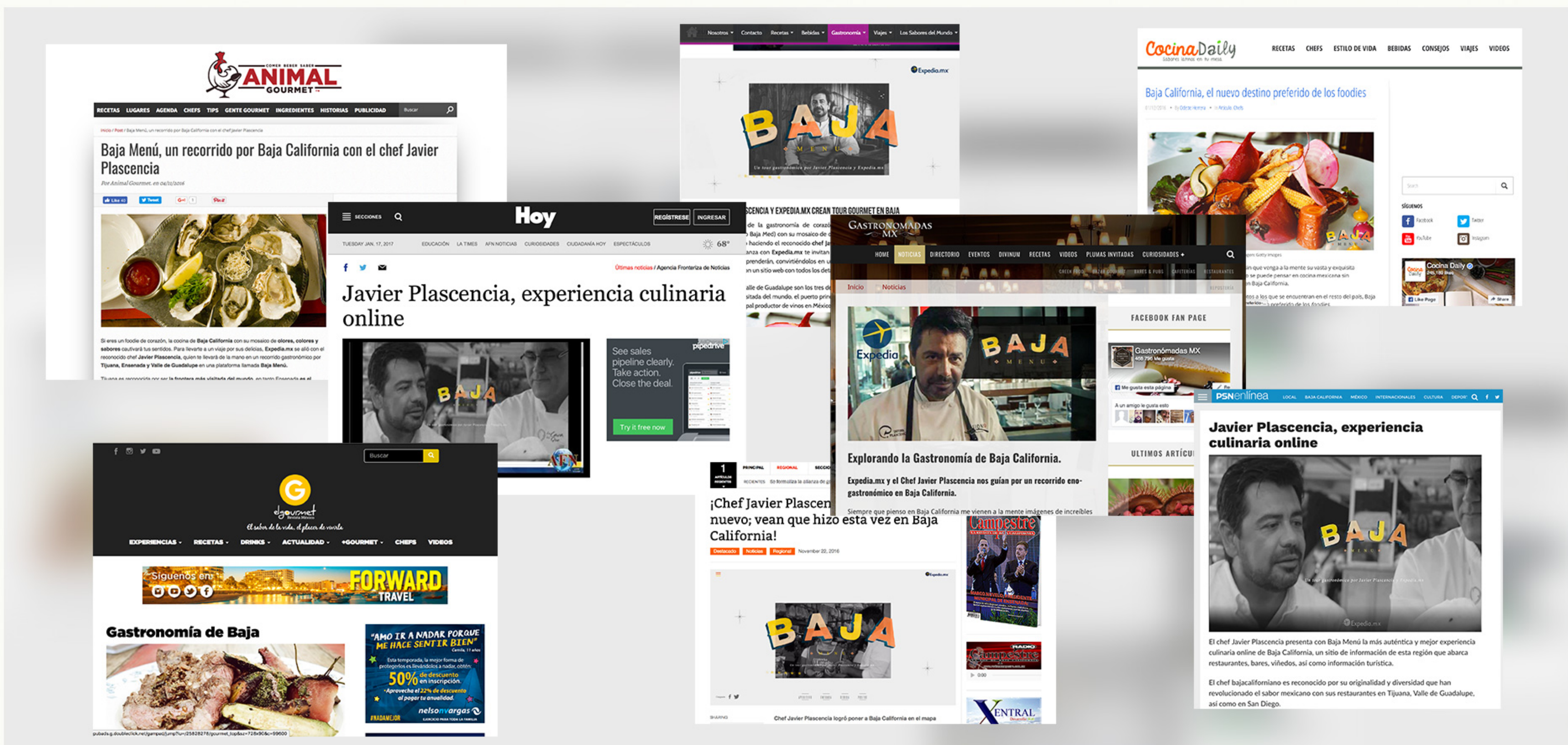
Although SEO strategy is usually equated with stats and search volumes, Baja Menu’s SEO value lies in connection Expedia can make with consumers’ emotions through storytelling, in addition to any sales conversions this strengthened relationship may compel travelers to make.



Conclusion

Throughout the process of producing and sharing Baja Menu, the effects of storytelling were important assets, especially in developing a localized brand presence and industry authority.

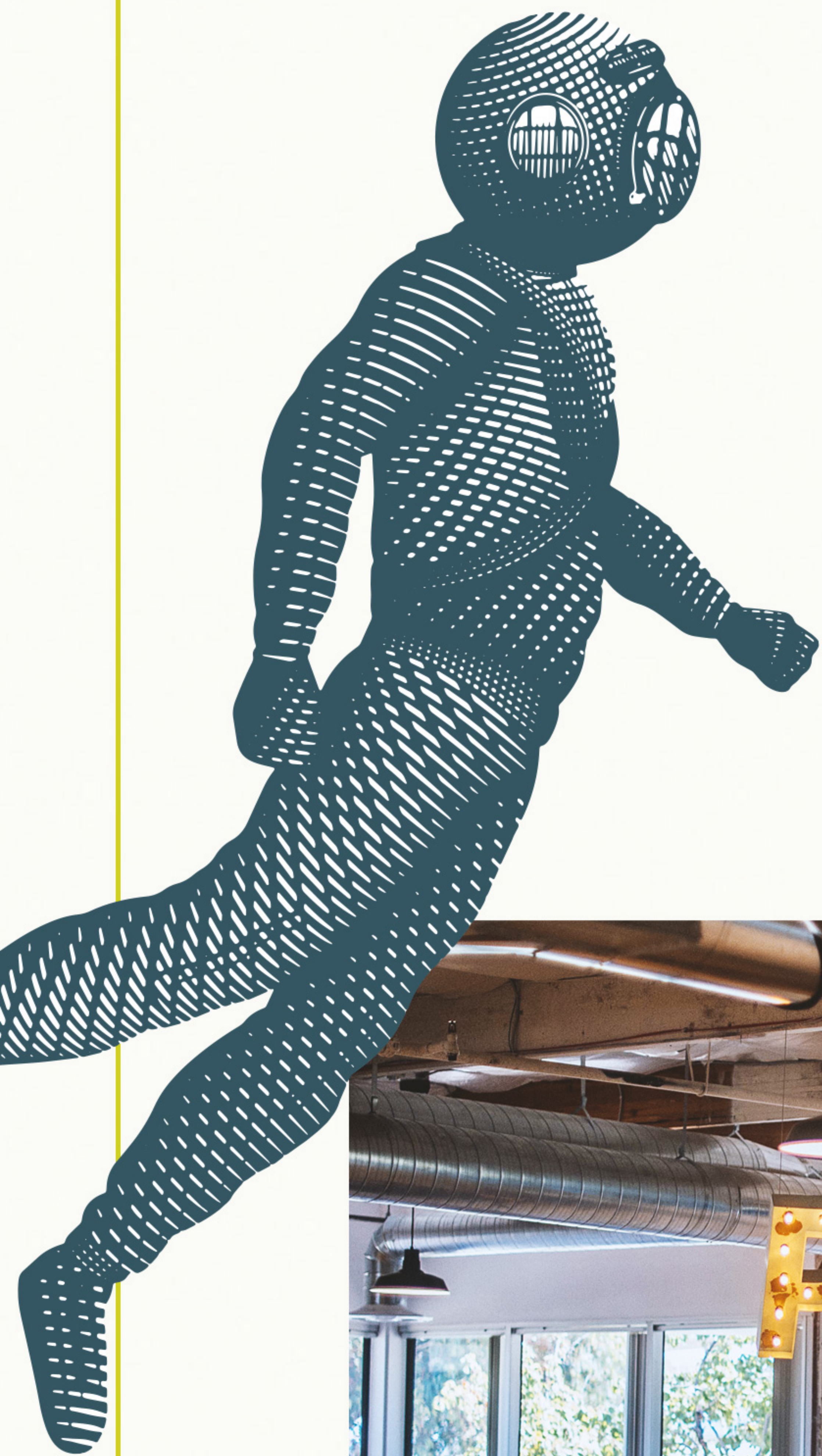
Baja's amazing gastronomical offerings shined in the historical accounts, restaurant visits, and cooking demonstrations. By carefully creating and composing a multimedia experience with custom content and insider points of view, we helped Expedia Mexico's clients see an established travel destination through a new lens. Baja Menu shows site visitors what they're missing—and one shot of Javier Plascencia sipping an Old Fashioned at Caesar's says it all.



**Have you combined
storytelling and
cultural insights
tactics to drive search?**

We can help.

Contact us to learn more



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We are **PACIFIC**, the Discovery Agency. As experts on curiosity, we craft multi-channel inbound search marketing campaigns that help our clients align their brand story with the questions their customers are asking. With a client list that includes Expedia, Travelocity, Jacuzzi, Mint, Microsoft, and others, we build campaigns that deliver incredible results. For more information, visit www.meetpacific.com

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