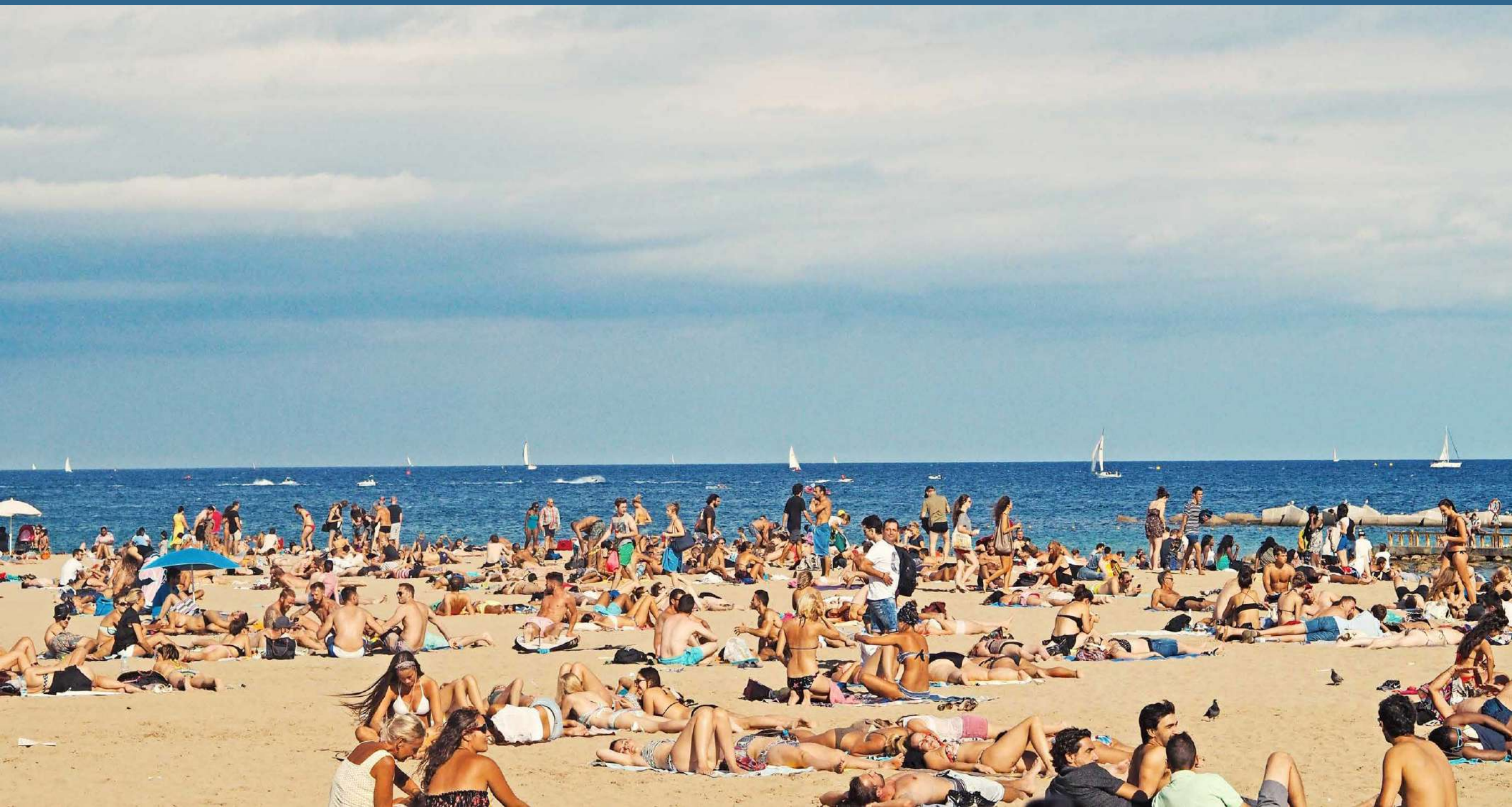
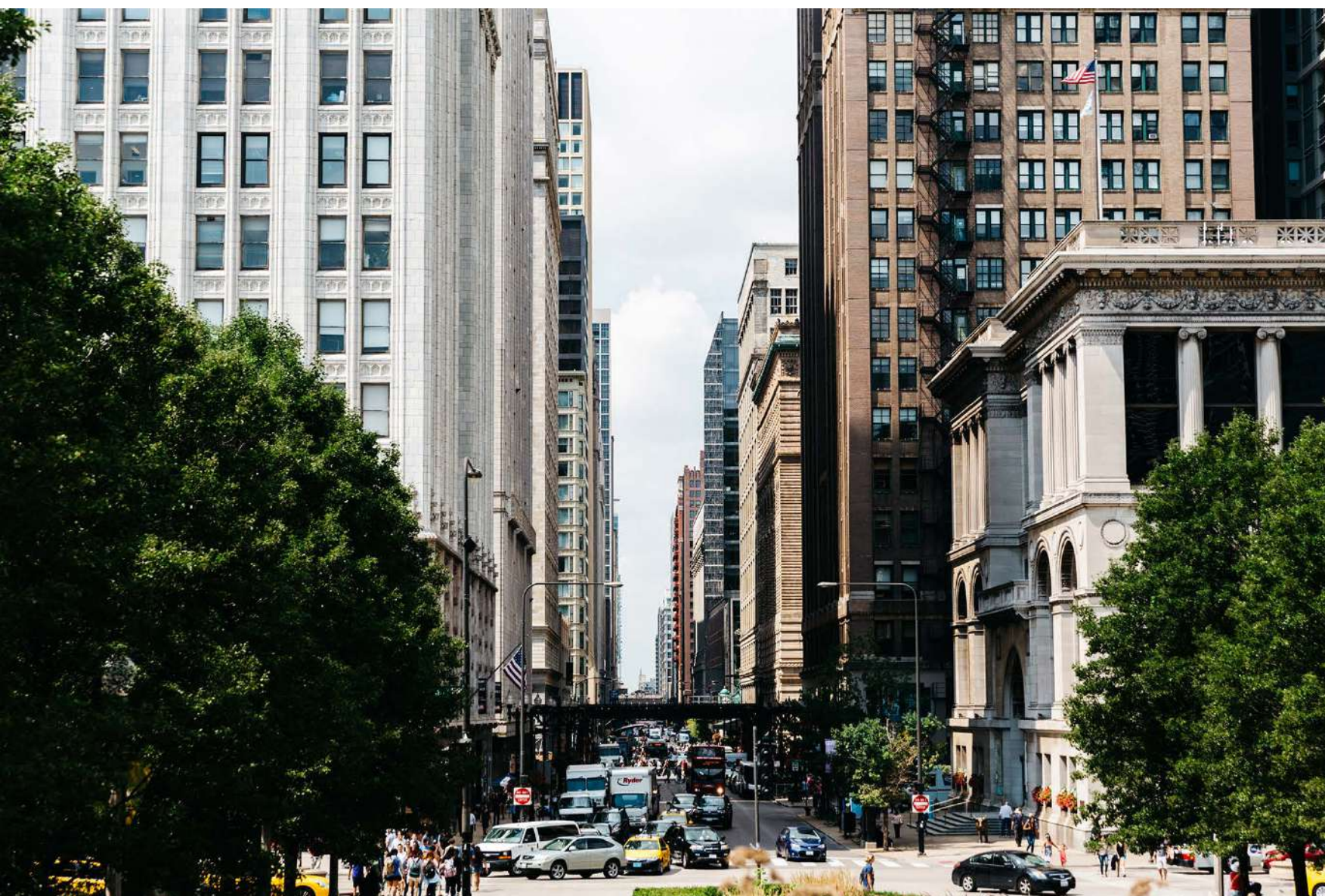




THE INTERNET IS A NOISY PLACE! HOW TO CULTIVATE AN AUDIENCE IN A CROWD

Quick Guide
Written by Kevin Kleitches





Photograph by Kevin Kleitches

Indeed, the Internet is a noisy place.

In fact, it's the noisiest it's ever been.

As of July 2017, Instagram has over 800 MILLION monthly active users. Facebook reports over 2 BILLION monthly active users. And those numbers are growing.

With so much content being posted, is it even possible to get noticed anymore?

Thankfully, it absolutely is.

Not only that, but what if I told you that it's possible to build a loyal following, meet tons of other creative individuals just like you, and even find paying clients without spending a dime on advertising?

With a proper strategy, all of that is achievable.

But if you're like most photographers, you might not know where to start.

Where do you find people? What's the best way to engage them? Which "hashtags" should you use?



Photograph by Kevin Kleitches

Here's what you'll learn today to help you cultivate an audience for your photographic work:

- Why creating value is absolutely necessary
- The power of Facebook groups
- How to optimize your Instagram hashtag strategies to build an audience

Ready to start growing your tribe?

Let's get to it.

⚠ Note: For any Internet newbies out there, a "tribe" is your followers. A "hashtag" is an Internet device used to "direct" your posts toward a potential audience.

👤 Recommended Reading: If you'd like to improve your composition skills for better images, grab a copy of Photzy's best-selling premium guide, [Advanced Composition](#).

WHY CREATING VALUE IS CRUCIAL

Let's set the record straight.

In order to attract an audience, you absolutely **MUST** have good content.

If you're not creating value in your content, you're missing the most important ingredient to developing an audience.

It's like trying to make banana bread without bananas. It just won't work.

However, posting solid, properly exposed, well-composed images just isn't enough these days.

You need to ensure that people are taking away something whenever they view your work.

The best way to make that happen is to **use a caption.**

Here are a few ways to do it:

- 1) Share your camera settings within the caption – Your audience most likely consists of a good percentage of people who are photographers themselves. If you're sharing a killer image, then there's a great chance that someone out there will be curious about the settings you used to get the shot. Sharing your lens selection and camera settings are a great way to help others out. **(You're adding value!)**
- 2) Tell a story – How often do you scroll past images on Instagram, Facebook, Flickr, or 500px that have one-word captions? Boring, right? Too many people take their caption space for granted. Instead of using the same words and phrases that other people are using, **why not tell a story instead?** Engage your audience by sharing something interesting or funny that relates to the photograph somehow. Talk about how you almost got kicked out of the place you were shooting at, or your thought process behind the shot. People love stories, so why not indulge them? **(You're adding value!)**



Screenshot by Kevin Kleitches

*A recent interaction in a photography group
where I shared the details of my shoot.*

- 3) Share a helpful tool – I recently educated my “tribe” (my audience) about the importance of tracking their mileage for business purposes. It turns out, many of them didn’t know that as of 2018, you could deduct up to 54.5 cents per business mile. In my Instagram caption I shared a tool that I use. It’s an app called “MileIQ.” The app automatically detects, and tracks, my driving.

Here's a screenshot of the post where I shared this tool:

kevintitusphoto Photographers and models: Raise your hand if you rack up miles on your car when you're driving to coffee shops, shoot locations, and meeting up with other creatives to collab! 🙋

•

Did you know that you can write off 54.5 cents per business mile that you drive? I drove a ton last year, and because I tracked all my mileage, I'll be getting back thousands of dollars around tax time.

•

I'll be visiting Charlotte for some shoots soon and I'll get back \$115 EACH WAY. [#knowledgeispower](#) my friends. Get your money!

•

There are lots of apps out there that help you track your mileage. I use MileIQ, which is free for 40 drives a month, and \$6/mo for their unlimited drives plan. Use the link in my profile to sign up for free! Thank me later. 😊 .

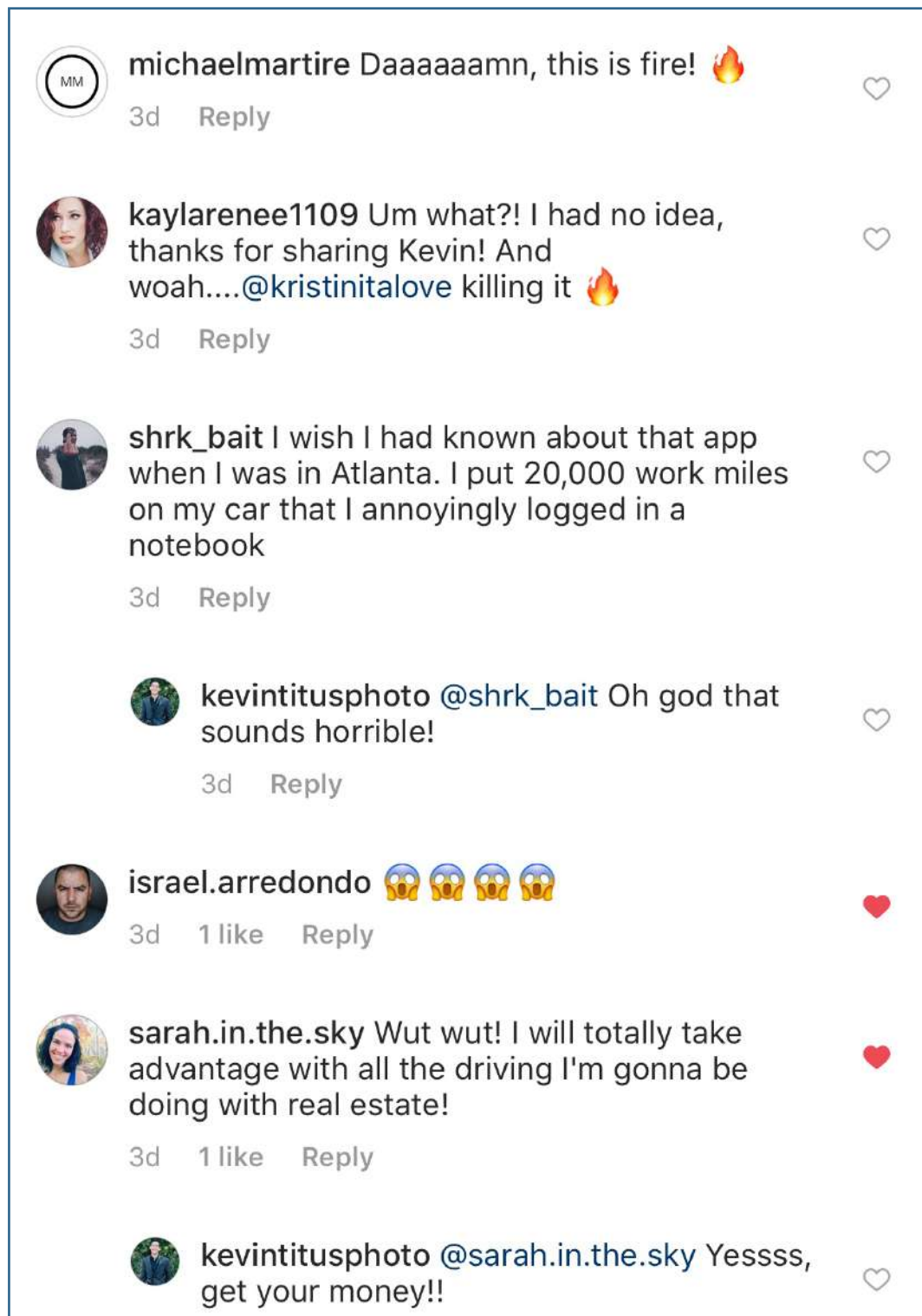
Screenshot by Kevin Kleitches

Now, here's a look at the insights/statistics that I received from that post:

❤️ 782	💬 19	🔖 21
Actions		
52 Actions		
Profile Visits		50
Follows		0
Discovery		
12% of accounts that saw this post weren't following you		
Reach		3,471
Impressions		4,567
From Home		4,056
From Explore		131
From Profile		91
From Other		289

Screenshot by Kevin Klatches

Did you notice how many people discovered me from the Instagram Explore page?





Screenshot by Kevin Kleitches

Check out some of the great interactions that I received!

That's quite a lot of new eyeballs on my post.

Sharing a helpful (and especially FREE) tool that people could use immediately undoubtedly played a huge part in why that post performed so well!

 **Key Lesson:** When mentioning any helpful resources that you use, why not see if "said resource" is on Instagram, and then tag them in your post? Sometimes brands will repost your image when you do that, which will serve your content up to an entirely new audience who otherwise wouldn't have discovered you!

 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to improve your composition skills for better images, grab a copy of Photzy's best-selling premium guide, [Advanced Composition](#).

THE POWER OF FACEBOOK GROUPS



Photograph by Kevin Kleitches

Let's talk about Facebook groups.

There's a Facebook group for virtually anything and everything now.

Just now, I thought of three completely random niches off the top of my head: Detroit mechanics, vegan moms, and Asian photographers. Sure enough, there's at least one group for each of them!

In the past two years alone, being active in Facebook groups has been a major contributor to the growth of my blog and business.

As a result, I've landed consulting contracts, paid blogging opportunities, and I have networked with hundreds of like-minded creatives.

Just last month I was in Miami for the first time and I called up a friend whom I met in a Facebook group for Fuji users.

We got together for dinner and he showed me around Miami. It was awesome!

But (!!) just joining random Facebook groups and spamming them with your photography isn't a good strategy.


Here are four best practice tips for using Facebook groups to your advantage:

1. DIVERSIFY YOUR COMMUNITIES

When choosing which groups to join, consider the different niches that might exist. For example, I live in Wilmington, North Carolina, and I shoot with Fuji and Sony. I also specialize in portrait and editorial-style photography. Let's think of a few groups we could research given those characteristics:

- Wilmington photographers
- North Carolina photographers
- Fuji shooters
- Sony shooters
- Portrait photographers
- Fashion/editorial photography
- Fuji portrait photography
- Sony portrait photography

Are you seeing the possibilities here?

 **Key Lesson:** Make sure you join at least two or three local groups to maximize the chances of picking up work in your area. You're much more likely to get hired by someone if you're local.

2. APPROACH WITH THE MINDSET OF GIVING VALUE!

It's best not to jump into a group and share links to your website right away.

Instead, use the same strategy as you would for your Instagram, Flickr, or 500px posts. **Leverage your caption space** to share camera settings, your creative process, or the story behind the photo you took.

Whenever you post something, ask yourself, "Would anyone find this post helpful or inspiring?"

Don't put too much pressure on yourself, though; not every post you create is going to be earth shattering or profound. Just aim to create value whenever you contribute.

3. INTERACT WITH MEMBERS

Being a part of a community is about so much more than sharing your own work and expecting everyone to grovel at your feet.

Get to know the other creatives! Feedback is invaluable. If someone posts a question that you can answer, help them out.


Also, it's CRUCIAL to reply to comments on your posts. Take the time to thank people who compliment your work. Remember, a little effort goes a long way.


Recently, I responded to a comment on one of my posts, only to discover that the person I was corresponding with was the owner of a fashion agency in my state! We ended up arranging a shoot together, and I've worked with several of their models since then.

4) GIVE PEOPLE A CALL-TO-ACTION

You want to be careful with this recommendation, as some Facebook groups specifically state that you aren't allowed to share links.

But for those that do allow it, leaving your website URL or Instagram handle as part of your "signature" (at the bottom of the posts you make) can be a great way to get new site traffic and followers.

 **Important Note:** Make sure you've contributed enough value into the group before doing recommendation #4. If your posts consistently get good engagement through likes and positive comments, you're on the right track.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to improve your composition skills for better images, grab a copy of Photzy's best-selling premium guide, [Advanced Composition](#).

HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR INSTAGRAM HASHTAG STRATEGIES

There's a lot of speculation about the Instagram algorithm. What factors affect your reach with a post to the site? In my personal experience, following these three strategies will help ensure you have healthy engagement from your followers.

1) KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Who are you trying to reach? Knowing your target demographic is crucial to successfully increasing your reach, engagement, and conversions (whether that's someone who wants to book you for a photo shoot, pay you for a promoted post, or even sending you free swag).

The biggest mistake that most people make on Instagram is not having any idea who they want to attract, so they just throw a bunch of hashtags together and hope for the best. (Does this sound like you? If so, don't feel bad. I was guilty of this too!)

❗ Note: For the Instagram newbies, a hashtag looks like this #. You place this symbol in front of a word or phrase. Here is an example: #portraitphotography. Anyone using Instagram who has an interest in portrait photography would click on the search window and type:

#portraitphotography. This would bring up all of the portrait photography posts that were hashtagged with #portraitphotography (including yours). One other way that an Instagram user can access a hashtag is by simply clicking on it within a post. They may have never heard of you, click on #portraitphotography in a completely random post, and when they arrive at the destination page they may see your hashtagged image! Boom! Perhaps you have a new follower.

Think about the kind of photography you do and the value you create. Who's your customer? Is it newly engaged couples looking for wedding photographers? Or actors and actresses looking for updated headshots? Or fine art poster publishers looking for new content?

Make sure you're targeting your hashtags toward your specific niche and the audience within it.

2) DIVERSIFY YOUR PORTFOLIO

Many photographers are guilty of only using super generic hashtags that have well over a million posts. The outcome of that practice is that their images are quickly buried by following posts. Someone who browses those hashtags won't see them because they are way down in the feed, giving them practically no discoverability.

Think of hashtags as a mutual fund. (If you know nothing about mutual funds, just bear with me, as this is an easy analogy.)

You want to diversify your chances of being discovered by choosing a mix of "popular" hashtags **and** "niche" hashtags. If you only use super popular hashtags or super niche hashtags, you probably won't see much growth.

Let's use myself as an example.

I'm a portrait photographer, blogger, and marketing strategist. I help photographers grow their online presence and create a side income for themselves.

Here's a look at the hashtags I used for a recent well-performing post:

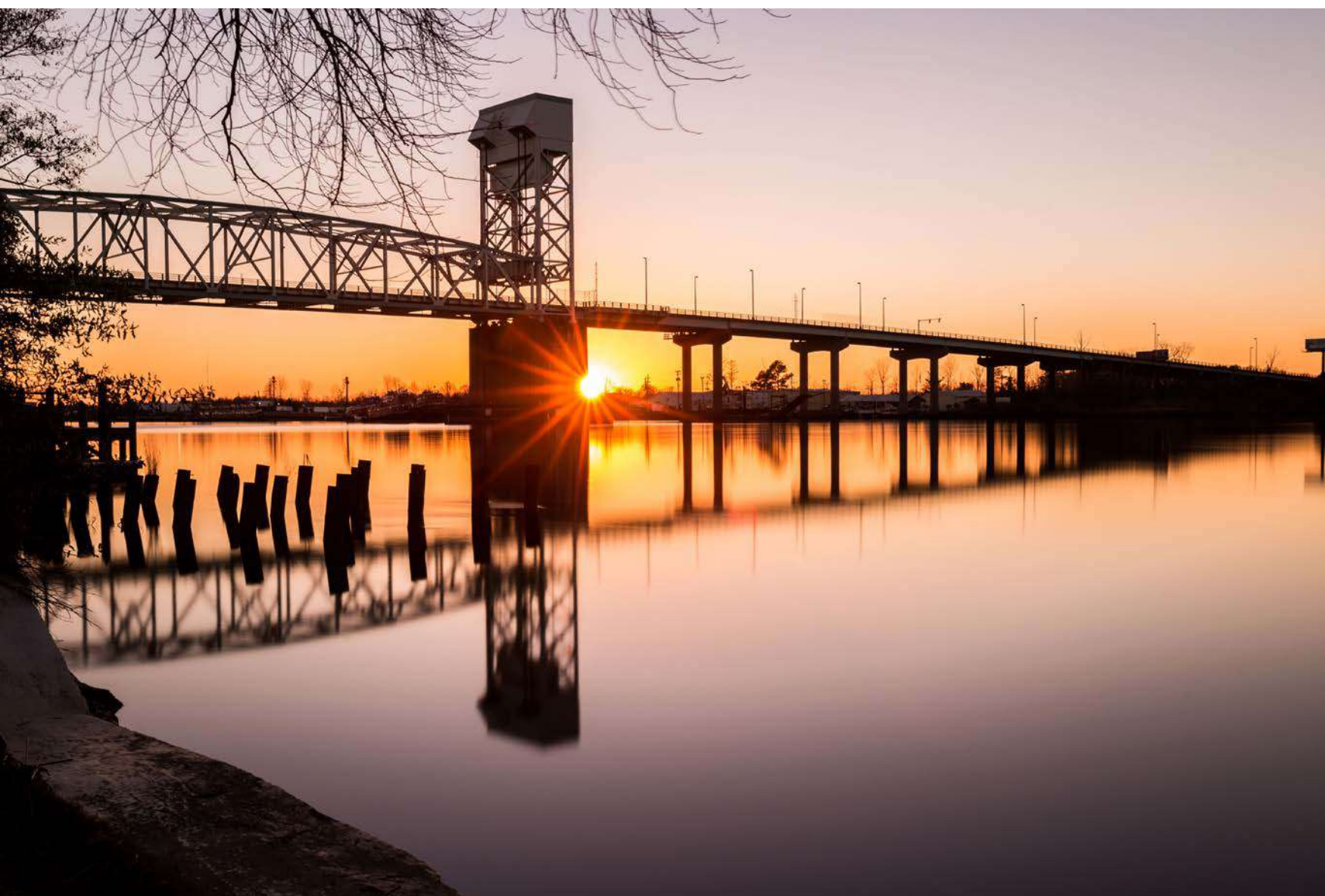


#buildyourbrand #businessdeductions
#businessowner #dowhatyoulove
#entrepreneurmindset #inspiredaily
#freelancephotographer #liveyourpassion
#makeportraitsmag #makeportraitsnotwar
#microinfluencer #mileiq #moodyports
#musephoto #pursueyourpassion
#selfemployed #sidehustle
#smallbusinessowner #stayinspired
#swimwearfashion #swimwearphotography
#taxwriteoff #wilmingtonnc
#wilmingtonphotographer #wrightsvillebeach

Screenshot by Kevin Kleitches

Notice that I used a mixture of popular hashtags (*#dowhatyoulove*, *#inspiredaily*, *#liveyourpassion*) as well as niche hashtags (*#mileiq*, *#businessdeductions*, *#businessowner*) and localized hashtags (*#wilmingtonnc*, *#wilmingtonphotographer*, *#wrightsvillebeach*).

Rather than just "swinging for the fences," use a variety of hashtags, of varying popularity, to maximize your discoverability to potential followers.



Photograph by Kevin Kleitches

3) Mix It Up

This is a point that I mentioned in a post last week.

Instagram wants users to find exactly the content they're looking for when they click on a hashtag. So, it doesn't help at all to use a popular hashtag if it's not relevant to the content that you're posting.

Many photographers use the same copied and pasted hashtags over and over in their posts, but you should avoid that.

Some people have reported that by doing so, it has resulted in their posts being "shadow-banned" by Instagram. This means the reach of your post is severely restricted, and in some cases not seen at all.

Whether shadow-banning is a thing or not (because no one knows for sure at this point), it's a good idea to mix up your hashtags so that they're relevant to the image you're posting.

Remember: Good content + specific audience + relevant hashtags = success.

CONCLUSION

Creating good content isn't enough. In order to build an audience, you need a clear strategy of who you want to reach and how you'll deliver value to them when you post online.

Once you have this strategy in place, share your work, and in the process help others as much as possible – good things will happen as a result.

Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) True or False: You need to have good content in order to build an audience.
- 2) Name three ways you can engage your audience in your post caption.
- 3) True or False: You have to pay for ads to reach anyone on Facebook.
- 4) What are the four best practice tips to follow when participating in Facebook groups?
- 5) True or False: You should use only the most popular hashtags to get maximum visibility.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

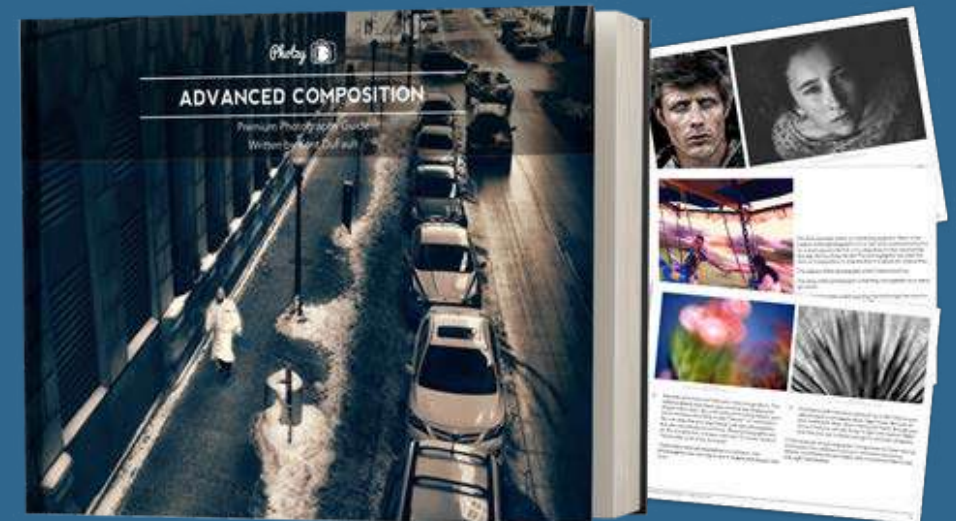


Kevin Kleitches is a photographer, and educator, based in Wilmington, North Carolina. He believes that creating and collaborating have the power to transform your life.

You can read his photography and business tips [on his blog](#) and check out [his Instagram](#) where he posts daily.

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