



Case Study



a Tripadvisor company

"We'd been running native and DCO successfully, but adding display to the mix gave us more visibility across premium placements that drove real engagement. The Creative Studio team reviewed our display units before launch and gave us feedback that actually improved performance. That kind of partnership, combined with display formats that increased our pageviews 48% month-over-month, made it clear Realize was a channel we could scale with confidence."

- Morley Quatroche, Sr. Marketing Manager, Performance & Acquisition, Cruise Critic - Tripadvisor



TRAVEL

TripAdvisor's Cruise Critic
beats Meta cost per click by
67% on Realize

67%

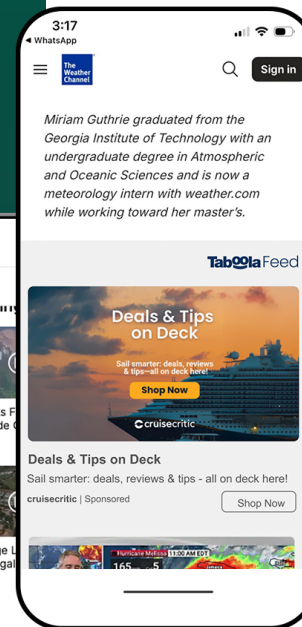
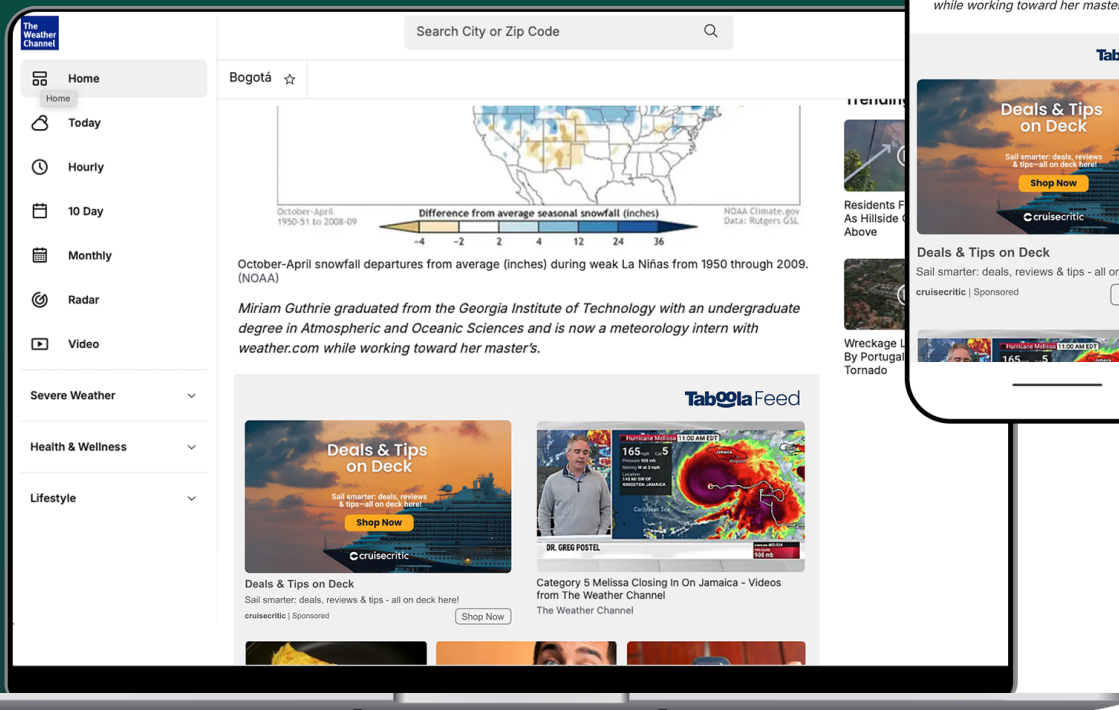
Lower CPC
than Meta

78%

More efficient than
Cruise Critic's CPC
benchmark



Case Study



COMPANY

Cruise Critic is the world's leading cruise review platform operated by The Independent Traveler, a TripAdvisor subsidiary. They wanted to diversify their media mix to promote cruise deals and their 30th anniversary sweepstakes.

CHALLENGE

Cruise Critic needed to expand beyond native and DCO to reach more in-market cruise planners while maintaining strong engagement and ROAS.

SOLUTION

They added display ads to their Realize mix, using Data Marketplace targeting, Maximize Conversions bidding, and Optimize for Engagement to reach high-intent travelers.

RESULTS

Realize delivered **CPCs 67% lower than Meta** and 78% more efficient than Cruise Critic's benchmark, while increasing pageviews 48% month-over-month.



Open English Engages and Retargets High-Quality Users with **Taboola** Pixel



Case Study

Introduction

Cruise Critic is the world's leading cruise review and planning platform, helping millions of travelers research, compare, and book cruises through expert insights and user-generated reviews. Operated by The Independent Traveler, Inc., a subsidiary of TripAdvisor, the brand combines trusted editorial authority with a large, highly engaged travel community to influence cruise decisions across every major line and destination.





Case Study

Cruise Critic Expands From Native To Display To Reach More In-Market Travelers

Cruise Critic was already running campaigns on [Realize](#), Taboola's AI-driven performance platform that connects brands with high-intent audiences across native, display, and video placements on the open web. Their **native ads**—image-based units that blend into editorial content on premium publisher sites—were performing well, especially when paired with DCO (**Dynamic Creative Optimization**), which automatically assembles and tests different combinations of images, headlines, and CTAs in real time to maximize engagement.

DCO allowed them to feature specific cruise deals within each ad unit, tailoring the message to what in-market cruise planners were actually looking for. Adding clear CTA buttons to every creative increased click-through and engagement rates. The approach was working, but they wanted more reach without sacrificing quality.

So they expanded into **display ads**, traditional banner-style placements served across Taboola's publisher network, powered by Realize's performance AI. Display gave them more visibility across premium inventory and opened up inventory they couldn't access through native alone. The additional format meant more opportunities to reach travelers who were actively planning cruises.

To make sure they were reaching the right people, Cruise Critic used [Data Marketplace](#), Realize's built-in targeting interface that layers third-party audience data from providers like Oracle and Acxiom on top of Realize's own behavioral segments. This lets them target travelers showing real intent signals like people researching destinations, comparing cruise lines, reading travel content.



Case Study

To bid, they switched from eCPC to **Maximize Conversions**, an AI-driven strategy that uses conversion data from the Realize Pixel to automatically adjust bids in real time. The goal was to deliver the highest possible number of conversions within budget. The shift lowered CPCs and increased conversion rates across campaigns.

Lastly, they also activated **Optimize for Engagement**, a campaign mode that prioritizes quality traffic over raw clicks. Instead of optimizing just for visits, it focuses on users who spend meaningful time on site or explore multiple pages. Cruise Critic could track session depth and steer the algorithm toward high-intent travelers who were genuinely considering a booking, not just browsing. This built a pool of engaged users they could retarget later in the funnel.



Case Study

Cruise Critic Beats Meta While Matching Their Own Engagement Benchmarks

Realize outperformed Meta on the metric that mattered most to Cruise Critic: cost per click. Across their campaigns, CPCs came in 207% lower than Meta while maintaining the same engagement quality. That efficiency also beat Cruise Critic's internal benchmark by 78%.

The numbers held up across the engagement metrics they track most closely—time on site, pages per visit, and bounce rate. Traffic from Realize aligned with their benchmarks across all three categories, proving that lower cost didn't mean lower quality. It meant finding the right people at the right price.

Before launch, Taboola's **Creative Shop** reviewed Cruise Critic's display units and provided specific feedback on how to improve performance. As a result, pageviews increased 48% month-over-month in Q3.

The Taboola team met with Cruise Critic monthly to review performance, recommend optimizations, and adjust targeting based on what was working. That level of transparency gave Cruise Critic confidence to shift more budget toward the platform.

Today, **Realize** has become their lead channel for driving ROAS. Cruise Critic now plans their media mix around Realize numbers first, based on its consistent outperformance of social. They're scaling DCO and native budgets for the rest of 2025 and testing ads on Apple News & Stocks to extend reach across additional premium placements and environments.