

## How Micro Influencers are Moulding the Future of Travel and Tourism

Joy Lacana\*

Department of Global Tourism, Kingston College, London, United Kingdom

### ABSTRACT

It's no news that social media has revolutionized the world of marketing in travel, tourism and hospitality. With an ever-changing market reflecting an increasingly volatile cultural and political climate, we have seen the transformation of using celebrities as the blueprint for advertisement, to Moulding consumers into their own sustainable brands; using their personal profiles as billboards for collaborations and building their confidence to glamourize and be the main character in their own lives.

**Keywords:** Travel; Hospitality; Social media; Moulding consumers

### INTRODUCTION

Let me put things into perspective: there are over 7.8 billion people in this world and 4.2 billion people are active social media users. That's almost 54% of the global population! We have lived through the expansion of Facebook, humbly initially boasting 2.18 billion users and acquiring 3.22 billion more since their investment in Instagram and WhatsApp. Tiktok, however, with its 1 billion monthly active users and cutting edge algorithm, has caused a shift in what we now deem as trendy. Million-follower influencers are no longer the wave they once were. The influencer of today is one that interacts with their audience, romanticises the mundanity of life, and makes an effort to consume as ethically as possible. If the world of travel and tourism is looking to stay afloat among a new demographic of environmentally, politically and socially conscious individuals it needs to get with the times and start shifting its priorities [1,2].

Social Media has evolved from being a tool to bridge the gap between travel and hospitality brands and travellers, to now being the bridge. Word-of-mouth referrals remain the most powerful tool to influence consumers in choosing products and services, with 86% of consumers reporting that this is the method of marketing that they trust most.

Over 10 years ago, referrals would've mostly come from friends and family-now, influencers that we follow and trust have taken precedence in which we go to for our tips, tricks and life hacks. Tiktok, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram have all allowed

communities to cultivate and encourage real life people to engage in content more consciously and with purpose [3].

Algorithms are getting smarter, videos are the number 1 method of media consumption, and with 58% of consumers reporting that they visit a brand's social media pages before visiting their website, it's crucial to invest in the right people for your company. Within the travel and tourism corner of TikTok, one of the only magazines on the platform @travelandleisuremag tease us with clips of scenic landscapes and tantalising views of pretty hotels. We've been invited in by hotels such as Hotel Active, proudly achieving viral status on some of their TikToks showcasing the variety of snow activities available around their hotel. Creators such as the solo travel expert featured on BBC Valerie Joy Wilson, the actual travel couple dream Mariane Lima and Jens Blogger and one of the most popular accounts dedicating to showcasing the best of the Maldives @Maldives. Only, this is only a fraction of an ever-growing culture of travel and tourism on TikTok [4].

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Destinations that protect biodiversity, protect nature, work with the environment and create better living conditions for the locals are becoming increasingly popular [5], with traveler motivations having changed-wanting to see the world, but also being conscious we take the steps so we ensure our children see it too.

**Correspondence to:** Joy Lacana, Department of Global Tourism, Kingston College, London, United Kingdom, E-mail: jlacana@aviareps.com

**Received:** August 18, 2021; **Accepted:** September 01, 2021; **Published:** September 08, 2021

**Citation:** Lacana J (2021) How Micro Influencers are Moulding the Future of Travel and Tourism. J Tourism Hospit.S5: 004.

**Copyright:** © 2021 Lacana J. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## Government preservation responsibility

Governments which make an effort to take responsibility of preservation into their own hands include:

**Uganda:** The government carefully monitors tourism and general impact on gorilla health; wherein conservation for gorillas is set up so both locals and tourists can safely and responsibly trek with gorillas while protecting the livelihood of the local people in the area.

**Maldives:** Volunteering work and conservation projects being done by both the government and local people to delicately preserve the islands while also offering opportunities for younger generations to explore and join in the volunteer work during their stay. This includes sea turtle and coral preservation.

**Philippines:** Having made the decision to temporarily close down one of the most famous island resort of Boracay to allow the island to heal after a bountiful amount of tourism, the government take pride in their conservation projects and prioritise the health of their natural environment.

**Tenerife:** Taking an initiative to use social media to promote the balance between sustainability and luxury, Tenerife have made an effort to connect with younger generations and encourage ethical tourism and sustainable efforts while enjoying the good side of life whilst still young. They are currently focusing on marine conservation projects, welcoming volunteers from all over the world to partake in programmes to care for the whales and dolphins.

These iconic locations have been utilising social media to promote conservations and sustainability projects, and educating the future adventurers of the world in preserving nature, wildlife and biodiversity, while still enjoying and celebrating in the beauty of the world [6].

Working in parallel, influencer marketing has now taken over the main stage, becoming an integral part of companies marketing strategies. Travel social media platforms have grown outstandingly, with many influencers having over 1 million followers-levelling them towards celebrity status. The ever-adapting algorithms of the platforms we indulge in have only made it easier for real people to have a say in the content they care about. We know exactly what the people want because it is directly reflected in the videos and photos that appear on our timelines. Targeting the right audiences and tailoring content to suit their lifestyle, hobbies and pursuits has never been easier [7].

The shift towards working with micro influencers (as opposed to exclusively only working with influencers with large, 6-figure followings) is pivotal in actually reaching real people. Not just in the field of travel, but also in lifestyle, fashion, gastronomy, culture, food and beverage, sports, wellbeing and active pursuits.

The new Gen Z generation is both the wanderlusts and the travel influencers of tomorrow. The way they navigate social media and have repurposed it to serve them directly, is revolutionary. It's avant-garde. They are digital natives to technology and most importantly the internet which they continue to mould and adapt to perform as an extension of

themselves; now without the unfiltered lens of the fear of whatever consequences they've been warned of. Authenticity and raw transparency is recognized and valued. Speaking on mental health and posting your breakdowns is no longer taboo. The emphasis on not taking life too seriously and the embedded layer of humor on top of these endless monologues also fuel this new wave of internet culture. These digital diaries are carrying the internet as we know it.

Most of these young adults are culturally and politically conscious-they prioritise happiness, human rights, eco-friendliness and ethical consumption-they make an effort to buy more from authentic, genuine brands, and from smaller companies as opposed to large conglomerates. Gen Z's and Millennials value the opinions of micro influencers far greater than large influencers. They trust people who look like them.

Why is that? Micro influencers have much greater engagement with their tribe as they have built parasocial relationships with their audience. The frequent engagement from a smaller influencer liking your comment, or following you back, gives you the same validation as the cool girl at school complimenting your outfit. It's kind of a big deal in a more heart-warming way.

## DISCUSSION

This process of constructing parasocial relationships can lead an influencer to successfully sell to their audience; because their audience trusts what they're selling is authentic, aligns with their values, and genuinely increases quality of life. It's the equivalent of supporting a small business. It makes people feel good to support someone who are within reach to them. And with these young adults realizing how quickly time is running out, their motivation to travel and explore the world is only increasing.

Although it's been fun keeping up with celebrities, and idolizing holiday resorts we see on who's and whose Instagram story and going to sleep and hoping to wake up to the salty ocean breeze of some islands we've never heard of, our tastes have changed a little. It's more fun keeping up with those who look like us, despite the fact that we've never met. It's more rewarding knowing you might be part of someone's growth as an influencer, and you contributed to their sponsored stay at a fancy Airbnb in the middle of Venice they might never have experienced before. It's like indirectly hopping on that business-class flight with them, and like grabbing a coffee with a friend when they post about how grateful they are and unexpected it all is. It feels good to know you might be part of the reason they're there. It gives you another reason to stay loyal and keep interacting, because one day, you might actually join them [8].

## CONCLUSION

To reach the travelers of tomorrow, working with micro influencers is the best option for travel and tourism companies to future-proof their businesses, as well as offering opportunities to those who might be getting a taste of what social media has previously defined "luxury life" as for the first time. The lifestyle and travel influencer of the future is the person behind the screen who takes pride in flying economy, loves cheap bars, bottomless brunch and student nights, dines out when there's

something on offer, and loves thrifting because it makes them feel good to be cheap and sustainable. Big influencer lifestyles are out of reach and were never relatable in the first place. People love seeing reflections of their own life and not feeling alone. The adventurer of tomorrow is someone who feels genuinely valued and like they're part of a network. A bigger picture. An influencer within their own right. Get with the times, work with those who will value your investments, promote sustainability, and care for the world while they do it.

## REFERENCES

1. Sha P, Sariyska R, Riedl R, Lachmann B, Montag C. Linking internet communication and smartphone use disorder by taking a closer look at the Facebook and WhatsApp applications. *Addict Behav Rep.* 2019;9:100148.
2. Weimann G, Masri N. Research note: Spreading hate on TikTok. *Stud Confl Terror.* 2020;6:1-14.
3. Bossen CB, Kottasz R. Uses and gratifications sought by pre-adolescent and adolescent TikTok consumers. *Young Consum.* 2020;21:1747-3616.
4. Wilson RE, Gosling SD, Graham LT. A review of facebook research in the social sciences. *Perspect Psychol Sci.* 2012;7:203-220.
5. Coco GL, Maiorana A, Mirisola A, Salerno L, Boca S, Profita G. Empirically-derived subgroups of Facebook users and their association with personality characteristics: A latent class analysis. *Comput Hum Behav.* 2018;86:190-198.
6. Jackson D. How TikTok (and Twitter) became gen z's best resource for skin-care advice. 2021.
7. Kassamali B, Villa-Ruiz C, Mazori DR, Min M, Cobos GA, LaChance AH. Characterizing top educational TikTok videos by dermatologists in response to "TikTok and dermatology: An opportunity for public health engagement". *J Am Acad Dermatol.* 2021.
8. Wu JF. Jigsaw puzzle of tourism destination image and its evaluation index. *J Shaanxi Norm Univ Nat Sci Ed.* 2014;42:85-93.