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Influence Of Social Media Influencers On Tourism Choices And Hotel Bookings

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technology and social media platforms has had a great influence on the marketing practice in the tourism and hospitality sector. This is a review paper that focuses on how social media influencers (SMIs) affect tourism decisions and hotel booking behavior through the synthesis of previous studies and analytical research. The research examines the concept and the role of the influencers, the rise of the influencer marketing as a sub-discipline in the tourism sector, and its effect on the destination image development, travel intentions, and accommodation selection. Results suggest that influencer credibility, authenticity, style of communication, and brand alignment have a significant impact on consumer perceptions and interest, especially in Millennials and Generation Z, whereas platform-specific and psychological variables are emotional connection and FOMO, which further boost travel motivation. Nevertheless, the fact that booking-decisions are still affected by the price, location, and online-reviews. The review concludes that it is necessary to have transparent, strategically formulated and value-compliant influencer partnerships that can improve tourism demand, hotel bookings and the sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: *Social Media Influencers (SMIs), Consumer Perceptions, Social Media Platforms, Influencer Marketing, Hospitality Industry.*

INTRODUCTION

The fast-growing digital technology and access to the internet have radically changed the tourism and hospitality sector of the world. The development of social media in the last ten years has seen the social media platforms grow to become robust marketing ecosystems that are highly influential in consumer behaviour [1]. Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Tik-Tok are now the ultimate inspirational sources of travel, search of information, and peer reviews [2]. Due to the growing use of digital content by travelers to plan their trips, the traditional methods of promotion are slowly being complemented (or even substituted) by influencers-based marketing strategies. Tourism decision-making process is complex and information-intensive in its nature. Before choosing a destination and a place of stay, travelers tend to watch trustworthy, experiential, and visual materials [3]. Here, the social media influencer, or those who have developed a large fanbase and trustworthiness in certain niches have become important opinion leaders in the travel ecosystem. In comparison to traditional advertisements, influencer content can be perceived as natural, personal, and relatable, which makes it influence the opinion about destinations and hotels by telling stories, visuals, and experience. They are effective influencers of consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions because they can develop aspirational stories and offer viable information about travel [4], [5].

Hotels and resorts in the hospitality industry have been the most active in the application of influencer marketing in their marketing efforts. The partnership with travel bloggers, vloggers, and lifestyle influencers will help hospitality brands target the audience in a more effective way [6], [7]. Influencers not only demonstrate hotel services and facilities but also organize an immersive experience that emphasizes ambiance, level of hospitality, and other unique services.

Such a promotional activity can have great influence on booking intentions, particularly in younger age groups like Millennials and Generation Z that are more inclined to trust peer-generated content in comparison with traditional advertisements [8].

Moreover, the emergence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has increased the power of social media personalities. The positive affirmations, commentaries, and aesthetically stimulating posts can enrich the process of destination image development and brand recognition, and the negative ones can also discourage a possible tourist. The sense of credibility, authenticity, and expertise of influencers determine the perceived trust and perceived risk to a considerable degree in travel-related choices. This is more so in the area of tourism where services are not tangible and cannot be assessed prior to consumption [9], [10].

Although influencer marketing becomes increasingly vital in the tourism industry and hotel reservations, the current literature has fragmented evidence concerning its productivity, plausibility, ethical consequences, and consequences in the long term [11]. Whereas in other studies, the positive impact on the intention to travel and booking behavior is significant, the other research questions the sustainability and authenticity of influencer-marketing. Thus, it is important to conduct a thorough review of the existing literature in order to synthesize the current results and determine the gaps in the research, as well as offer theoretical and managerial implications [12], [13].

Social media influencers and its role

Social media influencers promote themselves as specialists in their fields and use one or more social media platforms to convey their expertise with a carefully chosen audience. Influencers consistently generate and distribute content to establish their expertise and cultivate a connection with their followers. Creators may frequently "influence" their followers to try a specific product by consistently interacting with their audience and providing meaningful material [11]. Companies collaborate with influencers to market their goods and services, which enables them to successfully connect with their target market or increase brand recognition among consumers who are not familiar with their offerings [14]. Due to the trust that followers have in an influencer, they perceive these product endorsements as a recommendation from a friend rather than a sales proposal. As the influencer attempts to convince the audience to buy something, collaboration may lead to payment or free merchandise [15].

The influence of social media on travel decisions has increased due to the growth of social media influencers. Influencers frequently work with travel agencies and travel firms to promote locations because of their sizable fan bases and perceived expertise. These partnerships have the power to greatly influence the travel choices of their audience [16]. According to Mediakix research, 80% of marketers believe influencer marketing is successful, and travel influencers are crucial in determining consumer preferences and travel trends. Through visually appealing material, influencers like Murad Osmann, who is well-known for his "Follow Me To" series, have popularised a number of locations and significantly increased tourism to them [17].

Growth of Influencer Marketing as a Sub-Discipline in Tourism

In the last ten years, influencer marketing has emerged as a unique field of study in the travel and hospitality industry. Originally seen as a component of public relations or digital marketing, it is currently being researched for its own dynamics, impacts, and practices. In the early 2010s, academic research started to focus on social media influencers in the travel industry [18]. The motives of bloggers, the trustworthiness of non-traditional sources, and confidence in user-generated material were all examined in early research. Research on audience engagement, emotional effect, destination image construction, and consumer behaviour in relation to social media influence grew as influencer marketing developed. Marketers for travel have also changed. Nowadays, influencer collaborations receive special funding from a large number of destination marketing organisations (DMOs) [12]. In addition to serving as information distributors, influencers are included on press trips, brand partnerships, and tourist campaigns since they are crucial in influencing how the general public views a place. The sub-discipline incorporates theories from tourist studies, psychology, communication, and marketing. As additional studies are released, frameworks are being developed to describe how influencer marketing functions as well as how its impacts vary depending on the audience demography, platform (YouTube vs. Instagram), and influencer type (micro vs. macro). For instance, a DMO aimed toward younger tourists may collaborate with TikTok producers who produce brief, amusing travel videos, while another would favour lengthy YouTube travel vlogs that offer comprehensive itineraries [18], [19].

The key turning points in the evolution of influencer marketing in the travel sector are listed in Table 1. Influencer

marketing's growth in the travel industry is a reflection of wider shifts in consumer trust, media, and technology. From peer-shared social media information to expert-written guidebooks, the nature and source of travel influence have undergone significant shift. Influencer material has grown to be a potent strategy in influencing traveller preferences due to its personal, dynamic, and interactive character.

Table 1: Key Milestones in the Evolution of Influencer Marketing in Tourism

Period	Medium	Key Characteristics	Type of Influence
Pre-Internet Era	Travel guidebooks, print media	Expert-written, structured, limited updates	Authoritative, expert-driven
Early Internet Era	Travel blogs, online forums	Personal narratives, comment-based interaction	Informal, peer-like
Social Media Era	Instagram, YouTube, TikTok	Visual content, real-time sharing, high engagement	Relatable, peer-based, community-driven
Current Stage	Integrated influencer campaigns	Paid partnerships, data-driven targeting, niche segmentation	Strategic, measurable, interactive

Effect of social media influencer on tourism choices

The characteristics of the social media influencer (SMI) that include credibility, relatability, and content relevance are determinant in influencing the perceptions of destinations and travel decision of the followers. Psychological motivations such as emotional attachment, identification and fear of missing out (FOMO) also increase user engagement and impact on travel-related intentions. Platform-specific influencer effects also differ: Instagram is more visual and promotes destination awareness, YouTube encourages planning the trip more carefully due to long-form content, and Tik Tok triggers negative responses and causes people to be inspired and choose a destined place trendy [14], [18].

Organizational-led influencer partnerships are becoming a more prevalent strategy by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) to be more visible, redefine destination stories, and market niche or lesser-known destinations. The examples of the cases in Iceland, Dubai, and Bali show that the co-creation of the strategic content and focused interaction can bring a notable enhancement of the campaign results and the attraction of the new types of visitors [18]. Such results indicate that destinations and tourism enterprises need to keep up with the changes to the

consumer behavior, generational preferences and trends in digital purchases. As an example, to appeal to Generation Z, campaigns that are dynamic and potentially based on influencers, engaging marketing approaches, and promotion based on adventure will be necessary [20].

In addition, the recent study notes the significance of the authentic influencer communication, especially in the aspect of sustainable tourism promotion. Authentic content enhances eco-attitudes, normative congruence, and accessibility perceptions and this boosts sustainable travel intentions. Conversely, as compared to deep or promotional content, superficial content yields less. The attitudes are found to be a crucial mediator of the influencer messaging and travel intentions that require transparency, value consistency, and believable narrations in influencer campaigns [21]. In general, the social media influencers become an important source of knowledge to the travelers, with the ability to directly influence their tourism selection due to the authenticity, emotional appeal, and well-calculated digital presence.

Effect of social media influencer on hotel booking

Social media influencers (SMIs) have completely changed the way hotels are advertised and booked. Influencers have transformed how hotels interact with their prospective clients as they provide genuine narratives, precision, and visually appealing information that connects with the online communities. Their credibility and relatability also allow hotels to build real relationships with consumers to gain brand awareness, develop trust, and ultimately booking intentions [22]. The influencer marketing has been especially productive in the hospitality industry where the experiential value and emotional attachment have a significant effect on buying. Through presenting live stays, facilities, atmosphere, and experiences, influencers decrease the perceived risk and assist the potential customer in imagining their stay. This form of promotion is very experiential and therefore, it attracts high engagement and conversion rates particularly among Millennials and Generation Z, who prefer authenticity and word of mouth over conventional advertising [23]. Properly selected partnerships that are consistent with brand values also enhance loyalty and lifetime customer relationships.

Competitive advantages can also be achieved through strategic influencer alliances in both large and small hotel chains. Smaller hotels, especially, also enjoy the benefits of influencer endorsement since they become visible and more credible in the saturated markets. The suggestion of

influencers is usually trusted by followers, and there is increased booking conversion relative to traditional forms of promotional strategies [24]. Influencer marketing in hotel booking needs careful planning, proper selection of influencers, ongoing performance analysis, and brand alignment. Influencer partnerships influence client interaction, boost the brand perception and directly lead to financial expansion, when used in a strategic manner. As the trends of digital consumption continuously change, influencer marketing is no longer just a promotional trend, but a strategic necessity of a hotel that needs to maintain a competitive edge and generate booking interest in the digital market [12], [25].

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Chouhan & Manisha, 2025) [26] investigates how consumers perceive influencer marketing's effects on brand engagement in the hotel industry, with a focus on influencer communication, legitimacy, and brand fit. According to the findings, all three independent factors have a significant influence on brand engagement. The greatest impact was caused by influencer communication, which accounted for 41.4% of the variation in brand engagement. Then came influencer-brand compatibility and influencer reputation, which accounted for 12.5% and 33.2% of the variation, respectively. These results imply that the influencer's perceived credibility, direct and interesting communication, and brand alignment all have a favourable impact on consumers' engagement with the hotel. According to the report, influencer marketing is crucial for the hotel sector since it helps shape customer views and enhance brand engagement.

(Gautam et al., 2025) [27] Digital transformation has been swiftly adopted by the hotel sector, and influencer marketing now plays a significant role in influencing consumer decisions. This study looks at how influencer marketing affects hotel booking behaviour, particularly among consumers who are digital natives. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this investigation investigates the extent to which consumers' hotel preferences are influenced by the emotive resonance, trust, and perceived authenticity of influencer content. In-depth interviews with experts in the industry are included, along with polls of 500 social media users. The study found a high correlation between booking intentions and influencer marketing, particularly among Gen Z and Millennials. Hotel companies should carefully choose influencers whose aesthetics and beliefs align with those of their target customers, according to practical implications.

(Khaled et al., 2025) [28] Social media influencers, or SMIs, have become important forces in determining travellers' opinions and preferences. Their contribution to advancing historic towns like Luxor, however, has not received enough attention. By outlining a methodical framework for digital marketing that encourages collaboration with influencers and supports genuine cultural representation, the study seeks to close this gap. The results highlight how targeted influencer partnerships may improve traveller engagement and destination appeal. The report suggests using carefully chosen SMIs into well-planned advertisements that highlight Luxor's historical identity and are backed by quantifiable success metrics. It also urges the promotion of lesser-known websites with genuine and culturally relevant material.

(Siregar et al., 2025) [8] focuses on two main study topics as it investigates the effects of SMIs and online reviews on tourist marketing: (1) How do SMIs influence visit intentions? and (2) how trustworthy are online reviews when choosing a destination? The results show that a variety of criteria, including audience perception, material quality, competence, and attractiveness, influence SMIs' intentions to visit. By working with influencers that have the same interests as their target audience, tourism marketers may maximise these insights and create compelling content. Online reviews are regarded as a highly dependable resource for travel decision-making, particularly when travellers depend on trusted platforms, high ratings, and the utility of the review, which includes visual and descriptive elements. However, based on personal opinions and brand equity, the accuracy of internet reviews might differ.

(Mqwebu, 2024) [29] Examine how social media influencers affect South African tourists' choices of destinations and spending. A desk technique was used in this investigation. Secondary data collecting is another name for a desk study research strategy. According to the study, influencers' suggestions, images, and videos are all very important in influencing the opinions and aspirations about travel locations. According to studies, travellers frequently use the knowledge and experiences of influencers to organise their vacations and find new destinations. Travellers may therefore aim to duplicate the experiences shown online, increasing the number of tourists and expenditure at places highlighted by influencers. But there are also worries about the possibility of over-the-top depictions and the commercialisation of travel experiences, which can result in inflated expectations and overtourism in some places.

(Pawapootanont, 2024) [30] The following were the findings of the study on Facebook travel influencers' impact on Thai hotel reservations: The ways that people seek knowledge vary depending on their age. In addition, the characteristics of travel influencers that influence hotel booking decisions, as well as the presentation formats and platforms, should be factors that influence hotel booking decisions. Travel influencers should present content that is honest, explicit, and comprehensive, and services that are presented in an honest manner. It is possible to draw the conclusion that travel influencers have the power to affect the interests and hotel reservations of their followers. However, it was shown that Facebook followers of travel influencers may also consider other aspects when making hotel reservations, including whether or not the hotel's level of comfort satisfies their demands, location, cost, and special offers.

(Dubey & Roy, 2023) [31] Examine how well Prayagraj, India, tourism is promoted by social media influencers. Promotional methods have changed significantly in the tourist sector as a result of the growth of social media platforms and the growing influence of online celebrities. This study investigates how social media influencers' efforts affect Prayagraj's ability to draw tourists and raise its profile as a vacation destination. The results show that Prayagraj's tourism exposure is greatly enhanced by social media influencers. Travel decisions are greatly influenced by their authentic content, captivating content, and audience connection. However, the degree to which the influencer's brand complements the city's tourism offers, target demographic, and promotional approach also affects how successful influencer campaigns are.

(Priyanga & Ashokkumar, 2023) [32] Considering the Kaveri delta region of Tamil Nadu, investigate how social media influencers might draw consumers to the tourist destination. The goal of the study was to investigate the pre-, purchase-, and post-purchase decisions made by customers when planning a vacation that was influenced by social media influencers. The results demonstrate the validity and reliability of the research tool. Additionally, the Path analysis's findings show that social media users are impacted by social media influencers while they are making travel plans to the tourist destination in Tamil Nadu's Kaveri Delta. In order to influence prospective travellers, the results showed that social media users are reluctant to share their post-visit experiences from tourist destinations.

RESEARCH GAP

Although existing studies acknowledge the growing importance of social media influencers in tourism marketing, the literature remains fragmented and lacks an integrated perspective linking influencer characteristics, platform dynamics, tourism choices, and hotel booking behavior. Most research focuses either on destination image formation or general consumer engagement, with limited empirical evidence connecting influencer attributes directly to booking conversion outcomes. Additionally, comparative analyses across different social media platforms and generational segments remain insufficient. There is also a scarcity of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies examining the sustainability of influencer impact over time. Therefore, a comprehensive review is required to synthesize diverse viewpoints and provide a consolidated understanding of influencer-driven tourism and hotel booking decisions.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the concept and role of social media influencers.
- To study the Growth of Influencer Marketing in Tourism.
- To study the Effect of social media influencer on tourism choices.
- To study the effect of social media influencer on hotel booking.
- To study the various literature's viewpoint on effect of social media influencer on tourism choices and hotel booking.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This review paper adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design based on secondary data sources. Relevant literature was collected from previously published research articles, review papers, analytical studies, and scholarly databases focusing on the impact of social media influencers on tourism choices and hotel booking behavior. Studies were selected based on relevance to the objectives, publication credibility, and contribution to influencer marketing in tourism and hospitality contexts. The collected literature was systematically analyzed, compared, and synthesized to identify common themes, theoretical perspectives, findings, and research gaps. This integrative approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the role and effectiveness of social media influencers in shaping travel decisions and booking intentions.

DISCUSSION

This review reveals that social media influencers (SMIs) have transformed into content development stakeholders to strategic tourism and hospitality marketing stakeholders. Throughout the reviewed articles, the credibility of influencers, authenticity, the quality of communication, and the alignment with the brand remain standard predictors of tourism decisions and the desire to book a hotel. The impact that influences formation of the destination image is the visually strong experience-based storytelling, which lessens perceived risk and enhances emotional attachments. Psychological motivators that include identification, FOMO, enhance the level of engagement and travel motivation. The patterns of influence on platforms are also disclosed in the literature. Awareness, aspiration is promoted with the help of visual platforms, whereas planning and decision-making phases are facilitated with the help of long-form and interactive content. Influencer effect, however, does not work alone. The hotel booking is still a multifactorial decision and depends on price, location, comfort, promotions and online reviews. Research points out that influencer marketing is most appropriate with other digital strategies such as e-WOM and review management.

Moreover, there are also generational differences. Gen Z and Millennials are more sensitive to influencer recommendations, showing preference of authenticity and experiential stories. However, issues related to the overrepresentation of a site, authenticity burnout, and possible over-tourism imply that responsible and culturally conscious influencer partnerships are necessary. In general, the review confirms that influencer marketing is an important factor that impacts tourism demand and booking behavior, although the strategy has to be aligned, and the performance assessment should be measurable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strategic Influencer Selection:** Tourism boards and hotels must engage with influencers whose values, audience demographics, and content style fit the brand positioning and target markets.
- **Prioritize Authenticity and Transparency:** Overall, influencer campaigns need to focus on an authentic storytelling, an honest review, and an open disclosure of partnership to develop trust and long-term credibility.
- **Platform-Specific Campaign Design:** The marketing plans must be personalized based on the strengths of the platforms, where visual inspiration should be used to create awareness, detailed

content should be used to plan, and interactive formats should be used to engage.

- **Integrate Influencers with Review Management:** Online reviews and customer feedback systems should be accompanied by influence marketing to enhance credibility and decreased perceived risk.
- **Promote Sustainable and Responsible Tourism:** Influencer partnerships are to promote culturally competent representation and responsible travel in order to prevent over-tourism and unrealistic ideals.
- **Continuous Performance Monitoring:** The measurable indicators that should be used by the hotels and DMOs to assess the effectiveness of the campaign and tune strategies are engagement rate, booking conversions, and the return on investment (ROI).
- By implementing these recommendations, tourism and hospitality stakeholders can leverage influencer marketing more effectively while ensuring sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

The review underscores that social media influencers (SMIs) are now strong drivers of tourism preferences and hotel reservation behavior in the online era. The nature of influencers like credibility, authenticity, style of communication and brand congruence have a greater influence on destination perceptions and consumer interaction. Other psychological aspects, such as emotional bonding, identification, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) reinforce the intentions of traveling. The stage of decision making is also affected by platform-related dynamics, as visual and interactive content is better at increasing awareness, planning and final booking decisions. As the case studies indicate, the influencer collaborations have a positive impact on the visit intentions and expenditure as well as destination visibility, redefining the tourism narrative. Influencer marketing improves brand recognition, confidence, and rates of bookings, especially with Millennials and Gen Z in the hospitality industry. Nonetheless, hotel booking choices are still complex because price, location, comfort, promotions, and web reviews are also important aspects. Authenticity, value alignment, content quality, and strategic implementation are the key factors contributing to the success of influencer campaigns. Although influencer marketing presents considerable potential to the development of tourism and

hospitality, the issues of overstated images, authenticity burnout, and over-tourism should be addressed. In general, social media influencers are important knowledge intermediaries during the process of making travel decisions. Sustainable competitive advantage and long-term success in the tourism and hotel business sectors rely on strategic, transparent, and well-aligned influencer alliances.

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