

Transcript of expert interview with Instagram travel influencers

Interviewer: Hello. I am conducting a research study on the impact of Instagram travel influencers on Gen Z's tourism consumption. As influencers in the travel industry, your insights and experiences are valuable in helping me better understand how social media influences the travel choices of Gen Z individuals. What motivates you to share your experiences through Instagram (such as your start-up motivations and continuation motivations)?

Interviewee (I1): My main motivation, when I did it, was to be able to create a brand and a following which would allow me to start earning from sharing my experiences, in other words, I aimed to become an influencer.

Interviewee (I2): I love photography and documenting my travels and I think Instagram is a great place to do that, even though they are focusing more on reels now. I see my Instagram as a reminder & diary of my travels for myself, but I also love to see how people get inspired by it and ask questions about certain destinations.

Interviewee (I3): I want all people to experience travel.

Interviewee (I4): To be rewarded for my efforts, for my reels views to reach millions, my followers' comments, messages...

Interviewee (I5): I love to share my experiences traveling with other people so that they can have a great time too. I also think that Belgium is very underrated and not many people know that there are so many beautiful places, so that's what I want to show.

Interviewee (I6): Being productive, creative, open minded.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a brand partnership with any type of tourism business?
All of the influencers responded positively.

Interviewer: Can you please provide information about the project and the process (such as reaction of followers, budgeting, positive aspects, negative aspects)?

Interviewee (I1): I had two cooperations, one with the city of Kaunas, and the second with the city of Gent. Both were received well by our followers and provided an increase in our followers. It was done for free as it was beneficial for us to showcase our partnerships with those cities. No negative aspects, that I could think of.

Interviewee (I2): I went on a 10-day trip with the tourism board of Sri Lanka to promote the East coast. The East coast is not as popular as the West Coast, but I loved seeing that once I started sharing content about it, so many people were interested in going there. I don't remember any negative aspects, other than that it was 10 super busy days.

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Interviewee (I3): The reactions of followers are always positive, because most of them are interested in tips about hotels, discounts of airline companies etc.

Interviewee (I4): When I go to a tourism business, I try to share my experiences with my followers, both good and bad. Those who go to the businesses I share should go knowing my experiences and should not encounter any surprises. My followers also like this approach of mine. Therefore, our only problem is the budget. Unfortunately, the rising prices due to inflation also prevent people who want to go.

Interviewee (I5): It depends on the collab and the type of brand. Sometimes they contact me to ask if I want to take part in their campaign, sometimes I contact them to pitch and see if they have a budget for influencer collabs. Then we discuss deliverables and the budget. I don't do barter deals anymore, so if they don't have a budget, the discussion ends. Then we make up a contract with (very important) the right to the content. Some brands want to see the content in advance and approve it, some don't and give you lots of flexibility. When the brand/tourism partner fits well with my content & audience I usually receive a lot of positive reactions in the form of DMs (direct messages) and comments.

Interviewee (I6): It went very positively. I shared my own experience on social media and created brand awareness for my partner.

Interviewer: From your experience, what influencer marketing strategies have been successful or in influencing Gen Z's tourism decisions?

Interviewee (I1): Guest blog posts, product and content collaborations, brand ambassadors, reviews, discount codes, and affiliate campaigns.

Interviewee (I2): Sponsored posts, guest blog posts, product and content collaborations, competitions and giveaways, brand ambassadors, reviews, and discount codes.

Interviewee (I3): Sponsored posts, themed campaigns discount codes.

Interviewee (I4): Sponsored posts, product and content collaborations, discount codes.

Interviewee (I5): Sponsored posts, brand ambassadors, competitions, and giveaways.

Interviewee (I6): Themed campaigns, and shoutout content.

Interviewer: What is your opinion about how influencer marketing activities affect Gen Z's decision-making in the tourism sector?

Interviewee (I1): It helps to pick spots where to travel, and to set a traveling agenda once the location is selected.

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Interviewee (I2): This is hard to say because I am a millennial. But I think it influences them a lot, and sometimes find it sad to see that when a destination goes viral, you have to line up in a queue to have your picture taken there. But it can be used in a positive way too, like promoting eco-tourism, for example.

Interviewee (I3): I think Gen Z is more interested in budget travel than, for example, luxury tourism. They stay in hostels or book a budget room on Airbnb, they eat in budget cafes, more visit historical places and etc. So, it is important to give them information in this direction.

Interviewee (I4): I think we have the power to influence the decision-making processes of Generation Z in the tourism sector only if we work long-term. I think that, if tourism businesses want to increase their Generation Z audience, they should understand that the engagement rate of the influencer is more important than the number of followers, which is a more successful strategy.

Interviewee (I5): I do not know about Gen Z specifically because it is not my target audience, but people send me messages that they have travelled to the places I showed on Instagram or did the things I did. So, this can have a big influence.

Interviewee (I6): Gen Z is more purposeful. They are open to search for multiple use experience to find a genuine review.

Interviewer: How do you communicate with Gen Z in terms of influencer marketing collaborations? Do you differentiate your communication based on the target audience's generation or do you segment your audiences at all? (For example: using Instagram stories to attract Gen Z followers)

Interviewee (I1): No.

Interviewee (I2): No, I do not differentiate anyone. But I always communicate in the same way with everybody.

Interviewee (I3): Usually I do not segment my audience at all.

Interviewee (I4): No, I am not differentiating my communication. I am who I am, I try to give information that works for everyone.

Interviewee (I5): No, I don't differentiate. It all depends on your content.

Interviewee (I6): No.

Interviewer: At what stage of the tourism consumption process do travel influencers have the most significant impact on Gen Z, in your opinion?

Interviewee (I1): Information search.

Interviewee (I2): Information search.

Interviewee (I3): Information search.

Interviewee (I4): Information search.

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Interviewee (I5): Problem recognition.

Interviewee (I6): Information search.

Interviewer: As an influencer, what advice do you have for businesses seeking to appeal to Gen Z in the tourism industry?

Interviewee (I1): Just be yourself, make your content natural. Gen Z is very sensitive to ads that seem like they're made only for advertising purposes.

Interviewee (I3): Just be aware that Gen Z is very comfortable searching for information, more open for any kind of collaboration.

Interviewee (I4): Influencer Marketing

Interviewee (I5): Be inspiring and real.

Interviewee (I6): Find a purpose, find a cause, and support it. Be creative, be bold, and be genuine.

Interviewer: As an influencer, what advice do you have for other influencers looking to effectively communicate with Gen Z in the tourism industry?

Interviewee (I1): Being authentic and natural, avoiding content that seems like advertising.

Interviewee (I4): Being original, creative, and informative.

Interviewee (I5): The same, offer inspiration but also be yourself and show yourself.

Interviewee (I6): Understand the way they connect through different channels, the format, the duration, the content... One for all models will not work for Gen Z.