

## Chapter 38

# Travel Instagramability: A Way of Choosing a Destination?

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### ABSTRACT

*Digital technologies enabled the emergence of ever-broader networks of connection, communication, and sharing between users across the globe, forging new cultural, social, political, and economic scenarios. This chapter aims to investigate this transformation in the perspective of tourism communication, through a reflection on the impacts of new media on the relationship between consumers and the choice of their tourism destinations. For this, it proposes a literature review on the reconfiguration of tourism communication in the culture of participation. It develops an empirical analysis of the content among the most followed digital influencers' profiles and those with greater engagement in Portugal.*

### INTRODUCTION

The digital expansion rapidly transformed the processes of production, circulation and consumption of information. It redefined the unidirectional communication model (from one to all) until now dominated by the large media conglomerates, to a network-based communication model (from all to all) (Di Felice, 2010). This change gained a fast pace from the web 2.0 and digital social networks, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and, more recently, Instagram. Creating personal pages and profiles has enabled each user to become a content producer and potential media (Alves, 2017).

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This new paradigm of networked communication and the rapid growth of collective speaking by users have not challenged traditional media only. Political campaigns, educational teaching-learning strategies and market relations between company-consumers have also redefined themselves, giving special appreciation to the opinions of ordinary users in their media channels (blogs and profiles on social networks). Companies, public organisations, management institutions or the State agencies, from the most diverse segments, in which tourism is included, started to pay attention to this consumption practices and concerned to the management of this digital presence. To establish a direct relationship with their customers, answer criticisms and follow suggestions launched by users in the informational flood of networks.

Marketing, in general, has also been adapting to the digital culture, adapting products and services to the needs of each individual. That is possible due to the large volume of information, from the most diverse media, confronting with a demand for customisation and information (Magalhães, 2018b). In the era when marketing and advertising ideals are closer to human aspirations and values (Kotler et al., 2010), seeking to generate experiences and sensations obligate strategies also to change. Instead of the old tripod: press office - public relations - advertising, as the focus of organisational communication, the strategy started to integrate several media, mainly digital, besides the “voices” of ordinary users (Terra, 2011).

The rupture between public and private space (Kaufman, 2015). The connected culture forges the feeling that people are closer, through expressions of solidarity, help, knowledge share and decision-making recommendations - whether these “experts” are valid or not (Raine & Wellman, 2012). Those who achieve greater social engagement (calculated by the number of followers or friends and their reactions), who share opinions on different topics and experiences with a service or product are known as digital influencers, who have recognised performance in platforms like Instagram.

Previously, only celebrities were considered capable of reaching a large audience. Nonetheless, the emergence of digital social networks arises new “specialists”. Hitherto ordinary users can also attract thousands of followers who share the same interests or admire their choices and lifestyle (Raine & Wellman, 2012). The proximity between the digital influencer and the follower or fan, provided by the inherent interactivity of digital networks, is also an advantage that attracts investment from brands and companies from different segments. In the tourism area, these influencers are also known as travel Instagrammers, one of the types of Instagrammers used to promote hotels and destinations (Fonseca, 2019), among other tourism products and services.

Aware of the need to investigate the impacts of new media on tourism, this work intends to approach the topic from the perspective of the relationship between influence marketing and tourism in the landscape of digital social networks. In this sense, with a focus on the active role of consumers. This chapter has a theoretical-analytical nature, which starts with a literature review on the transformations in communicative processes in digital culture and then reflects on the relationship between marketing influence and tourism in our contemporaneity infused by the digital world.

The analytical part of this work focuses on investigating the phenomenon, empirically, through content analysis (Bardin, 2006) and a netnographic study (Amaral et al., 2008) from the profiles of digital influencers on the social network Instagram, in Portugal, in the “Travel” segment of Primetag (2019) study. Semi-structured interviews with the Instagrammers were also done. The corpus comprises the posts published during the European summer of 2019 by profiles with the biggest number of followers and the highest engagement level. The study’s main goal is to identify the strategies used by digital influencers in the promotion of tourist destinations. Also, to classify resources, products and services prevalent in the

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