TRAVEL

INFLUENCER MARKETING

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THE TRAVEL GAME HAS CHANGED IRREVOCABLY.

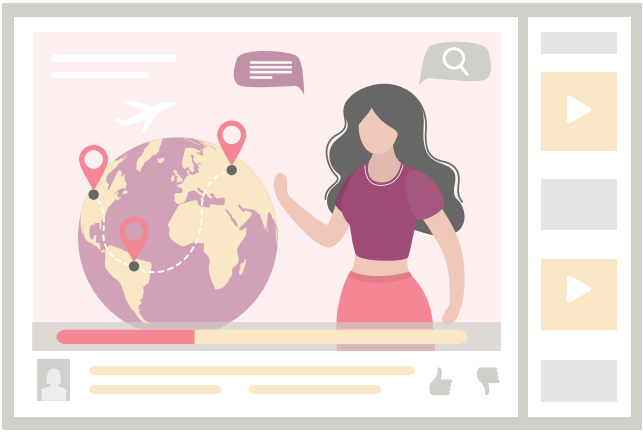
Thanks to the rise of travel content creators who love to share their experiences online, consumers no longer see travel as a privilege reserved for a few. Influencers sharing candid reviews, travel tips, and top location suggestions have lessened people's fear of the unknown. They now have all the information they need right at their fingertips.

Technological advancements have also helped to bolster the growing travel trend by making it easier for people to plan epic adventures online at their convenience. Consequently, travelers have become more self-reliant, with many choosing to forgo travel agents in favor of DIYing their vacation planning. So, it's no surprise that global International tourist arrivals are expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2030.

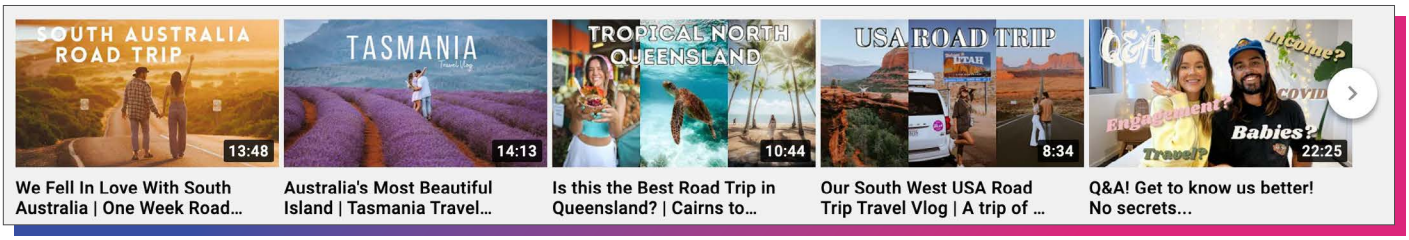
THE UP AND UP OF TRAVEL CONTENT

There was once a time when social media was just used for editing photos and staying in touch with friends and family. But it's grown into something so much more. These days, keeping up with influencers' lifestyles is the norm. But where did the travel influencer marketing all begin? For the answer to this, look further than the travel bloggers.

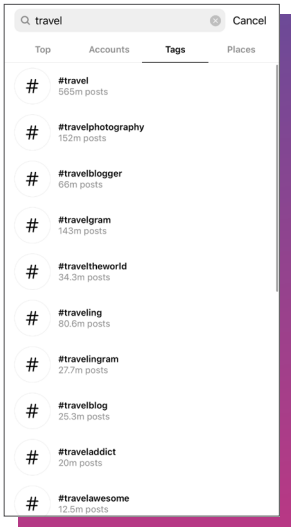
Kicking off in the early noughties when the internet was widely unexplored, travel bloggers in various sub-niches took to the internet to share their inspiring travel journeys. Blogs were the place you could share a story. Soon, there was something for everyone, from the keen volunteer to the avid thrill seeker, which pushed readers to share the travel content. Travel blogging was a hit because it was relatable, interesting, and easy to follow.



A few years later, people began to turn their attention to social media, largely driven by millennials. YouTubers hopped on the travel niche, offering a new way to view the world through a screen — raw videos. That's when travel content started to take off and secure mass distribution.



Then along came social media channels like Instagram, which democratized travel content. This move exploded influencer marketing's growth which isn't surprising given that Instagram gets 10x more engagement than platforms like Facebook. The content creator and travel enthusiasts could post their travel experiences in short snapshots that lured Instagram's curious platform users and served as handy mood boards for the users' own bucket lists. Consequently, travel content creators' followers soared as more people took to the platform to get their travel fill.



Brands in the travel niche noticed social media users' (their target customers) interest in travel and the content's viral potential on social media and jumped in head-first. Since then, travel-related companies have been battling to get their slice of the action. They work with influencers to craft jaw-droppingly good content that stands out on social channels like YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and, more recently, Tiktok.

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THE BENEFITS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

Did you know travel is now the fastest-growing segment in influencer marketing?

Just by being in the travel niche, you've set your brand on the path to riches. But there are so many more advantages to travel influencer marketing. Let's take at some:

Morph from a faceless corporation to a company with a personality, mission, and real people: Content by digital natives like influencers feels more natural to a prospective customer, and so it gets a better reception than pristine travel shots by corporations. Your brand can come alive through the influencer and fortify it through your social media efforts.

Maintain engagement with long standing customers: The great thing about travel influencer marketing is it can keep your existing customers interested in what you've got to say and offer. You can use influencer marketing to position your products or services in new ways to inspire your day one crowd to rebook.

Keep your brand on-trend without constantly reinventing it: Trends change frequently, and it can be a struggle to keep up. Besides, rebrands are expensive and take significant amounts of time and energy to execute. Thankfully, influencer marketing allows you to adapt when the tide shifts quickly. Work with influencers who embody the trend you want to be a part of, and you're good to go!

Be travel's mouthpiece to grow your authority: Many travel brands have reduced their marketing campaigns, so much so Travel ad spend plummeted by a shocking 60% in 2020.

This reduction creates the perfect opportunity to get out there and become the go-to resource for travel-related updates as the world reopens. Show what travel is like now, predict how it may be in the future, and advise on which consumer behaviors and travel regulations may stick around.

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TOP MACRO AND MICRO TRAVEL INFLUENCER MARKETING TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Global tourism has grown significantly in recent decades. This is largely down to the rise of globalization and tech advancements; demographic shifts are altering tourism as we know it. They've created perks like cheaper airfares and make it easier for people to plan and book their travel with greater ease, then share their experiences with friends in real-time.

While this growth looks like it will continue, shifting environmental conditions, technological innovations, and changing demographics are likely to transform the face of tourism by 2040 dramatically.

Here are some noteworthy trends to keep in mind when planning your travel influencer marketing strategy:

MEGA TRENDS SHAPING TRAVEL

SUSTAINABILITY

Thanks to environmental campaigns and initiatives worldwide, people are becoming increasingly aware of their carbon footprint. People are also waking up to the negative impact mass tourism has on countries and their population. For example, the gentrification of low-income towns and cities drives up living costs and pushes locals out. This awareness has kickstarted the sustainable travel movement to protect the areas and its inhabitants while experiencing the many wonders the world holds.

REMOTE WORK

The pandemic made working from home the norm seemingly overnight, and it looks as though it's here to stay. The amount of U.S workers working remotely went from 17% (pre-pandemic) to 44% during the pandemic in 2020.

Many corporations have closed their headquarters and informed staff there will be no office to return to. Announcements like this have skyrocketed the number of location-independent remote workers and digital nomads who want to travel and work or find a new place to call home for an extended time.

Consequently, new digital nomad hotspots and services have emerged alongside the veteran locations to serve this growing traveler segment. Demand for short to mid-term rentals, flexible flights, immersive travel experiences, and workcations groups have seen a significant uptick too.
For example, the 'influencer effect' has caused the once quiet jungle and oceanfront town Tulum to become a popular hang-out for yogis, remote workers, and digital nomads.

Local businesses have capitalized on influencers to demonstrate how the average person can have their own 'Eat. Pray. Love' journey with Tulum's picturesque landscape as the backdrop. And, it's worked—Tulum's surge in visitors flocking to the town to secure a piece of the magic for themselves.

THE SHARING ECONOMY

People now seek more freedom and flexibility when traveling or working remotely without breaking the bank. Consequently, there's been a sharp rise in demand for shared resources. This shift has boosted the use of co-living spots, Airbnbs, and rental vehicles, which help people get set up in their new location with little fuss.

MICRO TRENDS SHAPING TRAVEL

LUXURY TRAVEL

High-end travel has always had a strong appeal due to its popularization by celebrities and high-flyers. But luxury has become accessible due to social media. Consequently, generations like millennials who are stepping into their earning potential and have more disposable income than older generations actively seek out the finer things in life. These include luxe weekend getaways, vacations, and honeymoons.

VAN LIFE

There's a growing trend of off-the-grid living. People sell their belonging, doing up a van, and setting off on a massive road trip. Some document the process from start to finish. This has created a demand for travel-related companies that cater to this trend.

CURATED TRIPS & RETREATS

Workshops overseas have been around for ages. But now we're seeing a resurgence of retreats and custom-designed trips for people who want to maximize their time away, whether that's through learning new skills or seeing the best spots in a territory.

STAYCATIONS

COVID-19 has sparked a rise in people having to look closer to home for a break. Local accommodation bookings, trips to beach towns and the countryside, and socially distanced activities are commonplace.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Daredevil influencers are driving the uptick in people thrill-seekers on the hunt for adrenaline-fuelled travel adventures. From treacherous mountain hikes to exploring dense jungles, few things are off-limits.

HOW TO STAND OUT IN A SEA OF VACAY SNAPS AND INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES WITH INFLUENCER MARKETING

As travel influencer marketing continues to grow, stiff competition is the natural by-product. But there are a few ways to rise above the noise and get your target customers' attention. Let's dive into the best ways to nail your travel influencer marketing to secure your spot among the greats:

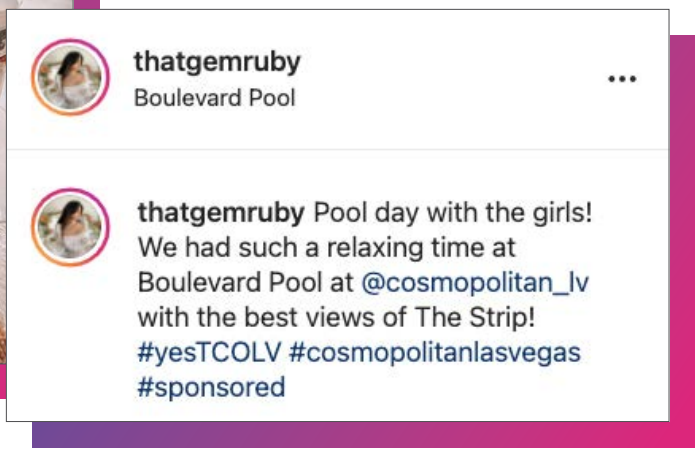
Let your creativity run wild

Slapdash campaigns won't cut it in the ultra-competitive travel influencing market. Also, avoid jumping on collaborations and content styles with specific influencers just because everyone else is doing it. Instead, research what your target market counts as envy-inducing, drool-worthy, and inspirational imagery, then go out there and make it.

Feed into the travel desires of your target market as these campaigns will have a greater chance of stopping their scrolling and checking out your content. Always be on the lookout for ways to keep your target audience excited about your brand and offerings. And aim to inspire an entire segment at once.

For instance, you could host an influencer weekender and invite a group of influencers to a location and request they document their experience on their social media.

Also, popular travel influencers often travel together; you could use this to your advantage. Arrange to work with their favorite group simultaneously or put together your own and collaborate with them on a series of vlogs or short videos (they get more engagement than photos). Feature your product(s) and highlight its benefits to drive tons of traffic to your social pages and website. This approach can also create more momentum and long lasting results.



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‘Be yourself. Everyone else is taken’

The well-known quote above is to encourage people but rings true for travel influencer marketing. Many brands fall into the trap of thinking they must present their products in a certain way to get customers.

Consequently, they miss out on building a community that vibes with their brand’s true personality and mission by alienating them with content that speaks to an entirely different crowd. Other companies misrepresent locations to get more customers, only to have it backfire and cause reputational damage.

Authenticity is the secret sauce for influencer marketing success. 90% of consumers believe authenticity is an essential factor when deciding whether to back a brand.

Places don’t change, but people do. So, influencers can offer new perspectives on your products. Their unique creator voice will always bring a fresh perspective. A great way to increase authenticity in your campaigns is to blend user-generated content with influencer marketing as shoppers find the former 2.4X more authentic than brand-created content.

So, don’t feel like you must follow the luxe travel trend if you built your brand to serve backpackers or try to make your offerings appear like something they’re not. Embrace your brand’s uniqueness and push what makes your brand different. Your tribe is waiting for you on the other side.

Tap into your target customers’ deepest desires and make it attainable - Social media is known for its awe-inspiring posts, especially in travel.

Research your customers' deepest desires and recreate them in your campaigns

From Instagrammable snaps of tropical locales to enviable skiing getaways, there's something about travel that keeps audiences hooked and coming back for more. Use the human desire for exploration to your advantage. Dig deep into your target customers' deepest wants and needs to uncover the experiences and products that will set their souls on fire. For example, do they love escapism content? Perhaps they want to feel free. Does luxury travel content stop them in their tracks? Perhaps they want to feel successful and accomplished.

Once you know the feeling they want to achieve, you can set out to create them in your influencer campaigns to inspire them to take action, whether that's booking a trip or buying a travel-related product. Lastly, make your offering seem attainable to your target market by carefully selecting influencers your target customers can relate to so you increase the odds of your content resonating with them.

Photo credit: **@ofleatherandlace**

Photo credit: **@ohdeardrea**

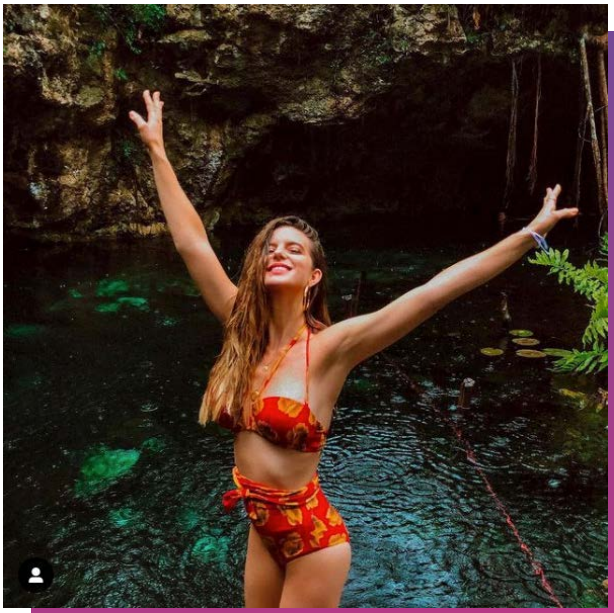

Photo credit: **@michelletakeaim**

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In times of crisis, don't take your foot off the marketing peddle: The Prospects of Future Travels

One of the biggest ways to hold your business back in the travel niche is to scale back influencer campaigns in crisis. People have traveled through the 2008 crash, swine flu outbreak, and COVID-19. Feed into the newness they're looking for so they can just straight in and book once they feel comfortable. Leverage influencers to inspire your prospects to plan and have something to look forward to.

During the recovery phase of this crisis, it's a good idea to take a two-pronged approach to your influencer marketing. Firstly, think local by pushing more activities people can do one their home turfs like road trips, train journeys, and staycations.

Then think global. Keep consumers informed about world travel in your influencer campaigns. You can do this by creating helpful micro-moments which promote travel at each stage of the customer journey, in which they get to experience short bursts of travel from their device. This approach will help keep your audience hopeful and inspired for better days ahead where they'll be able to take trips unhindered. Engage with them to uncover what makes them feel safe so you can tailor your offerings to match.

Helping your customers plan their future trips will put your business in a stronger position to close more sales in the long run.

Finally, optimize for mobile viewing. People tend to access social media from a mobile device and even shop on them. 85% of shoppers book travel activities via mobile. It pays to lead with a mobile-first approach.

Adopt a Data-Led Influencer Marketing Strategy

While the future is uncertain, experts are working around the clock to assess the impact the pandemic will have on future travel. It's a good idea to stay up-to-date on these developments. For example, researchers and travel experts anticipate shifts in the travel market like:

- Leisure trips to see family and friends are set to recover first.
- Business travel will likely trail behind other travel industries in their recovers.
- Remote work will probably stick around in some form.
- Flights prices could drop as airlines battle their mountains of debt.
- Bucket list adventures may resume.
- Countryside escape may continue to gain popularity.
- Package holiday may provide the security and peace of mind travelers seek.

Use these insights to guide your influencer marketing strategy (while keeping in mind they are predictions) to ensure you can maneuver your influencer strategy to fit consumer shifts.

3 Ace Influencer Campaigns to Inspire Your Travel Influencer Marketing

We're in the age of multi-platform users. So, to be successful in your influencer marketing endeavors, you should aim to be on all the platforms your customers use when wanderlust hits. To give you some inspiration, here are some content types that have hit it big in travel influencer marketing:

City of Miami

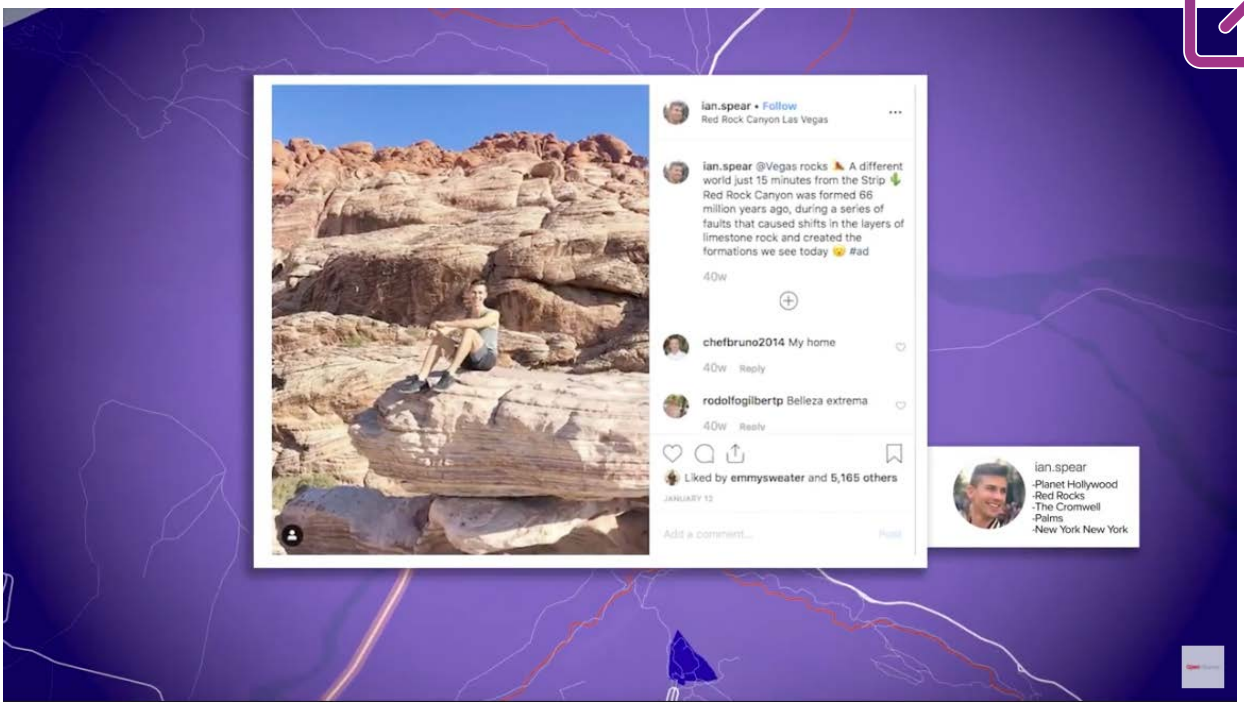
The City of Miami partnered with local Miami influencers who focus travel, family activities and cultural experiences to showcase what the city has to offer to their residents.

The campaign resulted in stunning images and great testimonials from people from all walks of life, who showed their audiences there are plenty of places to be discovered.

(Check out: Family-friendly Activities in Miami this Summer)

Las Vegas Convention and Visitor Authority (LVCVA)

In our award winning project with LVCVA, we worked with 27 travel, lifestyle, and LGBTQ+ influencers to highlight 9 official trips in Las Vegas. The influencers were first time visitors to Las Vegas and although they each had a unique style, they were united by their love for adventure. We tasked the influencers with documenting their personal experience on Instagram using a blend of images and short videos.



The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

We worked with the Luxury Resort, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas to bring attention to their unique site based in the center of Las Vegas. We collaborated with lifestyle influencers to create fun, 'in the moment' content so good viewers would have instant F.O.M.O. The campaign highlighted the perks of staying at the resort, from its breathtaking views to amazing food. Consequently we were able to drive home the point that this was the location for picture-perfect girls' trips.

Photo credit: **@iamlena**

Photo credit: **@ iamlena**

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A Game Plan for Successful Travel Influencer Marketing on the Uncertain Road Ahead

For years, travel companies relished in travel's popularity. Yet the dramatic effects of the pandemic have caused some travel brands to shrink back, their business' progress on the line.

To succeed on the uncertain road ahead, you'll need to fight the urge to sit and wait. Instead, choose to use the road less traveled. Be bold and brave in your influencer campaign to capitalize on the changes in the market.

Seek to educate consumers first to help mentally prepare for the new world of travel and the scenarios they'll encounter. Do this, and the world reopens; you'll be able to reap the rewards of your labor by having a sizable amount of qualified leads ready and waiting to take you up on your travel offers.

If you're tired of waiting around for the travel industry to pick up and want to take control of your travel business future, then don't delay! Discover how Open Influence can help you ramp up your travel influencer marketing campaigns.