

# **RESULTS-ORIENTED INFLUENCER MARKETING MANUAL FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Although the era of digitalization may be perceived as relatively new, research has long stressed its importance in studies about the need for companies to use new technologies to improve their business (Lindh and Rovira, 2018). Autonomous and collaborative robots, the Internet of things, additive manufacturing, cloud computing, augmented reality, and Big Data are some of the advances that companies are using to increase their productivity (Özüdoğru, Ergün, Ammari & Görener, 2018).

Furthermore, the way in which companies relate to customers has changed dramatically, with new figures such as influencers appearing on the scene. The term influencer is not new, but its use on social media is where this concept is proving to be an important marketing tactic. Thanks to the Internet, this tool has become powerful and easy to use. Influencers allow brands to reach customers in a more social, direct, and effective way. In fact, influencer marketing perfectly meets companies' need to face increasing skepticism of advertising among their customers. Moreover, purchase decisions are now based on comments from users who customers see as similar (Castelló, del Pino & Tur, 2016; Kanellopoulos & Panagopoulos, 2008; Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007). Thus, according to Nielsen (2015), 66% of the global audience trust consumers posting opinions online and 83% trust recommendations from people they know. Therefore, encouraging different neutral players to create positive content about a company's products or services has become a new and extremely effective communication tool.

Specifically, social media has changed the rules of the tourism industry. This phenomenon, known as Travel 2.0, has made it possible for people other than the companies themselves to share information about a specific service on a website; users can now share and rely on this information (Casaló, Flavián, Guinaliú

& Ekinici, 2015; Wöber, 2006; Xiang, Wöber & Facemailed, 2008). In this context, influencers have become new tour guides. The fact they share their experience in the first person provides a new point of view that is characterized by naturalness and trust. This is why campaigns with influential people can be extremely beneficial for tourist brands, since this allows them to reach a much more specific user profile at a lower cost than other conventional advertising campaigns (Hernández, Fuentes & Marrero, 2012).

In fact, there are already several tourist destinations that are using influencers to raise their profile in certain areas. This is the case of the Spain China Project, from 2018, through which the Spain Brand has organized an important campaign to promote Spain in China through influencers. In total, 10 Chinese influencers with more than a combined 30 million followers on social networks are visiting several cities in Spain, which allows them to share their experience and promote Spain's tourism, culture and gastronomy in the Chinese market. Reciprocally, and almost at the same time, the China Influencer Project was also implemented, through which 150 Spanish influencers, with more than 50 million followers combined, visited China and also shared their experiences on social networks.

However, conducting a successful marketing campaign with influencers is not easy if a company has no prior experience in the subject. On the other hand, there are many companies linked to tourism, such as hotels, airlines, etc., that could benefit from having influencers on their marketing campaigns. In this sense, although there are currently some guidelines on how to implement this type of strategy, there are no solid proposals that offer a results-oriented approach or indicators that help to better evaluate the campaign. This is precisely the objective of this paper: to create a results-oriented manual for influencer marketing campaigns in the tourism industry and, potentially, in any other industry. To achieve this objective, this manual is based on a practical case, that is, it is based on field experience, which gives it greater practical value.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Before delving into the project, it is necessary to clearly and precisely define the terms that will be used in this manual. This is vital, considering that the field of influencers is still new and unknown to a large part of the population. Specifically, there are three key elements in this study: influencers, influencer marketing, and influence inside tourism.

It is also necessary to indicate that when we talk about brands, although many of the concepts presented here can be used by all brands in a general sense, this manual is focused on tourism companies. Therefore, the concept of brand encompasses not only tourism company brands but also tourism destination brands. Although often managed by public bodies, these brands can still be used for the content that will be developed in this manual.

## What is an Influencer?

The word influencer has not always been used correctly. According to Chae (2017), social media influencers are online celebrities who exhibit their personal lives to many followers via social media. When this term is used in social media, there is a tendency to think of someone with a high number of followers and likes on their social networks. However, the reality is that not everyone with a big account can be an influencer. It should be remembered that popularity and influence are not synonymous. Therefore, more qualities must be included to realistically outline the meaning of influence over an audience. In other words, an influencer should be considered a powerful communication tool.

In this sense, according to the Cambridge dictionary, an influencer must have the power to change the way people behave. Therefore, a high number of followers alone does not make someone an influencer; rather, it is their real ability to affect users' decision-making processes. This concept of influencer is also shared by Castelló-Martínez and del Pino-Romero (2015). These authors consider that an influencer is a person who, thanks to their personality, the fact that they belong to a specific organization, or to their knowledge, generates influence via their opinions, ratings, or purchase decisions.

On the other hand, Armano (2011) argues that influence is based on six dimensions or pillars:

- **Reach:** Traditionally limited to conventional media, today social media allows influencers to expand their horizon and grow their reach exponentially.
- **Proximity:** The closer people are to the influencer, the more likely they are to agree and act according to their recommendation. Small networks facilitate proximity.
- **Experts:** giving opinions on their subject of expertise is key for achieving influence. On social media, there are also experts. However, these experts do not become such thanks to degrees or courses, but thanks to approval and positive assessment from their social system.
- **Relevance:** The influence is as effective as the relevance or relationship the subject has with the topic to which the influence is related.
- **Credibility:** This is the determining aspect of the influence. The activities carried out, and the transparency shown helped build reputation.
- **Trust:** The reason why people trust their friends, even if there is a lack of expertise or credibility, is because they believe in them, share the same interests or, simply, because they know them. The social media environment creates a new dynamic, like a private environment, where trust is developed to a certain degree, even if not all the members of the network are known.

It is important to note that influencers on social media tend to focus on a particular category, and they seek interaction with other users by incentivizing them to share their opinions, thoughts or ideas, too (Booth & Matic, 2011). Taking this into account, to summarize, social media influencers can be defined as those who generate information about products, services or about any contemporary topic, mainly through a social media platform, achieving great acceptance and respect from a portion of the users of the social network on which they operate.

Therefore, for the purpose of this project, influencers are born from their social networks and the trust that the audience gives them makes them ambassadors. However, other possible meanings should be excluded, such as specific recommenders in small circles or celebrities outside of social media. To avoid confusion, in this paper, the term influencers will be used for people whose origins are purely in social media. Conversely, all those with an influence on social media, but whose main sector and origin of this reach and ability to influence is outside of social media, in the offline world, will be called celebrities.

### **Influencers as Prosumers**

It is important to mention the prosumer aspects of every influencer. Toffler (1980) defines prosumers as people who produce goods and services for their own consumption. Thus, this term is not new either. However, it acquired a whole new dimension thanks to social media. Richter (2014) establishes a chronological timeline of the term prosumer. According to this author, the most traditional version of prosumer is related to the first wave, which relates the term to ideas such as people making their own clothes or hunting their own food. The second wave, the factory boom, separates consumption and production. This brings about dramatic growth in consumption and a shift to a consumer's perspective, where some people consume and others produce. This unbalanced situation of prosumers versus consumers leaves society with few recorded cases of prosumers and an undervalued image of the prosumer. It is the third wave that brings back the prosumer concept. People leave mass consumption in favor of individualization. These users have the need to produce what they consume and this has great implications in marketing.

The concept of prosumer is implicitly linked to the concept of service experience (Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert & Zeithaml, 1997; Gebauer, Johnson & Enquist, 2010) and co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Xie, Bagozzi & Troye, 2008), given that today, consumers not only consume, they also need to share their opinions and offer information about products or services. As a result of this evolution, the term prosumer applies to creative people providing content for others, particularly in the context of social media (Kosnik, 2018). They create content around their experience and social media offers them the means to share this experience. In this sense, an influencer can be a prosumer. If a company makes a user, and, specially, an influencer, happy or unhappy, their experience can be shared among millions of users almost instantaneously (Wang, Yu & Fesenmaier, 2002).

## Influencer Marketing

Today, traditional word of mouth (WOM) has become eWOM, allowing for the emergence of influencer marketing. This is a form of marketing in which advertising focuses on specific individuals with the ability to influence their followers (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). Thus, a first approach to influencer marketing is the art and science of involving influential people online to share brand messages with their audiences in the form of sponsored content (Sammis, Lincoln & Pomponi, 2016).

The use of influences in marketing is essentially the evolution of earlier celebrity or sport star sponsorships, thanks to social media. This evolution is aligned with the boom in online comments and reviews and the role they play in users' decision-making processes. The Internet, or more precisely social media, has therefore become one of the most relevant channels to influence consumer decisions (Marine-Roig, 2017). Thus, brands seek to generate the credibility or the trust they obtained before from sponsorship and celebrities via users. These users generate feelings among their potential or current customers because of their experience or knowledge on that specific matter. This type of marketing, among other things, increases sales (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Therefore, a new technique used by brands emerges. It is called influencer marketing.

Brown & Hayes (2008) state that influencer marketing encompasses the process of identifying, researching, engaging and supporting the people who create high-impact conversations with customers about your brand, products or services. According to these authors, this marketing activity is a relationship-based strategy that allows companies to align and combine their public relations, sales, product, and digital marketing activities. This will produce results that must be analyzed in accordance with the objectives set by the company. Therefore, when working with influencers, it is extremely important for organizations to know the different types of influencers, allowing them to select the profile that best fits their objectives. Knowing the different types of influencers will help organizations narrow down their selection of influencers and make them more valuable, long-lasting, and effective (Barone, 2013).

There are many ways of classifying the different types of influencers, such as by the type of content published, prestige, or number of followers. Following the classification system created by the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association-WOMMA (2013), there are five types of influencers:

- **Advocate or defender:** Can be defined as a person with positive feelings towards a brand. This user tends to defend the organization and would not hesitate to share content or experiences related to it. Sometimes, this love of the brand may lead to a loss of trust. This type of influencer is frequently used to share their user experience and reach or maintain brand equity.

- **Ambassador or brand ambassador:** These are people who share the values and philosophy of the company, such as employees or partners, and, therefore, have the role of representing it. By signing a contract and receiving the corresponding monetary compensation, the ambassador's main tasks are to represent the brand publicly; therefore, companies should see this type of influencer as an extension of their brand. They are characterized by their ability to influence others, and they are mainly used with the aim of growing the brand or making it stronger.
- **Citizen:** People who share their opinion or ideas, either positive or negative, with other users. In this case, there is no type of contract or relationship with the brand, which increases trust among users, as they are seen as more independent than other types of influencers. Although their intention is not originally to influence others, some audiences, such as millennials, take the recommendations of other users into serious consideration, and, therefore, they can have a significant impact on a brand.
- **Professionals or experts on the topic:** These are people who have influence because of their job, experience, or knowledge about a certain topic, such as bloggers or journalists. Their ability to influence catches the attention of brands and this generates part of their income. Through their social position, media channels, events, etc., they can have an impact and influence on the audience. The objective when working with this type of influencers is to increase value and knowledge of the brand, sales, or subscriptions.
- **Celebrity:** Celebrities are those who, thanks to the fame they have achieved outside the online world, can influence a large population. Therefore, they are the type of influencers with the biggest reach but also imply a higher cost. The relationship between the two parties requires a formal contract. On top of that, their actions are easy to measure. The main objective pursued with this type of influencer is to use their fame to have an impact on the organization's results. They are frequently used to increase sales, spread messages, support causes, increase brand awareness, etc.

Each category of influencer requires a specific program, while the type of influence achieved is different according to the audience. It must be considered that whether an individual belongs to one influencer type or another depends largely on the situation and the context. Therefore, an influencer can fall into more than one category. For example, someone who derives their income from one specific activity may be considered a professional. However, if this person recommends the product of a company with which they have no affiliation, they can be an advocate.

## Tourism and Influencers

Social media has come to change the rules of the tourism industry. Search engines have conventionally been where travelers were presented with information in a coherent way by tourism suppliers (Wöber, 2006; Xiang, Wöber & Fesenmaier, 2008). However, the traditional approach to search engines is threatened by the impact of social media, because of how frequently social media is updated and the high amount of content and links that it generates (Gretzel, 2006). Social media is not only a new player in search engine optimization, but it is also an alternative itself for finding relevant content. For these reasons, today, it is not enough to promote a service just with words. The tourism industry relies heavily on visuals, where lots of images or videos can be used to show their products and services (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). Within this visual content, pictures are key when looking for references about a particular tourism service. Consumers are gradually becoming more demanding, and they want to see more abundant, exact, and complete information. The video format is the most complete, since it includes all the necessary information about a product or service and puts it within the reach of potential users (Stylidis & Cherifi, 2018).

In this context, influencers have become the new tour guides. The fact that they share their experience in the first person provides a new point of view, characterized by a naturalness and trust that is lacking in traditional formats. This is why campaigns with influencers can be extremely beneficial for tourism brands: they allow them to reach a much more targeted user profile at a lower cost than other conventional campaigns (Suciati, Maulidiyanti & Lusia, 2018). In this sense, destinations should work closely with the influencers, not only to create innovative content, but also to better understand their potential customers by attracting tourists that feel identified with the values and experiences offered by the destination (Iyiola & Akintunde, 2011). These influence leaders can greatly assist tourism companies in achieving their business objectives at different levels, such as positioning their brands or destination and working on their brand equity, image, and trust (Hernández, Fuentes & Marrero, 2012).

According to Axon Marketing & Communication (2018), the benefits that can be obtained from using influencers for marketing campaigns in the tourism sector are:

- **Broader visibility of the brand or destination:** Working with popular people increases destination virality and exposure.
- **Greater impact on tourists of interest:** Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube are some of the social media channels most followed by millennials, and most millennials are travelers; therefore, tourism companies should pay attention to these followers of celebrities on social networks.

- **A message in tune with advertising-skeptic tourists:** When a celebrity recommends a product, people will likely think that it is a commercial. However, this changes when considering the promotion of a destination, since the influencer also travels voluntarily and nobody can prove that their photos on Instagram or Facebook are part of a campaign.
- **Organic impact on media:** Very often, influencers' activities are the focus of different types of press. This means free and organic exposure in traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, TV shows, and radio.

However, conducting a successful marketing campaign with influencers is not easy if the organization has no prior experience in the subject. Lack of experience with influencer marketing can leave some growing companies behind (Cave & Jenkin, 2012). On the other hand, there are many companies linked to tourism, such as hotels, airlines, etc., that could benefit from using influencers in their marketing campaigns. In this sense, although there are currently some guidelines on how to implement this type of strategy, there are no solid proposals that offer a results-oriented approach or indicators that help to better evaluate the campaign. This is precisely the objective of this paper: to create a results-oriented manual on influencer marketing campaigns in the tourism industry and, potentially, any other industry. Specifically, this manual seeks to offer a procedure that allows organizations to measure the efficiency of campaigns and learn from them, identifying where and why they have been inefficient. This proposal should help to establish a long-term relationship with influencers that allows companies to co-create more valuable content and get closer to their target audience.

## **THE CASE STUDY**

To achieve the objectives proposed in this work, the case study methodology was chosen. This technique is appropriate when a comprehensive, in-depth investigation is required and for cases with a limited amount of prior research or data compiled in studies. Specifically, as Yin (1994) states, the case study is an empirical investigation that studies a contemporary phenomenon in its own context in real life, especially when the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are not clear enough. An investigation based on a case study successfully addresses a situation in which there are more variables to analyze or define than observed data. As a result, it is based on multiple sources that should coincide; in other words, using more than one method to collect data on the same topic, the results should be similar. This allows the researcher to take advantage of previous theoretical proposals that can guide the collection and analysis of data. From this perspective, the relevant use of case studies as a research methodology has been verified in various subjects, including several associated with business management, management and organizational change, and innovation (Biggart, 1977; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Mccutcheon and Meredith, 1993; Nieto and Pérez, 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 1990).

As the name indicates, the case study requires a real case. To create this manual, a company from the tourism sector, which usually works with influencers, has been chosen. Specifically, it is an online price comparison company. Thus, the case study is based on the practices carried out by this company in its routine business activities when designing and implementing campaigns with influencers. This business seems to be a good choice because it is a leader in the use of influencers in tourism, as it has applied the technique successfully, and in different markets.

A case study has the following steps (George & Bennett, 2005; Yin, 1994):

**Step 1:** Study design

**Step 2:** Development of the study

**Step 3:** Analysis and conclusions

In the first step, the objective of the study is established. As already mentioned, in this case, this consists of creating a results-oriented influencer marketing manual to help organizations successfully run influencer campaigns. During the second step, the data collection activity is planned and implemented using the different sources considered for the case. These consist mainly of interviews with the influencer marketing campaign manager at the company selected. Specifically, to obtain the necessary information to create this manual, an in-depth interview has been carried out, as well as a series of subsequent follow-ups to clarify certain points with the two people responsible for managing these campaigns. The interviews took place in June 2017. The last step analyzes the evidence. There are different criteria to interpret the results of a study. When the case study methodology is cause-explanation, the dynamic aims to find coinciding behavior patterns and associate them with results. An example of this could be the existence of a systematic relationship between variables. To conclude, a summary of the investigation will be prepared and the results presented in a way that can be used as a manual for interested readers.

## **INFLUENCER MARKETING MANUAL FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY**

The process that will be followed in this manual is organized into the following phases: (1) Plan, which consists of preparing an overview of the project that will be used as a guide for the entire process; (2) Search for influencers for the campaign; (3) Evaluation, through a more in-depth look at the profiles and their audience; (4) Contacting the influencers, which is not always a simple task, (5) Proposing a detailed campaign project; (6) Execution, detailing the implementation of the plan; and (7) Analysis of the results, assessing them as accurately as possible based on the established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

## Campaign Planning

Planning social media and influencer activity is extremely important to efficiently run these types of communication campaigns. A starting point is to determine the frequency and number of campaigns to be run each month. This will mainly depend on the budget and the timeframe. If the organization has a budget and timeframe in mind, the next question to answer is: why is the brand using influencer campaigns? Influencers can help companies pursue different objectives. At the same time, each objective has its own KPIs that will determine the way the rest of the process is structured and evaluated. Therefore, it is very important to establish measurable KPIs. These measurable KPIs will ultimately allow brands to determine whether the campaign was successful or not.

Once the brand has established clear campaign objectives (increase the number of tourists, improve the tourist destination's image, increase visibility, etc.), it must specify the type of influencer(s) and social network(s) that best suit the main objective. The target audience must be considered to execute an effective influence campaign. It should be borne in mind that many social network profiles are ambitious. This means that although the image they project may be what the company is looking for, the real audience is completely the opposite, since they follow it because it represents their ideals. Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on the audience behind the influencer.

Some of the most popular social networks are Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, blogs, messaging apps (WhatsApp, Line, KakaoTalk, etc.), and the so-called "niche social networks," which target a specific segment of the general population. One example of the latter is Untappd, a mobile phone application that allows its users to check in as they drink beer and share these check-ins and their locations with their friends. Another example is Dribbble, a community of designers, which offers a self-promotion platform for graphic design, web design, illustration, photography, and other creative areas.

Finally, in this phase, it is necessary to come up with a rough description of the type of influencer profile the company is seeking. Appendix 1 shows a quick project planner that will make it easier for organizations to successfully plan their influencer campaigns. The steps to follow to select the type of influencer needed are:

1. **Influencer origin:**

- a. **Influencer:** A person who is well-known because of social networks. Their entire career was developed on social networks, for example, YouTubers or Instagrammers.
- b. **Celebrity:** They have an impact on social media, but their fame comes from other activities outside the online world. This is the case for actors, singers, politicians, sport stars, and TV presenters.

Both are perfectly capable of driving specific behavior in the target audience, but the type of influencer must be carefully chosen depending on the company's objectives. Sometimes, influencers become celebrities if they attain great fame and start to appear on TV shows or similar platforms. The opposite is true when a celebrity starts to gain significant traction on social media. As noted in the introduction, the term influencers is used for people who are social media experts. However, many of these principles are also applicable to celebrities. Generally, celebrities bring a bonus to branding, as they are usually well-known in society, whereas influencers are generally only "famous" among their followers. On the other hand, influencers tend to have increased interaction with the social media community.

2. **Type of profile:** It is helpful to consider different types of profiles for the same campaign:
  - a. Lifestyle: They get word of mouth from their recommendations. People tend to be very involved.
  - b. Fashion: Their image can work well with branding campaigns.
  - c. Travel: This profile is good for category-lovers and early adopters.
  - d. Family: They make trusted recommendations.
  - e. Technology: This type is appropriate for app campaigns and early adopters.
  - f. Humor: Very effective for product placement.
  - g. Photography: Especially useful for content generation.
  - h. Others: Some examples are Do it Yourself (DIY), designs, BookTubers, fitness, music, and foodies.
  
3. **Influencer size:** This is measured through the number of followers. Categories may vary depending on the market:
  - a. Macro-influencer: > 1M followers.
  - b. Big influencers: 500K-1M followers.
  - c. Medium influencers: 100K-500K followers.
  - d. Small influencers: 50K-100K followers.
  - e. Micro-influencers: <50K followers.

In general, the lower the size, the greater the number of followers who trust the influencer. On the other hand, the bigger the size, the more people who are reached by the influencer. The most balanced profiles are big and medium.

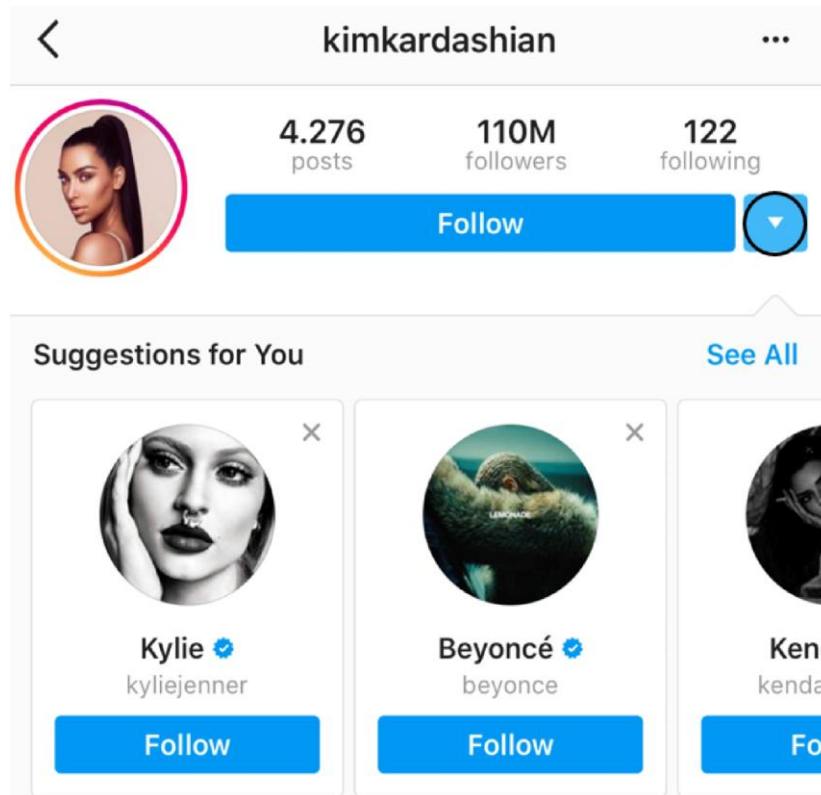
## Searching for Influencers

Once a tourism company has a clear idea of the type of influencer it wants to use in its campaign, it needs to find them. Although this may seem like an easy task, it requires the ability to “zero in” to end up with an accurate selection of profiles. If the brand does not have the resources/time to go through the search process, it can always rely on an agency for this part. However, if it prefers to take on the entire process, the next phase is to answer the question: how do we start the search? This will depend on the company’s degree of understanding of the market and the influencer panorama in that country/market. Below are a series of recommendations that companies can follow to carry out a good search:

- **Ask about it:** Brands must find the target market and simply ask them who they are following on social media.
- **Google it:** The simpler way to start is googling it. After a bit of research, companies should be able to find a couple of names repeated in different articles. They should try searching for something like “Top influencers in [Market],” “Best YouTuber [Market],” “Unique [Market] Instagram profiles,” “Top [Market] fashion bloggers,” etc.
- **Use external tools:** YouTube, and especially Instagram, are not big fans of external tools and almost all of them are blocked. However, there are some useful tools to help marketing campaign managers find new users. SocialBlade is one of them, and it offers the possibility of checking the top 100 most-followed accounts for a country. This information should be treated with care, as the most followed are not necessarily the most profitable, the most influential, or those that have the greatest reach.
- **Explore competitors:** What are competitors or even other non-related brands doing? Brands can check competitors’ social profiles to identify influencers. They should check tagged photos or top posts for specific hashtags.
- **Friends of influencers:** Once a couple of influencers have been found, brands should check their top friends, as they are usually tagged several times in their posts.
- **Use tools provided by the social network:** Not all of them provide features, but here are some examples.
  - Instagram.

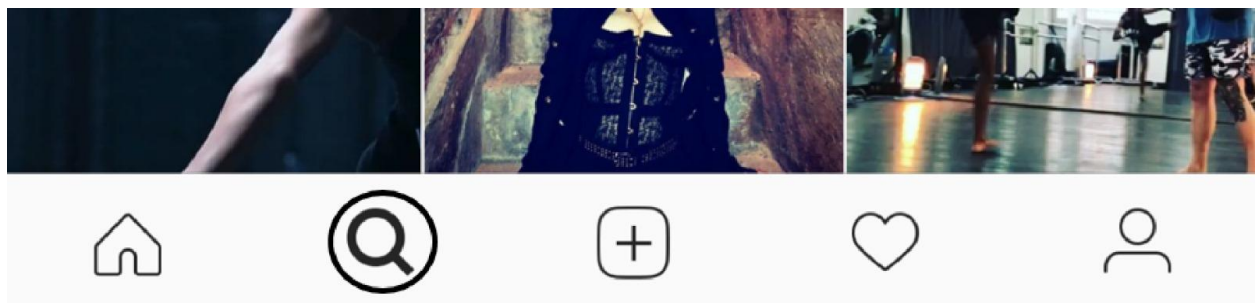
- Suggested profiles: Instagram displays a little arrow next to the “Follow” button. When it is tapped, a menu will come up with “other suggested profiles.” These suggested profiles tend to have characteristics like the original (see Figure 1, in which the arrow appears, pointing down, to the right of the "Follow" button).

Figure 1. "Explore similar profiles" feature on Instagram



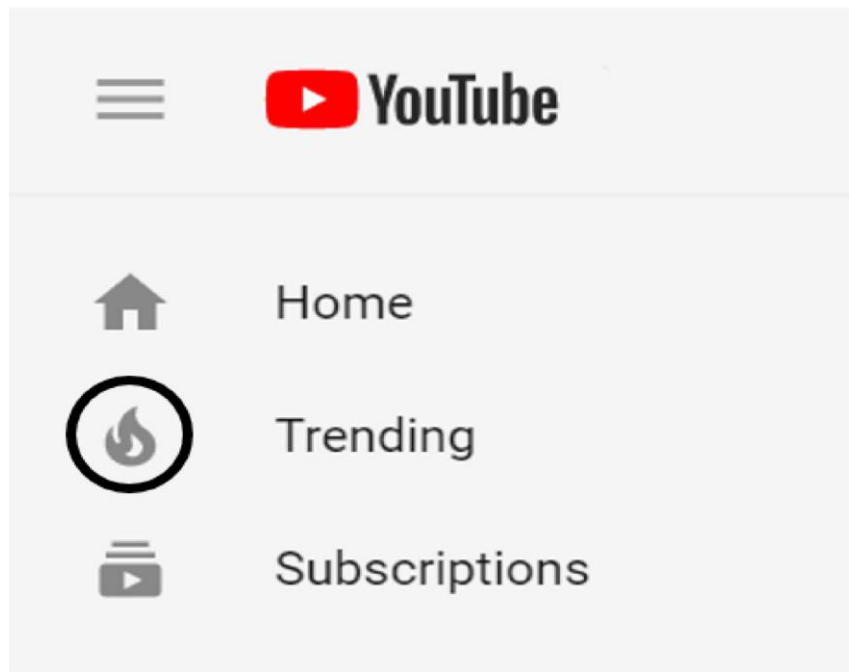
- Explore: The explore option in Instagram lets users see recommended profiles. Some may be of interest to brands looking for influencers (see in Figure 2, the option that looks like a magnifying glass).

Figure 2. "Explore" feature on Instagram



- YouTube.
  - Trending: YouTube allows users to discover what videos are trending at that moment. This can be extremely helpful for finding new YouTubers or new profiles that are growing fast (see Figure 3, the "Trending" option).

*Figure 3 "Trending" menu in YouTube*



- Suggested videos: If companies already have a YouTuber in mind, they can check a few videos and pay extra attention to the suggested videos. They usually include similar influencers.
- Twitter: It is important to check trending topics. Twitter is open to collaborating with other tools, so external tools such as “Audiense” can be used to find the perfect influencer.
- **Partners:** If the company has some influencers who are already working with the team, managers can explore different ways to collaborate with them to get additional exposure.
- **Influencer network:** In line with the above, influencers with whom the brand has a good relationship can serve as guidance and can be a good source of new ideas. Asking them about other profiles or even using them to get some feedback about specific profiles can be helpful. They will most likely know all the pros and cons of their competitors.

- **Previous influencers you have already worked with:** Although it is recommended to work with different influencers over time, long-term relationships are always welcome and could be a great opportunity for businesses.

These are just a few ideas; however, it is always a good idea to innovate and look for new ways to find those perfect influencers.

## Evaluation

When the company has a large database of influencers, it must filter them to collaborate with those that can best meet its requirements. Not all the profiles the brands have found and selected are equally valuable. Although the degree of influence that the profile exerts on users cannot be measured accurately, there are some metrics that will allow the brand to understand the users' level of implication or commitment to the influencer. This is an important subject to consider when dealing with campaigns with clear calls to action. Sometimes, agencies can provide extra information that can be useful, such as internal metrics, specifically designed tools, or prior experience. However, there is one key metric that is easy to obtain: engagement. Engagement can be defined as a psychological state that occurs because of individuals' interactive and co-creative experiences with specific actors, objects, or events (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). This state will play a vital role in the evaluation and selection process.

To evaluate influencers, a simple formula has been developed:

$$\text{Engagement \%} = (A * 1 + B * 2 + C * 3) / D$$

This formula assigns different values to different engagement items, (i.e. likes or comments) if each of them requires a higher or lower level of user involvement. The formula is also applicable to different social media networks. In this regard, the proposed formula is based on different user interactions for the main social networks, as shown in Table 1. For the analysis to be representative, it should be based on at least the last five posts, meaning that each of the items must be recorded as the average (i.e.: Likes = Average of likes for the last five posts). Appendix 2 includes clarifications for calculating engagement.

*Table 1. Importance of user interactions on the main social networks*

Social media	A	B	C	D
Instagram	Likes	Comments	-	Followers
YouTube	Views	Likes	Comments	Subscribers

Twitter	Likes	Retweets	Comments	Followers
Facebook	Likes	Comments	Shares	Fans
Snapchat	Views	Screenshots	-	-

Source: Developed by author

With respect to the number of followers, when conducting the evaluation, companies must be careful of fake followers. Therefore, it is important that they can identify so-called "fake followers" on influencers' accounts. Here are some ways to identify them:

- **Spikes in follower growth:** SocialBlade provides a history of follower growth. If abrupt spikes are seen regularly, they should be double-checked, as they could be bought followers.
- **Fake accounts as followers:** Sometimes, an influencer’s followers are fake accounts. Signs of fake accounts are profiles with no photos, few posts and that are “following” many accounts.
- **Fake comments:** If comments are standard comments such as “cool photo,” “nice shot,” or just an emoji, there is a chance that they are automated comments. This phenomenon is the result of tools that can post comments automatically.
- **Comment pods:** Sometimes, a group of users creates a private Instagram group where they share their latest posts and members agree to make comments. These comments look natural and genuine, but they are also fake. To identify them, browse some posts. If the commenters are the same, this may indicate that the influencer is using this practice.
- **Inactive audience:** If engagement goes below 5% on Instagram, or below 50% in YouTube, the users may be real, but they are not interested in the content anymore.

Given that the most popular social networks for influencers today are Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat, it is worth delving deeper into how these three market leaders are assessed:

- **Instagram:** Since engagement is the core of the evaluation process, brands should aim for a minimum engagement of 6% and, ideally, over 10%. Additionally, they must consider engagement on branded posts vs. non-branded posts. Other important metrics, such as the consistency of posts, should also be considered. If an influencer publishes regularly, they are likely more valuable than those who only post from time to time. In this sense, it is good practice to follow an account’s activity for some time before deciding to work with it, to better understand the influencer’s communication style, personality, likes and dislikes. This will also help create a better proposal.

Another good indicator is “fan accounts.” When an Instagrammer has a huge influence, fans start to create fan clubs or fan accounts.

Finally, demographic data or internal account statistics can be very valuable. These metrics are a bit more difficult to obtain, since the company will have to contact the influencer directly and request them. However, if the brand gets this information, they will have a more realistic understanding of the audience. These metrics include:

- Instagram story views, as accounts that are highly active on Instagram stories also have better, more natural engagement with the audience.
  - Audience age.
  - Country and city of the audience.
  - Reach and impressions per post.
- **YouTube:** Views on this platform are also considered when calculating engagement, but the engagement rate should be higher than on Instagram. Brands should look for a minimum rate of 50%, and, ideally, above 80%; this means that the YouTuber is growing quickly, as there are more people watching them regularly than subscribers.

Moreover, YouTube provides statistics like Instagram, but provides them in a more accurate way, so that the company can research:

- Audience age.
- Audience gender.
- Combined audience age and gender.
- Country of origin.
- Retention rate, that is, the average duration of the view and the average percentage of the videos viewed.
- Devices.
- Other information such as traffic sources, subscriber evolution, etc.

As some of these data may be personal, companies should be careful in their use to avoid problems with data protection laws.

- **Snapchat:** Many users in this field use apps that hack Snapchat, where they appear in a ghost mode, mainly for three reasons: (1) They can take screenshots of the story without the user knowing; (2)

They can watch the story without the user knowing; and (3) They can save pictures and videos without the other user knowing. So, keeping this in mind, and given that most use third-party applications like Snap-Hack, SaveSnap, SnapPad, etc., asking the influencer to send a screenshot of the number of views does not make sense, as it does not reflect the real number or level of engagement. There are three alternative ways to evaluate a Snap influencer:

- Checking the influencer's Instagram and assessing it as previously stated.
- Checking YouTube: Many followers or fans create YouTube channels for the influencer and upload all their snaps. Thus, companies can check the comments, views, and subscribers on these channels.
- Checking Twitter: The company can hashtag the influencer's name and see what is being posted about them. Most users go to Twitter to give their opinion. Thus, the influencer's snaps can be found posted on Twitter with a hashtag, along with some comments. This can show how popular they are, the type of followers they have, and to what extent their followers are influenced by them.

## **Contacting Influencers**

If it has not yet been done in the evaluation phase, the next step is to get in touch with influencers and propose that they work with the company or with the tourism destination. There are several ways to establish communication with influencers. Email works for the first approach, but after this first contact, many of them prefer to switch to phone calls, WhatsApp, Line, Facebook messenger, or other messaging apps. To make this first contact, the influencer's email address can be found in different ways:

- **Instagram:** Many influencers include a contact email in their biography. If this information is not shown there, this may be because they have an "email" button on their Instagram profile. Keep in mind that this button is only available in the Instagram application and will not be displayed when checking Instagram from a PC or web browser (see Figure 4, the "email" option).

Figure 4 Email address or call button in Instagram profile



- **YouTube:** To contact YouTubers, go to their YouTube profiles and click on the “About” tab. Once there, click on “view email address” and verify that is not a robot.

If an influencer’s email address is not available on YouTube or Instagram, the company can try to check other social media such as Twitter to see if they have one in their bio. Also, it should be noted that, even though many influencers manage their collaborations by themselves, there is a large part of the influencer community that relies on agencies or personal managers for this.

## Proposal

At this stage of the process, it is time to design the creative aspects of the campaign. The proposal can be specifically designed for the audience and for the influencers that best align with the company’s objectives, who have been selected previously. This proposal can be as creative as desired. Therefore, only the most basic structure will be covered here to let the rest be guided by marketing creatives. The three core points are: cost, type of impacts, and creativity and concept.

- **Cost:** There are two basic ways of rewarding influencers for their collaboration: fees (price per post) or sponsorship (exchange).

- Fees: This is the traditional method. It consists of a previously agreed-upon fixed price per post. Influencers are open to negotiating the fee when companies purchase more than one post or posts on different platforms. It tends to be more expensive than sponsorship, but it is faster and more time-effective when managing several campaigns. This option is also worth considering when the influencer is not big enough to be worth covering the cost of the product or service that would be given as an exchange. Fees can range from \$20 for small profiles to over \$20,000 per YouTube video. Of course, fees depend on reach, style, popularity, the influencer's business model, etc. In this regard, celebrities tend to be far more expensive than influencers, even if they have the same number of followers.
- Sponsorship: This consists of giving something away in exchange for social media exposure. Some tourism-related examples would be:
  - Free product or service: For example, the brand could fully or partially cover an upcoming trip or give away free trials.
  - Discounts: Brands can provide long-term discounts, for example, 10% off influencer purchases during the next X months.
  - Win-win: The company can also offer to pay them based on the performance (purchases, visits, etc.) they manage to generate through their audience.
- **Type of impacts:** One of the most important parts of the entire process is how the influencer implements the promotion and the impact this will have on the audience. There are several ways they can make an impact, depending on the social media platform. Below are some components of the different types of social media posts as well as some tips of what they should include:
  - Instagram Post:
    - Caption: This is the text that accompanies the image. It is important to include a mention, and it is good practice to have it displayed on the first line. The company can also include #Hashtags. Another recommendation is to avoid standard captions such as “thanks to [Brand],” which add no value. The more natural, the better.
    - Tags: The brand's profile can be tagged on a normal post.
    - Location: The influencer can add the location. This is good when promoting specific destinations.

- Promoted feature: The influencer can tag the brand’s Instagram account as a sponsor. This will let the tagged brand automatically access internal data such as reach, impressions, and engagement.
- No links: There is no way to include clickable content in a normal post caption.
- Instagram stories: These are images or short videos in vertical format, only available for 24 hours.
  - Image or video: The content will be shown full screen, so it needs to be vertical (like the smartphone screen). Only images or a maximum of 13 seconds of video are allowed.
  - Text or drawing: This function is available on Instagram stories.
  - Mentions and hashtags: It is possible to add mentions that link to a profile or clickable hashtags. When adding hashtags, there is a chance that the stories will be displayed in the hashtag feed.
  - Location: This option also offers the chance of being featured in the location feed.
  - Swipe up: Stories allow the company to add links; simply add them to the stories and users only need to “swipe up” to see them. This feature is only available to a restricted number of profiles, such as verified accounts for profiles with many followers.
- Instagram Live:
  - Pinned comments: Specific comments can be pinned so that they are always shown when watching the live broadcast.
  - Co-streaming: This feature allows live streamers to invite an external user to the stream in split-screen mode.
- YouTube:
  - Video: Generally, videos should last less than 10 minutes. However, some influencers prefer to make long videos, about 15 minutes. If that is what they usually do and that is how they became popular, it can be good practice. The important thing is to let the influencer follow their usual practices.
  - Description box: The brand can add several links and plain text in the description box below the video player.

- **Linked content in the video:** YouTube allows links to old videos or other YouTube videos during playback but does not allow external links.
  - **YouTube Live:** YouTube also allows creators to do live videos.
  - **Snapchat:**
    - **Image or video:** As with Instagram stories, the content will be shown full screen and only images or a maximum of 13 seconds of video are allowed.
    - **Location:** This function is only available in some places.
  - **Tweet:**
    - **Text:** In general, a maximum of 280 characters is allowed. Links and photos will not be counted as such.
    - **Photos or videos:** Can be posted on Twitter.
    - **Links:** Also allowed on Twitter.
  - **Facebook Post:**
    - Facebook allows text as well as multimedia content. Branded posts are also possible, as the influencer can tag the specific publication as a sponsored post.
  - **Blog Post:**
    - These posts allow the influencer to give a more detailed review of the product or service. “Do-follow” links will help improve search engine optimization (SEO) positioning.
- **Creativity and concept:** Brands must also define what type of post is going to be published. There are different types. The first could be called “inspirational” because it shows the influencer taking advantage of the benefit of using the company's brand. The key aspect of these publications is their naturalness. Thus, the publication should not be seen as being promoted, for example, the influencer could be on a plane or having breakfast. The second type of posts are promotional posts. In this case, the influencer will make it obvious that it is a collaboration and this allows for a more aggressive style of posts, for example, showing the app on the post, or promoting the benefits of using the brand. Both types are equally effective. Brands should seek to find a balance between the two to get the perfect mix for their country/market. Furthermore, the brand also needs to develop a

concept behind the campaign. This will vary depending on the objective of the entire campaign. In this regard, we offer some advice:

- Co-creation: The company must let the influencer take part in creating the concept. Some ideas may seem crazy, but it must be remembered that they know their audience, and they also know what similar companies have proposed so far.
- Be a “mentor” for the influencer: Influencers might know their audience, but the brand should share its knowledge of its products and current customers, as well as previous campaigns.
- Influencer campaigns are full of “last-minute issues.” The company should not let them ruin the campaign and must be ready for unexpected changes.

## Execution

When everything has been planned and arranged, the last step is to implement the plan. Below is the suggested implementation process:

1. **Agreement:** It is always recommendable to sign a contract or agreement to ensure a fair collaboration on both sides. Some important points must be outlined in these agreements. One is to make it clear what the brand is offering (hotel, fee, plane tickets, meals, dates, etc.). Another important question to be answered is what the influencer will do in return (number of posts, hashtags to include, mentions, etc.). In addition to these issues, other important clauses that must be included are:
  - The post, for example the photo or video, cannot be deleted afterwards.
  - Post dates, if required.
  - Whether the company can use the content in other promotional activities. Or, in other words, how can the content be used.

Appendix 3 includes a sample agreement that could be used for this purpose.

2. **Payments and products delivered:** If the collaboration requires some type of payment (fees, expenses, etc.), the company must be sure to process it on time or must reach an agreement with the influencer about the payment schedule. If a product needs to be delivered or service needs to be reserved, it is important to book them in accordance with the agreed-upon dates.
3. **Influencer:** Influencers must be provided with the right information to build the perfect post. Influencers should be informed of:

- a. Brand guidelines should be written that include best publication practices. They should include, for example, the concept of the campaign and information about the company.
- b. If the influencer needs to include a link, the brand must be sure to provide it. Links must be tracked to better evaluate their effects, except in SEO campaigns.
- c. The company must also provide influencers with any additional materials, such as logos, images, or whatever the influencer may need to be able to publish the necessary content.

## Analysis

Once the campaign has been executed, it is time to measure the results. The way in which the results are evaluated will depend upon the campaign's objective and established target KPIs. The best way to provide an overview of the campaign will be to write a report with all this information. To do so, the company will need to look at the original plan sheet and analyze the results in terms of the previously established KPIs. Table 2 shows some examples for establishing measurable KPIs.

*Table 2. Examples of measurable KPIs depending on the objective*

Objective	Measurable KPI examples
App downloads.	Number of apps downloaded.
Branding.	Post reach, impressions, comments, or buzz generated.
Promote specific properties or destinations.	Increase in visits/leads/... to the destination.
Promote specific features (filters, maps, etc.).	Changes in user behavior.
Social media channel growth.	Number of followers.
Revenue growth.	Increase in revenue, market share, channel share, etc.
Diversification of the audience.	Change in user demographics.

*Source: Developed by author*

It is vital to compare expected results with those ultimately obtained and, where appropriate, to analyze any deviations. Likely, many tests will be required until the perfect mix is achieved. Due to the unlimited possibilities of KPIs, only the most common ones are listed here:

- **App downloads:** There are two main ways to verify the impact on downloads:

- Organic downloads: Checking the overall trend of app downloads is a good way to gauge the impact of an influencer campaign. However, it also has some limitations. For example, spikes in downloads may be caused by other marketing activities. Therefore, it is always important to keep in mind any other marketing campaigns in place and avoid overlapping with them.
- Tracked downloads: Tracked links allow brands to accurately attribute downloads to a specific campaign. However, there are two important limitations. First, not all social networks allow links to be included, for example, Instagram. Secondly, not all users follow the link.
- **Reach, impressions, likes and comments:** While likes and comments are public and easily accessible for everyone, reach and impressions need to be obtained directly from the account manager. This information about reach and impressions, as with other similar information, is private and should be obtained by requesting it directly from the influencer.
- **Followers and demographics:** To accurately measure growth on social media, it is helpful to use a business profile to have access to profile statistics and use external tools. The statistics provided by the social network will allow the company to see their current user profile (country, age, gender, etc.). Thus, they can compare that profile to the type of users added during the campaign, or to the user profile from previous similar campaigns. Regarding external sources, SocialBlade.com lets users have access to a history of follower fluctuations on Instagram and YouTube.
- **Revenue:** This is the indicator that is most difficult to measure accurately. A data team is essential for the internal analysis of a company's results. Tracked links will serve as a first approach, displaying all revenue generated via this link. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, not all users will reach the brand via tracked link, or on the same device used to follow the tracked link. It would be best for brands to discuss with their data team the most suitable way to approach this variable, case by case, and prepare a specific report that excludes other unrelated marketing campaigns as well as organic growth. Once the results have been analyzed, they must be compared to the cost and other marketing activities that pursue the same objective. It is very important to consider the cost, since this in turn allows the company to calculate the Return on Investment (ROI) based on the results obtained. Once the ROI has been evaluated, the company can make decisions, such as whether it wants to continue to run the campaign, or what changes need to be made to improve the results.

## CONCLUSIONS

Traditional approaches to communication have been challenged by social media and influencers. Both are tools with great potential for companies, as they allow them to reach customers in a more natural, friendly way. In fact, influencers offer a series of advantages to tourism companies, given that they describe their own travel experiences, which provide greater credibility. In addition, this type of campaign can reach a very specialized audience at a much lower cost than traditional campaigns. They can also create innovative content, allowing brands to connect with visitors and help them to better understand their potential audience, attracting tourists who identify with the values and experiences that the destination offers.

The results of this work show that influencer marketing is a tool as measurable as any other and can be included in any tourism company's communication strategy to successfully reach their commercial objectives. Indeed, although influencer marketing campaigns may be a challenge for different companies (unknown tools, new techniques, etc.), this study provides a manual that can be used across the tourism industry to pursue business' objectives, step by step.

To create this manual, the case study methodology was used. The case chosen was a company from the tourism sector that works with influencers frequently. Specifically, it is an online price comparison company. Based on this company's experience, a series of phases for implementing an influencer marketing campaign were identified. The process begins with the planning phase, in which the objectives are established in such a way that allows for their subsequent evaluation. Then, the search for possible influencers that allow the brand to achieve its objectives in a satisfactory manner is essential. Third, the company must evaluate all its options to choose the influencer or influencers who will allow them to obtain the best results. Next, they must know how to contact them, which is not always a simple task, to subsequently offer them a proposal in which both parties win. Sixth, the campaign must be executed, and, finally, the results analyzed.

For a campaign to be evaluated correctly so that changes can then be made to the campaign, it is essential to be able to measure to what extent the objectives are being achieved. Therefore, the fact that this manual is results-oriented is of great importance. Establishing measurable KPIs leads to a more precise analysis of influencer marketing activities and to greater efficiency in their use.

As this is a pioneering manual, it should be followed by scientific studies that, through empirical research, provide evidence on key aspects of influencer marketing. Thus, for example, future research could analyze which strategy provides the best results. Likewise, and given the importance of evaluating the campaign, future studies could focus on outlining and clarifying the measures used to adapt evaluation methods to the reality of campaign results. In any event, and given the relative novelty of the subject, this manual is

intended to be a first step that will lead to other works in which the phases described here are more fully developed. It is now the companies that must take on the challenge.

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# APPENDIX 1

Figure 5. Appendix 1

## INFLUENCER MARKETING PLAN

### 1. BASIC INFO

Name of the campaign:

Budget:       Timeframe:

### 2. TARGET AUDIENCE

Age range:       Market(s):       Gender: M / F

Social Media:

Message app  
Others:

### 3. OBJECTIVE

Objective:	KPIs
Promote specific properties (Revato)	Number of App Downloads
Promote new features	Reach, Impressions
Social Media Channel Growth	Likes & Comments
Revenue / Booking growth	Increase on Visits/Leads for a hotel
Other: <input type="text"/>	Number of followers
	Revenue & Bookings
	Others: <input type="text"/>

### 4. INFLUENCER

Origin of the influencer:	Type of influencer:
Celebrity	Lifestyle
Influencer	Fashion
	Travel
Size:	Family
Macro-influencer (> 1M)	Technology
Big Influencer (500K-1M)	Humor
Medium influencer (100K-500K)	Photography
Small influencer (50K-100K)	Others: <input type="text"/>
Micro-influencer (< 50K)	

## APPENDIX 2

Figure 6. Appendix 2

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	<b>INFLUENCER NAME</b>					
2						
3	<b>Number of social media platforms evaluated</b>				<b>3</b>	
4	<b>No. of posts on INSTAGRAM</b>				<b>5</b>	
5	<b>Last 5 posts</b>	<b>Likes</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Saved post</b>	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
6	Last Post					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
7	Post -1					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
8	Post -2					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
9	Post -3					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
10	Post -4					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
11	<b>AVG. ENGAGEMENT</b>					
12	<b>#<sub>i</sub>DIV/0!</b>					
13						
14	<b>=SUMA(F6:F10)/F4</b>		<b>=(B6*1+C6*2+D6*3,5)/E6*100</b>			
15						
16						
17	<b>No. of posts on FACEBOOK</b>				<b>5</b>	
18	<b>Last 5 posts</b>	<b>Likes</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Shared</b>	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
19	Last Post					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
20	Post -1					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
21	Post -2					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
22	Post -3					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
23	Post -4					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
24	<b>AVG. ENGAGEMENT</b>					
25	<b>#<sub>i</sub>DIV/0!</b>					
26						
27	<b>=SUMA(F19:F23)/F17</b>		<b>=(B19*1+C19*2+D19*3,5)/E19*100</b>			
28						
29						
30	<b>No. of posts on YOUTUBE</b>				<b>5</b>	
31	<b>Last 5 posts</b>	<b>Views</b>	<b>Likes</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Subscribers</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
32	Last Post					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
33	Post -1					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
34	Post -2					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
35	Post -3					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
36	Post -4					# <sub>i</sub> DIV/0!
37	<b>AVG. ENGAGEMENT</b>					
38	<b>#<sub>i</sub>DIV/0!</b>					
39						
40	<b>=SUMA(F32:F36)/F30</b>		<b>=(B32*1+C32*2+D32*3,5)/E32*100</b>			
41	<b>=(B12+B25+B38)/B3</b>					
42						
43	<b>Cross-platform engagement</b>					
44	<b>#<sub>i</sub>DIV/0!</b>					