



THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS ON TOURISM DIGITAL ADVERTISING IN THE REPUBLIC OF KARAKALPAKSTAN

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ABSTRACT	KEY WORDS
In the rapid development of digital technology and the rise in the number of users, digital marketing is gaining momentum among businesses. In particular, businesses in the field of tourism are more interested in this type of marketing. The diversification of digital advertising tools is evolving continuously. Digital advertising investments are increasingly drawing the attention of marketing managers and becoming significant in the marketing policy of business. Directly or indirectly, the local population in the region influences advertising. As known, tourists heed the advice of fellow users on a tourist visit. Therefore, promoting their businesses via influencer feedback, blog entries, photo and video content influence tourists visiting the destination. The significance of this study is also due to the fact that there is currently no research on tourism digital advertising for this area. Therefore, the given study justifies the importance of digital advertising among businesses in the era of digital technology. The given study justifies the importance of digital advertising among businesses in the era of digital technology. Digital promotion includes various marketing tools. Influencers among them are currently in demand. It is established that influencer participation positively influences advertising views of both urban and regional areas of Uzbekistan. In addition, an assessment of the competencies of influencers operating in the tourism business, acceptance of their capabilities by the local population, and information about influencers operating in Karakalpakstan were given as a logical conclusion.	

Introduction

Background of Tourism in Karakalpakstan

A model was developed, explaining how each of the marketing instruments and concepts influence potential target tourists. The results show that influencer communication effectiveness influences attitude and, therefore, intention to visit Karakalpakstan. Therefore, developing the right tools of selecting and working with influencers is of key importance for creating reach and inspiring enough followers to positively approach Karakalpakstan, virtually explore it, and then decide to visit. Increasingly, bloggers and influencers are asked to visit a particular region, and, even more often, to mention how pretty or interesting it is, or how amazing are the “must-see” historical or other tourists’ sights. After all, the ultimate goal is to invite as many people as possible to come and visit that region personally. Will virtuality soon replace the reality? For various bloggers and influencers, success in finding answers to this question is closely related to the region, destination, or specific attraction that an influencer is asked to authentically promote.

There are numerous researches conducted on tourism in general, and the role of influencers in the tourism sector. However, no research has been done on how a region, such as Karakalpakstan, can utilize influencers based on specific cultural, historical, environmental, and other attractions, focusing on particular audience segments. Thus, there is no region-specific theory on influencer tourism. This study applies marketing and tourism theories of digital marketing and the relation of influencers and their audience to the specific nature of the region of Karakalpakstan, visualizing how influencers can become partners of tourist organizations in destination marketing (Ayupova, M., & Ayupova, L., 2020).

Overview of Digital Advertising

Mobile usage beneficiaries are social media platforms. The blended global user analogue is 3.8 billion social media users (SMDs) and the current analogue of total mobile users is 62% of the world's population. The shifting social strategy spends 24% of advertisers on social media, and that is driving even more money to social media advertising because of the increase in the online presence of buyers of goods due to the COVID-19 pandemic at nearly 10%. Such forecasts show that social media ad spending is expected to increase in 2023 to \$134 billion, while Instagram continues to be the largest advertising market, at \$33 billion. In addition, because SMD and trustworthy user content are growing because SMDs are influenced by recommendations for the usage of reliable customer content, enterprises should invest heavily in attracting customers within the social media platform (Wearesocial.com, 2020).

Driven by internet users, digital advertising emerged in the last decade as an advertising platform of the present and the future. The conclusion can be made based on the increased digital advertising spending that has been growing steadily in recent years. In particular, internet ad investment, after overtaking TV and print media, became the advertising category with the highest percentage of investment worldwide in 2020, followed by TV and print media. This is true for each year since 2015. The latter investment supports social media advertising, specifically in recent times (Dilafuz, Sodikova, 2023)

Influencers in Tourism Marketing

Recent studies about the power of influencers have demonstrated how they affect consumer's behavior and the level of satisfaction about a product or service. Thus, tourism marketing has exploded in recent years, not only through digital marketing but also through influencers who provide information related to their experiences. However, most of the tourism research focuses on urban destinations and large hotels, neglecting minor and marginalized destinations. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the key role of influencers in digital advertising on tourism promotion in Karakalpakstan, a small regional destination, and to obtain a sustainable form of local economic development (Magno, F., & Cassia, F., 2018).

Recent surveys show that the influencer marketing industry appears to continue to grow, as more brands adopt the technique. According to a report by Influencer Marketing Hub, nearly 4,000 studies were conducted in 2017, a number that has consistently escalated in recent years. According to the report, Facebook and YouTube are the top sources for global marketers, so it is an interesting study that was constructed in the tourism environment. Digital advertising is intuitive when we talk about using social media to promote travel through influencers. Endorsement and payment for reviews are an increasing challenge for digital advertising in tourism marketing strategy (Содикова, 2023). Digital marketing is a tried and trusted path for tourism industry marketers, with the use of this channel expected to grow in the coming months. According to the report, social media marketing plans will continue to dominate other strategies such as email marketing and website display, which are expected to be used less in the future (Magno, F., & Cassia, F. (2018).

Definition and Role of Influencers

Sociologists say a trend that could disappear in years under the influence of lifestyle transmitters, our planet's planters dressed like wind-like women characters, taking the dust lingered toward the direction of the leading ones besides the products tried on the protagonist of this figure. The cyber trend that rose even more with the pandemic process reached its peak especially in the field of beauty and led to the increase of brands and Instagram user searches. In fact, we can say Instagram influencers. Especially on Instagram, there are many influencers in various areas such as travel, fashion, and beauty. Influencers are accepted as social media users or entities that are aware of their opinions and behaviors and have reached a certain number of followers in their social environment. These individuals or entities are seen as role models by their followers. Internet users look at the recommendations and suggestions of influencers, including their product preferences (Sesar, V., Hunjet, A., & Kozina, G., 2021).

Influencers play an important role in communication by promoting a product, place, or airport on their social environment with an unbiased point of view. The area of influence of the influencer and the number of followers play a big role in brand engagement in this context; the active interaction of an influencer with their followers and the interaction with their followers can create a closer connection with their followers, and the active interest in the influencer's recommendation model can result from the said influences. People admire them for their accomplishments. They are social icons. Some such as artists, athletes, and the royal family are also the subject of admiration. In today's world, people are identified with the characters or people in certain places, and this identification exists as a great attracting factor in these places (Guerreiro, C., Viegas, M., & Guerreiro, M., 2019).

Influencer marketing has become an industry buzzword: the first and last sales solution. This type of advertising has fundamentally changed the traditional media landscape, and has become the most effective distracter of Millennials, especially in the tourism sector. Along with this, a new phenomenon termed “micro-influencers” has emerged, who also play a significant role in the tourism industry. Influencers inspire, excite, and activate future travelers, disseminating information and actions that amplify tourists' desires. They interact with various forms of social media, so that digital flyers can easily come together to create an interactive user experience. At the same time, influencers are advertising ethical sources, designing and delivering content that fits the specifics of the target audience (Barbe, D., & Neuburger, L.,2021)

Influencer marketing in the tourism industry can facilitate access to the right type of audience, with easy-to-establish credibility between the brand and the consumer. The primary goal of a tourist is to interact with and maintain personal relationships on social networks, so it's a natural tool and authentic way to share travel inspiration. Social networks boast a large following for every travel person. Unlike brands, influencers have built relationships and trust and loyalty to their friends. Influential micro-markets are those opinion leaders who have focused on creating and promoting their personal brand thanks to their interests and travel aspirations, their small audience and tight visibility. Authentication leaders are also open users and competitors in the broader social media context, and often the value of an exclusive product. The travel brand is also encouraged to promote the loyal broadness of micro-tour markets, especially those that implement advertising campaigns, implementation of travel programs in off-road areas such as Karakalpakstan, by performing work towards the building and placement of activities influencing the long-assigned credibility.

Challenges of Working with Influencers

When developing an influencer marketing strategy and planning the implementation of advertising content, advertisers must take into account many factors and react quickly. These could relate to choosing the right person to be an influencer, which involves choosing the right information and ways of presenting it in the face of the constraints of social media platforms. Moreover, influencers can also face other limitations such as network policies, changes to platform algorithms, the advertising content approval process, and so on.

Some advertisers also know that negotiations for project preparation and implementation take a long time, just like the process of preparing advertising itself. They may have a lot of back-and-forth requirements and feedback before the influencer publishes content. A constant process of negotiations and constant feedback is not uncommon, even with revisions desired at the last minute. In addition, issues may arise during negotiations that can stop them completely. To collaborate with an influencer, advertisers need to help the influencer ensure that the content is appropriate for the brand and its target audience, without watering down the influencer's voice. Trying to hit the target and reach the right people according to the brand goals are important steps in any influencer project, and even more so when things are disrupted by the platform or the audience (Barbe, D., & Neuburger, L. 2021.)

Successful Influencer Campaigns in Karakalpakstan

The image of live travel acquires distinctive colour when it travels in the digital area with the help of influencers. In Karakalpakstan, the image acquired by influencers gives audiences a powerful broadcast view. In today's world, advertisements are becoming a focus of attention due to their

excessive use. Some successful influencer campaigns to solve the problem. In earlier studies, Marina and Herlina have noted that influencer marketing is the most suitable marketing for tourism advertising and has positive effects on the ability of viewers to visit destinations advertised on social media platforms such as Instagram.

Karakalpakstan is an autonomous region of Uzbekistan. Until 1991, Karakalpakstan was not a separate territory as an independent state. After the collapse of the USSR, it became independent, which is connected by a common historical past, religion and shares the language with the Turkic-speaking peoples living around. The Turkic languages of the peoples living in the region serve as the language of inter-ethnic communication. Both tourists and residents are interested in visiting and getting to know the distinctive culture, national heritage, traditional way of life, craftsmanship, customs, ceremonies, camel breeding, local cuisine and other features. Through digital platforms, tourists have the opportunity to review and applaud the natural beauty and distinctive cultural heritage of tourism destinations in the region of Karakalpakstan (UNWTO, 2020).

Impact of Influencers on Tourist Behavior

Digitization is inevitably changing tourists' information search and gathering patterns, thus providing new challenges and opportunities for marketers. In the last several years, tourism is experiencing a transition in the way in which it communicates with potential and actual travelers. Organizations are discovering they should not only be present online, but also adopt a new communication approach, based on the new-emerging social media environment and its particular communication characteristic of co-creation of experiences. As one of the most influential platforms in current years, Instagram and Facebook have engaged numerous content creators, or influencers: users that can build a follower base and engage them through their unique content and recommendations (M. Sodikov, 2023)

Social media allow creating and disseminating user-generated content, which reports, speculates, evaluates, and provides advice. In this sense, content creators and social media allow performing, explaining, and potentially exploiting a word-of-mouth process towards a dialogue between companies and tourists and among tourists themselves, helping consumers find product information and aiding companies to market tourism resources cost-effectively. These individuals, also called influencers, can influence fans in terms of purchase intentions and promote a strong sense of engagement and community. Digital word of mouth, often mediated by these influential 'peoples', can change consumer behavior, attitudes, and intentions as it is suggested to be more credible and trustful in comparison to traditional advertising. Thus, while the extent of the audience plays an important role for influencers and organizations, engagement, the strength of the influence that social stars are able to create in their audience, is actually the most important influencers' feature when driving audience perceptions (M. Sodikov, 2023).

The rapid growth in technology leads to the fast development in information, decision-making, and media channels of online marketing. Word-of-mouth has been long recognized as an important driver of tourists' behavior. Influencers' contacts with their audiences yield word-of-mouth exchanges and information dissemination through social networks. Such high levels of persuasion are reported to be driven by increased levels of trust, familiarity, and personal experience situations when audiences feel they build a strong interpersonal bond with the influencer. Indeed, emotional ties, emotional responses, and personal attitude tend to enhance the audiences' persuasion. The likelihood of

responding to the influencer depends upon the amount of information received and the ease of access to that information (M. Sodikov, 2023).

Conclusion

Literature on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in comparison with traditional forms of advertising in the tourism industry. Currently there is little information on the effectiveness of influencer marketing when promoting tourism in the digital space, especially in remote regions such as Karakalpakstan. This literature was compiled from sources that addressed general advertising, influencer marketing as a whole, and tourism industry. In the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, Cambridge University Press defines an advert as 'an advertisement'. In this study the word 'advertising' is widely used because it relates specifically to work and advertising in general, as well as the advertising of tourism information. In today's digital age the vast amounts of information available on different tourist attractions can make advertising and promoting these attractions overwhelming. Traditional tourism advertising is not as effective as it once was in creating an impression about destinations. Most tourists are influenced by social media platforms when making decisions when it comes to traveling to a destination. Recently tourism advertising has shifted to social media and other online platforms. Social media influences tourism activities and motivates people to visit destinations.

Influencer marketing is a new and successful marketing tool but it is not yet widely used in the tourism industry. Studies around this topic area are therefore quite limited. It is important to note that influencer marketing is still a relatively new phenomenon and different definitions are given for it. Coates (2020) described an 'influencer' as having the capacity of influencing entertainers, politicians, and sporting figures over people. These digital influencers can have between 1,000 and 5,000 followers while macro digital influencers have more than 100,000 to 5 million followers, have more credibility, and are more loyal. The influencers in this research landed under the 'micro digital influencers' category because they have fewer than 5,000 followers. Moreover, they are local citizens of Karakalpakstan who travel to local tourist sites. Meanwhile, influencers in social media advertising highlight the best qualities of the sightseeing areas of countries. Many countries promote advertising through social media in order to attract tourists to the locations but they do not necessarily use locals for that purpose.

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