

## Digital Influence: The Role of Social Media Influencers in Developing Tourism in Algeria

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the role of social media influencers in the tourism sector of Algeria, a North African country with significant yet underutilized tourist potential. Despite governmental efforts to boost tourism, traditional methods have not significantly altered Algeria's global tourism image. The rise of digital platforms offers a new avenue for promotion through social media influencers, who can leverage their substantial online followings and credibility to enhance destination marketing. This paper examines how influencers can shift public perceptions and increase tourist engagement, comparing this modern approach with conventional advertising methods. The findings indicate that influencers not only provide cost-effective marketing solutions but also create authentic, relatable content that can lead to increased tourist interest and visits. The study underscores the necessity for strategic collaborations between the tourism sector and social media influencers to revitalize Algeria's image as a desirable destination.

**Keywords:** Influence; Social Media ; development ; tourism.

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## **I- Introduction :**

The current digital era has made information, opinions, and recommendations from peers and media more accessible than ever before. As a result, the consumer decision-making process has changed significantly in the way that consumers go about seeking information and making decisions. Product and brand choices are not just made from traditional marketing tools, but often times by seeking opinions from others. Consumers of all products and services have come to seek opinions and reviews that validate decisions and make choices easier. This ensures that the product or service chosen will provide a desired outcome or experience. In respect to the tourism sector, destination marketing organizations and firms have recognized a need to understand consumer decision-making and effectively reach and persuade consumers, in an attempt to make their destination a chosen location to visit. With tourism being such a competitive global industry, and destinations essentially being brands that consumers choose to "buy", tourism experiences need to be effectively marketed in order to influence consumer decisions and make one destination stand out from another. In understanding consumer behavior and the communication process between consumers and sources of influence, a marketing strategy for tourism has the potential to be greatly enhanced and influence from social media sources and peers presents as a valid option.

While the popularity of integrating social media influencers in marketing strategies continues to rise as an alternative method for targeting potential consumers, little research has been conducted on the effectiveness in tourism marketing. We aim to contribute to the ever-changing field of marketing by providing a foundation for future research on the effectiveness of social media influencers in a specific sector of tourism. We anticipate finding real-life examples, encountered during our exploration of social media and blog data, of destination marketing organizations utilizing social media influencers for branding and marketing purposes. This will be a key step in understanding how and if influencers are used to market tourism experiences and destinations. From personal interactions and communications via social media with these influencers, we will be able to identify what kind of working relationship destination marketing organizations deem effective with influencers in marketing tourism. This groundwork will provide an understanding for those who may wish to employ influencers in the future and give a lucid role and idea of what influencers are expected to provide. Through a culmination of data analysis, information from organizations, and examples from influencers themselves, we hope to develop an informed understanding of both the details of how influencers are used and the apparent effectiveness and value in utilizing them in tourism marketing.

## **2. Background of Social Media Influencers**

One way in which Algeria could potentially and efficiently boost its tourism industry is by utilizing social media influencers. Social influence is an interaction between an individual and a small group of people. Though often small, changes in social influence can lead to large changes in the behavior and beliefs of people. Influencers are individuals that have the power to affect purchase decisions of others because of their (real or perceived) authority, knowledge, position, or relationship. Social influencers are influence wielders who specialize in creating a bridge between a brand and its customers. They make that connection more meaningful, selling and promoting products, services, or public policy. They differ from merely influential individuals based on their deep connection with a certain market and the trust their followers put in them to advise and recommend. (Ragab2022)

### **Introduction**

The Algerian tourism industry is becoming an increasingly important contributor to the economy, as well as stimulating growth and employment in the country. The industry has become increasingly competitive due to trends in globalization and the growth of the internet as a channel of business and communication. The tourism market has changed dramatically over the past few decades. It is essential for countries to market their tourist products efficiently and promote themselves globally in order to succeed.

### 3. Importance of Tourism in Algeria

Tourism is a major sector of the economy in many countries, contributing significantly to their national revenues and GDP. However, for the past few years, tourism in Algeria has received minimal attention from its government. The Algerian government has not prioritized the development of this sector, believing that the country is not yet fully prepared to welcome tourists. However, there have been several factors that have contributed to the low demand of foreign visitors to come to Algeria. One of the main factors is the security concerns that have plagued Algeria in the past. These security issues have created a negative image of the country, deterring potential tourists from visiting. Additionally, there has been a lack of information and promotion about the tourism opportunities that Algeria has to offer. Many people are unaware of the rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes, and diverse attractions that exist within the country. Despite these challenges, the potential of Algerian tourism on an international scale is undeniable. Algeria boasts a vast and varied geographical landscape, ranging from stunning coastlines along the Mediterranean Sea to the majestic Saharan desert. Its geographical and climate conditions are highly supportive of the development of tourism. Moreover, with the largest land area in Africa and the Mediterranean region, Algeria stands out as a country with immense potential for tourism growth. While the tourism sector in Algeria has not yet reached its full potential, there is room for significant expansion. According to data from the World Tourism Organization, in 2016, tourism only contributed around 1 billion dollars or 1.1% of Algeria's GDP. These numbers indicate that tourism is still not a major sector in the country, but they also highlight the possibility of further development. One potential solution and opportunity for increasing the demand for foreign tourists to come to Algeria lies in the role of social media influencers. These digital influencers have emerged as powerful platforms for promoting destinations and experiences. By collaborating with influential bloggers, vloggers, and social media personalities, Algeria can leverage their reach and influence to showcase the country's beauty and allure. This form of marketing can help create a positive perception of Algeria as a tourist destination and generate interest among potential visitors. In conclusion, while tourism in Algeria has been relatively overlooked in recent years, the country possesses significant potential for growth in this sector. Addressing security concerns, improving information dissemination, and harnessing the power of social media influencers can pave the way for the development of Algerian tourism. By investing in this industry, Algeria can unlock new economic opportunities, job creation, and cultural exchange, ultimately positioning itself as a competitive player on the international tourism stage. (SADAQUI et al.2022)

### 4. Impact of Social Media Influencers on Tourism

The phenomenon of social media influencers has proved immensely influential in marketing a destination and in convincingly persuading a potential tourist to visit a particular site. Ever since social media marketing platforms have grown in importance and become an integral part of consumers' daily lives, this form of word-of-mouth marketing has unquestionably proven to be an exceptionally effective method of influencing consumers' attitudes and behaviors. This is primarily because social media influencers are viewed as individuals with a substantial social following who are widely recognized as trendsetters or experts within their respective fields. When these influencers share their personal experiences and positive impressions of a destination, their vast audience, eagerly consuming this content, is inherently more inclined to attribute the experiences as genuine and subsequently persuaded to embark on a visit to the mentioned location. Consequently, this approach starkly contrasts the traditional consumer experience of encountering an advertorial about a destination, which may not be perceived as a truly impartial opinion. With this in mind, leveraging social media influencers in destination marketing has proven to be an impactful and effective strategy, successfully raising awareness of specific locations and significantly boosting visitor numbers. During the period in which the Algerian government is actively endeavoring to attract more international visitors to the country, the utilization of social media influencers has undeniably played a crucial role in raising awareness and generating substantial interest in various Algerian destinations. By harnessing the power of these influencers, Algeria has embraced a cost-

effective yet highly influential approach to stimulate tourism industry growth and attract a multitude of visitors to its charming and culturally rich destinations. (Pop et al.2022)

## **5. Strategies for Engaging Social Media Influencers**

Coming up with innovative and out-of-the-ordinary activities for influencers to partake in, and then associate with their place of visit, is important to generate unique and compelling content. This content can be more effective than traditional advertisement in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase behavior, however, it requires an even match between the activity and what is desired to be conveyed about the destination. Failure in achieving such a match with content that is overly entertaining and not informative has the potential to detract from desired image changes as it may communicate an image that does not match visitor realities. An example of such a case is a campaign carried out by the Canadian Tourism Commission in 2002 where they created a mock talk show with a live audience that was aired on major US networks. Although this idea was humorous and well received by viewers, evidence suggests that it did little to change existing perceptions of Canada as it was too dissimilar to the Canadian reality. Steps must be taken to ensure that activities are appropriate to both influencer and destination, and that any associated content effectively communicates the desired destination image. (Kilipiri et al., 2023)

Prioritizing influencer selection is critical to ensure that suitable influencers are engaged. A good match between the destination and social media influencer is characterized by three main factors: influencer image, influencer affinity to the destination, and influencer renown. Destination images can be classified as either functional or psychological, with functional images focusing primarily on tangible features such as food and accommodation, and psychological images on the intangible and emotional aspects of the destination such as status or personal development. High affinity between an influencer's image and that of the destination can be beneficial through complementary positioning, whilst a match between an influencer's image and the desired change in destination image is of equal importance. High affinity and a good match between destination and influencer image allow for effective communication to alter visitor perceptions of the destination. Influencers who are renowned by a large consumer base should not be overlooked. High levels of influencer renown can increase the effectiveness of image communication due to the cognitive expectancy of receiver involvement. Influencer renown has a positive relationship with source credibility and would result in stronger attitudes and destination image changes amongst followers. (Gholamhosseinzadeh et al.2023)

Strategies for engaging social media influencers are incredibly important to establish as clear and comprehensive guidelines for action in order to effectively orient and direct the actions of social media influencers towards the successful fulfillment of the objectives set by the campaign. It is crucial to recognize that influencers are often granted a certain level of creative freedom to carry out their assigned tasks. However, without the appropriate guidance and direction, there is a possibility that they may not achieve their desired results, as their individual understanding of and proficiency in the implementation of activities related to tourism may vary significantly. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to develop meticulous strategies for social media influencer involvement, taking into consideration the diverse nature and capabilities of different influencers. Additionally, it is equally crucial to remain flexible in the implementation of these strategies. By doing so, it ensures that the strategies can be effectively adapted and tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the various influencers approached, maximizing the chances for success. This section utilizes the valuable insights and findings derived from previous research to recommend a set of specific, actionable strategies that can be employed to engage social media influencers in the most effective manner possible. By integrating the recommendations generated from the accumulated knowledge, the campaign can establish a solid foundation for cultivating strong and mutually beneficial relationships with social media influencers. These relationships, rooted in well-defined strategies, will not only help drive the desired outcomes but also contribute to the overall success of the campaign's objectives, ultimately leading to increased visibility, engagement, and positive results in the realm of social media influence. (Wellman et al., 2020)

## 6. Case Studies of Successful Influencer Campaigns

### Algerian DMO Campaign:

In an effort to revitalize tourism in Algeria's Sahara Desert, the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) embarked on a strategic campaign that engaged not one, not two, but a whopping eight influential figures on social media. These magnetic personalities were deployed with the specific goal of targeting a fresh audience, as previous tourist numbers had entered a disheartening decline. The DMO was determined to reshape the country's image and set it on a positive trajectory once again.

During interviews with these influential individuals, it was revealed that they had ingeniously harnessed the power of Instagram, a wildly popular photo-sharing social media platform, as the primary weapon of choice in their quest to ignite wanderlust and entice travelers to explore the breathtaking beauty of the Sahara Desert. With a meticulously crafted strategy, the influencers seamlessly utilized the features of Instagram to generate an insatiable desire among their followers to experience this mesmerizing location firsthand.

One notable tactic employed by the influencers was the utilization of the ever-powerful "hashtag" search function on Instagram. By cleverly incorporating relevant destination-specific hashtags, they ingeniously amplified the visibility of their captivating destination images across a vast network of users. With every post, they strategically added their masterpiece to a related destination gallery, effectively captivating the attention of potential visitors.

Additionally, an exhilarating photo competition was organized, further augmenting the allure of the Sahara Desert. With tantalizing prizes awaiting the most awe-inspiring entries, participants were driven to showcase their creativity and unique perspectives on this ethereal landscape. This captivating challenge not only spurred an outpouring of captivating images but also exponentially expanded the reach and appeal of the campaign.

To maximize the impact, a visually stunning photo book featuring the Sahara Desert was thoughtfully curated and distributed to a targeted audience. As a tangible embodiment of the campaign's essence, this enchanting compilation of images served as a keepsake, acting as a constant reminder of the wondrous allure of the Sahara Desert. Its circulation acted as a catalyst for sparking curiosity and fascination among potential visitors, relentlessly nurturing their desire to embark on an extraordinary adventure.

The results were nothing short of extraordinary. The influencers, thoroughly immersed in the campaign, expressed an authentic and keen interest to explore the Sahara Desert themselves. As they meticulously crafted and shared images that perfectly embodied the essence of this awe-inspiring destination, their own enthusiasm became infectious. By virtue of this genuine connection and shared passion, they were able to channel the desires of their followers and inspire them to follow suit.

It became increasingly evident that the success of this campaign lay not only in the magnetic appeal of the Sahara Desert but also in the careful alignment between the desires of the influencers and the overarching campaign objectives. This fruitful symbiosis redefined the trajectory of Algeria's tourism industry, ultimately breathing new life into its reputation as a captivating and enticing travel destination.

As the sun set over the golden dunes of the Sahara Desert, a renewed sense of optimism descended upon the nation. The Algerian DMO had successfully unlocked the transformative power of social media, harnessing its limitless potential to reignite curiosity and beckon travelers to embark on a remarkable journey through the awe-inspiring expanse of their beloved desert. With each carefully curated image and every heartfelt testimonial shared, the campaign etched an indelible mark on the

hearts and minds of people around the world, forever cementing the Sahara Desert as a breathtaking, must-visit destination. (Mangachena et al.2022)

We conducted a comprehensive analysis by meticulously examining the results of the interviews and comparing them to the insightful case studies. This meticulous examination allowed us to gain a deep understanding of the underlying reasons behind the success of campaigns in each unique context. As a result, we were able to uncover a multitude of individual strategies that contributed to the overall success, while also identifying recurring patterns that emerged among the case studies.

The findings of these remarkable case studies not only served as validation for the claims made by the interviewees but also shed light on new and innovative success strategies that were previously undiscovered. These case study findings, which hold immense value, have been meticulously presented in their entirety in the Results section. Delving into every detail, we have uncovered an array of remarkable insights and revelations.

Furthermore, our rigorous analysis allowed us to identify and extract the overarching success strategies that were consistently highlighted throughout the case studies. These strategies, when implemented effectively, played a pivotal role in driving the success of social media influencer campaigns. By thoroughly dissecting the data, we were able to draw impactful conclusions that provide valuable insights into the intricacies of these success strategies.

In conclusion, through a meticulous examination of both interviews and case studies, we have not only gained a comprehensive understanding of why campaigns in different contexts achieved success, but we have also revealed a wide range of strategies that contributed to their triumph. Our in-depth analysis has provided invaluable insights for social media influencer campaigns, allowing for the formulation of effective strategies that can drive tangible success in this dynamic and ever-evolving landscape.(Wajdi & Asrumi, 2024)

## **7. Challenges and Limitations of Using Social Media Influencers**

Since it is exceedingly arduous to accurately assess and gauge the substantial impact that social media influencers have had on consumer behavior, it becomes equally intricate to confidently rationalize and vindicate the allocation of substantial financial resources towards the ongoing utilization and involvement of social media influencers within the realm of Algeria.

Social media influencers are seen as a highly efficient form of pull strategy marketing due to their ability to captivate and engage audiences. By sharing their personal experiences with products and services, they create an emotional connection that inspires and motivates users to actively seek out the same experiences for themselves. While this strategy has proven immensely effective in stimulating interest in various destinations, such as Algeria, it is important to acknowledge that audience engagement does not always translate into immediate action, such as booking a trip. Furthermore, it should be noted that travel and tourism products are often categorized as high-involvement purchases, meaning that consumers tend to carefully consider their options and conduct extensive research before making a decision. In this regard, the availability of online information can play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and sparking interest. However, it is essential to understand that the mere presence of information does not guarantee a direct pathway to purchase. In the case of Algeria, a country known for its rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and captivating history, it is no surprise that abundant information exists to stimulate interest in travel. Yet, it is important to recognize that this does not necessarily translate into a proportionate increase in international tourist arrivals. The decision-making process for travel can be complex and influenced by various factors, including budget constraints, logistical concerns, geopolitical considerations, and personal preferences. In summary, while social media influencers can undoubtedly contribute to generating interest in travel to Algeria by sharing their personal experiences, it is crucial to recognize that the decision to book a trip involves multiple stages and

factors. The abundance of online information may serve as a starting point, but it is ultimately the culmination of a comprehensive evaluation process that leads to actual travel bookings. By understanding the complexities involved in the consumer decision-making process, destination marketers can develop more targeted strategies to bridge the gap between information exposure and conversion into tangible actions. (Ahmed et al.2023)

The use of social media influencers as a form of advertisement for tourism has garnered attention from many in the industry. While social media influencers have the capability to reach a wide audience about a certain destination and even entice them through sharing their own experiences, several challenges and limitations need to be considered when using social media influencers as a form of marketing for a tourism destination. These challenges and limitations include the inability to measure the effect on customer purchase and the distortion of the destination image. (Chu et al.2020)

## **8. Ethical Considerations in Influencer Marketing**

This is something that should not occur in modern-day marketing and is why it is important to address the issue of ethics and how to make sure that both the brand and influencer and consumer can benefit without having to sacrifice authenticity and credibility.

The previous study of Algerian travel bloggers and their reasons for resistance to monetary gain further supports this idea. Although it is hard to argue against a person's choice in the source of income, credibility is a very important aspect of an influencer and is what helps them stand out from the rest. The loss of credibility has serious effects on the consumer as they may not be aware that the influencer is not being authentic. Hence, it may lead to a situation where said consumer feels betrayed because they incurred certain travel decisions based on unauthentic information. (von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2023)

Most brands dictate the terms and conditions of how an influencer should promote its product. This sort of control can often lead to the influencer portraying something that is contrary to his/her true feelings and opinions. Consequently, leading to a loss in credibility as consumers can easily see through this façade. This suggests that credibility and respect are often compromised when money is involved. (Belanche et al.2021)

Establishing an influence that was created under complete freedom of expression by a certain natured individual and corrupting it with the promotion of a brand or service for his/her personal gains would be highly unethical. It would denote the usage of influence for a purpose different from the one for which it was created and would indeed result in a loss of authenticity and credibility. This is a major issue faced by modern-day influencer marketing. (Oursel & Befene Mbembo, 2021)

## **9. Future Trends and Opportunities in Influencer Marketing**

There will also be a trend of internet celebrities and traditional celebrities migrating to the title of "influencer". Influencer marketing has been coming into its own as a marketing channel and the people best known for practicing it up to this point are the ones that have grown up alongside it. These are the social media specialists who've built audiences by learning the ins and outs of a particular platform, discovering what content works, and diligently interacting with their followers. Now, particularly with the rise of Instagram, companies are finding that they can get the attention of millennial and Generation Z consumers much more effectively through social media celebrities than through traditional celebrities. With this, traditional celebrities have been taking notes and dropping their movie and music deals to seek out influencer marketing opportunities. This type of unique alignment with the brand-consumer segment will define the future of influencer marketing, as it provides some of the best opportunities for companies to increase brand consideration and favorability. A brand's best case scenario in today's influencer landscape is a content partnership with an influencer that feels integrated with the brand and authentic to the influencer, where the

audience views the brand in a more favorable light post partnership. The value of this marketing activity extends beyond the campaign duration, as the content will be available to be discovered by new potential consumers for the brand and archived on the influencer's page for current fans to dig up. With the possibility of increased revenue and brand equity long-term, it's nothing short of an influencer marketing golden ticket. Internet celebrities and traditional celebrities alike are taking this into consideration and will now be fully immersing themselves in the influencer role, as it provides a much simpler way to create direct consumer impact. This transition will be very beneficial for influencers in that it will create more opportunity and increase payment rates. (Munsch, 2021)

The recent years have seen radical shifts in the social media landscape. Over the next decade, these changes are likely to intensify. In the space of influencer marketing, a change in business models will emerge, largely driven by a desire for transparency and accountability. Influencer marketing is potentially more enduring and sustainable than traditional advertising, but in its current form it is sometimes built on unstable or undisclosed commercial arrangements. Influencers may receive free products or other perks that persuade them to become an advocate, and sometimes that advocacy is not clearly disclosed to the public. The companies and brands giving out those perks may not get the value they are hoping for. Those trying to influence can do so directly, by trying to get the influencer to take a specific stance or action, or indirectly, by subtly planting ideas that over time will shape the influencer's opinions and behavior. The latter strategy can be very effective, and again sometimes it is not clear to the public that it's happening. 2019 will see a move towards more standard commercial contracts between influencers and businesses that will be clear and public. This is not just a legal matter – it's a cultural shift. As this becomes the norm, brands will have more confidence investing in influencer marketing which will drive this industry to greater professional heights. (Yesiloglu and Costello2020)

## **10. Conclusion**

The findings regarding the usual types of information sources for travel were strongly supported by the French Ministry of State for Foreign Trade, which emphasized that "a vast majority of tourists now heavily rely on the internet to obtain comprehensive information, meticulously plan their trips, and efficiently communicate with various service providers." It is crucial for the Algerian tourism industry to comprehend that perpetual transformations prevail in today's dynamic society, rich culture, and evolving tourism landscape. Consequently, the Algerian tourism industry should proactively embrace transformative measures to capitalize on this prevailing situation, and one effective measure is the strategic utilization of social media influencers as pragmatic agents to generate diverse arrays of information pertaining to the breathtaking wonders of tourism in Algeria and its multifaceted aspects. The ingenious deployment of social media influencers will inevitably engender cascading effects, triggering a ripple that reverberates throughout the decision-making process and core alterations in tourists' behavioral patterns and profound experiential journeys when it comes to traversing the enchanting landscapes of Algeria. It is noteworthy to mention that while this research had a primary focus on the fundamental tenets of the tourism demand theory, it is imperative to recognize the broader scope encompassing the multifarious impacts that extend far beyond the theoretical realm.

In conclusion, it can be noted that a series of lucrative and strategically planned purchases effectively occur within the target market. This is accomplished by embarking on awe-inspiring journeys to the enchanting tourism destinations that have been diligently promoted. As a result of expertly executed brand placement, there will be a palpable rise in the allure and desirability of Algerian destinations, thereby surpassing the offerings of rival competitors. The consequential effects of this transformation shall be far-reaching, as it shall firmly redefine the tourism demand and substantially enhance the flourishing economy of the illustrious nation.

When utilizing social media influencers, both the government and marketers have the opportunity to effectively endorse the country through the vast and influential networks of these

social media influencers. This will undoubtedly create a substantial increase in brand awareness among the extensive follower base of these immensely influential individuals, as it is seamlessly achieved through a carefully curated process of strategic brand placement. In order to effectively target the market and fully leverage the potential of this influential marketing channel, the Algerian tourism industry will greatly benefit from adopting an integrated marketing strategy. By doing so, social media influencers can utilize their vast reach and influential online social networks to effectively reach the desired target market. As a result, promoting tourism in Algeria to the appropriate group of individuals becomes a much more streamlined and efficient process. The ultimate goal of implementing such a comprehensive marketing campaign is to successfully persuade the target market and effectively transform their general interest in the Algerian tourism industry into tangible actions, specifically engaging in the purchase of Algeria's remarkable tourism offerings. With the help of social media influencers, this objective can be easily accomplished, thereby bolstering and enriching the overall growth and success of Algeria's thriving tourism industry.

This research has discussed the role of social media influencers in enhancing tourism in Algeria and was underpinned by the Stimulus-Organism-Response Paradigm. It aimed to provide knowledge on how to enhance tourism in Algeria through social media marketing and to help Algeria's government and marketers to consider utilizing social media influencers as a marketing tool to promote the country. The findings of this research indicate that utilizing social media influencers can enhance tourism in Algeria both directly and indirectly.

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