

The employment of influencer marketing among Tirolean DMOs

TTR: What does influencer marketing mean in the tourism context and why is it relevant for Tirolean DMOs?

Michal Novotný: Due to the complex nature of the tourism product that is underpinned by its experiential nature and uncertainty, tourists tend to actively and extensively engage in the information search in order to reduce the perceived risk connected to its purchase. In this process, the role of the internet, online communities and social media has been steadily increasing on importance. One of the particular techniques that make use of this trend is influencer marketing, which can be employed by marketers to promote tourism-related brands, products and services. Existing studies on the topic have shown that influencer marketing is in fact even more authentic and credible compared to advertisements that companies and organizations carry out on their own. This thus renders the potential of social media influencers as immense and Tirolean DMOs can widely benefit from it. The correct employment of this particular marketing technique is however essential to make it both effective and efficient.

TTR: What were the findings of your study regarding the influencer marketing among Tirolean DMOs?

Michal Novotný: Since the amount of data that was collected in the course of the study is quite large, I will cover here just the most important findings.

The extent of usage regarding influencer marketing is among Tirolean DMOs very high, as almost 9 out of 10 DMOs employ the technique as part of their marketing activities. The conversations about a potential collaboration are most commonly initiated by influencers, but many DMOs also make the first step or alternatively approach influencers through a dedicated agency. Connected to this is the process of selecting suitable social media influencers for a potential collaboration. Here, qualitative metrics, such as matching audience, fit with the destination image or authenticity, are considered by the DMOs as more important than quantitative ones, in terms of for instance reach, frequency of posts or engagement rates.

Apart from advantages of employing influencer marketing over traditional social media marketing, various challenges and problems related to the technique are also identified by Tirolean DMOs. Regarding the advantages, the most commonly stated ones are reaching specific audiences, increasing awareness of the destination, promoting specific products or services, and managing reputation. Concerning the challenges and problems, identifying suitable influencers, measuring results or return on investment, influencer's inauthentic engagement and their fake followers are mentioned most frequently.

Almost all Tirolean DMOs also collaborate with other destination stakeholders in the course of influencer marketing campaigns, mainly with hotels, cable car operators, and restaurants. When compensating influencers for their work, either flat fees, free accommodation and/or entry to local attractions are employed. Building upon this, almost half of the DMOs have a dedicated influencer marketing budget.

Looking at the future of influencer marketing, a majority of Tirolean DMOs consider the trend to stay as important as it is nowadays and most of them also plan to invest the same amount of money in it as they do now. Taking this into consideration, the near future of influencer marketing in the Tirolean tourism context portrays as very promising.

TTR: What specific practical recommendations for Tirolean DMOs do you provide in your Master's thesis?

Michal Novotný: By combining the findings of the study with existing academic literature on the topic, a number of recommendations were generated. In order to make them as easy to comprehend and implement as possible, they were divided into three sections – selection of influencers, execution of campaigns, and compensation of influencers. The individual recommendations are presented by the following figure.



Figure 1: Recommendations