

Use of influencers in the Spanish tourism companies' digital marketing

Uso de influencers en el marketing digital de las empresas turísticas españolas

Uso de influenciadores no marketing digital das empresas de turismo espanholas

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ABSTRACT | Influencer marketing is a booming tool. More and more organizations are turning to influencers to communicate their message through social networks, especially on Instagram and YouTube. In this research, we analyze the use made of influencers by the Spanish tourism companies that invested the most in advertising during 2019 in these two social networks. A mixed model methodology is used to analyze the use of this type of figures in the communication of these entities, detect the types of professional profiles used, and determine whether their employment increases the value of organizational accounts. The results show a preference for Instagram over YouTube, an increase in Earned Media Value and that 60% of the companies analyzed are already turning to influencers in their regular communication, although they are betting on specialists whether than in profiles with a larger number of followers.

KEYWORDS: influencer marketing; Instagram; YouTube; influencer; tourism.

HOW TO CITE

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RESUMEN | *El marketing de influencia es un fenómeno en auge. Cada vez más organizaciones recurren a influencers para comunicar su mensaje a través de las redes sociales, sobre todo en Instagram y YouTube. En este trabajo analizamos el uso que hacen de los influencers las diez empresas turísticas españolas con mayor inversión publicitaria durante 2019 en esas dos redes sociales. Se emplea una metodología de modelo mixto para analizar la utilización de este tipo de figuras en la comunicación de las entidades, detectar los tipos de perfiles profesionales a los que se recurre y determinar si su empleo aumenta el valor de las cuentas organizacionales. Los resultados evidencian preferencia por Instagram frente a YouTube, un aumento del Earned Media Value, y que 60% de las empresas analizadas recurren a influencers en su comunicación habitual, aunque apuestan por especialistas y no necesariamente a perfiles con un número mayor de seguidores.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *marketing de influencia; Instagram; YouTube; influencer; turismo.*

RESUMO | *O marketing de influenciadores é um fenômeno em expansão. Cada vez mais organizações estão recorrendo a influenciadores para comunicar sua mensagem por meio de redes sociais, especialmente através do Instagram e do YouTube. Neste trabalho analisamos a utilização de influenciadores nestas duas redes sociais pelas dez empresas de turismo espanholas com maior investimento publicitário durante 2019. Uma metodologia de modelo misto é utilizada para analisar o uso deste tipo de figuras na comunicação das entidades, detetar os tipos de perfis profissionais que são utilizados e determinar se seu emprego aumenta o valor das contas organizacionais. Os resultados mostram uma preferência pelo Instagram em relação ao YouTube, um aumento do valor mídia ganho e que o 60% das entidades analisadas já está se voltando para influenciadores na sua comunicação regular, embora optem por especialistas do setor em relação a perfis com maior número de seguidores.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *marketing de influência; Instagram; YouTube; influenciador; turismo.*

INTRODUCTION

Despite its relatively short history, digital marketing has undergone major changes mainly due to the heterogeneity of its channels, fostered by the on-going evolution of the Internet. We are in a continuous experimentation of an environment in which marketing is constantly changing, evolving, and transforming (ESIC, 2018). Some of the digital marketing trends currently booming are: 1) inbound marketing (Galindo, 2018), which combines non-intrusive techniques to engage customers attracted by products that bring them value; 2) content marketing (Núñez, 2018), to understand exactly what users need, with the aim of offering it to them in the most convincing way; 3) email marketing (Rentero, 2018), a strategy based on sending emails to a user who has given prior consent by demonstrating interest in the brand; 4) search engine marketing (Key, 2017), or SEM, consisting of obtaining traffic by buying ads on search engines such as Google or Yahoo, or 5) mobile marketing (Sixto-García et al., 2021), which enhances the qualities of the mobile phone –for example, geolocation– as a means of communication and marketing tool.

Digital marketing offers companies a wide variety of alternatives to favor global marketing and generate revenue (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021). Nowadays, one of its most exploited variants is influencer marketing, based on the recommendation (brand advocacy) made by third parties, whether influencers, company employees, media, or opinion leaders (Suárez, 2021).

The effectiveness of influence in marketing actions was already confirmed before the popularity of social networks (López-Sáez & Bustillos, 2008). It was Daniel Edelman, in the 1960s, who coined the concept when referring to the influence that celebrities exerted on consumers, as well as the capacity that these would have to transform opinions into sales (Castelló & del Pino, 2015). The blog *Influencity* (2018), specialized in this type of marketing, collects some cases of influencer marketing that precede the term itself, such as the case of Coca-Cola with Santa Claus, whose image was changed to support its campaign in 1920, or the campaign starring Marilyn Monroe for the makeup company Tru-Glo Make Up in 1953, although in these campaigns the influence was exerted by opinion leaders and not by influencers as we currently understand that term. Strategies based on influencers did not arrive until 2009-2010, with the rise of blogs and MySpace; nowadays, we receive the opinion of a person who somehow has some power of influence over us (Santamaría & Meana, 2017), but who is not necessarily known outside that social network or an established opinion leader in traditional media.

A recent study concludes that users interact with influencers because they provide them with timely, entertaining, and interesting content (Bentley et al., 2021). Therefore, it is still necessary for the influencer to be a person who has

credibility on a specific topic and who, due to his/her presence and influence in social networks, can become a key influencer for a brand (Castelló & del Pino, 2015). This requires that these are people who have a large number of followers, but in turn those followers increasingly value accessibility to interact with influencers (Abidin, 2021). In the Spanish context, Ibáñez-Sánchez and colleagues (2021) concluded that renowned brand-influencer collaborations, when compared to other less recognized collaborations, improve users' attitudes towards the message, purchase intentions, and the influencer's perceived credibility. Despite the fact that cities and places can act directly as influencers (Banks, 2021), the use of influencers in tourism promotion is a reality (Gómez, 2018a). According to data from IAB Spain (2020), the world's largest association of communication, advertising, and digital marketing, in Spain 56% of social network users follow influencers, i.e., these are the most followed accounts after those of other users in their immediate environment (96%). Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are the favorite sites to follow them, although only Instagram and YouTube experience a rise compared to the previous year (35% and 28%, respectively), which justifies the need to explore the phenomenon in these networks. Instagram is also the most used social network when it comes to hiring an influencer (70% of cases).

INFLUENCERS AS BRAND PRESCRIPTORS

The influencer arises from such a primary marketing concept as the identification of needs, solving the consumers' interest in knowing the opinion and experience of other users who have previously had a relationship with the brand. By creating an audience in the form of a community (Fernández, 2017), companies and organizations have recognized an opportunity for profit and a solution to the demand for humanization of the brand in the social media environment.

A brand advocate is someone who recommends the purchase or consumption of a product (Santiago, 2015), usually because he or she has consumed it before, so that users may end up associating a brand with a specific person. Brand advocates defend the brand and promote it (Coobis, 2018), but do not receive income for it, while influencers are opinion generators that the brand deliberately chooses to communicate a specific message and create identity relationships with the target audience.

The selection of an influencer requires a detailed study of the profile to respond to the brand's aspirations. The company needs to set key objectives, as well as determine the most appropriate level of reach for the strategy to be implemented; the audience to which the company wants to address must be delimited, and how the brand wants to be known must be planned (Carrion, 2018; Santiago, 2015), as influencers are figures that move between intimacy and advertising, between

authenticity and commercialization (Borchers, 2019). Among the people who exert some kind of influence on the public, according to the Influencer Engagement Pyramid (Launchmetrics Content Team, 2015) we can find three types:

- a. Community leaders and prosumers. This is the largest category, since it is made up of all current consumers who are committed to a specific brand. Their influence is smaller, but their messages achieve great credibility within the communities themselves.
- b. Celebrities. They are easily identifiable due to their appearances in the traditional media. The collaborations that brands establish are usually linked to economic contracts.
- c. Opinion leaders, content creators, or trend setters. These are the influencers themselves, who create and share specialized content with a community.

Nevertheless, not all influencers are the same; rather, it is possible to classify them by the way in which they acquired recognition (Carrion, 2018):

- a. Mass influencer. Their positioning comes from the recognition of their work and their status in the traditional media.
- b. Specialized influencer. Influence is generated by their knowledge and way of communicating it, so they are a reference for the audience when dealing with topics related to their specialty.
- c. Micro influencer. These are prominent people in social networks who, although have fewer followers than the previous ones, stand out for their high engagement and for having a very active community.
- d. Millennial influencer. They are especially known by the young people belonging to their generation.
- e. Opinion influencers. Those who have achieved notoriety in social networks without actively seeking it and whose content is solely personal.

Another older classification (Santamaría & Meana, 2017) included ten categories that are nowadays grouped in the previous taxonomy: (1) sector specialist, (2) product specialist, (3) niche influencer, (4) generalist influencer, (5) trend influencer, (6) occasional influencer, (7) reference influencer, (8) captive influencer, (9) imitation influencer, and (10) anonymous influencer. However, empathy, professionalism, commitment to quality content, humility, respect, credibility and charisma, and being recognized and recognizable are still requirements for any influencer (López Herrera, 2018), although what is really important is engagement to generate commitment between brand and consumers (Ure, 2018).

Neither influencers are influential in all networks nor influencers exist in all networks, so the company must start by selecting the network in which its target audience is present and then the influencer in that specific network. The most used social networks when exploiting influencer marketing strategies are, respectively, Instagram and YouTube (Cabrera, 2019). It is clear that all campaigns are implemented with the purpose of attracting new customers, building loyalty among existing ones, or increasing the community of followers (BrandManic, 2018), so any action focused on influence must pursue at least one of the following objectives (Navas, 2018):

1. Create brand awareness and strengthen the image. To do so, it is necessary to locate relevant people in the networks who are trendsetters in the respective field and are willing to defend the brand. There are tools for identifying influencers (e.g., BuzzSumo) and for collecting and analyzing popular content (e.g., Flocker).
2. Increase engagement and interactions.
3. Enhance conversations. Conversations are often ultimately commercial, and therefore influencers can be used in two ways: by linking products to their social content or by instructing them to mention the contracting company's social networks.
4. Obtain consumer data.

This type of campaign usually generates a good return on investment (ROI), because if the influencer has the brand's target audience and the ability to encourage the sale of the product, it is foreseeable that the income will be greater than the investment made. From the point of view of intangible assets, branding is enhanced by achieving greater visibility and getting the brand mentioned more (Pérez, 2016). However, it is essential that the organization selects the right influencer for the promotion of its brand, since some users consider that those who broadcast an excess of publicity suffer a loss of credibility in the transmission of the message (Castelló & del Pino, 2015), and also that the company is transparent about its advertising relationship with the influencer (Peñalver, 2019). If the objectives are well thought out and the campaign is executed with professionalism and solvency, it is logical that the Earned Media Value (EMV) results will improve. EMV is a method used to calculate how important content is linked to brands through marketing efforts (Dan, 2019) and, therefore, coming from their own communication channels with audiences. It is calculated using a formula that measures the impact of the digital marketing strategy, comparing it to other similar outreach marketing efforts, so it is a good benchmark to get a view on the usefulness of organizational efforts in digital marketing.

The *Informe Benchmark de Marketing de Influencers* (Influencers Marketing Benchmark Report) (Influencer Marketing Hub et al., 2019) indicates that companies that use influencer marketing well make large profits, including as much as 18USD for every 1USD invested, although they put the average at 5.20USD profit for every 1 dollar spent. Cases of companies losing money are fewer, 25% of those surveyed, and, as the report explains, are mostly companies that do not understand how influencer marketing works or choose influencers whose target market is not a match for the brand.

Influencer marketing in the tourism industry

Web 2.0 has changed the way of traveling, both in the pre-trip (when thinking about the destination and travel) and during the trip and post-trip (when sharing the experiences lived) (Gómez, 2018b). The recommendations of other Internet users generate in the user the desire to experience that themselves, and have a decisive influence on their choices. The duty of the tourism sector, in its eagerness to adapt to this change, is to promote the creation of communities using social networks as a platform, as well as to enhance them in its communication strategies (Martínez-Sala et al., 2019), especially considering that 82% of tourism service users follow social networks or the blog of travel/fashion or lifestyle influencers (Axon Marketing y Communications, 2018). Lee and co-workers (2021) have found that four reasons motivate a user to follow influencers on Instagram: (1) authenticity, (2) consumerism, (3) creative inspiration, and (4) envy.

Tourism influencers or travel influencers have become emblematic figures that have caused a sensation and have managed to reach millions of people (BrandManic, 2018). They have become the best travel guides, since by teaching their own experiences they involve their followers, which is why they have positioned themselves as a new figure of relevance for companies in this sector (Basch, 2017). A few years ago, it would have been conceived as something totally extravagant for an influencer to pretend to stay in a hotel in exchange for advertising on social networks. However, nowadays it is the companies that make efforts to locate them and arrange actions, since the results of this type of strategies have exceeded any expectations (Blázquez, 2019). Nevertheless, the results of different studies show a unidirectional approach to communication and, as a consequence, a scarce exploitation of the communicative potential of social networks, which means at the same time, the neglect of the demands of tourists 2.0 (Martínez-Sala et al., 2019).

Although the profiles of travel influencers are very varied (Deloitte, 2020), 80% of users consider that influencers significantly influence their decision when choosing tourist destinations (Axon Marketing y Communication, 2018). It should be considered that travel users share experiences; they do not advertise directly, but present services in a more natural way (Martínez-Sala et al., 2019), which causes

the public to perceive the content from an almost friendly perspective. Their content is of quality and engaging, and therefore they can achieve greater engagement.

While the narrative discourse of travel influencers is based on sharing experiences (Yilmaz et al., 2020), their impacts on their followers can be classified into four categories: (1) informational effects, (2) motivational effects, (3) role model effects, and (4) community effects (Asan, 2021). Travel influencers' practices often attract followers' attention, self-discovery, community involvement, and information sharing (Gholamhosseinzadeh et al., 2021); thus, they act as a marketing tool to successfully guide tourists' destination decision making (Pop et al., 2021).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this work is to study the use of influencers on Instagram and YouTube by the tourism companies that make the greatest advertising investment in Spain in order to determine whether their use increases the success of social publications. Likewise, we established the following secondary objectives:

- Analyze the potential relationship between a higher advertising investment and a higher number of followers in social networks.
- Verify the relationship between the number of followers and the number of likes that the influencers' publications receive.
- Detect cases of influencer marketing and identify the influencer profiles used.

We employed a mixed-model methodology combining descriptive and analytical techniques. A descriptive quantitative methodology was used to explore the phenomenon of influencer marketing on YouTube and Instagram. The analysis sample is composed of 10 companies, both public and private, related to the tourism industry (table 1), which according to data published by InfoAdex in 2019, made more advertising investment in Spain that year. Similarly, we needed to identify the 10 accounts of Spanish influencers specialized in tourism with more followers both on Instagram and YouTube (tables 2 and 3) to check how they could have collaborated with those entities.

The research was conducted in three phases. The first consisted of examining permanent posts uploaded to Instagram and YouTube in the months of January and February 2020 on the companies' accounts. In both social networks, four common patterns were considered: (1) date of publication, (2) number of likes, (3) number of comments, and (4) mentions of influencers. In the case of YouTube, the number of views of each video was also considered (5). The study of these items allows us to know the engagement generated and the publication routines

of each organization, as well as the way in which influencer marketing is used and the influencer profiles chosen by the entities. In the second phase, from April 27 to May 3, 2020, we analyzed the use of self-destructing or ephemeral content, specifically Instagram stories in the profiles of the selected entities, according to the following items: (1) publication, (2) date, (3) approximate time, (4) swipe up, and (5) tagged influencers. Therefore, the number of stories uploaded was monitored to determine routines, publication times, as well as the possible use of influencers and swipe up in the storytelling. In a final phase, the Earned Media Value was analyzed through the Influence4You tool, which uses the Ayzenberg values as a basis, i.e., a model of conversion into monetary value of the main KPIs of social networks and which are considered the standardized ones for this type of measurement.

The data were processed in analysis sheets designed ad hoc and are expressed in percentages.

Nº	Company	Advertising investment in 2019 (in euros)	YouTube username	YouTube subscribers	Instagram username	Instagram followers
1	El Corte Inglés Viajes	27,399,056	viajeselcorteingles	8490	@viajeselcorteingles	74,700
2	Renfe**	6,599,785	renfe	10,900	@renfe	44,900
3	Iberia	5,800,004	iberia	32,200	@iberia	394,000
4	Nautalia Viajes	4,923,445	Nautalia Viajes	1310	@nautaliaviajes	7857
5	MSC Cruceros	4,087,588	MSC Cruceros España	7710	@msccruisesofficial	576,000
6	Costa Cruceros	4,004,010	Costa Cruceros	3870	@costacruisesofficial	168,000
7	Booking.com	3,940,789	Booking.com	38,700	@bookingcom	1,300,000
8	Grimaldi Group	3,564,808	Grimaldi Lines	*	@grimaldilines	9725
9	Generalitat Valenciana**	3,383,662	Generalitat Valenciana	4870	@generalitatvalenciana	34,500
10	Avoris Retail Division	3,270,860	B the travel brand	866	@bthetravelbrand	53,000

* Information not available

** Public entities

Table 1. List of tourism companies with the highest advertising investment in Spain and presence on YouTube and Instagram

Source: Own elaboration, based on data from InfoAdex (2019).

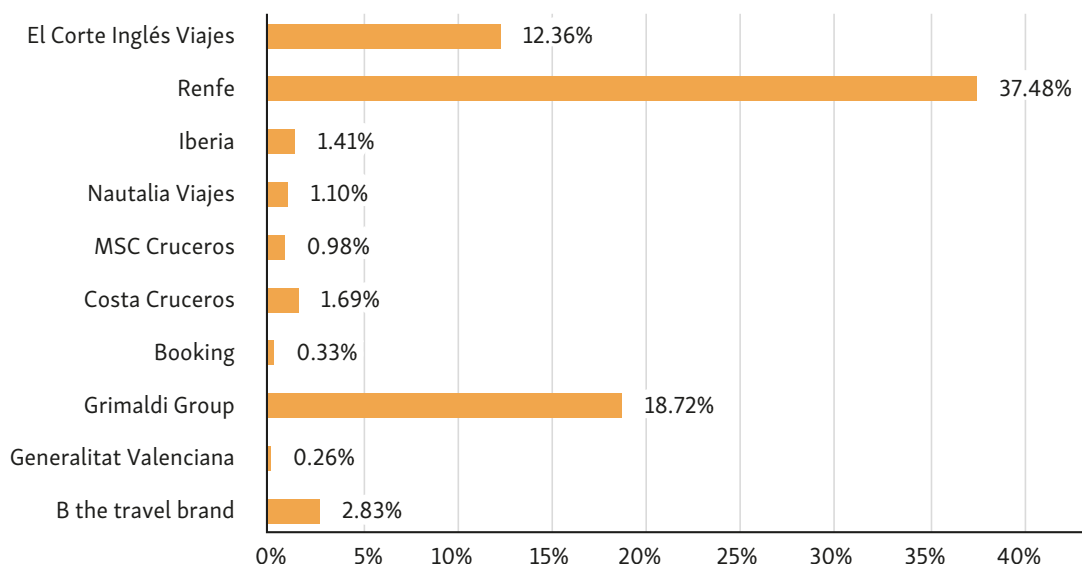


Figure 1. Ratio of followers to average number of likes on Instagram

Source: Own elaboration.

RESULTS

Table 1 lists the ten Spanish tourism-related companies that met the inclusion criterion of making a higher advertising investment in 2019 (all exceeding three million euros).

We include their usernames on Instagram and YouTube, as well as the number of followers on each of these social networks. A clear preference of users for Instagram is observed, as all companies have more followers on that network than on YouTube. It can also be seen that the companies that invested the most money in advertising in 2019 do not coincide with those that have the most followers on social networks.

However, the number of followers of an Instagram account does not necessarily imply greater social interaction (YouTube is not considered, because on that network the number of likes does not imply social dialogue). In fact, the relationship between the number of followers and likes is greater in those companies with fewer followers (figure 1), i.e., in percentage terms, fewer followers like the posts of those accounts with more followers. Thus, *Renfe* (railroad company) is the entity in which users give more likes to publications (37.48%) and, nevertheless, it is the fourth with the fewest followers.

Nonetheless, there is an increase in the average number of likes in the publications of the companies in which influencers are tagged (figure 2).

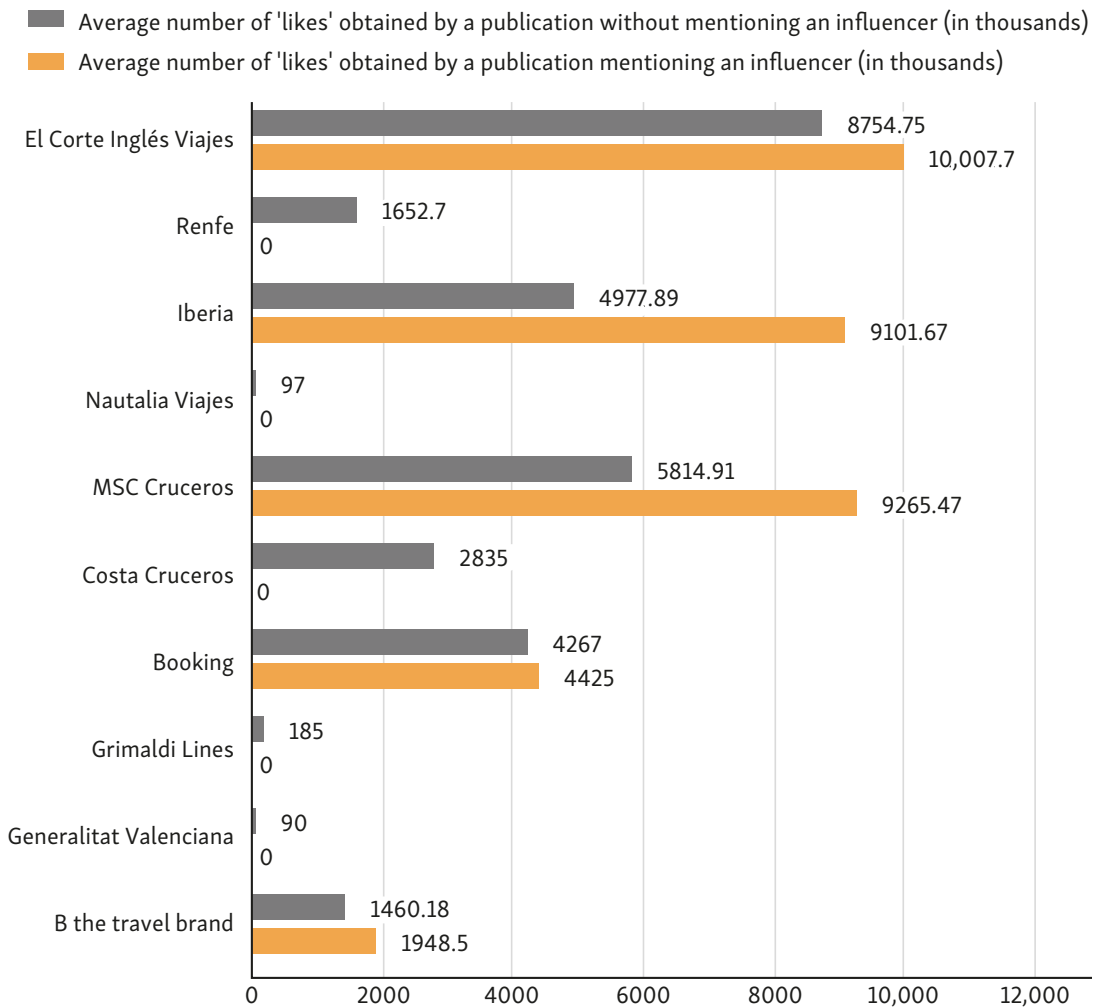


Figure 2. Average number of likes on Instagram posts of companies with and without mention of influencers

Source: Own elaboration.

Sixty percent use influencers for their publications and those in which these people are tagged are the most successful, which shows the importance of this type of practice in the companies' digital communication.

Regarding the influencer profiles (Carrion, 2018) that companies use (figure 3), there is a predisposition for specialized influencers (especially travel influencers with followers particularly interested in travel and tourism), and then for mass influencers (soccer players, celebrities, actresses...). Less used are the profiles of those influencers who have fewer followers but high engagement (micro influencers) and those whose fame comes from sharing their daily lives (opinion influencers).

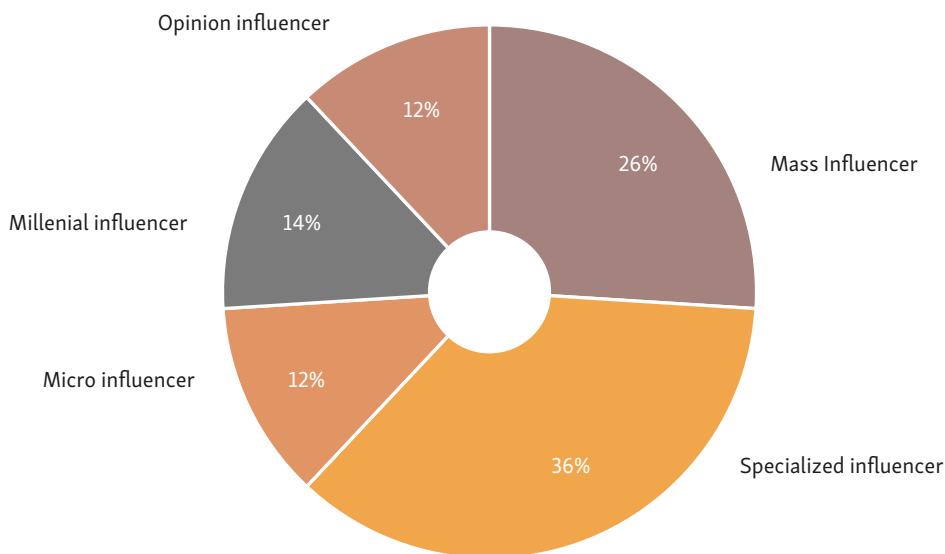


Figure 3. Types of influencers used on Instagram and YouTube by Spanish tourism companies

Source: Own elaboration.

Among the 10 most-followed Spanish travel specialists on Instagram (table 2) or YouTube (table 3), only two were mentioned by a company. These are the accounts of @molaviajar and Paco Nadal, who collaborated with *MSC Cruceros* and *B the travel brand* respectively. There is therefore a preference for specialized accounts over those with a larger number of followers, and also for micro-influencers with a smaller market niche but more deeply rooted in the social community. The thematic specialization of the accounts and high level of engagement are the two determining factors considered by companies when selecting influencers for their digital marketing campaigns.

Table 3 lists all the influencers used by the different companies in both ephemeral or self-destructing content (Instagram stories) and permanent publications. It can be seen that, except for two, the influencers listed in the list do not correspond to those located among the top 10 of those dedicated to travel with the most followers on Instagram and YouTube (table 2), but to profiles belonging to the young adult category, depending on the brand's target, with international followers and known for traveling a lot, so that they all maintain a close relationship with tourism and the implementation of travel marketing strategies.

No.	Full name	Username	Number of followers
Instagram			
1	Nicanor García	@nicanorgarcia	745,000
2	Elena Ortega	@misswinter	491,000
3	Oliver Vegas	@ovunno	421,000
4	Marina Comes	@marinacomés	303,000
5	Kike Arnaiz	@kikearnaiz	233,000
6	Roger Carles y Vanessa Santiago	@viajeroscallejeros	181,000
7	Enrique Álex Garde	@enriquealex	151,000
8	Benjamin Thorpe	@benjithorpe	139,000
9	Adrián Rodríguez, Gosia Bendrat, Daniela y Oliver Rodríguez	@molaviajar	128,000
10	Gabriel Samper	@kainxs	102,000
YouTube			
1	Pau Clavero	Clavero	957,000
2	Enrique Álex Garde	Enrique Álex	414,000
3	Carlos García	Charly Sinewan	406,000
4	Adrián Rodríguez, Gosia Bendrat; Daniela y Oliver Rodríguez	Molaviajar	315,000
5	Izhan Galiana	Izhan	307,000
6	Agustín Ostos	Soy Tribu	136,000
7	Judith Tiral	Judith Tiral	104,000
8	Chistian Corom	Christian Corom	85,200
9	Rubén Alonso	Ruben y El Mundo	70,300
10	Paco Nadal	Paco Nadal	45,800

Table 2. Top 10 Spanish travel influencers with the most followers on Instagram and YouTube

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Martín (2019) and Ruiz (2020).

There is no evidence of a consistent communication strategy among the different companies that would allow determining or establishing common behavioral parameters, although there is a preference for publishing more and using more influencers on Instagram than on YouTube (table 4). Similarly, there is less use of influencers in self-destructive content than in permanent publications.

Company	Influencers used on YouTube	Average YouTube views	Influencers used on Instagram posts	Average likes on Instagram	Influencers used in Instagram stories
ElCorte Inglés Viajes	@Adamrippen; @pjandthomas; @rafnee; @hearthermyriahpearson; @kelseystacypearson	6797	@daniel_gonzalez_fotograf; @_travelgang_; @viajaresvivir2veces; @z_lust; @dejarsevivir; @_desteaoeste	9236	
Renfe		1379		1683	@f.morientes9; @luhogarcia14; @fernandosanz_99; @gaizkamendietab; @albelda_aliques; @aintzaneencimas
Iberia		47,757	@teresahelbeig	5550	
Nautalia Viajes		856		87	
MSC Cruceros	@maxandharvey; @matteo.markus.bok_official; @spnlv; @valerio.mazzei; @sespo; @rosalba; @evaneding; @pilotmadeleine; @kleinstadtco; @kiskitchen; @tinaneuman; @stephangerick	13,020	@sarah.zeff; @vitoriberato; @mralexanderstar; @larryfitzgerald; @mark_sanchez; @juice_landry; @musadogremio; @aenna_xoxo; @maxandharvey; @matteo.markus.bok_official; @spnlv; @valerio.mazzei; @sespo; @rosalba; @justnic; @kleinstadtco; @travelandshare; @evaneding; @pilotmadeleine; @iqbalgram; @irina_mamaclub; @ramonfreixa; @molaviajar; @stephangerick; @tinaneumann	5561	
Costa Cruceros		697		2835	
Booking		**	@gabriel.desanti; @mensweardog; @lovehardtraveloften	4267	
Grimaldi Group		109,298		182	
Generalitat Valenciana		106		90	
B the travel brand	Patty Llagunos; Eli Amatriain; Pitty Bernad; María Pombo, Ana Milán, Marta Torne, Silvia Abril, Patricia Pérez, Amaya Valdemoro	110	@doyoutravel; @travelexploring; @aljvd; @_deepsky; @mariapombo; @mellamoagripina; @travethelife; @silviabril; @jovi_travel	1498	@japonismo; @paconadal; @francisco.carrera_gli; @sebasalvaro8848; @patriciaperezoficial; @mellamoagripina

Table 3. Influencers used by the different companies on YouTube and Instagram

Source: Own elaboration.

Company	YouTube posts	Influencers tagged on YouTube	Instagram posts	Influencers tagged on Instagram	Uploaded stories	Influencers tagged in stories	Use total de influencers
El Corte Inglés Viajes	8	5 (41.66%)	26	7 (58.33%)	1	0	12
Renfe	2	0	23	0	29	6 (100%)	6
Iberia	10	0	21	1 (100%)	0	0	1
Nautalia Viajes	3	0	16	0	4	0	0
MSC Cruceros	24	13 (32.50%)	71	27 (67.50%)	44	0	40
Costa Cruceros	1	0	16	0	12	0	0
Booking	0	0	9	3 (100%)	0	0	3
Grimaldi Group	9	0	17	0	4	0	0
Generalitat Valenciana	34	0	118	0	3	0	0
B the travel brand	10	8 (34.78%)	64	9 (39.13%)	47	6 (26.08%)	23
MEDIA	10.1	2.6	38.1	4.7	14.4	1.2	

Table 4. Number of posts, stories and influencers tagged on Instagram and YouTube

Source: Own elaboration.

After calculating the Earned Media Value (figure 4), i.e., the method for tracking any content or communication related to the brand, it became evident that the use of influencer marketing increases the value of the companies' social networks since it increases the number of social interactions and improves the KPIs established according to the Ayzenberg values determined by Influence4You. Although there are cases such as *Booking*, where this change is almost imperceptible, there are others such as *MSC Cruceros* where the difference between using or not using influencers is a great improvement in value. Although we said that a greater number of followers does not imply greater social interaction, we can now determine that a high number of followers is a determining factor in giving more value to the account, since profiles with more followers also obtain better EMV results.

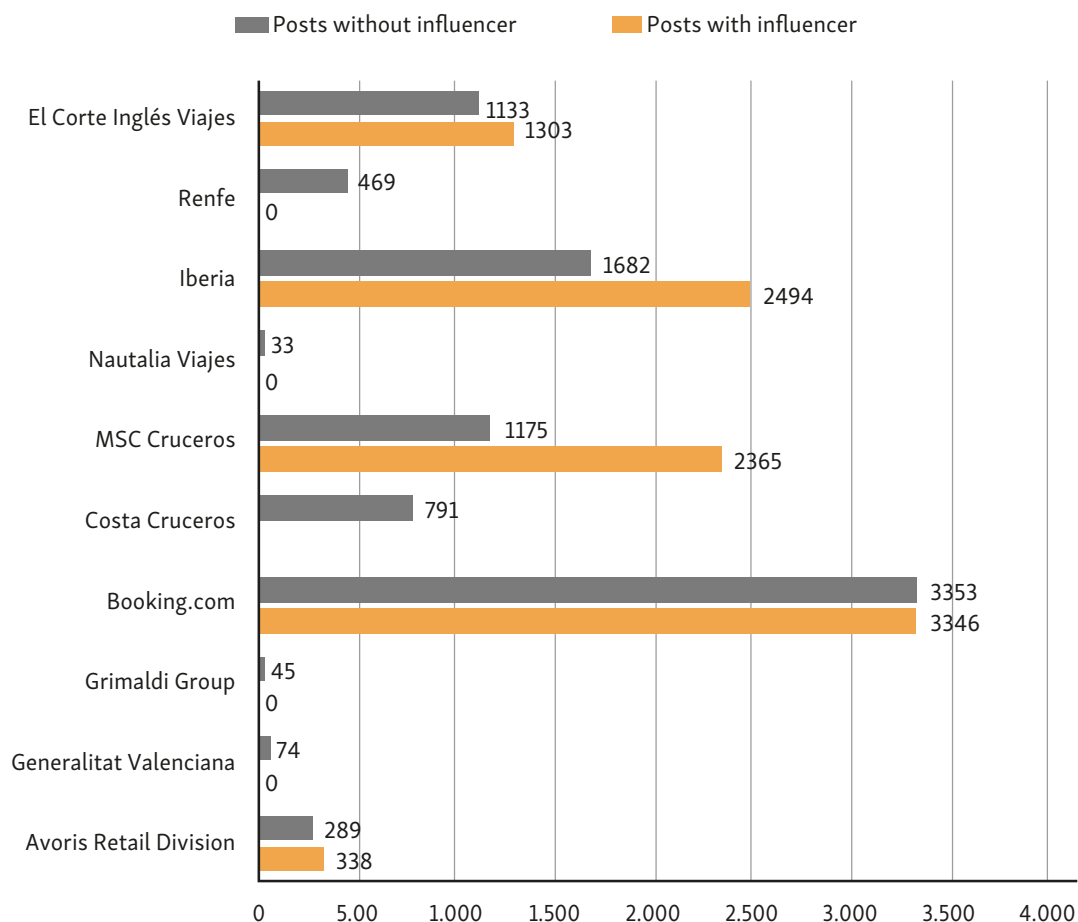


Figure 4. Earned Media Value of the tourism companies in Spain

Source: Own elaboration.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The advertising investment of Spanish tourism companies is not entirely allocated to online platforms, so there is no direct relationship between greater investment in advertising and greater success in social networks or a stronger practice of influencer marketing. In fact, in view of the results obtained in the research, an indirect relationship cannot be established either, since everything suggests that part of the advertising investment is allocated to traditional media, because there is no correlation between the companies that invest the most in advertising and those that have the most followers in networks, although posts with mentions of influencers obtain significantly more likes than those that do not use them.

However, in the tourism industry, not all social networks arouse the same interest among users. The results coincide with the trends detected by IAB Spain (2020), confirming a greater predilection for Instagram than for YouTube,

something that can be explained because when participating in a video network such as YouTube, users tend to look for specific content, while Instagram is used to view content uploaded by accounts that the user follows and in which he/she is interested. That is why whenever the content of an Instagram account is relevant, the user usually follows it to make sure they are aware of all the news, something that does not happen as often on YouTube.

The success of an organization in social networks is not only based on having a large number of followers, but also on the commitment they show towards the brand, i.e., engagement. The number of likes or the number of times content is published are factors that determine the engagement of an account, but a high number of followers does not necessarily translate into a high number of likes on each post; the data shows that the most followed accounts do not match those that receive the most likes per publication. Thus, for example, Booking.com is the most followed account on both YouTube (38,7K) and Instagram (1,3M), but it is in second to last position in terms of average number of likes per post, as only 0.33% of its followers like its posts. It is important for the scientific community to bear in mind that a greater number of followers does not always equate to greater social interaction; rather, the value of social network accounts depends more on community engagement than on follower numbers. Hence the interest in micro influencers who do not have a large number of followers, but whose communication is highly effective. When observing the relationship between followers and likes (percentage of followers who like the posts), we found that it is in the companies with the lowest number of followers where more likes are given to the uploaded content. Specifically, the case of *Renfe* stands out, where 37.48% of followers like the content despite being the fourth entity with the fewest followers of the group studied. Consequently, there is no direct relationship between success in social networks and the number of followers, but rather success depends on engagement and this, in turn, on the interaction that users have with the brand, which in the tourism industry is greater in smaller communities. However, it has been found that the use of influencers in publications increases social interaction (number of likes) and the Earned Media Value and, therefore, the return on investment (ROI), so that a greater investment in hiring influencer marketing strategies has a direct impact on the organization's income statement.

The results show that six out of the 10 companies studied use influencer marketing. The professional profiles vary greatly depending on the company and the communication strategy implemented at a specific moment. In the case of *El Corte Inglés Viajes*, for example, 50% of the influencers used were specialists in a single sector -tourism-, while *Renfe* used only well-known figures to elaborate stories as part of a challenge; all of them, well-known personalities from the world of soccer, are considered mass influencers (Carrion, 2018).

The profile most used in Spanish tourism companies is the specialized influencer, followed by the mass influencer. In the first case, the specialized areas of influence are tourism and travel (travel influencers), while the mass influencers are elite athletes and actresses/actors. The preference of companies for this type of profiles over the most relevant influencers (with the largest number of followers) on both YouTube and Instagram is demonstrated, as well as their inclusion in permanent publications versus ephemeral or self-destructing ones. Although the use of micro influencers in the social communication of tourism in Spain is only 12%, looking at the data as a whole shows a preference for this type of profiles and specialized accounts (38% in total) versus mass influencers (36%). The results coincide, then, with previous studies that show that in travel communication users bet on those who share experiences (Yılmaz et al., 2020) or are close to the community (Abidin, 2021) when selecting profiles that are interesting to them (Bentley et al., 2021).

When comparing the success of publications that contained mentions of influencers and those that did not, we observed that those that used this tool obtained a greater number of likes, both in comparison with other publications of the same company and when comparing the different companies. It is concluded, therefore, that the use of influencer marketing is useful to increase the number of likes of publications, since users feel more interest when they perceive this type of collaboration. This encourages likes, which increases engagement, Earned Media Value and, in short, guarantees a better economic return on investment. These data are in line with those presented in the *Informe Benchmark de Marketing de Influencers* (Influencer Marketing Hub et al., 2019), which states that the use of influencers provides benefits to companies. Similarly, when analyzing the Earned Media Value, it was also found that when tourism companies use influencer marketing, the value of their social networks increases.

The company that uses the most influencers on YouTube is *MSC Cruceros*. This company also stands out on Instagram for its way of communicating through self-destructing posts, which get great feedback thanks to initiatives such as surveys and questionnaires that involve the participation of audiences. Another company that stands out on Instagram for its use of influencers is *B the travel brand*, where relevant public figures continuously appear, although without circumscribing to a specific profile, so that there can be actresses, Instagrammers, or athletes.

Finally, when comparing the communication used on YouTube and Instagram, it is concluded that in the former companies seek less interactivity, i.e., they do not aim at a dialogue with the community, but simply at uploading content which they expect to be consumed. In contrast, on Instagram, communication

is more interactive and engagement is greater, mainly due to the use of stories. Instagram is also the social network most chosen by companies to upload content created by influencers.

As future research lines, we propose to study the phenomenon of influencers in other sectors to establish a comparison with the results obtained in this case. The limitation of the sample of this work, established by an advertising investment equal to or greater than three million euros, could be overcome by extending the sample to other companies with a lower investment amount, even to determine whether there are substantial differences depending on this data. Another limitation of the research was the impossibility of determining what percentage of advertising investment is allocated to digital strategies and, within this, to social networks and, in turn, to influencer marketing. In any case, it is worth highlighting the relevance of this study for the scientific community and for future research, especially for the results regarding the fact that the use of influencers improves engagement, value and, consequently, ROI.

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