

**TRAVEL INFLUENCERS AND THE REDEFINITION OF TRAVEL WRITING
ON SOCIAL MEDIA**



THESIS

Submitted to Meet the Requirements for Obtaining a Bachelor's Degree
Communication Science at the Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences

Written by

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YOGYAKARTA**

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ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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(.....)
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1. The research did not engage in any form of academic fraud during the completion of this thesis, including plagiarism, seeking assistance from others with the thesis, or any other infraction that violates the high academic ethics upheld by Universitas Islam Indonesia.
2. This thesis represents my original scientific work as a student and researcher, with no involvement from other individuals or parties.
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Thus, I truly agree with this remark.

Yogyakarta, March 22nd, 2025

Sincerely,



Shafa Gladya Amanda

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MOTTO

“Life is full of changes, some big, some small. I learned a long time ago that you can fight it or try to make the best of it.”

- Jay Pritchett

“Blessed is he whose own faults keep him from seeing the faults of others.”

- Ali ibn Abi Thalib (R.A)

“If you can dream it, fight for it.”

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, my beloved family, and myself for pushing the limits while finishing this work.

FOREWORD

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

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Yogyakarta, March 22nd 2025

Shafa Gladya Amanda

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ABSTRACT

Amanda, Shafa G. 21321258 (2025). Travel Influencers and the Redefinition of Travel Writing on Social Media, Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Cultural Science, Universitas Islam Indonesia. 2025

This research aims to explore new insights into the evolving nature of travel writing in the social media era. This research involves a media analysis of travel influencers' Instagram accounts to examine how travel writing has transformed within the social media landscape. Focusing on influencer-created visual narratives, this study examines how photography, video content, and textual descriptions contribute to the development of a complex digital travel writing genre. The study's results reveal that Instagram influencers have altered the meaning and the practice of travel writing by utilizing the platform's features to create commercial content that drives travel trends, visually narrates their travel journeys, and fosters communities.

Keywords: *travel writing, travel influencer, social media, Instagram*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Recently, traveling has become a necessity, accompanied by an increase in leisure opportunities. In the post-war era, numerous countries have witnessed a rise in leisure time and paid holiday allowances for workers. This shift has enabled workers to participate in emerging forms of consumption, such as tourism, contributing to the concept of the leisure society, coined by sociologists in the 1970s (Page, 2011). Tourism is a dynamic industry that continually evolves. Tourism evolves continuously as a consumer activity, with the industry and businesses striving to enhance it through innovative marketing strategies, fresh concepts, and technological advancements (Page, 2011). This evolution is driven by multiple factors, including shifting consumer preferences, technological advancements such as the internet, mobile technologies, and artificial intelligence, as well as global economic trends that significantly impact the overall growth of the tourism industry. Following the recent global pandemic, travel demand has surged as the lifting of mobility restrictions has sparked a renewed desire to travel.

The rapid growth of technology has influenced various aspects of the tourism sector (Law et al., 2014). In the tourist sector, social media has become essential to attracting potential travelers and persuading them to choose a certain destination or accommodation. Tourism and hospitality groups can use social media to showcase their destination's unique experiences and attractions, while engaging potential guests through online interactions. There has been a shift from traditional media to newer media, which can be seen from how many businesses have increasingly adopted social media as their major advertising platform, shifting away from traditional media (Lee and Hong, 2016). By analyzing user-generated content, such as reviews and comments, companies can identify trends, address pain points, and tailor their offerings to meet the evolving needs of their target market. Social media platforms have opened up new communication channels between tourism businesses and tourists, offering valuable opportunities to gather customer feedback

(Sotiriadis, 2017). Positive evaluations and recommendations from satisfied customers can enhance a company's reputation and attract new customers.

The practice of travel writing has a big influence on the rapid growth of the tourism industry. Priyatna, as cited in Hidayat (2014), states that 80% of Indonesians conduct online research before traveling. As a result, many people produce travel stories either in written form or in photos that they upload to their social media accounts. Many people then refer to themselves as travel writers. Travel writing practitioners in the world have built a powerful narrative that not only documents journeys but also shapes public perception and interest in destinations (Wardaningsih, 2020). During the rise of the internet, travel websites such as Wikitravel, Lonely Planet, and National Geographic were the pioneers of travel writing during the mass media era.

Travel writing is typically focused on stories about tourist sites visited (Tiede, 2017). Travel writing is more like providing information that creates a positive image, like an advertisement, to attract travelers to visit. In Indonesia, various works might be considered travel literature. Places and experiences can be presented in a book in such a way that the written text is more authoritative and valuable than the places, experiences, and objects described (Ekasiswanto, 2017). There are several well-known names, such as Adinegoro, Agustinus Wibowo, Bondan Winarno, Trinity, and many more, who paved the way for the next generation of travel writers. The pioneering writer and journalist Adinegoro (Djamaluddin Adinegoro) is credited with laying the groundwork for contemporary Indonesian travel writing. His 1930s publication, *Melawat ke Barat* (Traveling to the West), is regarded as a foundational work. It documented his trip across Europe and was a significant step in introducing Indonesian readers to the idea of in-depth, compelling travel stories.

Social media is a prime example of how rapidly information can spread across the internet. Many individuals use social media not only for communication but also to share information accessible globally. Davis (2016) defines social media as interactive online platforms that allow users to share their content. It indicates that social media users can

create and share their content in several forms, including photos, videos, and live streams. The rapid growth of global internet users, along with the emergence of a diverse range of social media platforms, has expanded opportunities for content creation and sharing. People are now easily capable of effortlessly creating their content and sharing the content with the public. The type of content varies from everyday life, business updates, hobbies, travel experiences, and many other activities. The social media content of every person is not the same. Some people use social media sites to share their stories and remain in touch with their family members, while others utilize them to build personal brands, promote their business, or get word out about important issues in society.

From the customer's perspective, social media has significantly changed the travel experience. Decision-making, sharing, and recalling travel experiences have all been revolutionized by social media and mobile technologies (Zarezadeh et al., 2018). Many travelers have utilized social media platforms to search, organize, and share their travel narratives and experiences through blogs, microblogs, online communities, media-sharing sites, and various collaborative tools (Leung et al., 2013). Additionally, social media is flexible, so users can share their travel experiences in a lot of different ways, like making video blogs, sharing travel photos, writing reviews of the places they went, and more. Instagram is one of the most popular social media sites on the internet today. Instagram is a complex platform with entities, APIs, applications, algorithms, large databases, and continuously evolving entities that encompass user content and personal information. It also represents the collective understanding of its users (Leaver, 2020). Although its features are not entirely novel, Instagram's creators effectively integrated multiple elements beyond photo sharing, contributing to the platform's widespread success. The platform enables users to share various types of content in different formats, including Instagram feeds, Reels, Stories, and live streams.

Internet celebrities are individuals who function as media formats, that is, entities that can be represented visually or textually on digital screens and who possess high visibility on the internet. Celebrities who first rose to prominence on digital platforms through talent, personal branding, or commercial success are considered native to the internet. This

distinction distinguishes them from established celebrities in the mainstream entertainment industry (Abidin, 2018). The label "internet-native" signifies a significant transformation in celebrity culture. Unlike traditional stars who adapt to digital spaces, internet celebrities are born in them, their fame sculpted by algorithms, virality, and direct audience interaction. The digital space fosters deeper connections between influencers and followers, which are built on shared online experiences. The internet's unrestricted access has democratized celebrity status, enabling individuals with a compelling story, talent, or personality to make an audience and gain internet fame. Beyond influencer and celebrity Instagram accounts, many active Instagram users create carefully curated feeds that appeal to consumers by being thematically consistent and highly specialized in content (Leaver, 2020). However, this accessibility comes with the challenge of staying relevant amidst fleeting trends and preserving authenticity in a monetized online world.

Instagram influencers represent a category of internet celebrity that deliberately cultivates a loyal following using microcelebrity strategies. Influencers, or those who have unintentionally gained fame, strategically build their online presence, emphasizing positive self-branding, long-term visibility, and aspirational content (Leaver, 2020). Instagram influencers are often identifiable by a high follower-to-following ratio, strategic engagement, and the presence of advertorials, frequently utilizing business account features. Initially not recognized as celebrities or public figures, they may reach internet fame by mastering platform dynamics and consistently producing valuable content. Influencers are often perceived as ordinary individuals due to their relatable depictions of daily life, which give followers a sense of access to otherwise private moments. As a result, some consider that influencers are more entertaining than artists, as they represent commonality (Danesi, 2008). Instagram influencers are easy to follow because their content is not exclusive and accessible to everyone. This accessibility promotes a sense of community and direct engagement, which increases their appeal.

The emergence of Instagram influencers has significantly transformed the landscape of travel writing, giving rise to a new category of content creators: travel influencers. Travel content posted on social media has altered how people perceive travel experiences. The

rise of social media now allows people to construct travel experiences based on curated online imagery, which represents an artificial and often unrealistic approach to travel (Miller, 2017). Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube often present an idealized and unrealistic portrayal of destinations, showcasing only the most picturesque moments and filtering out flaws. Since everyone's experience is unique, relying solely on others' accounts, particularly those heavily edited and curated for social media, can create unrealistic expectations and potentially disappointing travel experiences. Moreover, emphasizing visual aesthetics and social media validation can inadvertently discourage authentic travel experiences. Travelers may feel compelled to recreate the perfect shot, chasing “Instagrammable” moments rather than immersing themselves in the local cultures and embracing unexpected encounters. When it comes to travel, this tendency can lead to unpleasant and inauthentic travel experiences, where the main goal is to get the perfect pictures for social media rather than getting to know the place.

Nevertheless, travel writers need to fit in with how they tell stories and use social media to connect with readers on a deeper level as their audience's needs change. Travel companies and businesses need to be aware of these changes and take advantage of them by marketing their businesses to be successful. In this research, the researcher explores how travel writing is carried out in the current era of social media, as well as its implications and broader changes.

B. Research Question

With its complex features, Instagram has created so many internet celebrities called influencers in this digital era. Several types of influencers, including travel influencers who share travel-related content on the platform, have become one of the main sources of information about products or travel destination recommendations. Before social media, travel guides and personal recommendations were the primary sources of information. This shift has created several assumptions on whether travel content on social media can be categorized as travel writing or rather a completely different thing. This leads to the main question of this research: How have contemporary travel influencers used social media to redefine the new meaning of travel?

C. Research Objectives

This research seeks to better understand how the modern social media period influences the meaning and practice of travel writing, as well as to give new insights into the evolving nature of travel writing in the social media era.

D. Benefits of Research

1. Theoretical benefits

In this digital era and the constantly changing state of travel writing and the exchange between media, culture, and tourism, this research would provide a new insight that can be beneficial.

2. Practical benefits

The travel industry and related parties can get a valuable guide, and this research can assist them in utilizing social media and travel writing as powerful tools for better marketing in this digital era.

E. Previous Research

Previous research with a similar subject, ‘travel’, in the realm of social media as a reference for this research.

a. Sharing Tourism Experiences in Social Media: A Literature Review and A Set of Suggested Business Strategies

The article entitled Sharing Tourism Experiences in Social Media: A Literature Review and A Set of Suggested Business Strategies by Sotiriadis (2017) discovered how social media has changed tourist behavior, from gathering travel information to decision making, and sharing experiences after travel. With the focus on online reviews' influence on consumers, the author found some causes and effects of online reviews on how tourists experience their travel. With strategies to utilize social media efficiently to boost marketing and sales, the study offers valuable insights into the ways social media is transforming the travel industry. No research is perfect, and this research also has limitations. Since this research is focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and neglects other sources, it also limits the scope of knowledge by not including multiple perspectives from travelers and travel companies. It is recommended for future studies to get a more thorough analysis of the effect of social media on tourism by inclusively incorporating various sources.

b. Travel Experience on Social Media: The Impact Towards Tourist Destination Choice

The next study is an article by Mohamad, Vivien, and Pei with the title Travel Experience on Social Media: The Impact Towards Tourist Destination Choice. Using the theory of planned behavior, Mohamad et al. (2022) investigated the effects of positive and negative travel experiences that are shared on social media by travelers and how they influence tourists to visit the destination. To get the result, researchers surveyed local tourists in Klang Valley, Malaysia. With thorough analysis, the result revealed that social media content that promotes a positive experience about travel significantly influences tourists' travel decisions, while negative experiences did not affect people's decisions. But the results also found a main indicator that shapes their decision, which is a travel recommendation from friends, family, and colleagues. Regardless of

the limited sample size, it gave a glimpse of the impact of social media on tourist behavior.

c. Reinventing Travel Journalism in The Digital Age: Quality, Specialization, Technology, and a Unique Perspective

Is it true that digitization has strongly affected the travel journalism field? In this article written by Lekant and Palau-Sampio (2022) conducted in-depth interviews with Spanish and Russian travel journalists to find the answer. The result found that while digitization influenced the field of travel journalism, it also created new opportunities for new forms of storytelling while weakening them. The quality and objectivity of professional travel journalism are threatened by the development of the internet, especially social media and travel blogs. It raised concerns such as the decrease in in-depth reporting, the negative effect of clickbait, and the rising influence of the tourism industry. Travel journalists must adapt to the new environment by developing new skills, including multimedia production and digital marketing, while still sustaining high standards of journalism. Accuracy, ethical reporting, and commitment to in-depth coverage are still needed in this new environment of travel journalism. Travel writers need to be aware of the complexities of the digital era and the impact of social media, but it is also crucial to maintain professionalism, insightful, and engaging travel stories.

d. How Travel Influencers and Social Media Influence Tourist Travel Decisions to Ubud

Academic research entitled How Travel Influencers and Social Media Influence Tourist Travel Decisions to Ubud by Rahjasa et al. (2024) explored how the new generation of travel influencers has been rising on social media for the past few years. Since 77% of Indonesians actively engage on social media platforms, including Instagram and TikTok, the authors explored how social media and travel influencers affect travelers' travel decisions on one of the most popular travel destinations in Bali, which is Ubud. The survey is conducted to

find the implications of posting engaging content on social media on travelers' choices. With no bias, travel influencers gain trust from their audience by sharing their travel experiences, and as a result, alluring people to visit the chosen destination.

The feeling of fear of missing out (FOMO) encourages people to take their suitcases and travel more. In a famous destination such as Bali, the role of travel influencers is very crucial in shaping tourist behavior and decision-making. However, it is recommended for future studies to explore the complex effects of social media and travel influencers on traveler behavior across various places around the world.

e. Reviewing the Past to Inform the Future: A Literature Review of Social Media

The journal article by Zarezadeh et al., 2018, entitled Reviewing the Past to Inform the Future: A Literature Review of Social Media. The tourism industry has been remarkably influenced by the communication process that is shared on social media. Several aspects, including how individuals record and share their travel experiences on the internet, show how the changing environment of the tourism industry and tourist behavior from the conventional media era. This study suggests future research to explore the transformation of the role of social media from various perspectives to better understand its influence on the broader effects of social media on tourism development.

Social media has become an undeniable force in influencing tourist behavior, redefining the meaning of travel. The complexity of social media creates a significant shift in the tourism industry with the power of online reviews, travel influencers, the decline of conventional media in the digital era, and the rise of user-generated content. When taken as a whole, they highlight the importance of travel businesses and destinations adapting to this changing environment by strategically utilizing social media platforms.

F. Theoretical Framework

a. Digital Storytelling

Storytelling is a basic human activity that has deep cultural roots and is used for purposes other than enjoyment. It has also long been utilized as a method of engagement and education. It is a powerful tool for engagement, education, and cultural preservation, holding significant spiritual and ceremonial weight, particularly within many Indigenous communities (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). In storytelling, the narrator weaves the story's strands, consisting of character, setting, and storyline. Collective storytelling reinforces cultural values, creates a sense of community, and facilitates the transmission of knowledge to future generations.

Digital storytelling emerged in the early 1990s and has since become a powerful communication tool in the 21st century. The rise of digital storytelling marks a significant shift in how stories are created, disseminated, and enjoyed, harnessing the dynamic potential of digital media that extends beyond traditional formats. According to Jenkins (2017), digital storytelling refers to a broad range of narratives. These can include stories created using digital tools, stories that encourage audience engagement or interaction, and stories shared or experienced on digital platforms. Constructed narratives are conveyed through multimedia elements such as text, images, audio, and video to create engaging stories that can transcend traditional narrative forms. This idea is inclusive, encompassing traditional media like television programs and film, and also novel experiences available only on the web, like interactive fiction and video games. Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) note that digital storytelling empowers people through the interaction of personal narratives with images in a way that they can narrate their experiences authentically and together.

Digital storytelling differs from conventional forms of storytelling mostly due to its accessibility for reach and sharing. Unlike conventional forms of storytelling that are localized in physical spaces and local communities, digital storytelling employs

a participatory aspect in a new narrative format that normally involves a global audience and collective production (Robin, 2008). This can reach further, allowing individuals to deliver their stories straight to a broader population, giving voice to marginalized groups, and allowing the cultural stories to transcend regional or local borders. Online media, such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, due to their availability and shareability, have turned storytelling into a global conversation instead of a local one. This has provided channels for social change, cross-cultural understanding, and preservation of cultural heritage. Therefore, digital storytelling plays a critical role in shaping contemporary discourse and influencing global discourse, due to its potential for a broader reach and the participatory nature of digital platforms. However, it highlights issues about misinformation and the importance of media literacy.

Digital storytelling merges traditional storytelling with modern multimedia to create impactful short films that empower individuals and communities. By sharing their personal experiences, these narratives raise awareness, foster empathy, and inspire action on social issues. Increasingly, action researchers use digital storytelling to explore health and social problems, providing valuable insights and empowering communities to participate in research and drive positive change. However, individuals must recognize the potential and risks of new communicative capabilities, while media institutions must acknowledge the shift in audience power and embrace a more participatory model (Jenkins, 2017).

b. Media Engagement

The definition of engagement goes beyond attention or user interaction. It involves a more profound connection and commitment, signifying a genuine two-way interaction rather than mere passive observation. Dahlgren and Hill (2020) define media engagement as a complex concept that encompasses both emotional and cognitive elements, exists on a spectrum, and may serve as a precursor to participation. They emphasize the significance of understanding

involvement within the frameworks of political and popular cultural realms, as well as the power dynamics that occur within them.

Dahlgren and Hill (2020) identify five parameters for mapping and analyzing media engagement, which include media contexts, motivations, modalities, intensities, and consequences:

1. Media context

The specific channel through which individuals interact with media is the meaning of media context. In raising engagement, it is important to distribute the content through formal and informal channels. How people engage with the content is mostly influenced by the shapes of media engagement.

2. Motivations

Aware or not, most people consume media content with various motivations. People might engage with media content due to curiosity, relaxation, a sense of community, productivity, or responsibility.

3. Modalities

The parameter of modalities in media engagement refers to the communicative nature of the content, which can be either cognitive or affective. Affective engagement can be seen in the use of storytelling and live performances to evoke emotions, and on the other hand, cognitive engagement emphasizes problem-solving and critical thinking. In researching media studies, mixed modalities are also very crucial to learn

4. Intensities

We cannot talk about media engagement without the intensity of an individual's involvement with media. Whether for a short doom-scrolling or a long and deep connection with media content. The duration of media engagement can also be evoked by past media experiences. There might be

some content that brings individuals' memories and provokes them to shape how they engage with media in the current time.

5. Consequences

The effects of media use point to the results and implications of interaction, which can vary across groups and can or cannot be in accord with the originating goals. The effects can vary from positive, including empowerment and enjoyment, to negative, highlighting the importance of exploring the positive and negative effects of media engagement in current media landscapes.

Media engagement extends beyond passive entertainment or response to cultural stimuli. In the political, social, and artistic realm, it is an intense psychological commitment to matters of perceived importance, both short-term and long-term. The practicality of engagement is that it can explain the complex interactions of reason and emotion, for explaining the processes of public engagement or disengagement with political and cultural affairs.

G. Research Method

a. Data Collection

This research used qualitative methods to collect and analyze the data, aiming to gather rich, descriptive information related to travel writing in the new social media era. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a method for examining and understanding the meanings of individuals or groups attributed to a social or human experience. Qualitative research is characterized by its emphasis on in-depth understanding, typically achieved through a range of data collection methods. Qualitative research collects detailed information through a variety of techniques, including case studies, interviews, and observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Data were collected from several key sources. Academic journal articles and books provided essential theoretical and historical context, tracing established trends and critical perspectives within the field of travel writing.

Social media content, including blog posts, Instagram posts and captions, and travel vlogs, was analyzed to understand how individuals share their travel experiences with their audiences. Furthermore, observation was conducted through virtual ethnography of 10 travel influencers' Instagram accounts, as well as in-person visits to locations such as local bookstores, to understand how the industry is adapting to the rise of social media travel. The social media platform Instagram is chosen because of its multifaceted features, making it possible for the researcher to see how travel writing is implemented in the form of visually heavy content and to analyze the interaction that happens between travel influencers and their audiences.

The 10 travel influencers' accounts were randomly chosen through an observation using hashtags, trending sounds, and the travel-related community. However, the researcher chose these accounts not only travel accounts that are based in Indonesia but also from several countries to achieve a more diverse analysis. Even though they are categorized as travel influencers, each account has its own style of storytelling and serves different purposes. There is no specific category, but the researcher specifically chose accounts that have more than 5000 followers on Instagram. The researcher also considered how active the account is. Some of these accounts look very promising in terms of the number of followers and posts. Travel influencers who are very active on social media keep the interaction and engagement going.

This multifaceted approach is especially appropriate for this study, as its primary goal is to investigate the varied nature of travel writing in the digital age, rather than simply documenting changes, and to better understand the underlying motivations, cultural shifts, and evolving relationships between writers, audiences, and the travel industry itself.

b. Data Analysis

Creswell's (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* book provides a helpful roadmap to understanding the data analysis process in qualitative research. The book clarifies that data analysis in qualitative research involves preparing and

organizing data (e.g., transcripts or images), coding and minimizing themes, and representing the data in figures, tables, or discussion. To craft this research, the researcher gathered a variety of data formats during the observation, including notes, photographs, and screenshots from online media. Before the analysis process begins, it is crucial to divide the data collected into several categories for an easier approach to using text analysis in investigating the changing definition of travel in the current digital era. The analysis aims to get a deeper understanding of the major changes in the way travel writers perceive the world, what motivates them, and how they present their travel experiences. By comparing the two, the study aims to show the influence of social media on travel writing, including the way stories are written and how readers react to them, and what it means to be a travel writer today in the era of digital media.

c. Research Time and Location

The researcher collected information from a range of online sources between October 2024 until the completion of the research, including social media, websites, travel blogs, and observations the researcher made both online and in pertinent physical locations, such as bookstores.

CHAPTER II

TRAVEL WRITING AND TRAVEL INFLUENCERS

The main objective of this research is to analyze travel writing content published on Instagram. Instagram, as the most popular social media platform, was chosen due to its great influence on contemporary communication and content sharing. Its visually heavy format creates lively and engaging travel writing content. Furthermore, Instagram's rapid information sharing raises global connectivity, surpasses geographic barriers, and fosters community. Therefore, this study investigates the dynamic feature on Instagram and its impact on the creation and consumption of travel content. The evolution of travel writing was indirectly affected by the advent of new communication strategies. The researcher is curious and highly motivated by the variety of ways and possibilities in sharing travel experiences; thus, this study attempts to investigate the meaning of travel as constructed through social media accounts dedicated to travel content (Korte & Sennefelder, 2022). Visually heavy content on social media is becoming a trend nowadays, and the field of travel writing has never been the same as before. Slowly but surely, images and videos drastically replace long and boring text, and bring a chance for travel content creators to create a sense of emotion and take the audience to places they have never been to. Travel writing has become a multisensory experience that allows audiences to get an idea of the locations, visually and physically, because of its focus on visual media (Beuria, 2023). The researcher is eager to understand how this visual shift affects how travel writings in this digital era are created and perceived.

A. Travel Writing's Role Around the World

Travel writing has a rich history that evolved from early accounts of exploration and trade to the diverse forms it takes today. Ancient civilizations, such as the Romans and Greeks, documented their journeys for navigation, trade, and cultural exchange (Das, N., & Youngs, T., 2019). Those narratives can also take the form of personal reflections on one's experience during a travel journey. This historical development highlights the enduring human desire to engage with and comprehend the world through travel. In today's society,

this tradition continues, but with new tools and platforms. The rise of digital media not only expands the reach of travel narratives but also democratizes their creation and dissemination. This transition from manuscript records to visually rich internet content demonstrates travel writing's ongoing ability to inform, inspire, and connect people across space and time (Bolan, 2020).

Travel writing goes beyond providing itineraries. It is a crucial medium for fostering intercultural understanding and promoting responsible travel. By offering authentic and nuanced portrayals of local cultures, travel writers can challenge preconceived notions and foster respectful interactions between travelers and hosts, ultimately contributing to a more positive and sustainable tourism experience (Lockwood & Medlik, 2002). Effective travel writing goes beyond mere destination descriptions by actively exploring the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism. It sheds light on the challenges local communities face, including overtourism, the commodification of their culture, and ecological degradation (Rubiés, 2002). By raising awareness of these issues, travel writers empower travelers to make informed and responsible choices, thereby supporting sustainable tourism practices and minimizing their negative impact on the places they visit.

The impact of travel writing also stems from its capacity to humanize distant locations and cultures. Writers can bridge the gap between travelers and locals by employing vivid storytelling and personal narratives to foster empathy and understanding (Beuria, 2023). This function extends beyond presenting factual information, encompassing the portrayal of a place's essence, its people, and their experiences. Travel writers can break down prejudices and foster a greater understanding of the diversity of human experience by sharing personal interactions and viewpoints. They can highlight the common humanity that unites us all, regardless of geography or culture, fostering a sense of global citizenship and connection. Travel writers play a significant role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development. They actively conserve intangible cultural assets by documenting traditional practices and local knowledge. By allowing local perspectives' voices to be heard, travel writers empower communities to control their narratives and

leverage tourism sustainably, thus creating a more equitable and mutually beneficial travel experience.

B. Different Eras of Travel Writing

For a very long time, people have been sharing their travel experiences and their impressions of the travel destinations. As the world has become more interconnected, travel writing has changed significantly over time. Individuals' perspectives, technological development, and priorities within society have significantly shifted. From the pre-mass media era to the present social media era, it highlights the distinctive roles that travel writing has played in each of these periods.

1. Pre-mass media era

Way before the emergence of digital technologies, travel writing played an important role in linking numerous cultures and destinations. Pre-digital travel writings offer unique and valuable insights into unfamiliar places, serving as primary sources of knowledge about distant cultures, customs, and environments (Das and Youngs, 2019). These writings shaped perceptions and stimulated imaginations by offering a rare glimpse into the era when instant communication and widespread literacy were lacking. Early travel journeys were often documented in journals, letters, and published books, which played a significant role in geographical discovery, scientific exploration, and the nascent development of cross-cultural understanding. While fictional, works such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid* included elements of travel and discovery, impacting the cultural imaginations of entire civilizations. Later, pilgrims' stories, such as those describing journeys to sacred destinations such as Jerusalem or Mecca, gain popularity, combining spiritual quest with geographical description. These stories frequently describe not only the physical journey but also the traveler's emotional and spiritual transformations. Furthermore, early travel writing played a crucial role in the development of cross-cultural understanding, albeit often filtered through the lens of the traveler's own cultural biases and assumptions. While these stories occasionally

reinforced stereotypes, they also facilitated early forms of intercultural discussion, introducing readers to various ways of living and contributing to a shift in global perspectives.

In the Indonesian context, the travel writing field has some popular names that are known for their travel stories. They contributed a lot to the rise of travel writing practice in Indonesia. Journalist and writer Adinegoro (Djamaluddin Adinegoro) is the pioneer of travel writer practitioners in Indonesia who published his travel writing book in the 1930s.

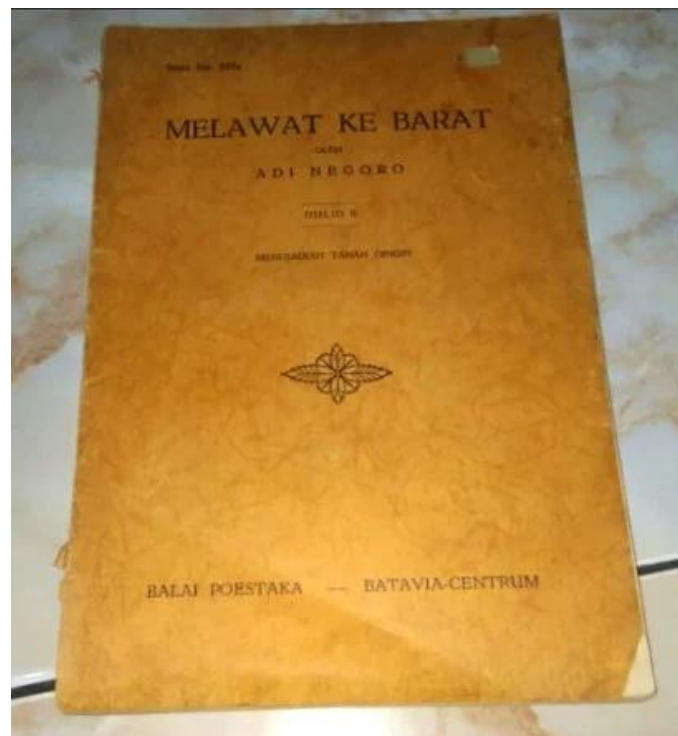


Figure 2.1 Melawat Ke Barat book by Adinegoro

(Source: warungarsip.co)

This book became a new standard when modern Indonesian literature was still developing. The book transformed a simple personal diary into a journalistic travel writing. He thoroughly portrays foreign cultures, modern infrastructure, and political systems, providing an objective and insightful consideration unlike anything seen in Indonesian literature at the time (TelusuRI, 2019). This

combination of travel and journalism establishes a new high standard for the genre, demonstrating that travel writing can be both entertaining and intellectually stimulating.

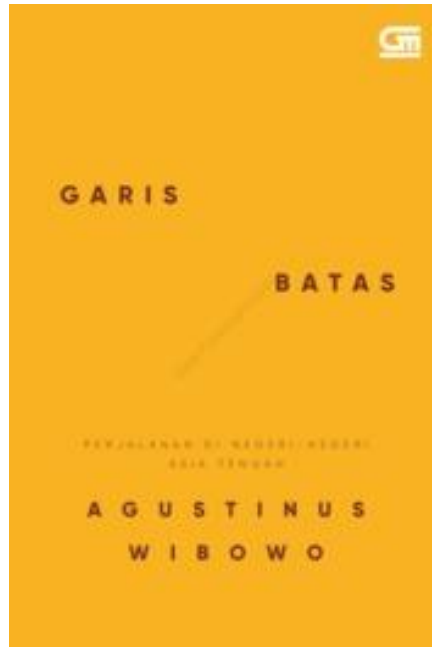


Figure 2.2 *Garis Batas* by Agustinus Wibowo

(Source: www.Gramedia.com)

Agustinus Wibowo is a pioneer of introspective and philosophical travel memoirs in Indonesian travel writing. Instead of merely documenting destinations, his works use travel as a deep search for self-understanding (Figge, 2019). Growing up as an ethnic and religious minority, his journeys are driven by a personal quest for identity and a desire to understand complex issues about nation and culture. He is known for his immersive and cost-effective approach, often hitchhiking and living with locals, who he acknowledges have provided some of his deepest life lessons. He does not travel for "wanderlust" but rather to seek answers to profound questions he has about the world and himself.

These Indonesian travel writing practitioners have a big impact in paving the way for a newer generation of travel writers. The fundamentals of travel writing that they shared influenced how people approach travel narratives in today's era.

2. **Mass media era**

In the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, travel texts were more culturally sensitive to other cultures' beliefs and outlooks. Travel writing still relies heavily on the distinction between oneself and others. In the second decade of the millennium, there has been a significant increase in travel-related publications, including novels, movies, television shows, and social media posts (Furqan, 2018). During this period, travel writing evolved into a widely consumed genre among people around the world (Richards & Julie, 2010). The rise of mass media, particularly the internet, has significantly transformed the production and reception of travel writing.

Travel websites such as Lonely Planet, The Rough Guide, World Nomads, Wikitravel, and National Geographic have become dominant forces, providing travelers with valuable information and influencing travel trends. The existence of travel-related websites such as Lonely Planet, Wikitravel, and National Geographic served as primary sources of travel information and guidebooks for much of the early 2000s, maintaining prominence until their influence began to decline in recent years. These platforms became invaluable resources for travelers, offering information from practical tips and destination guides to inspiring travel narratives and stunning photography (Richards & Julie, 2010). Furthermore, these platforms democratized travel writing, allowing anyone to share their experiences and perspectives.

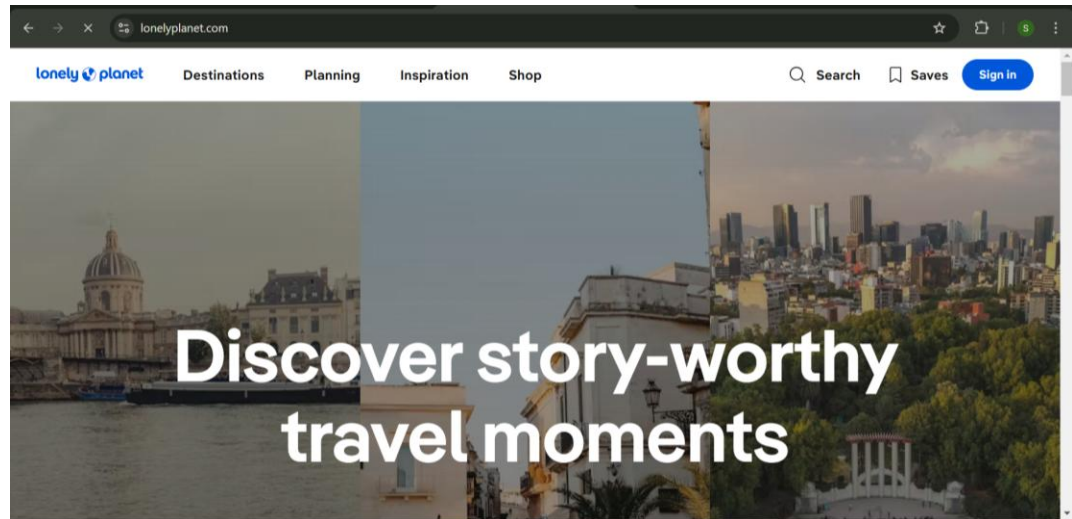


Figure 2.3 Lonely Planet website

(source: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com>)

In Indonesia, travel stories are not just in the form of books or blogs. People who prefer visual-heavy media rather than reading written text can also consume travel content through television. One of the most popular television shows in the early 2010s, *My Trip My Adventure*, is one of the most popular television shows in the early 2010s that shows travel journeys around Indonesia and has a significant role in inspiring Indonesians to travel (Furqan, 2018).



Figure 2.4 My Trip My Adventure Logo

(Source: Wikipedia)

This TV show played a significant role in shaping travel writing and culture in Indonesia. Unlike traditional travel books or blogs, *My Trip My Adventure*

focuses on the more immersive experience with energetic hosts that specialize in challenging dan thrilling travel destinations. Its success demonstrated a strong market for visual-first travel content, paving the way for the rise of travel vloggers and Instagram influencers who would later dominate the online travel space.

Trinity, also known by her pen name and brand The Naked Traveler, is a key figure in Indonesian travel writing and content creation who transformed travel writing in Indonesia from formal reportage into a highly personal and relatable genre (Ekasiswanto, 2017). The name "Naked" is a clever play on the Indonesian word "*nekad*," meaning brave or reckless, and perfectly encapsulates her signature style of storytelling. Over the years, Trinity has transformed her passion into a successful career, publishing 15 national best-selling books and inspiring two movie adaptations.

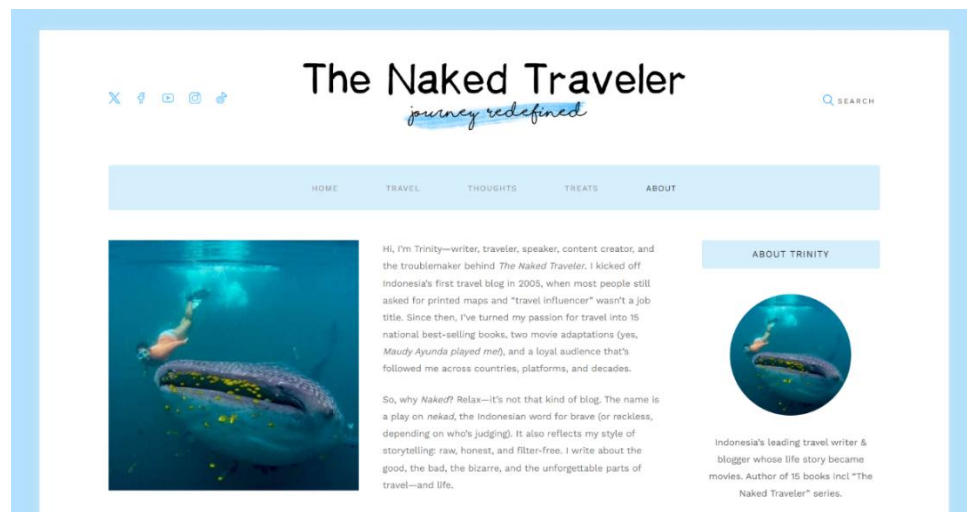


Figure 2.5 The Naked Traveler Website

(Source: <https://naked-traveler.com/about>)

Trinity has a significant role in the field of Indonesian travel writing. She proved that a travel writer did not have to be an academic practitioner or a professional journalist. A regular person with a passion for exploring has a big chance of becoming a travel writer. The new generation of Indonesian travel

writers would not be in this state if it were not for what Trinity has built over the past two decades.

3. **Post-mass media/social media era**

The advent of digital technologies has revolutionized how people share and experience travel. The current period of globalization is characterized by unprecedented human migration across borders and the rapid dissemination of knowledge through digital channels (Voyage, 2023). This interconnectivity has an enormous impact on how we travel. From the initial planning stages where online tools streamline bookings and research to the journey itself, during which digital devices capture experiences and connect passengers with others, the digital domain is key (Arthur & Van Nuenen, 2019). With the rise of social media, travel writing has further transformed. Writers now utilize online platforms, such as blogs and social media, bypassing traditional publishing and fostering greater diversity and innovation. This leads to the rise of amateur travel blogging, challenging professional writers to establish personal brands and maintain their market appeal (Beuria, 2023). Despite these changes, the core of travel writing remains: immersing oneself in a place, experiencing its culture, and sharing those experiences through compelling storytelling.

The social media platform facilitates a dynamic exchange of perspectives on travel. Capturing and sharing travel experiences has become practically synonymous with the journey itself (Miller, 2017). Travelers have a natural urge to share their adventures with people worldwide, which they frequently do via social media platforms, blogs, and vlogs. Viewers can consume and engage with shared travel content, offering their interpretations, insights, and experiences. This interactive dimension creates a multifaceted understanding of a destination, moving beyond the initial traveler's perspective. This frequent sharing, whether intentional or not, makes every detail of a traveler's journey accessible to everyone. Some studies show that sharing positive experiences leads the storyteller (i.e., the traveler) to experience more significant positive

effects than not sharing (Gable et al., 2004). From joyful experiences to sadness and disappointment, both positive and negative experiences contribute to online discourse. The public dissemination of travel narratives has the potential to significantly impact perceptions of destinations and influence others' travel choices.

The distinction between physical and digital life is blurred. Online interactions, digital representations of the self, and virtual groups have a significant impact on people's identities and self-perception (Miller, 2017). The digital component has become an essential and inseparable part of their life story. This thin line between what is real and what is not becomes increasingly difficult to define as digital experiences carry real emotional weight and can have profound consequences in the physical world. The constant flow of information and engagement in digital spaces can also influence how people perceive their place in the world, changing their values, beliefs, and even their sense of purpose.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research findings and discussion derived from the collected data. This research explored the current situation of travel writing in the social media era. The findings and discussion that follow will explore the evolution of travel writing, which has shifted from conventional travel narratives to a newer and more distinctive form of travel writing facilitated by social media. There are 10 social media accounts focused on the main object of this study, which aims to analyze the current era of travel writing through social media, specifically Instagram.

A. Findings

1. The Downfall of Conventional Travel Writing Books in Indonesia

The interest in reading physical books in Indonesia has been declining significantly in recent years, particularly after the pandemic, when people became accustomed to consuming information online. Accessibility is one of several reasons that have contributed to the decline in the number of physical books. The convenience of digital media offers a new experience compared to the traditional way of reading books. Nowadays, online bookstores provide easy access to a vast collection of books from authors worldwide. The E-library enables users to access multiple readings on a single device daily, which is more convenient than carrying heavy books in a bag everywhere. Furthermore, physical books, particularly those imported from abroad, can be significantly more expensive, which may be a substantial consideration for many people.

Beyond accessibility, the rise of digital platforms has influenced reading habits. Social media, online news outlets, and streaming services compete for attention, frequently displacing time previously allocated to reading more significant works such as novels. The fast-paced nature of digital content encourages fast consumption and shorter attention spans, which may make reading a physical book less appealing.



Figure 3.1 Travel books in Gramedia bookstore, Yogyakarta
(source: photograph by the author)

Even in the largest Gramedia bookstore in Yogyakarta, there is no specific book section for travel writing. The number of books about travel, in general, not exclusively travel books, is not extensive. What is even more striking is that the majority of these books are by foreign authors, detailing their travels *outside* of Indonesia. Because there are so few of them, they do not even have their category. Instead, they are grouped on a shelf labeled "Reference," sharing space with language learning books and other reference materials.

However, a different bookstore, Periplus, which specializes in imported books, has a much more extensive selection of travel-related books. While still not overflowing with travel books, Periplus does offer a more organized and visible selection of travel-related materials. They have dedicated an entire shelf to the genre, which is a step up from the "Reference" category at Gramedia. On a specific shelf, people can find a mix of travel books, travel magazines, and even travel maps, suggesting a more focused effort to cater to those interested in exploring the world. While Periplus has a slightly more curated

collection, it still highlights a more significant issue for travel literature in reaching an audience in physical bookstores, including ones that specialize in imported titles.



Figure 3.2 Travel maps of Lombok in the Periplus bookstore, Yogyakarta

(Source: photograph by the author)

However, at a local indie bookshop in the Malioboro area, called The Lucky Boomerang, there is a separate section dedicated to travel. Travel books have their own separate section, complete with travel maps and postcards, in this little bookshop. This bookshop sells secondhand and new books in foreign languages, as well as a selection of souvenirs. This place is a great tourist attraction, especially for foreign tourists.

As conventional travel writing books become increasingly outdated due to technological advancements, travel writers have gradually shifted their perspective and begun sharing their work on the Internet, through platforms such as blogs, articles, and social media posts.

2. The Rise of Travel Influencer Accounts on Social Media

This research analyzes 10 social media accounts and websites dedicated to travel content. The primary objective of this study is to analyze what distinguishes the current era of travel writers on social media from conventional travel writing. The researcher found these 10 travel social media accounts by searching through popular hashtags and trending audio on Instagram. There are no specific reasons for each account, but the researcher wants to include representation from each continent to ensure a global perspective. The sample, which was chosen without regard to gender, comprises both individuals and organizations. By analyzing their content, the researcher aims to explore the similar yet distinct ways these accounts conceptualize and present travel writing in the era of social media.

No	Name	Username & Followers per August 2025	Country	Content	Year established
1.	Jess Vincent	Instagram: @nomada.travel (17,3k followers)	Spain & England	Focus on the face and scenery	2013
2.	Dana Wang	Instagram: @bydanawang (216k followers)	Australia	Focus on the face, scenery, and POV contents	2012
3.	Jess Roams	Instagram: @Jess_roams (7.677 followers)	Philippines	Focus on the face and video compilation	2017
4.	World Packers	Instagram: @worldpackers (941k followers)	Global	Video compilation, scenery, and captioned images	2013
5.	Travel creator CEO	Instagram: @travelcreatorceo (21k followers)	United States	POV videos, captioned images	2023
6.	Nekat pergi solo	Instagram: @nekatpergisolo FB: nekat pergi solo (25,1k followers)	Indonesia	Captioned images, self-videos	2021

7.	Condé Nast Traveler	Instagram: @cntraveler Website: www.cntraveler.com (3,4M followers)	United States	Scenery, foods, lifestyle, and celebrity interviews	2012
8.	Braxton L	Instagram: @livinliddy (126k followers)	Global	Scenery, cinematic travel photography & videography	2021
9.	Shabbir Ahmad	Instagram: @thepaktrekker (561k followers) YouTube: The Pak Trekker (640k subscribers)	Pakistan	Focus on self-videos and vlogs with locals around the world	2018
10.	Aakanksha Monga	Instagram: @aakanksha.monga (1,3M followers) YouTube: Aakanksha Monga (898k subscribers)	India	Focus on self-video with the scenery in the background	2019

Table 3.1 List of travel influencers' Instagram accounts

The picture below is from one of the travel writers' social media accounts, which shares their travel writing experiences over the past few years. Upon further examination of the account, the researcher identified a pattern in this account and similar travel accounts. There are 10 out of hundreds of Instagram accounts, belonging to individuals and organizations, that regularly share travel writing content on social media.

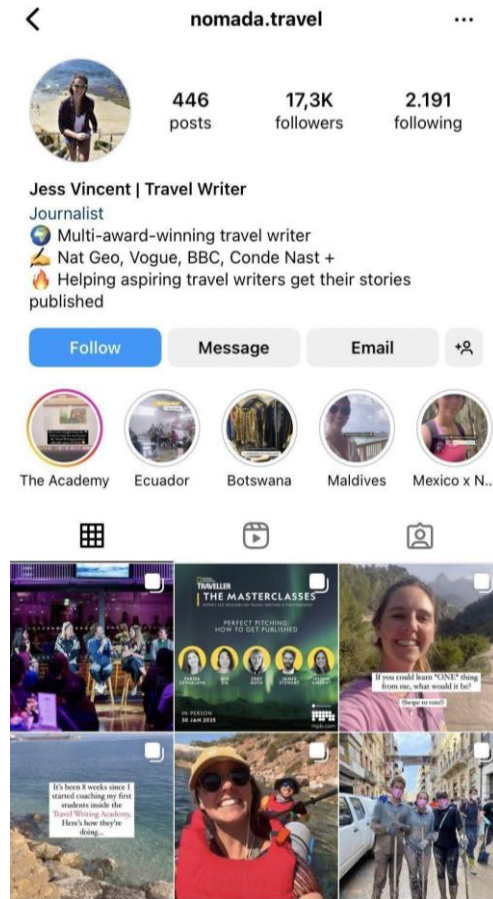


Figure 3.3 Travel writer @nomada.travel's Instagram account

(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/nomada.travel>)

The Instagram account @nomada.travel, managed by Jess Vincent, serves as a platform for travel writing content that prioritizes educating followers on the craft of creating and publishing compelling travel narratives. Vincent's extensive travel experiences across numerous countries over the past few years provide a rich foundation for her shared knowledge. She disseminates her insights through various media, including published books, articles, magazines, and her active presence on Instagram. She has published physical travel books and written several articles for travel websites, including National Geographic, Conde Nast, and Vogue. Because this user has experience in travel writing, the account's content primarily focuses on offering practical travel tips and detailed guides, catering to aspiring travel writers.



Figure 3.4 @nomada.travel Instagram post caption

The type of content that Jess Vincent posts encourages her audience to become digital travel writers instead of just highlighting the destinations. Vincent builds a community and educates newcomer writers on how to create engaging travel stories. The focus on education highlights the need for genuine and knowledgeable travel experiences and the possible viable career option for travel writing.

Additionally, Vincent highlights the changing connection between professional jobs and social media by using Instagram as her main platform. Instagram's visual format enables Vincent to utilize photos and engaging captions to illustrate travel writing concepts. In addition to improving the educational process, the mix of textual and visual materials also reflects the state of digital storytelling in today's era, where varied content is more effective for drawing in and holding audiences' interest. An excellent illustration of how social media can be used to disseminate information and cultivate a new generation of travel writers by Nomada Travel.

However, travel influencer Dana Wang has a slightly different idea of what travel writing is. The content posted by Dana is focusing primarily on travel tips, a list of places to visit, and cultural information from various countries she has visited. This type of content is ideal for individuals seeking travel destination recommendations from seasoned travelers. This travel influencer posts content that focuses on self-video and the scenery of the travel destinations she has visited. Almost every video she posts is edited with text or captions.

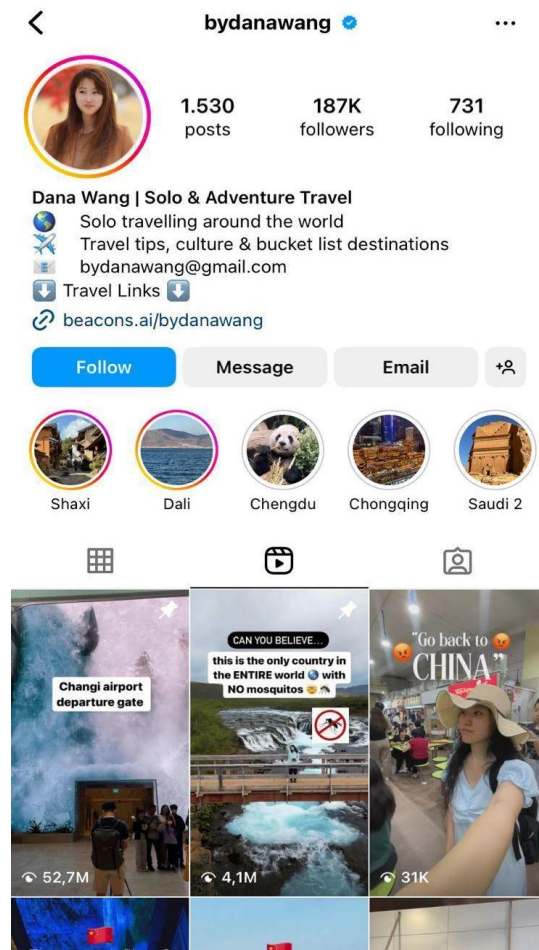


Figure 3.5 Travel Influencer account @bydanawang

(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/bydanawang>)

Similar to previous travel influencers, another solo travel influencer, Jess Roams, also posts captioned videos that focus on their face. While sharing their experiences in several travel destinations, they also offer travel tips and inspiration to their followers who want to

embark on their travel writing journey. Not only that, Jess Roams is also part of the organization Worldpacker and Visaly, where numerous travel writers and influencers come together in a large community to share their travel journeys.

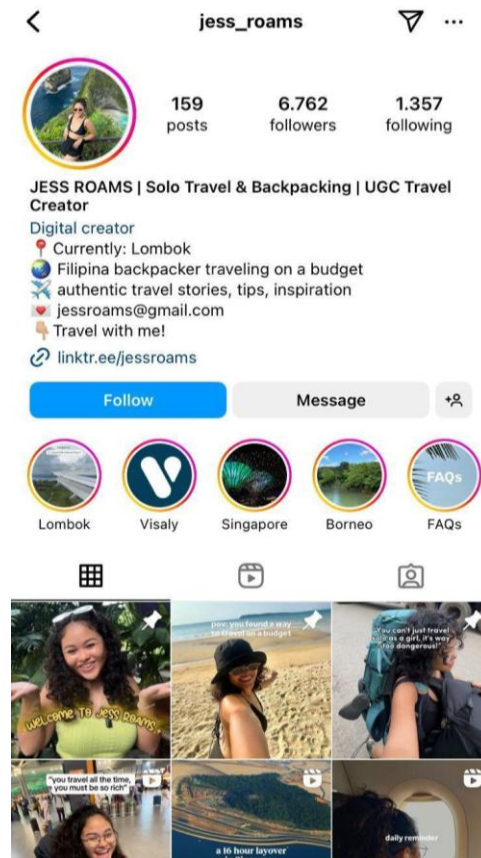


Figure 3.6 Travel Instagram account @jess_roams
(Source: https://www.instagram.com/jess_roams)

In addition to personal accounts, some organizations and travel companies also utilize the social media platform Instagram. World Packers is an international volunteering organization that revolutionizes travel by offering a unique work-exchange platform, connecting adventurous individuals with hosts worldwide. Worldpackers empower travelers to experience the world authentically and affordably by connecting them with a diverse global network of hosts, including hostels, eco-villages, NGOs, and families across 140+ countries. Through skill-based exchanges, supported by community reviews and

safety measures, travelers confidently break free from traditional tourism, immersing themselves in local cultures, contributing meaningfully, and transforming their journeys into opportunities for personal growth and global connection.

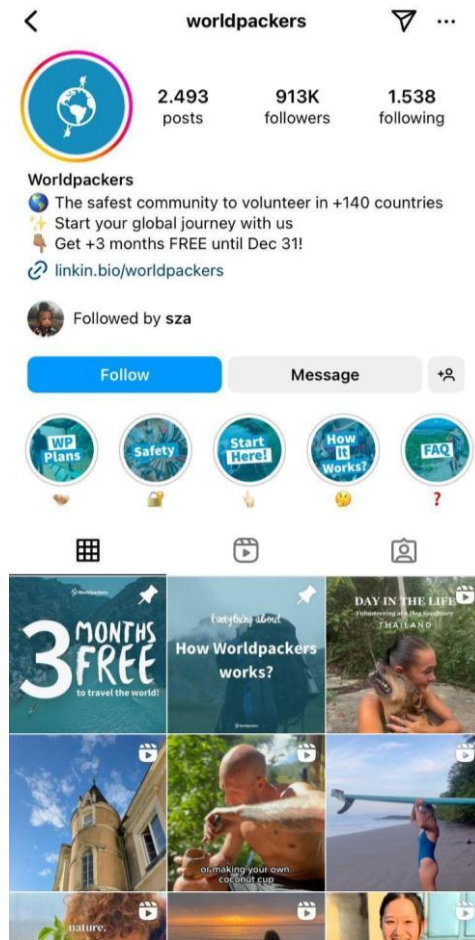


Figure 3.7 Worldpackers Instagram Account

(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/worldpackers>)

World Packers' website provides all the necessary information for individuals looking to embark on their journey. Not only does it offer host listings, but the World Packers' website also fosters a strong sense of community through various features. The website enables users to share reviews of both hosts and travelers, providing valuable insights. Meanwhile, forums and resources facilitate connections and knowledge sharing among members. The website also offers educational content, including travel tips, budgeting guides, and skill

development resources, providing travelers with the necessary tools for safety and successful exchange. The platform aims to minimize the uncertainties often associated with international travel and volunteer work. Not only that, but the availability of diverse resources, including detailed host profiles, creates a supportive ecosystem for travelers to embark on their journeys with confidence.

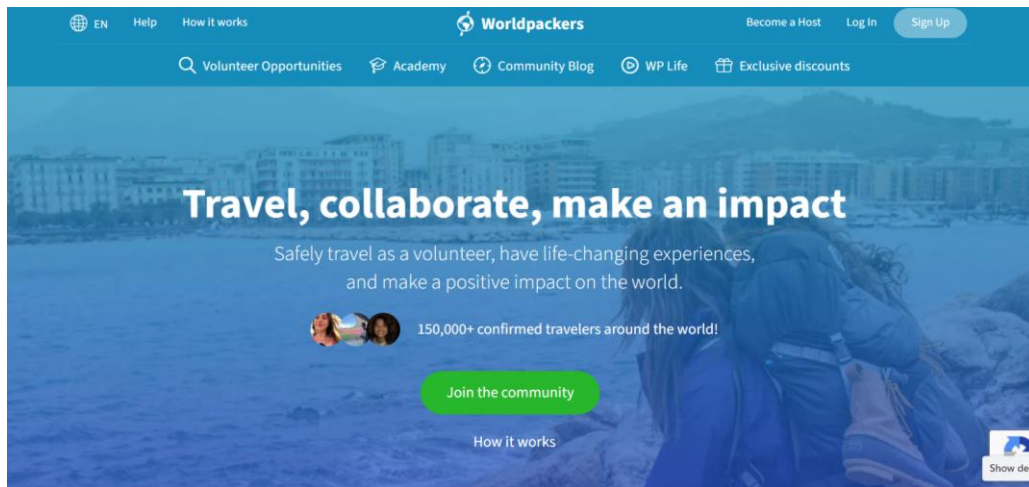


Figure 3.8 World Packers’ home website

(Source: <https://www.worldpackers.com>)

While World Packers acts as the provider for travelers and volunteers to build connections around the world, there is another travel organization that focuses on earning money from travel content on social media. The Instagram user, @travelcreatorceo, posts content on social media, focusing on providing tips, travel writing advice, travel kits, and even templates to help start pitching for collaborations with travel brands. For individuals looking to monetize their travel content, this account serves as a valuable guide. This account monetizes the content that it sells. They build a community around people who want to earn money through the travel content that they share.

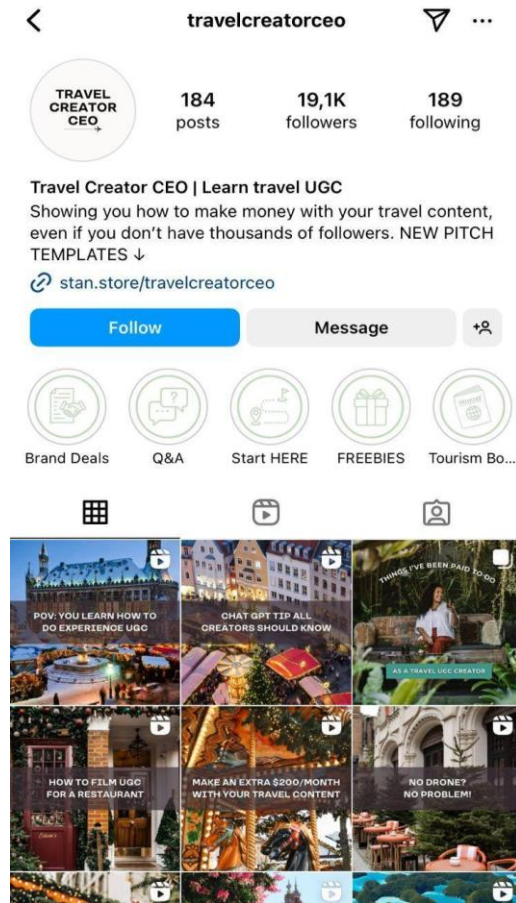


Figure 3.9 Travel Instagram Account @travelcreatorceo
 (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/travelcreatorceo>)

Individuals who are not well-known celebrities or influencers can monetize their social media presence by strategically curating and publishing content. The account @travelcreatorceo provides followers with specific ideas and tactics for enhancing their travel writing skills, ultimately positioning them to produce profitable content. @travelcreatorceo empowers people to monetize their travel experiences by democratizing content creation and reshaping traditional authorship. This strategy demonstrates that authentic storytelling and strategic engagement may generate reliable sources of income. For individuals who have just begun their travel creator journey, the templates offered by Travel Creator CEO can be highly beneficial in helping them start pitching to travel businesses. To promote the paid content on their Bio profile, they lure viewers by posting videos of people’s journeys in travel and engaging captions to attract viewers to see their

Instagram profile. The pictures below are an example of the attractive yet straightforward Instagram captions posted on the Instagram account @TravelCreatorCEO.

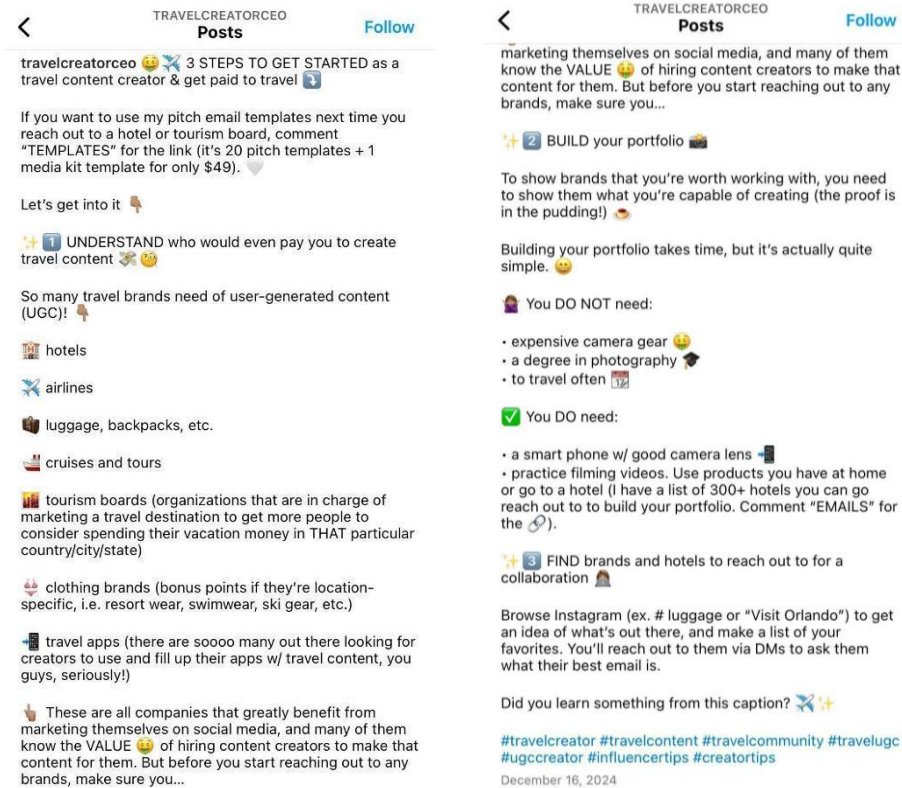


Figure 3.10 Instagram caption by @travelcreatorceo

The caption above is for an Instagram feed with pictures of several steps on how to start a journey as a travel content creator. Although they monetize their templates, as shown in the previous images, the user still provides a brief glimpse of the general steps involved in becoming a travel content creator. It may attract people who feel curious and want to learn more, ultimately leading to the purchase of paid content.

In Indonesia, there is a similar Instagram account named @nekatpergisolo, which is managed by two individuals who focus on sharing their travel experiences from various countries. Not only that, but they also built a travel community on the same platform, using the account called @nekatcommunity, to guide people with similar travel interests in joining and gaining insight into various travel-related topics.

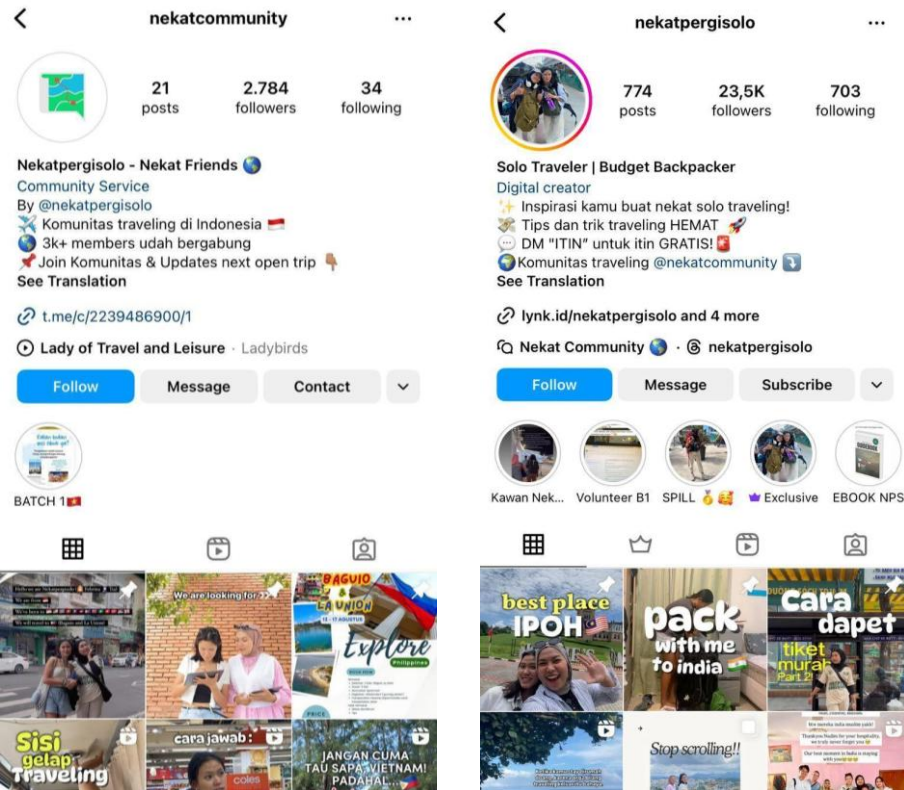


Figure 3.11 Instagram account profile of @nekatcommunity and @nekatpergisolo
 (source: <https://www.instagram.com/nekatpergisolo>)

The content posted on both accounts primarily consists of self- or face-focused videos. They shared their own travel experience through videos of themselves in the country they visited. The two owners of the account share their travel journey using a mix of English and Bahasa Indonesia. However, their target audience is Indonesian citizens who want to join their solo traveling community.



PLACES TO STAY

The best villas near the Cinque Terre

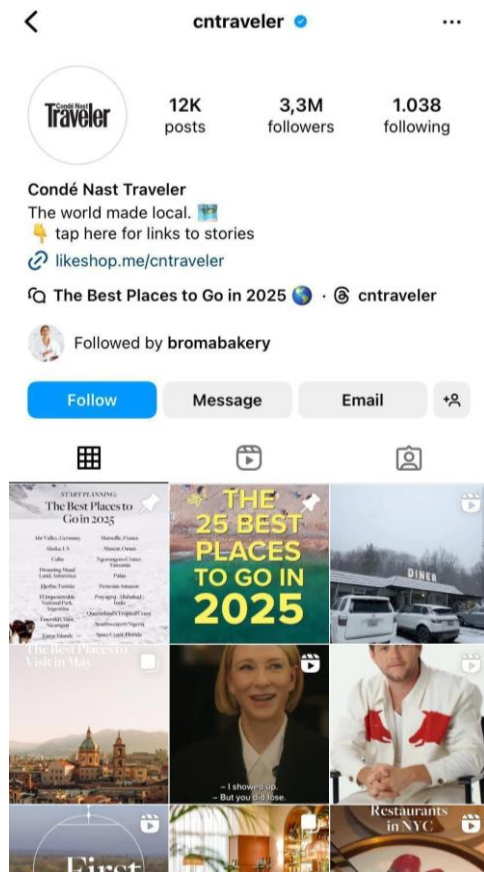


Figure 3.12 Condé Nast Traveler Website and Instagram page

(source: <https://www.instagram.com/cntraveler>
, <https://www.cntraveler.com>)

Condé Nast Traveler is a global luxury travel magazine and website established in 1987 by the international media company Condé Nast. This travel magazine has numerous travel-related articles on its website. Not only does the website offer travel destinations, but it also provides travel-related articles covering places to stay, style and culture, food and drink, as well as wellness and spas around the world.

Travel account @livinliddy creates an engaging travel experience through cinematic photography and videography. Their Instagram account transports viewers to various locations in Asia, America, and Canada, with each journey captured in appealing short films. The videos have a distinct aesthetic and often feature a central still figure set against

stunning scenery, creating a sense of tranquil immersion. This intentional approach, combined with concise captions, enables the sentimental photos to take center stage, effectively conveying the essence of each journey. The result is a curated collection that combines travel documentation and artistic expression, allowing followers to experience the world through a cinematic lens.

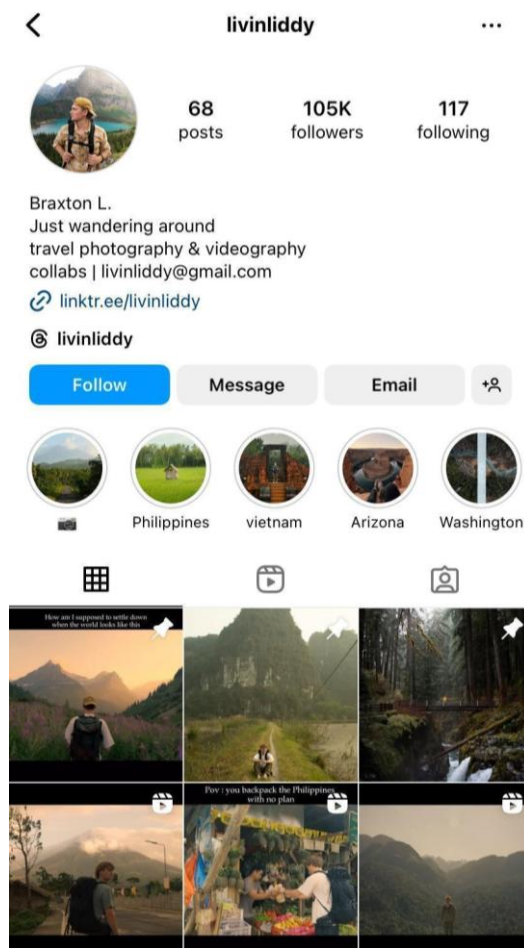


Figure 3.13 @Livinliddy’s Instagram profile
(source: <https://www.instagram.com/livinliddy>)

By keeping Instagram captions brief, this creator emphasizes the visual storytelling inherent in their videos. This intentional simplicity invites viewers to connect directly with the video content, allowing them to create their interpretations of the travel based on the imagery and motion presented. Without lengthy written descriptions, viewers are engaged in the experience's sights and sounds, fostering a more direct and personal connection.

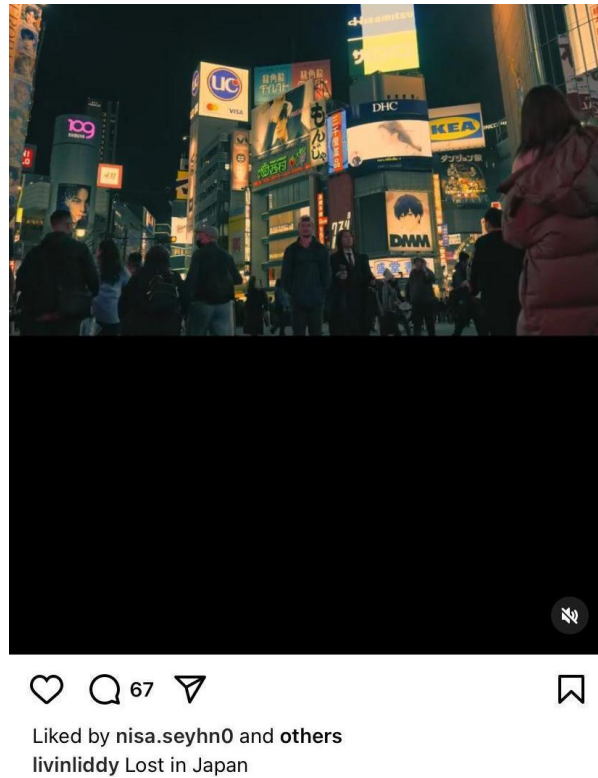


Figure 3.14 Instagram post and caption by @livinliddy
(source: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DCmogCtSFEF>)

@thepaktrekker, who is active on Instagram and YouTube, creates entertaining vlogs about their adventures to various destinations. Beyond merely displaying picturesque locations, the video they produce stands out by capturing authentic encounters with locals, providing viewers with a more immersive cultural experience. This combination of personal storytelling and authentic interactions elevates their vlogs to captivating stories of global exploration.



Figure 3.15 @thepaktrekker's Instagram profile
(source: <https://www.instagram.com/thepaktrekker>)

Rather than describing their travel experience in Instagram captions, this user takes a minimalist approach by recommending that followers "watch the full video on our YouTube Channel." This method effectively increases engagement and traffic to their YouTube site, where the whole story of each journey unfolds. Given that the account is video-based chiefly, this strategy perfectly combines their Instagram presence with their more in-depth storytelling on YouTube.

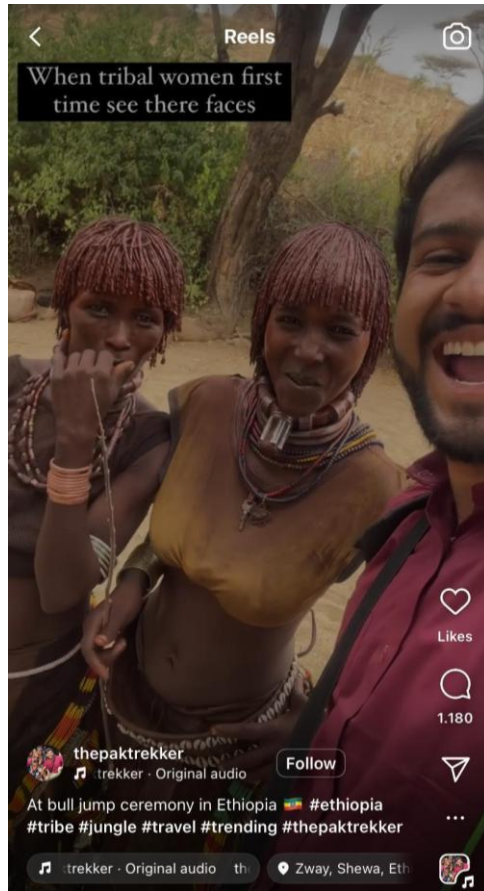


Figure 3.16 Instagram reel and caption by @thepaktrekker

This Instagram account showcases the beauty and diversity of local people encountered during the user's travels. The content offers insight into diverse cultures and communities by documenting real-life events and showcasing individuals from various backgrounds. The strategic use of location-specific hashtags improves discoverability, allowing locals and curious explorers to engage with the content and the account.

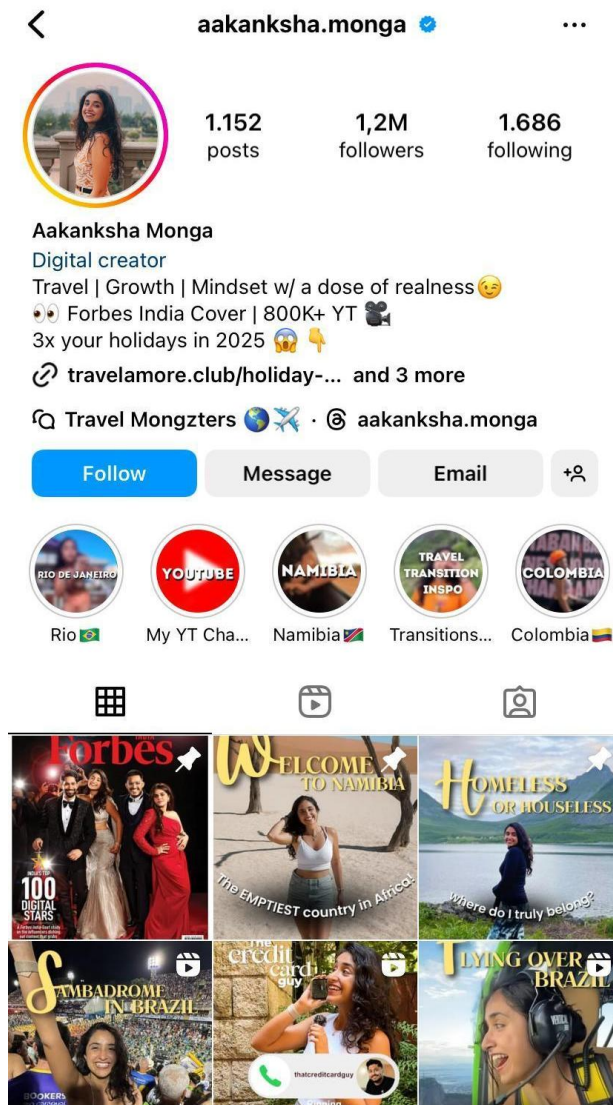


Figure 3.17 Instagram profile of @aakanksha.monga

(source: <https://www.instagram.com/aakanksha.monga>)

The last travel influencer mentioned above, Aakanksha Monga, who identifies herself as a digital creator, as stated in her Instagram profile, has built her career in the industry since 2019. Her social media platforms, including YouTube and Instagram, have reached 800,000 and 1.2 million followers. The content posted on her Instagram account primarily focuses on her face. Aakanksha's Instagram stands out with her captivating self-shot videos, artfully placing herself within stunning travel scenery. These often convey a sense of solo adventure, skillfully captured by her. Beyond showcasing beautiful locales, she also

provides valuable travel tips and offers a refreshing glimpse into the less glamorous side of travel that many travelers are unaware of.

Based on the findings above, several types of travel influencers differ in their content and social media performance. 6 out of 10 Instagram accounts focus on self-video or their faces in their content. This type of content fosters a sense of authenticity that can be effectively marketed to the public. Additionally, the author found that one out of ten accounts is still creating physical travel writing books while also actively posting travel content on social media.

3. Interaction Between Travel Influencers and Followers

As travel influencers, they have their specific audience that they actively engage with. The communication that happened is not only a one-way communication but a two-way communication through interaction on their page. This interaction can be seen through several features that Instagram offers, such as comments, Instagram story replies, and the Q&A feature. These tools allow for a dynamic interaction, where influencers can respond directly to their followers' questions and feedback. This constant back-and-forth interaction builds a stronger sense of trust, making their content feel more personal and valuable to their followers.

For instance, travel influencer Dana Wang frequently includes engaging questions in her posts to encourage interaction. She also often replies to her followers' comments on her page with a short response or even just an emoji. This trick can inspire the audience to write comments and interact with her content, creating a sense of community. This is a prime example of how social media interaction between travel influencers and their audience fosters a two-way communication through the comment section, building a more connected and loyal following.

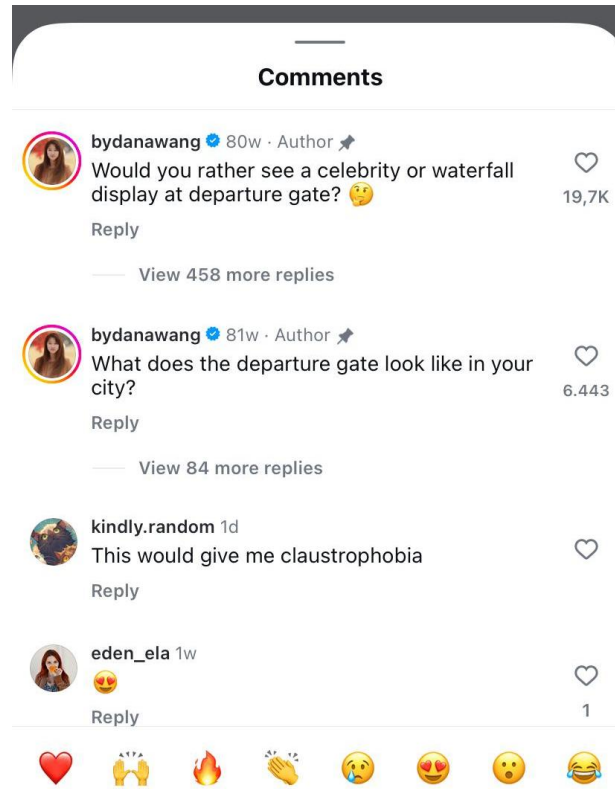


Figure 3.18 Comment section on Dana Wang's post

The pinned comment feature on Instagram allows the author to pin any comments at the top so that the chosen comments will not disappear with the other comments. Based on the picture above, Dana Wang's followers show their engagement through likes and comment replies. A simple reaction emoji is also shown by her followers as a way to show interest in the content.



Figure 3.19 Instagram post by travelcreatorceo

On the other hand, to get closer to the audience, what travelcreatorceo did was ask the audience to decide which travel destination she should go to next. This will make the audience feel more involved with the content that the travel influencer posts, transforming them from passive viewers into active participants in the creative process. By giving her followers a voice in her travel plans, she fosters a sense of community and ownership. This interactive approach not only boosts engagement but also creates anticipation, as the audience eagerly awaits the content from the destination they helped choose.



Figure 3.20 Instagram story highlights by @nekatpergisolo

Instagram user @nekatpergisolo has an Instagram story highlight about any kinds of important information on their page, including a Q&A section. The picture above shows a screenshot of one of their followers asking about travel destination recommendations for a beginner. The admin behind the account did not just answer the question right away. They gave out some disclaimers for first-time travelers to reflect on before they decide to do solo traveling. And they are not only giving out a list of countries to visit for Indonesian travelers, but also wrote the reasons why those countries are recommended to visit as beginner travelers.



Figure 3.21 Instagram story highlight for giveaway event.

Nekat Pergi Solo also conducted engaging giveaway events for their followers with one condition: to post an Instagram story about their reasons why they love travelling. This event encourages followers to share their stories and travel journeys, and create a sense of community by reposting all of the stories they shared on their social media. By doing this, everyone who follows @nekatpergisolo could read and engage with stories from a diverse group of people and gain new perspectives and connections. Moreover, this event also encouraged more people to participate and interact with each other. This activity not only boosted their engagement but also fostered a sense of belonging among their audience, making their followers feel like an active part of the community rather than just passive consumers of their content.



Figure 3.22 Instagram story highlight by Jess Roams.

For some influencers, personal life is a line they do not want to cross. Every piece of information they share on social media is open to public interpretation, so disclosing personal information to the public should be done carefully. Jess Roams was asked about money management, on how she collects the savings for traveling. When she was asked about her money management and how she saves for her travels, she provided a genuine response. She explained her budgeting strategies and her mindset about spending without revealing the exact numbers in her bank account or her specific income sources. This approach allowed her to connect with her audience by being honest and helpful while still maintaining a clear boundary between her public persona and her private financial life.

B. Discussion

From the findings presented above, we can discuss the current era of travel writing and how it changes the meaning of travel in this current social media era through several points below:

1. The End of Conventional Travel Guidebooks

The evolution of travel writing has been divided into three distinct stages: the pre-mass media era, when it served as the primary source of cultural information; the mass media era, when it democratized travel knowledge through the internet; and the post-mass media era, when it made immediate, interactive sharing possible through social media. As a result of this development, travel narratives have shifted from the cultural bias of travelers' journeys to widely accessible guides, and eventually, to dynamic, digitally driven experiences that combine virtual and physical travel. In this social media era, Travel writing in conventional media has slowly drifted away. With everything online and constantly updated, a printed book can feel somewhat outdated, and the long-form, descriptive narratives that once defined travel writing are now replaced by bite-sized blog posts and social media updates.

The emergence of travel influencers on social media sites such as Instagram represents a fundamental shift in how people consume travel information, thus directly challenging the relevance of traditional guidebooks. Lonely Planet was once the world's most famous travel guidebook. However, its significance has decreased over time. While the website remains active, the physical copy is often regarded as outdated, particularly in this era of social media.

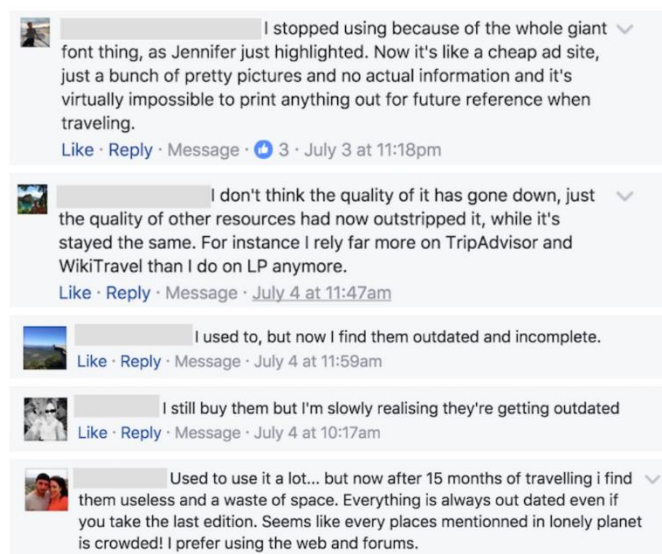


Figure 3.23 Users' Complaints of Lonely Planet Being Outdated

(Source: <https://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/lonely-planet>)

Unlike Lonely Planet, the website World Packers highlights the gap between typical tourism and authentic experiences, offering access to unique cultural exchanges and volunteer opportunities beyond standard tourist routes. The immediacy, customizability, and visual appeal of social media pose a significant challenge to the pre-existing authority of travel guidebooks, potentially accelerating their decline in the age of digital technology.

People's methods of gathering travel information have evolved significantly. Instead of relying on guidebooks or travel stories, many people are increasingly turning to online reviews, travel blogs, and social media for advice and inspiration. The downside is that people who have been writing travel books as a career for so long cannot rely on travel writing books as their only source of income because of the decrease of interest in physical travel writing books, especially in Indonesia, by the time they adapt with the new form of travel writing in social media era, everything will be shifted due to the rapid technology change.

While digital media has become the dominant force in travel communication, traditional forms of travel writing, such as magazines, continue to hold a unique place. Even as physical travel writing books may have seen a decline, travel magazines and in-flight publications remain consistent. Several Indonesian airlines still publish in-flight magazines to accompany passengers on their flights. One of the examples is LIONMAG by Lion Air.

LIONAIRGROUP

The Lion Air Group In-Flight Magazine

August - September 2025



Figure 3.24 The Lion Air Group In-Flight Magazine

(source: <https://lionmag.id/magazine/type/lionairgroup>)



Figure 3.25 Content in the Lion Air Group In-Flight Magazine

Even with the rise of digital media, and physical travel books and magazines are not the main source of travel information anymore, LIONMAG by Lion Air proves that in-flight magazines still hold a unique position in travel communication. The

content is strategically curated, including a mix of advertisements, brochures, travel writing, and pictures that captivate passengers during their flight.

Instagram, as a social media platform, acts as an excellent medium for people to share digital travel journeys beyond textual narratives. Jenkins (2017) stated that narratives constructed in digital storytelling are shared through multimedia elements, such as text, images, audio, and video, to create engaging stories that can transcend traditional narrative forms. With a focus on digital storytelling, Instagram addresses the contemporary traveler's desire for instant inspiration and compelling experiences that traditional guidebooks cannot provide. Moreover, social media's interactive nature promotes direct engagement with travel experts and communities, offering personalized tips and a sense of membership. This direct communication allows travelers to fulfill their individual needs in real-time, unlike when they are reliant on guidebooks. In the end, conventional guidebooks had to step down as the first choice for travelers to find travel-related information.

2. The Five Parameters of Media Engagement

Based on Dahlgren and Hill (2020), here is the analysis of five parameters of media engagement from the chosen travel influencers:

i. Media contexts

Travel influencers use various media formats to create engaging content. The type of content these travel influencers post is not just focused on photos of destinations; they provide travel tips, behind-the-scenes vlogs, and sponsored posts. These diverse content types cater to different audience interests, from visual inspiration to practical trip planning.

ii. Motivations

The motivations driving travel influencers' content creation are both personal and professional. The main personal motivation is the desire to build a personal brand and share a genuine passion for travel. On a professional level, a primary goal is to monetize their platform through various means, including brand partnerships and affiliate marketing.

iii. Modalities

Travel influencers use different media elements to enhance the sensory experience of their content. For example, they use music in Instagram posts to evoke a specific mood, such as using an upbeat track to convey adventure or a calm melody to create a sense of tranquility. To get the most engagement, influencers utilize trending audio for their content to make it easier to get a lot of views. Besides that, influencers often use voiceovers on their videos to give a personal touch and keep the storytelling element.

iv. Intensities

Engagement intensity can be measured through metrics such as likes, views, comments, shares, and participation in polls, which is the surface-level understanding of the audience interaction. On the other hand, a deeper understanding of engagement comes from emotional intensities, such as comments with emotional tone and the use of reaction emojis. These insights show the audience's emotional and personal connection to the content.

v. Consequence

The consequences of media engagement are significant for both influencers and their followers. For the influencers, a successful media engagement leads to an increase in followers, brand deals, and building a strong community, and the ability to influence travel decisions. For the followers, the consequences are equally valuable. The audience will get valuable travel advice, shaping perceptions on potential travel destinations, and a sense of community with fellow travelers.

3. How Travel Influencers Redefine the Idea of Travel

In the era of social media, the concept of “writing” has expanded to include a much wider range of multifaceted storytelling. The term "writing" is no longer limited to journalists or academics. The internet and social media have made travel writing more accessible and personal. Travel stories can be in the form of short videos, a series of Instagram photos with captions, or a personal blog entry. Travel influencers, bloggers, and regular social media users now provide the majority of

travel content in today's era. The emphasis has shifted from representing the country to sharing individual, personal experiences. This new form of writing with visual-heavy and auditory elements creates an immersive experience that was not possible to achieve with printed journalism a few years back.

Since the internet has become the main source of information, many tourists who have social media accounts regularly use their platforms to share visually engaging content about their travels. The rise of social media has played a huge role in the revolution of the travel writing industry. Travel influencers are not sticking to the traditional travel writing approach; they create this new meaning that combines visually appealing content, community building, and monetization, turning travel into a marketable experience that influences audience decisions.

The findings indicate that travel in the context of social media undergoes a complex and multifaceted redefinition of travel beyond the traditional idea that focuses mainly on the destination. For instance, Nomada Travel makes use of the platform to share knowledge and promote skill development, with a focus on the process of travel writing. This strategy fosters community building and enables followers to pursue careers as storytellers by highlighting the educational value of travel. It demonstrates the need for genuine and knowledgeable travel experiences while also proving that travel writing is a viable career path.

Focusing on the aesthetic presentation of destinations and practical travel tips, accounts such as @bydanawang, @jess_roams, and @aakanksha.monga provide travel as a curated visual experience. Their self-produced videos, breathtaking photos, and detailed captions attract the audience seeking both inspiration and a helpful guide. This strategy outlines how influencers construct people's perceptions of travel, whereby audience engagement is increased by visually appealing content and genuine personal experiences. The strategy could be marginally different from @lavinliddy's, which is founded on visual storytelling through short films in a cinematic style, where more focus is given to visual immersion than to the written

description. The visual narrative is supported by the minimalist captions that invite viewers to engage with the content at a higher, interpretive level.

Using a variety of personal accounts, as well as organization or community accounts, such as @travelcreatorceo, highlights business-centered travel content, redefining travel as a business opportunity. This account empowers individuals to make money off their travel experiences through templates and tutorials, highlighting the entrepreneurial aspect of modern travel. Social media application in the construction of specialized travel communities is highlighted by accounts such as @nekatpergisolo and @nekatcommunity, which focus on creating communities around similar travel interests, especially within particular demographics. Lastly, communities such as World Packers extend the idea of travel to include volunteering and cross-cultural exchange, allowing individuals to develop close relationships with their communities. Their platform goes beyond the constraints of conventional tourism by emphasizing immersive experiences and personal development.

Despite having similar visuals to travel influencers, they have different purposes in this role. In particular, Instagram travel influencers have transformed travel by taking on various roles. They foster cultural exchange while educating, creating visual experiences, establishing businesses, and building communities. This elevates travel from straightforward destination visits into an active, captivating environment fueled by the business community and information.

However, the practice of travel writing, like what these travel influencers do, has its downsides alongside the good. The current form of travel writing through social media has created an easier and more interesting way of sharing travel information. But there might be some problems with how the negative part of being a social media influencer who relies heavily on social media. Some of these issues include the pressure to constantly create content. Some travel influencers might feel pressured to share Instagram-worthy content to post on social media every time

they visit a travel destination. This might lead to an inauthentic travel experience because they focus.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher will conclude and explain the limitations of this research titled: Travel Influencers and The Redefinition of Travel Writing on Social Media. In addition, the researcher also provides suggestions that can be used as a reference for future research.

A. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions above, it can be concluded that travel writing has evolved in this social media era and is different from the traditional form. The activity of travel influencers on social media has significantly redefined the essence of travel. The researcher found that the presence of travel influencers blurs the line between travel writers and internet celebrities. With travel writing emphasizing direct, personalized experiences shared in real time and using a visual-centered approach, such as images and short videos, travel influencers establish a strong connection with their audiences, contrasting with the long, text-heavy style of traditional travel writing. As highlighted by the ten travel-related social media accounts mentioned above, the emergence of social media influencers has introduced a new way of sharing information, characterized by speed, wide reach, and deep engagement. The rise of the travel influencer industry on social media has enabled anyone with a digital device to share stories, which has simultaneously broadened the range of perspectives influencing travel decisions and the landscape of travel writing overall.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok allowed direct engagement and community building, which at the same time allowed travel influencers and their audiences to develop a more dynamic connection and evoke direct influence over travel preferences and decision-making. In certain cases, this

also resulted in the emergence of a fresh online business that may eventually turn a profit.

Travel influencers, especially on Instagram, have revolutionized travel writing by merging visuals, community, and monetization. Revolutionary, in this context, is how the practice of travel writing has changed into different forms and purposes, not merely just in a form of text-heavy content in magazines or books. Travel writing in a social media context is a multipurpose form of travel writing; it can be utilized for something beyond just travel stories. Travel influencers foresee the business opportunity with sharing travel content on social media and have created a new job opportunity for people who love travelling and content making.

Travel influencers have altered travel into marketable experiences that directly influence followers, unlike traditional travel writing, which often lacks a direct connection to the reader. Consequently, the meaning of travel, as portrayed by these digital travel influencers, extends beyond mere travel destination to encompass personal lifestyles, skill development, and even entrepreneurial ventures, highlighting the stories, communities, and business opportunities that now intertwine with geographical exploration.

With the rapid changes of digital technology, especially social media, the practice of travel writing on social media that travel influencers did might go through several changes throughout the year. Social media platforms have undergone significant changes in the last few years due to the rapid growth of technology. And this will impact travel influencers who relied a lot on the use of social media. In a few years ahead, especially with the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), certain social media features and posts will not be as relevant as today. The researcher personally argues that the practice of travel influencers in today's social media era will be very different in the next 5-10 years. This prediction can vary depending on how each travel influencers react to the change and how they take that opportunity to keep creating a new way of travel writing, so as not to lose their relevance. The future of

travel writing is influenced by how travel writing practitioners, or in this case, travel influencers, can create travel writing content with the ever-changing technology in the years ahead.

B. Research Limitations

This research has several limitations, including the following:

a. The number of social media accounts

The researcher focuses solely on Instagram as the chosen social media platform. The platform was used to identify as many travel content makers as possible. However, due to limitations in covering all accounts from various regions and backgrounds, the results may not fully represent the community as a whole. Future research should encompass a broader range of travel accounts on social media platforms beyond Instagram to ensure a more comprehensive and representative analysis.

b. The evolution of technology

The advancement of technology may change dramatically over time. As one of the most popular social media platforms, Instagram may change significantly over time. As a result, the findings of this study may be less relevant in future eras of communication media.

C. Recommendations for Future Research

To further understand the changing environment of travel in the digital era, future research should expand beyond Instagram to various social media platforms, capturing the multifaceted ways travel is portrayed and consumed across multiple online platforms. TikTok has been a rising social media platform in the past few years. Future research can analyze the practice of travel writing that is shared on TikTok and find how it differs from other social media platforms.

Moreover, expanding the geographical reach to encompass a broader range of global perspectives will lead to a deeper understanding of cultural differences in travel writings. To gain a more comprehensive experience, future research could

integrate the findings of this study with perspectives from fields beyond communication, such as economics, sociology, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary approach will enable a comprehensive examination of the social and economic implications of social media's impact on travel practices and attitudes.

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Instagram @jess_roams. https://www.instagram.com/jess_roams
Instagram @thepaktrekker. <https://www.instagram.com/thepaktrekker>
Instagram @livinliddy. <https://www.instagram.com/livinliddy>
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Instagram @nekatpergisolo <https://www.instagram.com/nekatpergisolo>
Instagram @travelcreatorceo. <https://www.instagram.com/travelcreatorceo>