

INFLUENCERS WITH LITTLE INFLUENCE ON TRAVEL DECISIONS



Tourism researcher Professor Pietro Beritelli from the University of St. Gallen has conducted extensive research to determine factors influencing our travel decisions. One of his key findings is that the stunning images we see on social media from advertisements and influencers have less impact than we might assume.

The study asked people about their vacation choices and how they came to travel to a particular place. Their answers could broadly be categorized into three groups.

The first group is related to relationships between people. **For instance, visiting friends or relatives, being invited to a wedding, or traveling with others who made the decision.** Usually, a consensus has to be found, and family, friends, or work environment limit individual decisions.

The second group includes returning to a place that has already been visited. This could be where someone has lived, studied, worked, or simply enjoyed a place during a previous visit. Sometimes, people prefer to stay at the same hotel as before because they have become friends with the hosts. Additionally, someone who has already been there may suggest a travel destination.

The third group is based on availability and affordability. When people have no idea where to go, they often look for travel offers at a reasonable price in an interchangeable country. This helps them make an initial decision about their travel plans.

Tourism advertising often portrays travel as a source of inspiration and dreams. However, this is not always the case. People usually make simple and mundane travel decisions when choosing their destinations. They don't usually admit this, but it is the truth.

Social media influencers have less influence on travel decisions than people may think. Most people mentioned friends and family members rather than social media when asked where they received travel tips from. Although social media may provide quicker access to information, word-of-mouth advertising from people you know is still the most effective.

People often cannot recall specific advertising campaigns that influenced their travel decisions. Instead, they might have drawn inspiration from a person they know who has already visited the location. This sends a stronger message than any advertisement ever could.

If people were to reflect on how they made their travel decisions, they would often find that their choices fall into one of the three categories described above.

The study included 256 interviews with a diverse group of individuals. From their experiences and perspectives, people have certain basic needs when traveling. Humans have an innate desire to explore new places and expand other horizons. In the past, people worked outdoors, migrated, hunted, or worked in fields. Many of us work in offices today, but this goes against our nature. We still yearn to discover new things, so we travel.

Traveling can be an exciting but challenging experience. It involves solving problems such as

transportation, accommodation, and food. **While transport companies, hotels, restaurants, and tour operators can offer packaged solutions, these problems must be addressed.**

However, traveling can also bring about beautiful moments outside of our everyday lives. These moments can be particularly appreciated because they take place in a different environment, on a new stage.

Although it's commonly assumed that people who travel more are happier, a happiness researcher once concluded that it's not the case. According to the researcher, people who meet others while traveling and share their experiences with them are happier.

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