

The Role of Artificial Influencers in Tourism Marketing

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Abstract

Influencer marketing appears to be gaining popularity nowadays. Especially in the tourism industry influencers are widely used and there is great potential. Virtual influencers are a relatively new and still unknown part of influencer marketing. As little research has been done in the comparison of real and virtual influencers, this thesis will examine this problem. The focus is on tourism as influencer marketing is commonly used in the tourism industry with the tendency to further increase. This paper focuses on the differences between real and virtual influencers and if virtual influencers have the same effect on consumers as real influencers in the future of tourism marketing. An experiment has been conducted with 104 valid results, and participants were randomly allocated to either the real or virtual influencer to get a result with as little bias as possible. A manipulation check was included and could be supported. However, the survey did not provide conclusive results for some participants which, therefore, have been excluded from the analysis, and only 96 results were used in the analysis. The empirical part firstly focuses on the difference between real and virtual influencers in terms of booking intention, trustworthiness, usefulness, and credibility. Evidence was found to support the hypothesis which is comparing the effects of the mentioned variables with virtual and real influencers. Furthermore, in the second part of the research, the focus is drawn toward different variables such as trustfulness, curiosity, and usefulness in terms of influencer marketing to examine if they have a significant effect on booking intention. The results are promising, and it opens doors for further research.