INFLUENCER MARKETING IN TOURISM: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

MARKETING DE INFLUENCERS EN EL TURISMO: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA DE LITERATURA

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the literature that has studied the intervention of the influencer in tourist decision-making. Through a systematic review and content analysis of the scientific articles located in the databases Science Direct, Web of Science, Springer, Redalyc, Dialnet, Scielo, and Emerald, both open and restricted access, in English and Spanish. Considering the first article related to the topic in the year 2003 to cover the first half of the year 2022. The results show the concepts, theoretical foundations, and methodological approaches that have been developed in related research, as well as the present and future trends in the literature that has dealt with the influencer phenomenon in tourism. Each of the elements, distinguished as indispensable for the performance of influencer marketing in practice, is identified and explained. The main findings are discussed and a knowledge base is offered for researchers who wish to study the influencer phenomenon in more depth, which is considered useful for the design of tourism marketing strategies in organizations. Finally, the gaps in knowledge are presented, as well as the limitations detected in the research.

Keywords: influencer, influencer marketing, destination marketing, tourism marketing, travel decision-making, persuasion, social media influencer, tourism

influencer, travel influencer.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo principal analizar la literatura que ha estudiado la intervención del *influencer* en la toma de decisiones del turista. Mediante una revisión sistemática y un análisis de contenido de los artículos científicos localizados en las bases de datos *Science Direct, Web of Science, Springer, Redalyc, Dialnet, Scielo y Emerald*, tanto de acceso abierto como restringido, en idiomas inglés y español. Considerando el primer artículo relacionado con la temática localizado en el año 2003 hasta abarcar la primera mitad del año 2022. Los resultados muestran los conceptos, fundamentos teóricos y enfoques metodológicos que se han desarrollado en las investigaciones relacionadas, así como las tendencias presentes y futuras de la literatura que han tratado el fenómeno del *influencer* en el turismo. Se identifican y explican cada uno de los elementos, distinguidos como indispensables para el desempeño del marketing de *influencers* en la práctica. Se discuten los principales hallazgos y, se ofrece una base de cocimientos para los investigadores que deseen profundizar en el estudio del fenómeno *influencer* que se considera de utilidad para el diseño de estrategias de marketing turístico en las organizaciones. Finalmente se exponen los vacíos de conocimiento, así como las limitaciones detectadas en la investigación.

Palabras clave: *influencer*, marketing de *influencers*, marketing de destinos, marketing turístico, decisión de viaje, persuasión, influenciador de redes sociales, *influencer* de turismo, *influencer* de viajes.

MARKETING DE INFLUENCERS NO TURISMO: UMA REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA DA LITERATURA

RESUMO

O principal objetivo deste artigo é analisar a literatura que tem estudado a intervenção do influenciador na tomada de decisão turística. Por meio de revisão sistemática e análise de conteúdo dos artigos científicos localizados nas bases de dados Science Direct, Web of Science, Springer, Redalyc, Dialnet, Scielo e Emerald, tanto de acesso aberto quanto restrito, nos idiomas inglês e espanhol. Considerando o primeiro artigo relacionado ao tema localizado no ano de 2003 até abranger o primeiro semestre do ano de 2022. Os resultados mostram os conceitos, fundamentos teóricos e abordagens metodológicas que foram desenvolvidos em pesquisas relacionadas, bem como as tendências atuais e futuras da literatura que tem tratado do fenômeno influencer no turismo. Cada um dos elementos, distinguidos como essenciais para o desempenho do marketing de influenciadores na prática, são identificados e explicados. Os principais achados são discutidos e uma base de conhecimento é oferecida para pesquisadores que desejam aprofundar o estudo do fenômeno influenciador que é considerado útil para o desenho de estratégias de marketing turístico nas organizações. Por fim, são expostas as lacunas do conhecimento, bem como as limitações detectadas na pesquisa.

Palavras chave: *influencer*, marketing de *influencers*, marketing de destino,

marketing de turismo, decisão de viagem, persuasão, influenciador de mídia social, influenciador de turismo, influenciador de viagens.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study of tourism from the academic perspective has been little addressed, Ballantyne et al. (2009) state that it is a recent phenomenon that in the last decades has experienced rapid changes in the field of research, being a topic of great relevance because, as indicated by Arango et al. (2021) tourism represents one of the fundamental sectors on which the economic growth of countries is based.

With the increased competitiveness faced by organizations today, they face an increasingly greater challenge in their role as providers of tourism services, which conditions them to know tourists (demand) better. As the latter represents an important component for the development of tourism, the scientific literature proposes that the study of tourist behavior is substantial to understanding the factors that determine their decision-making when traveling, since it has become a prevalent issue in terms of developing effective marketing strategies that contribute to the satisfaction of their needs.

In this sense, some researchers emphasize the importance of knowing what determines the tourist's decision to travel. For example, Marreiro et al. (2014) state that studies focused on understanding and influencing the consumer's decision are increasingly important in the face of high global competition, i.e. it is a sine qua non condition for the full development of market strategies suitable for business success.

Researchers such as Le (2017), Azazi and Shaed (2020), and Stylos (2020) agree on the relevance of conducting more studies that analyze the thematic, methodological, and sectorial trends of the different factors involved in tourists' travel decision-making. Le (2017) for example, argues that the intense competition between traditional and emerging tourism destinations forces tourism marketers to improve their knowledge of the tourist decision-making process. Wattanacharoensil and La-ornual (2019) add that tourists do not always make rational decisions due to the influence of behavioral factors, such as dispositions and emotions, as the prevalence and influence of cognitive biases at different stages of the trip, pre-trip, on-site, and post-trip, have been identified as major underlying causes of travel decisions.

For his part, Stylos (2020) considers that technological advances play a structural role in the tourist's decision-making processes. Furthermore, Gómez (2018) adds that it is evident how social networks have transformed communication habits in society, allowing the construction of communicational bridges so that people who live in the digital community, through the content they generate, become prescribers, influencing their audience. This is how to broaden the vision of tourists and homologate their opinions in a global dialogue that influences their travel decisions.

This is how the study of this phenomenon becomes relevant, and the importance of deepening through research the implications of the integration of influencers to the

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promotion strategies of tourist destinations is highlighted.

Therefore, a review of scientific articles concentrated in the databases Science Direct, Web of Science, Springer, Redalyc, Dialnet, Scielo, and Emerald was carried out due to their scientific, social, and humanistic content, where scientific articles of both open and restricted access, and written in both English and Spanish, were contemplated. Considering the first article on the studied subject published in 2003 and up to the present, the first half of 2022. This is to have a better understanding of the progress of research over time and to know which have been its orientations.

2. OBJECTIVES

Given the proclivity towards the figure of the influencer as part of the communication strategies of tourist destinations, the interest and objective of this study is born, which is to analyze the current state of research works that have addressed this figure and how it affects the decision-making of tourists to visit a destination. Additionally, the proliferation of the Internet and the omnipresence and accessibility of social networks have exponentially increased the appeal of influencers (Appel et al., 2020). Their advantages are very visible in aspects of investment and segmentation, supporting the increasingly specific identification of the market.

Regarding the structure of this study, it is reported that the first section expresses the conceptual framework around persuasion and travel decision. The second section explains the methodology used for the analysis of the literature found. The third section presents the analysis of the scientific articles identified, as well as the main findings of the review. The last section presents the conclusions and future lines of research.

3. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

First, an approach to the different perspectives of persuasion is made and the influencer's persuasion is linked to the communicative process in the frame of reference of tourism marketing. Subsequently, the different approaches to the travel decision construct are explained to understand the relevance of its approach in tourism studies, and finally, the conceptualization of influencer and influencer marketing is made.

3.1. Persuasion

According to Aristotle, three causes make persuasive speakers: reasonableness as an intellectual virtue, moral virtue, and benevolence. The first, according to Fonseca and Prieto (2010), is empowered by practical reason, it implies for a leader to have a great capacity to do things or to fulfill their responsibilities. The second, moral virtue, is required of speakers in the same way; and benevolence, translated into the respect that the speaker must show to the audience. The individual who has all these virtues will consequently be a persuasive speaker for the audience, since the credibility of the speaker would be high and, therefore, their speech would be more reliable for the listeners, together with the art of controlling the thought and behavior of the audience.

The most important thing in persuading is not believing that the receiver approves of the speaker's arguments, but that the audience perceives the emotional state in question as true (Cooper, 1993, cited in Oksenberg, 1996). For his part, de Garcillán (2015) materializes the concept as a tool, which involves persuasion techniques that are divided into rational and emotional. Some rational techniques would be argumentation, logic, rhetoric, scientific method, and evidence. Some emotional techniques would be advertising, faith, imagination, propaganda, and seduction.

Finally, persuasion conceived as a process by Moya (1999) implies a set of stages, in which there are a series of key elements that guide the effectiveness of a persuasive message; that is, it is fundamentally about the effect produced in the receiver by four key elements: a) the source (who is the sender of the message: its experience, sincerity, attractiveness, similarity to the receiver, power); b) the content of the message (quality of the arguments, promised incentives, organization, clarity, whether it emphasizes rational or emotional aspects); c) the communicative channel (e.g., visual or auditory, direct or indirect); and d) the effect.

By consensus, persuasion, understood as a process, tool, or art, aims to modify certain conceptions of an individual regarding a particular topic, through the transmission of a message correctly structured and transferred to the audience that receives it. In such a way that the modification of such conceptions produces visible implications in reality itself through the actions of the persuaded individuals.

Now, transferring the rhetoric of which Aristotle speaks to the current reality, Cabezuelo and Gonzáles (2014) believe that it is possible to intertwine it to our communicative present mediated by the emergence of social networks, being possible to recover the parameters that return the deep and critical thinking in favor of digital communication, but more human. Therefore, these authors suggest considering the categories that, according to Aristotle, should be sought in every speech to persuade, these are: the ethos that resides in the behavior and authority of the speaker; the logos, when convinced by the speech itself; and the pathos, which persuades by the emotions it arouses in the audience. According to the authors, these parameters, together with the resources offered by emerging technologies, make up the persuasive force that characterizes social networks.

Persuasion as a strategy has been used in organizations for several decades to convince the masses to think, give their opinion, vote, or act deliberately in the face of different group or individual needs. Therefore, the activity of the influencer is juxtaposed with the persuasive act, which according to their interests are transferred to prevailing behaviors in their audiences through the adoption of social dynamics or the acquisition of a tangible or intangible good of interest to the influencer, an organization, or various interest groups that promote the influencer in their ability to persuade.

3.2. Travel decision

The travel decision is a process that has been conceptualized by different authors from different perspectives; according to Jeng and Fesenmaier (2002), the travel decision

reflects a variety of temporal, dynamic, successive, and multi-stage contingent processes. Moreover, traditional models of decision and choice often equate travel behavior with the choice of a destination. For Lian and Yu (2019) travel decision-making is a complex, multi-layered process in which external and internal factors influence decisions about how often, for how long, and where someone will travel.

Among the external factors, Crespo and Soria (2019) explain that they include: culture, as everything learned and shared by the members of a community that shapes the way of understanding a product; social stratification, which according to Kotler et al. (2000) refers to the hierarchically ordered divisions of society whose members share similar values, interests, and behaviors; reference groups, which according to (Serra, 2016, cited in Crespo and Soria, 2019), have a direct or indirect influence on the attitudes and behaviors of the individual; family, as a socializing agent and people with whom behavioral patterns are shared; role and status, which entails the set of activities that a person is expected to carry out in relation to the people around them.

While within the internal factors (Serra, 2016, cited in Crespo and Soria, 2019), they allude to: attitudes and beliefs, which are the learned predispositions to consistently respond favorably or unfavorably to certain goods or services; motivation, which is the activation of a solution strategy in the face of the unpleasant state of feeling lacking; consumer perception, which Serra (2016) explains as the exposure to information, the attention given, the understanding and interpretation of the message, and the memory retention of information; personality and lifestyle, understood by Kotler et al. (2000) as the psychological and distinctive characteristics that make a person respond to their environment in a constant and lasting way; experience and learning, which Rivera et al. (2013), interpret as the experiences lived by the consumer, which affect their innate way of responding to marketing stimuli, and finally, economic and demographic factors, which determine their consumption capacity.

On the other hand, the travel decision as mentioned by Karl et al. (2021) is related to a future event in which people expect to have a positive emotional experience. However, since tourists cannot try the vacation before buying it, they are likely to base their decisions on mental approximations of the future vacation.

Tourist motivation, trip constraints, and the negotiation of such constraints are important components of decision-making. However, tourism studies tend to examine them separately and do not explore the relationships among them or how they influence travel behavior (Xie and Ritchie, 2019).

To study this phenomenon, some researchers such as Pop et al. (2021) have used theories such as Customer Journey Theory to explain the impact of influences on tourists' travel decision-making. Bronner and de Hoog (2020), using the Theory of Reasoned Action, explained the gap between plans and actual behavior in tourists' travel decision-making. For their part, Shin et al. (2022) used the Extended Theory of Planned Behavior that demonstrates the impact of travel promotion, constraint, and attitudinal factors on the travel decision during and after the pandemic.

3.3. Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing (i.e., the strategic use of influencers on social networks to promote a company, brand, issue, or cause in exchange for remuneration) has clearly become a useful tool in the strategic communication of for-profit and non-profit organizations (Hudders et al., 2021).

Given the broad practical implications of this new strategic communication tool, Enke and Borchers (2019) define social media influencer marketing as: the intentional use of communication within the market sphere, managed by the organization, that includes social media activities, identified as strategically substantial to marketing objectives. For example, the sale and purchase of products, services, or resources. Furthermore, these authors attribute to public relations with influencers, the intentional use of communication managed by the organization within the socio-political sphere that includes activities strategically substantial for the legitimization of the activities of organizations in the fulfillment of objectives of a political nature.

Researchers agree on the importance of knowing the goals to be achieved with the intervention of the influencer in the communication strategies, knowing them will help prevent errors and minimize risks. They also stress the importance of knowing other factors such as the profile of each influencer, as well as the consumers to whom the message is intended to be communicated.

3.4. Influencer

The influencer, according to Rodriguez and Sixto (2021), arises from such a primary marketing concept as the identification of needs. The concept includes alternative terms such as "blogger", "YouTuber", "Instagrammer", and "influencer" (Backaler, 2018; Brown and Hayes, 2008; de Veirman et al., 2017).

Also referred to as social media influencers (SMI), they have forged a strong online identity by sharing their interests and opinions first on personal blogs, but with the proliferation of media, they have moved to social networks with the emergence of sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Hudders et al., 2021).

Influencers are social network users who have acquired online popularity, expressed by a significant number of followers, by creating engaging social media profiles. In this regard, Enke and Borchers (2019) argue that this is due to the strategic way in which they employ textual and visual storytelling of their personal lives and lifestyles, which manage to connect with their followers in digital spaces. Oneto et al. (2020) argue that this new opinion leader can influence a certain group to modify their opinions, benefiting from the communication potential attributed to them.

The exposition and concepts give rise to a clearer explanation of the elements found in the literature, interrelated and still little associated with tourism studies and their relationship with influencer marketing, which are presented in the following sections.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted through a literature review based on the criteria of the PRISMA statement, which incorporates several novel conceptual and methodological aspects related to the systematic reviews that have emerged in recent years (Urrútia and Bonfill, 2010). Therefore, four stages were considered for the review: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, which are briefly explained below.

4.1. Identification

Regarding the identification stage, a search was conducted for scientific articles on influencer marketing, found in the Science Direct, Web of Science, Springer, Redalyc, Dialnet, Scielo, and Emerald databases. The search words used were "influencer, social media influencer, influencer marketing, tourism influencer".

For this process, the period from 2003 to 2022 was considered because the first research works that addressed the phenomenon were included, so that an exposition of the evolutionary process of such research works could be made, finding a total of 4,834 documents related to the keywords.

4.2. Screening

In the screening stage, 1099 documents were eliminated because they were duplicates (contained simultaneously in several databases) and documents that did not belong to the scientific article category were excluded, omitting review articles, books, book chapters, conference proceedings, editorials, and other non-referenced publications. Moreover, articles written only in English and Spanish were considered, including research from Ibero-America and various parts of the world related to the field of Social Sciences and Humanities, reducing the search to 3,495 articles.
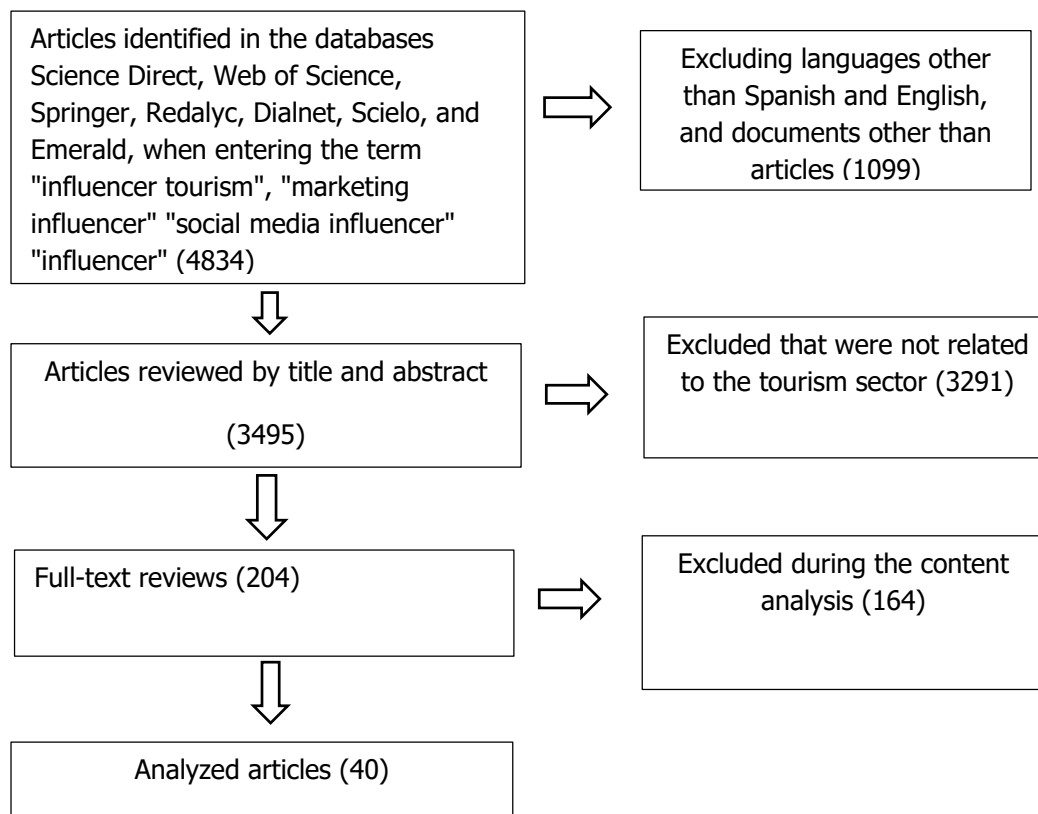
4.3. Eligibility

In the eligibility stage, only articles that included the subject matter analyzed in the title, abstract, and keywords were considered, thus excluding 3,291 articles not directly related to the tourism sector, leaving a total of 204 documents.

4.4. Inclusion

For the inclusion stage, selected articles were reviewed which, according to their titles, abstracts, and conclusions, were associated with the phenomenon under study. When the relevance was not clear, the entire document was read, so 164 articles were discarded because their research objectives did not coincide with the objective of the present research. Thus, the search, selection, and inclusion of materials were reduced to 40 articles used for the content analysis.

Figure 1 below shows the flow chart according to the stages of the PRISMA statement.

Figure 1. *PRISMA diagram*

Articles identified in the databases Science Direct, Web of Science, Springer, Redalyc, Dialnet, Scielo, and Emerald, when entering the term "influencer tourism", "marketing influencer" "social media influencer" "influencer" (4834)	Excluding languages other than Spanish and English, and documents other than articles (1099)
Articles reviewed by title and abstract (3495)	Excluded that were not related to the tourism sector (3291)
Full-text reviews (204)	Excluded during the content analysis (164)
Analyzed articles (40)	

Source: Own elaboration.

5. RESULTS

To have a broad view of how the phenomenon under study has been approached, it was decided to search regional and international databases, to know the scope of the topic in question. The number of articles found with the formula entered in the different databases shows the evolution of the study of the figure of the influencer in different disciplines, such as education, health, business, and, mainly, communication.

For this research, first, an analysis is made of the elements that researchers have found to be key for influencer marketing to be carried out in an integrated manner, to subsequently highlight its relevance in tourism practice, where the little participation that tourism studies have had in the practical understanding of the influencer in communication strategies and promotion of destinations is highlighted.

The researchers analyzed propose to understand the relationship between influencers -also called opinion leaders- and society, and to visualize them as those who achieve the integration or modification of habits, behaviors, or change of attitudes and, therefore, of ideas, actions that benefit organizations. Being a relatively new topic, not only in tourism studies but also in other disciplines, little is known about the theoretical and methodological implications that support the practical implementation of the influencer in communication strategies.

For a better understanding of the literature found, two sections are presented: the first presents the topics that stand out in the articles reviewed, those that have been the subject of study. The second section presents more specific aspects of the influencer phenomenon within the tourism sector, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: *Literature review*

Literature review

The influencer in the communication process	Organizations in communication strategies with influencers	Consumers
↓	↓	↓
The role of influencers in tourism	Destination Marketing Organizations	The tourist in influencer marketing

Source: Own elaboration.

5.1. The influencer in the communication process

The researchers consign different concepts of influencers, some of them expressly pointed out in the section on Conceptual Foundations. From which the definition of Oneto et al. (2020) can be taken up again, who state that this new opinion leader can influence a certain group to modify their opinions, benefiting from the communication potential attributed to them.

Therefore, it is important not to confuse the influencer with figures that, although they have popularity through the media, are not by themselves a key component for effective communication with their audiences, or at least not with the same results that an influencer has in terms of persuasion. One of the characteristics that distinguish an influencer from a celebrity is that the former usually know the topic they are talking about, as well as having experience in it, while a celebrity does not necessarily know or be knowledgeable about the topic they are communicating about, they are merely replicating a pre-established dialogue to a generalized audience. The concept of influencer could be interrelated with that of prescribers since it attributes to them the ability to connect with the consumer in an approachable and apparently spontaneous way.

Table 1 shows a series of characteristics identified by researchers in the figure of the influencer that contribute to the effective communication of their messages and the adoption of these messages by their audience.

Table 1. Influencer characteristics

Variable	Dimensions	Authors
Credibility	Experience, reliability, and attractiveness.	Breves *et al.* (2019); Fink *et al.* (2020); Reinikainen *et al.* (2020); Sakib *et al.* (2020)
Physical attractiveness	Public attention and interest in the influencer.	Lee & Watkins (2016); Sakib *et al.* (2020)
Familiarity	Way of being and acting that makes them pleasant to others.	Torres *et al.* (2019); Trivedi & Sama (2020)
Experience	Knowledge or skill derived from observation, participation, and experience of an event.	Hughes *et al.* (2019); Ki & Kim (2019); Trivedi & Sama (2020)
Reliability	Ability to perform efficiently and effectively, without making mistakes derived from acting and individual knowledge.	Schouten *et al.* (2020)
Popularity	Admission, approval, acceptance, or appreciation by the majority of people and the environment for a particular activity.	Hill *et al.* (2017); Ladhari *et al.* (2020)
Prestige	Good reputation, positive opinion towards the influencer, recognition, respect, and trust.	Ki and Kim (2019)
Power of influence	Ability to influence, determine, or alter the way of thinking or acting of their audience.	Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019)

Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, within the most common variables to recognize the practical potential of an influencer, the analyzed authors allude to measurable factors such as the number of followers, the number of "likes", the number of comments; the number of shared posts, or engagement, known as the level of interaction provoked by a brand or person in the communicative messages (Schouten et al., 2020; de Veirman et al., 2017; Grace and Ming 2018; Sundar, 2008; Kay et al., 2020).

The perceptions of the influencers themselves were examined by other authors to understand why they are willing to share their feelings, experiences, and opinions. Motivations such as self-expression, life documentation, and forum participation were revealed (Huang et al., 2007). Similarly, Ting et al. (2015) identified perceived usefulness, reputation, altruism, and trust as factors that positively affect these actors' intentions to share their lives. Furthermore, Al-Emadi and Ben (2020) highlighted the importance of credibility, story and content quality, platform appropriateness, real and

aspirational image homophily, and consistency for influencers to achieve fame and opinion leadership in the eyes of a given audience.

For their part, Enke and Borchers (2019) argue that each variable of those described above has led to the efficient performance of the figure of the influencer in social networks, however, they claim that it is mainly due to the establishment of the interest groups to be reached and the skill that over time they have acquired for the production, distribution, and integration of content in social networks.

Keller (2006), therefore, suggests that an adequate definition of influencers defines them as formal and not material objects; because in the case of strategic communication, it is not so much the figure of the influencer per se that is of interest, but their specific role in that communication process, an idea shared by Enke and Borchers (2019) who argue that the decision to understand influencers as a formal object carries two implications. First, the definition has to focus on their functions from a strategic communication perspective and not on ontological characteristics. Secondly, the definition cannot claim universal validity but is only admissible from the perspective of strategic communication and the goals intended to achieve.

5.2. Organizations in communication strategies with influencers

Organizations are the second fundamental element for influencer marketing to take place. The organization is responsible for identifying, selecting, managing, and monitoring the activities of the influencer in the communicative act. This, according to Sundermann and Raabe (2019) does not have to be of a certain type or line of business, since collaboration with such figures can be carried out by non-governmental organizations and state agencies, as well as the most common, private companies.

From the organizational perspective, the influencer is recognized with the ability to influence the stakeholders of the organization, by the scope they show in social networks (Enke and Borchers, 2019). Various organizations consider them effective intermediaries, especially because they provide access to interest groups that are difficult to reach with more forced methods such as advertising in traditional media. Therefore, cooperating with these figures has become an increasingly attractive option for organizations (Ye et al., 2021), that in the last decade have increased collaborations with these personalities, recognizing the power of the content they generate, while reducing investment in other usual communication alternatives.

Through influencers, organizations present products or brand-related content in the form of written or audiovisual contributions on social networks, instead of directly addressing their customers (Abidin, 2016; De Veirman et al., 2017; Petrescu et al., 2018).

The organization decides based on its communication and distribution strategies, which activities or functions the influencer should perform, which can be translated into one or more strategies, which according to Enke and Borchers (2019) were previously carried out by other actors with whom organizations also cooperate. For example: a) creative agencies, which develop and implement strategic communication messages; b) advertising media, which fulfill the task of distributing communication messages; c)

journalistic media, since the influencer does not create content exclusively for a brand or organization; d) opinion leaders, because they can influence other people in their immediate environment.

So instead of having to cooperate with several partners who all perform different and separate functions, organizations opt for just one partner who performs most or all of these activities: the influencer.

5.3. Consumers

The term consumer is widely used to refer to people who acquire and consume a product or service. Fischer and Espejo (2011) categorize them into 4 according to their participation in the purchase decision: the decision maker, the buyer, the evaluator, and the user. The decision-maker is the person who ultimately determines part or all of the purchase decision; whether to buy, what to buy, how, when, and where to buy it. The buyer is the person who actually makes the purchase or acquisition of the good. The evaluator is the one who gives an opinion of value regarding the purchase decision. The user, on the other hand, consumes or uses the product or service.

This depends on the product in question; in tourism services, it is common for the same person, the tourist, to meet the profile of the 4 interveners identified by Fischer and Espejo (2011). Therefore, by consensus, the authors affirm that persuasive strategies should be aimed primarily at the consumer (user) since they will be the one who accepts or rejects the product, as well as decide whether to purchase it again.

This is the third substantial element within the strategic communication framework of influencer marketing. The consumer is the receiver of the message, who can be a follower, but also a random user of the social media platform, the one who retrieves and processes the content of the influencers (Sundermann and Raabe, 2019). Such information processing occurs from the personal characteristics, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of each individual, and depending on these factors, they may respond differently to the same message (McGuire, 1985).

In the literature review, the most important consumer factors that motivate the appropriation of the persuasive message were found; these factors are both internal and external. Ye et al. (2021) for example, identified some reasons why people pay more interest to influencers, these are: affective exchange, search for information, entertainment, acceptance of an influencer's opinion, as well as the simple intention to interact. It also demonstrates that this leads to a social comparison trend that has significant effects on consumer behavior.

Social relationships are inherent to human beings, so the interaction between them and their surrounding environment is essential; this explains why people must belong to social circles, which have been substantially enriched by the media or virtual spaces (Hutt, 2012). This is how influencers and their followers can create a very close relationship, leading to parasocial relationships that create the illusion of a real, face-to-face relationship with a media actor (Horton and Wohl, 1956). Sharing daily information about their private life is one of the key factors that distinguish them from other public figures (de Lassus and Mercanti-Guerin, 2013; Jerslev, 2016).

Some other psychological factors that drive the persuasive act in the consumer are: inspiration, similarity, and enjoyment; attitude, values, appearance, desired identification (the desire to be or act like the influencer), and parasocial interaction (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Table 2 shows some variables identified in the analyzed literature, which have been studied to understand the influencer phenomenon and its intervention in consumer decision-making.

Table 2. *Consumer characteristics*

Variable	Authors
Parasocial interaction	Hu et al. (2020); Jin & Ryu (2020); Lee & Watkins (2016); Sokolova & Kefi (2020)
Self-congruence with the influencer	Kim & Kim (2020)
Inspiration	Ki et al. (2020)
Enjoyment	Ki et al. (2020); Magno (2017)
Sense of friendship	Kim & Kim (2020)
Homophily	Ki et al. (2020); Magno (2017); Schouten *et al.* (2020)
Identification of desires	Hu et al. (2020)
Influencer-fan bond	Folkvord et al. (2019)
Endorsee-product-brand congruence	Breves et al. (2019); Martínez-López et al. (2020); Torres et al. (2019)

Source: Own elaboration.

Some effects that organizations seek in consumer behavior are: purchase intention, sympathy, trust in the brand, attitude towards it, liking the brand, attitude towards the product, interest in the influencer and the product, commitment and loyalty to the brand and the influencer, intention to consume, recognition, and purchase persuasion (Vrontis et al., 2021). Each effect sought has its basis in the interests of the organization, the profile of the consumers to be reached, and even the product or service to be communicated.

Researchers suggest that in the attempt to achieve the aforementioned objectives, caution and wisdom should be exercised, to avoid blatant sponsorships that may harm the product and the brand, (Reijmersdal et al., 2016; Hudders et al., 2021). As in the performance of other communication strategies, the implementation of the influencer figure entails responsibilities that derive from the protection of the consumer as long as it avoids imposing a message to the audience that seems forced, artificial, and with

a main commercial appearance rather than of recommendation that, on the other hand, disregards the value of the brand it endorses.

5.4. The role of influencers in tourism

In tourism activities, influencers fulfill some very specific functions in the field; with their online publications, they create content about destinations, routes, tourism packages, services offered by tourism companies, and their own experiences.

They also share information about the cultural, historical, geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics of the destinations. Travel influencers not only inform about destination selection, but also about technical issues, such as travel formalities and equipment; they also explain little-known issues related to travel procedures, such as visa application, currency exchange operations, border crossing, and purchase of services (Asan, 2021).

Travel influencers' practices often attract followers' attention, self-discovery, community involvement, and information sharing (Gholamhosseinzadeh et al., 2021). Therefore, these travelers with a large number of followers are considered to be effective in the tourism planning and purchasing decisions of their followers. Some authors define them as travel influencers (TI), due to their ability to influence the decisions of future tourists (Hanifah, 2019; Kaur, 2018), to participate in tourism mobility (Asan, 2021).

Seçilmiş et al. (2021) argue that travel influencers intervene in two important factors of followers, cognitive response and trust, which in turn influence the intention to visit a destination. Other aspects such as experience and attractiveness are also determinants.

Based on the characteristics indicated for travel influencers, the accounts of those who specialize in tourism are diagnosed as having more potential than those that accumulate a high number of followers, as well as those of "micro-influencers" with a more delimited market niche. An example of this is the Spanish tourism companies that mainly use the profile of the specialized influencer (Rodríguez and Sixto, 2021).

5.5. Destination Marketing Organizations

These organizations can vary, as there are different stakeholders interested in promoting a destination; such is the case of Destination Managers of public agencies in charge of promoting the destination in the hope of attracting a greater number of tourists. There are also private organizations that offer specific services such as lodging, tours, food, or transportation that seek to exclusively promote a product and brand of the destination. Or there are those marketing agencies that, thanks to their experience in promotion, act as intermediaries between the organization and the future travelers for the search and assignment of the most suitable influencer for the objectives of the Destination Managers or private companies.

Due to current technological developments and new media that have spread to all walks of life, Asan (2021) suggests that travel influencers should be considered as new

actors of remarkable importance in the tourism sector. As mentioned ut supra, it is beneficial for the public and private sectors to consider contacting travel influencers (Asan, 2021). Moreover, they can be a supportive tool to help tourism destinations compete in an ever-changing market (Seçilmiş et al., 2021).

Travel influencers establish social links not only with their followers but also with travel communities, which contributes to the popularity of online and physical tourism social networks. It was shown that the use of influencer marketing increases the value of companies' social networks because it increases the number of social interactions and improves the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) or the Return On Investment (ROI) so that greater investment in hiring strategies of this type of marketing has a direct impact on the organization's income statement (Rodriguez and Sixto 2021).

The thematic specialization of the accounts and a high level of engagement are usually the two determining factors that organizations take into account when selecting influencers for their digital marketing campaigns. That is, they are not only based on having a large number of followers, but also on the engagement they demonstrate toward the brand (Rodriguez and Sixto, 2021). They can be an important reference for the promotion of new destinations, as well as tourism products, experiences, and activities.

Therefore, knowing influencers in the travel industry and inviting them to participate in their marketing efforts will contribute significantly to companies and brands (Asan, 2021). As this allows organizations to interact with their customers more credibly and directly (Backaler, 2018; Hays et al., 2013), than advertised by the media, travel agencies, or official tourism sites. Moreover, they can increase travel experience satisfaction, which would positively affect repurchase behavior, the latter being a key element for a long-term relationship and customer loyalty (Rebeka-Anna et al., 2021).

Another important highlight from the literature review is the authors' emphasis on the congruence that should exist between the consumer and the endorser and between the endorser and the brand. Rinka and Pratt (2018) state that, a higher degree of perceived congruence between influencer endorsers and destinations led to a more favorable attitude and a higher likelihood of visiting the destination.

In this context, the fact that influencer marketing will be increasingly used in destination promotion strategies, especially in the field of tourism in the future, requires tourism managers to take the necessary precautions and be prepared primarily to know and cater to the effects of influencers on different tourism services and activities (Asan, 2021; Seçilmiş et al., 2021).

5.6. Tourists in influencer marketing

Influencers' impacts on tourists are diverse; Asan (2021) classifies them into four categories: informative effects, motivational effects, effects as a role model, and community effects. These range from taking advantage of the content shared by the influencer on social networks as a source of information to considering them a role model for their followers, where their opinion of the destination or any product related to it is essential for making decisions regarding the trip.

Therefore, Rebeka-Anna et al. (2021) suggest that organizations in charge of carrying out destination tourism marketing use them to increase and stimulate the desire to travel, as it is clearly a means by which consumers seek information about their upcoming trip that is reliable to successfully influence tourists' decision-making about the destination.

In the context of medical tourism, for example, Mohammad et al., (2016) ensure that the quality and evaluation of the information provided, are vital to persuade and influence the decision-making process of the tourist patient. de Veirman et al. (2017), further state that to achieve persuasive communication it is necessary to take the personal criteria of the influencer beyond the impact of the message itself.

Benítez et al. (2018), for their part, add that because travelers are more informed thanks to social media, they no longer decide based on the advice of an agency or the organization itself, but have to be persuaded by how the tourism product is presented on the Internet.

Other relevant results found in the literature review highlight the congruence that should exist between the influencer and the brand they endorse, as well as the self-congruence that the follower and future tourist perceives of themselves with the influencer and the brand or destination. Some researchers have tried to discover at what point in the acquisition of a product or service the intervention of such a figure is more convenient to enhance their participation in the decision-making process. Rebeka-Anna et al. (2021) found that the direct or indirect effect of the influencer is in the phase before the purchase of the tourism product, that is, during the recognition of the need to travel and the search for alternatives that meet that need.

5.7. Other results

In terms of methodological approaches, the quantitative approach was the most representative with 53.8 percent, followed by 34.6 percent for the mixed approach, and finally 11.5 percent for qualitative research.

As for the theories addressed in influencer marketing, they have been mainly those related to communication, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Teorías para el estudio del marketing de influencers*

Theory	Authors
Theory of reasoned action	Kim *et al.* (2021)
Theory of social change	Vrontis *et al.* (2021)
Two-step communication theory	Guiñez-Cabrera *et al.* (2020)
Source credibility theory	Jang *et al.* (2021)
Persuasion knowledge model	Woodroof *et al.* (2020)

Social comparison theory	Mariani *et al.* (2021)
Attribution theory	Aw & Chuah (2021)
Customer trajectory theory	Rebeka-Anna *et al.* (2021)
Self-congruence theory	Rinka & Pratt (2018)
Stimulus-organism-response theory	Seçilmiş *et al.* (2021)

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, in the literature review, it is possible to identify the increase in publications on the topic addressed at the global level, and although the literature related to products such as food, health, and beauty has been very prolific, this is not the case with the literature related to tourism. Also, it is worth noting the low participation of scientific production from the Ibero-American region, since only 8 publications were found from Spain, 2 from Ibero-American studies in general, 1 from Venezuela, and 1 from Ecuador on influencer marketing in tourism.

6. DISCUSSION

The literature review allowed us to identify aspects that can serve as a guide for further research: This is the first literature review in the Spanish language that addresses the recent phenomenon of influencers. Although there are other recent reviews (Sundermann and Raabe, 2019; Ye et al., 2021; Hudders et al., 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021) covering up to 2021, few are the results of literature related to the tourism sector. Other papers that analyzed a specific sector could be identified; for example, de Veirman et al. (2019) analyzed case studies conducted on influencer marketing among children under 12 as well as its social and political implications. Krisam and Altendorfer (2021) focused on researching whether influencers can play an important role in health promotion by gathering current scientific evidence on the use of influencer marketing in health communication.

Thus, it was possible to make an updated assessment of what has been studied so far about this type of marketing and to deepen the evolution of the related literature in tourism studies.

As part of the future lines of research, it was detected that there are still knowledge gaps in theoretical aspects that allow analyzing the different consumer responses to persuasion attempts, as well as an analysis of the different influencer profiles. It is also necessary to identify which and why certain social networks are ad hoc for the promotion of destinations with influencers.

Some authors, such as Rebeka-Anna et al. (2021), assure that studies are needed that studies of more countries are needed to explore the similarities and differences between nationalities and consumption habits. Additionally, it would be relevant to explore the intervention of such influential figures in the decision-making process following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to find out their role in

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other emerging markets. Asan (2021), adds that it is important to explore the intervention of the influencer in the travel decisions of specific tourist markets.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The literature review broadens the perspective of what has been studied about influencer marketing in tourism; it can be seen how the practical implications of this phenomenon in tourism are increasingly greater.

The intentions of the literature analysis have been fulfilled, by gathering current information, as well as appreciating the evolution that the participation of the influencer figure has had in the tourism industry, first by performing an analysis of its introduction to marketing, to later land on the implications it has had in the tourism industry. The literature analysis also shows how these figures are gradually being integrated into the tourism sector to promote and position the image of destinations to act as a key prescriber for tourists, as a result of the obsolescence of other communication strategies that used to have a greater impact.

The results show weaknesses and opportunities that still exist in tourism studies to enhance this phenomenon in the sector. There is still a wide-open field for research related to the positive and negative effects that influencer participation can have on tourists' decision-making, mainly to understand and explain how, when, and what objectives are sought to be achieved with its implementation in destination marketing strategies.

Although the literature on influencer marketing is becoming more and more extensive, the epistemological foundation is scarce and therefore the theoretical foundations are also insufficient to be able to transfer the information obtained into practice to support communication strategies with these personalities, to minimize and avoid risks of damaging a brand or tourist destination.

In terms of methodology, it is suggested that more research be carried out with qualitative approaches that study semantic and semiotic aspects of the recent phenomenon, and mixed studies that analyze from both methodological perspectives the practical implications of influencer persuasion to complement the gaps that may result from the quantitative approach with the qualitative approach and vice versa.

Having demonstrated the potential of influencers in the promotion of destinations, it is suggested to researchers interested in the subject, to deepen the existing knowledge gaps, as well as to marketing managers to design tactical plans to improve the marketing strategies of destinations, to take advantage of the reach of digital social media and the impact generated by these new figures, prescribers of tourist destinations.

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