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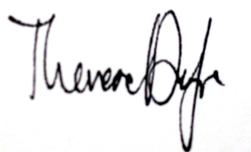
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# The Professionalisation of Touristic Instagramming

A practice study of travel influencers and their contribution to the creation and consumption of tourist images

by Therese Detje

Tourism Masters Thesis, Aalborg University  
Supervisor: Martin Trandberg Jensen  
Submitted: May 31, 2017



# **The Professionalisation of Touristic Instagramming**

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## **A B S T R A C T**

Hiring the services of an Instagram influencer is a new marketing initiative adopted by many brands across different industries. Influencers, or, *“people who build a large network of followers and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches”* are sought after by marketers to promote their brand to the influencer’s established audiences (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2016, p. 1; Berger & Milkman, 2012). The photo-sharing social media application Instagram is the preferred outlet for many influencers. This research paper looks into the practices of Instagram influencers who work in tourism.

These individuals are identified as the masters of touristic Instagramming. The objective of this study is to identify and understand the configuration of materials and activities involved in their practice of touristic Instagramming as travel influencers. In doing so, the research departs from existing literature that tends to

talk strategically, commercially, and motivationally about the role of social media in tourism. As a practice study, this research approaches the research topic in a novel way.

Although it is a non-representational study, representations of tourism created by Instagram influencers are still an important element of the discussion. The research investigates images and representations, but additionally emphasises how these images and representations are made. Insights into the practices of influencers are gained through qualitative methods including netnography, interviews, and participant observation. The participant observation was conducted during a week-long influencer trip with Australia's first professional Instagrammer, Lauren Bath (@laurenepbath).

The rich understandings of the practice gained present new, unique accounts of touristic Instagramming. Although the practices of influencers are more refined, strategic, and comprehensive than amateur Instagrammers, the insights still provide fascinating empirical material about touristic Instagramming more generally. This material is discussed in relation to existing theories on the tourist gaze, performativity, and identity management. The empirical data demonstrates how situated performances often contradicts the represented world of tourism. Instagramming is deceitful in that people select, edit and share images to create idealised versions of reality. Influencers solidify these existing idealised tourist images by implicitly exercising power in creating standards of how tourism photography should look. Their commercial and self-interested motivations to become professional influencers bring further friction to the bias towards posting these images.

Influencers have the power to share content to a large audience, yet most conform to the standard typology of images that are guaranteed to get more likes and attract new Instagram followers. The followers legitimise and assign power to influencers, and in doing so simultaneously control them. The motivations and ideals of influencers then also reflect those of tourists. Tourists are increasingly concerned with impression management and promoting an ideal identity through the holiday photographs they post online (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011). In doing so, classic representations of tourism are reinforced. The tourist gaze suggests that tourists seek the extraordinary in their tourism experience, yet a new, self-directed tourist gaze suggests that tourists are travelling differently to take photos that convey an idealised image of themselves (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

**Key words:** social media, tourist images, photo sharing, identity management, tourist gaze, Instagram, influencer marketing, practice studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

A new trend in tourism marketing is to hire the services of an ‘Instagram influencer’, a person who has an Instagram account with a substantial number of people following them. Influencers are regarded as trusted tastemakers based on the large network of followers they have, and usually specialise in one or more niches (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2016). Travel influencers live what is to some desirable lives by travelling around the world as their profession. Tourism boards, tour operators and hotels partner with these influencers and pay them to visit, provided they share photos of their experience on Instagram.

This research paper aims to understand the situated practices involved in touristic Instagramming as an influencer. By approaching the topic as a practice study, the material, everyday and situated happenings about Instagramming will be explored. Original insights have been gained through participant observation during an ‘influencer trip’ with Australia’s first professional Instagrammer, Lauren Bath. The relations and contradictions between lived experience and visual representations will thus be revealed.

These insights lead to new understandings about the creation of tourist images. Influencers actively produce and reproduce certain images of travelling, including aesthetic photos of pristine landscapes, luxurious spaces and ‘candid selfies’. While images of tourism have always been created, circulated, and reinforced through guide books, commercial destination photography, advertisements, magazines, and postcards, a technological social network medium like Instagram gives any one person the power to contribute to a user generated body of tourist images. Influential individuals in particular have the potential to create their own visual narratives of destinations, so the question is raised as to why they conform to reproduce existing, hegemonic representations of tourism.

This research contributes to theories of tourism and social media by elaborating upon contemporary notions of the tourist gaze. Tourists are increasingly concerned with impression management, and travel becomes an opportunity to take photos that promote certain ideals of the self (Lo, 2012; Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011). Influencers are defined as the masters of Instagramming and have refined the art of taking travel images for impression management. Studying their practices may thus reveal insights into motivations and discourses also shared by amateur Instagramming tourists.

## **PROBLEM FORMULATION**

The objective of this study is to identify and understand the configuration of materials and activities involved in the practice of touristic Instagramming as a travel influencer. It seeks to explore the relations between embodied experiences and representations of tourism in order to find new understandings of the tourist gaze and the creation of touristic images.

### **Research aims**

The research aims are to:

- Identify a typology of images created by influencers and uncover the interaction of materials, competences and meanings involved in the process of creating these images
- Investigate the ways in which Instagramming has been professionalised
- Explore how influencers exercise power in creating standards of tourism photography and the consequences it has on notions of the tourist gaze and touristic images.

## **MOTIVATIONS FOR THE STUDY**

This project has an exploratory purpose to investigate unexplored phenomena and identify patterns of meaning through rich description (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). It aims to originally combine existing theoretical concepts with empirical data collected in creative methods.

Dolnicar and Ring (2014) state that “*new concepts need to be defined and conceptualised as they emerge*” (p. 41). Instagram influencers have grown to become an empowered, admired, celebrity type of tourist. This thesis explores this new phenomenon and adds to the existing research on social media and tourism in new ways by seeking to uncover the behind the scenes, situated practices of Instagram influencers.

As a socially active female in my mid-twenties who likes to travel, it is unsurprising that I use Instagram. Instagram is a place where I can share experiences of my own life and travels, and also where I seek inspiration. Over the past few years I have encountered several accounts on Instagram where individuals like myself were constantly travelling, and apparently being paid to do so. I soon learnt these people were called *influencers*.

After an online search of ‘travel Instagram influencers’, I found a wealth of information in the form of articles, interviews and testimonial pieces. What surprised me was that no academic research on Instagram influencer marketing has been done in the field of tourism. Yet there are millions of people around the world who follow Instagrammers for travel inspiration and DMOs are spending big portions of their budget on partnerships with Instagrammers. This is a significant phenomenon in destination marketing and therefore merits academic attention.

The majority of studies relating to social media in tourism take a marketing or consumer approach. To depart from these trends, this research paper is a practice study that uses creative methodology to present unique empirical data and address theoretical concepts in new ways.

## **PROLOGUE: THE CASE OF INSTAGRAM AND INFLUENCER MARKETING**

### **The history of Instagram**

Instagram was initially released on October 6, 2010. It is a free online mobile photo-sharing application and site where users create profiles and share pictures and videos. Its distinctive features early on were the confined square dimensions and the use of filters that were applicable to photos. Now, users can choose square or rectangle shapes for photo or video, and choose to edit manually rather than apply filters. Geo-location tags, hashtags, and other accounts can all be attributed to posts. This adds users to larger networks who have used the same tags. It is designed primarily for mobile use, as the desktop browser version does not have an upload function. It is a social media networking site, yet has also extended its features for businesses. Switching to a business profile gives businesses additional analytics and the opportunity to promote their posts as ads that appear in the home feed of targeted users. The home feed is usually made up of recent posts from profiles you follow.

A user’s profile is predominantly a scrolling grid of their uploaded images, with their most recent uploads appearing first. Profiles can be made public or private, but all profiles show the number of followers and following. An explore tab, introduced mid-2012, allows you to search for people, tags, and places, and also has sophisticated recommendation algorithms which suggest accounts or posts that might interest you based on your online behaviour.

## **Users of Instagram**

Not two years after launch in April 2012, Instagram had over 100 million users. It was at this point that Facebook acquired Instagram for US\$1 billion. The following year, Facebook grew 3%, while Instagram grew by 23%. By May 2017, Instagram was available in 25 languages and has over 700 million users worldwide (Statista, 2017). 90% of Instagram users are below the age of 35 years (Pennsylvania State University, 2015). Gender statistics vary, with some studies claiming that Instagram is used almost equally between men (51%) and women (49%), and others saying it is skewed more towards women (Smith, 2013; Duggan, 2015).

## **The business of influencers**

The growing popularity of Instagram has seen brands and individuals find creative new ways to make money. Businesses are not only interested in promoting their brands through ads on Instagram, but also through influential accounts. People with a high number of followers on their Instagram account are sought out by brands to promote their products or services, creating a new kind of marketing and a professional class of Instagrammers. These people are called 'influencers'.

As they became more recognised, influencer agencies emerged (specialised agencies that connect influencers and brands). There is no official number of followers required to be an influencer, although some agencies classify an influencer as someone with over 3000 followers, and others will not accept anyone with less than 10,000 followers. It is said that micro-influencers (up to 10 thousand followers) and middle influencers (up to 250 thousand followers) are more effective than celebrities, as consumers tend to 'see through' celebrities (Minsker, 2017a).

## **Travel influencers**

Instagram influencers are paid according to subject matter, quality of content and audience size (Morrison, 2017). Micro-influencers will often promote the destination on Instagram just with free tickets and accommodation, while others will have their travel costs covered plus a base daily rate. Travel influencers are on average paid around USD\$205 per Instagram post (Morrison, 2017), while those with over 1 million followers can expect to earn \$3000-9000 per Instagram post (Harvey-Jenner, 2017). Long-term endorsements earn them even more, and travel influencers are now earning six-figure salaries (Harvey-Jenner, 2017). Influencers in other niches like modelling and fitness accounts generally earn more than those in the travel industry (Morrison, 2017).

In 2015, Wanaka (an alpine town in New Zealand) invited and hosted influencers to post about their adventures. This resulted in the fastest tourism growth in the country of a 14% increase, and Lake Wanaka Tourism stating that *“influencers provide an ‘incredible’ return on investment”* (National Geographic, 2017). Travel influencers are an evolved model of the travel photographer and writer. But influencers work in real-time, leaving a *“digital bread-crumbs trail that leads to a destination”* by posting updates, pictures, check-ins, and selfies — *“this isn't the stuff of lofty travel writing, but it's the way of the digital and mobile world, where the appetite for bite-sized bits of content to consume while scrolling is insatiable”* (Spector, 2016). The difference is that influencers are more instantaneous with posting content, and their personality becomes part of the appeal too. In this way, influencers are also an evolved model of the celebrity.

### **Ethical issues**

There are a number of automated services that Instagrammers can buy to gain followers. Users can buy followers (\$15 for 500 to \$160 for 5,000 followers), buy stock images especially for influencers (20 photos for \$400) or pay for ‘bots’ to like and comment on other people’s photos, in order to bring attention to their account (\$10 every 30 days) (Chafkin, 2016). These tactics make your profile look more popular, and even the ‘fake boost’ can turn into ‘genuine momentum’ (Chafkin, 2016). Some of these services are scrutinised, accounts have been shut down where terms of service by Instagram have been violated by cheating followers. Other regulations also emerge as influencer marketing becomes more mature. In March 2017, Australia joined the USA and UK in enforcing new transparency regulations that influencers must clearly label their sponsored posts. Most influencers add the hashtag #ad, #sp or #spon (for sponsored) (Purtill, 2017).

Another issue is that of representation. While these photos are inspirational and their lifestyles travelling the globe envy-inducing, the difference between Instagram and reality is quite different. Trolltunga, a cliff that juts out of a mountain in Norway more than 600 metres above a lake, is a popular destination for tourists to take photos for their Instagram. Image 1 portrays the kind of images tourists take on the cliff, versus Image 2 which shows another reality of the situation. *“Between 2009 and 2014, visitors to Trolltunga increased from 500 to 40,00 in what many consider a wave of social media-fueled tourism”* (Miller, 2017). It is criticised for setting up unrealistic expectations:

*“From cropping out the scores of selfie-sticks to filtering appearances beyond recognition, tricks of the trade used by travellers to ensure their trips look as enviable as possible only really mean one thing. You shouldn't choose your holiday on Instagram. You'll only end up disappointed.”*

Morris, 2017

It is these ‘tricks of the trade’ and their consequences that will be the focus of the study, as I explore the practice of Instagram influencing in the tourism niche.



*Image 1: An Instagram post showing travellers resting and admiring the view from the edge of Trolltunga*  
*instagram.com/tomashavel*



*Image 2: Tourists lining up and taking turns to pose for the camera*  
*2015 Photothek/Thomas Trutschel, via telegraph.co.uk*

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following section will introduce two theoretical landscapes. The first part reviews, connects, compares and critically discusses existing academic research related to social media in tourism, particularly in regards to online image sharing. Information communication technology (ICT) advancements have changed tourism for customers and suppliers, which has elevated social media to become a ‘mega trend’ in tourism and bring on a wave of literature uncovering its application in the industry (Minazzi, 2015; Leung, Law, Hoof & Buhalis, 2013).

Key theories that influence the analytical discussion of this research are those on photo-sharing and the idealisation of tourism images and identity impression management. Theories on influencers will also be introduced. In doing this theory review, it is found that research on social media often focuses either on social media use in the tourist experience or social media use by tourism organisations. This inspired a move away from these disciplines and frameworks in which to discuss social media in tourism. Rather, this research aims to take an ethnographic and humanistic approach by focusing on practices.

This elicits a second section, which covers the conceptual foundation of the study. Theories on non-representational studies, performative tourism, situated practices, and ontological politics are introduced. These conceptual theories help inform the data collection methods, just as the data we collect and represent influences the theories we draw from. This second section, then, is indicative of the reciprocal relationship between theoretical and methodological considerations. This dual theoretical framework highlights how this research contributes to existing theories of social media and tourism with an original, practical and non-representational approach.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social media in the tourism experience**

Tourists are increasingly using social media during the three stages of the touristic experience: pre-trip, during the trip, and post-trip (Minazzi, 2015; Wang, Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2014). This has been accelerated by the use of smartphones — mobile phones with internet access that can run downloaded

applications. Smartphones are predominantly used on holiday for communication, entertainment, facilitation and information search (Wang et al., 2014).

As a form of entertainment during downtime, and of communication to online networks, tourists will share different aspects of their holiday online (Wang et al., 2014; Minazzi, 2015). Experiences, thoughts, contacts and photos of destinations are shared on travel blogs and social network sites, as well as on review sites, apps, online forums, and podcasts (Munar, 2011; Munar, Gyimóthy & Ca, 2014). This can all be considered user generated content (UGC), which is the term used to describe the “*active and creative contributions of tourists on the web*” (Munar, 2011, p. 292). UGC leads other tourists to increasingly turn to web pages to research prices, suppliers, product features and general information (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015).

### **eWOM and online reviews**

Travel experiences are posted by people with altruistic motivations who want to share useful tips about their holiday experience and help others to make decisions (Minazzi, 2015; Kerr, Lewis & Burgess, 2012, Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Online reviews can be considered the internet-enhanced version of word-of-mouth (eWOM), and are influential on attitudes, purchase intentions and customer decision making as they contribute the overall reputation of an organisation (Minazzi, 2015; Mauri & Minazzi, 2013; Munar, 2011). Reviews and altruistic posts are more likely to be found on review sites and online forums, as they are intended for reviewing tourism products and services (Lončarić, Ribarić & Farkaš, 2016, Munar & Jacobsen, 2013, Manap & Adzharudin, 2013).

### **Inspiration portals**

Travel-related posts on social media are posted less for altruistic reasons and more for personal ones. In doing so, social media posts can serve as inspiration portals by fostering corporeal travel (i.e. posting about an upcoming trip or while being away) as well as imagined mobility (i.e. ‘I want to go there!’ imagined envy when seeing someone’s post) through the language, photos and geo-references in the post (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015, p. 729). They can enrich a reader’s image of a destination and intensify a person’s “*desire and motivation to travel and the possibilities or impossibilities of doing so*” (Munar, 2011, p. 298; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Social media posts drive mental pleasure in imagining and can give ideas of what to do, see, touch, feel and think at a destination (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). They are trusted because posts by a friend on a social network “*create notions of proximity and perceptions of authenticity: Places are real and visited right now*” (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015, p. 731).

### **Online identity management**

Holiday photography and the creation of (physical) photo albums were once primarily used to make memories for personal future reflection, whereas now communication and identity are the main functions of holiday photography (Robinson, 2014; Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011). Perhaps this is because, before the internet, photo sharing was a private activity; and now tourists share holiday photos with their social media networks as well as a wider audience beyond family and friends (Lo, McKercher, Lo, Cheung & Law, 2011).

It is argued that sharing content online is an identity management tool for self-preservation and self-presentation, ultimately to reflect positively on themselves (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011). This means that images are produced purposefully selected, and disseminated in new ways. In particular, it changes how tourists experience time, place and self, as they are constantly comparing themselves with others and reflecting on how to present the ideal self through the photographs they share online (Lo, 2012). The ideal self and idealised realities are co-constructed through travel photography by tourism attractions, tourists, and an anticipation of what audiences appreciate, and “*Online tourist photography is thus a co-creation of deceptions*” (Lo, 2012, p. 305).

It is suggested that self-centered motivations such as bragging rights, narcissism, fame-seeking, and gaining social capital drive many tourists to post online, especially younger travellers (Minazzi, 2015; Kerr et al., 2012, Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). A combination of different places, the distance consumed and the number of destinations visited makes for competitive structures in tourism, where social status can be acquired by visiting many destinations (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). The Instagram influencers of this study who post an endless supply of inspiring images from their constant travels may thus have high social status. Yet while they may be socially admirable, the ‘nomadic life’ at the same time can lead to a ‘liquid identity’ from constantly changing contexts, which may leave the person feeling lonely and alienated (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015).

### **Positively framing the experience**

Tourists are increasingly thinking about how they present themselves, and so engage in tactics to control impressions others have of them through framing, capturing, deleting, selecting, editing, organising, positioning and sharing photos (Lo, 2012; Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011). This means “*we select only a fraction of the potential body of photographs to tell the past for potential viewers*” (Sarvas & Frohlich,

2011, p. 8). It is a selective and curated process, where images posted by amateur photographers are chosen from multiple takes, then further manipulated and edited so that they are presented in the most desirable way (Robinson, 2014). Tourists feel it is important to capture aesthetic images, as these are the images that are given priority when selecting what to share (Lo, 2012).

Negative aspects of a holiday are often ignored, mentioned in passing, or trivialised in social media, where predominantly holiday posts are found to be positive and even euphoric, in turn evoking admiration and jealousy from audiences (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). Travelling in contemporary society is seemingly glamorised and creates the idea that all travel is positive and effortless.

### **The rise of the selfie in holiday photography**

Posting photos of the self at the destination may be done to emphasise proximity to landmarks, or to show social capital and connectedness (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). Urry's (1990) idea of the 'tourist gaze' suggests that tourists seek the novel while travelling and find pleasure in consuming sights and experiences that are extraordinary and different from their everyday (in Larsen & Urry, 2011). Dinhopf and Gretzel (2016) argue that with the increasing trend to take 'selfies' (photos of the self), "*The focus of the tourist gaze has shifted from extending outward to reflecting back on tourists themselves*" (p. 136). This resonates with the idea that tourists share holiday photos for identity management.

The self in the destination can be presented in different ways within a photo, such as photos of landmarks, photos of the self standing by the landmark, or photos of the self only with a textual reference to the destination (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). Tourists do not share unpretty or ugly photos of the self and are concerned with how their audiences view their online posts (Lo, 2012). While some tourists will embrace the selfie, especially with the affordances of front-facing cameras on smartphones, other tourists would rather hide that they have performed for the camera (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). They instead pose to look candid, as if caught in intimate moments and where the camera is seemingly absent.

This reflects the idea that although tourists may post online with narcissistic intentions, concealing this is vital to the success of their ideal image (Minazzi, 2015; Lo, 2012). Tourists often try to distinguish themselves from fellow tourists and hide their identity as tourists because "*photographing is a mocked and questionable tourist activity*" as "*it turns them into mere tourists and performers of voyeuristic gazing*" (Larsen & Urry, 2011, p. 1121).

Both taking selfies and posing candidly are very self-aware performances of tourist photography, and thus may be frowned upon by other tourists. It is predicted that destinations will become more relevant for the atmosphere and ambience they contribute to a stylised performance of the self, and where attractions at the destinations will become less important (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). The tourist selfie, whether posed or candidly posed, may then be inspired by the atmosphere of the place.

### **Viral UGC**

It is worth mentioning that UGC has the potential to go ‘viral’. This means the content continues to be shared and circulated in a high spread beyond the original platform it was originally posted. In general, positive content is more likely to go viral, as well as informative and surprising content (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Social media posts that are emotionally charged with high-arousal emotions such as awe, humour, joy, fear and anger are more likely to go viral than posts that evoke low-arousal emotions like sadness (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013; Minazzi, 2015; Berger & Milkman, 2012). Knowing this might influence users to post positive rather than negative content. It is also argued that visual images have more impact and are more engaging than text alone, making a platform like Instagram a powerful platform for creating viral content (Abbott, Donaghey, Hare & Hopkins., 2013).

### **Social media in marketing for DMOs**

How destination managers and marketers (DMOs), as well as the tourism market as a whole, operates has been affected by the rise of customer-to-customer relations through UGC. Local-global relationships are changed into public information sharing systems, meaning tourists and potential tourists interact all around the world (Munar et al., 2014) and “*authority over destination images shifts from the tourist industry to the tourists*” (Hjalager, 2015, p. 17).

Tourists are becoming more sophisticated, knowledgeable and experienced, making them more difficult to please (Buhalis & O’Connor, 2005; Tsiotsou, 2012). “*The population in general is travelling more frequently, becoming more linguistically and technologically skilled and can function in multicultural and demanding environments overseas*” (Buhalis & O’Connor, 2005, p. 11). Brands, therefore, need to create and deliver value to motivate the consumer’s wants and needs to visit the destination, especially in an increasingly competitive tourism industry (Tsiotsou, 2012).

This adds another layer of difficulty to marketing tourism, which has been recognised as challenging in itself because the tourist product is not singular, but rather an experiential product made up of a sum of

tourist experiences from a number of different businesses (Tsiotsou, 2012) Social media has made destination marketing more difficult, but also provides new insights and communication channels. DMOs can use UGC as a pool of knowledge to follow, examine, classify, monitor and evaluate tourists (Munar, 2011), to mine opinions and analyse sentiment to better understand market trends and travel behaviour (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), and to look to social media for segmentation, targeting and brand building (Tsiotsou, 2012).

### **Instagram and destination images online**

Instagram is seen as a trendy tool in tourism, and it is praised by marketers because it is a simple, express and free application that has a great opportunity for drawing the attention of potential visitors (Hanan & Putit, 2013; Martínez, Berrozpe & Lasarte, 2014). Visual content is particularly engaging for consumers, and Instagram has been found to be useful in encouraging the promotion of a tourism destination with its facilities to geo-tag and hashtag images, making them easy to search for (Minazzi, 2015; Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015).

The way DMOs use Instagram is either to share UGC of the destination or to post their own commercial photographs. Such commercial destination photography is designed to create a desire to travel by thrilling and seducing the viewer (Urry, 2011, in Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). It is also noted that DMOs often present images of a destination that are perfected and idealised, showing distinctive types of culture or scenic landscapes in photos that are structured and planned (Robinson, 2014; Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). In contrast to this, user-generated photographs contain a larger amount of ‘noise’ that do not strive for perfection and are more realistic and down-to-earth (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). Travel Instagrammers fall somewhere in between producing commercial and user-generated photographs — they become part of the user-generating community as just another profile on social media, yet also work to promote the destination with financial reimbursement.

### **DMOs embracing social media**

Social media is recognised as a cost-effective marketing tool, as the most popular sites — Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube — are free to join (Martínez et al., 2014; Aramendia-Muneta, 2012; Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). Tourists can be reached in more efficient and targeted ways than before, facilitating customer-centric approaches where they are invited to co-create products in value-adding strategies to identify and meet their needs (Aramendia-Muneta, 2012).

But while some DMOs are investing large chunks of their marketing budget into social media strategies, most DMOs often face limited financial and human resources, and social media often becomes the role for the unpaid summer intern (Hays, Page and Buhalis, 2013). In many cases, DMOs are still finding best practice of social media, and strategies are still largely experimental and varied (Hays et al., 2013). The continued technological changes that spring up often leave tourism organisations behind the curve in terms of marketing initiatives that have proved to be successful in other industries (Tsiotsou, 2012).

### **Instagram influencers**

One such initiative is the integration of influencers into the marketing mix. While there is no academic research on influencer marketing in the tourism industry prior to this research, many of the more innovative DMOs around the world are hiring the services of Instagram influencers.

‘Influencers’, also known as ‘influentials’ or opinion leaders, can be defined as *“people who build a large network of followers and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches”* (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2016, p. 1) or as *“some small set of special people who, whether through having more social ties or being more persuasive, theoretically have more influence than others”* (Berger & Milkman, 2012, p. 202). The number of followers is displayed on all Instagram accounts, and so it is easy to see how many people have followed them.

Instagram as a photo-based platform fosters different profile types, niches, and communities. Fitness accounts, musicians, fashion brands, ‘food-porn’ accounts, skateboarders, pets, and travellers have all emerged as Instagram profile ‘types’ based on the kind of content they post. Within these profile types are the more prominent users with large follower numbers, who can thus be considered influencers or ‘tastemakers’ in their niche (De Veirman et al., 2016; Berger & Milkman, 2012; Williams, Inversini & Buhalis, 2015). Travel Instagrammers may emerge as a type of celebrity expert in the travel industry as they have a lot of experience travelling to different places all over the world. Their expertise in travel, as well as their persuasive power, makes them ideal for destination endorsements.

The appeal for influencers comes from their power in shaping, constraining and enabling different opinions (Williams et al., 2015). Marketers seek influencers to promote their brands to established audiences and to generate word of mouth (Berger & Milkman, 2012; De Veirman et al., 2016). Critics argue that using influencers as part of a social media strategy is not as valuable or cost effective as

assumed and that marketers would be better off crafting content themselves that will go viral (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

### **The professionalisation of Instagramming**

Influencers have transformed Instagramming into a profession: something that is “*a distinct and generic category of occupational work*” (Evetts, 2014, p. 33) or “*anything that is done for a living*” (Weckert & Lucas, 2013, p. 73). At the core of any profession is a body of knowledge as well as a code of ethics, and so with the professionalisation of Instagram comes the need for professionalism (Weckert & Lucas, 2013). Professionalism is a desirable trait referring to being trustworthy, competent, ethical, knowledgeable, and doing the profession with care and pride (Evetts, 2014; Boughton, 2013).

While professionalism is more important in some occupations than others (medicine, for example, where the lives of patients are at stake), it is still important for technology-related professions. This is because it is difficult to regulate technology-related profession as they change so rapidly along with emergent technology, and so it is the behaviour of the practitioners at the core of the occupation’s function (Weckert & Lucas, 2013). Especially considering their power in shaping opinions (Williams et al., 2015), it is important for influencers to consider ethical responsibilities in what they post, especially as “*social media engagement is meant to signal openness and transparency to audiences*” (Wong, 2011, p. 109).

### **Collaborating with influencers**

Additionally, professionalism helps to establish trust with clients (Evetts, 2014). For DMOs, collaborating with an influencer can be seen as a kind of destination partnership to initiate with marketing and management motives. Successful destination partnerships should mean working with supportive partners with similar goals, focusing on and appealing to specific markets, and being willing to invest in each other and share information (Morrison, 2013).

Paying celebrities to endorse a destination is seen as a creative opportunity for DMOs to draw attention to the destination, target specific markets, add rememorability to the advertisement, and add credibility to the brand (van der Veen, 2008; Glover, 2009). This is also the logic behind working with influencers. It is argued that there is a general public fascination with celebrities, and often their private lives will be of more interest to people than their professional achievements (Glover, 2009). Celebrities are given special attention because they appear to be different from, yet somehow similar to, everyone else, so a person can identify with the celebrity and form a parasocial relationship with them (Gamson, 2001, in Glover, 2009).

This may be the same with an influencer whose followers are fascinated by their lifestyle, which is different from their own, yet similar enough to identify with.

Popularity is one of the main elements of social media logic, with ranking mechanisms enhancing the value of the platforms to filter out popular posts and influential people (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). More weight is added to prominent users who have more followers, who therefore dominate attention on the platform and are often considered ‘superusers’ influential enough that be paid to perform promotional tasks and jobs (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

Yet the number of followers should not be the only criterion for selecting an influencer to collaborate with: *“Likeability should preferably result from the fact that the consumers see the influencer as a valuable source of information — an opinion leader — rather than merely from popularity”* (De Veirman et al., 2016, p. 2).

### **Reflection and summary of the literature review**

Most research on social media in tourism focuses on consumer or supplier use. Theories tell us that tourists post about their holidays for impression management and using social media to make decisions about future travels. DMOs are faced with new challenges with social media and could benefit from using influencer marketing to promote their destinations. Key concepts on social media for impression management and idealised imagery will be used to inform the empirical data in the analysis. The conceptual foundation of the study will be outlined next in the second section of the theoretical framework.

### **THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION: PRACTICE STUDIES**

This research project aims to originally inform the management and consumer-driven research on social media and tourism that make up the first part of this chapter by taking a critical departure point to study the *practices* of Instagram influencing. This means the focus will be on what is enacted or performed in concrete situations, rather than just a study of representations (Larsen, 2008). Practice-oriented, performative, situated and ethnographic approaches to social science research will be introduced, which can be considered novel theories that are not commonly applied to tourism studies (Lamers, van der Duim & Spaargaren, 2016). By acknowledging the existing literature, but building on these conceptual theories

to inform the methodology and analysis, this project is an innovative study that looks at social media usage from a more practical and humanistic perspective.

### **Non-representational studies**

Representational studies are common in the study of social sciences where meanings, significations, representations, and motivations are the theoretical foci (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts & Whatmore, 2009). A representational study of Instagram influencers could, for example, look to investigate the motivations for Instagram users to follow travel accounts, or to study the meanings and symbolisms in the photographs of prominent travel accounts.

Non-representational studies, on the other hand, look beyond representations and meanings. A non-representational study of photography is more *“concerned with bodily doings and technical enactments rather than representations and meanings”* (Larsen, 2008, p. 146). Practice studies are non-representational, where researchers may choose to study the images or Instagram users, but further, seeks to study the *Instagramming* or *photographing*.

According to Larsen (2008), such research would contribute in unique ways to academic studies of tourist photography, where there is more interest academically in the representational worlds rather than the non-representational details about the production and circulation of photos. Non-representational theory emerged from an apparent overvaluation of representational-referential dimensions in social sciences, where researchers predominantly focused on creating *“active ‘readings’ of dominant or residual meanings”* (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 503).

### **Representational relevance**

That is not to say non-representational theories are anti-representation, they are just more concerned with how certain meanings and representations are made:

*“Non-representational theories are theories of practice in that their focus is on what humans and/or non-humans do, and how the reproduction and revision of practices underpin the genesis and maintenance of interpretation and thus meaning.”*

Gregory et al., 2009 p. 503.

This is important for this study, as a typology of holiday photographs as captured by influencers will be addressed. These images are argued to represent an idealised representation of the tourist, and by looking at the practices and performances involved in creating the images, it is possible to see how a person embodies an ideal self that comes from a socially desirable image (Goffman, 1959). Images posted on Instagram are the outcomes of a practice, so it is necessary to understand what kinds of photos are being taken in order to think about how they were taken. Representations are therefore still an important focus of the study, but the additional inquiry into performances and the *enactment* of identities establishes the study as non-representational (Gregory et al., 2009).

### **Performative tourism**

Performative tourism is a conceptual foundation acknowledging that tourism and the practices involved in it are embodied and performed by different groups in interactive rather than fixed processes (Edensor, 2001). For example, tourists perform their role as tourists in particular ways based on pre-existing accounts of what they should do and how they should behave (Edensor, 2001). Any social situation involves back stages and front stages, performers and audiences; where the backstage involves careful preparation by performers, who then present impressions of themselves through performances to audiences (Goffman, 1959)

Even photographs can be considered performers when considering what they do, how they organise gazes and construct impressions of places that are consumed by tourists (Larsen & Urry, 2011). In constructing such photographs, Instagram influencers may then direct gazes and construct realities of a place in the way they portray their images. The performative processes of how they organise and construct meaningful images are of interest in this study. Tourism, photography and social media can all be understood as liminal spaces, and when the three are combined, the performative nature of social life is even more intensified as the backstage area increases (Lo & McKercher, 2015). Looking into the performances of Instagram influencers, then, should promise much ‘backstage’ activity.

### **Ontological politics**

Researchers talk strategically, commercially, and motivationally about the role of social media in tourism, but very few address the everyday activities of those doing the ontological politics in practice. Ontological politics refer to the idea that ‘realities’ are not innocent of power relations, but are created through processes. This study builds on the notion of ontological politics as it considers that all

representations are political. Investigating the situated practices of influencers will help to explore how realities are enacted, and through which mechanisms.

A focus on performances opens new opportunities in research methods to witness the doing of practices and see how practitioners describe and also act in their world (Gregory et al., 2009). In studying this, it is possible to see how influencers as particular actors have specific aims that guide how they create and reinforce particular ideas of ‘realities’ in their images. But through inquiry, researchers are also altering and challenging the social world by creating certain realities (Edensor, 2001; Law & Urry, 2004). By writing a study on the topic of Instagram influencers in the tourism industry, I am also enacting what I am describing *into* reality (Law & Urry, 2004).

### **Defining practice**

A practice is the culturally formed, routinised type of behaviour of recurring patterns (Alkemeyer, Buschmann & Michaeler, 2017; Reckwitz, 2002). Reckwitz (2002) defines a practice as: “*a routinised way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood*” (p. 250). Practice theory supports the idea that “*social orders are practically produced, maintained, and changed in the interplay of diverse human and non-human participants*” (Alkemeyer et al., 2017, p. 67). The practice under study in this research is that of touristic Instagramming as a travel influencer referred to throughout simply as *influencing*.

A practice is a political process, where a person’s interests, power and identity are part of the resources needed to do it (Nicolini, 2009). It exists as a specific social phenomenon “*as long as it is performed and sustained by people with particular skills and practical concerns*” (Lamers et al., 2016, p. 54). While each individual perceives, evaluates and responds differently to the practice, each is still a carrier — a bodily and mental agent — of a collective practice if they take part in the routinised behaviour that makes up the practice (Alkemeyer et al., 2017; Reckwitz, 2002).

### **Emergent practices**

It is only through the performance of practices and their recurrent enactments that distinct elements of practices can be established, meaning social practices can become identifiable as entities (Lamers et al., 2016). People have to ‘do’ a practice for it to exist, meaning what the practice is and what it becomes depends on how, where, and who is ‘doing’ it (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). In this case, it is the increasing number of Instagram influencers that legitimises it as a practice that can be identified and studied.

Practices continually go through processes of reproduction and reinvention. They can be reinvented from previous and related practice with new and novel ingredients, and new practices “*arise through the active and ongoing integration of images, artefacts and forms of competence*” (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 43). Instagramming, in this case, has been reinvented with the addition of commercial ‘ingredients’, meaning there are new motivations and understandings involved in the practice. Practices are constantly evolving and are seen as process emergent, always embodied and including affect and emotion (Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Gregory et al., 2009).

### **Practice theories in tourism research**

Although it offers fresh horizons for tourism studies, applying practice theories in research is a novel approach not yet used extensively. Practice theories are relevant to this field of study because tourism activities are seen as “*concerted, ongoing, situated social practices*” that involve doings and sayings (Lamers et al., 2016). It explores the embeddedness of mental activities in doing things, interconnecting the mind, text, and conversations to talk about bodily movements, things, practical knowledge and routine (Reckwitz, 2002). Phenomena can be respecified by studying practices involved, bringing to the fore the unspoken and barely noticeable background of everyday life (Nicolini, 2009). This is particularly promising for the study of Instagram influencers, as we aim to uncover the rationales, behind-the-scenes processes and tactics behind creating the images.

Practices are part of our daily lives and connected “*between the here-and-now of the situated practising and the elsewhere-and-then of other practices*” (Nicolini, 2009, p. 1392). Single practices are caught up in other practices, and so a range of practices are often bundled into the study of the focus practice (Lamers et al., 2016). This is especially true as “*tourism should be understood by its imbrication in the everyday rather than as a special, separate field of activity and enquiry*” (Edensor, 2001, p. 59). Elements of a practice are not contained to their initial practical function but are likely to flow into others. Observing practices from different perspectives (zooming in or out) gives a better idea of the wider texture, the mutual relationships, and co-existences with other practices (Nicolini, 2009). While the focus of the study is Instagram influencing, this practice is closely tied to other practices like photography, travelling, and business negotiation, which will be further explored in the analysis.

### **Identifying and characterising social practices**

A practice is made up of several elements that interconnect including:

*“Forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.”*

Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249

In a similar line of thought, Shove and Pantzar (2005) denote three elements to state that *“practices involve the active integration of materials, meanings and forms of competence”* (p. 45). These three elements — materials, competences, and meanings — help guide the data collection of this study. This will mean shifting the way of thinking about Instagram influencing in tourism onto the *“body, mind, things, knowledge, discourse, structure/process and the agent”* to speak about it in terms of practice (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). Identifying and then analysing the elements can bring to surface tensions and contradictions that may be useful to better understand and continue to evolve the practice (Wellton, Jonsson, Walter & Svingstedt, 2016).

## **Materials**

Material artefacts, infrastructures, products, things and objects and how they are used are necessary to practices, yet they are often under-theories in social science research (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove & Pantzar, 2005). Most practices require requisite equipment. For example, a practice like Arctic expedition cruising needs materials like small ships, inflatable boats, and remote environments to enable the practice (Lamers et al., 2016).

Materials can be non-human (things, technologies, tangible physical entities) and human (bodies) (Lamers et al., 2016). The body is an important material in any given practice as is the agent and the carrier of the practice that enables its existence. The body performs bodily movements like handling objects, but also intellectual and mental activities like talking and writing (Reckwitz, 2002). The body is important for influencers, as they need to be able to physically move to different destinations, often pose in their own photos and create visual and written content that is inspiring for people.

Materials can also include the written, printed, and electronic media, which *“enable and limit certain bodily and mental activities, certain knowledge and understanding as elements of practices”* (Kittler, 1985; Gumbrecht, 1988; both in Reckwitz, 2002, p. 253). This can include informative material on how to do a practice like a rulebook or set of instructions. The Instagram app is a form of electronic media that enables and limits certain things. For example, offensive and explicit material is prohibited. Its photo

editing features enable creative manipulation to photographs which can communicate aesthetic and allow hedonic pleasures for users who can subjectively and artistically express themselves (Wang et al., 2014; Munar et al., 2014).

#### Materials: Technologies

A technical rhetoric is unavoidable when discussing a practice involved in social media and photography. Technologies play an important part in Instagram influencing, where hardware (smartphone, camera), software (Instagram, editing apps), and other technologies like chargers and data-providing sim cards are all requisites to the practice of Instagramming. Material entities in social practices like this enable the practice and warrant the durability and consistency of it (Lamers et al., 2016).

Larsen (2008) notes that “*technologies cannot be separated from embodied practices, from doings*” (p. 143), and that the social and the technological are mutually determining in how they impact each other. For example, cameras, editing software, and social media are manipulated by a person who is involved in “*looking for, framing and taking photographs, posing for cameras and choreographing posing bodies [...] post-practices of editing, displaying and circulating photographs*” (Larsen, 2008, p. 143).

#### Competences

Practices are mediums of meaning, knowledge and intentionality, and when a person performs a particular practice, their specific competences and capabilities in the form of skills, know-how and techniques are revealed (Alkemeyer et al, 2017; Lamers et al., 2016). The way a person understands the world, their desires and their knowledge of how to do something plays an important role in doing a practice. For example, playing football is a bodily activity, but it also involves the know-how of rules, interpreting other players’ movements, and aims to win the game (Reckwitz, 2002).

Specific forms of knowledge are part of specific practices, and although “*ways of understanding, knowing how, ways of wanting and of feeling*” are carried by the person, they “*do not belong to individuals but—in the form of knowledge—to practices*” (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 254). This means that competences need to be learned and acquired by a person to perform them. It is through instruction, trials and errors or learning by doing that these new actions and procedures can be acquired (Lamers et al., 2016).

Acquiring this depends upon the person's capability, as well as access to materials which enable the practice. The internet and Web 2.0 is often touted as a democratising, dynamic, content-generating, information sharing service (Minazzi, 2015; Munar et al., 2014). But segregation occurs alongside democratisation, where access and skills required to be an internet user shapes "*new forms of social segregation, inclusion, and exclusion in the tourism system*" (Munar et al., 2014, p. 5). Instagramming, for example, is possible only for those with internet access, a smartphone, and technological know-how. Additionally, practices may be enacted differently within and between different countries, cultures and communities because of the different ways images, materials and competences may circulate there (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

### **Creation of meanings and images**

Practices contain specific associations and ideas that attract certain people and their ideologies. Nordic walking, for example, has associations with nature, well-being and freedom, and so "*doing walking*' is also a process through which images and ideologies are reproduced" (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 47). In the same way, 'doing Instagramming' also produces images and ideologies. A practice's meanings — referring to the symbolic meanings, images, signs, discourses, ideas, and aspirations which ascribe meaning to things — help make sense of the world of the practice (Lamers et al., 2016; Reckwitz, 2002). This study focuses on the meanings, ideologies, and images associated with the practice of Instagram influencing, which can be found through studying the practice as a whole.

Meanings help to form the configuration of activities and give value to material elements in any practice (Wellton et al., 2016; Shove & Pantzar, 2005). Roberts and Andrews (2013) stress that meaning is not a priori, but is rather constantly being made in the enactments of tourism practices. Individuals interested in Instagram influencing in tourism are likely to be motivated by ideologies about travelling, making money, and inspiring a large audience through photography. Additionally, the creation of meanings can also be seen in the representations in their Instagram images. Looking into the creation of these images may help to uncover meanings and power relations of who creates the representations (Roberts & Andrews, 2013).

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN SUMMARY**

The theories introduced in this chapter create the framework for this research project. The methodological decisions and analytical concerns of this study are primarily informed by practice theories. The project

seeks to understand the entity of the practice of Instagram influencing and the ways people become practitioners or carriers of the practice. The literature review found that most tourism research on social media was taken from a consumer or supplier focus that was strategically, commercially, and motivationally driven.

This research departs from these disciplines to study the practice of touristic Instagramming as a travel influencer, in order to contribute to tourism theories in innovative ways. In particular, this research builds on the theories about how tourist photography is an outlet for identity management (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011). That tourists and DMOs alike privilege positive and even glamorised images when photo sharing (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015; Robinson, 2014; Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013) is reflected in images posted by influencers. Yet the practical details and influence on situated experiences is largely unexplored and will be developed further with the empirical data of this study, which will be outlined next.

## METHODOLOGY

As I am writing about people — Instagram influencers — and their practices, this research is considered an ethnography. Investigating human experiences is best done through qualitative and interpretative methods, which involve comprehensive observation where everything can be worthwhile of investigation: *“the interpretive inquirer watches, listens, feels, asks, records and examines”* (Decrop, 2004, p. 2). As indicated, approaching the research topic as a practice study informs the methodological considerations, which will be detailed in the following section. The primary data collection method was a short-term participant observation where the researcher joined an Instagram influencer on a week-long trip. To strengthen the body of data collected, other research methods including netnography and interviews with other influencers were conducted. The end of the section will describe the analysis processes as well as limitations and validity of the study.

### **Ethnography (and its ontological and epistemological implications)**

With the aim of trying to explore the social world of Instagram influencers, this project takes on an interpretivist ontological stance, where ‘reality’ is understood as something socially constructed, multiple and contextual (Decrop, 2004). This is because studying social science is different to natural science, as it is not possible to discover predictive theories and laws about the social world (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Given the ethnographic approach and the theoretical inspiration of practice studies, the ontology of Instagrammers in this study is that accounts of reality vary, and the way they describe or enact the practice of influencing will be multiple and based on context. Given this, it is acknowledged that the findings of this practice study will provide an interpretation and general understanding of the practice. This research project does not strive to find universal truths, but rather produce reflexive findings that add to food for thought in ongoing deliberation about the topic of study (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In line with this interpretivist ontology in doing ethnographic research, I acknowledge that knowledge is constructed rather than something to be found. By studying and writing about other people, I am constructing subjective ideas of social reality by creating and naming categories and framing and labelling findings in a way that highlights some elements and excludes others (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). As indicated when introducing ontological politics, talking or writing about something can make it real, revealing a relationship between reality and accounts of reality (Hannam & Knox, 2011).

It is, therefore, impossible to study social sciences ‘at arm’s length’, removed and distant from the study (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Rather, it is advised to be reflexive (self-aware) as a researcher and acknowledge the subjective and situated epistemologies that are formed through research (Hannam & Knox, 2011). My role in this project was to observe and participate in the situated practice of Instagram influencing and to write an exploratory analysis of the practice. This, all while remaining self-aware as a researcher, bringing attention to detail in the generation of knowledge and accepting that my findings may be rebutted by others with a different interpretation of the social world under study (Hannam & Knox, 2011; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

This ethnography and its ontological and epistemological position help to inform the methodologies used. Especially in the study of practice, qualitative methods are recommended as they “*allow for revealing the rich details of practices and the ways they unfold*” (Lamers et al., 2016, p. 59). Finding rich details and nuances are important, as I am studying a dynamic and theoretically complex phenomenon situated in the real world that cannot be recreated in a laboratory research setting (Decrop, 2004; Hannam & Knox, 2011).

This study has three main qualitative methods: participant observation, interviews and netnography. Methods situated in the research context like participant observation are an insightful and experiential way to learn about practices (Jorgensen, 1989b). Interviews and netnography complement such methods, as they provide more and deeper insights into a topic that is relatively uncovered in academic literature. Deductive research was essential to the start of the research, where existing theories on practice helped to guide the data collection. I then worked inductively between theories and data to establish themes, and then deductively again when finding that I needed more theoretical background about something in a hermeneutic circle (Creswell, 2014).

## **DATA COLLECTION**

Creswell (2014) suggests keeping a journal during the research study as a qualitative data collection approach. I did this, adding dates and notes to a Google Docs document. This proved useful to keep records of documents, write down statistics, and make notes of particular activities on Instagram. I created a spreadsheet titled ‘Travel Instagram accounts’ to keep track of the different accounts I followed throughout the research (Appendix 1). Here I would note their URL, Instagram handles, name, gender, followers, email, website, and a brief description of images commonly posted. This proved useful to get

an overview of statistics, quickly find email addresses, and begin to generate an idea of particular typologies of images commonly posted. It was a useful system to organise materials so they could be easily retrieved.

### **Desk research**

In the very early stages this project, I spent some time doing desk-based research. This topic of study came to me as I continued to come across online articles about Instagram influencer marketing. Judging by the amount of online information and the hype about travel Instagrammers, I knew this was an important phenomenon in tourism. Yet, when searching for ‘Instagram’ and ‘Influencer marketing’ in tourism-related academic literature, I found a lack of research. A literature search at the early stage of choosing a research topic helps to understand what researchers have already found, and how they found it. If there is nothing like your topic, it is considered a good sign that shows you are being innovative (Hannam & Knox, 2011). Further deductive research was carried out to narrow down the topic. A number of online articles, interviews with influencers, statistic reports, and podcasts by influencers boasted marketing success stories, deterring me from studying consumer impact or marketing benefits. I was more interested in the people behind the accounts, and more intimately — the everyday practices of their job as Instagram Influencer.

### **Short-term participant observation**

Participant observation is seen as the most effective research method for studying practices, as it focusses on the situated, observable and meaningful social enactments, bodily movements, and use of materials that help uncover the peculiarities of practices (Lamers et al., 2016; Jorgensen, 1989b). Participant observation was the best method to see the practice of influencing first hand and witness the behind-the-scenes production of how these Instagram images come to being.

### **Joining Australia’s first professional Instagrammer on an influencer trip**

I joined an Instagrammer on an ‘influencer trip’ in the Clarence Valley, a region in NSW, Australia. It is a lesser known tourist destination, attracting predominantly domestic tourists with its secluded beaches, heritage listed rainforests, premium surf breaks, dolphin and whale watching, river activities, waterfalls, and a gorge. The Instagrammer Lauren Bath, who runs the account @laurenepbath, was doing an influencer trip for 7 days in the region, paid for and organised by the Clarence Valley Council. She has been an Instagram travel influencer for 7 years and was named Australia’s first professional Instagrammer (Koelma, 2014).

The trip was only a week long, making it a short-term ethnography. While researchers like Moeran (2007) stress that it is not possible to conduct holistic analysis without long-term fieldwork (a minimum six months, ideally one year), other researchers state that short-term ethnography is still a valuable and even favoured method. Pink and Morgan (2013), for example, state that researchers put themselves in the centre of the action and engage with participants with clear intentions in short-term ethnography, while often long-term ethnography is characterised by a lot of ‘hanging around’ and waiting for things to happen. As well as this, a short-term ethnography was the most feasible in regards to time and financial resources. Additionally, most influencer trips usually only last a week or less.

I emailed Lauren after finding her email address on her Instagram. I introduced myself and my thesis, and asked for an interview or even better to join her on an upcoming trip. Lauren was one of five influencers who I selected to ask. Gaining initial access to the particular community of people under study is seen as the most difficult and tense part of the fieldwork, as it requires introducing yourself and validating your research to people you have never met, and trying to convince them to help you (Moeran, 2007). This part of the process was even tenser because I only selected five Instagrammers who would be viable for participant observation. They were selected according to criteria that I set: they had to be established travel influencers from Australia. It was only feasible for me to go on a trip within Australia, due to financial restraints as I was based there at the time of research.

Lauren was the only one who replied, and did so with interest about my thesis. We continued an email correspondence where she suggested 2 trips I could potentially join, both in Australia. She asked the tourism boards permission for me to join her and then invited me on the Clarence Valley trip, as long as I organised my own transport and accommodation. After providing an itinerary of the trip, I booked flights, accommodation and a rental car to meet her there.

### **A peek into the insider’s world**

*“Entry to a human setting generally provides direct physical access to matters otherwise obscured from the standpoint of people totally outside the setting”* (Jorgensen, 1989a, p. 56). This is absolutely the case with Instagram images, where it is mostly obscured what actually happens at the destination the influencer visits and photographs. Getting direct experiential and observational access to the insider’s world allows the researcher to gain information and knowledge, understand subjective views and interpretations, and witness the rules and interactions that shape the social reality of the insiders’ world

(Moeran, 2007; Jorgensen, 1989b; Schoene, 2011). This means I was able to study the routines, typical and the unusual aspects of the practice of Instagram influencing in tourism.

The participant observer as an outsider might lack familiarity with the setting, but this is a strategic advantage at the beginning of inquiry, as you “*can overview a scene, noting major and distinctive features, relationships, patterns, processes, and events*” (Jorgensen, 1989a, p 56). If I were an ‘insider’ (i.e. a professional Instagram travel influencer) myself, I would be less likely to notice things that are new and strange about the setting. For practice studies, observing the performed tourism practice in the field “*is particularly useful since it allows for in-depth analysis of distinctive tourism practices, as well as their embeddedness and connection to other practices*” (Lamers et al., 2016, p. 55). I soon realised that being an Instagram influencer is closely tied to practices of professional photography.

### **Participating as an influencer**

This is a multi-sited ethnography, where participant observation was conducted by following Lauren in many different locations on different days. Single-sited ethnographies are criticised because researchers often only catch a glance at passing flows of tourists through single tourist attractions (Larsen, 2008). Multi-sited ethnographies follow the flows instead.

Taking on the role of a participant is a research strategy allows the researcher to gain direct experience of the way of life under study (Jorgensen, 1989a). For me, this was taking on the role as an Instagram influencer. Actively participating in the practice under study helps the researcher gain practical understanding and acquire the knowledge and skills that are part of the practice (Lamers et al., 2016). Ideally, the researcher can shift from doing participant observation to observant participation. This means they move from front stage to back stage to see behind social fronts that participants put on for strangers, which “*marks an important rite de passage in fieldwork itself and affects the quality of information given and later analysed*” (Moeran, 2007, p. 13). This is what I aspired to achieve.

I did just as a travel influencer would, together with Lauren. Driving from home to the airport, flying to a location unfamiliar to me, hiring a car and navigating my way there. I stayed in 3 different hotels, ate at cafes and restaurants for most meals, and took part in different activities including kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, and guided walks around different towns. Photography was a major part of each day. We would rise before dawn and meet at a different location to shoot the sunrise every day. Then have breakfast at a cafe, ordering extra food to photograph if it was a nice looking place. We would then do an

activity, which would be photographed. I observed closely how Lauren would set up her cameras and tripods, and ask questions about what she was doing. Sometimes I was asked to stand in as a model for a shot. Every day would finish with a sunset shoot at different locations. I also watched Lauren during an editing session in her hotel room. An example of one day's itinerary is shown in Table 1.

<b>S</b>	<b>26-Mar-17</b>	<b>All Day</b>	<b>Influencing</b>
		6.30AM	(Set up at 6am) Sunrise - <b>Main Beach</b>
		8.00AM	Breakfast - <b>Irons &amp; Craig</b>
		9.00AM	Tour - <b>Yamba Kayak - Phil 04XX XXX XXX</b> 3 hours
		12 Noon	Lunch - <b>Leche</b>
		1.00 PM	Editing Session
		1.45 PM	Afternoon activities - <b>Ferry to Yamba to Iluka</b>
			<b>Rainforest Walk Iluka 1-2 hours (Sonia tour 04XX XXX XXX)</b>
		4.00PM	Afternoon activities - <b>Ferry to Iluka to Yamba</b>
		5.00PM	Dinner - <b>Watos</b> (Vego Burger - Sweet potato scallops!)
		6.00PM	Sunset - <b>Wooloweyah Lake</b>
		9.00 PM	Bedtime ready for sunrise shoot the next morning
			Accommodation - <b>Angourie Rainforest Resort</b>

Table 1: Day 3 of the 7-day itinerary.

Participant observation gives you access to the phenomenon from as many perspectives as possible, as well as enabling researchers to experience the studied phenomenon through all senses, including feeling, smell, and sound (Jorgensen, 1989a). This was true for my research trip, where I noticed how tired I got each day after waking up before dawn and doing activities all day. I was always ready for an early bedtime at 9pm. I also became more aware of my stomach, as we ate at irregular times of the day and sometimes overeating after ordering too much for a food photo shoot.

I took my own DSLR camera and laptop with me with the intention of participating in the photography and editing side of influencing too. This was in hopes of a gaining practical understanding of the practice. However, I soon realised that I had much less photographic equipment than Lauren, and especially the

lack of tripod meant I would not get similar photos to Lauren at sunrise or sunset shoots. Nevertheless, the numerous photoshoots I joined Lauren on, as well as the editing session I witnessed, provided much rich detail about the practice.

### **Making observations**

Ethnography prioritises observation as the primary source of information, as statements made in interviews cannot substitute naturalistic observations of situated encounters (Gobo, 2011; Larsen, 2008). Although it is believed there is a gap between what people say and what they do (Gobo, 2011), casual conversations and in-depth questions with Lauren in the field revealed particular details and explanations about what she was doing. A focus on performances means a different methodological approach to talk: *“Instead of asking respondents to describe their world, researchers have become more interested in listening to potential respondents talk while they are in their worlds”* (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 526). We spent a lot of time talking in the car, over meals, or while waiting for the sunrise after the cameras were set up to talk about her lifestyle as an influencer, the industry and other Instagrammers.

I also asked about specific things like why she was setting up her camera here, or what the function this particular filter had. This kind of intervention shows how situated and empathic interactions provide interesting empirical insights, and that building relations rather than performing unobtrusive observations can produce more and richer understandings of the practice. During my week with Lauren, we spoke a lot about the industry of travel influencers, discussing different kinds of practice in other destinations, or with other influencers.

### **Field notes and visual ethnography**

Observations were recorded in field notes, which can be found in Appendix 2 (referred to as I1 throughout the analysis). Field notes are used to take notes on doings of individuals at the research site (Creswell, 2014). They record the researcher’s immediate experience, who should keep written records or tape-record observations while in the field, or shortly after the observational period (Jorgensen, 1989b). I wrote notes on the Notes app on my iPhone, which I kept with me at all times during time spent with Lauren. Being able to immediately write down the names of certain camera parts meant I would not forget about it later. After each day, I would transfer the notes written on my smartphone into a document on my laptop.

The use of images or video as a way of documenting a phenomenon is known as visual ethnography. Using my smartphone, I captured photos and videos of the practice of influencing for possible reference later. This included photos of Lauren taking photos (at rock pools, a windy beach sunrise, preparing a food shoot) and of editing procedures. The smartphone proved a useful tool during fieldwork, as I was able to write mobile notes, as well as shoot photos. By re-viewing these visual materials, the researcher re-engages with the materials and the context and comes to understand it differently each time (Pink & Morgan, 2013).

#### Unstructured and semistructured field notes

Researchers may take notes in an unstructured or semistructured way (Creswell, 2014). I wrote unstructured notes when noting particular activities or experiences that lead me to ramble in thought. It was important to keep in mind that researchers tend to notice the most eventful, striking, visible and audible incidents, but studying stillness, silence, the mundane, and non-events can also illuminate unexpected and surprising elements of the ethnography (Gordon, 2015). These kinds of foci when conducting research are supported by the conceptual foundation of non-representational theories.

But I also wrote semi-structured notes using a criteria of things I wanted to find out in the field. Pre-identified topics from existing theory can be used as headings to produce and organise field notes in a way that ensures certain elements are captured (Beach, 2005). In this case, the pre-identified topics were inspired by the literature on practice as outlined in the previous chapter. I sought to find the materials, competences, and meanings that are all essential elements in any given practice (Shove & Pantzar, 2005), and these three elements became key headings in the field notes. I used these three elements as headings in my field notes and wrote findings under each accordingly.

#### **Building a research alliance**

The social location of the researcher will influence what is being observed (Jorgensen, 1989a). This refers to where the researcher stands in relation to other people — me, for instance, bonding and relating to Lauren as a young Australian female, interested in social media, photography and travel. This means that I pick up on certain actions that I find very significant, compared to a person of a different social location, who would find the same action totally meaningless. Our similar social location may have helped us quickly build a rapport and friendship throughout the week. We spent over 12 hours together each day, doing activities together like kayaking or stand up paddle boarding. By the end of the week, we were very comfortable with each other, making jokes, both of us sharing personal stories from our lives, and

departing with a hug. Despite this, I aimed to stay critical in my analysis of the data collected during fieldwork.

Moeran (2007) argues that researchers should aspire to make the subtle shift from doing participant observation to observant participation, and he says that the ability to move back stage depends on the fieldworker's personality and the bond that is forged with participants. I feel I made the shift while spending time with Lauren, as she seemed to be completely herself in my presence, and not putting on a social front because she was sharing a wealth of information and commentary with me.

Participation and observation of everyday life requires a 'research alliance' with those under study primarily through participant observation (Hannam & Knox, 2011). I built such a research alliance with Lauren. This meant she was also willing to answer any more questions I had following the trip, as well as send additional documents that she had mentioned during the week. This and our friendly time spent together proved how participant observation or observant participation allows researchers to gain a comfortable degree of rapport, and even intimacy with the people being studied.

### **Netnography**

Netnography can be described as just another element of ethnography, using computer-mediated communications as the field in which to understand the cultures and practices (Kozinets, 2013a). The practice under study here occurs in the real world, as the influencers travel to different destinations, and also in the virtual world, through their Instagram profiles. It would be insensible, then, not to conduct netnography and spend some time navigating the world of Instagram where these influencers exert their influence.

### **Identifying travel Instagram accounts**

An ongoing netnographic scan of travel Instagram influencer accounts throughout the study helped to not only identify who may be considered a travel influencer but also build an overview of how influencers present themselves and what content they post. The study of different profiles helped show connections and disconnections of these online identities, helping to form generalisations (Kozinets, 2013b). Searching for, extracting and categorising photos from travel Instagram accounts was necessary to understand trends and patterns of the types of photos they post.

A Google search of ‘travel Instagrammers’ showed several variations of online articles titled “5 Instagram Users Who Have Turned Travelling Into a Lifestyle Brand” (Fleming, 2016) or “15 Australian travel Instagrammers you have to follow” (Australian Traveller, 2014). Reading such articles lead me to find and follow around 30 of the most prominent travel Instagram profiles worldwide. After following these accounts, Instagram began suggesting that I follow similar accounts (Image 3), and as the research continued, I kept finding and following more travel Instagrammers. I experienced a kind of snowball sampling (participants recruiting other participants), where Instagram suggested new accounts for me to follow based on algorithms and variables of my online activity. This proves how netnography is a simple and rapid data collection method, with search engines making it easy to find relevant communities and data (Mkono & Markwell, 2014).

At the same time, the power of this technology’s ability to serve suggestions to researchers gives rise to questions on the politics of sampling and technologies in netnography. Search engines have automated operations that sort and rank data to be presented to the researcher, and this power is referred to as search engine bias. The automated operations that presented new suggestions of profiles I might be interested in contain a similar bias. While some find it that media companies (like Instagram or Google) make choices to favour certain content, it can also be considered both necessary and desirable (Goldman, 2008). Searchers expect there to be an order of answers, rather than a clutter of unhelpful results, or their search objectives won’t be met (Goldman, 2008). In my research, the suggested users operation of Instagram proved convenient, while also making me think about how Instagram does it, and why or on what basis.

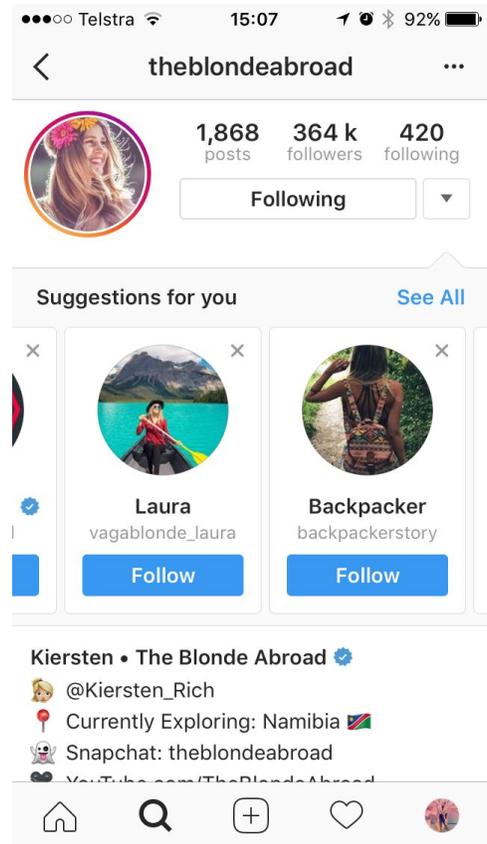


Image 3: Instagram’s algorithms suggesting travel influencer profiles to follow.

[instagram.com/theblondeabroad](https://www.instagram.com/theblondeabroad)

Consequently, my own Instagram account (@tdetje) was bombarded with new followers and likes on my most recent photos. Image 4 is a screenshot of my smartphone screen, showing a sample of the types of

accounts starting to follow me in a very small time frame. I soon realised these were all from new travel accounts who had paid for bots to interact with me. Paying for services from such bots helps to expose accounts to specific audiences, and are used as a way to gain followers. This shows that while online content is a source of unprompted insights available for the researcher, it is important to consider the problem of individuals who post fake content online (Mkono & Markell, 2014). Netnographic data may be considered less valuable and not representative of social worlds as empirically collected insights. I noticed that of the 45 or more new accounts that started following me, all of them had unfollowed me by the next day. Following and unfollowing, leaving comments, and liking photos are automated actions that these services run for accounts. This made me aware of how many Instagram accounts may purely be running my automated services, rather than people themselves. Using bots and ‘cheating’ on Instagram continued to come up as controversial in the practice of Instagram influencing.

### Extracting and categorising photographs

After searching for and following travel influencer Instagram accounts, and as a daily Instagram user myself, I saw what they were posting every day. Throughout the research, photographs were extracted and categorised for analysis. This was done by scouring through Instagram profiles and photos, taking screenshots, and organising them in folders on my laptop.

Compiling photos from different accounts was not an exercise intending to find something representative of all travel Instagrammers, but rather *“to build theoretical propositions or rich, thick, descriptions, comparisons, and classifications”* (Kozinets, 2013b, p. 7). Especially, it was used to compare editing styles (pastel colours, vibrant colours, foggy effects), find common types of content (landscapes, selfies, food), and what was written in captions (length, honesty, hashtags used).

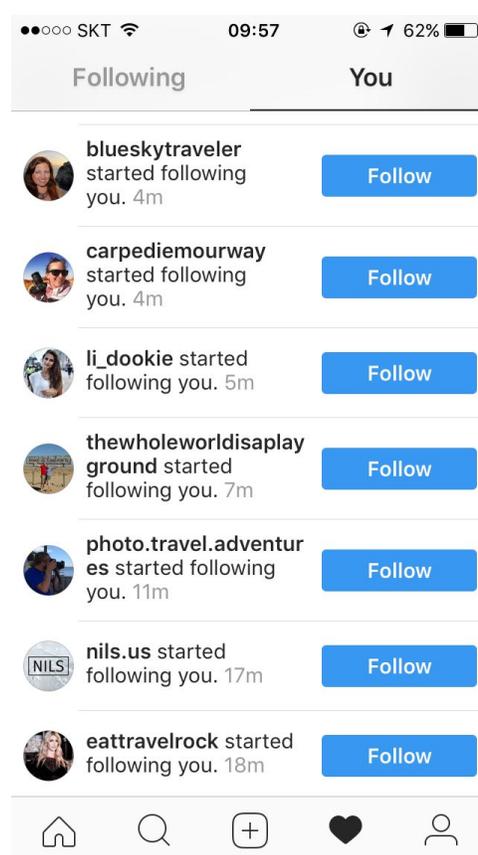


Image 4: A screenshot of travel accounts using bots to make themselves visible on my account.

Author's own Instagram account

Utterances beyond the photo, such as the caption, prominent colours, hash-tags, geo-tags and emoticons should also be interpreted, as they include important information in relation to the image, just as subtleties of body language can (Kozinets, 2013b). Elements from the profile pages were also used for analysis, including the handle used, the ‘bio’ description, profile picture and overview of the most recent images that were presented as a grid (see Image 5).

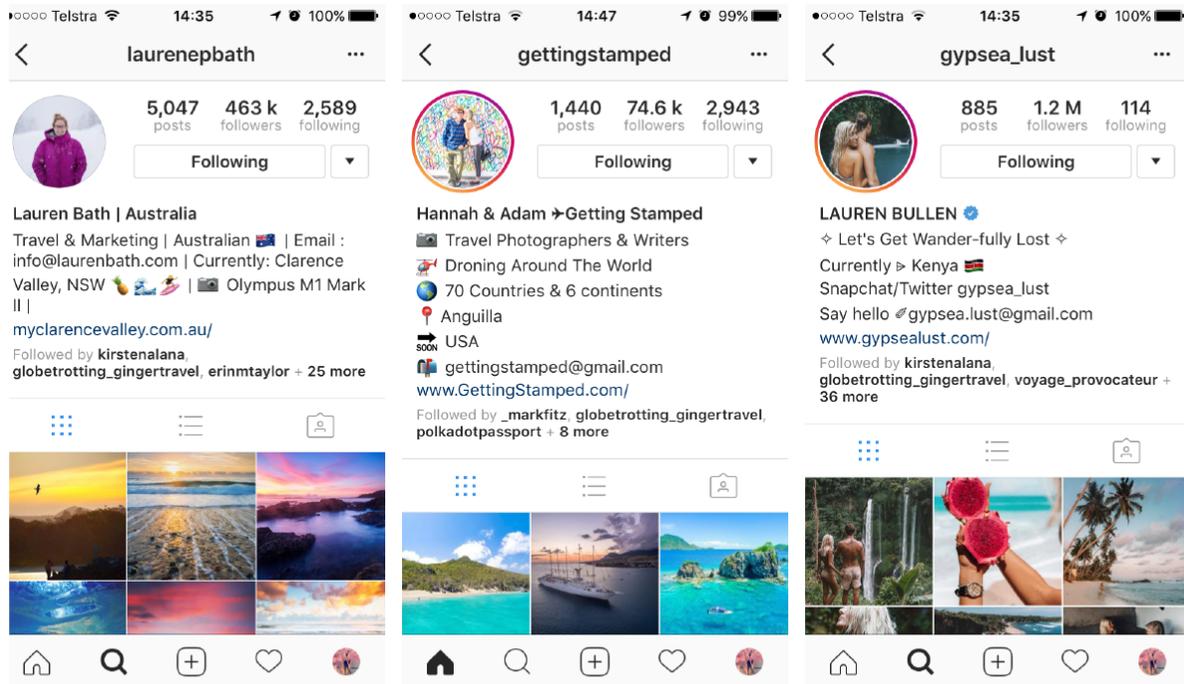
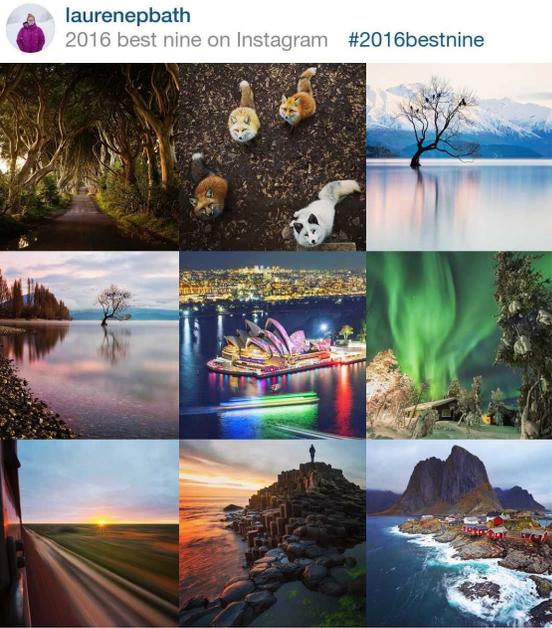


Image 5: a sample of screenshots of Instagram travel influencer profiles used for analysis.  
[instagram.com/laurenepbath](https://www.instagram.com/laurenepbath), [instagram.com/gettingstamped](https://www.instagram.com/gettingstamped), [instagram.com/gypsealust](https://www.instagram.com/gypsealust)

A ranking analysis of photos across the accounts helped identify what was the most liked content for followers. Rather than a traditional proportional sampling of study every 10th photo, the top photos were used as it was representative of what followers liked best. The top photos were identified and generated into a collage through the website 2016bestnine.com (see Image 6). This website was a useful and fast tool to generate the most liked posts. Although it was restricted to only take samples from 2016, it is still a large sample range, and only well-established influencers were chosen, who had been posting regularly throughout the year. These collage images for each Instagrammer were downloaded and sorted into separate folders for analysis (Appendix 3). The ranking analysis provided information of what types of

photos were most liked across a range of Instagram accounts, indicating what types of shots influencers may strive to take.



♥ 4,650,735 Likes to 840 posts in 2016  
laurenepbath Thank you for your likes!



♥ 10,509,196 Likes to 326 posts in 2016  
gypsea\_just Thank you for your likes!



♥ 7,987,465 Likes to 200 posts in 2016  
helloemilie Thank you for your likes!



♥ 4,654,182 Likes to 318 posts in 2016  
lebackpacker Thank you for your likes!

Image 6: A selection of the most popular posts by travel influencers, generated by website 2016bestnine.com

Images generated by 2016bestnine.com from [instagram.com/laurenepbath](https://www.instagram.com/laurenepbath), [instagram.com/lebackpacker](https://www.instagram.com/lebackpacker), [instagram.com/helloemilie](https://www.instagram.com/helloemilie) and [instagram.com/lebackpacker](https://www.instagram.com/lebackpacker)

Following the ranking analysis, as well as the ongoing observation of what the accounts posted on a day-to-day basis, 9 categories of photograph types were found. These categories were identified as

- Landscapes (mountains, sunsets, lakes, beaches, roads, bridges, astrophotography)
- Candid selfies (looking at scenery, walking down a path, relaxing in a pool)
- Point of view shots (outstretched hand, cocktail in hand, looking at feet, view from bed)
- Animals (closeups, from afar, riding/feeding)
- Little people (silhouette, standing on the horizon, swimming in distance, walking away)
- Food (flatlays, details)
- Action shots (kayaking, hiking, surfing)
- Aerial shots (landscape shot from drone or helicopter/small plane)
- Luxurious spaces (hotel rooms, dining locations, accommodation pools)

Certain images would often contain more than one element, for example, landscape photos would often contain little people, and point of view shots often contained food in them. The categories have been detailed with a selection of Instagram screenshots for reference in Appendix 4. It is important to acknowledge this representational world to learn how it was represented, and this typology of 9 image types will be readdressed throughout the analysis.

### **Commentaries from Instagrammers online**

Netnography also assisted in finding information about the practice of influencing through online documents. The ‘About Me’ or ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ on blogs that some Instagrammers had contained information about the type of equipment used, clients they had worked with, and tips for other Instagrammers. Additionally, there are several interviews with Instagram influencers on marketing and lifestyle media websites. These provided rich information including how much they are paid, how often they travel, and how they started out. Other online documents include podcasts from Instagrammers, and one Instagrammer hosting an ‘Ask me anything’ day on an Instagram post. I asked 3 questions and got a reply. I also spent some time gleaning the post at the end of the day and extracting questions and answers that were relevant to my research question. There were a number of valuable online resources that could be easily found, although none were extremely descriptive in terms of practice.

### **Interviews**

Interviews helped to gain an impression of what practices were like for other Instagrammers. There is no ‘rule’ of how many interview cases make up a strong sample as it depends on the aim of the study and

what you want to find out from interviewees (Pansiri, 2006; Paton, 1900, in Pansiri, 2006). Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) state: *“The sample is large enough when it can support the desired analysis”* (p. 49, in Pansiri, 2006). The primary data source was the participant observation, where I not only saw the practice first hand. Still, I felt the need to speak with other influencers to find out if the way they worked supported what I had found in the field. It is suggested that combining interviews and observations allows researchers to correlate and connect different perceptions with actions (Schoene, 2011).

### **Approaching interviewees**

It was not difficult to find a way to contact each influencer, as it was possible to message them directly on Instagram or email them via the address usually provided in their Instagram ‘bio’. Email was the preferred method of contact, as it seemed more professional and it better formatted a larger body of text in a neat layout. I personalised each email by looking at each influencer profile to get an understanding of their background, before introducing myself and my project, and asking for an interview.

What was most difficult was convincing influencers to share their ‘behind the scenes’ processes, which are normally kept quite secretive. Despite the fact that I spent the effort to email 33 Instagrammers individually, I received a very low response rate. It appeared that the participants under study are reluctant to share about their practice, which may be why there is not much research about it. This again shows how building trust and gaining initial access to the people under study can be the most challenging part of fieldwork (Moeran, 2007).

As I began noticing how secretive they were, I built some subtle skills and techniques for unlocking knowledge. For example, I would suggest that they were not the only ones revealing their secrets, by noting in the initial email asking for an interview: *“Your comments will become part of my thesis along with a handful of other Influencers like you”*. While conducting interviews, I would mention what another Instagrammer had told me about their processes, which lead them to open up about their own processes in contrast. Another interesting aspect of studying the secretive I found was that most interviewees were curious about my thesis, and agreed to speak with me in order to find out more about the practice themselves.

### **The interviewees**

Interviews of a qualitative nature mean that participants are purposefully selected, rather than through a random sampling or by relying on a large number of participants as in quantitative studies (Creswell,

2014). The Instagrammers emailed were all travel influencers of varying backgrounds and different levels of expertise (some with only 9,000 followers, others with 2 million). However, they were all purposefully selected as viable interview participants, as each of them had potential to provide insights into the practice of influencing.

Only eight replied. Those who replied were curious about the project, and most said they felt flattered that I had asked them. Of the eight who replied, I interviewed four. The others replied to say they were away on a trip but offered to talk 1-2 months later. Yet after the first four interviews, I felt there was little need for further interviews, as I felt I had gathered enough material to support the findings from the participant observation.

The four interviewees were all women aged between 25-40 from different backgrounds. The first interviewee was Solana (referred to as I2 when quoted) from @smrtravels and @hethenomader, an Argentinian who recently moved to Mexico with her boyfriend to start a video production and consultancy company together. The second was Nastasia (I3) from @nastasiapassport, who lives in New York and is of Middle Eastern descent. She also runs @dametraveller, an account that reposts images from solo women travellers with the aim of “*Inspiring and empowering women to travel more, do more and be more*”. The third interview was with Selena (I4) from @finduslost, an account featuring her and her fiancé Jacob, who moved together from Los Angeles to Amsterdam to be able to travel around Europe more easily. The fourth interview was with Joanna (I5), a Brazilian living in Australia, who is behind the more niche travel account called @fitbackpacker.

#### The interviews

Due to the fact that the influencers were scattered all over the world, the interviews were done in a variety of ways. Only Joanna’s interview was done face-to-face, as she was living in the same city as the researcher at the time of research. All other interviewees were asked to participate in a Skype call. The interviews lasted between 30-75 minutes. Time differences had to be factored in, and there was at one point a misunderstanding of what day it was in each country when I was prepared to call, but the interviewee was not.

#### *In person*

Face-to-face interviews would have been preferable for all interviews as in-person interviews are particularly strong for building personal connections and reading nonverbal cues (McGehee, 2012; Seitz,

2016). Joanna's interview was conducted in person and lasted for 75 minutes. We met at a local cafe near her house, providing a comfortable and non-invasive setting. Meeting face-to-face meant I could read body language, expressions and other nonverbal forms of communication while we talked (McGehee, 2012). It also meant she could show me certain procedures of her Instagram practice in person. For example, she showed me where she stored her hashtags list, the analytics of her Instagram account (follower demographics), and also an app called Tribe, which connects brands and influencers to work together. This interview proved how meeting in person can make the interview more dynamic, particularly when discussing something like practice which can be demonstrated in person. I recorded the interview on my phone using the Voice Memos app. It was unfortunate that the visuals of what Joanna was showing on her phone were not recorded.

#### *Video-call*

Body language and vocal and facial expressions were still readable through Skype. I could read expressions and hear if answers were quickly formed, or more difficult to answer. However, I was limited by the frame of the Skype camera, with the webcam limiting a view of body language to only headshots (Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour, 2014). In order to build a trust and rapport for the interviewee to comfortably share feelings and thoughts, it is recommended to reassure participants their voice is heard during a video-call (Seitz, 2016). I did this by nodding, saying "mm" in understanding, and using the interviewee's own words in follow-up questions.

I placed my phone next to the laptop to record it. My voice was much louder than what was recorded through the laptop speakers, but still audible enough for transcription. I also wrote notes at the same time to write down key notes and in case the recording failed, but the sound of rearranging paper interfered with the recording at times. Although there are some challenges with using this method of interview, Skype technology still created a much larger sampling possibility to interview anyone anywhere, as it saves money and travel time (Seitz, 2016). Video-calls are also advantageous because participants may feel more comfortable doing a Skype interview in their own private space (Janghorban et al., 2014; Seitz, 2016).

#### *Email interview*

One interviewee requested the interview questions via email, rather than a Skype call. I tried to convince her it would be quicker and more valuable for us if we had a conversation, but she still preferred to be interviewed over email. Although it did save time by not having to transcribe the conversation, the

answers were not as rich as the other interviews. I did not have the possibility to ask an immediate follow-up question to her answer, unlike in face-to-face situations.

Limitations of email interviews are that they not have the visual advantage and are asynchronous (not in real-time), meaning it is not possible to probe directly or have a synchronous visual interaction (Janghorban et al., 2014; Seitz, 2016). I felt that some of my questions may have come across differently meaning some answers were different to what I had hoped to provoke. James (2007) suggests that the nature of answers in email interviews are different because of the freedom offered to participants in terms of time and space. Interviewees may reflect deeper about their answers than if they were expected to answer synchronously. The socially constructed nature of 'reality' then becomes more transparent through the increased reflexivity of the interviewee (Morgan and Symon, 2004; in James, 2007). I noticed this in the email interview, where answers seemed more scripted and reflected ideologies and moral affirmations.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

Rather than structured and standardised interviews, I chose to use an in-depth interview technique, which is unstructured using a few open-ended questions made to provoke individuals to share their own views and opinions (McGehee, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews can capture human lived experiences through illustrative examples and rich, descriptive data that interviewees reveal in conversation (Pansiri, 2006; McGehee, 2012).

Interviews are useful when it is not possible to directly observe participants (Creswell, 2014). But due to the non-representational interest of photography practices, interviews do not capture the "*bodily, enacted, technologies and 'here-and-now' quality of practices*" like observations do (Larsen, 2008, p. 153). However, interviews can provide information that is more retrospective and reflexive (rather than becoming a telling of the immediate physical doings of a practice) if the interviews "*allow space for the unexpected and people's accounts of how their performances are meaningful*" (Larsen, 2008, p. 153). For this reason, I conducted semi-structured interviews, where I encouraged interviewees to talk freely and in detail about their practice. These conversational interviews were open-ended in nature, where I wanted to elicit 'rambling' from interviewees (Bryman, 2012).

### **Interview guides**

I used interview guides to ask a similar set of questions for all interviews in order to compare their answers later. Due to the semi-structured, in-depth nature of the interviews, conversations would usually

flow off course from the interview guides. The guide was made up of four main questions, headed by some ice-breaker questions, and finished with some concluding statements and a final thank you statement. This is a recommended interview protocol by Creswell (2014), who also notes that probe questions accompanying four to five main questions help “to follow up and ask individuals to explain their ideas in more detail or to elaborate on what they have said” (p. 244). I was able to probe for details about shooting process, editing procedures and Instagram strategies by asking follow-up questions if they had not expressed as much rich detail as I had hope. The guide helped to steer the conversation so that by the end of the discussion, all questions had been covered. Table 2 shows the basic interview guide.

<p><b>Shooting and editing photos.</b></p> <p>How long does it take to get a photo at one spot? How many takes of a particular shot will you make? How do you pre-plan shoots (location, time of day)? If you're in the photo, how much do you prepare in relation to the outfit you wear, doing your hair and makeup? What equipment do you use on photo shoots? How much help do you get from other people (taking photos of you, modelling)? How long does it take to edit your photos? What hardwares and softwares do you use for editing? Describe a day on an influencer trip. Is it exhausting, or actually like a holiday?</p>
<p><b>Working with tourism organisations.</b></p> <p>Have you had paid trips? Or just accommodation/tours for free? Tell me what it's like working with tourism organisations/hotels/operators. Do they approach you, or you approach them? How much negotiation power do you have in terms of what kind of content you cover, what kind of accommodation or activities you take part in? How much do you have to match their brand? Do you compromise your own brand? How long was your recent [Romania/Mexico/Switzerland] trip? What was each day like?</p>
<p><b>IG content</b></p> <p>Some travel IGers have been criticised for glamorising their travels – following photo trends (e.g. bikini + cocktail + exotic beach = many likes) and excluding tough moments during travels. What do you think about this? What do you want to convey with your images? How natural, or how posed are your photos? What are your hashtag processes?</p>
<p><b>Travel IGer as a career.</b></p> <p>When did you start this account? How did you know how to become an influencer? Do you have another job right now? How often are you travelling?</p>

Table 2: The interview guide

Questions relating to the practice of shooting and editing photos were of primary importance, and thus had the most amount of follow-up questions. The questions were altered slightly for each interviewee. Questions about the practice of shooting photos were different, for example, for the travelling couple (where one takes photos and the other poses) compared to the influencer travelling on her own.

I researched each interviewee thoroughly beforehand by looking at their Instagram profiles and blogs (if possible), so I could ask more specific questions, rather than basic information I could have found out for

myself beforehand. For example, I would mention a specific photo or destination they had recently been to, in order for them to give a contextualised account of the kinds of practices involved. Providing a scenario for discussion like this can stimulate interviewees to think of ideas and points of view in different ways (Bryman, 2012).

### **Transcribing**

Transcribing interviews was a long process, but it helped to document the interviews for analysis later. This meant I could read, search for, and highlight comments more easily in written form than if I just listened and relistened to the interviews. As well as documenting what was said, transcribing removes less relevant information from what was collected, such as long pauses, interruptions to the connection, and ‘umms’ and ‘ahhs’ (Bryman, 2012). The transcripts can be found in Appendices 5, 6, 7 and 8.

## **ANALYSING DATA**

### **Familiarisation with the data**

Analysis began with organising and preparing the data, including transcribing interviews, typing up field notes and cataloguing netnographic documents and visual material. This was all done throughout the data collection process. The next step was to read or look at the material, reflect upon it, and get a general sense of the information and to gain an impression of its overall meaning (Creswell, 2014; Beach, 2005). Reading and re-reading the collected materials is important to become very familiar with concepts before proceeding with analysis (Hannam & Knox, 2011).

### **Coding**

After becoming familiar with the material, researchers apply the process of coding to thematize information and draw out meanings and significance of materials collected (Creswell, 2014; Hannam & Knox, 2011). Descriptions and themes should emerge from the coding which indicate important dimensions of the phenomena under study, helping researchers to make more sense of it (Hannam & Knox, 2011; Creswell, 2014). This is done by affixing codes or categories to the material, in this case, the field notes, interview transcripts, online documents and Instagram posts. I used a method of colour coding, where I assigned a different colour to different categories and digitally highlighted texts in the colour to assign its category. This proved a convenient way to visualise and find details in particular categories.

## **Exploratory discussion**

From here, I went into a process of abstracting and comparing. This meant the coded data was sorted and compared to find similarities and differences to bring the coded material into more general conceptual constructs, patterns or processes (Kozinets, 2013b). These themes were used to guide an exploratory discussion in the analysis, meeting the aims of the research to explore the practice of Instagram influencing in tourism. Findings are not made to be confirmed or rejected, but rather to further explore the case:

*“The aim is to arrive at an understanding of events that can be expressed in terms of a general statement about variations and patterns that have been noted within data and have been reflexively checked against individual empirical instances (in an existing data or in a newly produced material) in terms of the ways in which they are representative of a particular idea.”*

Beach, 2005, p. 9

The themes have been expressed in the analysis chapter as different “general statements” that explore the similarities and differences between the empirical instances that were experienced during the participant observation, and the data from other sources. Through this analytic process, it is possible to explore the practice of Instagramming with the intention of understanding the rich and situated particularities of how travel Instagrammers are skilled professionals, with distinct material practices and specific competences that help produce tourist images.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There were a few limitations that may have affected the research. The first is that I was limited to the segment of English-speaking Instagrammers, due to that being my predominant language. As Joanna mentioned, there are many travel influencers from Brazil, as well as (undoubtedly) from many other non-English speaking countries around the world. This means I am limited to represent a segment of influencers who may enact practices differently to other countries, cultures and communities because of the different ways images, materials and competences circulate there (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

Resources also put limitations on the research. As mentioned, I was restricted to approaching only Australian influencers working on Australian jobs as candidates for the participant observation. Had I

been able to afford travel to other destinations, I would have contacted more influencers and potentially joined more than one trip. This would also require more time for the research. The single trip with Lauren proved to be an extremely insightful research method where I not only learnt about her practices but also about other influencers through the stories she told and when comparing other practices to her own.

Working as a single researcher can also be considered a limitation, as there is a possibility that alternative interpretations from other researchers, would have further helped make more credible conclusions (Decrop, 2004). However, had there been more than one person on the research trip with Lauren, she may have felt uncomfortable being outnumbered, as well as it causing inconveniences for some activities that were better suited for just her and I (kayaking, for example).

There was also a chance that as I did not meet Lauren prior to the participant observation she would have felt uncomfortable around me, especially knowing that she was being observed. However, we had a close social location and spent much time together bonding over casual conversations, which created a relaxed environment (Jorgensen, 1989b). Additionally, she was there on a job, so this would have still been her priority concern during the trip.

Another limitation of the study is the absence of male Instagrammers. Their practices might differ from those of females, and this was information I did not obtain in detail. Females do dominate over male accounts in travel Instagramming (see Appendix 1), but males still hold an influential part of the market. The travel account with most followers — @doyoutravel, with 2.3 million followers — is male. However, I was able to find some information about his practices through his website's FAQ page. I did email males and females, but only females responded. This could be due to the fact that females may relate to me more due to our close social location.

It could also be because Instagrammers proved to be very secretive about their practice, as mentioned earlier. The secrecy of their practice comes from the fact that Instagrammers feel competitive and do not want others to know how they take their photos or approach organisations to work with, as I learned through Lauren. The secrecy limited the number of responses I got to interview requests, although also became data in itself, as I learnt about this aspect of being an Instagram influencer.

## **VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

This study is based on interpretation and is open to being questioned by other interpretations (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The researcher must, therefore, be ready to defend its validity claims. Outlining the methodology, reflecting upon it and providing research material in the appendices make the paper transparent for the reader. This transparency is achieved further as I clearly position myself as a values-led, subjective and situated researcher. The propositions made in the analysis conform with the field notes and interview transcripts, making the research credible (Decrop, 2004).

Triangulation is “*probably the most comprehensive way of building trustworthiness into the research design*” (Decrop 2004, p. 7). This is because it limits personal and methodological biases by including different perspectives and information sources (Decrop, 2004). This project uses both data triangulation (different data sources like observational field notes, interviews from different people, online documents) and method triangulation (different qualitative methods).

Reflexivity as a researcher is also important in being careful to avoid disclosing only positive findings and to include all important insights and a full range of findings when analysing data (Creswell, 2014). Using rich, thick descriptions and clarifying bias can make the research more credible (Creswell, 2014).

## **METHODOLOGY IN SUMMARY**

This chapter concludes by verifying the validity and reliability of the research methods. Outlining the particularities and processes involved in the participant observation, interviews, and netnography denote how insights and understandings of the practice of Instagram influencing were made. The epistemological and ontological stance of the research highlights that this research does not intend to uncover universal truths, as ‘reality’ is constructed and subjectively understood. Rather, the aim of the research is to investigate the situated practice of Instagramming and the distinct material landscapes and competences that help produce tourist images. The findings will be analytically discussed in relation to existing theories in order to lead to new understandings of the practice and of tourism in general.

## ANALYSIS

This chapter is split into three sections. Each section contributes to the idea that Instagram influencers have through their professionalisation of the practice mastered the art of touristic Instagramming. By demonstrating ‘best practice’ to a large network of followers, influencers implicitly encourage tourists to take certain types of photos and use holidays as opportunities to enhance self-image through Instagram.

The first section will look into the situated performances and practices behind Instagram influencing. This will include an exploration of the photographic practices, editing, and the embodied experiences of Instagram influencing. This section addresses the interrelated materials, competences, and meanings of the practice (Shove & Pantzar, 2005), outlining the strategies, tactics, requisite material equipment and rationales behind the photographic and editing practices. It was found that the situated performances involve advanced and expensive technological landscapes, as well as tiring, awkward and uncomfortable experiences. Interestingly, these are practices influencers withstand in order to create images that make the travelling appear effortless and aesthetically appealing. The practicalities of the creation of tourism images are largely unexplored, so it is interesting to see how certain representations of tourism are created.

The second section will explore how touristic Instagram practices have been professionalised by influencers. They are paid to travel and take photos, and so refine Instagramming from an amateur to an expert level. Their marketing strategies including Instagram tactics and business skills contribute to this professionalisation of the practice, and this involves political implications and economic capital. One could imagine that influential status means influencers have the power to do and share whatever they please, yet they still conform to creating and circulating certain hegemonic versions of idealised tourist images. Their commercial and self-interested motivations in relation to this will be discussed.

The third and final section will critically discuss the practice of Instagram influencing more broadly in relation to tourism. The empirical research of this study contributes to existing theories on the creation of tourist images, as well as the gaze. Certain tourist images have always been created and shared through other mediums, but the democratic and global nature of internet technologies give opportunity for individuals to contribute to the body of visual communication in their own ways. Yet it is found that influencers, tourists, and DMOs alike post positive and often glamorised images online. Influencers create

and distribute these idealised hegemonic images and through their prominence, they are implicitly exercising power in creating standards and reinforcing how tourism photography should look.

If tourist photography is about self-presentation and identity management (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011), then we see that influencers are further encouraging tourists to use their holidays as an opportunity to refine their impression management. The research, then, creates new knowledges and understandings of Instagramming as a topical tourism phenomenon in which tourists are willing to compromise their embodied, situated experiences in order to create representations of an ideal self. Certain experiences, locations and things are marginalised if they do not conform to these representations, as tourists continue to privilege their gaze towards the extraordinary. This gaze and resulting tourist images are produced and consumed with motivations of self-interest, and the consumption of tourism is resultantly also affected by these motivations.

#### **INSTAGRAMMING: SITUATED PERFORMANCES, MATERIAL SET-UPS, STRATEGIES & TACTICS**

After studying the community of Instagram influencers in the travel niche, a typology of 9 kinds of Instagram images was found. Patterns and trends of photo types can be recognised in what kind of content the images contain (landscapes, little people, animals, food), the mood they insinuate (candid selfies, action shots, luxurious spaces) or by photographic perspectives (aerial, point of view shots). Influencers might not post all kinds of these photos, but most use a variety to create a diverse collection of photographs of their travels.

These types of representations are worth acknowledging so we can understand how they are created. Photography is an important part of Instagram influencing. Almost all influencers take their photos with a professional camera and accumulate a large inventory of camera equipment, which has almost become requisite equipment for the practice of influencing. Images will then be manipulated in editing software programs on a laptop and then transferred to the smartphone to be uploaded to Instagram. The material expense of influencers already greatly exceeds the intended purpose of Instagram, which is to take photos, edit, and share images in the one smartphone application.

## Material setups

### Camera equipment

The material set up for influencers is comprehensive and very technical. Gear that influencers are likely to use for their photography is listed here:

- Cameras (professional grade, varying brands such as Sony, Canon, Olympus, Nikon)
- GoPro camera
- Spare batteries
- Charger
- Lens cleaner wipes
- Tripods (full-size and Gorriapod flexible mini tripods)
- Remote control (shutter cable or wireless)
- Lenses
- Lense filters
- Camera bag
- Stabiliser
- Microphone
- Underwater housing
- Drone
- Selfie Stick
- Memory cards
- Laptop
- Hard Drive

This equipment helps photographers take better images than smartphone cameras as images can be better controlled and optimised. The professional cameras and image enhancing equipment like tripods, lenses and lense filters make it political in how they shape how reality looks. The photographer manipulates how the image represents reality by using the equipment to frame, exclude, enhance, distort or make more vivid the surroundings (Larsen, 2008).

Image 7 was taken during the participant observation field trip. It shows the influencer, Lauren, wearing a camera bag and taking photos with the camera mounted on the tripod during sunrise. A remote is used to release the shutter so the camera remains completely still during a long aperture setting, resulting in a sharp image with intense colours in low light. She later took out another camera and carried it around her neck, switching between cameras to take different photos. Camera bags can weigh 10-12kg, which can become a burden when walking for a long time or over difficult terrain to get to a location. Such experiences on the field trip included a walk along ocean rock pools in complete darkness before dawn and a 30-minute hike clambering over fallen trees and boulders upstream to get to a waterfall.

Yet these materials are necessary in order to create the high-quality, aesthetic images influencers share on Instagram. The images are, therefore, not innocent but caught up in politics; manipulated with materials by an individual that alters and enhances how the images are captured. Images are framed intentionally and made sharper, brighter, more vivid in order to be more aesthetic.



*Image 7: Lauren photographing a sunrise scene with camera bag on back*

*Author's own*

### **Editing tools**

Editing involves further manipulation and enhancement of photos. Photos are commonly edited either in Lightroom or Photoshop, where influencers purchase a use license to download the programs on their laptops. Brightness, contrast, and colours are adjusted on images to make them more aesthetic. Some even go so far as to crop out or cover inconsistencies in photos, such as people, marks on the wall, or trash. We see here how images can be manipulated to be presented in the most desirable way, and where negative aspects are not ignored, but intentionally removed from images (Robinson, 2014; Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). The avoidance and removal of trash, the ugly, and imperfections demonstrate how certain visualisations of travelling are marginalised. There are rationales and tactics behind the creation of tourism images that are glamorised, positive, even euphoric, and made to evoke admiration from audiences (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015).

Although camera gear and editing programs are requisite to creating aesthetic images, a practice is made up of more than just 'things' and their use and interconnects also with bodily and mental activities,

know-how and motivations (Reckwitz, 2002). Editing practices, for instance, demonstrate an integration of materials (the software, images), forms of competence (knowledge of how to use the program), and meanings (intentionality, aesthetic rationales) that make up a practice (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). Images are transferred methodically from the camera to a laptop where data is handled between hardware and software using memory banks, cables, adapters and wireless transfer technologies like AirDrop or Dropbox. Images are stored externally on hard drives in organised folders, of which there are duplicates for back-up. These are systematic and organised practices that allow for efficient processes of editing.

The practical act of editing — enhancing, removing, cropping — is a powerful example of how tourism images are subject to power relations, technological tools, and aesthetic rationales. Influencers admit to having obsessive tendencies of how images should look, taking particular care in maintaining consistency in colours and contrasts, checking details, and removing aspects in the images to make it look more ‘aesthetic’. Images are manipulated with precision, and travel is therefore represented in favourable ways where certain representations are not permitted to be represented in images. When considering that representations are not fixed, passive or timeless, but that they are created and able to travel and perform as active objects that organise gazes (Larsen & Urry, 2011), we can see how influencers create and reinforce ideas of realities (such as destinations that are more idyllic, pristine, trash- and crowd-free than they truly are).

### **Constant impression management**

The images travel in and out of virtual sites — from camera to laptop to smartphone — and selected and adjusted in systematic and controlled ways. After editing, photos will be transferred to the influencer’s smartphone where they can be posted on Instagram. This brings in the need for influencers to be constantly connected to the internet via local sim cards or wifi access. Most influencers post 1-3 photos per day, but images are not usually posted chronologically or in real time. Rather, they are posted when followers are most active and according to how it complements the rest of the recent feed. Applications or other manual and meticulous ways can be used to test which image to post next depending on how it harmonises with the colours and content of the influencer’s existing image feed.

This gives an indication of how influencers aim to control impressions others have of them through selecting and organising images to share (Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011). Dinhopf and Gretzel (2016) note that the rise of the selfie has led to tourist photography becoming a stylised performance of the self. Yet it appears that influencers are thoughtfully stylising their overall Instagram profile, not just their selfies.

Maintaining an aesthetic in their profile shows how ‘doing influencing’ is a process through which images, meanings, and ideologies are constantly reproduced (Shove & Pantzar, 2005).

It is suggested that when tourists pose for the camera, they have present, future, and imagined audiences in mind (Larsen & Urry, 2011). This is true for influencers too, although they are thinking about the entire photographic and editing process and how it would appeal to their current followers as well as clients. This reflects the idea that tourists are thinking about impression management in the entire photo posting process: deciding to bring a camera, choosing what to photograph, how to frame images, an initial culling stage and a final selection of ideal images to upload (Lo & McKercher, 2015). People are more interested in content that is positive and aesthetically appealing, and such posts can evoke admiration and jealousy from audiences (Lo, 2012; Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). Influencers are therefore solidifying certain hegemonic representations of tourism that marginalise mundane, ugly representations in favour of extraordinary, aesthetic and positive images.

### **Image compositions**

#### **Photogenic locations**

Many influencers admit that there are some places in the world where it is impossible to take a bad photo. But they also confess to searching for locations that look interesting, luxurious or unique to photograph. Influencers often spend time researching a destination thoroughly and choosing them based on how photogenic they are:

*“I love going to places that are really Instagrammable, or very pretty to photograph. Sometimes I choose a destination only because I saw a house or a hotel or an architectural place or a tree or something that is really unique in the world that I am dying to photograph.” (I4)*

It is unlikely they would photograph or even visit a mundane or unattractive location at a destination, as it would not comply with their standard of photography. Although regular tourists also do not photograph something if they consider it “*nothing special*” (Lo, 2012), influencers have higher expectations of what would make a good photo. Audiences expect tourists to share extraordinary photos of their images, as do broader tourist conventions that “*tacitly remind tourists of the extraordinary hence encourage the search and the capturing of it*” (Lo & McKercher, 2015, p. 114). Influencers, then, feel this pressure on a larger scale due to the fact they are being paid to produce extraordinary images to impress audiences and also

prove their professional worth. This means that certain images might not be shared in order to maintain a self-image and manage expectations (Lo, 2012).

When travelling with Lauren, for example, there were some attractions we both found fascinating but were not worth photographing: the quaint harbour with boats bobbing in the water was unphotogenic because it was low tide, the kids jumping into a swimming pool made from an old quarry had murky water, and the boutique accommodation Lauren stayed in was too difficult to photograph without proper lighting setups. As demonstrated here, there are some locations and experiences that are marginalised by influencers because they are not photogenic enough. Deciding when, how, and whether to take photos while travelling reveals how image selection occurs at different stages of the trip (Lo, 2012).

### **Strategies and tactics**

There are a number of tactics used to create interesting compositions and successful photos for Instagram. One followed by most influencers is shooting photos at sunrise or sunset. During these times the light is less harsh, the surroundings glow in the low light, and the sky and clouds turn different colours. Sunrise photos call for very early starts as influencers need to get ready, drive and/or walk to the location and set up gear all before sunrise. Another advantage of taking photos at sunrise is the lack of crowds in busy tourist areas.

The embodied efforts to take these photos are usually unnoticed, yet there is often an exhaustive process to set up a good composition, including the organisation of camera angles, bodies, and props. Note how the influencers pose in Image 8: they sit in positions that do not obstruct the objects they are handling, but casually (yet explicitly) show they are drinking tea and enjoying shisha in Abu Dhabi. The pillows and outfits are in warm, natural colours to match the desert setting and the glowing light of sunset. The composition and framing of the image is carefully curated: honouring the rule of thirds, the position of the sun just over the horizon, the symmetry of the bodies, table and pillows aligning with the skyline behind them.

These images are beautiful, candid, and look effortless. They embody certain cultural values in them, and through their practice, influencers create, reinforce, and reinvent these values in their photos. This candid, relaxed, cool character that is performed through their poses may then be considered a ‘socially desirable’ image of the ideal self that influencers commonly aim to achieve (Goffman, 1959, in Lo & McKercher,

2015). Yet, this image like many other requires much consideration and coordination that almost contradicts the relaxed and candid representations.



*Image 8: A candid duo-selfie of an influencer couple, who pose in a thoughtfully framed and composed shot  
[instagram.com/doyoutravel](https://www.instagram.com/doyoutravel)*

In my fieldwork, I experienced a number of different photoshoots involving the careful organisation of props. One was a sunset shoot with a mob of kangaroos at sunset, where Lauren crouched low in the grass to take photos of kangaroos (Image 9) and then asked me to chase them so they would jump across the grass, blocking the setting sun for a backlit effect (Image 10). This was done in order to create an extraordinary image of a kangaroo in beautiful light extending its limbs in a graceful jump, rather than the more ordinary, yet natural, image of the kangaroos who were hunched low and grazing.



Image 9: Lauren crouching low in the grass, photographing kangaroos handheld with a long lens and no tripod.

Author's own



Image 10: The Instagram outcome of the kangaroos. Note she acknowledges the process in the caption

[instagram.com/laurenepbath](https://www.instagram.com/laurenepbath)

When travelling, even mealtimes were opportunities for making Instagram content. Based on the interior of a restaurant, the menu, and how the food was plated, Lauren would consider taking food photos. Although it was the two of us, we ordered three meals plus sides according to what dishes looked most visually appealing. The staff were asked to bring all food and drink out at the same time, and when it arrived Lauren would spend some time arranging everything with props on the table. She would then stand on her chair and take photos directly from above (Image 11). She took photos for around 5 minutes before starting to eat. The resulting Instagram image can be seen in Image 12.



*Image 11: The staging and physical effort exerted in order to capture an appealing food shot*

*Author's own*



Image 12: The three dishes and pairs of cutlery allude to a breakfast sitting of three people, while there were only two  
[instagram.com/laurenepbath](https://www.instagram.com/laurenepbath)

Understanding the situated practices involved in taking such a photo teaches us about the careful curation that goes into the construction of Instagram photos. This is often to the detriment of experience, where the influencer is preoccupied with taking a good photo and their food is likely to go cold, or choosing meals that look good as opposed to what they truly desire. This suggests that influencers may not just be posting positive experiences on their social media, but more so images that look good. Here we are given new understandings of how the representational world of Instagram images is created by witnessing the doing of practices and seeing how practitioners describe and act in their world (Gregory et al., 2009). This, in turn, gives us insights into the rationales and performances involved in creating the representations.

### Modelling

The way bodies are posed in images has become part of the typology of images, notably in 'candid selfies'. The fact that this kind of photograph is continually reproduced in different influencer image feeds sees it become an identifiable and enduring element of the practice. This is an outcome of active and creative practitioners who may each be appropriating the practice in their own ways, yet still conforming

to particular elements of the practice (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). Here we see how influencers contribute to the ontological politics of the practice; their individual efforts to post images that are similar to other influencers realises a certain ‘way of being’ an influencer.

### **Material setup of the candid selfie**

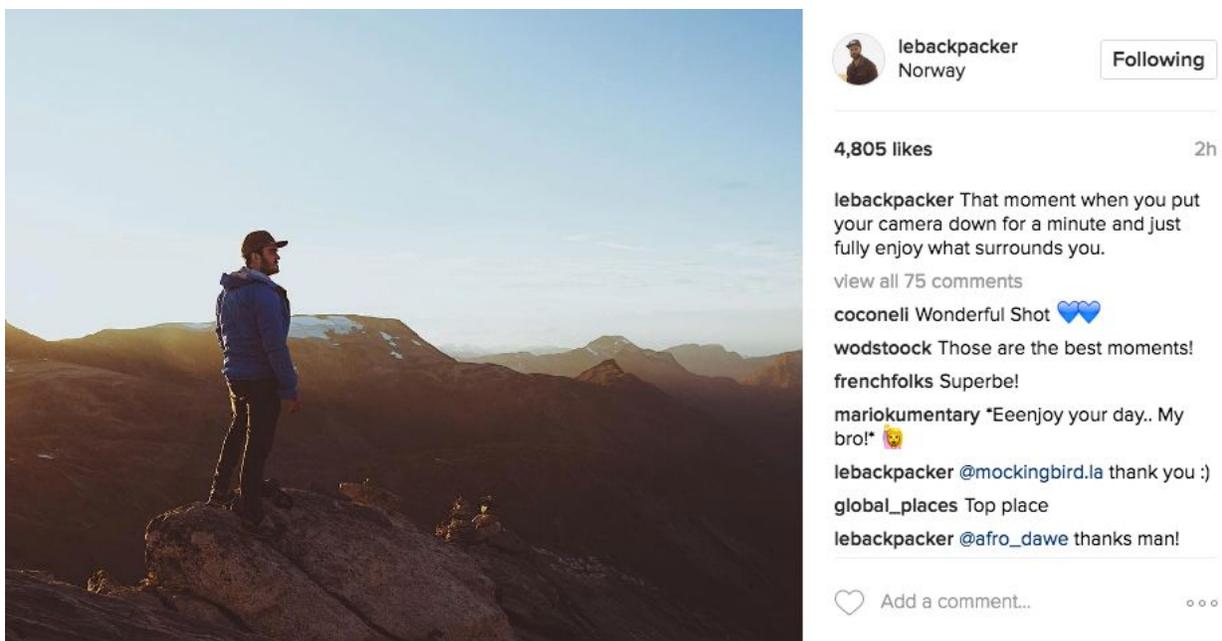
Taking photos of the self while travelling solo requires a material set up where the camera is mounted on a tripod and the shutter is released using a self-timer or remote. It also means outfit choice is a deliberation for influencers and they often choose clothing that suits the location. Many influencers feel shy and even uncomfortable about taking photos of themselves. While some are perfectly comfortable being in the photo even while travelling alone, others feel self-conscious and awkward:

*“There [were] so many people all the time, and if you try to take a picture by yourself or with like the auto remote control or whatever, they would all look at you. It's like, "Come on, you're taking pictures all the time. Why are you looking at me this funny?" It was a little awkward. So, yeah. Maybe... it's not easy when you're by yourself.” (I2)*

Although is not unusual for other visitors at the tourist destination to take photos, to some, *“photographing is a mocked and questionable tourist activity”* (Larsen & Urry, 2011). It is likely the comprehensive setup, explicit effort, and perceived self-indulgence to take a candid selfie that onlookers find curious. The inquiry and observation from onlookers can feel judgemental, disdainful and intimidating to influencers. Additionally, some influencers feel lonely and disconnected from a community from travelling continuously, resonating with ideas that travelling often can create liquid identities and feelings of alienation (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). There is a conflict then between the effortless, candid and cool image that influencers project and the uncomfortable, awkward feelings they endure in order to take the images.

The loneliness and humiliation are often alleviated when travelling with other influencers who are in the same position. Several influencers travel with their partners who are usually also influencers. This also enables them to take photos of each other, as well as share equipment, accommodation and the same itinerary. If they choose to be photographed together, then the tripod and self-timer or remote are again required.

Some tourists would rather hide that they have performed for the camera, and pose as if unaware of the camera, caught in an intimate moment (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). This is reflected in influencer photos where bodies are thoughtfully choreographed and positioned; pictured in a flattering way, strategically placed in frame yet still generating a candid and casual mood. The caption of Image 13 is therefore rather ironic: *“The moment when you put your camera down for a minute and just fully enjoy what surrounds you”*. Undoubtedly influencers must experience and enjoy these moments, but in this image it is likely that the camera has been set up on a tripod a few metres away, positioned to capture the horizon and rock ledge with the sun outside of the left frame, where the influencer may have trialled several positions and stances, taking photos with a self-timer or remote.



*Image 13: An influencer claiming to enjoy his surroundings without his camera while photographing himself*  
*instagram.com/lebackpacker*

Some influencers prefer to ask others to pose in their photos. This requires people who are of the right demographic who are willing to pose and are usually other influencers or companions on trips. The influencer then needs to direct the ‘model’ to pose candidly: *“I don't prefer too much of a posed shot so I usually ask my subject to walk naturally or I make them laugh so they can relax”* (13). I encountered several participative experiences during the field trip when being asked to pose in different shoots by Lauren. One location was a waterfall that had a 2-metre deep swimming hole beneath it (Image 14).



*Image 14: Scout's Falls and swimming hole used as a location during the influencer trip with Lauren  
Author's own*

The photoshoot took around 3 hours, as it involved a 30-minute walk to the location, setting up the camera in the waterproof housing, changing into swimwear and a long time spent in the water trialling camera settings, angles and poses. I swam back and forth in different parts of the swimming hole, Lauren testing different angles and settings. She directed me to blow bubbles, have my arms by my side, swim away from the camera, and point my toes to elongate my legs. This experience made me very self-aware of how I positioned my body and required some concentration and coordination. A selection of the shots are displayed collectively in Image 15, of which Lauren posted two to her Instagram (15D and 15E).



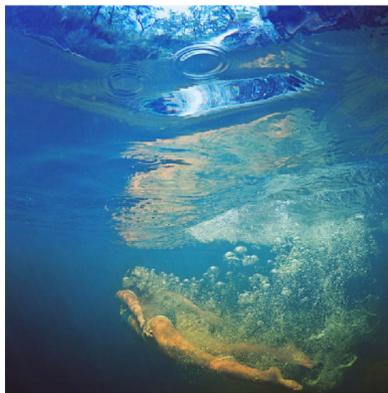
15A



15B



15C



15D



15E



*Image 15: A collection of photos taken by Lauren Bath at one location on the influencer trip Lauren Bath and [instagram.com/laurenepbath](https://www.instagram.com/laurenepbath)*

The embodied experiences of this photoshoot included driving to the location, wearing backpacks, hiking, changing clothes, swimming and modelling while swimming. It shows the effort involved and energy exerted in order to capture a few photos for Instagram. There are advanced technologies involved and much time is spent setting equipment up, adjusting settings and photographing different compositions.

Despite this, the nature of the candid pose means that the model appears not to be performing for the camera, but is photographed while they are preoccupied doing something else (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). Most commonly, we see romantic captures of influencers wandering away from the camera, gazing at a view, or sitting in a relaxing location, as well as more strenuous activities like swimming, hiking, skiing, standup paddleboarding, kayaking or cycling. Influencers are performing a number of practices that require physical effort as well as attention to the self and surroundings: an influencer could easily be

photographing, walking and modelling at the same time, all while pretending the camera is not there. This shows how the practice of influencing is caught up in many other practices (Lamers et al., 2016).

Influencers will usually shoot a location for at least 15 minutes, and up to 2 hours. There is a commitment to stay as long as necessary:

*“I stay there for as long as I need, because I know I'm gonna take a perfect picture if I wait. So sometimes it could be an hour, two hours. Sometimes it could be just fifteen minutes” (I2)*

*“I try different perspectives so about 5-10 shots in each location so I have some to choose from” (I3).*

Photoshoots usually involve time spent ‘waiting around’: for models or animals to act naturally or pose in a certain way, for sunrises or sunsets to ‘pop’ or for the clouds to move. This can become draining, again revealing that influencers are willing to endure uncomfortable situations in order to take good photos for Instagram. The resulting images and captions rarely allude to their discomfort, showing a controversy between lived experience and representations on social media.

### **All day on the job**

Image 16 shows how influencers use spare moments in their day on Instagram posting, replying to comments, and liking other people’s photos. While tourists — particularly from higher income segments — use their smartphones for much if not all of their holiday for communication, entertainment, facilitation and information search (Williams & Lew, 2015; Wang et al., 2014), influencers actually depend on having a charged smartphone with constant internet access while on a trip. I noticed with Lauren her smartphone was used not only for Instagramming, but also to navigate to new locations, check what was next on the itinerary, communicate with the client at the tourism council, and to call operators who were taking us on tours.

One influencer highlights that it is a “24/7 task” to be an influencer, “*meaning I am never able to fully switch off and disconnect from work (even when everyone thinks I am on a constant ‘holiday’)*” (polkadotpassport.com, 2017). As mentioned earlier, even mealtimes are Instagram opportunities. This dedication shows that influencers compromise even the most fundamental human functions like eating and resting for their lifestyle as influencers. This provides an interesting way of looking at Urry’s tourist gaze, which suggests that the tourism experience is a way to escape from the mundane and everyday life:

influencers are in fact turning the tourism experience into their everyday life, and in turn, they endure mundane routines they feel are inescapable. This reflects in a unique way how the tourist gaze is expected to fade as the boundary between tourism and everyday life becomes more blurred (Larsen & Urry, 2011).



*Image 16: Lauren on Instagram while set up and ready to shoot, waiting for the sunrise*

*Author's own*

There is a conflict of whether they truly experience a holiday as a tourist would, or if they are too preoccupied thinking about photoshoots. Some influencers maintain “*Oh no it felt like a normal holiday. Especially because I met loads of people, and I would be taking photos anyway*” (I5) or “*generally we're not going anywhere just to take photos. We're going somewhere we would normally go*” (I4). But many state that they travel to a destination seeking ‘Instagrammable’ locations and find themselves exhausted after waking up before sunrise every day and filling a day with activities. Still, the influencers enjoy the trips:

*“So as burnt out as I am like when I get back here, I feel pretty satisfied. Like even if I didn't relax, I still usually enjoyed the location so much, so it was worth it.”* (I4)

It can be mentally draining to constantly navigate new areas and different cultures, as well as physically tiring:

*“Oh my god yes it's so exhausting. It is exhausting. It's not anymore a vacation. It's never– everybody thinks you are on vacation because you're travelling” (I2)*

*“[laughs] it's pretty exhausting. [...] it's funny because the two-day trips feel like they're a week because you cram so much in, and it's pretty crazy.” (I4)*

A typical work day on the influencer trip with Lauren went from 5am–9pm; photographing sunrise, doing and photographing activities, mealtimes, sunset shoots. She requests that her influencer trips do not have a fully packed schedule, and sets herself an early bedtime of around 9pm in order to get enough rest for sunrise shoots. Days usually involved long transit phases driving the hire car between activities, photo locations or new accommodation. Between travelling and doing activities, she also needed 1-2 hours per day to edit photos and almost every moment in between on Instagram.

It has been argued that *“the obligation of taking photos for the future audiences can be a burden at times, but can also be an opportunity to enhance and perform an ideal self”* (Lo & McKercher, 2015, p. 114). But for the influencer, it is not only taking photos that is a burden at times, but the whole itinerary where the influencer is required, rather than given an opportunity, to enhance and perform their ideal self. Due to the standards of photography and the tactics of sharing appealing images, influencers have a pressure to maintain their online identity constantly.

## **THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF INSTAGRAM PRACTICES**

Studying the practices involved in photographing, editing and posting for Instagram helps illustrate the situated performances, rationales and strategies involved. At the core of the practice is creating appealing content for Instagram. This ultimately contributes to the marketable package of the influencer, which alongside business skills and marketing strategies leads to the professionalisation of Instagramming.

The practice of Instagramming has been reinvented in a way that individuals can now monetise from it, showing how practices are constantly evolving and emerging from existing ones (Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Gregory et al., 2009). One influencer comments on this: *“An application that used to be a fun and social thing that you do just to have fun and kill time – now it has become all business”* (12). Instagramming has been reinvented into a profession, where influencers “do” travelling and Instagramming as their job. This ‘doing it for a living’ makes their practice distinct from amateurs (Weckert & Lucas, 2013). Travelling and Instagramming is less of a leisure activity, but rather something that influencers think strategically about and approach with a professional yet self-interested attitude.

### **The economic landscape**

It is said that influencers only begin to see a steady income after 1-2 years. Influencers need to have a high socioeconomic status to begin with to afford their own travel and buy the necessary photographic equipment. A particular mindset is also required to consider the initial spending as an investment needed to create content and build a prominent Instagram profile. Interestingly, once they are more famous, influencers are often gifted or loaned cameras and equipment. The more successful the influencer, the less economic capital is required.

As part of the expanse of gear listed at the beginning of this chapter, influencers will usually purchase spare batteries, memory cards, several lenses, and even back-up cameras and tripods. Gear is insured in case it is damaged or stolen, and influencers prefer to have a personal driver or a hire car rather than use public transport in order to protect their equipment. This shows how new practices (such as getting an international driver’s license, driving different hire cars, learning international road rules) can be triggered, but also points to the socio-economic position of influencers. Influencing is predominantly a Western phenomenon for the affluent. It is more viable for those who are prominent or affluent already, demonstrating how influencing is caught up in political and economical landscapes that privilege those with higher socioeconomic status.

### **A self-invented profession**

Before becoming influencers, most individuals were amateur Instagrammers whose posts attracted a large number of followers over time. Many state that it was the followers that encouraged them to pursue a self-directed career in influencing, as they noticed they were becoming more popular and saw opportunities in using the platform more strategically. Others mentioned they wanted to make money while travelling, and so thought about how they could combine travelling, freelancing remotely, and

Instagramming. This reflects how the very nature of pursuing a profession entails self-interests in salary, status and power (Evetts, 2014).

To 'do' a practice, the sense, meanings and competences of the practice need to be learned and acquired (Lamers et al., 2016). Most influencers admit that they 'make it up as they go', and learn through trials and errors. Influencers use professional skills when pitching for jobs, creating business reports, negotiating with clients and managing their own invoicing and accounting. Such competences and bodies of knowledge related to professions are usually learned through formal education or training (Evetts, 2014; Boughton, 2013). Yet most influencers are self-taught, reflecting how know-how of a practice can be acquired through trial and error or learning by doing as well as instruction (Lamers & et., 2016).

Instagram influencing in the travel niche is a self-invented and self-regulated practice, where most skills are self-taught. New occupations are usually pioneered by individuals who are self-employed, who can enjoy the perks of exciting work, high earnings and the chance to shape the profession (Crosby, 2002). Lauren could be considered a pioneer as she was one of the first Instagrammers hired by tourism boards as an influencer. She admits that it required a risk to quit her previous career path in order to invent a new career through Instagram for herself, but it paid off. Without having other influencers to learn from, Lauren went through an improvised process learning tactics and strategies along the way.

As the number of influencers and tourism organisations hiring them increases, it has evolved into a professionalised practice. Influencing, as a practice and thus as a specific social phenomenon "*exists as long as it is performed and sustained by people with particular skills and practical concerns*" (Lamers et al., 2016, p. 54). The performances by different people reflect how realities are produced and made from social relations (Law & Urry, 2004).

Strategies and tips about influencing can be found in online resources such as articles and FAQ pages, although these are usually not extremely detailed. Some influencers sell 'packages' of digital resources and how-to guides or host conferences that people pay to attend in order to learn how to make money by travelling through Instagram. This demonstrates how written and electronic media can enable and limit knowledges and understandings crucial to a practice (Kittler, 1985; Gumbrecht, 1988; both in Reckwitz, 2002).

Yet professional advice appears to be either very shallow or to come at a price. Influencers try to protect their knowledge assets by remaining rather secretive about their processes in order to remain competitive. This is what makes the phenomenon interesting to study from a practice point of view: experiencing the situated practices of influencer photography and inquiring about their methods in this study helps to learn of these barely noticeable and unspoken practices that are usually kept secret (Nicolini, 2009). Yet this lack of a defined body of knowledge means there is no real indication of the required education and training needed to participate in the profession, preventing the profession from being properly defined and with boundaries and regulations (Boughton, 2013).

If it is true that *“For a practice to endure and exist as an identifiable if mutable entity, it must be continually reproduced by those who do it”* (Shove & Pantzar, 2005, p. 49), then the absence of a defined body of knowledge means that influencers are practicing the profession in individual ways. While this could be said of any professional, it does lead to a concern about a lack of ethics. When influencers use bot services, for example, it compromises the professional society’s code of ethics. This code of ethics can ensure practitioners maintain competency, good behaviour, and remain considerate toward other practitioners, clients and the community (Boughton, 2013).

### **Gaining followers**

Going from an amateur Instagrammer to influencer requires ‘proof in numbers’ of social influence, meaning a person should have a large network of followers and a distinct voice in a particular niche (De Veirman et al., 2016). Instagram followers can, therefore, be considered a requisite material for the practice of influencing. Realities are made in processes of social connections and flows (Law & Urry, 2004), which can be seen in the relations between an Instagrammer and their followers who help new opportunities and realities emerge for the Instagrammer. As followers are considered requisite materials for the practice of influencing, many of the photography practices and marketing strategies revolve around appealing to and attracting followers.

### **Using bots or automation services**

Some influencers use bots or automation services that like, comment, and follow and unfollow Instagram accounts in order to make themselves seen to users, get more likes and gain followers. Influencers who use bots defend themselves by claiming this is what has become the norm, and it is a way to remain competitive: *“It’s not nice, but it’s like my marketing. Not only mine, everyone does that”* (15). This is controversial in the industry, and it is widely regarded as cheating and unethical. These influencers are

seen as inauthentic and taking shortcuts to gain followers. Using bots goes against the values of professionalism: being transparent, trustworthy, trying to do one's work as well as possible, and taking responsibility for what one does (Wong, 2011; Evetts, 2014; Weckert & Lucas, 2013).

### **Hashtags**

Most influencers rather use marketing strategies that are supported by Instagram. Using hashtags, for example, makes it easy for Instagram users to find images of a destination (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). Influencers aim to use hashtags that will be searched for and add them to posts to give themselves more exposure. Hashtags related to the destination are selected as well as trending travel-related hashtags (such as #wanderlust, #passionpassport, and #bestintravel). It is a strategic goal to be in the top nine photos that are displayed when users search the hashtag.

Although they use hashtags to be seen on Instagram, they prefer to be discreet about using them. Hashtags are often added to a caption a few line breaks down from the main caption. Or they will post hashtags as a new comment directly after the caption so they are hidden when first glancing at the image. There appears to be a fear that they look desperate by using hashtags:

*“It feels like I'm trying to sell out myself [...] I don't know why, I feel that by using hashtags it's like ‘Oh my God I want so hard for everybody to look at this’.” (I2)*

Keeping a “cool” image is reflected even in the way influencers use hashtags as this reflects the paradox between the effortless look of the images and the actual effort to create the image. Influencers appear to use deceitful tactics to maintain a certain impression that is admirable for others.

### **Engagement and interaction**

Other strategies include interacting with other Instagram accounts: *“It's simple. You just like other people's pictures, you comment, you interact” (I2)*. This means that influencers spend several hours per day on Instagram, liking other peoples photos, commenting, following, replying to comments on their own images. Lauren believes the first half hour after posting an image dictates the amount of likes and comments it will get, and so it is important to post and then immediately spend time engaging on Instagram by liking and commenting other people's posts.

### **Working with tourism organisations**

Influencers make their money by invoicing clients who hire them. This means client relations skills are required in order to establish contact and work together. While more prominent influencers will often be approached by clients first, often it is the influencers who are pitching to tourism organisations to collaborate. A media kit (detailing follower and engagement statistics) will usually be sent with the pitch email to validate the influencer's status and prove they are a professional, rather than amateur Instagrammer. This may help convince DMOs to work with them, as they are more likely to form a partnership with an influencer who can communicate similar goals, target specific markets, and be willing to share information (Morrison, 2013).

Influencers are paid for their Instagramming 'services', meaning they will post about their experience at the destination a predetermined amount of times. They may also provide high-resolution images and a report for clients including a breakdown of the posts, likes, comments, and overall impressions of each image. The media kits, reports, and high-resolution images are all privately-shared business assets adding value to an influencer's services. There is much involved behind the scenes in negotiating work with clients and providing them with professional services.

Any social situation involves performers, audiences, and impression management with careful preparation in a back stage region and a front stage, where the performance is presented (Goffman, 1959). Influencers in a sense have two 'front stages' — their Instagram profile where they perform through their images to an audience of Instagram followers, and another front stage which is the business environment, where influencers perform as professionals for an audience of clients. Influencers are thus involved in complex and multiple stages and performances of impression management.

### **Professionalisation and normalisation**

Although they work independently and across the globe, the research showed influencers share similarities in work practices. A shared professional identity is usually produced and reproduced through professional socialisation, shared educational backgrounds, training, and memberships of associations (Evetts, 2014). Despite the lack of training, education and even a defined body of knowledge that prevents the profession from being properly defined with boundaries and regulations (Boughton, 2013), influencers still managed to create a shared professional identity. The research indicates this has been achieved through the self-directed training from online resources and virtual socialisation of influencers. By

following and observing other influencers, influencers produce and reproduce a system that is varying, yet still identifiable as an entity (Shove & Pantzar, 2005)

To learn about what makes an account attractive to followers, influencers evaluate their performances (their image sharing) by learning from audience (or follower) reactions, as well as by comparing their own performances with immediate others (Lo, 2012). By using each other as exemplars to learn from, influencers are producing and reproducing certain types of representations and images. The practice has been standardised and is a system that reproduces itself, as can be seen by the typology of images and a consistent pattern of the processes that influencers go through found in this study.

Influencers are then subject to creating and conforming to normative performances, thus revealing how “*social and cultural power can inscribe meaning and action on bodies*” (Edensor, 2001, p. 78). These social and cultural powers can be seen in the form of validation from a high number of likes on particular aesthetics and styles of images. Social and cultural power is measured by followers and likes, and therefore a common desire is inscribed in influencers to maintain and attract more of this power. So while influencers have social power in the form of followers who they can influence, they are at the same time controlled by the social power of the collective number of followers who ultimately legitimise and guide their work as influencers.

Conforming to normative performances in terms of what they represent on their Instagram competes with the idea that “*The tourist gaze represents individual experiences and subjective forms of seeing and understanding*” (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 28). While we see that the tourist gaze is socially constructed and builds on the existing knowledge of individuals, the tourist gaze as seen through Instagram images is less subjective and more reproductive of standardised and idealised images. It causes friction with the idea that an individual’s use of technologies depends on their embodied practices, including looking for compositions, framing, posing, choreographing poses, and then editing, displaying and circulating images (Larson, 2008). While each influencer has their own embodied experiences and many also claim to have developed their own distinguishable style of photos, the ways of framing, posing, editing, and circulating Instagram images has been normalised, standardised, and refined into ideals through the professionalisation of the practice.

## **INSTAGRAMMING: PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM**

The two previous sections have highlighted the situated practices and the professionalisation of touristic Instagramming as a travel influencer. The discussions highlight how tourism images are produced and distributed in a complex fusion of different practices and rationales. How tourism is consumed can thus be understood in a new way, and I argue that in the case of tourists using social media while travelling for identity management, influencers are the masters of it.

### **Masters of Instagramming**

Influencers can be considered the masters of touristic Instagramming. A typology of images and a shared professional identity have been co-produced and reproduced by influencers comparing each other and responding to audience engagements. In the process, success strategies and professional procedures of the practice have been established and are accepted as being most effective by influencers. Influencers have mastered the practice of touristic Instagramming to the point where they are able to, in a sense, sell advertising space on their Instagram feed.

Studying the situated practices of influencers through participant observation reveals the particular tactics and strategies, as well as the material landscape involved in creating Instagram images. The empirical research found that these images are created with much effort and a reliance on technology. Additionally, the practices are bound in the meticulous, the awkward, uncomfortable moments, as well as everyday and mundane experiences. What is revealed is a conflict between the obligation to take aesthetic images and the enjoyment of the travel experience itself. It highlights that influencers approach Instagramming as a craft they strive to master. Crafting beautiful images of their travels is their way to make money. And part of that craft is hiding the non-representational, embodied efforts behind their images.

Looking deeper into the practice of Instagramming and its professionalisation can help reveal broader understandings about tourism. Theories tell us that posting on social media is a way to enhance self-representation and to portray an idealised self-image (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011; Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011). Yet little do they tell us about the practices and processes individuals withstand in order to create these representations. If we denominate influencers the masters of impression management through Instagram, we see that there is a conflict between the represented world and the

situated world. We tend to reduce images to symbols, but turning our back on the symbolic and look at the material landscape, what an image is and how it is created, we can see how tourists are moving, behaving, thinking while travelling to understand the politics of creating images. It is political because there is a vast landscape of materials and technologies, that require economic capital, which helps to create these images.

Individuals go through embodied strain — early mornings, long days, waiting around, loneliness, awkward moments — as well as the ordinarily mundane aspects of travel. This shows how although the tourist gaze is visual, it is also interconnected with other bodily sensations as well as sociocultural sense scapes such as ideology and meaning (Larsen & Urry, 2011). Only the glamorised, exciting, and inspiring representations are shared through visual mechanisms, suggesting there are two different realities: the represented world and the lived world. The individual experiences the two realities yet privileges the imagined reality. The lived experience will be compromised, made uncomfortable and burdensome, for the sake of creating the ideal reality. It points to a new way of travelling that prioritises taking perfect photos for personal impression management.

### **Positively framed experience**

Influencers are not the only ones positively skewing their holiday experience through idealised images posted online. Commercial destination marketing photography presents images of destinations that are perfected and idealised in order to thrill and seduce the audience (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013; Urry, 2011, in Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). And while ordinary tourist photography is perceived as more authentic because “*places are real and visited right now*” (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015, p. 731), tourists also carefully select to post images that present the holiday experience in the most desirable way (Robinson, 2014). While all people who post content online are caught up in processes of self-preservation, self-presentation, and identity management (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011), influencers go through more intense and more constant processes of impression management.

This is reflected in their daily posts and time spent on Instagram, consistently uploading inspirational new images to expectant followers. The photographs are consistently of a high aesthetic quality, and each destination, as well as the influencer, is captured attractively. The destination is usually pictured without crowds, in beautiful light, and where something like rubbish has been photoshopped out. Influencers never look sweaty or tired, and they pose in flattering ways wearing fashionable clothing. The representations in these images may create romanticised views of the destinations, but ultimately it is

about maintaining the appealing impression of the influencer. This supports the idea that online tourist photography often reflects the photographer's desired self-image rather than the best reflection of the destination or travel experience (Lo & McKercher, 2015). In doing so, certain aspects of travel are marginalised, reinforcing ideas of the classic consumption of tourism that is about seeking the extraordinary (Larsen & Urry, 2011).

The impressions or idealised identities of influencers represent tourists that are cool, candid, and constantly travelling to new destinations. Maintaining this image is the main driving force of the practice of Instagramming, and can be achieved by consistently posting quality travel photos by regularly visiting new destinations. In doing this, their photos implicitly exercise power by forwarding expectations and standards of how tourist photography should look and defining how tourism should be represented on Instagram. This reveals the politics behind the representations: actors who are producing representations that actively organise tourist gazes (Larsen & Urry, 2011).

The argument from influencers is that although their images may be romanticised, this is what followers like and what inspires them. Although these representations are deceptive in many ways and not innocent of an agenda, influencers do not see their misrepresentations as harmful. Most influencers want to show the destination as it could be experienced by any visitor. To them, the representations of travel they create through their images help to inspire others, communicate empowerment and positivity, transport followers into a dream world and get people to see destinations differently (I4, I3).

Influencer photography is a unique combination of the noisy, imperfect, down-to-earth images from the user-generated community, and the planned, structured, commercial photography from DMOs (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). They join the body of user-generated tourist images as "*active and creative contributions of tourists on the web*" (Munar, 2011, p. 292) by distributing images that feel like tourist photos. Yet they have refined the amateur practice of Instagramming in their professionalisation of the practice, meaning their images are thoughtfully composed and enhanced with advanced photographic equipment rather than looking noisy and imperfect like other UGC. Influencer images also conflict with traditional notions of UGC that emphasise a democratic, public information sharing system allowing tourists to take authority over destination images by contributing to intensifying bodies of visual communication online (Minazzi, 2015; Munar et al., 2014; Hjalager, 2015). It appears influencers rather reproduce existing image ideals of destinations that portray the positive, extraordinary and aesthetic.

While amateur photographers also carefully select and edit photos to share online (Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011; Robinson, 2014), influencers have potentially more liability for posting deceitful images because they are prominent users considered influential enough to be paid to perform promotional tasks (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Their self-interests to be paid to travel are core motivations to professionalise the practice of Instagramming (Evetts, 2014), which raises a conflict with the nature of user-generated content and trust placed in eWOM.

The fact that there are (often not disclosed) commercial motives behind the posts can be considered deceptive. Commercialism is continually seen as negative by tourists in tourism studies: commercial photography is too idealistic (Robinson, 2014), eWOM is considered reliable because it is noncommercial (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013), and some tourists dislike tourism as a whole because it represents commercialism (Larsen & Urry, 2011). It reflects the idea that in modern times, the commodification of tourism has influenced tourist behaviours in more pervasive and subtle ways ever (Williams & Lew, 2015). Influencers are paid to implicitly forward expectations of how tourist photography should look and thus inspire tourists to travel in new ways. Most followers are unaware that influencers are paid to travel, and are also oblivious to the physical efforts and technological equipment required to produce these images. This could be because actions or behaviours that contradict a person's idealised self-image are often concealed (Goffman, 1959). If Instagram audiences were to know exactly how much influencers were paid or the particular efforts they went through to take their images, perhaps the romanticised, inspirational appeal of the images would be compromised.

### **Impression management**

As identified throughout the analysis, it takes certain characteristics and capabilities to be an influencer. Ultimately, it requires mobility, initial economic capital, ambition, competitiveness, manipulation, persuasiveness, confidence, stamina, creativity, independence, business knowledge, perseverance and decisiveness. Above all, being an influencer means playing close attention to your idealised self and maintaining impressions.

Although influencers are guilty of deception and imitation, and ultimately have their self-interests at heart, these are all necessary for maintaining a certain impression. Their images are stylised in a way that reflects the personal brand of the influencer. They are being paid to take photos, and have a large following who expect them to continue posting interesting photos of their travels. This reflects the idea that performers feel a pressure from audiences who expect them to play an idealised role (Lo &

McKercher, 2015). Both the followers and the influencer are producing and reproducing these idealised images, as influencers respond to what types of photos their followers appreciate. The posing, framing, and selection of images are done with audiences in mind, reflecting how performers rely on audience reaction in order to form an ideal image (Lo, 2012). Their photos are not innocent holiday snaps, but rather carefully curated and imbued with an intention to please clients and continue to impress followers. This means influencers as performers are constantly engaging in impression management, or self-presentation to manage their ideal image for others (Lo & McKercher, 2015).

It is argued that the key functions of holiday photography in contemporary society are communication and identity management (Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011). While this may be true for regular tourists, it is these two things that are the ultimate driving forces for an influencer's practice. Perhaps what makes influencer accounts admirable, then, is their similarity with amateur Instagram users. Influencers appear to be different from, yet somehow similar to, ordinary Instagram users, and this identification helps form a parasocial relationship (Gamson, 2001, in Glover, 2009). The tourist gaze is about encountering the extraordinary, yet the gaze has been reinterpreted over time as notions of why and how tourists travel are speculated upon (Larsen & Urry, 2011). Lo (2012) asks the question: "*With the emergence of new norms on social media, can the extraordinary be now confirmed more through positive audience reactions (i.e., the number of "likes" and quality of online comments)?*" (p. 308). As explored in this study of influencers; yes. Influencers gaze at destinations through eyes that attempt to foresee what images can be created and circulated to attract likes and followers.

Influencers are inspiring tourists to travel just like them, as well as to take pictures just like them. Tourists can see what type of images are produced by influencers that attract positive audience reactions, and thus try to recreate similar images when they are on a holiday. Just as tourism organisations can be 'directors' of the stage for tourists to perform (Edensor, 2001), these influencers are also directing the consumption of tourism. Tourism is a performing stage for the construction of idealised realities (Lo, 2012), and influencers have mastered online impression management. Through holiday photography that is posted online, individuals may also use holidays as opportunities to create and share images that define themselves in idealised ways.

## **ANALYSIS CONCLUSION**

Instagram influencers have through their professionalisation of the practice mastered the art of holiday Instagramming. Their situated performances while travelling and creating images for Instagram involve

complex combinations of different aesthetic and strategic rationales, material set ups and purposeful practices. Producing appealing images to impress followers and clients becomes the objective of trips, meaning certain comforts and conveniences are compromised.

Instagram images as UGC reconfigure the production, consumption and distribution of tourism images. The professionalisation of Instagram practices demonstrates how new practices are triggered in refining the art of tourist image creation. Whether amateur or professional Instagrammers, the analysis has helped create new knowledges and understandings of touristic Instagramming. Influencers and tourists alike produce and reproduce idealised images and use holidays as opportunities to enhance self-image through Instagram.

## CONCLUSION

Instagramming is deceitful. People select, edit and share images to create versions of reality that represent only the most glamorous and extraordinary visualisations of their holidays. Influencers are perhaps the most deceitful. They use advanced technologies and go to immense efforts to present reality in particular ways. They experience uncomfortable and mundane experiences, yet they only convey impressions of tourism and the self that are candid, effortless, and cool. In doing so, they are implicitly exercising power in creating standards of how tourism photography should look. Their commercial and self-interested motivations to become professional influencers bring further friction to the bias towards posting these images.

The objective of this study was to identify and understand the configuration of materials and activities involved in the practice of touristic Instagramming as a travel influencer. This has been achieved through qualitative research methods including netnography, interviews and participant observation in which the researcher joined an influencer trip and learnt about the configurations from one prominent influencer. The participant observation and interviews revealed a complex interaction of materials, competences and meanings involved in the process of creating these images (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). The research presents unique insights into the practices involved in Instagramming that provide rich details about the situated performances and material landscapes about the practice.

It was found that there are two worlds: the lived experience and the represented world. The empirical data revealed details of the situated performances and show that often it contradicts the represented world. Influencers, whose images show a dreamy, glamorised, effortless way to travel, encounter awkward, tiring, uncomfortable, and burdensome experiences. These mundane, uncomfortable and tiring routines and everyday practices are essential to the practice of influencing. Influencers need to carry their 12kg of equipment, wake before sunrise, and be prepared to feel awkward and lonely in order to take the types of images that are expected of them. A conflict is revealed between an obligation to take aesthetic images and to enjoy the tourism experience itself. Through the professionalisation of touristic Instagramming, influencers are in fact turning the tourism experience into their everyday life and the boundary between tourism and everyday life becomes blurred in a unique way (Larsen & Urry, 2011).

Images are created, manipulated and selected so that only certain representations of travel are permitted to be shared on Instagram. These representations were identified as 9 categories that make up a typology of influencer images. It is interesting considering that influencers have the power to share whatever visualisations they desire to a large audience, yet most conform to the standard typology of the practice. This is due to self-interested and commercial motivations to attract followers and make money by working with DMOs. Performers feel a pressure from audiences who expect them to play an idealised role (Lo & McKercher, 2015), and it is the audiences — followers and clients — that influencers perform for. The followers legitimise and assign power to influencers, and in doing so simultaneously control and empower them. So, on the one hand, influencers exercise power by setting an example to amateur Instagrammers as masters of the practice, and on the other, they are also captives of the power. It is a system that reproduces itself based on social power and existing idealised representations of travel.

The research question sought to explore the relations between embodied experiences and representations of tourism in order to find new understandings of existing theories on the tourist gaze and the creation of tourist images. While an influencer's Instagram practices are more comprehensive than that of the average Instagram-using tourist, the insights revealed particular motivations and tactics about enhancing and also marginalising certain representations of tourism. Idealised images of travel are both welcomed and dictated by followers, and so these idealised images then also reflect those of tourists. Tourists are increasingly concerned with impression management and promoting an ideal identity through the holiday photographs they post online (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Lo et al., 2011). In doing so, classic representations of tourism are reinforced, as audiences prefer to see positive, extraordinary, glamorous images of travel rather than mundane, negative and ugly sides of travel ((Sarvas & Frohlich, 2011; Robinson, 2014; Larsen & Urry, 2011). The tourist gaze suggests that tourists seek the extraordinary in their tourism experience, yet in contemporary society, the tourist gaze appears to turn towards the self through the eyes of an audience. A self-directed tourist gaze suggests that tourists are travelling differently, and seek to take photos that convey an idealised image of themselves (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). In relation to this, tourists may now be more concerned with taking photos that will attract likes and comments, meaning the extraordinary is now confirmed by these social media mechanisms (Lo, 2012).

Instagram influencers have through their professionalisation of the practice mastered the art of touristic Instagramming, and implicitly encourage tourists to use holidays as opportunities to enhance self-image through Instagram. This research paper has identified the configuration of materials and activities

involved in the practice of touristic Instagramming as a travel influencer. It found friction between embodied experiences and representations of tourism, which help contribute to discourses on contemporary notions of the tourist gaze and the reinforcement of certain tourist images. The implicit power relations between influencers and tourists alike show how social media can on the one hand empower individuals, yet also pressure them to conform to hegemonic idealisations.

## **IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research uncovers new understandings about a profession that has emerged recently. While many industry and academic articles tout the advantages of incorporating influencer marketing into a brand's promotional mix, there is no in-depth research about what the practice entails. This research answers this lack of information by providing descriptive, exploratory accounts of the situated performances and experiences of an influencer for the first time.

The implications help develop the professionalisation of the practice. By defining through general accounts what the practice involves, tourism managers and influencers alike are given access to information that has previously been kept secret about how influencers work. DMOs should understand that influencers persistently invest large amounts of money, time, and effort in order to maintain their impression management. While novice influencers are willing to accept jobs only for free accommodation, the cost of services charged by influencers are warranted and should not be rejected. In the same line of thought, influencers can now be made aware of their role in producing and reproducing the practice, and how it is their responsibility to embrace the values of professionalism in the absence of a formal regulatory body that enforces a code of ethics.

The topic of Instagram influencers in tourism will become more prolific to study as it advances in the near future. It is likely that increasingly more DMOs will partner with influencers to promote their destination, just as the amount of 'wannabe' influencers increases as the concept of influencing as a profession is normalised. Many opportunities are promised for future studies of the phenomenon.

In extension to this research paper, future studies could address particular variations of the broader practice of Instagram influencing in tourism. This could include studies that compare the practices of novice and veteran influencers, male and female influencers, and influencers of different ethnic groups (i.e. Brazilian or Japanese influencers). Considering the fundamental aspect of these influencers' identity is that they travel to different countries all over the world, studying different practices will contribute to a global understanding of the phenomenon as it becomes more widespread.

Another research focus could be that on tourist photography practices to see how they reflect the practices of influencers. If influencers implicitly create standards of how tourism photography should look, then the way tourists create their own tourism photography should reflect the practices of influencers. However,

tourists are unlikely to own and take the vast amount of technological equipment on holiday nor know the extent of the practices involved in creating the images. Therefore, it would be interesting to see the practices of tourist photography that has been inspired by the images created by influencers.

Exploring how tourists manage identity and impressions through their online profiles will continue to be an important focus of study. Tourists are travelling in new ways in order to take photos and promote a certain identity online, and so further insights into behaviours and motivations while travelling will help develop new understandings of the tourist gaze.

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# APPENDICES

## Abbreviations of appendices

I1	Influencer 1	Appendix 2	Field notes from Lauren Bath trip
I2	Influencer 2	Appendix 5	Interview transcript from Solana
I3	Influencer 3	Appendix 6	Interview response from Nastasia
I4	Influencer 4	Appendix 7	Interview transcript from Selena
I5	Influencer 5	Appendix 8	Interview transcript from Joanna

## Appendix 1: Travel Instagram accounts Spreadsheet

URL	Handle	Followers	M/F	Email	Website	Type	Email ed?
<b>23 January</b>							
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/gypsea_lust/">instagram.com/gypsea_lust/</a>	gypsea_lust	1m	F	gypsea.lust@gmail.com	<a href="http://www.gypsealust.com">www.gypsealust.com</a>	Attractive girl, tropical, wanderlust	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/adventurouskate/">instagram.com/adventurouskate/</a>	adventurouskate	92.5k	F	kate@adventurouskate.com	<a href="http://www.adventurouskate.com">www.adventurouskate.com</a>	Solo women's travel, architecture, landscape	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/polkadotpassport/">instagram.com/polkadotpassport/</a>	polkadotpassport	185k	F	hello@polkadotpassport.com	<a href="http://www.polkadotpassport.com">www.polkadotpassport.com</a>	Attractive girl, tropical, soft colours, pastels	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/theblondeabroad/">instagram.com/theblondeabroad/</a>	theblondeabroad	319k	F		<a href="http://bit.ly/CapePeninsulaRoadTrip">bit.ly/CapePeninsulaRoadTrip</a>	Attractive girl, smiling, activities, tropical, mountains	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/roundtheworldgirl/">instagram.com/roundtheworldgirl/</a>	roundtheworldgirl	294k	F	igroundtheworldgirl@outlook.com		Attractive girl, smiling, active, wilderness	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/lebackpacker/">instagram.com/lebackpacker/</a>	lebackpacker	397k	M	world.johan@johanlolos.com		Landscapes, other people, observational, mountains	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/laurenepbath/">instagram.com/laurenepbath/</a>	laurenepbath	416k	F	info@laurenepbath.com	<a href="http://www.thetravelbootcamp.com">www.thetravelbootcamp.com</a>	Photography, landscapes, supernatural colour	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/bemytravelmuse/">instagram.com/bemytravelmuse/</a>	bemytravelmuse	82.2k	F	addis.kristin@gmail.com	<a href="http://www.bemytravelmuse.com">www.bemytravelmuse.com</a>	Landscapes, skies, vibrant colours, vivid	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/kirstenalana/">instagram.com/kirstenalana/</a>	kirsenalana	216k	F		<a href="http://www.kirstenalana.com">www.kirstenalana.com</a>	Food, cities, nature,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/michaelchristopherbrown/">instagram.com/michaelchristopherbrown/</a>	michaelchristopherbrown	436k	M			People, cultures, conflict, portraits	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/worldwanderlust/">instagram.com/worldwanderlust/</a>	worldwanderlust	584k	F			Girls trips, nature, leisure, buildings,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/expertvagabond/">instagram.com/expertvagabond/</a>	expertvagabond	106k	M			Adventure travel, sports, animals	Y

<a href="https://www.instagram.com/theplanetd/">instagram.com/theplanetd/</a>	theplanetd	171k	M & F		<a href="http://theplanetd.com">theplanetd.com</a>	Couple travel, romantic, sunsets, privacy	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/triphackr/">instagram.com/triphackr/</a>	triphackr	63.1k	M		<a href="http://triphac.kr">triphac.kr</a>	Solo male travel, nature, cities, drone	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/travelinglens/">instagram.com/travelinglens/</a>	travelinglens	116k	F	photos@travelinglens.me		Snow, NYC, cities	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/theglobegetter/">instagram.com/theglobegetter/</a>	theglobegetter	2,400			<a href="http://bit.ly/NMAAHCVisit">bit.ly/NMAAHCVisit</a>	iPhone photos, self,	
<a href="http://instagram.com/passporttofriday">http://instagram.com/passporttofriday</a>	passporttofriday	9,112	F	chelsea@passporttofriday.com	<a href="http://www.passporttofriday.com">www.passporttofriday.com</a>	Attractive girl, pastels, beach, food,	Y
<a href="http://instagram.com/nastasiapassport">http://instagram.com/nastasiapassport</a>	nastasiapassport	57.9k	F	contact@dametraveler.com	<a href="http://www.dametraveler.com">www.dametraveler.com</a>	pastels, flowers, girl, buildings, details,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/hotelblogr/">instagram.com/hotelblogr/</a>	hotelblogr	5,492	F	PM on Instagram			Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/smrtravels/">instagram.com/smrtravels/</a>	smrtravels	7809	F		<a href="http://www.smredititions.com">www.smredititions.com</a>	girl, mirror/symmetry, colour blocks,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/hethenomader/">instagram.com/hethenomader/</a>	hethenomader	120	M	hethenomader@gmail.com		shapes, warm sun, symmetry	Y
<b>11 February</b>							
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/matglastonbury/">instagram.com/matglastonbury/</a>	Matt Glastonbury	172k	M			nature, landscapes, drone	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/youngadventuress/">instagram.com/youngadventuress/</a>	Liz Carlson	175k	F		<a href="http://youngadventuress.com">youngadventuress.com</a>	NZ, nature, symmetry, self feature.	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/jasoncharleshill/">instagram.com/jasoncharleshill/</a>	Jason Charles Hill	366k	M	info@jasoncharleshill.com	<a href="http://jasoncharleshill.com">jasoncharleshill.com</a>	photography, nice, landscapes, single person.	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/garry_norris/">instagram.com/garry_norris/</a>	Garry Norris	119k	M	info@garrynorris.com	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/GarryNorrisPhotography">www.facebook.com/GarryNorrisPhotography</a>	Landscapes, nature	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/denoodle/">instagram.com/denoodle/</a>	Tim Denoodle	14.6k	M	timothydenoon@gmail.com		Bondi, men, beach, friend groups	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/jewelszee/">instagram.com/jewelszee/</a>	JEWELS	113k	F	jewelszeezee@gmail.com	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/photographybyjewelszee">www.facebook.com/photographybyjewelszee</a>	sunsets, skies, beach, blonde, self feature	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/theoveassembly/">instagram.com/theoveassembly/</a>	Aubrey Daquinag	26.8k	F			self, beach, pastels, cute shops	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/lifeinthelowlane/">instagram.com/lifeinthelowlane/</a>	Melissa Connell	35.9k	F	melissaconnell@hotmail.com		self, van, slow travel, nature, simple	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/helloemilie/?hl=en">instagram.com/helloemilie/?hl=en</a>	Emilie Ristevski	934k	F	info@helloemilie.com	<a href="http://facebook.com/helloemilie">facebook.com/helloemilie</a>	self from back, nature, colour matching	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/ohhcouture/">instagram.com/ohhcouture/</a>	Leonie Hanne	858k	F	info@ohhcouture.com	<a href="http://www.ohhcouture.com">www.ohhcouture.com</a>	self, girl groups, fashion, coffee, clothes, flowers	Y
<b>26 February</b>							
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/gettingstamped">instagram.com/gettingstamped</a>	Hannah & Adam	70k	F & M	gettingstamped@gmail.com	<a href="http://www.gettingstamped.com/">www.gettingstamped.com/</a>	couple, drone photos, sea, girl, romantic	Y

<a href="https://www.instagram.com/traveltomtom">instagram.com/traveltomtom</a>	Tom?	112k	M	info@traveltomtom.net	<a href="http://www.traveltomtom.net/">www.traveltomtom.net/</a>	Guy selfie, vibrant colours, adventure,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/aussieblondeabroad">instagram.com/aussieblondeabroad</a>	aussieblondeabroad	111k	F	contact@runtowardstravel.com		very vibrant, self, sunsets,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/finduslost">instagram.com/finduslost</a>	Selena & Jacob	45.2k	F&M	finduslost@gmail.com	youtube	girl selfies, bright, pastel, romantic	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/globetrottinggingertravel">instagram.com/globetrottinggingertravel</a>	Aubrie	170k	F	globetrotting_gingertravel	<a href="http://www.globetrottinggingertravel.com">www.globetrottinggingertravel.com</a>	girl, selfie, red hair, vibrant	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/anna.everywhere">instagram.com/anna.everywhere</a>	Anna	108k	F	annaeverywhere.blog@gmail.com	<a href="http://annaeverywhere.com">annaeverywhere.com</a>	self, saturated, couple sometimes,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/doyoutravel">instagram.com/doyoutravel</a>	Jack Morris	2m	M	jack@doyoutravelphoto.com	<a href="http://doyoutravelphoto.com">doyoutravelphoto.com</a>	self, couple, beach, muscles,	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/pieaerts/">instagram.com/pieaerts/</a>	Pie Aerts	59.4k	M	info@pieaerts.com		wild, girlfriend, nature, mountains, snow, castles, architecture	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/jesswintz/">instagram.com/jesswintz/</a>	Jessica Wintz	30.1k	F	info@jesswintz.com		self, nature, mood, castles, cold, cities,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/alexpreview/">instagram.com/alexpreview/</a>	Alex	74.1k	M	info.alexpreview@gmail.com		self, sunsets, swimming, architecture, gentleman style	Y
<b>February 28</b>							
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/reneeroaming/">instagram.com/reneeroaming/</a>	Renee Hahnel	114k	F	info@reneeroaming.com	<a href="http://www.reneeroaming.com">www.reneeroaming.com</a>	self, muted colours, pastels, soft,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/fitbackpacker/">instagram.com/fitbackpacker/</a>	Joanna Romano	38.6k	F			self, active, fitness, Spanish	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/jess.wandering/">instagram.com/jess.wandering/</a>	Jess Dales	271k	F	jess@jessdales.com	<a href="http://www.jessdales.com">www.jessdales.com</a>	self, mountains, lakes, beach, bf takes pics	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/evechanginghorizon/">instagram.com/evechanginghorizon/</a>	Quin	398k	M			him, jess.wandering, lakes, mountains,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/matthewhahnel/">instagram.com/matthewhahnel/</a>	Matthew Hahnel	191k	M	info@matthewhahnel.com	<a href="http://www.matthewhahnel.com">www.matthewhahnel.com</a>	him, his gf, mountains, cosy,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/hannesbecker/">instagram.com/hannesbecker/</a>	Hannes Becker	993k	M	hello@hannesbecker.com	<a href="http://www.hannesbecker.com">www.hannesbecker.com</a>	mountains, mist, nature, moody,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/carmelisse/">instagram.com/carmelisse/</a>	Carmelisse Sanga	14.6k	F			Self, nature, pink skies, dreamy,	
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/lauraalycebell/">instagram.com/lauraalycebell/</a>	Laura Bell	33.6k	F	lauraalycebell@gmail.com	<a href="http://lauraalycebell-photo.com">lauraalycebell-photo.com</a>	Nature, sunsets, beach, Melbourne	Y
<a href="https://www.instagram.com/haylsa/">instagram.com/haylsa/</a>	Hayley Andersen	34k	F	hayley.andersen92@gmail.com	haylsaway.blog	Beach, jungle, fun, self	

## Appendix 2: Field Notes from Clarence Valley field trip with Lauren Bath of @laurenepbath, March 15–30, 2017

### **Notes from conference 25th March at Angourie Rainforest Resort.**

50-60 attendees. Local tourism operators, council members, small businesses, travel brands, tourism board employees, hotel chains. most people 40+ and some other younger people.

Mostly advice to them of how to do instagram well, and what is instagram.

Lauren is doing it for 7 years.

Instagram is NOT traditional marketing, you've got to make it interesting, cool, hot, funny, yummy, whatever it is that is interesting that people will find an interest in.

You get instant feedback to what people like and don't like on your photos, based on engagement (likes, comments, follows).

Power of Instagram is its 'believability' that it's "real experiences, real images, that reach people organically".

Important who you follow too. personal connections, but also businesses, and like-minded people.

There are 'nuanced tricks' to her uploads. It is a mobile platform, but the camera takes better photos than phones. Use filters, because this makes photos more 'instagrammy'.

Write something interesting in captions. Put your personality on it. Lauren says people get to know her. She's more of a person on the Instagram profile. Make yourself funny, interesting, engaging. People say to her that she's just like they imagine in real life based on the captions of her uploads.

Caption planning - write in the notes app of her phone first. This helps her to pre-plan Instagram, check spelling etc. Then just copies and pastes into the caption section.

Geotagging is prime real estate for destinations and operators.

Hashtags give visibility. Don't put all 30 hashtags in the caption though, rather in the 2nd comment. It looks desperate or annoying. Selection hashtags: country, state, town etc.

Your profile is the most important page on Instagram. It's where people decide to follow you or not. People look at the profile picture, the bio, and the top 9 pics. If you have more followers, it's easier to get followers. Lauren follows a lot of Instagram profiles, because she meets a lot of people. You should follow less than you have.

Profile picture should be a clear portrait. Your bio is important, because you're always marketing to people. "The grid" of your pictures is hard to predict to know how it will look before you upload something. She says she's OCD. Can't do 2 colours next to each other. So she uses the Plann App, or a different 'crazy method' to see what her pics will look like depending on the next upload.

Content is king. Be diverse. Have food, details, people, animals, hero shots (landscapes). Mobile vs. DSLR. With tricky lighting, sunrise and sunset, it's not as good. Need to use a camera.

She goes through a basic 'how to' of Instagram. Uploading, cropping, selecting filter, strength of filter.

Digital Influencer. They have trust. Word of mouth strength. Personality is out there. They can change, cause affects. Influencers strength is on trust and reach together. They have unique photography styles and their own brand.

Her services: 3 instagrams daily, high resolution images, workshop, uploading to other platforms, report on reach, impressions, media value.

Good influencers have accountability and approachability. Their initial email correspondence is important for example, when choosing whether to work with them. Imagine what the job would be like...

Cheating. Buying services from bots and automation to grow followers. This software is programmed to be on your account all day, doing lot son engaging and getting followers. But it's cheating, unfair, not endorsed by Instagram. It's fraud to buy likes and followers and then pitching to a brand as an influencer. It's unethical and unfair.

When looking for someone, better to look at their engagement rather than numbers. You can fact check influencers by using sites like Socialblade, iconosquare, and asking for analytics from business accounts.

Multiple influencer campaigns are appealing for tourism boards.

Logistics - camera, computer to edit, dropbox to phone. or iPad and edit on Snapseed (like first 2 years), then to phone and instagram.

"Instameet" is a gathering of instagrammers. People meet in real life, have a strong common ground. Most of her friends are through Instameets, through Instagram. It's a nice building exercise.

Good vs. bad content.

Good

- sunrise and sunset - people love it
- animals - esp. from destination. Instagram gold.
- bright colours. Bold colours.
- leading lines. Strong composition.
- personal perspective. puts people in the scene, feet and hands, 1st person perspective.
- Hero shots (landscapes), beach.
- little people. Portraits do badly. So a little person. an ordinary scene turns nice with little person in there for scale.

Bad

- boring
- bad light
- too busy
- obvious product placement. People aren't stupid
- straight portraits
- cheese people shot. Anything that doesn't look authentic, looks set up.

Final tips.

1. Content (diverse and strong)
2. Engagement (liking, following, commenting).
3. "You have to give to get". Pick relatable accounts and engage with them. Reward followers, even if shitty photos, she follows them. Comment back to comments. Spend time on the home screen. Start conversations, be real on Instagram. Biggest compliment that she seems like the same person. 1st half hour dictates engagement. Post, and then immediately like/comment.
3. Consistency (quality, quantity, min 1 post per day or 2 or 3, but spread out. Style, and maintain aesthetic)
4. Have fun. People can tell if you hate it. So don't do Instagram if you hate it. Give it a go. It's fun, interesting, inspiring, motivating. Instagram time for Lauren is fun. She literally puts her feet up and relaxes. Away from her desk.
5. Get out there
6. Make sure your profile looks good.

She's not doing it for any other reason than 'people like my photos!' Got 200k in 1.5 years. It was always a dormant dream for her to travel. She wanted 3 things - travel, make money, Instagram. Many Australian destinations first for her. At first, she did it for no money. Then she said "give me \$1000 and I'll do whatever". She still needed to understand destination marketing, making friends, etc. But now she is running a consultancy, public speaking, as well as having usual rates that she charges everyone. her passion is Australia. She could be in Switzerland, but would rather be here.

Instagram is not a tool for conversion. It's awareness. A call to action won't work for her brand. She's not comfortable with doing it.

## **INSTAGRAM PRACTICE**

### **Materials used**

Tripod

(knob missing)

camera. brands are important. Started with a Nikon. now with Olympus because they trial cameras to influencers and photographers. She can use the equipment for free. Some are still "iPhone only" where they'll only take photos on iPhone or smartphone, but increasingly rare, Lauren says. People compare camera brands, most have professional kinds. Lauren prefers the lighter ones, like Olympus, saying her Nikon is too heavy, and also the Canon is even heavier. Jealous of iPhone only, but camera gets better images.

smartphone - on this a lot between shoots. Even between shots when waiting during sunrise or sunset. uploading Instagrams that have been planned. Live stories of the day. checking itinerary. putting in GPS. looking up images of the place. Checking out food

instagrams of the cafe. messages and emails to keep on top of from people. calling the operators we meet up with. torch for when we walk along the rocks to get to the sunrise spot on the beach.

car charger or portable charger.

wifi or data

sim card

lenses (7 on this trip)

special lens cleaning wet wipes.

filters x 2 (polariser and mutual density to block the light), Could do it in post production, but why not now.

wired remote so the photos don't shake

"Always keep your backpack on when you're shooting in the ocean"

Spalshproof camera

keeping camera bag between legs in kayak.

car, not public transport with gear. sometimes 4WD.

duplicates of everything — cameras, phones, tripods, SD cards, hard-drives.

1 hard drive at home on the Gold Coast. 2 hard-drives travelling with her. 2 Terabytes. Has to keep buying them, wherever she is, buys them online. Colour coded cases. meticulous about data storage.

SD and CF memory cards (in different cameras). Formats these after transferring the information to hard drives. Always takes photos in raw format. NEF files (Nikon) and ORF (Olympus). JPG is too compressed, but raw files have the most information on images and can be edited better. Knows which photos she wants to edit as she takes them. So it's quicker when looking through the photos of which to edit. Remembers well because she does it regularly through the process of the week. if had to do it all at the end — it would be harder to remember which ones.

Macbook Pro. Charger. puts in the SD card. Copies onto 2 Harddrives, into folders with Nikon and Olympus folders. Then a 'to edit' folder on her desktop.

Photos — never deletes any.

Time. It's money - cheaper to buy more hard drives than go through deleting photos.

Photoshop — default program. Doesn't like Lightroom. Pays per month to use the app. Crops to square in photoshop, also saving out to Facebook format, and HR to client. Edits what she is most excited about first. edits completely to taste. makes main adjustments in camera raw to brighten, saturate, highlights etc. then straighten, clone tool, 'action' filter preset. "selective sharpening" is an action she made. Then she saves it.

Dropbox. Or Airdrop. programs to send from computer to phone.

Snapseed editing App. final touches, as it looks diff on camera screen (brightness 100%).

Apple doesn't preview ORF files so has to preview in photoshop and write down file names. (paper and pen).

Desktop folders of things to do/answer. Folders in hard drives sorts by job, and include photos, itinerary, PDF documents.

Camera roll and into "Instagram Layout folder" where she plans out her Instagram feed. This is done by playing with what photos will go next, depending on how they look as a whole with the rest of the feed, next to her existing photos.

Waterproof housing for Olympus. Couldn't find one part, so didn't use it for stand up paddle boarding. But found it, and played with it in tide pools. Can access all parts of camera

Sunscreen required for shooting in Aus sun. But it made reflective marks when she was in water too

Swimsuit for shooting in water

Tourism activities — stand up paddle boards, paddle, kayak,

water bottle — getting very dehydrated.

Tax invoice for every meal. Difficult for fish and chips. Also street food - never can get it.

Other people get in the water. Guy searching for his Gopro at the bottom of waterfall swimming hole. We couldn't shoot photos.

These guys just wait.

camera bag with 2 cameras and lenses, filters, remotes. All in one place so you can grab everything you might need and go, and not have to return to the car. Also she knows exactly where everything goes, so she isn't fumbling around, but can grab what she needs on the fly. She knows where everything is. weighs 10-12kg. Walking crazy terrain with that.

### **Material/Bodily**

Putting on 20kg since job, because she is always eating out at restaurants. 10 course dinners... complains about it.

wet butt sitting on the sea stone.

no shoes on the rocks

no shoes walking in the shallows with tripod

mosquitoes - normally they don't bite her. Really need mosquito stuff. otherwise unbearable to shoot by the lake.

bare feet at beach locations. Waves crashing over feet and tripod.

sleep is important. talking about locations where the sun goes down late are rises early, especially in winter. that gets tiring. or 7 hour days are great - shooting all day, and then just at the hotel to edit.

model in photo for the 'little person' shots. I am told to walk in front of the camera and stop at one point. Sometimes I have to stand really still, because it's a long aperture shot. Other times to pretend I am walking. But I still stay within the same 2-3 metres of the spot, so walk back and forth. On the stand up paddle board, told to paddle just in the shallows rather than all around. So it is posed, to get a nice photo.

### **Material/Surroundings**

waves - timing of when they crash

sky - waiting for sunset. waiting, waiting, then suddenly the sky lights up a crazy pink, and on the other side, a fluorescent orange. I am told to run over to the horizon to pose as a silhouette.

sunset 2. Waiting but nothing. No good photo.

Mosquitoes harassing us. Having to put on repellent.

Locals standing or sitting in way of photos. but she rarely asks them to move

Waiting for 'rogue waves' to come. White spill over side of pool "That's what we want".

Band of clouds are 'frustrating' for not letting red light through across landscape.

barefoot - careful not to slip on algae or step on sharp shells.

waiting for sunrise. cold and windy sitting on the rocks, with sea spray. Sun is quite strong as soon as it rises.

### **Material/Props**

Me having to 'model' and stand in distance. Having to stand very still for long exposure shots.

Me having to be at the front of the kayak so she has a model for that.

third plate of food for food shots. Standing on chair to get photo. Lip balm, headphones, flowers, glasses, phone on table. Everything to arrive at once including coffee.

### **Competence**

"Business head". Managing the restaurant as head chef. People person.

Being genuine and nice to people.

Not accepting jobs that are unpaid (just payed for) because it's bad for the industry. Wants to encourage a standard where influencers are legitimately paid.

Doing conferences and consulting as another diverse package to make money.

Standard practice and rates no matter the client.

asking not to have too full schedule. needs flexibility, comfort. not too full schedule. need to be able to revisit a place. her friend will all luggage in park - taking down stairs...

type of person — need to be three things: confident, decisive and a good sleeper.

misses out on certain competences too — like how much a hotel room costs.

different to a photographer because it's about selling your personality too, not just type of photographs. So Lauren's captions are very personal, honest, and self-aware. Other girls' accounts are more about pictures of them, putting themselves visually in it more. People follow for the nice photos, but also for the person behind it. It's good to be likeable, or attractive, or amazing.

telling me many stories of the trip. people love to tell travel stories. worked with many tourism boards, hotels, influencers, photographers. Says she meets heaps of new people. they are always excited and want to show her the best places and treat her. Always ask the same questions and she tells the same stories.

When looking through photos, is always thinking about the square. After a shoot "we got a couple of squares".

Editing photos. Some photoshop skies from different times into the shots. Lauren heightens colours and light, but never moves something into a frame. "I want to show something that you could see if you were there yourself".

Having a business head. Knowing how to negotiate, how to email people, how to do business.

### **Meaning**

This job requires a type of person and materials. They need the drive, the guts, to ambition, the people skills, creativity.

She is like a veteran of the practice. Has set herself up comfortably in the industry. Has a steady flow of jobs. Has her routines down, all equipment is good. Comfortable position. Also with enough expertise and experience to run workshops. Can lead to consulting. She helps in facilitating the legitimacy and standards of the practice. Demanding to be paid for instance. If she takes on work where she doesn't get paid, only the costs covered, she believes it encourages that behaviour.

The younger guys are less demanding of money. That's the early stages of the practice while you're still growing follower numbers and getting content.

This project shows exactly what goes on behind the scenes in this practice. Every influencer is unique, and they've got to be to remain competitive and stand out as having their own aesthetic. This means that they've all got nuances to their practices. But the research has indicated that there are several key elements to the practice of instagram. Lauren is a more advanced example, and her practice shows why she deserves to be paid to do this. It is really long days 5am-9pm very often. To capture the sunrise, activities between, sunset. In between there are long transit phases, where sometimes it takes over an hour to get between activities, photo locations, or accommodation. Even times we eat she is working. If the food and ambience of the cafe or restaurant is good, she'll want to photograph it. Between travelling and doing activities, she also needs time to edit. She is paid a day rate, so doesn't want to edit photos when the trip is over. This means 1-2 hours per day for editing. She also needs to post on Instagram, which involves working out which photo to put next (making sure it fits well to her current feed), writing a caption, adding hashtags, and then an 'engagement phase'. This involves her liking other people's photos, commenting on theirs, liking other people's comments on her own photos, and also replying to their comments. There are some rest times between, but there's always something to do, and she'll most likely be on her phone to do this. She still has time to talk to her boyfriend. This is important — to have a home base. A home to come to, where her stuff is, where her family and boyfriend are.

# Appendix 3: bestnine Instagram collages





# Appendix 4: Typology of Instagram Photo Types

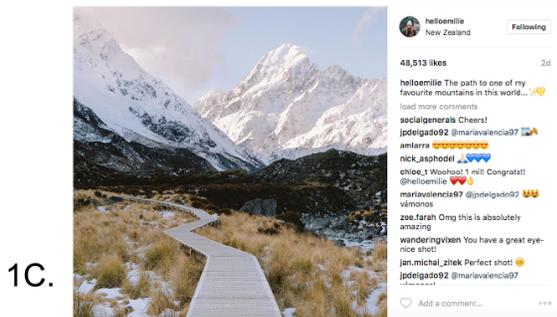
## 1. Landscapes

Landscapes can be defined as:

*“Scenery, either natural (natural landscape) or modified by human activities (cultural landscape); often used to refer to the expanse of scenery that can be seen from a single viewpoint.”*

Park and Allaby, 2013

Instagrammers take photos of mountains, forests, canyons, lakes, beaches, deserts, rock formations, fields, waterfalls and cliffs, as well as cities, ancient villages, and dramatic roads, paths or bridges cutting through natural scenery.



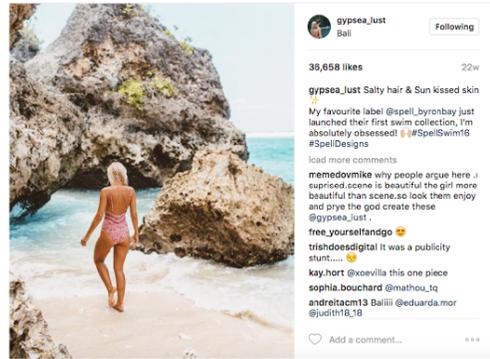
## 2. Candid selfies

These images are of the Instagrammers themselves. They are usually whole-body shots framed in a landscape, and are rarely showing facial details. Rather, they show candid, casual poses, as if the Instagrammer did not know the camera was there. They are often pictured walking towards a landscape, standing looking at a view, sitting comfortably, looking out of a window, casually wading through water, or walking through a field of flowers.

2A.



2D.



2B.



2E.



2C.



2F.



### 3. Point of view shots

This is a camera angle technique that shows the photographer's point of view, usually by including some part of the photographer's body such as their legs, feet or hand.

3A.



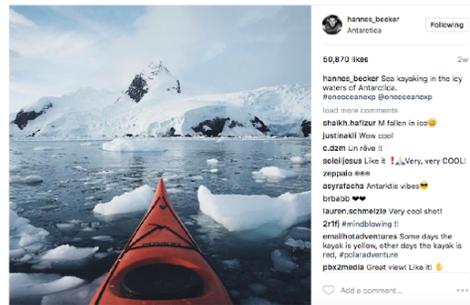
3D.



3B.



3E.



3C.



3F.



#### 4. Animals

These photos include encounters with animals. These include exotic animals from those particular destinations, activities with animals like horse riding or safari trips, and novel ones like 4F, showing rare encounters with wild animals that have been domesticated.

4A.



4D.



4B.



4E.



4C.



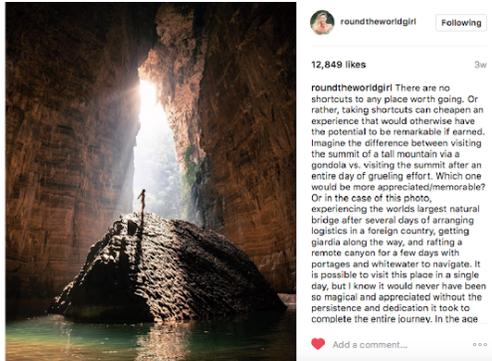
4F.



## 5. Little people

Photos categorised as little people are usually landscape photos that include a small person in them, usually a silhouette on a horizon, a small person standing on the edge of a huge cliff, or walking away. They are different from candid selfies, because usually the person is so small they are barely recognised, and they are not the focus of the image. It is another way to bring interest, and scale, into a landscape shot.

5A.



5D.



5B.



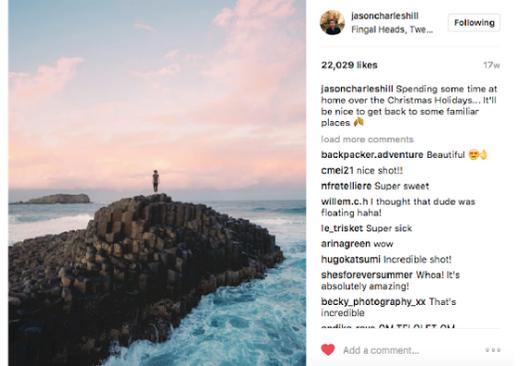
5E.



5C.



5F.



## 6. Food

Not all Instagrammers take food photos, but some do. They are usually photos of food available at accommodation, or local cafes and restaurants. Often they are flat lay photos of the table taken directly from above (as 6B, 6E and 6F), but can also include the surrounding atmosphere.



## 7. Action shots

These are characterised by action or movement in taking part in activities like swimming, diving, swinging, skiing, surfing, horse riding, and rock climbing.

7A.



7D.



7B.



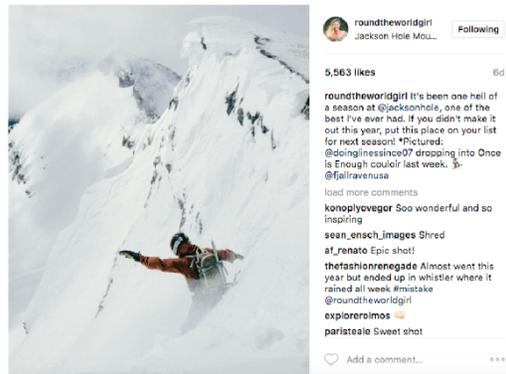
7E.



7C.



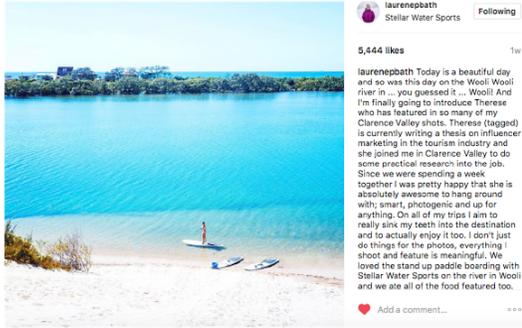
7F.



## 8. Aerial shots

These are shots from above, offering an interesting perspective of a landscape. Increasingly, these are taken with drones, but can also be taken from helicopters, planes, or tall hills or buildings.

8A.



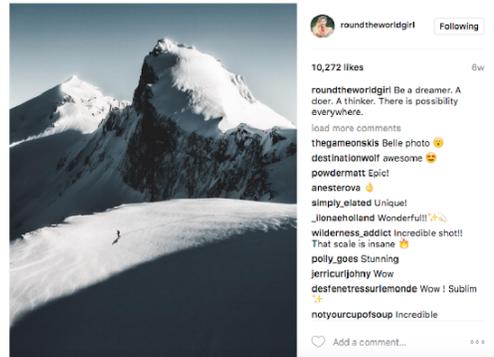
8D.



8B.



8E.



8C.

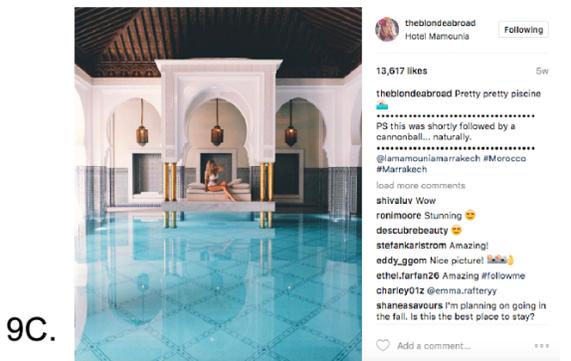


8F.



## 9. Luxurious spaces

These images make luxurious spaces, such as fancy hotels, recreation areas, or poolsides, the hero of the photo.



## Appendix 5: video-call interview with Solana Re of @smrtravels and @hethenomader

Solana:

So we are trying our luck here [laughs] and at the same time we are building our travel guides, and creating original material on that stuff. That's mainly the reason we are based here [Mexico].

Therese:

And, the production company, does that mean you produce photos and videos primarily or is it more like consulting?

Solana:

We do consulting, we do social media management, and we started producing content... the first thing that I started doing was editing pictures for people I was working with for Instagram or Facebook accounts. So I started managing content related to social media. But now we do institutions also, we do videos like aerials with drones and bigger productions. And we manage the whole thing, from where it's going to be, and models—if we need models—and who we need to contact. So yeah, it's producing the whole thing. From beginning to end of it, how the material and visual content is going to be finished.

Therese:

Have you already had some clients?

Solana:

Yeah. Here in Mexico, they are very interested. Mostly hotels, and we've done restaurants too. We tried to contact institutions also that are related to the things that we need. [Laughs] how can I explain this. It's a bit of a mess—it's all mixed up. We do the travel guides, so in order to create content for the travel guides, we work for hotels and restaurants so we can create the contents we need. More or less, almost with no cost. So we stay at the hotels, for example, the last thing that we did was Holbox, and island in the north part of Yucatán here in the Caribbean in Mexico. The idea was just to go and in a couple of days finish everything, you know we do the research first and then we take pictures and everything. But in the end, there were a couple of hotels that were interested in our services as content producers, so we did a couple of videos for them and shots of the hotels and everything and we could stay for free for example. And also we could taste food, really really amazing restaurants. So it's a little bit of everything. We create content for our digital products, but at the same time, we create content for other institutions and businesses. It's definitely like a win-win! [laughs]

Therese:

Yeah. So is that like sort of your main career, then, doing productions for other companies?

Solana:

Right now it is, yeah. I used to, uh... the main source of income for me used to be working online. Like, I don't know... translate or event captioning or anything that I could do with my abilities online. That would be my main income so I could travel all year round. Or, most of the year, without having to have a real like, not a real job because they are all... jobs and [laughing].

Therese:

Yeah yeah, but something with a contract and an office or something...

Solana:

Yeah. Contract and the fact that you probably still today, even though we are—there is a lot of movement about the freelance world, and that section of the economy... most of the employers are still looking for people that are willing to be based in some place specifically and for what I'm trying to do it's not a match. So, I don't know. I was studying at law school, and I wasn't happy so I realised I needed to do something related to my passions, which was travelling, at first. Because all the time I was thinking about travelling constantly. And then photography. So I grabbed my camera and I started working online. And then sometimes with my camera I could, I could do... I created my portfolio, travelling. And everything, so I was... I built this in more or less, 3 years. It's not been easy. But, at the same time, it's very rewarding. You learn a lot... and you see a lot of things and places [laughing].

Therese:

So my thesis is mainly just about Instagram influencers. So it sounds like you have your production company but at the same I found you because I saw that you have quite a lot of followers on your Instagram which is mainly travel photos.

Solana:

Well, the reason that I started this... the idea "maybe I can be a photographer" it was indeed because I had followers on Instagram. I was like "oh! *maybe* I could do it!" if there is people that is willing to follow and keep up with my photography, and my style—I don't know if I, I didn't even know if I have a style [laughs]... at the time I'm most certain that I didn't have it, and it was taking a risk. But it was thanks to Instagram that I started most of my moves. Many hotels and restaurants they contact me directly through Instagram. And that was for me that was amazing. It was like... *whaat?! [laughs]*

Therese:

Yeah, I think so too. I think it's amazing that like there's so many jobs and opportunities that spring up from it. So that's why I'm researching it...

Solana:

Yeah! It's crazy! Even now I have—I don't know how many I have...I think I'm around eight thousand... but at the time that I started I think I had three thousand [followers]. It's not that much, I don't think it's really... I don't think eight thousand is super, like a lot of followers either right now, but... at the time it wasn't that much but it was enough for me to... I don't know feel maybe I could do that for a living.

Therese:

And to make that as 'your living', did you have other examples that you could follow? Like you saw other people who had a similar account who might be working with tourism organisations or hotels. Did you like have help from anyone or did you just sort of, improvise?

Solana:

[laughing] Well, unfortunately I improvised. Yeah so that made it a little bit harder, because... I think I spent the first year and a half or maybe two years trying to figure out a way how the heck am I going to do this? Because I had the idea in my head, I knew that I needed... I don't know if this is what I'm going to do my whole life... but I had this urge inside of me that was like "you need to do this", "you're still young, you're..." I started when I was twenty-five, twenty-six years old. So I was like "you're still young, you need to take a chance now". I would see myself at like forty, regretting not taking the chance. And I don't... I was like. I don't know... the task is... I am completely blind, and I don't know exactly where I'm going or what I'm doing. But, I just started. I think I did a lot of research, a lot. Researching for example how to make money online, how to travel and make money while travelling, how to make money through photography, how to make money... [laughs] I don't know, anything you can possibly think that included the words 'travel', 'online', 'freelance', 'remote'... I was searching everyday for different way of making an income.

Therese:

Did you ever struggle a lot financially, or was there always enough money?

Solana:

The times that I struggled or maybe the money that ran out because I also had to learn how to administrate my money properly while travelling. It's like... that's the tricky thing with this. You're not only learning how to live online and freelance and... but you're also learning how to administrate money living in a way that is completely unknown. You're not going to be spending the same money maybe in Bali than in Paris and in New York and in Argentina. Maybe every budget that you plan in destinations, it has to be very well thought. And of course at first it was a mess! So... the moments that I ran out of money I just came back home. And I lay down... I don't know I would stay at home a couple of months to recover financially. And then start over.

Therese:

And by home do you mean with your parents, or do you have your own place?

Solana:

I have my own place in Buenos Aires in Argentina. I grew up with my parents outside of the capital, but I left home when I was seventeen.

[Brief talk about home life, the apartment etc.]

Solana:

May I ask you—sorry—how you decided to do this as your thesis subject? I'm curious [laughs].

Therese:

I think... I was just like amazed that... because I'm studying tourism, it's a master of tourism. And like, everything that I read about social media, and like Instagram and stuff in terms of academic literature, it's so old fashioned and so outdated. And so there's absolutely nothing about like making a career as an Instagram influencer. So I just think... And also I'm very interested in how many accounts there are too. That tourism destinations are very willing to pay people or invite them to come there because apparently there's a lot more social influence than traditional advertising.

Solana:

Yeah, yeah. That's very wise. Yeah, it's true. There is no, anything like it right now. It's not being studied, studied that hard.

Therese:

No, and like most people like yourself, you're just making it up for themselves and improvising as they go.

Solana:

Because we see an opportunity. We see an opportunity and we try to grab it as hard as we can. And, also it's hope. I think it's the hope that you will find a way, see the way. Along the way you will find a way to do it correctly. And I think it's like that. Most of the people are the bloggers that I've read about. They were just taking a chance. They were mostly nobodies who were just passionate people that really liked a subject so much that they were willing to talk about it every day with strangers.

Therese:

Do you think it's very easy now to become an influencer?

Solana:

[Sucking in breath]. Er, no, there is a lot of conversation. There is... I think there is a lot of people trying to make it, by themselves, for themselves. But you have to set it up, be competitive but also original and creative and... I think you have... The outlet is out there. You have Instagram, you have Facebook... you have the outlets to do it. But there is a lot of people who are also doing it in a very good way and they are putting a lot of energy and everything. So... for me it's not about becoming an influencer. Because related to this question I think it is very hard... it's like being an actress. It's like am I going to be in Hollywood or not. It's just... I think it's probably not. Maybe in the middle of the way you should probably think, another way to make money, to provide yourself an income. So yeah. I think being an influencer is the ideal dream and yeah it's the new way of becoming famous and that stuff. But I don't know if it's possible for everybody to do it. It does require you to be very very creative and original.

Therese:

Yeah. I was listening to a podcast the other day by an Australian influencer called Lauren Bath... maybe you know her. And she criticised a lot of these instagram accounts for like, making up trends or just following trends and glamorizing their travels so like you know, the girl in the bikini with the cocktail on the beach... like that's just guaranteed to get a lot of likes.

Solana:

Well that happened to me... Whenever I uploaded a picture in the beginning of that... I kind of... it got me furious because it was like "Oh! my god the only thing that you want to see is *that* and I, I, I'm trying to keep it *my* work here, *my* pictures also. It's just, it's not only about... everybody wants to know about *you* a little bit and what you do and who you are, but it's just... it's such a

cliche. You know, the bikini on the beach. It's just... ah I don't know. It would be easier, of course, it would be *so* [laugh] much easier... But I, I was... I think I was drawn by your invitation because of what you put on the email like the unique way I put myself on the pictures. And I really try hard to not be the girl in the bikini on the beach [laughing]. Even though here in Mexico... well we are going to be doing a lot of beach scenarios and everything. And I am going to have to be in a bikini and that stuff and show that side, that beautiful side. But it's just... sometimes it's just ahhh no! I don't want to do that... I would *love* for people to be interested in my pictures of- I don't know- [inaudible], a bicycle in Kyoto... and yeah. But that's not how it works.

Therese:

And people have always been like that as well. I think you just can't change it [laughing].

Solana:

[laughing] yeah. And you end up, I don't know. Giving it up. Because if that's what you want, then whatever. [laughing]

Therese:

So I wanted to know a little bit more about like your shooting process. So yeah like if you're travelling to Japan or something for instance, do you pre-plan your day like locations, time of day, outfit... that kind of thing?

Solana:

Well, yes. I usually think, mostly now, because I like to be creative in the pictures and I've seen a lot of people has a lot of pictures where you know you are in a beautiful scenery or landscape and everything and *maybe* what you're wearing is so not accorded to the place that people end up looking more at you than the place that you're trying to portray. So yeah I think about the outfit, mostly because I don't want to me being the main centre of attention. I want to be able to blend in the pictures. So I do a lot of research, whenever I'm travelling to a place, a city or a country. And I research most, I think mostly right now because of the travel guides and everything and I've researched a lot of restaurants and hotels and for example if it's a beach destination I research places where you can go even if you're not staying at the hotel, where you can spend the day, what are the places that you *must* see of all the places that there is. I try to curate the information. For myself and in the future for my audience too. Also I love going to places that are really Instagrammable, or very pretty to photograph. Sometimes I choose a destination only because I saw a house or a hotel or an architectural place or a tree or something that is really unique in the world that I am dying to photograph. For example the last trip that I did to China I went to Zhangjiajie, that is the city of Avatar. But I didn't know it was the city of Avatar, I found that out while there. But I did know that I wanted to photograph the park and that stuff. And it was like "OK! I'm going to China. I *need* to go to that place."

Therese:

And how do you find the photos, like it's obviously online research? Do you also look at Instagram itself?

Solana:

Mm... not... this is not going to sound good... [laughs]. But even though I use Instagram a lot for my account I don't tend to look at others' pictures like a lot. Probably I do more research through bloggers and Google. I Google places and... I don't know. It's not that I wake up in the morning and see the feed of Instagram and try to see what's new out there. Probably I do more research, guided research, than that. Sometimes Facebook also. In Argentina we use a lot of Facebook. And I follow a lot of hotels and travel organisations and stuff so I can be... I don't know. The feed of Instagram I don't know why I like it better than Instagram-sorry the feed of Facebook-and so sometimes some of the pictures that I've seen of places that I want to photograph or got curious about it was through Facebook.

Therese:

And when you're actually at the location, I mean on Instagram you're like travelling and stuff, but would you say it's more of a photography trip than a holiday, when you're travelling to a holiday?

Solana:

Oh my god yes it's *so* exhausting. It is exhausting. It's not, it's not anymore a vacation. It's never-- everybody thinks you are on vacation because you're travelling. Em... the fact is that you're, you're, you get tired every day to try to make the perfect picture and to find the perfect place or the unknown spot, or the coffee but, I don't know it's constantly a living research. You do research while you're at home and then you do research while you are on the street and then you do research when you are speaking to people, it's constant research. I think mostly that's why I'm starting the travel guides because I realise that I'm very good at researching. And it's mainly what you do. It's just, that. So yeah it is a little bit exhausting. It's photography but it's also the mix of doing research while you're taking pictures.

Therese:

And how long does it take to get the perfect shot at a location, usually?

Solana:

Oh! Eh, it depends if I'm on it or if it's just the location. Because if it's just the location maybe... it also depends on the location, but for example there was a place in Kyoto, one of my, my latest pictures I think I did in Akyoko Kyoto, that is next to the bamboo forest. It was a very, it was gorgeous river and it was during autumn and everything and sometimes I just stand there or sit there when I know that there's going to be people passing by, riding bicycles or just walking or whatever. I stay there for as long as I need, because I know I'm gonna, I'm gonna take a perfect picture if I wait. So sometimes it could be an hour, two hours. Sometimes it could be just fifteen minutes. And if I have to be on it, I usually do the auto photo with the tripod and the automatic remote control and everything. That also takes me, at least half hour, or one hour.

Therese:

So normally you set that up by yourself with a tripod and an automatic remote. Your boyfriend also has an Instagram, right? So do you guys help each other out on shoots?

Solana:

Now we do, but we met last year in Mexico so it's very recent. Like we've been together for five months. But in the middle I travelled alone, I did Japan on my own. We met again, we reunited in China. Now we do, now he takes pictures of me, I take pictures of him. It's, it's really easier [laughs]. But also we do have a joint account that we are...I don't know, we're trying to explore the market of how people react to couples travelling and that stuff.

Therese:

What is the name of that account?

Solana:

"We the nomader".

Therese:

Yeah, yeah, I follow that one as well.

Solana:

Okay. So we are trying to build that up. Also because the blog is going to be joint, we are going to do it together. And the travel guides is going to be a product related to that, it's going to be "Nomaders". I don't know how to say it in English exactly, I pronounce it "nomaders" but I think it's different.

Therese:

I think "nomaders" yeah.

Solana:

Okay. So yeah but when I'm traveling alone I have to set it up. So I bought a remote control that it's easier to do it like that and not waiting with ten seconds and running, and getting yourself in the pose and everything [laughs]. And photos of us together, I had to go back to the traditional style and the tripod and the timer...

Therese:

It must have been difficult in Japan, because I was also there in autumn last year, in Kyoto, and there's so many people, everywhere it's really hard to photograph anything I feel! Without having crowds in them.

Solana:

Well, it was a tough one. I think Japan wasn't my most creative trip, I don't know why. I think it was also the end of a three month thrip through Asia and it was exhausting. It was exhausting. The contrast, you know, you find the different cultures. And me not speaking either Chinese, Japanese, anything. So if it's not English or Spanish it's like "Oh my god I'm screwed". And it wasn't easy, so I think I was tired, but at the same time there was so many people all the time, and if you try to take a picture by yourself or with like the auto remote control or whatever, it's, they would all look at you. It's like "come on, you're taking pictures all the time, why? Why are you looking at me this, this funny?" It was a little, awkward, so... yeah, maybe... it's not easy when you're by yourself. If I probably had a partner, it would have been easier to take pictures. But also certain places, it was so packed out with people. The. It was impossible. I tried to do my best, for example in the bamboo forest. It's always so, so filled with people. It's just. It was like OK, I should go one day and wake up at four AM and try to get there by first time in the morning. And it was already filled with people. It was like "oh my god! How am I going to do it?".

Therese:

What do you think about if, maybe you're setting an unrealistic expectation if you get a photo like that if there's no-one there. So if you did something like that, would you like post the photo and then say how it is truthfully? Like "it's so busy here, so I would recommend going early". Or do you just like, not bother, with that kind of thing?

Solana:

Uhhh, sometimes I do speak to the Instagram audience. Sometimes I just upload the picture and that's it. Uh, but yeah, that's something that I thought about a lot, the thing that I don't want to portray something that it's not. There is a picture that we have in the Great Wall of China. There is no-one there. We were so lucky. There was no-one, not even I don't, I think we passed like or five people, it's just, we were really lucky, because it was in the afternoon, and everything. And. But everyone was asking, "how did you do it?", "is this Photoshopped?", I don't know it's just... we were waiting and when two or three people were passing by we would wait, and then... boom! we had the picture. We were really lucky. Yeah, everybody know that those places are really really packed up with [inaudible]. But the idea is to, really be able to guide everybody to something truthful and not something unrealistic. Mostly with the travel guides. With the blog and everything, it's just. I love the creative pictures, where you have more minimal sense, where you don't have so much people and everything, but... sometimes, it is what it is and the picture is, it is beautiful even if there is someone else in it that it's not, that it doesn't make sense that it's there, but it was.

Therese:

And what kind of editing processes do you do? Does it take a lot of time? Because I guess you would take the photos on your camera and edit them and then put them on your phone to put on Instagram.

Solana:

Well my editing processes are specifically could be very crazy. Because sometimes I use the computer and then sometimes I go to use five different applications that I have on the phone. I have Photoshop on the phone, I have Lightroom on the phone, I have- I use, most of the time my phone more than I use the computer. Probably because the applications now are really, really smart and really easy to use. And if the picture is too complicated *then* I go to use the computer and use the full program of Photoshop or Lightroom. But... sometimes I edit first like the Photoshopped part. Sometimes I had to delete something, as I said i like the minimal aspects in my pictures, so sometimes I delete things, just to make it more creative.

Therese:

Oh, ok. Like what would you delete? Like a rubbish bin or something?

Solana:

Uhh, like a person, for example [laughs]. Or, eh, I don't know. A part of the wall that was ah, wasn't well painted....

[call interrupted]

Solana:

So I lost the question, what were we talking about?

Therese:

Uh... just the editing process. And what you were deleting on the photos.

Solana:

Oh, yeah. I call it "cleaning the photos". It's just that I clean them up. I like to, I like to make them look a little more minimalistic and.... yeah the only word that I only use and come up with it is just to be clean. You know, deleting the parts of a wall that doesn't look well. It's not that you change the whole picture, but you make it a little but more, aesthetic. Or something like that. Artistic, a little bit. Or sometimes you have to make it even and, to make it even you have to delete I don't know, a column that's over there, or a chair, or a glass that you forgot, or I don't know a light or something like that it's just something that does look well or it doesn't fit or it's something. That would be the first step of my editing process. And then I go back and try to fix the light, the shadows, the blood point, and sometimes I use presets, but not many of them because it makes the quality go away very fast. But in the meantime I think I use at least 3 apps in order to create the perfect, I don't know the perfect tone or colour. Also, the moment I am uploading the picture to Instagram, I also use the tools that Instagram has, because I really love it. They have improved a lot in that department, and I really like the way you can edit a picture in the same app. Which is exactly the only thing that it used to be capable of. I mean Instagram didn't started as a social media thing, it started as an app to, I don't know, to have fun with your pictures and edit it and so... I love that they still keep that in mind when they improve the app and everything. So that would be probably the... I do use a lot of iPhone apps to edit my pictures.

Therese:

And what about like, you don't seem to use a lot of hashtags or anything like that. Or do you?

Solana:

No, no. I don't like it. I mean, I know- my brother's started started marketing, he's a genius at that and he was like "you have to do it" it's like "oh my god!" I feel so dirty just putting myself up like that. It's just, it feels like I'm trying to sell out myself. If I was a company, if I was a brand, if I was something else, but it's not it's just my, my account. My pictures. It's just. Of course I need to sell out my pictures, but I'd probably find some other way to make that happen. I don't know why, I feel that by using hashtags it's like "oh my god I want so hard for everybody to, to look at this". And my strategy, my marketing strategy, in Instagram, has always been the same, and it's what I call... marketing interaction. It's simple. You just like other people's pictures, you comment, you interact. because if it's, now it's social media thing, and it's open to everybody. Because originally it was only for iPhone owners. And then when it grewed, it solved, so much to much, to the whole wide world that had the phone, the smartphone. it was like, "now is the time to interact and really, really socialise". Because this is really what it's all about. So that would be my only, yeah. I don't like hashtags, they work. They do work. And I do recommend that to clients that need to make... I don't know that need to grow their net, and that stuff. But I personally I don't feel good using that.

Therese:

Yeah, I understand. And so you mentioned your clients, is it, do you, you mentioned that you work with hotels and restaurants, but have you also been working with any larger, like destination management organisations? Like Visit Mexico or whatever.

Solana:

Well no not yet. Not yet, but I, I read... now that we are, that we are doing this that we are trying to pursue, this are the... the very like... more serious and professional way with our media production company, we, we try, I-I did some research on how we can step it up in the game. And, and be able to expand our, I don't know. Not only our services, but how can we do [Faroe] for example, if we wanted to know very well an island. Can we go and contact their institutions and everything so they can help us. Is that a thing? Is that something that you can do? Do these people really help? People like us, that we really want to know the place and explore it and make, and at the end of the day a travel guide is for example publicity for everybody, so. We are starting to figure that whole area right now. But before this year no, I didn't, I didn't even explore it that much. My approach was a little bit narrow. Yeah and just hotel and restaurants because it was my, my interest. I love going to hotels, I love design I love architecture. I love food! So I was like "Okay I'm going to do this because that's what I like". But now that it's a little bit more about the whole thing. I would love to do it for other people to have really, really, curated and good information about places, yeah. I don't know if it works, but I read that it's a good way of getting help when you try to do research and get into places.

Therese:

Yeah because I think because I'm researching this, that like destinations are much more willing to collaborate with influential people. So and mainly just for publicity.

Solana:

Exactly

Therese:

Like they'll invite them to stay there and post a few things on Instagram and then they'll get so much money for each post. So... I think it's going to become more and more that they are willing to work with people like that.

Solana:

The thing is that I, you have to have at least ten thousand followers to be considered right now, an influencer.

Therese:

How do you know that?

Solana:

it is in the, well I read a lot. About this stuff. And there are companies right now that are, and maybe if you like, I can research. I can, I don't know where I have it written it down. But I know there are a couple companies that are dedicated specifically to working with influencers and companies. So you would apply as a job as an influencer for that company, that would be probably doing things for Coca Cola, Johnny Walker, or whatever big brands that are out there. But you have to have at least ten thousand followers. It's like if you're not even in the map... you don't have at least that number. So, I think yeah. Maybe with those companies probably there will be more of a study or research or something about how can influencers work with institutions and everything.

Therese:

Those kinds of agencies that have popped up... even that's amazing too that there's whole new companies too that arise from it.

Solana:

Yeah. It is, it is. That's when I, when I read about this "is that crazy?!". Is this real? It's just... one of them, they contacted me and they were like "We see that you're growing, and once you get there please give us a call, we are very interested in... like it's just you have to be able to qualify to be able to" blah blah blah the whole thing. But for me it was just like this is going to another level of craziness. It didn't feel real but now because you have certain amount of followers you get paid for doing that. But yeah. It's something that's happening. So yeah. I think, I will be able to give you a little bit more information about this when this year goes by [laughs]. Because it's, every month things change. And I see the response of people on organisations about what you do, and how you do it, and how you portray yourself. What is it that the audience is looking for? It's not only about the picture but the caption. What do you write? What do you put in the [inaudible]... as important as the picture. So, what something. I don't

know. An application that used to be fun and social thing that you do, just to have fun and kill time. Now it has become all, all business.

Therese:

Yeah. And so, tell me a bit more about your other account that you're running with you boyfriend? Are you posting things differently on that one?

Solana:

Well, we are trying to find our joint voice. Because it's not easy trying to find our style in there... a curated style, but we're trying different pictures, different angles, different places. It is kind of different because the idea is simply, for that account to represent the blog and the travel guides. So it's going to be related to hotels, restaurants, secret spots, different places, this island, this place, this city. But we still do not know how to really figure it out in a way that is appealing for everybody else. Because it's starting from scratch. So, yeah. Because when you have an audience you can see, you know what they want because they started following you for a reason and you had to take the style...When you start something new, no one's in a new market, you're open to new audience or different audiences. It will take time. I think it takes time. But, we are, we are. The thing is that we started, we bought a drone, and some other DGI products that are going to give us a little but more quality, when it comes to our photography and videos. We are really loving the aerial takes, a bit different. And the videos also, because we know people, institutions, brands, everybody they love having videos in their accounts. So that's another part that I'm not really do in my account really. I'm going to stick to my photography and my stuff. Probably because I'm [inaudible]. but also it's cause we, the nomaders, it's a way of exploring new horizons. And we'll see what happens.

Therese:

Good. Well, I've actually asked you all the questions I wanted to, so... thank you.

Solana:

Well thank you so much, it was a really good experience. I was curious about your point of view of all this, and I'm glad, I'm glad we had a talk.

## Appendix 6: Email interview with Nastasia Yakoub of @nastasiapassport and @dametraveler

### ***1. Shooting photos.***

*Tell me about your shooting process. Are your photos thoroughly pre-planned (finding locations, choosing outfit, heavily scheduled day) or more spontaneous?*

*How do you take photos of yourself -- with an assistant or tripod/remote?*

*How long does it take to get the perfect shot, and how many takes usually?*

*What equipment do you use (camera, iPhone) and what editing procedures you have (computer edit, number of phone apps used)?*

*Would you say your photos are more natural or posed?*

Shooting process is not pre-planned as I'm not much of a planner myself. I use Foursquare to scout interesting locations and look out points and save them to a list but that's the extent of my planning process. Outfits are not important, I'm promoting travel, not fashion and that reflects on my Instagram gallery as I don't accept many product sponsored posts. I try to keep both @nastasiapassport and @dametraveler as authentic as I can.

I try different perspectives so about 5-10 shots in each location so I have some to choose from.

Sony alpha a6000, I'm not much a gear snob, I prefer simplicity at its finest and I also believe its not what you shoot with but how you look at and see things that ultimately matters.

I don't prefer too much of a pose shot so I usually ask my subject to walk naturally or I make them laugh so they can relax. I believe in moments over poses. I also prefer being behind the camera but sometimes I'll get in the shot.

I use Lightroom and Snapseed to edit but my photos aren't heavily edited.

## **2. Your @dametraveller account**

*This account is hugely popular, judging by follower count and amount of submissions you must get. Why do you think people like to follow this account?*

*What is it about girls being fascinated by other girls photographed in beautiful locations?*

*What do you think about people finding accounts like @boyfriendsofinstagram entertaining? It may expose and mock the kind of photography in @dametraveler.*

I started the account over two years ago after a back injury as a Labor and Delivery nurse that resulted on bed rest for 6 months. One of my photos was featured on @beautifuldestinations and I got so excited. I then started searching for a female travel community to live vicariously thought until I could start traveling again but could not find one. All I found were fashion and beauty communities which don't interest me. Travel is my passion. And so, I started @dametraveler \*which means a courageous women\* and added the hashtag to all my photos. Before I knew it, the community blossomed and I was receiving a ton of gorgeous photos by female travelers. I would ask permission to share the photo and then I would carefully curate the gallery. I am proud to say that @dametraveler is the FIRST female travel community on Instagram.

People resonate with my community because I strive to keep it as authentic as possible. I don't hard sell any products or services and I also share my heart and stance on situations going on in the world in a positive light. Ultimately, I feel as if I have a responsibility to shed light on important issues going on in our world since travel and the world go hand in hand and since I have the audience.

It's not so much about "girls being fascinated by other girls photographed in beautiful locations" it's more about empowerment, like hey, she was brave enough to travel to Sri Lanka, I can do that too. Or it could be a means of transporting into dream world for a moment. It's all about positivity at the end of the day.

I've never heard of @boyfriendsofinstagram as I don't waste my time on people who mock others. I spend my time building a positive and empowering community of females and I like to keep my focus and energy on my own brand, to each their own.

## **3. IG careers and working with tourism organisations.**

*Tell me what it's like working with tourism/destination organisations and hotels. Do they approach you, or you approach them?*

*Is Instagram Influencer a viable career path, or do you need other projects and freelance work on the side?*

*How did you get started with the account -- with guidance from existing examples, or is it mainly just 'winging it' (because it is such a new phenomenon)?*

Both. I get approached for press trips but if I'm heading to a destination on my own, I'll research a unique hotel and pitch to them using my media kit.

Freelance on the side if you want to keep your community authentic.

Please refer to my answer above.

## **4. IG content**

*Lauren Bath has criticised some travel IGers for glamorising their travels -- following photo trends (e.g. bikini + cocktail + exotic beach = many likes) and avoiding sharing the tough/bad moments during travels. What do you think about this criticism? Do you ever feel you are setting an unrealistic or overly optimistic image of travelling? Do you notice any trends of 'types' of photos that people like on IG?*

I am as real as I can be, especially on @nastasiaspassport where I'm always sharing my heart and thoughts without holding back. I'm here trying to help people, not make them jealous and I don't waste time criticizing other bloggers.

My blog has tons of journal entries that speak the truth such as this one on Havana:<http://www.dametraveler.com/havana-honest/>

Of course there are the popular locations like NYC, Santorini, etc that perform well no matter way. There are just some places where it's impossible to take a bad photo.

## Appendix 7: video-call interview with Selena of @finduslost

[start of interview was not recorded]

Selena:

We had no idea what Instagram could do. I had started it originally just as a way to share photos with friends and family. And she was like 'Oh and at around ten thousand, you'll probably start getting requests for like free product' and I was like 'Ooh! Free stuff!' Like, that's what got me excited and it wasn't until you know it hit me later down the road I, probably not even until we were way past ten thousand followers, probably around like fifteen to twenty thousand, and we thought 'Mm... this could actually be something way more serious than I ever imagined. So like I don't want to start compromising it for, for like a free hat. Or something like that! [laughing]

Therese:

Yeah I always wonder that as well, like if you've been invited somewhere by a tourism destination or a hotel or something like... how much do they dictate what you're taking photos of, and what you're posting and what you're saying about it. Is it like, up to you a little bit or do they have control?

Selena:

So it's really interesting. We just went to, we just came back from Switzerland, as you know. And they specifically, we had reached out to them actually because I do guest blog posts for laurenconrad.com sometimes and so I wanted to actually get content for that. So I'd reached out to them and said, you know, 'Hey we're looking to do some, you know coverage, and we'd be really interested in staying here doing a feature on a winter stay. And, you know in exchange, can you do accommodation?' And they had responded with you know 'Oh that sounds interesting however we're actually running our own campaign, and we showed, you know we showed your work to the person in charge and they really love it. So would you be interested in coming here and shooting photos for us?' And we were like, 'Well that sounds more interesting!' [laughing]. So I'm like 'Why not do both?' So for them, they were running a campaign where they wanted to just — it's called the 'Original Experiences' campaign — and they wanted to just show people on vacation and how they would experience that hotel specifically. Because they are one of a larger network of about 260 hotels. And so we figured 'Oh they're going to give us like a shot list, it's going to be so specific', and of course they did send us a contract and everything but, what it came down to it, you know we got to the hotel and we're like 'okay what do you want us to cover, what do you want us to do here and here and...' we're always specific because Jacob's worked in photo and video for years and so we always want to make sure that we're actually, you know pleasing the person we're working with and they were like 'Yeah we just want you to do like what you'd normally do'. And we were like, well, this is so weird... okay. You know so it's funny because that is echoed amongst like, every other hotel we've talked to since like we're going to another hotel this coming week and then another hotel, and they both have said the same they've been like 'Well we'd

like you to get shots around here and here, but other than that you know just do what you'd normally do. So that's, pretty wild actually that you can actually be on a job and do that. I don't think I'll ever get used to that. [laughs]

Therese:

Yeah, that's pretty great. But it might also be for them, like, they want to figure out, like, what is appealing for maybe like other people like you that are travelling, like in your age group and demographic. So maybe that's like... for them it's like 'Oh they really like this part, so maybe we should do more of that, and like they don't care about this... sauna' or whatever it is, you know.

Selena:

Yeah. I guess that's where influencing comes from, but yeah, no it's crazy. It's pretty wild to me.

Therese:

Yeah. No, that's cool. So, how long are your trips normally? Like, when a hotel invites you, how long will you usually stay there?

Selena:

Definitely dependent on the project. But it's typically between two to four days.

Therese:

And is it... what is that like for you? Is it exhausting, or do you actually get to relax? Are you waking up early?

Selena:

[laughs] it's pretty exhausting. We both still work part time. So, I work for a company in Los Angeles, and I work... it's supposed to be 20 hours per week but it's usually way over that to be quite honest. I work in marketing, so I'm still doing work for them throughout the week. As is Jacob, and Jacob's usually a little bit more flexible, he tends to be mostly on emails and just kind of conference calls just when he has to be. But I kind of have like, you know deadlines and projects I'm working on also in addition. [04:19] So, I'd say a typical day if we're doing a hotel shoot now is... we always wake up for the sunrise usually because we want the better light for photos. So we'll get up like 6:30-7, we'll go out and take photos. We'll probably come back, 10-11, have something to eat, we'll get ready for the day, we'll head back out, we'll go to do like an activity or a location that we'll go shoot. We'll probably grab lunch while we're out. We'll come back, get back in like the late afternoon, we'll usually start dumping the photos. I'll start answering work emails. Then we'll prepare for a sunset shoot, we'll head back out [laughs] we'll head back out, we'll do the sunset shoot, come back. I'll usually start getting back on emails again for work, and then we'll try and fit dinner in there somewhere and... usually the rest of the night is spent— I usually also have to post an Instagram so that'll be fit in somewhere, and then I'm usually editing photos throughout the rest of the night. So it's, it's funny because it's like the two-day trips feel like they're a week because you cram so much in and it's pretty crazy. But it's, I mean it's like people say it's like you enjoy it, because it's what I like to do. So as burnt out as I am like when I get back here, I feel pretty satisfied. Like even if I didn't relax, I still usually enjoyed the location so much, so it was worth it.

Therese:

What kind of work do you do for marketing that allows you to be remote?

Selena:

So before we left in March I was working at a place for just under three years. They've built their own kind of suite of ordering tools for restaurants, and we have a marketing department that helps market them. They offered me a remote position when I left, doing social media for them. Not so much consultant work, but project work for them. But it's funny because my week is split between that and then @finduslost.

Therese:

Well it's great that you have that financial support behind you as well, I guess.

Selena:

Yeah, it definitely helps.

Therese:

Okay, so I'm going to refer to some questions I have. We've already covered a little bit. Mainly my thesis is about like, because I read a lot of like success stories, and why it's beneficial for travellers and for the destination and la la la... but mostly I'm interested in the behind the scenes, kind of stuff... so, like for example when I was asking what a day in the life of is like. So, I might just ask more specifically, how much do you plan what you wear, and how much do you do your hair and everything like that?

Selena:

[laughing, laughing again]. Sorry I'm laughing because it's like, my hair... [laughing] my hair's just like falling apart because I don't even do it anymore unless I'm taking photos [laughs] it's terrible. Planning what I wear... so again it usually depends on what we're shooting, so when I do the blog posts also for laurenconrad.com I'm actually usually wearing product of theirs. So if I'm trying to do a blog post for them, I try to fit multiple different things. So let's say we're going to Switzerland going to shoot in the mountains, I will try to wear a jacket from their clothing line, and I'll try and wear like anything else that I need to shoot. Like for example we also deliver content to a watch company now. So I'll wear the watch, so if we see an opportunity for me to shoot the watch while we're there then we'll do that. If we see a good opportunity to do more like of a... not so much a fashion style shoot, because we still give them pretty organic stuff, but if we see an opportunity for me to kind of show off the clothing a little bit more, I'll do that. And then... I'm trying to think like... my hair [laughs] my hair is so fried.

Therese:

It doesn't look bad! I think it looks like you do it.

Selena:

I feel like it's never been worse and it's funny because I never used to do anything to it but now it's like... [laughs] Nothing irritates me more than when we're going through our photos now because I edit them and I see that my hair looks different in every photo, it drives me crazy! But no, I'll usually—if we're doing a shoot that day—I'll try and get up in the morning and do my hair. But honestly if we're getting up for an early morning shoot, I won't even bother. The last full day we had in Switzerland this time, I was like "OK I'll get up in the morning, I'll shower, I'll do my hair then we'll go out and we'll do the shoot. I didn't get up. And I was like "OK well I'll do the early morning shoot and I'll have messy hair and that's fine and then I'll shower after that." Didn't shower! It was, just the whole day... happened. You know it was kind of like we did the morning shoot and then we were like "Oh! it's snowing we should go here and we went there and- you know, I have to be flexible. So I'll do the best I can, but you know it helps that my face isn't in a lot of the photos [laughs]. Because sometimes I'm like done up and other times I'm like I have literally no makeup on. It all depends on what we're trying to fit in.

10:08

Therese:

I notice that a lot of these kind of accounts, it's very often an attractive looking girl being photographed, but from behind. Why do you think that is?

Selena:

[laughs]. Sorry, say that last part again?

Therese:

Why do you think that is? Is it so people can imagine themselves as the person?

Selena:

Yeah I think so. I mean, when we started doing it, it was kind of just naturally Jacob and I- Like I'm not really the type of person who likes to be directly in front of the camera, which is ironic considering I now have an account that's me travelling. But, you know when we started doing this, Jacob has always preferred like kind of more artistic shots, and I have too. And so it was just much more natural. When we were taking photos on our own and not even thinking about long-term how we would present them

to people, this is how they were turning out. So it just kind of naturally transitioned into, into that being kind of the core of our account. But honestly I'm not, you know, stuck with it. Like I'm not stuck to that either. If I changed it a little bit, I would be curious to see what happens. But I'm not in a rush too because I'm more comfortable like not having my face in the forefront. And I think the reality is people enjoy, and can imagine themselves in a scenario a little but more when it's not you smiling at the camera, so it kind of seems like a win-win for us and everyone else.

Therese:

I think it also makes you look a little bit less like a tourist as well, because like no-one wants to be identified as a tourist. So maybe that's also what makes them look a bit more artistic and candid. Would you say they are more natural or more posed though?

Selena:

A good chunk of them are pretty natural. You know if we're doing... If we really want to capture something, usually we'll... we also don't have a photographer that's photographing us so we'll have to set up a tripod and capture the two of us. But generally we're not going anywhere just to take photos. We're going somewhere we would normally go. Like you know, Switzerland... we went to the top of the hill and we really wanted to see the lookout. And I was interested in skiing, however we just didn't have the time I think I had we spent another day at that place we would've. So we went up and we watched the other skiers, but we ended up just sitting and having a really nice leisurely lunch and just walking around there. And so the photos we got were us sitting down and having drinks, and us walking around looking at the view and that's really what it was like. We didn't go skiing so there's not going to be skiing photos or anything like that. It's fairly accurate.

Therese:

Yeah I think that's good. And so what kind of equipment do you use?

Selena:

Ah well photos and videos. So if we're photos, we use a Canon 6D. And if we're doing video, Jacob would speak more to that set up I can have him comment on it, but video's his domain, so he recently purchased a Sony camera and it has a stabiliser, so we're going to be shooting more video. And that's what he'll be using for that. And then if we're doing other video shots, we have a drone. An Avid Pro.

Therese:

And then you sometimes use a tripod if it's the photos of the two of you?

Selena:

Yes, if it's photos of the two of us we'll use the tripod. We used to ask people in the past to actually take photos of us, if it was like, if there was someone around who seemed like they'd be willing to do it... Never turned out, so we gave up on that. So, hence the tripod.

Therese:

It never does!

Selena:

It never does. And then I feel so bad because we asked someone and we're like "We'll definitely never use this". Because either it's like tilted or out of focus... well if it's tilted it's easier to fix but like there's always something you know you can't really get what you want from someone else doing it unfortunately.

Therese:

And then do you use a remote or a self-timer?

Selena:

Both. It depends if we've forgotten the remote back at our hotel room [laughs]. So if we remember the remote, usually that. But otherwise we'll make do with the self-timer.

Therese:

And you always just use natural light?

Selena:

Yeah. We usually do. There's never like a, we don't use like a bounce card or you know... we have enough stuff to carry around so we wouldn't really carry anything like that with us.

Therese:

Yeah, is it a lot to carry around when you're moving around all day?

Selena:

If we're just walking or hiking somewhere it becomes a lot more difficult to manage, so we're not usually taking like a tripod. But generally yeah, Jacob has like a backpack that he has almost everything in, and I'll be carrying a camera and usually something else too, if we're going specifically and we know that we're taking photos.

Therese:

Okay. And tell me about the editing process? Is that both of you? Or do you do more of the editing?

Selena:

So I actually do all the editing, and we... so when we started doing this he was taking most of the photos and it's kind of like split now because I used to actually do photography in college and I just kind of stopped doing it. Like I didn't really use it for my professional career where as he was. And so both of us have started, you know, developing like our own personal style through this. So I edit all the photos now and he is now going to be editing all the video. Which is actually helpful because if we're trying to do both for a client, he can focus on that project and I can focus on photos. But I've become sort of obsessed with editing now. So I'm like doing all our photos essentially in Lightroom and editing them there.

Therese:

On the computer?

Selena:

Yep.

Therese:

And do you do any more editing on your phone, or you just upload it as you've edited it on the computer?

Selena:

Um, I upload it as is. Like if I notice it's crooked or something like that, I'll do one last final tweak. But usually I'll just edit everything on the computer and then just Airdrop it to my phone. That's usually the process.

Therese:

And what about hashtagging and stuff, have you got a particular process for that?

Selena:

Ah yeah, I think [nervous laugh] hashtagging is such an interesting domain, because I think people can be so strategic with it. I'll start by saying that I literally didn't know what I was doing when I first... when I first hashtagged something, like I feel like I never used a hashtag, properly, until I had this account, which is hilarious. Like, I don't know what I was thinking being like my generation, doesn't know how to use a hashtag. But the first time I was ever like "Oh I'm going to hashtag this account to see if

they'll repost it". So we were in... I distinctly remember, because we were in Venice. It was April of last year, and I was like "Oh @dametraveler is a cool account, like what happens if I hashtag them?" And- are you familiar with them?

Therese:

Yeah I interviewed her last week!

Selena:

Oh really! That's so funny. I always imagine she's like a really awesome person, I really, really love her account. But I also like her because she was the first person who ever noticed our account.

Therese:

She's just very busy.

Selena:

Yeah, I'm sure. No it was funny, I distinctly remember being like "Oh I'm going to hashtag this with dametraveler, and literally, I didn't even know what happens. Like I didn't even know it gets put into a hashtag world... I literally didn't know anything! I was like "I'm just going to try it". And I hashtagged it, and it was a photo of me in Venice, and she had reposted it within two minutes. And all of a sudden we start getting followers. And I was like "What happened?! What did I do? I don't understand!" Like I didn't realise everyone posts this as soon as you hashtag it. So it was both exciting and then totally misleading because after that I was like "Everyone posts photos of us!" [laughs]. So I distinctly remember that. But since that moment, you know just from my marketing background, I got so interested in hashtags. So I would research and see what people are doing. And I read a few articles on it and I remember people saying you want to have a variety, and you want to make sure you're tagging the bigger accounts and some smaller accounts, and yada yada. And I'm sure I follow that structure without realising it. But my goal actually, became, when I was using hashtags, to just make sure that our photo would show up in the top nine of each hashtag as much as possible. So I just I found hashtags that were more accessible to us, knowing that like lets say someone was searching for Romania, and I hashtagged all the Romanian accounts that were a certain size, knowing that we have a good chance of getting to those top nine posts. My hope is that okay, someone trying to go to Romania if they're looking at multiple hashtags would see us in almost every single one. Because you know, as someone who, just on a daily basis is looking, working with marketing like you know, you want people to see the repetitiveness. You want people to see you more and more and more, and that's what's going to get them to convert over. So my thought was "Okay, if I can get us on the feeds then people can see us." Not one time, but two time and three times and four times... they're going to be more likely to pay attention. So that was kind of my goal, and then I think at this point I don't even think about it anymore, it's just second nature. It's in my notes in my phone and I'll go into my notes and I'll be like "Okay well we're in Switzerland so I'll pull these Switzerland hashtags, and I'll pull this and here we go." And I'll slap it on there. So. It's just a daily activity now. [laughs]

Therese:

And in general, your whole set of photos on your account... what is the story that you want to tell with the account? Or what do you want to convey with your images?

Selena:

I think, for Jacob and I both, we really just want people to be inspired to explore more. My hope -- and this is also dictated now by our projects -- but my hope is I can visit more and more places that are more untouched. Because I think people overlook so many countries to visit. And just so many cities and I really really like going to places that are not popular. Like the Romania trip I specifically just really wanted to go to Romania. And so I hope that number 1, if I can make 1 person go somewhere that they never would've even considered, I will feel accomplished. Because I just want people to have a different mentality about travel and try and experience as much as they can in the short time that they have. Rather than just saying "Ok, I'm going to Paris to the Eiffel Tower". Like I want to have our generation to be the generation that's exploring and really getting that worldly perspective. So I don't know if that's translated here, but we feel responsible almost, to kind of just get people excited to go somewhere that they would never originally think to go.

Therese:

But there's kind of a problem with that, like... I think it's very noble, but sometimes if things get too popular it can get bad for the destination. Like in Norway there's that cliff-face called Trolltunga and that's like very popular to go and take photos there. And everyone just poses like they're the only person standing there.

Selena:

Did you just read, I just read an article about that. Did you read it too?

Therese:

Yeah.

Selena:

Yeah, it's so true. And that's the thing, it's crazy because it's like a double-edged sword right. Because now, I'm sure they were like originally happy having such a spike in tourism but now it's like defeated the calmness of that place. It's funny too, I had a friend who went to Norway and she absolutely loved it and she sent me some places to go. And she specifically was like "Don't tag these place, people in Norway just don't want..." like they're so sensitive they don't want people knowing where this is. And like that's the kind of thing where it's like, if that's the case I would never, like I wouldn't even think to put it on there. Because it's like that's the last thing I want to do is upsetting culture. But on the otherhand, Romania, as soon as we were in Romania, talking to people who live there, they were like "how did you choose Romania? why are you here?" we met a woman too who was visiting and had grown up and she had come back there for the first time in I think it was like 20 years, and she was like "what do you think of Romania?" and so we gave her our honest opinion and she was like "yeah, I don't really like being here" and we were like "well, why not?" and she's like "I continuously want my country to take steps towards new things, and grow the economy and do all these things. And every time you come back you feel disappointed because you see that they're not doing that." And something like that to me is like it makes me want so bad for people to come and visit that country. Because one thing will lead to another you know, if people start taking interest in the country, the country starts promoting their tourism a little bit more, if they start taking more pride in their culture and things like that, it's a snowball effect. I would hope it would lead to better... better something. I really like the concept of feeling like I can hopefully influence someone someday to look at a place differently or to influence something positive for that place.

Therese:

I think it's really awesome for smaller countries like Romania, they need some kind of boost to their economy at some point as well, otherwise they might just become stagnant. So... I think I've ask most of my questions, but just one more generally about the editing effects, again. So you create quite a dreamy look, I feel. It's quite romantic, and stuff. Is that something that you intentionally do, or is that just what you'd think the images would look nice? I mean there's other accounts that use very vibrant colours, or more a crazy clouds, or have more action or something. So yours is a bit different.

Selena:

Ah it wasn't intentional. Yeah honestly it wasn't intentional. I feel like it probably just developed based on what I already liked. It's funny no-one's ever called it romantic and dreamy, but now that you say that I'm like "Oh okay, I guess that fits." No it's just... I'll say this too. A friend of mine in Amsterdam was looking at my pictures the other day and she goes, "Your Pinterest, your personal Pinterest looks exactly like your Instagram feed!" And I was like, "Oh that's really silly." Because it's probably true, I gravitated towards like an editing style without even realising it. So no it wasn't intentional but I'm glad it looks cohesive. Because I think to the person who's posting it and to the person who's looking at it on a daily basis which is usually me, and then of course Jacob too... For me I, every time I look at a photo I didn't like an edit on, all I can think about is like "Oh my god, I can't stand how that photo looks" and it bothers me and it doesn't look cohesive with everything else. And I'm sure no-one else, hopefully, no-one else bats an eyelash, but for me it's like a sore thumb. It's just probably my own style that came out. I'm still desperately learning, all the time. But I like editing a lot so it makes it a lot easier.

Therese:

And just one final question. How easy do you think it is to be an Instagrammer? You say you're figuring it out as you go; is it also the same for tourism organisations or hotels? Or they have quite a set of expectations? Or you know, standards for payment? Or is everyone just winging it? How much is everyone improvising in this new career?

Selena:

It's definitely made up as people go. I think this year, I'm anticipating this year is going to have a lot more structure, but still not to the point where it will ever be you know like a fee-based structure for each person. My observations just is like, as someone who is now in this on a daily basis, is that I see constantly there's companies that are popping up that are just influencer-based companies that are trying to connect influencers to brands. There's more and more people starting to realise Instagram, creating an Instagram account, separate to a personal one is a good idea. I'm starting to see more and more people be more open about it like they're doing interviews or talking about articles. And I think I've probably started at a time where maybe it's... I'm just guessing but maybe it's right before it became a little bit more mainstream, because... I'm just starting to get questions to do interviews from other people from universities too and I didn't even realise that people are actually studying this. Now it's getting widespread attention. So I have a feeling that this year will tell a little bit more about how brands jump on board. Because it's interesting too, even from my perspective now, working for the company I'm working for. I'm getting scouted to look at influencers. And it's like "Ooh look at this influencer! Don't you want to learn about our influencer network", and I'm like "This is so weird, it's strange having the two paths cross". My actual job-job is receiving these inquiries about influencers, so that's really interesting. But no I think people, I'm sure a lot of people are faking it until they make it. I feel like we've tried to be a little more structured with just, with presenting costs, we're really doing it based on what we know the time it will take, we know it's going to take us long. You know, Jacob having worked in photo and video, is better at that because he worked freelance, so he had to price things on his own. So that comes more naturally to him whereas I'm still like "I can't believe I can charge for this!" I'm trying to be a little more flexible but... you'll see probably a wide range of people, from people who will kind of will do anything because maybe their Instagram was just a side project for them and they just want quick stuff. And you'll probably see people who are trying to be very specific about it, but don't really know what to charge. And then you'll probably see people who are like they want to hone in exactly on what they should do to work professionally with brands in the long term. And I think we fall toward the end of that spectrum because I would much rather to work with a company long term than try and do a one-off thing.

Therese:

Yeah especially as people study it and stuff it legitimises it a bit more.

Selena:

I'm very curious to see where it goes next. I'm so curious, I don't know what you're doing for the thesis but I'd love to see it, I'm very interested in everyone else's responses too.

Therese:

Yeah sure. Actually, most people have said that.

Selena:

I can imagine! Because the reality is, again, influencers are so curious about what other people are doing. I think it's awesome that you reached out, and I'm so curious, I wish I could interview you now because I'm so curious because I want to know what your class structure is like! Because I honestly think it's fascinating. Because now it's something that's made its way into school. I mean I graduated 5 years ago now and it was marketing and PR. And I'm sure now they're starting to study this. Which is mind-boggling to me. I now want to ask my previous classmates if they're hearing about this because the school had a lot of ties with the entertainment industry and if they're not studying it they're way behind. So it's interesting.

Therese:

Yeah, there's hardly any academic research on this. So I'm excited to be one of the first to write the thesis on it.

## Appendix 8: face-to-face interview with Joanna from @fitbackpacker

Therese:

So my thesis is basically about the behind the scenes of Instagram accounts like yours. And I know a lot of people like you have blogs and stuff, but it's the Instagram I'm focussing on. I read a lot about success stories, but for me it's about the behind the scenes, how you get working with organisations, what the shoots are like, that kind of thing. So have you worked with many tourism destinations, or is it mainly... you do like a lot of active tourism stuff, so is it mainly like hot air ballooning or sky diving?

Joanna:

Yeah mainly tours. I haven't worked with any tourism boards yet.

Therese:

So the tours will be sky diving... or?

Joanna:

Yeah I've done kayaking and skydiving.

Therese:

And do they just give you that for free? And what is the relationship like, do they reach out to you or you to them?

Joanna:

It depends. It's mostly me reaching out. But I've received some invitations to do stuff.

Therese:

Have you got a standard that you set for yourself of how many posts you do?

Joanna:

It really depends. Like for example when I did the hot air ballooning, they asked for two photos on my Instagram account. Because I told you I write for a Brazilian website, so they asked for a blog post on the website and an English version of that post that they can post on their website.

Therese:

What's the Brazilian site that you work for?

Joanna:

Fantrip.

Therese:

Because I've noticed in your captions you'll have both English and Portuguese. So what's your following like?

Joanna:

Half of my followers are from Brazil, and then the other half is like... I have loads of followers from Indonesia for some reason! I don't know why, I've never been to Indonesia.

Therese:

Have you ever used any bots or anything like that?

Joanna:

No! I think they're very active in social media.

Ondrej:

Hey how can you tell? Can you read it from some API? Like the location of your followers?

Joanna:

No it's because on Instagram you can check. It keeps changing. [shows us analytics screen on her phone] But you can see like the demographics...like how many followers they have...

Ondrej:

Is it a business account?

Joanna:

Yeah, mine is a business account. So 56% are women, 44% men. Their age range. Top locations when you see cities. It's like Rio, Sao Paulo, London, Perth and Sydney. Used to be Melbourne but it changes all the time I don't know why. And then when you go to countries... Oh! Indonesia is not there anymore, it's so weird. Yeah, so Brazil, 36, Australia comes second now. Australia was like, I don't know maybe third or fourth. Italy. It's very random.

Ondrej:

That's pretty useful also because like based on location of your most followers you can actually decide on what time you're going to post something.

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah that helps a lot. So you can even see what time my followers are active the most.

Ondrej:

I definitely have to switch because look, my work [shows his Instagram]

Joanna:

Oh yeah definitely switch to business. Because you can get apps that do that as well but you have to pay. And Instagram is free.

Therese:

And so do you like, post your content according to the followers?

Joanna:

Yeah, so I usually post mine at either early mornings, or around like 9pm.

Therese:

I guess I'm limited in my research because I'm only finding accounts that are English speaking, like from Australia, America, usually. Are there also many in Brazil?

Joanna:

Oh yeah! Loads. There are many.

Therese:

Is there a difference in trends or styles of photos between English speaking and Brazilian accounts?

Joanna:

No not really. They have just like. They have all sorts of blogs. So there are ones more focussed on photography, others more on experiences. Like I follow blogs that are lots of luxury, there are loads of luxury Brazilian travel blogs.

Therese:

I guess that they're like easier to form, because hotels are very willing to stay there. Luxury hotels.

Joanna:

Yeah, I have problems with hotels because my account is called Fitbackpacker, so hotels don't want me to stay there for free because...

Therese:

...you have the backpacker personality.

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah. So it's not interesting for them to yeah... But I have four Instagram accounts. So that I can pitch everywhere. So I have one that is a repost account, called thedailyadventurer, I'll show you. [shows phone]. So between my boyfriend and I we have five Instagram accounts. So I have one that we started recently, called luxstays, that we. Because we plan on leaving Australia in October. And yeah we want to go to New Zealand for a month, then go to England for Christmas, and then fly back to Asia. And we want to live in Asia for a while and travel around for two years or so. So with this account, we'll be able to get like luxury...

Therese:

Yeah it looks like a lot of places in Asia have supported...

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah, villas... yeah so that's why we started this because... There's one called seriouslydelish that we started recently as well. So we can approach restaurants... because I don't post about food on fitbackpacker and he doesn't post about the food either. So we want one specifically for that.

Ondrej:

It's pretty important to have some kind of integrity right? Because if you post everything, you'll lose followers. Because people always want to follow some kind of identity.

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah! That's why we decided to do it this way, instead of just posting. Because there is some travel bloggers who post about everything. They post about food, hotels... I don't like it, I'm like very... OCD. When it comes to my photos. So we have this one as well [shows on iPhone] this is a repost account. So every now and then I post one of my photos. Yeah.

Therese:

And are they all successful?

Joanna:

Um... so this one I have 23.2. I'm already making money with this one. With my fitbackpackeraccount as well. And my boyfriends account richyfeet, we are making money with three accounts. Not with the other ones because we started like, a few months ago. So it's still not using it.

Therese:

And do you think you have a different posting style. Like I know in terms of content it's all different, but what about like the way you describe things, or how you edit the photos. Is that different per account?

Joanna:

Yeah, totally. Yeah. Like I, my account I only post about active travelling, I didn't, like I said, post about food, and it's only certain style. And I try to mind like the colours as well. So it's not only like everything is blue and green, so I try and post like one like with a green background and a little bit closer. So it's more of a mix. Like a set of...

Therese:

And why do you do that?

Joanna:

It's visually better. I don't know I'm a very visual person. So if there is an account that's all one colour, I don't really like it.

Ondrej:

Did you also try to post these like 9 pictures but like one square so that it's looking big over the screen?

Joanna:

Oh no, I don't like it. Yeah I never do that.

Therese:

They're kind of weird those accounts. Because I think it's unpleasant when you're scrolling through to then to see a corner of a picture.

Joanna:

My favourite Instagram account is this one. Nothing to do with travel. But it's just because it's so pretty... [shows on iPhone @thebungalow22]. This one. I love her account. Oh yeah, it's beautiful colours. And they are all her photos.

Therese:

Wow!

Joanna:

Yeah. I love her account, it's amazing isn't it?

Ondrej:

Oh wow. Hey yeah I think I've seen somewhere the bungalow.

Joanna:

Mm, yeah she's very creative. She's Australian as well.

Ondrej:

So isn't she more like a designer then?

Joanna:

Yeah she's a designer. Yeah I think so. And a photographer, because these photos they are all hers. I really like her style.

Therese:

So what is it like when you have agreed with a skydiving company for example, that you're going to skydive and post about it? What is the day-to-day happenings for that? Would you just go one day or do you stay for a longer day?

Joanna:

No I just go for the day. Yeah, so yeah when it's like skydiving things like that, it's just a day, trip.

Therese:

And you drive yourself there?

Joanna:

Oh no they offer the transfers as well. Yeah you have the option to drive but if you can't drive or you don't have a car they offer you the transfer as well.

Therese:

And how important is getting the right photo for you? Because it must be hard being like an active kind of profile. Like you're actually doing active things so you can't concentrate that much on the photography.

Joanna:

Umm... I really enjoy taking photos. So for me it's not really like something like "eughh shit I have to take photos", you know? It's something that I really enjoy, I would be doing it anyway even if I wasn't... even if I was paying for the tour myself. So yeah... but it's very important. Because this was the second time that I've done hot air ballooning. The first time, the weather was horrible. So I had to ask them... the flight itself was nice it was a really nice experience, but the photos didn't turn out good because the weather wasn't great. And it was a sunrise tour. So I couldn't even see the sun! So it wasn't like amazing or anything. So I ask them for photos, to use their photos on my blog post. Yeah, on my blog post I talked about my experience, but I had to use their photos because they looked way nicer than mine, because the weather. It was just grey and you... cloudly... and you couldn't see anything.

Therese:

Yeah. Did you disclose that it was their photo?

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I wrote about my experience. Because yeah the flight was amazing, it was just eh. It's not their fault, yeah. Oh well.

Ondrej:

Can I also be asking questions? Like I'm wondering, are you being reposted? A lot? By other sites and channels?

Joanna:

Yeah I get reposted like every now and then. But in the past I used to get reposted all the time I've been reposted by the Australia account like five times. I got reposted recently but since they changed, on Instagram you used to see the whole caption, but now you have to actually click on it to read everything. And they usually put the... I'll show you so you know what I'm talking about. For example here [shows on iPhone]. Yeah they have like 2.5 million followers. But when they reposted me in the past, oh this. Oh they changed it again! So you used to be like, 2 lines, and then you'd have to click 'see more' to see everything. So when they reposted me it was like this, you could read everything and my name was at the end, so people would read, click on my name, and they start following me. So I'd get, 500 followers at once, jsut by one repost. But then when they changed it, I got reposted like maybe twice by them and I didn't get as many followers, because not many people read the whole thing. They check the photo "oh cool" but they don't want to know who took the photo or... and also like they tag loads of accounts. So it's very, it's really confusing, to know whose photo it is.

Therese:

What was the longest trip you've been on, where you were paid?

Joanna:

Ah, the longest trip that I've been paid for? It was the east coast of Australia. I travelled for a month. With an agency called Wicked Travel.

Therese:

The campervan?

Joanna:

No, no no no. It's a travel agency, they don't sell. It's not the same one as the...

Therese:

It's kind of weird to have your name the same as them, because they have quite a bad reputation.

Joanna:

Oh yeah, god no I wouldn't want to do business with them [laughs]. It's more, similar to like Peter Pans, those travel agencies, like Backpackersworld.

Therese:

Yep. So they organised all the accommodation, activities...

Joanna:

Everything! Like all the tours. The greyhound buses as well. So I travelled with the Greyhound bus. So yeah I got the bus, all the accommodation, all the tours that you... the skydiving as well. That was my... this one here was my second time skydiving. First time I did it on the east coast. So yeah, so I went diving on the Great Barrier Reef as well. Like a two day tour. I went to Fraser Island, Whitsundays. So I did everything.

Therese:

And could you choose what you wanted to do or they determine that?

Joanna:

Because it's the main route, it's what they sell. It's what they sell.... like, they just gave me what they sell. So, everything. Because usually when people travel along the east coast they do these specific tours. They go to these places and they do pretty much the same things. So I did pretty much everything.

Therese:

So do you think it felt like a regular holiday? Or were you more busy taking photos?

Joanna:

Oh no it felt like a normal holiday. Especially because I was I met loads of people, and like I said I would be taking photos anyway. It wasn't like I had to put some extra time or... because I would be... I was there for the first time, so I would be taking photos. So it felt like I was just enjoying myself [laughs].

Therese:

Well, it's just like a little different because speaking to some other Instagrammers, and for them they said it was like never like a holiday, so exhausting, everyday they get up at sunrise to take photos.

Joanna:

Mm! I wouldn't want... Yeah, I was talking to my boyfriend about this the other day. Because like if it ever gets like to a point where I feel like this, where I wouldn't do this anymore. Because I love travelling and I wouldn't want this to take away my passion for travelling. I wouldn't want this to be...

Therese:

To be just for the photos?

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. To get the perfect shot. It's because I really enjoy it. But I wouldn't do anything crazy just to get the perfect shot. Well, sometimes [laughs] but...

Therese:

What kind of equipment do you use for your photos?

Joanna:

Oh I have a drone. I have a Canon mark 3 5D. It's a quite big camera.

Ondrej:

What drone do you have?

Joanna:

DJI.

Ondrej:

Yeah, the small one?

Joanna:

Yeah it's like this big [shows with hands]. It's not amazing because it's very unstable when it's windy. So it's not that... but it's my first drone. So I didn't want to spend loads of money because I had never flown a drone a before. So I was like "Oh no, what if I crash". So it wasn't cheap. But...

Ondrej:

Can you actually fly it legally everywhere?

Joanna:

No, not everywhere. Depending on... you can't fly in the city. And it depends on the place as well. You have different regulations from the laws.

Ondrej:

So how do you check it out? Like, if you are somewhere. And you don't know it there. So how do you find out if you can actually use it or not?

Joanna:

Sometimes they have signs. But sometimes I just check online. But I don't like, I don't usually take city shots anyway. So I don't love taking photos like in the city. So it's usually where I go like hiking and things like that it's usually fine. The only place where I thought I would be able to use it but I wasn't was at Uluru. You're not allowed to fly drones there. Because it's a sacred place. So they don't allow you. There are even signs there, 'No drones'.

Therese:

And sometimes you have a selfie stick too?

Joanna:

Yeah. I only use that for my Go Pro.

Therese:

Yeah I guess there are probably some tours and stuff that you do where you can't really take your Canon.

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've been using more my big camera than my GoPro. To start with, when I first started my account it was more the GoPro. But now I've been using the Canon more. Some of the photos that I've been posting lately are like old photos. That's why there are loads with me with the selfie stick.

Therese:

And what about the editing process?

Joanna:

I use Lightroom. Yeah I love editing photos.

Therese:

How long does it take you usually?

Joanna:

Ah it depends. Sometimes I maybe 20 minutes to half an hour per photo.

Therese:

And do you only use Lightroom on the computer?

Joanna:

Yeah.

Therese:

Do you use any apps on your phone?

Joanna:

Yes, Snapseed. And sometimes that VSCO Cam. But I prefer Snapseed.

Therese:

Do you ever get help from other people? Like to take your photos, or editing, or anything like that?

Joanna:

Not editing, because I really enjoy the editing part. But, my boyfriend takes loads of photos of me and I take his and he takes mine.

Therese:

Okay. Does he also have an account?

Joanna:

So these are all our accounts [shows on phone]. Like @fitbackpacker is my account, he has one called @richyfeet but the other ones like the @dailyadventurer, @luxstays one, and the @seriouslydelish are ours.

Therese:

Okay. So you guys just work from home? Like, day-to-day here?

Joanna:

I do, but he works. But he has like a proper job like he works Monday to Friday. He works in IT. He's not a technical guy, he's more like a project manager.

Therese:

Is he Australian?

Joanna:

No, he's English. Yeah, so we came to Australia together. And then we lived in Byron Bay for three months. And then we travelled the east coast. And then when we came to Melbourne he got this job here. And then they sponsored him. We are both on the sponsored Visa.

Therese:

So, do you hope to be just be running Instagrams in the future? And that's your only jobs?

Joanna:

Yeah... not Instagram but something travel related. Because I don't want to rely on Instagram because it can, they can... it can... I don't know. Because Facebook bought it, they can always change any site, like a new social media... because yeah you can't rely on social media. 20:38 But like something, we want to definitely want to work online, with something travel related. We still don't know quite what we're going to do.

Therese:

Well a lot of people are just doing their own like guides and stuff I guess.

Joanna:

Yeah but you can't make a lot of money in blogging. Only like a few people make loads of money. Yeah, it's very hard. And it's a lot of work, as well. I don't think it's worth it. So I wouldn't want, I don't have my own website. I do, but I haven't started it yet. I bought the domain like ages ago but I haven't started it. Because it's a lot of work and it takes forever for you to start making money. And when you make money it's not like loads of money. So you have to spend a lot of time in front of the computer and that's what I said, I don't want my life to be like that I don't want to go to places and not be able to enjoy myself because it's my job, you know. I would rather like go back to working as like a waitress or something. But for now, it's working.

Therese:

And what you post, is it always like. Do you generally make it positive or would you also reveal if something wasn't as nice like with the hot air ballooning.

Joanna:

I always write about my experience as it was.

Ondrej:

I really love the one where you told me about the diving with the sharks. And then someone posted a comment.

Therese:

There's an account called @gypsea lust. She's one of the biggest ones.

Joanna:

Ah she's crazy though.

Therese:

Why?

Joanna:

Do you know her?

Therese:

No. She didn't respond to me.

Joanna:

Oh no she's not a nice person from what I know. Did you hear that she invented like someone was copying her photos. Did you see that? No I think maybe only Instagram people know about it, because it got reposted like everywhere like Facebook, Instagram groups, everything like that. Because she has loads of followers right, and she's travelling with, she's now @doyoutravel girlfriend. He has over a million... So I think it was probably like some marketing strategy. She's sad. She probably emailed like one of those big travel websites, saying someone was copying her photos. Like going to the exact same locations, taking exactly same photos, wearing exactly the same clothes. And like, created an account. But then they found out that the account, the email linked to the Instagram account, the fake one, was actually hers. Yeah so she got loads of followers out of it, because for a few weeks, people were genuinely thinking people were copying her. But then they found out it was all fake. And then there is a guy here in Australia that I follow, we follow each other, and he's a really nice guy his photos are amazing. And it happened that they were travelling basically the same route, that @doyoutravel and @gypsealust, so he ended up going to the same places, but taking his own photos. Not like, copying her photos. And then she messaged him saying "how do you dare to copy my work" and things like. She's like full of herself like crazy.

Therese:

Yeah. I kind of sense that. Well, the picture that I mentioned, it was an underwater photo of her swimming with a whale shark, with her perfect body and nice bikini. And everything and then someone commented like, "Little do you know that there's a line of twenty tourist also in their lifevests, and flippers just two meters away." So I think like that's quite a deceptive...

Joanna:

But I see this more as like an artistic photography. You know.

Therese:

Yeah. It is very stylised.

Joanna:

Yeah! Her photos are amazing, like I'm not judging her for her trying to show like the perfect life. Because it's her job you know. Like, she's really good at taking photos at, this. Okay, fine. But I don't agree with her marketing strategies. I find it a bit weird.

Therese:

It works for her though.

Ondrej:

How many followers does she have?

Therese:

One million now. Apparently she doesn't accept a job for less than \$3,000 per post. Which is so much money.

Joanna:

I know, it's crazy. But if you think, it's not. It is, it's a lot of money. Currently I'm making \$400 per post. When I promote, not when I go on trips. But like, if a company wants to like send me something to promote on my account. Like a product. I usually charge \$400 for one single post.

Therese:

What kind of product would it be?

25:56

Joanna:

Um, like this one, was a sponsored post [showing on phone] for Westpac. Like about travel insurance. They paid me \$400 for this. I've done.... [showing on phone] this is like Rose wine, I they paid me like \$350. Boots. But I don't post things that I wouldn't promote normally. Like I drink wine. Yeah, this one was a campaign about being safe on the road. Yeah they also paid me \$400.

Therese:

So is that like a standard rate that you tell them? Or is that just across the industry, the standard?

Joanna:

Have you heard of an app called Tribe? Yeah, so I'm on Tribe. Yeah so it's like an agency. Like brands post their campaigns there. Have you had a look on it?

Therese:

No, I just read about it online.

Joanna:

No, yeah. [showing Tribe app on phone]. So they have their campaigns here. And then you apply for the campaigns. The companies don't approach you, you have to pitch. Wow let's see this one, it's called Be Part of It. So you read what they want. And then you either take a photo for the campaign and pitch like with exactly how you would post on your Instagram. And you put how much money you charge. And they have like a rate card. Somewhere. [looking on phone]. So far I've made nearly \$5,000. Just on this app. Oh yeah--rate card.

Therese:

And it's mostly just products?

Joanna:

Yeah. [showing rate card]. So now I'm in this range, 23... so I've been charged \$400. But it depends on the company. I sometimes lower. Because I still find it a lot, like \$400 for one photo. I'm like oh yeah! If they pay me \$400 great, but if they want to pay me \$200, it's still amazing for one photo. You know.

Therese:

And you mention there are like Facebook groups like for Instagrammers?

Joanna:

That people like help each other like they talk about like when the algorithm changes. And they have like, comment pods, that people... like that you post a photo and then you send your photos to this comment pods, and everyone who's in the pod goes on your account and likes and comments so your engagement goes up. I used to do that, but so much work has stopped.

Ondrej:

How much time have you spend doing Instagram each day? Like liking, commenting, following and stuff.

Joanna:

Oh it really depends. Maybe 5 hours a day or something.

Ondrej:

5 hours a day?! So it's like, regular work.

Joanna:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I think about like the \$400 it sounds like a lot in one sense. Oh \$400 for one post is a lot of money. But at the same time, all the effort I put behind the account... being online all the time, worrying about taking nice photos. Like when I edit my photos as well I take at least 20 minutes per photo. So it's not like \$400 for one photo. Sounds a lot, even to me when I think about "Oh my god I'm doing great" but if you think about all the work that I do, it's not a lot at all. It's just because it's easy: I can do it from home, and it's on my couch while watching TV. But it's...

Ondrej:

Have you ever used any bots?

Joanna:

Yeah. I've used Instagress. But it's not like bots that you buy fake followers. Do you know what Instagress is? It's like...

Therese:

When you like and comment other people's...

Joanna:

Yeah but you choose the hashtags. So you're not.. it's not like nice, but it's like my marketing. Not only mine, everyone does that. So you pay \$9 or \$10, US dollars a month, for 30 days actually. But it only counts the hours that you use. So it lasts like two months or three months, depending on how much you use it. And you can select. You can follow and unfollow. I don't do that. But you can put the Instagress to follow people and unfollow people for you. You can select for them to comment on photos that are in specific hashtags, like photos that....

Ondrej:

That's super crazy. I had this discussion with a friend of mine, like, a few months ago. Like these bots, aren't these like heading towards living in this kind of society where it's mostly like bot interaction. And then you are going to like define what kind of things you actually agree with or disagree with. Like it can be interacting in stead of you.

Joanna:

Yeah I know it's crazy. I only started using it recently because ah I was totally against it, but everyone does. Everyone's account was growing like really quickly. And mine wasn't. And I'm competing with them somehow. Like if I have to pitch companies and they, they will choose people who have more followers. So that's why I started using it. I only found out about it because I hosted a guy. Like a German guy stayed at my place. I met him through Instagram, like he commented on one of my photos, and I checked his account and I saw that he was travelling in Australia. And then I messaged him "Oh hey when are you coming to Melbourne, let's meet up!" And then he replied "Oh yeah I'll be in Melbourne like these dates" and I "Oh yeah cool". And then he stayed with us for like three months! He was only supposed to stay for a couple of days but we got along so well that he called us his parents [laughs]. So we became like really good friends and he told me "Oh do you know that message, that comment I commented on your account? It wasn't me. It was Instagress. I was like "what?!" [laughs] So like Instagress connected us. And he actually told me he actually doesn't use his account at all. Like he doesn't spend any time on his account. The only thing that he does is like post a photo. And then the thing is running all day, every day doing stuff for him. He's like "oh no I don't like it, I can't be bothered with that."

Therese:

I guess it's just one of those standard, standardised things. Like that everyone has it, and you fall behind if you don't.

Joanna:

Yeah, that was happening to me!

Therese:

I interviewed a girl from Argentina and she has an account called SMR travels. Which is pretty nice, but I was speaking to her about hashtagging. And for her she's very against hashtagging, she's like "Oh I feel like I sell out if I'm doing hashtags, and this and that" But I think like that's what's going to....

Joanna:

Oh yeah that's like Instagram's main thing. You know that's how you find photos. I use hashtags all the time. Not only on all my posts, but if I'm going on a hike, for example, I put the hashtag, I click on it to see what kind of photos people post. If I want to know about a place not only to grow my account but to find about places, I always use hashtags. So it's very useful. I don't see why you wouldn't use hashtags.

Therese:

How do you find the hashtags that you end up posting?

Joanna:

I have like general ones. I have like 500 lists on my notes. I think it's cheating if you use hashtags like 'likeforlike' or 'followforfollow'. Things like that. But I only use hashtags that are actually relevant to travel. Like, for example there's, I use. When I post photos there's like 'Melbourne' or the surroundings here. 'SeeAustralia', AUstraliagram, EnjoyAustralia, VisitMelbourne. And then the Brazilian blogs that I write for. Lonely planet. It's like, no likeforlike, followforfollow. Nothing like that.

Therese:

Just travel related.

Joanna:

Yeah yeah yeah. And then I change like if it's a beach photo then I put beach. Like sunrise, sunset, I change what it's into according to what the photo is about.

Therese:

Where do you think most of your effort goes? Like actually doing the experience, or the afterwards process?

Joanna:

Yeah, I think afterwards. The writing the posts, as well. And editing the photos. Just, for sure. Yeah because the trip itself is like the fun bit. So it's like when I come back that it's like work. Yeah it's not. Some people, yeah when they are doing the tour they are constantly thinking about "Okay this is my job". I also think this because this is my job and I have to take nice photos but like I said it's something that I would do anyway because I enjoy it. But for me like the work bit, it's when I get home when I have to like write about it, like edit the photos, which I like.

Therese:

How long does it usually take you to get a photo when you're there?

Joanna:

It really depends. It depends on the light. Like you take one it's amazing, you take 500 and only 1 turns out OK. So it really depends on the weather conditions.

Therese:

Do you ever take them with your phone, or just your camera?

Joanna:

Sometimes I use my phone, but rarely. Only if it's like, now that the light is like, really bright. But if it's in the evening. Like night shot, I would never use my phone.

Therese:

And, with these companies, do you ever have to like explain to them why it would be valuable to have you there?

Joanna:

I have a standard email that I send out, like talking about the number of followers, what I can offer them. How many followers the blogs that I write for have, like how many page views they have per month, how many followers on Instagram they have.

Therese:

And usually they are willing to work with you?

Joanna:

Yeah, mostly. Most times they say yes. They either never reply, or they reply saying yes.

Therese:

That's how it was when I sent emails to people asking to interview them. Either no reply, or a yes.

Joanna:

Yeah exactly.

Therese:

Well I think that's all the questions that I wanted to ask.

Joanna:

Oh cool. Do you have an Instagram account yourself?

Therese:

Yeah I do.

Joanna:

Is it a travel one?

Therese:

Well, because I travel a lot in my daily life, I guess. But it's not really aiming to be a travel account.

Joanna:

I'm going to follow you. And when you finish your Masters, what do you want to do?

Therese:

I'm not sure yet.