

**INFLUENCER MARKETING IN TOURISM: A SEMIOTIC  
ANALYSIS OF NEPAL'S REPRESENTATION AND THE  
RESPONSIBILITIES OF INFLUENCERS**

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## Abstract

This study examines influencer responsibility in Nepal's tourism industry using semiotic analysis to analyse influencer representations and responsibilities. The issue statement has addressed influencer promotion regarding authenticity and cultural appropriation. Influencers' filtered or misrepresented information threatens tourist destinations' reputations. Misinformation can result from cultural appropriation, the misuse of symbols or rituals without understanding their meaning. The key terms are defined namely "Influencer", "Semiotic Analysis," "Representation," and "Responsibilities of Influencers" to clarify their use in research. This paper has analysed several literatures to provide insights of the central idea based on themes. The section has highlighted various aspects of influencer promotion with the dynamics of tourism industry. The themes are based on information collected from existing sources of literature to have an overall idea of the core concept. The study has also found gaps within the literature that has a need for further exploration.

Influencer marketing in the context of destination promotion can be divided into two major categories, one is individual travel influencers and the other one is commercial influencers. Commercial influencers are paid for promoting a destination by destination organisations. Individual travel influencers share their own experience with their audience based on the experience that they get at a destination. Oftentimes brands or individuals collaborate with influencers so that influencers can make blogs for them. Blogging content can be both written and video recorded. Brand ambassador is an influencer content when influencers share content on a regular basis and become an ambassador of particular brands. This research has found that in Nepal both national and international influencers promote the tourism sector of the country. Influencers in their content exhibit different aspects of Nepal including its natural beauty, cultural heritage, culinary experience, adventurous activities and others. International visitors make online vlogs on YouTube and highlight the tourism experiences in Nepal, which helps to promote the country as a tourist destination among online users. Travel Influencers produce their content based on their individual experience of visiting a destination. Therefore, improving the tourism experience is a major strategy that Nepal can implement to ensure effective and positive Influencer marketing that can promote Nepal as a preferred tourist destination among international tourists.

It has explored the areas of responsibilities that are associated with the roles of local as well as international travellers. Both local as well as international influencers have made a huge impact on the tourism and travel industry of Nepal. It has been observed that they had portrayed a picture of Nepal in such a way that it can influence a lot of tourists towards the destination. The conclusion chapter too resembles an overall analysis of the aspects studied throughout the research. The section has also attempted to provide several recommendations that holds the scope to widen up the industry as a whole. Finally, the research concludes with the application of future implications on the realm of influencers in association with the tourism industry of Nepal.

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	8
1.1. Background .....	8
1.2. Problem Statement .....	9
1.3. Purpose of the study .....	10
1.4. Significance of the study .....	11
1.5. Definition of key terms .....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	13
2.1. Influencer and its role in destination promotion .....	13
2.2. The history of influencer and its evolution .....	14
2.3. The impact of image formation in destination marketing .....	16
2.4. Visual semiotics and its significance in influencer content .....	18
2.5. Responsibilities of influencers in promoting a destination .....	20
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	23
3.1. Research Design.....	23
3.2. Data collection methods.....	23
3.2.1. Primary data .....	24
3.2.2. Secondary data .....	25
3.3 Sample selection of influencers .....	26
3.4. Data analysis procedures.....	26
3.5 Methodical Rigor .....	27
Chapter 4: Who is an Influencer? .....	28
4.1. Categorising influencers into individual travellers and commercial travellers .....	28
4.2. How different types of influencers represent Nepal .....	29
4.3. The impact and assessment of influencers on destination promotion.....	30
4.4. Market communication strategies employed by influencers. ....	32

Chapter 5: Contents Created by the Influencers .....	33
5.1. Types of content produced by Influencers .....	33
5.2. How influencers portray Nepal in their content.....	34
5.3. Semiotic analysis of the visual elements in their content .....	37
5.4. Common themes and differences in the portrayal of Nepal by influencers.....	40
Chapter 6: Influencers Impact on Destination Marketing.....	43
6.1. The role of influencers in shaping the destination image .....	43
6.2. The marketing strategies employed by influencers .....	44
6.3. Comparisons between influencers and destination marketing organisations (DMOs).....	45
6.4. Critiques and Suggestions for Influencer’s contents .....	46
Chapter 7: Responsibilities of Influencers in Promoting Nepal .....	48
7.1. Sustainability and ethical considerations in the way influencers work .....	48
7.2. Different approaches of local and international influencers .....	49
7.2.1. Local influencers and their role .....	49
7.2.2. International influencers and their role .....	52
7.3. Influencers content patterns .....	54
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	57
8.1. Summary of key findings.....	57
8.2. Impacts of Influencers contents on destination promotion .....	57
8.3. Recommendations for the effective use of influencer .....	58
8.4. The future of influencers in tourism .....	60
8.5 Future Implications .....	60
Reference List .....	61

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Growth of Influencer Marketing .....	13
Figure 2.2: Anticipation of Global Influencer Marketing.....	16
Figure 2.3: The attributes that trigger the image of a destination .....	18
Figure 2.4: Visual impact of Nepal to draw tourists .....	19
Figure 2.5: Factors of Influencers in Destination Marketing.....	21
Figure 3.1: Process of data collection .....	24
Figure 3.2: Model of Semiotics Analysis .....	25
Figure 4.1.1: Types of Content by Influencers .....	33
Figure 4.2.1: Nepal as Portrayed in Youtube.....	34
Figure 4.2.2: How to Travel Mount Everest .....	35
Figure 4.2.3: Nepal Portrayed by Influencers .....	36
Figure 4.2.4: Local Market of Nepal .....	37
Figure 4.3.1: Instagram Content of Ghumante .....	38
Figure 4.3.2: Local Food of Nepal.....	39
Figure 4.3.2: Temple in Nepal .....	40
Figure 4.5.1: Natural Landscapes In Nepal .....	41
Figure 4.5.2: Culinary Experiences In Nepal.....	42
Figure 4.5.3: Cultural Richness in Nepal.....	42
Figure 5.1.1: Impact of Influencers in Destination Marketing .....	43
Figure 5.2: Strategies of Influencers .....	44
Figure 5.2.2: Steps of Destination Marketing .....	46
Figure 5.2.3: Strategies to Improve Influencer Content .....	47
Figure 6.1.1: Individual traveller influencers in Nepal.....	43
Figure 6.1.2: Commercial influencers .....	44
Figure 6.2.1: Types of Influencers .....	45
Figure: 6.3: Impacts of Influencer Marketing.....	46
Figure 6.4: Non-verbal Communication Strategies of Influencers .....	47
Figure 7.1.1: Aspects of Sustainable Tourism .....	48
Figure 7.1.2: Responsible adventure tourism in Nepal.....	49
Figure 7.2.1.1: YouTube channel of 4K Nepal.....	50
Figure 7.2.1.2: Instagram profile of Oshin Sitaula .....	51
Figure 7.2.1.3: YouTube channel of Ghumante .....	52

Figure 7.2.2.1: A group of International tourists posing in Nepal .....	53
Figure 7.2.2.2: Instagram profile of Jordan Simons .....	54
Figure 8.2: Influencers portrayal of Nepal attracting visitors .....	58

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1. Background**

An Influencer is an individual that has a large fan base and can be utilised to promote goods and services. It has been observed that the majority of people often follow the lifestyle and choices of their favourite influencers. In this regard, it can be said that the tourism industry can promote its destination with the help of renowned and acknowledged influencers. From the suggestion of Justianto and Morley (2020), influencers can help provide proper insights regarding the tourism sector. The background of the research is the areas and benefits of influencers of tourism in Nepal. Moreover, influencers also pose a certain responsibility to promote their own area which can help in economically stabilizing their own areas. In the present era, the power of social media has been increased on a large scale. As per the observation of Talukdar and Shekhar (2022), it can be asserted that local tourism popularity also can be enhanced by the association of influencers. Influencers have the capability to educate others by disseminating knowledge about sustainable practices, regional traditions, and responsible tourism. They help their followers become more aware and encourage wise travel choices. Engaging local community is also one of the responsibilities of influencers in tourism. Influencers can showcase the quality and benefit of using local products garnering support from both tourist companies and visitors. Influencers ought to support ethical and sustainable travel, highlighting responsible tourism practices. This includes promoting environmentally friendly conduct, showing deference to regional traditions, and raising awareness of Nepal's environmental conservation initiatives. Destination representation is also one of the salient responsibilities of influencers. Influencers' collaboration with local business, tour operator, and hotel can help to stabilize local economic condition. Social media has become a central part of people's lives and influences, often driving people to make travel-related decisions. It is worth mentioning that the travel and tourism industry plays a significant role in the progression of the economy of certain regions. Influencers can help in increasing brand awareness and reaching information regarding the tourist destination of Nepal.

Influencers can promote local communities as tourists often search for affordable and quality accommodation and food. Nepal tourism has helped to stabilise the economic background and thus many influencers of Nepal have taken responsibility to promote tourist destinations of Nepal. Muna K.C. is an Instagram influencer associated with Kathmandu tourism who has



secured a place for herself in the world of photography. Her username is munachiya and with the help of her username, she has gathered an impressive number of 83,058 followers, who are seeking to see her stunning photography skills and expertise on display. This lady captures the most interesting and attractive photos of tourist destinations and places of Nepal to promote tourism.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

The tourism industry can collect information by talking to visitors or tourists regarding their opinions of influencer promotion. Conducting a semiotic analysis can help in determining themes, symbols, and narratives in influencer content. The foundation for comprehending the textual and visual components employed by influencers is provided by this analysis. The tourism industry can examine how travellers interpret and assess the veracity of messages and content created by influencers. In addition, recognizing how authenticity affects travellers' decision-making and sense of trust can help the tourism industry connect with influencers. This can help those influencers to increase views but may decrease the reputation of those touristic places. According to the statement of Razak and Mansor (2022), it can be informed that social media influencer can help in gaining the trust of customers. Social media also can be the reason behind the decline of a brand's reputation as visitors can share their feedback on social media. Thus, authenticity is one of the primary requirements in this case. Cultural Appropriation is also another problem. Influencers may use symbols, apparel, or rituals without discovering their original cultural value and significance and that can lead them to provide wrong information unintentionally.

From the statement of Nadanyiova *et al.* (2020), it can be informed that companies need to define influencers based on their target customers. Therefore, influencers need to collect a wide range of information regarding the culture and destination that can help in minimising the chance of misconduct. It is worth mentioning that providing wrong information can decrease the reputation of the influencers. This can be the reason for the loss of the target audience and damage Nepal's reputation by resulting in misrepresentation of the culture and destination and offending local communities. The benefit of connecting with social influencers in tourism is that it helps create new jobs and employment, supports the local economy, and contributes to local infrastructure growth. In addition, influencers also have a responsibility to help save the natural environment by promoting ethical practices and preserving cultural assets and traditions.

### ***Aim***

The research aims to examine how local and international influencers promote Nepal through their content and identify their roles in promoting accurate cultural representation, sustainable tourism, and community engagement.

### ***Research question***

- How do influencers, both local and international, represent Nepal through their content creation, and what type of content they publish to promote the destination?
- What is the impact of connecting with influencers in representing Nepal's tourism sector?

### **1.3. Purpose of the study**

This study investigates multiple factors associated with influencer in the tourism industry in Nepal. Those factors include community engagement in the tourism sector, fostering ethical and sustainability practices, reaching information to their followers, utilizing social media platforms for positive impact, displaying diverse attraction, and encouraging cultural sensitivity. In addition, this research also aims to cultivate the responsibilities of influencers to present the tourism destination of Nepal. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to acquire knowledge regarding the benefit of involving influencers in promoting tourist destinations. Social media can help in selecting tourist destinations and accommodations. The purpose of this research is to highlight crucial factors regarding the influencers. Moreover, challenges related to the involvement of influencers in promoting tourism.

Influencers can represent and demonstrate the facility in selecting certain tourist destinations. In addition, influencers also provide information regarding accommodation, transportation, and food that ease visitors in selecting different factors regarding travel. The purpose of the study is to highlight influencers' responsibility to promote the tourism destination of Nepal. It has been observed that various social influencers such as Instagram influencers, YouTube influencers, and Facebook influencers have taken responsibility for promoting the tourism destination of Nepal. Moreover, they also have the responsibility to foster ethical practices in the tourism industry.

#### **1.4. Significance of the study**

This study is noticeably significant as it will discuss pivotal areas such as ethical practices, engagement of local community, showcasing unique culture and background of Nepal that can attract tourists, and reaching information to the follower's associated with influencer in the tourism industry in Nepal. In this regard, it can be said that this research will include crucial factors regarding the travel and tourism of Nepal that can help in the progression of the tourism sector. In addition, this research is significant as it has displayed the potential challenges and risk factors related to the involvement of influencers in the promotion of the tourism industry. According to the explanation of Cholprasertsuk *et al.* (2020), it can be informed that influencers play the mediating role between travellers and tourists' industry. Cultural Appropriateness and aggregated information are primary problems in promoting tourist destinations with the help of influencers. In addition, it can be said that influencers often focus on taking attractive pictures and neglect the needs of the environment. As a result, those promotions can engage unethical practices regarding the advertisements. Therefore, there may be a disconnect between anticipation and reality if tourists arrive at that specific tourist destination and expect an Instagram-perfect experience and end up disappointed. This study is significant as it can help in identifying the responsibilities of influencers for promoting the tourism sector that can help in attracting more customers. Moreover, the pattern of influencers' engagement to promote the tourism industry also will be discussed in this study which will be beneficial for Nepal tourism to develop strategies for promotion. In addition, influencers' responsibility towards ethical practices also will be discussed in this study which is another significant of this study. The growth of tourism can help in multiple factors for society. For instance, tourism can help in enhancing the employment of certain regions. Influencers have the capability to empower local residents by endorsing local companies, craftsmen, and projects that enhance the destination through their platform. Based on the statement of Seyfi *et al.* (2023), it can be explained that influencers can increase the ethical sense of Gen-Z in tourist places. On the other hand, promotional influencer can be the reason of a source of inaccurate and inappropriate information. This research also discloses the responsibilities of influences in promoting ethical practices in tourist places.

#### **1.5. Definition of key terms**

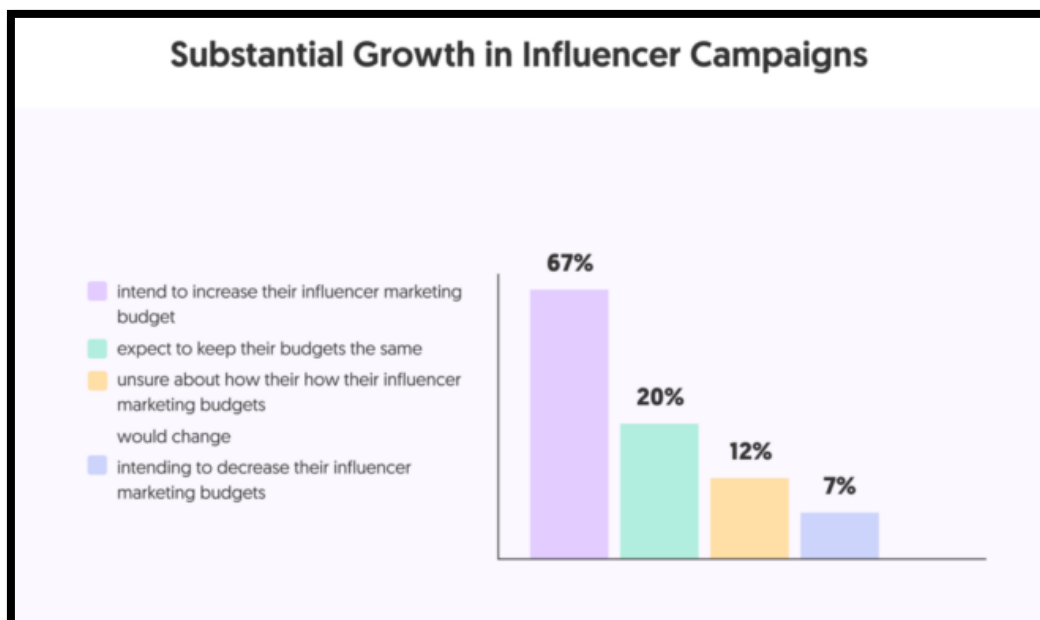
The definition of the key term “Influencer” in this research is that influencer is the procedure of utilising the social media followings of some well-reputed people to promote market goods

and services and in this research travel destinations. The necessity of the selection of the key term “Semiotic Analysis” is that this key term helps in collecting information to identify the unspoken senses, cultural representations, and messages planned for the audience to know. In addition, this study employs semiotic analysis to investigate the textual and visual components of influencer content about promoting Nepal tourism destinations. On the other hand, “Representation” is also another key term in collecting information such as the process of demonstrating something. Another key term in this research is “responsibilities of influencers” as it defines influencers' responsibilities as involving the moral and ethical duties they endure in influencing the attitudes and actions of their followers to visit certain tourist destinations. This could involve taking into account things like cultural acuity, genuineness, and exposure in their initiatives.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1. Influencer and its role in destination promotion

Influencer marketing has been a very effective method for destination promotion in recent years. As social media platforms have grown in popularity, people with sizable and active followings, who are referred to as influencers, have played a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions and setting trends in travel. As per Kruger (2022), this type of marketing fosters a mutually beneficial partnership between travel boards and content creators by showcasing places through the legitimacy and reach of influencers. In contrast, Alzub (2023) has stated that influencer marketing is essentially working with people who have a large online following to promote a place through real and exciting content. These influencers, who frequently have a certain area of expertise or a recurring subject, connect with their audience by offering a unique and accessible take on travel experiences. They provide a window into a place's customs, landmarks, and distinctive qualities through content that outperforms conventional advertising.



**Figure 2.1: Growth of Influencer Marketing**

(Source: Influencermarketinghub, 2023)

The capacity to reach a highly targeted audience is one of the main benefits in destination promotion that can be achieved through influencers. According to İnce and Keskin (2023), either through luxury travel, adventurous travel or cultural exploration, influencers usually

cater to a certain audience. Tourism boards can guarantee their message reaches the proper audience and has a higher chance of conversion by choosing influencers that are aligned with the destination's target market (Jaya and Prianthara, 2020). Influencers create a connection with potential customers that traditional advertising might find difficult to establish when they share their personal travelogues. Potential travellers will see the location more favourably due to this genuineness. Influencers have an even greater effect because of the visual content of social media sites like YouTube and Instagram (Bishop, 2021). Viewers are encouraged to consider visiting a destination for their next vacation by visually stunning photos, engrossing movies, and compelling narratives that highlight the destination's beauty and appeal. In this case, Nepal's beauty and cultural diversity can be promoted by the influencers.

The influencer's immediate following is not the only audience this content can reach; it can also cause a domino effect that increases the likelihood that the destination will go viral Zhang *et al.* (2023). Resorts profit from influencer initiatives' dynamic and ever-changing character as well. Influencer content is updated often in real-time, giving a constant flow of new content, in contrast to traditional advertising, which is static. From the viewpoint of Pandey, Chaudhary and Darda (2021), in large part due to social media algorithms that favour current and popular material, this ongoing interaction keeps a place at the forefront of the minds of prospective travellers. Data-driven decision-making is made possible by tourism boards' ability to monitor engagement, reach, and conversion rates. It has been found that with a firm grasp of the ROI provided by this degree of information, destinations are able to improve their campaign strategy for subsequent years (Influencermarketinghub, 2023). Therefore, it can be said that influencers of Nepal have a direct impact on destination promotion through the means of content they produce.

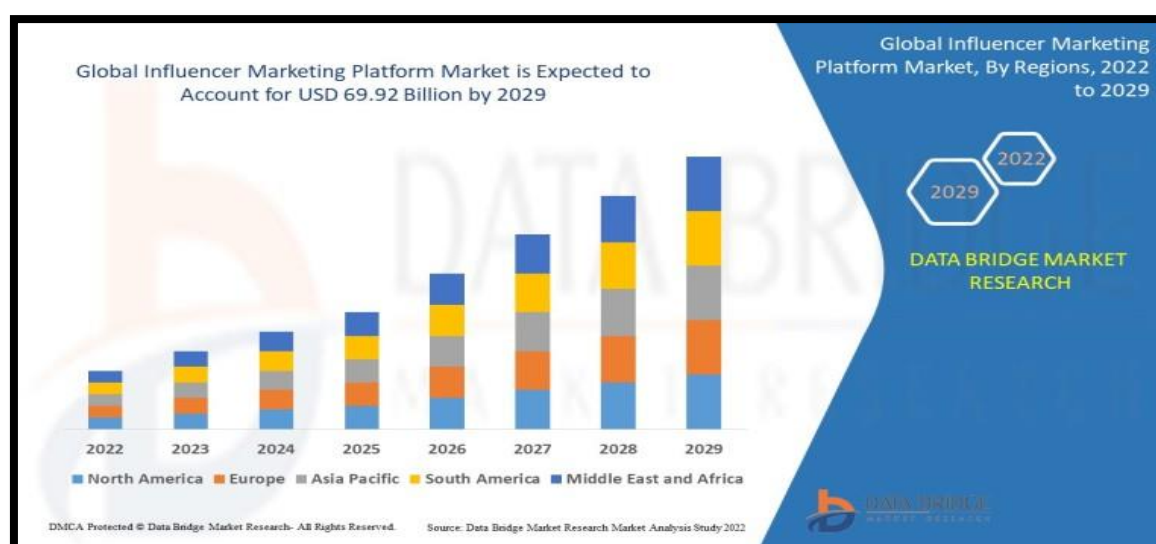
## **2.2. The history of influencer and its evolution**

The roots of influencer marketing can be traced back to the early days of celebrity endorsements. Influencers were first hired to endorse goods and services, which is where the concept of marketing originated. However, with the emergence of social media platforms, influencers have changed dramatically in the way people think about it today (Forbes, 2020). The first wave of influencing was defined by traditional celebrities collaborating with companies to promote items on radio, print, and television. As per the opinion of Femenia-Serra and Gretzel (2020), this strategy worked well for reaching large audiences but lacked

the individualised touch that modern influencer marketing aims for. Influencers saw a change in their development with the introduction of social media in the middle of the 2000s. People have the chance to build sizable followings on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter (X), and eventually Instagram for their content and subject-matter expertise (Cotter 2019). The influencers started to have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviours of consumers.

Early on in the history of social media influencer marketing, corporations tested out partnerships after realising that influencers might establish more genuine connections with their followers. Influencers in the fields of fashion and beauty were among the first to become well-known for displaying their individual looks, go-to items, and way of life (Olsenmetrix, 2023). Other sectors started to discover the power of influencers when audiences responded favourably to their endorsements. With time, Instagram's highly graphic content and user-friendly sharing features made it a primary hub for influencer marketing. It has been observed by Narassiguin and Sargent (2019), that influencers were also able to reach a wider audience due to the platform's algorithm, which takes interaction and relevancy into account rather than just follower quantity.

The field of influencing in Nepal has grown even further with the emergence of YouTube as a platform for sharing content. Influencers like Muna K.C, Himal Ghale and Sikha Agarwal connect with their audiences more deeply by offering in-depth reviews, vlogs, and tutorials through video content. It has been stated by Tuladhar *et al.* (2021), that moving beyond still photos and text, brands started to realise the potential of influencers.



## **Figure 2.2: Anticipation of Global Influencer Marketing**

(Source: LinkedIn, 2023)

The concept of influencing experienced rapid expansion in the middle of the 2010s with the introduction of websites like Snapchat and TikTok. Influencers had an obligation to develop and adapt because of these platforms' introduction of new forms for content generation and consumption. Campbell and Farrell (2020) stated that each type of influencer offered a distinct degree of audience reach and intimacy, brands started to vary their influencer collaborations by enlisting a combination of macro, micro, and nano-influencers. The maturation of influencers brought about the need for more sophisticated strategies and metrics. It has been commented by Gabhane *et al.* (2023), that destination marketing through the hands of influencers is expected to innovate as technology and consumer behaviour both continue to change in the ever-shifting field of digital marketing.

### **2.3. The impact of image formation in destination marketing**

In destination marketing, image development is crucial because it shapes the perception that prospective visitors and travellers have of a place. A destination's perception is affected by more than simply its outward appearance. As per the words of Kumarn *et al.* (2020), it is also influenced by the memories, legends and feelings connected to it. Prospective visitors are strongly influenced by the image of a destination. Natural scenery, cultural landmarks, historical relevance, and the general ambience are only a few of the many components that it consists of. The way in which travellers make decisions is greatly influenced by this first impression. According to Jebbouri *et al.* (2022), unfavourable or antiquated ideas can discourage prospective guests; on the contrary, positive pictures can stimulate curiosity and a desire to investigate. Nepal is equipped with a Himalayan landscape, Kathmandu Valley, Lumbini, Chitwan National Park, Bardia National Park, Pashupatinath Temple, etc., all offering adventure, culture, spiritual peace, and escapism that can be marketed easily through the means of visuals.

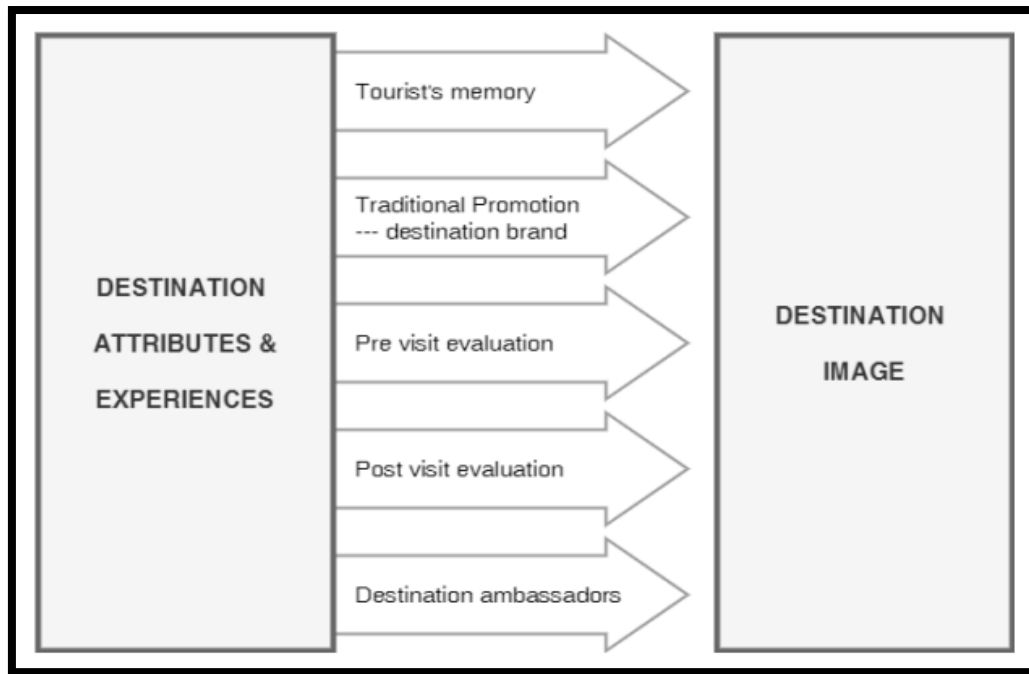
The internet, social media, and travel websites play a major role in determining the way a destination is seen in this era of digital communication. As per the views of Rasul, Zaman and Hoque (2020), before making travel plans, tourists frequently turn to internet resources to research destinations, read reviews, and look at photos. Using a variety of internet platforms, DMOs, tourism boards and companies in the travel sector actively work in order to promote



the perception of their destinations. A key factor in the creation of an image is visual content, such as images from films and photos. It has been stated by Marder *et al.* (2021), that vibrant images have the ability to draw in new visitors and highlight the special charm of a place. High-quality, expertly taken photos have the potential to highlight the diversity of experiences offered. The beauty of surrounding landscapes and the energy of the local culture combine to create an appealing and positive image in front of the visitors.

The image of a destination also gets shaped through storytelling, as per Marine-Roig (2019). Story-driven content helps to establish a connection between the potential visitor and the destination, making it more appealing. Therefore, this element is also used in the process of framing an image of a particular destination. Image creation is greatly influenced by word of mouth, both online and offline. A destination's general perception is greatly influenced by the positive experiences that visitors, relatives, or influencers share (Lam, Ismail and Lee, 2020). Travellers can share their experiences in real-time with a global audience by using social media platforms, which enhance the power of marketing. However, bad experiences or reviews can swiftly damage a destination's reputation, underscoring the significance of first-rate accommodations and satisfied customers.

Nepal, nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, is a land of diverse landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and a plethora of adventure and spiritual experiences. The tourism elements in Nepal are multifaceted, ranging from breath-taking natural wonders to cultural and historical treasures. All these elements can be effectively utilised to promote the destination in front of the world, and influencers can act as a cherry on top for the process.



**Figure 2.3: The attributes that trigger the image of a destination**

(Source: Cardoso, 2020)

The target audience is drawn to a unified picture that is created by a consistent portrayal of the destination's USPs in promotional materials and online content. It has been stated by Milwood and Crick (2021), that potential tourists gain confidence in the destination by this constancy, which highlights its favourable aspects. When it comes to destination marketing, image formation has a significant financial impact. It has been seen that increased tourist revenue results from attracting more visitors with a favourable and appealing image. As per the views of Kilipiri, Papaioannou and Kotzaivazoglou (2023), a positive destination image boosts demand for the services of tourism-dependent businesses like hotels, restaurants, and tour operators. Furthermore, a favourable perception of the place might draw in investment, supporting the growth of the infrastructure and improving the entire tourist experience.

#### **2.4. Visual semiotics and its significance in influencer content**

The way that Nepal is portrayed in influencer content for tourism is heavily influenced by visual semiotics. As per the comments of Sharma and Phyak, (2022), it is a subfield of semiotics that focuses on the study of signs and symbols in visual communication. Nepal primarily relies on visual storytelling to draw in and hold the interest of potential tourists because of its rich cultural legacy, varied landscapes, and unique experiences. Utilising visual

semiotics to communicate the essence of Nepal is a critical role for influencers, who promote content makers with the power to alter impressions. Regarding Nepal's tourist depiction, influencers employ diverse visual components to convey the natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and exciting adventures the nation has to offer. From the words of Devkota *et al.* (2023), images, movies, colours, symbols and even the way the text is put together are examples of these visual components.



**Figure 2.4: Visual impact of Nepal to draw tourists**

(Source: Atozholidays, 2023)

The use of rich cultural imagery is one important component of visual semiotics in influencer content. Iconic elements like traditional attire, religious rites and magnificent buildings like temples and palaces are frequently used in making the mentioned content. In addition to supporting the general portrayal of Nepal as a place rich in history and customs, these images function as potent signals that arouse feelings of cultural authenticity and individuality (Justianto and Morley, 2020). Influencer material heavily features Nepal's natural scenery, which includes the spectacular Himalayas, verdant valleys, and tranquil lakes. Influencers communicate the natural beauty and adventure that await travellers through visually beautiful photographs and movies that play with the semiotics of landscapes. Visual icons of Nepal's varied and breathtaking topography include snow-capped mountains, vivid sunsets, and charming paths.

Colours are another fundamental component of visual semiotics; they are carefully selected to elicit particular feelings and connections. It has been observed by Hidarto (2021), that bright colours that are typical of traditional Nepali art, clothing and architecture are frequently complemented by influencers. These hues enhance visual appeal and function as clues

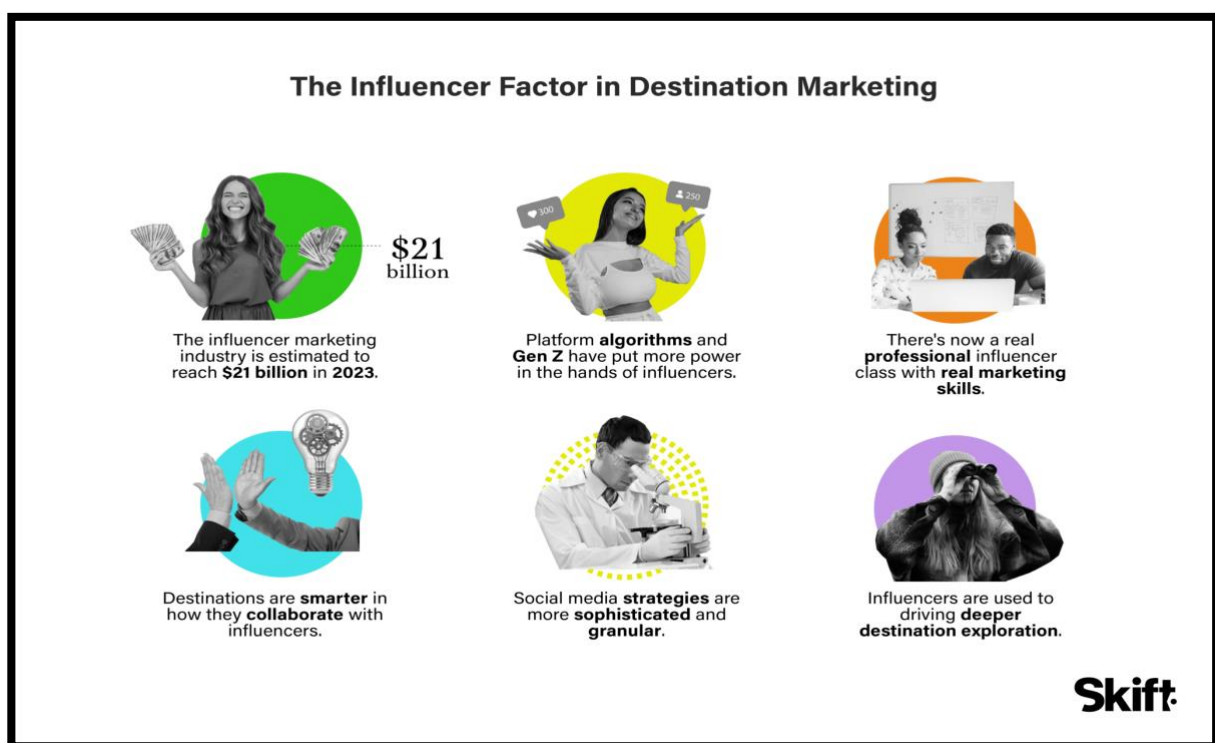
supporting the destination's cultural identity. One complex area of visual semiotics is the structure of influencer content. Influencers' portrayal of Nepal incorporates several approaches, such as framing, angles and visual storytelling. Wide-angle photos of expansive landscapes highlight the scope and grandeur of Nepal's natural treasures, while close-ups of regional food or traditional rituals provide the impression of a personal and immersive encounter (Karimova, 2020). Influencers also leverage visual semiotics to highlight adventure and outdoor activities with the visuals of paragliding in Pokhara or its wildlife safaris.

The power of visual semiotics to sway perceptions and impact choices makes it important in influencer content. Influencers craft a story about Nepal's natural beauty, adventure opportunities and rich cultural heritage by meticulously selecting photos that go beyond the limitations. Consequently, this influences the way prospective tourists view and interact with the location. Increased visitor interest and engagement for Nepal's tourism industry can result from the skilful application of visual semiotics in influencer content (Cara, 2019). Through appealing to a worldwide audience and encouraging a sense of connection, the visual depiction becomes a method of communication that surpasses language borders. The cooperation of visual semiotics concepts with influencers ultimately helps to promote tourism throughout the nation.

## **2.5. Responsibilities of influencers in promoting a destination**

As the power of digital content makers continues to alter travel narratives, scholarly interest in the duties of influencers in destination promotion has grown. The necessity of transparency and sincerity in influencers is one recurring subject. It has been stated that when influencers disclose any partnerships or sponsorships and when their content is consistent with real experiences, people view them as reliable sources. Greeff (2023) has noted that influencers have an obligation to uphold authenticity in order to build and maintain trust with their audiences. This trust plays a crucial role in shaping decisions about travel. The advent of influencer marketing has had a major impact on the current state of tourism promotion. In order to reveal the symbolic elements buried in influencers' stories, this study uses a semiotic analysis to conduct a thorough investigation of how visitors view influencer marketing in the context of Nepal. According to CHAMIDAH *et al.* (2020), proper communication can help enhance customer satisfaction. Communication is also one of the crucial factors in managing the tourism industry as it can help in understanding the demand and requirements of visitors.

Influencers support the respectful representation of regional customs, traditions, and heritage by exercising cultural sensitivity and abstaining from cultural appropriation. Avoiding the reinforcement of preconceptions and promoting an inclusive tourism sector are considered to be critical outcomes of this obligation. A growing body of recent research has focused on influencers' environmental obligations when promoting destinations. Influencers augment the conversation on sustainable tourism by exhibiting eco-friendly activities, endorsing conservation efforts, and motivating their followers to reduce their environmental footprint. One of the most important aspects of ethical destination marketing through influencers is the open disclosure of agreements and the observance of ethical standards.



**Figure 2.5: Factors of Influencers in Destination Marketing**

(Source: Skift, 2023)

The importance of influencers being aware of the social and cultural ramifications of their work is emphasised by Sharma (2021). In line with the ideas of responsible tourism, this includes avoiding the unfavourable effects of over tourism and marketing travel destinations in a way that helps nearby communities. A sustainable and positive representation of destinations in the digital age largely depends on influencers fulfilling various responsibilities, all of which are multifaceted. The themes of authenticity, cultural sensitivity, environmental responsibility, and social impact are evident in multiple studies. The dynamic

interactions between destination marketing, influencers, and the larger tourist scene may be explored in more detail as the field develops. This research paper conducts influencers to comprehend the duties associated with influencer communication. This can help the tourism industry understand influencers' opinions on their jobs, moral dilemmas, and the obligations they bear for influencing a destination's story, which are explored qualitatively. As opined by Vlahov and Vlahov (2021), travel influencers have become one of the primary strategic partners of the tourism industry. The findings from the semiotic analysis and the information collected from influencer interviews are synthesized to present a holistic view of the interplay between symbolic representation and responsibilities.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

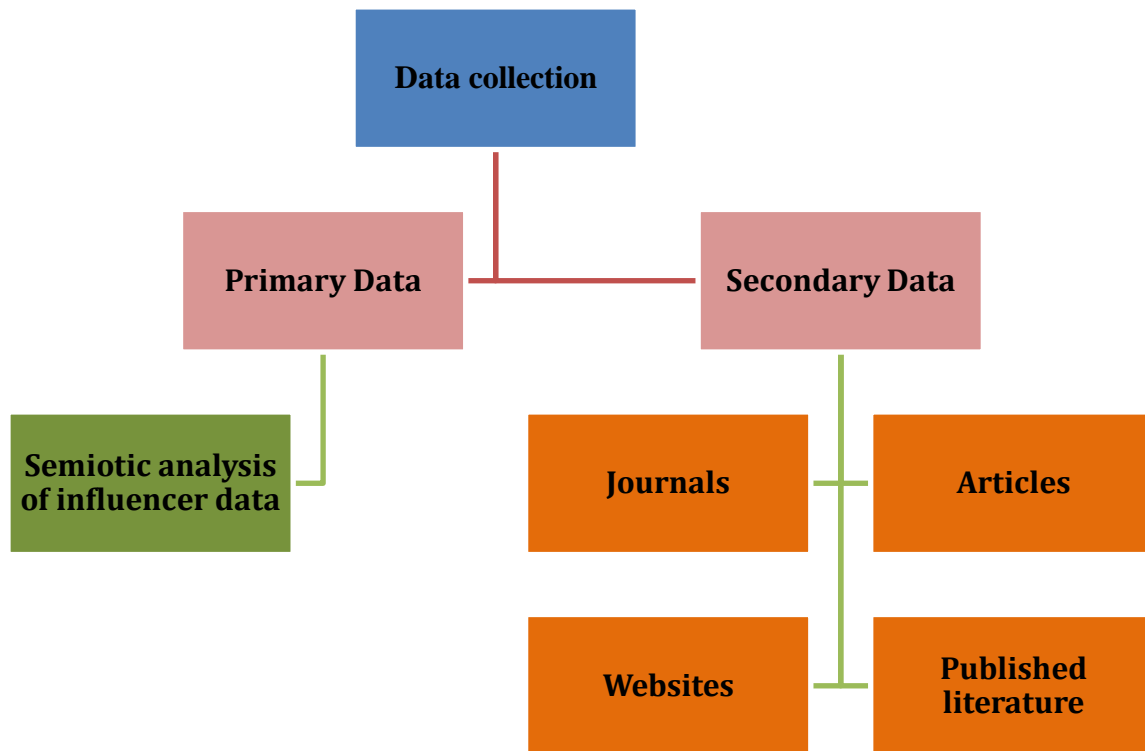
The chapter on methodology in the study deals with the use of methods. It demonstrates the approaches that have been selected in order to derive proper findings for the study. The section describes the way in which information is being collected for the purpose of executing the outcomes of the study. The part has provided several justifications behind the use of its specific kinds of methods to process the study in the best possible way.

### **3.1. Research Design**

Research design refers to the overall plan, structure, and strategy that guides data collection, analysis, and interpretation in a research study (Froehlich, 2024). It is a blueprint that outlines the framework for conducting research, specifying the methods, procedures, and techniques to be employed in the investigation. The research design is crucial to the research process, shaping the study's objectives, scope, and how data will be gathered and analysed. It is a foundational element in the research process. It provides the framework for conducting a study, influencing the data's quality, validity, and reliability. A thoughtful and well-constructed research design enhances the overall rigour of the research, leading to more meaningful and dependable results.

### **3.2. Data collection methods**

It is evident that access to an extensive body of existing literature on influencers and tourism can be gained through the means of secondary data. In addition, the primary data consisting of the online published content of the influencers is included. Qualitative data is obtained from academic publications and articles for this research work. The credibility and dependability of these materials have been established through review and publication (Sileyew, 2019). Therefore, it is a solid foundation for the research that is provided. With the large collection of knowledge, it enables a thorough comprehension of the topic that descriptive design is being implemented. A sophisticated grasp of visual symbols, signs, and representations can be obtained through secondary qualitative data sources (Vespestad and Clancy, 2021). It has the potential to offer in-depth interpretations of semiotic aspects. Through the use of both primary and secondary methods, the researcher is able to investigate the meanings that are communicated through images. The methods selected for the study fit deeply into the semiotic elements of influencer material for the tourism sector in Nepal.



**Figure 3.1: Process of data collection**

(Source: Self-created)

### 3.2.1. Primary data

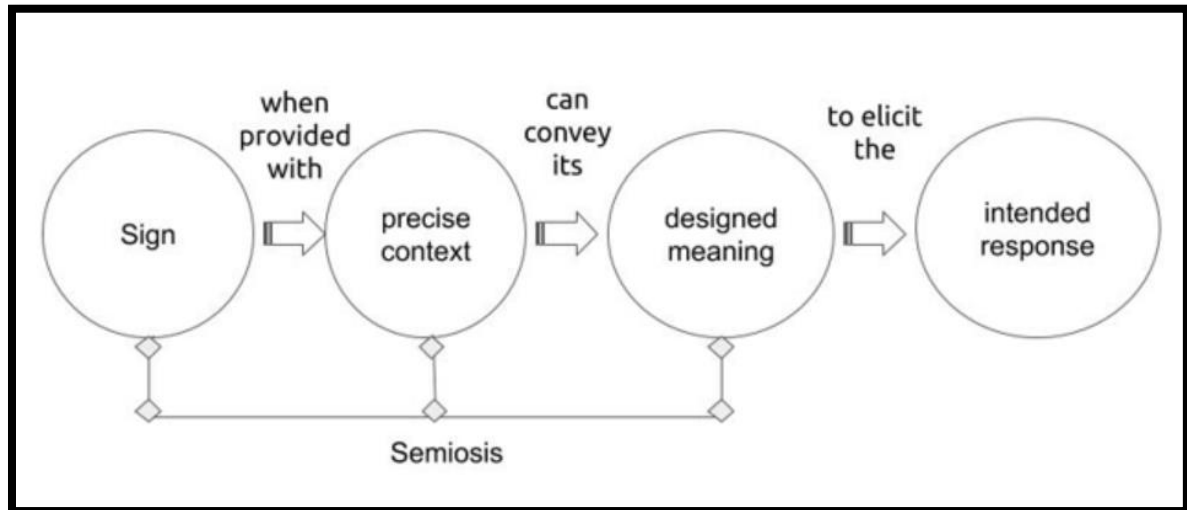
#### Semiotic analysis techniques

A methodological technique known as semiotic analysis is used to analyse signs and symbols in the context of a culture that is determined in both written as well as visual representations (Eriksson, Eriksson and Linder, 2020). The identification of subtexts and hidden meanings present in the visual representations is made possible by the means of semiotics analysis. This is important because it has the capability to reveal the underlying narratives and messages that influencers are trying to convey to the viewers. Collecting information regarding the number and capacity of influencers potentially illuminates the fine ways through which Nepal is portrayed to the world for its actual motive of attracting tourists to it. The data is going to consist of follower count, images posted and intensity of advertisements from the influencer's side. This approach of semiotic decisions goes into the overall portrayal of the landscape of tourism in Nepal.

With the process of unlocking the cultural nuance hidden in the visual components of a particular content, an interdisciplinary approach is used in semiotic analysis. Therefore,



Nepal's cultural intensity and richness can be seen in the contents of the influencers. It is known commonly for drawing on linguistics, cultural studies as well as visual communication (Weninger, 2021). The technique contributes to a nuanced analysis of Nepal's portrayal in the field of tourism. It goes by decoding the visual and textual language employed by influencers.



**Figure 3.2: Model of Semiotics Analysis**

(Source: Opentext.wsu, 2023)

### 3.2.2. Secondary data

The journals contain a wealth of information about influencers in the mentioned industry. Moreover, a huge volume of influencer's published content is going to be examined in order to highlight the intensity of its use in showcasing Nepal as a form of semiotics. An in-depth investigation of the moral, cultural and environmental responsibilities of influencers in destination promotion can be analysed with the practice of secondary data. This aids in the gaining of a sophisticated grasp of the complex role that influencers tend to play in influencing their viewers.

A process of thorough review is going to be applied to respectable journals in order to guarantee the accuracy of the data (Lobe, Morgan and Hoffman, 2020). With the utilisation of primary information from the influencers' pages, social media, and blogs, the research will derive the intensity of Nepal's portrayal. By utilising the primary and secondary sources, the study is able to gain insights into the benefits derived from semiotics. In turn, it also raises the calibre of the conclusions as a whole. These arguments support the research practices and

also strengthen the study on influencer marketing in the mentioned tourism industry. By the means of providing a semiotic analysis of the Nepal tourism industry, the study is portrayed along with the duties that are to be done with the country's influencers.

### **3.3 Sample selection of influencers**

In selecting an illustrative sample of influencers for the study, a “purposive sampling technique” is considered as suitable. Purposive sampling allows the inclusion of influencers who have a substantial impact on the narrative of Nepal's tourism. The criteria for the selection of potential samples include follower count, content authenticity, and diversity of represented regions (Wies, Bleier and Edeling, 2023). The study attempts to gather a thorough picture of Nepal as it is portrayed in the influencer marketing environment. The method proceeds by specifically selecting influencers with a sizable online presence as well as impact.

In this study, a diverse representation of semiotic framework is going to be analysed during the process of choosing primary data from influencers published posts. Once the total population is handy, it is going to be chosen through the use of a “simple random sampling technique” to ensure the sample size is more likely to be representative of the entire population, enabling for more accurate generalisations and conclusion. The semiotic analysis framework is augmented by primary data from the content as well as secondary data containing information regarding tourism in Nepal specialising in semiotics. The specific types of papers that will be considered are Journals of Travel Research, Tourism Research papers and Tourism Management articles that offer thorough insights into the workings of tourism marketing (Timmermans and Tavory, 2020). Furthermore, this study also attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of influencers as well as their role in the marketing of Nepal tourism.

### **3.4. Data analysis procedures**

In order to carry out the process of data collection, the resources will be collected using relevant keywords to search for journals and articles from authentic sites like ProQuest and Google Scholar (Gusenbauer and Haddaway, 2020). Moreover, a total of 50 Instagram profiles of Nepali influencers will be examined to analyse their portrayal of Nepal's tourism. The total population of data will be chosen in descending order among the follower count and uploaded posts. Moreover, video posts from YouTube will also be treated as a source of

influencers' attempts to portray Nepal. Once the required amount of data is in place, it will be sorted according to the required population using the proper sampling techniques. The data will be further converted into codes that are associated with the core elements of the study. The step proceeds further to generate themes based on the codes that were derived from the actual population of the study. The themes that are going to be generated will further strive to provide additional information on the core of the study. The study will ensure that the sources from where information is being collected are properly cited to support the authenticity as well as provide credibility to the source author. The whole study will be executed in a proper way with all the methodical implications to finish the study in a genuine manner. Data Protection Act will be followed so that the procedure of data analysis links with the proper application of information to produce the final piece of the study (Walter and Suina, 2023). Finally, it will be ensured that the waste that will be produced during the course of the research will be properly executed.

### **3.5 Methodical Rigor**

In order to collect data for analysis, Instagram profiles and YouTube channels of both national and international influencers have been considered. In regard to National influencers of Nepal, Ghumante has been given priority because this YouTube channel, as well as their Instagram profile, highlights tourism aspects of Nepal that are of substantial importance and are not covered by other YouTubers or Instagram influencers. 4 K Nepal YouTube channel has been considered as it shows different sites of Nepal in high-quality video. Roje Shetha and Oshin Sitaula are two major influencers from Nepal whose Instagram profiles have been considered because their vlogs have adventurous features. A number of international influences have been selected from semiotic analysis because they promote cross-cultural exchange and promote the culture and tourism of Nepal to international audiences. International profiles that have been considered are Karl Watson, Gabriel Traveller, The Life of Jord, Gypsy in Sneakers, and Ryleigh's World. For data exclusion, the posts that are generic and do not have particular weightage have been removed; for data inclusion, posts that bring forth special elements of tourism in Nepal have been considered.

## Chapter 4: Who is an Influencer?

### 4.1. Categorising influencers into individual travellers and commercial travellers

Individual travel influencers are those who share their experience of visiting and travelling to a place through social media. It has been argued by Oliveira et al. (2020) that travellers share their individual experiences of visiting a place on social media and make recommendations to others based on their experience. The personal experiences of individual travel influencers play an integral role in shaping their online content.



**Figure 4.1.1: Individual traveller influencers in Nepal**

(Source: Missmalini, 2023)

The above figure reflects some activities of individual influencers. From the figure, individual influencers explore tourist destinations' local cuisine, engage in tourism activities and share their experience on social media in digital forms like photographs and videos. Individual travellers also share their cultural experience of visiting tourist destinations with their social media followers. The purpose of individual travel influencers is to engage their audience through effective content and make personal recommendations and suggestions for their audience.



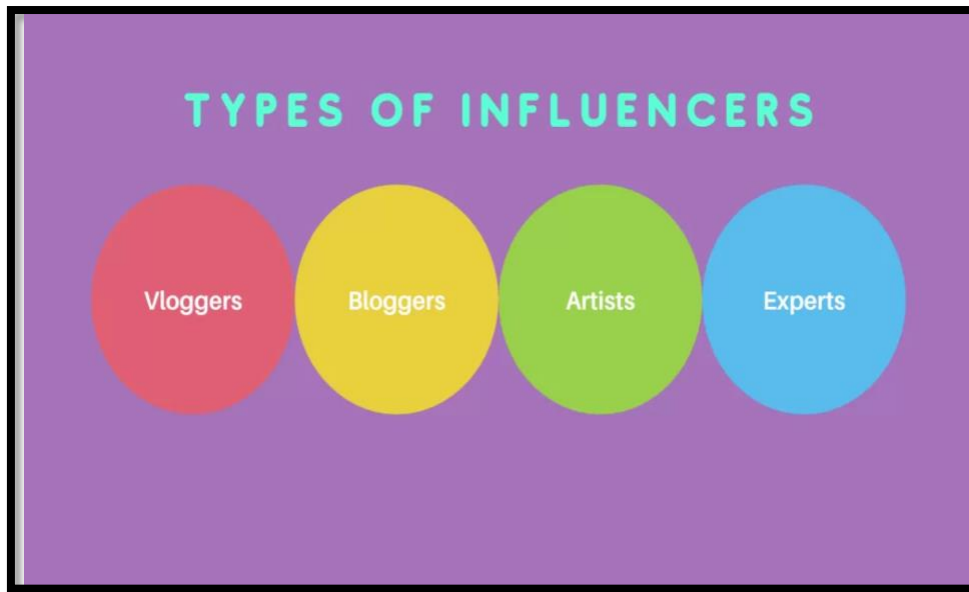
**Figure 4.1.2: Commercial influencers**

*(Source: Uschambe, 2023)*

In contrast to individual traveller influencers, commercial influencers are paid by the client companies to promote their products or services on social media. Commercial influencers are paid to encourage their audience to buy products or services offered by other organisations. Commercial influencers are more formal, and the video recording is also more formal and organised. Commercial influencers do not provide experience-based recommendations to their audience (Chen and Yang, 2023). Rather, commercial influencers focus more on providing recommendations as per the demands of the organisations. Thus, individual travellers portray the tourist destination in their videos or posts based on their experience, while commercial influencers may not have personal experience.

#### **4.2. How different types of influencers represent Nepal**

In Nepal, people use different social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and others. Influencers in Nepal represent the country to their audience in different manners. The most common way influencers represent the country is by showing the scenic natural beauty of the country.



**Figure 4.2.1: Types of Influencers**

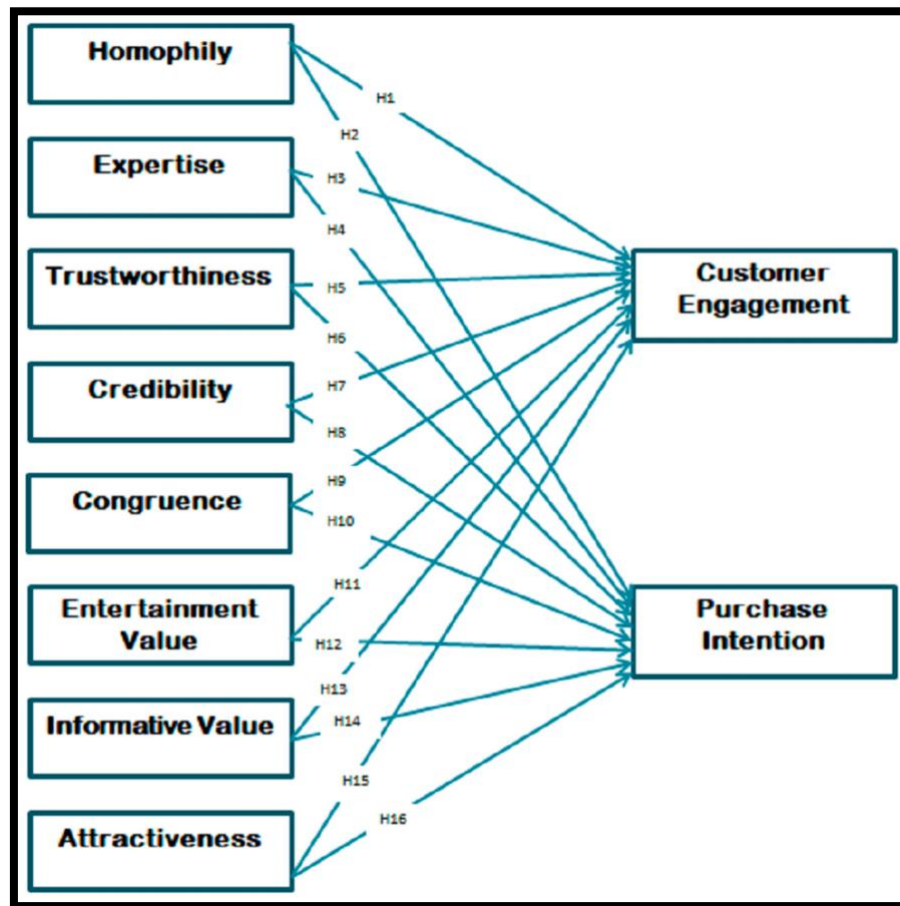
(Source: Mocapp, 2023)

The above figure highlights different types of influencers that affect the expectations and decision-making processes of their audience on some particular products or services. Travel Vloggers record videos while travelling to their destination and share their experiences on social media (Peralta, 2019). Vloggers visit different tourist destinations in Nepal, record their visiting experiences, and share the same on social media, which attracts the attention of their followers. Bloggers are those who express their experiences through written words. There are several blogs about Nepal on the internet that are both informative and engaging. Bloggers capture their experiences of visiting Nepal in their writing, which is later on read by internet users and it helps the readers to make their decision about visiting Nepal. Moreover, artists capture the scenic beauty of nature in their art and share the same on social media. Moreover, artist influencers portray the prominent artistic culture of Nepal to online audiences. Expert influencers are more diverse in nature; they portray different facets of the country to their audience, which may include cultural heritage, landscapes, culinary experience and others. Expert influencers use a more organised set-up for content making, which helps to produce high-quality and clear content.

#### **4.3. The impact and assessment of influencers on destination promotion**

Influencers have significant impacts on the promotion of destinations because, with their content, they directly engage with their audience. As per the arguments of Yuan and Lou

(2020), influencers focus on developing strong relationships with their followers, and they share trustworthiness with their audience; due to this reason, the recommendations of influencers have a strong impact on the audience.



**Figure: 4.3: Impacts of Influencer Marketing**

(Source: Ao *et al.*, 2023)

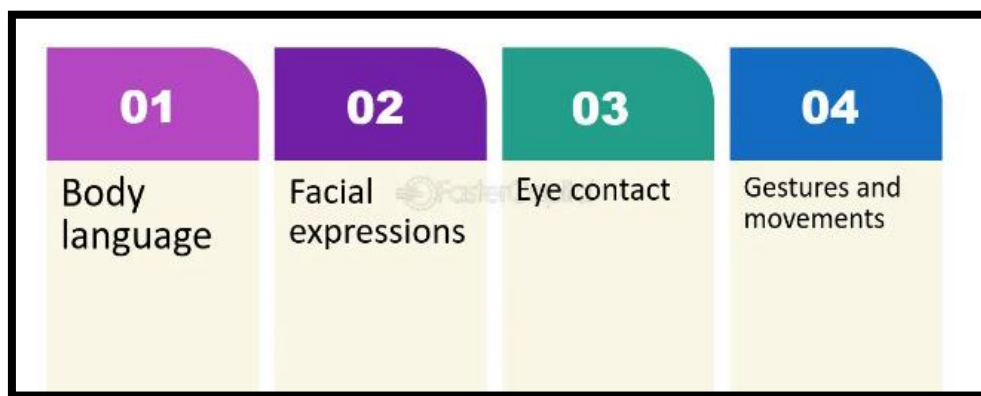
The above figure exhibits the major impacts of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour. These factors are equally relevant for the promotion of designations. For example, Ghumante, a major social media influencer in Nepal engages its audience through content that is engaging, entertaining and informative at the same time. This type of content helps the audience decide about visiting Nepal and exploring the country and its diverse offerings, such as natural beauty, adventurous activities, and others. Influencers present their content in an attractive manner, which significantly attracts the attention of their audience. Positive reinforcement can be defined as a type of enforcement that prompts customers to make purchasing decisions (Wu *et al.*, 2020). Influencers motivate their audience to visit the tourist's destination and provide their experience-based recommendations and suggestions.



These factors significantly enhance the reputation of a destination. Moreover, influencers have a high reach in social media, which is indicative of the promotion of a tourist destination on a large scale. Influencers, by exhibiting symbols of nature, culture, heritage, and others, promote a tourist destination in a multifaceted manner.

#### **4.4. Market communication strategies employed by influencers.**

Influencers, to engage their audience, employ a number of communication strategies. Influencers focus not only on verbal communication strategies but also on non-verbal communication strategies.



**Figure 4.4: Non-verbal Communication Strategies of Influencers**

(Source: Fastercapital, 2023)

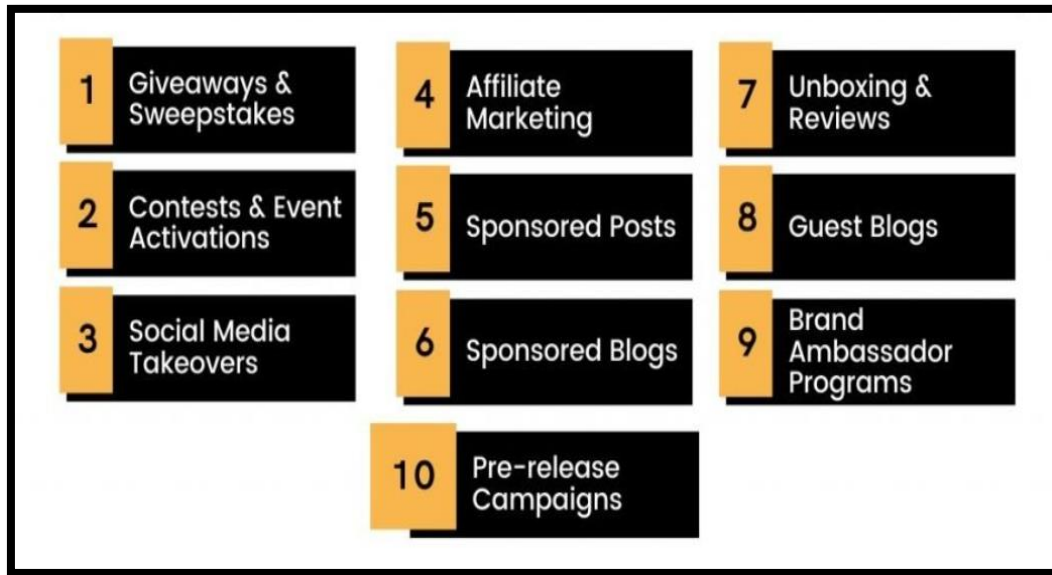
Non-verbal communication strategies are the use of facial expressions and other types of gestures using different parts of the body (Wardhani and Hasan, 2023). The above figure demonstrates the major non-verbal communication strategies that are widely used by influencers. Influencers maintain appropriate body language, eye contact and bodily gestures while engaging with their audience. Moreover, in terms of verbal communication, influencers are required to make sure that their content is informative and relevant. Informative and relevant content gets more reach in social media, which enhances the effectiveness of the influencers. For written communication, influencers focus on drafting coherent content and presenting the written content in an attractive and visually appealing manner. Attractiveness and visually appealing features of the content help the influencers in engaging their audience in a more effective manner, moreover, attractive content incurs high reach and visibility in social media. Influencers adopt a holistic approach involving effective communication styles, facial expressions, and other behaviors to engage their audience.



## Chapter 5: Contents Created by the Influencers

### 5.1. Types of content produced by Influencers

Influencer content can be defined as the images, videos, and several other types of content which are produced by influencers, mostly in partnership with brands.



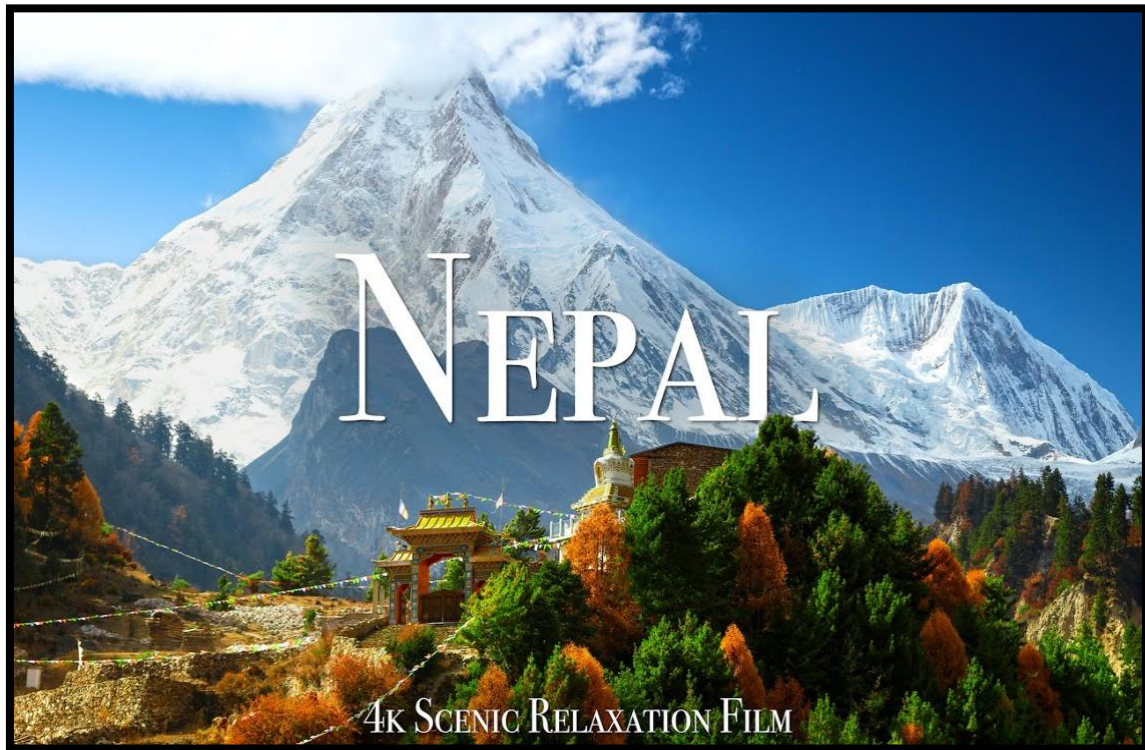
**Figure 5.1.1: Types of Content by Influencers**

(Source: Engaiodigita, 2023)

The figure provided above gives a visual representation of the different types of content produced by influencers. Giveaways in marketing content in which the participants win prizes and sweepstakes refer to raffles and lotteries; the participants in sweepstakes can win prizes if their name comes in the lotteries. Social media takeover happens when an influencer handles social media accounts of a brand or individual for a specific period of time; it requires trust between the influencer and the client. Affiliate marketing content is when influencers, in exchange for a commission, promote specific brands among their followers. Sponsor social media content happens when influencers are sponsored by brands to create promotional content. Gifts, unboxing, and review content are when influencers are provided with products by brands for promotion (Rajaram and Manchanda, 2020). Influencers persuade customers and arouse excitement before launching new products or services; such content is called pre-release and discount codes.

## 5.2. How influencers portray Nepal in their content

Influencer marketing in Nepal is growing at a high pace because of technology and the increasing availability of the internet in the country. In the context of Nepal, celebrities, businessmen and famous personalities are the major influencers. Moreover, the foreign visitors in the country act as major influencers.



**Figure 5.2.1: Nepal as Portrayed in Youtube**

(Source: Scenic Relaxation, 2023)

As demonstrated in the above figure, Nepal is portrayed as a land of scenic beauty and spectacular and stunning landscapes. Influencers use social media platforms to portray the country's scenic beauty to their audience. The picture of 4k Nepal has the semiotic element of visual storytelling as it portrays the landscape of Nepal in high-quality video and images.



**Figure 5.2.2: How to Travel Mount Everest**

(Source: Ghumante, 2023a)

Ghumante, a regional YouTube channel in Nepal, not only portrays the natural beauty of the country but also portrays the major adventurous activities that one can experience in Nepal. As portrayed in the above figure, Ghumante provides information to its audience on various contents like travelling to Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. The above image, as Ghumante presents, highlights a narrative of personal travel experience. As per the views of Zhou *et al.* (2021), influencers highlight narratives based on their personal experiences. Ghumante thus portrays the experiences of travelling to Mount Everest to its audience,

Besides regional influencers, the natural landscapes and scenic beauty of Nepal are captured by international visitors, as can be seen in the below figure. International tourists come to Nepal and share their experiences through social media with their social media audience, which has a significant impression on Nepal as a destination for tourism.





**Figure 5.2.3: Nepal Portrayed by Influencers**

(Source: Republica, 2023)

The happy faces in the above figure of the international travellers in Nepal portray their reliability and endorsement of the destination. It has been argued by Balaban and Mustăţea (2019) that endorsement and reliability portrayed by influencers inculcate trust among their audience. Thus, Nepal is promoted as a reliable tourist destination by international influencers.



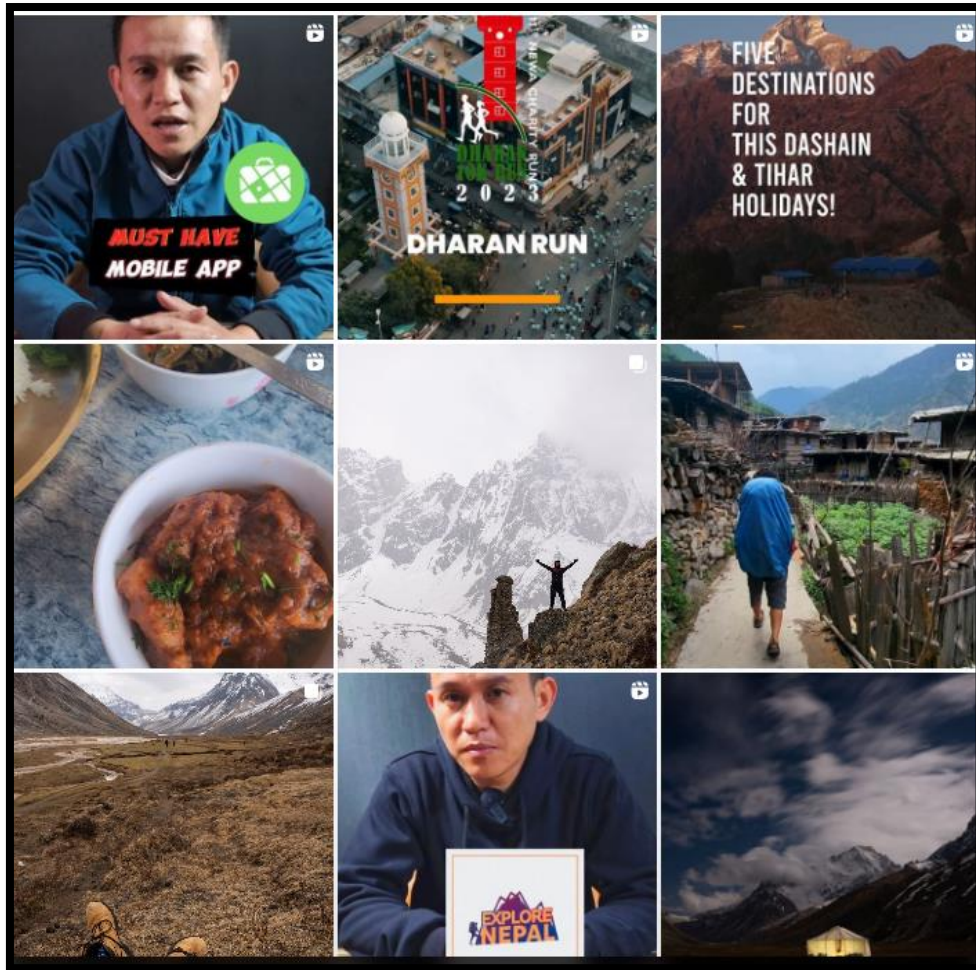
**Figure 5.2.4: Local Market of Nepal**

(Source: Ryleigh's World, 2023)

Besides the portrayal of scenic beauty and adventurous activities, influencers also portray the cultural heritage of Nepal. As evident in the above figure, Ryleigh's World, a famous YouTube channel on travel blogging, is exploring the local markets and heritage of the country. This helps to promote the richness of the cultural history and heritage of the country. The videos of Ryleigh's World in Nepal incorporate cultural symbols, as noticed in the above image, such as the masks portraying the cultural values of Nepal. A major purpose of tourism is to experience new cultures; influencers, by portraying cultural semiotics, promote the destination as a new cultural experience to the audience (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2019).

### **5.3. Semiotic analysis of the visual elements in their content**

Colours, tone of voice, imagery and other factors are key elements of influencer marketing (Wangshu and Guanhua, 2020). Visual elements refer to those factors that are directly perceived by the audience through their visual sense organ. The visuals used in influencer marketing often determine the reach of the content and its effectiveness in creating awareness among consumers.



**Figure 5.3.1: Instagram Content of Ghumante**

(Source: Ghumante, 2023b)

As showcased in the above figure, the visual elements of the regional influencers of Nepal are diverse. The visual elements include natural landscapes of the country, local food, heritage, activities, and others. Remote areas of Nepal, which are not much popular among tourists are also portrayed by national influencers of the country. The elements of the Instagram profile of Ghumante contribute to the destination branding of Nepal. It has been argued by Omer *et al.* (2023) that influencers contribute to the destination branding by creating images and symbols highlighting special features of a tourism destination to potential visitors. Ghumante highlights elements of adventures, culinary experience, natural beauty, and others.





**Figure 5.3.2: Local Food of Nepal**

(Source: Gypsy in Sneakers, 2023)

As opposed to national influencers, most of the international influencers focus on Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. Foreign visitors, in their content, capture in detail the market dynamics of Nepal, including its local products and food. As seen in the above figure, Gypsy in Sneakers, a YouTube channel, has captured the visuals of the local food market in Kathmandu. Food is influenced by the culture of a destination, and the culinary experience, as portrayed by influencers, supports destination branding (Soltani *et al.*, 2021). Gypsy in Sneakers highlights the local food of Nepal to a global audience, thus reinforcing the cultural tenets of Nepal as well.



**Figure 5.3.3: Temple in Nepal**

(Source: Wild Viking Travels, 2023)

The religious heritage and culture of Nepal are also captured by influencers in their content. Wild Viking Travels has portrayed Nepal's cultural and religious heritage through videography. This YouTube channel has captured the visuals of religious places in Nepal, paintings, and other factors. Wild Viking Travels highlights the experiences of visiting Durbar Square in Nepal. Durbar Square in Kathmandu, Nepal has both cultural and historical significance. Thus, the influencer promotes the cultural and historical heritage of the country.

#### **5.4. Common themes and differences in the portrayal of Nepal by influencers**

The influencers in Nepal portray various facets of the country, including its natural beauty, culinary experiences, and cultural richness.

##### ***Natural Landscape and Scenic Beauty***





**Figure 5.4.1: Natural Landscapes In Nepal**

(Source: Sali Trekking, 2023)

The pictures show that a popular theme of travelling to Nepal is its natural beauty and prowess. Influencers capture the visuals of popular tourist destinations in the country. Some influencers capture the beauty of those areas, which are not popular among tourists, but have pristine beauty.

### *Culinary Experiences*



### Figure 5.4.2: Culinary Experiences In Nepal

(Source: Alphonsostories, 2023)

Visitors in Nepal experience local cuisine and share their experiences on social media, which helps to promote Nepal's culinary culture to tourists. This also helps to protect Nepal's regional food and popularise it at the international level. The foreign visitors wearing garlands and putting colours on their forehands clearly demonstrate their endorsement of the culture and experiences in Nepal. These semiotic elements foster the authenticity of Nepal as a tourist destination to enjoy new experiences and culture.

#### *Cultural Heritage*



### Figure 5.4.3: Cultural Richness in Nepal

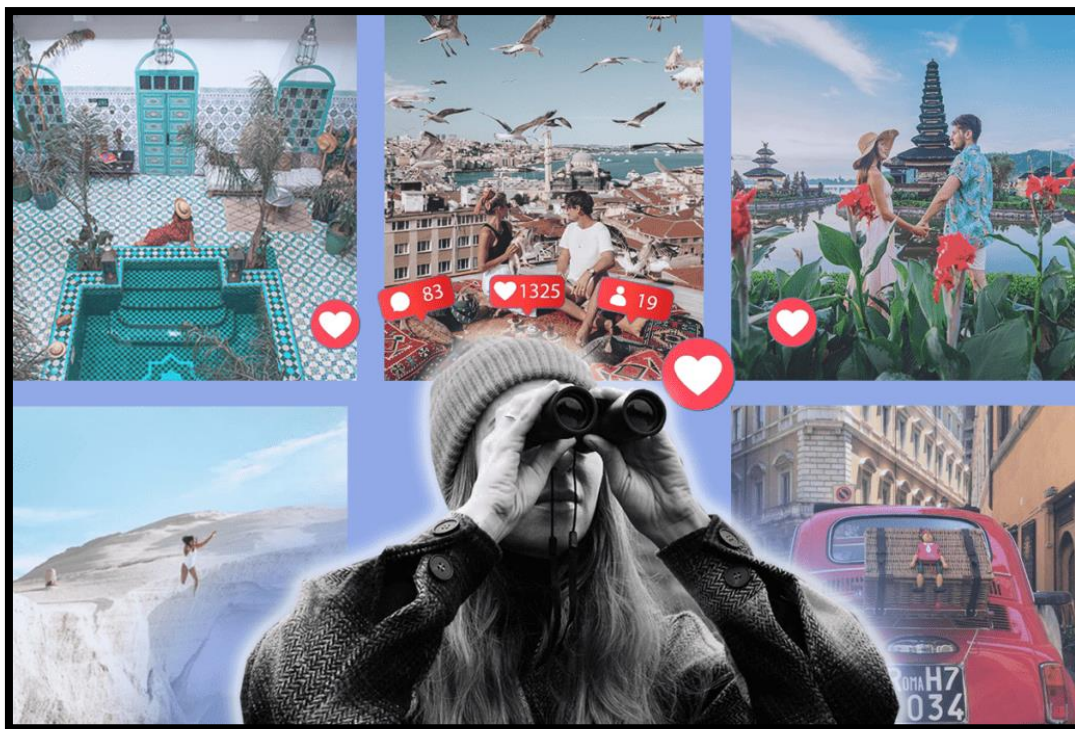
(Source: Sajha Pana, 2023)

Nepal has an old and rich history and marvellous architecture that represents its cultural richness. Influencers, in their content, capture the country's cultural richness and promote it simultaneously. The unique culture and rituals of Nepal is highlighted in the above image. Such semiotics has religious elements that helps to attract religious tourists around the world.

## Chapter 6: Influencers Impact on Destination Marketing

### 6.1. The role of influencers in shaping the destination image

It has been argued by Jaya and Prianthara (2020) that influencers have an integral role to play in impacting the image of a destination abroad. Influencers create and provide content that offers significant information and insights into a destination. The information that is shared by influencers in their social media accounts captures the attention of their fans and followers. When influencers in their content highlight the positive aspects of a destination, their audience are reinforced positively about the destination. On the other hand, when influencers share negative opinions in their content about a destination, audiences are negatively reinforced.



**Figure 6.1.1: Impact of Influencers in Destination Marketing**

(Source: Skift, 2023)

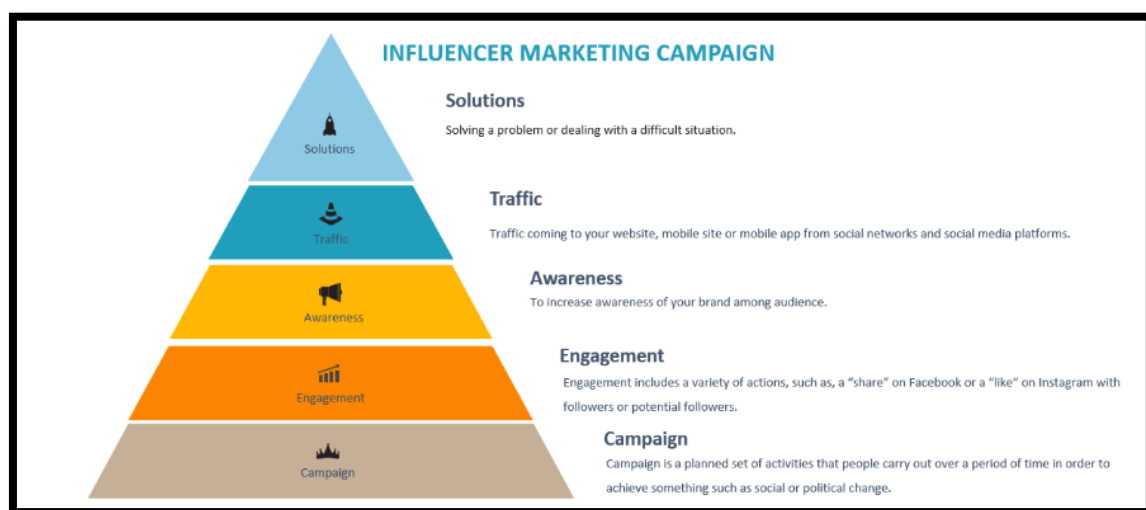
The above figure shows that the content influencers share on social media is seen and liked by several audiences; in turn, they develop an image of the tourist destination in their mind. It has been argued by Kilipiri *et al.* (2023) that influencers, with the help of their marketing content, can create awareness about tourism in a destination. Moreover, influencers can promote sustainable tourism with the help of healthy lifestyle content. Influencers play a vital



role in affecting the consumer attitude towards sustainability with the help of sustainable and rational messages through their content. Customer Engagement is enhanced through social media posts by influences, which positively affects the growth of tourism destinations. As per the arguments of Liu *et al.* (2020), influencers in social media act as initial motivators for people to opt for a particular tourist destination. For example, by watching and reading positive content about Nepal as a tourist destination, several people will be motivated to visit Nepal. The semiotic symbols portrayed in the posts by the influencers capture the attention of the audience, who in turn develop eagerness to visit the place.

## 6.2. The marketing strategies employed by influencers

Influencers use a number of strategies to increase their audience and deliver information to their audience about particular products or services. As per the views Reinikainen *et al.* (2020), the major strategy that influencers utilise in order to engage their audience is that they develop a sense of community with their followers.



**Figure 6.2: Strategies of Influencers**

(Source: Powerslides, 2023)

The above figure demonstrates some of the key strategies of influencer marketing. The very first approach of influencer marketing is to identify the problem and develop effective content to overcome the same. Moreover, influences need to ensure a high reach of their content for greater stability. In this context, hashtags play a vital role, influencers use a number of hashtags in their posts to ensure high reach. Influencers use the strategy of creating awareness among their followers by providing relevant content and necessary information

about particular products or services. Moreover, they focus on engaging their audience with the help of communication and visually appealing content at regular intervals. Moreover, social media campaigns are conducted by influencers to create a greater impact on the audience. For the promotion of a particular destination, influencers develop compelling content and explore places that are less known but have amazing visiting experiences. Influencers, through effective and engaging content about tourist destinations, compel social users to explore new destinations. This helps tourist destinations witness high traffic, which eventually enhances their economic growth. The portrayal of the memorable experiences of influencers in social media helps to secure the attention of their tourists, and the destinations are promoted.

### 6.3. Comparisons between influencers and destination marketing organisations (DMOs)

Destination marketing and influencer marketing are significantly different from each other. Both of these marketing strategies have their own unique and distinctive characteristics. Destination marketing is focused on highlighting major attractions of a particular tourist destination and targeting greater audiences. On the contrary, influencer marketing is based on a particular niche, which is mostly based on the influencers' follower base.



### **Figure 6.3.1: Steps of Destination Marketing**

(Source: Promodo, 2023)

The figure highlights the processes and major strategies of destination marketing. A close examination of the figure reflects that in destination marketing, DMOs study their competitors, identify customer needs, and develop affecting marketing content to attract tourists to the destinations so that economic growth of the destinations can be fostered. Thus, destination marketing can be considered to be predominantly focused on the destination, and the destination's development is prioritised significantly in destination marketing. On the contrary, in influencer marketing, the development of the destination is not given as much priority as the popularity of the influencers. Moreover, influencers, while promoting a destination, focus on their individual experience and personal recommendations. Thus, the role of influencer marketing cannot be considered destination-centric because the subjective opinions and experiences of influencers significantly affect the content of influencer marketing. However, influencer marketing plays a significant role in the promotion of tourist destinations because it helps to reach a wide online audience and the relationship of the influencers with their audience helps to create significant awareness about tourist destinations among them. Thus, Destination marketing is only for the promotion of the destination for its economic growth, while influencer marketing is also about engaging the followers for the personal benefits of the influencers as well.

#### **6.4. Critiques and Suggestions for Influencer's contents**

Influencers, with the help of their content, can capture the attention of their audience and develop awareness about the products and services. However, ineffective marketing content and lack of information in the content often fail to create awareness among the audience, which eventually undermines the effectiveness of overall influencer marketing, and the purpose of marketing is not achieved.



**Figure 6.4.1: Strategies to Improve Influencer Content**

(Source: Fastercapital, 2023)

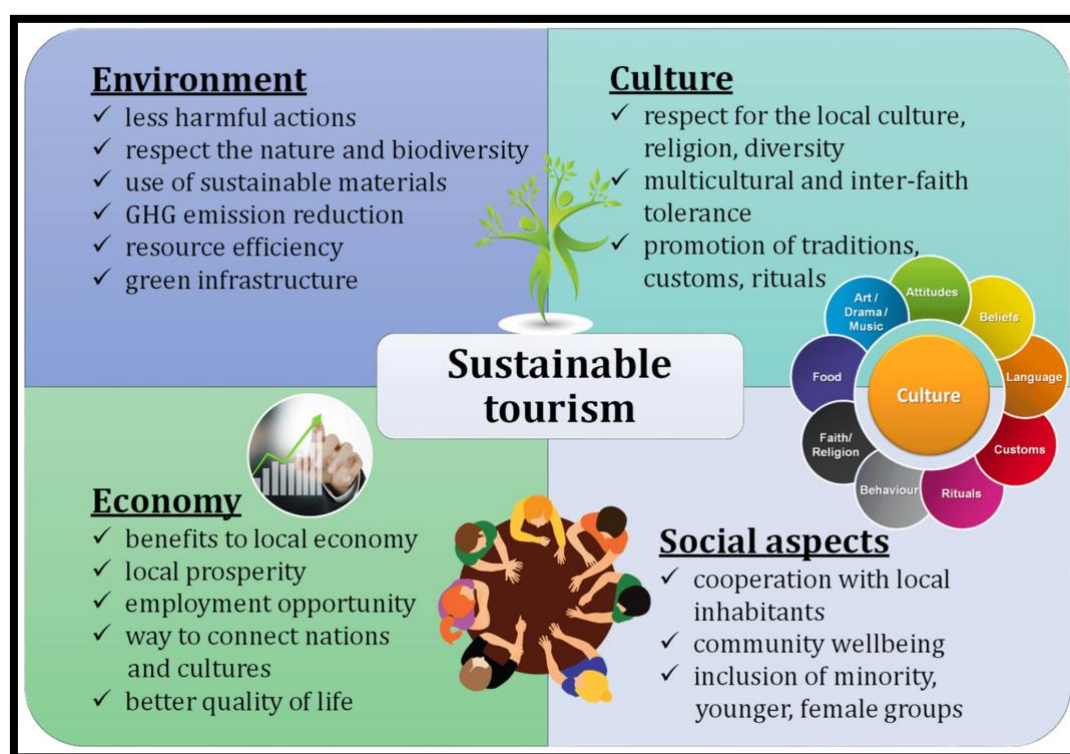
In the above figure, some of the key suggestions that can significantly enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing have been provided. The very first suggestion for influencers is that they need to expand their reach. In order to do so, they can improve their presence on different social media platforms. Moreover, in order to retain an audience, influencers need to develop trust and credibility with their audience. The content posted by influencers needs to be relevant and transparent. As per the arguments of Hollebeek and Macky (2019), clear and engaging content helps to develop audience engagement, and audiences develop trust and loyalty. Moreover, influencers need to develop their content in an informative manner so that the content can provide necessary information to the audience, which can help them in their decision-making. Also, the signs and symbols used by influencers need to be visually appealing.

## Chapter 7: Responsibilities of Influencers in Promoting Nepal

### 7.1. Sustainability and ethical considerations in the way influencers work

#### *Sustainable Tourism Promotion*

The promoting of environmentally friendly tourism practices is a growing emphasis for Nepalese influencers. They draw attention to community-based tourism projects, ethical trekking outfitters, and environmentally friendly lodging options. Influencers help to preserve Nepal's natural and cultural resources by promoting eco-friendly choices. This particular means guarantees that tourism helps the community and has as little of an adverse effect on the environment as possible (Cheng *et al.* 2019).



**Figure 7.1.1: Aspects of Sustainable Tourism**

(Source: Tahiri, Kovači and Trajkovska Petkoska, 2022)

#### *Cultural Sensitivity*

The ethical aspects of influencers' efforts to uphold cultural sensitivity are apparent. It emphasises the respectful portrayal of regional cultures, customs as well as religious activities. Influencers interact with local communities, obtaining consent before showcasing people in their material to prevent cultural appropriation and guarantee that Nepal is portrayed in a way that is consistent with the beliefs of the community (Demsar *et al.* 2023).



### ***Responsible Adventure Tourism***

Influencers are essential in promoting safe and responsible adventure activities. They encourage following safety precautions, cutting back on trash on trails, and engaging in ethical trekking. In terms of responsible tourism, Nepal is so responsible that only one death occurred in the year 2023 while practising canyoning (English.onlinekhabar, 2023). Influencers protect Nepal's beautiful natural landscapes and ensure the safety of both tourists as well as local communities by promoting responsible behaviour among their followers.



**Figure 7.1.2: Responsible adventure tourism in Nepal**

*(Source: English.onlinekhabar, 2023)*

As evident in the above picture, influencers highlight and capture the adventurous symbols of Nepal, and promote Nepal as a destination for adventurous experiences.

## **7.2. Different approaches of local and international influencers**

### **7.2.1. Local influencers and their role**

Local influencers in Nepal play a crucial role in shaping and promoting tourism. The content they produce leverages the culture, geography, and nuances of the region. As a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and adventure seekers, Nepal is promoted by numerous local influencers who specialise in these fields. Their material encourages and directs travellers looking for exhilarating activities, from paragliding in Pokhara to trekking in the Himalayas, hence

fostering the expansion of adventure tourism. An array of sites in Nepal are showcased in high-quality travel videos produced by the YouTube channel **“4K Nepal”**. Nepal is known for its adventure tourism, which is beautifully portrayed by 4K Nepal. The channel showcases adventure activities like trekking, mountaineering, and paragliding. It also highlights the daily lives of people in different regions of Nepal. Visitors can take a virtual tour of many areas with the visually amazing information that the channel delivers. Nepal's various scenery, which includes towering mountains, verdant valleys, tranquil lakes, and charming villages, is frequently captured on camera by the channel. Another YouTube channel, **“Travel Vlog Nepal”**, documents the travel experiences of the creator within Nepal. Travel Vlog Nepal explore the local food scene, trying traditional dishes and street food. Food-related content can provide a taste of the diverse culinary offerings in different regions of Nepal. The channel also visits historical sites, ancient temples, and architectural wonders (Ma and Mohame, 2023). In some vlogs, it has also showcased interactions and interviews to provide a glimpse into the lives of people in different parts of Nepal.



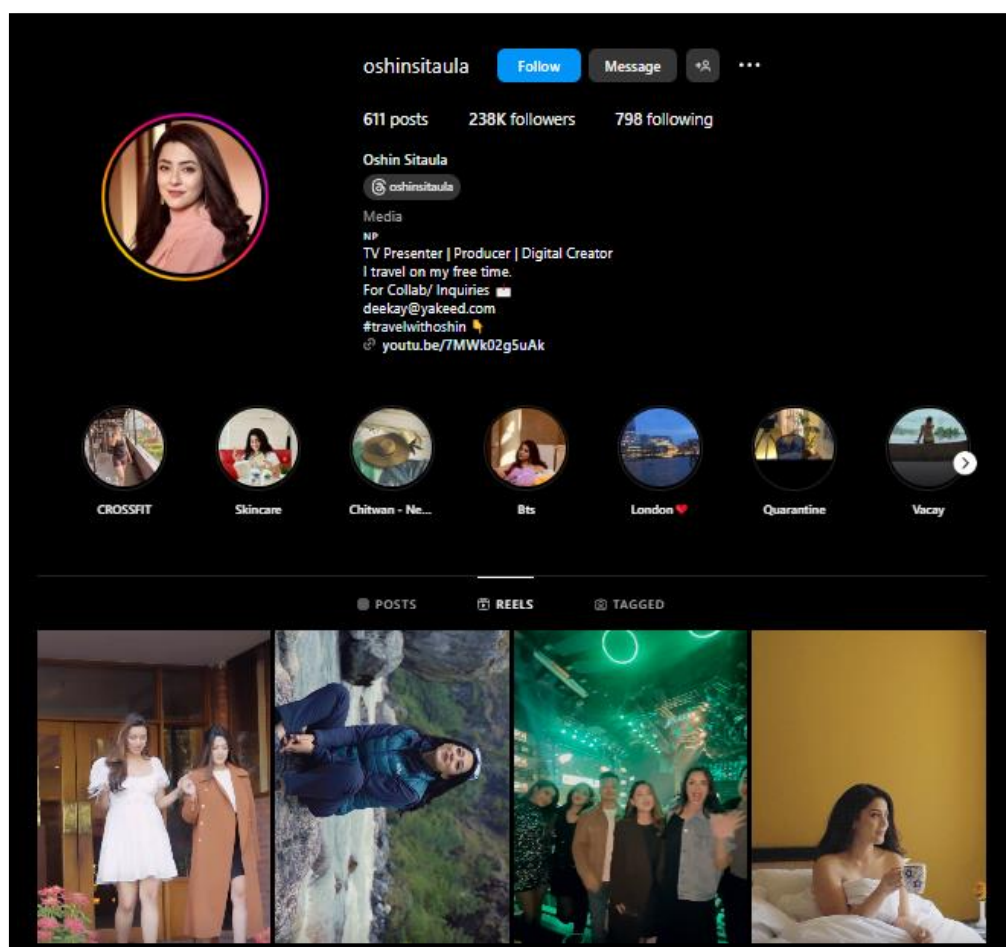
**Figure 7.2.1.1: YouTube channel of 4K Nepal**

(Source: 4K Nepal, 2023)

**Roje Shrestha** is a content developer and travel lover who posts about her travels on Instagram. She travels throughout Nepal, photographing scenes and events that encourage others to see their own nation. Travel blogger and photographer **Saroj Oli**, as known as "The Wandering Soul," investigates and records his travels throughout Nepal. Beautiful photos and

educational content about different vacation sites may be found on his blog and social media profiles.

**Oshin Sitaula** is well-known for producing content, especially on Instagram and YouTube. She is a well-known Nepali lifestyle and travel blogger (Oshinsitaula, 2023). Travel vlogs featuring Oshin Sitaula's adventures visiting different locations in Nepal and potentially other countries are a common feature of her output. These vlogs feature adventurous activities, beautiful scenery, and cultural encounters. Influencers frequently vlog about their lives, and Oshin does the same by sharing details about her everyday activities, wardrobe decisions, and beauty regimens.



**Figure 7.2.1.2: Instagram profile of Oshin Sitaula**

(Source: Oshinsitaula, 2023)

**"Ghumante"**, a Nepali travel and adventure YouTube channel. Through travel vlogs and adventure videos, the channel focuses on seeing different places and highlighting Nepal's natural beauty. It's conceivable that Ghumante offers travel vlogs that virtually transport

viewers to various locations in Nepal. Popular tourist destinations, undiscovered treasures, and off-the-beaten-path areas may all fall under this category. Ghumante, prioritises striking images via photography and filmmaking (Ghumante, 2023). Magnificent images can accentuate the narrative as a whole and highlight the scenic splendour of the surroundings.



**Figure 7.2.1.3: YouTube channel of Ghumante**

(Source: Ghumante, 2023)

Local influencers frequently take part in educational projects in addition to promoting material. They promote cultural sensitivity, responsible tourism, and environmental preservation. Influencers support a community of aware and conscientious travellers by adding educational components to their material (Jiménez-Morales and Lopera-Mármol, 2022). Local influencers are more frequent at posting Nepal-related factors that ensure high-level engagement. Moreover, they are more aware of the traditions and culture of Nepal, thus providing more accurate information to their audience.

### **7.2.2. International influencers and their role**

International influencers bring a distinct perspective to the promotion of tourism in Nepal by introducing tourism within the country to a broader audience. Through sharing their actual experiences of experiencing Nepal, international influencers promote cross-cultural exchange. Festivities celebrating culture, customs, and relationships with the community are highlighted. The diversity and distinctiveness of Nepal's cultural traditions are presented to their global audience through their content.

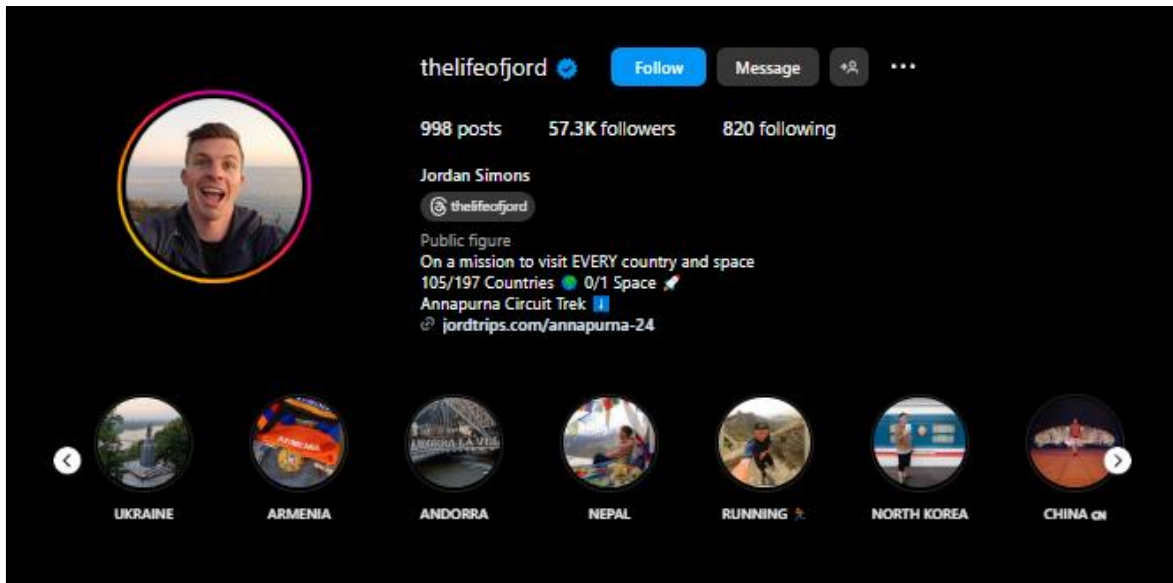




**Figure 7.2.2.1: A group of international tourists posing in Nepal**

(Source: Intrepidtravel, 2018)

Many visitors around the world have experienced Nepal and have shared their messages in the form of blogs and videos. Recognised for his backpacking escapades, **Karl Watson** is a travel vlogger. His experiences, which included trekking in the Himalayas and visiting historical places, were chronicled when he travelled to Nepal. The country is among the places that travel YouTuber **Gabriel Traveller** posts content from. Travel advice, cultural discovery, and insider views into local life are frequently featured in his videos. Travelling full-time and posting videos of their adventures to YouTube is what **Kara and Nate** do. They made vlogs featuring different places, cultural events, and adventurous activities while in Nepal. Travel vlogger **The Life of Jord** travels to several nations. His clips from Nepal contain a range of topics, such as trekking, cultural encounters as well as meeting locals. All these influencers have created an international effect in terms of tourism and travel promotion for the nation.



**Figure 7.2.2.2: Instagram profile of Jordan Simons**

(Source: Thelifeofjord, 2023)

Nepal contributes to tourism through diverse approaches that go beyond mere promotion. Influencers act like a cherry on top in the means of promotion of cultural representation along with the advocacy for responsible tourism. They are responsible for showcasing hidden treasures as well as fostering connections between travellers and local communities. International influencers have a global reach; thus, they promote Nepal to a global audience.

### **7.3. Influencers content patterns**

In this research, the content of a total of 50 influencers was analysed, among which 14 are briefly mentioned above. The selected influencer's contents were analysed to identify patterns. Through the research, it was found that a significant number of local travel influencers of Nepal tended to avoid Kathmandu as their prime focus for their content. Instead, emphasised rural areas, prioritising the lifestyle of village people living in those regions and opting for more off-beaten tracks.

Local influencers with a large fan following emphasize exploring adventurous activities and showcasing the stunts and scenic landmarks of the hills and mountains of Nepal. Likewise, Pokhara city poses as a popular destination amongst the local influencers as opposed to the capital city, Kathmandu. Pokhara is also known as the gateway to multiple trekking routes ranging from beginner to advanced level, which further contributes to the excitement of the influencers, who prefer Pokhara to Kathmandu.

While local influencers often overlook Kathmandu, it is found to be admired by foreign influencers, one of the reasons being Kathmandu is the only city with a fully operating international airport at the moment, leaving the tourists no choice but to explore the city. And the compulsion makes Kathmandu the hub for foreign influencers. The chaotic and busy streets of Kathmandu brimmed with culture and heritage sites are found to be an intriguing sight for the influencers from abroad. Immersed in the culture, diversity, and chaos, they also find the pollution, particularly in Kathmandu, a bit challenging for them.

Due to a lack of waste management, several streets in Kathmandu are filled with waste. Visitors in Kathmandu often capture streets in Kathmandu filled with waste. This type of content hampers the image of Nepal as a tourist destination. Destination de-branding is the factors that make a destination less attractive to potential visitors (Hanna *et al.*, 2021). The negative experiences shared by influencers regarding their visit to Nepal act as destination de-branding for the country, making it less attractive to potential visitors.

Apart from exploring the good and bad sides of Kathmandu, various repeated patterns of content posted by international influencers can be found on the internet, and the hike to Everest stood out the most, followed by Pokhara city, Annapurna region hike, Chitwan and Bardia National Park and Lumbini. The scenic beauty of the Himalayan ranges combined with the kind and helpful people of the region are the prime features in most of the contents of the foreign influencers.

Nepal is often portrayed as an affordable destination; however, there is a lot of content from the influencers showcasing their bargaining experiences. A video of a British lady caused a sensation on the internet back in 2017 when she was chased by a Nepali mountain lady because she bargained for a tea that cost only 1 pound (Smith, 2017). Which supposedly was not a lot for her as people in Europe spend more than one pound when everything can be available easily without having to add up labour costs. There were a lot of mixed comments in the post from all over the world. Nepal has been reduced as a cheap destination by foreign influencers who highlight the low costs of goods and services found in Nepal while not being aware of the income situation of the general population. Delighted content showcasing considerably cheap meals and products that can be found in Nepal by the influencers are viewed by their followers, and Nepal is then perceived as a budget-friendly, easy-to-bargain location, which will adversely affect travelling trends. As an influencer, it is extremely

important to be conscious of the potential consequences it might bring to the local market as their action can shape the travel behaviour among their followers.



## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

### **8.1. Summary of key findings**

There have been several key factors that directly link with the presentation and development of tourism in Nepal. Marketing the tourism and travel sector in Nepal with the help of influencers holds a pivotal place. When it comes to maintaining cultural authenticity, encouraging ethical tourism, and encouraging community involvement, local influencers in Nepal are crucial. They represent Nepal's rich history and undiscovered treasures as cultural ambassadors. International influencers highlight global perspectives, adventure, and distinctive cultural experiences (Papavasiliou, 2022). With an emphasis on responsible hiking and environmentally sustainable lodging, influencers from both domestic and foreign markets help preserve Nepal's natural beauty. Maintaining integrity in influencer marketing is crucial because ethical considerations and transparency in collaborations are commonplace. Influencers come together to create a more positive and genuine story about Nepal, which helps to promote the country's tourist industry sustainably and strengthens the bond between visitors and the energetic local communities.

### **8.2. Impacts of Influencers contents on destination promotion**

The impact of Influencers' content on destination promotion extends beyond the digital realm. As a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and adventure seekers, Nepal is promoted by numerous local influencers who specialise in these fields. Adventure tourism is growing because of the inspiration and guidance provided by their material (Hanna *et al.* 2019). In Nepal, it ranges from paragliding in Pokhara to trekking in the Himalayas. Through their documentation and dissemination of traditional architecture, art, and customs, local influencers contribute to the preservation of Nepal's cultural heritage. They raise awareness about the value of maintaining cultural identity in the face of modernisation through their material, which serves as a digital archive (Otero, 2022). Local celebrities actively support and interact with tiny neighbourhood companies. Influencers support the economic growth of their communities by promoting homestays, traditional restaurants, and artisan stores. In addition to supporting sustainable tourist practices, this strategy empowers the neighbourhood.

Local companies and international influencers often work together to feature the businesses in their content. In order to promote economic growth in Nepal, this involves forming alliances with lodging facilities, dining establishments and travel agencies (Badal, 2019).

These partnerships build a connection between global consumers and regional businesses. They actively support ethical hiking, eco-friendly lodging, and conservation programmes in order to advance sustainable tourism practices. The scenic beauty and clear landscapes portrayed by influencers reinforce Nepal's sustainability mission.



**Figure 8.2: Influencers portrayal of Nepal attracting visitors**

(Source: Guyontheroad, 2023)

### **8.3. Recommendations for the effective use of influencer**

***Recommendation 1: Influencers need to be a diverse representation***

The DMOs are required to include as many local and foreign influencers as possible to give a complete picture of the content that Nepal has to offer. It is necessary to make sure that there is a diverse group of adventure seekers, cultural explorers as well as proponents of sustainability in order to accommodate varying interests among the audience (Nepal, 2022).

***Recommendation 2: Influencers are needed to put an emphasis on responsible tourism***

It is recommended to motivate influential people in order to give ethical tourism a high priority. The purpose of lessening the influence on the environment involves publicising sustainable travel options and encouraging eco-friendly lodging. Through the means of their content, influencers are required to push for trash minimisation during hikes. It is important to place a strong emphasis on openness while working with influencers to show the right picture of Nepal's industries. To maintain credibility and audience confidence, influencers should be transparent about their connections as well as all the sponsored materials they inherit.

***Recommendation 3: Fostering a practice of initiatives for community engagement***

It is required to encourage the influencers of the country, along with local communities, to work together. In order to guarantee that the profits from tourism stay in the community, it becomes crucial to promote community-based tourism projects. There has to be an urge for influencers to support local companies. For the purpose of guaranteeing that regional cultures and traditions are respectfully portrayed in the content produced by influencers, it is also recommended to train influencers regarding cultural sensitivity (Mukhalalati *et al.* 2020). Within the scope of doing this, they can avoid cultural appropriation and also improve the authenticity of the material they ultimately produce.

***Recommendation 4: Establishing strategic partnerships with Tourism Boards***

It is also crucial to establish strategic alliances among the influencers and the travel boards of Nepal. The collaboration will automatically become an opportunity for sponsored travel, and cooperative marketing initiatives. Enlisting influencers in tourism-related events is also considered to be a suitable example of collaborative activities which are required to be appreciated. There is also a requirement to develop enduring connections with influencers who genuinely share the goals and ideals of Nepal's tourist industry. It has been observed that storytelling that is more sustained and real is made possible by means of long-term partnerships.

#### **8.4. The future of influencers in tourism**

As digital platforms continue to advance and travellers seek out more personalised and authentic experiences, influencers in Nepali tourism have a bright future ahead of them. By highlighting Nepal's cultural diversity and undiscovered treasures, local influencers will be crucial in helping visitors in order to form a closer bond with the country's varied landscapes (Ahmed Farhan, 2021). Nepal's tourism products will be more diversely represented as a result of the emergence of micro-influencers, who frequently have more specialised and engaged audiences. The growing popularity of influencers promoting responsible tourism practices will impact travellers' conscious decision-making as sustainability emerges as a key subject in international travel.

It is anticipated that influencers and travel boards will work together more closely to create creative advertising and immersive experiences that truly embody Nepal. As technology develops, influencer-led virtual and augmented reality experiences could appear, giving prospective tourists a sneak peek at the nation's top attractions. In general, influencers will keep influencing how the world views Nepal's tourist industry, serving as a driving force behind sustainable practices, positive development, and a more inclusive portrayal of this alluring place.

#### **8.5 Future Implications**

This research has significant future implications because, with the help of both primary and secondary data, this research has provided new insights into how influencers contribute to the promotion of tourist destinations to a wide audience. A key area of implication of this research is that the role of both national and international influencers has been portrayed in influencing the promotion of Nepal's tourism industry. Future researchers can study this research as a reference to understand the effects of influencer marketing on tourism destinations like Nepal.

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