

Keith Jenkins on how best to harness influencer marketing in travel

 By Ruth Cooper

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For influencer marketing to continue to grow and perform, it needs to return to its roots of honesty and authenticity says [iambassador](#) founder and CEO Keith Jenkins. Jenkins spoke at the recent World Travel Market Africa conference held at the CTICC in Cape Town.

I got in touch with Jenkins post-conference to delve a little deeper into how best companies can harness influencer marketing in the travel and tourism spheres and what social media tactics travel influencers should utilise and avoid.



Keith Jenkins

■ ***How do you see influencer marketing evolving in the travel and tourism sectors?***

I see the travel industry focussing more on authentic influencer content. Blogs will continue to play an important role due to their long form, longevity and searchability as organic reach on social media platforms declines. I also see more longer-term partnerships developing – encompassing much more than just content and engagement.

■ ***Do you see it returning to its initial principles of authenticity and honesty?***

Yes, I do. It has to. Without these principles, influencers are doomed in the longer run.



#WTMA19: Keith Jenkins on what travel influencers are getting right and wrong

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■ ***What advice would you give to emerging bloggers and influencers who want to grow their audience and engagement?***

Don't do it for a free trip/meal/hotel or money. Do it because you love to travel and you're passionate about creating travel content, sharing it and interacting with your readers. When your passion shines through, people will take notice and start following and engaging with you, and opportunities will soon present themselves.

■ ***What key advice would you give travel companies that want to use influencers for marketing purposes?***

Working with influencers should be part of a longer-term strategy with clear and measurable goals. Do your research and find the influencers most suited to your brand message. Follow them for a while before approaching them and, when you do, start on a modest scale. If it's a success, think of ways to build and nurture a mutually-beneficial relationship.

■ ***What would be your top five do's and don'ts when it comes to creating a successful influencer marketing campaign?***

Do's:

1. Create clear objectives and KPIs
2. Ensure the selected influencers are a good match with the objectives
3. Brief the influencers of the objectives and goals
4. Discuss and create an agreement with the influencers – one that clearly states the objectives/goals, expectations in terms of deliverables/reporting, timelines and any (financial) compensation
5. Ask for post-campaign feedback

Don'ts:

1. When selecting influencers to work with, don't just look at numbers. Instead, get a good idea of their style of creating content, engagement and previous work with the industry
2. Don't make promises you can't keep or inflate expectations
3. Don't make unreasonable demands on the influencers (outside of what had already been agreed on)
4. For destinations, don't over-plan an itinerary. Provide the influencers with sufficient time to explore on their own and gather content that reflects their interests/niche
5. Don't think in terms of 'one-size-fits-all'



#WTMA17: Taming the Wild West web of bloggers

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■ ***What is your pet peeve when it comes to influencer marketing?***

Staged content that encourages reckless, irresponsible behaviour. Its proliferation on social media, especially Instagram, not only gives all influencers a bad name (which is totally misplaced) but can lead to disrespectful behaviour, injury/death and, potentially, destroy fragile natural environments.

■ ***What have been some of your most successful campaigns?***

Our most successful campaign is Blogville, which we've been running every year with the region of Emilia-Romagna (Italy) since 2012. This blogger apartment concept has been so successful (in terms of content and engagement) that we've expanded it to include other regions in Italy and Austria. This concept has also been replicated in other countries such as Malta, Faroe Islands and even in Stellenbosch, South Africa. It's also won several awards through the years.

Other campaigns we're particularly proud of include #EuroFoodTrip, a cross-border collaboration between Costa Brava (Spain) and Emilia-Romagna (Italy), and our '24 Hours in the UK' campaign with VisitBritain. These groundbreaking campaigns won the World Travel Award for 'Europe's Leading Marketing Campaign' in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

■ ***Which influencers and bloggers are really getting it right?***

There are many influencers/bloggers out there who are creating terrific content and thinking out of the box. Examples include Janice Waugh (Solo Traveler World), Shivya Nath (The Shooting Star), Daniel Noll and Audrey Scott (Uncornered Market), Michael Turtle (Time Travel Turtle) and Becki Enright (Borders of Adventure).

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Oh how I wish I was a traveller of yore. That cameras weren't invented, visual content didn't exist. That I could show you a place through my words alone, capture it in my mind alone, paint it not in your eyes but your imagination alone. . . Oh how I wish I was a traveller of yore. That there was no way to read the impressions of past travellers, no medium to form pre-conceived notions of a place. That I could travel in my backyard or a land far away, without knowing a thing about it. That my mind wasn't tainted with advice, that my eyes had absolutely no idea what to expect. . . Oh how I wish I was a traveller of yore. That I could travel in a caravan, lose myself to the music that helped people transcend barriers of language, sleep in caravan serais or under open skies. . . But if I was a traveller of yore, travelling as a woman, with a mind of her own, would be a million times more challenging. I couldn't plug in to wifi and make a living online. I couldn't expect to find vegan-friendly hideouts around the world. I couldn't connect with you on Instagram. . . I wish I was a traveller of yore. But I also don't 💎💎 . . And you? . . Photo —> Quite ironically, working on the rooftop of a caravan serai, with the stark landscape near Kerman before me 💎💎 . . 💎💎 Exploring Iran with @uppersia . 💎💎 Shot on #iphonexsmax . . #theshootingstar #irantravel #digitalnomad #workhardanywhere #passionpassport

A post shared by Shivya Nath (@shivya) on Mar 25, 2019 at 9:33pm PDT



How have you seen the conversations at World Travel Market Africa shifting over the years?

In influencer circles at WTMA, whereas in the past, the conversations were about basic blogging, growing audiences, SEO and the like, these days there's a focus on issues such as empowering women to travel, LGBTQ travel, sustainable/responsible tourism and ways to build long-lasting relationships with the travel industry.

What is your preferred social media platform?

Pinterest, as it still delivers a decent amount of organic traffic. For engagement, I prefer Twitter and Facebook for now – though engagement is visibly declining.

What has been your favourite travel memory?

Quitting my 10-year investment banking career and embarking on a round-the-world trip in 2008. Looking back, that trip (and all the amazing experiences I had) changed my life forever. I started my blog, Velvet Escape, in late-2008 and iambassador in 2011 – and it's been an incredible journey!

Click through to our [World Travel Market Africa](#) section for more.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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