A vibrant tropical beach scene. In the foreground, two tall palm trees with lush green fronds frame the top of the image against a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. Below the trees, a row of overwater bungalows with thatched roofs and wooden stilts extends into the turquoise ocean. The water is crystal clear, showing the sandy bottom. The overall atmosphere is serene and idyllic.

TIKTOK FOR TRAVEL BRANDS

A WHITE PAPER
BY CARMEN SOGNONVI & MICHELLE GONZÁLEZ

AUGUST 2020

A NOTE FROM MICHELLE & CARMEN



Michelle González
@LAXtoLuxury



Carmen Sognonvi
@TopFlightFamily

We are travel creators who met and became fast friends over TikTok. We bonded right away over our love for this amazing social media platform and, of course, our shared obsession with all things travel.

We decided to collaborate on this white paper to show travel brands how unique of a platform TikTok is, and how the potential for discoverability truly sets it apart.

TikTok makes the world feel like a smaller, more accessible place and we'd love to see more travel brands embrace its potential for connection.

Michelle & Carmen

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01

WHY TRAVEL BRANDS SHOULD BE ON TIKTOK

NOW IS THE TIME

TikTok is just an app where teenagers post dance videos, right?

Absolutely not!

TikTok has evolved into a dynamic ecosystem where you can find content on just about any topic imaginable. And travel is one of the fastest-growing content categories.

Travel brands who become early adopters of TikTok have an unprecedented opportunity not only to connect with Gen Z travelers, but also to nurture relationships with the many millennial and Gen X travelers who are avid TikTok users.

There's no better time than now to start experimenting with this platform.



43%

*of TikTok users are not on Instagram. In other words, this part of the audience is **exclusive** to TikTok.**

34%

*of TikTok users are age 25 or older. More than a third of the audience are millennial and Gen X users and this percentage rises daily.**

“*The average TikTok user opens the app 16+ times a day and spends an average of 80+ minutes on it per day.**”

Contrast that with Instagram, where only 42% of users open the app more than once a day, and the average user spends only 27 minutes per day on the app.**

Here are some other eye-opening statistics about TikTok's user base:

- 84 million active US users monthly
- 805 million active global users monthly
- Available in 150+ countries/regions
- Total downloads have reached more than 2 billion

* Provided by TikTok's Brand Partnerships team, June 2020

** "37 Instagram Stats That Matter to Marketers in 2020,"
Hootsuite, October 22, 2019

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02

A TIKTOK PRIMER FOR TRAVEL BRANDS

HERE ARE THE BASICS TO KNOW

Click to watch!



TikTok is a sound-driven, visually immersive social experience. There are three primary types of content on TikTok:



Informational:
Content that aims to educate or inform



Immersive:
Content that immerses viewers in an experience



Trend-driven:
Content that participates in an app-based trend

PLATFORM DIFFERENTIATION

Several attributes uniquely position TikTok among social media platforms



DIFFERENCE 1: **LIFE OF CONTENT**

Unlike Instagram, where reach and engagement drop off after 48 hours, existing content on TikTok continues to be pushed out to new users. TikTok content has the potential to experience "delayed explosions," surging in viewership and reach weeks and even months later.



DIFFERENCE 2: **POTENTIAL FOR VIRALITY**

The democratization of content on TikTok via the For You page allows content to reach far beyond a creator's audience. Authentic, well-received content is rewarded with wider audiences.



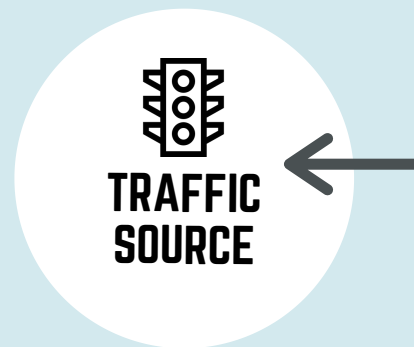
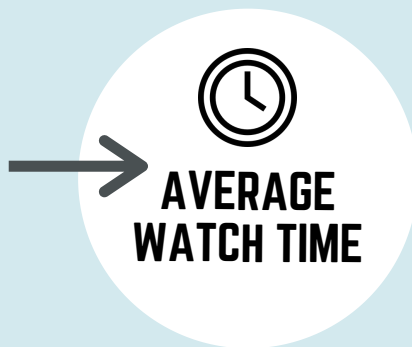
DIFFERENCE 3: **UNDUPLICATED AUDIENCE**

The TikTok audience is largely exclusive; 72% of users are not on Twitter, 45% are not on Facebook and 43% are not on Instagram* (data sans China).

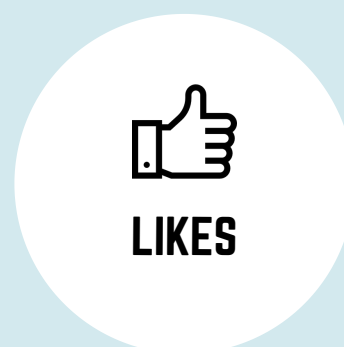
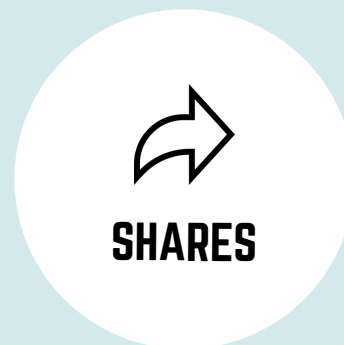
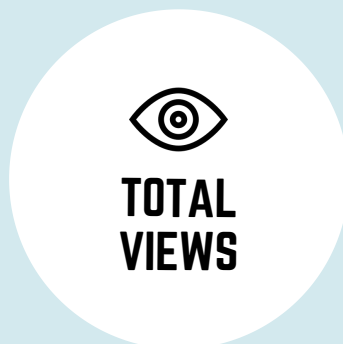
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following content analytics are available to creators to share with partners:

Most highly rewarded by the TikTok algorithm



Followers, personal profile, For You, sound and hashtag



03

CONTENT STRATEGIES FOR TRAVEL BRANDS

USE ALL 3 STRATEGIES FOR BEST RESULTS



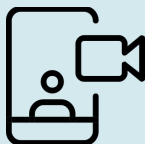
STRATEGY 1: CREATE YOUR OWN BRANDED ACCOUNT

An account that is owned and operated by your brand gives interested TikTok users a place to learn more about what you offer.



STRATEGY 2: PARTNER WITH TIKTOK CREATORS

Experienced TikTok creators are skilled at creating content that will both resonate with their audience and effectively promote your brand.

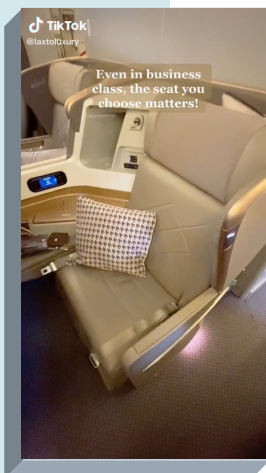
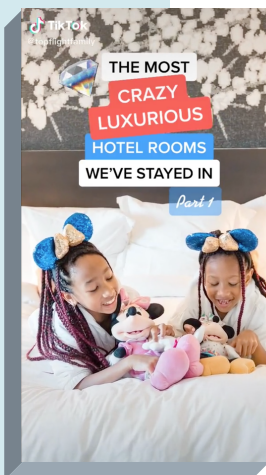


STRATEGY 3: ENCOURAGE USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Just as travel brands have become adept at creating "Instagrammable" experiences, they should look to create "TikTokable" moments for travelers.

04

Click to watch!



TIKTOK FORMATS FOR TRAVEL CONTENT

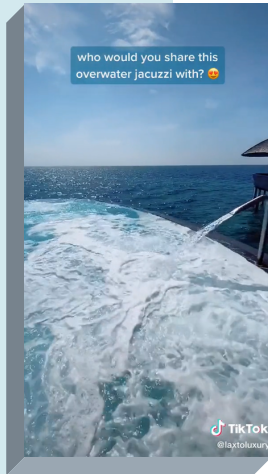
THESE ARE TRIED-AND-TRUE FORMATS

FORMAT 1: ROOM/PROPERTY TOUR

Room or property tours are quick, bite-sized ways to immerse a viewer in the experience of visiting your destination. From luxe interior design touches to beautiful views, this format highlights the best of your property or destination.

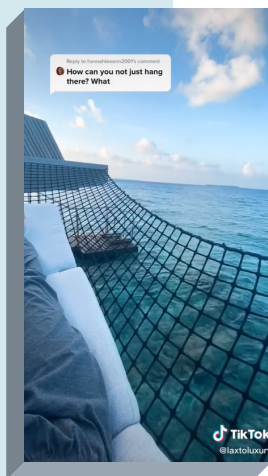
FORMAT 2: INFORMATIONAL

TikTok as a platform loves educational, informational content. Share facts about your destination or tell viewers unique tidbits about your property. Top fives are also an easily digested informational format, such as top five activities, cocktails, room types or other fun topics.



FORMAT 3: **AESTHETIC SCENE**

The quickest way to get a destination added to a viewer's bucket list is stunning, unique imagery. The full screen, visually immersive nature of TikTok lends itself perfectly to this content format.



FORMAT 4: **Q&A**

Community building is an important aspect of social media and the TikTok "video reply to comment" feature allows dialogue between creators and their inquisitive audience.



FORMAT 5: **VLOG**

Although TikTok videos are limited to 60 seconds, vlogs can still be a fun way to deliver quick "day in the life" content from visitors at your destination.

05

HOW TO WORK WITH TIKTOK CREATORS

REACH YOUR AUDIENCE MORE EFFECTIVELY

The TikTok algorithm determines a user's interests and pushes niched content out accordingly. This means that creators in the travel niche are more likely to reach TikTok users with an interest in travel than those creators with a different niche.

For this reason, it makes more sense for travel brands to work with travel creators who have smaller, targeted audiences than, for example, dance creators with larger follower counts.

“Working with creators in the travel niche allows you to target your audience more effectively.”

HOW TO SOURCE CREATORS

Finding the best fit for your campaign



METHOD 1: CREATOR MARKETPLACE

TikTok offers the Creator Marketplace, an official portal through which brands and agencies can sort and find creators with over 100K followers. This portal does not differentiate creators by niche, but does provide creator analytics and allows brands to establish campaigns and connect with creators directly.



METHOD 2: SEARCH HASHTAGS OF SIMILAR BRANDS

Since location tagging is not a current feature on TikTok, many creators identify or tag content through hashtags. Search creators who have successfully partnered with similar brands or properties through such hashtags (example: St. Regis Maldives via [#stregismaldives](#)).



METHOD 3: **CROSSOVER FROM OTHER PLATFORMS**

If you have identified a blogger, YouTuber or Instagram creator for your campaign, see if they have already crossed over to TikTok with success. Cross-platform adaptability can be a huge bonus in boosting your campaign's reach.



METHOD 4: **SEARCH NICHE TRAVEL HASHTAGS**

Another good way to find relevant creators is by searching niche hashtags that are a fit for your brand. For example, upscale properties may search #luxurytravel or #luxuryhotel. Family-friendly destinations may search for #familytravel or #travelwithkids. Outdoors-oriented attractions may search for #adventuretravel or #outdoorlife.

IDENTIFYING QUALITY CREATORS

Lean into creators with healthy accounts who exhibit best practices on the platform.

“It's important that creators speak the language of TikTok.”



QUALITY INDICATOR 1: **USES A VARIETY OF FORMATS**

Variety and freshness is important on TikTok. Quality creators don't rely solely on tried-and-true formats. They constantly experiment with new ones.



QUALITY INDICATOR 2: **CREATES TREND-BASED VIDEOS**

It's important that creators "speak the language" of TikTok. Creators should be comfortable adapting current trends for the travel niche.



QUALITY INDICATOR 3: **HAS REALISTIC ENGAGEMENT**

Healthy TikTok accounts should demonstrate at least 5% engagement. Online [TikTok engagement calculators](#) sometimes oversimplify this calculation at the exclusion of comments and shares, but provide a good approximation. Another quick indicator of account health is the comparison of likes to followers. While this measure does not take into account a creator's total post count the way an engagement rate calculation does, it is a quick and easy account health test. Most creators should have a total likes count equal to at least 10 times their follower count. For example, an account with 10K followers would typically have at least 100K total likes. If you encounter accounts with a total likes count that is equal to or less than their follower count, it may be an indicator of follower fraud.



QUALITY INDICATOR 4: **HAS AN ACTIVE COMMENTS SECTION**

The relationship between a creator and their audience is critical. Quality creators have lively and engaged comments sections and they actively reply to follower comments to encourage conversation.

THE FUTURE OF TIKTOK

ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS



WILL TIKTOK GET BANNED IN THE US?

It's hard to say. At the time of publication, President Trump has given Chinese-owned parent company ByteDance until September 15, 2020 to find a US buyer for TikTok. Microsoft appears to be the most likely acquirer. Meanwhile, TikTok is threatening to sue the Trump administration, calling into question the legality of the proposed ban.



WHAT ABOUT ALL THE PRIVACY CONCERNS?

Most security experts who have examined TikTok agree that it does not collect any more personal data than other apps like Facebook. (That is to say, it *does* collect a lot of data, but so do all its competitors.) The concern over TikTok has more to do with fears that the data will be shared with the Chinese government. If the Microsoft acquisition goes through, as many analysts predict it will, this concern should be alleviated.



WILL TIKTOK BECOME OBSOLETE NOW THAT INSTAGRAM HAS LAUNCHED REELS?

If TikTok can be successfully acquired by a US buyer, it will have staying power. Instagram has been able to copy some of TikTok's technical features with Reels, but there are elements of TikTok that will be much harder to replicate: the democratization of virality on the platform, the mix of fresh and unexpected content recommended by the For You page algorithm, the innovation and creativity of its creators, and the breadth and diversity of the existing content ecosystem.

Moreover, at the time of publication, Instagram appears to be continuing its practice of primarily rewarding already-popular creators with reach on Reels, while smaller creators are not seeing much in the way of discoverability.

Instagram's past attempts at mimicking features from other apps have seen mixed results. The introduction of stories (taken from Snapchat) was a runaway success. But IGTV, the long-form video feature which was supposed to be "the YouTube killer," is largely seen as a failure. Based on this track record, Reels' success is not a sure thing.

07

GET IN TOUCH

FOR HOSTED TRIPS, PARTNERSHIPS AND CAMPAIGNS

**CARMEN SOGNONVI**

TikTok: @TopFlightFamily

Email: info@topflightfamilymedia.com

Carmen is a luxury family travel creator based in New York City. Her insights on travel have been featured in The Washington Post, INSIDER, and HuffPo. Her long-term brand partners include Delta Air Lines, American Express and Disney. She has done sponsored TikTok campaigns with Sonder, Visit Williamsburg and more.

**MICHELLE GONZÁLEZ**

TikTok: @LAXtoLuxury

Email: michelle@laxtoluxury.com

Michelle is a Los Angeles-based luxury travel creator who prioritizes both the journey and the destination, sharing aspirational flights and properties alike. She is an authority on luxury travel on TikTok, gaining 320k+ followers, 70M+ views and 8.5M+ likes since making her social media debut in late December 2019. She was recently invited to join the official TikTok Creator Program.