

**Grabbing the bucket with both hands – a study into
the presentation of self through ‘Bucket List’ tourism
in a social-media-focused world.**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement

for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

William Angliss Institute

Faculty of Higher Education

Melbourne, Australia

2022

ABSTRACT

The notion of the travel 'Bucket List' has only recently begun to be explored within tourism research; however, it has garnered significant levels of attention within popular culture and gained cultural prominence. The Bucket List has become a framing device for ordering one's identity and life goals (Thurnell-Read, 2017), and thus, research exploring the Bucket List use can uncover new insights into influences on travel consumption patterns. This study explores the phenomenon of the travel Bucket List through the lens of Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959), positing that Instagram posts that use the #bucketlist are a performance by the poster on the platform. The study quantitatively examines the historical and geographical context for Instagram posts with the hashtag #bucketlist. It then takes a qualitative approach employing content analysis to explore the themes linked to the presentation of self of Bucket List posts on Instagram. Twenty-four categories of elements are found within #bucketlist posts. Consequently, four stages for the presentation of self in line with Goffman's theory, are presented and explored, highlighting the ways people used their travel Bucket List on Instagram to present themselves to others. These stages are The Nature Stage; The Fit, Hot, Outdoorsy Stage; The Paradise Stage; and The Well-Trodden Stage. This study then identifies and explores a new concept – Aesthetic Production Design, where the content of the Bucket List photo seemed to matter less than how it is presented and what this says about the Instagram user. The study builds on the limited research into the travel Bucket List, concluding that on social media, the travel Bucket List is a popular concept that offers users an opportunity to present their travel self as an important component of their online self-identity. Theoretically, this study reinforces the re-emergence of Goffman's (1959) theory of presentation of self in the context of travel, the online age, and the established notion of curation on social media. The research has implications for tourism marketers and destination management organisations in utilising the combined power of social media, analytical hashtag methods, and the idea of the travel Bucket List to enhance destination or attraction management by building on the newly identified travel consumption trends. Finally, this study suggests a direction for future research, including exploration of the concept of Aesthetic Production Design in other online spaces, primary research into Instagram users and their Bucket List experiences,

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examining the idea of the travel Bucket List in a post-COVID-19 era, and exploring the phenomenon on emerging social media platforms like TikTok.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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I, Leah Gibson, declare that this thesis prepared for examination for the Master of Philosophy (Major Thesis) degree entitled *Grabbing the bucket with both hands – a study into the presentation of self through 'Bucket List' tourism in a social-media-focused world* is no more than 60,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature:



Date:

15 July, 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to the following people for their support and assistance during the preparation of this dissertation:

Dr Kim Williams, my supervisor, for guiding me through this long journey with good humour, good advice and great questions.

Dr Caroline Winter, my supervisor, for the life advice, the thesis advice and for pushing me to present the best work I possibly could.

Dr Marcela Fang, her last-minute addition to my supervisory team was delightful and appreciated, as was her boundless encouragement.

Ian Gibson, my dad, for his help with all things IT, data scraping and APIs. I literally couldn't have done this without you.

Dianne Gibson, my mum and unofficial Supervisor, your support, patience, and proof-reading skills are unparalleled.

The supervisors who got me started whom I lost along the way – Associate Professor Leonie Lockstone-Binney and Dr Madelene Blaer – your contributions are appreciated.

Olivia Soekirno for reading things that made no sense and being a formatting whiz. Faith Ong for not letting me give up, and Stuart Linnell for telling me I could if I really wanted to.

And finally, thank you to William Angliss Institute for providing me with this opportunity, and to everyone there who supported me through this process.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of this study encompassing the concept of the Bucket List and its role in contemporary pop culture, Goffman's theory of Presentation of Self, and the social media platform Instagram and its impact on society generally and tourism more specifically. The chapter presents the aim of this research and outlines the scope and boundaries of the study before identifying the philosophical position and methods to be applied moving forward. Finally, the chapter highlights the research study's significance and contribution to knowledge.

1.1 Background

The concept of the travel Bucket List has only recently begun to be explored within academic tourism research; however, it has garnered significant attention within popular culture. Traditionally, the Bucket List is a compilation of experiences or achievements that a person aims to accomplish during their lifetime; it was popularised by the 2007 film *The Bucket List* and first entered the Oxford Dictionary in 2013 (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2018). The Bucket List has swiftly gained cultural prominence that has progressed beyond this traditional framing to become a way in which individuals can order how they consider their identity and their goals in life and has become a vehicle for highlighting the 'right' tourism experiences, what one should be doing or seeing as one travels (Thurnell-Read, 2017). However, despite the recent emergence of the term 'Bucket List', the concept of travelling to the 'right places' and having the 'right experiences' has in many ways been around for centuries – from pilgrimages to the Grand Tour and, more recently well-worn backpacker trails (Kenny, 2002).

Tourism and photography are considered by many to be intrinsically linked (Garrod, 2009; Lo et al, 2011; Sharpley, 2021; Walsh et al, 2019), with photography developing in tandem with modern tourism (Sontag, 1977). Sontag (1977, p.24) observed that "Ultimately, having an experience becomes identical to taking a photograph of it... Today everything exists to end in a photograph" and the democratisation of photography through mobile phones has

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only enhanced this ubiquity in travel and beyond (Sharples, 2021). Since the earliest adoption of travel, images or photography has become the method by which travellers share their 'right experiences' via a range of mediums (Siegel & Wang, 2018). Instagram is one current social media platform people use to present this photographic representation of their tourism activity.

Inspiration for this research study came from personal observations by the researcher. This sign (Figure 1.1), photographed at the end of a two-hour hike in Petra, Jordan, in January 2018, continued to play on my mind. Reflection on it caused me to speculate – is everyone taking the same photos? Furthermore, while travelling and scrolling through Instagram, I noticed a substantial increase in the number of travellers focused on getting the 'right' picture for 'the gram' (as Instagram is colloquially referred to), as well as noticing an increase in the number of people in online forums, groups and on Instagram referring to Bucket List travel destinations and experiences.



Figure 1.1: Petra, Jordan (Author, 2017)

In 1959 Erving Goffman presented what many consider to be his foundational work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which likened face-to-face interactions with theatrical

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performance, using the metaphor of life as a theatrical stage where people present themselves through performing a process of impression management to an observing audience (Goffman, 1959). Goffman's theory has had a resurgence in the internet age, being applied to online spaces such as online dating, online forums, and social media (Belk, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This study uses the lens of Goffman's theory to explore the presentation of self by members of the social media site Instagram who utilise the hashtag #bucketlist. It takes a view that posts on Instagram, and the Instagram feed as a whole, represent a presentation of self by the poster to an audience which involves a process of impression management similar to that outlined by Goffman (1959). Instagram began in 2010 as a social networking site focused on photographs (Instagram, 2018b); it has since grown to have more than a billion users active on a monthly basis, making it a highly influential social platform (Instagram, 2018b). The visual nature of Instagram makes it particularly suited to the portrayal of the tourist experience (Latorre-Martínez et al., 2014; Thelander & Cassinger, 2017). The combination of Instagram's mass usage, its visual nature lending it to depictions of tourism activity and its positioning as a space for the presentation of self make it an excellent platform to explore the concept of the travel Bucket List and its links to travel consumption trends and influences.

Within Goffman's (1959) theory, he conjectured that the presentation of self allows individuals to define the situation and outline expectations and that this allows audiences to stereotype individuals and their behaviours into more easily understood typecasts. He offered the idea of 'sign vehicles', which are carriers of information that help both the individual and their audience to understand any given situation and predict past and future behaviour (Goffman, 1959); within this study, the sign vehicles are be presented in Instagram posts via setting, appearance, and activity. All social media use is a public performance to some extent and therefore involves active choices in presentation (Maares et al., 2021). Presentation of self allows individuals to present their 'best' self where the idea of best is not an objective ideal; it is not 'the best', but rather represents the way to best present and communicate the idealised self an individual would like to portray via impression management in a given environment (Goffman, 1959; Hogan, 2010). This presentation of the 'best' self or 'ideal' experiences is not necessarily a conscious process but is instead based on what they believe socially powerful people might consider as

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'acceptable' (Goffman, 1959). Presenting one's best self can allow for the enhancement of social capital and thus influence others (Bourdieu, 1986). When combined with the idea of the Bucket List, which is about presenting an individual's ultimate travel experiences, there is a clear link between wanting to present one's 'best' self through the 'best' tourism encounters, where the destination becomes a setting for the performance. This study explores the idea of presentation of self via Instagram in the context of Bucket List tourism to explore what tourists who use Instagram perceive to be acceptable travel displays to their audiences which may indicate underlying social structures that can influence travel consumption patterns.

1.2 Study aim

This study aims to explore the concept of the travel Bucket List on Instagram and how Instagram users are incorporating it as part of their presentation of self.

1.3 Scope and boundaries

This study focuses on presentations of Bucket List tourism by users on the social media platform Instagram. It will present data as to the historical context of the Bucket List on Instagram between 2010 and 2018; the geographic context between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018; and content analysis of posts collected in 2019 and 2020. The specific context of Instagram at this time will be commented on within 4.5 Limitations.

There are several reasons why Instagram has been chosen for this study. First, in comparison to other social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook, Instagram is primarily a visual platform, which allows users to share photos and videos of their experiences and destinations (Baker et al, 2018; Baumann, 2018; Berbe et al, 2020); this can provide a rich source of data for studying the presentation of self and destinations using visual cues, such as content, location, composition, and framing. Second, Instagram has a strong focus on travel and lifestyle, with many users sharing their travel experiences through the use of hashtags such as #travelgram and #travelfie (Gretzel, 2017). This makes it a relevant

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platform for studying the relationship between social media and tourism. Third, Instagram has a large user base, at the time collection of the data for this study began in 2018, Instagram had over a billion users active on a monthly basis (Instagram, 2018b). This provides a wide pool of potential data for the study and allows for the analysis of a significant number of posts. Finally, Instagram's public API, available to academic researchers in 2018, and the 'Public' setting of many accounts on Instagram make it accessible for the researcher.

It is important to note there are limitations in using Instagram as a platform for research. These limitations are explored in 4.5 Limitations and include the global reach of Instagram, the fluctuations in popularity of the platform, the demographic groups more likely to be included in a study focused on Instagram and the impact of the Instagram algorithm. Despite these limitations, Instagram's visual focus, relevance to travel and tourism, large user base, and availability make it a useful platform for this study.

This study will look at photographs posted to Instagram feeds which use #bucketlist. Photographs are chosen over video as they were the more prominent platform content in 2018 when this study began, and feed posts are chosen over stories as their greater permanence suggests a more curated presentation of self than what is presented in temporary Instagram stories.

This thesis focuses on the travel Bucket List, rather than the end-of-life Bucket List activities. While it is impossible to tell the intent of posts on Instagram and whether they were tourism related (for example a post that shows two people at Hamilton the musical – is it their own city, or part of a tourist activity?), almost all images collected and analysed could be seen as being connected to tourism style activities. Any image within the data collection for content analysis that seemed in the researcher's opinion to be directly related to end of life Bucket Lists as opposed to Travel Bucket List was not included in the pictorial analysis dataset (this was not possible for the contextual data of history and geography), as such, this study is focused specifically on the presentation of the *travel* Bucket List on Instagram.

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To limit the scope of this study, for the content analysis portion of the research posts posted by businesses, paid influencers, attractions or destinations, and the like were excluded as these posts have little to do with the presentation of self. These posts could not be excluded from the historical and geographic contextualising work due to the vast amount of data being worked with.

1.3.1 A note on the researcher's emic position

This study is informed by an emic perspective, as the researcher is a digital-native and a casual user of Instagram (looking at the platform regularly, but rarely posting herself and never using #bucketlist on her own posts). Advocates for an emic perspective conjecture that phenomena are best examined from within their cultural context (Fetvadjiev & van de Vijver, 2015), however those who prefer an etic position highlight that the emic position can create bias and, by failing to see how outsiders may view the phenomenon may leave out valuable information (Morris et al., 1999). There is broad debate about insider/outsider or emic/etic positioning when it comes to research.

In its simplest articulation, the insider perspective essentially questions the ability of outsider scholars to competently understand the experiences of those inside the culture, while the outsider perspective questions the ability of the insider scholar to sufficiently detach themselves from the culture to be able to study it without bias. (Holmes, 2020, p. 6).

This researcher acknowledges that this study will not be without bias, based on her emic position within the Instagram community, but also her cultural context as a white, female, from a western country with a high socio-economic level of security, but also considers that the insider perspective allows her a greater understanding of the Instagram culture. A discussion of the limitations of this position can be found in 4.5 Limitations.

Instagram is its own unique online culture which may be unfamiliar to outsiders. The researcher's emic perspective in this research provides context when interpreting the data. Much as a regular video game user may intuitively understand the general process of playing a game, or a teacher might understand the general principles of the teaching

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environment, in this study the researcher has an understanding of Instagram use and popular content from the perspective of her interests and the content served up to her by the Instagram algorithm. This position brings with it an additional understanding of the ideas of the 'Instagram aesthetic' outlined in the Literature Review (3.1.3), and a connection to the tropes presented in the Instagram account Insta_Repeat which may not be immediately understood by an outsider (Insta_Repeat, 2018). This perspective has helped inform the approach and the methods used in the research.

The emic position of the researcher has also had an influence on the coding and interpretation of data within the study. The Instagram user may be able to perceive themes from their broader use of Instagram that an outsider would not reach, for example the idea of Aesthetic Production Design, presented later in this study (5.3.2). While this does provide additional insights, it does run the risk of being biased either in favour or opposition to Instagram as a platform and the content presented on it. As discussed at various points in this study (in particular 4.3.2 and 4.5) the Instagram algorithm has an impact on what an individual sees when browsing the platform; this technological factor is another impact of the insider positioning of the researcher. Instagram's algorithm dictates what is seen by the researcher on her explore page and feed, based on content she has previously liked or connected to (Carbone, 2018a), which has the potential to impact research results. In order to counter this, the data presented is based on searches of #bucketlist on the platform in both top posts (a higher likelihood to have been impacted by the algorithm) and in recent posts (which are less likely to have been impacted by the algorithm as it presents the most recent posts using the hashtag).

Finally, the irony of a thesis based on Goffman's (1959) theory of presentation of self is the fundamental premise that we have no true self, only that which we present to others, is not lost on the researcher. This provides a double layer of reflexivity where the emic researcher is in presenting their work as a presentation of self to others. Goffman may have considered that it is difficult to untangle the topics presented in this study because the researcher's own sense of self is embedded in the structures being studied as well as academia as a whole.

1.4 Research philosophy and methods overview

Pragmatism is a philosophical paradigm that emphasises the practical consequences of actions and ideas (Morgan, 2014). In the context of research, this paradigm suggests that research should be focused on solving real-world problems and should be guided by the question of what works best in a given context to answer the aim or research questions of a given study (Morgan, 2014; Yvonne Feilzer, 2010).

One way to apply pragmatism to research is by using mixed methods, which involves combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Yvonne Feilzer, 2010) to understand the phenomenon; this study uses a quantitative approach to understand the context of #BucketList and then uses a major qualitative approach to explore the content on #BucketList. This pragmatic approach allows the study to present the historical and geographic context of #bucketlist posts on Instagram (quantitatively), and then to qualitatively explore the content of a sample of #bucketlist posts.

To provide context to the Bucket List tourism phenomenon, the study uses a quantitative method, using large-scale data collected utilising Instagram's public API to collect the number of posts using #bucketlist between 2010 and 2018 and the geotagged location of posts using #bucketlist, posted between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018, thus presenting the state of the travel Bucket List at the time this research began.

To address the content of #bucketlist posts on Instagram collected in 2019-2020 a qualitative methodology is taken, and a process of content analysis occurred, collecting and analysing screenshots of individual Instagram posts using the #bucketlist. Although the concept of mining photographic content as a research tool has not always been considered best practice, arguments have been made that analysing photographs, particularly in a tourism context, can help convey complex meanings and visualise perceptions and may be necessary for tourism research to achieve its full potential (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019).

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Qualitative and quantitative methods can be used together to provide a broader investigation (Oakley, 1999).

1.5 Statement of significance

This study is warranted in the contemporary tourism landscape because of the substantial presence of the Bucket List in popular culture (explored in Chapter 2: Context) and non-academic literature and, conversely the limited academic focus on it to date. There are more than 11.7 million total posts on Instagram which use #bucketlist (based on a search conducted on the platform on 16 June 2022 using #bucketlist). Anecdotally the travel Bucket List is frequently mentioned relating to travel in blogs, news, forums, and online discussion groups highlighting that it is a social phenomenon worthy of academic consideration (Appendix 1 provides examples of the Travel Bucket List within popular culture). Conversely, an analysis of the literature reveals there is a gap when it comes to in-depth studies of the Bucket List phenomenon in a travel and tourism context. To date, only one study identified and focused on the topic of the travel Bucket List (Thurnell-Read, 2017), while others only mentioned the concept (Apollo et al., 2021; McKay, 2020; Riemer, 2020). Hence, this study adds to the travel Bucket List literature and expand the literature on the presentation of self in the context of social media.

This research takes two relatively recent phenomena – that of the Bucket List and that of Instagram and combine them to investigate this underexplored social phenomenon. Using the platform Instagram is valuable because of the links between tourism and photography. Being a global platform, albeit with a western bias, Instagram provides a wealth of publicly available data that represents a broad range of experiences and travel consumption patterns, therefore, adding dimension to the study that may have been difficult to achieve using a different data collection strategy. When this study was initiated, Instagram was a popular and influential social platform within the Western world and for many users due to its image focus became a place to see and be seen (Smith & Anderson, 2018; Victor, 2018). Thus, this research adds to the travel Bucket List literature by exploring tourism experiences via social media output.

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Finally, by exploring the concept of the Bucket List through the lens of presentation of self, this study contributes to the growing field of work exploring the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), within a social media context.

1.6 Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. Firstly, it establishes the historic and geographic context within which Bucket List tourism exists, justifying it as an important but under-researched element of the tourism space, worthy of consideration by this and future studies. Due to the closing of the public API by Instagram and Facebook (Instagram, 2018c; Venturini & Rogers, 2019), the data which establish this context is no longer readily available and as such, the output is not replicable, however, the study's qualitative methods offer guidance that other researchers can utilise to study another hashtag phenomenon. The geographic data provide context to what locations Instagram users have chosen for presentations of self on their platform. Secondly, this study offers a breakdown of what is being presented as Bucket List travel on Instagram; there is currently little understanding of what travellers consider 'Bucket List worthy' and how this may impact the tourism landscape and travel consumption. Finally, using Goffman's theory as a lens (1959), this study contributes to the understanding of the travel Bucket List phenomenon by presenting five ways in which Instagram users are performing their ultimate tourism experiences, including introducing the new concept of Aesthetic Production Design.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced the study by presenting the concept of the travel Bucket List and the rise of the social media site Instagram. The aim of the study has been outlined, and the scope and boundaries acknowledged. The chapter outlined the research philosophies and methods undertaken to address the research aim. To present a justification for this study, the wealth of Instagram posts referencing #bucketlist was contrasted with the paucity of current academic research into this topic, uncovering potential connectivity to

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current travel consumption patterns. Finally, the significance of the study and the ways it will contribute to knowledge were outlined.

CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT

This chapter presents the context for this study, both in terms of the travel Bucket List and social media's impact on the tourism industry.

2.1 The Bucket List

The Bucket List, in an everyday sense, is a compilation of experiences or achievements that a person aims to have or accomplish during their lifetime (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2018). For many people, their Bucket List involves travel, and as such, the term has become closely linked to tourist activities and destinations (Thurnell-Read, 2017). This section discusses the limited academic research which addresses the travel Bucket List and the concurrent rise of the travel Bucket List in popular culture.

2.1.1 The travel Bucket List

The idea of the Bucket List as a device for structuring life and travel goals is becoming increasingly visible in popular culture (Thurnell-Read, 2017). The Bucket List is closely linked to tourism but also identity, status and self-representation and reflects the rise of social media within society (Thurnell-Read, 2017). The travel Bucket List offers those who adhere to the concept of travel goals something to achieve to show off to the world (often through social media), indicating that they are worthy of respect, admiration or even envy.

The term "Bucket List" originated from the phrase "kick the Bucket" which is an idiomatic expression meaning to die (Zimmer, 2015); it was popularised in the movie "the Bucket List" which was released in 2007 and follows two terminally ill men who make a list of things they want to do before the "kick the bucket" and set out to accomplish them (Zimmer, 2015). This movie popularized the idea of creating a list of things to do before you die, and it became a popular way to reflect on what a person wants to accomplish in their life. Since then, the concept of a "bucket list" has evolved to include things that people want to achieve or experience in their lifetime, rather than just before they die (Thurnell-Read,

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2017). It has become a popular way for people to set goals and reflect on what they want to accomplish in their lives and has become strongly linked to tourism experiences with travel being a common denominator on many Bucket Lists (Grossman & Bly, 2008; Thurnell-Read, 2017).

In the time since the term was coined, the Bucket List has been researched in an end-of-life sense by academics particularly in the medical field. Aisporna & Erickson-Hurt (2019) explored the end-of-life desire of patients in palliative care to travel, often to return to their place of birth, and the power and comfort that can be given to patients when palliative care teams assist with these wants. This study links both the idea of the end-of-life Bucket List and the travel Bucket List, indicating that travel goals are present both within those who have limited time left to live, and those who potentially have many years ahead. This concept reinforces a study by Periyakoil, Neri & Kraemer (2018) who found that in a study of 3056 patients there were six main themes in the end-of-life Bucket List with the desire to travel being the most prevalent (other goals included accomplishing a personal goal, specific life milestones and spending time with family and friends), and that knowing these goals can help decide treatment plans. In *Before I die: The impact of time horizon and age on bucket-list goals*, Chu, Gruhn & Holland (2018) explore the impact of time on an individual's bucket list goals by assigning people a timeframe of either open-ended, six-months or one-week left to live and asking them to develop Bucket Lists. They found that the time-horizon had a strong impact on the composition of Bucket List goals, and that a shorter timeframe increased the presence of goals related to intimacy rather than goals related to generativity (which included reproduction, educating future generations and similar goals) (Chu, Gruhn & Holland, 2018).

In his formative study on the Bucket List within a tourism context, Thurnell-Read (2017, p. 65) identified how the Bucket List has changed as it gained cultural prominence and has moved on from its traditional purpose of end-of-life goals to become a "technique of ordering how one thinks about one's identity and the life one leads". In his discourse analysis, Thurnell-Read (2017) investigated 50 pieces of online writing about travel Bucket Lists and discovered that the Bucket List within a tourism context is a tool to indicate worthy and desirable tourism experiences, informed by economic and cultural capital.

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As might be expected, many of the Bucket Lists analysed conformed to an established canon of culturally valorised and objectively worthy destinations and attractions such as the Eiffel Tower, the Grand Canyon, the Giza Pyramids and the Taj Mahal. Many destinations were positioned as desirable due to being the original, best or most extreme example of something (Thurnell-Read, 2017, p. 61).

This tourism version of the Bucket List has changed the idea of the Bucket List from an urgent end-of-life list of goals to something which is more related to social status and performance of life goals. Arguably, the traditional sense of the things one needs to do before they die is not about social performance, whereas the tourism version could be seen as such, creating a strong case for using Goffman's (1959) work on presentation of self.

The popularisation of the travel 'Bucket List' is relatively recent; however, this concept could be seen as a continuation of the tradition of tourism where tourists and travellers seek to visit the 'right places' and have the 'right experiences' to gain social capital. They visit the 'must-see' attraction or undertake the 'once-in-a-lifetime trip' (Canavan, 2017). The Grand Tour of the 17th and 18th Centuries is generally considered the beginning of modern tourism (Colletta, 2015; Towner, 1985), although some place it even earlier with the undertaking of religious pilgrimages (MacCannell, 1973). The Tour, usually undertaken by nobility or upper-class men, followed a version of a standard itinerary throughout Europe, and going on a Tour was seen as a rite of passage before adulthood, a symbol of status, wealth, and culture (Colletta, 2015; Towner, 1985). The trend could be seen to continue with backpackers clasp their Lonely Planets while searching for the same 'authentic' experiences to tick off their lists (Kenny, 2002) or the formation of standard backpacker 'trails', particularly through South-East Asia (Hampton & Hamzah, 2010). While the presentation of the idea of the travel Bucket List is recent, it is apparent that the concept is not new.

As previously noted, there is a limited in-depth exploration of the idea of the travel Bucket List within academic research beyond Thurnell-Read's aforementioned study (Thurnell-Read, 2017). Some research has addressed the concept of the Bucket List in the more traditional end-of-life sense (Chu et al., 2018; Freund, 2020; Periyakoil et al., 2018).

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Zascierinska et al. (2022) reflected on the idea of the Bucket List as it relates to tourism but focused on how it links to managing thoughts on dying and existential anxieties. However, their research concluded that the Bucket List can be, in some cases, an “explicit manifestation of consumption directed towards the creation of identity and self-esteem” (Zascierinska et al., 2022, p. 1). Tickle and Von Essen (2020) addressed the idea of the travel Bucket List in relation to hunting tourism, identifying it as one of the ‘sins’ of the industry where people have ‘hunting trophy lists’ or try to achieve a hunting ‘world slam’. They highlighted that “the bucket list aims both at self-actualization, and conspicuous consumption” (Tickle & von Essen, 2020, p. 5). In addition to these studies, there are papers within the tourism space that refer to the travel Bucket List in passing – McKay (2020) observed that seeing a Great White Shark is part of some people’s Bucket Lists, Apollo et al. (2021) identified that the concept of ‘peak bagging’ (climbing particular mountains) can be linked to Bucket List tourism, and the book *Front and Back Stage of Tourism Performance: Imaginaries and Bucket List Venues* acknowledged the concept of Bucket List destinations but despite the title which directly reflects this study, offered little detail on the idea of the travel Bucket List (Riemer, 2020).

2.1.2 The travel Bucket List in popular culture

What makes the idea of the travel Bucket List so significant is that while there is currently little academic research into the topic, the concept has become increasingly prevalent within a popular culture context. The concept first rose to popular prominence in the 2007 film *The Bucket List* and expanded its cultural cachet in 2014 when, after visiting Stonehenge, President Barack Obama announced that he had ‘knocked it off the Bucket List’ (Thurnell-Read, 2017).

A Google News search of “‘Bucket List’ AND (tourism OR travel) after:2008’ (undertaken 18 June 2022) uncovered more than 324,000 articles, of which more than two-thirds (221,000) were published since 2018 (Google News search of “‘Bucket List’ AND (tourism OR travel) after:2018’ (undertaken 18 June 2022)), indicating how much the trend has grown within the media. Articles ranged in scope; for example, Dickler (2018) and Jacobs (2018)

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recommend Bucket List activities, locations, or experiences, whereas Dickinson (2018) and Slauer (2018) expressed derision of the concept of the Bucket List and its perils.

Uses of the travel Bucket List in popular culture included the Telegraph's "The ultimate travel Bucket List: 31 things to do in your lifetime" (2017) which listed a range of worldwide Bucket List activities, including classic items such as seeing the Northern Lights, visiting Galapagos, trekking to Machu Picchu, taking a safari in the Serengeti, visiting the Taj Mahal or Angkor Wat, or watching the sun rise over Bagan. CNBC listed a similar range of items in its top 20 things to see in your lifetime, focusing on the activities to do along the way – diving in Belize, swimming with pigs in the Bahamas, picnicking in front of the Eiffel Tower (Corsano, 2017). What is highlighted in many of these articles is that the travel Bucket List is generally framed as more than seeing a destination; there is an emphasis on doing and consuming – it is not enough just seeing the Eiffel Tower. The goal is to picnic at it or climb to the top; one does not just go to Machu Picchu; they trek the Inca Trail. There are many more articles along these lines on websites, blogs, and online newspapers.

However, as is common with a great deal that becomes popular on the internet, there seems to have been a pop-culture backlash against the Bucket List. Articles such as "17 Bucket List destinations that are overrated – sorry" (including Stonehenge, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Pyramids, Niagara Falls) (Slauer, 2018), "Bucket List destinations that tourists are ruining" (Cinque Terre, Machu Picchu, Taj Mahal) (McMah, 2016), "20 Tourist Attractions That Used To Be On Everyone's Bucket List (But Now Avoid At All Costs)" (Kuta Beach, Hollywood walk of fame, the Pyramids, Times Square) (Rayner, 2018) and "The travel trend to avoid – how the Bucket List is ruining the world" (Dickinson, 2018) were increasingly common. The motivations for these articles vary, from addressing issues of overcrowding to trying to persuade prospective tourists to consider other destinations for marketing purposes, to aiming to appear more hipster-cool, and to addressing sustainability issues. There was also discussion within some media articles about the impact Instagram and other social media have had on the Bucket List.

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The travel and tourism industry is like almost any other. There are trends and fads. Instagram and other social media sites have certainly made this reality more obvious. Obscure destinations suddenly become popular because of some amazing social media posts, and suddenly, these places are being flooded with tourists... Over time, the site becomes overcrowded and overpriced. Most people begin talking about it as “overrated,” and suddenly, what was once a popular destination is being stroked off Bucket Lists everywhere (Rayner, 2018, p. 1).

The Bucket List has been used as a marketing tool by destination marketing organisations (DMOs), tour companies and others in the industry. Intrepid Travel has multiple blog entries that reference Bucket List destinations – from China to Finland to South Africa (Intrepid Travel, 2018), Tourism New Zealand helps visitors create their journey with the ‘Ultimate New Zealand Bucket List’ (*Ultimate New Zealand Bucket List*, 2018), and Greyhound tell readers of their website how they can visit Bucket List destination Australia Zoo using their buses (Greyhound, 2018).

There are currently almost 12 million posts on Instagram that use the #bucketlist (search conducted on the platform on 16 June 2022), which makes it a notable presence on the platform. It is important to place this within the broader context of the travel related content on Instagram; for example, based on an Instagram search result, there are currently 631 million posts that use the hashtag #travel, and 42.4 million posts that use the hashtag #traveller based on a search on the same date. The number of posts using these two hashtags is higher than those using #bucketlist, which may be explained by the concept of the Bucket List being an ideal or aspirational life goal as opposed to ‘regular’ travel (Thurnell-Read, 2017); therefore, there is less of it. Additionally, it may simply be because the concept of the Bucket List is less broadly known, a more niche, albeit still important, concept than that of travel in general, so there are less Instagram users seeking to join the conversation being held around the hashtag (Van den Berg, 2014).

Despite the different foci regarding the value, impact, or backlash against Bucket List tourism by a range of sources, there is an obvious drive to use the travel Bucket List as a means to prioritise tourist destinations. As discussed, this is evidenced by the number of articles that suggest the Bucket List as providing a focus or goal for travellers, its presence on Instagram and its use in marketing campaigns.

2.2 Social media and tourism

The impact of social media has been revolutionary in tourism and tourism communications (Latorre-Martínez et al., 2014). This section contextualises the social media and tourism landscape as it exists today by considering how social media is affecting tourism marketing, the concept of user-generated content, the rise of social media influencers, the role of social media in destination choice and how destinations harness data from social media. The Literature Review will later explore how social media, in particular Instagram, has influenced tourists on an individual level in relation to the presentation of self.

2.2.1 Social media, in particular Instagram, and its effect on tourism

Social media is introducing new possibilities, opportunities, and challenges for the tourism sector, and for the first time, the consumer-traveller is actively able to give opinions, express needs or give feedback throughout their journey (Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013). An integral way in which social media is influencing tourism is in the marketing sphere.

The internet has revolutionized the tourism destinations' business both as a source of information and as a sales channel. Visitors' reviews, photographs, videos, stories and recommendations, online marketing are bringing destinations closer to the potential visitors regardless of where in the world they are located (Kiráľová & Pavlíčka, 2015, p. 359).

Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013) investigated the ways that some of the world's most visited tourism destinations were utilising social media within their marketing strategies and found that in light of public sector funding cuts, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) were gravitating toward social media as a cost-effective tool to reach global audiences. Instagram can effectively contribute to the creation of a destination's brand, both through destination-controlled channels and through user-generated content (UGC) – posts created by visitors that represent a brand or destination (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015; Hanan & Putit, 2014; Thelander & Cassinger, 2017). "Tourists have adopted Instagram as their platform to share

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photos and videos of their travel experiences with others, and DMOs have similarly adopted Instagram to promote the destination through pictures, and videos” (Barbe et al., 2020, p. 594). User-generated content can be particularly useful to individuals in the travel planning process (Terttunen, 2017).

Opinion leaders, such as travel writers, have long been influential in tourism travel decisions; more recently, the rise of travel influencers on social media, particularly on Instagram, has impacted tourism marketing and destination image (Barbe et al., 2020). Influencers are social media users who use the tools provided by social media to shape audiences’ perceptions and beliefs; they are opinion leaders who often get to try products before the general public; they can be paid or unpaid and serve as an intermediary between advertisers and consumers (Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2020). Influencers can be classified as micro, macro or mass influencers based on their number of followers, but all can play a role in electronic word of mouth (Yilmaz et al., 2020). The perception of authenticity by an influencer’s followers is a key component in their success (Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021). Travel influencers are online influencers who focus their content on travel and tourism related content, in some cases living life ‘on the road’ and living off monetised social media accounts.

Influencer marketing, where influencers are paid or offered free products in exchange for posts, has been growing in prominence across social media marketing (particularly on Instagram), and parts of the tourism industry have been quick to adopt this trend, paying or collaborating with influencers to promote their product (Barbe et al., 2020; Delevingne, 2016). An emerging and growing promotional practice by DMOs is the “formal engagement of travel bloggers and social media influencers in tourism promotion strategies”, which has occurred in Dubai, Jordan, Scotland and Australia (Shuqair & Cragg, 2017, p. 2). This element of sponsored or paid content, often known as ‘sponcon’ and the growth of social media influencers, has had a significant impact on social media and society more broadly (Barbe et al., 2020).

Social media is influencing where people choose to visit; of the respondents in their study, Siegel and Wang (2018) found that 90% of respondents said social networking connections

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had influenced their travel choices, helping them select a place they had not known about previously, and 100% of respondents knew someone who had previously travelled where they went themselves. Similarly, in a study of Finnish travellers, Terttunen (2017) found that 82% said that Instagram had at least some influence on travel planning and that more trust is placed on user-generated content than brand content. In a study of 151 people who were questioned before and after being shown UGC of Lebanon on Instagram, researchers demonstrated that Instagram posts were “effective in changing the viewers' perceptions” and can “influence viewers' ‘behavioural intentions’” in the pre-visitation stage (Shuqair & Cragg, 2017, p.1). On the other end of the spectrum, travellers' social media usage has been stated to have a significant influence on their choice of itinerary, with motivation to visit or not, certain destination coming from the perceived effect that destination will have on their online profile (Magasic, 2014).

Social media can give destinations and tourist attractions qualitative and quantitative information about tourists, their movements, and their interests (Latorre-Martínez et al., 2014; Önder et al., 2016; Yuan & Medel, 2016). Onder, Koerbitz and Hubmann-Haidvogel (2016, p. 2) found that digital footprints left by tagged photos could provide destinations with a more accurate picture of where tourists were visiting than more traditional research methods and noted that online data is usually “freely available, easy to collect and is abundant compared to the amount of data that can be collected through traditional methods” (Önder et al., 2016, p. 2). Consequently, location data from social media posts can be used to track and predict international travel behaviour, flow and patterns in a cost and time-effective way (Yuan & Medel, 2016). Social media posts can also allow destinations to interact with visitors and prospective visitors and to monitor and react to their opinions, questions, and evaluations of service, allowing for real-time feedback and the opportunity to gain important understandings of user experience (Kiráľová & Pavlíčeka, 2015). Finally, the images posted on social media can provide destinations with insights into what images are appealing to the online audience and help them achieve better results in their online and offline marketing (Baumann et al., 2018).

Social media has had a substantial impact on tourism, as it has on many other facets of modern life. Among ways that social media has impacted the tourism sphere is in the

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marketing space, with destinations and attractions harnessing the power of social media for promotion. Included is the rise of the travel influencer, which has democratised a role once reserved for travel writers. As a result, social media is impacting the destination choice of travellers, whether due to paid campaigns, influence by 'influencers' or by influence by friends sharing photos on the platforms.

2.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the context within which this study exists in relation to the idea of the travel Bucket List and considers the impact of social media on tourism. The academic research into the Bucket List was presented with a focus on Thurnell Read's (2017) discourse analysis of internet articles about the travel Bucket List. The chapter then addressed the conversely large amount of popular culture explorations on the travel Bucket List and some of the approaches these writers have taken and explored some of the ways tourism operators have harnessed the idea of the Bucket List within marketing and promotion. It concluded with an exploration of the impact of social media, in particular Instagram, on the tourism industry, considering the role of social media in marketing, the rise of social media influencers, and how social media impact destination choices.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review that explores Goffman's theory of the presentation of self and self-representation on social media. It then discusses how people may present themselves through travel and tourism. Included in this is a discussion of the history of travel and photography, including the ideas of the tourist gaze and the selfie gaze. Finally, the chapter outlines some of the other studies which have used social media hashtags within their methodology.

3.1 Presentation of self in the contexts of social media and tourism

Identity has been an extensively explored and debated concept within psychology, philosophy, and sociology (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Goffman, 1959). "Identity can mean subjectivity (how we think of ourselves), representation (how different facets of identity are depicted in culture and media), or self-presentation (how we present ourselves to others). It can refer to our personal identity as an individual, or our social identity as a member of a group" (Marwick, 2013, p. 355). In this study, the focus is on the self-presentation component of identity.

3.1.1 The presentation of self in everyday life

Existing as a person means presenting oneself to the world, and there are many ways individuals can present themselves; this section reviews the ways the self can be presented by utilising Erving Goffman's theory of the presentation of self (1959). Goffman's book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) is a foundational piece of work that considers face-to-face interactions and the process of self-presentation that occurs within them. Central to the framework is the idea that every social interaction involves the presentation of self and decoding of it by an audience.

When an individual enters the presence of others they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his

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competence, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him ... For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or 'sign-vehicles') become available for conveying this information. (Goffman, 1959, p. 11)

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman developed a theory that likens all in-person interaction to theatrical performance. Goffman's theory uses the metaphor of life as a theatrical stage, where individuals 'perform' a process of 'impression management' to an audience of those who observe the 'actor' (Goffman, 1959). This discussion of life as a theatrical performance was first proposed by Kenneth Burke, although he saw life more literally as a theatrical performance, rather than Goffman's metaphorical approach (Boje et al, 2003). Goffman acknowledged the impact of Burke's work on his own at later stages in his career, although Goffman's metaphorical approach took a less literal view (Boje et al, 2003); it is Goffman's metaphorical dramaturgical approach that will be adapted for this study. In Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, social spaces are considered to be 'stages' upon which the actor, the individual, performs their presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). "Audience members use the performer's physical and verbal cues to construct their understanding of the performer's role so they can provide an appropriate reaction" (Birnbaum, 2008, p. 74). In *Interpretive Interactionism*, Denzin (2001, p. 26) noted, "we inhabit a performance-based, dramaturgical culture".

Goffman (1959) considered that people want to ensure social interactions go as smoothly as possible and avoid embarrassment for the actor or the audience. To do so, the actor undertakes a process of 'guiding and controlling' the impressions the audience form of him or herself (Goffman, 1959). One of Goffman's core premises is that individuals aim to create and maintain positive impressions which are believable to their audience (Birnbaum, 2008). This process of consciously managing impressions of viewers, particularly in an online sense, can also be thought of as curating (Davis, 2017; Hogan, 2010; Seitzinger, 2014). This idea of curating is particularly relevant on Instagram where users may pick from thousands of photos the 'best' to upload and may even edit images to improve them.

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“Goffman’s dramaturgical approach is a metaphorical technique used to explain how an individual presents an ‘idealized’ rather than authentic version of herself” (Hogan, 2010, p. 378). Goffman’s impression management theory is established in symbolic interaction (Smith, 2006) and laid out ‘props’, ‘settings’ and ‘gestures’ as elements that make up a performance (1959) or, in the case of this study, an Instagram post. A prop is an item that the actor displays to affect the impression presented; for example, a basketball could indicate ‘sportiness’ or to be seen holding a book of classic literature may indicate ‘intelligence’; in an Instagram post, a poster holding a cocktail may indicate sophistication and good taste. Clothing choice or costume can also be seen as a prop used to manage or reinforce impressions (Langman, 1991; MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997); for example, a woman may wear workout clothes or ‘activewear’ to imply health, fitness, and self-discipline (Horton et al., 2016). A setting, according to Goffman, is a background item that offers the audience a sense of place (Goffman, 1959); for example, a politician may give a speech at a school to indicate their caring nature and their focus on the future, while a social media post may show a background of a hiking path to indicate outdoorsy-ness and connection to nature. When it comes to tourism, and in particular, tourism photography, the destination which one chooses to travel to can be seen as a setting upon which the traveller chooses to ‘perform’ their traveller persona (Goffman, 1959) – a five-star resort may be used to present luxury and wealth while a photo of a traveller bungee jumping presents adventure and a daredevil nature. Gestures are the physical, non-verbal cues given by an actor, for example, eye contact or hand movements. These symbols combine with the spoken word to allow the actor to manage impressions of themselves. The idea of curating and impression management on Instagram will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

One way Goffman suggested people present themselves and share information is through ‘fronts’, the “part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). “Fronts provide observers information in the form of recognizable, standardized mannerisms, appearances, and settings. Fronts allow people to fill in information that might not be given during a performance” (Birnbaum, 2008, p. 79). In this way, fronts are the stereotypical behaviour an individual actor could be expected to present in any given situation, which gives the audience an understanding, via past experiences, of

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what they should expect. People display different fronts in different parts of their life and can be seen as 'codeswitching' (Nilep, 2006) or 'changing hats' as Goffman called it in a later work *Forms of Talk* (Goffman, 1981).

Goffman's dramaturgical perspective also offered the idea of the 'backstage' as a counter to the fronts people offer. "A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (Goffman, 1959, p. 79). Researchers have interpreted this idea of backstage in different ways; while some see it as what is kept private from all audiences, Tseëlon (1992) interpreted the backstage not as something wholly private but instead as elements of a different front, which an actor chooses not to present to a particular audience (much as a person may be happy to share their drug-taking behaviour with friends, but not with colleagues).

Goffman's theory has been used as a framework to explore a range of different social phenomena. Goffman's concept of the front and backstage was applied to authenticity in tourist settings in *Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings* (MacCannell, 1973). MacCannell took a broader interpretation of the front and back stages, looking not at an individual but a tourist destination as the 'actor' and saw the backstage as "a back region, closed to audiences and outsiders, allows concealment of props and activities that might discredit the performance out front" (1973, p. 590). MacCannell (1973) conjectured that tourism involved a search for authenticity that was missing from the travellers' life. As such, tourists desired to view the 'real' version of their destination – the backstage (MacCannell, 1973). This search for authenticity has led tourist destinations to 'stage authenticity' to offer up experiences that provide a view of the 'backstage', which is, in many cases, another front. For example, an open kitchen in a restaurant where diners can view chefs preparing their meals before their eyes but are not able to see many other steps of the process – the interpersonal relationships between the chefs, the slaughtering of their meat and the cleaning of the kitchen, the open kitchen becomes yet another performance, albeit one that can be perceived as backstage and 'authentic'; "What is being shown to tourists is not the institutional 'backstage', as Goffman defined this term. Rather, it is a staged back region, a kind of living museum" (MacCannell, 1973, p. 596).

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Impression management is a huge part of reality television, both from the point of view of the contestants and the production and how they choose to edit; this idea was explored through the lens of Goffman by Beames, Andkjær and Radmann concerning the TV series *Alone* (2021). In *Alone*, contestants in the American wilderness film themselves as they survive in the wild, attempting to outlast other competitors; this footage is then edited into a TV show by producers (Beames et al., 2021). Competitors present fronts via their outfit and equipment choices and by pre-season videos shown in the lead-up to each season, but as the season continues and their circumstances become more difficult, the ability to manage impressions also seems to become harder (Beames et al., 2021). An interesting element of reality TV is that the backstage often blurs with the front stage or has a far thinner line between them. With cameras on *Alone* and other reality TV rolling for so many hours each day, it is harder for participants to suppress facts about themselves; this is further complicated by the contribution of producers and editors who create the storylines they want the audience to see (Beames et al., 2021). The researchers concluded that *Alone*, as it appears to an audience via TV, is “ultimately a fusion of the impression that actors have attempted to present to a wide range of audiences with the individual narratives that have been curated by the program’s producers” (Beames et al., 2021, p. 8).

Despite its popularity and influence, Goffman’s (1959) book has been subject to criticisms from various perspectives (Jacobsen & Smith, 2022; Raffel, 2013; Williams, 1986). Some critics have argued that Goffman’s work is largely based on anecdotal evidence, lacks empirical support, and is unable to be systematically tested (Brissett & Edgley, 1991; Raffel, 2013). Another point to note is the limited scope of Goffman’s theory which Blumer (1972), Hogan (2010) and Miller (1995) reflect is focused on face-to-face interactions without considering other forms of communication such as mass media and technology, even if Hogan and Miller note this may be primarily due to the time in which his work was created. The next section of this study (3.1.2) will specifically address interpretations and expansions of Goffman’s (1959) work in the internet age to address this commentary.

Some critics of Goffman’s (1959) work address the narrow focus on the individual, arguing that his theory places too much emphasis on the individual and neglects the role of institutions, power and social structures in shaping self-presentation (Gouldner, 1970; Smith

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& Jacobsen, 2019), although others see this minimalist, small scale focus of Goffman as a benefit to his works (Best, 2017). In particular in relation to power dynamics, some critics have argued that Goffman's theory does not take into account power imbalances and the ways in which individuals with more social and economic power are able to control the presentation of self more effectively (Gouldner, 1970; Williams, 1986).

A final criticism of Goffman's (1959) theory has been that it makes broad generalisations about human behaviour that may not hold up in all cases (Williams, 1986). Notwithstanding these criticisms, Goffman's work continues to be influential in the field of sociology and other related disciplines, it has also been subject to several extensions and developments that aim to address these criticisms. Despite some criticism, the ideas presented by Goffman in 1959 have remained relevant for over sixty years (Raffel, 2013; Jacobsen & Smith, 2022). They have been used to explore the presentation of self of people (Beames et al., 2021), tourist destinations (MacCannell, 1973) and events (Winter & Frew, 2018) along with countless other studies. While Goffman's (1959) theory has been used to explore these real-life events, it has seen a recent surge in use in the internet age, and this literature is reviewed in the following section.

3.1.2 Exploring Goffman's presentation of self in the internet age

The advent of the internet and social media has led to a resurgence in the popularity of Goffman's Presentation of Self, and his theory has been applied increasingly to online spaces (Belk, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). When it comes to the online space, a large proportion of the research on identity has been centred around self-presentation (Marwick, 2013). While Goffman's (1959) original theory focused on social interaction between people in a physical environment such as a building or a manufacturing plant, over the years, the theory has moved beyond the physical, and been applied to online settings, most recently to social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2012; Zhao, 2005).

Belk (2013) utilised Goffman's theory in his *Extended Self in a Digital World*. Belk (2013, p. 479) identified the dematerialisation of our possessions (where consumption is no longer just focused on items one can hold) as one of the features of our move towards a digital self

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and highlighted that “in terms of Goffman’s (1959) presentation of self, the ability to publish our playlists online can say a great deal more about us than opening the windows and cranking up our stereo” (p.479). Thus, the social media environment allows people to present their curated self to a wider audience. Belk (2013) noted that “there is nothing deterministic about the effects of technological change, and current digital technologies are merely the latest in a human technological history that began in Palaeolithic times” but that it was evident that new digital technologies have changed behaviour (Belk, 2013, p. 477).

Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) also examined online presentations of self, in this instance via personal blogs and the online game Second Life. They found that Goffman’s theory of the ‘front stage’ shifted smoothly to an online presentation where users were curating and choosing to present their identity and that Goffman provides an excellent framework for interpreting the presentation of self in this space (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). Examples of people constructing an online identity that differs from their ‘real life’ identity could be seen in gamers adjusting their avatar in Second Life, for example, making their avatar thinner than their human body, or in bloggers who choose to disseminate information that is more ‘risqué’ than they would share with people in ‘the real world’ (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). The paper concluded that in most cases, people choose to adopt an online persona that is in most parts similar to their offline self, although some aspects of their personality may be emphasised, while others are minimised, allowing people to ‘edit’ themselves (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013).

While Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) explored the world of blogs and second life dating, Hogan (2010) investigated online participation. Hogan (2010) identified Goffman’s presentation of self as becoming increasingly popular for addressing online participation but reasoned that the technology of social media itself and the fact that the audience is not necessarily immediately present to receive the performance creates a slightly different situation to Goffman’s original theory. Hogan (2010) therefore, divided real-life and online presentations of self into dynamic ‘performances’ (face-to-face) and static ‘exhibitions’ (online), both of which are a form of impression management. He identified the role of ‘the curator’, both with the individual curating what they wish to share, and the role of the computer (although not specifically stated, this seems to refer to the social media

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platform's algorithm) in shaping what is seen by audiences (Hogan, 2010). Utilising Hogan's (2010) perception of online self-presentation as 'exhibitions', this study will consider individual Instagram posts collected to be exhibitions, taking the position that the Instagram users are 'performing' for their audience via Instagram, but once a post is posted on a user's feed, it becomes an exhibit of the performance that has happened.

With Instagram's growing popularity throughout the 2010s, the platform has been increasingly studied and connected to self-presentation and Goffman. Smith and Sanderson (2015) examined athletes on Instagram through the lens of Goffman to explore how they presented in relation to gender norms. Another large-scale study took a Goffman-inspired look at 2.5 million selfies on Instagram and concluded that these images presented the self in the usual ways also performed in real-life – wealth, health, and beauty (Deeb-Swihart et al., 2017). To do this, the researchers used a facial recognition tool to identify images tagged with #selfie and which included faces; they then analysed the other hashtags that were used in posts, which were verified selfies (Deeb-Swihart et al., 2017). Liu and Suh (2017) studied the connections between self-branding and Instagram and linked it to Goffman's Presentation of self and his later work on presentations of gender.

When considering the backstage of an Instagram post or account, there are two factors to consider; on one hand, there is the backstage of the platform itself, explored by Fiers (2020), and in the case of a post about a tourist destination, there is the backstage of that destination, as highlighted in work by MacCannell (1973) explored in the previous section. Fiers (2020) highlighted that for many Instagram posters, it is important to downplay the backstage of the post or account and the work put into creating the content – the research, the staging, the editing, the hashtags, and the caption creation. He observed that "the perfecting of one's online presentation does not only happen by producing a high-status image but also by concealing the "inauthentic" nature of this production" or, in other words, the backstage (Fiers, 2020, p.1).

Based on this recent research, it can be concluded that Goffman's theory of presentation of self is relevant to offline and online 'performances' and is a useful model through which to view self-presentation and impression management. Goffman's (1959) concept of

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performance, impression management and front and backstage all link seamlessly to posting on Instagram, where a user presents themselves through carefully curated photos shared with an audience. This dissertation examines Instagram as a 'stage' based on Goffman's theory and incorporate Hogan's framing of online 'exhibitions' in this instance, considering individual Instagram posts to be exhibitions. In this way, Instagram is seen as a space for the presentation of self. While we only see the 'front stage' through the Instagram posts presented, we can be aware that there is a backstage, actively hidden from the view of the audience by the Instagram user.

3.1.3 Presentation of self and impression management on social media

As digital technology becomes increasingly powerful and portable, means of self-expression have fundamentally changed. To speak in this media milieu is to tweet, update a status, or post photographs to social networks. These forms of self-expression provide new means of communicating the self and articulating a sense of connection to others (Hess, 2015, p.1629).

Social media is a way in which people develop and share their identity with the world (Canavan, 2017), "Social media enables identity expression, exploration, and experimentation" (Gündüz, 2017, p. 85). Social media use is more prevalent with younger people, and boyd outlined three steps which youth used in a process of impression management on early social media site Myspace, the general idea of which is reflected on more current social media – (1) 'profile creation', in which the young person explores socially acceptable ways to build their profile, (2) 'identity performance', where the selection of photos is used to "signal meaningful cues about themselves" and (3) 'writing identity and community into being' where the young people create identity and community through their written word and communications (boyd, 2008, pp. 130-131). This is reinforced by Maares, Banjac and Hanusch (2021), who asserted that given that all social media use is, to some extent, a performance, it similarly all represent strategic choices, even when one attempts to portray 'authenticity'.

Marwick (2013) also provided commentary on the difference between identity in reality versus online; she noted that every action and interaction by a user of the internet builds

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their online identity, but that any difference between an online identity and a 'real life' one is narrowing as the internet becomes part of everyday life. Marwick outlined that on social media, users "self-consciously create virtual depictions of themselves" (Marwick, 2013, p. 356). In contrast to the users' offline identity, the internet provides users with the "possibility of unimaginably wide publicity", where any person on the internet may become their audience (boyd, 2008, p. 137). Public profiles on Instagram can be viewed by almost anyone with an internet connection, meaning that when a user posts, they should, in theory, be open to the possibility of their post being seen by anyone, although the level of consciousness of this reality in the moment of posting may differ.

Constructing and sharing one's self-identity is a key motivator for social media usage (Sigala, 2016). Nadkarni and Hofmann presented two primary reasons for using Facebook - the need to belong and the need for self-presentation, highlighting that Facebook "leaves itself open to the possibility that its users display their idealized, rather than accurate, selves through their profiles" (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012, p. 246), Instagram was not as popular as Facebook when this was published, but it seems fair to extrapolate that similar motivations would exist. Sheldon and Bryant (2016) identified four main motivations for using Instagram – 'Surveillance', 'Documentation', 'Coolness', and 'Creativity'. Three of these factors – documentation, coolness, and creativity, could be seen as relating directly to self-presentation on the platform.

The idea of the "attention economy" was first presented by Herbert A Simon as knowledge became an important part of the economy, although this idea was not popularised until the 1990s, particularly in light of the rise of the internet (Bueno, 2016). Davenport and Beck (2001) noted that in an economy transformed by the internet and globalisation, capital, information, and knowledge are plentiful, but human attention is in shorter supply. In this new economy, attention can be monetised, and members of the general public can gain high levels of attention and thus social and economic capital more easily thanks to social media (Zulli, 2018). Social capital is a concept first presented by Bourdieu (1986) as the value of a person's network as it pertains to how it can help them gain cultural or economic capital. The combination of the attention economy and Instagram has led to the rise of the 'instafamous' as outlined by Marwick (2015) and the ensuing group of social media users

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known as ‘influencers’ (Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021). These social media influencers can monetise the attention they garner on platforms such as Instagram, and as such, the position has become aspirational for many online (Haenlein et al., 2020). In 2020 influencer marketing was a \$10 billion industry with companies paying influencers to promote their products (Haenlein et al., 2020). Some of the impact of social media influencers on the tourism industry was explored in the Context chapter (2.2).

This idea of the attention economy and the social and economic capital it can provide is linked closely to a newer concept appearing within some academic literature, but even more so within popular culture – that of ‘clout chasing’. Clout can be seen as a digital form of social capital. Evans and Baym (2022) explored the idea of chasing clout within the music scene, speaking to black youth in Chicago. They found that emerging musicians worked to acquire clout, which they defined as a digital form of influence that would allow them to build professional and social status (Evans & Baym, 2022). The idea of clout was, for a while, quantifiable through a platform Klout which was developed to assess the impact a social media user had across multiple platforms and thus their level of influence (Rao et al., 2015). An article in the Atlantic explored “Why Kids Online Are Chasing ‘Clout’ and noted that “The meaning of *clout* is porous, but the word is everywhere” and linked it closely to the idea of social capital, outlining how young people are curating and shaping their images to try to gain clout (Tiffany, 2019, p. 1).

With this focus on constructing, curating, and presenting the self, it is unsurprising that social media profiles are often highly curated to present the users’ ‘best self’ (Zhao & Lindley, 2014), suggesting the possibility of a backstage that is not as glamorous as what is presented online. Canavan (2017, p. 3) noted that “behind facades such as social media profiles or acquisition of possessions, feelings of worthlessness, lack of confidence, fragility, shame, insecurity and anxiety can lurk”, suggesting that social media is a front, while backstage is a different picture, and that social media can allow people to shape an online persona. Images posted on social media are not all photos taken of or by a person and are selected and curated by the poster as a strategic representation of the self to the online viewers of the content (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010; Maares et al., 2021). Users select what content to upload and thereby choose how they are portraying themselves, and thus

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influence how they are seen by friends and the world at large (Zhao & Lindley, 2014). The immensely popular Instagram account @Influencersinthewild, which sports 4.4 million followers, is centred around offering followers a backstage view into the world of social media influencers by posting videos of the processes undertaken to get the front stage social media content, indicating that many social media users are aware of, and even fascinated by, the backstage of social media (@Influencersinthewild, 2021). Similarly, the account Insta_Repeat explores the idea of the hidden backstage and curation of Instagram by highlighting near-identical posts by unrelated Instagram users (Insta_Repeat, 2018).

Alluded to by the account Insta_Repeat, there is a common popular aesthetic within Instagram which can be seen in particular in the 'top posts' or 'explore' sections of the app. Manovich (2017) reflected on this idea noting that if one were to look at the search or the explore screen of Instagram, it would be dominated by "aesthetically perfected photos", giving the "impression that Instagram has become the platform where the casual and flawed no longer exists" (Manovich, 2017, pp. 21-22). In his book *Instagram and Contemporary Image*, Manovich (2017) conducted a large-scale investigation of 15 million Instagram images and outlined three common types of images appearing on the site – casual, professional, and designed. The professional and designed images both focused on being aesthetically pleasing. The professional images do this in a more traditional, classic way, whereas the designed photos were more 'contemporary', 'cool' and 'hip' (Manovich, 2017). Professional images, in this instance, do not indicate that the photographer is a paid photographer; rather, that they follow photographic principles of 'good photography' including "the rule of thirds, proper exposure that shows details in shadows, middle tones and highlights; use of line orientations that lead the eye into the distance or, on the contrary, make the subject appear more flat; balanced colors without any color tint dominating" (Manovich, 2017).

While aesthetics in photography is interpreted by individuals and how they characterise beauty, and there is no consensus as to what it means other than some images are more pleasing to the eye, there have been attempts to study aesthetics with a computational approach (Datta et al., 2006; Oh et al., 2020). Datta et al.'s study (2006) used computational methods to distinguish that the elements that contributed to aesthetically pleasing images

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included exposure of light and colourfulness, saturation and hue, the rule of thirds, familiarity, texture, composition, depth of field and the shapes within an image. These principles of good photography have existed well before the invention of Instagram and are reflected in design thinking (Manovich, 2017).

Instagram culture is closely associated with the idea of 'competitive photography' where the goal of the photographs is to get the most 'likes' (whether in the past awards and prizes, or now, likes on Instagram) (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018). The pressure to present one's best self on social media is felt by many, with "the visible quantity of 'friends', 'followers', 'likes' and 'shares' shown on social media platforms giv[ing] participants a quantifiable metric for social success" which could also be seen as social capital (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 127). Competitive photography is a "highly skilled and highly aesthetic practice" and is both art and amateur (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018, p. 176). Tifentale and Manovich's (2018) research found that the majority of images on Instagram are not competitive photography but are primarily 'home photography'. From a sample collected in 2015, they found that 80 per cent of the photos were not sophisticated enough to be professional photography and that the posters "cared about the subject of the photo and not its aesthetics" however, the other 20 per cent of photos "had interesting compositions, careful control of gray scale values and colors, sufficient sharpness, and other signs of serious intention to make visually appealing photos that will be liked by other Instagram users" suggesting competitive photography has a significant impact on Instagram (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018, p. 179).

The culture around Instagram photography also includes vast amounts of discourse on how to create the best Instagram posts and feeds, much of this taking the form of blog posts and how-to guides (Manovich, 2017). Many of these guides are created as marketing tools by companies that directly link to social media, for example, the companies Hootsuite, Hubspot and Later, who publish articles including "How to Create a Unique Instagram Aesthetic that Fits Your Brand" (Fontein, 2019), "How to Create a Cohesive Instagram Aesthetic" (Carbone, 2018b) and 25 Stunning Instagram Themes (& How to Borrow Them for Your Own Feed) (Forsey, 2021). These articles help contribute to the concept of 'Instagram face', a term coined to highlight how many celebrities and those who aspire to look like them have begun to look the same online as they conform to an Instagram-curated beauty standard, an idea

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that can be extended an 'Instagram aesthetic' of content that performs well on the platform (Tolentino, 2019). At the height of data collection for this study, several media articles appeared noting that there seemed to be a shift coming in the aesthetics of Instagram, with *The Atlantic* stating *The Instagram Aesthetic is Over*, reflecting on the idea of the Instagram aesthetic as it had been and where it may move to.

Instagram has grown to more than 1 billion monthly users, it has ushered in a very particular look: bright walls, artfully arranged lattes and avocado toast, and Millennial-pink everything, all with that carefully staged, color-corrected, glossy-looking aesthetic. Photos that play into these trends perform so well on Instagram that the look became synonymous with the platform itself, then seeped into the broader world", the new generation of Influencers have "rejected the notion of a curated feed in favour of a messier and more unfiltered vibe (Lorenz, 2019, para. 3).

While Instagram may enhance and democratise the visual nature of presenting oneself, this desire to pictorially document and present ourselves is not a new phenomenon. Social media and new technologies may amplify our ability to curate and shape what we present to our audiences, but Rettberg (2014) noted that representing ourselves has always been part of our culture.

We have drawn, carved, sculpted, and painted images of ourselves for millennia; we have kept diaries, scrapbooks and photo albums; we have sung ballads and told stories about ourselves. Sometimes we use the mediation of technology to help us see ourselves better, to understand ourselves or to improve ourselves ... Other times we want to share our experiences with others. (Rettberg, 2014, p. 2).

The above discussion has outlined how managing the presentation of self on social media is a core practice of participation on these platforms (Deeb-Swihart et al., 2017), and the level of authenticity between the online self and the real-life self can vary greatly (Geary et al., 2021). This section presented the idea of the Instagram aesthetic and competitive photography where social media users seek to post images, which are popular with other users (Manovich, 2017; Tifentale & Manovich, 2018). Goffman's theory of the presentation of self is a commonly used lens through which to analyse online and social media behaviour (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Deeb-Swihart et al., 2017; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). As

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previously noted, this dissertation views individual Instagram posts as ‘exhibitions’ that allow the poster to present themselves to the world. As the social media feed contains a roll of individual exhibitions (posts) that make up their presentation of self, it is not necessary that the poster be featured in the images they post – simply by publishing these exhibitions to the stage that is their feed, they are shaping the image of self they are presenting to the viewing audience.

3.1.4 Travel as a presentation of identity and status

Given this study’s focus on travel and its Instagram representations, it is important to understand the role of travel as a status identifier for many social media users. Section 3.1.3 explored the notion that individuals will try to shape others’ impressions by managing their social media, but identity and impressions thereof can also be shaped by an individual’s travel history or goals. Studies have addressed the link between self-identity and one’s travel biography, and some have indicated the role that posting about travels on social media can also play (Bosangit et al., 2015; Cohen, 2010; Desforges, 2000).

The theory of conspicuous consumption, presented by sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1899), focused on displaying economic power and social status by purchasing luxury goods and services. Studies have investigated tourism behaviour as a form of conspicuous consumption (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994; Shipman, 2004). Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) compared the symbolic consumption of goods with that of leisure and found that the choice of leisure activity (including travel) is impacted both by the personal identity (need for self-expression and self-affirmation) and the social identity (need for conspicuous display or sign value). Bronner and de Hoog (2018) linked conspicuous consumption and holiday destination choice. They found that while status and wealth played little role in destination choice, identity demonstration was important, seen in visiting ‘cool’ locations or having unique experiences (Bronner & de Hoog, 2018). Specific types of travel can also be used to signal identity, and Humberstone (2009) found that adventure travel could be used to provide ‘narrative capital’ to those who took part. These ideas link closely with the concept of the travel Bucket List. The concept of conspicuous consumption also links back to Goffman’s presentation of self, by seeing a group of consumers as focusing on symbolic

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representations of status or identity through props and settings (the items purchased) performed for their audience.

Having leisure travel goals can be a provider of life satisfaction, "tourists can experience higher levels of subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction or overall happiness in life) if they select leisure travel goals that have high levels of positive valence and expectancy" (Sirgy, 2009, p. 247). Similarly, presenting travel-related content can provide Instagram users with status and can help users boost their social image (Siegel & Wang, 2018). Travel content is particularly popular for users to upload across social media (Lee & Sung, 2016). Magasic (2016) highlighted how the 'social media pilgrimage' places the traveller in the online attention economy and helps users accrue social capital to the extent that they structure their journeys around the goal of obtaining likes and followers. "Tourism experiences are lived with an audience in mind... Tourists enact certain practices, live and share specific experiences, because their own self-representation may be viewed by their peers and a potentially unlimited audience... Sharing travel experiences is a major reason for experiencing travel moments" (Sigala, 2016, p. 99). The online journey links clearly to the idea of the online presentation of self and the conspicuous consumption of leisure activity in the shape of tourism.

The online journey is constructed of moments captured within the physical journey which are edited in ways that are conversant with the traveller's ideal self-image as well as on the feedback received from the audience. In this way, the traveller's practice of online identity construction is looped back within the physical journey as practices of net use and self-presentation are performed in physical space as part of the routine of social media integrated travel (Magasic, 2016, p. 178).

Siegel and Wang (2018, p. 14) explored the concept of 'keeping up with the Joneses' and examined travel as a marker of status among millennials, finding that "online photo sharing has become a prolific aspect of online social networking and in this environment, self-image is sought out to the degree that it is replacing previous markers of status and consumption". They considered tourism an expansion of the commodification of modern life, whereby people consume travel like any other commodity (Siegel & Wang, 2018). Their study found that when asked about motivations to share travel photos on social media, bragging or

showing off was the second most popular response (Siegel & Wang, 2018). Similarly, Ek Styven and Foster (2018) identified that young people were far more likely to share their travel experience if it helped them be seen as an 'opinion leader'. Posting travel-related experiences on Instagram has become, for some, one of the reasons for travel and a key driver of enjoyment (Walsh et al., 2019), and Instagram, in particular, has been directly linked to destination choice (Terttunen, 2017).

As with all social media posting, travel-related social media content shows a clear curation of the image presented, in line with Goffman's proverbial stage (Gretzel, 2017). Instagram accounts show the front stage of beauty and luxury of travelling without showing the backstage challenging aspects – getting lost, getting sick, the multi-hour bus trips and more, thus creating an online reality that does not exist in the real world.

This section has explored Goffman's seminal theory of presentation of self in everyday life and provided examples of how his dramaturgical approach has been applied by other researchers. It outlined the recent resurgence in interest in his theory in the age of the internet and social media. The literature around self-identity and representation on the internet and social media was explored, and finally, the idea of travel as a part of identity and how that can be further shared and curated through social media was outlined.

3.2 Travel and photography

"To be a tourist, it would seem, involves taking photographs" (Robinson & Picard, 2009, p.1). This section explores the literature concerning the links between travel and photography and the concept of the 'selfie gaze'.

3.2.1 The links between travel and photography

Photography and travel are intrinsically linked, with photos both documenting and shaping the experience of travel (Garrod, 2009; Sheungting Lo et al., 2011). Susan Sontag explored how the concept of modern tourism and the popularisation of photography developed in

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tandem – “It seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along. Photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made... Photos document sequences of consumption carried on outside the view of family, friends, neighbours” (Sontag, 1977, p. 6). This is further highlighted in Urry’s (1990) concept of the tourist gaze, where a key motivation of tourists is to gaze at the real-life versions of images they have seen across advertisements, movies, books, postcards and more, as the tourist seeks to capture not the site itself, but what it represents or invokes (be it the romance of Paris, or the Olde English nature of a rustic countryside cottage) (Urry, 1992). As contended by Schroeder (2002, p. 72), the “ritual act of photography seemed paramount – one must take a picture when confronted with such an important site. The camera acts as a proxy for seeing”. While mobile phones have increased the photographic output by people generally, the special link between tourist experiences and photographing them continues, even to the extent that some travellers feel they have decreased satisfaction in their tourist experience if they are not able to take photos (Garrod, 2009).

Even before photography, being able to document one’s travels visually was important; tourists made sketches or purchased images created by professional artists while on their Grand Tour journey (Hibbert, 1987). The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, a highly fantastical and exaggerated travel memoir from between 1357 and 1371, included illustrations and sketches of the wonders ‘seen’ during his travels (Tzanaki, 2017), and explorers like Captain Cook took along natural history artists to record their discoveries (Parkinson & Kenrick, 1773). “Holiday photography is the record which shows, no matter how rushed the visit, that what was seen was what was there” (Hutnyk, 1996, p. 145). The concept of collecting images from travels was explored by Bensen and Silberman (1986), who identified photos as an easy-to-carry souvenir or keepsake of a trip, which can verify a visit to a wider audience. This has only been enhanced by technological advances and social media, which allow travellers to share images in real-time, highlighting their location, with an audience of both those they know personally, and with strangers (Smith, 2018).

Sharing photographs is, for many, a part of the ritual of the travel experience; in the age of analogue photography, travellers would often invite family and friends to a post-holiday slide night, sharing their experiences with their loved ones and telling stories (Bensen &

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Silberman, 1986). The holiday photograph shows evidence not only of the tourist visit but of the tourist themselves in a process of expressive self-creation (Robinson & Picard, 2009). Social commentator Bernard Salt observed that:

Overseas travel was so exotic in the 1980s that returnees would sometimes hold slide nights for family, friends and other interested parties to generously share the exotica of travel. The success of slide nights was judged on the quality and quantity of questions asked, and on the genuine energy attached to each question (Salt, 2018, p. 1).

The advent of digital photography and the rise of the internet has transformed this for travellers and their audience:

Now, Instagram Stories are the new slide night but rather than grainy holiday snaps being served up with popcorn in the dark, they're beamed into your hand 24-7, in HD, so you can watch the travel adventures of your friends, family and even foes with equal parts FOMO and jealousy (Mitchell, 2018, para. 6).

Producing the 'right' image has long been a part of the process of travel photography, with many visitors seeking to replicate the images they have seen produced previously (Chalfen, 1979). "When they travel, they want to see the Eiffel Tower or Grand Canyon exactly as they saw them first on posters. An American tourist... does more than see the Eiffel Tower, he photographs it exactly as he knows it" from posters on a wall (Carpenter, 1976, p. 6) or from how it is displayed on postcards (Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). Even when not replicating specific advertisements or postcards, "many tourist photographs are virtually identical, for instance, photos of African sunsets neatly framed by silhouetted acacia trees" (Bensen & Silberman, 1986, p. 264), or reoccurring photos of beaches, a setting for performance and the perfect photo (Osborne, 2000). At various tourist attractions, travellers line up to take the same photograph, and in some cases, markers are placed by the site management indicating the best position for taking photos (Bensen & Silberman, 1986). This concept was explored by Caton and Santos (2008), who analysed photographs by participants in a study abroad program to assess whether they represent a hermeneutic circle where tourists replicated and reinforced media depictions. Their work reinforced a study by Jenkins (2003), who confirmed that tourists complete the hermeneutic circle by taking photos comparable

to those found in the travel brochures that target them. This practice of repeating imagery continues to the present day and can be seen highlighted on Instagram in the Insta_repeat account, which highlights how similar posts by unrelated Instagram users can be (Insta_Repeat, 2018); or by the presence of 'selfie spots' – signs, stickers or other notations, demonstrating to visitors the best place for them to get a photo (Cardell & Douglas, 2018), as demonstrated in the photo that inspired this study (Figure 1.1).

3.2.2 The democratisation of travel photography

Technological advances have heavily impacted the world of photography and democratised the image creation and sharing process. The first revolutionary moment in tourist photography was in 1888, when the launch of the Kodak portable camera allowed travellers and tourists to take their own photographs (Bensen & Silberman, 1986). As technology advanced, the barriers of cost and difficulty of photography decreased, making it more accessible (Sheungting Lo et al., 2011). Most recently, the advent of the smartphone with inbuilt cameras of increasing photographic quality each year and the range of online photo-sharing media has democratised the image creation and sharing process even further (Sheungting Lo et al., 2011).

Much of society is now at a stage where photography has become ubiquitous, immersed in the everyday and the travel experience, thanks to the combination of digital photography, the internet, smartphones and social media (Utekhin, 2017). The number of photographs being captured and shared has grown at a phenomenal rate, changing the entire landscape (Figure 2.2) (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019).

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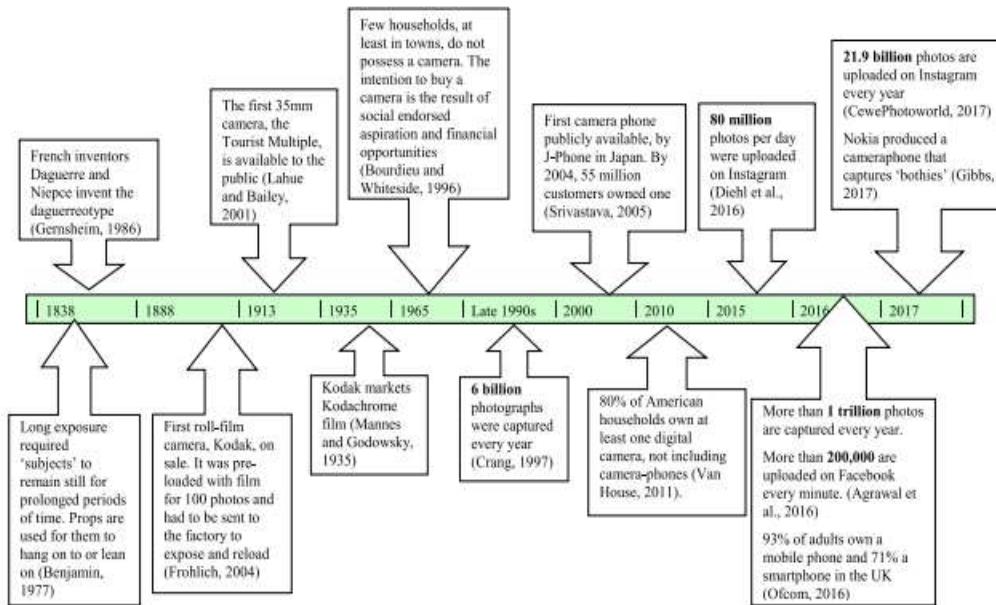


Figure 3.1: Number of photographs captured and shared (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019)

3.2.3 The selfie gaze

Technological changes can have a substantial impact on an established trope; where once a traveller may have commissioned a portrait of themselves at a tourist destination, they may now take a selfie (Hibbert, 1987); a development of recent pop culture, the selfie is a “digital self-portrait that is usually taken with a forward-facing camera; usually on a mobile phone” which generally focuses on the face (Cardell & Douglas, 2018, p. 1). Selfies are very much a part of modern photography and the social media landscape, and a considerable amount of research has been done into the phenomena in recent years (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Hess, 2015; Pearce & Moscardo, 2015), with some focusing on them specifically in the tourism landscape (Cardell & Douglas, 2018). As photos that literally show the self, selfies are by definition a direct form of self-representation when posted on social media. Within the tourism realm, the selfie phenomenon moves the focus of travel away from simply being on the destination to being focused on the presentation of self in that destination. The idea of the selfie is also inherently linked to the concept of presentation of self, as a selfie distributed via social media or otherwise is a performance shared with the audience (Walsh & Baker, 2017). Furthermore, Walsh and Baker (2017) saw the selfie as a stage for self-presentation. Deeb-Swihart et al. (2017, p. 1) noted that “selfies bring us full-circle to Goffman—blending the online and offline selves”.

Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016, pp. 131-132) saw selfie-taking as a new form of 'touristic looking' where tourists themselves become the objects of the 'self-directed tourist gaze'. The concept of the 'selfie gaze' was coined by Magasic (2016) and developed from Urry's (1990) 'tourist gaze' theory, linking the concepts of social media, tourism, and photography. Numerous philosophers have used the concept of the 'gaze' to describe a "structured way of seeing which privileges certain values over others" (Magasic, 2016, p. 175). Under the 'selfie gaze', no longer does the traveller gaze passively; they are now participants in creating meaning of tourist sites through the online sharing of their experiences (Magasic, 2016).

Within the concept of the selfie gaze, tourist experiences are undertaken with a view to present oneself in a specific way; the selfies created by tourists are constructed to be seen by others. Magasic (2016) noted that selfies are often taken with the future audience in mind "we pose, search for our best side and delete less appealing drafts whilst questing for an ideal image... The digitally connected traveller's selfie gaze searches for sites that will improve the traveller's esteem in the eyes of their social network" (Magasic, 2016, pp. 176 - 177). So, self-esteem and satisfaction come not from the experience itself but from the reaction of the audience, their likes, shares and comments, in some cases leading tourists to seek destinations, experiences and activities that the prospective online audience will approve of (Sigala, 2016).

3.3 Hashtags and other Instagram studies

This study utilises both hashtags and image analysis in its research methodology, and as such, it is appropriate to look at the literature which uses these techniques.

3.3.1 Utilising photos as data within tourism research

The use of photographs as a data source in social sciences, and particularly in tourism research, has not been as prevalent as the field might naturally lend itself to, with many in

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the field preferring textual evidence to the visual; “photography has often been considered tainted as a source of research data, even in tourism, its natural habitat” (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019, p. 201). That being said, many past studies have used both photographic representations of tourism (postcards, brochures and other promotional imagery) (Albers & James, 1988; Garrod, 2009; Jenkins, 2003) and travellers’ photos as a data source (Utekhin, 2017).

Photo-elicitation, whereby participants are shown photos as conversation prompts within an interview or focus group, is one such method that has been repeatedly used in tourism studies (Cederholm, 2004; Williams, 2019). Balomenou and Garrod (2016, 2019) and Balomenou et al. (2017) favoured this method and took it a step further, using participant-generated images where participants are provided cameras and asked to take photos for the express purpose of research and are then asked to later discuss them. These studies share an interpretivist view, focusing on the meanings people create and share through photography. However, neither of these photo-elicitation methods is focused entirely upon what is in the images, but more on the reactions and responses those images bring up amongst study participants. This study method also has many challenges around sample size of both participants and photographs, the use of incentives, and the potential the study participants can produce misleading results through awareness that they are study participants (Balomenou & Garrod, 2016).

Content analysis of imagery shown in destinations’ promotional materials has also been utilised within tourism and involves interpreting visual artefacts. Hunter (2008) collected and analysed photographic representations used by 21 destinations in promotional brochures and guidebooks. Albers and James (1988), on the other hand, used images from postcards to investigate representations of culture, ethnicity, photography, and travel. A study of online images (and text) by official government tourism organisations and local private sector tourism businesses in Dubai gave insight into the different portrayals of the city that were being projected by the different groups, where government images focused on culture and heritage, whilst private sector imagery highlighted facilities and activities (Govers & Go, 2004).

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More recently, some studies have begun using photographs from social media as a data source. Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) conducted a comparison of photographs presented by DMOs in Peru to images shared by visitors on social media, constructing maps to represent the projected and perceived images of Peru. Similar comparisons have been conducted in Macau between official online representations and those shared by visitors (Choi et al., 2007) and in Seoul (Hunter, 2016). Studies that have used Instagram as a data source have predominantly focused on the ways Instagram can link to destination branding and on how they impact perspectives of a destination, but commonly are often less focused on analysing the photographic content itself than on the channel as a whole (Acuti et al., 2018; De Veirman et al., 2017; Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015; Thelander & Cassinger, 2017).

It is evident that, while not overwhelmingly prevalent, tourism studies have utilised photographs as research data. Research connecting tourism and Instagram is still in its infancy, for the most part, due to the platform's recent rise to prominence. Still, there is ample scope for the user-generated images on Instagram to be mined as an ethnographic source for content analysis in future research.

3.3.2 Social media hashtag studies

Studies using hashtags to cluster information and investigate how a certain topic is being represented on Instagram have been used in a wide spectrum of academic literature, although not in abundance, presumably due to the relatively recent emergence of Instagram and hashtags. This method has been used more frequently for studies on Twitter. The accessibility of Twitter has made it one of the most studied social media platforms, and the functions of hashtags, replies, and retweets, as well as the public nature of posting on Twitter, allow researchers to track and analyse data collected through the Twitter API (Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Highfield & Leaver, 2015; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

In many ways, Instagram, particularly public posts, are closely related to Twitter, which makes it an effective potential study tool.

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The importance of tagging on Instagram, for instance, has conceptual and practical links to the hashtags employed on Twitter (and other social media and 'Web 2.0' platforms), with tags serving as markers for the main subjects, ideas, events, locations, or emotions featured in tweets and images alike. (Highfield & Leaver, 2015, p. 1)

By tagging a photo with a location or a hashtag, an Instagram user is making a conscious effort beyond just uploading a picture. This effort might just be to make the image easier to find, but it may also be to join a dialogue of people using the same hashtag. Much tagging is related to rhetoric rather than findability, where hashtags can be seen as 'meta-commentary', used expressively rather than to mark topics (Daer et al., 2015). The #bucketlist could be seen as an identifying hashtag, whereby the user refers to themselves as ticking one off the Bucket List.

Recent studies into Instagram have used hashtags as a study method as a way of grouping data or researching a certain theme. One study collected Instagram posts that used the #funeral and undertook grounded theory research to analyse what was being shown in Instagram posts using this tag (Gibbs et al., 2015). Another study undertook research into the usage of cigarillos, using #swisher and then generating a coding frame of common themes to report on the use of cigarillos among Instagram users (Allem et al., 2017). The online trend 'Fitspiration' (aiming to inspire people into healthier lifestyles by promoting exercise and healthy food) was the subject of Tiggemann and Zaccardo's (2018) work which undertook a content analysis of #fitspiration images on Instagram, where images were coded for body type, activity, objectification, and textual elements. In another example, Cardell and Douglas (2018) also used hashtags in their study of selfies as a new form of travel writing. Using #anzaccove, they researched the presence of selfies at a culturally significant memorial site and the appropriateness of doing so (Cardell & Douglas, 2018). Another way in which studies have been conducted using hashtags is through outlining 'hashtag networks', which identify how a hashtag may be used in conjunction with or linked to others to demonstrate connections between topics (Ichau et al., 2019).

Instagram, an image-based social media, provides an appropriate choice of social media to use for this study because of the links between travel and photography, and hashtags make

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an effective research tool to identify a theme. The links between photography and tourism have long been recognised and considered (Chalfen, 1979; Sharpley, 2021; Sheungting Lo et al., 2011; Sontag, 1977), and Instagram has been recognised as a way in which users (particularly millennials) demonstrate their self-identity (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Ferrara et al., 2014; Moon et al., 2016; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Each social media platform has its own characteristics and so should not be selected at random for a study; the characteristics should be matched to the research goals (Yuan & Medel, 2016). The presence of hashtags on Instagram and the ability for users to tag geolocations are also, particularly of value to this study. These factors position Instagram as the preferential social media to use for this study when compared to other popular options such as Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat.

A limitation of Instagram, however, is that while it provides researchers with photos, it does not provide any context around picture taking and sharing, and while some clues can be gained from tags, captions, and comments, this insight is shallow without speaking to the poster in some form or another (Utekhin, 2017).

3.4 Chapter summary

This Literature Review outlined Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory of presentation of self and his positioning of the front and backstage areas of a person's life. Whilst providing examples of how Goffman's dramaturgical approach has been applied by other researchers, it presented the recent resurgence in interest and use of his theory in the internet age. Also explored was the literature around self-representation on social media and the curation of the front stage of presentation on the platform. The chapter considered how people could present themselves through their travel experiences, the need to communicate this through sharing images, and the links between this and Veblen's (1899) ideas on conspicuous consumption. A short history of the interconnectedness between travel and photography was explored, including the concepts of the 'tourist gaze' and the 'selfie gaze'. Finally, this literature review presented other studies which have utilised social media hashtags within their methodology.

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This Literature Review has clarified the gap in the research when it comes to academic study into the travel Bucket List. It solidifies the aim of the study *to explore the concept of the travel Bucket List on Instagram and how Instagram users are incorporating it as part of their presentation of self* as being worthy of academic consideration in seeking to fill this gap and build upon the under investigated area of the travel Bucket List. This study will explore the phenomenon of the travel Bucket List through the lens of Goffman's theory of the presentation of self (1959), which, despite being established in 1959, has been shown to have remained a useful lens to view presentation as the world has progressed into the internet age (3.1.2), and as such will also add to the body of work exploring Goffman's presentation and dramaturgical approach in the social media era. As per the work by Hogan (2010), the approach taken within this work identifies Instagram posts as 'exhibitions' that are a form of self-presentation. Finally, this Literature Review reiterated past research which establishes social media hashtag studies as a valid and useful way of gathering data, thus helping to establish the method utilised within this study.

CHAPTER 4 METHODS

This chapter outlines the research methods used within the study, starting by outlining the philosophical paradigm. It will then present the quantitative and qualitative methods utilised for data collection and the analysis within this study and the rationale for doing so. The final sections discuss the ethics and limitations associated with this research project.

4.1 Philosophical paradigm

The identification of a philosophical position or paradigm is key to beginning academic research, and it is this selection that helps guide the study in choosing a research method, as well as the overall tone of the study (Saunders et al., 2009). The choice of a philosophical position subsequently determines the epistemological and ontological positions adopted in a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section orients this project in each of these dimensions.

Epistemology asks the question “what constitutes knowledge?” and provides a choice between a positivist position where the researcher works in observable social data and produces “law-like generalisations” and an interpretivist position whereby the researcher understands “differences between humans in our role as social actors” (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 115-119). In contrast to interpretivism and positivism, pragmatism is a philosophical paradigm that emphasizes the practical consequences of actions and ideas (Morgan, 2014; Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). Pragmatism grew out of the rejection by scholars of the notion that social science research can use a single scientific method to access ‘reality’ (Maxcy, 2003). In the context of research, this paradigm suggests that research should be focused on solving real-world problems and researchers have the freedom to choose the methods and techniques that most suit their needs and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morgan, 2014; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). By the very nature of the approach, pragmatists are practical in their research “Pragmatists do not “care” which methods they use as long as the methods chosen have the potential of answering what it is one wants to know” (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010, p.9).

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One way to apply pragmatism to research is by using mixed methods, which involve combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic and can provide a more nuanced view of the phenomena being studied (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). For example, a researcher studying the impact of social media on tourism may use both qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews with tourists (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020), and quantitative methods, such as surveys (Öz, 2015) to gather data. The combination of these two approaches can provide a more complete picture of the ways in which social media affects tourism and can help the researcher to identify patterns and trends that may not be apparent using a single method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In summary, using pragmatism as a philosophical paradigm and incorporating mixed methods into a research study can provide a more comprehensive and practical understanding of the research topic (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), and makes for an excellent way to approach a study with mixed methods (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010).

4.2 Research questions

As previously outlined, this study aims to explore the concept of the travel Bucket List on Instagram and how Instagram users are incorporating it as part of their presentation of self.

Based on the Literature Review and selection of the philosophical paradigm, the following research questions have been established:

- *Research question 1* – To what extent has the use of #bucketlist on Instagram increased since the platform's beginning?
- *Research question 2* – What geographic locations are Instagram users presenting as 'bucket list worthy'?

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- *Research question 3* – What do the content and themes present in photographs tagged with #bucketlist on Instagram suggest about Instagram users ‘presentation of self’ within a Bucket List tourism context?

The sections below will provide an understanding of how these three research questions will contribute to the aim of exploring the concept of the travel Bucket List on Instagram and how Instagram users are incorporating it as part of their presentation of self.

4.2.1 Research question 1

To what extent has the use of #bucketlist on Instagram increased since the platform’s beginning?

Providing a history of the use of #bucketlist posting volume on Instagram in response to Research Question 1 provides context for this study and for possible future work. Currently there has been little written about the travel Bucket List in the academic sphere (Section 2.1), and it is not yet a broadly acknowledged part of the tourism rhetoric. As such, there are limited current statistics around Bucket List tourism. Providing an understanding of how the use of #bucketlist has increased since the platform’s beginning with the collection and analysis of primary data from Instagram will help to confirm that Bucket List tourism is worthy of academic investigation.

4.2.2 Research question 2

What geographic locations are Instagram users presenting as ‘bucket list worthy’?

Mapping which locations Instagram users are geo-tagging using the #bucketlist allows us to gain an understanding of the geography of the travel Bucket List as represented on the platform. This research will show the locations people are choosing to show in their online exhibitions of presentation of self in relation to the Bucket List. While the mapping of this data may not provide precise details of what is in the images posted, it will give an idea of locations which may be overrepresented in #bucketlist posts comparison to visitation.

4.2.3 Research question 3

What do the content and themes present in photographs tagged with #bucketlist on Instagram suggest about Instagram users 'presentation of self' within a Bucket List tourism context?

While *Research questions 1 and 2* provide a broader quantitative investigation into the state of the travel Bucket List on Instagram, *Research question 3* focuses on the detail of individual posts which use #bucketlist in order to explore and theorise on presentations being performed by Instagram users in relation to their ideal travel experiences. This will increase understanding of the idea of the travel Bucket List as well as highlighting how it can be seen as part of presentation of self as proposed by Goffman (1959).

4.3 Method

Marwick noted that Instagram offers a “fairly open-ended social media tool” which allows for users to shape their representation of self more freely than Facebook, which has a more set profile structure; this means Instagram can be better employed for the process of ‘self-branding’ a “self-presentation strategy that requires viewing oneself as a consumer product and selling this image to others” (Marwick, 2015, pp. 139-140). The age-old concept of a picture is worth a thousand words is also in play in this online space, with Marwick (2015) using the example that a shared selfie of the poster at Machu Picchu is a more effective way for the user to indicate that they like travel than typing out a paragraph stating the same, particularly in the case of the image focused Instagram. Utilising hashtags on Instagram provides a useful way of grouping posts into themes (Highfield & Leaver, 2015; Gibbs et al., 2015), allowing for in-depth exploration.

Instagram posts are made up of various components seen in Figure 4.1, including the poster’s username, the date/time posted, a geographic location (geotag), an image or video which is the key focus of the post, likes, comments and a caption which will often include

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hashtags (Highfield & Leaver, 2015). The geotag, caption and hashtags are optional components that a poster may choose to include (or not). Likewise, not all posts will have likes and or comments, depending on the audience's reaction. Different components of Instagram posts were utilised to achieve the research questions in of this study.



Figure 4.1: The anatomy of an Instagram post (Author, 2017)

4.3.1 Research question 1 & 2 - data collection and analysis

The first goal of the study is to provide an overview of the use of Instagram and 'bucket list' to demonstrate its significance, given the lack of current research in this space, by identifying the historic and geographic contexts for the use of #bucketlist on Instagram. To do so, the researcher used a quantitative approach, using the date and location components of an Instagram post and used computer programming methods to collect data. An "application programming interface" (API) is a computer programming tool, which is a formally defined interface that allows software to interact with other software and is a highly efficient programmatic interface for accessing data from a computer-based system (Rudrakshi et al., 2014). Data were collected by a computing expert using Instagram's public API, which was available to academics and others at the time.

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4.3.1.1 *Data Collection – Research question 1*

To show the historic use of #bucketlist across Instagram, the dates of posting for Instagram posts that used #bucketlist between October 2010 (when Instagram began) and August 2018 (when Instagram changed its public API access) were collected using the API outlined above and resulted in 6,228,912 individual pieces of data.

In 2018 Instagram (and its owner Facebook) made changes to the availability of its public API in response to the Cambridge Analytica scandal and privacy concerns (Instagram, 2018c; Venturini & Rogers, 2019). The changes restricted the bulk collection of historical data and placed limits on the amount of data that can be returned by the data collection tools used in this study. Due to these changes, data were unavailable for collection from August 2018 onwards.

4.3.1.2 *Analysis – Research question 1*

The dates of posting for the 6,228,912 #bucketlist posts collected were uploaded to Tableau. Tableau is a sophisticated data visualisation tool with user-friendly geographic mapping tools (*Tableau Mission*, 2020), which is a best practice tool for this research. The data was then graphed to show the historic use of posts using the hashtag (Figure 5.1 in Results).

4.3.1.3 *Data Collection – Research question 2*

The next focus is the destinations people consider to be 'Bucket List worthy' based on the identification of geographic locations people were tagging when posting their #bucketlist photos. To undertake this, the study again used a quantitative approach, utilising geotags to explore the geographic dispersal of the use of #bucketlist. Geotags are the location tag that Instagram users can use to include in their posts (Figure 4.1). To map the geographic use of #bucketlist, the computing expert used Instagram's public API to collect geotags for Instagram posts tagged with #bucketlist for the twelve months from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. "Seasonality of demand is a distinctive feature of tourism" (Ball, 1989, p. 35); as such,

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this study used a snapshot of twelve months' worth of location data to account for some of the peaks and troughs of tourism demand across different destinations (Karamustafa & Ulama, 2010), while keeping it to a manageable size.

Instagram posts do not need to include a geotag, so the resultant sample does not include all posts tagged with #bucketlist from the twelve months; it includes only those that use #bucketlist and have a geotag (Table 4.1). The API gathered data from Instagram in attraction/city/country format. A Python Geolocator.geocode function was then used to convert the data into latitude and longitude format to allow for convenient upload into Tableau. Not all results could be decoded using the python function as not all records had valid location data (reasons include misspelling and missing information), and this accounted for a further reduction of locations mapped compared to the total number of posts using #bucketlist within the time period (Table 4.1).

In total, geolocation usable data were collected from 954,190 Instagram posts tagged with #bucketlist (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Data collected July 2017 - June 2018 Research question 2

#bucketlist Posts	Number of posts
Total posts with #bucketlist	1,097,356
Posts with #bucketlist which have no Geotag	143,129
Posts with #bucketlist which include a Geotag	954,227
Posts with #bucketlist with a Geotag which cannot be converted into latitude/longitude format	37
Posts with #bucketlist with a Geotag that can be converted into latitude/longitude format with python Geolocator.geocode function	954,190
Final Sample	954,190

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4.3.1.4 *Analysis – Research question 2*

The geotag dataset was uploaded into Tableau to create a heat map indicating the global dispersal of posts using #bucketlist and highlighting Bucket List hotspots across the globe (Figure 5.2 in Results).

4.3.2 *Research question 3 - data collection and analysis*

The research next sought to analyse the content of photographs in posts tagged with #bucketlist on Instagram and explore how Instagram users may use their Bucket List as a component of their ‘presentation of self’. Photographs on social media can be a useful source of data that can provide deep insights into a topic (Stepchenkova and Zhan, 2013; Choi et al., 2007; Hunter, 2016).

4.3.2.1 *Data Collection – Research question 3*

A manual collection of Instagram posts tagged with #bucketlist were collected and compiled during four data collection periods across twelve months, beginning in August 2019. The initial data collection plan for this study was to focus on the ‘top posts’ section of Instagram. When searching by hashtag, Instagram presents posts as ‘top’ and ‘recent’ posts (Figure 4.2). Instagram uses a proprietary algorithm to select what is displayed in the list of ‘top posts’ under any searched hashtag; Instagram has indicated that the prioritisation of top posts is based on the number of comments, likes, views, shares and other interactions that occur on a post, however, the specific details of what makes a top post are not publicly available (Baker & Walsh, 2018; Carbone, 2018a). One of the benefits of analysing top posts for a hashtag is that they “signify high status images likely to be modelled by others” and represent “popular forms of identity presentation and display” (Baker & Walsh, 2018, p. 8). However, the posts visible in the ‘top posts’ section of Instagram for a given hashtag may not change dramatically from day to day, depending on the volume of posts posted using the given hashtag.

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After the first day of data collection, it became apparent that a large majority of top posts for #bucketlist were from travel companies or other businesses or were highlighted as sponsored posts (posts where the poster was receiving payment in cash or kind for their post). This study focuses on the presentation of self when it comes to the Bucket List, so these posts, which likely did not represent individual presentations of self, were not collected. As such, a substantially larger number of posts had to be observed before ten individual, personal posts within the ‘top posts’ could be captured.

Due to these challenges, the researcher decided to also collect the first ten posts (that were not related to companies/businesses/sponsored posts) from the ‘recent posts’ tab of Instagram. The ‘recent posts’ section of a particular hashtag search includes posts that are less influenced by the Instagram algorithm and instead are the most recent posts which have been posted to Instagram using the relevant hashtag. This means the recent post section in a hashtag search with sufficient posts (like #bucketlist) is much more dynamic and changes substantially from day to day or even hour to hour. While these images may not be as ‘high status’ as the ‘top posts’, they still present a way in which Instagram posters are choosing to present themselves using a given hashtag (in this case, #bucketlist) on a public account to a potentially global audience.

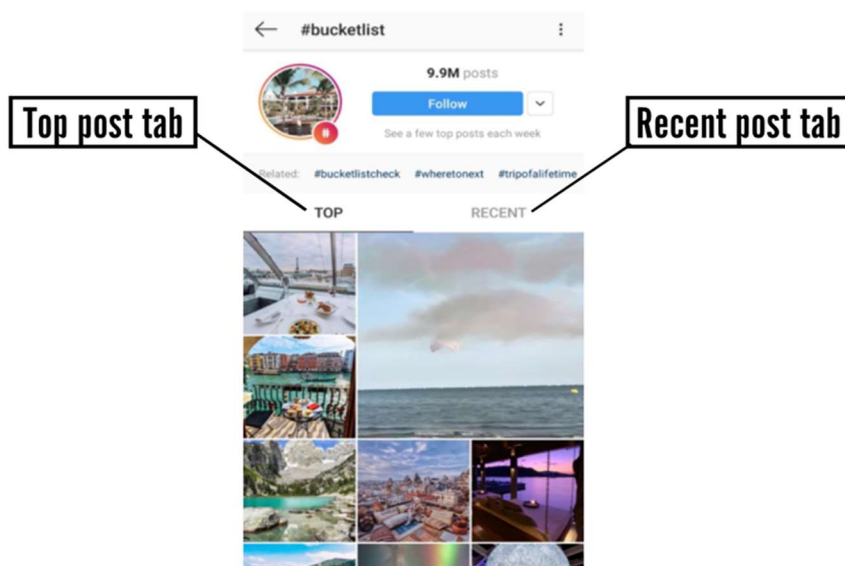


Figure 4.2: Top posts and recent posts (Author, 2021)

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The strategy for data collection was for it to take place over four separate seven-day periods (Table 4.2) across twelve months. Using four separate data collections makes some allowance for the seasonal nature of tourism (Ball, 1989). During each collection period, a manual screenshot was taken of the image, associated text, and geotag for the first ten ‘top posts’ and the first ten ‘recent posts’ for each day, with advertising/business and sponsored posts excluded. Collection months were set for August 2019, December 2019, February 2020, and May 2020, with the start day selected by a random number generator to allow for seasonal fluctuations. This collection strategy would provide a sample of 560 individual Instagram posts across the year – 280 from the ‘top’ classification and 280 from the ‘recent’ tab on Instagram (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Planned data collection Research question 3

Data collection Periods	Top posts collected	Recent posts collected	Total posts collected
Session 1 – August 2019	70	70	140
Session 2 – November 2019	70	70	140
Session 3 – February 2020	70	70	140
Session 4 – May 2020 (CANCELLED)	70	70	140
Total	280	280	560

However, only three of the four planned data collection sessions were able to occur due to the global outbreak of COVID-19. The scheduled fourth collection of data was scheduled for May 2020, but the researcher was concerned that the massive impact of the global pandemic on the tourism industry (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020) may substantially change posting on Instagram in comparison to previous data collection periods. It was therefore decided that this data should be excluded from this study. The change in posts with #bucketlist in the pre- and post-COVID-19 environments could warrant a separate study.

The collection of data thus took place across 21 days from three individual weeks, across three separate months. A total of 420 posts were gathered from the top and recent posts categories for #bucketlist. Two posts needed to be excluded as they were duplicated posts, both from within the ‘top posts’ category; this resulted in a total of 208 total top posts and

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210 total recent posts, for a total sample of 418 usable individual Instagram posts (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Final data collection Research question 3

Week	Top Posts	Recent Posts	Total
22 August – 28 August 2019	69	70	139
12 November – 18 November 2019	70	70	140
10 February – 16 February 2020	69	70	139
Total	208	210	418

4.3.2.2 Analysis – Research question 3

Content analysis is usually considered to be a quantitative tool; however, it can also be used to generate new concepts and to test theory (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Interpretive content analysis, used in this study, employed researcher-generated interpretations (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). The use of a hashtag places a user within a conversation on social media (Van den Berg, 2014). While what is presented in a hashtag may not represent a poster's backstage feelings, the simple fact of it being notated publicly makes it a part of their front stage presentation. As such, a tagged post with #bucketlist may not represent a destination on a poster's literal Bucket List, but by presenting it as such on Instagram, it becomes a part of their public persona, the self that they are presenting. For this study, it is assumed that the use of #bucketlist on a post conveys a poster's desired public presentation.

Coding for the photographic Instagram content occurred in the two months after each data collection session. The lens of Goffman's (1959) presentation of self and dramaturgical approach was highly relevant in the coding of the images, as it incorporated coding costumes, props, settings and staging. In line with the pragmatic approach of this study, no preconceptions were made as to possible elements within the sample. The researcher allowed these to emerge inductively as images were observed and coded. As an element that had not been observed in a prior post was identified, it was added to the overall list of elements. Individual images were coded in a denotive manner, recording what could be visually identified as a key focus of each image, for example, a person, a beach, mountains,

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bikini, activewear, the Eiffel Tower or Machu Pichu. Where it was a key feature of the image, style or pose was also noted, for example, images that were in black and white or in images with people – the direction they were facing. The analysed posts could feature any number of individual elements. For example, the post seen in Figure 4.3 was coded with the elements 'Lake', 'Water', 'Trees', 'Nature', 'Female presenting', 'Swimwear' as all these elements are a feature of this post. Images were coded with multiple elements where relevant to give a broad overview of what was being shown in Instagram posts tagged with #bucketlist, not just focusing on a singular element.

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<p>Southern Most Part of the US "Key West"</p>  <p>♡ 👁 🗑 📌</p>	<p>Elements</p> <p>Ocean/sea Signage Fence Bikes</p>
<p>Lake Tahoe - Nevada State Park</p>  <p>♡ 👁 🗑 📌</p>	<p>Elements</p> <p>Lake Water Trees Nature Female presenting Swimwear</p>
<p>London, United Kingdom</p>  <p>♡ 👁 🗑 📌</p>	<p>Elements</p> <p>Tower Bridge River Architecture Famous landmark</p>
<p>Mong Kok 旺角</p>  <p>♡ 👁 🗑 📌</p>	<p>Elements</p> <p>City Urban Signage Crowds</p>

Figure 4.3: Examples of post tagging

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Using this denotative method, a total of 270 individual elements were coded across the 418 posts (see Appendix 2). The 270 elements ranged from having only one post that featured them to appearing in 119 posts. It is noted that coding these elements required judgement calls by the researcher as to what was a feature and what each element was; were coding to be undertaken by another researcher, results may be different in line with the constructivist approach taken for this study. After posts had been coded, a second check was done by the researcher across the 418 posts to ensure consistency of coding.

After coding, the elements were condensed to create 'categories' based on elements that could fit into similar groupings (Table 4.4). The creation of categories was no longer denotative and became connotative as it required specific interpretation by the researcher as to themes and groupings that existed within the data. Among the categories identified were 'Include nature', 'Include famous landmarks', 'Include one or more women', 'Urban setting' and 'Feminine'. The top 24 categories can be seen in Table 5.3.

Table 4.4: Number of posts, elements and categories

Number of Posts	Number of Elements	Number of Categories
418	270	24

While some categories were literal, other categories could be considered more abstract in line with the move away from the denotative coding. For example, the category 'Outdoorsy' was defined in this research to include the elements – walking paths and trails, rock climbing, hunting and fishing, mountains and waterfalls and tents. The category 'Feminine' was also abstract, including elements such as mud masks, balloons, flower crowns and those images that had a pink colour palette; also abstract was the category 'Masculine' which included hunting, fishing, 4-Wheel-Driving and bullfighting. The 'Tropical' category in this study contained beaches, palm trees, hammocks, and resorts.

In some cases, an image could feature multiple elements that fall within one category, for example, a post with a waterfall and trees – in these cases, the image was only included once in the category, in this case, 'Nature'. On the other hand, a single post could include

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multiple categories; for example, a person hiking up a cliff would be included in the categories 'Person as focus' and 'Nature as focus'. In some cases, categories could also be grouped as they also had similarities in what was being presented; for example, there was a category 'Includes nature or horticulture as focus', as well as a separate category just focused on 'Nature' as both classifications have value and a different meaning when it comes to presentation.

An array of well-known tourist attractions was identified during the process of coding the 418 posts in the sample. The researcher used personal judgement informed by popular culture, guidebooks, marketing, and personal travel experience to determine what were known attractions. The researcher believed that attractions coded in these results would be identifiable to a sizeable population of the public or Instagram audience who are interested in travel because of their status as global landmarks.

In this study, the categories 'male' and 'female' were based on the researcher's presumption of the outward gender expression of those photographed. This may not match with the gender identity of the people in these images but is what can be ascertained from an outside position and matches with the focus of this study on the presentation of self in a given image as opposed to a 'reality' of self.

4.3.2.3 Analysis – #bucketlist and presentation of self

Finally, this study focused on exploring how Instagram users use Bucket List posts as a component of their 'presentation of self'. To do this, the researcher worked in line with Goffman's theatrical analogy to develop four separate 'Stages' that Instagram posters used to present themselves to their audience. The four stages identified: 'Nature', 'Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy', 'Well-trodden' and 'Paradise' do not comprise an exhaustive list but present a range of presentations identified by the researcher that outline how Instagram users are presenting themselves via their Bucket List tourism experiences.

Identifying the four stages involved reinterpreting the dataset, specifically through the lens of presentation of self rather than the more objective approach taken in the coding process.

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The researcher looked at the 24 categories developed in *4.3.2.2 Analysis Research question 3*, and at the wider dataset of 418 total Instagram posts to develop the stages. Both the full dataset and the categorised data were used as each revealed different facets of presentation by Instagram users. The categories summarised the visual elements that posters included in presenting their identities in public; however, exploration of the full dataset of photos revealed patterns and themes which had not been specifically coded into elements as they have context beyond what is literally shown based on cultural norms and values. Combining the categorisation and these broader observed themes allowed the researcher to identify the four stages outlined for the presentation of self in #bucketlist images.

In addition, the idea of Aesthetic Production Design is presented and offers a concept related to the presentation of self and #bucketlist images. Aesthetic Production Design was identified to various extents within #bucketlist posts. The development of the concept of Aesthetic Production Design benefited from the researcher's emic position as a user of Instagram to interpret intangible elements of certain posts in relation to the idea of the Instagram aesthetic and expanded upon Manovich's (2016) idea of Casual, Professional, and Designed Instagram photos. The concept will be explored at length within the Discussion.

4.4 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations involved with research utilising social media have not been as widely explored as they have for offline research, in part due to the much more recent emergence of social media related research. However, pertinent issues within the field have been identified as including privacy, consent, and confidentiality (Moreno et al., 2013).

In the sphere of consent, all users of Instagram agree to Instagram's Terms of Service, including its data policy, when they sign up to use the platform. Instagram's data policy states that "Public information can be seen by anyone, on or off our Products, including if they don't have an account... Public information can also be seen, accessed, reshared or downloaded through third-party services such as search engines, APIs... and other services

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that integrate with our Products” (Instagram, 2018a). Instagram’s API specifically allows researchers and academics access to information on the platform, and their data policy includes information on this: “We also provide information and content to research partners and academics to conduct research that advances scholarship and innovation” (Instagram, 2018a). As such, all Instagram users have agreed to their data being used for research. There has been some discussion as to whether agreement to a platform’s data policy constitutes informed consent (Ravn, Barnwell & Barbosa Neves, 2019), however, this study takes the perspective of Bechmann & Vahlstrup (2015) that the policy can be considered as informed consent, but that data should still be handled with care and sensitivity in terms of ethical considerations.

Privacy and confidentiality are a key component of ethical research, and research should take steps to ensure the privacy of participants in a study (Ali & Kelly, 2004). To ensure the privacy of any Instagram users whose data were used in this study, the data collected were de-identified, and usernames were not collected. While the data were used for coding and categorisation, no photos that include identifiable people or dates of posting are presented in this paper. Additionally, for both practical and ethical reasons, data in this study were collected from public Instagram accounts; Instagram users have the choice between two types of accounts: public accounts – open to everyone, and private accounts – open only to followers they accept requests from. By using only public Instagram accounts, this reduces the risk of privacy violation. The researcher acknowledges the restrictions this puts on the generalisability of the study findings, as the context in which #bucketlist is used may differ on private accounts.

Data security is another important element of ethical research (Ali & Kelly, 2004); all data collected for this study stored at William Angliss Institute in a password-protected file. This data is only available to the researcher and their supervisors and will be held for five years as per minimum requirements and will then be destroyed.

Finally, the William Angliss Institute Ethics Committee advised that as all data being used for this study is in the public domain, this is a low-risk project, and as such, ethics approval did not need to be sought.

4.5 Limitations of the method

Studying the presentation of self on Instagram, specifically through the lens of #bucketlist posts, is a valuable way to understand how individuals present themselves to their social media followers. However, it is important to recognise that this type of study is not without limitations.

Instagram is one of the top social media platforms globally (particularly in 2018 when this study was initiated), but its use is not evenly distributed globally (Statistica, 2022). As Instagram is not a universal platform, the sample of Instagram users being studied is not representative of the global population, both due to audience preference and also for geopolitical reasons. In particular, the use of Instagram is banned in China (although accessible via a VPN) (Yuan, 2018), which not only means it is unlikely people will use Instagram while in China it also decreases the likelihood of this substantial market of travellers using Instagram while they are travelling. These factors impact both who is posting to Instagram, but also where they are posting their #bucketlist photos. The use of the term Bucket List which is in English may also impact who is represented in the sample of posts collected.

Similarly, Instagram is just one of many social media platforms, and while it has been presented why this platform is ideal for this study (1.3 Scope and Boundries) the results based on the Instagram user demographic would be different to other platforms studied. In 2018, Instagram's users tended to be younger, with higher popularity among the 18-24 age group (Smith & Anderson, 2018), and as previously mentioned were not evenly globally distributed. The data was gathered for this study was collected between 2018 – 2020. When the collection began Instagram was one of the most influential social media platforms with what some considered an outsized impact in popular culture (Victor, 2018), however in recent years there have been shifts in the popularity and impact of social media platforms and in particular TikTok has become increasingly relevant, especially with the youth market (Harwell, 2022). Research in the social media space, which is particularly dynamic,

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should be viewed in the particular context of time in which data was collected, as the popularity and impact of individual platforms can shift quickly both due to innovations in the technology side and changes in the consumer side (Appel et al., 2020).

Within this study, the analysis focuses on the front stage of the presentation via Instagram; the same way an audience would view Instagram posts, this positions the researcher as an observer. Fodor (1984) posited that it is impossible to be neutral when undertaking observational studies, which must be noted when considering this research. The content analysis undertaken in this study is also limited in that, by the nature of the study, assumptions were necessarily made about what Instagram users are presenting in their Instagram posts. The researcher's interpretation may not match that of the Instagram user or their intentions. In future study, interviews or focus groups of people posting to Instagram using #bucketlist could be conducted to give a more complete view of the perceptions of individual posters on Instagram who use the hashtag #bucketlist (Utekhin, 2017).

Another consideration is that of access, what an individual is posting to their Instagram with the #bucketlist might not be their ultimate travel Bucket List goal, but instead may show something more achievable (it is easier to get to the Eiffel Tower than to the South Pole for example). In another example, many travellers may wish to visit Australia, however, are not able to due to the geographic distance and/or high cost, which will in turn impact the number of Bucket List posts made from within Australia. It is for this reason that the geographic distribution results are compared to the UNWTO visitation statistics so variations can be highlighted, and thus indicate locations that have a Bucket List factor beyond standard visitation. In this study it is not possible to ask the posters if the locations tagged with #bucketlist are really their ultimate Bucket List items, however, within the context of this study the reality is somewhat irrelevant as the focus is on the presentation of the travel Bucket List on Instagram rather than the poster's actual Bucket List.

Audience reaction is not part of this study, but it is a key aspect of the presentation of self, according to Goffman (1959), and this may be seen as a limitation by some. By not including audience reaction to the presentation of self, we are missing one side of the interaction in

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understanding how individuals present themselves on Instagram. However, the practicality of this study is such that this element of Goffman's work cannot realistically be incorporated as it focuses on secondary data directly from Instagram, and not the reactions of audiences. This approach is reflective of Hogan's (2010) model of viewing posts on social media as 'exhibitions' rather than performance with live reactions, as incorporated into this study (laid out in 3.1.2). A researcher in the social media space could consider incorporating likes, comments and other reactions into their data, however in this instance the researcher has chosen not to incorporate these as they are dramatically impacted by the Instagram algorithm and cannot be seen as comparable data across posts.

For the qualitative components of this study, the researcher has sought to exclude Instagram posts that are paid or sponsored (known as sponcon), or posted by businesses, as these are unlikely reflect a true presentation of self. However, it is not always possible to exclude these posts; while, in theory, advertising or sponsored content on Instagram is required to be identified as such in many countries, the rules are inconsistent, and the self-governance of this space is rife with undisclosed sponcon, advertising and 'gifts' (Found Editor, 2019). For the quantitative components of the study, these posts were not able to be excluded due to the way the data was collated via API, thus the historic and geographic contexts of the #bucketlist posts does include data which is not focused on the presentation of self by individuals.

Finally in relation to Instagram posts, the Instagram algorithm can also be a limitation in this type of study. The Instagram algorithm determines which posts are shown to which users, and historical use of Instagram will impact what is displayed. This is part of the reason why the researcher decided to incorporate 'recent posts' as well as 'top posts' as the recent posts are less likely to be impacted by the Instagram algorithm and instead primarily present the most recent posts made using the relevant hashtag.

Outside of the limitations caused by using Instagram as a data source, another potential limitation of this study is the coding process undertaken. Images in this study were initially coded in a denotative manner, where "denotation corresponds to the literal meaning of an image, the immediate meaning relating to what is objectively represented in the image"

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(Aiello, 2006, p. 94). This is not to say that a denotative coding process is prescriptive and given the subjectivist lens through which this study has been conducted, the elements noted for each photo may be recorded differently when viewed by another researcher with different life experiences and perspectives. Williams and Moser (2019, p. 49) noted that the process of coding data is “more art than science” and, as such requires judgement calls by the researcher, which may not be reflected by other researchers looking at the same data, influential in this is the researcher’s western perspective and her emic position as an Instagram user. In the coding of ‘well-known’ tourist attractions, the researcher’s western perspective and her travel experience came to the fore and while all care was taken to code only attractions that would be understood by other travellers, the attractions coded may be different to those identified by another viewer.

The development of the Categories moved away from the denotative approach and into a space of connotation as some categories represented societal and cultural ideas rather than simply addressing what was presented literally in the photographs. The development also incorporated the researcher’s emic position as an Instagram user (1.3.1). This connotative approach may vary from researcher to researcher, and as such, the categorisation based on the elements may vary.

Finally, while the qualitative component of this study sought to overcome the impacts of seasonality in the data collection strategy for the individual Instagram posts, there is still the possibility of it impacting the results. This impact of seasonality is more likely in light of the cancellation of the final data due to COVID-19.

Overall, while studying the presentation of self on Instagram can provide valuable insights, it is important to recognise the limitations of this type of study and how they may impact the results.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the methods used to explore #bucketlist posts on Instagram. The chapter discussed the philosophical, epistemological, and ontological positions adopted in the study. It identified the qualitative and quantitative components of the study in relation to the study's research questions. Methods of data collection and sampling strategy were explained and then an outline of the data analysis was discussed. Lastly, the ethical considerations and limitations of the study were addressed.

CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the concept of the travel Bucket List on Instagram and the ways Instagram users are incorporating it as part of their presentation of self. This chapter presents results related to *Research questions 1 - 3* of the study. Hence, in line with the adopted methods, this chapter first establishes the history of #bucketlist on Instagram and the geographic dispersal of #bucketlist posts on Instagram (quantitative investigation) to address *Research questions 1 and 2*. It then offers the results of content analysis of 418 individual #bucketlist posts (qualitative), before presenting four 'stages' and one new concept emerging from the data, as seen through the lens of the presentation of self to address *Research question 3*. (qualitative).

5.1 The history of the Bucket List on Instagram

Instagram was launched to the public in 2010 (Instagram, 2018b), and the number of posts on the platform has grown dramatically since this time. To see how the use of #bucketlist has grown on the platform, dates of posting for every post that included #bucketlist between October 2010 and August 2018 were collected.

The dataset on the history of the use of #bucketlist on Instagram evidences the popularity of this hashtag and how it grew over nine years. Posts tagged with #bucketlist on Instagram between October 2010 (when Instagram began) and August 2018 (when Instagram changed its public API access) resulted in 6,228,912 individual pieces of data. In January 2011, only one post was made using #bucketlist. This was the first appearance of the hashtag on the channel, which remains today. Comparatively, in August 2018, the final month of data collection, 206,625 posts were made using #bucketlist.

The dates of posting for the 6,228,912 individual #bucketlist posts can be seen in Figure 5.1, which denotes the number of posts made each month between January 2011, when the first #bucketlist post was recorded, and August 2018.

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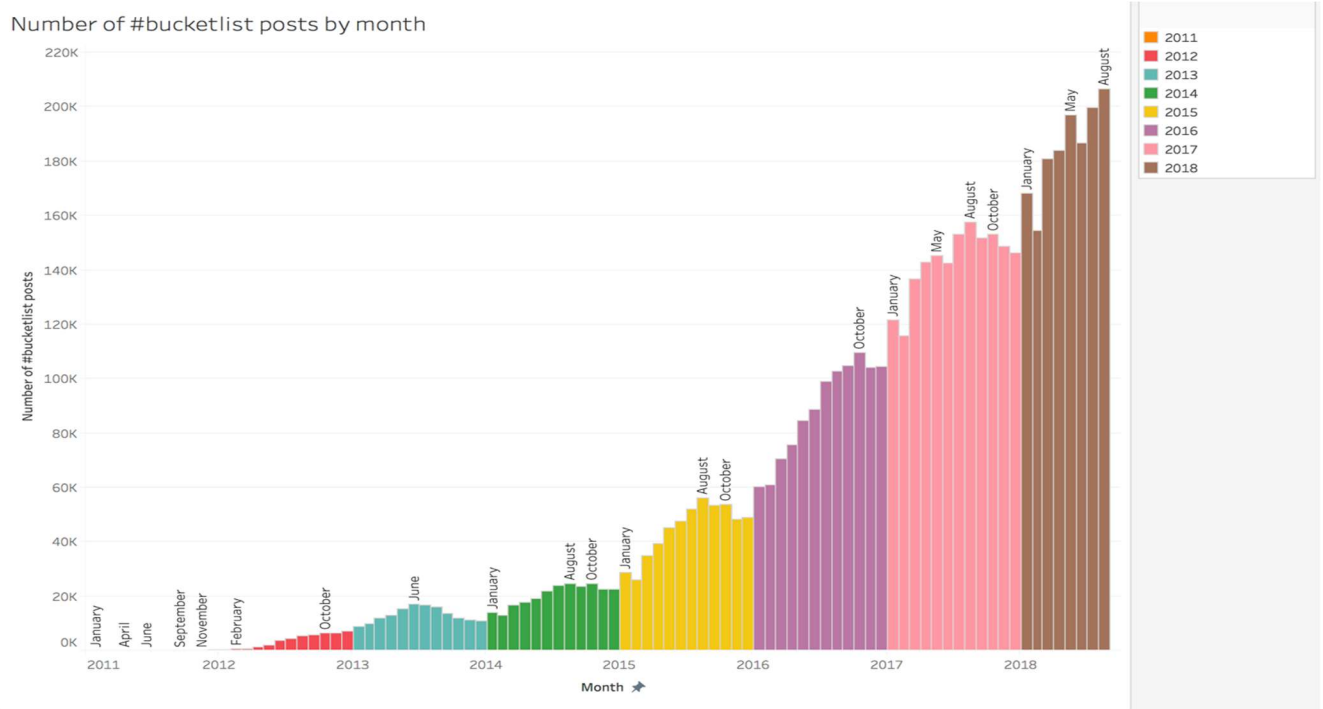


Figure 5.1: Number of #bucketlist photos on Instagram by month

It is evident from the data that there has been a substantial increase in the use of #bucketlist across the nine years of data collected. This growth has continued, and there were 11.7 million total posts with #bucketlist tagged on Instagram based on a search conducted on the platform on 16 June 2022.

The increase in #bucketlist posts on Instagram cannot be seen in isolation. In the same timeframe, the number of users on the platform has also experienced strong growth. Instagram grew from a brand-new platform in 2010 to one billion monthly users in June 2018 (Richter, 2018). This growth in users, indicated in Appendix 3, follows a similar curve to that of the growth in #bucketlist posts.

5.2 The geographic locations of #bucketlist

A map of the twelve months' worth of location data collected (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018) for #bucketlist posts, a total of 954,190 posts, is displayed in Figure 5.2. This heatmap indicates the concentration of the locations geotagged in #bucketlist posts, showing how the phenomenon was clustered around the world. This geographic context indicates what

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Bucket List locations and destinations Instagram users were choosing as a setting for presentations of self on Instagram.

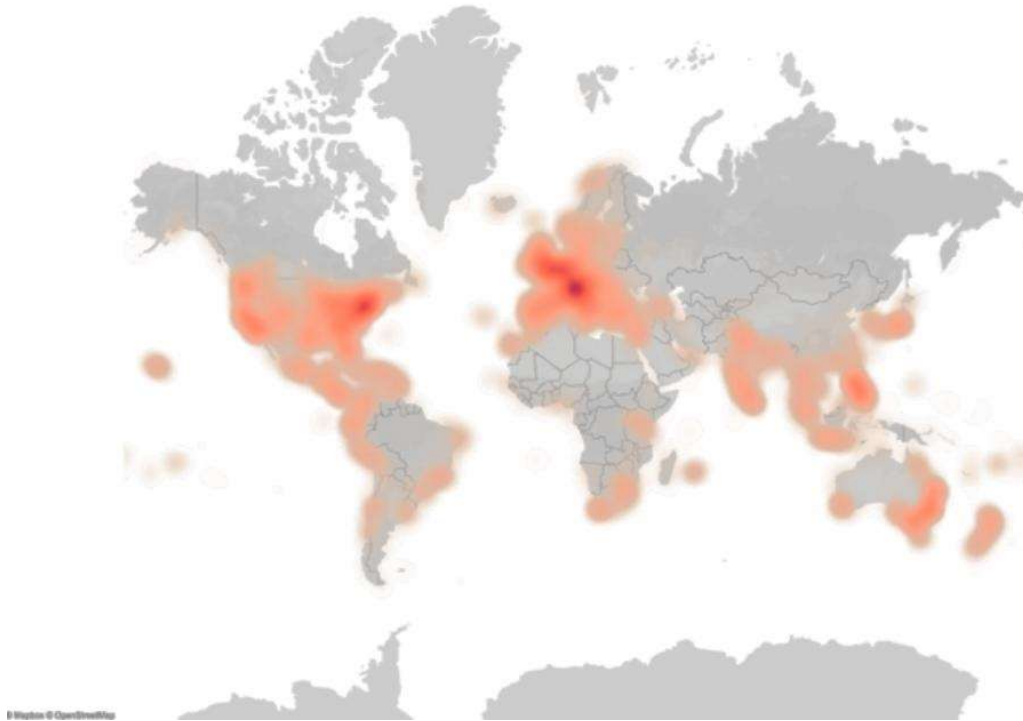


Figure 5.2: Heatmap of the geographic distribution of #bucketlist posts between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018

This diagramming indicates that the majority of #bucketlist posts were collected around Western Europe. The next most highlighted area appeared around East Coast USA, in particular New York City. Aside from these two areas of density in posts, other geographic regions also have a mass of #bucketlist geotagged posts. Further discussion of individual regions will follow.

The relative number of posts in the six main regions is somewhat consistent with tourist arrivals globally in 2017 as measured by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2018), although the Americas are overrepresented in comparison, and Europe is underrepresented (Table 5.1).

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Table 5.1: Geographic comparison of international tourist arrivals v #bucketlist posts

Region	Posts	% of total	Tourist arrivals 2017 (UNWTO, 2018)	% of total
Americas	336,635	35	210.9 million	16
Europe	295,306	31	671.7 million	51
Asia	193,994	20	306.5 million	23
Oceania	60,807	6	16.6 million	1
Africa	42,087	4	62.7 million	5
Middle East	22,182	2	58.1 million	4

Note: Data for Antarctica is negligible and therefore not included in this table, and some posts could not be classified into these regions, which results in a slight discrepancy in total posts.

The following sections (Figures 5.3 – 5.6) will provide greater detail, focusing on specific global regions.

5.2.1 Europe

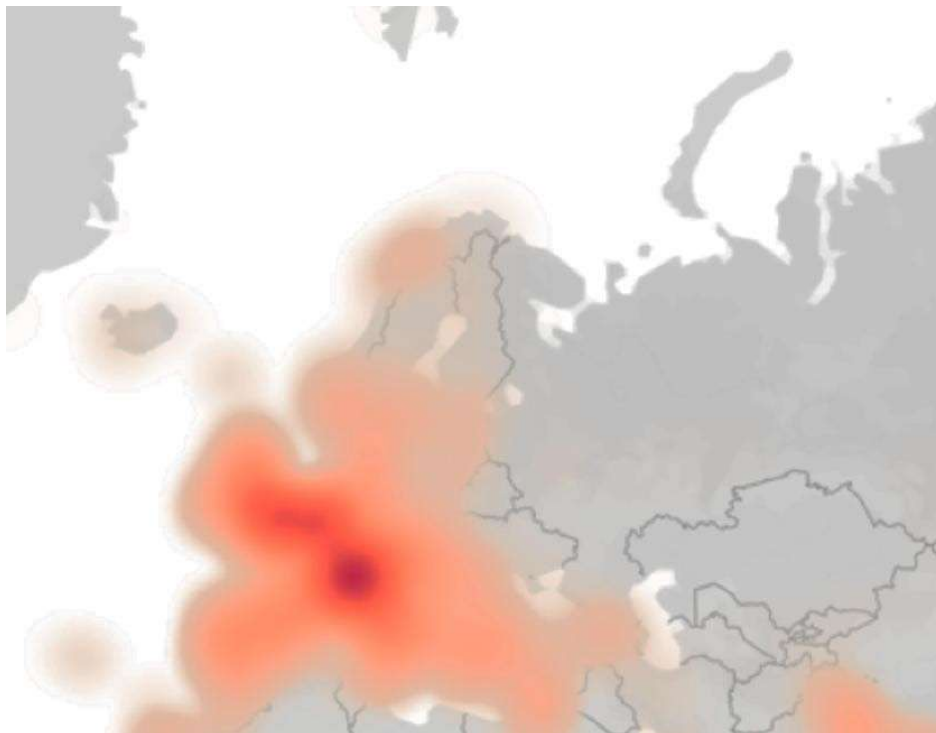


Figure 5.3: Heatmap of #bucketlist photos - Europe

Figure 5.3 illustrates the #bucketlist posts in Europe, representing 31% of posts collected, which were centred around France, the UK, Ireland and Italy. There was a high level of posts

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covering most of western Europe and some of eastern Europe, including Turkey. The further north or east one looks in Europe, the fewer posts occur. Belarus, Ukraine, and the majority of Russia had very few posts, as did the areas of Central Asia which feature on this map. Iceland's representation was limited, on par with the Canary Islands.

5.2.2 Asia and Oceania

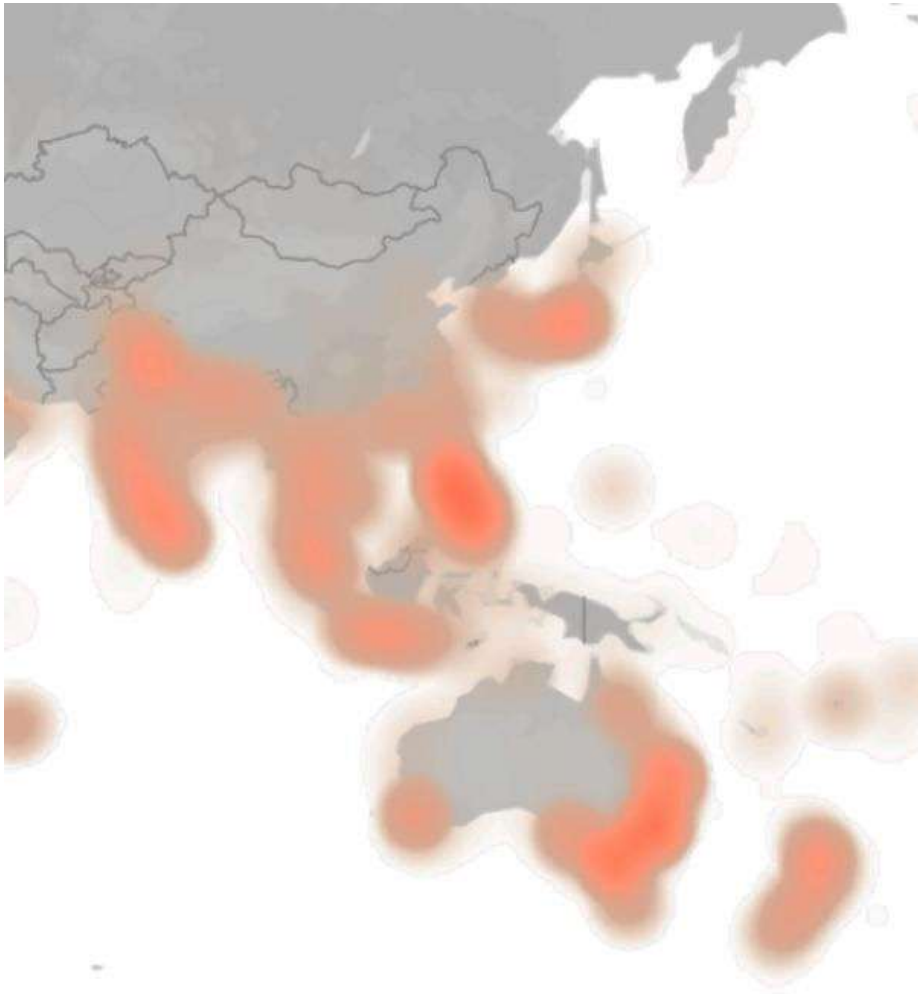


Figure 5.4: Heatmap of #bucketlist photos - Asia and Oceania

Hotspots in Asia and Oceania were more widely distributed than in Europe, linked to a less dense concentration of cities within much of the region (Figure 5.4). Of note is the popularity of the Philippines, which along with the East Coast of Australia, formed the most #bucketlist tagged locations within the region. Overall, Asia/Oceania had fewer #bucketlist posts than Europe and North America, but it still represented a destination with 27% of total Bucket List posts. Other areas within the region which were 'popular' are New Zealand,

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Japan and South Korea, India and Sri Lanka, and the strip of countries and regions from Thailand down through Sumatra, Java and Bali. Areas with very few posts included Central Australia, Papua New Guinea and West Papua, Sulawesi, Borneo, much of China (although this could be related to internet access issues from inside China), Mongolia, and Central Asia.

5.2.3 The Americas

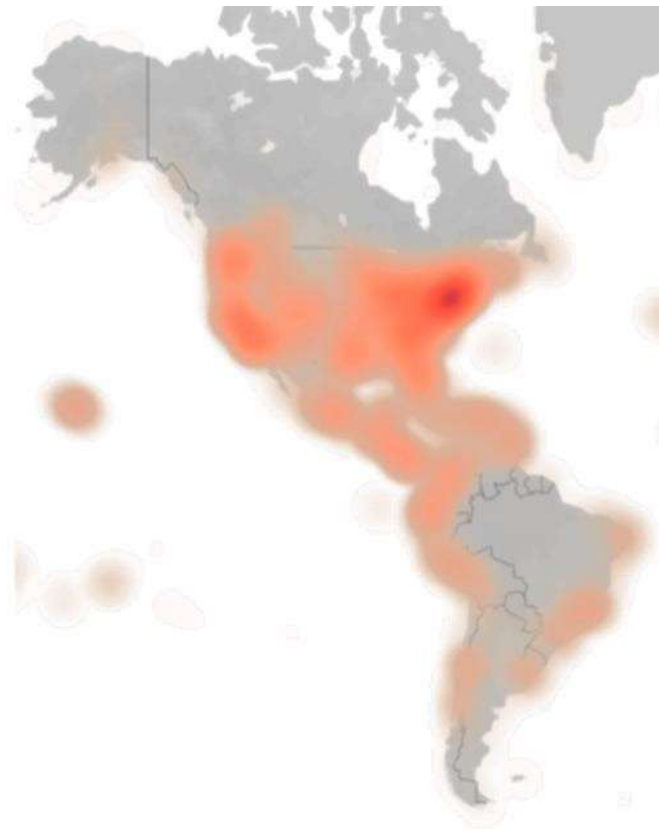


Figure 5.5: Heatmap of #bucketlist photos - The Americas

The Americas, seen in Figure 5.5, represented the largest group of #bucketlist posts collected (35%) (Table 5.1); North America made up most of these posts (27% of total posts), followed by South America (4%), Central America (3%) and the Caribbean (2%). As previously stated, the area around New York City and north to the Canadian border, including Niagara Falls, was the second most dense global hotspot for #bucketlist posts. The popularity of this area continued down through Florida and into Cuba and the Caribbean, gradually dissipating further south. On the east coast of the USA, from British Columbia

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down to California was well represented, with fluctuations in popularity down the coast. The central 'fly-over' states in the USA showed a lower density of posts.

To the north, Alaska and northern Canada presented very few #bucketlist posts. Hawaii, however, proved a popular place for tagging #bucketlist posts on Instagram.

Moving into Mexico, the north of the country and Baja California presented less #bucketlist post density, however from Mexico City and south into Central and South America, a consistent level of posts continued to the bottom of Peru, and some of Bolivia, with another hotspot around the north of Chile. The east coast of South America showed less density of posts, although parts of coastal Brazil and northern Argentina had a collection of posts. There was a relatively lower level of posts collected from South America than much of the rest of the world, on par with the level collected in Africa.

5.2.4 Africa

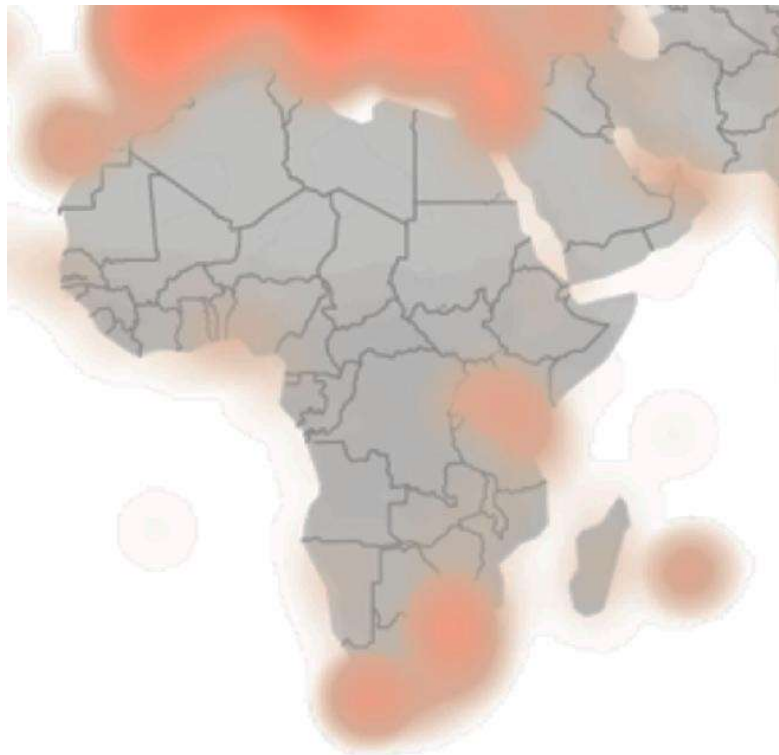


Figure 5.6: Heatmap of #bucketlist photos - Africa

Overall, compared to the rest of the world, Africa (Figure 5.6) had fewer #bucketlist posts (Table 5.1). Some more densely clustered spots did exist, particularly around Morocco and

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northeast Egypt, continuing into Jordan and Israel. In sub-Saharan Africa, the most popular #bucketlist locations were around the Kenyan/Tanzanian border – a popular safari destination near the Serengeti and across South Africa. Of interest is to observe that the islands of Mauritius and Reunion collectively presented a substantial number of #bucketlist posts.

Greenland and Antarctica, along with much of eastern Russia, are not included in these breakdowns, as they feature very few #bucketlist posts.

5.3 #bucketlist images

This section presents results in relation to *Research question 3 - What do the content and themes present in photographs tagged with #bucketlist on Instagram suggest about Instagram users 'presentation of self' within a Bucket List tourism context?* It focuses on the sample of 418 individual Instagram posts to analyse the content of identified elements and categories within photographs tagged with #bucketlist on Instagram. Further, it investigates for how these photos relate to the 'presentation of self'. The results presented refer to a snapshot of data collected in three different data-collection periods over three separate months – August 2019, November 2019, and February 2020.

As outlined in the Method (4.3.2 *Research question 3* data collection and analysis), the 418 individual Instagram posts collected were coded based on the elements that were visually prominent in each image. The designations of the dataset groupings – Elements, Categories and Stages are defined in Table 5.2. This process resulted in 270 individually coded elements (Appendix 2) which were then grouped into 24 categories (Table 5.3).

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Table 5.2: Dataset grouping designations

Designation	Description
Element	Each individual item coded in an image (e.g., waterfall, female, pig, hot air balloon) – as seen in Appendix 2.
Category	A group of elements identified in the coding process that fit into an identifiable category (e.g., elements waterfall, beach, lake, pool fit into the category ‘Includes water as a focus’) – as seen in Table 5.3.
Stage	Groupings of categories , elements or other themes that fit together and demonstrate how Instagram users are using their travel Bucket List in their presentation of self .

5.3.1 Categories of #bucketlist posts

This section presents a summation of the 24 categories of #bucketlist posts. It then examines more specific results regarding individual categories and themes. Table 5.3 presents the breakdown of the 24 categories developed. Due to the coding process (outlined in 5.2.2.2), elements and categories are not mutually exclusive; as such, the data presented in Table 5.3 do not add up to 418 posts.

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Table 5.3: The 24 categories of Bucket List posts

Category	Total Posts	% of total posts this category appears in
Include person or people as a focus	281	67.22
Include nature or horticulture as focus	218	52.15
Include nature as focus	208	49.76
Include water as a focus	136	32.54
Outdoorsy	99	23.68
Feminine	62	14.83
Urban Setting	74	17.70
Include landmark	66	15.79
Include human-made structures historic	63	15.07
Include tropical look/feel	61	14.59
Include a 'famous' landmark	51	12.20
Include art/culture	49	11.72
Include human-made structures modern	41	9.81
Include transportation standard	29	6.94
Masculine	23	5.50
Include horticulture as a focus	23	5.50
Luxury	22	5.26
Include sport or adventure activities	21	5.02
Include an identifier (e.g., signage)	18	4.31
Include food and drink	14	3.35
Include a 'wild' animal	12	2.87
Include a domestic animal	12	2.87
Include luxury transport	10	2.39
Rural Setting	7	1.67

Note: Posts can be categorised into multiple categories which are not mutually exclusive. As such the number of posts in this table is not equal to the total number of posts in the study.

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The most common element of Bucket List posts was that images included a person or people, with almost two-thirds of images collected showing a person or people (Table 5.3). More than half the posts included elements related to the category 'Include nature or horticulture as a focus', although the majority of these featured nature rather than horticulture (Table 5.3). Water was also a common element in the images collected, with almost a third of posts falling into the 'Include water as a focus' categorisation.

As seen in Table 5.3, natural sights were very common in posts; however human-made sights were also present. Slightly less than one in five posts featured some sort of urban setting, most commonly a city. Conversely, some posts featured a rural setting like a farm. One category presented human-made structures of the historic variety, and another presented more modern human-made structures. One in four images was categorised as 'Outdoorsy'; sixty-two posts fit into the category 'Feminine' while only 23 posts fit into the 'Masculine' category. Sixty-one posts fit into the 'Tropical' category.

5.3.1.1 Category - The presence of people in posts

As noted previously, most images (67%) within the sample included either a person or people as a focus of the post (Table 5.3). People were more commonly seen in 'top posts', with approximately 80% of top posts having a person included, while only around 50% of recent posts featured a person. Table 5.4 presents the ways people appear within #bucketlist posts on Instagram.

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Table 5.4: People within #bucketlist posts on Instagram

Element	Top Posts	Recent Posts	Total posts
Female-presenting	119	57	176
Male-presenting	12	27	39
Couple (male & female presenting)	15	15	30
People in the distance	14	10	24
Multiple female-presenting	9	3	12
Children	5	4	9
Crowd	1	3	4
Group of people – mixed gender	0	4	4
Multiple male-presenting	1	2	3
Include person or people as focus	167	114	281

Note: The category 'Include person or people as focus' presents the total number of posts, which include people as a focus; it is not the total of each column, as an image could feature a couple, and a crowd in the background (for example), and would only be categorised once as 'featuring people'

Of the #bucketlist posts collected which included people, the majority featured females either on their own or in a group of women (66.9% of total posts that feature people include only women). Less than one in eight of the images collected that featured people included men or a solo man as the focus. Approximately one in ten images that featured people included a traditional heteronormative 'couple' – where one presented male, and one presented female. The appearance of children, crowds and mixed-gender and all-male groups were not common within the dataset.

As outlined in the Method (Chapter 4), each individual post could have had multiple elements coded (Figure 4.3). In most cases, people pictured within the sample were only one part of the focus of the image, with the background or activity they were doing also being a feature of the image. Whether the image includes a beach, some signage, a cityscape, or them on a surfboard, for example, this harks back to the idea of props and setting as being important factors within the presentation of self. Examples of posts including people can be seen in Figure 5.7.

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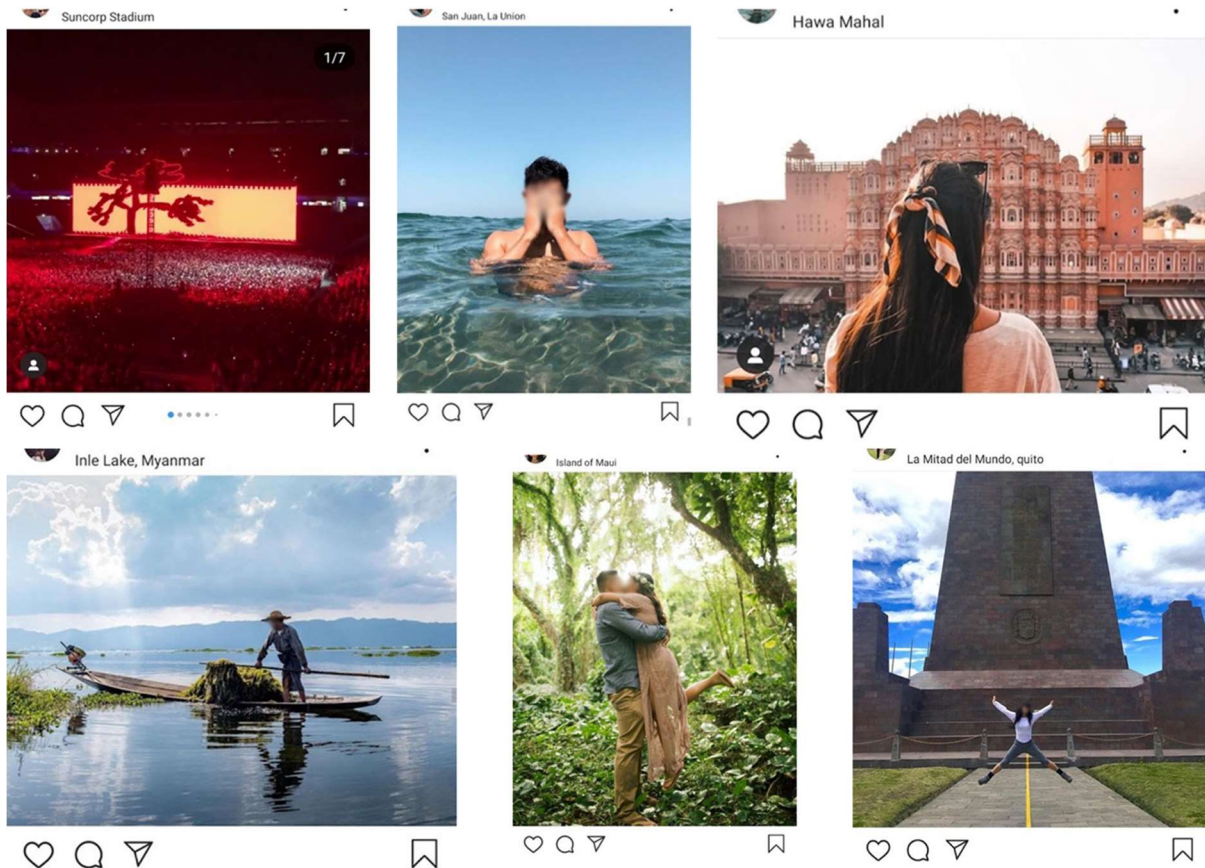


Figure 5.7: Examples of #bucketlist posts that include people

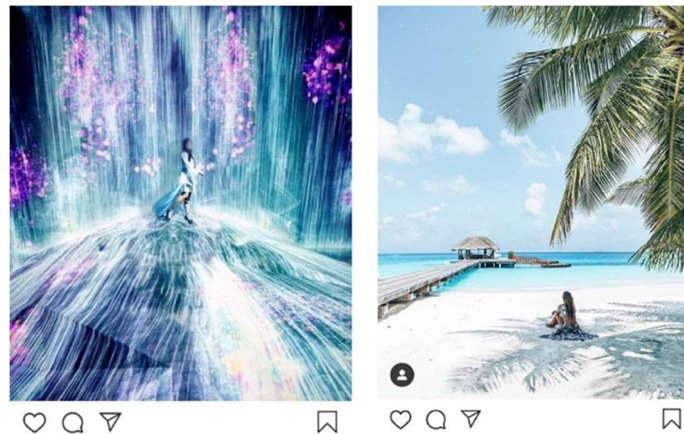
5.3.1.2 Top and Recent posts – key differences

Instagram divides posts into two feeds: ‘top posts’ and ‘recent posts’, and the original plan for this study had been to collect only ‘top posts’ (Method - Chapter 4; Figure 4.2). However, it became apparent that the photos, and therefore presentation of self, between the top and recent #bucketlist photos were markedly different and worthy of consideration. In selecting top posts, Instagram uses its propriety algorithm, and, although the criteria are not known to the public, it has been suggested they include factors such as likes, comments, saves, the popularity of the poster and content (Carbone, 2018a). This algorithmic prioritisation of certain posts suggests that Instagram (and therefore the broader public) prioritise ‘top posts’ content as the ideal Instagram content, an aesthetic that posters might be consciously or unconsciously trying to replicate. A complete comparison of categories within the top and recent posts can be seen in Appendix 4.

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Figure 5.8 illustrates a comparison between two typical ‘top posts’ and two typical ‘recent posts’ collected during this study. There was a marked difference between the appearance of a ‘top post’ and a ‘recent post’ in terms of aesthetics. While there is no such thing as a broadly appealing aesthetic across cultural boundaries, there is an ever-evolving idea of an Instagram aesthetic, closely linked to the idea of competitive photography, explored within the Literature Review (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018). Overall, images in top posts appeared more considered than those in recent posts, with a stronger focus on the photographic principles of composition, lighting, framing, editing, or filtering and, in many instances, more consideration or skill displayed by the ‘model’ (the person pictured) in posing. These factors led to top posts typically having an aesthetic quality that more closely matches the Instagram ‘look’ and makes them more visually appealing or cohesive within this context of Instagram. This is explored in more depth later in this chapter with the concept of Aesthetic Production Design (5.3.1.5).

Top post examples



Recent post examples

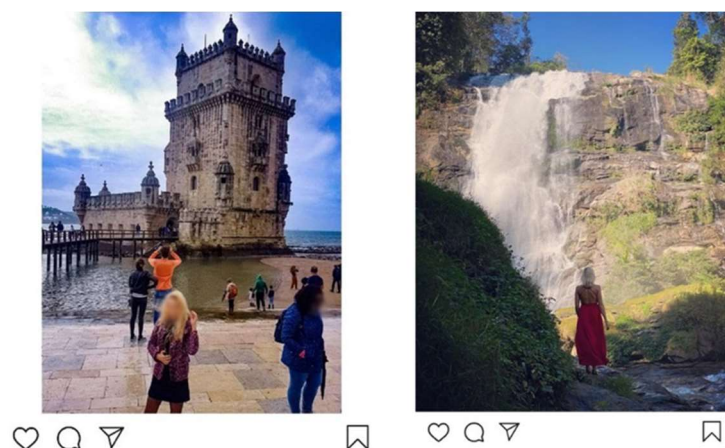


Figure 5.8: Examples comparing ‘top’ and ‘recent’ posts

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As well as these differences in image aesthetics, there were differences in what content people featured in their Instagram #bucketlist posts (Appendix 4). A much higher proportion of 'top posts' included people as a focus (80%) than recent posts (54%). In addition, 'top posts' were more than twice as likely to feature a female compared to recent posts, and, perhaps because of the higher presence of females, 'top posts' were more likely to include dresses or swimwear compared to 'recent posts'. These elements contributed to a higher likelihood that 'top posts' have a 'feminine' feel compared to 'recent posts'. 'Top posts' were more likely to include nature, water, or be outdoorsy than recent posts, conversely, recent posts had a higher propensity to include an identifiable landmark. A complete comparison of categories within the top and recent posts can be seen in Appendix 4.

5.3.2 Stages for the presentation of self

Core to this study is the notion that Instagram represents a presentation of self; it is through this lens that the results are presented. At the same time, Instagram is very much a social phenomenon within which the images and ideas presented must be performed in such a way that an audience of Instagram users can decode them. This suggests that images on Instagram exhibit stereotypes and ideas that already exist within society as commonly understood stages for the presentation of an associated self-image.

To demonstrate the presentation of self in relation to the travel Bucket List, four 'stages' upon which self-presentation is performed to the Instagram audience are outlined and explored below. Also offered is a new concept, 'Aesthetic Production Design'.

The stages were developed by taking into consideration the full dataset of 418 posts (including both top and recent posts), as well as the 24 categories presented in Table 5.3. Each post collected in this study is a unique exhibit of the presentation of self (Hogan, 2010). Each post offers a small insight into the world of the Instagram poster, curated to shape, and enhance the way the audience perceives them.

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The four resultant stages demonstrate a particular theme in the presentation of self: 'Nature', 'Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy', 'Well-trodden', and 'Paradise'. Each of these stages, and the reason for its selection within this paper, are outlined in the following sections. These stages represent four ways in which people use the idea of the Bucket List to represent themselves and demonstrate different examples of self-presentation. These stages are not an exhaustive list of potential stages for performance of the presentation of self in relation to the travel Bucket List, but present a range identified by the researcher as noteworthy. Other potential stages that future research may wish to explore could consider the masculine and feminine stages presented, the urban stage, the signposted/literal stage or the luxurious stage; these stages were not developed as the data indicated they had less relevance than the selected stages. It is important to note that the four stages are not mutually exclusive, meaning a single Instagram post may be placed in more than one of the identified stages.

Finally, an overarching concept is presented, that of the Aesthetic Production Design. This concept is not a distinct grouping but is about the design and staging of #bucketlist photos from within the sample. The concept of Aesthetic Production Design utilises the researcher's emic positioning as an Instagram user and expands on the idea of 'designed' photos as outlined by Manovich (2016). Posts utilising Aesthetic Production Design focused on the aesthetics and design of the image as a priority over content, such that the content is less relevant than the look of the image.

5.3.2.1 The Nature Stage

The category Nature translates directly to become the first stage presented in this study – the Nature Stage. Posts that were collated into the Nature category included one or more of the following elements categorised by the researcher as relating to nature: cliffs/mountains, waterfalls, beaches, trees and plants, ocean/sea, lakes, sand, river, rock formations, deserts, islands, waterholes, snow, clouds, reefs, savannah, geysers, rainbows, wild animals, or the northern lights. As highlighted earlier, almost half of the images collected for this study include these elements of nature, and it is this prominence within the dataset that justifies the category of nature becoming one of this study's four stages (Table 5.3).

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While nature-based tourism and ecotourism are a well-recognised part of the tourism landscape (Bell et al., 2007), the researcher had not anticipated the sheer volume of #bucketlist posts that included nature as previous literature had documented well-known, culturally revered attractions as forming the basis of most Bucket Lists (Thurnell-Read, 2017). This divergence from expectation signified nature as a stage worth exploration. Of the four stages presented in this study, only the Nature Stage and the Well-Trodden stages directly translate from the categorisation undertaken in 4.2.2.2, as the other two stages required interpretation beyond the denotative coding. Figure 5.9 provides some examples of typical posts which appeared within the Nature stage.

The data demonstrate that people wished to feature nature as part of their Bucket Lists when posting on Instagram. However, images in their #bucketlist posts did not always show nature alone, as seen in the examples below. Almost 40% of images that featured nature also included people as a focal point. In some cases, the primary focus of the post was the person, with nature as a background or stage for performance; in other cases, nature was the focus of the image, with people appearing incidentally. Some of the images appeared to be organic, while others seemed highly performative or engineered.

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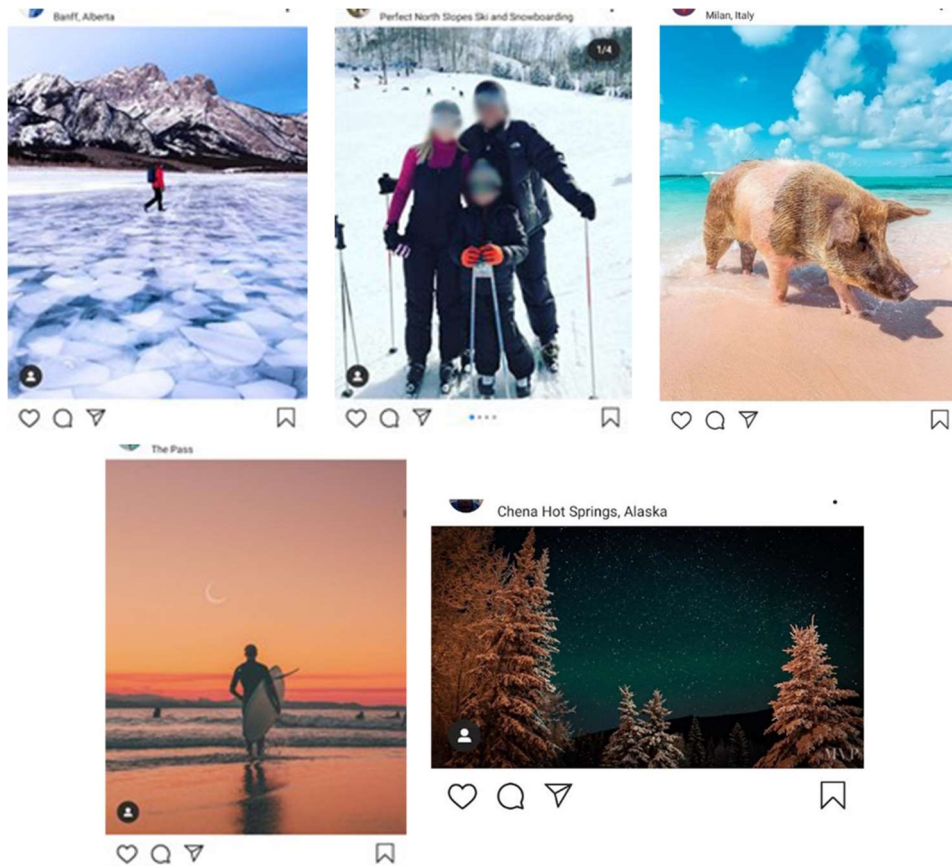


Figure 5.9: Examples of the 'Nature' Stage

5.3.2.2 The Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage

The next stage is the 'Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage', which presents as a subset of nature and the Outdoorsy categories. While the Outdoorsy category was identified in the coding process, the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy stage was developed on further reflection on the 'Outdoorsy' category of images. While the number of posts that fit into this stage was not large, the researcher considered this a potential emerging trend worthy of analysis.

The 'Outdoorsy' category included 99 total posts including individual elements seen by the researcher as being related to outdoor or adventure tourism activities, for example – mountains, waterfalls, walking trails/paths, hunting, fishing, rock climbing, skiing, surfing, 4WDing, tents. While there is a crossover between some of these elements, and those featured in the Nature category, these images pointed to an element of participation in nature or an attempt to tackle it.

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Within the 'Outdoorsy' category, the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage showed images of people, usually women, in a natural environment, presenting themselves as active (fit) and physically attractive (hot) while undertaking outdoor activities (outdoorsy). While other images in the outdoorsy category included people, in the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy stage, there was a core focus on not just looking happy or accomplished, but on looking 'amazing' – on human bodies looking toned, posed, poised, and highly curated within the natural environment.

A key feature of the images that fell within the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage was the presence of activewear, which appeared in 23 posts. While, in general, activewear may not make a photo 'outdoorsy', as it could be expected to include people at the gym, within the #bucketlist context, all 23 images collected that featured activewear placed the wearer in an outdoor recreational setting (it seems gym selfies do not make people's #bucketlists). Examples of the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage can be seen in Figure 5.10 and demonstrate a highly curated presentation of self in terms of setting (beautiful natural backgrounds), costume (skin-tight activewear) and, in some instances, props (outdoor gear such as rock-climbing equipment, backpacks).



Figure 5.10: Examples of the 'Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy' Stage

5.3.2.3 The Paradise Stage

The Paradise Stage presents the idea of a tropical paradise, which is a well-established archetype. The Western archetype of 'paradise' is often linked to tropical beach destinations – Mexico, the Caribbean, Bali, and the Gold Coast (Clancy, 2001; Gurtner, 2016;

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Murray, 2007; Rigney, 2018; Vandegrift, 2008). The archetype of the tropical paradise is summarised as “tropical paradise-lush vegetation, beautiful beaches, palm trees, coral reefs, and beautiful moonlight” (Punnett & Singh, 1994, p. 166). These destinations are the traditional locations for rest and relaxation, places to ‘get away from it all’. It is within this context that posts from the sample that reflected the idea of paradise are explored – the traditional idyllic tropical paradise. This idea of a tropical paradise was well represented within the sample of #bucketlist posts.

Beaches are a core part of the archetype of tropical paradise and were one of the elements initially coded within the #bucketlist sample. Just over one in ten #bucketlist posts in this study featured a beach. It is impossible to tell the actual climate of a #bucketlist post from the image, and not all beaches were tropical, so to create the ‘Include tropical look/feel’ category, elements including palm trees, resorts, some swimming pools, hammocks, and swing-sets in water were also incorporated.

Further reflection on the category ‘tropical’ revealed the idea of paradise. The Paradise Stage grew from the ‘tropical look/feel category’ and led to a broader consideration of the whole dataset to identify images that matched the idea of the archetype of paradise – where images represented the traditional western idea of a tropical paradise. Some typical examples of this Paradise Stage are displayed in Figure 5.11.



Figure 5.11: Examples of the ‘Paradise’ Stage

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5.3.2.4 *The Well-Trodden Stage (World Wonders and famous landmarks)*

The Well-Trodden Stage also relates to another well-known element of tourism – famous landmarks. The Well-Trodden Stage was selected for this study due to its relative infrequency within the sample compared to the researcher’s expectations. Where one might stereotypically expect world-famous attractions like the Eiffel Tower or the Pyramids to frequently appear on travellers’ Bucket Lists (Thurnell-Read, 2017), the frequency of their appearance within the #bucketlist image dataset was not particularly high.

As highlighted in 4.3.2 *Research question 3 Data Collection and Analysis*, an array of well-known tourist attractions and famous landmarks were identified during the process of coding the #bucketlist sample. These posts were then collated into the ‘Include famous landmark’ category. A total of 51 posts included famous landmarks, and these were more common within the ‘recent posts’ (30 posts) than in ‘top posts’ (21 posts). There were 33 discrete famous landmarks coded across the sample. The category included landmarks, both human-made and naturally occurring, and both ancient and modern. This idea of presenting famous landmarks became the ‘Well-Trodden’ stage.

The most featured landmarks within the #bucketlist images were the white buildings typified in the Greek Islands of Mykonos and Santorini and the ‘fairy chimneys’ of Cappadocia in Turkey. Posts also included Pyramids, the Golden Temple in Yangon, Myanmar, Tower Bridge London and two attractions from Peru – Machu Picchu and Rainbow Mountain. Some of the world’s most famous landmarks appeared only once in the 418 posts, including the Taj Mahal, the Colosseum, the Statue of Liberty, Uluru, and the Great Wall of China. At the same time, notably, others were virtually absent in the sample including the Sphinx, the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and the Sagrada Familia. The full list of famous attractions seen within the sample is in Appendix 5, and Figure 5.12 shows some examples of #bucketlist posts that fit within this category.

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Figure 5.12: Examples of the 'Well-Trodden' Stage

5.3.2.5 Aesthetic Production Design

Presented here is a final overarching concept that emerges from #bucketlist images, the concept of Aesthetic Production Design – a framing of images that incorporates Goffman's dramaturgical perspective and the idea of the Instagram aesthetic. Within a film and theatrical context, a production designer is the person responsible for overseeing the overall 'look' or atmosphere of the production (Tashiro, 1998). That idea has been extended to create the concept of Aesthetic Production Design, where the focus of the post is less so on the content of an image but on the mood, feeling and beauty it evokes. The idea of Aesthetic Production Design also expands upon Manovich's (2017) research which identified images on Instagram as 'casual', 'professional' and 'designed', where professional and designed images focus on being aesthetically pleasing. Still, designed images do it in a way that is more contemporary than professional images. All posts on Instagram will incorporate some level of design thinking, be they happy snaps or professional photos; Aesthetic Production Design is a step beyond where photos are taken and posted with aesthetics as the primary focus. Aesthetic Production Design can be used to various extents within any Instagram post where there is a focus on the aesthetics of the image. The images presented in this section to demonstrate Aesthetic Production Design represent it at its peak level.

Some examples of posts that utilised high levels of Aesthetic Production Design are shown in Figure 5.13.

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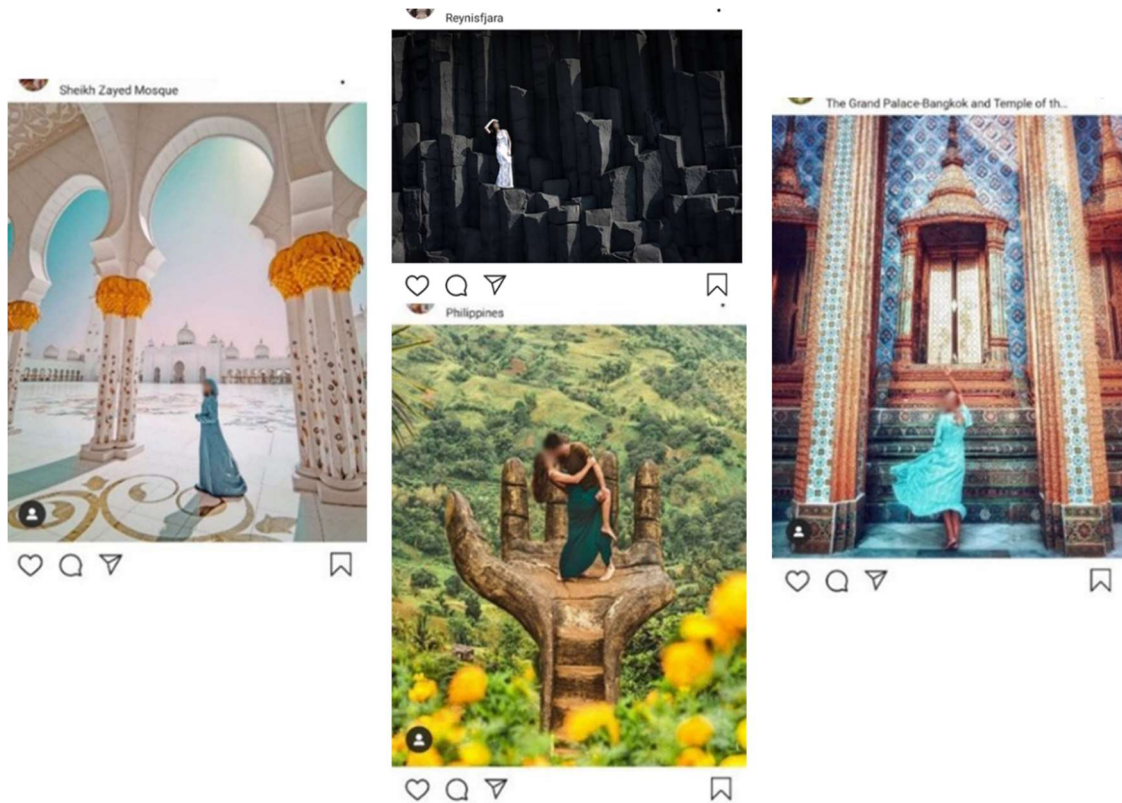


Figure 5.13: Examples of #bucketlist posts utilising Aesthetic Production Design

The researcher utilised her emic position within the Instagram culture to identify images within the dataset that reflected the idea of the pervasive Instagram aesthetic. The concept of Aesthetic Production Design came from reflection on the 418 posts in the sample as a collective, and a selection of images that specifically focused on beauty and aesthetics in a way that would appeal to the Instagram audience emerged from the data. These images were particularly prevalent in the ‘top posts’ and could be seen across an array of categories (Table 5.3). While there were no strict components that indicated Aesthetic Production Design had been used, these images stood out as more ‘designed’ (Manovich, 2016); in these images there was a focus on framing, colour, lighting and on images that could be considered art-like or cool, rather than simple holiday photos.

What is evident to an Instagram user (and most of the western public) in all these images was a high level of curation – colours are matching (or starkly juxtaposed), the background of the destination and the foreground featuring a person are linked through colours or poses. In some instances, the actual tourist destination was not specifically identifiable or was somewhat extraneous within the post representing the exotic or the far-away as a

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generic concept. These images were designed to be beautiful and evocative, and one suspects they take effort to create.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the results of this study, and key results of importance are summarised below. Firstly, the study showed consistent growth in the use of #bucketlist on Instagram between the years 2010 to 2018, highlighting that there are now almost twelve million posts which have used #bucketlist, indicating it is a popular tag to use on the platform. Next, the chapter showed the wide dispersal of use of the #bucketlist around the world, with increased prevalence in some of the world's most popular tourist destinations – Western Europe and the USA. In a comparison between the relative number of posts with UNWTO records on tourist arrivals, areas that received unexpectedly high #bucketlist posts included the Philippines, the east coast of Australia, Sri Lanka, Peru, Mauritius, and Reunion.

This chapter then moved to qualitative analysis and explored the images within the sample of #bucketlist posts collected. There are many possible themes that could have emerged from the dataset of #bucketlist images, and this study selected and presented four key themes, referred to as Stages, linked to Goffman's theoretical model of self-presentation and online exhibits of performance. These four Stages - 'The Nature Stage', 'The Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage', 'The Well-Trodden Stage' and 'The Paradise Stage' represent front stages within which presentation of self by #bucketlist posters on Instagram is exhibited. Finally, the concept of 'Aesthetic Production Design' is presented whereby the presentation of self occurs not only through the content of an Instagram post but also by the design of it and the way it fits in with the pervasive Instagram aesthetic.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

This study is the first known research to explore #bucketlist use in the context of presentation of self on Instagram. This chapter outlines the state of the travel Bucket List by addressing both the historic and geographic context of the use of #bucketlist on Instagram. The chapter then delves into the visual presentation of the Bucket List, focusing on Instagram as a stage for performance and presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). The differences between top and recent posts within the sample are explored before examination of each of the stages presented in this study – the Nature Stage, Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage, the Paradise Stage, and the Well-Trodden Stage. Finally, it considers the concept of Aesthetic Production Design and how images utilising this relate to the presentation of self.

6.1 The state of the travel Bucket List

6.1.1 Historic context

Research question 1 of this study explored the historical context of #bucketlist on Instagram. The travel Bucket List is a growing phenomenon – the volume of content relating to travel Bucket Lists in advertising and popular culture, as outlined in Context – 2.1.2, is supported by the consistently strong growth in the use of #bucketlist on Instagram. The study results showed 6,228,912 posts that used the #bucketlist between October 2010 and August 2018 (Figure 5.1). The number of #bucketlist posts on Instagram now sits at 11.7 million posts based on a search conducted on the platform for #bucketlist on 16 June 2022, which demonstrates continued growth in use. This growth in the use of the travel Bucket List across media and social media reinforces the notion that for many individuals, travel is a form of conspicuous consumption played out in an online environment and best enjoyed when shared with an audience (Dimanche & Samdahl, 1994; Magasic, 2016), and that Instagram users are using it in their presentation of self on the platform to their audience.

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While the travel Bucket List is well represented on Instagram, the impact of continual changes in the social media space, such as the introduction of Instagram Stories and Reels and new channels, including TikTok, may evolve as favoured posting channels for Bucket List travel presentations. Similarly, changes in the social media space may change what is considered fashionable to post. While this was not the focus of this study, it may provide inspiration for future research.

6.1.2 Geographic context

To address *Research question 2*, this research next explored what destinations are included on travel Bucket Lists as presented on Instagram, indicated by geotags on #bucketlist posts. As well as providing context on the general state of the travel Bucket List, this exploration highlighted an important component of the presentation of self on Instagram – the geographic locations users chose as a setting for their presentation of self.

Within the results of the geographic analysis laid out in *4.2 The geographic locations of #bucketlist*, there was a link evident between some of the world's most visited cities and countries of 2017 and 2018 ("These cities attracted the most tourists in 2018," 2019; UNWTO, 2018) and the areas which engendered the most #bucketlist posts, for example, London, Paris, Tokyo, and New York City. However, people placed a wider range of destinations on their Bucket Lists than just these most visited cities and the Philippines, the east coast of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Caribbean all displayed a higher rate of #bucketlist posts than tourist visitation to these geographic areas would indicate. This suggests that for many travellers, Bucket List destinations are not only the world's most popular destinations – those that receive the most visits; they are also destinations off the beaten path. Sigala (2016) noted that tourism is now often undertaken with the social media audience in mind, and Magasic (2016) pointed out that the online attention economy means that social media users can earn social capital; these unique #bucketlist destinations may allow Instagrammers to present to their audience that they are ahead of the crowd and undertaking travel which is brag-worthy. Consequently, these findings also highlight some emerging travel consumption patterns of Instagram users in this study context.

DISCUSSION

Marwick (2013) observed that there can be vast gaps between online and real-life identity, and on social media, users can create enhanced virtual versions of themselves. As such, it should be noted that a feature of Instagram is that a poster does not need to be physically present at a destination when geotagging it. What is important within this context is that even if the poster is not at the destination, they are still undertaking a presentation of self. Similarly, a poster does not have to believe what they are saying for them to be performing to their audience; for example, a poster may choose to post with #bucketlist to contribute to the #bucketlist conversation happening on Instagram or to try to gain attention despite not truly considering the destination to be on their personal Bucket List. By publicly presenting the destination as part of their travel Bucket List, it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). In both these instances, by virtue of posting and by using the #bucketlist, Instagram users are presenting themselves as at this destination and that they consider it to be worthy of being on their public Bucket List; the reality (or backstage) is irrelevant, the public front is what they are presenting to their audience as to how they want to be perceived (Goffman, 1959).

The desire by some to use the setting of a unique tourist destination to present 'coolness' and thus earn 'Instagram clout' is suggested by the diverse locations of #bucketlist posts (Figure 5.2) (Evans & Baym, 2022; Tiffany, 2019). The hunt for Instagram clout via presenting oneself as 'on trend' may lead to a continued search for the next 'hit' destination for posters to share on their social media feed as part of a social media pilgrimage (Magasic, 2016). This desire to present 'trendy' content may have mixed consequences; take the example of New Zealand's Wanaka Tree, which was inadvertently damaged by visitors seeking the best photo and eventually vandalised after becoming a social media sensation (Roy, 2020). Thus, the settings which Instagram users are choosing for the presentation of self via their tourism Bucket List can be seen as directly impactful to the tourism industry, and this may provide direction for future study.

6.2 The visual presentation of the Bucket List on Instagram

DISCUSSION

Goffman's (1959) theory of presentation of self has had a resurgence of relevance in the internet age (Belk, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and when Instagram users post photos on the platform, they are presenting their identity to an audience who in turn decodes the message (boyd, 2008). The goal of social media, according to Hogan (2010), is to present an idealised self. Similarly, the travel Bucket List is a compiling of ideal travel experiences (Thurnell Read, 2018). The Instagram posts shown in the Results (Chapter 5.3) provided examples of some of the ways that posters are presenting themselves on Instagram by linking themselves to their ideal travel experiences.

The setting individuals present themselves in is an important part of impression management, along with props and gestures (Goffman, 1959). In this study, the #bucketlist destination served as a setting for performance by the Instagram poster. In the various photos presented in the results, the setting seems to have differing levels of importance; in some posts, the #bucketlist destination is entirely the focus of the post, while in others, the performance by a person included in the post is the priority. There are also posts where there is a mix of both as the focus.

Even if the Instagram user does not feature in an image they post to the platform, there is implied performance – that they were there taking the photo; this can be seen in the photo of the festival in Figure 5.7, the pig at the beach in Figure 5.9, and The Colosseum in Figure 5.12. Although the poster may not be prioritising themselves appearing in the image, the audience is expected to decode that the photographer is participating in the scene and was there taking the photo, and as outlined by Sontag (1977), providing evidence of their travel. The Instagram feed became the stage, and each post on it is a performance or exhibition of their idealised self, as noted by Hogan (2010). In this research, the most common feature of the Bucket List posts was to have a person/people featured, indicating that for many, their presentation of self in relation to #bucketlist on Instagram does include literally presenting their physical self.

Additionally, it is also apparent from this study that an image posted on Instagram does not need to be a selfie as defined by Cardell and Douglas (2018, p. 1) as a digital self-portrait usually taken with a forward-facing camera on a mobile phone, to display the characteristics

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of the 'self-directed tourist gaze' (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016) or the 'selfie gaze' (Magasic, 2016). Many of the images in this study appeared to be taken by a photographer who is not in the image, or with some sort of tripod setup (for example, the couple in the forest in Figure 5.7 or the woman in the light installation in Figure 5.8). Despite these images not being selfies, the people photographed were still participants in creating meaning in the relevant #bucketlist tourism site by sharing their experience online through the exhibition of a social media post (Cardell & Douglas, 2018; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Magasic, 2016); whether selfie or not these Instagram users were presenting themselves via their photo and post.

Curating is an important part of social media, and it can be seen as performing – choosing what to show, what to hide and how to present oneself to the audience (Davis, 2017; Hogan, 2010; Seitzinger, 2014). While the researcher in this study did not speak to Instagram posters directly, Zhao and Lindley (2014) contend that curation on social media is expected, and it appears likely from this study's dataset that many of the posts were curated and selected to present a specific 'idealised' version of the self. This is the case even in images within the dataset that are less aesthetically pleasing – the poster still had to choose to post the image to their feed, most likely picking from several choices, and actively opting to tag #bucketlist, thereby presenting themselves along with their travel goal. Across the dataset of images collected for this study, Instagram users were presenting themselves in distinct ways in relation to their travel Bucket List, whether selfies, photos taken by other people, or images that do not show the poster. By presenting themselves on Instagram and linking to the concept of the travel Bucket List, they are telling their audience that 'this is me, this is one of my top travel goals, and as such this is peak among what I aspire to', thus adding strength to their presentation of self. Also relevant in their presentation of self is the specific travel Bucket List destination or experience and what the Instagram user was presenting by posting it; this is explored below through the four stages outlined in the results.

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6.2.1 Comparing presentation of self through 'top' and 'recent' posts

While all posts on social media represent a presentation of self by the poster (Canavan, 2017), the findings of this study show that 'top posts' on Instagram generally indicate a more highly curated presentation (Figure 5.8), signifying a higher level of backstage work to create content that resonates with an Instagram audience and the Instagram algorithm.

Tifentale and Manovich (2018) discovered that in around 20% of Instagram posts, the poster is actively seeking to post photos that demonstrate serious intention to be appealing, also known as 'competitive photography'; within this study, these images were more likely to be seen in the top posts collected. In terms of presentation of self, these idealised posts worked twofold – they both present what the poster is doing/where they are/how they look, and they presented a level of perfection or creativity attributed to the poster, thanks to the medium of photography. These images suggested a greater level of backstage work and curation to create (Goffman, 1959). The other 80% of images found in Tifentale and Manovich's (2018) study were 'home photography' where there was less of a focus on posting artistic photos, but which still represented a presentation of self by the poster on the platform. This difference can be seen within this dataset in the images comparing top and recent posts in Image 5.8 where the top posts fall into the category of 'competitive photography', while the recent posts are more in the style of 'home photography'. As they relate to the presentation of self, both the top and recent posts hold importance (Goffman, 1959). While recent posts represent the majority of posts on Instagram and the way that the 'average' person may be presenting themselves to their audiences when using #bucketlist, the top posts are important in their prioritisation by Instagram which, through their algorithm, has defined these posts as aspirational by their placement in 'top posts' feed.

Zhao and Linley (2014) asserted that on Instagram there is a focus on constructing, curating, and presenting one's best self, this is in line with Goffman's commentary about presentation of self (1959). To take an artistic Instagram photo (as with all photography) requires skill, creativity, time, potentially a 'model' who knows what they are doing when it comes to posing, as well as a beautiful or impactful background (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018). A noticeable component of many of the top posts within the dataset was that they followed

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the principles of 'good photography' outlined in the Literature Review (3.1.3) (Manovich, 2017; Datta et al., 2006); they utilised the rule of thirds, they focused on colour, light and saturation and there were less likely to be extra tourists lingering in the background (as there were in many of the recent posts). Fiers (2020) reported the importance of producing an idealised image while downplaying backstage work (such as editing), and Marwick (2015) contended that photos on Instagram could be presumed to have been digitally edited, and it appears that some of the images in the study sample, particularly in the top posts, have been edited with photo editing tools such as Photoshop and Lightbox. The likelihood of digital editing can be seen in saturation with enhanced and sometimes unnatural colours, backgrounds free of people and faces free of pores or wrinkles, for example, the woman in the artistic light installation in Figure 5.8. The use of digital manipulation can allow Instagram users to display an enhanced version of reality in their presentation of self, a way to try to avoid social embarrassment (Goffman, 1959), in the setting and hide some of the backstage of their Bucket List tourism endeavours, be it rubbish, bug bites, bad weather or other travellers.

The images collected in this study from the top posts tab were more likely to match the 'Instagram aesthetic' (Tolentino, 2019), while the photos from the recent posts tab were more akin to the traditional holiday 'happy snap', called 'casual' photos by Manovich (2017). While some of the photos in recent posts were aesthetically pleasing, on average, they were more likely to include awkward posing, people in the background of photos, lighting that is less than ideal, or composition which does not appeal to the eye; an example can be seen in comparing the top and recent post examples shown in Image 5.8. This suggests that some of these posters were not aiming to present themselves as glamorous Instagram influencer traveller (although some may certainly be trying but lack the skill or the resources previously explored). However, they did still want to show the world that this is them travelling; they were achieving one of their Bucket List goals as part of how they choose to present themselves online (Goffman, 1959). This performance of self allowed posters to present themselves as a person who holidays or travels, is undertaking conspicuous consumption of the tourist destination (Veblen, 1899), and linked them to the Bucket List setting shown in their images.

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Recent posts were more likely to include identifier elements like signage which help decode the image to the viewer ('Include an identifier' in Table 5.3), with one such example showing two girls under a 'welcome to Utah' sign – perhaps here the presentation by the poster is simpler – the Bucket List goal is to visit Utah with a friend. Other examples in a similar vein include two young women holding a playbill for the stage show *Hamilton*, and a photo of a bollard marking the southern-most point of continental USA. The inclusion of an identifier or prop makes these images more literal in their presentation of self and makes decoding by the audience more straightforward (Goffman, 1959). With Instagram public posts, the potential audience is anyone with an internet connection (Sigala, 2016) however for those posts that do not appear in 'top posts' or the 'explore feed' of Instagram, the likelihood is that they will be seen primarily by the posters followers, made up of friends and acquaintances. This reinforces the idea of Instagram as the latest version of the slide night family (albeit one that friends and family can escape by simply clicking away!) where one presents their travel self to their audience (Mitchell, 2018).

Both recent and top posts on Instagram represent the presentation of self by the Instagram poster, with a front stage presented in the exhibition post on the platform, and a backstage hidden from view (Goffman, 1959; Hogan, 2010). The top posts seen in this study suggest a higher level of curation and hiding of the backstage than posts that were collected from the recent posts feed. The most curated images collected in this study will be further explored in the section on Aesthetic Production Design (6.2.2.5).

6.2.2 Key Stages for performing Bucket List travel

While the Bucket List destination is the setting for the presentation of self, there were many other elements of Bucket List posts that serve as sign vehicles to help the audience decode their presentation (Goffman, 1959). Sometimes these sign vehicles were a part of the destination (for example, the concept of a beach and what it represents, no matter what the specific beach is), sometimes they were broader and as indicated by Goffman (1959) could incorporate costumes and props. By using the #bucketlist in these posts, as suggested by Thurnell-Read (2018), posters were implying this is one of their goals, a peak travel experience; this is who they aspire to be. The four stages explored below present tropes

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within Bucket List tourism revealed by this study. The stages presented reinforce earlier findings that images on Instagram present the self in ways often performed in real life, through wealth, health, and beauty (Deeb-Swihart et al., 2017).

6.2.2.1 *Nature*

The Nature Stage is one of the four stages identified for performance and presented in this study. By placing themselves on a natural stage and using the #bucketlist, these posters on Instagram were presenting that at least one of their peak travel goals or their Bucket List destinations are of the natural world. The stereotype of the traveller attracted to nature is an outdoorsy, potentially adventurous, young, and fit traveller who is down to earth and 'real'. While this may not be the objective truth, it is the implied performance being undertaken by many of those posting in the Nature Stage.

Images in the Nature Stage located within the dataset, both included people, as in the case of the family of skiers and the man alone on the ice, and did not include people, for example, the nightscape of stars and trees, all shown in Figure 5.9. In images from the Nature Stage that did not include people, the Instagram audience shares with the poster the tourist gaze outlined by Urry (1992) into nature, and this gaze is reflected onto the poster, who is now associated with the scene. This elevates the poster to being at one with nature, thereby reinforcing their association with this environment as a stereotypical nature tourist – someone intrepid who likes exploring and being challenged, not someone who wants to 'just relax' on holiday. On the other hand, there is a distinct group within the posts in the Nature Stage that presented a solo traveller staring into the distance, alone in the world; for example, the man walking on ice in Figure 5.9 or the woman on a cliff in Figure 5.10. By posting a picture of themselves alone in nature, there is an implication of individual strength and almost meditative quality in these images, which is delivered to the audience. Some of the images imply an integration into nature, as well as gazing upon it, further connecting the poster with nature.

Within the Nature Stage, there are posts that included props and costumes which presented the poster as surfers (surfboards and swimwear), 4-wheel-drivers (4WDs), safari participants

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(giraffes, leopards, and other wild animals), SCUBA divers (SCUBA gear), skiers (skis and ski outfits) and more (Appendix 2). Each of these individual presentations was curated to position the poster in a specific way as associated with each activity. As on the TV show *Alone*, people in the nature stage were using these outfit and prop choices to present their front (Beames, Andkjær, & Radmann, 2021). The Nature Stage is very broad, and there are a lot of impressions posters could have been trying (and succeeding) to create specifically through the activity they choose to display. The theme of nature photos on Instagram can regularly be seen on *Insta_Repeat*, with the account most often highlighting remarkably similar images of natural scenes, indicating that nature is a popular theme on Instagram even outside of #bucketlist images. A specific example of one of the presentations delivered in the Nature Stage is explored next within the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage.

6.2.2.2 *The Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage*

The Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage is a subset of the Nature Stage, presenting a uniquely different presentation. The posts in the study's dataset that fall into the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage present the users as not only in nature but as being 'outdoorsy' - tackling and overcoming nature and looking good while doing it. All images in this Stage include people, and these people are not simply observers; they are active and participatory with the natural environment, or 'mother earth' whether by hiking, rock climbing or taking their yoga practice into nature. For the audience, the inference is that the poster is adventurous, young (in years or at heart), fit, and active. In this stage, nature is the backdrop that reinforces their presentation of themselves as physically fit, conventionally attractive and as a person who is at one with the outdoors.

Of particular interest is the clothing worn in many images that fell into the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage (Figure 5.10), much of which fits into the category of 'activewear'. MacGillivray and Wilson (1997) highlighted that the clothes or costumes people present themselves in are an important part of their presentation of self. In the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage, gone are the 'dorky' woollens, plastic over pants and gaiters once the privy of outdoor adventure tourists. In this stage, costume is part of the process of impression management, which may be equally important to the presentation of self as the

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nature-based setting (Deeb-Swihart, Polack, Gilbert, & Essa, 2017; Goffman, 1959; MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997). Since the start of the millennium, activewear, once reserved for exercise alone, has taken on a new role in fashion and can be seen to embody a fashionable lifestyle “achieved through a regime of self-discipline, and that symbolises the pleasure in attaining and displaying the healthy and fit body” (Horton, Ferrero-Regis, & Payne, 2016, p. 180). As with all presentations and exhibitions of self, how much the presentation by posters in the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage is believed depends on the audience’s decoding of the presentation, and how consistent it is with past performance and potentially real-life experiences with the poster (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Goffman, 1959; Witty, 2008).

By posting their Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy images with the #bucketlist, these Instagram users were presenting that their ultimate travel goals are not just to see things but to tackle and even conquer them, or at least give the impression thereof. These posts have a strong link to Adventure Tourism, reinforcing Humberstone’s (2009) assertion that some use adventure as an aesthetic sign in constructing their identity, whether real or performed.

6.2.2.3 *Paradise*

The archetypal tropical beach paradise is evident in the images explored within this study. In tourism literature, the archetype of ‘paradise’ is often linked to tropical beach destinations – Mexico, the Caribbean, Bali, and the Gold Coast (Clancy, 2001; Gurtner, 2016; Murray, 2007; Rigney, 2018; Vandegrift, 2008), the traditional locations for rest and relaxation, a place to ‘get away from it all’. It is within this context that images within the sample reflected the idea of paradise – in the traditional sense of idyllic beach paradise. Osborne (2000) reflected on the beach as a stage, a background of sand, water, and sky where people place themselves in front of a camera, a place to be seen.

Images within the Paradise Stage represent one element of the concept of paradise – the purest traditional Western idea of relaxation and leisure focused, in this case, around the tropical beach (Cooper, 1994). In almost all images within the dataset, the only people who appear in the images were those who are a focal point (or those very far away in the

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background), as seen in Figure 5.11. What is apparent is that those posting their #bucketlist images were not people who want to represent themselves on a crowded beach filled with other tourists. The suggestion inherent in these images is that these beaches or paradisiacal locations are remote, special to just the poster. This reflects on the poster as special, alone in paradise, someone to be envied for their blissful life.

In many of the images that fall into the Paradise Stage, the actual location of the beautiful beach is not recognisable (although it may be discernible from a geotag on Instagram – Figure 5.11). So, despite stating in their hashtag that this is a Bucket List location, what the poster may be presenting is that their Bucket List includes relaxing in a beautiful spot, not necessarily a specific spot. The presentation here implies that the poster is so busy and important in their everyday life that they need a tropical holiday to get away from it all, to the extent that it becomes a Bucket List travel goal. The Paradise Stage shows some of the most stereotypical conspicuous consumption of leisure goals (Veblen, 1899), a presentation of wealth in terms of time and money to the audience.

Images in the Paradise Stage, in many cases, were postcard-like, the kind of beach location one can imagine emblazoned with the words ‘Wish you were here’, harkening back to commentary by Stylianou-Lambert (2012) of people seeking to replicate images seen in postcards. Among many other #bucketlist posts with more creative, unique, off-the-beaten-path destinations pictured, the idea of the idyllic beach holiday lives on within Bucket Lists. In some cases, the poster may have gained social capital by tagging themselves in a beach location that is more remote or more glamorous, however, as previously noted, many beaches are otherwise indistinguishable. In some of the posts within the Paradise Stage, the images did not feature the faces of those pictured; they offer the opportunity to viewers to ‘put themselves in the picture’ with those who are pictured at times facing away, silhouetted or in the far distance.

In three of the photos in the Paradise Stage, a beach swing appeared; an example is seen in Figure 5.11. These swings have become popular at tourist destinations and may be becoming a part of the landscape of paradise. Photos of people swinging at a beach or over water reflect not only the previously mentioned image of leisure and

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relaxation but also include an element of youth and play from the traditional children's toy, additionally, they're often aesthetically pleasing. These swings have proved a popular addition to tourist destinations, with an article on Fodors.com noting:

Swings are fun, whether you're five or fifty. There's something freeing about propelling yourself through the air, although nothing beats the familiar tingling tummy rush as you arc back down to earth. Combine that with some spectacular scenery and you're onto a winner (Cocking, 2019, p. 1).

Within the data collected for this study, there were more of these Paradise Stage images than there were of well-known landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Pyramids, Platform 9 & $\frac{3}{4}$ and other major attractions (Table 5.3 provides a comparison between categories 'Include a famous landmark; and 'Include a tropical look/feel'). It is interesting to consider the implication that a tropical beach was more likely to appear on many people's Bucket Lists than any of these well-known attractions and that while Instagram posters seem to be avoiding replication of well-known landmarks, many were presenting images of tropical beach paradises which have little visible difference between them.

6.2.2.4 Well-Trodden - World Wonders and famous landmarks

Upon beginning this study, the researcher anticipated well-known tourism attractions would be a substantial feature of #bucketlist posts on Instagram as posters sought to present themselves as having travelled to the most famous tourist attractions in the world (Goffman, 1959); however, as evidenced earlier (in 5.3.1.4), this was not the case. With just over one image in ten within the dataset, including a famous or well-known attraction, this is a strong indication that many travellers did not wish to place themselves on the Well-Trodden Stage (Table 5.3). This is at odds with Thurnell-Read's (2017) discourse analysis that found Bucket Lists conformed to an established concept of culturally worthwhile destinations which could be considered the 'original' or the 'best' (Thurnell-Read, 2017).

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A subset of the famous landmark category relates to World Wonders: The New Seven Wonders of the World, which were voted on in 2007 - The Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal, the Colosseum, Chichén Itzá, Christ Redeemer, Petra and Machu Picchu, and the Great Pyramid of Giza as the one remaining Ancient Wonder of the World (Tikkanen, Unknown). Given the renowned status of these global attractions, the researcher anticipated that they would be on people's travel Bucket Lists and thus feature heavily in the #bucketlist sample (Thurnell-Read, 2017). However, while six of these eight wonders are featured, what is of particular interest is that these attractions were far from prominent within the recent posts collected, as outlined in Appendix 5. In addition, almost all posts that included World Wonders were from the 'recent posts' category, suggesting that photos of World Wonders are not seen as aspirational on Instagram. The lack of World Wonders in #bucketlist on Instagram suggests that these most famous attractions are not what people seek to 'show off' to the wider world when they embark on their 'once in a lifetime' trips and post about them on social media.

Tripadvisor claims, based on reviews on their platform, that the most popular tourist attractions of 2018 were the Colosseum, Vatican Museums, the Statue of Liberty, the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, Sagrada Familia, the Golden Gate Bridge, Stonehenge, Versailles, and Venice's canals (Tripadvisor, 2018), however, there are only a few posts that showed these sites in the photographic #bucketlist sample collected for this study. The distribution of #bucketlist posts highlighted in the geographic data (Figure 5.2, Table 5.1) indicates that broadly speaking, these attractions are in areas that have a high concentration of #bucketlist posts. However, given that travellers were still visiting, for example, Paris and New York and Venice, as evidenced by the geographic data, but were less frequently posting images of these key attractions, it raises the question of what the posters are showing in their posts from these geographic locations tagged as Bucket Lists destinations. It may be that Instagram users were posting from lesser-known locations in these key areas, as demonstrated in some of the images within the sample. Further research is recommended to investigate this conjecture. It seems likely that it may now be cooler to show your Bucket List item as having a croissant at a café in Paris rather than gazing upon the Eiffel Tower. Instagrammers who choose to do this may be presenting themselves as 'too cool' for or not

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caring about the mainstream. However, they are still associating themselves with the tourist mecca that is Paris and all the glamour and luxury it implies.

There is an element of authenticity or 'getting in with the natives' in this narrative, as explored by MacCannell (1973). In this version of the travel Bucket List, it may be that the goal for the traveller, or at least the image they want to portray, is that they are more like a local – they do not want to *see* Paris, they want to *do* Paris. The poster may also be trying to say to their audience that they are so well travelled that they do not need to post something as rudimentary as the Eiffel Tower; of course, they have seen that it has been ticked off the list and now they have moved on to 'cooler' more authentic travel experiences. This suggests that people are often using their posts with #bucketlist not to claim their ticking off the classic big-ticket items, but that they are more adventurous – they are such good travellers they have already done the main attractions of the world, and now it is time for them to branch out – they need to put more unique, difficult to access or off-the-beaten-path destinations and attractions on their Bucket List. This is congruent with Bronner and de Hoog's (2018) assertion that visiting cool destinations or having unique experiences is a key factor in destination choice and may in turn encourage other Instagram users to consider these destinations (Terttunen, 2017).

The most featured well-known attractions within the posts collected were Cappadocia and the Greek Islands. The Greek Islands were seen, around 2018 and 2019, as a 'cool' destination, regularly profiled in glamorous magazines and by influencers and seen as highly 'Instagrammable' (Bateman, 2019; Dawson, 2016; Paula, 2019). These images of white buildings with blue water are almost a stereotype now and have come to represent youth, summer, freedom, and hedonism. Similarly, Cappadocia was also seen to be a social media influencer hotspot around 2018. This was reflected in five posts within the sample featuring the area, and its famous hot air balloons, as indicated by many travel blogs (Yara, 2018). By attaching themselves to these locations, the posters could claim the social capital these destinations held within the popular culture at the time, allowing them to present themselves as on trend with what is in fashion in tourism, particularly within the Instagram community.

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The concept of ‘Instagram face’ has been identified to highlight how many celebrities and those who aim to look like them have begun to look the same online as they conform to an Instagram curated beauty standard (Tolentino, 2019). Similar could be said about travel photographs on Instagram, evidenced by these repeated photos of the Greek Islands and Cappadocia, where people are presenting similar images of these popular destinations. This idea connects with the older concept of trying to replicate images that are on guidebooks or postcards, copying something beautiful, using someone else’s creativity and claiming it as one’s own (Urry, 1990), as well as the idea outlined by Benson and Silberman (1986) that even when not replicating specific photographs, many holiday photos are ‘virtually identical’. Despite not being of the world’s most stereotypically famous destinations, these repeated images within the study sample reflect the conclusions of Jenkins (2003) and Caton and Santos (2008), who found that travel photography often represents a photographic hermeneutic circle or ‘circle of representation’. This replication of styles of Bucket List images suggests that while people in some ways want to present themselves as unique, there is comfort in presenting a self that is consistent with other people within the same culture, congruent with Goffman’s (1959) assertion that individuals seek (actively or passively) to present themselves in a way that avoids the embarrassment of being socially different. Further exploration with a larger sample size of #bucketlist images may confirm this repetition and is a potential direction for further study. Additionally, the links between Instagram and overtourism have been explored (Gretzel, 2019; Shin & Xiang, 2020) and may be able to be applied to these on-trend destinations.

6.2.2.5 Aesthetic Production Design

“[Instagram] has its own aesthetic language: the ideal image is always the one that instantly pops on a phone screen. The aesthetic is also marked by a familiar human aspiration, previously best documented in wedding photography, toward a generic sameness. Accounts such as Insta_Repeat illustrate the platform’s monotony by posting grids of indistinguishable photos posted by different users—a person in a yellow raincoat standing at the base of a waterfall, or a hand holding up a bright fall leaf. Some things just perform well.” (Tolentino, 2019, para. 2)

For many users, Instagram is about beauty; it is about portraying the most visually stunning representation possible of whatever activity they are partaking in. As it is commonly

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referred to on Instagram, it is all about being 'aesthetic' (Manovich, 2016). This idea strongly aligns with the idea of the presentation of self and the front stage (Goffman, 1959) and with the concept of competitive photography, where Instagram users compete for likes and followers (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018), and can be seen in many of the images presented in this study.

In the case of the images using high levels of Aesthetic Production Design identified in this study, Instagrammers were using impression management to present their 'best', 'most beautiful' or most 'interesting' self, shown through the highly curated images placed on the performance space that is Instagram, thus matching Hogan's (2010) conjecture that social media is a space for sharing the idealised self. Aesthetics is culturally and socially derived, and not all viewers will find the same image aesthetically pleasing. However, there are commonly held elements of design that make photos aesthetically pleasing to the eye – the rule of thirds, texture, composition, depth of field, exposure, and the shapes within an image (Datta et al., 2006; Manovich, 2017). As well as these set components of photographic aesthetics, in many ways, Instagram is its own society with a strong visual culture (Manovich, 2017; Tolentino, 2019), heavily influenced by a western perspective. The concept of Aesthetic Production Design also links to the discussion earlier in this chapter in relation to 'Top Posts' as the posts with the highest amount of Aesthetic Production Design were more commonly seen in the top posts' dataset.

Images that adhere to the principles of Aesthetic Production Design are related to the category referred to as 'designed' by Manovich (2017), where the focus is less on classic photography and more on what is 'cool'. These designed images differ from 'casual' and 'professional' photos on Instagram, can be seen as contemporary or hip, and are an essential part of the competitive photography landscape where posters compete for attention, likes and followers (Tifentale & Manovich, 2018; Manovich, 2017). There are many different specific aesthetics that Instagram posts can fall into (Agung & Nugraha, 2019). Still, the focus in this space is not on a particular aesthetic but more on the level of effort put in backstage to creating posts that place the aesthetic front and centre of the mind.

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Images that were focused on the aesthetic within the sample present the people who posted them as glamorous, worldly, and sometimes even ethereal, as seen in the images in Figure 5.13. The level of design presents to the audience the good taste and adventurous nature of the traveller, and it harks back to the photo that inspired this study. It turns the simple holiday snap into a work of art. While often, in reality, travel can be decidedly unglamorous in the backstage (Goffman, 1959), these photos focus on the aesthetics of a destination and the traveller, presenting a glamorised version in which the person presents in a striking way in an exotic place.

Almost all images that use a high level of Aesthetic Production Design included a person or a couple, and no other people, which helps set them apart from just beautiful scenic photos. In these photos, the tourist destination became the background canvas or the setting that the poster uses to make themselves look picturesque – the focus is first on the person who is presenting themselves, then the scene. In many images which utilise Aesthetic Production Design, the #bucketlist location became secondary and serves as a setting or even a prop to create a better image for Instagram (Goffman, 1959). However, the background or setting is still important. It appears from many of these ‘aesthetic’ photos that the costume, and the pose, were carefully selected and curated to juxtapose the attraction in a way that enhances the beauty of both. In many cases, colours seemed selected from within the background to be worn by the person (almost always female-presenting) pictured; for example, in Figure 5.11, two images feature women dressed in blue, which blends into the colours within their image, as does another in a green dress pictured kissing a man in a brown shirt – both colours replicate the greens and browns of the natural environment behind them. On the other hand, the photo of a woman in white uses the colour of her dress to starkly contrast with the background of black rocks (Figure 5.11). In these instances, the costumes worn form an important part of what the Instagram user is presenting (Goffman, 1959).

In these posts which feature a high level of aesthetic production design, the presentation of self is quite literal; these people are saying ‘I am beautiful within this beautiful image’ or ‘I am cool at this cool location’. In this Bucket List worthy destination that I have explored the world for, I am the highlight. Whatever might be their inner-most feelings, they are

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presenting themselves on the stage of Instagram to suggest confidence, glamour, and worldliness.

As discussed in the previous section on well-known attractions and landmarks, Santorini or similar Greek islands were one of the most commonly appearing attractions in the sample. The white buildings and blue skies of these destinations provide an ideal setting for aesthetically designed images. The commercial power of combining a beautiful Bucket List destination with beautiful clothing can be seen in companies that will hire not only photographers but also dresses and gowns and even drones to help holidaymakers get their perfect photo (*SantoriniDress – Your Unforgettable Photoshoot Experience*, n.d.). It is possible that some of the images in this study may have been captured by a professional photographer, for example, the woman on the black rock (Figure 5.11) or the couple in the large hand seen in Figure 5.13. Some travel advice blogs suggest to travellers that they consider hiring a professional photographer to improve their travel photos and thus present an idealised version of themselves via their Instagram (Barbagallo, 2018; Megsy, 2016; Poonam, 2019). Companies and collectives have entered the market to match this demand with sites like Localographer (*Localographer*, 2022) and Airbnb Experiences (*Unforgettable activities hosted by locals*, n.d.), offering either paid guides to help find the best spots to take photos or the opportunity to hire a local photographer in the destination.

Images which used high levels of Aesthetic Production Design were more likely to be seen in the 'top posts' on Instagram. For posters appearing in the top posts may not be an explicit goal. The increasingly monetised nature of Instagram, where people can create a career as an 'Instagram influencer' and utilise the 'attention economy', likely incentivises Aesthetic Production Design (Van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021). As mentioned in Method (4.3), this study specifically excluded posts self-identified as paid sponcon. However, it should be acknowledged that one of the potential rewards for putting substantial effort into Instagram posts is that it can help the posters be seen as social media influencers (whether on a micro or macro level) (Yilmaz, Sezerel, & Uzuner, 2020). While in some circumstances, this could result in monetary compensation or complimentary travel experiences, for many Instagram users, the reward is for their self-identity. Those seen as social media influencers possess Instagram clout and become the 'Joneses' (or Kardashians) that people try to keep up with

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(Siegel & Wang, 2018). This, in turn, can boost their real-life social and financial capital. This incentivises some amateur users to present a self that is styled as a travel influencer in the hopes of becoming one, and images that adopt a high level of Aesthetic Production Design are often in this style which makes a point of further obscuring the backstage.

That aesthetically designed images were more likely to be in the top posts category is unsurprising as there is an Instagram 'look' or aesthetic that is prioritised by the platform algorithm and its users (Tolentino, 2019). This is what many influencers are trying to create and may represent the closing of a hermeneutic circle (Caton & Santos, 2008). It is of interest to note that digital strategist Taylor Cohen has claimed that the saturation point of the Instagram aesthetic occurred sometime around the middle of 2018, a time close to the data collection of images for this project (Tolentino, 2019) which may have implications for future study.

6.3 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the context for the growing phenomenon that is the travel Bucket List and how Instagram data can be used to support this conjecture. In examining the geographic context for the Bucket List on Instagram, the results suggest that there is a combination of the world's most popular destinations and those away from the beaten path which garner a place on a traveller's Bucket List. This breakdown suggests that it may be that a destination becomes worthier of being on someone's Bucket List, particularly on social media, by being a destination that is more 'exotic' and 'brag-worthy'.

Images on Instagram tagged with #bucketlist allow users to present their travel-self to the world and show off their social and cultural cachet. Based on the sample of Instagram posts explored in this study, there is a vast difference between what is in the top posts and what appears in the recent posts on the platform when searching for #bucketlist posts. Top posts can be seen as the idealised version of the presentation of self on Instagram with a very well-hidden backstage (Goffman, 1959), as these images are aspirational. Top posts in this dataset were more likely to include people, nature or a tropical or feminine feel. However,

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even if a person did not feature in the #bucketlist photo, performance is still occurring as there is an implication of the poster behind the camera, observing the scene.

The chapter then looked at the presentation of self via #bucketlist posts by examining four stages for presentation – the Nature Stage, the Fit, Hot and Outdoorsy Stage, the Paradise Stage and the Well-Trodden Stage. The idea of repetition in posts was explored as was the juxtaposition between Instagram users is seemingly wanting to have unique off-the-beaten-path experiences while also replicating familiar images and tropes on the platform. Finally, the concept of Aesthetic Production Design was examined as a presentation of self which idealises the aesthetic when it comes to props, costumes and settings, and implies a high level of effort to remove traces of the backstage of travel from the exhibition of Bucket List travel on Instagram.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore the concept of the travel Bucket List on Instagram and the ways Instagram users are incorporating it as part of their presentation of self. This chapter will conclude this study by reflecting on this aim and the findings in relation to the three research questions, before discussing theoretical contributions and practical implications and finally providing recommendations for future research.

7.1 The travel Bucket List on Instagram

This study has found that there is a segment of people who want to present themselves via their travel Bucket List on Instagram and be seen as achieving their travel goals. This research establishes that the travel Bucket List is well represented on Instagram and is a substantial social phenomenon by demonstrating that the hashtag #bucketlist has shown considerable growth on the platform. This indicates a continuation of the desire for people to perform the self to their audience as theorised by Goffman (1959) and expanded on by Hogan (2010) through pictorial representations of travel, whether by paintings (Rettberg, 2014), slide nights (Bensen & Silberman, 1986; Mitchell, 2018), or the current technological iteration – Instagram and other social media. Given that the travel Bucket List is a way for people to outline their travel goals (Thurnell-Read, 2017), Instagram is giving users a platform to demonstrate the achievement of these goals or aspirations to their online audience, in turn allowing them to present themselves in relation to those goals. The proliferation of #bucketlist across Instagram also provides confirmation that the travel Bucket List is a valid component of the tourism landscape and is worthy of further research and consideration.

This study found that Instagram users use the #bucketlist in a wide range of geographic locations, indicating that Bucket List destinations are worldwide. It showed that people are using #bucketlist across the world in a way that is somewhat consistent with global tourism arrivals but with some locations overrepresented in #bucketlist posts compared to visitation including the Philippines, the East Coast of Australia, New Zealand and Madagascar. This

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anomaly suggests that some travellers have Bucket List destinations that are off the beaten path. Using #bucketlist in these locations means that people consider these Bucket List destinations as part of their presentation of self and a setting for performance (Goffman, 1959). An interesting consideration is that when it comes to the presentation of self via Instagram, to some extent, it does not matter if the poster visited the destination or not; by tagging #bucketlist, they are choosing to make these destinations a part of their Bucket List identity being presented to the Instagram audience. As well as giving information on the setting people choose for their Bucket List posts, the geographic mapping presented in Figure 6.2 presents a snapshot in time of #bucketlist locations and can provide a baseline for future studies to compare Bucket List destinations and hotspots.

Next, this research explored photographic content from Instagram, which utilised the #bucketlist. A sample of 418 individual Instagram posts was collected, coded, and categorised, resulting in 24 categories of Bucket List posts presented on Instagram during this time. Although a person doesn't need to be included in a post on Instagram for it to be a presentation of self, the most common element of Bucket List posts was that images did include a person or people. Thus, most commonly, posters on Instagram using #bucketlist wanted to literally show themselves at their Bucket List destination in their online presentation of self or exhibition. The majority of the 24 categories of Bucket List photos on Instagram had links to existing segments in tourism, for example, famous landmarks, nature, adventure, animals, tropical destinations, art and culture, and food and drink. These categories show the types of attractions and activities that Instagram users are connecting themselves to when presenting themselves. Noticeable in the categorisation was a marked difference in what was presented in 'top posts' on Instagram compared to the 'recent posts', with top posts seeming more 'aspirational' and likely to fit into the Instagram aesthetic.

The range of categories of #bucketlist posts identified in the Results (Chapter 5) was broad and could lead to a range of conclusions as to presentation of self and the travel bucket list on Instagram; this study chose to offer four specific stages for the presentation of self within #bucketlist images on Instagram. The stages offered in this study were developed out of the 24 categories and from broader themes observed in the image dataset, which were not

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codifiable based on elements apparent in the images. These four stages represent themes Instagram users want to associate themselves with as they present themselves through their aspirational travel achievements.

The Nature Stage demonstrates that in their presentation of self, many Bucket List travellers are associating themselves with the natural world in ways that could portray them as outdoorsy, potentially adventurous, young, and fit travellers who are down to earth and 'real'. Fit, Hot, Outdoorsy Stage is an emergent theme identified in this study, which has not been discussed in tourism previously. Although it is a niche stage, its presence in the dataset suggested posters as wanting to highlight all three things – physical fitness, physical attractiveness, and an association with outdoor activity. The Paradise Stage reinforced that the concept of the stereotypical tropical paradise lives on and remains popular on people's Bucket Lists as a way to present conspicuous consumption and the earning of a much-needed break for pure relaxation. The relatively low number of famous attractions identified in the research dataset that makes up the Well-Trodden Stage was at odds with what was anticipated by the researcher and previous work by Thurnell-Read (2017) based on his content analysis of online Bucket List webpages. This lower prevalence of posts in the Well-Trodden Stage suggests that travellers posting to Instagram may not be romanticising well known attractions and world wonders the way they may have in the past or may find them lacklustre to post in their curated feeds. Subsequently, these findings also provide insight into the emerging travel consumption patterns, such as the types of destinations being visited, and the activities Instagram users may be engaged in.

Consideration of the four stages led to the four key conclusions. Firstly, many people do not want to post about unoriginal mainstream attractions as part of their travel Bucket List (Well-Trodden), and these appear to now be less Bucket List worthy or 'cool' than they were to travellers in past generations. Secondly, Instagram users are still happy to post paradisiacal beach photos (Paradise), this is despite these images being sometimes generic or unidentifiable as to destination and being as cliched as famous attractions. Thirdly, Instagram users are wanting to appear associated with nature (Nature) when they post #bucketlist photos, with some particularly focused on the way nature can help to emphasise the posters' youth, physical fitness, and attractiveness (Fit, Hot, Outdoorsy) while tackling

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the environmental elements. Finally, much as travellers have throughout history, Instagram users are trying to present their 'unique' selves by posting images that follow the mould and themes of travel photos and posts before them. These stages and conclusions reinforce previous research that indicates Instagram users upload content that presents health, wealth, and beauty (Deeb-Swihart et al., 2017), in this case, linked to bucket list tourism. They also indicate that these online exhibitions (Horgan, 2010) are able to be viewed as a form of presentation of self by the users of Instagram despite being in a context many years on from Goffman's (1959) initial work on the subject.

Finally, this study identified and presented the concept of Aesthetic Production Design, where the primary focus of Bucket List tourism posts was not only on the destination but on the design of the image presented and how it matches Instagram's pervasive aesthetic. The idea of Aesthetic Production Design expands upon previous work by Manovich (2017) who presented the idea that Instagram images fell into three categories – casual, professional, and designed. Images which utilised Aesthetic Production Design were not only focused on good photographic principles but on matching the aesthetic of Instagram at the time and indicated a high level of effort to achieve this look. In the #bucketlist posts which used Aesthetic Production Design the actual Bucket List location was secondary, used as a visual setting that is important for juxtaposition and allows the poster to present in a striking way against this background. There was a very high level of curation involved in images using Aesthetic Production Design, with Goffman's (1959) elements of presentation of self - the setting, costumes and props seemingly carefully selected. The concept of Aesthetic Production Design is linked to Influencer culture and the attention economy, and images using it are more likely to appear in Instagram's top posts. Looking through the lens of Goffman's Presentation of Self, where all interactions are performances, it becomes apparent that there is the potential of a vast hidden backstage when it comes to Bucket List and travel photos presented on Instagram (Goffman, 1959). This is particularly highlighted in the posts in the study that used a high level of Aesthetic Production Design to present a highly curated front stage. This concept of Aesthetic Production Design reflects the idea that on Instagram, looking good does not necessarily have to be glamorous, but it does have to fit the 'Instagram aesthetic', which further reinforces Goffman's (1959) assertion that much of presentation of self is designed to stop individuals from socially embarrassing themselves.

7.2 Contribution to theory

Through the results obtained, this study confirmed the importance of the Bucket List as a component of travel which is worthy of investigation in this study and beyond. This expands upon and contrasts with the work of Thurnell-Read (2017) who examined online discussions of the travel Bucket List via web pages and blogs. While the findings in this study reinforce Thurnell-Read's conclusion that the travel Bucket List has become a part of the tourism landscape, it challenges his findings on what people are considering worthy of placing on their travel Bucket List. Thurnell-Read found that many of the Bucket Lists he analysed "conformed to an established canon of culturally valorised and objectively worthy destinations" (Thurnell-Read, 2017, p. 61); conversely, this study found that within the dataset considered, Bucket List destinations were less likely to feature these major attractions than they were to feature nature or beach environs. This paper has addressed a gap in the literature where there has been very limited focus on the travel Bucket List despite its substantial presence in popular culture, adding to the modest quantity of research into Bucket List tourism.

This research further reinforced the relevance of Goffman's theory of Presentation of Self in the social media age and demonstrated another way in which his dramaturgical approach can be applied to online impression management rather than face-to-face interactions (Goffman, 1959; Belk, 2013; Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Hogan, 2010). By applying the concepts of presentation of self, impression management and front and backstage to #bucketlist images, it is apparent that all link seamlessly to posting on Instagram where a user presents themselves through travel photos shared with an audience as a certain kind of traveller. As such, Instagram can be seen as a space for the presentation of self. This study shows only the front stage of Bucket List tourism experiences, but audiences may have different levels of awareness of the backstage hidden from view. Fiers (2020) highlighted the importance on Instagram of posters downplaying their backstage, and this study has bolstered the assertion that in the online Instagram context this is akin to curation.

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The findings also reemphasised the established notion of curation within social media posting, in this case, in a travel context (Zhao & Lindley, 2014). While all images posted to Instagram or other social media platforms are in some way curated simply by being chosen to be uploaded (Zhao & Lindley, 2014; Maares et al., 2021), many of the images in this study had a level of curation well beyond this. The stage Fit, Hot, Outdoorsy indicated a curation of posts that allowed posters to strategically present themselves as physically fit and attractive within an outdoorsy environment. To an even greater extent, the concept of Aesthetic Production Design presented in this paper outlines another way in which users of Instagram can curate their posts and feeds to present their 'best' travel self. The links between presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) and curation are apparent.

7.3 Practical contribution

The findings in this study have an array of potential practical implications for tourism practitioners. As indicated by the results, the concept of the travel Bucket List is popular and, where appropriate, may be used in marketing tourism destinations and products. Destinations that are harder to get to or more obscure may consider leaning into a Bucket List status within their promotional material, appealing to the once-in-a-lifetime nature of these experiences and the aim of many travellers to present an idealised travel self. For those travellers seeking to claim more social capital or clout, visiting unique and unusual destinations may be prioritised as it allows them to present themselves to the world as sophisticated world travellers who visit exclusive 'once-in-a-lifetime' destinations and attractions. Travellers may therefore be willing to spend more time and money to be able to present themselves in line with these ultimate travel experiences.

This study supports the notion that many travellers do not simply want to 'see' attractions, they want to experience them; this provides scope for tourism practitioners to turn traditional sights into experiences, which can be seen in the success of the hot air ballooning industry at Cappadocia which was well represented in the dataset in this study. Given the lower-than-expected presence of world wonders and other famous landmarks in the sample, these attractions are seemingly not 'cool' to the Bucket List traveller, indicating a

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change in how travel is being consumed. To continue to support destination and attraction success, managers could consider adding on-site activations (for example, traditional French picnics while gazing on the Eiffel Tower) to appeal to the desire to 'do' not just 'see'.

Given the high number of posts with people presenting a connection to nature or natural destinations as part of their impression management, nature appears to be 'cool' or on-trend currently. Similarly, perfect tropical beaches seem to never go out of style. This reiterates the need for tourism practitioners to respect the potentially fragile landscape of natural attractions and consider how to best manage them, particularly as Bucket List tourism and Instagram have been linked to overtourism (Gretzel, 2019; Shin & Xiang, 2020).

When it comes to posting on social media, for many users, the aesthetics of an attraction are as important as its touristic value. Destinations that are aesthetically pleasing or fit into the Instagram aesthetic are more likely to be popular on social media and thus prioritised by the Instagram algorithm. While visitors may not want the cliched walls with painted angel wings to stand in front of anymore, continuing to help visitors find the best view and best selfie spot may lead to a product being seen in a better light online which may increase visitation or put it on the 'must do' list.

Finally, tourism practitioners may find it useful to monitor social media, particularly Instagram, to see what is being presented as Bucket List experiences and how these trends may affect their business or destination, thus allowing for more effective marketing and management.

7.4 Recommendations and implications for further study

The study was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the collection of data from Instagram and global travel patterns. As explained in Method (3.2), the data collection was reduced to nine months rather than the planned twelve-month schedule. Similarly, consideration should be given to the interpretation of the data by the researcher.

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Despite the limitations of the present study, the information gained offers insight into the importance of the travel Bucket List. It may give rise to further research by policymakers, tourism bodies, and academics to better understand the value of Bucket List tourism and social media to the industry.

This study has focused on Instagram posts as a way to reflect on people's presentation of self in relation to Bucket List tourism. Without speaking to the Instagram poster, the motivation of the poster cannot be fully understood. Therefore, the analysis is based on the researcher's interpretation of their presentation of self via images only. To expand on this perspective, speaking directly to travellers with a travel bucket list may be valuable as these primary sources will provide a different insight into their goals and expectations. Additionally, repeating the method outlined for *Research question 3* of this study could provide insight into how the Bucket List landscape is changing and how Instagram users engage in travel consumption.

The methodology followed in this study for *Research question 3* may prove useful to future studies wishing to investigate the Bucket List and other hashtag phenomena. Unfortunately, the methodology used to address *Research questions 1 and 2* is currently not replicable due to the closure of Instagram's public API. However, should Instagram make its API accessible to academics again, this study's methodology for *Research questions 1 and 2* provides a proven way to provide context to a phenomenon. In the post-COVID-19 world, the reality of the travel Bucket List may change substantially. Research comparing the Bucket List pre- and post-pandemic may help reveal the impact it has had on travellers' feelings towards different tourism experiences and destinations.

The social media landscape is constantly changing, so to remain current, it is recommended that further studies explore the concept of the travel Bucket List on the social media platform TikTok, which could help understand emerging trends and how younger generations are thinking about and presenting travel.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Examples of the Travel Bucket List in pop culture from 2017 – 2019

Cheap Travel: How To Afford The World's Best Bucket List Trips



Laura Begley Bloom Senior Contributor @
ForbesWomen
Transformative Travel: I look at how travel can change lives.

TWEET THIS

- Now there's no reason not to start planning your dream trip.
- There is something magical about living the Italian lifestyle, riding Vespas along the coast and sailing to small islands during the day.



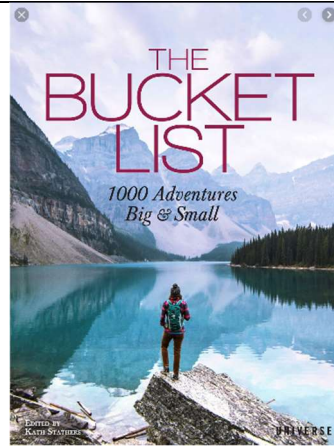
(Bloom, 2019)

Create a late summer bucket list for Toronto this August

Create the perfect end of summer bucket list in Toronto!
COREY DEETH Updated August 9, 2019



(Deeth, 2019)



(Slathers, 2017)

Why every traveller should have a bucket list

Ben Groundwater • 08:16, Jan 17 2019



(Groundwater, 2019)



(Goulding & Smith, 2018)

APPENDICES

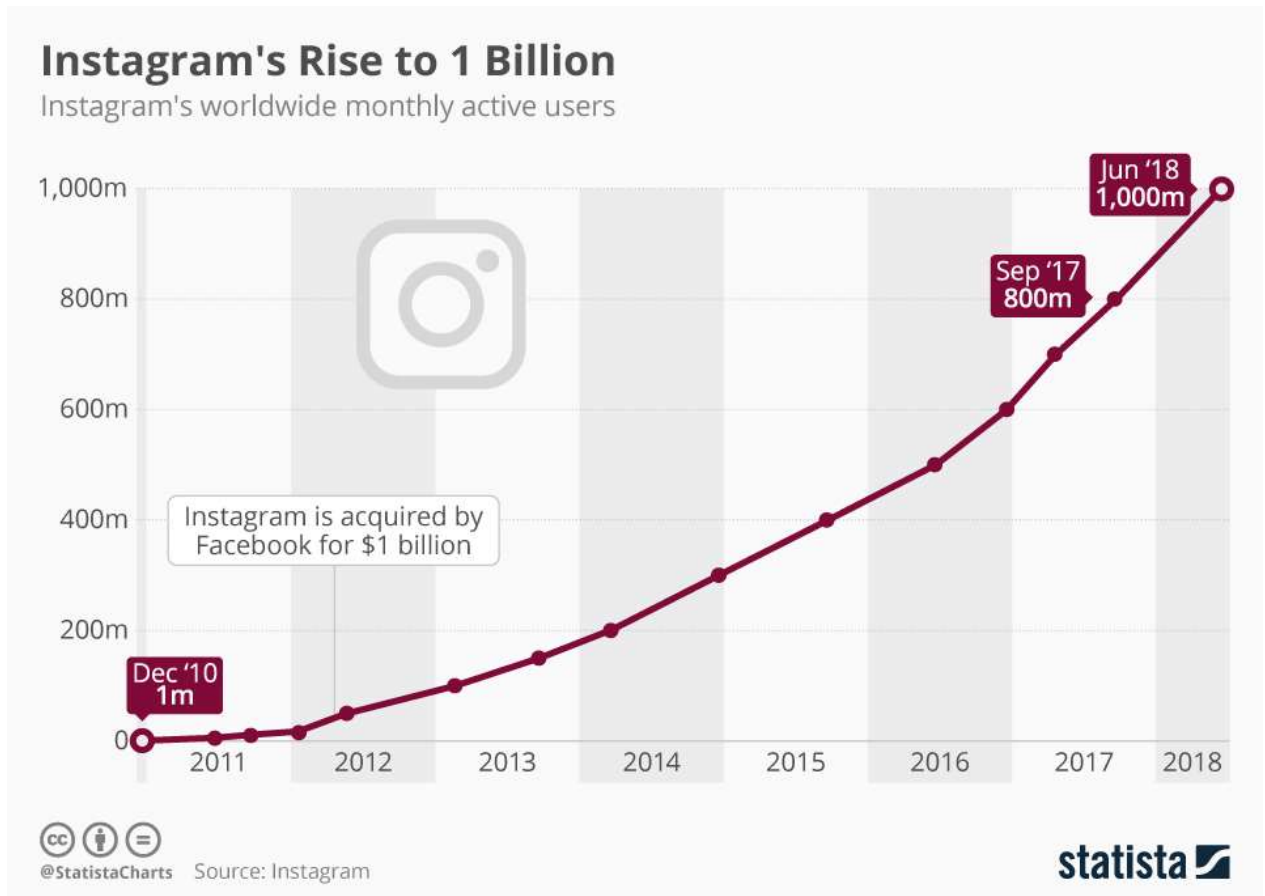
Appendix 2: Full list of elements included in #bucketlist posts

- 4WD
- Accommodation
- Acrobatics
- Activewear
- Airplane
- Airport
- Alcatraz
- Alice in wonderland
- Altar
- Ancient
- Ankor Wat
- Architecture
- Arm out in front
- Art
- Asian architecture
- Autumn leaves
- Balcony
- Balloons
- Bamboo
- Beach
- Beach hut
- Beanbag
- Beanie
- Bed
- Beer
- Bench
- Big "thing"
- Bike
- Birds
- Bison
- Black and white
- Boat/s
- Books
- Bridge
- Bright/colourful
- buddha hand
- Buddha statue
- Building/s
- Bull
- Bullfighting
- Bus
- Cabin
- Café
- Cage
- Camel
- Canal
- Cappadocia
- Car/van
- Cardboard cutouts
- Castle
- Chalet
- Chandelier
- Chichen Itza
- Cinque Terre
- City
- Cityscape
- Cliffs/rocks/mountain
- Close up
- Clouds
- Coat
- Cobblestones
- cocktail/glass of wine
- Coconut
- Coffee/coffee cup
- Cold weather clothes
- Colosseum
- Cottage
- Cowboy boots
- Crowds
- Cruise Ship
- Curtains
- Decorative art
- Desert
- Disneyland etc
- Distance
person/people
- Dog
- Dolphins
- Door/doorway
- Dragon
- Dress
- Dubrovnik old town
- Eggs
- Elephants
- Embracing
- English breakfast
- European style
architecture
- Face/mud mask
- Facing away
- Facing forward
- Farm
- Feet/legs
- Fence
- Ferris wheel
- Festival/fair
- Field
- Fish
- Fisherman
- Flag
- Flower Crown
- Flowers
- Food
- Footprints
- forbidden city
- Fountain
- Fushimi Intari-Taisha
- Garden
- Geyser
- Giraffes
- Girl
- Gnome
- Goat
- Gold
- Golden Gate Bridge
- Golden Temple Bagan
- Gondola
- Graduation hat
- Grand Canyon
- Great wall of China
- Green
- Hammock
- Harry Potter/ Platform
9 ¾
- Hat
- Hawa Mahal
- headstone/grave
- Helicopter inside
- Historic
- Historic religious
building
- Horse/s
- Hot air balloon
- Hunting
- Hyena
- Ice
- ice rink
- Islamic architecture
- Islands
- Kid/s
- Koala

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- Lake
- Lamb
- Landmark
- Laneway
- Lantern
- Laptop
- Leather jacket
- Leg pop
- Light blur
- Lighthouse
- Lights
- Lion
- List
- Lizard
- Llamas
- Local people
- Louvre
- Luxury car
- Machu Picchu
- Man
- Man and woman
- Market/bazaar
- Monument
- Moon
- Multiple men
- Multiple people – mixed genders
- Nature
- Neon signs
- Night
- Northern Lights
- Notebook
- Ocean/sea
- Palm trees
- Park
- Picnic
- Picnic table
- Pier
- Pig
- Pineapple
- Pink
- Playbill
- Pool
- Pyramid/Pyramids
- Rainbow
- Rainbow mountain
- Red Fort
- Reef
- Reflection
- Resort
- Rice paddies
- River
- Road/street
- Rock climbing
- Rock sculpture/sea stack/rock formation
- Rose petals
- Rubber duck
- Ruins
- Rural Setting
- Safety gear
- Sand
- Santorini
- Savannah
- Scuba
- Sea star
- Selfie
- Shelves
- Shopfront
- Side profile
- Signage
- Silhouette
- Silly/fun
- Sitting
- Skiing
- Skydiving/paragliding
- Smog
- Snow
- Soft toys
- Sport
- Stadium
- Stage
- Stairs/staircase
- Stars
- Statue of liberty
- Statue/sculpture
- Stepwell
- Stone carving
- Street art
- Streetlight
- Sunglasses
- Sunrise/set
- Surfing/surfboard
- Swimwear
- Swing/swing set
- Taj Mahal
- Tent
- Thailand lantern festival
- Theatre
- Tiger
- Tiles
- Times Square
- Tower bridge
- Traditional attire
- Traditional practice
- Train
- Train Station
- Tram
- Trees/plants
- Trevi Fountain
- Twin towers KL
- Uluru
- Underwater
- Uniform
- Urban Setting
- Veranda
- View
- Village
- Vineyard
- Wadi Rum
- Walking trail/path
- Washington Monument
- Water
- Water gun
- Waterfall
- Waterhole
- Wedding
- Wetsuit
- Whale
- White Greek style buildings
- Windmill
- Window/s
- Women - multiple
- Writing
- Yoga

Appendix 3: Instagram's rise to 1 billion users



(Richter, 2018)

APPENDICES

Appendix 4: Comparison of frequencies of categories between 'Top Posts' and 'Recent Posts'

Category	Top Posts	% of Top Posts	Recent Posts	% of Recent posts
Include Person or people as a focus	167	80.29	114	54.29
Include nature or horticulture as focus	124	59.62	94	44.76
Include nature as focus	120	57.69	88	41.90
Include water as a focus	76	36.54	60	28.57
Outdoorsy	50	24.04	39	18.57
Feminine	45	21.63	17	8.10
Include tropical look/feel	42	20.19	19	9.05
Urban Setting	38	18.27	36	17.14
Include historic humanmade structures	27	12.98	36	17.14
Include some kind of landmark	25	12.02	41	19.52
Include modern humanmade structures	23	11.06	18	8.57
Include art/culture	22	10.58	27	12.86
Include a 'famous' landmark	21	10.10	30	14.29
Include transportation standard	16	7.69	13	6.19
Include horticulture as a focus	14	6.73	9	4.29
Include sport or adventure activities	13	6.25	8	3.81
Luxury	10	4.81	12	5.71
Include a 'wild' animal	9	4.33	3	1.43
Masculine	9	4.33	14	6.67
Include food and drink	7	3.37	7	3.33
Include an identifier	7	3.37	11	5.24
Include a domestic animal	6	2.88	6	2.86
Include luxury transport	4	1.92	6	2.86
Rural Setting	3	1.44	4	1.90

Note: Posts may have more than one element within the image, meaning they can be categorised into multiple categories. Categories are not mutually exclusive. As such the total number of elements is not equal to the total number of posts.

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Appendix 5: 'Famous' landmarks within #bucketlist posts

Attraction	Top Posts	Recent Posts	Total Posts displaying this element
Greek Island white buildings (Mykonos, Santorini, or similar style)	2	3	5
Cappadocia	1	4	5
Pyramid/Pyramids*	1	3	4
Golden Temple Yangon	2	1	3
Tower Bridge London	2	0	2
Rainbow Mountain Peru	1	1	2
Twin towers KL	1	1	2
Machu Picchu*	0	2	2
Ankor Wat & surrounding temples	0	2	2
Thailand lantern festival	0	2	2
Hawa Mahal	1	0	1
Dubrovnik old town	1	0	1
Grand Canyon	1	0	1
Trevi Fountain	1	0	1
Golden Gate Bridge	1	0	1
Times Square	1	0	1
Fushimi Intari-taisha	1	0	1
Wadi Rum	1	0	1
Forbidden City Beijing	1	0	1
Chichen Itza*	1	0	1
Cinque Terre	1	0	1
Harry Potter/ Platform 9 ¾	0	1	1
Red Fort	0	1	1
Taj Mahal*	0	1	1
Colosseum*	0	1	1
Statue of Liberty	0	1	1
Washington Monument	0	1	1

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Alcatraz	0	1	1
Louvre	0	1	1
Disneyland/Disneyworld	0	1	1
Uluru	0	1	1
Great Wall of China*	0	1	1
<hr/>			
Include a 'famous' landmark	21	30	51
<hr/>			

* Indicates World Wonder