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VENTURES



## Social Commerce Is the New Travel Agent

Social media and user-generated content are fundamentally reshaping how people discover and book travel. Today's travelers often scroll through Instagram, TikTok and travel blogs for inspiration, creating highly curated "instagrammable itineraries" defined by shareable sights and experiences. Short-form video reigns supreme – a recent report found 66% of consumers say brief, candid clips are *the* most engaging [travel content](#) – and authenticity is prized: **73% of travelers** say user reviews and real photos [influence their booking decisions](#). In practice, that means a beautifully shot photo or compelling influencer post can spark FOMO (fear of missing out) and turn viewers into customers. New platforms are emerging to capture this shift, merging travel inspiration and booking into one seamless flow. For example, one startup aggregates traveler-shot hotel and attraction videos and lets users book directly from that content – essentially turning social feeds into shop windows.

### The Rise of Instagrammable Itineraries

Visually rich travel posts and FOMO-driven content are guiding more of our journey planning than ever. Travelers no longer wait for a travel agent’s brochure – they tune into their friends’ and favorite creators’ feeds. Research shows social media now trumps traditional channels for inspiration: a [Cvent survey reports](#) more people look to social media (35%) than to travel agents (29%) or even TV/movies (25%) when planning trips. In other words, we’re witnessing the rise of the “Instagrammable itinerary,” where each leg of a trip is chosen for its photo-op potential. [That FOMO factor is real](#): industry studies have found over half of social-media-savvy consumers say they’ve booked or planned a trip after seeing a photo or video online.

This presents a huge opportunity to turn passive inspiration into active bookings. One example is **TripBtoz**, a Korea-origin OTA that weaves community content into the booking funnel. TripBtoz’s ecosystem *aggregates user-generated travel videos* – hotel and attraction reviews shot by real travelers – and embeds booking links alongside that content. Users who share videos earn loyalty points and coupons when friends book through their referrals, literally “unlocking the power of community and commerce,” in the [CEO’s words](#). In practice, TripBtoz lets a traveler say, “Wow, I love that seaside resort video,” and book a stay in a couple of taps, all within the same app. The result: inspiration *and* transaction happen in one place, mirroring how people actually shop.



This Velocity Ventures portfolio startup has built an OTA around UGC video content. Its mobile platform rewards travelers for creating short reviews of hotels and attractions, then directly links those clips to booking offers. Over 500,000 user videos have been collected to date, giving hotels authentic marketing content, while travelers earn loyalty currency and discounts for bookings made via their shared links. As the founder notes, TripBtoz allows travelers to move “*from travel inspiration to reviews to uploading memories*” – truly blending discovery and commerce.

## Trust & Verification in Social Commerce

As we lean on social content more, trust becomes paramount. Travelers have grown wise to photoshopped villas and fake glam – industry analysts now warn of a rising “fake review storm” in travel, [fueled by easy-to-use AI tools](#). TNMT notes that

generative AI has “paved the way for misuse” like [bogus reviews](#), and this is especially dangerous because consumers *do* rely on reviews heavily. (In fact, [TNMT finds](#) the “vast majority of travelers heavily rely on reviews” when planning trips.) In this environment, the ability to verify authenticity is becoming a selling point in itself. Already, new solutions are entering the market to label or incentivize genuine feedback. For example, tokenization can tie a review back to an actual booking: [blockchain-based systems can verify](#) that a person truly stayed at the hotel they reviewed. Some startups even reward verified reviewers with NFTs or loyalty tokens, checking things like geolocation, transaction history and photos to ensure the review is real.

- **Verification Tools:** Innovations range from digital “proof-of-stay” wallets to community badges. For instance, [TNMT highlights](#) that blockchain’s token mechanism can “link reviews to specific travel transactions, bolstering trust and authenticity”. Meanwhile, platforms like Triend are experimenting with NFT-style review rewards, scoring content by location and evidence and granting tokens to confirmed travelers.
- **Community Verification:** Alongside tech, there’s a move toward crowdsourced trust. Some brands are considering “verified by community” badges – digital word-of-mouth. Just as local residents might vouch for a hidden cafe, these systems would let seasoned travelers or micro-influencers endorse content. In effect, a high rating from a trusted peer network could carry as much weight as a formal certificate.

In short, travel tech is learning old lessons in new ways: people trusted word-of-mouth long before TripAdvisor existed. Today’s tools are just bringing that trust into the digital age. We see platforms surfacing only “community-verified” ratings, and experiments with letting genuine reviewers mint their feedback as unique tokens. These shifts should make travelers more confident in booking directly from social content.

## Peer Reviews > Brand Promises

The upshot is clear: **peer feedback now outmuscles polished marketing**. Modern travelers assume ad copy is self-serving – they’d much rather hear from someone who just returned from the destination. In fact, recent surveys underscore this. For example, [a YouGov poll](#) across 17 countries found that **42% of travelers rely on fellow consumers’ reviews** for accommodation bookings, versus only 5% who turn to professional critic reviews. Similarly, [market research repeatedly finds](#) 80–90% of people will trust a friend’s or peer’s recommendation over any advertisement. In

practice, this means a 4.5-star rating from a fellow guest carries far more weight than a hotel's front-page brochure.

To succeed, brands must therefore amplify authentic voices instead of talking *at* customers. Restaurants and hotels can no longer hide behind glossy taglines – diners and guests want to hear unfiltered experiences from real patrons. This has given rise to new review models that put peer voices front and center. For example, Singapore's Tablevibe (backed by Velocity Ventures) is turning table feedback into direct marketing. [Tablevibe provides](#) QR-code surveys for dine-in and takeaway customers; instead of funneling reviews through delivery apps, high-rated feedback is shared directly as Google Reviews or social posts. In other words, when a customer scans, rates, and praises their meal, that positive note can be instantly broadcast online – a sort of built-in referral system. By capturing feedback on the spot and rewarding customers with offers for direct bookings, Tablevibe helps restaurants convert happy diners into ambassadors without intermediaries.



Tablevibe

This [Singapore-based F&B tech platform](#) consolidates restaurant feedback and reviews. Diners receive quick QR-code surveys at the table or on packaging; when they give a high rating, Tablevibe prompts them to publish it publicly on Google or Facebook. The result is more genuine, verified reviews flowing to the restaurant's profile (and away from anonymous third-party apps). This transparent loop not only builds trust – 80% of consumers say authenticity matters more than advertising – but also helps venues grow direct relationships with customers, reducing costly delivery fees.

## Looking Ahead

Social commerce is just getting started, and travel is emerging as a prime case study. Investors and founders alike should take note: the battleground is now at the intersection of content and commerce. Established OTAs and agencies risk obsolescence if they don't adapt to this "experience economy" – and every click on a travel post could instead go to a content-driven competitor.

At Velocity Ventures, we're bullish on this trend. Companies that enable frictionless booking from inspiration, while safeguarding trust, will thrive. Today's portfolio startups – from TripBtoz and Tablevibe to other innovative platforms – exemplify the

direction of traveltech. In the coming months we'll be watching new waves of AI-curated itineraries, blockchain-backed review networks, and hyper-personalized booking engines. **Stay tuned** for our next issue, where we'll highlight the cutting-edge startups and technologies (from AI-guided trip planners to decentralized hospitality networks) that are poised to define the future of travel.

Warm Regards,



Stay ahead of the curve. [Subscribe](#) to our updates and join us as we explore the innovations shaping the future of Travel & Hospitality.

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