

Analysis of the Content Generated by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ Digital Influencer in Tourism and Travel

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Abstract

This study analyzed how Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer operate on the social network Instagram, structure their posts, and contribute to the discourse on tourism and diversity. Based on a qualitative approach grounded in netnography and content analysis, five main categories of publications were identified: sharing experiences, advertising, travel tips, destination recommendations, and personal experiences. The results showed that, although the initial expectation was a more explicit promotion of LGBTQIAP+ tourism, the theme appears subtly, revealing a paradiplomatic dimension within the influencer's communicative practices. By sharing experiences, translating lived situations into travel advice, and engaging with diverse audiences, these content creators act as non-state cultural mediators, projecting images of inclusion and hospitality that reinforce the soft power and symbolic governance of territories. The study concludes that the role of digital influencer goes beyond the promotional sphere, constituting a communicative practice that contributes to cultural diplomacy and strengthens Brazil's image as a diverse and inclusive destination.

Keywords: LGBTQIAP+ tourism; digital influencer; instagram; paradiplomacy; soft power.

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Análisis del contenido generado por influencer digitales brasileños LGBTQIAP+ en turismo y viajes

Resumen

Este estudio analizó cómo los influencer digitales brasileños LGBTQIAP+ actúan en la red social Instagram, estructuran sus publicaciones y contribuyen al discurso sobre turismo y diversidad. Con base en un enfoque cualitativo, sustentado en la netnografía y el análisis de contenido, se identificaron cinco categorías principales de publicaciones: compartir experiencias, publicidad, consejos de viaje, recomendaciones de destinos y experiencias personales. Los resultados mostraron que, aunque la expectativa inicial era una promoción más explícita del turismo LGBTQIAP+, el tema aparece de manera sutil, revelando una dimensión paradiplomática en las prácticas comunicacionales de los influencer. Al compartir experiencias, traducir vivencias en consejos de viaje e interactuar con públicos diversos, estos creadores de contenido actúan como mediadores culturales no estatales, proyectando imágenes de inclusión y hospitalidad que refuerzan el soft power y la gobernanza simbólica de los territorios. El estudio concluye que la actuación de los influencer digitales trasciende la esfera promocional, configurando una práctica comunicacional que contribuye a la diplomacia cultural y fortalece la imagen de Brasil como un destino diverso e inclusivo.

Palabras clave: turismo LGBTQIAP+; influencer digitales: Instagram; Paradiplomacia; soft power.

1. Introduction

Tourism moves millions of people around the world and is considered one of the main drivers of growth in the global economy. Due to the particular characteristics of the sector, especially its sensitivity to market events and seasonality, studying its segments, as well as tourists' preferences and purchasing behavior, can provide important insights for industry managers, aiming for sustainable and orderly market growth (Machado, 2013).

According to the World Tourism Organization, international tourism has shown consistent growth over the past decades, reaching over 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals before the COVID-19 pandemic, with a gradual recovery observed in recent years. Tourism accounts for a significant share of global GDP and employment, reinforcing its role as a strategic sector for economic development and territorial competitiveness. These data highlight not only the scale of global tourism flows but also the increasing diversification of market segments, including niche markets such as LGBTQIAP+ tourism.

The LGBTQIAP+ public is considered a segment of tourism due to the diversity of issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation and their influence on consumption behavior. It is known that sexuality can influence reception in certain tourist destinations. This makes marketing strategies aimed at diversification beneficial for this group of people.

At the same time, the territorial dimension becomes central in understanding this segment, as destinations increasingly compete to position themselves as inclusive and attractive spaces for these travelers. In this context, the development of tourism strategies is not only market-oriented but also territorially driven, reflecting the interest of cities and regions in fostering visitation, strengthening local economies, and projecting inclusive identities. Thus, the relationship between LGBTQIAP+ tourism and territorial development highlights how destinations actively seek to attract this audience through policies, narratives, and symbolic positioning.

LGBTQIAP+ tourism has experienced significant growth in recent years due to the development of more welcoming destinations (Osorio & Henz, 2018). In this regard, according to the Global Report on LGBTQIAP+ Tourism (World Tourism Organization, 2012), the visibility of this segment and the discussion of its impact on tourism are understood as a highly profitable market. However, beyond economic relevance, this field also represents a space of symbolic diplomacy and governance, in which territories project values of inclusion, diversity, and social equity.

More recent evidence reinforces this trend. The Second Global Report on LGBT Tourism (UNWTO, 2017) highlights that these travelers represent one of the most dynamic and resilient segments in the tourism industry, characterized by higher levels of international mobility, consumption, and brand loyalty. The report also emphasizes that destinations adopting inclusive policies and communication strategies tend to achieve greater competitiveness and visibility in the global tourism market.

In this sense, the concept of paradiplomacy becomes central to understanding how cities, regions, and local governments engage in international projection strategies to attract visitors and investments while promoting inclusive narratives. Paradiplomacy refers to the international actions of subnational entities aimed at strengthening their identity, fostering cooperation networks, and promoting territorial attractiveness (Clemente, 2018; Cornago, 2013). When linked to tourism, it can be seen as a mechanism of territorial valorization, where destinations act as agents of soft power by highlighting cultural assets, community diversity, and hospitality as strategic resources.

LGBTQIAP+ tourism can thus be interpreted as an expression of paradiplomacy and territorial governance. Inclusive destinations that actively promote equality and human rights through events, cultural policies, or digital narratives develop a specific form of “cultural paradiplomacy.” This approach expands the visibility of territories, improves their global image, and reinforces their competitiveness in international tourism markets (Mallmann & Clemente, 2016).

Digital influencer play a growing role in this process. Their narratives often transcend traditional promotional campaigns, becoming instruments of informal paradiplomacy that communicate values of inclusion and belonging. Through social media, they shape perceptions of destinations, generate symbolic legitimacy, and act as mediators between local territories and global audiences (Rodríguez & Sixto García, 2022). Their activity aligns with the contemporary understanding of governance as a networked process involving state and non-state actors who collectively shape territorial attractiveness and reputation.

One of the most recent strategies to attract this market is the use of influencer marketing, which offers alternative ways to promote tourist destinations (Angeloni & Rossi, 2021). Influencer marketing occurs through the recommendation of products or services to the digital influencer’s audience (Madinga *et al.*, 2025; Suárez, 2021). A digital influencer is defined as an individual who creates content on social media and has the ability to persuade and inspire people, leading to changes in the thoughts and behaviors of their followers, both in real life and online (Felix, 2017).

In the tourism sector, this form of destination promotion refers to the dissemination of tourist destinations and travel tips (Barreiro *et al.*, 2019). Currently, Instagram is one of the main platforms used. Veirman *et al.* (2017) argue that Instagram has certain features that facilitate content sharing, along with strong persuasive power. This happens because people are influenced daily by posts from friends, family, influencer, and followers. In this sense, Instagram goes beyond being just a photo-sharing app and becomes an important mobile marketing tool (Ribeiro González *et al.*, 2018).

Within this digital environment, the narratives of LGBTQIAP+ influencer acquire a political and diplomatic dimension. By portraying inclusive experiences and advocating

for respect and diversity, they contribute to shaping international perceptions of Brazilian destinations and to reinforcing the soft power of local governance initiatives committed to equality (Lee & Alhabash, 2025). This research, therefore, dialogues not only with tourism marketing and digital communication but also with the emerging field of paradiplomatic and cultural governance strategies that use digital networks to promote inclusive territories (Manfredi *et al.*, 2024).

Openly LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer use social media as a way to engage with their own community (Santos Vieira de Jesus, 2021). According to the Community Marketing & Insights 24th Annual Survey on LGBTQIAP+ Tourism & Hospitality (Community Marketing & Insights [CMI], 2019), this population places greater trust in media produced within the community, including events, organizations, digital influencer, and social networks, than in traditional media outlets.

Despite the growing relevance of LGBTQIAP+ tourism and the expansion of digital influencer marketing, there is still a lack of studies that explicitly examine how the content produced by these influencer contributes to the construction of territorial attractiveness and the promotion of inclusive tourism. In particular, it remains unclear how such digital narratives articulate elements of tourism, identity, and governance within specific contexts.

The exchange of content focused on niche audiences opens space for deeper studies on the material produced by digital influencer. Thus, this study aims to analyze the relevance of content generated by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer. Additionally, it considers how such content contributes to shaping the territorial attractiveness of destinations, influencing the interest of these tourists and supporting strategies aimed at promoting inclusive tourism development. By interpreting these influencer as agents of cultural paradiplomacy, this research contributes to understanding how digital narratives mediate territorial governance, promote inclusive tourism, and reinforce Brazil's international image as a diverse and welcoming destination.

This study is specifically delimited to the analysis of content produced by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on Instagram, considering a defined sample of profiles, a specific time frame (January to May 2022), and a qualitative analytical approach based on

netnography and content analysis. This delimitation allows the research to focus on how digital narratives are constructed and how they relate to tourism, inclusion, and territorial representation within a specific empirical context.

2. Literature Review

Tourism, as a social and economic phenomenon, is characterized by its multidimensionality and capacity to integrate different fields of knowledge (Johnsen *et al.*, 2004; Page & Connell, 2020). Its complexity allows it to be analyzed through the lenses of marketing, sociology, geography, and political science (Hall, 2005). In contemporary contexts, digital connectivity and the global circulation of symbols add new layers of meaning to tourism, transforming it into a communicational and geopolitical practice (Castells, 2009).

LGBTQIAP+ tourism has gained prominence as an important dimension of contemporary mobility and identity expression. According to Osorio and Henz (2018), this form of tourism represents not only a market segment but also a means of sociocultural recognition and affirmation of diversity. In this regard, the World Tourism Organization (2012) highlights that destinations that invest in inclusive practices and marketing strategies aimed at this public tend to strengthen their image and competitiveness in global markets.

The territorial value of this type of tourism lies in its ability to transform destinations into spaces of representation and visibility. Cities that promote inclusive tourism reinforce values such as tolerance, respect, and social equity, projecting themselves as safe and plural territories (Mcwha *et al.*, 2018). Thus, LGBTQIAP+ tourism is not limited to an economic logic but extends to symbolic and political dimensions that shape the image of places in international circuits.

Moreover, inclusive tourism practices intersect with broader governance processes, as they involve local policies, social movements, and communication strategies that project destinations beyond national borders. This dynamic aligns with the concept of paradiplomacy, in which subnational actors engage in international relations to promote cooperation, identity, and territorial attractiveness (Cornago, 2013; Santos Vieira de Jesus, 2017).

The concept of paradiplomacy emerges as a key interpretative framework to understand how cities, regions, and other subnational entities develop international actions that strengthen their cultural identity and visibility (Cornago, 2013). Paradiplomatic practices are particularly relevant in tourism because they link local identity construction to strategies of international projection, often guided by values such as inclusion, diversity, and sustainability.

In this context, tourism becomes a form of cultural diplomacy, in which destinations act as agents of soft power, using their symbolic assets (culture, heritage, and diversity) to strengthen their position in the global tourism market. When applied to LGBTQIAP+ tourism, paradiplomacy assumes a political character, as inclusive destinations project themselves as spaces of freedom and recognition, reinforcing global narratives of equality and human rights (Mcwha *et al.*, 2018).

From a governance perspective, paradiplomacy involves the articulation of public and private actors who collaborate in the construction of shared narratives about the territory. These narratives serve to legitimize policies of inclusion and to expand the capacity of cities to participate in global cultural exchanges (Santos Vieira de Jesus, 2017). Therefore, the intersection between paradiplomacy and LGBTQIAP+ tourism highlights how international recognition and territorial branding can emerge from inclusive local actions.

The emergence of digital media has transformed the ways in which destinations are promoted and perceived. Social media influencer play a decisive role in shaping perceptions, trends, and attitudes toward travel experiences. According to Felix (2017), these influencer have the power to persuade and inspire their audiences through narratives that combine authenticity and engagement.

Within this digital environment, influencer can be understood as informal agents of paradiplomacy and cultural mediation. Their online narratives often go beyond marketing, addressing topics such as inclusion, representation, and belonging. By portraying diverse experiences and advocating for respect and equality, LGBTQIAP+ influencer contribute to shaping the global perception of destinations and to reinforcing the soft power of territories that adopt inclusive governance (Lee & Alhabash, 2025).

In this sense, their activity aligns with the idea of “digital public diplomacy,” in which communication networks serve as tools of international influence and cultural exchange (Jansson, 2018). Through social media, influencers perform symbolic work that connects local realities with global audiences, expanding the visibility of inclusive destinations and complementing official paradiplomatic actions promoted by governments or tourism boards.

Influencer marketing, as a communication strategy, consists of the use of individuals with significant online credibility to influence consumer attitudes or purchasing decisions (Suárez, 2021). According to Angeloni and Rossi (2021), this form of marketing is particularly relevant in tourism because it allows destinations to be promoted through authentic and emotional storytelling, capable of generating engagement and trust among followers.

When applied to the LGBTQIAP+ context, influencer marketing assumes not only a promotional but also a social and political function. These influencers act as mediators of cultural diplomacy by legitimizing inclusive destinations and representing marginalized identities in global tourism narratives. Their actions illustrate how digital communication can contribute to the construction of paradiplomatic networks that enhance territorial attractiveness and reinforce diversity as a governance principle (Pham & Phan, 2025).

By integrating the principles of paradiplomacy with digital communication and inclusive tourism, it is possible to see how governance is exercised through symbolic representation. Local governments, civil organizations, and digital creators collaborate in building inclusive images of territories, transforming tourism into a space for the negotiation of values and cultural recognition (Manfredi *et al.*, 2024).

This perspective expands the understanding of tourism marketing, positioning it not only as an economic activity but also as a form of political action and soft power. The content generated by LGBTQIAP+ influencers works as a bridge between territorial branding and paradiplomatic strategy, where diversity becomes a diplomatic resource and a foundation for sustainable and inclusive governance.

3. Methodology

This research is defined as applied, descriptive, and qualitative in nature. It adopts a netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2014) combined with content analysis (Bardin, 2016) to examine the content produced by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on Instagram. Instagram was selected as the data collection site due to its high level of interaction, co-creation, and engagement compared to other social media platforms (Oliveira, 2016).

For analytical purposes, the study is structured around key analytical variables derived from the content: (i) types of published content (sharing experiences, advertising, travel tips, destination recommendations, and personal experiences), (ii) communicational strategies used by influencer, (iii) presence or absence of explicit LGBTQIAP+ references, and (iv) territorial representations conveyed through narratives and visual elements. These variables guided the coding process and supported the interpretation of results.

Data collection was carried out through a purposive sampling strategy, based on searches for LGBTQIAP+ tourism influencer on Instagram and complementary digital sources. Profiles were selected according to the following criteria: (i) self-identification as part of the LGBTQIAP+ community, (ii) active production of tourism-related content, (iii) audience engagement, and (iv) relevance and richness of published material, in line with netnographic principles (Kozinets, 2014).

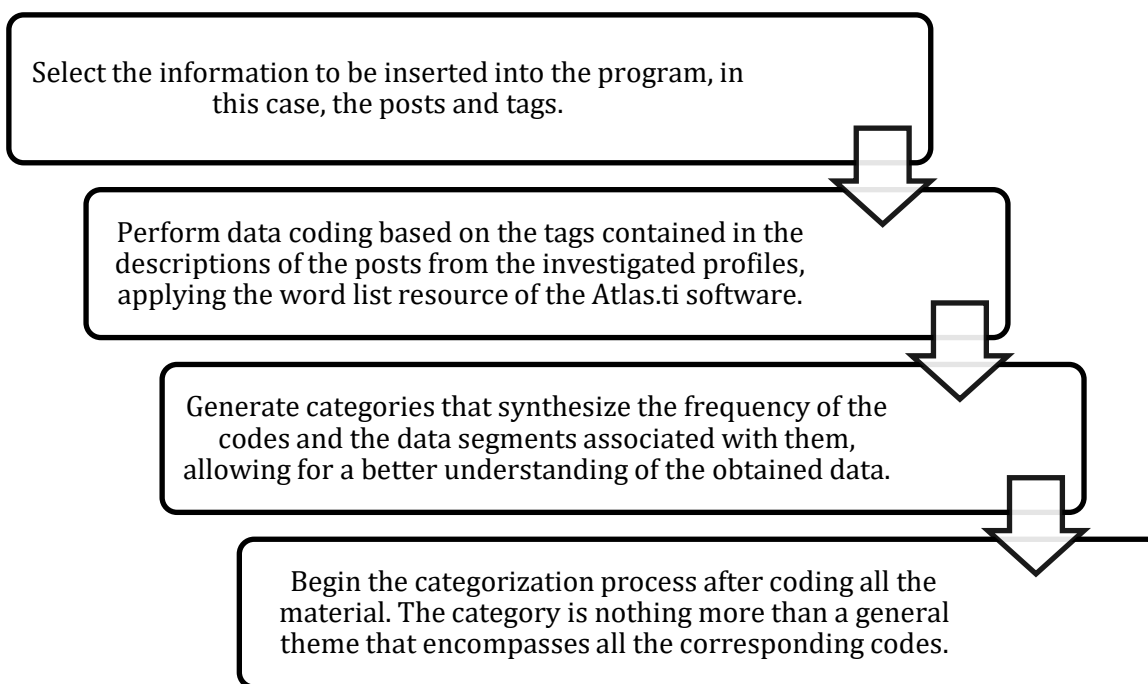
A first set of profiles was identified and mapped, from which a smaller group was selected for in-depth analysis, prioritizing those with greater reach and content consistency. The final sample was analyzed within a defined time frame (January to May 2022). Data included posts, captions, hashtags, and visual elements.

The analytical procedure followed the stages of content analysis proposed by Bardin (2016), including pre-analysis, material exploration, coding, categorization, and interpretation. The software Atlas.ti was used to support the organization and coding of data, enabling the identification of patterns, thematic categories, and relationships among variables.

The researcher adopted a non-participatory observational role throughout the process, without interfering in the interactions of the analyzed profiles. The methodological

approach allowed the articulation between empirical data and theoretical constructs related to paradiplomacy, digital communication, and inclusive tourism.

Figure 1. Category Mapping Using Atlas.ti



Source. Own elaboration.

The software Atlas.ti was used to perform Bardin's (2016) content analysis and to operationalize the categorization process. Based on this approach, the method enabled the identification of communicational patterns and marketing strategies, as well as the understanding of how the narratives produced by LGBTQIAP+ influencer function as expressions of cultural paradiplomacy and symbolic governance.

By examining the discourses and images, the study sought to observe how the representation of diversity and inclusion contributes to the construction of Brazil's territorial image as a plural and welcoming tourist destination. Thus, the proposed methodology is not limited to the thematic categorization of publications but rather articulates the empirical content with the theoretical dimensions of paradiplomacy, digital communication, and inclusive tourism, in order to relate the results to broader discussions on symbolic power, soft power, and cultural diplomacy.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

For the generation of categories in this research using indexes and key concepts, it was decided to use the tags mentioned in the influencer' posts. According to Henriques (2016), tags serve as markers appropriated by Instagram users as indexers to enhance post content and expand connections between users. On Instagram, these keywords influence interactions with content and users.

There were 202 posts containing tags, which generated a word list in Atlas.ti software. This software creates a report that can be downloaded in Excel format, displaying the frequency of each word. In these posts, 560 words were used as tags. Of these, only 224 words appeared more than once. No tags related to LGBTQIAP+ tourism were found with direct mentions. Therefore, it was decided to analyze the similarities among tags that appeared five times or more, resulting in 76 words.

By using tags as keywords for category generation through indexes and key concepts, the archival procedure was chosen. This involves analyzing documents, records, archives, or other forms of stored information to obtain relevant data for the study. Additionally, this process includes steps such as identifying and selecting documents (in this case, posts) relevant to the research topic, organizing and cataloging the material, conducting a critical analysis of the content, and interpreting the data to achieve the study's objectives. This method is commonly applied in historical research, public policy analysis, sociological studies, and other fields where access to documentary sources is essential for research development. Four categories were identified: tourist destination recommendations, sharing of travel experiences, travel tips, and advertising.

During the categorization process, some posts were found to include personal narratives that did not fit into any of the above categories. As a result, an additional category called "personal experiences" was created, without direct association with any tags. Table 1 presents the tags along with their frequency of appearance and the defined categories.

Table 1. Categories and Hashtags

Category	Hashtag (frequency)
Sharing experiences	Tourism (47), nature (15), adventure (12), backpackers (11), perfect nature (11), boat (11), natural pools (11), creative ideas (7), vacations (6), crystal clear water (5), waterfalls of Brazil (5), castle (5), fun (5), gastronomy (5), winter (5), snow (5), landscape (5), water park (5), amusement park (5), sunset (5), beach (5), hiking (5), and flying (5).
Total hashtags: 24	
Advertising	Reels (21), cariocanomundoexperience (20), reelsinstagram (18), royalcaribbean (15), advertising (11), wonderoftheseas (10), meumomentoroyal (7), reelsviral (7), mileva (6), cruise (5), audience (5), expectationvsreality (5), and reelsvideo (5).
Total hashtags: 13	
Travel tips	Travel (88), travel tip (53), traveling (45), travel tips (44), I love traveling (6), curiosities (5), and travel (5).
Total hashtags: 7	
Destination recommendations	Visit Brazil (23), Brazil (22), Pernambuco (18), must-see destinations (17), Caribbean (12), Europe (12), Portugal (10), Alagoas (9), Berlin (9), London (9), visit Porto and North (9), beautiful destinations (8), Gramado (8), Italy (8), love Great Britain (8), Porto (8), visit Portugal (8), Maragogi (7), Brazilian beaches (7), Brazilian Caribbean (6), Spain (6), Maldives (6), Maranhão (6), Northeast (6), Serra Gaúcha (6), visit Spain (6), Andorra (5), I love the Northeast (5), Gramado and Canela (5), Lençóis Maranhenses (5), Mexico (5), São José da Coroa Grande (5), Tocantins (5), visit Andorra (5).
Total hashtags: 34	

Source. Own elaboration.

The content generated by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on Instagram is represented through the posts analyzed in this study. A total of 324 posts were examined, distributed across the selected profiles. Each post was categorized according to the analytical framework presented in Table 1.

In order to provide a clearer overview of the results, Table 2 presents the distribution and relative frequency of the identified categories. The findings indicate that content related to sharing experiences (27.13%) and advertising (26.62%) predominates, followed by travel tips (19.12%), destination recommendations (14.21%), and personal experiences (12.92%).

Table 2. Categories, Number of Posts and Frequency.

Category	Number of Posts	Relative Frequency (%)
Sharing experiences	105	27.13%
Advertising	103	26.62%
Travel tips	74	19.12%
Destination recommendations	55	14.21%
Personal experiences	50	12.92%
Total	387	100%

Source. Authors, 2024.

This distribution suggests a strong emphasis on experiential and promotional narratives, highlighting the central role of influencer in shaping tourism imaginaries and consumption practices. From a theoretical perspective, these patterns can be interpreted through the lens of paradiplomacy, as such narratives contribute to the symbolic construction of territories and reinforce inclusive representations aligned with soft power strategies.

The category “sharing experiences” emerges as particularly relevant, as it encompasses narratives that occur during and after travel, integrating emotional, aesthetic, and experiential dimensions. These narratives not only promote destinations but also contribute to the symbolic construction of territories, projecting them as inclusive spaces associated with diversity and belonging (Cornago, 2013; Santos Vieira de Jesus, 2017).

In this context, digital storytelling operates as a mechanism of symbolic governance, where influencer act as informal agents of cultural paradiplomacy by mediating the relationship between local territories and global audiences. Their content reinforces territorial attractiveness not only through information, but also through affective and identity-based connections.

Santos Vieira de Jesus (2021) states that the intention to stimulate consumption through promotion allows influencer to position themselves as representative members of a group for which access to symbolic goods is allowed, such as sophisticated or paradisiacal places, expensive products, and happy, exciting, and love-filled lives. Similarly, according to Rosa, Walkowski & Perinotto (2022), in the context of luxury tourism, the experience

of traveling exhibited on social media is sold as a product that promises to ensure, at least, those small joys.

Within the “sharing experiences” category, the analyzed content reveals a predominance of narratives centered on personal trajectories, everyday life abroad, and experiential accounts related to mobility and cultural adaptation. In several cases, these narratives combine tourism with elements of academic or long-term stays, reinforcing the role of influencer as mediators of knowledge and lived experience. In this sense, such content contributes to shaping perceptions of destinations not only as places to visit, but also as spaces for learning and personal development, which aligns with discussions on academic tourism (Rodrigues Soares & Castro Gabriel, 2018).

Additionally, a significant portion of the posts emphasizes natural landscapes and environmental experiences, often combining aesthetic representation with practical travel guidance. This articulation between experience and information expands the communicative function of influencer content, as it both inspires and informs audiences. As highlighted by Zeng & Gerritsen (2014), content focused on environmental and experiential dimensions can influence attitudes and behaviors, promoting greater awareness of travel practices.

Despite the predominance of experiential narratives, explicit references to LGBTQIAP+ themes within this category were limited. This finding suggests that representation often occurs in subtle ways, through everyday situations and implicit forms of visibility rather than direct discourse. From a paradiplomatic perspective, these subtle representations still contribute to the symbolic construction of inclusive territories, as they normalize diverse identities and reinforce perceptions of safety, belonging, and acceptance in different destinations (Lumertz *et al.*, 2026).

Berezan *et al.* (2015) consider that although safety is still a concern for LGBTQIAP+ travelers, it has ceased to be a factor that restricts them from visiting destinations. However, lesbian women, according to Magalhães (2018), should also be concerned about gender-related issues before making a travel choice, as some countries are known for cases of mass sexual assaults, such as India.

In this context, the scarcity of explicit LGBTQIAP+ references does not diminish the paradiplomatic dimension of these narratives. On the contrary, subtle acts of representation (such as showing affection or everyday normalcy in same-sex relationships) contribute to the construction of an inclusive symbolic repertoire that projects Brazil as a diverse and welcoming nation (Pamment, 2012). These micro-narratives serve as informal cultural diplomacy, reinforcing a global discourse of equality and mutual respect (Cull, 2008).

The “advertising” category highlights the explicit or subtle promotion of products or services. This category is also present in the posts grouped under the “sharing experiences” category, as it is part of the influencer marketing strategy to create a narrative that engages the user and then offers the product or service.

The contrast of opinions among users adds credibility to the influencer’s analysis of advertising. However, there is a risk that such messages may harm credibility among followers. This category encompasses the unique aspects highlighted by Crescitelli and Tagawa (2015), Rosa *et al.* (2022), De Oliveira (2019), and Joner (2018).

It is also important to note that commercial partnerships extend beyond economic logic. When influencers collaborate with tourism brands to represent destinations that embody values of diversity and inclusion, they participate in a form of paradiplomatic communication. These collaborations connect market strategies to the symbolic diplomacy of territories, contributing to the exercise of soft power through the dissemination of inclusive and positive representations of Brazilian tourism (Cembranel *et al.*, 2024; Dinnie, 2008).

Advertising-related content appears both explicitly and implicitly within influencer posts. In some cases, promotional intent is signaled through hashtags such as #ad, #publi, or #publicidad. However, in many instances, advertising is embedded within narratives that resemble travel tips or personal experiences. This blending of promotional and experiential content reinforces what De Oliveira (2019) describes as covert advertising, in which the commercial dimension becomes secondary to the aesthetic and emotional appeal of the post.

The findings indicate that advertising content is frequently integrated into storytelling strategies, combining product or service promotion with experiential narratives. This approach enhances perceived authenticity and strengthens audience engagement, increasing the persuasive potential of influencer communication (Crescitelli & Tagawa, 2015). In this context, followers are more likely to trust and act upon recommendations when they are embedded within relatable and visually appealing content.

Additionally, the results reveal that advertising practices are closely associated with the construction of a “spectacle of travel,” in which destinations and experiences are presented in a highly aestheticized and aspirational manner (Rosa *et al.*, 2022). This dynamic transforms travel into a consumable narrative, where influencers act as curators of desirable lifestyles and experiences.

Despite the prominence of advertising content, explicit references to LGBTQIAP+ themes were absent in this category. This suggests that commercial partnerships tend to prioritize broader market appeal over identity-based representation. As noted by Joner (2018), although LGBTQIAP+ content is present in digital environments, it is not consistently integrated into branded communication strategies. From a paradiplomatic perspective, this indicates a partial disconnection between market-oriented narratives and the explicit promotion of diversity, even when influencers themselves belong to this community.

From a paradiplomatic standpoint, advertising content can therefore be interpreted not only as a mechanism of market persuasion but also as a symbolic expression of governance. The repetition of inclusive imagery, diversity-related messages, and destination promotion under a lens of respect contributes to the international recognition of territories as culturally open and socially responsible (Dorbayani, 2021).

The category “travel tips” includes advice published before, during, and after visiting a tourist destination. It encompasses tips on accommodation in certain places, hotel recommendations, routes, hostels, inns, safe places for LGBTQIAP+ guests, gastronomy, cultural aspects, sightseeing, natural attractions, the local LGBTQIAP+ scene, climate conditions, appropriate clothing, and how to avoid unpleasant experiences in tourist destinations, among others.

In addition to their practical function, these “travel tips” posts play a paradiplomatic role by translating individual experiences into forms of collective learning and intercultural dialogue. When influencers highlight safety, inclusion, or accessibility, they symbolically mediate between local governance and global audiences, acting as cultural interpreters of inclusive destinations (Melissen, 2011). This reinforces the idea that the everyday practice of travel communication can serve as a channel for non-state diplomacy and soft power (Bjola & Holmes, 2015).

The “travel tips” category intersects with “sharing experiences,” as it encompasses narratives produced before, during, and after travel. These posts combine practical guidance with experiential elements, reinforcing the hybrid nature of influencer communication (Barrientos *et al.*, 2022; Lehmann, 2013; Rosa *et al.*, 2022; Spolaor, 2019).

The most frequently used hashtags, such as #viaje, #consejodeviaje, #viajar, and #consejosdeviaje, indicate that influencers actively frame their content as advice-oriented, positioning themselves as credible sources of information for potential travelers. This labeling strategy enhances the perceived usefulness of content and supports decision-making processes related to tourism experiences.

The results show that travel tips are often associated with visually appealing and highly curated representations of destinations, reinforcing what Spolaor (2019) defines as “Instagrammable” content. In this context, aesthetic value becomes a key element in attracting attention and influencing user engagement, shaping how destinations are perceived and desired.

Moreover, the integration of informational and experiential elements reflects the transformation of social media into a central channel for the dissemination of travel knowledge, where influencers act as intermediaries between destinations and audiences (Lehmann, 2013). Posts frequently combine recommendations, personal experiences, and curated itineraries, which are among the most valued types of content by users interested in travel (Rosa *et al.*, 2022).

From a paradiplomatic perspective, these narratives contribute to the symbolic mediation of territories, translating local experiences into accessible and relatable knowledge for global audiences. By emphasizing accessibility, safety, and attractiveness, influencers

indirectly reinforce the positioning of destinations as inclusive and desirable, strengthening their visibility within international tourism dynamics (Manfredi *et al.*, 2024).

The “destination recommendation” category highlights different levels of experience associated with tourism consumption. According to Narangajavana *et al.* (2017), recommendations from more experienced travelers play a significant role in influencing destination choice and planning processes. Although this category did not present the highest number of posts, it concentrated the greatest diversity of hashtags, indicating a strong emphasis on territorial identification and symbolic positioning.

The most frequently used hashtags, such as #visitbrasil, #brasil, #pernambuco, and #destinosimperdibles, reflect narratives that span before, during, and after the travel experience (Magno & Cassia, 2018; Nunes, 2008; Rosa *et al.*, 2022; Rodrigues Soares & Castro Gabriel, 2018). These markers contribute to reinforcing the visibility of destinations and structuring how they are communicated to audiences.

The findings indicate that destination recommendations are commonly associated with immersive visual content and emotionally driven narratives, which enhance user engagement and influence perceptions of attractiveness. As noted by Nunes (2008), information shared through social media can generate emotional responses such as curiosity and desire, shaping the decision-making process of potential tourists.

In this context, travel is often framed as a consumable experience, combining aesthetic appeal, symbolic meanings, and promises of transformation, relaxation, and escape from routine (Rosa *et al.*, 2022). This reinforces the commodification of destinations, where places are packaged and communicated as desirable products within digital environments.

Additionally, the results suggest that recommendations vary according to the type of experience offered, including short-distance trips, cultural visits, and destinations that require prior preparation or specific safety considerations. The adoption of these recommendations depends on the perceived credibility of the influencer and the quality of the information provided (Magno & Cassia, 2018).

From a governance perspective, these destination recommendations embody a type of symbolic diplomacy, where influencer' emotional engagement with places transforms them into ambassadors of inclusive tourism. By narrating experiences that connect identity, emotion, and place, these creators expand the paradiplomatic visibility of destinations, aligning the tourism discourse with values of diversity, sustainability, and cultural coexistence (Manfredi *et al.*, 2024).

The “personal experiences” category encompasses posts about the influencer' daily lives and personal opinions. Cotter (2019) argues that sharing personal experiences makes influencer also be seen as “ordinary” individuals and cultivates a sense of accessibility and intimacy. Furthermore, there is known interest in content related to influencer' private lives (Cembranel *et al.*, 2023, Cotter, 2019; Mention, 2022; Rosa *et al.* 2022; Silva, 2018).

The “personal experiences” category encompasses narratives centered on everyday life, emotional expression, and moments of intimacy shared by influencer. These posts often include celebrations, reflections, and personal memories, contributing to the construction of an authentic and relatable online identity. According to Cotter (2019), such representations are strategically used by influencer to build visibility and engagement, translating personal content into symbolic and economic capital.

The findings indicate that personal narratives play a central role in fostering identification between influencer and their audiences. By sharing aspects of their private lives, including emotions, challenges, and achievements, influencer create a sense of proximity and trust. As highlighted by Rosa *et al.* (2022), this use of intimacy functions as a mechanism of identification, particularly in digital environments characterized by an abundance of information and competing references.

The use of hashtags such as #tbt (Throwback Thursday) reinforces the role of memory and nostalgia in these narratives, transforming past experiences into meaningful and shareable content (Silva, 2018). These elements contribute to the construction of a continuous narrative identity, in which personal and travel-related experiences are intertwined.

In this context, personal content often blurs the boundaries between private life and public communication, transforming everyday experiences into communicative assets.

This dynamic aligns with broader trends in digital media, where influencers act simultaneously as content creators, narrators of their own lives, and mediators of meaning.

From a paradiplomatic perspective, these narratives extend beyond individual expression, contributing to the symbolic projection of values such as authenticity, diversity, and emotional connection. The representation of affection, resilience, and experience reinforces the human dimension of territorial images, strengthening identification among diverse audiences and fostering subtle forms of cultural governance (Castells, 2009).

Additionally, by sharing aspects of the couple's daily life, the influencer understands that their followers are not just looking for travel-related content. The analysis of content generated by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on Instagram reveals significant patterns regarding experience-sharing for the LGBTQIAP+ community. This finding highlights the importance of promoting LGBTQIAP+-friendly tourist destinations and the need to ensure the safety and reception of these travelers.

Regarding advertising, influencers use various strategies to promote products and services, ranging from explicit to subtle posts. These strategies aim to engage followers and encourage them to make purchases, but they can also affect the credibility of influencers among the public. Hashtags play a fundamental role in signaling content as travel advice. The most commonly used ones, such as #viaje, #consejodeviaje, and #consejosdeviaje, add value to the content and encourage follower interaction.

The analysis of content generated by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on Instagram reveals not only behavioral patterns and marketing strategies but also important issues related to representation and inclusion in tourism.

Behavioral patterns indicate that these influencers often share travel experiences that highlight inclusive and safe destinations for the LGBTQIAP+ community. Their posts tend to emphasize authenticity and the personalization of tourism experiences, showing a clear deviation from the generic promotions seen in other sectors of digital marketing. The marketing strategies that influencers use on their platform are not only intended to promote destinations but also to collaborate with brands that share values of inclusion.

and diversity. These collaborations not only benefit brands by increasing their visibility within the LGBTQIAP+ community but also validate and strengthen the image of influencer as advocates for equality and fair representation. It is notable how marketing campaigns involving these influencer tend to be more authentic and credible, as followers perceive influencer as genuine and trustworthy voices within the community (Angaramo & Pérez-Torres, 2021).

The behaviors observed in Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on Instagram include sharing travel experiences, highlighting unique and emotional aspects, prioritizing destinations and experiences that promote diversity and inclusion, and engaging with the LGBTQIAP+ community through hashtags, mentions, and collaborations with brands and organizations that support the cause (Lumertz *et al.*, 2026).

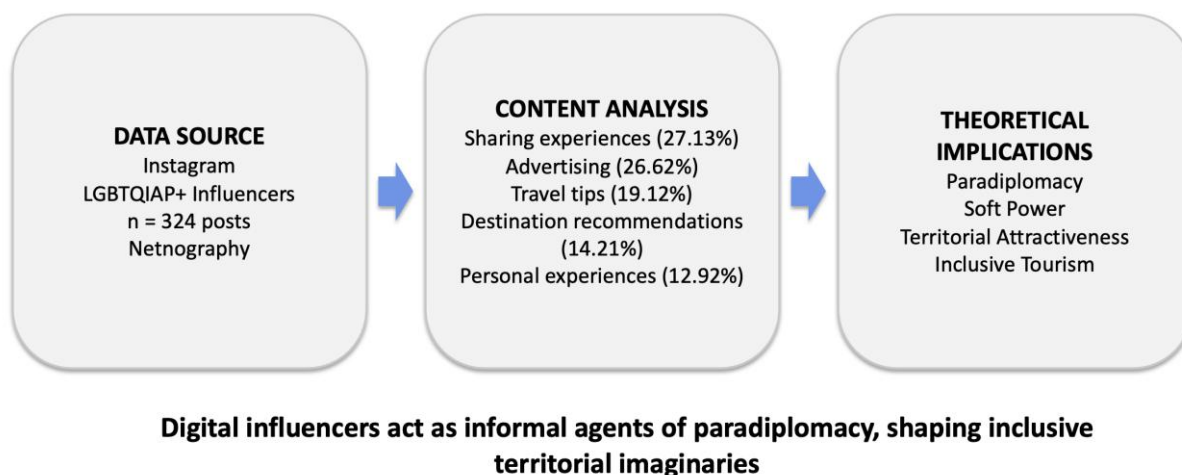
It is clear that the content produced by these influencer has a positive impact by increasing visibility for the LGBTQIAP+ community in the tourism sector. Their posts not only celebrate diversity but also educate their followers on the importance of choosing destinations that respect and promote the rights of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This type of content can significantly contribute to changing perceptions and attitudes toward the LGBTQIAP+ community in tourism, fostering a more inclusive and respectful environment (Bakker, 2018).

Overall, the findings show that the content created by these influencer acts as a hybrid form of marketing and diplomacy. Beyond commercial intent, their digital narratives contribute to constructing a paradiplomatic network that connects local identities to global audiences through representations of inclusion and diversity. This interaction between digital communication and territorial branding demonstrates how symbolic power can be exercised through online influence, reinforcing tourism as a field of both economic promotion and cultural diplomacy (Cornago, 2013).

Additionally, through the visual representation of diversity, individuals from different backgrounds, gender identities, and sexual orientations are depicted enjoying travel and experiences. This promotes LGBTQIAP+-friendly destinations and contributes to awareness and the promotion of inclusive tourism (Rodríguez & Sixto García, 2022).

Figure 2 synthesizes these relationships, illustrating how content categories, communicational strategies, and digital narratives interact to shape territorial attractiveness and function as mechanisms of paradiplomacy within the context of inclusive tourism. The results highlight that important issues related to representation and inclusion in tourism are directly connected to the promotion of inclusive destinations, advocacy for diversity, awareness of challenges, and the encouragement of audiences to support businesses and initiatives aligned with these values. In this sense, digital influencer narratives contribute to driving positive changes in the tourism industry by reinforcing inclusive imaginaries and practices.

Figure 2. Graphical Abstract of the Study



Source. Own elaboration.

5. Final Considerations

The general objective of this study was to identify and analyze the content generated by Brazilian LGBTQIAP+ digital influencer on the social network Instagram in the leisure tourism segment. To this end, a netnographic approach was applied to systematize posts, hashtags, and thematic categories. The research also developed an interpretation of symbolic meanings related to diversity and inclusion. The methodological design allowed the articulation of empirical data with the theoretical concepts of paradiplomacy, symbolic governance, and soft power, revealing how influencer act as non-state cultural mediators in the projection of inclusive territorial images.

The analysis showed that influencer' content emphasizes experiences, recommendations, and advertising strategies that both promote destinations and communicate values of diversity and authenticity. The fact that only 22% of the sample were lesbian women highlights the predominance of gay men in the creation of travel and tourism content, as well as their higher number of followers compared to female influencer. Furthermore, 80% of the analyzed profiles were micro-influencer, with fewer than one hundred thousand followers, indicating that influence in LGBTQIAP+ tourism is built more on perceived authenticity than on reach scale.

The categorization process identified five main types of content: destination recommendations, sharing experiences, travel tips, advertising, and personal experiences. Among these categories, "sharing experiences" demonstrated how digital narratives function as symbolic exchanges between local cultures and global audiences, constituting paradiplomatic micro-actions that project Brazil as a diverse and welcoming country. The "travel tips" and "destination recommendations" categories also revealed an intercultural pedagogical role, translating individual experiences into forms of collective learning and cultural mediation.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study broadens the discussion on the convergence between influencer marketing, inclusive tourism, and paradiplomacy. By incorporating the perspectives of cultural diplomacy and symbolic governance, it demonstrates that digital communication can perform diplomatic functions, building bridges between markets, local governance structures, and global audiences. The results highlight how communication networks work as arenas of cultural negotiation and reinforce the strategic role of influencer as soft power agents in tourism.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer insights to inform decision-making by marketing managers and tourism organizations. Recognizing the paradiplomatic dimension of influencer communication shows that partnerships with LGBTQIAP+ content creators can address both commercial and reputational objectives, strengthening the international image of destinations committed to equality. Recommended actions include developing inclusive co-created campaigns with influencer, implementing diversity and inclusion training programs for staff who interact directly with the public, promoting events that celebrate LGBTQIAP+ tourism, and integrating authentic

testimonials that humanize brands. Continuous data monitoring and impact assessment through analytical tools ensure strategic coherence and return on investment.

On the social level, the study underscores the need to promote greater plurality in digital representation. The predominance of cisgender gay men and the underrepresentation of other gender identities and sexual orientations reveal an imbalance in voice and visibility. Encouraging intersectional representation among influencer contributes to reducing stereotypes, enhancing the sense of belonging, and strengthening tourism as a space for equality, empathy, and intercultural dialogue. Moreover, by emphasizing content that promotes LGBTQIAP+-friendly destinations, the study contributes to combating prejudice and building more inclusive travel environments.

This research presents some limitations. The first concerns the composition of the sample, which was limited to cisgender gay men and lesbian women, excluding trans and non-binary identities. Another limitation relates to the temporal scope of data collection (five months), which may not capture seasonal variations in tourism behavior. In addition, only four profiles were selected for detailed analysis, which may limit the generalization of results.

Future research should address these limitations by expanding both the empirical scope and methodological approaches. Specifically, it is recommended to (i) include a more diverse range of gender identities and sexual orientations, particularly trans and non-binary individuals; (ii) extend the observation period to capture longitudinal and seasonal dynamics; and (iii) adopt mixed-methods designs, such as in-depth interviews, surveys, or sentiment analysis, to better understand audience perceptions and engagement.

Further studies may also explore comparative analyses across countries or regions to examine how cultural, political, and institutional contexts influence the paradiplomatic role of digital influencer. Additionally, investigating the relationship between influencer content and destination governance strategies could provide deeper insights into how digital communication contributes to territorial positioning and inclusive tourism development.

By advancing these research directions, future studies can contribute to consolidating this emerging field, expanding theoretical frameworks, and supporting more effective and inclusive practices in tourism and digital communication.

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