presented by

stay22 TRAVEL MASSIVE

THE 2025 CREATORS & TRAVEL INDUSTRY RESEARCH REPORT

Insights from the Travel Massive Global Industry Study

version 1.0 (April 2025)

Image by **Erik Odiin , Unsplash**

OUTLINE

A FEW WORDS FROM THE TEAM

We're thrilled to have partnered with Travel Massive, the world's largest online travel community (a.k.a. where all the cool travel kids hang out), to put together this fresh industry report on what's really going on with travel creators. We've dug into the data, looked for trends, and even found a few surprises. We hope you enjoy it!

~ **Rami Nuseir**, Head of Marketing, Stay22, @get.stay22

The origins of this study was a small community survey, and curiosity around the topic allowed it to flourish into a full-fledged research project. I've conducted a range of research projects for startups and global organizations alike — working on this project so close to my personal passions was a special treat. This is just a beginning...

~ **Kateryna Topol**, Lead Researcher, Chapter Lead,
Travel Massive Toronto, @travelmassive, @katerryna

INTRODUCTION

Is there a gap in expectations between travel creators and travel providers?

That was our opening question coming into this study. Even when looking at the same geographies there are currently no standards for creator collaborations. Some see the number of followers as the primary metric, others pay close attention to engagement. And then there is quality and expertise, which often get left behind for those with a following under 10K. Articles and webinars encourage smaller creators to pitch based on skills, while travel providers, naturally, have to question the value of every exchange.

The study was split into two primary categories: **Travel Providers** and **Travel Creators**. Each group received a tailored, **anonymous survey**. The survey was open globally to Travel Massive members, partners, and the travel industry at large. Over the course of 3 months (ending January 2025), we collected over 200 responses from 36 countries with the highest numbers of participants located in the USA, Canada, UK, and South Africa. Less than 2% of creators identified as nomadic.

The global tourism industry is worth approximately USD 10.9 trillion (10% of GDP) as of 2024, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).[1]

$254 **BILLION USD**

GLOBAL SPEND ON CONTENT AND INFLUENCER MARKETING IN TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY.

Extrapolating the results of the 2024 Gartner CMO Spend Survey of the travel and hospitality (T&H) sector,[2] the global industry spends $916 billion on marketing and customer engagement.

The same research indicates that content, influencer and affiliate marketing accounts for around 28% of marketing budgets — including influencer marketing (5.5%), sponsored content (5.3%), podcasts (8.8%), and video (8.1%).

TERMINOLOGY

Travel Industry: Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representatives, Public Relations Agencies, marketing and influencer relations, Destination Management Company (DMC), Online Travel Agent (OTA), Hospitality and Accommodations, Tours, Transportation, and experience representatives

Travel Creators: Journalists, bloggers, content creators, influencers, photographers, YouTubers, and podcasters

Earned Media: Unpaid coverage in a 3rd party publication.

(1) https://wttc.org/research/economic-impact
(2) https://www.gartner.com/en/marketing/research/hospitality-marketing-budget-benchmark

WHOSE INSIGHTS ARE THESE?

Participants from 36 countries responded with the highest numbers located in the USA, Canada, the UK, and South Africa. The survey revealed that an average tourism provider organization (90%) employs 1-49 people therefore operating as a small business. 75% of these employees are over the age of 34 and 35% are 45-54 with a nearly even gender split.

51% OF TRAVEL CREATORS **HAVE OVER 10 YEARS EXPERIENCE**

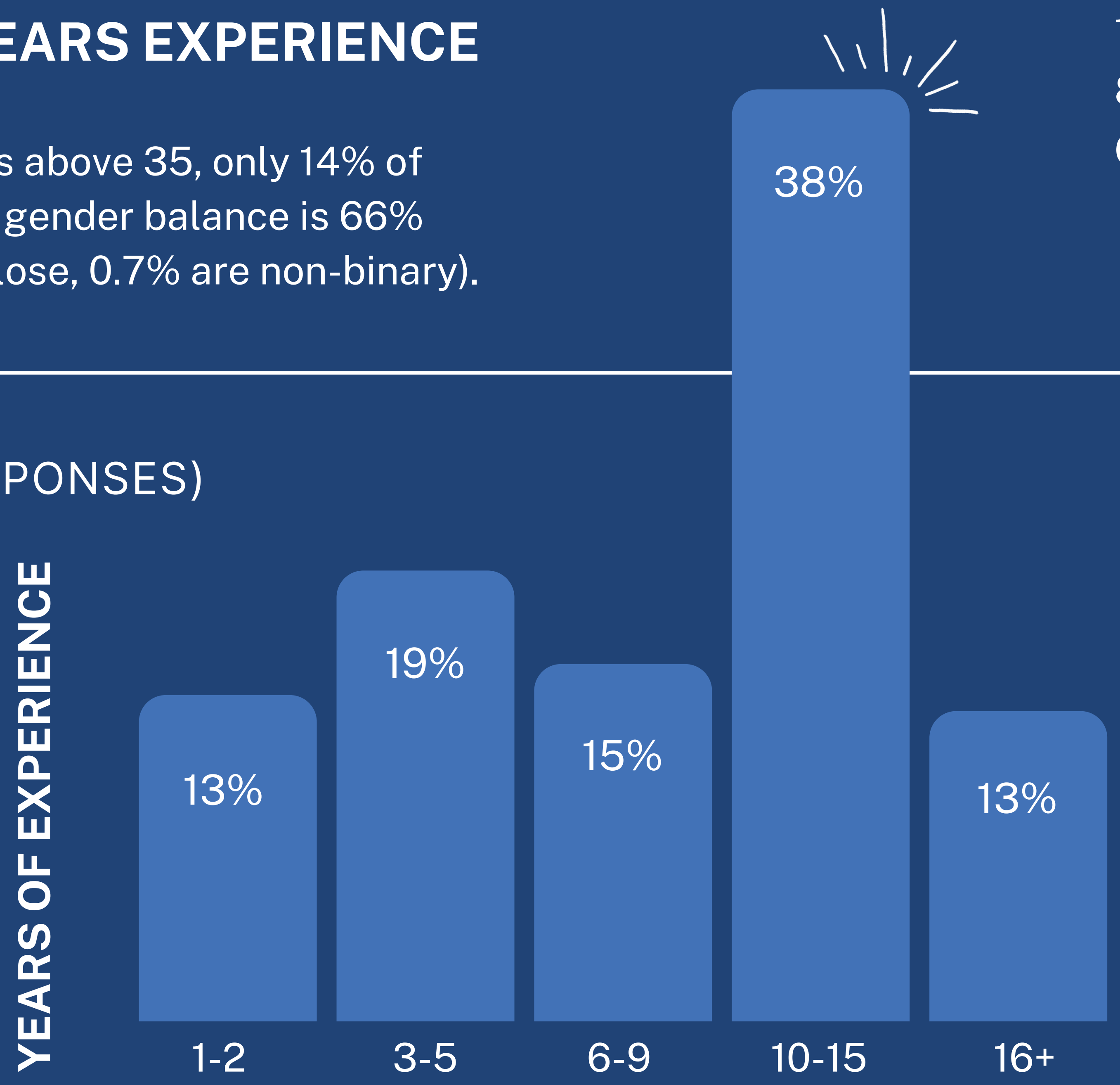
On the creator side, the age similarly skews above 35, only 14% of participants were under the age of 34. The gender balance is 66% female / 29.6% male (4% chose not to disclose, 0.7% are non-binary).

TRAVEL INDUSTRY (SURVEY RESPONSES)

37% Tour operator
25% Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)
23% Travel agent
17% Destination Management Company (DMC)
12% Online Travel Agent (OTA)
12% PR/Marketing Company
8% Transportation provider
6% Hotel brand

TRAVEL CREATORS (SURVEY RESPONSES)

64% Content creator
58% Blogger
27% Journalist
22% Influencer
21% Photographer
10% YouTuber
6% Podcaster
4% Media network/company



CREATORS' PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

31% are members of ASMP, ASTW, ATTA, BATW, BGTW, BSME, China Tourism, European association, Experience Gold Coast, Hungarian Journalists Association, IFWTWA, IGLTA, Local Travel Bloggers Association, NUJ, NATJA, OWAA, PPA, SATW, TIAC AITC, Travel Coach Network, VDRJ, WUC.

CREATORS' STATE OF MIND

There is an assumed glamour associated with being a full-time travel creator so naturally, we wondered if it was all that it's made up to be.

36% Full-time creators and happy with it

29% Would like to be full-time

20% Have no interest in being full-time creators

16% Are full-time but need to make changes

People who indicated they need to make a change include participants across all age groups and represent 13 countries. Naturally, we were curious why 16% of full-time creators wanted to make changes. A pattern among this small group was their annual income, on par or below livable wage for the geography.

Image by **Spencer Davis, Unsplash**

TRAVEL INDUSTRY BEHIND THE SCENES

Image by **Anthony Delanoix, Unsplash**

WHO ARE TRAVEL PROVIDERS LOOKING FOR RIGHT NOW?

We asked travel providers who are they currently looking to work with by ranking roles from most interested to least. The ranking system did not expose one single winner but content creators and journalists certainly came up on top. Here are the average priority rankings for each role:

1
CONTENT CREATORS

29% 1st priority
13% 2nd priority

2
JOURNALISTS

27% 1st priority
18% 2nd priority

3
INFLUENCERS

17% 1st priority
27% 2nd priority

4
YOUTUBERS

8% 1st priority
8% 2nd priority

5
BLOGGERS

8% 1st priority
2% 2nd priority

6
PHOTOGRAPHERS

2% 1st priority
13% 2nd priority

7
NEWSLETTERS

8% 1st priority
10% 2nd priority

8
PUBLISHERS

0% 1st priority
8% 2nd priority

9
PODCASTERS

0% 1st priority
8% 2nd priority

Image by **Marco Xu, Unsplash**

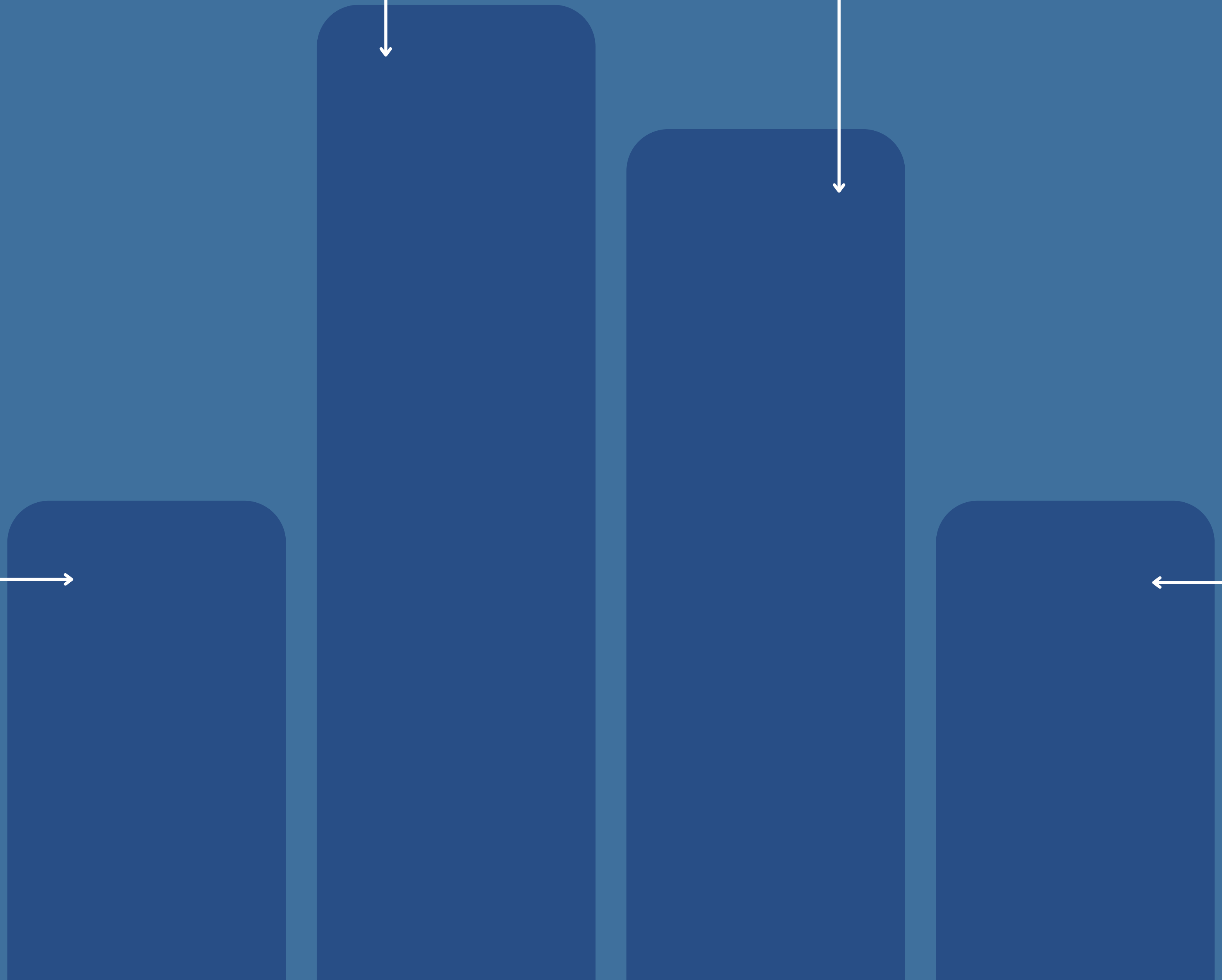
ACTIVITIES HOSTED BY TRAVEL PROVIDERS

61%

of travel providers host press trips, FAM trips or other fully hosted experiences

53%

of travel providers offer self-driven or self-guided complimentary experiences



31%

of travel providers offer complimentary hotel stays, tours, flights, meals, car rentals, etc

31%

of travel providers don’t offer anything for free

*multiple choice applies

DEFINING SUCCESS

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ROI

Measurable success is by far the top method for defining success among travel providers. Among the **ROI metrics** they look for are: conversions, leads, bookings, reservations, visits, inquiries, and other trackable indicators of sales or intent to purchase.

ENGAGEMENT

High engagement with the creator's community is seen as important. Increased social media engagement and website traffic for the brand and **amplified campaign message** and brand awareness are seen as high value for many.

AUTHENTICITY and USABILITY

A collaboration where the brand and creator have a **natural fit** resulting in authentic, engaging and inspiring content that the audience can relate to. This content is also of high quality and can be used in various ways.

PROFESSIONALISM

Markers of professionalism were present throughout, indicating the need for timely communications, well-written articles based on expert advice and knowledge, timely deliverables, and post-engagement reporting. Both parties working towards **the same, mutual objective** is seen as a desirable benefit.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

"How do you find people you work with" is a common question in the travel marketing world so we asked both sides of the industry how they meet people. In-person connections came up on top for both sides making **IRL networking events** essential for relationship building. The numbers on this page show all the different ways people currently connect.

Use of creator platforms* ranked low among both sides as well with only ~10% of participants stating they use them.

TRAVEL CREATORS

66% The business comes to me
60% Networking in-person (events, conferences, etc)
45% Outreach to tourism boards and businesses by email
41% Networking online (webinars, communities, etc)
31% Outreach to tourism boards/businesses on social media
10% Creator platforms
3% I have an agent

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

48% By recommendation from other industry professionals
48% In-person (events, conferences)
48% They reach out to us
44% Search for them online
10% Hire someone to create a list for me
10% Use a creator platform
8% PR lists

BEST WAYS TO REACH TRAVEL PROVIDERS

By a landslide, travel providers preferred to be **contacted by email** (85%) with 30% ready to reply to a social media DM and 15% giving preference to a web form.

When asked if they pay attention to people who tag them on social media the responses were an even split between those who keep a list of people who mentioned them and those who pay attention but only somewhat.

* #PAID, Awin, Klear, CrowdRiff, Viral Nation, Jerne, Later, Cohley, AspireIQ, Skeeper, Lobby, Popular Pays, AInfluencer, The Shelf, Sway Me Good, The Influencer Room, Evolusen, Upgrow.

CREATORS ARE UNICORNS

Image by **Neom, Unsplash**

CREATORS' BACKGROUND

Overwhelmingly participants chose 3 to 5 roles illustrating a **multi-skilled group** capable of delivering across various verticals.

47% of respondents are journalists and the majority of those are not exclusive to the role. And while only 59% identified as bloggers, 77% of participants offer written articles as a service.

When it comes to content niches, general travel naturally came out on top (56%). Only 34% of participants had a single focus, the rest added secondary and tertiary niches.

SERVICES OFFERED BY CREATORS

77% Blog articles
73% Content creation (Instagram, TikTok, etc.)
37% Journalism
34% Newsletters
30% Consulting and/or coaching
25% Professional photography
22% UGC (User Generated Content)
18% Digital products (ie. courses, downloads, etc)
5% Physical products

CREATORS' DEAL BREAKERS

A quick scroll on Threads or any community group will show a wide range of **struggles shared by travel creators** asking for advice about contracts and project proposals. To see how deep this struggle goes we asked creators to vote on common dealbreakers and add their own. Here is what they said:

55% will not give away images/videos for free

49% will not guarantee social media engagement

45% will not promise deliverables for a gifted product

37% will not pay for their own flight to get to a press trip or a hosted hotel stay

32% will not promise deliverables for unpaid hosted stays and/or press trips

"I will not promise positive reviews for gifted products or experience"
"I won't lie. If something isn't true, harms others, or harms my reputation, it's a total NO"
"I'm only interested if deals have affiliate opportunities"
"I will not give paid do-follow links"
"I will not add do-follow links for a press trip or hosted stay and I always disclose"
"I will not offer sponsored do-follow links"
"I don't work with companies that don't align with my values"

LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

INSTAGRAM

82% of respondents indicated an Instagram following of over 10K and identified as **content creators and bloggers (overlapping)**. 40% of those also offer professional photography services hinting at a higher quality of deliverables. This group of creators have focused content niches in luxury travel, women's travel, and adventure.

YOUTUBE

16% of participants have over 1,000 YouTube subscribers but only 46% of them call themselves YouTubers. Most consider themselves **content creators and bloggers**. In this group, the primary niche is adventure travel followed by luxury and budget travel.

BLOG/WEBSITE

35% of respondents bring in over 10K monthly website visitors and 96% of them **offer blog articles as a service**. To no surprise, 48% of website owners also offer newsletters. Here the top content focus is adventure travel while the rest are split between budget and sustainable travel followed by an even tie between women's and family travel.

WHAT ELSE?

While less popular, **Facebook** continues to be a major platform for community building and audience engagement. Participants shared ownership of groups with 32K – 200K members and pages with 220K – 320K followers.

Pinterest also has a place as a strong player with participants managing accounts with as many as 538K followers.

But what does this actually mean for creator success?

Image by **Luke Bender, Unsplash**

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MONEY MATTERS

HOPES AND DREAMS

Before we get into the cost of things we wanted to know where creators stand when it comes to trade of services versus paid projects. Granted, there is value in exposure for both sides, but creating content takes time and skill. Creators' chats online exposed many concerns about expectations of free labour so we asked the community to add context and to draw the line.

First, we asked them what they hope to get when they reach out to a DMO or travel business. And then we followed that up by asking what they would reply to a press trip invitation. Participants were allowed multiple-choice answers thus showing what they really hope to get and what they are ready to settle for.

EXPECTATIONS DURING OUTREACH

When reaching out to a tourism board, hotel, or other tourism-related organization 54% of creators hope for a comped experience and a fee for their services. 49% only expect a free experience but the ideal scenario for nearly half of the respondents is an ongoing paid engagement.

54%

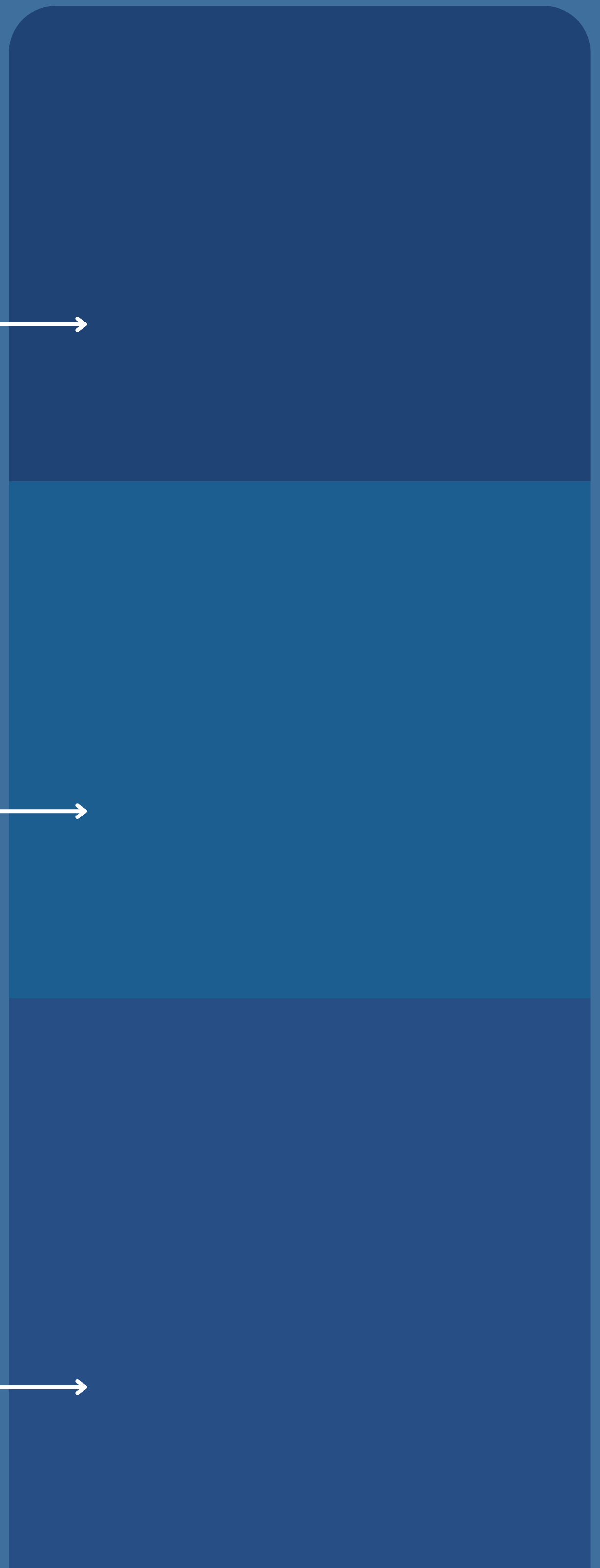
A free trip, stay, or experience **and** a FEE for my services

49%

A free trip, stay, or experience

44%

An ongoing paid engagement



5%

Taking into consideration multiple-choice the math tells us that only 5% of creators will NOT GO on a free trip if there is no pay

HOPES AND DREAMS

PRESS TRIPS

When invited on a press trip, only 26% of participants agree to go right away. 45% will at least ask if there is a budget to pay for their services and 16% will not go if no payment is available.

> *I would ask if there is a budget to pay for my services, will weigh in whether there is a real benefit in going if there is no payment.*

> *It depends how badly I want to visit the destination, the value of what's being offered, and what's expected in return. If I wasn't being paid, I would aim to reduce agreed deliverables.*

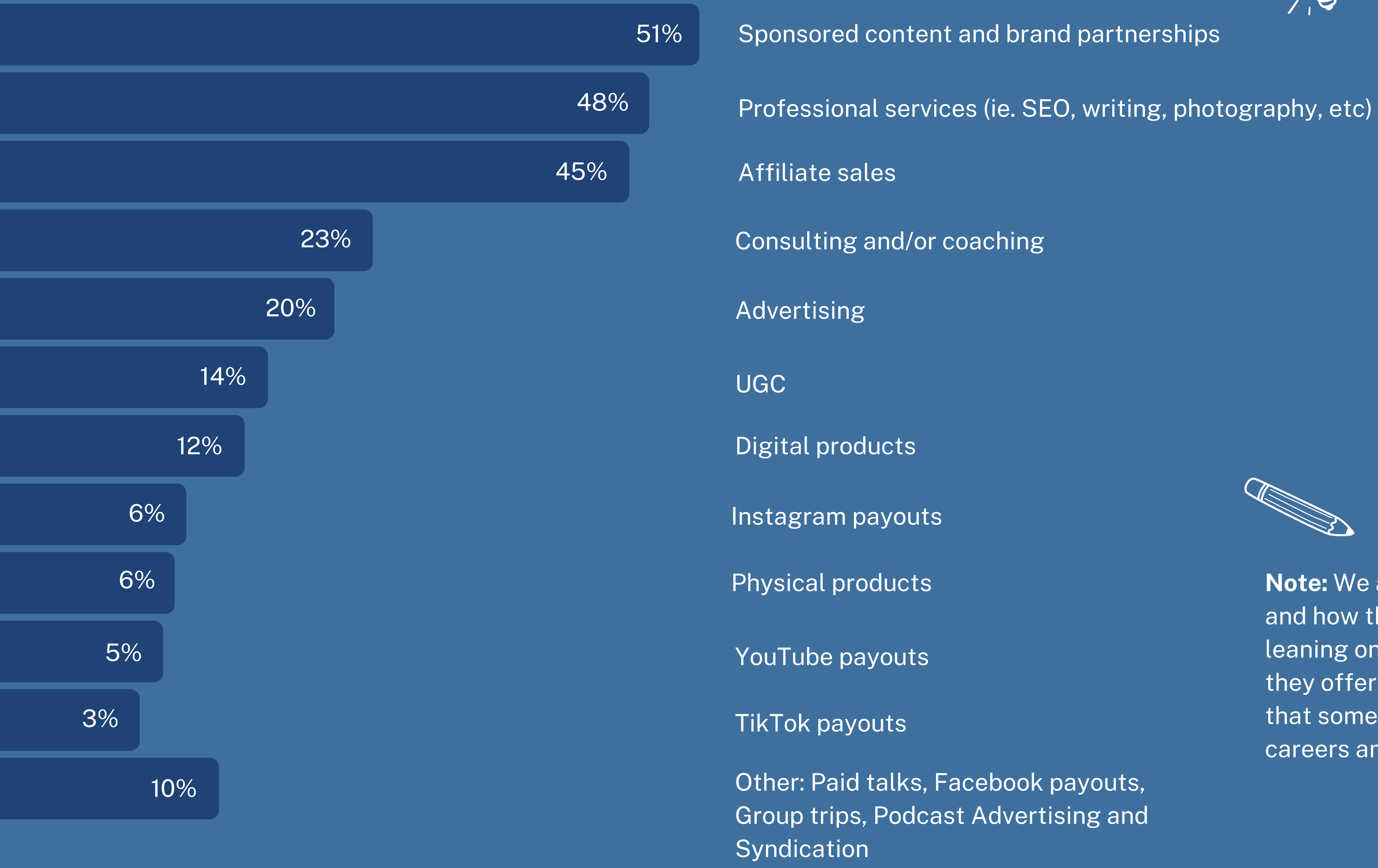
PHOTOGRAPHY

Images have become a common exchange currency with 52% of creators willing to share their images for free (with credit) in hopes of exposure or future work. Only 38% stated that they would ask for a licensing budget.

> *I find there is a lot of disrespect for photographers, magazines and newspapers don’t want to pay for photos, hotels don’t want to pay for licensing, and PR often just steals them. Most think a credit is enough as if photography is not skilled work.*

Images by **Angelo Moleele** and **Annie Spratt**, Unsplash

MONETIZATION METHODS



Note: We asked creators what services they offer and how they monetize as two separate questions leaning on the hypothesis that not all services they offer are making an income and recognizing that some creators are in the early stages of their careers and still figuring things out.

COST OF SERVICES

US **$500** IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

The key takeaway is **there is no exact formula for how much creators get paid** because there are a lot of variables at play and the following numbers are just one of the considerations.

The primary currencies used by participants are USD, CAD, EUR, AUD, GBP, and ZAR. USD was the preferred currency for most. It is also important to note that the numbers shared are often starting rates.

Considering your numbers, skills, expertise, and ROI, where do you fall in?

INSTAGRAM FEED POST

Range: $50 to $1,000+

On the lower scale, 45% charge $50–$250 per Instagram feed post. Mid-point fees are split between $300-450 (18%) and an even $500 is the base fee for 19% of participants. 13% of those who earn a minimum of $500 per post have an Instagram following of under 10K! Those who earn over $1,000 per post have at least 29K Instagram followers

INSTAGRAM REEL

Range: $50 to $1,000+

The lowest rate for an Instagram reel is $50 with 35% asking $50–$250 per reel. 16% offer reels for $300–450 and once again, $500 is a magic number for 12% of participants. 47% make a minimum of $500 per reel and 16% of them have under 10K followers. 19% of participating creators with an Instagram following of 39K+ earn over $1,000/reel.

INSTAGRAM STORIES

Range: $30 to $550+

$500 was the fee per story for 10% of participants. The rest charged between $30–$300 or $550+ for large accounts. The pricing range versus following is the same as with feed posts and reels.
Many creators also offer stories as a “free” bonus in bundles.

BLOG ARTICLES

Range: $100 to $4,000

54% offer blog articles for $100–$450 per post while 22% charge an even $500. The other 20% get paid up to $4,000 per article, roughly half of these participants have over 10K monthly website visits. Those who charge $1,700+ per article have over 10K monthly website visitors.

COST OF SERVICES (CONTINUED)

I'm shocked at how often destinations are still surprised when I ask for compensation for content.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Range: $100 to $700

20% of photographers would not disclose a rate without knowing all the details (shoot requirements, licensing, etc) while a very small number share a cost per hour showcasing a vastly broad range. The cost per image is based on licensing split into social media use only and higher rates for promotional use. The average cost per image for social media use is $100–$250 (30%) and $300–$700 for the top 18%. Promotional use fees increase by +/- 10%.

TIKTOK VIDEO

Range: $100 to $2,500

From the 21% of participants who offered TikTok videos as a service 31% have over 32K likes. 21% charge the magic $500 per post, 34% charge $100–$350 and 28% get paid upwards of $2,500 per video.

It is important to note that only US, UK, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain can monetize on TikTok today.

YOUTUBE

Range: $300 to $2,000

YouTube rates are also very diverse but the most common range is $300–$450 (28%). 24% of participants charge $500–$1,000 per video and 20% over $2,000. The majority of the high-earning channels have a minimum of 10K subscribers.

MONETIZE EVERYTHING!

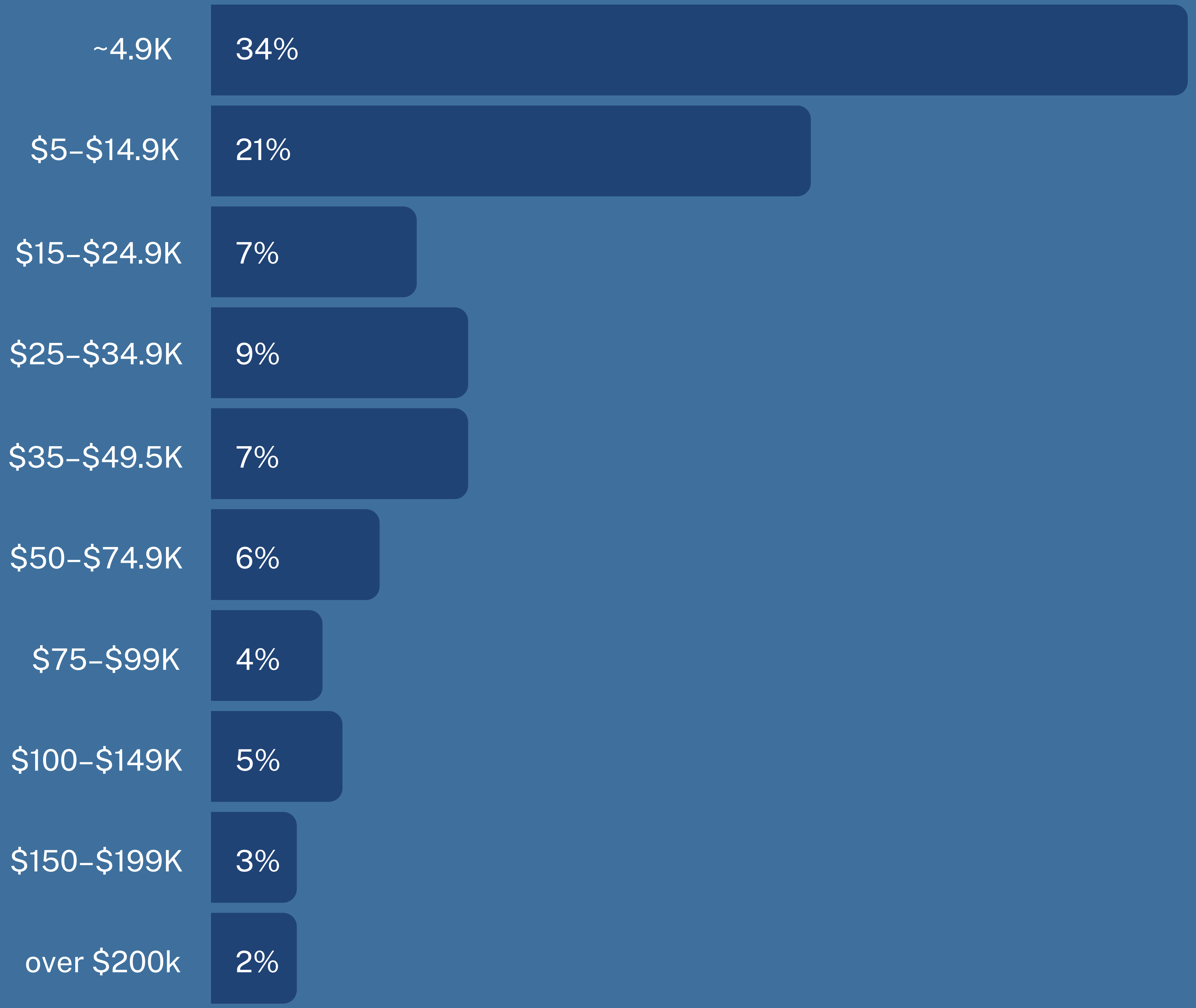
Range: $50 to $2,500

When asked what else they offer as a paid service creators added an impressive list of products including $200–$2,500 per Facebook post, white-labelled articles for $50–$500, a $300–$500 fee for participating in a press trip, fees for drone videos and video packages ($300–$2,500), paid link insertions ($100–$200), $200 for a branded newsletter, $300–$2,500 for a podcast episode, and $300–$500 for speaking engagements.

ANNUAL INCOME

This annual income range is in USD and represents **all participants**, including those treating content creation as a side hustle. The income disclosed is for creator services only.

ONLY **51** % ARE FULL-TIME TRAVEL CREATORS



LESSONS FROM HIGH-EARNERS

ZOOMING IN ON THE HABITS OF THE 14% WITH AN INCOME OF $75K+

90% of the high earners are full-time creators offering services across 2-3 roles on average with a combination of content creator, journalist, blogger, influencer, photographer, or YouTuber. These creators are located in USA, Australia, UK, Netherlands, Canada and Vietnam (reported earnings are in USD).

Here are a few habits they all share:

It's not all about social media

36% of high-earners have an Instagram following under 5.5K and 32% over 20K. 54% of these creators have over 10K monthly blog visitors and a separate 54% have over 2K newsletter subscribers. The website and newsletter participants are mostly the same people who invested time into building out their own evergreen channels.

They offer multiple services

The most common services these individuals offer are blog articles (77%), sponsored content and partnerships (68%), professional services (45%), and advertising (27%).

Affiliate networks are a shared source of income

50% of high-earners take advantage of affiliate networks. The top choice affiliate partners are GetYourGuide (45%) and Stay22 (41%).

They are proactive about business development

An impressive 82% of participants state that the business comes to them. However, they still actively utilize multiple ways of looking for business including networking and digital outreach.

They are not afraid of saying 'no'

23% of them will not go on a press trip if they are not paid for their services and 36% will at least ask if payment is available. Half will not give away images for free, will not promise deliverables on a gifted product or unpaid gig – and yes, there is significant overlap. 70% of high-earners are willing to pay for their own flight, it is worth pointing out that the flight can be a separate paid partnership.

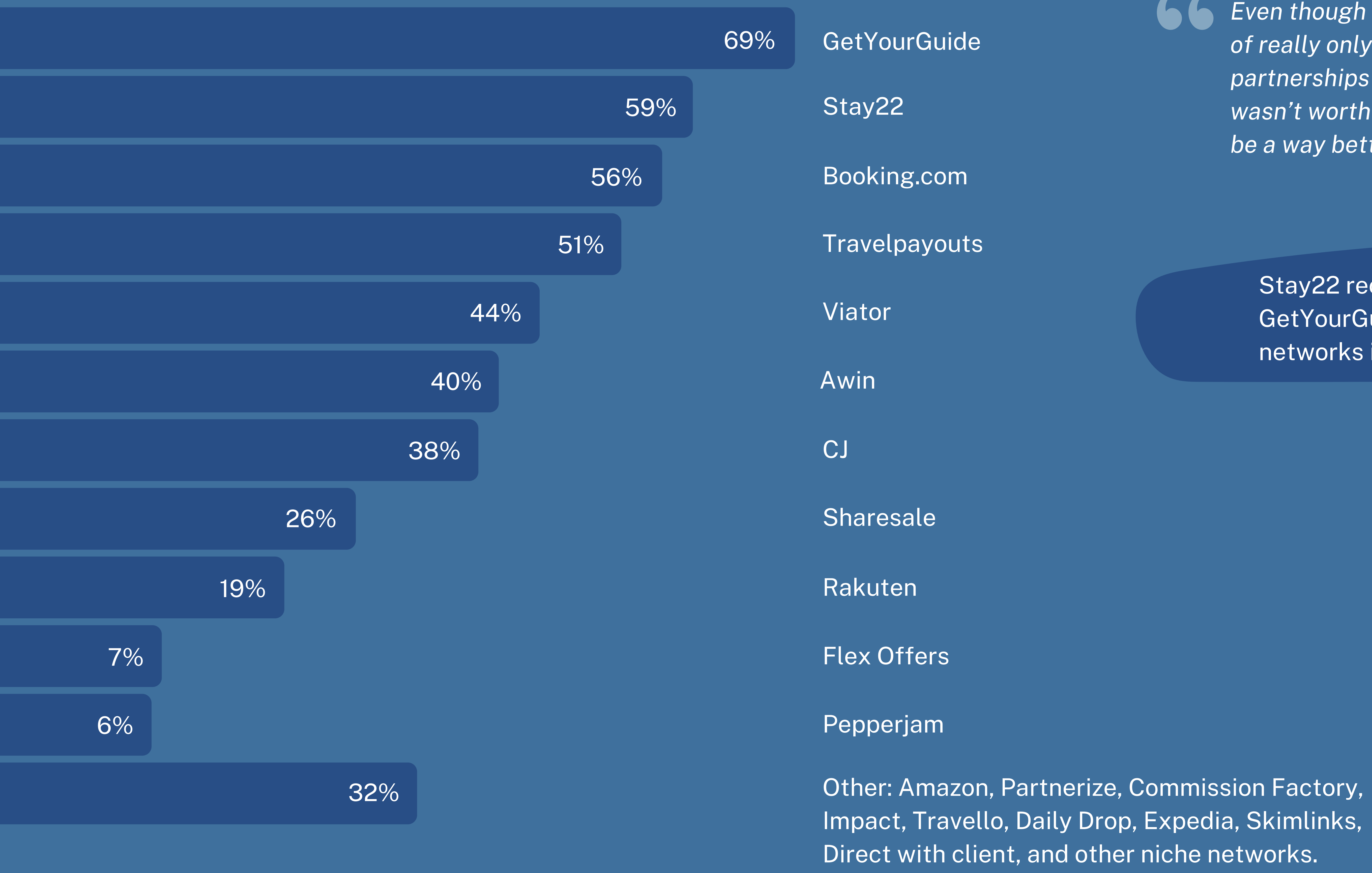
They take advantage of technology

50% of high-earners use data to inform their content. This can include feedback from their audience, search insights, travel trends, industry studies, and hard data gathered from affiliate networks. 70% use AI to brainstorm, do minimal research, optimize workflows, and some use AI tools to create visual assets.

AFFILIATE NETWORKS AS PARTNERS

Image by Sasha Kaunas, Unsplash

AFFILIATE NETWORKS IN USE



> *Even though I am a travel blogger, I took the approach of really only monetizing through affiliates. I did a few partnerships and press deals a few years ago but it wasn't worth it for the time it took. I find affiliates to be a way better value for the work.*

Stay22 recently partnered with GetYourGuide combining the two top choice networks in one place.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF WORKING WITH AFFILIATES

Most creators use an average of 4 affiliate networks and some upwards of 8. Working with multiple networks, however, is seen as a downside, the options are overwhelming and spreading commissions across multiple networks means you are less likely to meet the payout thresholds.

Logistics of earning can be an issue

High payout thresholds and lack of payment transparency, in addition to long payout windows, were noted as common concerns among creators. Brands can move networks on a whim creating time-sensitive work.

Quality and availability of assets

Creators also noted that brands are often slow to update their assets like banners and images and often announce promos with too little runup time.

Technical issues and data transparency

Another commonly shared concern is frequent technical issues resulting in low commission and little to no customer support. Quite a few networks offer limited reporting with minimal transparency and analytics with little insight into campaign success making it difficult to know what converts best.

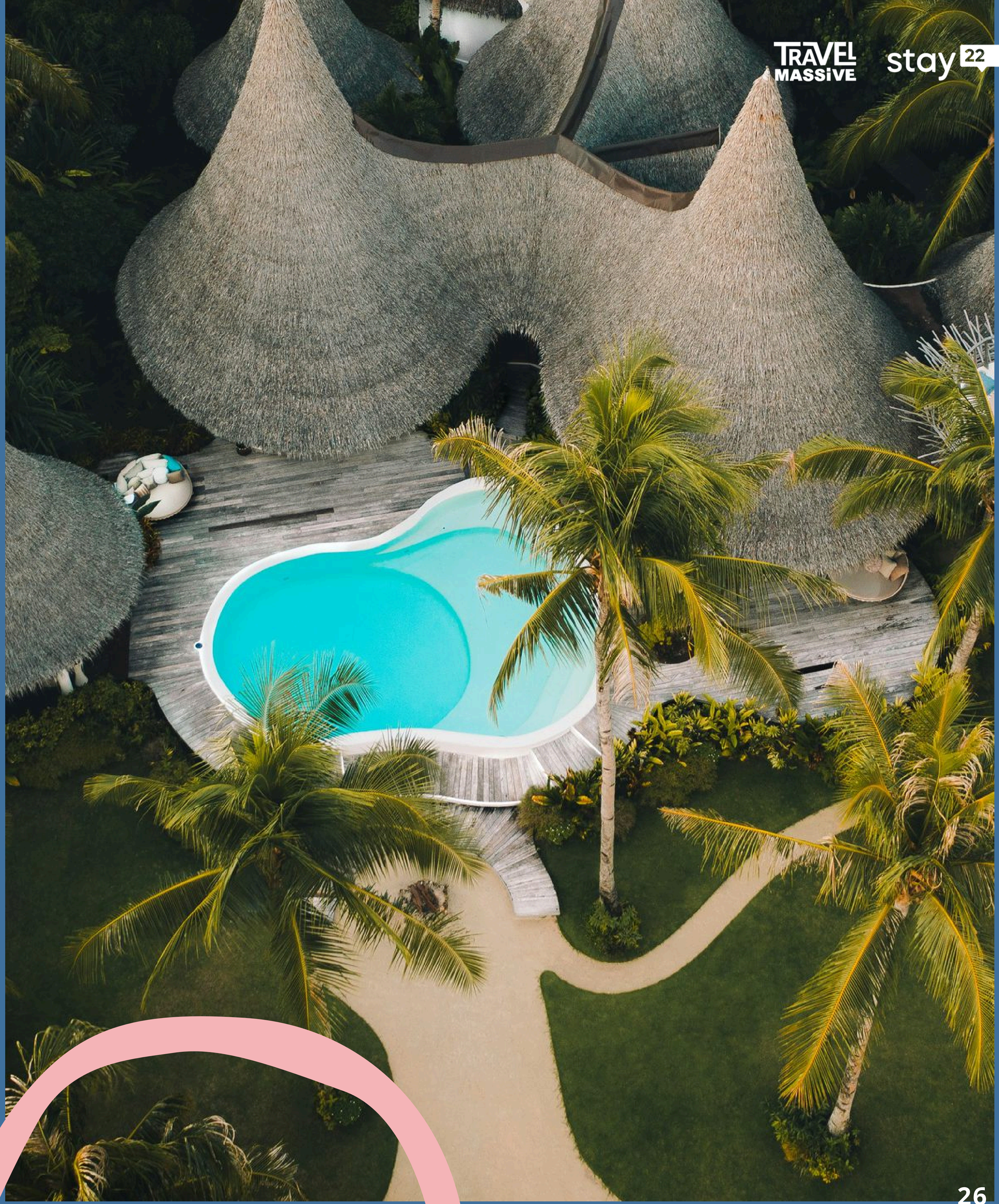


Image by **Sasha Kaunas, Unsplash**

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF WORKING WITH AFFILIATES

Creators had a lot to say about their experiences with affiliate networks, here are quotes that represent the most common concerns:

“Don't know if I can trust any of them with accurate reporting and payments.”

“I wish they'd provide more support on how best to place links so as to maximise monetisation potential. Some do a better job of this than others.”

“I don't earn enough in smaller programs to meet the minimum payout threshold”

“There's no direct contact with the brand and they really don't care who you are as a creator. They also aren't incentivized to do deeper partnerships because they aren't tied to the marketing department.”

“Time-consuming to create specific links. I link to lots of hotels and activities and it can take hours to generate all of them. There are also very few sites that provide images for affiliates”

“Would like more info on best practices for conversion, ie. what types of links and what placements of links get the most clicks and the most completed sales?”

“Recently it came to light that many affiliate programs are withholding data about sales, so creators do not receive the payouts they earned. Understandably, the community of creators is pushing hard for transparency at the moment, with some affiliate programs and brands starting to react.”

It’s hard to get started when they want a minimum number of clicks or orders in a specific time span. I often do A/B testing to see what works and I can’t guarantee that I can always drive traffic to affiliate at a steady rate. Also, many pay poorly for the time it takes to search their database for links and place them.

AI & TECHNOLOGY SENTIMENTS

Image by **Ceyda Çiftci, Unsplash**

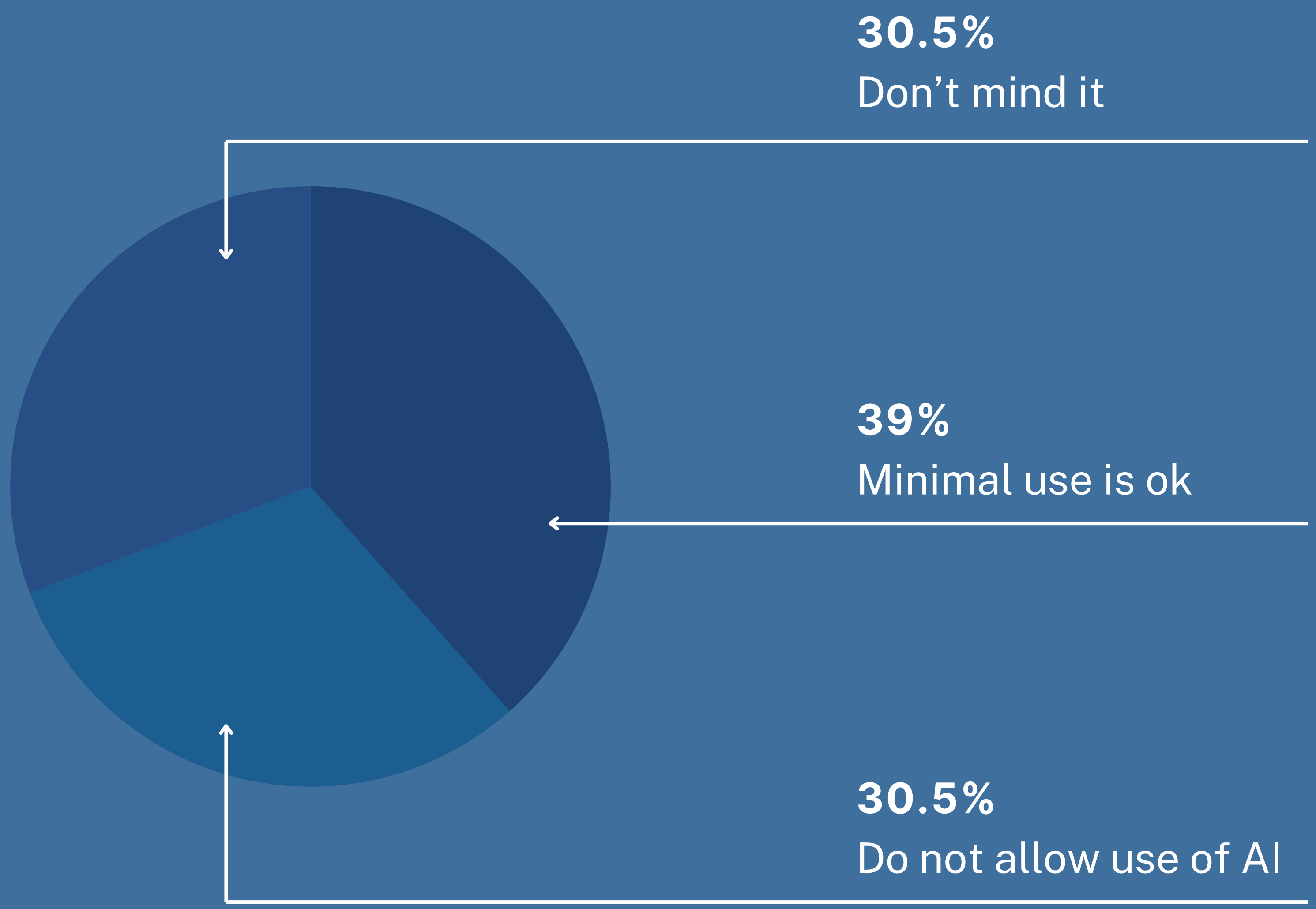
AI APPLICATIONS

38% of creator respondents explicitly replied with a no while the rest found an array of common uses. The most popular applications of AI by creators are to generate ideas, research, planning, building outlines, and some even use AI for editing.

> *I use AI to get ideas, to expand bullet points into content, etc. Never to write content by itself without proper guidelines and never without a human review.*

A smaller group of participants found AI applications for SEO including creating optimized titles, descriptions, and social media captions. Photo, video, and audio editing have also been optimized with AI by some creators.

How do **TRAVEL PROVIDERS** feel about the use of AI in creator campaigns and articles? The verdict is: you should always ask.



IMPLICATIONS OF GOOGLE UPDATES

Recent Google updates have caused quite an uproar in the blogging community with many stating heavy losses in traffic. Our internal data showed that while 46% of respondents have not noticed a significant change 32% of survey participants have witnessed a **noticeable drop in traffic up to 90%** for some.

> *We used to be able to make a living from being content creators. Now we make about 1/5th of what we used to and can't be content creators only, anymore.*

> *Initially, I lost 30% of traffic but the August 2024 update lost a further 60% of traffic.*

> *Appearing on the first pages of Google has changed. Articles are shifting to the back.*

> *The one in the spring lost me about 15% of my traffic, but it came back with the most recent update. I can't be sure if either the fall or rise were due to the HCUs though.*

WHAT'S NEXT?

In this fast-paced digital world, things change quickly and people's experiences are often unique. If there is a question we haven't answered or you have follow-up queries, feel free to share them by contacting us at hello@travelmassive.com.

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THANK YOU

DISCLAIMER

The content of this study is based on information gathered through the Travel Massive community and network. The data is valid as of January 2025 and represents a small fraction of the travel industry. The quality of the data is based on the input of individual survey respondents and while we found interesting patterns in what participants had to say it does not reflect the opinions of all. Data is subjective and ever-changing. Ongoing insight collection, tailored to your individual needs, is strongly recommended to properly inform content/marketing strategy.

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