

TOURISM COMPANIES INTRODUCE MORE AND MORE VIRTUAL INFLUENCERS



The rise of AI (artificial intelligence) is evolving in many sectors, and tourism is no exception to this technological revolution. Virtual assistants have become commonplace, redefining the interactions between tourism professionals and travelers. From virtual influencers and chatbots on travel companies' websites to virtual hostesses in airports and interactive digital guides, these innovative tools enhance the customer experience while promoting various destinations.

Virtual assistants mark a new era in the tourism industry, where innovation and personalization come together to provide travelers with enriched and connected experiences. With their ability to learn and adapt continually, **virtual assistants are becoming essential allies in meeting travelers' increasing demands.**

Qatar Airways' virtual assistant, **Sama**, is making her social media debut as an airline ambassador. As the world's first digital cabin crew member, she aims to inspire and engage a global audience by sharing travel tips, personal stories from her stopovers, and exclusive insights into cabin crew life on her Instagram account.

Introduced in 2024, Sama represents Qatar Airways' commitment to combining innovation with storytelling. This initiative seeks to create memorable moments and strengthen connections with an audience linked to digital platforms.

Sama provides content, from discovering new destinations like Paris to sharing helpful travel tips while highlighting Qatar Airways' extensive network, serving over 170 destinations.

Travel giant TUI has introduced Lena, a virtual influencer who promotes its offer and inspires travelers on social media, mainly in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Lena shares photo and video content to encourage users to explore new destinations and get more involved in authentic experiences, moving beyond the typical clichés often found on social networks. She was selected by a panel of 2,000 people from five proposed profiles by TUI. This virtual influencer embodies the concept of virtual travel while also addressing customer inquiries related to TUI's services.

While Lena plays a significant role in TUI's digital communication strategy, she does not replace the company's physical ambassadors. Piet Demeyere, the Head of External Communications at TUI Belgium, emphasizes that this initiative aims to maintain a permanent presence on social media, with all content created and managed exclusively by Lena.

In October, the German National Tourist Board (ONAT) launched **Emma**, its first virtual influencer, to promote Germany to international tourists. Developed with artificial intelligence, Emma is available online 24/7 to interact with users and provide inspiring information about various regions and experiences in the country. This initiative is part of ONAT's enhanced digital strategy, which seeks to improve Germany's appeal as a tourist destination while offering innovative communication tailored to the needs of a connected audience.

Petra Hedorfer, CEO of ONAT, emphasized that introducing Emma marks a significant advancement in the organization's digital strategy. She highlighted that leveraging new technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, expands communication channels while fostering a more personalized connection with potential travelers. Emma's primary objective is to immerse users in the German tourism experience, offering them ideas for stays and helping them discover both iconic landmarks and lesser-known destinations.

Anne Kerdi's mission is to promote Brittany's cultural and natural treasures on social media as part of a regional digital strategy. Interestingly, her full name's first and last letters are rooted in AI.

Anne Kerdi's role goes beyond simply sharing traditional content. She adopts an immersive approach, sharing fictional travel stories and anecdotes about both iconic and lesser-known places in the region. **Leveraging her digital platform, she creates innovative posts illustrated with virtually generated photos and videos, providing a fresh perspective on Brittany.** As a virtual influencer, she embodies a young and enthusiastic persona aimed at engaging a connected audience, particularly young travelers eager for local discoveries.

Through Anne Kerdi, Brittany emphasizes its strong identity and heritage while adapting to contemporary communication trends. This marks a significant shift towards an innovative and effective digital strategy for influence.

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