

SOCIAL TRAVEL GUIDE

2026 Social travel trends in Southeast Asia

How leading travel and hospitality brands across Southeast Asia are winning travellers from discovery to destination.

Travel discovery is social-first. Across Southeast Asia, bookings are increasingly shaped by creators, guest content, reviews and real-time engagement – long before travellers reach a booking page.





INTRODUCTION

Travel planning used to begin with search

Travel planning used to begin with search. Today, it often begins with a TikTok video, an Instagram Reel, a creator recommendation, an online review or a guest post that brings a destination to life.

Across Southeast Asia, social media is transforming how tourism organisations, airlines, hotels, resorts, attractions and travel providers connect with travellers. The brands achieving stronger engagement and better business outcomes in 2026 aren't relying on polished, one-way promotion. They're building content strategies around authentic experiences, engaging with travellers in real time and using social intelligence to understand changing travel behaviours before demand peaks.

Emplifi's latest [social media benchmark and market research](#) show just how quickly the travel landscape is evolving. TikTok recorded more than **200%** median follower growth

year over year, while Instagram shares increased by more than **150%**, making shareability one of the strongest indicators of visibility. At the same time, travellers continue to trust authentic experiences over polished advertising. In fact, **65%** of consumers say user-generated content (UGC) influences their purchasing decisions, while **79%** read at least three reviews before making a booking.

For travel and hospitality brands across Southeast Asia, this means one thing: social media is no longer just another marketing channel. It's where travel inspiration begins, customer expectations are formed and long-term loyalty is built.



This guide explores 2026 Southeast Asia social travel trends and how top hospitality brands turn engagement into bookings, experiences, and loyalty.

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01: THE RISE OF SOCIAL TRAVEL

Travel inspiration starts in the feed

The traveller journey has become increasingly connected. Inspiration, validation, customer service and booking intent now happen across the same social touchpoints.

A traveller discovers a destination through TikTok, saves an itinerary on Instagram, checks reviews, reads comments for reassurance and sends a direct message with a question, all before ever reaching a booking website.

For travel brands, visibility now depends on showing up where discovery is happening. [Emplifi's 2026 Social Media Benchmarks Report](#) found that TikTok continues to lead platform growth and engagement, while Instagram increasingly rewards content people want to save and share. Reach is no longer determined by follower count alone, it's driven by relevance, authenticity and shareability.

By the numbers

200%+

median follower growth YoY on TikTok

2x

more interactions on TikTok than Instagram

150%+

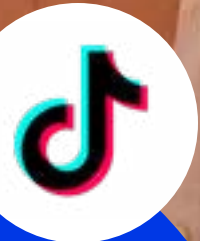
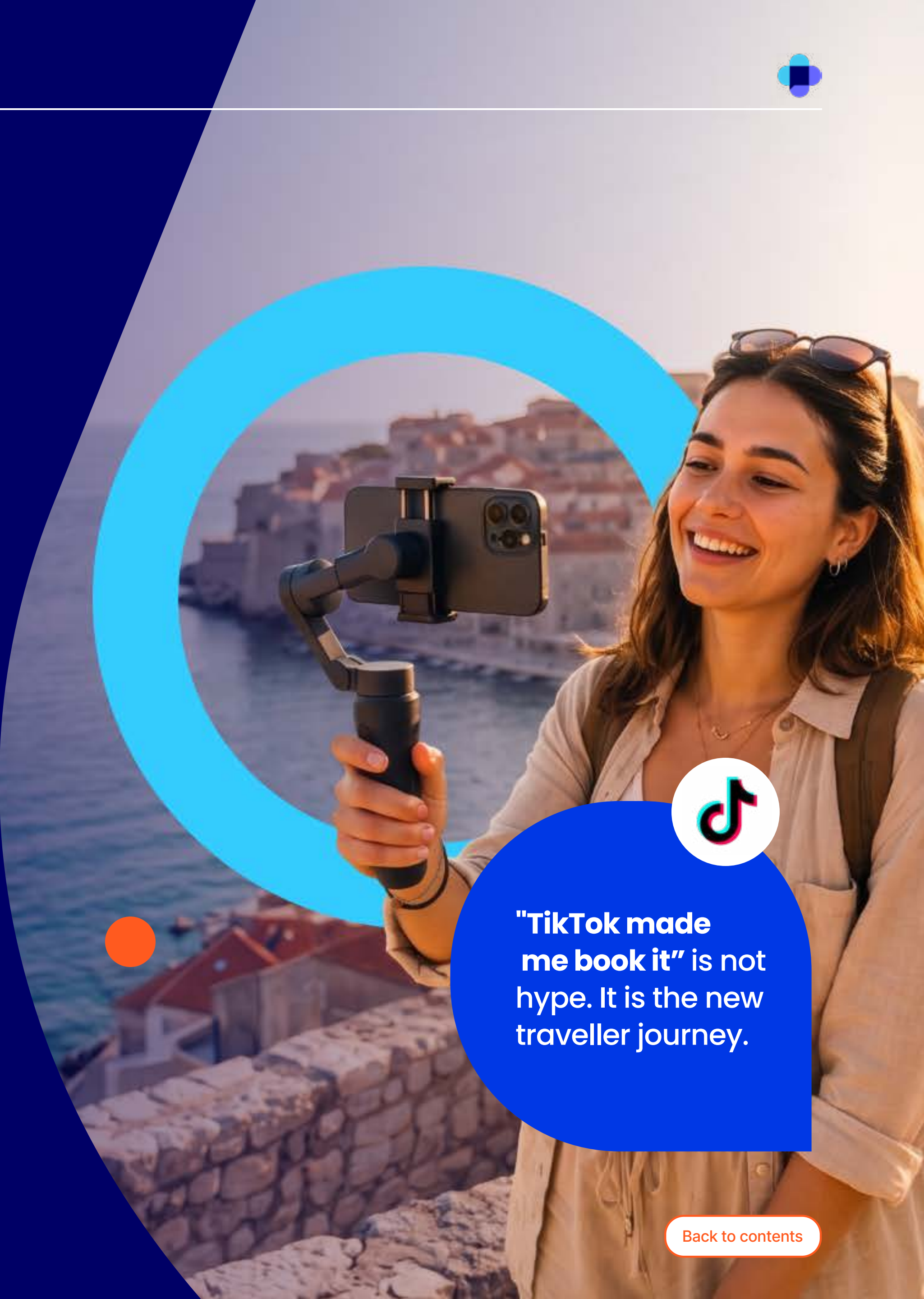
growth in Instagram shares

65%

of consumers say UGC influences purchase decisions

Emplifi point of view

The opportunity is not to publish everywhere. It is to turn customer signals into coordinated action. With **Emplifi Fuel**, brands can connect social discovery, creator content, guest experience, and reporting in one system instead of managing them in silos.



"TikTok made me book it" is not hype. It is the new traveller journey.

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02: WHAT IS WORKING FOR TOURISM BOARDS

Destinations win when they market experiences, not landmarks

Across Southeast Asia, leading tourism organisations are moving beyond brochure-style destination marketing. Instead of focusing solely on iconic landmarks, they're showing travellers what it actually feels like to experience a destination.

The highest-performing destination content brings experiences to life through:

- Local food and neighborhood discoveries
- Creator-style "day in the life" itineraries
- Seasonal travel recommendations
- Hidden gems beyond the headline attraction
- Practical, save-worthy planning content

This matters because social discovery is emotional before it's transactional. People don't share destinations because they're famous, they share them because the content feels authentic, useful or inspiring.

Emplifi point of view



For tourism organisations, content performance and regional relevance have to work together. **Emplifi Listening, Emplifi Influencers, and Emplifi Unified Analytics** help teams identify what travellers care about in each market, activate the right creators, and measure which stories actually drive response.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT



While organisations like **Switzerland Tourism** demonstrate the value of regional storytelling, tourism organisations across Southeast Asia have an equally strong opportunity to combine authentic local experiences with creator-led content that resonates with both regional and international travellers.

Travellers increasingly want to discover the cafés locals recommend, the hidden beaches that don't appear in every guidebook and the neighbourhood experiences that make a destination memorable. The brands showcasing these authentic moments are creating stronger emotional connections long before travellers are ready to book.

[Read the customer story](#)

People want authentic experiences, not polished destination brochures.



See how Emplifi helps tourism boards turn regional insight into content that inspires travelers to act.

[Explore now](#)

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03: HOTEL AND ACCOMMODATION TRENDS

Guest content now carries more weight than brand creative alone

For hotel and accommodation brands, trust is built through social proof. Travellers want to see the room, the view, the breakfast, the pool, the neighbourhood, and the experience from someone who actually stayed there.

That is why high-performing accommodation brands are putting guest content to work across the journey:

Social media reposts

On-site UGC galleries

Guest reviews and testimonials

Post-stay advocacy campaigns

Creator stays and local partnerships

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

The impact is measurable. **Skyscanner** collected more than **15,000+** pieces of user-generated content in six months, achieved a **70%** content permission rate, and redirected **50%** of Instagram visitors to its website using Emplifi’s UGC capabilities. That is a powerful example of how authentic content can bridge the gap between inspiration and action.



At the same time, guest experience now includes social customer care. A delayed response to a comment or DM does not just affect a service metric. It affects trust. Emplifi research shows that **59%** of consumers expect a response within **6 hours** on social media, and **84%** say a quick response is critical to authentic service.

Read the customer story

For hospitality brands, social proof and social care are both part of the guest experience.

Emplifi point of view

This is where travel and hospitality brands need more than publishing tools. They need **connected workflows**:

- **Emplifi UGC** to collect, permission, and activate guest content
- **Emplifi Care** to manage DMs, comments, reviews, and public mentions in one place
- **Emplifi Unified Analytics** to connect engagement, sentiment, and response performance

Discover how Emplifi helps hospitality brands turn social proof and fast service into stronger guest trust.

Book a demo

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04: TOUR OPERATORS, ATTRACTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES

Travellers buy the experience before they buy the ticket

Across Southeast Asia, tour operators, attractions, cruise companies and experience providers aren't simply selling tickets, they're selling anticipation. The strongest social content helps travellers imagine the experience before they commit to it. Rather than looking like traditional advertising, the most effective content feels practical, authentic and genuinely helpful.

High-performing brands are creating content such as:

"What to expect" videos		Seasonal recommendations	
POV walkthroughs		Packing guides	
Behind-the-scenes experiences		Family, luxury, solo and adventure travel itineraries	
Local travel tips		Creator collaborations with highly relevant niche audiences	

Whether someone is booking an island-hopping adventure in the Philippines, a food tour in Singapore, a rainforest experience in Malaysia or a cultural tour in Vietnam, they're looking for authentic content that makes the decision feel easy.

Experiences sell when content answers both emotional and practical intent.

Practical content formula - use three layers:

1

Inspire
with visual storytelling



2

Validate
with creator or guest proof



3

Convert
with practical information and a clear next step

Emplifi point of view

Emplifi Influencers helps brands identify niche creators by location, audience fit, and performance history, while **Emplifi Listening** surfaces the conversations and travel themes already gaining momentum. That helps operators create content from real demand instead of guesswork.



See how Emplifi helps attraction and experience brands turn travel intent into bookings with smarter creator and trend insights.

Get a personalised demo

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05: THE SOCIAL TRENDS DEFINING 2026

Five shifts travel brands cannot ignore

The travel brands leading the way across Southeast Asia aren't simply producing more content. They're creating smarter, more connected customer experiences. These five trends are shaping how travellers discover destinations, make booking decisions and build lasting relationships with travel and hospitality brands.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT



By using **Emplifi's AI-driven** insights to optimise both paid and organic social media activity, **TUI fly Belgium** achieved:

81.5%

reduction in cost per engagement

75%

reduction in reporting time

150%

increase in audience engagement

The result was **faster** decision-making, **stronger** campaign performance and **more effective** use of marketing resources.

[Read the customer story](#)

Trend 1:
UGC beats polished ads



Travellers trust real experiences. Emplifi research shows **65%** of consumers say UGC influences purchase decisions, compared with just **14%** for celebrity endorsements.

Trend 2:
AI-powered engagement is scaling service and insight



The brands pulling ahead are using AI to spot trends faster, summarise large volumes of conversation, and route service issues more intelligently. With this, brands can monitor the full digital landscape, detect anomalies faster, and convert signals into action.

Trend 3:
Micro-creators outperform celebrity content



Smaller creators often deliver stronger relevance, higher trust, and better local fit. This is especially important for destination marketing, boutique accommodation, and experience-led travel across Southeast Asia.

Trend 4:
Social is compressing the path from inspiration to booking



Short-form video, creator recommendations, reviews, and on-site UGC galleries shorten the distance between “that looks amazing” and “I want to book”. For airlines such as **Delta Air Lines** and **Aeromexico**, social now shapes not just discovery, but also service expectations, brand perception, and loyalty along the journey.

Trend 5:
Community now drives loyalty



Travel brands are no longer just running campaigns. They are building repeatable engagement with travellers before, during, and after the trip.



06: WHAT HIGH-PERFORMING BRANDS MEASURE

High-performing travel brands measure business impact, not vanity metrics

Follower counts and likes still have value, but they don't tell the full story. Leading travel and hospitality brands across Southeast Asia are moving beyond surface-level metrics to understand how social media contributes to real business outcomes. Instead of focusing only on audience growth, they're measuring the indicators that influence customer experience, marketing performance and revenue.



The goal is not more reporting. The goal is clearer action.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Aeromexico used Emplifi to consolidate analysis and streamline collaboration, resulting in **786%** growth in engagement, **40%** growth in community, and a **35%** decrease in content pieces.

[Read the customer story](#)



Share of voice		Content shareability	
Brand sentiment		Creator performance	
Social customer care response times		Booking influence from social channels	
Review volume and quality		Regional and market-level content performance	
Engagement quality		Paid media efficiency and cost per engagement	

These metrics provide a much clearer picture of what's driving traveller behaviour and where opportunities exist to improve performance.

Emplifi point of view



This is where Emplifi Unified Analytics becomes essential. Instead of switching between disconnected dashboards, travel brands can combine everything into one reporting environment. **With a unified view of performance, teams can:**

- Identify which campaigns influence bookings
- Understand traveller sentiment across different markets
- Measure creator performance alongside customer experience metrics
- Track operational efficiency
- Make faster, data-driven decisions

See how Emplifi helps high-performing teams move from manual reporting to faster, decision-ready insights.

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07: TAKEAWAY

Five actions travel brands should take in 2026

Action 1:
Invest in social listening



Understand destination demand, traveller sentiment, and emerging opportunities before your competitors do.

Action 2:
Treat social customer care as part of the traveller experience



Travellers expect answers in real time. Service on social affects satisfaction, retention, and brand trust.

Action 3:
Turn guests into creators



Build repeatable UGC and creator workflows that make guest experience visible across every stage of the journey.

Action 4:
Build an always-on content engine



Win with regional relevance, practical storytelling, and content that is built for each platform's behavior.

Action 5:
Measure outcomes that connect to business value



Track sentiment, response time, engagement quality, and content influence, not just top-line audience numbers.



Emplifi is the only **Autonomous CX** platform unifying social marketing, commerce, and customer care for more than 20,000 brands worldwide. Powered by Fuel AI, built on more than 5T of data, and recognized as a leader by leading industry analysts, Emplifi helps enterprise teams orchestrate connected customer journeys and deliver personalized experiences at scale, turning every customer touchpoint into a competitive advantage.

Travel brands across Southeast Asia do not need more disconnected tools to manage their social media customer experience. They need a clearer way to turn traveller signals into action across discovery, engagement, service, and loyalty.

Emplifi Fuel helps travel and hospitality teams connect content, care, intelligence, and measurement in one system so they can move faster, respond smarter, and create better traveller experiences at scale.

See how Emplifi helps travel and hospitality brands across Southeast Asia turn social signals into bookings and loyalty.

[Book a demo](#)

