



“Digital Marketing in the Promotion of Tourism in Bahía de Caráquez”

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Abstract

The main objective of this research was to analyze the impact of digital marketing for the promotion and development of tourism in Bahía de Caráquez, the importance of the object of study lies in understanding and taking advantage of the tourist potential of the city, Bahía de Caráquez has a cultural heritage and rich natural that deserves to be promoted effectively, the methods used in the research were quantitative and qualitative, the type of research was descriptive and allowed us to obtain a detailed understanding of the digital marketing that is being used in Bahía de Caráquez, the target population of study. were the inhabitants and visitors of Bahía de Caráquez, the technique used was the survey, with a sample of 80 people through random sampling, the instrument used to measure reliability was SPSS v. 25, resulting in reliability through Cronbach's alpha of 0.987, the instrument being reliable, it is concluded that digital marketing is revealed as an indispensable tool to promote tourism in Bahía de Caráquez, the results obtained demonstrate that applying digital strategies well designed can significantly increase the visibility of the destination and attract more tourists, so it is important to adapt marketing practices to new trends, and in this way position Bahía de Caráquez as an attractive destination in the Ecuadorian tourism panorama.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Promotion, Social networks, Tourism,

JEL Classification:

1. Introduction

Digital marketing has become the essential tool to promote tourist activity in a destination, facilitating a broad and segmented audience effectively, promoting the unique characteristics of the place and attracting potential visitors. Through digital strategies such as the creation of attractive visual content, the use of social networks with the purpose of increasing the visibility of the destination and generating interest in a diverse public. In addition, digital marketing facilitates interaction with tourists, allowing for real-time feedback and adjusting campaigns according to public preferences, which strengthens the visitor experience and improves the competitiveness of the destination in the market.

Argument generated by Ormaza (2023) explains that the tourism sector and its influence have changed business processes and models, current tourists are more demanding and informed, for this reason the tourist products and services offered must adapt to the consumer with the ease and reach of a click. (p. 1)

Tourists have access to a wealth of information online, allowing them to compare and choose between various options for destinations, accommodations and activities. This transformation has led companies in the tourism sector to rethink their strategies, focusing their efforts on adapting products and services that are more personalized, accessible and easy to acquire.

Tourist attractions are considered as a resource that influences the purchasing decision of tourists, for this reason investments are made in each of them to be recognized and have the influx of travelers to each of them, since it is important for the economy and development of a locality (Carvajal & Lemoine, 2018).

It is clear that tourist attractions significantly influence tourists' decisions when choosing their destinations. This influence makes attractions key elements to attract travelers, which motivates investments in their development and maintenance. The purpose of these investments is to improve and highlight the attractions, making them recognized and increasing the influx of visitors. The impact of these investments is not only limited to improving the tourist experience, but also plays an important role in the economy and development of the locality. The arrival of tourists boosts sectors such as hotels, commerce and services, generating employment and stimulating local economic growth. Consequently, tourist attractions become development engines that contribute to the economic and social well-being of the community in which they are located.

On the other hand, (Andrade, 2016) states that the emerging competitiveness between tourist destinations has highlighted the need to emphasize digital marketing strategies, in order to create intangible added value for the potential client, aimed at creating a favourable image of the territories that are intended to be promoted based on considerations of the behavioural styles of consumers or clients who frequent tourist destinations (Lemoine et al., 2023).

There are many reasons why the growing competitiveness between tourist destinations has highlighted the importance of implementing digital marketing strategies. These allow to highlight intangible elements that add value to the potential client, such as unique experiences and cultural authenticity. Digital marketing offers a

powerful platform to build a favorable image of the territories, using social networks, blogs and online campaigns. These tools allow reaching global audiences, generating trust and credibility, and improving the perception of the destination. In such a competitive market, creating an emotional connection with tourists through digital promotion is essential to differentiate and attract more visitors (Lemoine et al., 2018).

The argument of Encalada et al. (2019) is established, where they state that digital marketing plays an important role in the commercial dynamics of a business since the client can find out about the offers, promotions and new products that are offered without having to be physically present in an establishment or the help of sales personnel. (p. 3)

This type of marketing allows customers to learn about offers, promotions and new products without having to physically visit a store or rely on sales staff. This highlights the convenience and accessibility that it offers, by facilitating the connection between the business and consumers through online channels. It uses tools such as social networks, emails, websites and online advertising to communicate information efficiently and directly.

On the other hand, Lemoine and Rosado (2024) tell us that nowadays many businesses seek success through marketing techniques and tools, so it is essential to develop digital marketing strategies in order to direct increasingly competitive strategies that from their conception allow to provide a competent and timely customer service, in addition to providing more effective digital marketing strategies (p. 255).

The growing trend of businesses seeking success through marketing techniques and tools underlines the importance of developing digital marketing strategies to be competitive. The main focus is the need to design strategies that are not only effective, but also improve customer service, making it more competent and timelier where marketing effectiveness is evident (Arroyo & Lemoine, 2023).

In this context, we believe that digital marketing must be an integral part of the conception of the business strategy, ensuring that actions are not only competitive, but also aligned with customer satisfaction. This implies a double perspective: on the one hand, maximizing the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies and, on the other, optimizing the customer experience, ensuring that interactions are relevant and timely.

Another consideration to take into account is that tourism has become one of the main sources of income for many regions of the world, for this reason, it was chosen to investigate digital marketing in the promotion of tourism in Bahía de Caráquez due to the need to revitalize tourism activity in this coastal city, which has faced significant challenges in recent years (Carvajal et al., 2023).

The research seeks to explore how digital marketing strategies can enhance the image of the city as an attractive tourist destination, generating a greater flow of visitors and, consequently, a positive impact on the local economy. Through this study, we aim to identify the most effective digital tools, such as social media and multimedia content, which can be implemented by local actors to position the city as a preferred destination and promote its tourism development in a sustainable and resilient way. This research contributes to the cultural contribution project "Science from experience" led by Dr. Lilia Villacis.

The problem lies in the limited use of digital marketing strategies by local tourism businesses, which results in low visibility in the global market and underutilization of available tourism resources. Despite the city's tourism potential, the lack of knowledge and application of modern promotional techniques has prevented it from reaching optimal levels of tourist influx.

Tourism is a very important and dynamic sector for the economy of the receiving countries. This sector is made up of several sectors of the economy such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, travel agencies, recreation, among others, which is why it has been considered one of the largest industries in the world (Lambogglia, 2014).

Tourism has the potential to become a key driver of economic growth in cities. Through proper management, it can strengthen its position as an attractive tourist destination, capitalizing on its cultural diversity, natural beauty and historical heritage to attract more tourists and thus have a more dynamic and highly relevant economy.

Based on the theoretical foundation, the main objective of the research is to analyse the impact of digital marketing for the promotion and development of tourism in Bahía de Caráquez. To do this, it is necessary to know the elements and problems that lead to promoting, encouraging and activating tourism in the area.

2. Methodology

The research was quantitative in nature and, from its context, facilitated the analysis of statistical figures that allowed the generation of criteria that contribute to digital marketing to promote the visibility of the Bahía de Caráquez destination, which in turn provided a complete vision of how digital marketing is influencing the tourist development of the city, through a documentary review, based on bibliographical references from researchers and thinkers on the topics of digital marketing in the promotion of tourism.

The method used is the descriptive one that will help to describe the phenomenon for the strategic decision-making of the actions to be taken in the tourist destination. The survey technique will be used, starting from the population of Bahía de Caráquez, from which a sample of 80 people was extracted, in a simple non-probabilistic random manner to know the existing reality.

Using SPSS v. 25, the survey will be processed, the instrument will be validated, and correlation studies will be conducted to facilitate a better interpretation of the results and, in this way, a better description of them that will facilitate decision-making at the tourist destination level.

3. Results

A survey was conducted among visitors and residents of Bahía de Caráquez to identify their perception of the use of digital marketing when promoting Bahía as a tourist destination, with the following results:

Table 1. Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's alpha	N of elements
0.987	7

When examining the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's Alpha, it was found that the survey in question was reliable, yielding a reliability result of 0.98. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges between 0 and 1. A value closer to 1 indicates greater reliability, while a value close to 0 indicates low consistency or correlation between the elements, suggesting that they are independent of each other. Researchers usually consider 0.7 as a

minimum acceptable threshold to determine good internal consistency in measurements (Pérez, 2022).

According to the related question whether tourism activity has generated employment opportunities in the Bahía de Caráquez destination, the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Tourism has generated employment opportunities in Bahía de Caráquez.

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Totally disagree	7	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Disagree	18	22.5	22.5	31.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	18.8	18.8	50.0
	OK	23	28.7	28.7	78.8
	Totally agree	17	21.3	21.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

As shown in table 23 people, equivalent to 28.7%, stated that they fully agree that tourism has generated more employment opportunities in Bahía de Caráquez and 17 people, equivalent to 21.3%, agreed, 15 people, equivalent to 18.8%, neither agreed nor disagreed, on the other hand, 18 of them, equivalent to 22.5%, indicated that they disagree with the statement that tourism has generated more employment opportunities, while 7 people, equivalent to 8.8%, were able to state that they fully disagree with this statement. The results showed that tourism has generated employment in Bahía de Caráquez, according to the perception of the majority of those surveyed, however, there is a significant proportion of people who do not share this perception or who believe that the benefits have not reached everyone, this raises the need for a more equitable approach in tourism planning, ensuring that the growth of the sector benefits a greater part of the local population.

According to the question described, whether tourism activity has encouraged the creation of new businesses in the area, the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Tourism has encouraged the creation of new businesses in the area.

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Totally disagree	5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Disagree	20	25.0	25.0	31.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	16	20.0	20.0	51.2
	OK	25	31.3	31.3	82.5
	Totally agree	14	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

As established in the table, 25 people, equivalent to 31.3%, state that they agree that tourism has encouraged the creation of new businesses in the area, 25%, equivalent to 20 people surveyed, disagree that tourism has encouraged the creation of new businesses in the area, 16 of them, equivalent to 20%, indicate that they are at a neutral point, meaning that they neither agree nor disagree with the question, on the other hand, 14 people, corresponding to 17.5%, totally agree with this statement, 5 people, equivalent to 6.3% were able to state that they totally disagree that tourism has encouraged the creation of new businesses in the area. In light of the evidence, tourism has encouraged the creation of new businesses in Bahía de Caráquez according to a significant group of respondents; however, a considerable proportion of the population believes that this is not the case, suggesting that there is room for improvement in the expansion of tourism and its ability to stimulate business growth. To strengthen this relationship, strategies that encourage business creation, involving the local community, could be considered.

According to the question linked to the general impact of tourism using digital marketing, Table 4 indicates the results.

Table 4. How would you rate the overall impact of tourism using digital marketing in Bahía de Caráquez?.

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Negative	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Neutral	21	26.3	26.3	27.5
	Positive	31	38.8	38.8	66.3
	Very positive	27	33.8	33.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

As observed, 31 people, equivalent to 38.8% of respondents, were able to answer that they qualify. The overall impact of tourism using digital marketing in a positive way, 33.8% which is equivalent to 27 people surveyed were able to answer that this impact is very positive, on the other hand 21 people which is equivalent to 26.3% of respondents consider that the overall impact of tourism using digital marketing is neutral and 1 person which is equivalent to 1.3% were able to answer that the impact is negative. Considering the results, digital marketing has had a mostly positive impact on tourism, according to the answers of the majority of respondents. This indicates that digital strategies are working, attracting more visitors and helping to improve the local economy, especially in tourism-related sectors such as hotels, restaurants and other services. However, a significant percentage of people remain neutral, meaning that the campaigns have not reached all segments of the city or that the benefits of digital tourism are not equally visible in all areas.

According to the question on whether the city's digital presence is well managed and updated, the results are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5. The city's digital presence (Websites, social media) is well managed and up-to-date.

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Totally disagree	7	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Disagree	27	33.8	33.8	42.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	17	21.3	21.3	63.7
	OK	19	23.8	23.8	87.5
	Totally agree	10	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

As it was confirmed, the evidence showed that 33.8%, equivalent to 27 people, disagree and 8.8%, equivalent to 7 people, totally disagree that the digital presence is well updated and managed, while 17 people, equivalent to 21.3%, say they neither agree nor disagree. On the other hand, 23.8%, equivalent to 19 people, agree and 12.5%, equivalent to 10 people, totally agree that the digital presence is well updated and managed. Given the evidence, a high percentage of respondents believe that the digital presence is well managed and updated, however, a high percentage are neutral or disagree with its effectiveness. This indicates that there is a need to strengthen digital marketing strategies, improving the frequency and quality of updates on websites and social networks, as well as increasing interaction with tourists and the community. Better management of the digital presence could help change public perception and position it as a more attractive destination in the digital environment.

According to the question that refers to whether current digital marketing strategies are effective in attracting more tourists to the area, the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Current digital marketing strategies are effective in attracting more tourists to Bahía de Caráquez.

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Nothing effective	7	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Little effective	19	23.8	23.8	32.5
	Regular	22	27.5	27.5	60.0
	Cash	18	22.5	22.5	82.5
	Very Effective	14	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	80	100	100.0	

As reflected, 22 people, equivalent to 27.5% of respondents, say that current digital marketing strategies to attract more tourists are average, 23.8%, equivalent to 19 people, say that these strategies are not very effective, 22.5%, equivalent to 18 people, say that they are effective, on the other hand, 17.5%, equivalent to 14 people, say that these strategies are very effective, and 7 people, equivalent to 8.8%, say that marketing strategies to attract more tourists are not effective at all. From the results, it was verified that the majority of respondents said that current digital marketing strategies to attract more tourists are average, this shows that digital campaigns are not reaching their maximum performance and that there is room to optimize their planning, implementation and reach, in order to attract more tourists and improve the general perception about their effectiveness.

According to the question linked to whether the content on social networks has improved their perception of the destination, the result is described in Table 7.

Table 7. The content about Bahía de Caráquez on social media (Photos, videos, posts) has improved the perception of the destination.

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Totally disagree	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Disagree	23	28.7	28.7	33.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	17.5	17.5	51.2
	OK	25	31.3	31.3	82.5
	Totally agree	14	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

The predominant results of the 25 people, equivalent to 31.3% of the respondents, and 14 people, equivalent to 17.5% of the respondents, were able to express that they agree and totally agree that the content on social networks has improved their perception of the destination, while 23 people, equivalent to 28.7%, and 4 people, equivalent to 5%, disagree and totally disagree. On the other hand, 14 people, equivalent to 17.5%, were able to express that they neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Given the results shown, a considerable group of respondents consider that the content on social networks has improved the perception as a tourist destination, but a third thinks that it has not had that effect. This shows that although some positive results are being achieved with publications on social networks, there are more possibilities to improve the quality, relevance and creativity of the content and in this way attract more people and change the perception of the population.

According to the associated question of how effective digital marketing is considered in promoting the area, the results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. How effective do you consider digital marketing in promoting Bahía de Caráquez?

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	Nothing effective	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Little effective	12	15.0	15.0	18.8
	Regular	23	28.7	28.7	47.5
	Cash	24	30.0	30.0	77.5
	Very Effective	18	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

It was verified that 24 people, equivalent to 30%, and 18 people, equivalent to 22.5%, consider that digital marketing in promoting the city is effective and very effective, while 23 people, equivalent to 28.7%, consider that its effectiveness is average. On the other hand, 12 people, equivalent to 15%, and 3 people, equivalent to 3.8%,

reported that it is little or not at all effective. Based on the evidence, the effectiveness of digital marketing in promoting the city shows a predominantly positive perception among those surveyed. However, there is a significant percentage that considers this effectiveness to be average. Therefore, it should be explored which aspects of digital marketing need to be improved, perhaps in terms of segmentation or personalization of messages.

According to the question linked to whether you consider that digital marketing is essential for the tourist development of the town, the results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. He believes that digital marketing is essential for the tourist development of Bahía de Caráquez

		F	%	%V	%TO
Valid	No	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Yeah	77	96.3	96.3	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

As shown in the table, 77 people, equivalent to 96.3%, indicated that they consider digital marketing to be essential for the tourism development of the city, while 3 people, equivalent to 3.8%, indicated that they do not consider it essential. Based on the results obtained, the vast majority of people see digital marketing as essential for the tourism development of the city, which reflects a positive perception and acceptance of the critical role that digital marketing plays in the promotion of tourist destinations. This is why taking advantage of these tools can provide a significant competitive advantage in the local market.

4. Discussion

Based on the exhaustive investigation of works carried out that agree with the research presented, the work referred to Marketing strategies for tourist destinations in the Sucre canton was visualized (Villacis et al., 2021) which express that the Sucre Canton has natural and cultural attractions such as historical, archaeological, rural, adventure and nature tourism, which are essential for attracting tourists, with this Marketing strategy the tourist activity that this population has in the north of the province of Manabí would begin to be exploited.

According to the authors, Sucre Canton can position itself as an attractive destination within the region, differentiating itself from other tourist locations in Manabí, this competition can encourage improvements in tourist services and experiences, the exploitation of tourist activity must be carried out in a sustainable way, ensuring that natural and cultural resources are preserved for future generations, in this way it can attract a type of tourist who values ecotourism and responsible tourism, implementing marketing strategies that highlight the tourist resources of Bahía de Caráquez can be crucial to position the destination in the market, social media campaigns, collaborations with tourism influencers, and the promotion of cultural events should be included.

Furthermore, the work of the researchers (Laz & Lucas, 2021) in their work named Audiovisual communication as a tourism promotion tool: case of Bahía de Caráquez, Ecuador 2020, which reveals that audiovisual marketing strategies help connect Bahía de Caráquez with its potential tourist attractions through its well-defined history and gastronomy, which aim to impact tourists based on communication strategies that are perceived by all the senses, generating experiences that enhance the tourist's sensations.

In relation to this article, a consensus was reached on its research because thanks to audiovisual marketing, Bahía de Caráquez can weave an emotional bond with its future visitors, by telling captivating stories about its rich history and exquisite gastronomy, this tourist destination creates a visual and sensorial experience that leaves a deep mark. The combination of images and sounds evokes intense emotions, making travellers feel connected to the local culture and want to live unforgettable adventures.

Likewise (Villacis et al., 2018) with the work entitled "Perception of local actors on sustainable tourism in communities of Leónidas Plaza of the canton Sucre, Manabí" reveal that tourism can not only be said to be the people who visit a place, to do tourism requires many factors that make this possible, one can start with the economic part that is very important for both the one who travels and the one who receives the tourist, since if one travels it is because one is going to spend money which means contributing to the economic growth of the place and the people who live there. Another factor would be the quality of the services that are acquired, that is why a service must be offered that is worthy of praise from visitors this will help them return and feel the need to return, this in turn allows the place to be improved in all aspects.

The authors point out that tourism encompasses much more than just the arrival of visitors, as it depends on key factors. Firstly, the economic aspect benefits both tourists, who need resources to travel, and the host communities, who gain from visitors' spending. This drives local economic growth and improves the quality of life of residents. Secondly, the quality of services is essential, as good service not only attracts new tourists, but also encourages loyalty, encouraging their return and strengthening the reputation of the destination. Thus, tourism becomes a sustainable and mutually beneficial activity.

For its part, the research work carried out by (Arroyo & Lemoine, 2023) on "Digital marketing strategies to position the Bahía de Caráquez city brand, Cantón Sucre" reveals that Advertising content, a product of the digital marketing strategy, must respond to the needs of each economic group that needs to be strengthened. Messages aimed at attracting the consumption of local gastronomy cannot be merely informative; establishing a sensory marketing strategy will allow the multicultural city brand of Bahía de Caráquez to be positioned in the national and international market and achieve a higher level of tourist influx.

In accordance with the above, to maximize the impact of digital campaigns, it is essential to segment the target audience and personalize messages. By combining relevant information with sensory experiences, it will be possible to connect with each segment and encourage the consumption of local cuisine. Bahía de Caráquez will position itself as a multicultural and attractive destination, thanks to a digital marketing strategy that prioritizes user experience.

In the same sense, (Burgos, 2019) in his research entitled "Contribution of digital marketing in strengthening the Campos hostel in the Sucre canton, Leónidas Plaza Parish", states that digital marketing strategies on social networks are the most common and the ones that large companies are using to reach their customers, these strategies allow for greater reach and greater acceptance by customers, in addition, it reaches out massively and you can know if customers are happy or not with the service.

According to the author, digital marketing strategies on social networks are effective because they allow companies to reach a wide and segmented audience, which increases brand visibility and the possibility of direct

interaction with customers. These platforms offer analytical tools that allow businesses to measure the effectiveness of their campaigns in real time, providing information on customer satisfaction and behavior. Social networks facilitate two-way communication between companies and consumers, allowing brands to adjust their offers based on the feedback received.

5. Conclusions

Digital marketing has proven to be an invaluable tool to promote tourism in Bahía de Caráquez, by attracting more visitors and improving the perception of the city, it has contributed significantly to its development, and however, to remain competitive in an increasingly dynamic market, it is essential to continue innovating and adapting new digital strategies, in order to guarantee tourism growth.

From the results obtained, it was found that digital marketing is used in Bahía de Caráquez to promote tourism, but the strategies used are often not so effective, which is why the adequate implementation of digital platforms would improve the image of the city, promoting the creation of businesses and generating new employment opportunities, thus increasing the visibility of the city and attracting more tourists. Therefore, it is crucial to continue perfecting digital strategies and strengthening the management of Bahía de Caráquez's online presence.

It is essential to continue adapting strategies to new trends and emerging technologies. It is recommended to invest in the creation of high-quality content, strengthen the presence on social networks and develop more segmented digital marketing campaigns. Likewise, it is important to constantly measure the results to optimize investments and guarantee long-term success. By doing so, Bahía de Caráquez will be able to consolidate its position as an attractive and sustainable tourist destination.

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