DIGITAL MARKETING FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR: THE CASE OF HOTEL CASA ALEJANDRÍA QUIMBAYA - QUINDIO

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SUMMARY

Marketing is a dynamic activity of constant change and evolution; the digital transformation in the channels of communication with the consumer marked by aspects, such as the pandemic generated by the COVID-19 virus and the increased penetration of the Internet, generate that marketing adapts to this new reality achieving an exponential growth of digital marketing today. The main objective of this research was to determine how the tourism sector can take advantage of the tools offered by digital marketing to improve their business results. In that sense, a mixed approach methodology was used as a primary source of information collection; a survey was applied to 385 people and analyzed through ATLAS.ti software and SPSS version 26.0, being necessary a qualitative and quantitative analysis. As a main result, the use of social networks was identified as the main source of promotion, accompanied by content according to the needs of each follower, with promotions being one of the most attractive contents in general terms, followed by aspects related to the experience of living.

Keywords: Internet; marketing; social media; advertising; tourism.

INTRODUCTION

From the end of 2019 until the current year 2022, the planet has been immersed in a pandemic crisis caused by Covid-19 (Coronavirus), causing limitations to people in aspects of their daily lives such as work, study, leading to the development of the same from their homes, causing prolonged social isolation and temporary closure of businesses in all sectors. With negative consequences for the health sector, as well as for the economic, political, cultural and, of course, all commercial dynamics, the magnitude of the pandemic crisis in question is global; therefore, the governments of the world, elites, entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs are forced to adapt to change in order not to become extinct.

World tourism is among the sectors most affected by the pandemic. According to figures from the World Tourism Organization (2021), the percentage variation of international tourist arrivals worldwide for December 2020 was -73% and for March 2021 was -83%; At the regional level in the American continent, the percentage variation for December 2020 was -68%, and for 2021 up to March it was -72%; at the national level in the country of Colombia the percentage variation corresponds to -70% for December 2020, while by February 2021 the variation corresponds to 77%. At the departmental level, according to El Quindiano (2021), the department of Quindio had already been presenting low rates of economic growth since 2017, which is equivalent to 1.7% and 2020 which was the year with more impact due to this pandemic, a percentage of -6.1% was obtained. The sustainability and growth of a company are based on the generation of sales, being marketing a fundamental part, not to say the sustenance of the same, being this a dynamic activity, which,
in its traditional concept throughout history, has undergone conceptual and applicative transformations, until what was identify today as digital marketing, an object of study of this research.

Years of discussions and theoretical and methodical proposals took place, as CocaCarasila (2006) exposes in his article: “the concept of marketing: past and present.” Digital marketing has grown exponentially in recent years; according to Lamberton & Stephen (2016), the growth of digital marketing has been proportional to the technological innovations that have been presented, such as the growing presence of the Internet in the home, the affordability of broadband connections, the development of social networking platforms and the acquisition of mobile devices. Thanks to all of the above, it becomes necessary for every company to position itself in the virtual atmosphere to have an important place in the minds of consumers, which is what is talking about when Kottler & Keller (2012) define positioning as the act of designing products and selling the image of a company to occupy a special place in the minds of consumers, particularly the target market.

Therefore, digital marketing is a necessary tool that allows the company to have a presence in the virtual world, a vital element today; in addition to the above, the virtual world allows companies to access a wider range of customers and greater profitability in its operation, positively impacting the income of the same.

This research aims to generate an approach of the tourism sector to the use of digital marketing tools, taking as a case study the Alejandría hotel located in the municipality of Quimbaya, department of Quindío, an area characterized by its tourism potential.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to generate a clearer conception of what digital marketing can offer, the study of the concept, tools and its subsequent evolution is analyzed, bringing the reader closer to its notion and giving greater clarity to the results obtained.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing, according to American Marketing Association (2020), is any marketing method that is done from electronic devices, allowing the involvement of websites, social networks, search engines, blogs and any virtual channels that allow access to more people. Digital marketing, unlike traditional marketing, consists of high levels of dynamism and change, i.e., while traditional marketing is limited to tangible advertising (billboards, print ads), thus limiting the interaction of stakeholders, digital marketing expands its scope to enrich an active two-way communication between the company and its customers.

Evolution of Marketing. Lamberton & Stephen (2016), through a thematic exploration, propose the division of digital marketing evolution into the following 3 eras:

Era 1. Forms of digital media and Facilitates buyer behavior (2000-2004). It can be expressed in the condensation of three main themes that were fundamental to the shaping of the era in question, and these themes are the Internet as a platform for individual expression, the Internet as a search and decision support tool, and the Internet as a marketing intelligence tool.

Era 2. Consumers shape the DSMM (digital marketing, social media and mobile devices): WOM (word-of-mouth marketing) and networks (2005-2010): During this era, consumers developed a more active role through their online social interactions via WOM on social networks.
**Era 3.** The era of social networks. (2011-2014): The three fundamental themes that developed during this era were as follows: Individual self-expression as a means to amplify or hinder marketing actions, user-generated content as a marketing tool, and capturing marketing intelligence on specific social media platforms.

**The New Era.** The rise of the DSMM culture and the post-digital world: during 2015 and early 2016 led to the expression of the consumer and the Internet as a tool, the Internet as a source of market intelligence and improved tools for data analysis.

**Digital Marketing Objectives**

According to VRD (2017), there are 5 important objectives when elaborating on digital marketing: sell, serve, talk, save and surprise. For the general objectives, specific objectives assigned for each of the areas named above must be created, i.e., they must be supported by the company’s general objectives.

VRD (2017) mentions the first objective, sell, which refers to increasing sales through a wider distribution of customers that cannot be served offline. The second objective is to serve, which is to give customers extra benefits by developing products in response to the online dialogue; the third objective is to talk, that is, the approach to consumers where they are analyzed and questioned to create a conversation and be able to learn from them; the fourth objective, to save, corresponds to reducing service, administration, transaction, mailing costs, among others and the fifth objective is to surprise, which means to extend the brand online, reinforcing the values of this in a new medium.

**Digital Marketing Strategies**

Analid (2016) states that “the Strategic elements represent aspects that guarantee the good use of digital tools for the success of the Strategies” (p.117).

According to Analid (2016), these strategies are those that ensure interactivity between the organization that applies it and consumers, reaching the opportunity to identify undiscovered needs through the experiences shared by customers; those digital marketing strategies are interaction, content updating, community building, Virality, Community manager and web analytics.

According to Pavan et al. (2012), interaction is the exchange of user experiences and information between the company and customers, generating the feeling of equal equality in the same environment.

Del Santo & Álvarez (2012) mention that updating content should be a consistent policy of the company, which should be done dynamically and socially in different channels with knowledge of the virtual environment, generating more bidirectional communication channels.

Colvée (2014) says that community building is a way to involve the user with the company. Furthermore, he argues that these communities bring together users with related interests who want to share tastes and hobbies.

Within the hotel sector, the community with the greatest involvement is travelers and tourists, who share a taste for traveling and getting to know towns, cities, customs, gastronomy and culture.
Virality, according to Colvée (2014), is the marketing strategy that aims to encourage people to spontaneously talk about, recommend or spread the brand, company, idea, service or product, generating a credibility effect on those who listen to them.

Another strategy is the Community manager, who, according to Colvée (2014), is the person in charge of maintaining and taking care of the followers that the company attracts and also being the link between the needs of the followers and the possibilities of the company.

According to Analid (2016), web analytics is a control and evaluation tool that analyzes the user’s information during visits to the company’s websites.

**Digital Marketing Tactics**

According to Corrales et al.(2017), tactics are the specific activities that make up the comprehensive set of strategies, and then tactics are a derivative of strategies. Therefore, all tactics must be coherent and coordinated to achieve a single objective.

Atlantic review of economics (2019) mentions the following list of digital marketing tactics (tools):
- Corporate website and online store, corresponds to the base that promotes the dissemination of the business image through the network, such as Wordpress and Woocommerce;
- Blogs, are the websites in which articles are grouped around a theme, where users are also offered opinions and relevant information in relation to the topic; social networks, which are the channels for the link and direct contact with customers and users, are classified into social networks based on the profile such as facebook, Twitter and linkedin, and visual social networks such as Youtube, Instagram and Pinterest;
- E-mail marketing, which refers to the technique of attracting customers through e-mail, for this to work well there must be a previous segmentation of customers; SEO, is the process by which the visibility of a website is improved; SEM, are the ads that are displayed prominently in the results of the search performed by the user; digital advertising, such as banners and others such as presence of the company in yellow pages, AboutUs, QDQ, TripAdvisor, Google maps and Google my search, the tools used in this form of advertising more efficient by means of ads that really want to see the consumer (Rodriguez, et al. 2020), it is necessary to determine how the E-WOM becomes a determinant at the time of purchase by the influence of this in the buyer’s judgment (Lee & Youn, 2009), so this becomes a possible tactic of digital marketing.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research was developed with a mixed approach with both qualitative and quantitative processes, implementing tools such as interviews, benchmarking, surveys and validation of information in the development of the work. According to Hernández Sampieri (2014), the mixed methodology refers to a group of systematic, empirical and critical research processes which involve the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, likewise involving the integration and joint discussion to subsequently make inferences that are the product of all the information collected and thus be able to understand the study phenomenon more easily. In addition, Johnson et al. (2007) define this concept as a “broad sense” and visualize it as a process where quantitative and qualitative approaches are mixed, either focusing more on one of these or giving equal “weight” to both.

As primary sources of information, interviews were conducted with the members of the hotel Casa Alejandría (owner and workers), and the application of surveys to the target audience of the statistical sample and fieldwork through observation. Secondary sources used were consultation through institutions’ websites that collect information on tourism statistics and digital marketing.
Categories of variables

Categorizing the variables within the present research was necessary, allowing for visualization in a simple way of the concepts and fields essential to developing within a framework of questions, the primary input for the research development. Therefore, the categorization of the variables is presented below for a better understanding.

Table 1

Variable categorizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 S’s(^a)</td>
<td>Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 S’s</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 P’s(^b)</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 P’s</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C’s(^c)</td>
<td>Customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C’s</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C’s</td>
<td>Convenience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 C’s(^d)</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 V’s(^e)</td>
<td>Valuetothecustomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 V’s</td>
<td>Valuetothemarketer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: Own elaboration.

Population

The study approached a finite population, which according to Arias (2012), has information on the total number of components that constitute it from a documentary record where such information is verified. Although the population chosen to develop the research were people residing in Valle del Cauca, Quindío or Cundinamarca, after reviewing the lodging records of the hotel Casa Alejandría, it was found that the vast majority of visitors come from these departments.

To determine the delimitation of the population, the age range between 25 and 39 years is taken into account. The choice of the age range is argued in the publication of Cámara de Comercio del Quindío (2021), where it is evident that the age range that most visit Quindío is from 27 to 35 years old; however, for research purposes, this range is adapted to the ranges provided by DANE (2018) from 25 to 29 years old, from 30 to 34 years old and from 35 to 39 years old. Ultimately, the age range is 25 to 39 years old. Table 2 shows the total number of people in Valle del Cauca, Quindío and Cundinamarca who are between 25 and 39 years old.

Table 2.

Target population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>People between 25 and 39 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

238
RESULTS

To determine how the hotel can use digital marketing tools to achieve its business objectives, users were asked about aspects such as their presence on social networks, preferred content and their likes and dislikes regarding the hotel’s offer, most of which was conducted virtually, due to the preventive isolation measures taken by the government. The survey was validated based on the master’s thesis published by Vaca Jaramillo (2019), based on consumer characterization and behavior, digital marketing strategies and purchase decision variables.

Interview Analysis

The analysis of the interviews was carried out in the Atlas. TI software, from which the following results were obtained.

Figure 1.

Word cloud.

Source: Own elaboration based on Atlas software. TI

The illustration is a word cloud, which represents the most mentioned expressions during the exercise of the 4 interviews conducted with the owner and the workers, which shows that the
words with the greatest weight were: Hotel, people and communication, that is to say, that the interviewees gave greater importance in their discourse to these words. The researchers elaborated this word cloud through the analysis software Atlas. IT.

Sankey Diagram

Figure 2.

Relation of variables and fieldwork.

Illustration 2 - Sankey diagram shows the relationship between the variables studied in this study and the fieldwork carried out (interviews) to obtain information. This graph shows that the variables with the greatest presence in the interviews are communication and people, with representations of 19 and 15 responses, respectively, linked to these variables. On the other hand, the variables with the lowest presence in the fieldwork were context and site, with only 1 variable representation. From the above, it can be inferred that for the interviewees, the constant use of chats, e-mail and different forums that help the hotel’s communication with customers are very important, additionally, they give importance to the constant interaction with customers during the sale, pre and post-sale.
Figure 3.

Crossover between field work and theory in relation to variables.

Source: Own elaboration based on Atlas Ti software.

Figure 3 shows the relationship between the fieldwork and the theory with the variables chosen, and this image ultimately shows that all the variables set out in the marketing mix theories are somehow present in the answers obtained during the fieldwork exercise through the interviews conducted. In addition, the communication variable had a strong presence in the fieldwork with 19 interventions, while in theory, there were only 3 interventions of the same variable. However, precisely, this variable had the greatest presence between theory and fieldwork because the number of interventions gives a total of 22 interventions. Next, the variable with the greatest intervention in the sum of theory and fieldwork is promotion, with a total of 21 participations and in third place is the people variable, with a total of 20 iterations.

Social networks and advertising content

Analyzing Table 3, the preference of people is evident when wanting to acquire information through social networks, specifically Facebook and Instagram. The highest percentage of respondents chose that advertising content should be mainly in the social network Facebook and have product information (67.4%), followed by promotions (19.5%); while in Instagram, the highest percentage preferred product information (71.9%) and usefulness (11.4%). It can also be highlighted that the social networks with the least impact are Google and Twitter, with a preference percentage of less than 1%, indicating that people do not use these as much to receive advertising information. In addition, it is not preferable for advertising content to have entertainment or immediate responses to be attractive to people.
Table 3.

Social networks and content

| Source | Own elaboration based on SPSS software. |

Internet advertising

Regarding the type of advertising preference and what it should contain to be attractive to people, the results show that product information generates greater impact through publications in social networks and advertisements on websites with a percentage of 72.5% and 70.8%, respectively. The second option with the highest response was promotions, with a total of 15.4%, where 9% were related to advertisements on websites. On the other hand, the responses with the lowest percentage were entertainment, with 0.8% and blogs concerning entertainment and immediate responses, with 0%, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

Internet advertising

| Source | Researchers’ own elaboration based on SPSS software. |

Type of advertising

The results show that people have a greater preference for receiving advertising through publications in social networks percentage of 50.5%, followed by ads through web pages, with a percentage of 22.5%. On the other hand, the results with the lowest impact were blogs, with only 1.0% and phone calls, with less than 1%, which means that the best strategy is not to receive
advertising through these last two mentioned since it is not so striking for people, but to focus more on publishing ads through web pages and publications in social networks, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5.

Type of advertising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of advertising</th>
<th>Anuncios a través de páginas web</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
<th>Micromedias</th>
<th>Publicaciones en redes sociales</th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>Videos</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llamadas telefónicas</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensajes de texto (SMS)</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press social media</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redes Sociales</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS software.

Advertising channels and credibility

Table 6 shows the cross between how people like to receive information and the credibility of advertising recommendations, with the highest percentage being the cross of brand publications in social networks, followed by recommendations from friends or family, while the lowest percentages are the radio guidelines in the cross with telephone calls and the recommendation of celebrities in the cross with the written press.

Table 6

Advertising channels and credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising channels</th>
<th>Anuncios de otras fuentes de internet</th>
<th>Anuncios de las marcas o empresas</th>
<th>Publicaciones en TV</th>
<th>Publicaciones en redes sociales</th>
<th>Recomendaciones de amigos o familiares</th>
<th>Recomendaciones de personajes públicos</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anuncios a través de páginas web</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Llamadas telefónicas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensajes de texto (SMS)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press social media</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redes Sociales</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS software.
E-WOM

Table 7 shows the type of recommendations to be made according to the reason for travel; it is observed that the main reason for travel is vacation and recreation, and these people prefer to receive recommendations through publications in social networks, followed by recommendations from friends or relatives; in second place as the most selected reason for travel is the visit to family or friends, people who travel for the previous reason mentioned prefer to receive recommendations through publications in social networks or recommendations from friends or relatives. On the other hand, it is reflected that people who travel for vacations or visits give less weight to recommendations from radio spots, press advertisements and celebrities.

Table 7. E WOM

| Source: | Own elaboration based on SPSS software. |

Means used for consultation

Table 8 shows which is the social network through which a person learns about products and promotions with their reason for travel; in this case, the options with the highest response were promotions through Facebook for vacations and visiting friends, with a percentage of 67.3% and 55.3% respectively, another option that also obtained positive responses was promotions through Instagram with a percentage of 24.5%. And the options with the lowest responses were promotions through google and Twitter, with percentages of 0.3%. People who travel for vacation, recreation or visit find out about promotions through Facebook in the first place and Instagram in second place, which becomes a trend detected among tourists (Sotomayor, 2019).

Table 8 Means used for consultation

| Source: | Own elaboration based on SPSS software. |

244
CONCLUSIONS

Marketing is an ideal tool for the promotion of the tourism sector, which allows approaching the potential buyer of the service the experience that he will be able to live by the visual benefits that this allows, additionally tourist sites like Quimbaya are appreciated by people around the planet, who want to have more information of the tourist attractions that this area offers, the Internet facilitates access to advertising from anywhere, being the digital marketing a real need for this sector of the economy.

Social networks are a potent tool for transmitting the advertising message, which can be massified from the fact that people want to share it with their network. This aspect plays an important role in the E-WOM, being friends one of the sources of greater credibility against the recommendations of the service, showing a possible tactic to take into account when applying digital marketing.

The place where the company under study is located is very well-known nationally and internationally. Furthermore, it is associated with the coffee culture and, therefore, with vacations, being this a primary content to be taken into account in advertising through the Internet, leading to the fact that tourism companies should identify what product or service they offer, facilitating their positioning in the market.

REFERENCES


