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## Digital marketing and tourism management: study on tourism

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### Abstract

According to previous studies, communication and digital media have an increasing importance in society and in tourism boosting. When it comes to tourism's use of digital marketing, this importance is increased, as it is mostly through digital marketing that it is possible to obtain information about tourists or to get information to them. This study purpose was to analyze the use of digital marketing in tourism. This research contributes to future research related to tourism and to digital marketing which can be transposed to organizations management in order to encourage discussion on the processes of capture, retention and loyalty of target audiences. In an interdisciplinary perspective, this study presents inputs for marketing and for the management of tourist destinations. In the end, guidelines for the future will be discussed.

### Keywords

tourism management, digital marketing, handicrafts, city

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is developed in an online environment and consists of a set of strategic actions developed by a company or brand to achieve certain objectives, according to the American Marketing Association (AMA) this type of marketing can be used in social networks, search engines, internet, mobile devices, among others, allowing a closer, personalized and two-way communication between companies and different audiences.

The internet is, in fact, a fruitful ground for digital marketing, in the sense that they have multiple characteristics in common. In general, with information technologies and particularly the internet, users have started to communicate with the brand immediately, to be able to personalize their articles, to discuss topics related to brands or companies in online groups, giving them the power to build or destroy a brand.

In this line of thought, it is possible an involvement and interaction between brand/company and consumer, mainly through social networks (Winer, 2009), that would not be possible without the Internet, which reveals the growing importance given to integrated digital marketing strategies. It is through the use of digital marketing that it is possible to bring customers closer and understand them better, add value to products, expand distribution channels and boost sales through digital marketing campaigns using digital media channels such as marketing research, online advertising and affiliate marketing (Chaffey & Smith, 2017).

It is precisely with these new opportunities in digital marketing that tourism gains a new dimension, as it is possible to track and access multiple data related to tourists (e.g., preferences, ratings, and suggestions) that previously were not possible (Kontogianni & Alepis, 2020).

The tourism industry is one of the largest sectors in the world and is a crucial component of the social and economic activity of a multitude of countries, as it generates job openings and business opportunities (Kontogianni & Alepis, 2020). This industry is presented as "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves people movement to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes" (World Tourism Organization, 2020).

Currently, tourism is considered an industry of relevant importance, positively contributing to economic development of several countries, through job creation and development of rural, peripheral and less developed areas, however, it is necessary to invest in development strategies in other sectors (e.g., transport, education, industry, agriculture). Indeed, tourism is essential in Portugal and in the world, since it is through cultural consumption by tourists that regional and local development is fostered (Ferreira, Sousa & Gonçalves, 2018).

This work has a particular focus on tourism development in Barcelos city, since it is a very tourism-oriented city. In fact, in 2017 Barcelos received, in the category of handicraft and popular art, the title of UNESCO creative city. In this sense, the aim of this study is to analyze the use of digital marketing in tourism in Barcelos, where we tried to answer the initial question: what importance is given to the use of digital marketing by tourists visiting Barcelos city? Being that the most literature evidence that, in specific contexts of digital marketing and tourism, understanding and meeting the needs and motivations of tourists or potential tourists can be essential for the loyalty and/or growth of the tourist destination.

The present study focuses on some of the factors that may influence consumer attitudes and behaviors in specific tourism contexts with respect to digital marketing. In this sense, this theoretical nature study with the objective of reviewing some of the existing literature is an important complement to other studies developed

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in similar contexts and whose object of study focuses on the use of digital marketing by tourism. Some implications for management will be presented, as well as suggestions for future lines of research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Technology is a big influence, because with the great technological advances marketing professionals need to be constantly looking for information (e.g., influences of new technologies in corporate communication). Moreover, with the evolution of technology directed to health, with artificial intelligence and robotics, with the dark web and chatbots (the latter allow scheduling automatic responses), with smartphones and social networks, with technologies that assist in-store sales and with previously established technologies marketing has, in the future, the possibility of new forms of communication, attraction and value adding (Grewal et al., 2020).

Among mentioned developments, artificial intelligence may have great influence on marketing strategies and customer behavior. With artificial intelligence a greater impact is expected in commerce, banking and travel, where the use of marketing will be important for segmentation, personalization, prediction of consumer behavior, programmed purchases of digital advertising and programmed offers for consumers (Davenport et al., 2020).

Social media, which has come to enable greater engagement between professionals and consumers, may also play a significant role in the future of marketing. Through presence on multiple online platforms (omni-social presence), the rise of influencers, and concerns about trust and privacy, marketing will enable more integrated communication between online and offline, as integrated marketing strategies have proven to be more effective on consumers (Appel et al., 2020).

In fact, despite all these transformations that have occurred, this field of study has not stagnated. On the contrary, due to technological trends, socioeconomic trends, and geopolitical trends (Rust, 2019) marketing continues to transform and consequently evolve.

Digital marketing is a field that makes use of digital and social channels, such as digital media, mobile devices (e.g., smartphone), internet, among others, i.e., technologically able to allow companies to reach consumers and/or promote a brand and thus communicate, create, deliver, and sustain a set of values for stakeholders (American Marketing Association, 2020; Alford & Jones, 2020). In a more practical perspective, digital marketing allows companies to increase their databases, because it is through this that it is possible to obtain customers in real time and create an effectively valuable communication for customers. Moreover, digital marketing highlights the customer through the use of different online communication channels (Low et al., 2020). It is noteworthy that with digital marketing the need to understand its impact on consumer behavior is an important element.

Being that, with the emergence of the internet, several subareas of digital marketing have also emerged, which has made it difficult to study focused on this area, because it is visible an increase in its fragmentation (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). In this way, digital marketing merges with the internet and shares multiple of its characteristics.

Innovation is a tool to be allied with the internet, and the latter presents characteristics such as immediacy, because everything is immediate; customization, since it is possible for companies to customize their communication with customers based on their purchase history; the quantification, because it is possible a more accurate quantification of customers and/or visitors; the involvement of the user, to the extent that the

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user ceases to be passive and starts to interact with the brand and the network effect, because communication between consumers now reaches a larger proportion and even has the ability to build or destroy a brand (Lindon et al. , 1996, 9. 600).

Considering these characteristics of the Internet, areas of study and development emerged in digital marketing such as brand communities created by its users, privacy concerns, creation of recommendation algorithms based on personal tastes, development of specialized products and customer participation in product realization, among others (Busca & Bertrandias, 2020). This makes possible a greater engagement between brand and consumers, which without the massive development of the internet would not be possible, hence the growing importance attributed to the internet in digital marketing. As we analyzed before, integrated marketing strategies have proven to be more effective with consumers (Appel et al., 2020).

In fact, with the digital transformation's customers/consumers can now interact with companies and with each other mainly through social networks (Winer, 2009). This communication possibility between various players allows the exchange of opinions and experiences worldwide, thus providing new possibilities for marketing, more precisely digital marketing. In this sense, the media complement each other, because digital media needs offline media and vice versa, because it is essential a crossing and complementation of the various areas of marketing research, such as marketing strategies, digital marketing, its operational applications and the media where they are developed.

Taking into account these characteristics that Internet presents, it is possible for digital marketing to develop and reach audiences that previously would be unreachable. In this line of thought, digital marketing is essential because it allows to bring customers closer and understand them better, add value to products, expand distribution channels and boost sales through digital marketing campaigns using digital media channels such as marketing research, online advertising and affiliate marketing (Chaffey & Smith, 2017).

As we can deduce, technological innovation is the great precursor of the changes that are taking place. In this sense communication acquires new functions, because "communication is more effective the more meanings it provides, that is, the more polysemic it is and the more sensations and emotions it arouses" (Sousa, 2006, p. 26), therefore communication is a process of significance. In fact, the communicative process needs a sender and a receiver, where digital marketing allows their interaction in the most diverse online platforms.

However, the existing means of communication, whether traditional or non-traditional, have been constantly changing and reinventing themselves (e.g., radio now has a visual component, with the sharing of online programs in video format). In fact, we can state that, "it is an undeniable reality the power that communication, in its most varied aspects and typologies, as well as traditional mass media and social media of the digital age exert in contemporary society" (Kunsch, 2017, p. 340).

Considering the importance attributed to media and transformations it has undergone, no consensus is yet presented about a possible new classification of media.

Nevertheless, it is possible to compile the new media into three groups: intrusive where the user is exposed to advertising compulsorily, non-intrusive in which the user needs to activate the advertising, (e.g., following a brand's Facebook page) and user-generated where it is the user who produces the advertising/communication, such as the possibility of participating in brand videos or by making recommendations of a certain product/service to other users (Winer, 2009).

The knowledge of these new aspects of media, allows us to understand the ability and ease of consumers to share various information, which influence brands and companies, with enormous speed and scope. It is also

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through digital media that consumers can share on companies' websites, social networks or blogs their opinions about products, services, brands and companies (Kannan & Li, 2017).

Laconically, digital marketing assumes a prominent position today, as it allows for proactivity, consumer-centricity, and constant vigilance on competitors that would not otherwise be possible. In fact, attracting and maintaining a solid range of consumers of a given brand is the primary function of digital marketing (Kotler, 2010).

## **2.2. INFLUENCES OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN TOURISM**

The implementations of digital marketing strategies by organizations enable the promotion of consumer awareness and engagement, conversion of potential buyers into actual customers, trust and loyalty by customers (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Therefore, it is through digital marketing and the platforms on which it develops that consumers have transformed their buying process, interacting between offline and online (e.g., visiting a particular city is now shared online; seeing online reviews about a product and buying offline), (Teller et al., 2019).

It is in digital markets, that it is possible to capture and interact with customers, in turn, these markets are constantly developing which is critical to the company's marketing practice and success. These marketplaces are rich in data, which organizations can access about their customers (e.g., buying behavior, customer tastes), allowing companies to extend, acquire and retain more customers (Sridhar & Fang, 2019). Since customer data is of relevant importance for companies, since this is the only way to understand, adapt and personalize future purchase suggestions, as well as to facilitate companies' monitoring of market evolutions, a thorough knowledge of the various online platforms where companies can develop their digital marketing actions becomes increasingly significant.

As we have previously analyzed, the use of Internet presents a growing trend and, in this sense, more and more companies are using the Internet as an integral part of their marketing strategy, in this line of thought, digital marketing is increasingly used as a smart digital advertising tool that aims to "promote products and services due to its ease of targeting customers, reliability, and ease of assessing effectiveness. Thus, companies have formulated innovative digital marketing models and worked to improve these models" (Low, 2020, p, 2).

Laconically, we can highlight as relevant platforms to digital marketing the digital pages; augmented reality and virtual reality; mobile technologies, in the sense that it is necessary to create specific strategies for cell phone and tablet screens, which may not work on other types of screens; social networks and search engines (Gabriel, 2010).

The presence of tourism in digital markets is increasingly essential for the development of this sector, since the wealth of information about tourists or potential tourists is vital for a market adaptation to existing needs and consequent maintenance and revitalization of tourist destinations.

In Portugal with the Decree-Law No 191/2009 the term tourism is presented as being a "temporary movement of people to destinations other than their usual residence, for leisure, business or other reasons, as well as the economic activities generated, and the facilities created to meet their needs".

In view of tourism concept, it is urgent to reflect on the concept of visitor, tourist, and hiker in order to develop a broader knowledge about this area of study. In this line of thought the visitor is the "individual who goes to a place outside his usual environment, for a period of less than 12 months, whose main reason is other than

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the exercise of an activity remunerated in the place visited" (Instituto Nacional de Estatística - INE). It is possible to divide visitors into two categories: tourists and hikers.

For the World Tourism Organization, the term tourist is difficult to define, since it is difficult to delimit its boundaries. Decree-Law 191/2009 frames the tourist as a "person who spends at least one night in a place other than his usual residence and his trip is not motivated by the exercise of paid professional activity in the place visited. Thus, the tourist is the one who stays overnight in the place visited or stays for more than one day and occupies some type of accommodation (INE). In turn, the excursionist is a visitor who does not stay overnight, stays less than a day and does not occupy any type of accommodation (INE).

### 3. THE EXPERIENCE, SATISFACTION, IMAGE AND LOYALTY WITH THE DESTINATION

Based on tourism literature, tourists are characterized as a heterogeneous group of people with totally different personalities, demographics and experiences (Cooper et al., 2008), being an essential element for tourism realization worldwide. Moreover, technological transformations increasingly influence our lives and are constantly present in everyone's daily lives, and in tourism there is a great dependence on technology "both in relation to the use of specialized interactive systems or based on general-purpose systems for the delivery or services improvement" (p. 478), which influences the experience of tourists on their visits (Stankov & Gretzel, 2020).

Being that the supply of goods and services is not enough, and it is necessary the creation of added value through the experience where the tourist participates (Wardana et al., 2021). In fact, the tourist experience is directly related to the activities in which he participates during his stay, but also with the programming and scheduling of the trip and after it takes place (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017).

The experience of a tourist can be assessed and measured, through several dimensions, namely: sensory dimension, where the various stimuli can be perceived by the senses; behavioral dimension, where the bodily experience gives rise to actions; intellectual dimension, imagination and thought creation are used and the affective dimension, as the tourist develops personal emotions and feelings (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020).

Given that, the study is applied to the city of Barcelos it is central to contemplate questions that allow analyzing the satisfaction of the tourist with the city. Moreover, this region has worked over the years to promote tourism, either by creating several routes (e.g., the Pottery Route, the Figurine Route), by promoting "Galo de Barcelos" as a symbol of popular Portugal, the "Festival das Cruzes", the creation and promotion of fairs and markets, among other activities.

As already mentioned in the literature review, digital transformations have revolutionized the interaction of companies/brands with consumers, mainly through social networks (Winer, 2009). In fact, the relationship between destination and tourists is increasingly framed in a two-way communication through online, in several platforms, whether official or not (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). In this sense, it is urgent to understand and promote the satisfaction of the tourist with the destination and in this line of thought the satisfaction of the tourist is the result of his evaluation of perceived quality. The overall satisfaction is presented as "the extent of overall pleasure or contentment felt by the visitor, resulting from the ability of the travel experience to meet the desires, expectations and needs of the visitor in relation to the trip" (Chen & Tsai, 2008, p. 1116).

Being that, in tourism the attributes of the tourist destination need to meet the needs and desires of tourists in order for the visit to be satisfactory, that is, the tourist's involvement in recreational activities, measured by different degrees of pleasure, allow the tourist to develop a positive perception and consequently, satisfaction with the tourist destination they visited (Bayih & Singh, 2020).

In order for the likelihood of a tourist considering their visit as satisfactory, several "attributes of the destination in general and the quality of the accommodation, the accessibility of the destination, the beauty of the landscape, the weather or climate conditions, and cleanliness" must be met (Bayih & Singh, 2020; Campón-Cerro et al., 2020).



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Therefore, the more satisfied a tourist is with his visit, the more likely he is to revisit and recommend a destination to others (Chi & Qu, 2008; Bayih & Singh, 2020), being that there is a positive correlation between satisfaction and quality touristic experience and also with image and service quality (Bayih & Singh, 2020).

When mentioning image it is relevant to reflect that tourists develop an image of the touristic destination long before making the trip, through various sources of information, namely, books, television and radio, opinion of family and friends, by visiting the official website of the touristic destination, but increasingly through the experience of other tourists (Buhalis, 2019; Duan et al., 2020), through their opinions on various platforms, which makes the internet the first source of information and allows influencing potential tourists (Duan et al., 2020).

In this sense, tourists develop the induced image of a tourist destination before starting the trip, and it is a formation predictor of the more comprehensive and complex image after the visit is made (Duan et al., 2020). The image allows building mental processes that stimulate the visit by the tourist (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020), and this set of perceptions and mental associations (Lindon et al., 1996) vary for all individuals. However, they must have a common component to all, stability (Lindon et al., 1996), because it is this feature that allows the tourist loyalty to the touristic destination.

In this line of thought, the image is a subjective perception that the tourist has about a touristic destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007), so it is imperative that the perceived image of the tourist is in line with the image that the touristic destination wants to convey (projected image), because it is the junction of the two that will give rise to the image of the touristic destination as a whole (Duan et al., 2020).

Satisfaction with a touristic destination contributes directly to tourist loyalty, in this sense there is a commitment of the tourist to the destination (Chi & Qu). In fact, the study of loyalty applied to tourism, by marketing has proven to be important, because loyalty "promotes sustainable income for destinations through word-of-mouth and lower marketing costs" (Lv, Li & McCabe, 2020), namely with the sharing by tourists of their opinions regarding the visited site (e.g., TripAdvisor), which can influence "the reputation, brand and business performance of tourism organizations" (Buhalis, 2019, p. 1).

The loyalty of a tourist to a touristic destination is materialized in the repeat visit or destination recommendation to others. Being that loyalty can be measured in two dimensions, either by behavioral loyalty, where the evaluation focuses on the visit repetition, or by attitudinal loyalty, where loyalty is measured by the positive attitude of tourists in recommending a touristic destination (Sánchez-Sánchez; De- Pablos-Heredero & Montes-Botella, 2020). However, the tourism market is constantly changing and new trends, at the level of tourists' wants and needs, put marketing in a position of constant challenge which makes the simple binomial satisfaction-loyalty increasingly difficult (Campón-Cerro et al., 2020).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT LINES OF INVESTIGATION

The present study contributes, in a preliminary way, to the tourism and digital marketing literature providing insights into relationship between the use of digital marketing by touristic destinations to enable tourism market to adapt to tourists' needs and consequent maintenance and revitalization of touristic destinations. From an interdisciplinary point of view, it is hoped that this research can contribute positively to theory development in marketing and tourism contexts.

In fact, there is a relationship between the experience, satisfaction, image and loyalty for the touristic destination and digital marketing can play an essential role in this process. As an example, destination providers can develop and promote the participation of tourists in cultural experiences that allow them to engage with local culture (e.g., creating a handicraft). These activities aim to promote the touristic destination but also offer pleasant moments and enhance the positive experience of the tourist, moreover, recent studies show that the involvement of the tourist with the local culture is closely related to positive memorable experiences (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017).

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However, it is relevant to mention that tourist makes a personal evaluation of his visit experience which is very relevant for tourism companies that accompany the tourist throughout his trip and stay. In fact it is "fundamental to provide experiences that stay in the memory of consumers since are these experiences that discourage change" (Dieguez, 2020, p.51).

As initially mentioned, the aim of this study was to analyze the use of digital marketing in tourism in Barcelos, where we tried to answer the initial question: what importance is given to the use of digital marketing by tourists visiting Barcelos city? Therefore, according to presented above, we can defer that the use of various digital platforms by tourists is a constant. In fact, we all experience tourism through various mobile devices (e.g., sharing the experience at the destination of visit) and in this sense digital marketing is constantly present (e.g., sharing promotions; visitors' experience).

It is expected that future work will contribute to empirical studies development with the aim of testing causal relationships established in the study, thus contributing to a better understanding of the various constructs addressed. Therefore, understanding the use of digital marketing and tourist behavior in touristic destinations will allow, gather and provide useful information for a digital marketing planning more targeted to tourists' needs, as well as for the planning of touristic destinations and to support other agents involved in the decision-making process.

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