



Research Article

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The Impact of Digital Marketing on Tourism in Albania

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the impact of digital marketing in the Albanian tourism sector. Regardless of the fact that the effects of this form of marketing have been noticed for years in the Albanian tourism sector, since we have a significant increase in foreign tourists who are choosing to visit the beautiful Albanian destinations, the aim is that through some questionnaires randomly distributed among of tourists, to see if this influx is mainly attributed to digital marketing. The research aims to unravel the nuanced ways in which digital marketing strategies impact the perceived quality of services, offering insights to guide policymakers, marketers, and service providers. As Albania endeavors to position itself prominently on the world tourism stage, this study contributes valuable insights to inform strategic decisions, foster innovation, and enhance the overall tourist experience in the country.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Impact, Quality, Services, Albania

1. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of the global tourism industry, the role of digital marketing has become increasingly paramount (Pike, 2015). As destinations seek to differentiate themselves and enhance the overall quality of services offered to visitors, the integration of digital marketing strategies has

emerged as a pivotal factor in achieving these objectives (Li et al., 2017). This study delves into the specific context of Albania, exploring the impact of digital marketing on elevating the quality of services within its burgeoning tourism sector.

Albania, endowed with natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and a diverse range of attractions, has witnessed a steady growth in tourist arrivals in recent years (Hays et al., 2012). Recognizing the need to adapt to evolving consumer behaviors and preferences, the Albanian tourism sector has embraced digital marketing as a powerful tool to engage with potential visitors, enhance their experiences, and ultimately, elevate the overall quality of services provided.

The convergence of digital technologies, including social media, online platforms, and data analytics, has reshaped the way tourism services are promoted, delivered, and evaluated (Neuhofer et al., 2015). In this context, understanding the multifaceted impact of digital marketing becomes essential for stakeholders in Albania's tourism industry. This study aims to unravel the intricate relationships between digital marketing initiatives and the enhancement of service quality, shedding light on the strategies that prove most effective in the Albanian tourism context.

As we embark on this exploration, it is crucial to recognize the broader implications for the competitiveness and sustainability of Albania as a tourist destination. By comprehensively examining the nexus between digital marketing interventions and service quality improvements, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights that can inform strategic decision-making within the Albanian tourism sector and potentially inspire best practices in the broader global tourism landscape.

2. Literature Review

The intersection of digital marketing and the tourism sector has become a focal point of scholarly inquiry as destinations worldwide strive to harness the transformative potential of digital technologies (Pike, 2015). The literature reflects a consensus that digital marketing is not merely a trend but a fundamental driver of change, influencing how destinations engage with potential visitors and, crucially, shaping the overall quality of services provided.

Studies by Gretzel et al. (2015) and Buhalis and Law (2008) underscore the profound impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior and decision-making processes within the tourism sector. The availability of online information, coupled with social media's pervasive influence, has empowered travelers with unprecedented access to destination-related content. As tourists increasingly turn to online platforms for inspiration, planning, and validation of choices, the significance of a well-crafted digital presence cannot be overstated.

Within the context of service quality, Kim and Stoel (2004) contend that effective digital marketing strategies can contribute significantly to visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Digital engagement, when executed strategically, facilitates real-time communication, personalization of experiences, and the delivery of relevant and timely information. Thus, the ability to leverage digital channels emerges as a key determinant in not only attracting tourists but also in cultivating a positive perception of service quality.

Technological innovations, particularly the rise of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), introduce new dimensions to the service customization process (Xiang et al., 2017). The integration of AR and VR in digital marketing campaigns allows tourists to preview destinations and experiences, fostering a sense of anticipation and aiding in decision-making. Consequently, destinations that adeptly embrace these technologies can enhance the perceived quality of services, creating a competitive edge in the tourism market.

However, the literature also acknowledges challenges associated with the integration of digital marketing in the tourism sector. The work of Neuhofer et al. (2015) highlights issues such as information overload, privacy concerns, and the need for destinations to stay abreast of rapidly evolving technologies. Balancing the adoption of innovative digital strategies with the preservation of authentic, local experiences remains an ongoing challenge.

While the global literature provides a rich backdrop, there is a dearth of research specifically

examining the impact of digital marketing on service quality within the tourism sector in Albania. This study seeks to address this gap by contextualizing existing findings within the unique characteristics of the Albanian tourism landscape, providing insights that are not only academically significant but also practically relevant for industry stakeholders in Albania.

In summary, the literature converges on the understanding that digital marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping tourist behavior, influencing decision-making processes, and ultimately impacting the perceived quality of services. The subsequent sections of this article will delve into the methodologies employed to explore these dynamics within the Albanian tourism context and present findings that contribute to both academic scholarship and the practical advancement of the tourism industry in Albania.

3. Methodology

Studies that have evaluated the role of social media marketing in tourists are numerous and vary in their approaches and methodologies.

This study is mainly based on primary data which were collected through a questionnaire.

The search method through questionnaires is one of the most commonly used techniques in scientific and business research for collecting data from a specific group of individuals. The search method through questionnaires can provide valuable and reliable data that can be used to assess the impact of social media marketing on tourists.

The choice of the monster was made in a case way as each member of the population has an equal opportunity to be part of the sample. 130 randomly chosen tourists were included and they were mainly asked about the fact if they are influenced by marketing in social networks to choose the next touristic destination.

The questionnaire is distributed in the three tourist cities of Albania: Dures, Vlore and Sarande during the tourist season of 2023.

The questionnaire was physically distributed and filled out by the respondents while they were on their vacation time at the beach.

The questionnaire consists of a group of 12 closed questions divided into two main groups

- General questions (age, gender)

- Questions about the topic as below:

1. Do you have an account in social media?
2. Which social media do you mainly use?
3. How many hours do you spent weekly on social media?
4. Which is the main reason on using social media?
5. Do you follow well-known touristic destinations in Albania on social media?
6. Which are the reasons for following these types of destinations?
7. Do you have ever been recommended a touristic destination by a friend, which they now follow on social media?
8. Which of marketing channels of touristic destinations impact you more?
9. Have you ever decided to choose vacation destinations only because of reading something interesting on social media?
10. After you have a positive experience on a specific touristic destination in Albania, do you recommend it to others on social media?

All data from the questionnaires were processed using Excel and will be presented in the next paragraph. Each question will be accompanied by the corresponding graph and a short comment.

4. Analysis of the Results

The questionnaire contains a total of 12 questions, diverse in nature, related to the use of social media, following well-known touristic businesses on these platforms, and their impact on their

decision-making about vacations.

The first question is related to age, and from the data analysis, it appears that the majority of respondents are between 20 and 25 years old. The questionnaire was accurately completed by 130 individuals (Figure 1).

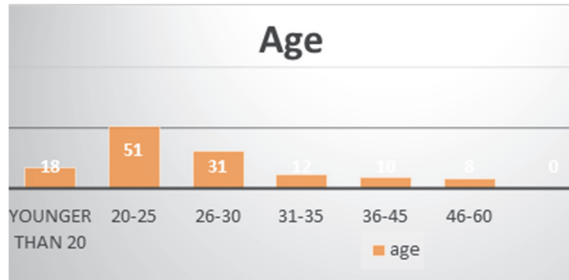


Figure 1: Age

Additionally, out of the 130 respondents, 70 were male and 60 were female (Figure 2).

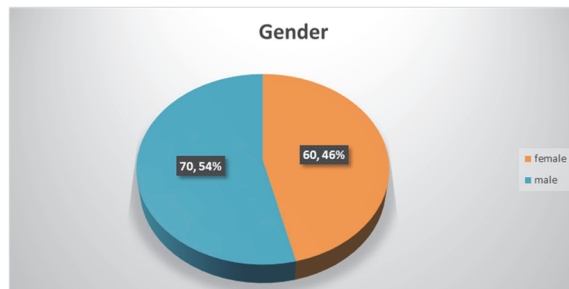


Figure 2. Gender

After the initial demographic questions, the third question immediately delves into the topic of social media usage. It asks whether respondents are currently active on social media platforms. Approximately 95% of respondents answered positively (Figure 3).

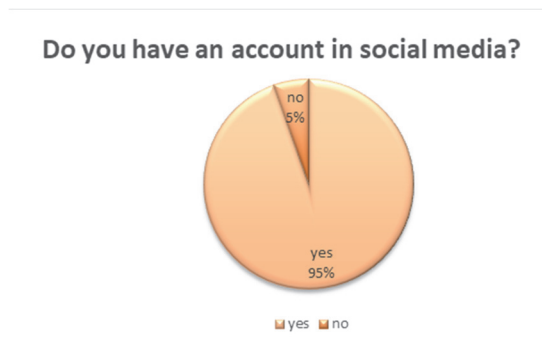


Figure 3. Do you have an account in social media?

Next, participants were asked about their specific social media accounts. The most commonly used platform was Instagram, with 54% of respondents actively using it. Facebook followed as the second most popular platform, with around 39%, while Yahoo, YouTube, Pinterest, and Twitter also had users (Figure 4).

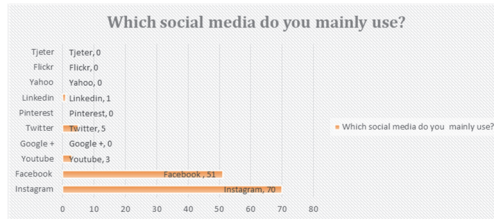


Figure 4. Which social media do you mainly use?

We believe that Instagram is the most widely used platform in this study due to the fact that major part of participants were between 20-25 years old. However, it's essential to note that more extensive studies would be needed to verify this conclusion (Figure 4).

Subsequently, participants were asked about the time they spend on social media platforms each week. The purpose of this question was to highlight the importance of social media, given that consumers are actively engaged and continuously bombarded with various information. The majority of respondents spend more than 12 hours per week on social media, while a smaller number spend 5-10 hours, and very few spend less than 1 hour (Figure 5).

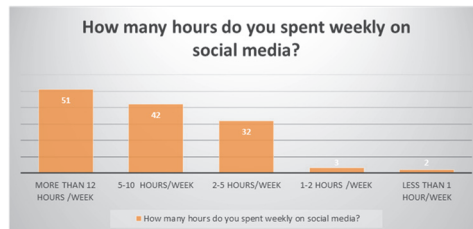


Figure 5. How many hours do you spent weekly on social media?

Regarding the primary reasons for using social media, the data analysis indicates that easy access to information and availability are the main drivers. Additionally, staying updated and discovering new trends contribute to users' loyalty to these platforms. However, some respondents also use social media for entertainment, such as listening to music, watching movies, or meeting new people (Figure 6).

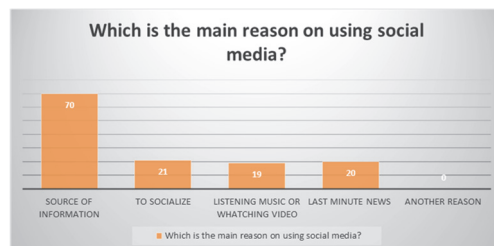


Figure 6. Which is the main reason on using social media?

Furthermore, it's essential to understand whether respondents follow well-known touristic businesses in Albania on social media and whether they currently follow any. The results show that 90% of respondents do follow such , while only 10% do not (Figure 7).

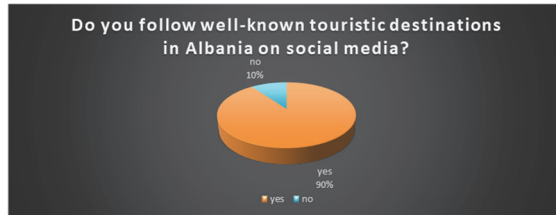


Figure 7. Do you follow well-known touristic destinations in Albania on social media?

Linked to the previous question, the following one inquires about the reasons for following these types of businesses. The majority follow touristic businesses to stay informed about the latest discounts and offers, get acquainted with new products and services they offer , and maintain continuous contact with them. Some also follow touristic businesses to read recommendations and comments about their services. However, there are also those who follow touristic businesses simply because their friends do (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Which are the reasons for following these types of destinations?

In summary, recommendations and comments play a crucial role in why people follow specific businesses on social media. These findings provide valuable insights into the impact of digital marketing on consumer decision-making.

Therefore, a question was asked to the respondents if they have ever been recommended a touristic destinations by a friend, which they now follow on social media. The majority responded positively (Figure 9).

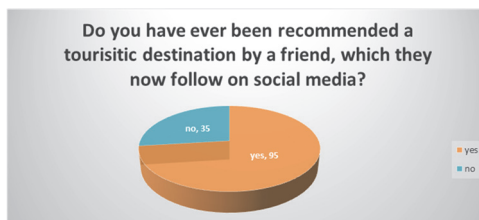


Figure 9. Do you have ever been recommended a touristic destination by a friend, which they now follow on social media?

Specifically, 95 of them have received such recommendations in the past, while only 35 have not.

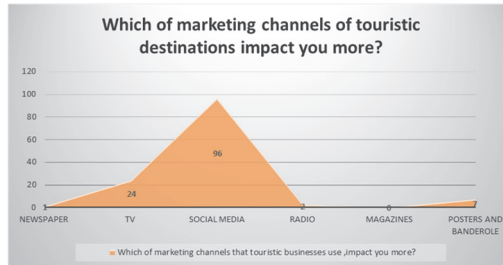


Figure 10. Which of marketing channels of touristic destinations impact you more?

The study also explored the importance of various marketing channels used by touristic businesses and companies. The data analysis revealed that social media campaigns have the most significant impact on the 130 respondents. Television also plays a significant role, while newspapers, magazines, radio, and posters have a smaller influence (Figure 10).

Furthermore, respondents were asked whether they have ever made a vacation decision solely because they read about it on social media. The results show that 102 individuals have done so, while 28 were not influenced by social media for their vacations. (Figure 11).

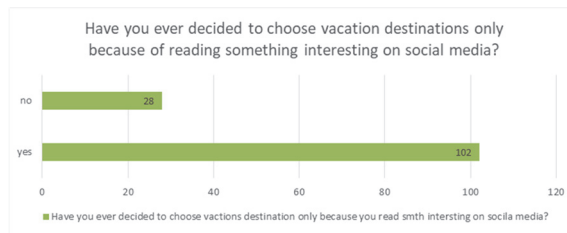


Figure 11. Have you ever decided to choose vacation destinations only because of reading something interesting on social media?

Lastly, considering that recommendations and comments significantly impact consumers, I asked participants whether they have ever commented or recommended a specific product or service after purchasing or trying it. The majority value the opportunity for recommendations (Figure 12)



Figure 12. After you have a positive experience on a specific touristic destination in Albania, do you recommend it to others on social media?

5. Conclusions

From the analysis of the data collected in the field, it turns out that the impact of digital marketing is very large. Most of the respondents are active users of social networks and actively follow Albanian tourist destinations.

To a large extent, their decisions to visit are based precisely on what they receive through digital marketing about these destinations. A good part affirmed that they share their experiences with others as well as refer to the experiences of others in making decisions about vacations.

From this work, it is evident that people extensively use social media in today's world. They are in constant contact with information, and everyone follows a specific brand through social networks, whether it's an individual, a product, or a service. Comparing which marketing campaign is most successful for businesses today is challenging because it requires extensive research. However, this study highlights the importance of social media as an integral part of a business's marketing strategy, especially in today's digital age.

The data analysis shows that individuals spend a significant amount of time observing everything online. Specifically, Instagram and Facebook were the most widely used platform among the participants in this study. Consumers actively seek information on social media, especially through comments and recommendations. These factors significantly influence their decisions.

Social media marketing has a lower cost compared to other advertising methods. Additionally, the study reveals that social media has a substantial impact on touristic sector today. It is essential for businesses to take social media seriously because it is a reliable source of information for consumers. The wide accessibility, abundance of recommendations, and positive and negative comments make it a secure platform for consumers.

A very important finding is the fact that 78% of the respondents said that they would choose their tourist destination based on social media. (see Figure 11.)

In the world, the percentage of tourists who are influenced by social media to choose their tourist destination varies according to different studies and the demographics of the studied group.

In general, the percentage of tourists who are influenced by social media to choose a tourist destination varies from 36% to 67%, depending on the study and the methodology used. Social media is a powerful source of inspiration and information for many travelers globally, influencing their vacation and travel decisions.

6. Recommendations

After a thorough literature review on social media marketing and analyzing the data collected from the questionnaire, I can confidently recommend this work to all business units, especially those in the early stages of consumer awareness. I believe that every business, but particularly touristic businesses, should be present on social media. It is through this presence that they can truly exist for consumers.

There is a direct correlation between broad awareness on social media and consumer behavior. The data analysis shows that individuals spend a significant amount of time observing everything online. Specifically, Instagram and Facebook were the most widely used platform among the participants in this study. Consumers actively seek information on social media, especially through comments and recommendations. These factors significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

While this study provides valuable insights, further research is recommended to delve deeper into specific aspects, such as the long-term sustainability of digital marketing impacts and the potential influence of cultural factors on tourists' responses to digital strategies. Additionally, continuous monitoring of emerging technologies and their applicability to the Albanian tourism context is crucial for informed decision-making.

Digital marketing has been and continues to be a very efficient tool to promote the tourism sector in Albania. Here are some ways that digital marketing has influenced and continues to

influence the tourism sector in Albania:

- Increased awareness of tourist destinations in Albania: Through digital marketing, tourist destinations in Albania have managed to increase their awareness and visibility at the international level. Through websites, social media, and various online campaigns, potential tourists are introduced to the country's natural beauty, culture, history, and all the tourist potential.
- Increase in the number of visitors: Digital marketing has helped increase the number of tourists visiting Albania. Through segmented campaigns, online advertising, and the use of online booking platforms, tourists have easier access to information and opportunities to book accommodation and activities in the country.
- Creating a tourism brand for Albania: Digital marketing has helped create a strong tourism brand for Albania. Through the use of social media, tourist blogs, promotional videos and official tourism websites, Albania has managed to create a positive and attractive image for tourists.
- Increased investment in the tourism sector: Sharing information on tourist destinations and accommodation infrastructure through digital marketing has helped increase investment in the tourism sector in Albania. Potential tourists, having easier access to information, are more willing to visit the country and spend money on tourist services.

In general, digital marketing has been an important tool to increase tourism in Albania and has had a positive impact on the development and promotion of the tourism sector in the country.

In conclusion, this research positions digital marketing as a potent force in shaping the quality of tourism services in Albania. The findings serve as a foundation for strategic considerations and actionable recommendations, fostering the ongoing development of a vibrant and competitive tourism industry in the country.

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