

The use of the RRSS as a communication strategy of the Costa del Sol as a tourist destination.

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Abstract. In recent years, the internet has become a fundamental source of information when planning vacations. Also, social networks have broken into our lives in a very considerable way. From the pandemic caused by COVID-19 this information transmitted through RRSS must be planned conscientiously, since it is very likely that potential tourists need a type of information that in addition to generating interest in the destination, generates security and confidence in terms of health. The main objective of this project is to analyze the image issued of the Costa del Sol through Social Networks taking as reference the information published in their RRSS (Facebook and Twitter), the most recurrent topics, the information provided about the COVID-19, the type of publication and the objective of it, among others. As main conclusions, the objective of the publication is in most cases to inform or persuade, leaving aside one of the main capabilities of the social network that is to generate reactions. Also, and in relation to the management of the crisis caused by the pandemic, there is no emphasis on generating security and trust in its audiences.

Keywords: Networks, Costa del sol, Tourism.

1 Introduction

The tourism sector, although it is a sector that has grown regularly and steadily over time, is also a sensitive sector that is affected by multiple variables. This happened in 2020, a year that was hit by a pandemic caused by a virus (COVID-19) that crossed borders and caused a total confinement. This confinement meant a serious drop in the number of international tourists, going from 1461 million international tourist arrivals in 2019 to 381 in 2020 [1].

The tourist destinations, once the situation normalized and, to overcome these vicissitudes, needed the use of strategies aimed at recovering part of that lost tourism. The managers of the destinations, from this situation, have seen the need to generate trust and security [2], and of course, improve the positioning and the image of destination, so that he continues to be elected despite the situation [3-4].

In the existing literature there is a huge consensus as to the variety and quantity of factors involved in the process of choosing the destination. There are authors who focus on the motivation of the tourist [5-6], others in the previous visit [7-8] and many of them on the destination image [9-10]. This last factor of influence, that is, the image of destiny, will also be conditioned by other factors, among which we highlight the media of communication and specifically to the RRSS.

According to Xiang and Gretzel [11] is the appearance of web 2.0 that initiates this process and changes the rules of the game. Communication is no longer unidirectional, but in the network, you can find information produced both by Destinations Management Organizations (DMOs) and by the user himself. In this context, data produced by tourism destinations management companies are combined with data published by the users themselves, generating a large amount of information available [12]. The Internet and social media have contributed to a substantial change in the tourism sector. Tourists have changed the way they access information about a destination, the way they plan and book trips, and of course, the way they share their experiences [13-14].

In situations of great vulnerability, the RRSS are crucial to provide information and generate security in their audiences. In a context as the health crisis caused by COVID-19, RRSS should be used to inform about possible restrictions, activities and in initiatives that are being carried out to minimize the risks and, in short, conveniently inform their audiences to continue attracting tourists.

Given this fact, in this study the main objective is to analyze the communication strategies carried out by different localities that make up the Costa del Sol in Spain. Specifically, and after a period pandemic in which the tourist activity is paralyzed almost completely, the RRSS (Facebook and Twitter) are analyzed that manage the DMOs of each of the localities, specifying the most recurrent topics, the types of publications most used, ... In addition, and in a very exhaustive way, an analysis of the news and recommendations related to the COVID-19 pandemic that have had as an objective to generate confidence and tranquility in the potential tourist.

The importance of this study lies in the analysis of the RRSS framed in a context of health crisis, so it will not only focus on monitoring parameters but on analyzing if the post published affect this context passes over ignoring a delicate situation for the tourism sector.

2 Review of the literature

Over the past 30 years, the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has been enormous, greatly changing the way activities are carried out. Human resources, material and immaterial resources are mobilized, wealth is generated, and business opportunities are identified and exploited [15].

In the tourism sector this change has occurred in the same way, greatly affecting the purchase process. Before the trip, the internet has changed the way in which information is searched and the trip is booked, during it also has important repercussions improving the experience and allowing to share it in networks and after the trip it is essential generating useful information for other potential tourists who are at the moment before the purchase [16].

Also, social networks have broken into our lives in a very considerable way. At the business and institutional level, they have become an important communication tool, and on a personal level, they have become one of the main sources of information to which go.

The rise of social networks has meant a change in the field of the tourism sector, intermediaries are reduced, and communication is bidirectional and direct with their

audiences. According to the IAB report [17], 85% of Internet users aged 16 to 70 use social networks, which represents about 27 million people.

In addition, and because of the intangible nature of tourism products, the communication process becomes a vital element in the offer [18]. For this reason, the use of social networks has allowed new possibilities in relation to communication, providing an important impact on demand and supply. tourism [19].

In fact, social media websites allow internet users to form virtual travel communities (VTCs) that make it easier for tourists to get information, maintain connections, develop relationships and eventually making travel-related decisions [20-22].

On the other hand, and from the side of tourism institutions (DMO), social networks allow them to improve the image of the destination [23], which in turn will improve its chances of being chosen [24]. The RRSS will contribute to the creation of a strong and differentiated image in the minds of potential tourists, which will provide the destination with important benefits, since these they will choose their holiday place based on that preconceived image, the result of exposure to certain media.

While it is true that social networks are a fundamental tool for the promotion of tourist destinations, it is no less true that these institutions face a new challenge and that is to manage properly these means.

Consequently, DMOs at both the national and local levels should pay attention to how they use social media, as it can play a crucial role in promotion and marketing. effective of a tourist destination in a global context, characterized by hyper competence not only between companies [25] but also between destinations [26].

From the pandemic caused by COVID-19 this information transmitted through RRSS must be planned conscientiously, since it is very likely that potential tourists need a type of information that in addition to generating interest in the destination, generates security and confidence in terms of health. In summary, DMOs in this exceptional and vulnerable situation must correctly manage their social networks to help them generate trust and security [2] and strengthen their image and reputation [3].

Previous studies have focused on the consequences that this type of health crisis has on the tourism sector, reaching the following conclusions: (i) the tourist demand is very sensitive to any type of risk [27], (ii) before any perception of risk tourists change destination [28] and even, (iii) if they perceive the risk of contagion of any disease they will decide to postpone it or even cancel it [29].

In a context of such importance and vulnerability, social media should be used as it plays an important role in communication in crisis contexts [30]. It is a more complete and useful communication for users because it is created from the contributions and participation of all audiences [31].

Organizations must respond to crises with successful crisis communication management [32], restoring normal order and meeting the information needs and expectations of audiences through effective use of social media. In fact, social media allows organizations in times of crisis to monitor the opinions and feelings of audiences, destroy rumors, establish relationships. favorable and maintain their credibility [30].

This answer can be made from two opposing positions, on the one hand, intuitively [33] and on the other, strategically [14].

Previous studies have analyzed the use of social networks in times of crisis such as the H1N1 pandemic [34] and the pandemic caused by the Zika virus [31]. More recently and framed in the COVID-19 pandemic, a study compares the social networks of

tourism institutions in Spain and Italy, reaching a very relevant conclusion [4] and that is that while the social network Twitter of the Italian DMOs published half of their tweets to inform about the tourist efforts they made to face the COVID-19 crisis, the tweets on this topic were practically non-existent in the social network Twitter of the Spanish DMOs.

3 Methodology

To carry out the study, the analysis of the official Facebook and Twitter accounts of the following tourist destinations in the province of Malaga has been considered of interest: Mijas, Costa del Sol, Estepona, Malaga, Fuengirola, Marbella, Nerja, Torremolinos and Vélez- Malaga. The choice of these RRSS is because, as Stated by Beezhotels [35] they are among the most outstanding in the tourism sector. The study is carried out in the months of June and July 2021, months in which this type of promotion is considered more effective because, as the market behaved. On that date, trips were planned at short notice and one of the main concerns of potential tourists was the safety of the destination [1].

Considering that one of the main objectives of the project is the analysis of the image emitted by the DMO through social media, it has begun by establishing the parameters and items of study. These parameters and the type or indicators are as follows:

- Format: Video, Photograph, Text and Retweet.
- Includes Emoji: Yes/no.
- Includes link: Yes/no.
- Includes Hashtag: Yes/no.
- Purpose of publication: inform, promote, educate, promote reaction, encourage cruise tourism, encourage national tourism, encourage international tourism, encourage both types of tourism (national and international), build trust and security
- Theme: Services and transport, Sun and beach, Cityscape, Institutional information, Suggestions for visits, Hotel and restaurant companies, Sport, Technology, Leisure agenda, Intangible heritage, Tangible heritage, Nature, Other.
- Health crisis management: COVID-19, Restrictions, Pandemic, Health security.
- Audience: Families, Young people, Senior, Media, Enterprises, Other, Various categories.

For the measurement of the indicators of the official accounts of the destinations, the online tool Fanpage Karma has been used that allows the monitoring and subsequent analysis of the RRSS. This tool has previously been used by other academics including [36-38].

Facebook is the social network with the highest number of active users worldwide in January 2022 [39] with approximately 2.9 billion. Facebook has become an ideal network to establish marketing activities [40]. In the tourism sector, it also shows great utility since it is present in all phases of tourism planning, before the trip generating inspiration and helping the reservation, and during and after the trip as a platform to share lived experiences [41]. In addition, and as Rodríguez, Llorente and García (2012),

[42] affirm, Facebook could help to improve the image of the destinations as long as it has a coherent discourse. On the other hand, Twitter has great interactive capacity that allows to establish quality relationships with its audiences [43] do it in real time [44].

4 Results

Analysis of the post's formats showed that photographs were the most frequent type of content shared on the two online platforms (Facebook with 81% and Twitter with 71%) and were often accompanied by captions about the events. Videos ranked second and were particularly used for events and other types of promotional activities. However, Retwitter and Text Only were not frequently used in the extracted posts.

Destination pages on social media use emojis to express feelings, moods, emotions, and opinions, as well as to stimulate the emotions of potential tourists. In our research, two main types of emoji can be identified; namely, face emoji (which expresses human emotions and feelings, for example, 😊) and faceless emoji (which do not involve human faces, for example ♥). Regarding this point, it can be stated that a large portion of the posts included symbols and emojis, however, some differences are obvious. On Facebook and Twitter, the Marbella page used at least one emoji on 100% of the shared posts, while the Costa del Sol page used fewer emojis than other destination pages, the percentage being 15%.

As for whether the content includes a link, the analysis of the posts showed that all Destination Management Entities (DMO) web pages on Facebook shared a link in most of the published posts that were primarily related to an event or a news story. In addition, on Facebook, Costa del Sol shared more links (100%) than other DMOs, while Fuengirola shared fewer links (2%).

The official pages of Andalusia used both general hashtags such as "#aeropuerto", "#civilización", "#hotel", as well as hashtags related to specific events such as #Malagafilm, #StarliteFestival. In fact, DMOs used hashtags to get the attention of followers or promote their cities as favorable destinations for tourist activities. In addition, THE DMOs also tried to link the contents with positive feelings related to travel, such as fascinating, incredible, enjoyment, relaxation, good times, etc. In fact, these keywords were the most used hashtags to attract, motivate and persuade travelers to choose Andalusia as their next vacation spot. As the data shows, Marbella used hashtags in all Facebook posts, while the rest of the localities used it to a lesser extent. In relation to the objective of the publication, it should be noted that, on Facebook, while Estepona (with 91%) and Fuengirola (with 82%), concentrated most of their efforts on encouraging both national and international tourists, Marbella (with 95%) focused on promoting the online reaction or response in the same way to publication, by readers. In addition, the objective of the publication posts on Twitter was mainly: "Inform: Event/event", and then "Promote: Brand Spain/Andalusia". The cities of

Mijas, Cosa del Sol and Estepona have covered all the objectives determined, but the cities of Fuengirola and Marbella have not covered objectives of "Inform: Event/event", "Promote the reaction or the online response in that same publication", by the readers. As for the theme of the publication, the most addressed aspect was related to coastal images such as beaches, the sea and the sun. Most thematic posts on Facebook were about the aspects "Sun and Beach" (24%), "Cityscape" (17%) and "Suggestions for visits" (15%).

On Twitter, the topic of "Sun and Beach" (22%), "Urban Landscape" (12%), and just over 11% of the total topics analyzed were on "Agenda tourist information, leisure, festivals, theater, fairs".

In relation to the management of the health crisis, an unequal use by the analyzed platforms is contemplated. While Facebook focuses its comments on safety (without specifying what type) and only mentions once health security and the measures taken to guarantee it, Twitter refers 25 times to the word Covid-19, not placing so much emphasis on safety.

Table 3. Purpose of publication

Health crisis management	Facebook	Twitter
COVID-19	1	25
Restrictions	0	0
Pandemic	0	2
Safety	12	1
Health security	1	2

Analysis of the audience of the posts showed that, across all social networks, "Various categories" is by far the one with the highest audience, followed by "Families", "Media" and "Others". Therefore, no significant differences are appreciated.

Table 1. Purpose of publication

PURPOSE OF PUBLICATION	Mijas	Costa	Estepona	Málaga	Fuengirola	Marbella	Nerja	Torremolinos	Agenda Fuengirola
1.Report: Event/event.	6	8	3	11	43	00	14	16	35
2.Promote: Spain/Andalusia brand	3	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	0
3.Educate: Transmit culture / knowledge regarding a place.	1	2	3	13	0	0	0	4	3
4.Promote the online reaction or response in that same publication, by readers.	11	4	1	9	3	41	2	13	2
5. Encourage cruise tourism.	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Encourage national tourism.	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
7.Encourage international tourism.	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8 Encourage both national and international	0	0	83	29	52	2	0	15	60

Table 2. Purpose of publication

PURPOSE OF PUBLICATION	Mijas	Costa	Estepona	Málaga	Fuengirola	Marbella	visitaCostadelSol
1.Report: Event/event.	38	19	3	29	53	0	11
2.Promote: Spain/Andalusia brand	14	7	39	14	21	2	2
3.Educate: Transmit culture / knowledge regarding a place.	2	2	3	3	0	2	3
4.Promote the online reaction or response in that same publication, by readers.	0	2	1	0	0	0	1
5. Encourage cruise tourism.	2	3	1	1	0	0	1
6. Encourage national tourism.	1	1	5	0	0	0	0
7.Encourage international tourism.	4	5	3	2	0	1	0
8 Encourage both national and international	26	3	36	36	26	38	10

5 Conclusions

The main conclusions that are drawn from this research work are based on the obviousness that Facebook and Twitter are two tools widely used by tourist destinations. There is a greater use of photographs by RRSS profiles, with the use of videos being lower. This coincides with the result obtained by the study carried out by [37] Pastor Marín and Paniagua Rojano, (2020).

It is also striking that the objective of the publication is in most cases to inform or persuade, leaving aside one of the main capabilities of the social network that is to generate reactions.

This study also provides important practical implications or recommendations for the destination management. As a starting point, the OMD must analyze and specify the motivations, needs and expectations of their users (potential tourists) to adequately meet them, thus achieving a greater power of attraction to the destination.

Also, and because the profile of the user of each social network differs and therefore may have different needs, it is recommended the prior analysis of the users of each social network, their main requirements with respect to the destination, and therefore adapt the content to each of them.

Finally, and in relation to the management of the crisis caused by the pandemic, there is no emphasis on generating security and trust in its audiences. Of the 562 posts analyzed on Facebook and 476 on Twitter, only 14 and 30 respectively mentioned any aspect related to the health crisis. In general, it seems that ignoring the situation was a maxim for all the destinations that make up the province of Malaga. However, there are significant differences based on the social network used, showing Twitter a greater visibility of COVID-19 and its effects. This could respond to what was stated by Schultz et al. who stated that crisis communication via Twitter generates fewer negative reactions in the public than crisis information received through other channels such as blogs or newspapers [45].

Finally, it remains to be recognized that in general, and in view of the results obtained, DMOs are adapting to this transformation with great speed and professionalism, although due to the speed with which these changes occur, in many cases tourist destinations are using social media more intuitively than strategically [14].

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