

## Management of Colombian hotel companies' websites: an empirical approach

### Gestión de las páginas web de las empresas hoteleras colombianas: una aproximación empírica

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**Recibido:** abril 09 de 2023

**Aceptado:** junio 25 de 2023

#### Abstract

The article examines hotel companies' Website management in Cúcuta, Colombia. The methodology is quantitative with descriptive design. A survey of sixty-two items is applied to the managers of five hotels, to know their opinion on aspects such as: Website, Prices, Reservation, Products, Navigability, Customer Relationship Management Variables, Privacy and Security. The results indicate that hotels manage their websites well. However, weaknesses are evident in the visualization of room services, information on city attractions, interaction via chat and access for the visually impaired. We conclude with the need to constantly review the changing trends in web pages and clients' demands, in order to offer information that provides optimum visibility on the national and international market.

**Keywords:** management, websites, hotel companies, client relationship.

#### Resumen

El artículo examina la gestión de las páginas Web de las empresas hoteleras de Cúcuta, Colombia. La metodología es cuantitativa con diseño descriptivo y se aplica una encuesta de sesenta y dos ítems a los gerentes de cinco hoteles, para conocer su opinión sobre aspectos como: Sitio web, Precios, Reserva, Productos, Navegabilidad, Variables de gestión de relaciones con los clientes, Privacidad y seguridad. Lo resultados revelan que los hoteles hacen una buena gestión de las páginas web. No obstante, se evidencian debilidades en la visualización de los servicios de habitaciones, en la información sobre las atracciones de la ciudad, en la interacción vía chat y el acceso a personas con discapacidad visual. Se concluye con la necesidad de revisar constantemente las nuevas tendencias de las páginas web y las exigencias de los clientes, de cara a ofrecer información que dé una óptima visibilidad en el mercado nacional e internacional.

**Palabras clave:** gestión, páginas web, empresas hoteleras, relación con los clientes.

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## 1. Introduction

The network of networks, also known as the internet, has become one of the most significant exponents of technologies that has grown and strongly impacted today's society (Pulido-Huertas, 2018). The rapid expansion of the network has had significant effects on virtually all areas of society, such as: the economy, education, public health, social relations, culture and even business relations (Otero-Gómez & Giraldo-Pérez, 2023; Ríos-Escalier, 2021; Varas-Meza et al., 2020; Hernández-Zuluaga, 2022).

One of the main Internet applications is the World Wide Web. This allows the deployment of information and communication in a multimedia and interactive environment, which is of significant interest to goods and services companies (Gutiérrez-Ochoa & Díaz-Torres, 2019). In this sense, the hotel sector has a powerful dissemination platform, with which it can easily compete with other companies on the market (Luján et al., 2019). However, the accelerated growth of the network has made it a constantly evolving resource (Blandón, 2020), especially in matters such as more established, recognized and standardized structures (Eslava-Zapata et al., 2019a).

The tourism sector is currently undergoing major changes due to globalization and the intensive use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (Oliveros-Contreras & Martínez, 2017). ICT, especially the use of the Internet, has led to new consumption habits in people, who increasingly demand online information from companies (Salas-Rubio et al., 2021), a fact that has directly impacted the different sectors of the economy, especially the hotel sector (Arias-Aragonés et al., 2023).

Today there are millions of websites competing to be known. However, companies' leadership around certain activities is still incipient and innovations bring new technological paths (Sanabria-Gómez, 2022). The hotel sector does not escape from this dynamic, as organizations are forced to compete in an environment with

few standards to follow. However, they are aware that the communication channel provided by the Internet must be taken advantage of (Eslava-Zapata et al., 2019b). ICT have transformed hotel users' needs and behaviors, business models and services offered (Cruz-Estrada et al., 2019). This approach forces the hotel sector to adopt an innovative market-oriented philosophy to design services that contribute to creating value for the customer and competitive advantages for organizations (Bolzán & Fernandes-Ferreira, 2020).

Companies face significant challenges to compete and offer products and services that allow them to respond to market needs, hence the need for flexible websites that have up-to-date information about organizations (Saldaña-de Lira et al., 2021). The use of Web sites involves the publication of content and is a means to influence potential customers to consider the organization when making a purchase decision (Cedeño-Troya & Townsend-Valencia, 2021).

In Colombia, the hotel sector has proposed a set of measures to boost hotel occupancy effectively, with undisputed support in the design of web pages to generate significant benefits in the sector (Jiménez et al., 2018). Hotels on the internet allow promotion and provide a platform for communication and information with the customer (Mogrovejo et al., 2019). In this sense, the relationship between hotel services and consumers makes it an information-intensive sector that is perfectly integrated with technologies (Saldaña-de Lira et al., 2021). However, despite companies' awareness of the advantages brought by ICTs, many of them still maintain a basic presence on the Internet (Oliveros-Contreras & Martínez, 2017). Therefore, the hotel sector must establish guidelines aimed at improving its presence on the Internet and in the market (Eslava-Zapata et al., 2019a).

Websites offer hotels the opportunity to present content, have greater visibility on the Internet and reach customers worldwide (Luján et al., 2019). However, some hotels do not have websites or are partially implemented,

missing the advantages offered by this tool to compete (Cruz-Estrada et al., 2019). By not having well-developed websites, there is the possibility of not publicizing all the activities and services provided by the hotel, limiting the company's growth both in terms of the number of customers and the income it could obtain (Mogrovejo et al., 2019). In view of the above, this research aims to examine the management of hotel companies' websites in Cúcuta, Colombia. It aims to determine the use these organizations make of this tool to promote their services.

## 2. Methodology

The work is quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional or trans-sectional. The research variables are numerical and were collected from a survey, which is an appropriate instrument to collect information in this type of projects (Cadena-Iñiguez et al., 2017). The research was conducted through a descriptive phase to establish what is happening with the management of hotel companies' websites in Cúcuta, Colombia. The descriptive study involved a review of bibliographic sources, to deepen and learn about the phenomenon studied and identify the state of the art of the research (Macías-Rojas et al., 2022). An analytical phase was also developed, which consisted of breaking down the phenomenon to study and interpret it.

The study population consisted of the most important companies in the two-, three- and four-star hotel sector in the city of San José de Cúcuta, according to the Hotel and Tourism Association of Colombia (COTELCO), as follows: Casino Internacional (four stars), Hotel Tonchalá (three stars), Hotel Arizona (three stars), Hotel Holiday (three stars), Hotel Bolívar (four stars), Hotel Casa Blanca (four stars), Hotel Ibis (three stars), Hotel Quinta Avenida (three stars) and Hotel Hampton (two stars).

The sample was determined intentionally. In this sense, Burbano-Pantoja et al. (2022), indicate that the purposeful sample is one in which the units

are chosen arbitrarily, everything depends on the relevance considered by the researcher. In this case, taking into account the opportunity factor to obtain the information and the time available to conduct the study, the following sample was used: Hampton Hotel (two stars), Hotel Arizona (three stars), Hotel Holiday (three stars), Hotel Ibis (three stars) and Hotel Casino Internacional (four stars). These hotels are representative of the sample and comprise a diversity of stars ranging from two to four. This made it possible to achieve the proposed objectives.

For data collection, a questionnaire was designed to collect organized information to explain the research problem. The questionnaire was applied to hotel managers so that the answers were as close to reality as possible (Rojano-Alvarado et al., 2021). The questions were formulated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 is the minimum value and five is the maximum value. Accordingly, 1 is totally disagreed, 2 is completely disagreed, 3 is neither agreed nor disagreed, 4 is agreed, and 5 is totally agreed. The questionnaire was divided into seven parts and sixty-two (62) variables formulated in closed form where only one answer must be selected, as follows: Web site (26), prices (3), reservation (3), products (2), navigability (10), customer relationship management (CRM) variables (11) and privacy and security (7). The questionnaire was validated by three experts, one methodological and two linked to the area of study.

Once the information was collected, it was processed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to generate statistical parameters for describing the data in light of the research problem (Leal-Patiño et al., 2022).

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1 Descriptive analysis

The analysis of variables 1 to 8 of the website allows establishing that, according to the managers, Holiday, Hampton, Casino and Ibis

hotels reveal information in the category of agreement, on variables such as: "Publishes video or 3D photos of the services", "Uses alternative software for the visualization of the services" and "Publishes content for printing of room services". However, for the variable "Publishes video or 3D photos of room services," Holiday and Hampton hotels show neither agreement nor disagreement. Regarding variables 9 to 15, it is observed that Holiday, Hampton and Casino hotels neither agree nor disagree with the variables: "Visualizes for more than twelve seconds the room services", "Publishes content of the city's tourist attractions" and "Uses alternative software to visualize the city's tourist attractions". A weakness in visualizing room services and attractions for tourists may result in a new customer base.

Regarding variables 16 to 25, it is observed that the Arizona hotel, for example, is in full agreement with variables such as: "Publishes room prices", "Publishes hotel offers", "Uses hyperlinks to the city's tourist attractions" and "Publishes the hotel's services". However, hotels

such as Ibis neither agree nor disagree with the variable "Publicizes tourist attractions".

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for Web site variables. Some cases are observed with minimum values of 4 and maximum values of 5, as is the case with the variables: "Publishes the services offered by the hotel", "Publishes the services of the rooms" and "Publishes the tourist attractions of the city". In other cases the minimum value is 3 and the maximum value is 4, as in the variables: "Uses alternative software for visualization of room services" and "Publishes content about the services available in the rooms". As for the Standard Deviation (STD), it is noted that the data in general terms present a dispersion measure of 0.000 with respect to the mean, in variables such as: "Publishes content about the city's tourist attractions", "Uses alternative software to visualize the city's tourist attractions" and "Visualizes for more than twelve seconds the city's tourist attractions". However, the variable with the greatest dispersion is "Uses hyperlinks to tourist attractions" (1.10).

**Table 1.** Website (N = 5).

Item	Min.	Max.	Media	STD
Publish video or 3D photos of the services.	4	5	4.2	0.45
Publishes content for printing of room services.	4	4	4.0	0.00
Uses alternative software for the visualization of the services.	4	5	4.2	0.45
Visualize for more than twelve seconds the services.	3	4	3.8	0.45
Publish content about the available services.	4	5	4.6	0.55
Publish video or 3D photos of room amenities.	3	5	3.8	0.84
Publishes content for printing of the room services	4	5	4.2	0.45
Uses alternative software for visualization of room services.	3	4	3.8	0.45
Visualizes for more than twelve seconds the room services.	4	4	4.0	0.00
Publish content about the services available in the rooms.	3	4	3.8	0.45
Publishes content about the city's tourist attractions.	3	3	3.0	0.00
Uses alternative software to visualize the city's tourist attractions.	3	3	3.0	0.00
Visualizes for more than twelve seconds the city's tourist attractions.	3	3	3.0	0.00
Publishes content of the city's tourist attractions.	3	3	3.0	0.00
Publishes an agenda of events to be held in the hotel.	5	5	5.0	0.00
Publishes room prices.	5	5	5.0	0.00
Publishes hotel offers.	3	5	4.6	0.89
Uses hyperlinks to tourist attractions.	3	5	3.8	1.10
Publishes the hotel's services.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Publishes the services of the rooms.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Publicizes tourist attractions.	3	5	3.6	0.89
Publishes photos of the hotel services.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Publishes photos of the services of the rooms.	3	5	4.4	0.89
Publishes photos of the tourist attractions of the city.	3	5	3.4	0.89
It is available in several languages.	4	5	4.8	0.45

In the examination of price variables, Holiday, Casino and Ibis hotels are in complete agreement with variables such as: "Requests registration and identification to access prices", "Publishes additional services" and "Allows customer identification by type". Regarding descriptive

statistics, for the group of variables that make up the price (Table 2), the standard deviation indicates reasonable behavior, since there is little dispersion. This is the case for the variable "Allows customer identification by type" (0.45).

**Table 2.** Price (N = 5).

Item	Min.	Max.	Media	STD
Requests registration and identification to access prices.	4	5	4.6	0.55
Publishes additional services.	4	5	4.6	0.55
Allows customer identification by type.	4	5	4.8	0.45

The results of the analysis of reservations aspects show that the hotels are in complete agreement with the variables examined. This is confirmed, for example, by the Arizona and Holiday hotels with the variables "Publicizes the company's commercial policy" and "Responds to customer reservations". Regarding descriptive statistics,

the minimum value is 5 and the maximum value is 5, in variables such as: "Publicizes the company's commercial policy" and "Responds to customer reservations" (Table 3). As for the standard deviation, it can be seen that there is a dispersion of 0.00, in variables such as "Publicizes the company's commercial policy".

**Table 3.** Reservation (N = 5).

Item	Min	Max	Media	STD
Allows you to make room reservations.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Publicizes the company's commercial policy	5	5	5.0	0.00
Responds to customer reservations.	5	5	5.0	0.00

From the results of the variables related to the product, it is evident that hotels such as: Arizona, Holiday, Hampton and Ibis, are in complete agreement with the propositions "Allows the product to be adapted to the client's taste" and "Indicates the cost of the contracted product".

Table 4 shows that hotels' scores range between 4 and 5 for the variables examined. Likewise, there is little dispersion in the data, for example in the standard deviation of 0.45 for the variables "Allows the product to be adapted to the client's taste" and "Indicates the cost of the contracted product".

**Table 4.** Product (N = 5).

Item	Min	Max	Media	STD
Allows the product to be adapted to the client's taste.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Indicates the cost of the contracted product.	4	5	4.8	0.45

In the navigability, it can be seen that the Arizona and Holiday hotels are in total agreement with the variables "Shows hotel services" and "Shows local time and weather". The Ibis hotel, however, disagrees with the variable "Shows local time and weather". The descriptive statistics have

scores ranging between 4 and 5, in variables such as: "Uses links on all contents", "Uses links that lead back to the home page" and "Has a map". However, the lowest score is given for the variable "Shows local time and weather", which ranges between 2 and 5 (table 5).

As for the standard deviation, table 4 shows that the lowest dispersion of 0.45 is found in variables such as: "Locates the user where he/she is", "Uses links on all contents", "Uses links that lead back

to the home page"; while the highest dispersion is found in the variable " Shows local time and weather" (1.10).

**Table 5.** Navigability (N = 5).

Item	Min.	Max.	Media	STD
They have a nice design	4	5	4.4	0.55
Shows hotel services.	4	5	4.6	0.55
Have a design suitable for the visually impaired.	3	4	3.4	0.55
Shows local time and weather.	2	5	3.2	1.10
Has a standard menu throughout the page.	4	5	4.6	0.54
Locates the user where he/she is.	3	4	3.8	0.45
Uses links on all contents.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Uses links that lead back to the home page.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Has search tools.	3	5	3.4	0.89
Has a map.	4	5	4.8	0.45

Regarding the CRM variables associated with customer relationship management, it is observed that managers have favorable opinions of managers in customer management tools. For example, the hotels examined agree with the propositions "Publishes the customer service number" and " Publishes the customer service manager's name". They also agreed with variables such as "Has a customer loyalty program", "Has a space for customer inquiries" and "Responds to customer inquiries in a timely manner".

Regarding the descriptive analysis, a significant number of variables present values ranging between 5 and 5. This is the case with the variables "Publishes the customer service number" and "Publishes the customer service manager's name". Table 6 also shows that there is little or no dispersion among the variables. An example of this is the standard deviation of the variables "Has a customer loyalty program", "Has a space for customer questions" and " Responds to customer inquiries in a timely manner".

**Table 6.** CRM (N = 5).

Item	Min	Max	Media	STD
Has a customer loyalty program.	4	4	4.0	0.00
Has a space for customer questions.	4	4	4.0	0.00
Responds to customer inquiries in a timely manner	4	4	4.0	0.00
Publishes the customer service number.	5	5	5.0	0.00
Publishes the customer service manager's name.	5	5	5.0	0.00
It publishes a customer service e-mail.	4	5	4.8	0.45
Has a chat to interact with the customer.	3	5	3.8	1.10
Responds to customer e-mails.	4	5	4.2	0.45
It has a user's data registry.	4	5	4.4	0.55
Allows to send news to customers by e-mail.	4	5	4.6	0.55
Responds to customer e-mails in a timely manner.	4	5	4.2	0.45

The results of the evaluation of privacy and security variables show that hotel managers fully agree with a significant group of survey propositions, such as: "Allow online payment" and "Display privacy policy" (table 7). Based on the descriptive statistics, the set of variables receives significant scores between 4 and 5. This is for example in the variables: "Allows

the customer to modify or delete the privacy record", "Allows the customer to cancel the sending of notifications" and "Shows the security certificates in the payment options". Table 7 also shows that some variables have a dispersion of 0.00, for example: "Allow online payment" and "Display privacy policy" and "Provides security with credit card numbers".

**Table 7.** Privacy and security (N = 5).

Item	Min	Max	Media	STD
Allow online payment.	5	5	5.0	0.00
Display privacy policy.	5	5	5.0	0.00
Allows the customer to modify or delete the privacy record.	4	5	4.2	0.45
Allows the customer to cancel the sending of notifications.	4	5	4.4	0.55
Shows the security certificates in the payment options	4	5	4.6	0.55
Displays additional payment services.	4	5	4.6	0.55
Provides security with credit card numbers.	5	5	5.0	0.00

### 3.2 Discussion

In Colombia, the hotel sector is one of the main generators of foreign exchange and jobs in the country, which has been boosted in recent years thanks to the peace process, a situation that has favored national and foreign investment in the sector (Brida et al., 2021). In Cúcuta, the hotel sector has experienced a dizzying growth from its competitive advantages, characterized by multiculturalism and natural attractions (Jiménez et al., 2018). An example of this is the opening of new hotel chains, such as the Hampton by Hilton Hotel in Cúcuta. Considering the dynamism of the hotel sector, organizations seek to provide added value to their products, through strategies such as the establishment of quality management based on ISO 9000 standards (Santis-Puche, 2021). Likewise, market growth has led hotels to seek strategies to improve the customer experience and promote their services, using websites and social networks.

The results show that the companies analyzed have an excellent Internet presence through their websites. In the variables associated with the website, the main weakness is the

information on the tourist attractions of the city. This is with an average of 3. This is part of the information most tourists require at the time of purchasing (Carrillo-Rosero et al., 2021). Another aspect to improve is the use of tools such as 3D visualizers or promotional videos of the facilities. These videos obtained an average of 3, to promote the hotel organization's services. These tools provide an updated and innovative aspect to the website and are highly appreciated by users (Correa, 2021), which is why they should be incorporated into the design of companies' websites in a sector as competitive as the hotel industry (Mendes-Thomaz, 2013).

The navigability section is one of the weakest, since the variables "shows local time and weather", "locates the user where he/she is" and "has search tools" have an average value of between 3.2 and 3.8. In this sense, the companies analyzed should pay greater attention to the navigability of their web pages, since elements as simple as having a search engine or locating the user on the site are basic aspects to provide a pleasant browsing experience to potential customers (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2020).

The variable "have an adequate design for the visually impaired", with a mean of 3.4, indicates that accessibility is an aspect that is left out of the design considerations of the web pages in the organizations analyzed. This situation is common to other economic and service sectors, which provides potential for improvement to program more inclusive websites in terms of visual impairment (Rodríguez-Moreno, 2018).

In the CRM section, a mean value of 3.8 is observed for the variable chat readiness to interact with customers. Studies such as Alfonso-Alfonso et al. (2019), have found that social networks, websites and wireless networks are the tools most exploited for hotel management, especially in customer service. In this sense, CRM becomes a possibility for improvement for the websites studied, since chat is one of the most popular communication tools on the Internet.

In the section on privacy and security, a mean value higher than 4.2 is observed for all variables. This indicates the importance hotel organizations give to this aspect. This is related to the fact that all hotels handle sensitive information of their clients, since they allow online payment for their services, which obliges them to have high standards for privacy and security of information (Bolzán & Fernandes-Ferreira, 2020).

Hotels in Cúcuta score well on prices, reservations, products, and privacy and security. This indicates that hotel organizations do very good promotion of their services, while protecting their clients' information. However, the website, navigability and CRM dimensions should be improved to provide more efficient information access.

Today's knowledge society is a complex society undergoing continuous structural changes, driven by new technologies (Blandón, 2020). In this context, information is a resource that is within the reach of all people, affecting social relations and uniting nations, in what is now known as a globalized world (García-Mogollón, 2020). Data speed is almost instantaneous and society can participate in information generation, supported by increasingly powerful computers (Gutiérrez-Ochoa & Díaz-Torres, 2019).

In a globalized society, countries' wealth is determined by knowledge, and the technology used to generate it. In this context, information is so abundant that it exceeds individuals' capacity to process it, which is why it must be presented in an organized and structured way to be assimilated (Ríos-Escalier, 2021). Websites are tools widely used by companies to connect with their customers. In the digital era, customers want first-hand and real-time information about the product or service they are consuming, so companies that promote themselves on the web and appear in search engines will have a greater chance of selling (González-Calixto et al., 2023; Luján et al., 2019).

The website is a vital platform for approaching customers in a strategic way to open a space on the market. In fact, through the website it is possible to disseminate information that highlights the services offered to consumers to improve organizations' prestige (Santis-Puche, 2021). In this sense, when designing their web pages, companies must consider the legal regulations in force in each country to provide reliable information about the products offered and, in general, the minimum requirements established by law to protect consumers' rights (Otero-Gómez & Giraldo-Pérez, 2023).

In short, the website becomes an ideal showcase available 24 hours a day for customers to consult about products, prices, services and any other information they require. This is at a low cost (.). However, in order to respond to the expectations of current and potential customers effectively, companies, especially hotel companies, must take care of the aspects related to the design of the pages and their positioning in search engines (Correa, 2021; Carrillo-Rosero et al., 2021).

#### 4. Conclusions

The study showed hotel companies' willingness to have a website to reach an increased number of customers. This was to enhance the organization's communication and image. Likewise, strategic information can be obtained from



the website about the variables examined. This information is related to: the website, prices, reservations, products, navigability, CRM (customer relationship management) variables, and privacy and security.

In this sense, it can be said that hotels are making significant efforts to position themselves and offer accessible information, thus promoting their image. Hotels use their Internet presence to publicize their services to the public and interact with users in real time. However, there is evidence of a possible weakness on the part of hotel companies when displaying room services. In addition, hotel companies may have weaknesses in informing them about city attractions. This could mean new clients for the hotels.

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