

Social media marketing strategies: an empirical study in the hotel sector

Estrategias de marketing en redes sociales: estudio empírico en el sector hotelero

Research article

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the use of the social network Facebook by clients of the Hotel RZR, located in the city of Cúcuta, Colombia. The study is quantitative, follows a cross-sectional design and the questionnaire was applied to a sample of 102 hotel guests. The descriptive statistics reflect a standard deviation of 0.579, which indicates that there is a low dispersion of the data with respect to the average value. The results show that age, the level of study and gender are aspects related to customers' preferences in the use of Facebook. It is concluded that Facebook's social network has become a valuable digital marketing tool and the RZR Hotel must innovate in the network, to boost communication with customers and exploit other benefits offered by Facebook, such as segmentation, branding, online reputation and traffic generation.

Keywords: social media marketing, Facebook, hotels, customers.

Resumen

El trabajo busca analizar el uso de la red social Facebook por los clientes del Hotel RZR, ubicado en la ciudad de Cúcuta, Colombia. El estudio es de tipo cuantitativo con diseño transeccional y el cuestionario se aplica a una muestra de 102 clientes del hotel. Los estadísticos descriptivos reflejan una desviación estándar de 0,579 lo que indica que hay una baja dispersión de los datos respecto al valor promedio. Los resultados evidencian que aspectos como la edad, el nivel de estudios y el sexo están relacionados con las preferencias en el uso de Facebook por parte de los clientes. Se concluye que La red social Facebook es una herramienta valiosa del marketing digital y el Hotel RZR debería innovar en la red, a fin de impulsar la comunicación con los clientes y aprovechar otros beneficios de Facebook, como la segmentación, el branding, la reputación online y la generación de tráfico.

Palabras clave: marketing en redes sociales, Facebook, hoteles, clientes.

1. Introduction

The new information and communication technologies supported by the fourth industrial revolution, "Industry 4.0", have generated a new way of interrelating people supported by virtual interaction models in education, labour, and business, among others (Anaya *et al.*, 2022; Eslava-Zapata *et al.*, 2023). In the business sector, e-commerce has been boosted through social networks, especially through the social network Facebook, where today, products can be purchased, and services can be contracted in real-time anywhere in the world (Bedoya-Jiménez & Quintero-Arango, 2024).

Social networks are spaces found on the Internet, through which people publish and share all kinds of personal and professional information with third parties and foster relationships with acquaintances or strangers (Siaw *et al.*, 2023). For their operation, social networks require people and the connections that occur between them through Internet sites to perform content exchanges, such as photos or videos (Valladolid-Benavides *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, social networks allow access to anyone to create a profile, exchange content, create topics of social interest and intervene through interaction between individuals, groups and companies (Salem *et al.*, 2022). Social networks can be classified into personal social networks (group a set of contacts and friends with common interests) and professional social networks (focus on creating professional contacts) (Palenčarová *et al.*, 2022). Personal social networks are linked to contacts, and professional social networks are linked to the generation of work connections with common purposes (Ramos-Rivadeneira & Jiménez-Toledo, 2024).

One of the sectors where the use of Facebook has had the greatest impact is the hotel sector due to its global reach and access to current and potential customers at any time (Mishra *et al.*, 2023). Facebook facilitates the procurement of services in real-time and in a personalized manner; it also enables market positioning and profit generation (Jamouli *et al.*, 2023). The use of Facebook is having a positive impact on the hotel sector; for example, travel agencies have integrated into their marketing the lodging service such as Booking, Despegar, Kayak, and Atrápalo, among others, in order to offer complete packages and discounts on lodging to acquire the product more attractive (Arredondo-Espinoza *et al.*, 2022). The social network Facebook facilitates attention, direct communication and shortening distances, which increases customer satisfaction with the service provided (Galindo-Inga *et al.*, 2022).

The hotel sector is very important worldwide, as it is one of the economic sectors that generate more employment and stimulate other sectors such as gastronomy, entertainment, commerce, recreation, transportation, culture and catering (Morelos-Gómez *et al.*, 2024). In Colombia, the hotel sector has shown very positive indicators in the last two years and a remarkable recovery, gradually overcoming the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Eslava-Zapata *et al.*, 2024a). In the city of Cúcuta in 2022, the hotel sector had an occupancy rate of 50% of the approximately 3,000 rooms offered; in addition, the hotel sector generated 8.00% of employment and had 391 tourism service providers (González-Mendoza *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the city of Cúcuta, due to its geographic location in the border zone with Venezuela and being the capital of the Department of Norte de Santander, registers the constant arrival of people who come for business, which contributes to the

hotel sector's occupancy (Linares-Giraldo *et al.*, 2023).

Hotel RZR is a family business with over 13 years of experience in the hotel industry and a strong focus on quality service. It has facilitated the strengthening of the relationship with existing customers and attracting new customers who come by recommendation, which has allowed the growth of operations over the years. Hotel RZR is very well located, close to avenues and shopping malls; in addition, it has comfortable rooms, cafeteria service, parking, gym, and meeting rooms, among others. Currently, the RZR Hotel has significant challenges in the use of social networks, especially Facebook, in order to establish marketing strategies that allow it to match the level of other hotels in the city (Li *et al.*, 2023).

Marketing through the Facebook social network in the hotel sector emerges as an alternative to enhance e-commerce and position itself in the market (Carbache-Mora *et al.*, 2023). Hotels should design marketing strategies in order to innovate, provide complete information to customers and enhance the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in order to influence their final decision to hire the service (Fadhlurrachman & Sofyan, 2024). The Facebook social network facilitates the promotion of hotel services to a larger number of people at low cost (Gómez-Ortiz & Durán, 2023). In this regard, the RZR Hotel has an incipient use of Facebook, so it has an important task in designing strategies for its implementation in order to attract new customers and reach new markets (Ho *et al.*, 2022).

The objective of this study was to analyze the use of the social network Facebook by customers of the Hotel RZR, located in the

city of Cúcuta, Colombia. The study was quantitative and followed a cross-sectional design. In this regard, a first exploratory phase was carried out in order to review the literature on the subject. The second phase was descriptive, which involved the design of a questionnaire divided into two clearly differentiated parts. The first part comprised three demographic data items related to sex, age and level of study. The second part consisted of fifteen statements. The questionnaire was applied to a sample of 102 hotel guests.

2. Methodology

The study is quantitative (Hernández-Sampieri *et al.*, 2016). Based on a cross-sectional design, the first phase was exploratory in order to review the literature on the subject. The second was descriptive, which involved the design of a questionnaire divided into two clearly differentiated parts (Table 1). The first part comprised three demographic data items related to sex, age and level of education. The second part was composed of fifteen statements in order to know the use of the social network Facebook by the clients of the Hotel RZR, located in the city of Cúcuta, Colombia. It should be clarified that a fictitious name of the hotel was used to comply with the confidentiality of the information. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the field (Eslava-Zapata *et al.*, 2024b).

Descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) were calculated, and the following hypotheses were tested:

- H_1 : There is a relationship between age and preferences of Hotel BQPC customers in the use of social networks with a focus on Facebook.

- H₂: There is a relationship between the level of education and the preferences of Hotel BQPC customers in the use of social networks with a focus on Facebook.
- H₃: There is a relationship between gender and the preferences of Hotel BQP customers in the use of social networks with a focus on Facebook.

The survey was applied to an intentional and non-probabilistic sample in order to facilitate its application and data collection. The sample consisted of 102 clients. The information was analyzed using MS-Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). For hypothesis testing, the results of the variables had to be transformed into a new variable and then assessed in the visual grouping section.

Table 1. Use of the social network Facebook.

PART 1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA											
Sex:	Male				Female						
Age:	Between 18 and 38		Between 39 and 59			More than 60					
Study level	Primary	Segundary	Technical	University	Specialization	Master's Degree	Doctorate				
PART 2. USE OF THE FACEBOOK SOCIAL NETWORK											
N°	Affirmation	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Neutral		4 Agree		5 Strongly Agree	
1	Follow the hotel's Facebook page.										
2	Check the hotel's Facebook posts frequently.										
3	The information posted about the hotel's service on Facebook is better than that of the competition.										
4	Make reservations at the hotel through Facebook.										
5	Would recommend the hotel's Facebook to their contacts.										
6	Uses social networks other than Facebook.										
7	Exchanges information on the hotel's Facebook.										
8	Comments on the publications made by the hotel on Facebook.										
9	Receive notifications of new publications made by the hotel on Facebook.										
10	The customer service offered by the hotel is disclosed on Facebook.										
11	Information about the work team is disclosed on the hotel's Facebook.										
12	The quality of the hotel's service is one of the motivations for making Facebook reservations.										

- 13 The hotel's products are published on Facebook.
- 14 I recommend the hotel to family and friends through Facebook.
- 15 The prices of the hotel's products and services are disclosed on Facebook. Use of the social network Facebook.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Questionnaire analysis

Table 2 shows the results of the questionnaire in order to know the use of social networks by the hotel's customers. Regarding item 1, 43.14% of the clients totally agree that they follow the hotel's Facebook; on the other hand, item 2 shows that 19.61% of the cli-

ents disagree that they frequently check the hotel's Facebook posts. Item 3 reveals that 48.04% of customers agree that the information posted about the hotel's service on Facebook is better than that of the competition. In contrast, 51.96% of customers agree that they make reservations at the hotel through Facebook (item 4). Regarding item 5, 17.65% of the clients totally agree with recommending the hotel's Facebook to their contacts.

Table 2. Use of the Facebook social network by the clients.

N°	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	0	0,00	3	2,94	17	16,67	38	37,25	44	43,14	102	100,00
2	6	5,88	20	19,61	27	26,47	33	32,35	16	15,69	102	100,00
3	0	0,00	5	4,90	28	27,45	49	48,04	20	19,61	102	100,00
4	0	0,00	8	7,84	25	24,51	53	51,96	16	15,69	102	100,00
5	0	0,00	2	1,96	28	27,45	54	52,94	18	17,65	102	100,00
6	0	0,00	7	6,86	34	33,33	50	49,02	11	10,78	102	100,00
7	0	0,00	5	4,90	30	29,41	51	50,00	16	15,69	102	100,00
8	0	0,00	4	3,92	33	32,35	48	47,06	17	16,67	102	100,00
9	0	0,00	4	3,92	31	30,39	44	43,14	23	22,55	102	100,00
10	0	0,00	2	1,96	28	27,45	55	53,92	17	16,67	102	100,00
11	0	0,00	1	0,98	27	26,47	52	50,98	22	21,57	102	100,00
12	0	0,00	1	0,98	28	27,45	53	51,96	20	19,61	102	100,00
13	0	0,00	2	1,96	26	25,49	50	49,02	24	23,53	102	100,00
14	0	,00	1	,98	29	28,43	54	52,94	18	17,65	102	100,00
15	0	,00	0	,00	31	30,39	54	52,94	17	16,67	102	100,00

As for item 6, 49.02% of customers agree to use social networks other than Facebook; item 7 shows that 50.00% of customers exchange information on the hotel's Facebook. Item 8 reveals that 47.06% of the clients agree that they comment on the publications made by the hotel on Facebook. In comparison,

22.55% of the clients totally agree that they receive notifications of new publications made by the hotel on Facebook (item 9). Regarding item 10, 53.92% of customers agree that the service offered by the hotel is disclosed on Facebook.

Regarding item 11, 21.57% of the customers agree that the hotel’s Facebook page discloses information about the work team. In contrast, item 12 shows that 51.96% of the customers agree that the quality of the service provided by the hotel is one of the motivations for making reservations on Facebook. Item 13 reveals that 23.53% of the clients totally agree that the hotel’s products are published on Facebook. In comparison, 52.94% of the clients agree that they recommend the hotel to family and friends through Facebook and consider that the prices of the hotel’s products and

services are disclosed on Facebook (items 14 and 15).

3.2 Descriptive statistics

Based on the new variables obtained and the value given in the visual grouping section of the SPSS, descriptive statistics were obtained (Table 3). In this regard, the minimum value obtained is 3 (neutral), and the maximum is 5 (totally agree). The standard deviation of 0.579 indicates that there is a low dispersion of the data with respect to the average value.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Media	Standard deviation
Facebook use (grouped)	102	3	5	4,26	0,579
N valid (by list)	102				

3.3 Hypothesis testing

Table 4 shows the distribution of preferences in the use of Facebook by age. The results reveal that 38.20% (between 18 and 38) strongly agree, and 41% (between 39 and 59)

agree. In turn, the H_1 test yielded a Chi-square of 0.120, evidencing a relationship between the variables; therefore, it can be said that age is related to customers’ preferences in the use of Facebook (Table 5).

Table 4. Age and use of Facebook social network.

		Age			Total
		Between 18 and 38	Between 39 and 59	More than 60	
Neutral	Count	4	2	1	7
	% within the use of Facebook	57,10	28,60	14,30	100,00
Agreed	Count	12	25	24	61
	% within the use of Facebook	19,70	41,00	39,30	100,00
Strongly Agree	Count	13	9	12	34
	% within the use of Facebook	38,20	26,50	35,30	100,00
Total	Count	29	36	37	102
	% within the use of Facebook	28,40	35,30	36,30	100,00

Table 5. Chi-square H_1

	Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	7,325 ^a	4	0,120
Likelihood ratio	7,276	4	0,122
Linear-by-linear association	0,001	1	0,980
N of valid cases	102		

a. 3 boxes (33.3%) have expected a count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.99.

Table 6 shows the distribution of preferences in the use of Facebook by level of education. The results reveal that 29.40% of customers with primary school and university levels coincide in the category totally agree. On the other hand, 42.60% of students at the

university level agree. The H_2 test yielded a Chi-square of 0.62, showing a relationship between the variables; therefore, it can be said that the level of education is related to customers' preferences in the use of Facebook (Table 7).

Table 6. Level of study and use of the social network Facebook.

		Study level							Total	
		Primary	Secondary	Technical	University	Specialization	Master's Degree	Doctorate		
Facebook use (grouped))	Neutral	Count	0	0	1	4	2	0	0	7
	% within the use of Facebook	0,00	0,00	14,30	57,10	28,60	0,00	0,00	100,00	
	Agreed	Count	7	4	7	26	9	6	2	61
% within the use of Facebook	11,50	6,60	11,50	42,60	14,80	9,80	3,30	100,00		
Strongly Agree	Count	10	2	7	10	1	0	4	34	
% within the use of Facebook	29,40	5,90	20,60	29,40	2,90	0,00	11,80	100,00		
Total	Count	17	6	15	40	12	6	6	102	
% within the use of Facebook	16,70	5,90	14,70	39,20	11,80	5,90	5,90	100,00		

Table 7. Chi-square H_2

	Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	20,289 ^a	12	0,062
Likelihood ratio	24,003	12	0,020
Linear-by-linear association	4,200	1	0,040
N of valid cases	102		

a. 14 boxes (66.7%) have expected a count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 41.

Table 8 shows the distribution of preferences in the use of Facebook by gender. The results reveal that male clients, with 61.80%, totally agree. At the same time, 68.90% of male customers agree. The H_3 test yielded a

Chi-square of 0.139, showing a relationship between the variables; therefore, it can be said that gender is related to customers' preferences in the use of Facebook (Table 9).

Table 8. Sex and use of the social network Facebook.

		Sex		Total	
		Male	Female		
Facebook use (grouped)	Neutral	Count	7	0	7
		% within the use of Facebook	100,00	0,00	100,00
	Agreed	Count	42	19	61
		% within the use of Facebook	68,90	31,10	100,00
	Strongly	Count	21	13	34
		% within the use of Facebook	61,80	38,20	100,00
Total	Count	70	32	102	
	% within the use of Facebook	68,60	31,40	100,00	

Table 9. Chi-square H_3

	Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	3,945 ^a	2	0,139
Likelihood ratio	5,990	2	0,050
Linear-by-linear association	2,787	1	0,095
N of valid cases	102		

a. 2 boxes (33.3%) have expected a count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.20..

3.4 Discussion

Digital marketing is allowing hotels to take advantage of opportunities in e-commerce and to publicize everything they offer (Siti-Munirah & Ezdihar, 2022). Social networks, especially Facebook, allow the creation of ad communication with current and potential customers, thanks to the versatility of the platform and the audience that can be reached (Maltseva *et al.*, 2021). One of the digital marketing tools is Facebook Ads, by which the hotel's Facebook can be promoted and help to create effective advertising

campaigns in different formats such as texts, videos or images (Garcia-De-los-Salmones *et al.*, 2021).

Considering Facebook as a marketing strategy is a wise decision for Hotel RZR since there are millions of users belonging to the network; moreover, the hotel has the opportunity to share more assertive content, gain followers and understand customer behaviour (Ibrahim, 2021). Therefore, Facebook is presented as a tool with enormous opportunities to reach the whole world and viralize advertisements (Singh *et al.*, 2022).

Therefore, Hotel RZR needs to create a marketing area in order to establish more effective digital marketing strategies with an emphasis on Facebook, which will allow it to improve customer perception with the creation of content that transmits the hotel's values and positions it in the market. Likewise, the large number of options offered by Facebook to segment users allows for tailoring advertising and reducing costs (Dimitrios *et al.*, 2023).

The results indicate that the RZR Hotel should strengthen communication through Facebook, with content that brings them closer to customers. In this regard, Facebook offers tools to monitor statistics and manage online reputation; to this end, the hotel can link the website with the social network to achieve greater synchronization and impact on the number of visits (Kamenidou *et al.*, 2022).

For the above, Facebook is presented as a social network that offers differentiating benefits for the hotel compared to other social networks thanks to the versatility in the use of the page by individuals and companies in a simple way, which would allow the Hotel RZR to enhance its visibility and economically promote all activities; since, the investment required is minimal (Kruger *et al.*, 2023). In order for Hotel RZR to achieve better results on Facebook, it must keep the work team informed so that they become followers, link with other people and share appropriate content. Likewise, Hotel RZR must constantly update the Facebook page to turn it into a direct communication channel through which relevant content is shared (Santana-Martínez *et al.*, 2023).

4. Conclusions

It was evident that Hotel RZR has local, national and international recognition that has been enhanced through Facebook. Customers are followers of the hotel's Facebook page. They are willing to use the page as a direct means of communication to make inquiries and reservations and learn about new products and services offered.

The Facebook social network has become a valuable digital marketing tool because it is modern and cost-effective. In order to achieve positive impacts in the short and long term, Hotel RZR must innovate in the network to boost communication with customers and exploit other benefits offered by Facebook, such as segmentation, branding, online reputation and traffic generation.

The contrast of the hypotheses showed that there is a relationship between gender, age level, education level, and the use of social networks. Therefore, Hotel RZR has a task to take care of the content published and the customer segments it is targeting in order to achieve a positive reputation. Similarly, if Hotel RZR proposes well-formulated marketing strategies, it will be able to obtain results that will favour it economically and in the positioning of the brand.

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Authors' contribution

Rolando Eslava-Zapata: funding acquisition, investigation, Methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing - review editing.

Volmar Becerra-Orejarena: conceptualization, investigation, Methodology, software, writing - original draft.

Verence Sánchez-Castillo: data curation, formal náalisis, methodology, software.

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