

## Social networks, a digital marketing tool focused on attracting customers in Ecuador

Las redes sociales, herramienta de marketing digital enfocada en la captación de clientes en Ecuador

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### ABSTRACT

Due to technological progress and the evolution of the digital media approach, it is imperative that companies take full advantage of the digital tools available today. The main objective of this article is to expose social networks as the most efficient digital media for customer acquisition among end users in the food market; this time taking as reference the northern sector of the city of Guayaquil; through which information can be provided to the target audience about companies and microenterprises, and in turn information about the consumer profile can be obtained. This research adopts an empirical and quantitative approach, using the survey technique. The target population comprises 76,540 residents of the Sauces sector in the city of Guayaquil, men and women between 18 and 55 years of age with purchasing power. The results obtained will allow us to diagnose and evaluate which are the social networks most used by this target audience, as well as to identify new trends in the field of digital marketing.

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## RESUMEN

Debido al progreso tecnológico y la evolución del enfoque de los medios de comunicación digital, es imperativo que las empresas aprovechen al máximo las herramientas digitales disponibles en la actualidad. Este artículo tiene como objetivo principal exponer las redes sociales como medios digitales más eficientes para la captación de clientes entre los usuarios finales del mercado alimenticio; en esta ocasión tomando como referencia el sector norte de la ciudad de Guayaquil; a través de los cuales se puede proporcionar información al público objetivo acerca de las empresas y microempresas, y a su vez se puede obtener información acerca del perfil del consumidor. Esta investigación adopta un enfoque empírico y cuantitativo, utilizando la técnica de encuesta. La población objetivo comprende 76,540 residentes del sector de Saucos en la ciudad de Guayaquil, hombres y mujeres de 18 a 55 años con capacidad adquisitiva. Los resultados obtenidos permitirán diagnosticar y evaluar cuáles son las redes sociales más utilizadas por este público objetivo, así como identificar las nuevas tendencias en el ámbito del marketing digital.

**Palabras clave:** Estrategias, Mercado, *Marketing Digital, Marketing Online*, Redes Sociales, Tendencias, Globalización

## INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the Internet, companies have had to change their strategies to adapt to the new demands of the market since, thanks to globalization, consumers have information much more easily and at their fingertips.

The Internet is recognized as an unlimited resource for the establishment of business and relationships. Today, it has become the primary channel for searching, consulting and participating in the acquisition of products and services. Users share their preferences, needs and experiences online, giving companies the opportunity to observe and analyze consumer behavior.

The internet has become an integral part of the daily routine of both individuals and organizations, driving companies to adopt new digital marketing tactics. This is due to the benefits derived from the digital tools currently available and accessible to all. According to Lopez et al (2018) in the 2000s the Internet starts to consolidate and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) become more common for businesses. New internet providers and Cyber cafes began to appear in the Country. According to the Telecommunications Regulation and Control Agency ARCOTEL until March 2018 there are approximately 10 internet providers with market share.(p.40).

In Ecuador, Internet use has experienced significant growth, as revealed by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), which reports that since the last census in 2012, 55.9% of the population has used the Internet, with 64.4% in urban areas and 37.9% in rural areas (Lopez et al., 2018, p. 39). This increase in Internet adoption dates back to 1995, when the popularization of the Internet began in Ecuador with the appearance of graphical browsers such as Netscape, Internet Explorer, and Opera.

The aforementioned findings indicate that companies in Ecuador are increasingly committed to the digital environment. Today, many companies face the need to reinvent themselves due to changing circumstances that can affect their performance, either positively or negatively. As a result, they are forced to look for ways to adapt and survive in this changing environment. In fact, many companies in sectors such as banking, household appliances, restaurants, among others, have been compelled to maintain at least a minimum digital presence to communicate and promote themselves to their customers.

Therefore, the digital era of marketing arises as a result of technological advances, such as the Internet, the World Wide Web (www), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), social networks, and the imminent need for market innovation in relation to globalization, which has driven the digital development of organizations. The main objective of technological advances in relation to marketing is to facilitate communication, promotion and sale of products and services, as well as to establish solid business relationships with customers, offering them prompt solutions tailored to their needs. One strategy that can help address this challenge is the incorporation of technology in the market, this being digital marketing.

With the evolution of digital media, entrepreneurs and business owners have developed the ability to interact in an effective and personalized way with their customers or consumers. In the field of digital marketing, concepts equivalent to the traditional 4Ps of the marketing mix have been developed, being Fleming's 4Fs (Flow, Functionality, Feedback and Loyalty) of vital importance for the e-commerce process and user interaction in the virtual environment (Osorio et al., 2016). These elements are fundamental to understand and effectively manage online marketing strategies, ensuring a satisfactory user experience and promoting customer loyalty.

It is essential to consider that in the context of digital marketing, Flow reflects the user's state of mind online; Functionality refers to improving the website experience, making

it more attractive, interactive and user-friendly; Feedback involves customer feedback, which implies personalizing the website to foster a two-way relationship that generates valuable information; and Loyalty focuses on ensuring that the customer returns to the website and has easy access to it. This involves meeting the customer's expectations in terms of content and interaction (Osorio et al., 2016).

Thanks to technological advances, connectivity to digital media has become a reality. In this context, digital marketing has acquired a role of great relevance in the community, providing digital tools that allow customers to access the services of companies effectively. The accessibility of these tools has facilitated the adaptation of strategies to the individual needs of people, companies and organizations. The ubiquity of digital technology has led to an increasing participation in the digital environment, since, from the beginning of working life, people are connected to the internet through devices such as smartphones, computers, social networks, blogs and websites.

Based on these benchmarks and recognizing the growing adoption of digital marketing tools, it is crucial to identify the most popular social networks among consumers. This will allow companies to determine how to target their digital marketing strategies, using the most appropriate medium, considering their high usage by consumers. In the digital environment, where internet access through smartphones, computers and various platforms is common from the beginning of working life, understanding which social networks are most prevalent among consumers is critical to effectively target digital marketing strategies.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This article is based on documentary research through bibliographic reviews of scientific documents, government publications, national statistics, and market research such as the one conducted by Orbe Baldeón (2021) who in his thesis, for obtaining a master's degree in marketing with mention in digital strategy at the University of Guayaquil proposed "Digital marketing strategies for attracting customers of the typical food restaurant parrilladas el progreso in the city of Guayaquil".

The information gathering carried out for this article is characterized as an empirical, non-experimental research, which relies on primary sources. These sources have allowed us to explore whether social networks are one of the marketing tools most used by consumers. In addition, it has been considered an exploratory study, since consumer behavior in relation to the use of social networks was investigated. Through this research, it is possible to identify which are the social networks most used by consumers in the northern sector of the city of Guayaquil, taking as a reference the area of Sauces.

Research approaches constitute the methods that the researcher employs to obtain the necessary results within a study. According to Mata (2019), the approach encompasses the entire research process, as well as the stages and elements that compose it. This

implies that each approach has specific characteristics in relation to various aspects of the research (p. 7).

Therefore, it is pertinent to state that a research with a quantitative approach was used through the application of the survey as a research technique for data collection, which allows to diagnose and evaluate which are the social networks most used by the target audience and at the same time identify new trends on technological management.

According to Ventura (2017), the population is defined as a set of elements that share certain characteristics that are the object of study. In this context, there is an inductive approach between the population and the sample, where it is sought that the observed part (the sample) is representative of the complete reality (the population), with the aim of ensuring the validity of the conclusions obtained in the study (p. 648).

Therefore, for the development of this study we have considered the target population of 76,540 inhabitants of the willows sector in the city of Guayaquil, men and women between 18 and 55 years of age with purchasing power, data obtained from the ICM-ESPOL 2010.

To determine the sample size necessary to carry out the research survey, the Raosoft tool was used, a software recognized for its reliability. This system has been widely tested and guarantees the integrity and security of the data. As a result of the calculation, a sample size of 383 elements was recommended for the research survey.

The data entered to develop the sample size calculation were as follows:

For the analysis of the results, five questions were selected from the research work conducted by Orbe Baldeon (2021), which are related to user preferences regarding the use of social networks. This approach will make it possible to determine which social networking platforms are most used by consumers.

## RESULTS

Of the total number of respondents, 75.8% use social networks to obtain information about restaurants, and 24.20% do not. From the analysis obtained 75.8% use social networks to get information about restaurants, 51% sometimes do, sometimes do not; they make food purchases through social networks, and 20.3% always, 15.6% most of the time do, 8.30% never, 4.7% most of the time do not. 86.9% of respondents at some point use social networks to make food purchases, 61.20% of respondents use social networks to make purchases for convenience, 18% to avoid exposure to contagion, 16.10% to avoid exposure to crime. Most of the respondents prefer to use social networks for convenience and the remaining percentage for health and safety, which indicates that the trend is that many people rely on the networks to make their purchases.

It is analyzed that 41.7% receive message information through WhatsApp, 35.9% use message through Facebook, 20.6% use message through Instagram.

It is observed that most of the respondents use WhatsApp and Facebook, according to the results, that is to say that these would be the two networks of greater use by the

consumer, where the Marketing Strategies can be developed. 64.1% of respondents place home orders through the WhatsApp application.

Most of the customers place orders through the WhatsApp application, thus obtaining home delivery service, and also use the Glovo application.

According to the results obtained, it is interpreted that 86.90% of the respondents use social networks to make their food purchases.

Likewise, it is observed that 95.30% of the respondents consider shopping online, for convenience, health and safety, which indicates that it is the new trend of many people to rely on social networks to make their purchases.

From the results obtained from the surveys, most of the surveyed customers use the following social networks WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, which means that these would be the most used networks by consumers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted allows us to conclude that, in line with digital trends, there is a marked inclination to use technology specifically in the interaction through social networks with a variety of companies and businesses.

The analysis also reveals that, among the many social networks available, three stand out as the most used by consumers. Recently, there has been a notable increase in the use of WhatsApp, which now occupies the top spot in terms of popularity. This trend can be attributed to several factors, including the platform's ease of use and accessibility, making it an attractive option for users. The simplicity of the usage process has allowed consumers to use this social network more frequently. In this sense, it is essential that companies and businesses consider this trend when developing their future business strategies, recognizing the important role of WhatsApp as a primary channel for interaction with customers and through which information can be provided to the target audience about companies and microenterprises, and in turn can be obtained information about the consumer profile, this employing digital marketing strategies.

These digital platforms represent a fundamental vehicle for companies to expand their reach to a more diverse audience, while allowing them to establish a direct interaction with customers. They also help to increase brand visibility and generate new business opportunities. In addition to these primary functions, the Internet and social networks provide essential tools for market research, data analysis and personalization of marketing strategies. This strategic approach allows companies to more accurately understand their audience and proactively adapt to their specific needs and preferences. In short, optimizing the use of these technologies translates into a significant improvement in both the presence and business performance of companies in the digital environment.

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