

Research paper

# Marketing metrics in generalist social networks in travel agencies. The case of Spain

## Métricas de marketing en redes sociales generalistas en agencias de viajes. El caso de España

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### ABSTRACT

*Social networks are ideal tools for developing relationship-marketing activities in companies and achieving consumer engagement. Its use is widely spread, as evidenced by the figure of 3.8 billion users all over the world. This figure represented 59.4% of the total inhabitants of the planet who use them regularly in 2019. The main objective of this research is to know the state-of-the-art in the development of relational marketing activities in social networks in Spanish travel agencies. A quantitative methodology was used to achieve this objective, focusing on the effects of marketing initiatives implemented in Spain by 10 agencies on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook for 1 year, from August 1, 2019, to August 1, 2020. The results obtained show valuable information related to total engagement, number of publications, total average engagement per publication, audience, conversation rate, amplification rate and approval rate reached by the different travel agencies analysed. Among the main conclusions achieved, the results show the existence of great disparity and lack of homogeneity in the actions carried. Due to this, it is necessary for travel agencies to plan their relationship marketing actions in social media better, to improve the degree of customer engagement, the customer confidence and customer loyalty to the brand.*

**Keywords:** Customer engagement, KPI, online marketing, social media marketing, travel agencies.

### RESUMEN

En 2019 se alcanzaron globalmente más de 3.800 millones de usuarios de redes sociales; el 48% de los habitantes del planeta las utilizan regularmente. Por ser interactivas y colaborativas son herramientas idóneas para desarrollar actividades de marketing relacional en las empresas y lograr el compromiso del consumidor. El principal objetivo de esta investigación consiste en averiguar el estado de la cuestión sobre el desarrollo de actividades de marketing relacional en redes sociales en las agencias de viajes españolas. Para alcanzar dicho objetivo se emplea una metodología cuantitativa analizando los efectos de las actividades de marketing digital realizadas por 10 agencias de España en YouTube, Instagram, Twitter y Facebook durante 1 año; desde el 01 de agosto de 2019, hasta el 01 de agosto de 2020. Los resultados muestran información valiosa al respecto de audiencia, participación total, número de publicaciones, participación promedio total por publicación, tasa de amplificación, tasa de conversación y tasa de aprobación alcanzados por las diferentes agencias analizadas. Entre las principales conclusiones destaca la existencia de gran disparidad y falta de homogeneidad en las acciones desarrolladas; resultando necesario mejorar la planificación para aumentar el grado de compromiso del cliente y su confianza y lealtad a la marca.

**Palabras clave:** Compromiso del consumidor, KPI, marketing digital, marketing en las redes sociales, agencias de viaje

## INTRODUCTION

Social media users in the world surpassed 3.80 billion in 2019. If this figure is changed into a percentage, it can be stated that 48 % of people worldwide use social media actively (Hootsuite, 2020). In January 2020 Spain reached 29 million of social media users, with a penetration rate of 62 % (Kemp, 2020). Social media networks, whose unique feature is being able to create and distribute user-generated content, have become popular in the travel and tourism industry as travellers can share their experiences online in many ways. They also evidence that they make markets interact faster and make customers an active part of marketing exchanges, demonstrating that consumers purchasing decisions can affect other consumers purchasing decisions (Abou-Shouk and Hewedi, 2016).

Now that we are living in the Information and Communication Technology era (ICT), social media networks have become essential for an organization to be competitive, allowing to manage interactions with consumers and keeping them closer to the corporation. Implementing marketing in social media networks becomes key in the development of consumer relationship management (CRM) strategy, which considers the consumer a strategic part of the organizations' businesses, guiding the marketing policy in that direction. For this reason, it is necessary for companies to analyse the need to evolve from traditional CRM to a social CRM, benefiting from the use of social media networks to boost profitability and sales, creating advertising campaigns as well as in the processes of acquisition, retention and building loyalty of new clients (Cerchia, 2016).

In the business world, there has been an evolution in how marketing is thought of and used, leaving the approach of passive or transactional marketing, focused on the sale and production of services and products to adopt relationship marketing, a more proactive marketing strategy focused on the consumer, in satisfying their needs and seeking to improve and establish lasting relationships with clients and with the rest of the actors present in the process (Monferrer, 2013). All of this is developed in an environment where social media generates benefits related to the ability to collect information and peer reviews prior to a trip; allowing the maintainance of relationships within a community by sharing information during and after the journey (Pérez-Vega et al., 2018). Therefore, in travel agencies the traditional system of value creation centered on the organization becomes obsolete in a new

stage in which the consumer has evolved from isolation to connection, from unconsciousness to information, from a passive to an active attitude in a context of interaction with companies co-creating value (Marques et al., 2011). The integration of CRM systems in social media networks and vice versa allows organizations to increase the efficiency of work in the new digital social environment and to better understand the changes in customer behavior introduced by ICT. For this reason, social media marketing in the travel industry is being used more frequently by allowing the increase of borders that influence relationship marketing models (Kayumovich, 2020).

## THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

### *Social media marketing*

Consumers rely on the Internet for advice while online social media networks create collective knowledge as reliable sources for tourists to consult when making travel decisions and when purchasing travel-related services and goods (Süli and Martyin-Csamangó, 2020). In this sense, social media is transforming the marketing practices of tourism companies due to changes in traveller's behaviour and the trend toward a demand for personalized products together with the co-creation of experiences. For this reason, tourism companies are forced to modify their marketing strategies to meet the needs of different market niches that require a more personalized and customer-oriented product in a context in which adaptability, flexibility and agility take centre stage (Sigala and Gretzel, 2018).

Social media marketing is a comprehensive idea that includes five components (word of mouth, personalization, trend, interaction, and entertainment) that contribute positive effects to the value of brands via its two primary components: brand awareness and brand image (Godey et al., 2016). Software, channels and social media technologies are all used in social media marketing to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offers that generate value for the interested parties of an organization (Tuten and Solomon, 2017). They expand rapidly as a complement to traditional marketing communications due to their efficiency and low cost. In addition to this, social media offer commercial applications as a tool for managing relationships with consumers, attracting their attention, developing new product ideas, promoting brands, boosting both in-person and online traffic of a business or to help in processes of loyalty and conversion of consumers into

clients. However, the effectiveness of social media marketing is viewed with certain skepticism due to the lack of evidence that confirms the return on investment (ROI) for companies (Rishika et al., 2013).

Social media networks generate huge amounts of qualitative data that cannot be evaluated using traditional metrics (Fisher, 2009) affirms that. Therefore, it should be considered that there is no one way to parameterize and calculate the ROI for the impact of social networks, so it is important to find metrics that enable their proper calculation. This is because the role of the social media marketing function is connected to businesses' capacity to obtain positive value in both the long and long term. Consequently, through Key Performance Indicators or KPI, variables associated with an objective in social media, organizations can monitor the level of fulfilment of their objectives in these media and from their analysis they can obtain valuable information about how to continue applying their social media strategy as well as optimize and enhance their channels. In this sense, three categories of metrics to be developed are identified and they allow: identifying possible prescribers and people who influence the community, observing the relationship of the brand with users and quantifying the effect of the different activities in social networks on the sales of the company (Kingma and McClure, 2015).

In this way, the concept of Impact of Relationship or IOR (impact of relationships between brands and their followers) emerged, quantifiable through four variables: the influence of the brand in the media, the authority of the brand's content, the interaction and participation of followers in the brand's social profiles, and objectively measurable traffic variables (Castelló-Martínez, 2012).

***Strategies: online reputation management, reverse marketing and engagement in the tourism industry***

**Online Reputation Management**

Reputation management in the tourism sector requires organizations to be authentic and transparent about the services provided and the use of consumer comments to identify areas or aspects to improve as it influences business performance. For that purpose, travel agencies should benefit from their online presence by staying active on the top review sites and well-known social media platforms, participating in user-generated content creation,

responding to user comments, protecting their reputation and building consumer trust to achieve the commercial objectives of the company and gaining in competitive advantages (Kamel, 2017; Pinto and Castro, 2019).

**Reverse marketing**

The potential information published on the Internet is important to improve service management and the competitive advantages of organizations in the tourist industry; being able to accurately and more fully comprehend consumer needs in order to improve service quality (Hou et al., 2019). Derived from this co-creation of value, reverse marketing is developed (Levesque and Boeck, 2017). And through mass customization processes, this type of marketing seeks to increase the personalized experience of each client through the service by allowing their participation in the creation of the totality of the product, looking for elevating their individual experience and trying to make them perceive a feeling of total control over their purchase (Munaf, 2022; Sheth, 2021).

**Customer engagement**

There is no unanimity on the definition of consumer engagement (Brodie et al., 2001) as there are different approaches to categorize it according to cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects. Marketers consider engagement as the most important online result that companies must achieve through their activity in social media to achieve competitive advantages to generate consumer loyalty beyond a rational sense (Roberts, 2015). This becomes a strategic imperative to achieve the improvement of corporate performance, sales growth, superior competitive advantages and sustainable profitability (Elgarhy, 2022; Rather, 2019).

Social media applications and their use in travel agencies The creation of interactive Internet communication interfaces, has been greatly invigorated through web 2.0 technologies, where users generate content and travel experience are shared. Among others, this is possible through multiple networking sites like Twitter or Facebook, portals for sharing videos and photos like Instagram or through travel-themed blogs and websites that are more specifically about tourism, like TripAdvisor (Süli and Martyin-Csamangó, 2020). Due to this, it is possible to affirm that the decision-making process of customers when travelling has been radically transformed and that these interfaces

have positioned themselves as dominant communication channels (Guerreiro et al., 2019). These technologies have been adopted by travel agencies as one more marketing method (Chilembwe et al., 2019). In this sense the most popular applications used as sources of unstructured data in the tourism industry, in other words sources which are not specifically developed for the field of travel, are: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Vargas-Sánchez and Saltos, 2019) and YouTube can be added to the previous list as the main solution for sharing online videos in tourism environment (Briciu and Briciu, 2020).

Below it can be seen the generalist social media networks that are most frequently employed in travel industry with the marketing strategies of travel agencies and tourism in general, considering that social media is the best extension for activities related to relationship marketing due to their nature both collaborative and interactive (Rekhter, 2012).

## Facebook

Facebook is the most popular platform among travellers (Apple Tree Communications, 2019). Born in 2004 as a social networking site by Harvard University, in 2009 it became the most popular social network on earth with more than 1.59 billion users per day and over 2.4 billion members (Mariani et al., 2019). It is considered a useful platform when it comes to sharing travel-related information, during and after it (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017) and to plan and make decisions prior to the trip (Lo and Fang, 2018).

On Facebook, the key performance indicators (KPI) in the digital marketing strategy through this platform are the following: the number of posts made, total and weekly followers reached, posts shared by users, organic growth, traffic received from Facebook, the comments generated, and the level of engagement achieved (Florida, 2019).

## Twitter

This social media platform has 1.3 billion open accounts and daily registers more than 500 million comments or tweets posted by its 336 million active users (Karami et al., 2020). So, users show their reaction and commitment to a tweet or publication by republishing it on their Twitter account (retweet or RT), tagging a user, clicking "like", or replying to the writer of a tweet (Ćurlin et al., 2019). Twitter is identified as a very valuable platform to develop business strategies and planning and study decision-

making processes, being useful to examine electronic word of mouth by allowing the compilation of qualitative comments or establishing reference points; and where monitoring the messages is beneficial for businesses due to their ability to spread quickly. Although due to the massive volume and variety of the messages, it takes a lot of time to complete the task, it is expensive and often impossible to carry out; without ceasing to be an interesting source for companies to also obtain quantitative data (Philander and Zhong, 2016).

The main KPIs of Twitter in the digital marketing strategy are the following: the number of publications (tweets), the number of followers, the number of "likes", visits and interaction to the profile achieved, retweets, mentions of published tweets, traffic generated, the tone used and the types of posts (Florida, 2019).

## Instagram

Instagram is a platform that has acquired great relevance, surpassing Twitter in the number of active users and in which influencers (people who have a notorious presence and influence) are becoming more and more representative (Barbe et al., 2020). It was created in 2010 as a social media network to share photos and videos and since 2014 it multiplied its use by five, reaching more than one billion active users (Carpenter et al., 2020). It can be affirmed that the arrival of Instagram improved in the exchange of tourist information and multiplied its presence in social media networks. Instagram has also positioned itself as an efficient, productive and essential marketing tool in the tourism sector in which the different forms of virtual interaction are the sign of defined objects and in the context of user-generated content, help other users and marketing to generate interest and desire towards the promoted products and destinations (Saxena and Kumar (2020).

The main KPI in the digital marketing strategy on Instagram are, the number of publications, the engagement and the "likes" reached, the number of followers and weekly followers, the comments generated and the type and tone of the publications (Florida, 2019).

## Youtube

Video content has been positioned as the most consumed by users on social media networks, with a larger audience than traditional television, directly influencing

purchase decision-making processes. In this sense, in the tourism industry it has been shown that 66% of travellers view videos when they decide to take a trip and 65% of travellers look for specific destinations to travel to (Griffin and Tung, 2018). YouTube, launched in 2005, is a reference tool for viewing online videos that allow companies and amateur creators to disseminate diverse and global content to a wide audience (Burgess and Green, 2018). In 2019, YouTube recorded 2 billion users per month (Yun et al., 2020), more than 500 hours of content loading per minute, and more than 5 billion videos viewed per day (Hedeshy et al., 2020). In 2017, YouTube was the second most used search engine in the world, after Google and became important when defining any search engine-positioning strategy (Burgess and Green, 2018). YouTube offers tourists, who are not looking for passive entertainment, but rather to determine and control what happens during their vacation, the opportunity to view reviews, look for particular activities, and look for advice and help on destinations, making decisions on the basis of the experience of other travellers, who do not seek to sell a product or a destination but to be actively constructing their personal experiences (Reino and Hay (2011).

The main KPI in the digital marketing strategy through YouTube are the following: the number of videos published, subscribers and views achieved, impressions (generated when a user locates the thumbnails of the videos on the platform and is defined as the number of times that these thumbnails appear) as well as the number of comments, recommendations, the traffic generated, the time of visualization and the type and tone of the publications (Florida, 2019).

## METHODOLOGY

In our research we have undertaken a quantitative analysis of the effects of marketing initiatives implemented in the generalist social media networks that are most frequently employed in travel industry: Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, by a total of 10 travel agencies from Spain or that operate within the national territory; both OTA (online travel agencies) and brick and mortar. Five brick and mortar travel agencies with sales networks in Spain were selected (Carrefour Viajes, Viajes Nautalia, B Travel, Viajes Halcón and Viajes El Corte inglés) and 5 online travel agencies. Three of them with either headquarters or origin in Spain (Atrápalo, e-dreams and Logitravel) and the other 2 (Booking.com and Expedia) as examples of large international

OTA that capture the largest market share both in Spain and worldwide. We have used Rival IQ, as it is a powerful marketing intelligence tool that allows us to carry out a solid in-depth analysis of the impact of activity on the main social media networks of the target brands related to total engagement, number of publications, total average engagement per publication, audience, conversation rate, amplification rate and approval rate (Durrani et al., 2019).

One year has been taken as the reference period, between August 01, 2019 and August 01, 2020 to carry out this analysis. In this sense, it should be clarified that the comparison highlights the effects of the global health crisis brought on by the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus which has impacted the global tourism industry.

## RESULTS

We proceed to analyse how each social media network considered in this study (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) is related to the marketing strategies of 10 selected travel agencies from Spain or that operate within the national territory. We have analysed of audience, total engagement, number of posts, total average engagement per post, conversation rate, amplification rate and approval rate at a global level or together for the four most important social media networks in tourism (YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) as well as the amplification rate on Facebook and Twitter, taking as a reference the one-year period between August 01, 2019, and August 01, 2020, and with results obtained in August 01, 2020.

Global audience in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the Spanish market.

As can be seen in table 1, among brick-and-mortar travel agencies that stand out the most for having a greater audience among the four social media networks analysed are El Corte Inglés Viajes with an audience of 363,159 people and B travel with 298,870 people; both reaching a larger audience on Facebook with 238,790 people and 217,516 people respectively.

Among the OTA, the following ones stand out for being the ones with the highest total audience: Booking.com with an audience of 16,534,790 people and Expedia with 8,755,521 people; reaching both the largest audience on Facebook with 14,947,235 and 7,138,599 people respectively. At this



point, it should be noted that both OTA generate data at an international level, and it is impossible to extract national data in isolation. Logitravel, the largest of the national OTAs, reaches an audience of 1,111,294 people, standing out on Facebook with a total of 989,313 people.

**Number of global publications in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

Regarding the number of publications among all social media networks (table 2), the most active of the brick-and-mortar travel agencies, B travel, made 2,498 publications, with a decrease compared to 2019 of -41.50% and registering higher activity in Twitter with 1,608 posts, followed by Facebook with 517. There is a great difference with respect to Viajes Halcón, positioned in second place with 911 publications, an interannual decrease of -54.30% and being more active on Twitter and Facebook with similar data.

The most active of the OTA, Expedia, makes 1,530 publications among all social media networks, registering the highest activity on Twitter with 932 publications, followed by Facebook with 306 publications. There is a great diffe-

rence with respect to the OTA positioned in the second place, Atrápalo, with 880 publications and being more active on Twitter with 348 publications and Facebook with 330 publications.

**Total engagement in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market.**

Regarding the total multichannel engagement achieved (see figure 1) the OTA that offers international data, Expedia and Booking.com, is located at the top. Expedia reaches 527,000 participation actions, with more participation on Instagram, followed by Facebook. Booking.com reaches 428,000 participation actions with a decrease compared to 2019 of -23.4%, achieving the highest participation in Instagram, followed by Facebook. The third place is the brick-and-mortar travel agency El Corte Inglés Viajes with 383,000 participation actions; with a decrease compared to 2019 of -43.60%, and with the highest participation on Facebook, followed by Instagram. In the fourth position is for the brick-and-mortar travel agency B travel with 296,000 participation actions and similar participation ratios on Facebook and Instagram.

**Table 1: Global audience Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

The type of travel agency	Name of travel agency	Total multichannel audience as of August 01, 2020	Variation % since August 01, 2019	Audience by channel under analysis as of August 01, 2020			
				YouTube	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook
Brick & Mortar	Carrefour Viajes	163,952	+ 1.81 %	2,100	36,883	4,873	120,096
	Viajes Nautalia	58,006	+ 8.03 %	1,320	11,470	8,137	37,079
	B travel	298,870	+ 20.10 %	981	27,144	53,529	217,516
	Viajes Halcón	180,290	n. a.	117	29,165	8,665	142,343
	El Corte Inglés Viajes	363,159	+ 13.50 %	8,500	40,984	74,885	238,790
OTA	Expedia	8,755,521	+2.44 %	884,000	425,026	307,986	7,138,599
	Booking.com	16,534,790	+2.81 %	36,600	171,661	1,379,294	14,947,235
	Logitravel	1,111,294	+6.31 %	73,200	16,433	32,348	989,313
	e-Dreams	1,325,047	+2.63 %	4,290	11,401	81,796	1,227,560
	Atrápalo	464,863	n. a.	1,670	60,173	21,622	381,98

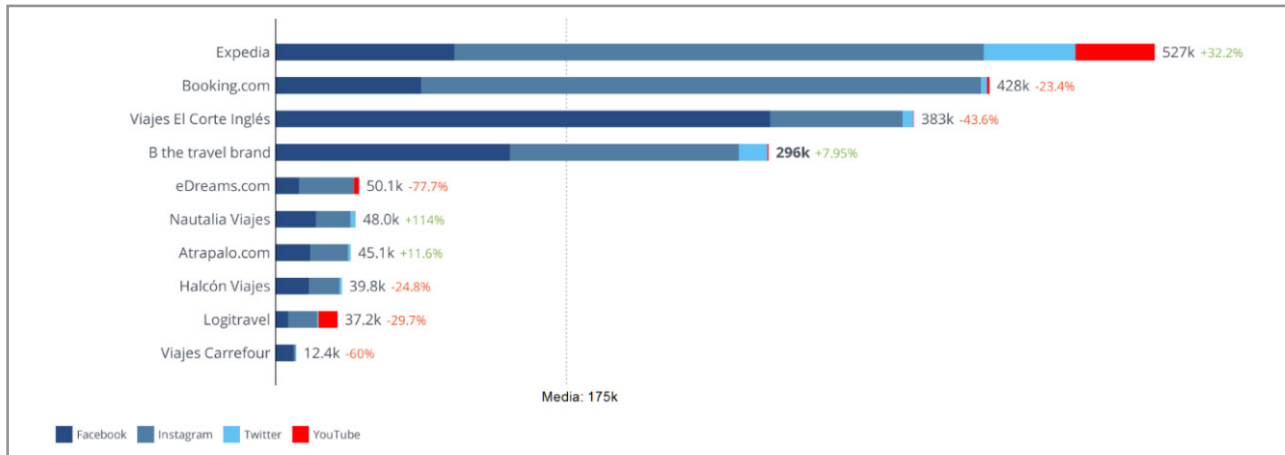
Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Table 2: Number of global publications, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

The type of travel agency	Name of travel agency	Total multichannel publications August 01, 2020	Variation % since August 01, 2019	Audience by channel under analysis August 01, 2020			
				YouTube	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook
Brick & Mortar	Carrefour Viajes	610	- 66,50 %	51	279	123	208
	Viajes Nautalia	491	- 26,50 %	5	355	246	305
	B travel	2,498	- 41,50 %	82	1608	291	517
	Viajes Halcón	911	- 54,30 %	24	181	127	159
	El Corte Inglés Viajes	661	- 22,20 %	8	264	25	313
OTA	Expedia	1530	+ 0,86 %	15	348	187	330
	Booking.com	306	- 2,86 %	27	23	88	37
	Logitravel	426	- 40,80 %	48	133	75	170
	e-Dreams	175	- 89,20 %	7	79	109	111
	Atrápalo	880	+ 3,65 %	33	932	259	306

Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Figure 1. Global data on total engagement in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**



**Total average engagement by post in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

Regarding the total average engagement per publication (see figure 2) we can see that the international OTA Booking.com is at the top with 1,400 participation actions per publication, with a decrease compared to 2019 of -21.10%, followed by the brick-and-mortar travel agency Viajes El Corte Ingles, with 579 participation actions per

publication and presenting a decrease compared to 2019 of -27.40%.

**Applause rate in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

All social media networks have systems that allow the user to show their approval of the content published by a company; making it possible for organizations to assess whether

that content is on the right track by allowing them to analyze the level of attraction and approval that content has reached among brand followers. In this way, the applause rate or approval rate measures the number of "likes" obtained from each publication on Twitter, Instagram and YouTube and the number of "reactions" obtained from each publication on Facebook (Kaushik, 2011). In Figure 3, we see that the highest applause rate is achieved by the international OTA Expedia and Booking.com. The first one obtained 447,000 approval reactions and a greater activity on Instagram, followed by Facebook. In the second position, Booking.com achieved 376,000 approval reactions with a decrease compared to 2019 of -27.6%. The third position is held by the brick-and-mortar travel agency El Corte Inglés Viajes, with 340,000 approval reactions and a decrease, compared to 2019, of - 42.4%.

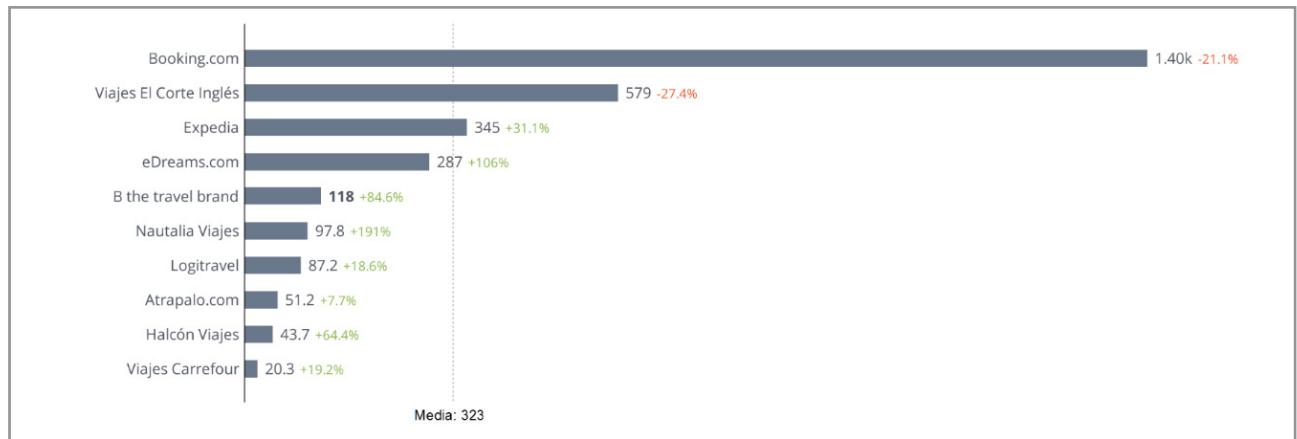
**Conversation rate in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

The next step is the assessment of the conversation rate on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to count

the number of comments or responses issued by a brand's followers based on the publications it makes. Therefore, a high conversation rate necessitates a deeper comprehension of the target market, our brand's qualities, what it excels at, the value it can provide to its audience, and the ecosystem in which it operates.. Therefore, achieving significant conversation rates with the audience has a high value for companies and in terms of marketing strategies it has a cost that cannot be bought (Kaushik, 2011).

As shown in figure 4, we observe that the international OTA Expedia and Booking.com are at the top, followed by the brick-and-mortar travel agency El Corte Inglés Viajes. Expedia reaches 447,000 comments and / or responses issued by its followers to the publications made by the company, with Instagram being the social network with the highest activity. Booking.com reached 376,000, with a year-on-year decrease of -27.6% and concentrating the bulk of the activity on Instagram. In the third position, El Corte Inglés Viajes, reached 340,000 with a decrease compared to 2019 of -42.4% and concentrating the activity on Facebook.

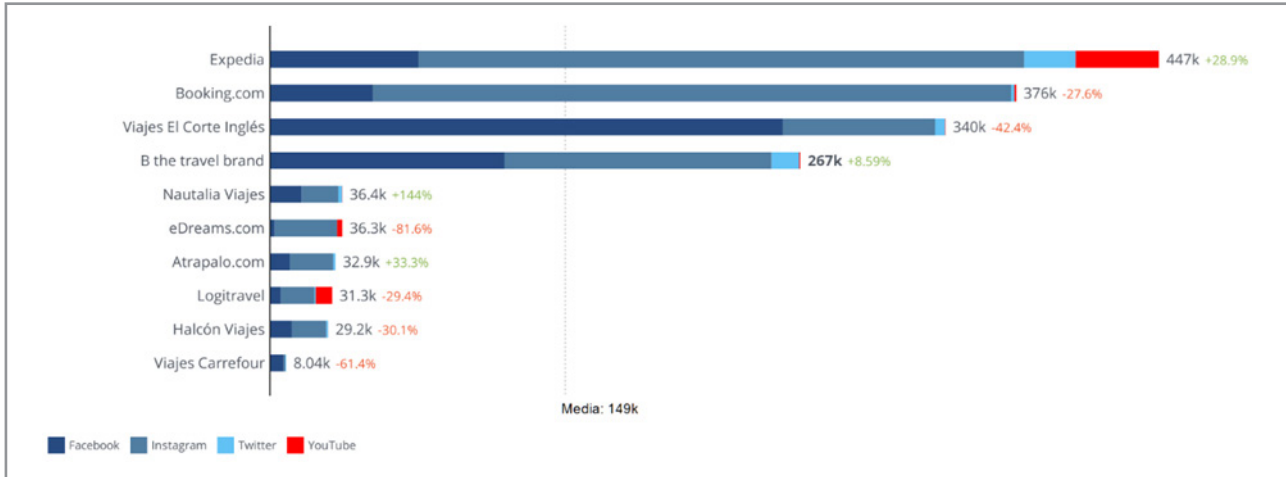
**Figure 2. Total average engagement by post in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**



Source: Prepared by the authors.

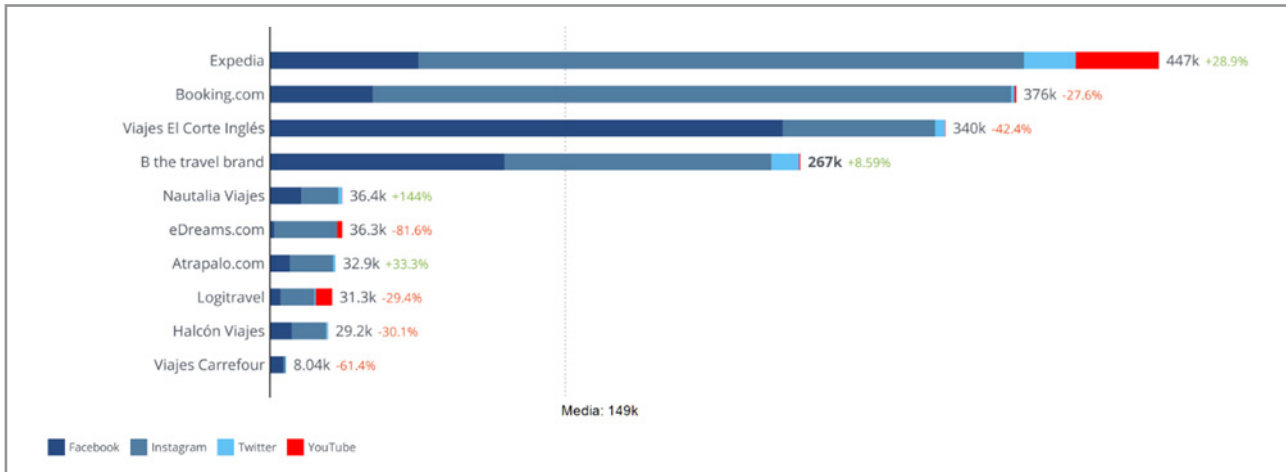


**Figure 3. Applause rate in Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook of brick and mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**



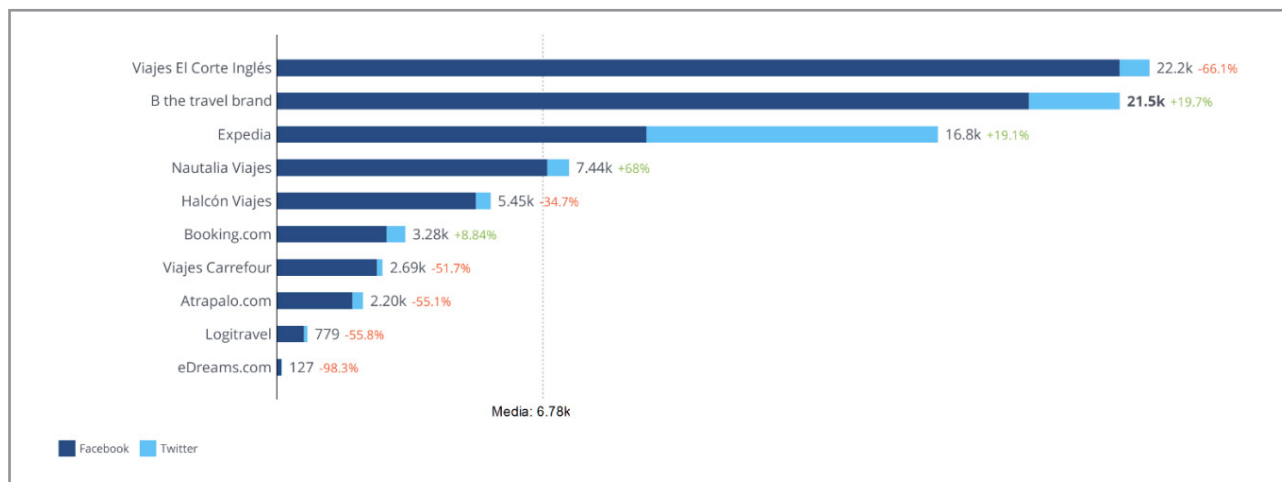
Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Figure 4. Conversation rate in Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook of brick and mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**



Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Figure 5. Amplification rate in Facebook and Twitter of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**



Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Amplification rate in generalist social media networks of brick-and-mortar travel agencies and OTA operating in the spanish market**

Finally, we must pay attention to the amplification rate, which quantifies how the followers of a brand take content from it and share it with other users; exposing it to new audiences without the need for the company to have to make an economic investment. Thus, a high amplification rate indicates that a brand's followers have decided to actively engage with the organization by sharing content among their peers (Kaushik, 2011). In figure 5, we observe in terms of the amplification rate for Facebook and Twitter, that the brick-and-mortar travel agency El Corte Inglés Viajes leads the way with a total of 22,200 shares between Facebook post shares and retweets on Twitter; with an interannual decrease of -66 10% and with Facebook as the protagonist of these interactions. In second place we have the brick-and-mortar travel agency B travel with 21,500 shares and Facebook as the main social media networks. The third position is the OTA Expedia, with 16,800 shares and almost identical activity on both Facebook and Twitter.

**DISCUSSION**

Given that a penetration rate of 62 % was achieved in Spain in January 2020 with more than 29.00 million social media network users (Kemp, 2020); it is necessary for travel agencies to plan the relationship marketing actions implemented in social media better since, in the travel

agency sector, the degree of customer engagement with the participation in social media networks and customer loyalty have a partially positive relationship, according to a company's social media activity. It is equally significant for the organizations to involve and connect with consumers to develop their value towards a business since this fact generates loyal customers, lasting in time and ready to spend more money (Van Asperen et al., 2018). Therefore, travel agencies promote their brand image and must improve their reputation by using social media networks to increase customer loyalty and help to increase their confidence in the decision-making process (Abou-Shouk and Hewedi, 2016).

**CONCLUSIONS**

After the quantitative analysis of the effects of marketing initiatives implemented in the generalist social networks that are most frequently employed in travel industry, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook by a total of 10 travel agencies that are from Spain or that operate within the national territory both OTA (online travel agencies) and brick and mortar; we can conclude that there is no uniformity in the digital marketing strategies carried out through social media networks between travel agencies that are from Spain or that operate within the national territory. It has also been observed that there is a great disparity between the different commercial brands in the brick-and-mortar and online fields examined and related to number of publications, audience, total engagement as well as

total average engagement per publication, conversation rate, amplification rate and approval rate. Due to this, it is necessary for travel agencies to plan their relationship marketing actions in social media better to improve the degree of customer engagement, as well as the customer loyalty and customer confidence in the decision-making process.

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