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EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL MARKETING AS A MEANS TO ENHANCE TOURISM AGENCIES SERVICES: CASE STUDY OF 'BASBAS TRAVEL' TOURISM AND TRAVEL AGENCY IN ORAN AS A MODEL

Lamia BASBAS* [1], Laboratory of Financial Market Management through the Application of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of RELIZANE, ALGERIA, Lamia.basbas@univ-relizane.dz

Fatiha GUESSAS [2],LARMHO, University of Tlemcen , ALGERIA , fatiha.guessas@univ-relizane.dz

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Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the significance of implementing robust digital marketing strategies within tourism agencies, which frequently interface with a diverse clientele, encompassing both organizations and individual patrons. Employing a descriptive analytical methodology for its theoretical underpinnings, this research ventured into the empirical realm by conducting a field study and engaging with the management of 'Basbas Travel,' a prominent tourism agency in Oran. The findings demonstrate that, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, this agency has progressively leveraged a variety of digital marketing tools and techniques. Such strategic adoption has not only streamlined its operations but also carved a competitive niche in marketing its eclectic tourism offerings. Drawing on these insights, the study offers a compendium of recommendations aimed at empowering managers across the tourism sector to harness digital marketing efficacies.

key words: Tourism Agency, Tourism Services, Digital Marketing.

Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, the imperative for organizations to integrate modern technology into their operational frameworks has never been more critical. These advancements are instrumental in enhancing the production and marketing dynamics of products and services, thereby bolstering competitive stances and expanding global market footprints.

Digital marketing, riding the wave of technological proliferation, especially in communication and service marketing facilitated by the widespread adoption of the internet, has emerged as a contemporary vanguard. Organizations are increasingly

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deploying electronic communication strategies to market their services, which enhances transactional efficiencies, advertising reach, and customer-business interactions across multiple levels.

The tourism sector in Algeria, a cornerstone in the national economic tapestry, has assumed heightened significance. Historically, during the 1990s, amidst prevailing security concerns, tourism was a vital economic conduit, a narrative that has seen a resurgence due to Algeria's vibrant dynamism and enriched by its plethora of natural tourist resources, including hotels and relaxation centers.

This resurgence is further supported by an entrenched tourism culture dedicated to attracting global tourists. However, the seismic disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic brought about an unprecedented stasis affecting all facets of life, including the tourism industry.

Consequently, with tourism agencies being pivotal economic actors within this sector, there has been a concerted push to invigorate tourism development, with a particular emphasis on bolstering domestic tourism as a cornerstone of the broader tourism endeavor.

Problematic:

Given the context delineated earlier, it becomes imperative to delve into the realities of deploying digital marketing strategies within tourism agencies and to understand their adopted measures, particularly during the post-pandemic recovery phase. This inquiry is centered around the pivotal question:

- To what extent are digital marketing strategies being effectively implemented in tourism and travel agencies?

Sub-Questions:

To methodically dissect the problem, it has been segmented into the following sub-questions:

- Is the agency proactively seeking to deploy digital marketing mechanisms to enhance and refine its service levels?

- How has the operational performance of tourism agencies evolved in response to the pandemic?
- What array of electronic communication tools are utilized in marketing the offerings of tourism agencies?
- In what ways does the incorporation of digital marketing techniques enhance the quality of tourism services?

Study Hypotheses:

To address the research problem, we propose the following hypotheses:

- Tourism agencies acknowledge the criticality of incorporating marketing strategies tailored for tourism services.
- The pandemic has adversely impacted tourism agencies, catalyzing significant transformations in their service delivery.
- 'Moderate Travel' agency is actively pursuing the adoption of digital marketing mechanisms to evaluate and augment its service standards.

Study Objectives:

The objectives of this study include:

- To ascertain the extent of utilization of modern communication technologies in the digital marketing of tourism services.
- To determine how contemporary electronic communication tools contribute to enhancing service quality for tourists.
- To identify the material, human, and legal prerequisites necessary for leveraging modern communication technologies in digital marketing for tourism services.
- To explore
- The key strategies and mechanisms that tourism agencies employ in mitigating challenges to their services.

Study Significance:

This study holds significance in several aspects:

- It sheds light on the essential concepts related to the study variables.
- It clarifies the role of digital marketing in the enhancement of tourism services.
- It underscores the critical importance and impact of digital marketing on the operational frameworks of tourism agencies.

Study Scope:

- **Geographical Limits:** The study is geographically limited to a sample from the 'Basbas Travel' tourism and travel agency in the Oran region.
- **Temporal Limits:** The study period spans from July 20, 2024, to July 22, 2024.

Study Methodology:

In response to the articulated issues and the formulated hypotheses, and considering the nature and aims of the study, a descriptive analytical approach was deemed appropriate. This approach was implemented through an extensive review of relevant literature and information gleaned from personal interviews with the managers of the agency, serving as a primary research tool.

Previous Studies:

- **Study by Ahmed Hamada (2020):** "*A Research Study Establishes 07 Recommendations for the Recovery of the Tourism Sector in Light of the Corona Crisis."*

Conducted by the National Planning Institute, this research scrutinized the impact of the Coronavirus crisis on the Egyptian tourism sector, outlining three potential scenarios should the virus persist in Egypt through the end of 2020, with the revival of the tourism sector not anticipated until the subsequent year. This

predicament forecasts a stark decline to zero in both tourist numbers and revenues during the second and third quarters of 2020.

The study propounded seven strategic recommendations to alleviate the crisis's impact, which included enhancing health consciousness among tourism workers, employing advanced technological tools like virtual tours, and promoting distinct traditional crafts as cataloged in the government's "Atlas of Handicrafts."

- **Study by Nahar and Lahwel (2019):** *"The Role of Social Media Marketing in Boosting Tourism in Algeria."*

This investigation sought to decode the essentials of tourism marketing and the core elements that constitute successful marketing strategies on social media platforms. An analytical approach, characterized by detailed narration and descriptive analysis, formed the basis of this study, employing secondary data sourced from a multitude of references.

Findings suggest that social media plays a crucial role in the promotion of tourism and the broader tourism industry in Algeria, although the country remains significantly underutilized in harnessing online platforms for tourism promotion.

- **Study by Belhamissi Mohammed (2016/2017):** *"Electronic Marketing as a New Strategy to Promote the Tourism Sector in Algeria (Case Study: Tourism Agencies),"* a Master's thesis in Touristic Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, University Abd el-Hamid Ibn Badis of Mostaganem, Algeria.

The primary aim of this study was to redirect the focus of policymakers towards the tourism sector and its diverse supporting infrastructures, highlighting its potential as a continuous revenue stream and a viable alternative to the hydrocarbon sector.

Utilizing a case study methodology, this research delved into the intricacies of specific phenomena by meticulously gathering and analyzing data to yield factual insights from extensive empirical investigations. It was conclusively determined

that tourism and travel agencies, while offering similar services, have operations that are somewhat limited in scope.

- **Study by Eliott Faure (2015), Université de Toulouse 2:** *"Integrating Digital Technology into the Development Strategy of a Territorial Tourist Structure*."

This study ventured to examine the integration of digital technologies with strategic planning and human resources within regional tourism frameworks, exploring optimal conditions for the effective implementation of these technologies.

THE FIRST TOPIC: THEORETICAL STUDIES ON DIGITAL MARKETING AND TOURISM AGENCIES:

1. Concept of Digital Marketing:

In the contemporary business landscape, the significance of digital marketing has escalated, becoming indispensable for operational success. This necessitates its integration into organizational activities and processes.

Firstly, Definition of Digital Marketing:

Digital marketing is defined diversely:

As per Ghoneim, it is "the execution of all integrated activities undertaken by specialized management within a modern organization, aimed primarily at delivering products to customers and consumers in the correct quantity, place, and time").[1]

Naseer describes it as "the application of a broad spectrum of information technologies designed to reshape marketing strategies and enhance consumer benefits through effective market segmentation" [2].

[1] Ghoneim, A. M., Marketing and e-commerce, Al-Asriyah Library for Publishing, 2008, p13.
[2] Nasir, M. Z., Electronic marketing, Dar Hamed for Publishing and Distribution, 2004, p 299.

According to Lavayssé and Badoc, it is "the utilization of all available technologies to augment the profitability of the enterprise by diligently working to meet every customer's individual needs"[3].

The American Association for Digital Marketing encapsulates it as "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to the customer, managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders, achieved through electronic tools and means" [4].

From these perspectives, digital marketing can be succinctly summarized as: "The optimal use of digital technologies, including information and communication technologies, to boost the effectiveness of marketing and its processes, which are organizational activities aimed at identifying the needs of target markets and delivering goods and services to customers."

Secondly, Importance of Digital Marketing:

The importance of digital marketing is reflected in the following:

- **Enhancing and Increasing Competitiveness:** Digital marketing is pivotal in shaping an organization's competitive landscape, particularly within the sphere of electronic marketing management. The overarching goal of organizational strategies is to cultivate a competitive advantage that propels the organization and its offerings beyond its competitors. This is achieved through superior performance, unparalleled skills, efficient resource management, and providing maximal benefits to customers at minimal costs, all while unveiling innovative capabilities that challenge competitors[5] .
- **Reducing Costs and Effort:** Digital marketing strategies are instrumental in decreasing operational costs and efforts. This includes reducing the volume of marketing-related queries handled over the phone and minimizing the

[3] Badoc, M., & Bentran Lavayssé, E-marketing of banking and insurance, Editions d'Organisation, 2009, p 74.
[4] Amer, S. A.-M., & Kandil, A. S., Electronic marketing, 1st ed., Publishers and Distributors, 2012, p 57.
[5] Yousef, R. O., & Al-Sumaidaie, M. J., Marketing technology, 1st ed., Dar Al-Manahij for Publishing and Distribution, 2004, p 178.

resources spent on printing and disseminating marketing communications, such as advertisements[6].

- **Maintaining Market Share:** By leveraging digital technologies, organizations can significantly enhance their market presence. The internet's vast reach allows for the promotion of new products and services, aiming to capture and expand customer base extensively[7].
- **Improving Customer Service:** The internet has revolutionized customer service by providing enhanced interaction opportunities. It offers customers golden opportunities to engage directly and more effectively with organizations, thus improving the overall customer experience.[8]

2. Concept of Tourism Agencies:

First, Definition of Tourism and Travel Agencies:

- A tourism and travel agency is defined as "a profit-oriented enterprise designed to provide various services tailored to the needs of those interested in travel and tourism. These agencies may also organize and offer trips they have planned, inviting public participation"[9].
- It is also described as "any commercial establishment permanently engaged in tourist activities. This includes the direct or indirect sale of both individual and group travel packages, alongside all associated services"[10].
- Furthermore, a tourism and travel agency is characterized as "a profit-driven entity focused on delivering a wide array of services to individuals eager to

[6] Al-Alak, B. A., Internet marketing, 1st ed., Al-Waraq Foundation for Publishing and Distribution, 2002, p 19.
[7] Ghribi, F., The role of e-marketing in improving the quality of tourism services, First Symposium on Tourism Marketing and Promoting Algeria's Image, Under the Slogan "Algeria, Tomorrow's Destination," University of Baji Mokhtar, Annaba, 2013, p 4.
[8] Yousef, R. O., & Al-Sumaidaie, M. J., op.cit, p197.
[9] Belhamissi, M., E-marketing as a new strategy to promote the tourism sector in Algeria (Case study: Tourism agencies), Master's thesis, University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis, Mostaganem, 2017, p 31.
[10] Belgherbi, I., & Ratoul, M., The role of tourism agencies in marketing tourism services in Algeria: The National Office of Tourism as a model, Euro-Mediterranean Journal of Economics of Tourism and Hospitality, 3(3), 31-50, 2021, p 41.

travel and explore, based on their specific requests. Such agencies might also plan and promote trips, encouraging public involvement"[11].

In summary, tourism and travel agencies play a crucial role in assisting individuals by orchestrating and facilitating travel arrangements, thereby enhancing the overall travel experience.

Secondly: Definition and Importance of Tourism Services:

The concept of service is articulated by the American Association for Service as the activities or benefits that are offered for sale or provided in connection with a specific commodity. Philip Kotler elaborates on this by defining service as "an activity or benefit that is offered for exchange, fundamentally intangible, and does not result in ownership; it may be linked or unlinked to a physical product"[12].

Further, a tourism service integrates tangible and intangible elements that cater to the essential facets of the tourist offer. It effectively meets the needs and desires of tourists through components such as accommodation, transportation, and dining.

This is elaborated as "a collection of works and activities that provide tourists with comfort and facilities when purchasing and consuming tourist products during their travel or stay in tourist facilities away from their original residence"[13].

A. Importance of Tourism Services:

Tourism significantly propels economic development as a major source of foreign currency income, impacting positively on the balance of payments and employment levels. Besides generating employment, it also stimulates local economies through increased economic activities.

Taxes paid by tourists assist local governments in funding crucial services such as education and healthcare. Tourism is pivotal in enhancing foreign currency influx into countries, with Britain alone garnering approximately $9 billion annually from Arab tourists, underscoring its crucial role in economic advancement.

[11]Belkheir, A. H., & Abdel Hak, O., The role of tourism agencies in reviving and activating domestic tourism from the customer's perspective: A study on travel and tourism agencies in Mila State, Master's thesis, Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences, Mila University Center, 2019, p03.

[12] Kotler, P., & Dubois, B., Marketing management, 12th ed., Pearson Education, 2006, p462.

[13] Lejatt, I., & Rakam, N., The role of the Algerian Tourism Quality Plan (PQTA) in improving the tourist image, Shuaa Journal for Economic Studies, 2, 104-119, 2017.

Since the latter half of the 20th century, tourism has been recognized by policymakers in various developing nations as a critical economic resource globally, including in countries like the United States, Italy, Spain, France, and Britain[14].

B. **Services Offered by Tourism Agencies:**

- Organizing and marketing travel, including tourism trips, individual, and group stays.
- Arranging tours and visits with guides to cities, sites, and monuments of tourist, cultural, and historical significance.
- Organizing hunting and fishing expeditions, artistic, cultural, and sports events, conferences, and meetings as part of or upon request of the agency's operations.
- Providing translation and tourist guide services for tourists.
- Booking accommodations or reserving rooms in hotel establishments and offering related services.
- Handling tourist transportation and the sale of various types of transport tickets, adhering to the regulations of transport institutions.
- Selling tickets to entertainment venues and cultural or sports events.
- Assisting and supporting tourists throughout their stay.[15]

Thirdly, the Electronic Marketing Mix for Tourism Services:

The integration of Internet technology has significantly influenced the tourism marketing mix, leading to the development of the electronic marketing mix for tourism services[16]:

[14] Ibid, p 32.
[15] Belgherbi, I., & Ratoul, M. op.cit, p 41.
[16] Chelihi, T., & Ezzedine, A., The touristic marketing mix in the age of Internet technology, Journal of Finance and Business Economics, 2018, p 246.

- **Electronic Service:** Represents all benefits that tourists receive through time available for exchange between the tourist and the website electronically.
- **Electronic Price:** The monetary value assigned to the service provided to tourists for obtaining the promised service.
- **Electronic Promotion:** All the information that is communicated among all parties involved in the marketing process.
- **Electronic Site:** Utilized by the agency to display its services to diverse societal segments, detailing specifications, prices, distribution systems, and methods and channels of both electronic and traditional payment.
- **Accuracy of Information:** Tied to the precision of database management systems and digital content management for target market selection (segmentation) and market positioning.
- **Electronic Payment:** Ensures that payment systems are secure for tourist use and user-friendly.
- **Adding a Personal Touch:** The website interface should be adaptable to meet the varying needs of tourists.

Fourthly, digital Marketing Strategies and Their Role in Enhancing Tourism Services:

A. Website:

The core of a tourism agency's digital strategy often revolves around the development of a dedicated website. This site is enriched with distinctive texts and images to set it apart from competitors, offering 24/7 accessibility for customers to make inquiries about bookings and services.

The agency’s website serves as a vital platform to showcase its diverse services to various societal segments, elaborating on specifications, prices, distribution systems, and payment methods, both electronic and traditional.

It is imperative to curate unique and engaging content about tourist trips and travel, ensuring that information is not only accurate but also regularly updated to meet customer expectations for quality and reliability [17].

B. Search Engines:

Search engines provide customers with a multitude of options, facilitating comparisons and informed decision-making. These engines typically feature both normal and advanced search functionalities[18]. A tourism agency must optimize the content it uploads to search engines to enhance visibility and accessibility.

By providing detailed descriptions of their websites and listings for travel and tourism offices and transportation options, agencies make it easier for tourists to discover and access their services online. Prominent search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Ask are frequently utilized for this purpose, playing a critical role in the digital discovery of tourism services[19].

C. Social Media Sites:

Known as expansive electronic communities, social media platforms facilitate a myriad of services that promote communication and interaction among users. These services include establishing connections, messaging, instant chatting, creating interest groups, and organizing pages for various events and occasions. Additionally, social media allows for the sharing of media such as photos, videos, and software, enriching the user experience[20].

1. **Social Media Sites for the Tourism Agency:**

[17] Issani, A., & Barawi, I., Electronic marketing as a mechanism to activate and upgrade tourism enterprise services, Journal of Economic Studies, 2011.
[18] Bouzifi, N., Under the dominance of Arab search engines, failure after another, Library Science Journal, 8(2), 69-95, 2016, p 58.
[19] Chlighem, G., & Seifeddine, J. R., Modern marketing trends in tourism management and their role in developing and improving tourist services: The model of e-tourism marketing, Algerian Journal of Security and Development, 6(1), 191-207, 2017,p 200.
[20] Ben Yahia, H., & Onis, A., The role of social media in influencing the online consumer's purchasing decision, Journal of Economic Reforms and Integration into the Global Economy, 14(1), 1-14, 2020, p 03.

Establishing a presence under the agency's name on various social media platforms is crucial. Pages on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram should feature detailed information about the agency's services and offers.

Adding unique photos and videos can significantly enhance user engagement with the agency's brand, facilitating a more rapid and cost-effective marketing process. The influence of social media on marketing management strategies is profound, affecting both the destination marketing and the decisions of tourists [21].

2. **Popular Social Media Sites:**

- **Facebook** allows individuals and legal entities to enhance their presence and communicate with others within and across platforms, fostering widespread networking.
- **Twitter** provides a microblogging service where users can post updates limited to 280 characters, enhancing direct communication through the platform or linked messaging services.
- **Blogs** emerged as personal online spaces where individuals express opinions and discuss a range of issues. These platforms gained popularity for their role in facilitating social interaction and addressing social and political challenges.
- **YouTube** has become a leading media-sharing platform, recognized for its role in broadcasting significant global events, including natural disasters and political movements.
- **Instagram**, launched in 2010, offers photo sharing and social networking services, rapidly gaining traction at both personal and institutional levels due to its focus on visual communication.

A. Email Marketing in Tourism:

Email plays a pivotal role in enhancing the capabilities of a tourism agency to maintain effective communication with its clients. By distributing emails that

[21] Nahar, K. B. A.-W., & Lahoul, F., The role of social media marketing in activating tourism in Algeria, Forum Journal for Economic Studies and Research, 3(A), 104-120, 2019, p 116.

include promotional offers and pertinent information, the agency enables customers to initiate inquiries through a highly efficient, low-cost medium.

The prevalent adoption of email, driven by its importance and the level of informational security it offers, facilitates direct customer engagement. This approach not only highlights the significance of the customers but also keeps them continuously informed about new offers and updates.

Such strategic communication fosters a deeper understanding among customers, thereby attracting them to the agency's offerings and influencing their purchasing decisions. This dynamic interaction helps diversify the range of tourism services provided and revitalizes the tourism sector [22].

Fifth, impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism and Travel Agencies:

The COVID-19 pandemic has exerted a profound negative impact on the majority of Algerian travel and tourism agencies, especially those promoting international destinations, which constitute about 80% of these agencies.

The local tourism options are often perceived by Algerian families as non-competitive and undesirable, attributed to high service prices, unchanged room rates throughout the year, and subpar service quality. Moreover, agencies specializing in religious tourism, such as Hajj and Umrah, encountered significant challenges due to Saudi Arabia's suspension of Umrah visas and visits to the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, compounded by the cancellation of the Hajj season on March 4, 2020[23].

Despite the resumption of Umrah pilgrimages announced by Saudi Arabia in November 2022, the continued closure of Algerian borders has stalled the booking processes for Umrah, further complicating the situation for travel and tourism agencies.

[22] Siddik, B. B., The roles of e-marketing as a mechanism to stimulate demand for tourism services, Namaa Journal for Economics and Commerce, 6(1), 53-73, 2022, p60.
[23] Umaira, H., & Fernand, Coronavirus in Arab countries: A passing storm, an opportunity for change, or a regional disaster, Elcano Royal Institute for International and Strategic Studies, 2020, 1-7, p 2.

Additionally, the 20% of agencies that focus on domestic tourism faced considerable challenges as their offerings targeted foreign tourists interested in exploring new destinations, a concept not typically embraced by the local Algerian populace[24].

THE SECOND TOPIC: THE REALITY OF DIGITAL MARKETING APPLICATION IN 'BASBAS TRAVEL' AGENCY IN ORAN

This section addresses the practical application of digital marketing strategies at the 'Basbas Travel' agency, following a theoretical overview of relevant study variables. The field study included interviews and questionnaires directed at the agency's management to gauge the effectiveness of their digital marketing efforts.

1. **General Overview of the Agency:**
   A. **Personal Data:** Interviews with the agency's team revealed that they possess high levels of education and scientific qualifications, an encouraging indicator of their expertise. They have extensive experience, typically over eight years, in managing electronic interactions and are proficient in utilizing various social communication tools in their daily operations.
   B. **Location of the Agency Headquarters:** The agency is strategically located in the heart of Oran State, which is central to its operations.
   C. **Agency Activities:** The principal activities of the agency include:
      - Booking tickets for a variety of domestic and international travel.
      - Reserving accommodations and managing related services in hotel establishments.

[24] Taba, S., With the impossibility of saving the season amid the COVID-19 pandemic - a grim fate faces tourism agencies, Ech-Chaab, August 2, 2020, Retrieved November 30, 2022, from http://www.ech-chaab.com/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D9%85%D9%84%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A9/item/154686-%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%B1-%C2%AB%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%C2%BB.

- Facilitating the issuance of various types of visas.
- Managing the logistics and support for performing Umrah rituals at holy sites, including providing certified religious guides and accompanying personnel such as doctors.
- Participation in tourism-related conferences and meetings, often organized by the Directorate of Tourism.
- Organizing and managing trips to diverse destinations, both within the country and internationally.

D. **Capabilities of Basbas Travel Agency for Tourism and Travel:** The agency employs 12 workers, including the agency manager, all of whom are proficient in the basics of computer science and the Internet.

E. **Equipment Owned by the Agency:** The following table illustrates the information and communication technology equipment at the agency.

Table 1: Information and communication technology equipment at the agency

Equipment	Quantity
Telephone	4
Printer	3
Copy Machine	2
Computers	6
Fax	2

***Source**: Prepared by the researchers based on interview results.*

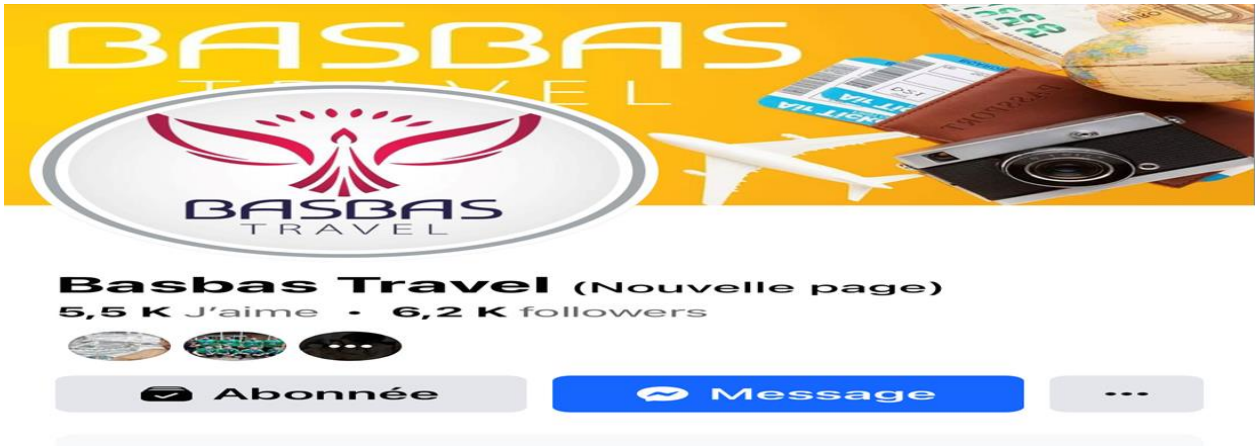
F. **Agency's Presence on Social Media (Facebook):**

The agency's Facebook page can be accessed via the following link: Facebook Profile

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Vol : 07 No: 02 Year: 2024 Page : 799 - 823

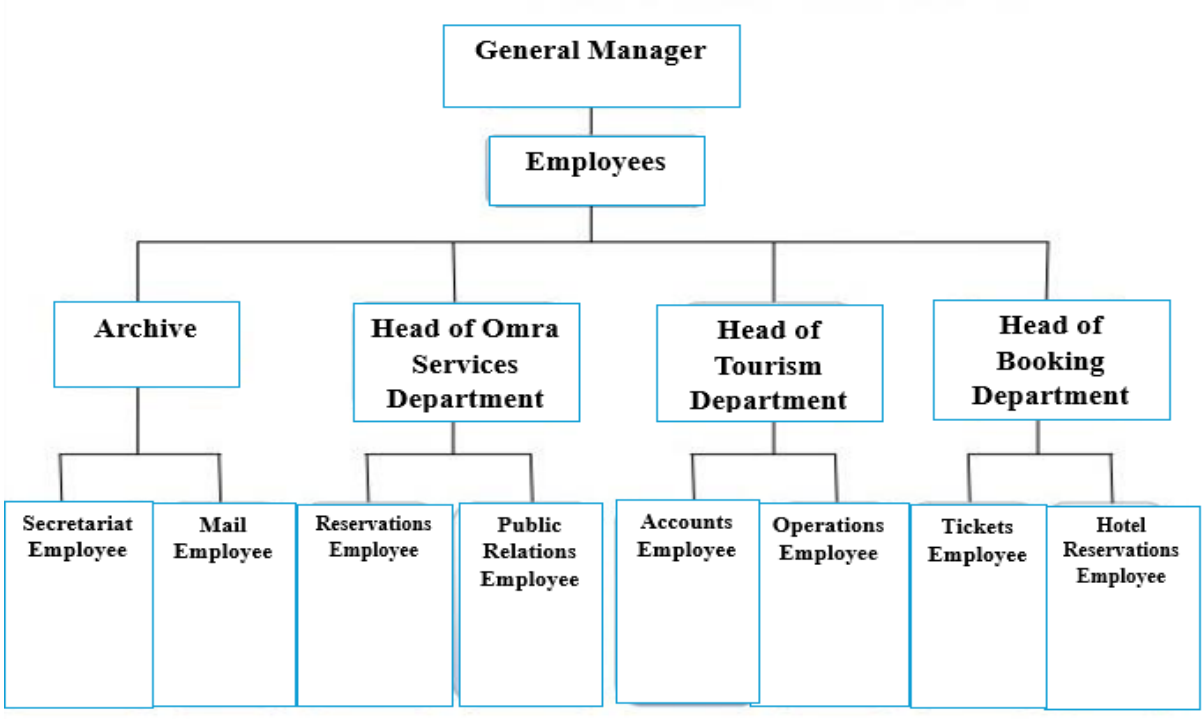
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL MARKETING AS A MEANS TO ENHANCE TOURISM AGENCIES SERVICES: CASE STUDY OF 'BASBAS TRAVEL' TOURISM AND TRAVEL AGENCY IN ORAN AS A MODEL



Source: Agency's Facebook Page.

G. **WhatsApp Numbers:** 0771579901 / 0770405115
H. **Email Address:** basbas.travel@gmail.com
I. **Organizational Structure of the Agency:**

Figure (01) represents the organizational structure of the agency.



Source: Prepared by the researchers based on observation and interview results.

2. Reality of Digital Marketing Application in the Agency:

An in-depth interview was conducted with the director of the agency and several employees, yielding comprehensive insights into their digital marketing practices:

- The agency is equipped with an internet network and communicates with its external environment and various economic stakeholders via email, benefiting from various internet applications.
- The agency offers a range of electronic services to customers, such as making hotel reservations online, booking tickets, and processing visa applications for various countries.
- The agency strives to interact electronically with customers, strengthening the relationship and exchange through constant and continuous communication, as well as exchanging information and responding to inquiries electronically.
- For example, approaching the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the agency offered special and enticing deals to its customers via various email sites and social media platforms, like its Facebook page. It also sends offers to its various customers, whether individuals or agencies, via email.
- The agency makes significant efforts to promote its services attractively and extensively on its website and social media platforms to attract and engage as many tourists as possible.
- The agency itself is responsible for designing its website, demonstrating its seriousness in its electronic approach.
- Customers interact with everything published on social media sites, indicating that the agency's pages are lively and active, and the agency works hard to maintain this interaction consistently. The website is also regularly updated to introduce all that is new.
- The agency was negatively impacted in offering its services during the COVID-19 period, which forced it to promote its products through posts on Facebook and Instagram pages and share them in other tourism groups.

- Marketing plans were put in place to revive the tourism sector, attract more customers, and compensate for losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Regarding the payment methods in the agency, employees confirmed that while electronic payment is available, cash payment predominates. Customers often prefer to be present and pay for the service in cash, while different electronic platforms or platforms usually involve payment by check (either deferred or prepaid). Dealing with hotels and foreign institutions is the only case where electronic payment through Visa or MasterCard is used. Meanwhile, employees in the agency confirmed that electronic payment has been relatively phased out due to technical problems, lack of infrastructure for such transactions, and a lack of supportive culture for electronic business, including mistrust in electronic transactions.
- The agency uses social media, especially Facebook, to respond to customer inquiries and meet their needs for booking requests and various service prices, especially during the spread of COVID-19, which complicates travel to tourism and travel agencies, thus facilitating and speeding up their receipt of requests.
- Social media sites provide customers the freedom to choose their service according to their needs and purchasing power, helping them make decisions. This assists the agency in designing their products according to customers' preferred needs.
- The agency relies on databases and accounting software to organize sales and purchase invoices and set prices for its services with an added profit margin.
- The agency distributes its products from customer needs, whether tourists or other agencies or institutions, largely based on email or WhatsApp.
- The agency works to keep customer data and protect their privacy through a secure database.

3. **Interview Results:**

After thorough interviews with the agency director and employees, the study concluded with several critical findings summarized as follows:

1. The agency's employees are highly skilled and competent, possessing the ability to provide customer assistance that meets their needs.
2. With extensive experience in customer interactions, the agency understands the importance of maintaining electronic customer relationship management, especially in a competitive environment, giving it a competitive edge.
3. The agency's organizational structure is distinguished by various departments that operate electronically. It has a specialized system aligned with modern developments, tasked with responding to all messages, comments, and inquiries received through its website or social media platforms. This contributes to building strong relationships with customers, fostering their loyalty, and consequently enhancing the agency's profitability.
4. The agency implements an appropriate electronic promotional strategy to attract as many tourists as possible.
5. The agency possesses the right equipment, tools, and devices to effectively implement electronic marketing.
6. The agency ensures a constant presence on social media platforms to communicate electronically with customers. Platforms such as WhatsApp, email, mobile phones, and websites are utilized for this purpose. Recently, social media has become increasingly important for the agency, providing 24/7 services. Additionally, the website consolidates all essential information about the products and services offered by the agency, allowing customers to access this information anytime and anywhere.
7. The agency strives to provide its customers with offers and information wherever and whenever they need them, and at high speed.
8. The agency addresses customer concerns and issues by finding solutions electronically.
9. The agency delivers its services and meets customer needs electronically, with speed and high efficiency. This includes inquiries about private trip prices, hotel bookings, and travel services via ship or plane, eliminating the need for physical visits. Additionally, it provides services such as obtaining visas for

different countries and sending them to customers electronically via email, a practice that has been crucial before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. The agency prioritizes the security and privacy of its electronic transactions with customers.
11. Digital marketing plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of tourism services, heavily relying on the availability of the necessary material and human resources with the expertise required to execute online marketing activities.

Conclusion:

The tourism industry is increasingly recognized as a key priority by both developed and developing countries, given its extensive cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions. Recent research underscores that tourism is among the fastest-growing sectors globally. The advent of e-tourism has underscored the necessity for both private and governmental tourism entities to embrace and leverage modern technology. This technological imperative is driven by the need to deliver superior services to customers, thereby securing their satisfaction and fostering loyalty.

Today, the success of the tourism industry is intricately linked to the utilization of electronic marketing tools and techniques. These digital resources enhance the tourist experience by simplifying the process of searching for information, comparing different destinations, prices, and offers. This digital facilitation allows institutions to deliver competitive tourism services of global quality within a rapidly evolving marketing landscape, marked by swift changes and the dissolution of traditional geographical constraints.

The overall effectiveness of tourism institutions in achieving their strategic objectives and enhancing their service offerings significantly depends on the adept selection of electronic marketing tactics and related strategies. These elements are vital tools employed by tourism management to bolster their competitive standing and enhance their capability to attract tourists, both internationally and domestically, while also ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction with their services.

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has cast a shadow over the sector, exerting a profound negative impact, particularly on the Algerian tourism industry. The sector has faced a severe crisis due to the stringent restrictions necessitated by health prevention measures, which led to a complete cessation of activities.

In response, there has been a concerted effort to reactivate the services of tourism and travel agencies, recognizing them as crucial for the development of the tourism sector. This sector is considered one of the main pillars of the industry, and the focus has shifted towards employing digital marketing strategies to promote the services they offer, thereby adapting to and overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Recommendations:

Based on the insights gleaned from the study, several strategic recommendations are proposed to aid tourism agencies in enhancing their operations and capitalizing on potential growth opportunities:

- Learn from the experiences of leading foreign tourism agencies in this field by understanding their secrets to continuous success and using them as a guide, especially those countries that share similar tourism characteristics and features as Mediterranean Basin countries through the promotion of their natural, cultural, and environmental heritage.
- Encourage the technological and electronic aspects and raise awareness more about tourism services electronically, such as virtual tours, and legally establish them.
- Focus on promoting domestic tourism and highlighting the immense tourism potential of Algeria for both local and foreign tourists, and cooperate with all tourism devices and institutions responsible for the sector to create a new industry, tourism industry.
- Necessity to devise an appropriate promotional strategy to attract the maximum number of domestic and foreign tourists.
- Develop an updated strategy to promote Algeria as a tourist destination and prepare a preliminary study of the outlined goals through experienced

specialists to test the suitable markets for promotion and how to recover from the negative impacts of COVID-19.

- Necessitate activating electronic transactions, especially electronic payments in various sectors, by providing support, enforcement, monitoring, and educating various institutions, including tourism agencies, to adopt electronic marketing by providing the necessary infrastructure for communication technology, especially advanced communication networks, and creating a supportive regulatory and legal environment.
- Agencies are also recommended to keep pace with developments, particularly in digital marketing applications.

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