



Universitat
de les Illes Balears

BACHELOR'S THESIS

PROMOTION OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA, THE CASE OF MALLORCA

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Double degree in Business Administration and Tourism

Faculty of Tourism

Academic Year 2020-21

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Key words:

Social media, Instagram, branding, influencers, engagement rate, street artwork.

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ROI: Return of Influence
UNWTO: World Tourism Organization
SIMs: Social Media Influencers
USD: United States Dollars

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research has been to evidence and uphold the use of Instagram for the promotion of tourist destinations. During the last decade, social media networks have been constantly proven to be one of the best marketing tools to add value and achieve successful campaigns, however in the touristic sector not many countries have taken advantage of all the possibilities these platforms offer. Mallorca is one of the most well-known destinations in Spain, but nowadays, its use of traditional mass media and conventional promotion techniques are not enough for reaching modern travelers. The findings of this thesis indicate the numerous objectives that an active Instagram account could achieve when enhancing the brand of the island through photography and aesthetics.

El objetivo de esta tesis ha sido evidenciar y defender el uso de Instagram para la promoción de destinos turísticos. Durante la última década, se ha demostrado constantemente que las redes sociales son una de las mejores herramientas de marketing para agregar valor y lograr campañas exitosas, sin embargo, en el sector turístico pocos países han aprovechado todas las posibilidades que estas plataformas ofrecen. Mallorca es uno de los destinos más conocidos de España pero, hoy en día, su uso de medios de comunicación tradicionales y sus técnicas de promoción convencionales no son suficientes para llegar a los viajeros modernos. Los hallazgos de esta tesis indican las numerosas ventajas que podría alcanzar una cuenta activa de Instagram a la hora de potenciar la marca de la isla a través de la fotografía y la estética.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, there has been a quick development respect to data sharing and communication on social media (Stojanovic, 2017). Nowadays, it is no secret that the presence of Internet in every industry has created new relationships between consumers and businesses; or in the specific case of the touristic sector, between destinations and their visitors.

There are thousands of forms of being present in online platforms, from content communities to blogs, or even through virtual worlds (Granberg, L., 2019). The ways of sharing information, thoughts and experiences are boundless since new innovative approaches are developed and launched in the markets every year.

Taking advantage of the use of social media applied to market tourism products has proven to be a great strategy (Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R., 2014). The digital programs allow travelers to collect information first-hand from other to make better decisions about the destination. Since the content is generated mainly by real visitors, the opinions are usually considered more reliable and perceived as authentic experiences (Kiráľová, A., & Pavlíčka, A., 2015). This gathering of information is occasionally published on personal internet sites, the destination's official webpage or other intermediaries' applications. After the trip, these pages are again crucial to save and share the experiences through written opinions, images or videos (Benedek, I., 2018).

This thesis aims to understand how this online content defines the image for the touristic destination and how it could be applied to the case of Mallorca.

The Balearic Islands have been fighting for years against the promotion of mass and unregulated tourism. Since their expansion in the late 1950's, the area has been subject to different natural and human processes, but because of the huge scale of tourism in such a small territory, the impact has often been disproportional (Buswell, R. J., 2011). Problems such as the *all inclusive*, the saturation of beaches and roads, the technological delay or the lack of sustainability have increased the cases of tourismophobia in the islands and weakened their image on an international level.

For these economical, social and environmental reasons, branding is considered a high-priority topic for both academics and companies. Interacting with online media sites allows potential visitors to experience the destinations without visiting them physically, which prompts the development of an earlier destination picture (Molinil-lo et al. 2018, cited in Benedek. I., 2018).

Because of this, marketing analysts should study the content uploaded in the digital platforms, including the users' generated one, in order to determine if the view projected fits the perspective they aim to provide (Llodrà-Riera, 2015).

During this report different business strategies related to the participation in Instagram for touristic promotional purposes will be analyzed, focusing on the situation in Mallorca.

2. CONTEXTUALIZATION

In order to properly analyze the evolution of the touristic destinations, it is necessary to present its market definition and background.

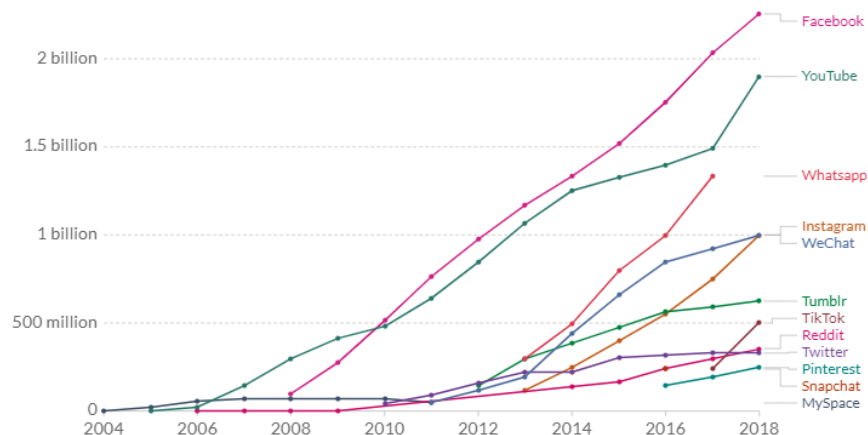
Destinations are occasionally defined as geographical areas with an appropriate political and legislative framework for the realization of any kind of touristic activity (Davidson & Maitland, 2000).

It can be said that the final location decided is paid in advance before the point of consumption (Királová, A., & Pavlíček, A., 2015). Visitors are charged for the flights and hotels before they can even experience the product by themselves. That is why, travelers have no other option than to trust the descriptions from others, whether they are found online, received through word of mouth or with advertisements.

However, as many studies demonstrated, visitors are more likely to rely on the opinion of family and close friends since a certain adversity to the traditional mass media has appeared among society during the last years (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Kitsak, M., et. al., 2010).

The use of social media has improved the connection between individuals and simplified the process of information research and decision-making (Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R., 2014). Since the early 2000s many of these platforms appeared on the market, but it wasn't until 2004 when MySpace claimed to have achieved the million monthly active users (E. Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

The following graph provides an outlook of the increase of users on the main social media sites during the last two decades. Nowadays, Facebook is still leading the ranking, with approximately 2.4 billion, according to data provided by R. Fernández for Statista.com (2020).



Graph 1: Users of social media platforms from 2004 to 2018.
Source: E. Ortiz-Ospina (2019), C. Booth (2019).

The rise of the so called *influencers* appeared as a side effect of this expansion. Rakoczy (2018) provide a definition for these SMIs:

An entity E such as a person (user), a group of people (e.g. company) or an object (content, conference, etc.) performs an action A by creating new content (such as posting, photo-sharing etc.) and broadcasting or sharing existing ones. Activity performing entity is active or prominent in the social network meaning that he/she has many ties. (p. 4-5).

The number of people dedicated to social media has kept growing due to the profitability achieved after the campaigns; with this success being calculated in terms of Return on influence - ROI (Gormley, 2016). However, this determination is not an easy process. Platforms such as Klout, mBlast, Peer Index and TweetLevel have been working to establish points of reference to understand a person's level of digital influence based on the behaviour and activity within social networks (Smith, B. G., et. al., 2018).

Instagram is considered one of the applications with more participation of influencers. Nowadays, Instafamous creators have demonstrated to have the potential to reach an audience that rivals traditional mass media. (Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R., 2017). Despite this, it has been found out that expensive celebrity collaborations do not ensure high engagement as much as smaller influencers do.

Microinfluencers on Instagram usually have between 10,000 and 50,000 followers (Rakoczy, M. E., et. al., 2018). These creators are known for interacting with fans regularly, creating an impact addressed to more active audiences (Mediakix, 2019). Studies have demonstrated more interesting Engagement rates (Likes plus comments divided by followers) for users with less than 10.000 followers. For example, as Markerly.com (2018) stated: "1,000 followers generally received likes on their posts 8% of the time. Users with 10 million+ followers only received likes 1.6% of the time".

In other words, companies objective when using these marketing tools is to capitalise the social networks and benefit from the intimate, more 'trustworthy' relationships SMIs have created (Gormley, 2016). Social media is known for allowing its users to create their own identity, sharing and giving a snapshot of how they want to be seen (Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R., 2017). So then, why not take this advantage and apply it to the touristic market?

Various studies have already demonstrated how the content presented first-hand by the suppliers, also known as Web 1.0, plus the user generated information, or Web 2.0, are key in defining image formation in destinations (Llodrà-Riera, 2015; Granberg, L., 2019).

This thesis aims to demonstrate that the tools offered by the specific platform of Instagram could be used to achieve a makeover of the island's touristic model and, by this, provide some solutions to the current issues.

2.1. Market analysis

The tourism industry has experienced one of the biggest progresses during the last decades, representing one of the main sources of income in many countries around the world. Before the year prior to the current coronavirus crisis started, the sector had grown by a 5%, computed 1.400 million arrivals worldwide and invoiced 1.7 trillion USD (World Tourism Organization, 2019).

As a consequence of the increase in travelers, more areas started promoting themselves in order to participate in the economic and social benefits that tourism provides. Today's visitors have a great variety of destinations to choose from, but less time to make a decision. That is why, in order to be successfully promoted, a touristic region needs to be properly differentiated from its competitors (Királová, A., & Pavlíčka, A., 2015).

A destination's perceived image relies on many factors such as its history, geography, art, food, citizens and other cultural features. Occasionally, these ideas are nothing else than stereotypes, a simpler version of reality that might not be accurate since they can be outdated or based on simple impressions rather than real facts (Kotler & Gertner, 2002 cited in Granberg, L., 2019).

This is exactly what happened in Mallorca. After years of promoting a harmful typology of tourism based on cheap packages, parties and only sun-and-beach activities, the island's image is no longer seen attractive for many travelers. To change this, different campaigns were carried out by the regional government during the last years but unfortunately, never with enough impact.

The Smart Island project is one of these numerous examples. According to a report published in Esmartcity.es (2017) by Elena Carrillo, Technical Secretary of the Consell Insular, and Jara Forcadell, Smart Business Consultant, Mallorca benefited during 2016 with an 8.8 million euro grant financed by the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism of Spain. The budget had to cover aspects such as the improvement of the quality of life of the island's citizens by improving technological applications, the revitalization of tourism and the support for local corporations. However, five years later many of the initiatives have not been implemented yet and thus there hasn't been a considerable change.

During the event Hospitality Innovation Planet (HIP), held in Madrid in 2019, two approaches about the role that administrations should have in the conversion of tourist destinations were highlighted. The hotel chain Meliá defended a public-private collaboration, while Palladium asked the authorities for more support (J. Luis Ortega, 2019).

Finding a solution to these image problems is not an easy task. That is why, in order to understand how others overcame these issues by investing into social networks, different Instagram accounts from various countries will be analyzed during the following pages.

The first contact of government agencies with social media was through blogs back in the late 90's, but it wasn't popular until 2007, when Facebook launched a version that allowed interaction between product pages and users (K. Dalton, 2019). Nowadays, due to the versatility of these platforms more governments are joining the trend and are using them to share and connect with the citizens.

Instagram accounts increase transparency, raise awareness, allow to take surveys, share daily operations and encourage interaction with the followers (A. K. Kirk, 2020). That is why, entities as important as the German National Tourist Board @germanytourism or the Spanish National Tourist Agency Turespaña @spain are present in this application.

The next table presents data from the official Instagram accounts managed by the Tourism agencies in different countries in the world.

Country	Account	Followers	Posts	Hastags	Verified
Australia	@australia	4.700.000	10.300	#SeeAustralia #Holidayherethisyear	Yes
Canada	@canada	1.500.000	1.339	#Canada	Yes
Spain	@spain	674.000	3.718	#Spain	Yes
Germany	@germanytourism	453.000	2.636	#VisitGermany #GermanyTourism	Yes
Croatia	@croatiafulloflife	392.000	10.600	#CroatiaFullOfLife	Yes
Costa Rica	@visit_costarica	306.000	1.790	-	Yes
México	@turismomexico	258.000	1.636	#MexicoMagico etc.	Yes
USA	@visittheusa	218.000	2.376	#VisitTheUsa #UnitedStories	Yes
South Africa	@meetsouthafrica	189.000	1.920	#BecauseSouthAfrica #ShareSouthAfrica	Yes
Italy	@visititalyofficial	186.000	1.781	#VisitItaly	No
France	@france.fr	136.000	2.016	#ExploreFrance	Yes
Brasil	@visitbrasil	117.000	2.538	#VisitBrasil #VisitAndLoveUs	Yes
Vietnam	@vietnamtourism board	165.000	1.167	#WhyNotVietnam #MyVietnam	Yes
Morocco	@visit_morocco_	108.000	876	#VisitMorocco #Maroc	Yes
China	@visitchina	9.440	526	#VisitChina	No
Rusia	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1: Promotional Instagram accounts of countries and public data.
Source: Official Tourism representatives' Instagram accounts. Retrieved on: 15/02/2021.

For the elaboration of this table, sixteen countries with different geographical and cultural backgrounds have been chosen in order to understand their perspectives towards their interest in promotion in this digital age. Overall, it is remarkable the presence of such a variety of international accounts and their mechanisms to participate in the platform.

The regions have been organized by number of followers, being Canada at the top of the list with 1.5 million subscribers. On the other side, China and Russia hold the last two positions. The communist regime to which they are subjected could be one of the reasons of this lack of interest. Instagram is forbidden in the Asian country, so all the accounts related to it are controlled by private individuals in other territories. By cons, in the case of Russia or even Cuba, where the application is not only allowed but also quite popular between its citizens, the participation by the public administration side is null.

The verification is also an interesting point. Being checked on Instagram means that the account is considered "an authentic presence of the public figure, celebrity or global brand represented." (C. Newberry, 2019). The lack of proves, as in the case of China and Italy, can present inconveniences such as distrust, a less scope, identity frauds and other constraints.

The blue check helps people easily find the brands or public figures they want to follow, but there are other solutions to reach them too. According to Carah & Shaul (2016) *hashtags* are short expressions that group images together around particular perspectives, identities, cultural aspects and practices. In the case of destinations, they help reaching target customers, but also participate in the reconversion of the image. For example, the choice of the Croatian National Tourism Board (#CroatiaFullOfLife) represented a fresher picture of the country compared to the simple option that Canada used (#Canada).

The Instagram algorithm is known for monitoring how quickly users interact with the content through these hastags, likes or comments; however it has been demonstrated how it also enhances the capacity of social media to reinforce ideas (Carah, N., & Shaul, M., 2016). In other words, this technology detects patterns and thus can contribute to the promotion of any concept. This is a double-edged sword since it can be particularly dangerous when the opinions promoted are controversial. In the case of tourism marketing however, it is one of the best tools to reach the target market and boost the new image.

Nowadays, a correct adaptation to the digital world is not only an efficient decision, but also a practice that can provide important economical advantages. Many international entities are participating nowadays in projects that encourage a higher use of technology in tourism. For example, the European Union has contests, such as the European Capital of Smart Tourism, focused on rewarding those regions that show smart, innovative and inclusive solutions in the field of tourism (European Economic Community, 2020).

The participation in digitalization is a significant trend that has been present for years in the countries' agendas. In brief, actions in social media reinforce the idea of going one step forward towards accessibility and modernization.

2.2. Current interest

The growing role of social media in tourism has been under the spotlight during the last years for various reasons. Nowadays, many studies have been carried out to understand its value in society and the impact in the decision making process.

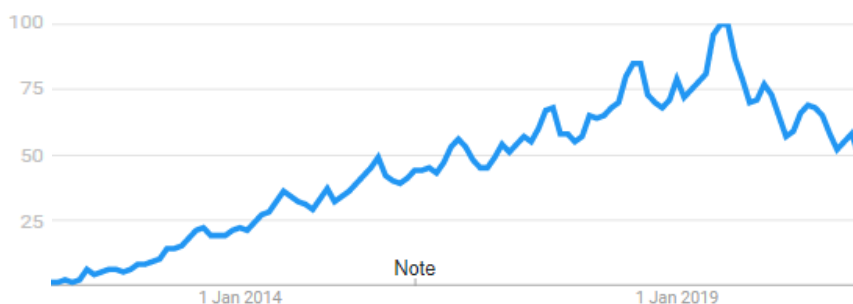
As an example, a survey conducted by Schofields in 2017 among travellers aged 18-33 demonstrated that 40% of these millennials said that the 'instagrammability' of a destination was the main motivator when choosing their next destination; even higher than other options offered such as personal growth or sightseeing (P. Schofield, 2017).

Upholding this theory, a research from Booking.com (2018) with data from 21.500 travellers across 29 countries exposed that 28% of the participants chose their lodging depending on the aesthetics and its potential to obtain pictures for their social networks. Thus, the desire to impress others would play a decisive role when opting for alternative options instead of traditional hotels.

Photography has always been a fundamental support for vacations and travel since the images of hotels, activities and experiences are decisive when closing reservations. According to C. Solares (2018) for Neuromarketing.la, people process images 60,000 times faster than texts, hence the great success of Instagram.

This application was launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom as a photo and video-sharing social network platform (D. Blystone, 2020). However, for the tourism sector the opportunities were beyond it and today it has become a consolidated promotion channel.

On the 17 of February 2021, when searching on the Google engine the words *Instagram* and *travel* 894.000.000 results appeared. To understand the growth, the next graph from Google Trends provides the evolution of the searches worldwide since 2012. The decrease presented during 2020 is due to the coronavirus crisis and its effect in the travel industry.



Graph 2: Google Trends for the word *Instagram* in the travel category.
Source: Google Trends, retrieved on the 2nd of February 2020.

3. METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to analyze how the Balearic Islands are using the image-based platform of Instagram as a destination branding tool and how it could improve the situation in Mallorca.

The first part of the paper has presented the theoretical background of the research, including definitions and online destination theories. Next, for the second research, the major promotion programs of the Balearic Islands will be analyzed with a special focus on their presence on social media networks.

Following, and in order to understand how this thesis results could apply to Mallorca, the main touristic spots and their impact in the area will be identified with the purpose of locating the visitors' main routes. To determine these attractions, multiple sources will be used, including the public data provided by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE) and different Instagram accounts based on the island.

Regarding the methodology used, a **direct observation method** has been chosen during the first steps of the project, where data has been collected by monitoring the visitor's choices around the streets of the main cities.

After gathering the information and in order to provide different perspectives to the paper, two more different methods have been chosen to analyze the online activity.

First, and to prove the assumption that Mallorca does not have a great international presence on social media sites, a two months depth observation in various Instagram accounts has been carried out. @mallorcatourism and @mallorcamagic have been chosen for being one of the official site and the one with the most followers, respectively. Through a **quantitative research approach**, statistical aspects such as the amount of followers or the engagement rates will be calculated to provide measurable impact.

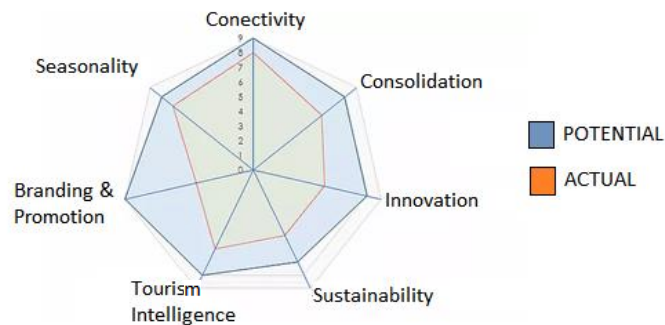
On the third chapter a **qualitative research technique** under the design of a **case study** will be performed. After understanding the evolution of social media through its literature review and the practical examples of other regions, an analysis of the impact of new photographic attractive around the island will be carried out.

In summary, the following pages will give examples of how to implement and take the most from social media appropriately in order to improve the image of the city according to the concepts acquired in the first chapters.

4. CASE STUDY: THE BALEARIC ISLANDS SITUATION

4.1. Current destination promotion programs

Despite all the data presented so far and knowing how online platforms are the future of travelling, the Balearic Islands' promotion plans have never been properly focused on the promotion of social media.



Graph 3: Competitive positioning of Mallorca - Current and desired.
Source: Strategic Tourism Plan 2020-2023 by Fundació Mallorca Turisme (2020).

During the last decades their marketing projects have been rather outdated as it is proved in the latest research by the Fundació Mallorca Turisme (2020).

The graph above represents the current situation of the main island in terms of tourism competitiveness. As seen, there is still a margin to achieve, with usually between 2 and 3 points from the actual position to the desired objectives. However this difference is more noticeable in the *Branding and Promotion* section, demonstrating that the projects carried until now have not been successful enough.

The Government of the Balearic Islands approved in 2014 the Comprehensive Tourism Plan 2015-2025, which was committed to improve the image of quality of the Balearic Islands by encouraging four main lines of action: consolidation of the destination, innovation, sustainability and smart destination (CAIB, 2014).

This plan, apart from not specifying any active participation in social networks, has some weak points that can be discussed:

- **Advertising campaigns in traditional media.** Despite it was said that they would be carried out on the most important national televisions, as demonstrated before, traditional channels of marketing are powerful means, but they had lost momentum due to the increase of online communication (Fernández-Cavia, J., et. al., 2017).

- **The promotion through participation in specialized fairs.** Nowadays it has been proved that these congresses by themselves do not provide a ROI positive enough to balance the huge costs (E. Zamorano, 2015). This is why it is necessary to alternate physical presence with online activities in order to obtain the full rewards of the investment.

For this, countries as Germany limited their attending. According to Ulrike Bohnet, director of the German National Tourism Office, the digitization strategy on a global scale was financially more reliable (P. Nadal, 2018).

- **Creation of a website and a tourist application.** The idea appeared after the latest review of the plan and the proposal of the Mallorca Strategic Tourism Plan 2020-2023 to adapt the island after the coronavirus crisis. This project towards technology advances is meant to offer specific and detailed information on the areas with the highest tourist influx, safe corridors and areas free of saturation to ensure that the tourist experience complies with the canons of sanitary security.

The approach is certainly a progress, however all this information could be provided through social network platforms too, which in the end are more accessible.

Despite the lack of specifications regarding the activity in the platforms in their promotion plans, the Insular Government does have accounts for each one of the Islands on Instagram. The next table collects some data from each account and the amount of times each island has been tagged with a hastag in a post:

Account	Followers	Posts	First post	Verified	Hastags
@turismoislasmallorca	43.800	1.812	21th July 2014	No	1.366.622
@mallorcatourism	5.635	201	24th July 2019	No	11.245.997
@turismomenorca	34.100	1.617	16th Nov. 2013	No	2.489.797
@ibizatavel	40.000	2.091	22th January 2013	No	17.349.095
@visitformentera	54.200	1.600	21th June 2013	No	2.564.579

Table 2: Instagram accounts of every Balearic Island.
Source: Official Tourism Instagram accounts. Retrieved on 22/02/2021.

Except from Mallorca, the scope of the accounts is acceptable. The number of followers rounds 40.000 and since 2013 they have uploaded content almost every day. Unfortunately, none of them are verified, making it harder to position themselves as the official pages; fact that lowers their impact and future growth.

The information retrieved from the account of Mallorca was interesting since the first post was in 2019, way later than the others. In order to understand why, a message was sent to its community manager, who's answer can be found in the annex of this thesis. In brief, there were no funds from the Spanish government until 2018, so the accounts were managed by individuals, not the administration.

On the other side, the average of the engagement rate calculated for 10 pictures shows a good tendency. As displayed in the next calculations, the result of the Mallorca's profile demonstrates a better interaction with its followers. This is key for its further development since this ratio keeps the account among the first ones when searching in the platform.

$$\text{@mallorcatourism: } \frac{(464 \text{ likes} + 14 \text{ comments}) + (279 + 0) + (266 + 5) + (237 + 6) \dots}{5.635 \text{ followers} \times 10 \text{ pictures}}$$

$$\dots + \frac{(601 + 7) + (324 + 0) + (385 + 1) + (300 + 4) + (228 + 2) + (213 + 1)}{10} = 5,92\%$$

$$\text{@turismoislasbalears: } \frac{(871 + 11) + (1.814 + 53) + (843 + 12) + (1.637 + 44) + (966 \dots)}{43.800 \text{ followers} \times 10 \text{ pictures}}$$

$$\dots + \frac{(1.311 + 15) + (930 + 14) + (1.186 + 22) + (1.242 + 15) + (836 + 4)}{10} = 2,7\%$$

Another point to mention and improve in the Mallorca's account it its feed. When comparing its page with Formentera's one, which has the most followers, it can be seen how the aesthetics play an important role.

Formentera publishes quality pictures and mantains a clean and profesional profile, while Mallorca bases its program in uploading photos of beaches and sometimes small towns such as Valldemossa, as seen in the figures below.



Fig. 1: Instagram feed @visitformentera.
Source: Official Instagram account.



Fig. 2: Instagram feed @mallorcatourism.
Source: Official Instagram account.

Related to this, it would be beneficial too if Mallorca followed the strategy of the account of Ibiza and posted about activities and events too. Mainly to include the tourists in the cultural aspects and not only in sun and beach plans. Nowadays, there are pages with this kind of information but just for locals. As an example, @ajuntpalma, the oficial site of the City Council of Palma, provides news to 16.800 users, but only in catalan.

4.2. Importance of enhancing the Instagram of Mallorca

After comparing the different accounts from the islands, it can be said that the Instagram of Mallorca requires some work in order to be up to the task. The general benefits of this platform have been already given during the first part of this thesis, so the next pages will be specifically focused on the Mallorca case.

4.2.1. *Economic advantages*

In the economic spectrum, Instatourism has been beneficial to attract tourists to parts of the world that they did not previously travel to. By default, tourism has a positive economic impact on the destinations, creating jobs and collecting taxes, which can be reinvested in the local economy and used in other areas such as education or healthcare (H. Stainton, 2020).

This could not seem specifically the case of Mallorca, since the island is already known around the world. However, there are several problems that affect economically too and Instatourism can provide some solutions.

First, the citizens have been dealing with the great inflation of prices in touristic areas; not only in real state, but also in services such as restaurants and shops. The descongestion of these saturated locations could be carried out through the next assumption: By creating and promoting aesthetic spots in areas less touristic, the flow of the visitors will change towards them. Examples will be given in 4.2. *Instagrammable proposals*, but in general terms these projects would regulate the saturation of some major streets and the prices around them. By encouraging people to take pictures of different spots, the supply and the demand will become more diverse and decentralized.

On the other side, another problem that has been affecting the island for years is its seasonability. The public administration has shown a great concern about this situation since the 70s, when they created for the first time a program to promote its culture through musical shows performed during winter. According to Bigné (2000) this didn't work out as expected at first but in 1983, under the coordination of the Mallorca Tourism Development Department, it started to achieve some progress.

Nowadays and thanks to the plans of promotion such as the ones presented in the last chapters, there has been a certain improvement. The diversification of the activities offered has been key, with a major focus on rural tourism and cycling. Today, Mallorca welcomes more than 150.000 cyclists every year, which spend an average of 140 euros a day and have an estimated economic impact of 150 million euros each year (L. Marques, 2019).

Social media has been proven to be one of the most valuable and cost-effective channels for destinations to reach their potential visitors (Benedek, I., 2018). In this case, Instagram could easily promote these new typologies of tourism during the low season while mantaining a reasonable budged.

4.2.2. *Social goals*

According to the analysis of *Estimated tourist income of the Spanish autonomous communities* by M. Figuerola (2020), the touristic sector represented in 2019 a 42,1% of the Balearic islands' GDP. However, and despite being the source of income of an upgrowing number of families, the cases of the so called turismophobia have also increased during the last years.

In this case, social media has not been of great help, but rather has added fuel to the fire. Through the geo-tagging options, travelers have been able to find easily locations without having to spend time asking, which occasionally has been prejudicial since some areas did not exactly wanted to be discovered.

Because of this, it is necessary to find a balance between the desire of tourists to find original places and the apprehension of locals towards them.

According to a study of Airbnb.com, 80% of the travelers exposed a desire to integrate between locals in their next trips ("Airbnb and the Rise of Millennial Travel", 2016). Moreover, other analyses have shown how the best solution to make people respect and care about the destinations' landscape and culture is by getting them to know it in real life (H. Stainton, 2020). In other words, once visitors feel integrated, they become more aware of their impact.

Instagram could be an instrument to promote activities for both travelers and locals to participate and cooperate. This platform could help to promote a new identity for the islands and, as Kladou (2017) demonstrated, *branding* reflects ideas for the visitors that are basic for their understanding of the destination. In brief, Instagram could provide the information necessary for the tourists to understand better the culture and improve the relationships with the citizens.

4.2.3. *Sustainable development benefits*

Erosion, littering, lack of enough water, noise pollution, etc., the tourism industry can present many negative impacts if not handled properly. The problem in many regions is that Instagram tourism has grown faster than expected and the tourism planning has failed to provide adjustments and solutions on time (H. Stainton, 2020). Because of this, the objectives of sustainability travel have presented difficulties to be achieved.

However, being sustainable in the long term is not just a trend issue, it is a necessity. The UNWTO (2019) defended that destinations can be more efficient in the long run if they work from an ecological view, promoting biodiversity conservation and through measures to avoid climate change.

Instagram can support these changes and be a powerful tool to promote new typologies of travelling and educate the tourists, presenting more respectful activities in the area or providing information of the best practices for travelers.

4.3. Instagrammable proposals

The necessity of decongestion of the main touristic areas is a common problem in many destinations.

Citizens from cities such as New York have seen their daily operations affected due to the great influx of people on the streets. As a solution to this problem, new tourist attractions were created and spread around five of its districts. The city surpassed 60 million tourists for the first time last year and still managed to balance its overcrowding through this diversification (V. Hinojosa, 2017). The next proposals follow this example.

Today, Mallorca has many areas that are saturated while others are lacking of touristic attractives. When looking online for routes to visit the island, the guides mostly follow the itinerary in blue:

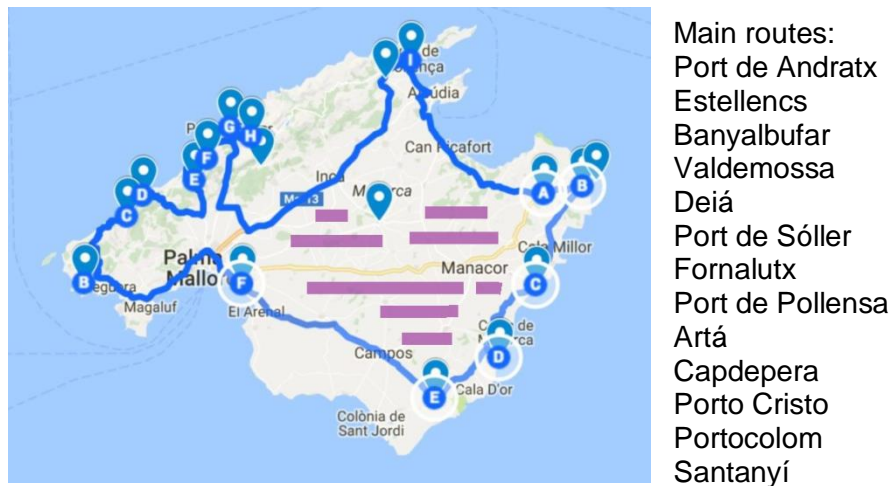


Figure 3: Itinerary of Mallorca's most visited towns.
Source: Self-elaborated, data from M. Callón (2017).

The main problem of the island is clearly seen in this map. The tourist sun-and-beach offer continues to have an important weight while the center is less interesting for visitors. Of course it is hard for small towns in the middle of Mallorca to compete with the landscapes of Valldemossa or Deià but, with the appropriate creation of alternative activities and its Instagram promotion, they could become as interesting as the them. Beauty is important, but not the only reason why people are traveling nowadays.

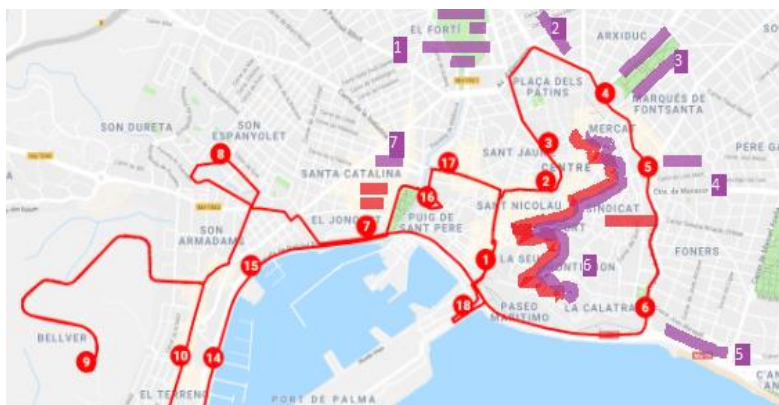
As an example, according to a study from this same platform, 75% of tourists chose a destination for its gastronomic experience while 88% of the destinations considered that gastronomy was key to their image (D. R. Vilarasau, 2018).

So then, in order to diversify the activities and control the flows of tourists, it would be convenient if the next proposals of this chapter were more focused in this less touristic areas.

Spreading the touristic attractions would reduce the negative impact of overcrowding, but also would help avoiding situations such as the one in Amsterdam. In this case, the Insta-famous IAMSTERDAM was located in an already touristic area, provoking daily saturations. In the end, the sign had to be removed to control the large influx of tourists. According to A. Butler (2018), the decision was made by the city's party, which said that it had become a symbol of massification and went against their ideals of community and solidarity.

In the specific case of Palma, the next image shows in red the routes of the touristic bus *Hop On Hop Off*, which coincides with the most crowded attractives during the summer season.

In order to expand the options for the visitors, the next ideas could be located in the lilac areas, which nowadays are way less crowded but still have the potential to integrate attractives that can benefit both tourists and locals. These districts have been chosen for its conectivity with the rest of the routes and because of its touristic-friendly shape, represented by parks and pedestrian streets.



Proposals:

1. Sa Riera park.
2. Street: Blanquerna.
3. Ses Estacions park.
4. Street: Nuredunna.
5. Congress Palace area.
6. Center's secondary streets.
7. Santa Catalina area.

Figure 4: Itinerary of Palma's most visited attractions.
Source: Self-elaborated, data from C. de Ory (2019).

Art is a powerful tool that not only decorates, but also makes people become aware of their surroundings. In this way, street art could present a great solution for inspiring, diversifying the opinions and add character to the scene. In the case of Mallorca it can create an opportunity for travelers to discover new spots, but also make the commuting of locals more interesting.

In general, the island has always been an attractive spot for artists. Painters, writers and musicians have contributed during decades to develop the actual creative atmosphere. Because of this, the next proposals could be easily integrated and promoted by both the public administration through the Mallorca's instagram account and also by private business with original ideas in their restaurants, hotels, shops, exteriors, interiors, etc.

Nowadays, there are already routes around Palma's street art. Livingtours offers a 2 hour itinerary for 46€ while, since 2015, the Instagram @streetart_mallorca documents the urban pieces of the island. The facility to promote art through this platform relies on its aesthetics and its interactive options. People do not only take pictures of the works, but also tend to appear with them in a playful and participative mode, reason why this tactic should be more encouraged.

According to the The municipal cleaning, waste and residue ordinance (2017, p.37) graffiti artwork are illegal and considered a form of vandalism. Of course whenever it's done without permission or aiming to harm private property it should not be supported. However, the scene in the island is varied and full of talent so a better control and updated regulations could create a positive outcome.

From the public administration side and to support the cause, the Council of Mallorca created the following map, which gathers 272 artworks in the capital.



Figure 5: Street art map in Palma.

Source: Google My Maps (2020) "Mapa art urbà Palma".

The Instagram account of Mallorca could also collect and promote these artworks, which in the end not only have an aesthetics meaning, but also can uphold cultural references. As an example, the Balearic Islands have established few but really Insta-famous examples that combine literature and art.

- Ses Salines, Formentera: A beach with the sentence "No hay verano sin beso".
- Around Palma's streets: Cans on walls inscribed with short messages or poetry lines in Catalan, by Jakuna Melata.
- Es Trenc, Mallorca: Huge white bunkers with parts of the poem *Cala Gentil* from Miquel Costa i Llober.

Besides this, other cultural aspects could be shared such as the multiple events that happen throughout the year. From the Night of the Art to the Majorca Day, the page could provide in Spanish, Catalan and English all the information that nowadays is only available in the first language.

In brief, Instagram and creativity could be the solutions to improve the international image of Mallorca. By posting diverse and attractive images apart from beaches, people would be able to conceive the island beyond this typology of tourism and thus, new opportunities would emerge.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been the study of Mallorca's promotion strategy in the digital age. After carrying out various quantitative and qualitative analyses, the results have shown a slow but positive trend towards the implementation of social media as a marketing tool to enhance the image of the island.

From the economic point of view, Instagram has demonstrated to be one of the most profitable platforms for promoting any type of products. The impact that these pages can achieve are huge when the content presented is attractive and innovative. The touristic sector has benefit from this, but still, there are many countries, enterprises and entities whose trust and use of them has been rather limited.

The public administration of the Balearic Islands is one of them. Many programs have been created during the last years to promote new activities in the islands beyond sun and beach offers. However, its use of traditional mass media and conventional marketing approaches have demonstrated to not be enough in modern society.

Digitalization is key and, because of this, institutions such as the European Union are rewarding those countries and cities with the best ideas regarding technological advances to solve problems such as sustainability or social issues in touristic areas.

Mallorca has the potential to evolve and achieve a new image in the international market. However, the necessity of investing into the correct analyses, the slowness exploring different marketing methods and the lack of new attractives and activities have led into a belated implementation of social networks.

As demonstrated through the examples of other cities, travelers are willing to change the preset routes to new locations in order to obtain original photographs. With an appropriate strategy, this fact could not only help with branding the island, but also could lead to solve negative aspects such as price inflation and overcrowding.

The findings of this thesis indicate the necessity of Mallorca to provide new attractions and promote them through an active Instagram account in order to achieve a new image. Social networks are booming and, since it is not known until when this trend will keep expanding, the island should take advantage of its benefits before it loses its chance.

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7. ANNEX

Caption of the conversation with @mallorcatourism, the official representation of the island of Mallorca in the platform of Instagram. 23/02/2021.

