

## **DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT APPLIED TO THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: VUELING AIRLINES CASE STUDY**

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### **Abstract:**

This research was carried out to examine the role of digital marketing in the tourism sector. To this end, the main contributions in the literature related to the study of digital marketing and its application in the tourism sector were analyzed, identifying which variables determine digital marketing management in the airline industry. Once a suitable model was established, a qualitative study was realized using digital content analysis for a Spanish air operator, Vueling Airlines. The results obtained demonstrate the applicability of digital marketing strategies to a tourism business model based on the Internet, considering the determinant variables: (1) search engine marketing, (2) email marketing, (3) word of mouth marketing, (4) affiliate marketing, (5) blog marketing, and (6) social media marketing. It is considered that the present study can help managers to face the specific challenges of digital marketing management in the airline industry.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Digital Economy, Digital Marketing, Air Operators, Spain

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has changed the way human beings interact with those close to them and, at the same time, it has promoted many business ventures (Bakardjieva, 2005). Thus, the growth of the Internet in recent times can be considered unstoppable, with more than thirty percent of the world population being regular users (Curran, Fenton, and Freedman, 2016). Therefore, there are significant changes in business, and studies will continue to determine the impact and role of the Internet in the globalization process (Barrientos, 2017).

Additionally, the justification for the application of digital strategies in the airline industry can be found based on the phenomenon that has occurred with air liberalization in Europe since 1997, translated into the adhesion of low-cost companies, and the evolution of the sensitivity of travelers to price (Valls, 2010), among other factors of the globalization of the economy (Hjalager, 2007). Therefore, air operators have increased the implementation of web strategies and policies to adapt to the demands of the environment (Jacobsen and Munar, 2012). Thus, Nekic (2014) states that national tourism organizations are aware of the need to interact with current and potential visitors through a website and through the generation of digital marketing strategies.

Focusing on the concept of digital marketing, it stands out that this consists of the performance of a series of activities aimed at generating online communication using a direct dialogue with users and looking for potential customers (Strauss, Frost and Ansary, 2009). Therefore, it can be considered that we are in the era of online marketing, or Internet marketing, in which online social media can be of great help in business strategies (Carballar, 2012). Similarly, Lew, Hall, and Williams (2008) emphasize the Long Tail concept or Internet-based economy proposed by Anderson (2007), pointing out that the phenomenon has allowed service companies to improve their volume of demand and create greater access to information and services based on different market niches. Uribe (2014) argues that digital marketing strategies offer many possibilities of interaction with the client and greater loyalty, being an online sales channel developed from strategies of the e-marketing mix.

In the specific field of air service, Gee and Fayos (1997) confirm that digital marketing strategies make products and services special. And this, applied to the tourism market, helps to better segment potential customers and to understand the psychology of the traveler, in order to generate research and tourism forecasts. Küster (2006) also emphasizes that these strategies have a far-reaching impact on the travel and tourism industry. More recently, Jacobsen and Munar (2012) confirm that, in the new digital age, digital and social marketing act as a differentiating element within the search for information and choice of tourist vacation destination by potential consumers.

In this framework, it is considered that the present study can help to progress scientifically in the area of marketing, given that to date, although research has been carried out on digital marketing in the tourism sector (Ejarque, 2015; Foglio, 2015; García and Sánchez, 2014; Jacobsen and Munar, 2012; Nekic 2014; Perdomo, Rincón and Sánchez, 2014; Sánchez, 2018; Valls, 2010) there is no research that exhaustively analyzes the private airline industry in Spain, combining seven variables that could be the basis of air e-marketing management. In addition, it is considered that it can be useful for managers in the aviation sector, since they can decipher the keys to the digital marketing strategy developed by a specific airline and, with it, generate appropriate actions in their business.

The objective, therefore, of this work is to analyze the role of digital marketing applied to the airline industry. Therefore, two key objectives are considered: (1) analyzing which are the most decisive variables corresponding to a digital marketing strategy among tour operators and (2) analyzing the digital marketing strategies of a specific tour operator. In these lines, Vueling Airlines is considered the best option, justifying said choice because it is considered a benchmark both nationally and internationally (Casanoves and Küster, 2016).

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Kannan (2017), and following the definition of the American Marketing Association, digital marketing is understood to be an adaptive process, enabled by technology through which companies collaborate with customers and partners to create, communicate, deliver and maintain value for all interested parties. In addition, Riobó (2005) considers that digital marketing refers to those applications of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that are used in the world of marketing. Morris (2009) shows that the correct use of digital media helps any company to maximize its business unit. Thus, and after reviewing the literature, the subsequent lines pose seven research questions in which the suitability of certain digital marketing strategies in the airline industry is questioned.

### **2.1. Search Engine Marketing**

According to Orense and Rojas (2010), the use of search engines is the most repeated activity by Internet users, along with checking their e-mail. Furthermore, few search engine users look beyond the second page of results after conducting a search. Iglesias and Codina (2016) consider that cybermedia should be aware of the importance of search engines and, take their optimization (SEO) into account. That is, applying search engine positioning techniques when, among other things, generating user experience.

Applying this terminology to the tourism sector, Rovira, Fernández, Pedraza, and Huertas (2010) study the positioning of the websites of large Spanish municipal corporations in searches for the city's tourism brand on Google and Yahoo, detecting empirical evidence on the weight of inbound links and keywords for search engine positioning strategies. Ramos (2017) also indicates that it is very important for tourism companies to have a good positioning in Internet search engines since this will help users to interact more easily with them. Tourism organizations and agencies must make an effort to create quality content and thus be able to position themselves on the first page of the search engine. Quintero, Bravo, Chica, Zambrano, and Cedeño (2018) evaluated, among other factors, the use of SEO and SEM strategies that improve the tourist visibility of the Sucre canton (Ecuador), emphasizing the great competitive advantages and growth opportunities that this provides in relation to traditional advertising media.

In view of the above, it is possible to ask the first research question: RQ1: Does search engine marketing positively influence the digital marketing strategy of air operators?

### **2.2. Email Marketing**

According to Jenkins (2008), email marketing is one of the most powerful but misunderstood tools in the marketing world. Virtually all users and companies use it on a daily basis, either to send or receive content and offers. Hartemo (2016) also takes into account the importance of email marketing and encourages managers to carry out strategies focused on email to empower their brands. Ramos (2016) considers that email marketing is understood to be the sending of a commercial message through email, traditionally being one of the most effective loyalty and re-marketing tools. Thus, its survival as a channel of promotion and communication is the best proof of its effectiveness.

Applying this terminology to the tourism sector, Anato (2006) argues that tourism companies must adapt to new marketing instruments, generally focused on the digital ecosystem, among which email marketing actions stand out so that users know and receive publicity from the destinations and tourist services offered. Kaur (2017) states that today's digital marketing has become an indispensable part of every tourism business, regardless of its size and type, with email marketing being a key tool, which must be worked on very well, through the personalization of offers and communication with the different segments to maximize their profitability. Saavedra (2020) analyzes the importance of email marketing in the Commission for the Promotion of Peru for Exports and Tourism (Promperú) in order to promote its brand image, its offer as a tourist destination, and investment opportunities. As a result, he states that this strategy has a positive impact on the response of advertising and information campaigns while defining the positioning in the minds of stakeholders.

Taking into account what has been said, it is possible to ask the second research question: RQ2: Does email marketing positively influence the digital marketing strategy of air operators?

### **2.3. Word of Mouth Marketing**

According to Maqueira and Bruque (2009), the purpose of Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM) is to guarantee that consumers receive the information, advertising, or content and share it. Thus, characteristics such as offering relevant information, being commented/shared, offering entertainment, comedy and/or attractive audiovisual elements stand out, in such a way that it is recommended and viralized. Palka, Pousttchi, and Wiedemann (2009) point out that viral marketing helps to significantly expand the number of recipients, increasing the impact of marketing communication at a low business cost, while reducing distribution costs in services from business to consumer.

Applying this terminology to the tourism sector, Chillitupa and Ccahuana (2017) highlight the importance of viral marketing to boost the demand for tourist attractions in the Ccorca district (Peru) by tourism agencies. Martínez, Albeza, and Martínez (2018) state that eWOM can be maximized thanks to the interactions of users with the social networks of the Spanish tourist brands of sun and beach destinations, although they must be complemented with other strategies of digital marketing and study the interests of each particular user well. Carpio, Hanco, Cutipa, and Flores (2019) analyze the brand viral marketing strategies used by tourist restaurants in the Puno Region (Peru), revealing that connectivity is the main strategy of viral marketing that contributes to the positioning of brands online.

Consequently, it is possible to ask the third research question: RQ3: Does WOMM

positively influence the digital marketing strategy of air operators?

#### **2.4. Affiliate Marketing**

According to Goldschmidt, Junghagen, and Harris (2003), although affiliate marketing can be considered an outdated concept in the face of the rapid digital changes taking place, it is still a very useful and effective tool for marketing managers, consultants, advertisers, and other business market players. Duffy (2005) considers that affiliate marketing represents a kind of open market in which innovative Internet marketers can generate income by acting as free agent sellers for thousands of brands online. Additionally, advertisers benefit from predictable marketing costs as a percentage of sales.

Applying this terminology to the tourism sector, Daniele, Frew, Varini, and Magakian (2009) emphasize that affiliate marketing is becoming a key strategic channel for the distribution of travel and tourism products and that the discipline is maturing with the arrival of affiliate networks and the growing sophistication of both merchants and affiliates. Furthermore, they highlight that there are still several problematic aspects linked to this form of online distribution, mainly in relation to issues of brand management and affiliate fraud. Recuero Blasco and García (2016) state in their work that affiliate programs are an important basis to take into account in the tourism marketing strategy. Therefore, they should appear in the design of the marketing plan of tourism companies. Rodríguez (2019) considers that Affiliate Marketing has become the most important and effective form of online marketing for both tourism companies and travelers, by facilitating new opportunities to advertise aimed at a specific demand segment and extend the reach of the brand and social recognition, by facilitating fame and greater visibility with the consumer.

Thus, it is possible to ask the fourth research question: RQ4: Does affiliate marketing positively influence the digital marketing strategy of air operators?

#### **2.5. Blog Marketing**

According to Wright (2005), blogging means that your business will no longer need to rely on costly group dynamics, comment forms, email, and other tedious and time-consuming methods of obtaining feedback. For Rojas (2006), weblogs, blogs, logbooks, and simply blogs, are personal web pages that, like online diaries, have made the possibility of publishing on the Internet to all users.

Applying this terminology to the tourism sector, Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts (2007) explore travel blogs as a manifestation of the travel experience. As a result, it is found that the opinions of bloggers about a trip are of great help to other users; additionally, blogs facilitate the commercialization of tourist destinations, while improving the quality of service and the general experience of travelers. Filgueira (2008) shows that the new technologies that appeared with Web 2.0 have their application in the world of tourism and travel, giving rise to the so-called Tourism 2.0 of which blogs are a fundamental element. In other words, these represent an innovation in marketing strategies for companies and institutions that offer tourist services, while at the same time representing a new set of tools for the users of said services. Y, Huang, Yung, and Yang (2011) explore blogging and digital marketing strategies for the Taiwanese travel agency industry. The

results show the importance of developing differentiated strategies and indicators for measuring blogging performance by Taiwanese travel agencies.

As a result of what has argued above, it is possible to ask the fifth research question: RQ5: Does blog marketing positively influence the digital marketing strategy of air operators?

## **2.6. Social Media Marketing**

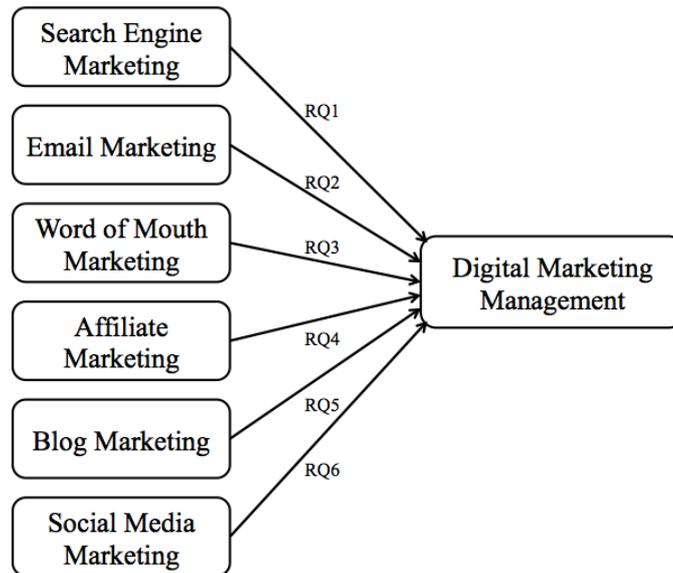
According to Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012), social networks are being widely used by practically everyone, at the individual and business level, regardless of their size. Although, big brands make special use of social networks to convey customer friendliness and brand strength. Castells (2015) states that Internet social networks allow people to connect to each other and work on projects from multiple sources, regardless of their personal points of view or organizational ties.

Applying this terminology to the tourism sector, Hvass and Munar (2012) state that over the years, online marketing has gained importance in the tourism industry, offering numerous marketing tools, one of the most recent being social networks. Even so, they determine that there is a lack of strategic perspective between the use of social networks by airlines since they are used with limited uniformity. Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013) argue that they are gaining prominence as an element of destination marketing organization, although they state that the use of social networks among the main destination marketing organizations is still in an experimental phase and strategies vary significantly depending on the type of tourism organization being studied. Kiráľová and Pavlíček (2015) consider that social networks play an important role in both the demand and supply of tourist destinations, allowing destinations to interact directly with visitors through various Internet platforms while monitoring and reacting to the opinions and evaluations of visitors.

Consequently, it is possible to ask the sixth research question: RQ6: Does social media marketing positively influence the digital marketing strategy of air operators?

In view of the above, Figure 1 shows our proposal for a Theoretical model designed to defend the present research.

**Figure 1.** Theoretical model proposed for the present research



### 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the proposed research questions, empirical, qualitative research was carried out through a case study. To this end, the digital content analysis applied to Vueling Airlines was used as a data collection tool, dividing the information based on the proposed analysis variables.

Vueling Airlines is a Spanish airline that began operating in 2004, having its main base of operations at Barcelona airport, although it also has bases in Madrid, Seville, Bilbao, Malaga, Valencia, and Ibiza (during the summer season), flying to the main cities in Spain, Europe, and North Africa. According to their current managers, the airline has a different way of seeing and doing things and this may be why they are considered a new generation, where ideas as seemingly irreconcilable as competitive prices and traveling safely and in style are perfectly compatible. However, the most remarkable thing for our study, among other factors, is that the company is part of the history of the Ecommerce Awards, benchmarks in the Spanish digital scene whose task is to reward online sales companies that have stood out for their strategies in different categories (<http://www.finanzas.com>).

Thus, official data from Vueling Airlines and secondary Internet sources were used, also analyzing the company's data. To do this, information was collected for six months by examining the content of 27 websites related to the air service area and this specific airline, which are: (1) the Vueling Airlines website itself, (2) news websites and air service rankings, among which we chose those related to this specific airline, (3) websites in which the airline carried out a social media marketing strategy, (4) opinion forums from Internet users who occasionally purchased a service from the airline and, in doing so, they comment on their satisfaction of use and (5) blogs of marketing experts who write about Vueling Airlines on the network.

## **4. RESULTS**

The results obtained demonstrate the applicability of Vueling Airlines’ digital marketing strategies to a tourism business model base on the Internet, considering the determinant variables: (1) search engine marketing, (2) email marketing, (3) word of mouth marketing, (4) affiliate marketing, (5) blog marketing, and (6) social media marketing.

### **4.1. Search Engine Marketing**

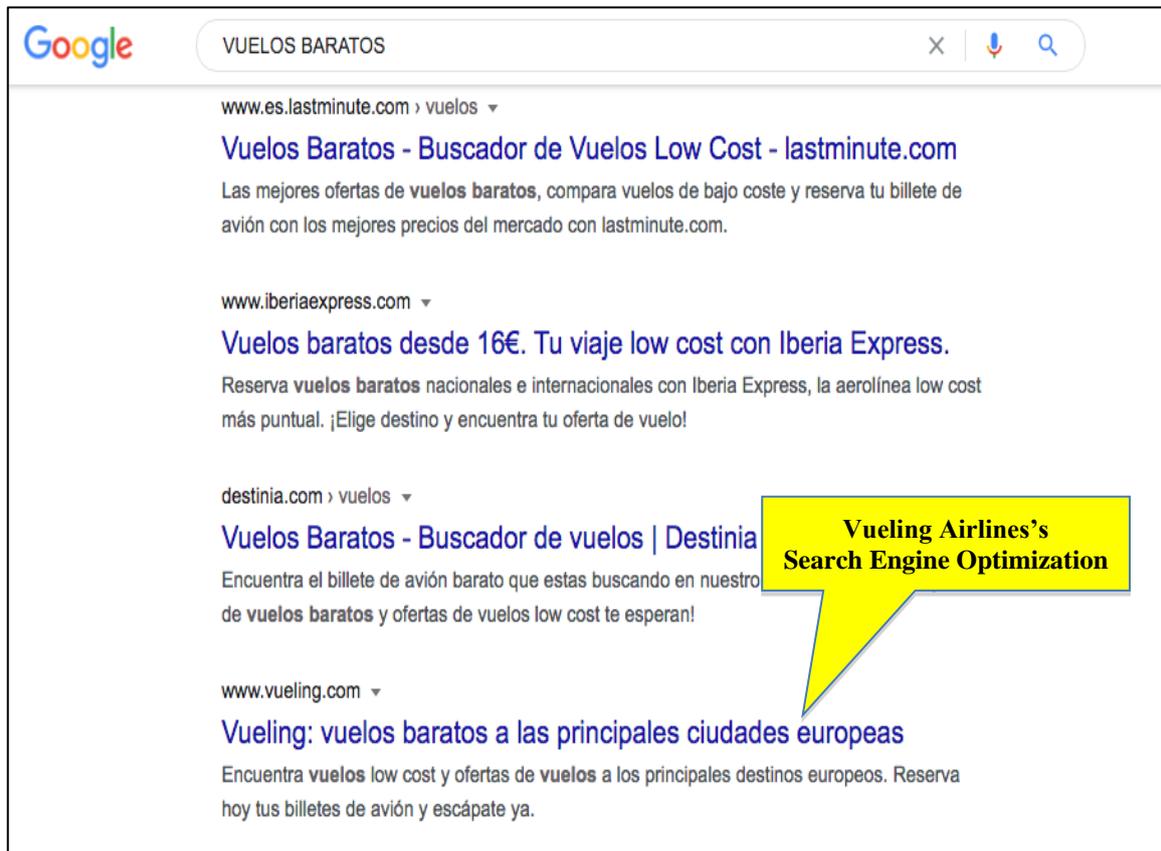
Vueling has opted to carry out search engine marketing actions, differentiated into two types: (1) organic positioning (Search Engine Optimization - SEO) and (2) sponsored positioning (Search Engine Marketing - SEM). See each of them below.

First of all, and with respect to organic positioning (SEO), it is observed in Google Search that Vueling is positioned on the second page, exactly 25th on the list of airlines that can offer cheap flights. This shows us that the search engine has stored a database of different websites with data associated with the word "Vueling", responding automatically after having applied a search algorithm, and, presenting us with the results in order of relevance. Thus, the Vueling brand has positioned itself in Google Search with the following objectives: To be indexed, to be presented, to be popular, and to achieve quality content. Although, it should be noted that its SEO positioning should be improved since it is considered that the first five companies that appear in the search engine (without being sponsored links) are the most important.

On the other hand, if we write the word "Vueling" in the Google search engine, eleven references of the airline appear, behind the SEM positioning, the following references being, by priority in the search:

- <http://www.vueling.com>;
- <http://www.vueling.com/ES/>
- <http://www.vueling.com/ES/chekin>
- [www.vueling.com/offers/offer.php?language=ES](http://www.vueling.com/offers/offer.php?language=ES)
- [www.rumbo.es/vuelos/baratos/air/line/VY/vueling](http://www.rumbo.es/vuelos/baratos/air/line/VY/vueling)
- [www.mirayvuela.com](http://www.mirayvuela.com) › vuelos low cost
- <http://viajesyrelax.com/vueling-com-buscador-vuelos-baratos-reservas-low-cost>
- <http://www.cafeytren.com/viajareuropa/avion/companias/vueling.php>
- [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vueling\\_Airlines](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vueling_Airlines)
- <http://www.edreams.es/ofertas/vuelos/aerolinea/VY/vueling>
- [http://www.google.es/noticias\\_sobre\\_Vueling](http://www.google.es/noticias_sobre_Vueling)

**Figure 2.** Vueling Airlines’ search engine optimization

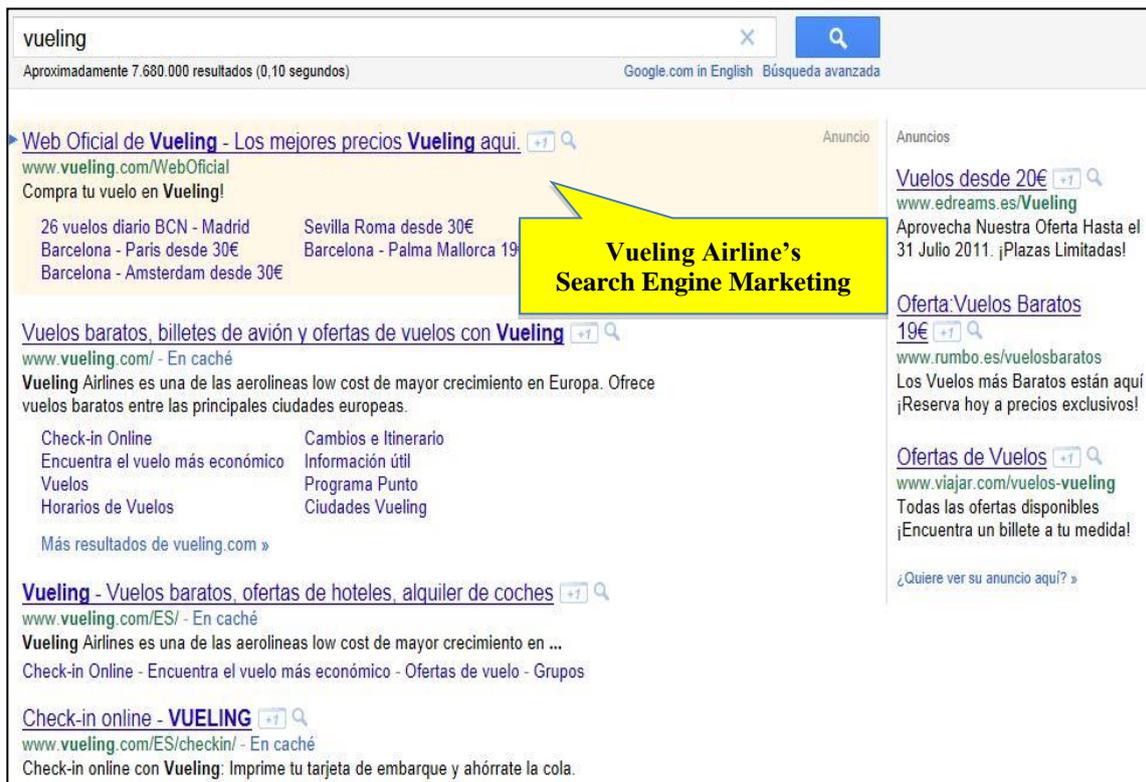


Source: <http://www.google.es>

Each and every one of the eleven references is free for these companies, which indicates that the Vueling brand is well positioned in Google Search. In other words, these are organic results that the search engine presents in response to our search. This shows us that the search engine has stored a database of different websites with data associated with the word "Vueling", responding automatically after having applied a search algorithm, and with it, presenting us the results in order of relevance. Thus, the Vueling brand has positioned itself in Google Search with the following objectives: to be indexed, to be presented, to be popular, and to achieve quality content.

In terms of sponsored positioning (SEM), Vueling also makes use of managing search engine marketing through promotion and pay per click (PCP).

**Figure 3.** Vueling Airlines’ search engine marketing



Source: <http://www.google.es>

## 4.2. Email Marketing

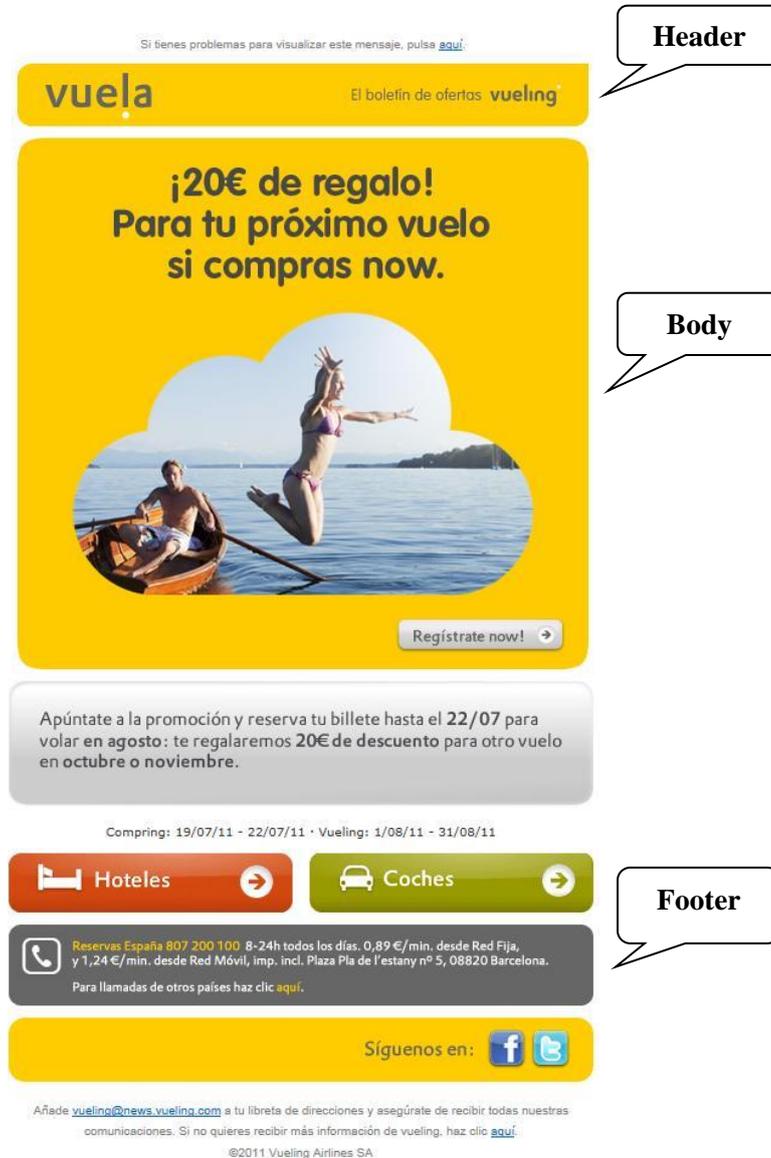
As announced (<http://www.puromarketing.com>) in 2009, one of Vueling's differentials is the email marketing campaigns it uses to attract customers. An example that the Emailing Network developed in one of Vueling's online marketing campaigns in 2009, managed to attract 10,000 potential customers. On that occasion, the Emailing Network designed an email marketing campaign to attract Vueling to expand the market niches to which it could direct its offers and with which to obtain greater brand awareness.

Therefore, we speak of direct sales to the client, allowing this type of direct online marketing campaign companies to quickly and efficiently reach those segments of the population that are likely to become potential clients, and this is demonstrated by the different campaigns developed from the Emailing Network. Specifically, the Vueling campaign designed by the Emailing Network allowed the airline to increase, in just two days, its database considerably. That is why more and more companies that develop part of their business on the Internet are firmly committed to this type of strategy.

Thus, Vueling uses permission email marketing to exclusively advertise a service or plane ticket that sends it via email to registered users, with express consent to receive emails. In other words, the company uses the emails that have been registered, through its website, simply by entering a series of personal data and accepting the conditions of use of the service. In this way, the company will create a list or e-CRM, together with other users that belong to the same target (e.g., by age, social rank, community, percentage of annual flights) to send specialized promotions and the monthly newsletter afterward.

To analyze the design of the email marketing campaigns carried out, we have studied an example of a promotion that they sent us, as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Vueling Airlines' email marketing campaign



Source: <http://www.vueling.es>

The airline develops the email design based on the following key points:

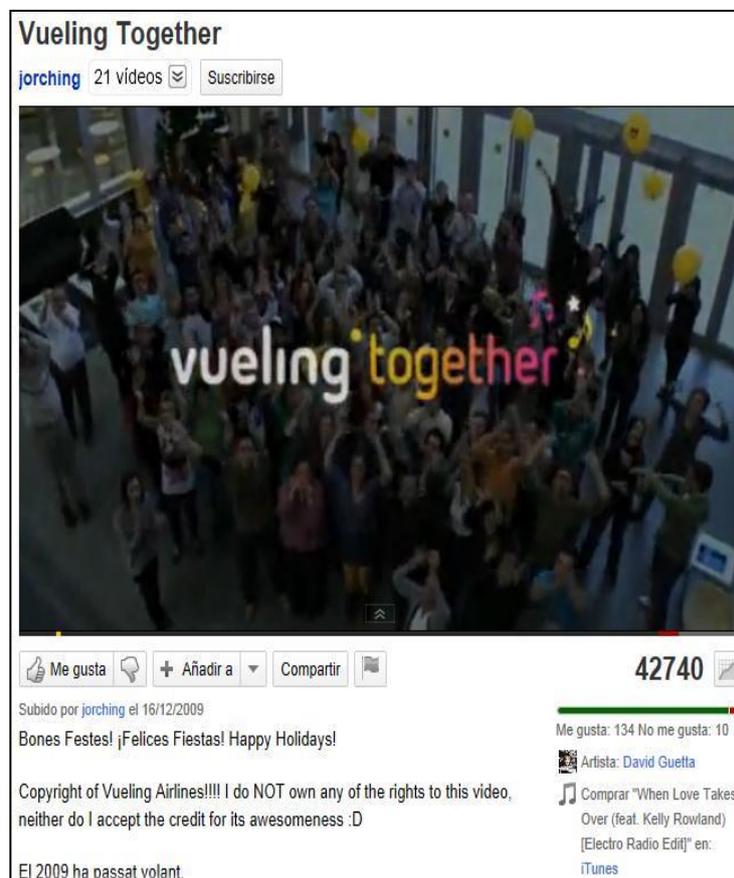
- Subject: (1) the content that is inserted is very important since it will or will not attract the user's attention; (2) Book now and get €20 discount!
- Header: (1) The brand logo and the claim; (2) a link is included in case of not being able to visualize the mail well.
- Body: (1) the core of the message is detailed (€20 gift); (2) it is played with the 'attraction' factor of sales to current and potential customers.
- Footer: (1) the dates of the promotion are detailed; (2) the cross-selling technique is introduced, advertising hotel and car banners, which are adapted to the indicated offer; (3) two links to social networks are included; (4) a corporate email is included to register and receive news related to the company; (5) a link is included

to unsubscribe, as stipulated by the Official Data Protection Law (LOPD); (6) Trademark copyright is included.

### 4.3. Word of Mouth Marketing

The airline has many viral videos on the Internet. A very impressive example of Lipdub (it can also be called Flash Mob) created was the viral video created in 2009, sent from the Marketing team, by email to all its CRM as well as inserted on its website and social networks, with a 2010 Christmas greeting to the rhythm of “When Love Takes Over” by David Guetta, and I. Rowland. If you clicked on the image, you were automatically redirected to a site specially created for the occasion (<http://www.vuelingtogether.com>) where you could see the full video. In addition, it was also inserted in (<http://www.youtube.com>) so that all Internet users had the option of being able to see the viral video and share it.

**Figure 5.** Vueling Airlines’ viral marketing campaign



Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch/Vuelingtogether>

During the campaign period, Christmas 2009, more than 42,000 visits were obtained only on the site (<http://youtube.com>), making the video viral by many bloggers, some examples are presented below:

- <http://www.undernews.com/2009/12/17/video-viral-de-vueling>
- <http://www.zumodemarketing.com/vueling-together/>
- <http://peopleinflight.com/vueling-together>

- [http://www.flashmobvideo.es/video/owcJ\\_pQVnQ8/Vueling-together.html](http://www.flashmobvideo.es/video/owcJ_pQVnQ8/Vueling-together.html)
- <http://formientera.blogspot.com/2011/05/preparados-para-volar.html>
- <http://fabricevilla.posterous.com/youtube-vueling-together>
- [http://www.francetudiant.com/videos/?v=owcJ\\_pQVnQ8](http://www.francetudiant.com/videos/?v=owcJ_pQVnQ8)

As can be seen, the blogger community has a very important weight when it comes to viralizing any marketing activities of a company, giving them articles of a positive or negative nature.

The “Looking for clouds” campaign created in 2009 could be a clear example. Although it was not the first time that these actions were talked about with stickers. Thus, among the strengths of this action, the following stand out: (1) Total coherence with the image and positioning of the brand; (2) low budget promotion strategy. It is not spent on media, but on people; (3) Why buy outdoor spaces, if through creativity you can be in them and in many others; (4) The use of Google Maps integrated into the promotional site; (5) The mechanics of voting; (6) Direct download of the central element of the action (Stickers) from the site; (7) A first use of the teaser, to later reveal the brand; (8) Registration form for subsequent insertion in CRM database.

Along with this, the brand also participates in forums on flights and topics from the world of airlines, some of them being the following:

- <http://losviajeros.com/foros>
- <http://foros.ya.com>
- <http://Vuelingva.com/foros>
- <http://rankia.com/foros/Vueling>
- <http://buenvueling.com/foros>
- <http://foro.edreams.es/Vueling>
- <http://foro.enfemenino.com/Vueling>

**Figure 6.** Vueling Airlines’ forum

Foro de compañías aéreas		
 <b>Foro Aerolíneas</b> Foro de compañías aéreas del mundo <i>Moderadores: marc131, darthdla, cortsario</i> <i>Subforos: Foro Easyjet, Foro Air Europa</i>	2113 Mensajes en 306 Temas	Último mensaje <b>Ayer</b> a las 00:28:54 en Huelga en Air France des... por Buenvuelo.ES
 <b>Foro Iberia</b> <i>Moderadores: marc131, darthdla, cortsario</i>	741 Mensajes en 117 Temas	Último mensaje <b>Hoy</b> a las 00:50:35 en Re: Iberia a la caza del... por marc131
 <b>Foro Ryanair</b> <i>Moderadores: marc131, darthdla, cortsario</i>	2155 Mensajes en 183 Temas	Último mensaje <b>Hoy</b> a las 08:13:37 en Re: Zaragoza: ¿Hay que d... por Vueling voy Vueling vengo
 <b>Foro Spanair</b> <i>Moderadores: marc131, darthdla, cortsario</i>	1050 Mensajes en 123 Temas	Último mensaje <b>Hoy</b> a las 00:22:09 en Re: Los TCP de Spanair h... por marc131
 <b>Foro Vueling Airlines</b> <i>Moderadores: marc131, darthdla, cortsario</i> <i>Subforos: Fusión VUELING-CLICKAIR</i>	6013 Mensajes en 366 Temas	Último mensaje <b>Hoy</b> a las 16:51:46 en Re: La gente esta muy lo... por VY9977

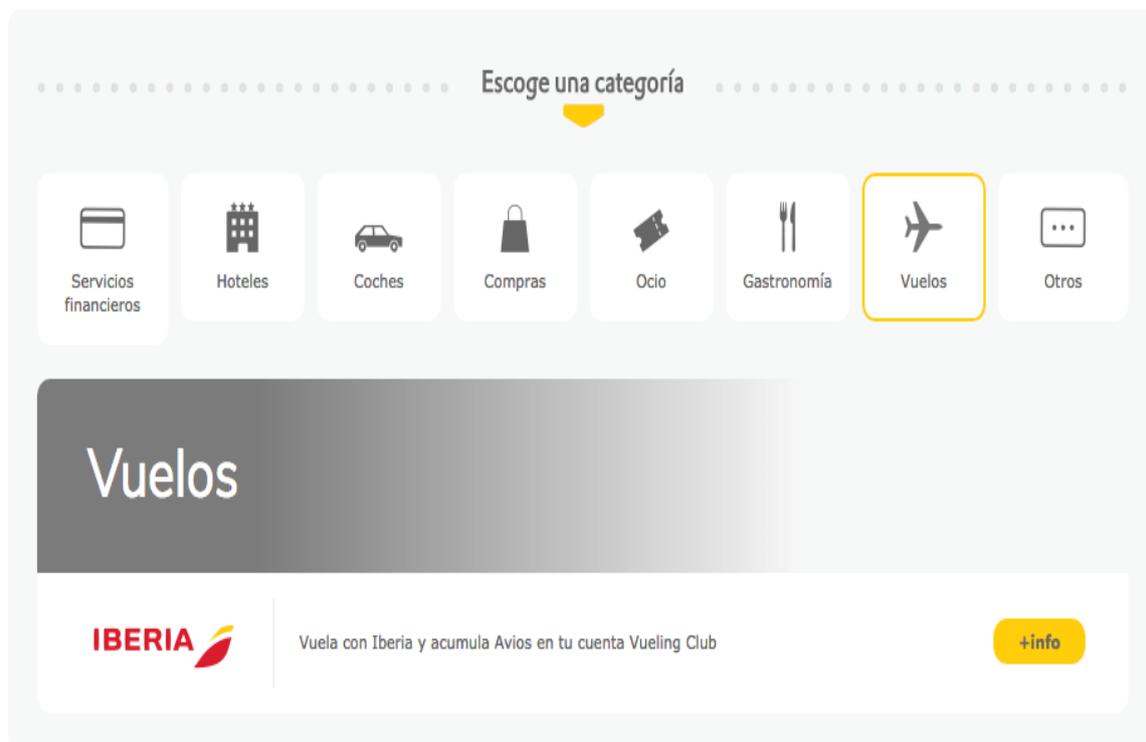
Source: <http://www.buenvuelo.es/foro-viajes/index.php>

As we can see in the image, through the web (<http://www.buevuelo.com>) you can access different forums of airlines, the Vueling Airlines Forum being one of them, highlighting 366 topics within it and more than 6,000 messages written in that example.

#### 4.5. Affiliate Marketing

Throughout its history, Vueling has signed agreements with different companies, with the main objective of obtaining more benefits for both parties. Thus, there are the companies that they currently work with stand out, divided by categories: (1) MidPoint for financial services; (2) Booking and Airbnb for hotels; (3) Cabify for car rental, and Cepsa as a petrol station; (4) La Roca Village in Barcelona and Las Rozas Village in Madrid for shopping; (5) Viator and Julia Travel WorldWide for leisure; (6) ElTenedor and Vinoslección for gastronomy; (7) Iberia for flights; (8) Lounge Pass for VIP lounges at airports; (9) The Economist for print media; and (10) Endesa to contract electricity and gas at home.

**Figure 7.** Vueling Airlines’ affiliate marketing



Source: <https://www.vueling.com/es/vueling-club/partners>

As we can see in the image, Vueling classifies the different partners based on service categories. Thus, any user can access each of the categories and find more information about each of Vueling's partners, as well as learn about the benefits they provide when consuming their services.

#### 4.6. Blog Marketing

Vueling Airlines offers several blogs such as <https://blog.vueling.com/es> and <http://vuelingnews.com>. Taking the second one as an example, it is divided into the following sections:

- Header: designed at a corporate level (yellow, white, and dark gray) detailing the name of the blog “Vueling.news” and the claim “Vueling informs you”. In addition, the firm has chosen to add the permanent links (permalinks) of its social networks and RSS, with the intention of facilitating the entry and exit of the user from said blog to other own sites.
- Navigation bar: several subpages appear, in which you can find specific information. These are: (1) Tips: brand news that try to help the user take advantage of the advantages, such as seat changes, online check-in, etc; (2) Baggage: information can be obtained about check-in and type of baggage that can be carried, depending on the place of destination and the ticket purchase that has been made; (3) Your flights: You can get information about itinerary changes, information about the flights and services provided on the flight; (4) Vueling Cities: Information on new flight openings, festivals, and special events celebrated according to the time of year, history of cities, etc.; (5) Airports: Information on new terminals, flight advance options, and any type of company incident at the airport; (6) Networks: Referring to contests and special promotions that the brand offers, so that users have the opportunity to register and obtain information. Examples like "Vueling day" and "Fly me I'm famous" are some of them; (7) Punto Program: The new characteristics of the program for obtaining points offered by the brand for traveling on its planes, news, validation, and expiration dates as well as important details to take into account are detailed.
- Blog posts: considered the most creative part of the blog since this is where creative messages adapted to its readers are included. In addition, the written language of bloggers is used, and spelling mistakes are avoided, mismatches in paragraphs, images copied from the internet or with copyright, and any other type of incident that makes reading difficult and the reader disinterested.
- Footer: the name of the webmaster who designed the blog appears (in this case it was made through [www.xarop.com](http://www.xarop.com)) as well as the different nomenclatures that the brand uses to refer to this type of digital services, such as is the weblog.

It should be noted, in addition to the airline's own blog, that the brand generates an image through other bloggers who speak about it, positively or negatively. Thus, it is very important to know how to take care of this community of bloggers, as they can significantly improve or destroy the brand image with their posts, thanks to the trust that Internet users place in them when looking for references about a brand or its products. Examples include: (1) <http://blogvacaciones.com> with the entry “Vueling's best prices”; (2) <http://blogdeviajes.com.ar> with the entry "Doubts and publicity: The case of Vueling"; (3) <http://impossibleisnothink.blogspot.com> with the entry “Vueling Crisis 2.0”.

**Figure 8.** Vueling Airlines’ blog post



**Vive en directo Fly Me I´m Famous!**

Prepárate para vivir en primera persona una experiencia de altura... En [www.facebook.com/Vueling](https://www.facebook.com/Vueling) sorteamos 2 packs "Fly Me I´m Famous" para el ganador y un acompañante.

¿Y en qué consiste?

Te llevamos en avión hasta París desde tu aeropuerto Vueling más cercano. Y una vez llegados a París, ¡comienza la fiesta! Nos embarcamos en un vuelo muy especial... David Guetta a bordo del avión Fly me I´m Famous estará pinchando el 26 de mayo durante el vuelo rumbo a Ibiza, acompañado por Talo Cruz, ¡WOW!...

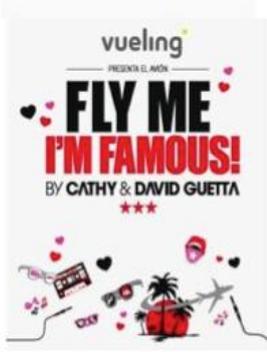
Y aquí no termina la fiesta... Llegamos a Ibiza al hotelazo Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel, y terminamos la aventura en el opening de la temporada de F\*\*\* Me I´m Famous en Pachà Ibiza.

Y después de esta increíble experiencia... Vuelo de vuelta al día siguiente a tu aeropuerto Vueling más cercano.

¿Cómo participar?

¡Es muy sencillo!

1. Conéctate a tu ordenador (desde dispositivos móviles no puedes participar)
2. Entra en la aplicación de Fly Me del [facebook de Vueling](https://www.facebook.com/Vueling).
3. [Apúntate](#) a la promoción.
4. Y ya está... Entrarás en el sorteo de uno de los 2 packs "Fly Me I´m Famous".



Suerte... Y nos vemos en el avión Fly Me I´m famous el 26 de mayo ¡Oh yeah!

Source: <http://vuelingnews.com>

#### 4.7. Social Media Marketing

Vueling has tried to make the most of social networks, trying to be that "trusted friend" that every current and potential client looks for in a company. According to an article published in (<http://www.expansion.com>) Vueling begins sales through social networks. Thus, these are some of the social networks in which the brand has acted throughout its history:

- Twitter: Vueling has created two profiles, being: (1) corporate "@Vueling" in which you can be informed of the latest exclusive offers and news; and (2) customer service "@VuelingClients", which registers daily business hours, in case of any questions from its customers and followers.
- Flickr: through the address <http://www.flickr.com/photos/Vueling>, photographs of work done by company employees and winners of competitions held during the year are shown.
- Youtube: under the name "VuelingTV", the brand has created its own channel that permits the creation of its own spaces to upload videos and to be able to pigeonhole them on the same site. In addition, it incorporates the option to "Subscribe" and "Comments" where fansumers can comment on the uploaded videos and the site in question.
- Spotify: through the address <http://www.spotify.com/Vueling> in such a way that the songs that are used in marketing campaigns as well as in viral videos are uploaded, for example, those of David Getta.

- Facebook: through the address <http://www.facebook.com/Vueling> and under the name “Vueling People!” The brand allows users, in addition to their own interactions such as the wall, photographs, and information, to search for flights on their profile and share it with their followers or friends.
- Instagram: through the address <https://www.instagram.com/vueling>, the brand publishes photographic and video content on destinations, landscapes, Vueling equipment, news, and promotional campaigns, in which users can be informed at any time they want.
- LinkedIn: through the address <https://www.linkedin.com/company/vueling-airlines>, the company informs users of the latest business news, as well as adds posts to their profile, shares contacts, videos and offers for people interested in working in the airline.

**Figure 9.** Vueling Airlines’ Facebook post



Source: <http://www.facebook.com/Vueling>

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the results obtained, it should be noted that the proposed model showed a positive and direct relationship in the six proposed variables with respect to the digital marketing strategy of the tour operators. Thus, the studies of various authors found in the literature are reinforced (Anato, 2006; Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts, 2007; Filgueira, 2008; Daniele, Frew, Varini and Magakian, 2009; Rovira, Fernández, Pedraza and Huertas, 2010; Huang, Yung and Yang, 2011; Hvass and Munar, 2012, Hays, Page and Buhalis, 2013, Királ'ová and Pavlíčka, 2015; Recuero Blasco and García, 2016, Chillitupa and Ccahuana,

2017; Kaur, 2017; Ramos, 2017; Martínez, Albeza and Martínez , 2018; Quintero, Bravo, Chica, Zambrano and Cedeño, 2018; Carpio, Hanco, Cutipa and Flores, 2019, Rodríguez, 2019, Saavedra, 2020).

As a result of the results obtained, it is possible to raise six managerial implications. Firstly, and with regard to search engine marketing, the results reinforce previous works (Rovira, Fernández, Pedraza and Huertas, 2010; Ramos, 2017, Quintero, Bravo, Chica, Zambrano and Cedeño, 2018) found in the literature. Thus, the weight of inbound links and keywords for the search engine positioning strategies of tour operators stands out. In addition, being strongly positioned in an organic and sponsored way in search engines provides tourism companies with more visibility, a competitive advantage, and greater opportunities for growth compared to the traditional advertising system.

Secondly, and with regard to email marketing, it should be noted that this strategy improves travelers knowledge about the destinations, while maximizing the advertising impact in terms of tourist services offered, thus reinforcing previous work (Anato, 2006; Kaur, 2017; Saavedra, 2020) found in the literature. Furthermore, it is considered that this strategy has a positive impact on the brand image and profitability of tourist destinations, which makes personalizing communication and the company's offers correctly to the different market segments in question essential.

Thirdly, regarding Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM), the results also reinforce previous works (Chillitupa and Ccahuana, 2017; Albeza and Martínez, 2018; Carpio, Hanco, Cutipa and Flores, 2019) found in the literature. Thus, the importance of viral marketing is highlighted to boost the demand for tourist attractions, studying the interests of each user, in particular, being important in order to interact with users through the different means offered on the Internet, and at the same time Integrate the strategy along with other variables in the marketing plan.

Fourthly, and with respect to affiliate marketing, note that the discipline is maturing with the advent of affiliate networks and sophistication. In addition, this strategy allows new opportunities for air operators, in terms of advertising design aimed at a specific demand segment, in addition to prolonging the reach of the brand and social recognition, by facilitating renown and greater visibility with the consumer. Thus, previous works (Daniele, Frew, Varini and Magakian, 2009; Recuero Blasco and García, 2016; Rodríguez, 2019) found in the literature are reinforced. Although the importance of correctly managing the online distribution of affiliates is highlighted, to avoid inconveniences related to brand management and affiliate fraud.

Fifthly, and with regard to blog marketing, the results reinforce previous works (Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts, 2007; Filgueira, 2008; Huang, Yung, and Yang, 2011) found in the literature. Thus, it is argued that blogs facilitate the commercialization of tourist destinations while improving the quality of service and the general experience of travelers. Along with this, the opinions of bloggers are of great help to travelers, in addition to acting as brand ambassadors of tourist destinations. And this, applied to air operators, means generating competitive differentiation and innovation in the marketing strategy.

Finally, regarding social media marketing, the results also reinforce previous works (Hvass and Munar, 2012; Hays, Page and Buhalis, 2013; Kiráľová and Pavlíčka, 2015) found in the literature. Thus, we can highlight that social networks are one of the most interesting tools to use in the digital marketing strategy by airlines, although it is essential that the actions carried out in them are uniform in terms of brand communication. Therefore, the social media marketing strategy allows destinations to interact directly with visitors,

while monitoring and reacting to consumer opinions and evaluations.

Once the results and conclusions derived from the study were analyzed, it was necessary to clarify a series of limitations that, in our opinion, this work presents and, with this, propose future lines of research. On the one hand, the model was tested on one Spanish airline, so extending this study to other airlines and comparing the results is recommended, thus validating the construct in other cultures and countries. On the other hand, the research was carried out at a specific period of time, so it would be of great interest that future research longitudinal studies were carried out that contemplated the possible variations over time in their perceptions, to determine if this has an influence. Also, note that it would be necessary to increase the number of judges and observers to avoid possible subjective biases of the content analysis carried out by a pair of observers. Finally, this research was carried out using a fully qualitative technique, considering that it would also be interesting to complement it with a quantitative study aimed at the different agents involved in the air service, both internal (management team and workers) and external (customers and employees) and the general public, in order to add value to the results obtained and observe possible differences in perception.

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