

Assessing the Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Campaigns in Promoting of Azerbaijan's Tourism

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Abstract

This article investigates the critical role of digital marketing in shaping Azerbaijan's tourism industry. Tourism has emerged as a crucial driver of growth and development as the country is diversifying its economy beyond from the traditional oil and gas sector. Businesses and destinations are adapting their marketing strategies to more effectively engage today's tech-savvy tourists by using digital platforms and technologies. This study analyzes how digital marketing influences tourists' perceptions, improves industry visibility, and drives tangible economic outcomes using a thorough examination of literature and case study methods. The study underscores the importance of digital marketing in positioning Azerbaijan as a major tourist destination, providing sustainable growth, innovation, and competitiveness in the global tourism market. The study discovered that digital marketing has a beneficial impact on travelers perception Azerbaijan, making it more attractive to visit. Additionally, it helps Azerbaijan tourism businesses reach a wider audience and drives economic growth through increased visitors and revenue, and promotes sustainable practices. It concludes with recommendations for stakeholders to further invest in digital marketing strategies to maximize its tourism potential and ensure sustainable success in the industry.

Azerbaijan, located between Europe and Asia, is a country rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage. In recent years, it has developed as a promising destination for travelers looking for unique experiences. As the country seeks to diversify its economy beyond the traditional oil and gas sector, tourism has emerged as a critical driver of growth and development.

Before the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan experienced a increase in tourism, which became a key contributor to the country's economy. In 2019, tourism emerged as the leading revenue generator in Azerbaijan outside of the traditional oil and gas sector (Azerbaijan Statistical Information Service, 2024). However, the pandemic brought unprecedented challenges, underscoring the need for innovative strategies to revive and sustain the tourism industry.

Keywords: tourism, digital marketing; Azerbaijan, economic growth, competitiveness, sustainability

Оцінка ефективності цифрових маркетингових кампаній у розвитку туризму в Азербайджані

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Анотація

У цій статті досліджується критична роль цифрового маркетингу у формуванні туристичної індустрії Азербайджану. Туризм став ключовим рушієм зростання та розвитку, оскільки країна диверсифікує свою економіку за межі традиційного нафтогазового сектору. Компанії та напрямки адаптують свої маркетингові стратегії, щоб ефективніше залучати сучасних технічно підкованих туристів за допомогою цифрових платформ і технологій. У цьому дослідженні аналізується, як цифровий маркетинг впливає на сприйняття туристів, покращує впізнаваність галузі та забезпечує відчутні економічні результати за допомогою ретельного вивчення літератури та методів тематичних досліджень. Дослідження підкреслює важливість цифрового маркетингу в позиціонуванні Азербайджану як основного туристичного напрямку, що забезпечує стаке зростання, інновації та конкурентоспроможність на світовому туристичному ринку. Дослідження виявило, що цифровий маркетинг благотворно впливає на сприйняття мандрівниками Азербайджану, роблячи його більш привабливим для відвідування. Крім того, це допомагає азербайджанським туристичним підприємствам охопити ширшу аудиторію та сприяє економічному зростанню завдяки збільшенню кількості відвідувачів і доходів, а також сприяє сталим практикам. Він завершується рекомендаціями для зацікавлених сторін щодо подальшого інвестування в стратегії цифрового маркетингу, щоб максимізувати туристичний потенціал і забезпечити стійкий успіх у галузі.

Азербайджан, розташований між Європою та Азією, є країною, багатою природною красою та культурною спадщиною. В останні роки він став перспективним напрямком для мандрівників, які шукають унікальних вражень. Оскільки країна прагне диверсифікувати свою економіку за межі традиційного нафтогазового сектору, туризм став критичним рушієм зростання та розвитку.

До глобальної кризи, викликані пандемією COVID-19, в Азербайджані спостерігалось зростання туризму, який став ключовим фактором економіки країни. У 2019 році туризм став провідним джерелом прибутку в Азербайджані за винятком традиційного нафтогазового сектору (Azerbaijan Statistical Information Service, 2024). Однак пандемія принесла безпрецедентні виклики, підкресливши необхідність інноваційних стратегій для відновлення та підтримки індустрії туризму.

Ключові слова: туризм, цифровий маркетинг, Азербайджан, економічного зростання, конкурентоспроможність, стійкість

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Introduction.

This article investigates the transformative power of digital marketing in Azerbaijan's tourism industry. By investigating the diverse consequences of digital marketing and its integration into the sector, paper aspire to shed light on how this new strategy may create growth and prosperity. Through actionable insights and real-world examples, article aim to inspire stakeholders to use digital marketing to fully realize Azerbaijan's tourism potential and launch the industry into new era of success.

In this context, digital marketing has emerged as a critical tool in shaping the future of Azerbaijani tourism. Businesses and destinations are adjusting their marketing strategies to target today's tech-savvy tourists by utilizing digital platforms and technologies (Kaur, 2017). From fascinating social media campaigns to targeted email marketing, digital marketing has the power to not only attract visitors but also enhance their overall experience.

Literature review.

The integration of digital marketing within the tourism industry has become a focus of academic inquiry and practical application. Scholars and practitioners alike recognize the transformative impact of digital technologies on destination marketing, customer engagement, and industry sustainability.

Digital marketing encompasses a diverse array of strategies and methods designed to reaching and engaging travelers in the digital landscape. According to Wymbs (2011), digital marketing involves leveraging digital channels to create targeted and measurable communication campaigns that enable customer relationships. This approach has redefined the dynamics of tourism marketing, offering benefits such as cost-effectiveness, high return on investment, and accurate audience targeting (Kurtishi, 2023).

The expansion of digital marketing has ushered in a new era of tourism development, characterized by increased accessibility, visibility, and engagement. In Azerbaijan and beyond, the integration of digital technologies has catalyzed growth and innovation across the tourism ecosystem (Natocheeva, Shayakhmetova, Bekkhozhaeva, Khamikhan, & Pshembayeva, 2020).

First and foremost, digital marketing has simplified access to tourism information and services, empowering travelers to explore destinations and plan their itineraries with unprecedented ease. Online booking platforms, mobile applications, and digital concierge services have streamlined the travel experience, offering real-time availability, pricing transparency, and personalized recommendations. As noted by Kurtishi (2023), the digitization of transportation and accommodation services has revolutionized logistical processes, enabled seamless travel reservation, and improved overall customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, digital marketing has played a essential role in growing destination visibility and competitiveness on a global scale. Through targeted digital campaigns, destinations can showcase their unique attractions, cultural heritage, and experiential offerings to diverse audiences. Social media platforms, travel blogs, and influencer partnerships serve as powerful boosters, allowing destinations to reach millions of prospective travelers with captivating visuals and authentic storytelling. This heightened visibility not only stimulates tourist demand but also encourages destination branding and loyalty over time (Real, Toril, & Abad, 2020).

Moreover, digital marketing enables destinations to adapt dynamically to changing market dynamics and consumer preferences. Tourism stakeholders may obtain valuable information about tourist behaviors, preferences, and sentiments by utilizing data analytics and digital insights (Li, Xu, Tang, Wang, & Li, 2018). This data-driven strategy enables more rapid decision-making and strategic resource allocation, ensuring that destinations stay responsive to changing market trends and competitive pressures.

In sum, the impact of digital marketing on tourism development is multifaceted and far-reaching. By democratizing access, increase visibility, and enabling flexibility, digital marketing has become an indispensable driver of growth, innovation, and sustainability within the tourism industry (Nuseir, 2020). As destinations like Azerbaijan continue to implement digital strategies and harness the power of technology, open up to new opportunities for economic prosperity and cultural exchange on a global scale.

However, the implementation of digital marketing in the tourism sector is not without its challenges. The heterogeneous nature of destinations presents complexities for marketing efforts, requiring tailored strategies to effectively promote unique attractions and experiences (Ritchie, & Crouch, 2013). Despite these challenges, the opportunities afforded by digital marketing are extensive. Through responsive websites, compelling content marketing, search engine optimization, social media engagement, and influencer partnerships, tourism stakeholders can amplify their online presence and attract a global audience.

The rise of digital marketing has reshaped the global economy, empowering consumers and intensifying competition among businesses (Korkpoe & Nyarku, 2013). This shift significantly influences business performance and shapes future marketing strategies. Korkpoe & Nyarku (2013) suggests that digital marketing integration has a positive impact on both business performance and perceived digital marketing innovation. This indicates the importance of leveraging digital technologies to enhance corporate performance in today's economic climate.

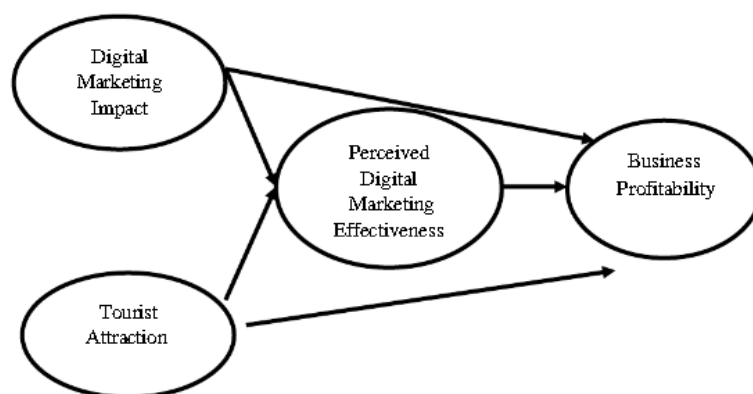


Figure 1. Digital marketing impact and business profitability.

Source: (Durrani, Zia, Ali, & Shahid, 2023)

Figure 1 illustrates the critical significance of effective digital marketing in promoting tourist attractions. When tourists perceive digital marketing efforts as impactful, it positively influences their decision to visit specific places. Thus, developed attractions contribute to overall profitability of businesses in the tourism industry (Durrani, Zia, Ali, & Shahid, 2023).

In conclusion, the literature emphasizes the importance of digital marketing in encouraging innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability in the tourism industry. By implementation of digital strategies and staying attuned to evolving consumer behaviors and technological advancements, destinations like Azerbaijan might capitalize their unique assets to attract and delight travelers in an increasingly digital world.

Research methodology.

This study uses qualitative research design to investigate the impact of digital marketing on tourism in Azerbaijan. Qualitative methods are chosen for their ability to provide detailed insights into the complex relationship between digital marketing strategies and tourism development. Because the research questions are about exploring new ideas and understanding the different viewpoints of stakeholders in tourism, there needed a flexible and thorough way to collect and study information. That's why there have chosen to use a qualitative approach – it allows dig deep into the data and look at things from many angles.

Research Questions

The study aims to address the following research questions:

- How do digital marketing strategies affect tourists' perception of Azerbaijan as a tourism destination?
- How do tourism destinations or businesses in Azerbaijan use digital marketing strategies to enhance their visibility and attract tourists?
- What are the tangible outcomes and perceived benefits of digital marketing initiatives on the overall development and sustainability of tourism in Azerbaijan?

Data collection and data analysis

Tourism destinations and businesses will be purposely selected based on their active use of digital marketing strategies. Comparative analysis may be conducted with similar entities between Azerbaijan and other countries to provide broader industry perspectives. Data will primarily be collected through document analysis, involving the examination of marketing materials, online campaigns, and digital presence of selected destinations or businesses. This approach allows for the gathering of comprehensive information without the need for direct interviews.

Case studies.

The study examines the dynamic relationship between digital marketing and social media, highlighting their mutually beneficial role in promoting success within the tourism industry. The research draws on extensive investigations of both traditional (academic databases) and empirical (case studies) information sources, resulting in a diverse and reliable set of materials. In the case studies, Azerbaijan, the Philippines, and Turkey were utilized as examples and their experiences were showcased as case studies. The digital campaigns under examination were deployed for destination marketing purposes across all three countries. Analyzing Azerbaijan's digital businesses as a case study reveals their active engagement in digital marketing and their ability to generate large followings, which may effectively attract tourists.

Case Study 1: Take Another Look

One of the most compelling examples of effective digital marketing in Azerbaijan is the "Take Another Look" campaign initiated by the Azerbaijan Tourism Board (2024). Launched in 2018, this program aimed to redefine Azerbaijan's tourism image by presenting new perspective on the country's cultural and natural resources. With the slogan "Take Another Look," the campaign encouraged travelers to explore Azerbaijan's blend of ancient culture and modern architecture, rich natural landscapes and anthropogenic sightseeing.

The campaign used a combination of attractive images and engaging words to distribute across multiple

international electronic channels and social media platforms. The hashtag #TakeAnotherLook has become synonymous with uncovering Azerbaijan's hidden beauties, generating significant attention and engagement from potential visitors (CNP Awards, 2019). The "Take Another Look" campaign had a significant influence, as evidenced by tourism statistics. In the year following Azerbaijan experienced an exceptional 11% growth in numbers of tourists, including to tourism revenues exceeding \$2 billion in 2019 (World Bank Open Data, 2024). This tourism growth not only boosted the country's economy but also helped to reshape Azerbaijan's tourism image on a global scale.

Case Study 2: It's More Fun in the Philippines

Another notable example of effective digital marketing comes from the Philippines, with the "It's More Fun in the Philippines" campaign launched by the Department of Tourism. This vibrant and colorful campaign captured the essence of Filipino hospitality and the country's diverse attractions, showcasing everything from pristine beaches to cultural festivities.

The slogan "It's More Fun in the Philippines" encapsulated the country's spirit of adventure and hospitality, permeating through various social media platforms, merchandise, and even local vernacular.

The impact of the campaign was substantial, leading to a remarkable 20% increase in international tourist arrivals in the year following its launch. This surge in tourism had significant economic implications, injecting an estimated \$1 billion boost into the local economy. Moreover, the campaign's success extended beyond mere visitor numbers, fostering a sense of cultural pride and sustainable tourism among locals and tourists alike (InAppStory, 2024).

Case Study 2: GoTürkiye

Digital marketing has a significant impact on Turkey's expanding tourism industry. Türkiye remains to attract tourists, increase revenue streams, and raise its global reputation through strategic technological exploitation. As devices and innovative technology develop, the future of digital marketing in Turkish tourism promises even greater growth and engagement.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism's "GoTürkiye" campaign, launched in 2021, serves as an example of Turkey's cultural richness, natural beauty, and diverse tourism offerings. This campaign is a powerful way that not only attracts tourists but also strengthens Turkey's global brand identity (Aslan, 2021).

GoTürkiye's social media activity speaks volumes, with 5.5 million followers on Facebook and 3.1 million on Instagram. This thriving online community provides a dynamic platform for promoting Turkey's attractiveness and communicating with a large audience.

In 2023, Turkey's tourism revenue increased dramatically to \$54.3 billion, attracting 57 million visitors. Advancements in digital marketing are expected

to drive a continuous growing trend in the next years (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2024).

Case Study 3: Food Vloggers and Slow Food Travel in Azerbaijan

The development of food vloggers in Azerbaijan shows how digital marketing may effectively promote tourism. One notable example is the YouTube video series titled 'Country Life Vlog,' which features cooking videos set in the magnificent landscape of Azerbaijan's Gusar region. With over 1.7 billion views and a global audience, each video not only emphasizes the country's breathtaking natural beauty but also its rich gastronomic tradition (Country Life Vlog, 2019). The passionate response from viewers, as seen by millions of comments expressing a desire to visit these locations, highlights Azerbaijan's indirect but effective promotion as a tourism destination.

Furthermore, professional chefs like as 'Wilderness Cooking' and 'Kanan Badalov' have used digital platforms like YouTube and Instagram to promote Azerbaijan's national cuisine and various places. Their efforts have not only attracted millions of viewers, but also contributed promote the country's culinary tourism potential on a global scale.

Recognizing this possibility, the Azerbaijan Tourism Board (2024) has adopted Slow Food Travel, which aims to promote sustainable tourism growth. Slow Food Travel Azerbaijan has developed a thorough travel map, providing tourists with useful insights into the country's gastronomic offers. This initiative, which works with over 100 small-scale farmers, chefs, craftsmen, and other stakeholders across five regions to implement 15 sustainable practices, aims to improve the visitor experience while also encouraging responsible tourism practices. By leveraging the popularity of food vloggers and embracing the Slow Food movement, Azerbaijan is not only promoting its culinary delights but also establishing the path for sustainable tourism growth.

Conclusions.

Digital marketing campaigns like "Take Another Look", "It's More Fun in the Philippines" and "GoTürkiye" significantly shape tourists' perceptions of Azerbaijan as a tourist destination, resulting in increased interest and engagement among potential visitors. Tourism destinations and businesses in Azerbaijan effectively use digital marketing strategies to increase visibility and attract tourists. These endeavors exemplify the efficacy of digital narratives in reshaping destination perceptions and captivating worldwide audiences. Such campaigns not only enhance destination branding but also cultivate cultural affinity and engagement among travelers. Case studies demonstrate successful implementation through engaging content and a strong social media presence. The practical results of digital marketing campaigns, such as increased tourist arrivals and revenue, contribute to the overall development and sustainability of tourism in

Azerbaijan. Furthermore, initiatives such as Slow Food Travel promote the country's cultural history and ethical tourism practices, which supports sustainable tourism development.

In general, this study highlights the importance of digital marketing in influencing Azerbaijan's tourism industry. First, digital marketing has a considerable impact on tourists' impressions of Azerbaijan, increasing its desirability as a tourist destination. Second, it increases industry visibility, allowing Azerbaijani tourist businesses to efficiently market their services to a global audience. Finally, digital marketing produces actual economic results, such as increased tourist arrivals, revenue generation, and sustainable tourism practices. Overall, digital marketing emerges as a crucial driver of growth, innovation, and competitiveness in Azerbaijan's tourism economy, creating the way for sustainable success in the global tourism market.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the potential of digital marketing in promoting Azerbaijan's tourism sector. By investigating the diverse consequences of digital marketing and its integration within the industry, it has been uncovered how this modern approach can create growth and prosperity.

A detailed study of the research and case studies reveals that digital marketing has a major impact on tourists' perceptions of Azerbaijan, increases industry

visibility, and creates tangible economic consequences.

In general, this study shows the critical role of digital marketing in shaping Azerbaijan's tourism sector. Firstly, digital marketing significantly impact on tourists' perceptions of Azerbaijan, increasing its desirability as a tourist destination. Secondly, it expands industry visibility, allowing Azerbaijani tourism businesses to effectively showcase their services to a global audience. Finally, digital marketing drives tangible economic outcomes, correlating with increased tourist arrivals, revenue generation, and sustainable tourism practices. Overall, digital marketing emerges as an important source of growth, innovation, and competitiveness in Azerbaijan's tourism economy, creating the way for sustainable success in the global tourism market.

It is recommended that in order to maximize Azerbaijan's tourism potential, policymakers need to understand the crucial role of digital marketing in shaping economic and tourism policy-making. It's critical that they understand its significance and incorporate it into policy frameworks. Similarly, businesses should embrace digital approaches, establish strategic partnerships, and use data analytic to successfully marketing efforts effectively. By collaborating on digital marketing, Azerbaijan can present itself as a major tourism destination, boosting both economic growth and cultural interchange on a global scale.

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