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# Tourism 2.0 communication in Ecuador. Analysis of public and private companies

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** Tourism in Ecuador represents the third non-oil income for the economy and it is intended that in 2020 it will be the main source of foreign exchange; therefore, internal and external tourism promotion are essential to achieve these objectives. This research part of a study quantitative to determine the evolution of tourist communication 2.0 in Ecuador from the management of companies that offer tourism products and services. **Objectives.** The objective of this research is to identify and evaluate communication 2.0 in public and private companies in Ecuador. **Method.** The mixed, qualitative and quantitative methodology is used, for which the Communication Evaluation Model 2.0 is used, which quantifies the actions and interactions in social media and identifies the key performance indicators (KPI) to evaluate the variables of: presence, growth, activity, level of service, participation and Engagement. **Conclusions.** In Ecuador 2.0 tourism communication is incipient and the convergence towards social media is low.

## Keywords

Communication 2.0; Internet; tourism promotion; participation; interaction

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promotion in Ecuador. 3.3. YouTube as a platform for promoting tourism in Ecuador. 4. Conclusions. 5. List of References.

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## **1. Management of tourism communication 2.0**

Advertisement of tourism destinations has been crucial throughout history (Estévez Monzo, 2002; Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2007). Digital media have undergone an evolution process starting from the era of information to the era of participation thus experiencing, a transformation in the way of interacting with audiences (Alonso González, 2008). The opinion or reference of other consumers has been, is and will be relevant when it comes to select a specific product or service, but currently with a browser we can obtain an avalanche of information that even companies have a hard time processing. Thus, “internet users make purchase decisions of products or services oriented or motivated by the information found on the Internet.” (Celaya, 2009: 24).

“The tourism industry has experienced in the last decade an emergence of such magnitude that it positioned it in a prominent place of the socioeconomic scheme of many countries.” (Piñeiro-Naval Serra and Mangana, 2017). In this scenario, the Web 2.0 enables tourists and organizations/ companies to abandon linear communication and relate in an interactive manner where feedback is the key to success in a new globalized market (Cascales García *et al.*, 2017). With the new communication and information channels consumers express themselves freely and uncensored (Villalba Trujillo *et al.*, 2014). Besides, they turn into the ideal media to get information and share opinions about a specific company, product or tourism destination. The Network introduces a world of possibilities that was unimaginable before, generating a restructuring of the business sector before a new landscape that faces a change, not only of the message, but of organizational structures generating them (Vilaseca Requena *et al.*, 2007).

In conclusion, the increasing relevance in tourism communication, summed to the development of Internet, the new Information and Communication Technologies, entail a change of scenario in the relationships between the tourist and the environment. This relationship, that initially produced in a relatively controlled milieu, occurs today in a context where the travelers and the community can communicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction and reach a visibility level impossible to achieve with traditional media. In this new scenario, every tourist can be a media, something that completely disrupts the concept of company-tourist relationship.

### **1.1. Social media for tourism promotion and dissemination**

The constant search of information and the need of tourists to share it has encouraged the emergence of virtual communities that turn into referents when it comes to select a product or tourism destination. These communities are created in a voluntary manner and in most cases in an independent manner from tourism companies, which influences in the way tourism organizations are

communicated with their publics, incorporating Internet and Social Media in the communication strategies and plans. However, the key to success of digital communication is not the presence in the digital environment nor generating information for the tourist, but instead “the search of ways to manage it and make it appealing for users” (Domínguez Vila and Araújo Vila, 2012: 226) with the purpose to approach the market to generate the need of visiting a place or influence in the selection of a specific tourism product. Thus, social media “are digital communication platforms that empower the user to generate contents and share information through private or public profiles” (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009: 6), empowering the user to control the environments he or she develops.

Media enable the creation of digital communities where relationships among individuals with common interests are established. “Internet is being used to apply strategies of relational marketing and create virtual communities around a brand or product where there is aim for visitor’s participation in the communication process. They constitute a true meeting point where users with common expectations share information about products they are interested in” (Túñez, Sixto and Guevara, 2011: 53–65). Therefore, tourism companies must promote the creation of these communities around their tourism product in order to get information direct from the source and to control what is being said about their product, which will allow to do improvements and to adapt the offer to the needs of the market. Thus, also “official websites are an essential tool of promotion for tourism destinations, because they represent a media to introduce their destination to all potential tourists using it, acting as an information channel for decision making” (Fernández-Cavia, Rovira, Díaz-Luque and Cavaller 2014:11).

Due to the impact and penetration they have, social media have turned into relevant tools of organizational communication in general, and tourism, in particular. But, users are the ones who establish rules and decide what activity to perform, what to see, what brand to follow and how to communicate. In this context, the society establishes behavior guidelines in the virtual communities and therefore, companies must adapt to this new market. The tourist 2.0 demands a 2.0 attitude (update, participation and interaction) and commitment. Therefore, if tourism organizations wish to incorporate to this environment, they must establish a strategic, dynamic, creative and interactive communication. “There is no doubt that, without commitment, without strategy, without target and without humanizing the brand there is no effective management of social media” (Ayestarán, Rangel and Ana, 2012: 238).

In this scenario, the presence of tourism companies in the different social media is also essential for the tourism promotion. Generalistic networks, such as Facebook, Google+ and Twitter allow approaching a target public in a friendly manner and are successful in conveying the message but, mainly of generating virality, results that become tangible with the “use of mobile devices and their complementary software that enable users to connect to Internet and use its resources” (Tanti and Buhalis, 2017). The networks for sharing videos and images, such as YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr and Instagram, are close to being a repository of tourism promotional material, and simultaneously a platform of interactive dissemination of advertisement campaigns. Uses of social media for tourism companies solve, partly, the lack of interactivity of destinations and that, according to Míguez-González and Fernández-Cavia (2015) is a neglected reference point that is worth mentioning.

## **1.2. Tourism and communication in Ecuador.**

Ecuador is considered a destination for tourism due to its historical, cultural and social richness. But mainly, due to its mega environmental diversity, which allow its image and international positioning to strengthen and generate an increase of activity in the country. Tourism represents the third non-oil

income for the economy and the aim is that for 2020 is the exchange source (Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, 2015a).

The tourism activity has become a priority for the Ecuadorian Government. On April 19, 2001, according to the Executive Decree 1.424, published in the Official Registry 309, there was declaration of tourism in the country as a Priority State Policy (Executive Decree 1186, 2008), which means performing strategies for the growth and improvement of the sector and that influences in the increase of incomes both of tourists as well as foreign exchange. Besides, due to relevance of tourism in the country's development, the Ministry of Tourism assumes the responsibility of encouraging the activity and guarantee the generation of adequate conditions to compete in the international market, a function that is being carried out in a strategic and planned manner. To comply with this objective, the Ministry of Tourism develops a tourism offer adapted to the needs and the demands of the tourists visiting the country.

Since it is catalogued as a Estate's Priority Policy due to its relevance in the economic balance, tourism is considered within the objectives of the National Plan for Good Living 2013–2017, which aims to reach “the way of life that allows happiness and permanence of cultural and environmental diversity; it is harmony, equality, equity and solidarity” (National Secretary's Office of Planning and Development, 2013: 17).

In the framework of National Planning, there is promotion of a conscious, sustainable and respectful tourism with the environment and social communities. This way, tourism is incorporated to the change of the productive matrix together with other thirteen priority sectors. The goal planned for 2020 is increasing to 64% incomes from tourism over exportation of total services and, to achieve this, a national and international promotion is established.

To achieve these objectives, the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador develops the Strategic Plan of Sustainable Development of Ecuador until 2020. In the diagnosis made by MINTUR (Ministry of Tourism), there is detail about how one of the deficiencies of the touristic activity in the country is the lack of strategical planning in the marketing area, both nationally and internationally, therefore establishing the implementation of the Program for Strengthening the Tourism Marketing of Ecuador as an urgent need.

In this scenario and in the framework of the national policy of productive matrix change and elimination of poverty, in 2015 the project “Ecuador, Tourism Potency” in order to strengthen the sector as a sustainable source of income through the national and international positioning of tourism destinations in terms of diversification of products and tourism markets (MINTUR of Ecuador, 2015b: 18). The purpose of the project is to promote and perform a strategic marketing of Ecuador as tourist destination. The suggested strategies are projected towards an integral touristic communication, where traditional communication and online or virtual communication are also incorporated. In conclusion, tourism promotion and diffusion of Ecuador is considered a transversal axis for the development of the activity. Therefore, it is presented as an indispensable aspect in strategic policies and planning of the activity.

Besides, the promotion of tourism is incorporated to the Law (Executive Decree 1186, 2008), and it is considered an objective of the State policy. Article 4 sets forth that it must be “acknowledged that the tourism activity corresponds to the private and community initiative or self-management, and to the State in the sense that it must potentiate activities through the encouragement and promotion of a competitive tourism product” and the State is granted the function of promoting tourism, thus the Ministry of Tourism must “elaborate policies and the reference framework where there shall be,

mandatorily, the international promotion of the country” and “elaborate the national and international tourism promotion plan.” For the Ecuadorian government, the promotion and diffusion of the country constitute a transversal axis for the development of the activity.

## 2. Material and methods.

The objective of this research is to identify and evaluate communication 2.0 in public and private companies of Ecuador using a mixed, qualitative and quantitative methodology. The use of the qualitative method allows conceptualizing the management of tourism communication, communication processes 2.0 and to define models and trends on digital environments. The quantitative method is grounded in the measurement of characteristics of social phenomena, which entails deriving a series of postulates that express relationships between studied variables from a conceptual framework related to the analyzed problem. This method tends to generalize and standardize results (Bernal Torres, 2006). For this reason, in the present research the quantitative method allows to describe the possible relations in numeric form, in order to do this, we collected data from the different key performance indicators (KPI) to connect them between them and describe the behavior of Tourism Entities and the tourist in the digital environment. The time period where the information was selected were the years 2014 and 2015. This time range allows establishing the evolution of communication 2.0.

There are quantitative researches evaluating tourism websites (Fernández-Cavia et al, 2014; Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015; Túñez, Altamirano & Valarezo, 2016). But due to the few evaluation models of communication processes 2.0 in social media we developed our own evaluation model, which was called Communication Evaluation Model 2.0 in Tourism Social Media. Our model allows evaluating Communication 2.0 developed in social media starting from the premise that this kind of tourism promotion must comply with the special characteristics of the Web 2.0. The measurement is done based on the quantification of the actions and interactions in social media, which enables evaluating six variables interconnected with the following key performance indicators:

**Presence:** The constitution of communities and the permanent activity in the network is evaluated, therefore we measure two KPIs of the number of followers and the number of publications (Interactive Advertising Bureau Spain, 2016).

**Growth:** We study the number of followers incorporated during the research period.

**Activity:** We evaluate the number of publications as a key performance indicator.

**Level of service:** To obtain this value, we use the analytical tool Fanpage Karma.

**Participation:** We measure the interrelation of 4 key performance indicators; Number of “likes”, number of reactions, number of comments and number of shared contents.

**Engagement:** It is calculated by relating the created community and followers participation.

$$\text{Engagement} = (\text{N}^\circ \text{ likes} + \text{N}^\circ \text{ comments} + \text{N}^\circ \text{ shared posts} / \text{N}^\circ \text{ fans}) * 100$$

Once the key performance indicators were obtained we generated indexes for every variable, therefore we standardize data obtained by applying the formula  $\text{Min} - \text{Max} = (\text{X} - \text{min}) / (\text{Max} - \text{min})$

creating a standard scale that keeps the same proportions among variables. This standardization enables scaling values of attributes again and the relationships between original data are maintained (Alonso Berrocal, García Figuerola and Zazo Rodríguez, 2006). These results allow creating indexes of each indicator. Finally, these results are interrelated to elaborate the tourism communication index 2.0, that is the results of every variable are summed up and divided by 6.

**Table 1. Index Elaboration**

FANPAGE	PRESENCE		Formula application
KPI	Pi	Pi	Calculation of the Presence Index (NPi) of Fanpage 2:
Fanpage 1	1837643	<b>100</b>	$N_i = \frac{(X - \text{Min})}{(\text{MAX} - \text{Min})} (100)$
Fanpage 2	1136504	<b>58</b>	
Fanpage 3	1111591	<b>56</b>	$NP_i = \frac{(1136504 - 176287)}{(1837643 - 176287)} (100)$
Fanpage 4	816162	<b>39</b>	
Fanpage 5	583653	<b>25</b>	
Fanpage 6	553653	<b>23</b>	$NP_i = \frac{960217}{1661356} (100)$
Fanpage 7	265405	<b>5</b>	
Fanpage 8	176287	<b>0</b>	$NP_i = 57,79$
X= Value of the analyzed Fanpage	1136504		
Max = Maximum value	1837643		
Min = Minimum value	176287		

**Source:** Authors' own creation

## 2.1. Sample

The sample selection was done considering the following parameters:

1º) Public companies. MINTUR of Ecuador in the year 2001 started the Decentralization Program of the tourism activity that relinquished the competency of tourism to 76 Municipalities and 19 Province Councils, which has entailed huge benefits to the sector (Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, 2007). In this sense, in the Strategic Plan of Development of Sustainable Tourism of Ecuador – PLANDETUR 2020 (MINTUR of Ecuador, 2008) the decentralization process is detailed

The transference of Tourism Competencies, generated from the Law of Decentralization and Social Participation and the Law of the Municipal Regime, is framed in the progressive process that, according to the Decentralization Unit, it reaches 77 of the 219 Municipalities in Ecuador and 20 out of 22 Provincial Councils by the end of 2006. Sectional governments now have corporations, addresses or tourism departments, responsible for the competencies of control and collection of annual licenses for functioning, promotion and planning of tourism of every community to its respective Municipalities, leaving the Ministry with a function of national planning, regulating entity responsible for maintaining the registry of establishments, the administration of the country's image, promotion of activity and the coordination of decentralized entities.

In this context, for sample selection we chose the 24 Decentralized Provincial Autonomous Governments and the 24 Decentralized Municipal Autonomous Governments of the provincial capitals. The sample selection was intentional considering the territorial relevance and coverage.

2°) Private companies. MINTUR of Ecuador updated the Tourism Cadaster every year, which details the establishments offering tourism products and services in the country. In the year 2015, there were registered 21.574 tourism companies classified in: accommodation, food and beverage, intermediation, thermal springs and spas and tourist transport. Therefore, to select a representative sample we had a sample error of  $\pm 5\%$  and a confidence level of 95% in the sample formula, obtaining a result of 377 companies, that were randomly selected, but keeping a percentage relation with the type of service offered.

### **3. Analysis and results**

In Ecuador, currently tourism represents the third non-oil income for the economy and it is intended that for 2020 would become the main source of foreign exchange (Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador, 2015c). Therefore, the tourism promotion, both internally and externally are essential to achieve the goal proposed by the National Government. In this context, social media are the suitable platforms to promote tourist destinations with few resources and reach an international target public. However, the tourism promotion in public and private institutions does not migrate towards digital and social environments.

#### **3.1. Presence in social media**

As a result of the research it is determined that none of the 24 Provincial Governments analyzed has presence in social media for tourism promotion. The presence of Municipal Governments in social media is also low: only Municipalities Azogues, Riobamba, Guayaquil, Ibarra and Quito have tourism accounts on Facebook.

Similarly to the behavior of Decentralized Autonomous Governments, the tourism private company of Ecuador has low presence in social media. 16% of entities create an account on social networks, from which 77 have accounts on Facebook and three companies use Facebook and YouTube. Therefore, we demonstrate that in Ecuador, although used little, the social media used the most for tourism promotion is Facebook.

From the monitoring process of social media it is evidenced that in the companies offering accommodation services, only 21% of the analyzed sample has presence in social media and in an exclusive manner, in Facebook. Travel agencies have a greater presence on social media because 51% of the sample have a tourism fanpage and three agencies incorporate a YouTube channel. The beverages and food sector have a minor presence on social networks, only 19% of analyzed companies have a Facebook account. From the companies offering tourism transport service, 16% of the sample equivalent to a company, use Facebook and promotion media. The thermal springs and spas companies do not have presence on social media.

#### **3.2. Facebook as a platform for tourism promotion in Ecuador**

In Ecuador 98% of individuals over the age of 12 have a Facebook account. This was demonstrated by results of the Survey on Life Conditions performed by the National Institute of Statistics and Census, INEC (Sandoval, 2015). For this reason, Facebook is the most used social media for the tourism promotion of the country both in public and private companies.

##### *Presence in tourism fanpage of Ecuador*

To analyze presence on Facebook, we used the PRGS Model (Presence, Response, Generation and Suggestion), proposed by Interactive Advertising Bureau Spain (2016), which compared two KPIs:

the number of fans and the number of publications carried out during the evaluation period (2014–2015).

#### 1) Public company of Ecuador

In January 2015, in Ecuador there are 8.1 million Facebook users, according to the SOCIALBAKERS (2015) report, evidencing that the penetration of tourism accounts is low. The Municipality of Quito, which leads the ranking of presence, with 104.581 fans, only reaches 1% of active users of the country's network in the country, hence its international impact is lower.

Activity on Facebook is also variable. While the Municipalities of Quito and Guayaquil saturate the network with 17 and 15 weekly publications, in average, the Riobamba Government updates its account with a low frequency and publishes, in average, two weekly posts, therefore they do not meet the standards set forth by *Internet República* (2012) that says that the optimal number of weekly publications is of three to five. The governments of Ibarra and Azogues, update their accounts strategically and periodically, complying with the optimal average of weekly publications.

#### 2) Ecuador private company

Private tourism entities also have low presence on Facebook. From the 377 companies comprising the sample, 81 created an account on social media. However, eight of them are profiles and since they do not meet the functions of a fanpage, they are not evaluated. Besides, two of the accounts were blocked during the analysis period, therefore we evaluated 71 tourism sites

Two restaurant companies leader the presence ranking: *Fruques* and *Los Patacones de Elena*, which reach a penetration of 9% and 7%, respectively. It is important to highlight that these are local SMEs that compete in a national market. In 73% of the analyzed sample the impact is minimal. Five companies get to 1% of the 8.1 million Facebook followers in the country. Two organizations belong to the accommodation sector: *Lumini Boutique Motel* and *Hotel Oro Verde Guayaquil*, the second one is a national hotel chain, but the fanpage of Guayaquil is analyzed. The other two entities are small sized food businesses: *Chivitos* and *Mi Cocina* and one belongs to the entertainment sector: *Due 2 Bar*. 93% of the sample does not exceed 40.000 followers, out of which 51% is inferior to 1.000 in number of followers, 16% is between 1.000 and 5.000 fans, 6% has a range of 5.000 and 10.000 users.

The activity of the Network is also low, 23 out of 81 fanpages analyzed do not update tourism accounts during the research period. In a parallel manner, 41 accounts do not reach the average of weekly publication, which demonstrates there are inactive periods on Facebook. On the contrary, in five touristic fanpages we detect saturation of the Network with more than eight weekly posts, among these there is *Hotel Oro Verde* which sends, in average 21 weekly announcements. The optimum publication average is kept by two travel agencies, *Isla de Fuego* and *Turismo E.V.G.*, and two restaurants, *Fruques* and *Chivitos* (*Internet República*, 2012).

#### *Tourism Communication 2.0 on Facebook*

With the purpose to determine the tourism communication 2.0 in Ecuador we generated indexes of presence, growth, activity, participation, service and *engagement*. The result of indexes sum is divided by six. In such a way, the tourism communication 2.0 can be catalogued in public and private tourism entities.

#### 1) Communication 2.0 in public companies of Ecuador



The websites of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments do not generate a tourism communication 2.0. Only the account of the Municipality of Quite obtains an optimal score, due to the following factors:

**Presence.** Quito consolidates a greater community to the other fanpages and keeps an active presence on the network.

**Growth.** Fanpage Karma (2015) measures the growth depending on the number of fans that incorporate in the time period analyzed. In the tourism account of Quito, during the years 2014–2015, 25.423 users join the Network, different from the website of Guayaquil which receives 7.532 new subscribers. Riobamba has 772 and the growth of Azogues and Ibarra is lower, incorporating 138 and 53 tourists, respectively.

**Activity.** As mentioned in the previous section, the update of contents in the tourism accounts of public companies is very frequent, reaching saturation. However, they keep permanent presence in the Network, a reason why they generate tourists 2.0 interaction.

**Participation.** To promote participation of tourists 2.0 we need to create a community large enough to keep the network active and generate quality contents. The three requirements are complied with by the touristic site of Quito, which obtains 1.151.077 users' interactions, surpassing the interactivity generated in Guayaquil which reaches 783.015 reactions. A lower intervention is observed in the accounts of Riobamba which get 11.152 reactions, Ibarra with 8.280 and Azogues 5.984 reactions.

To calculate the participation of users in the Network we sum the contents generated as comments and publications in the wall, shared announcements and clicks on “like” option.

**Level of service.** The level of service is the interactivity that promotes the organization, defined as “the possibility that the site answers doubts, that it offers additional information, share prices and perform auctions, to give the public what it wants, offer added value and create a community with common interests and really involving experience promoting the participation of the client-community.” (Ros, 2008: 100). This KPI corresponds to the response of the Tourism Organization to the publications made by followers, a comment or like in the publication is considered a response. To determine the level of service we evaluate the data obtained through Fanpage Karma.

When analyzing the variable we confirm that the account of Azogues offers a better service to tourists 2.0 and interacts with them in 60% of opportunities. The website of Quito responds 25% of tourist posts and the Ibarra government establishes a dialogue in 9% of publications. Tourism fanpages of Guayaquil and Ibarra are used as traditional communication channels with travelers. That is, they provide the destination through the unidirectional sending of information.

**Engagement.** Conceived as “the set of reactions of a follower before a message” (Valerio et al., 2014), is calculated with the total number of actions done by users divided by the number of followers and multiplied by 100. This formula allows determining not only the participation in the network, but also the commitment and involvement of users towards a brand.

In the result of the evaluation of KPI, it is demonstrated that Quito pages obtain, again, the absolute leadership, reaching an evaluation of 1.101, followed by Guayaquil achieving 606; Azogues, with 189; Riobamba, obtaining 180 and Ibarra with 105 engagement points.

*Index of tourism communication 2.0 in public companies of Ecuador*

To elaborate the index of Communication 2.0 we use the Communication Evaluation Model 2.0 in Tourism Social Media. The index is obtained by interconnecting analyzed variables and allows evaluating the tourism communication in public companies. In such a way, the Decentralized Autonomous Government of Quite obtains the absolute leadership, due to the community it consolidates and the permanent activity of the Network promoted by users' participation, but it must improve the level of service for tourists, an essential element in the communication 2.0. It is necessary to highlight the tourism service 2.0 offered by the DAG of Azogues which, however, must improve other aspects of its presence in the social network.

**Table 2. Index of communication 2.0 in public companies of Ecuador**

Municipality	Presence	Growth	Activity	Participation	Service	Engagement	Communication 2.0	Category
Quito	100	100	100	100	41	100	90	Optimal
Guayaquil	11	29	83	6	0	51	30	Acceptable low
Azogues	0	0	3	0	100	10	19	Improvable
Riobamba	3	3	0	0	16	9	5	
Ibarra	5	0	17	0	0	2	4	

**Source.** Authors' own creation

## 2) Communication 2.0 in private companies of Ecuador

As confirmed in the research, tourism companies of Ecuador incorporate Facebook and YouTube as platforms of tourism communication. However, they are not aware of their potentialities and, therefore, are not administered strategically. To determine communication 2.0 they interconnect six variables analyzed in an independent manner.

**Growth.** 83% of tourism fanpages of private companies of Ecuador do not show growth during the analyzed period (2014-2015). That is, in the two years of the analysis no new followers were incorporated to the accounts. Out of the 10 fanpages of greater growth three are travel agencies, three are restaurants and four are hotel business companies. In the companies with greater growth there outstands the presence of the International franchise Dunkin' Donuts and the national chains *Hotel Oro Verde* and *Heladería Pingüino*. The remaining ones are small and medium sized companies. In the analysis we also confirm that *Agencia Sur viajes* reduces eight points, that is, a percentage of their followers abandons the page.

**Participation.** Tourists 2.0 which interact in the websites of the private company of Ecuador register 1.011.285 reactions in total, out of which 91.8% are the manifestation of the acceptance of read contents through the "like" option, 4.6% of actions are contents- references and in accordance with the international trend their opinions are less visible, therefore registering a 3.3% of comments and 0.4% of publications in the wall.

In the sample analyzed we observe that 92% of pages are not successful in generating users' participation: in 18 of tourism accounts no participation is recorded and in 47 of the we observe less than 50 daily reactions.

Among the pages with higher response from users there are the national franchises of *Pingüino* and *Hotel Oro Verde* and the international ones KFC and Dunkin' Donuts, highlighting also the achievements of SMEs *Moros en la Costa* and Red Lounge Urdesa, a food company.

The fanpage of *Pingüino* has 25 posts in two years and generates 434.862 reactions, approximately 17.390 by each post, which confirms that the participation of users is a variable depending on contents published by the organization. Likewise, KFC receives an average of 201 reactions per day, *Moros en la Costa* 132 daily interactions, Dunkin' Donuts gets in average 127 actions from tourists 2.0. In the hotel chain there are 89 reactions and in Red Lounge Urdesa 55 participations per day.

**Level of Service.** KPI is calculated by the number of responses that the tourism company grants to users' participation with the objective of generating interactivity. From the organizations studied, eight respond to 100% of users' actions and 14 companies interact with 50% and 99% of posts, being higher the number of companies that do not respond to their fans: 10 entities respond less than 50% of publications and 39 do not interact with the target public.

*Index of communication 2.0 in private companies of Ecuador*

When using the Communication Evaluation Model 2.0 in Tourism Social Media the analyzed variables are interrelated and subsequently results are weighted, which allows scaling and sorting the levels of communication in the private companies of Ecuador. From the research we conclude that tourism companies of Ecuador do not generate a communication 2.0. They incorporated to the social media, but they are not aware of their relevance as communication tool and manage it in an empirical manner. 34% of the sample gets a deficient evaluation because they do not reach the minimal score and 54% is classified as improvable, basically due to the abandonment of the Network.

**Table 3. Index of communication 2.0 in private companies of Ecuador**

Company	Presence	Growth	Activity	Participation	Service	Engagement	Communication 2.0	Category
Hotel Oro Verde	21	36	100	15	95	17	47	
You Travel Agency	0	100	59	4	81	6	42	Acceptable
Dunkin' Donuts	1	52	24	21	70	24	32	
Pingüino Ecuador	0	53	4	100	13	9	30	
Abercrombie & Kent	0	35	38	3	73	3	25	
KFC (EC)	0	0	21	35	81	3	23	
Armadillos Café	0	0	0	0	100	35	23	Acceptable
La Gambugia	0	27	7	1	86	11	22	Low
Moros en la costa	0	0	12	22	66	27	21	

**Source.** Authors' own creation

In the acceptable low and acceptable category there are two international chains: Dunkin' Donuts and KFC and two national chains *Hotel Oro Verde* and *Pingüino*. Two travel agencies incorporate to this list Abercrombie & Kent USA, which is an international franchise, and You Travel Agency, which is

a national chain. We must highlight the presence in the list of three middle sized companies in the country: *Los Armadillos Café*, *La Gambugia* and *Moros en la Costa*.

### **3.3. YouTube as a platform for promoting tourism in Ecuador.**

The results obtained from the study of YouTube channels confirm that in Ecuador there has been a migration to social media. Neither of the three accounts were updated during the study period and the acceptance of tourists 2.0 is low. The channel of the travel agency Abercrombie & Kent Ecuador has more presence in the Network with 920 subscribers, while in *Hostería Finca El Pigual* it reaches 26 and the agency Equatortrekking has 7 followers. Therefore, the tourism communication 2.0 in YouTube cannot be evaluated.

## **4. Conclusions**

In Ecuador, tourism communication 2.0 is incipient, the convergence towards social media is low. Only 10% of public companies and 16% of private companies created accounts on Facebook to promote tourism destinations. In YouTube the presence is much lower, 0.7% of private companies implemented a channel for tourism promotion, a quite low percentage considering the relevance of social media in promotion of tourism destinations.

The evaluation of tourism accounts determines that in Ecuador there is no tourism communication 2.0. From the sample analyzed, only the communication 2.0 of the tourism fanpage of the Decentralized Autonomous Government of Quito reaches the optimal evaluation. While in the private company two tourism accounts get an evaluation of acceptable. We conclude that tourism companies are not making the most of the advantages offered by social media as platforms for the national and international promotion of tourism products.

Tourism companies in Ecuador must adapt to changes in communication, as mentioned by Túñez, Altamirano and Valarezo (2016) where communication models and processes have evolved. But the tourism promotion platforms still have a traditional and unidirectional model. They are not appealing for the tourist. It is a rule that users should be the ones dominating the Network. Therefore, the institutions must adapt to their needs of participation and interaction and must create spaces encouraging them.

With the research, it is evidenced that the permanent update of social accounts and the quality of information impact on users' interaction. But the service and commitment 2.0 of public and private companies is too low, influencing in the participation of tourists in social environments. Thus, social media turn into traditional platforms for the unidirectional promotion of tourism destinations hence, it is time to change the concept of communication towards the bidirectional sending of information and generate digital interactive and participative contents allowing the user to live the experience in order to know the strengths and competitive advantages of each country, contributing to the purchase decision.

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