



# The use of Facebook as a tourist communication tool in major international urban destinations

## *El uso de Facebook como herramienta de comunicación turística en los grandes destinos urbanos internacionales*



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### **Abstract:**

The object of study of this work is to analyse the communication strategy of different tourist destinations, which is applied to Facebook. More specifically, we examine the activity, the capacity to generate a community and interaction, what themes contribute to it, and what formats predominate. It is based on the hypothesis that

### **Resumen:**

*El objeto de estudio de este trabajo es el análisis de la estrategia de comunicación que aplican diferentes destinos turísticos en Facebook. En concreto se examina la actividad, la capacidad de generar comunidad e interacción; qué temas contribuyen a ello y qué formatos predominan. Se parte de la hipótesis de que los territorios*

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territories can perform better because of their presence on social media. As a methodological technique, the content analysis of the official pages of the destinations included in the study “City Tourism Performance Research” (UNWTO and WTCE, 2017) is proposed. The study provides success stories in urban tourism; Malaga is one of these as it is the fastest-growing urban destination in Spain. 2,217 shared posts are analysed between February and April 2019 on the pages of the following cities: Antwerp, Berlin, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Cape Town, Hangzhou, Linz, Malaga, Marrakech, Beijing, Seoul, Sapporo, Tianjin, Tokyo, and Turin. The conclusion is that the topics that generate the most reactions are those that correspond to visual elements and the attributes that differentiate the destinations. It is also confirmed that the territories maintain a more intuitive rather than strategic presence on Facebook.

**Keywords:**

Facebook; tourism; destinations; cities; interaction.

*pueden lograr un mayor rendimiento de su presencia en los medios sociales. Como técnica metodológica, se propone el análisis de contenido de las páginas oficiales de los destinos incluidos en el estudio ‘City Tourism Performance Research’ (UNWTO y WTCE, 2017), que recoge casos de éxito en el turismo urbano, a los que se suma Málaga, por el ser el destino urbano de España que más crece. En total, se analizan 2.217 posts compartidos entre febrero y abril de 2019 en las páginas de las ciudades de Amberes, Berlín, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Copenhague, Ciudad del Cabo, Hangzhou, Linz, Málaga, Marrakech, Pekín, Seúl, Sapporo, Tianjin, Tokio y Turín. Se concluye que los temas que generan más reacciones son aquellos que se corresponden con los elementos visuales y con los atributos diferenciadores de los destinos y se confirma que los territorios mantienen en Facebook una presencia más intuitiva que estratégica.*

**Palabras clave:**

*Facebook; turismo; destinos; ciudades; interacción.*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is currently one of the most important economic sectors in the world. The tourist industry is establishing itself as one of the best indicators for measuring the good health of the economy, both in developed and emerging countries. In 2017 tourism contributed just over 10% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it generated one in ten jobs and accounted for approximately 30% of export services worldwide (UNWTO; 2018).

In 2018 there were 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide, a growth of 6% compared to the previous year. This figure was reached two years earlier than official forecasts (UNWTO, 1998). Urban tourism is the segment that is experiencing the most significant growth worldwide due to its capacity to attract tourists for both business and leisure. Consequently, it has become essential to the cities' economies.

The tourism sector has continued to grow due to many factors: the opening of new markets, new business models, cheaper travel, and, of course, the emergence and subsequent development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Internet (Buhalis and Law, 2008). In any case, social media has marked a turning point in tourist communication for the tourism sector (Martínez-Valerio, 2012).

In this sense, many authors consider social media to be the internet's most revolutionary application (Rodríguez and De la Morena, 2014) as it is “the modus operandi of the 21st century” (Lange-Faria and Elliot, 2012). Social media has transformed tourist communication (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; De San Eugenio 2011; Míguez, Mariné-Roig, and Huertas, 2014; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Wichels, 2014; Paniagua and Huertas, 2018).

This transformation is mainly due to the capacity to interact and create a dialogue with audiences on social media (Lim, Chung and A Weaver, 2012; Míguez et al., 2014; Altamirano and Túniz López, 2016). Consumers can talk to each other,

compare information about different tourist destinations, and recommend or advise against their experiences thanks to social media (Giraldo and Martínez, 2017).

### *1.1. The importance of the image of tourist destinations*

Therefore, images are now crucial when choosing a tourist destination (Crompton, 1992) since tourists' experiences in that destination will serve as a recommendation guide for family, friends, and their contacts on different social media. Thus, it is evident that social media is an essential information source for tourists (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Miguéns, Baggio, and Costa, 2008), and contributes to changing the communication paradigm.

Nowadays, the tourist is at the centre of this paradigm. Therefore, organised and uniform traditional tourism has given way to experiential tourism (De San Eugenio, 2011). That is why the destination marketing offices (DMOs) are increasingly consolidating their brands so that tourists obtain the best image of these destinations. The concept of the brand is made up of a set of names, logos, symbols, and values that aim to create a positive identity of the territory so that potential audiences have a positive perception of it (Huertas, 2014). Therefore, the brand is adapted by consumers in a complex way (Giraldo and Martínez, 2017).

The tourist destination is an intangible service. Until the tourist enjoys his/her experience there, he or she will not know if it is good or bad (Blain, Levy, and Brent Richie, 2005). As the destinations are intangible, choosing one is always risky, although this risk is now minimised thanks to other tourists' opinions (Mill and Morrison, 2012; Mendes Thomas, Augusto Biz, and Gândara, 2013). Other tourists' assessments are considered more than those of the Destination Marketing Offices (DMOs) (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Domínguez and Araújo, 2012).

Destinations benefit from this media in the pre-trip phase, when tourists are looking for inspirational information about the place they are going to visit, during the trip itself, when they publish and share information when returning home, and when they share their experiences (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Mendes Thomaz et al., 2013). Tourists are publishing information about their holiday experience on social media more and more, thus demonstrating a proactive attitude (Santo, 2014).

Currently, tourists can make their decisions based on the information from other tourists who have already visited the destination and not only on what the destination managers can tell them (Curty and Zhang, 2011). In this new tourist communication paradigm, the media offers tourists the opportunity to give their opinions, make points, ask for information on any issue, criticise or praise their experience, make suggestions for improvement or meet other tourists with similar tastes. Thus, tourists can become opinion leaders because of their ability to create or destroy a reputation (Alvarado, 2012).

In this sense, the travel planning process is being reinvented (Sanmartín, 2012). The Internet is the backbone of search, and social media is the "new" tourist agency where experiences are shared. Therefore, there is a new type of traveller who acquires their tourist products directly and without intermediaries (Buhalis and Law, 2008).

In this context, it is evident that destinations have increased their need to communicate and understand the importance of communicating the brand (Fernández-Cavia, 2011). Territories with a strong brand are more likely to attract tourists and new residents or future investments (Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride, 2011). Although a territory is not a product, most studies (Fernández-Cavia and Huertas, 2009) consider that branding can also be applied to regions. The territory-brand is now what most identifies a tourist destination (De San Eugenio, 2011).

The image of a tourist destination is still the overall perception that a tourist has of it (Bigné, Isabel Sánchez, and Sánchez, 2001). In this sense, social media is a great tool for contributing to the excellent image of the destination, facilitating two-way communication between the organisation and its audiences (Fernández-Cavia and Huertas, 2014). Its use allows us to know what travellers think, and the destination marketing organisations (DMOs) can engage in dialogue with them and open the door to future relationships (Wigley and Lewis, 2012; Fernández-Cavia and Huertas, 2014; Mariné-Roig and Huertas, 2016).

### *1.2. Social media in tourist destinations*

Social media offers many opportunities for tourist institutions (Xu, 2010) and contributes to destination branding (Domínguez y Araújo, 2012). The idea is to make sure that tourists remember it since they will choose their tourist destination based on the destination's image. Therefore, as explained by Folgado, Oliveira, and Hernández (2011), the destination will try to emphasise its unique character by using promotional techniques that seek to create a secure and robust brand.

The brand image that tourists have of the destination will play an essential role in its success. Generally, tourists have limited knowledge of tourist destinations before visiting them. Therefore, if the destination has a strong, differentiated brand image, it is more likely to be included in the tourists' travel itinerary (Beerli and Martín, 2002). Consequently, one of the main reasons for using social media is to improve the brand's image (Piñeiro, 2012).

To interact with tourists and engage in authentic dialogue, logically, proper management of social media is needed, allowing for comments and responding to them. If the tools are only used unidirectionally, dialogue cannot take place (Míguez et al., 2014). Not surprisingly, although social media itself enables interaction because of the technology (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012), social media managers must use it correctly for it to be effective (Zhou and Wang, 2013). Some authors (Míguez et al., 2014; Martínez-Sala and Campillo-Alhama, 2018) point out, however, that the DMOs are not taking full advantage of social media's potential as a tool for generating dialogue with their audiences.

Since its appearance, "all levels of governments, mainly use the Internet as an electronic bulletin board to publish information, without making a real effort to interact" (Castells, 2001), this model seems to be the same in the case of tourism communication via social media (Martínez-Valerio, 2012). Establishing relations between DMOs and different users is maybe one of the most transcendental aspects of social media (Altamirano and Túnuez-López, 2016).

Thus, while it is true that social media has offered new opportunities, they have also posed a significant challenge for tourism institutions, as well as for communication directors and the media managers themselves. They have had to

adapt quickly to a new and changing reality. In general, DMOs are adapting to this transformation professionally and rapidly. However, because of the speed at which these changes are taking place, on many occasions, tourist destinations are using social media without knowing where they are present or what the effects of their strategies are, which tend to be more intuitive rather than strategic (Hvass and Munar, 2012; Hays, Page and Buhalis, 2013).

Even today, this media is used to inform, without dialogue (Fernández Cavia and Huertas, 2009), for fear of criticism or the lack of training (Huertas, 2014). Even so, social media is the communication directors' most important channel to address their audiences, and its relevance is reflected in the significance communication directors themselves give to it. 90.4% of communication directors consider social media to be the most significant channel (Zerfass, Moreno, Tech, Vercic and Verhoeven, 2017), ahead of websites, online newspapers, events, radio stations, and television channels or traditional newspapers. Thus, the perception of the importance of social media has increased from 10% in 2007 to over 90% a decade later.

Destinations are increasingly opting for this type of communication, which has even led to changes in the structure of most destination communication and marketing departments (Wilches, 2014). Not surprisingly, the use of social media forces those in charge of destinations' communication to update information (Domínguez and Araújo, 2012) continuously.

Among all social media, Facebook is still the most widely used today. The network founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 is one of the most popular websites worldwide. It has over 2.3 billion active users per month (Facebook, 2018), which composes almost half of the connected population (Internet World Stats, 2018). Facebook is thus one of the largest media organisations in history (Rieder, 2013).

Facebook is an indispensable element for the implementation of marketing activities (Stankov, Klauco, Vujicic, Vasiljevic, and Dragicevic, 2016). Facebook has proven to be very strong in the field of tourism communication, as it is used in each of the phases of travel planning described above: before the trip itself, when helping to inspire tourists, assisting planning and booking, and as a platform to share the experiences in the destination (Sparkler, 2014). This is why a coherent discourse on Facebook can help the destinations to generate a better brand image (Rodríguez, Llorente, and García, 2012).

In general, more and more destinations are realising the importance of effectively managing social media to gain a competitive advantage over other destinations (Pike and Page, 2014). Despite the widespread adoption of social media by both consumers and tourism providers in recent years, successfully managing and administrating social media remains mostly unknown to professionals and academics (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Leung, Law, van Hoof and Buhalis, 2013; Mariani, Di Felice, and Mura, 2016).

There are notably few studies on tourism organisations' application of social media (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Hays et al., 2013; Huertas, Setó and Míguez, 2015). The studies carried out also have a series of methodological limitations (Hays et al., 2013), mainly due to the lack of robust metrics to capture social engagement (Mariani, Mura and Di Felice, 2018).

To close the research gap, we conducted a study to explore how marketing offices in significant urban destinations are strategically using Facebook as a tourist communication tool, in order to illustrate how the cities studied used social media, analyse what factors contribute to tourists or potential visitors participating more and to identify cases of good practice in these destinations' use of Facebook. In short, the aim is to find out which contents generate the most reactions and interactivity among tourists.

We have decided to centre on Facebook because, as previously explained, this network currently has the highest number of users worldwide. We start from the hypothesis that destinations are using this social network more intuitively than strategically, and have limited interaction with their audiences, as it is used more for tourist information than as a place for dialogue.

## 2. Methodology

This study has analysed the posts of the official Facebook profiles of a sample of 16 urban destinations worldwide, published between February and April 2019, to achieve the proposed objectives. The selection of the sample coincides with the 15 destinations from the study "City Tourism Performance Research" (UNWTO and WTCE, 2017), which features the success stories and good practices in some of the main urban tourist destinations in the world, Malaga has been added as it is the fastest-growing destination in Spain. Thus, the final sample includes Malaga, Antwerp, Berlin, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Cape Town, Hangzhou, Linz, Marrakech, Beijing, Seoul, Sapporo, Tianjin, Tokyo, and Turin.

A content analysis of these destinations' official Facebook pages is proposed as a methodological technique. This technique is considered to be the most suitable for dealing with quantitative research on written texts, a long-standing tradition in journalistic studies since it allows us to establish reliable inferences about the context of the news (Krippendorff, 2002) and its conditions of production and reception. It is also considered to be more useful for gathering, processing, and evaluating large amounts of information (Orellana and Sánchez, 2006). It is frequently used for describing the components of media messages (Igartua, 2006).

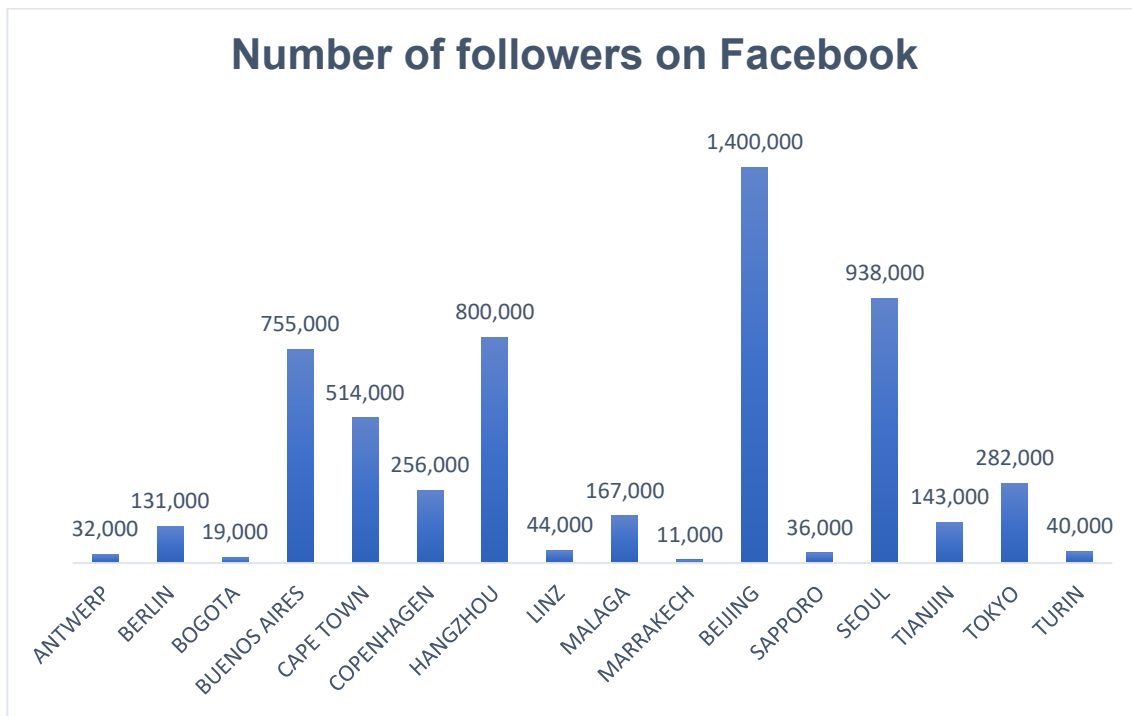
A total of 2 217 posts have been studied through the tool Fanpage Karma ([www.fanpagekarma.com](http://www.fanpagekarma.com)) classified by their type (photograph, status, video, or link) and also according to the number of "likes" received, shares and users' comments. Subsequently, a content analysis of the tourist attractions and emotional values of the brand (tangible heritage, landscape, agenda, climate, nature, services, leisure, institutional messages, intangible heritage, sport, business, nontourist information, and technology) most mentioned or communicated by the destinations' marketing offices (DMO) is carried out by showing the posts that generated the most reactions.

### 3. Results

The destinations analysed have a total of 5 568 000 followers, and an average of 348 000 followers for each of the destinations. The differences between them, however, are noteworthy. The destinations with the highest number of followers are Beijing (1,400,000), Seoul (938,000), Hangzhou (800,000), Buenos Aires (755,000), and Cape Town (514,000). At the other end of the spectrum are Marrakech (11,000), Bogota (19,000), Antwerp (32,000), Sapporo (36,000), and Turin (40,000).

The destinations have published a total of 2,217 posts, which is an average of 138.5 posts for each of the destinations in the period analysed. There are also significant differences between the different destinations. Bogota is the place that posts the most (302), followed by Berlin (237), Marrakech (194), Malaga (182), and Cape Town (177). In contrast, the destinations with the least activity in the period were Sapporo (9), Copenhagen (84), Linz (87), Seoul (107), and Tokyo (108). These figures show that the number of followers is not directly related to the number of posts published.

Figure 1



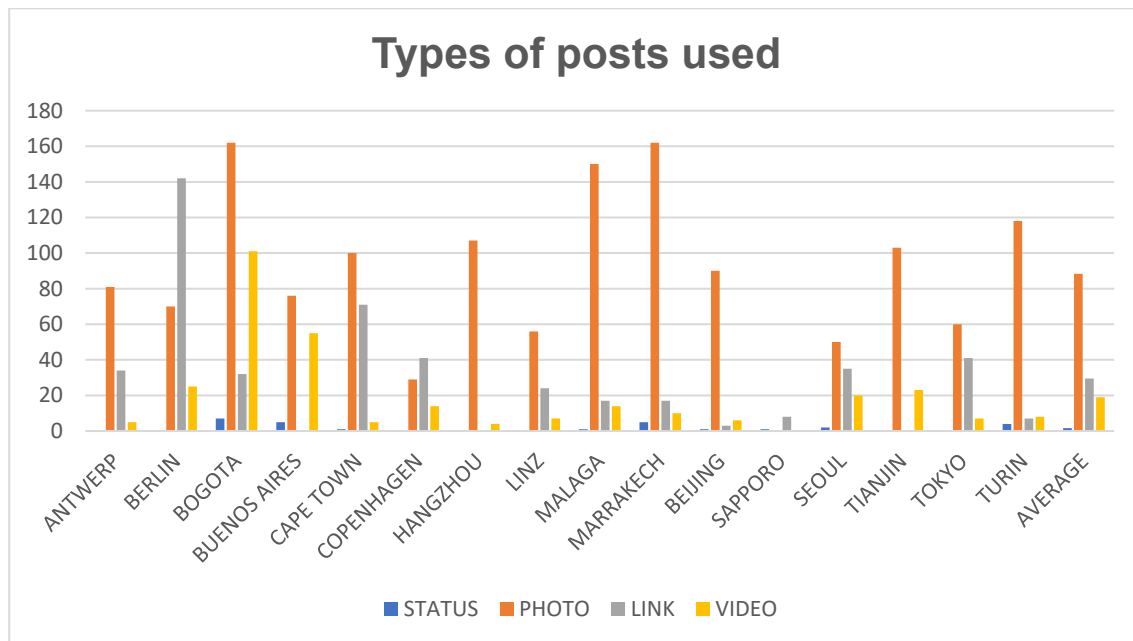
Source: created by the authors

The types of posts are classified into link, photo, status, and video. Facebook allows you to send both photos and videos easily. Most of the posts published in this period use images (either photos or videos), there were 1 718, which is 77.49% of the total. Moreover, all destinations, except Sapporo, use this resource, so it can be said that 93.5% of destinations use images for their Facebook posts. Specifically, the total number of posts analysed 1414 (63.7% of the total) feature photos, 472 (21.2%) are a link to another website, 304 (13.7%) are videos, and only 27 (1.21%) is just a status.

The average number of status posts per destination in the period analysed is 1.6. 62.5% of the destinations use this resource. Bogota posted the most status updates (7), Buenos Aires (5), Marrakech (5), Turin (4), and Seoul (2). Cape Town (1), Malaga (1), Beijing (1), and Sapporo (1) are below the average. However, Antwerp, Berlin, Copenhagen, Hangzhou, Linz, Tianjin, and Tokyo do not even use this type of post.

93.7% of the destinations post photos. The average number of posts featuring pictures is 88.3% per destination. The destinations that featured photos in their posts the most are Bogota (162), Marrakech (162), Malaga (150), Turin (118), and Hangzhou (107). Far below the average are Copenhagen (29), Seoul (50), Linz (56), Tokyo (68), and Berlin (70). Sapporo did not post any photos.

Figure 2



Source: created by the authors



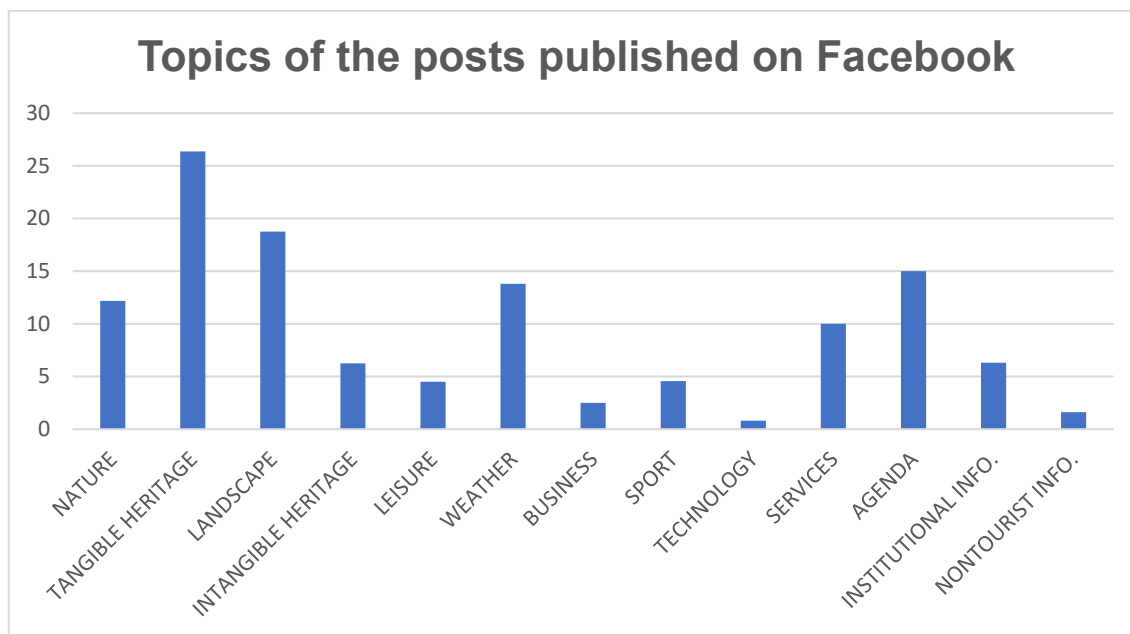
On the other hand, 81.2% of the destinations post links or links to additional information. The average of this type of post per destination is 29.5%. Well above the average are Berlin (142) Cape Town (71), Copenhagen (41), Tokyo (41), and Antwerp (34). In contrast, below the average are Beijing (3), Turin (7), Sapporo (8), Malaga (17) and Marrakech (17). Buenos Aires, Hangzhou, and Tianjin do not post links.

Finally, 93.5% of the destinations use videos in their posts. The average number of this type of publication for each destination is 19. The ones that most use this resource are Bogota (101), Buenos Aires (55), Berlin (25), Tianjin (23), and Seoul (20). Below the average are Hangzhou (4), Antwerp (5), Cape Town (5), Beijing (6), and Linz (7). Sapporo is the only destination that does not use videos in its posts. After analysing the types of posts, we analyse the types that generate more interactivity from users through likes, comments, and shared posts; the Fanpage Karma tool carried out this analysis.

The posts with the highest number of reactions are those with photos. The posts with images receive an average of 69,587 reactions. Destinations such as Hangzhou (6,470), Seoul (1,363), and Beijing (919) make the most use of these types of posts. However, other destinations do not receive anywhere near as many reactions: Bogota (10), Marrakech (11), and Turin (15) are well below the average. After posts featuring photos, the links receive the most reactions (an average of 243.5). Well above the average are Beijing (1 989), Seoul (696), Malaga (318), and Copenhagen (291). Well below average are Marrakech (5.6), Bogota (28), or Hangzhou (32), but some destinations do not even receive any reactions to these types of posts such as Tianjin, Hangzhou, and Buenos Aires.

Regarding content, most of the posts published by the tourist destinations refer to tangible heritage (an average of 26.3 posts in the period analysed), followed by landscapes (18.7), agenda, (15), weather (13.8), and nature (12.1). At the other end of the spectrum are posts on services (10), leisure (7.4), institutional messages (6.3), intangible heritage (6.2), sport (4.5), business (2.5), nontourist information (1.6) and technology (0.8).

Figure 3



Source: created by the authors

The differences between the destinations, however, are striking. The posts about tangible heritage are the most numerous in all the destinations; the figures range from 45 in Tianjin to 13 in Seoul. There is also a notable difference among destinations when publishing posts on the landscape. Malaga (43) leads this ranking, followed by Berlin (40) and Marrakech (32). At the other end is Sapporo, which does not post at all about this topic.

Agenda is included as part of the communication in posts in all the destinations except in the case of Sapporo and Hangzhou. Turin (42), Malaga (26), Berlin (26), and Bogota (23) are the destinations that publish more on agenda aspects on Facebook.

Five destinations do not post about the weather. These are Seoul, Tianjin, Tokyo, Turin, and Buenos Aires. Sapporo only posts once on this topic and Beijing twice. In contrast, Cape Town posts about weather almost every day (69), followed by Berlin (22). As indicated above, nature is also a widely used element by urban tourist destinations on their Facebook posts. All the destinations analysed, except Sapporo, make a publication on natural attractions: Tokyo holds the record (32), followed by Beijing (23).

Regarding services, Tokyo (19), Berlin (17), Buenos Aires (15), and Turin (15) are the destinations that publish the most posts on this subject. On the other hand, Beijing and Hangzhou are the only destinations that do not post anything about tourist services. Regarding leisure Tokyo (14), Buenos Aires (10) and Berlin (9) are the destinations that post most frequently on these topics, and Bogota, Cape Town, and Sapporo do not publish anything.

The topics that give content to tourist destinations' Facebook posts, which are least cited by tourist destinations, are, as indicated, institutional messages, intangible heritage, sport, business, nontourist information, and technology. However, there are also notable differences among destinations. Copenhagen, Berlin, and Sapporo do not use this channel to inform about institutional messages. In contrast, Bogota uses it on up to 35 occasions, followed by Marrakech (10) and Malaga (8).

All the destinations mention intangible heritage in their posts: Buenos Aires does so on 18 occasions, followed by Copenhagen (11) and Hangzhou (9). Sport is still present in the information on Bogota (22 posts) and Malaga (13). On the other hand, Antwerp, Hangzhou, and Sapporo do not post on sports matters. Hangzhou, Malaga, Sapporo, and Tokyo do not publish any posts about business. On the contrary, Marrakech is the destination that refers to this topic the most (10), followed by Antwerp (8) and Bogota (5).

Finally, technology is only used in Facebook posts by Bogota, Hangzhou, Linz, Marrakech, Beijing, Sapporo, Seoul, and Tianjin. Seoul has the most (5), followed by Tianjin (2). On the other hand, Antwerp, Bogota, Cape Town, Hangzhou, Linz, Malaga, Marrakech, Beijing, Tokyo, and Turin are the destinations that post nontourist information on Facebook posts. Bogota (6), Cape Town (4), and Malaga (4) are the destinations that most use this resource.

Interactivity was analysed according to the types of posts; their content was analysed searching for the topics that generate the most reactions among tourists. Tangible heritage (786.9 average reactions), nature (735), and landscape (729.1) are the most mentioned elements, although leisure (513), intangible heritage (478.9), or institutional information (413.7) are also prominent topics. They are followed by technology (325.3), weather (172.6), sport (102.6), the agenda (83.6), services (75.7), business (57.8), and nontourist information (48.1). Tangible heritage (14.2) and landscape (12.3) are also the topics that generate the most comments and are shared the most: the landscape was shared 54.6 times on average, and heritage 53 times on average.

In any case, in absolute terms, the elements that generated the most reactions were a report on the Seoul Spring Welcome Week (40,083), a news item on blogger Hallie Daily's visit to Hangzhou (28 391), an exhibition at the Botanical Garden in Beijing (9,009), the presentation of a prestigious award for a Cape Town Chardonnay (3,319), a general photo of Berlin (2,643) and a photo shared by a user from Malaga (2,548).

In general, the topics that received the most reactions from users are those that correspond to the most visual elements (images and videos) and that corresponded to the differentiating attributes of the destinations (tangible and intangible heritage, nature, and landscapes).

#### 4. Conclusions and discussion

Facebook continues to play an essential role as a marketing tool for tourist destinations. All the destinations in the study 'City Tourism Performance Research' (UNWTO and WTCE, 2017) have an official page on this social network, including Chinese destinations. However, in the Asian giant, the presence of Facebook is symbolic.

Moreover, two Chinese cities-Beijing and Hangzhou- are among the three destinations that have the most followers on their Facebook pages, which confirms that regardless of the social network's importance in a country, it is still a vital tool for tourist promotion in the international arena. The results also show that the number of followers a destination has on Facebook is more linked to the size of the destination itself than the activity it has on the network.

The results show that the way communication managers in urban destinations use Facebook varies significantly. The differences in the number of posts published by each of the destinations are significant. More activity on Facebook does not lead to a more substantial number of followers or a higher number of reactions.

In this sense, our research coincides with that conducted by Mariani et al. (2016), which indicated that frequent posts usually harm engagement. Similarly, the ranking of a destination in tourist arrivals does not dictate a more developed strategy. Thus, as Hays et al. highlighted (2013), small destinations can be more innovative. In any case, this approach demonstrates our initial hypothesis that destinations' work on Facebook is still more intuitive than strategic.

There is evidence of an increase in the use of images to reinforce the message to be conveyed through Facebook. More than six out of every ten posts have photographs and all the destinations except Sapporo, which is the city with the lowest activity on the network, use this resource. These results contradict what Martínez-Valerio (2012) stated in "Tourist promotion strategies through Facebook," which said that destinations did not pay much attention to the use of images on Facebook.

The use of photographs is also fundamental. Since White (2010), at a very early stage of Facebook's emergence, had concluded that the images taken, shown and recorded on Facebook reinforce tourists' travel experience; and how, moreover, these images can influence the travel decisions for those who see the photos.

However, despite the capacity that the images have to communicate emotional values, as indicated by Míguez-González and Huertas (2015), destinations continue to use them mainly to show their heritage or tourist attractions. It has been found that in many of the destinations, there is still a lack of strategy in the use of these images.

Mariani, Mura, and Di Felice (2018) established that destinations use Facebook with a top-down approach and that spontaneous user-generated content has almost no place. In this sense, we concluded that Facebook continues to be used more as an information channel for potential tourists than as an interaction or public relations tool. The agenda, weather information, or institutional messages continue to have significant importance in the content.

However, there seems to have been progress in the use of elements that help to communicate the brand. Thus, most posts published by tourist destinations refer to tangible heritage, which is usually connected to the symbolic aspects

of the destination and the brand's identifying values. These topics are also those that generate the most reactions from users, so destinations should make a greater effort to communicate the values that differentiate them from their competitors.

On the other hand, even though the images or comments shared by the users themselves are in the absolute ranking of elements that produce the most reactions, it is clear that the one-person model continues to be established in cities' tourism promotion. Thus, we agree with Martínez-Valerio (2012) that those responsible for the pages do not use the tools as elements of interaction or to encourage debate.

In this sense, we conclude that destinations should be more innovative and creative. They can foster interaction with their users through easily accessible tools, such as competitions, opinion surveys, or games, which would facilitate potential tourists' participation and provide the destinations with information on their profiles.

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