The emergent nature of wine tourism in Ecuador and the role of the Social medium Facebook in optimising its positioning

La naturaleza emergente del enoturismo en Ecuador y el papel de la Red Social Facebook en la optimización de su posicionamiento

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ABSTRACT:
Wine tourism is an emergent activity that has experienced major development in recent years. In this sense, those regions whose identities and key characteristics include a strong reputation as wine producers and therefore enjoy a solid position at the forefront in the minds of consumers who appreciate this drink, see wine tourism as a means of attracting visitors, further consolidating their reputation and promoting local wineries. This study is centred in Ecuador, where this form of tourism is growing in popularity. Specifically, it considers two of the country’s most representative wineries in which wine tourism plays a major role, thanks to the introduction of guided tours and wine tasting sessions designed to offer visitors positive experiences of a lasting nature. These wineries are ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and the ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’. Our research identifies the positioning of these wineries in the social medium Facebook as a communication channel for connecting with the target markets, given that it is

RESUMEN:
Enoturismo es una actividad emergente que ha experimentado mayor desarrollo en los últimos años. En este sentido, las regiones cuyas identidades y características clave incluyen una sólida reputación como productores de vino y por lo tanto disfrutan de una posición sólida a la vanguardia en la mente de los consumidores que aprecian esta bebida, ver el enoturismo como medio para atraer visitantes, consolidando su reputación y promoción de bodegas de la zona. Este estudio se centra en el Ecuador, donde esta forma de turismo está creciendo en popularidad. Específicamente, considera dos de las bodegas más representativas del país en que vino turismo desempeña un papel importante, gracias a la introducción de visitas guiadas y degustación de sesiones diseñadas para ofrecer a los visitantes positivos experiencias de carácter duradero. Estas bodegas son ‘Dos Hemisferios’ y la ‘Chaupi Estancia bodega’. Nuestra investigación identifica el posicionamiento de estas bodegas de la
1. Introduction

Although the motivations that drive modern day tourists have changed, and are becoming increasingly diverse and plural, they all share a common need, that of “living unique experiences”. Experiencing sensations, emotions or reliving pleasurable moments are key factors in generating the desire to visit a specific destination.

Wine tourism is seen as a means of satisfying some of these wishes.

Wine, a natural beverage obtained from the fermentation of grapes, is one of the principal products of gastronomy: not only is it considered a drink of prestige, rooted in a narrative that can even be considered mythical thanks to references such as the “blood of the land”, but it is also widely used in food preparation. The popularity of this resource has led to a growing interest in gastronomy and wine tourism, attributable to a large degree to the promotion campaigns targeting destinations associated with oenology.

With regards to communication, it is important to stress that changes in our environment stemming from the arrival of information and communication technologies (ICTs), in which social media play a crucial role, have led to the inclusion of new, specifically tailored strategies in tourist promotion in order to reach customers effectively.

Within this context, the principal objective of this research is to analyse the positioning on Facebook of two leading wine production and distribution companies in Ecuador: ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’. The choice of Ecuador as the scope of our study is due to the steadily growing interest in wine tourism in this country, the result of its unquestionable viticulture resources and attractions.

Furthermore, the choice of the companies featured in our study is attributable to their position at the forefront of Ecuador’s wine industry: their wines and brands enjoy an outstanding domestic and international reputation, as reflected in the numerous awards and accolades they have received over the years. In addition, they offer wine tourists the chance to discover in situ their vineyards, wineries and wines, etc.

2. Wine Tourism

Like gastronomy, wine forms an essential part of the culture and history of any region, reflecting its identity and forming an essential part of its heritage. The term ‘wine culture’ takes various forms within a territory, all centred on wine, which is an inherent part of the culture of the place (Pastor, 2006).

Enotourism, wine tourism or even vinitourism refers to “consumer behaviour, a strategy for the development of the geographical area and the wine market of that area, and also an opportunity for wineries to promote and sell their products directly to consumers” (Getz and Brown, 2006).

As stated by Millán and Dancausa (2012) and Molina, Gómez and Esteban (2013), in recent years this type of tourism has been the subject of a considerable amount of scientific literature in Australia (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2000; Jolley, 2002; Carlsen et al. 2006); in Canada (Williams and Dossa, 2003; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2003; Getz and Brown, 2006); in the USA (Dodd, 1995); in Chile (Egan and Bell, 2002; Sharples, 2002); in France (Frochot, 2000); in Greece (Tzmitra-Kalogianni, Papadaki and Alexaki, 1999); in Hungary (Szivas, 1999); in Italy (Brunori and Rossi, 2000); in New Zealand (Beverland, 1998; Hall and Macionis, 1998; Mitchell and Hall, 2001; Alonso et al., 2007); in Portugal (Correia, Passos and Charters, 2004; Marques, 2006); in South Africa (Bruwer, 2003); and in Spain (Gilbert, 1992; Armesto and Gómez, 2004; Alvear et al., 2007; Millán and Melián, 2008, López-
This vast amount of literature is indicative of the tremendous interest generated by this type of tourism. One of the contributing factors is its capacity to revitalize a destination by involving all three sectors of the economy: the primary sector, through vine growing; the secondary sector, through the wine making process; and the tertiary sector, due to the variety of services involved (tourism, gastronomy, the retail trade, etc.).

According to Mowforth (1993), if alternative tourism represents all those trips made in order to carry out recreational activities in direct contact with nature, and forms of cultural expression that motivate visitors to discover, enjoy and take part in their conservation, then wine tourism can be included in this classification.

In their study of the motivations and experiences that drive the wine tourist to visit and enjoy a destination, Hall and Sharples (2000) consider wine tourism to be “visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine regions are the main motivating factor for visitors”.

In short, wine tourism attempts to promote the winemaking resources of a specific region through a wide range of wine-based cultural elements, in order to boost the social and economic development of the territory. In this sense, ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’ boast more than sufficient resources in order to contribute to this development.

### 3. Leading wineries in Ecuador: ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’

Ecuador is home to a number of leading companies dedicated to the production and sale of wine. The most important of these include ‘Dos Hemisferios’, ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’, ‘La Toscana’ and ‘Vinos Don César’ (Acosta and Monge, 2014).

In the alcoholic beverages market, wine is the third most popular drink amongst middle class Ecuadorians after beer and whisky.

The most popular varieties consumed in the country include Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Syrah, Merlot Tempranillo and Pinot Noir.

For the purpose of this study we have selected just two of the four companies mentioned, due to the reasons given above. Characteristics such as their location, details of their production and sales or the prizes and awards received are given in Table 1.

### Table 1: ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOS HEMISFERIOS</th>
<th>CHAUPI ESTANCIA WINERY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Guayas (in San Miguel del Morro in the Playas Canton)</td>
<td>Yaruquí (parish in the metropolitan district of Quito)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and sales</td>
<td>National and International</td>
<td>National and International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of wines</td>
<td>White and Red</td>
<td>White and Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Caberbet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Shiraz and Chardonnay.</td>
<td>The first was Palomino, originally from Jerez, Spain. Today it has 32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine tourism</td>
<td>Tours of the vineyards and wine-tasting sessions.</td>
<td>Guided tours of the vineyards, wine-tasting sessions and the possibility of attending cocktail receptions and picnics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own from Acosta and Monge (2014)

4. Online communication, tourism and social media

Within the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs), social media have emerged as a new format for the dissemination of tourism companies. Recent studies have pointed to a growing number of tourists that generate content on 2.0 platforms and use the information available on social media when planning their trips.

Among these social media, Facebook occupies a dominant position. The most popular social medium of all time, it is positioned at the forefront of the online tourism industry and is used by tourists at all stages of the travel experience (Mich and Baggio, 2015).

In recent years, advertising investment in these interactive media has increased dramatically, attributable to the rise in the Internet penetration rate among the world’s population. In the light of this, Buhalis (1998) stressed the need to adapt to these technologies. In the late 1990s, he claimed that companies failing to establish a presence in the electronic marketplace would face serious short-term disadvantages, characterised by a sharp drop in their market share. Likewise, Álvarez, Benamou, Fernández and Solé (2011); Heerschap, Ortega, Priem and Offermans, (2014); Theodosiou and Katsikea (2012) and Hudson and Thal (2013), defend the idea of a clear transformation among sectors due to the Internet and its ongoing evolution, which naturally includes the tourist industry.

From the traveller’s perspective, Wichels (2014), Lange and Elliot (2012) and Llodrá (2013), posit that the social media influence tourists’ decisions. Wichels (2014) draws attention to the fact that the modern day tourist has access to multiple information sources and channels.

In the light of this new scenario, and with regards to tourist promotion, companies are obliged to adapt their strategies to the new forms of online communication, which pose a series of challenges. At all events, their presence on the social media is crucial.

In the specific case of the wine industry, online forums and comments about wine are a visible and potentially valuable source of information for wine tourists (Dean and Forbes, 2016).

According to Rodríguez and Sánchez (2014), Sánchez et al. (2015) and Rodríguez et al. (2016), Facebook profiles impact positively on the positioning of tourist companies, and therefore optimizing their presence on the social media is essential. Indeed, their mere presence is insufficient: what is
required is the correct use of these media in order to achieve the desired results. These aspects have proved decisive in our approach to this study.

5. Methodology

The aim of this study is to analyze the Facebook positioning of two winemaking companies: ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’ in order to detect positive and negative aspects of the promotion strategies implemented through this channel and to provide, where appropriate, a series of recommendations that would enable the companies to optimize their presence in online media in order to enhance their future positioning.

The case study method has been used for our research, defined by Serrano and Martínez (2003) as the intention to construct knowledge around individual circumstances. This methodology is therefore in line with our research objectives.

The qualitative research tools deployed in this study also include documentary analysis based on the observation of the fan pages at www.facebook.com/vinosdoshemisferios/ and www.facebook.com/ChaupiEstancia.

Fanpage Karma, http://www.fanpagekarma.com/, was used to analyse these fan pages. This is an online tool used for the analysis of social media and the monitoring of networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+ and Instagram, previously used by authors such as Rodríguez, Rodríguez, Viñán and Martínez (2016); Sánchez, Ludeña, Viñán and Martínez (2015). The study was carried out over a year between 1.11.2014 and 1.5.2016. The items used for the fan page analysis were Visibility, Interactivity and Profitability.

In terms of Visibility, the study was addressed from three perspectives: on the one hand, that defined by Cavalcanti and Sobejano (2011) as “influence”; namely the number of followers a brand has on the various social media. This is considered to be the most important variable, and is often the only one taken into consideration. This may be an error, as the group of fans alone does not mean that the strategy or objectives of a certain fan page have been met.

In addition to the recognition generated by the number of fans, Huertas, Setó and Míguez (2014) posit that visibility can also be measured in each post, taking into consideration the number of ‘Likes’, comments and shares.

A final point for consideration is that the number of posts also impacts on the visibility of a page: the higher the number of posts published, the greater the chances of the information reaching more people.

As for Interactivity, Brodie, Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek (2011) see engagement as the interaction of experiences between consumers, the brand and other community members.

Engagement has become increasingly relevant in recent years, and is also an indicator of ‘electronic word-of-mouth’. This term, which stems from the earlier expression ‘word-of-mouth’, refers to communication between individuals. However, the arrival of the Internet and the exponential growth of the World Wide Web has led to the appearance of a new scenario or space in which consumers and individuals in general can communicate and interact and therefore influence purchasing decisions, giving rise to what has been coined the ‘electronic word-of-mouth’ (Goldsmith, 2008).

This parameter provides an insight into the company’s communication and interactivity with the users of its virtual community. A high engagement rate indicates that a brand has managed to connect with its Facebook fans. In some cases, it is claimed that the engagement rate should be higher than 7%, as stipulated by the online tool LikeAlyzer; however, other authors and tools such as Fanpage Karma, do not establish any minimum score in this respect.

In order to calculate this rate, Cvijikj and Michaélles (2013), Huertas, Setó and Míguez (2014), Valerio, Herrera, Herrera and Rodríguez (2014) use the following formula: Engagement = \[\text{[likes+comments+shared posts/No. fans]} \times 100\]

Leung and Bai (2013) posit that securing fans’ participation in a Facebook page ensures that they are more likely to return to the page in question. In other words, a high engagement rate indicates that social media activity is being carried out correctly, managing to involve the community members. This item therefore sheds light on the interaction between a page and its fans; in other words, it
provides information regarding the number of people that comment on, share or like one of the posts.

Finally, the question of Profitability in social media has always been surrounded by a certain degree of controversy, attracting the attention of a number of researchers interested in the study of the utility of social media. Cavalcanti and Sobejano (2011) have described a new Internet environment that emerged following the arrival of social media that has influenced business economic activity, with new dynamics based on conversations and relations whose value is difficult to calculate. This becomes clear when questions such as the following are posed: How can the ROI (return on investment) of a conversation be calculated? How much is a customer's recommendation worth? What are the implications of direct contact with the market? What does giving a customer exactly what they need mean for a company? For the purpose of our study, profitability will be analysed in accordance with two indicators: the advertising value of the Facebook page and profile performance.

6. Facebook positioning of ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia Winery’

This section contains the results of the various items for each company carried out using the Fanpage Karma tool in order to analyse their positioning on the social medium Facebook. The variables analysed are listed below:

- Visibility: number of fans, number of posts, likes, comments, shares, post type, post content and timing.
- Interactivity: engagement, geographical analysis, the brands’ response to fans, the network of companies the brand shares fans with.
- Profitability: advertising value of the Facebook page and profile performance.

In terms of Visibility, the following table shows that there are significant differences between ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia’, with the former company obtaining far higher figures than the latter in all indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fans</th>
<th>Total Posts</th>
<th>Daily post average</th>
<th>Likes (post)</th>
<th>Comments (post)</th>
<th>Shares (post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dos Hemisferios</td>
<td>28,555</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>26,716</td>
<td>1,828</td>
<td>8,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaupi Estancia</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own based on Fanpage Karma

(* )Chaupi Estancia’s Facebook activity is so limited that Fanpage Karma has insufficient data to calculate the daily post average.

The number of fans, published posts as well as the likes, comments and shares for each post reveals that ‘Dos Hemisferios’ is far better positioned on this social medium than ‘Chaupi Estancia’.

Indeed, the analysis of the number of posts reveals that ‘Dos Hemisferios’ exceeds the minimum number recommended by Internet República (2012) of between 3 and 5 posts per week. In this case the figure stands at an average of 7 posts per week, just short of the total number of items posted by ‘Chaupi Estancia’ during the entire period under consideration.

As for the post content, ‘Dos Hemisferios’ achieves greater visibility in each post thanks to the inclusion of information about the company and its wine products, competitions and prize draws, comments on wine and health, the brand’s awards and the history of wine in Ecuador.
In addition, ‘Dos Hemisferios’ includes photographs in practically all its posts, and resorts to the use of a recurrent editorial style of a type that appeals to its fans such as “Could we ask for anything more?” in reference to one of its products. As for the timing of the posts, these vary each day and therefore the channel is not updated in accordance with a pre-established pattern.

In the case of ‘Chaupi Estancia’ there is little to add: the number of posts is extremely low, just nine. The number of likes, comments and shares indicates that they fail to engage their fans, which should lead the company to reconsider its strategy. As for the post content, this consists mainly of photographs communicating customers’ visits to the winery. Online interaction with these posts is low, and in some instances non-existent.

Moving on to the question of Interactivity, our analysis produced the following data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Analysis of fan page interactivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dos Hemisferios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaupi Estancia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information gathered for the question of visibility shed light on the degree of engagement, which seeks to establish and maintain long-term links between the company and consumers. The above table once again shows major differences between the online promotion of ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia’. The low rate achieved by ‘Chaupi Estancia’ is the result of the low number of posts and the low participation rate of its online community, resulting in practically inexisten levels of interactivity. Based on the data included in this parameter, it would appear that ‘Dos Hemisferios’ knows how to interact effectively with its fans, reaching an engagement rate of 131%.

In order to obtain a further insight into the interactivity rates of the two fan pages analysed, thereby extending the scope of our study, the Fanpage Karma tool also provides information on other items including Geographical analysis, Brands’ response to fans and the Network of companies the brand shares fans with.

Regarding the Geographical analysis, of particular interest is the origin of the Facebook page fans. In the case of ‘Dos Hemisferios’, and as would be expected, practically all its fans are from Ecuador (26,995), followed by Spain, (461), the USA (378), Mexico (96), Argentina (78), Chile (66) and Colombia (53).

**Image 1:** ‘Dos Hemisferios’: Geographical analysis
In contrast, ‘Chaupi Estancia’ attracts a wider public: worthy of note in this sense is that the number of fans from Egypt is higher than that of Ecuador or the United States. This should be of particular interest to the winery’s management team, as understanding the reasons for this could enable them to improve the company’s positioning in this country.

Image 2: Analysis Geographical ‘Chaupi Estancia’

Considering information such as fans’ geographical origin will therefore help to define future strategies aimed at enhancing contact and interaction with Facebook communities.

Turning to the question of **Brands’ response to fans**, Image 3 shows that interaction with fans is far greater in the case of ‘Dos Hemisferios’ than ‘Chaupi Estancia’. Nevertheless, the company’s average response time is 117.2 hours, which should be reduced in order to improve its positioning among its fans.

Image 3: Dos Hemisferios’ response to fans
Image 4 shows that in addition to its low number of posts, ‘Chaupi Estancia’ also fails to interact with its fans. On three occasions during the period under analysis it ignored fans’ questions or contributions. In terms of the time taken to respond to its community, our analysis tool revealed an average time of 54.7 hours.

Image 4: Chaupi Estancia’s response to fans

Fanpage Karma also offers an insight into the Network of companies shared by an online community of similar characteristics. In this case, and due to Chaupi Estancia’s low level of activity, the tool only provided data for ‘Dos Hemisferios’, shown in Image 5.

‘Dos Hemisferios’ shares fans with the following companies: ‘Azúcar Valdez’, ‘Café Minerva’, ‘Colcafé te consiente Ecuador’ and ‘Pronaca Tqma’

Image 5: Network of companies that ‘Dos Hemisferios’ shares fans with
The Visibility and Interactivity analyses have shed light on the most relevant and regular variables used in the study of social media.

Finally, with regards to the Profitability variable, two general indicators were analysed: the Advertising value of the Facebook pages and their Profile performance. Table 4 shows the results for these items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advertising value</th>
<th>Page performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dos Hemisferios</td>
<td>€26,315</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaupi Estancia</td>
<td>€8.50</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own based on Fanpage Karma

Advertising value allows for the calculation of the expenditure required in other advertising channels in order to reach the same number of people as via the Facebook page. This figure is naturally directly related to the number of fans each page has. In this sense, and for the period analysed, Dos Hemisferios’ activity would cost €26,315 in other advertising media, whilst that of Chaupi Estancia stands at just €8.50.
To conclude our analysis, in general terms the **Profile performance** variable enables us to determine the situation of the Facebook community. The data shown in the table above indicate that both companies are underperforming in this sense. To date, neither has been capable of taking advantage of the opportunities this channel offers. This is particularly true in the case of ‘Chaupi Estancia’ which has a page performance rate of just 1%.

These data confirm that the case of the wineries can be extrapolated to companies operating in other sectors. Although on a personal level social media are fully integrated into our everyday lives, there are still many companies that are reluctant to channel efforts and resources into them, as they do not consider them to be an effective form of promotion.

### 7. Conclusions

Today, consumers lie at the centre of any business, and it is therefore essential to be able to connect with them and build up long-term relationships. For this reason, tourist companies and organizations should make use of those platforms that enable them to contact their clients, realizing that they are seeking interaction and relations that produce added value. Social media are positioned as the perfect platforms from which to connect with users in a direct and personalised way.

In the light of this situation, the companies analysed here, both situated at the forefront of the wine tourism sector in Ecuador, should be fully aware of the crucial role social media play as a communication and advertising tool.

The results of this study into the Facebook positioning of ‘Dos Hemisferios’ and ‘Chaupi Estancia’ reveal a clear difference between the two companies.

Both reflect the different types of companies we can encounter on social media. ‘Dos Hemisferios’ is in line with those companies that choose to adapt to the new communication channels, incorporating them into their everyday business activity, whilst ‘Chaupi Estancia’, for reasons that are unknown to us, falls into the category of those companies that to date have failed to adapt and take advantage of the opportunities social media offer.

In short, in our analysis, ‘Dos Hemisferios’ obtained good results in terms of its Visibility, Interactivity and Profitability in the online channel, benefiting from a strong position on Facebook. In contrast, ‘Chaupi Estancia’ failed to reach anywhere near the same level.

In the light of the results obtained, and with regards to the question of visibility, it is necessary to highlight that despite the large number of fans, the wine-making companies must not desist in their efforts to boost their customers' engagement and conversion rates. Furthermore, it can be seen that posting a higher number of publications does not necessarily lead to a higher degree of loyalty, and these companies should therefore monitor their posts more closely, encouraging greater interactivity.

The crucial role social media play in improving customer relations and therefore engagement rates has been demonstrated (Merodio, 2010). Determining their fans’ origin is therefore of vital importance for companies, as it can contribute to improving the design and application of communication strategies that are more closely tailored to the characteristics of their online communities.

As for profitability, companies must be aware of the opportunities Facebook offers as a communication channel, as reaching the same number of fans via traditional channels implies considerable costs. Taking full advantage of the possibilities Facebook provides is therefore of maximum importance.

In the light of the above, the companies should conduct benchmarking studies in order to boost their visibility, interactivity and profitability and by extension their future positioning on Facebook.

Recommendations to companies wishing to obtain a good online reputation include the following: listening actively to customers, making comments, being accessible by creating communication channels from which to interact with customers, showing empathy and the capacity to listen to and respect consumers' opinions, talking to customers, answering their queries and responding to their opinions, offering an experience that adapts to the brand’s objectives, adopting a constructive attitude and analyzing any criticisms in order to learn and grow from them (Guzmán et al. (2011). Apart from these recommendations, we could also add the need to regularly update the online
channel, and include visual elements such as photographs and videos offering contents that are both appealing and interesting to users.

In the case of the companies analyzed, awareness of the degree of efficiency of their fan pages is essential, as it will enable them to detect any weaknesses, adopt the necessary measures and thereby contribute to improving their position in the wine tourism sector.

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