

# IMPLEMENTING MARKETING INNOVATION STRATEGIES IN TOURISM: LESSONS FROM CASE STUDIES

G.V. RAMOS-GIRAL<sup>1,2</sup> C.P. CONSTANTIN<sup>3</sup>  
R. PÉREZ LAVANDERA<sup>4,5</sup> F. DÍAZ-POMPA<sup>6</sup>

**Abstract:** *This study evaluated the effectiveness of innovative tourism marketing strategies implemented between 2014 and 2024 through a systematic review of six empirical studies selected from the Scopus database. The results highlight that the most effective strategies combine digital innovation, cultural authenticity, and local collaboration. Immersive technologies such as virtual tours boosted engagement, especially in urban destinations, while cultural storytelling and collaboration fostered authenticity and diversification in rural contexts. The main constraints were high technological costs, the digital divide, and a lack of coordination between actors. It is concluded that the success of innovative tourism marketing depends on its adaptation to the context, integrating sustainability, experiential value, and appropriate technology.*

**Key words:** *marketing innovation, tourism, tourism marketing, tourist destination, case study*

## 1. Introduction

Tourism has evolved significantly in recent decades, driven by globalisation, technological progress and increasing competition between destinations seeking to position themselves in saturated and changing markets (Hjalager and Nordin, 2011; Ranasinghe *et al.*, 2021). In this context, marketing strategies have acquired a leading role as the axis through which the destination's value proposition is communicated (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2015; Chiang and Chen, 2023).

Innovation in tourism marketing has transcended traditional techniques, incorporating experiential, narrative and technological elements that seek to connect emotionally with the visitor and create memorable experiences (Kumar and Barua, 2024). This trend

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<sup>1</sup> Transilvania University of Braşov, glessler.ramos@unitbv.ro, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9016-7781

<sup>2</sup> University of Holguín, glessler.ramos@uho.edu.cu, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9016-7781

<sup>3</sup> Transilvania University of Braşov, cristinel.constantin@unitbv.ro, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0928-7717

<sup>4</sup> Transilvania University of Braşov, rodolfo.perez@unitbv.ro, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1794-8573

<sup>5</sup> University of Artemisa, rpelav@uart.edu.cu, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1794-8573

<sup>6</sup> University of Holguín, fdiaz@uho.edu.cu, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2666-1849

responds to the need for destinations to adapt to a constantly changing environment, where external factors such as global crises, changes in consumer behaviour and the advance of immersive technologies have redefined the expectations of the contemporary tourist (Gretzel *et al.*, 2015).

In this sense, experiential, sensory, digital and collaborative marketing approaches have positioned themselves as key strategies to attract and retain visitors, integrating concepts such as personalisation, sustainability and cultural authenticity (Gilmore and Pine, 1998; Deng and Tang, 2020; Urdea, Constantin and Purcaru, 2021; Confetto *et al.*, 2023; Ijomah *et al.*, 2024). However, despite the growing interest in implementing innovative strategies in tourism, there are still gaps in the analysis of their effectiveness in specific contexts, such as rural destinations, emerging or highly dependent on international tourism (Cavallo and Olivieri, 2022; Nguyen *et al.*, 2023).

Consequently, the evaluation of case studies that have implemented innovative marketing strategies in tourism is presented as a relevant way to analyse the factors that determine their success or failure, considering both the context of the destination and the characteristics of the strategies applied (Hjalager and Nordin, 2011; Santos *et al.*, 2024). In this research, the general objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of tourism marketing strategies implemented in different contexts between 2014 and 2024, identifying the key factors that have contributed to their success or limitations and analysing their impact on destination perception, visitor loyalty and digital engagement. These dynamics have generated the need to implement innovative marketing strategies that allow tourist destinations not only to capture new market segments, but also to strengthen visitor loyalty through personalised, immersive and culturally relevant experiences. To this end, the following research questions are presented:

Q1: What innovative tourism marketing strategies have been effective in their implementation?

Q2: What results have tourism destinations obtained from their implementation?

Q3: What limitations have these strategies presented for their development?

## 2. Literature Review

The scientific literature on the comparative analysis of tourism marketing strategies has approached this topic from various methodological perspectives, focusing primarily on case studies that allow for the evaluation of the effectiveness of different interventions in specific contexts. The interest in comparing strategies arises from the need to identify common patterns, contextual differences, and factors that influence the success or failure of marketing initiatives in different tourist destinations. This approach allows us not only to understand the specific results of each case but also to establish criteria for replicating successful practices or avoiding strategic errors in similar situations.

One of the most common approaches in the literature is the comparative analysis of tourism branding campaigns, which examines the impact of destination identity promotion strategies on visitor perception and loyalty. Sharma, Buranadechachai and Dongsri (2024) conducted a study comparing branding campaigns in destinations with distinctive cultural and historical characteristics. Using a quantitative approach based on surveys and exploratory factor analysis, they identified that the incorporation of local

elements and the brand's narrative coherence positively influence visitors' perceptions of authenticity and emotional attachment. This finding reinforces the idea that effective tourism branding should not only focus on highlighting the destination's attractions but also on connecting emotionally with tourists through meaningful narratives.

Another relevant approach focuses on the analysis of marketing strategies implemented by small and medium-sized enterprises in the hotel sector. Ahmad and Saber (2015) conducted a comparative study in the United Arab Emirates to determine the marketing tactics that contribute to competitive success in this segment. Based on interviews and qualitative analysis, they concluded that service personalisation, a focus on specific market niches, and the use of digital strategies adapted to diverse cultural contexts are key factors that foster customer loyalty. This finding highlights the importance of understanding local dynamics and adapting marketing strategies according to the visitor profile and the characteristics of the tourism environment.

In the field of digital promotion, some studies have focused on the advertising strategies of hotels located in different regions. Aydoğan and Demir (2023) analysed hotel advertising campaigns in Cyprus, Macedonia, Poland, Spain, and Turkey. Through content analysis of advertisements disseminated on digital platforms, they observed that the most effective messages were those that managed to balance creativity and brevity, integrating attractive visual elements and clear messages about the value proposition. Furthermore, they found that adapting advertising content to the local culture of the target market significantly increased promotional impact. This approach suggests that digital marketing should consider not only the design of attractive messages but also their adaptation to the cultural expectations of potential visitors.

Another area of study that has generated interest is the comparative analysis of websites managed by destination marketing organisations (DMOs). Some studies have explored how the structure, content, and accessibility of these digital portals can influence tourist perceptions and visitation intentions (Cerić, Więckowski and Timothy, 2024; El Archi *et al.*, 2025). Also, a comparative analysis of Asian tourist destination websites identified interactivity, constantly updated information, and mobile-friendly features as key factors in capturing visitor attention (Chek and Lei, 2020). Furthermore, sites that offered immersive experiences or virtual tours were found to achieve longer visitor dwell times and a higher likelihood of direct bookings (Ouerghemmi *et al.*, 2023). This underscores the need for tourism managers to implement digital platforms that not only offer relevant information but also facilitate direct user interaction, boosting interest in the destination.

Urban tourism has also been the subject of comparative analysis in studies seeking to identify effective strategies for promoting cities with high levels of tourism competition. In the case of Thessaloniki, Greece, a strategic tourism marketing plan was developed that integrated surveys of tourists and industry professionals, as well as a SWOT analysis that identified priority areas for the development of promotional strategies (Zouni and Gkougkoulitsas, 2019). The study concluded that diversifying the tourism offering into less-exploited sectors, such as gastronomy and health tourism, could improve the city's positioning as a year-round tourist destination. This experience highlights that, in urban settings, the success of marketing strategies largely depends on the ability to diversify products and adapt the offering to specific market segments.

### 3. Methodology

For the development of this study, the PRISMA methodology (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Moher *et al.*, 2009) was used to identify and select case studies focused on the implementation of innovative marketing strategies in the tourism sector.

#### 3.1. Search strategy

The search was conducted in the Scopus database using the search string: ("marketing innovation" OR (innovation AND marketing)) AND tourism, restricted to the title, abstract, and keywords. This initial search yielded a total of 892 articles.

The following filters were applied within the database: publication period (2014-2024), language (Spanish and English) and thematic areas (Business, Management and Accounting, and Social Sciences). After applying these filters, a refined set of 313 articles was obtained, which were exported for further analysis.

#### 3.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To analyse the results of the search, the software EndNote 20 was used, and to ensure the relevance of the studies, a set of criteria was defined, presented in Table 1. First, each article's keywords were analysed to identify which of them fulfil the criteria. A total of 173 articles were eliminated for not meeting the required keywords or for being unavailable.

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Simultaneous presence of the terms Marketing, Innovation and Tourism in the keywords.	Absence of one or more of the three key terms in the keywords.
Empirical studies focused on the implementation of innovative marketing strategies in tourism.	Purely theoretical or conceptual studies without practical application or case studies.

A detailed reading of the abstracts of the remaining 140 articles was conducted, and six articles fully met the inclusion criteria and were selected for the final analysis.

#### 3.3. Data coding and analysis process

The six selected articles were analysed using a qualitative approach based on thematic analysis, to identify common patterns, contextual differences and critical factors that influence the effectiveness of innovative marketing strategies in tourism. The procedure was as follows:

1. Corpus preparation: relevant fragments of the studies (introduction, methodology, results and conclusions) were extracted and organised.
2. Initial coding: an exploratory reading was carried out to generate open codes, representing emerging concepts such as digital engagement, experiential marketing, collaborative networks, storytelling, among others.

3. Thematic grouping: the codes were grouped into thematic categories such as strategy typology, territorial approach (urban/rural), perceived impact, and structural limitations.

This approach allowed us to build a robust interpretive framework on the conditions that determine the success or limitations of innovative marketing strategies, considering both the content of the strategies and the territorial and digital context in which they were implemented.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Presentation of the cases analysed

The studies selected for analysis are presented in Table 2, which lists the main elements identified in them that answer the research questions posed.

*Case study selected*

Table 2

Case	Innovative Strategy (Q1)	Results Obtained (Q2)	Identified Limitations (Q3)
Los Algodones, Mexico (Flores, Molinar and Contreras, 2020)	Collaborative marketing in health tourism (networks between clinics, hotels and operators).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater diversification of the offer.</li> <li>• Increase in average stay.</li> <li>• Improvement in perception of quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local coordination department.</li> <li>• Limited digital infrastructure.</li> </ul>
Rome, Italy (Cavallo and Olivieri, 2022)	Territorial marketing and communication positioned Rome as the Mediterranean agri-food capital.	Rome's Strategic Agri-Food Plan demonstrates how, in the Mediterranean urban and metropolitan contexts, it is possible to integrate agriculture, food culture, logistics, research, innovation, and tourism marketing within a single planning and public policy tool.	Lack of a solid territorial branding and integrated experiential marketing strategy that connects Roman agri-food heritage with its tourism, cultural and economic projection.
Sanya, China (Qu, Wang and Han, 2024)	Emotionally position the destination by creating tourist experiences that generate lasting emotional bonds.	Emotional pathways connecting destination attributes with revisit intention are identified, providing a deeper understanding of how experiences affect tourists' decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited generalisation.</li> <li>• Methodological complexity.</li> <li>• Focus on positive emotions.</li> </ul>
Andalusia, Spain (Florido-Benítez, 2025)	Tourism promotion campaigns managed by the Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) of the eight Andalusian provinces as a key tool to stimulate tourism demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive impact on tourism indicators.</li> <li>• Post-COVID and post-geopolitical crisis recovery.</li> <li>• Greater international visibility for Andalusia.</li> <li>• Development of iconic products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequality in resources and promotional capabilities between provinces.</li> </ul>

Case	Innovative Strategy (Q1)	Results Obtained (Q2)	Identified Limitations (Q3)
Brazil (Santos <i>et al.</i> , 2024)	Integration of immersive technologies, specifically virtual reality (VR), into tourism marketing strategies, materialised in the development of Tour View 360°.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour View 360° represents a tool for using VR to promote tourist destinations, allowing users to virtually experience places before visiting them.</li> <li>• Improved visitor intent</li> <li>• Adapting to market demands.</li> </ul>	<p>The early adoption phase of virtual reality technologies in the tourism sector implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of standardisation.</li> <li>• Unevenness in technology adoption.</li> <li>• Need for specialised training.</li> </ul>
Romania (Bochert, Cismaru and Foris, 2017)	Brand culturalization aimed at Generation Y (Millennials), using information and communication technologies (ICT) to create an emotional bond between young people and the tourist destination brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional connection with the brand.</li> <li>• Adoption of sustainability values.</li> <li>• Marketing innovation</li> <li>• Flexibility and adaptability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of generational loyalty.</li> <li>• Financial resources.</li> <li>• Technology Readiness Level (TRL).</li> <li>• Generation gap in some regions.</li> </ul>

After analysing the cases, we proceed to evaluate their contributions and limitations to the research questions posed in this study. To this end, the analysis continues independently.

#### 4.2. Implemented strategies and their innovative nature

The analysis of the selected studies identified various innovative tourism marketing strategies implemented in different contexts between 2014 and 2024. These strategies are grouped into three broad categories based on their nature: technological, narrative, and collaborative.

Technological strategies focused on the integration of advanced digital tools to enhance the user experience before, during, and after the trip. Prominent examples include the use of immersive platforms and 360° virtual tours in Brazil (Santos *et al.*, 2024), which allows potential tourists to explore destinations virtually before making a reservation and the use of information and communication technologies to create emotional bonds between young people and the tourism destination brand (Bochert, Cismaru and Foris, 2017).

Narrative strategies, for their part, were characterised using digital storytelling and the creation of audiovisual content aimed at conveying the cultural authenticity of the destination. In China, they create emotional experiences which create emotional bonds, boosting the emotional positioning of the destination, by understanding and harnessing the emotional mechanisms that influence tourists' decision to return, highlighting destination attributes that evoke positive and memorable emotions (Qu, Wang and Han, 2024). Similarly, in Rome, a territorial narrative focused on agrotourism products was applied as an emotional marketing tool (Cavallo and Olivieri, 2022).

Finally, collaborative strategies stood out for their focus on integrating local

stakeholders into cooperation networks geared toward tourism development. In Los Algodones, a qualitative study revealed that alliances were formed among clinics, hotels, and operators to position the destination as a benchmark in health tourism (Flores et al., 2020). In contrast, in Roma, rural producers participated in gastronomic tours coordinated with digital promotion campaigns. Also, the strategy implemented in Andalusia proves that tourism marketing based on planned, targeted, and adequately funded promotional campaigns is an effective tool for stimulating tourism growth in multi-destination regions like Andalusia, provided that territorial asymmetries and the need for long-term coordinated planning are taken into account (Florido-Benítez, 2025).

#### **4.3. Results obtained by type of strategy**

The impacts of the strategies analysed were measured using both qualitative and quantitative indicators, depending on the methodological approach of each study. In general, strategies based on digital innovation showed positive results in terms of engagement, visit intent, and booking conversions.

In Brazil, the implementation of Tour View 360° (Santos et al., 2024) represents a pioneering tool in the use of VR for promoting tourist destinations, allowing users to virtually experience places before visiting them. In addition to improving visitor intent, studies indicate that VR experiences can positively influence tourists' intention to visit a destination by providing a realistic and immersive view of the location (Ouerghemmi et al., 2023), while also allowing for adaptation to market demands. In the case of the study conducted in Romania, the initiative creates an emotional connection with the brand using the new technologies (Bochert, Cismaru and Foris, 2017).

Narrative strategies have proven effective in enhancing the cultural value of the destination. The study conducted in China (Qu, Wang and Han, 2024) allows for the identification of critical emotional variables, highlighting the importance of specific emotions that mediate between destination characteristics and tourists' return intentions. In turn, it allows for the discovery of detailed emotional pathways by identifying emotional paths that connect destination attributes with revisit intentions, providing a deeper understanding of how experiences affect tourists' decisions. The marketing plan that was developed in Rome (Cavallo and Olivieri, 2022) allows for the strategic repositioning of Rome as a sustainable and culturally rich agri-food city, integrating marketing with local economic development, tourism, and urban planning.

Collaborative strategies, for their part, were effective in diversifying tourism offerings and strengthening value chains. In Los Algodones, coordination between stakeholders allowed for an expansion of the health tourism product offering and improved perceptions of quality, while also extending the average length of stay (Flores et al., 2020). In Andalusia (Florido-Benítez, 2025), the implementation of this strategy had a positive impact on tourism indicators in 2021 and 2022, as promotional campaigns significantly increased passenger arrivals, tourist numbers, and hotel occupancy rates. In the province of Málaga, the number of tourists exceeded 3 million in 2022, with 8 million foreign overnight stays and more than 500,000 domestic overnight stays, the international campaign "Málaga, where better?" relaunched the destination and increased average daily spending from €47.4 in 2010 to €71.3 in 2022 (+50.4%);

meanwhile, in Sevilla, the number of tourists increased by 207.6% in 2022 compared to 2020, resulting in a 170% increase in foreign overnight stays and a 48% increase in hotel occupancy (Florido-Benítez, 2025). These indicators, together with similar ones in the rest of the provinces, allowed the Andalusia region to break the record of 34 million tourist arrivals in 2023, proving the effectiveness of the marketing strategies implemented (Florido-Benítez, 2025).

#### **4.4. Limitations identified in the implementation of strategies**

While the strategies analysed showed positive impacts, they also faced a series of limitations linked to the territorial context, technological capacity, and market segmentation.

Technological strategies, such as those implemented in Brazil and Romania, among others, faced constraints related to the high cost of platform development and maintenance, as well as the need for high levels of digital literacy among users. These barriers make them difficult to replicate in destinations with limited financial or technological resources.

Narrative strategies, although effective in cultural contexts, present market segmentation challenges. In China, the complexity of the strategy limits its generalisation, as well as its focus only on positive experiences, leaving aside how negative experiences affect the intention to visit.

Regarding collaborative strategies, such as those in Los Algodones and Andalusia, they faced problems of inter-institutional coordination, a lack of digital infrastructure, and seasonality in tourism demand. In Andalusia, the inequality in promotional resources and capabilities between provinces generates a budget imbalance, unequal brand positioning, a lack of coordination with secondary airports, and a persistent stereotypical "sun and sand" image.

#### **5. Discussion and conclusions**

The comparative analysis of tourism marketing strategies provides a robust methodological approach for identifying common and differential factors that influence the effectiveness of initiatives implemented in different contexts. Based on the studies reviewed, it is evident that the success of a strategy depends not only on the type of tool used but also on its ability to adapt to the cultural environment, visitor profiles, and the characteristics of the tourist destination. Studies that integrate qualitative and quantitative perspectives tend to offer a more complete picture, as they capture both visitor perceptions and the measurable results of interventions. In this sense, comparing cases not only contributes to generating academic knowledge but also guides strategic decision-making in the field of tourism marketing.

The results obtained in this review allow us to identify common patterns in the implementation of innovative tourism marketing strategies and, in turn, identify significant differences depending on the type of destination, the resource used, and the visitor profile. These findings are then compared with the relevant scientific literature.

First, it is confirmed that technological strategies such as virtual reality, immersive tours, and gamification have a positive effect on visitor intention and digital conversion,



especially in urban destinations. This result is consistent with Gretzel *et al.* (2015), who state that immersive technologies strengthen pre-trip emotional connections and improve visitors' anticipated experience. However, as Ijomah *et al.* (2024) also point out, the effectiveness of these technologies depends on the destination's digital infrastructure and the tourist's level of digital literacy, which was evident in the cases of Brazil and Sanya. However, in the case of the use of technologies, virtual and augmented reality represent only one example in the field of marketing innovation; other tools used for different tourist destinations represent practical evidence of their effectiveness, like blockchain technologies or the use of Artificial Intelligence to help customers on their travel experience (Buhalis, 2020; Bulchand-Gidumal *et al.*, 2024).

About narrative strategies, such as the creation of bonds applied in China and Rome, the findings reaffirm what was proposed by Gilmore and Pine (1998) and Nguyen *et al.* (2023), who argue that perceived authenticity is a key component in the construction of the destination's image. In this perspective, Gonçalves, Dorsch and Figueiredo (2022) examines the creation of brand strategies to strengthen awareness of intangible realities in the Mediterranean region, using Portugal and its intangible cultural heritage associated with the Mediterranean diet as a case study; this approach involves redeploying traditional knowledge to a digital platform that includes apps and a virtual tour of key geographic locations. However, studies such as those by Deng and Tang (2020) warn that the effectiveness of storytelling depends on the cultural connection of the message with the target audience, an aspect that limits its impact on audiences less sensitive to the symbolic component.

Regarding collaborative strategies, the results demonstrate their capacity to diversify the offer and improve territorial cohesion, as argued by Cavallo and Olivieri (2022) in their study on territorial marketing. However, the observed limitations — especially the dependence on poorly institutionalised local networks and the lack of training in digital marketing — align with the warnings of Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) about the difficulty of scaling this type of strategy without a robust governance framework. This was also evidenced in the study by Fuentes-Fernández and Gilinsky Jr (2022) which explored collaborative relationships in the wine industry in Spain, highlighting barriers such as producer indecision and consumer confusion, in a context of a shrinking wine market and high political and economic uncertainty.

Finally, what Santos *et al.* (2024) pointed out is confirmed: the success of tourism marketing strategies does not depend exclusively on the tool used, but on its adaptation to the socio-territorial context, the visitor profile, and the available technological resources.

Based on the study's findings and directly related to the research questions posed, the following conclusions are drawn. Regarding RQ1: What innovative tourism marketing strategies have proven effective in their implementation? The study identified that the most effective strategies have been those that integrate advanced digital tools with experiential and/or collaborative approaches. Immersive platforms and collaborative marketing strategies have shown high effectiveness when tailored to the visitor profile and the destination's capabilities. Their success lies in their ability to generate emotional value, digital engagement, and a perception of authenticity, in line with the proposals of Kumar and Barua (2024) and Zhang, Papp-Váry and Szabó (2025).

RQ2: What measurable or qualitative results have been obtained from its

implementation in different tourism contexts? It identified that the main results are focused on increases in visit intention, an improvement in the positive perception of the destination, increased participation of local stakeholders, and the diversification of the tourism offering, as well as growth in digital engagement and booking conversions. These results validate the arguments of Confetto *et al.* (2023) and Urdea, Constantin and Purcaru (2021), who highlight the direct relationship between marketing innovation and visitor loyalty.

According to RQ3, (What barriers or limitations have been identified in the development and implementation of these strategies?) the study identifies that the most common limitations detected were high development and maintenance costs of advanced technologies, low digital literacy in certain target audiences, difficulties in inter-institutional coordination in collaborative strategies and economical differences between regions. These barriers demonstrate that innovation is not sufficient on its own; its impact is mediated by structural, sociotechnological, and cultural factors.

Overall, the evidence analysed demonstrates that the most successful innovative tourism marketing strategies are those that achieve a contextualised integration of digital tools, significant cultural content, and local value networks. To move toward more sustainable and effective models, it will be key for future strategies to consider the balance between technology, culture, and community. It is also recommended that future research address longitudinal and comparative studies with a mixed approach to measure the sustained impact of these strategies in various types of destinations.

The limitations of this study primarily lie in the selection of the database, which focuses only on research indexed in Scopus. Furthermore, the filters applied narrow the sample to a specific time frame and limit it to articles in Spanish and English only.

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