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## The impact of digital marketing in improving tourism service-An exploratory study of a sample of tourism companies within the holy city of Karbala

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### **Abstract:**

Digital marketing is one of the modern concepts that have emerged recently as a result of the information revolution and technological development that has swept the world. The importance of the study stems from the role played by modern marketing trends (digital marketing) in transforming tourism activity into a competitive arena, as it works to connect individuals to each other through technology, In addition, the study aims to highlight the role of digital marketing in promoting tourism activities in general and tourism services in particular, considering digital marketing the distinguishing factor in tourist attractions, which has become at present a definite and indispensable necessity in activities Tourist

**Keywords:** marketing, digital marketing, tourism, tourism service.

### **Introduction:**

As a result of the technological revolution that took place in the world, which began to greatly affect the various aspects of life, as a result, the face of the world changed, as information and communication technology occupied the forefront with various concerns of services and business sectors. Especially in the field of the tourism industry, which is closely linked to this modern technology, especially communication technology, the Internet and digital technologies. This development contributed to the emergence of digital marketing in the field of tourism, considering tourism an intangible service industry, Therefore, digital transactions have become a global trend and an important condition for providing competitive tourism services of international quality in a modern marketing environment.

Modern technology was clearly used after the spread of the Corona (Covid-19) pandemic, which changed the features of the world in general and economic and social dealings in particular, And people became keen on their health by taking precautionary measures and following the rules of social distancing, and thus this deeply affected the behavior of individuals. (Indriastuti et al, 2021), This increased the use of modern technological trends and increased purchases through digital marketing.



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This prompted the researcher to think about preparing this study to know the role of digital marketing in tourism services.

## Section (1) The Methodology

In this topic, the general framework of the research, the researcher presents the research methodology in terms of (problem - importance - goals - hypotheses - variables), and the following presents each of these aspects in some detail.

### 1.1 The Problem

The large number of tourism companies in the Holy governorate of Karbala made it easier for the tourist to choose the service that suits him, and with the presence of modern electronic means used by these companies, the customer has faced many alternatives, such as mobile phones, especially smartphones, which have increased the intensity of competition between companies. As a result, the tourist offers became within everyone's reach, which made these companies look for customer satisfaction, through this, the following problem can be raised: How can digital marketing contribute to enhancing tourism service?

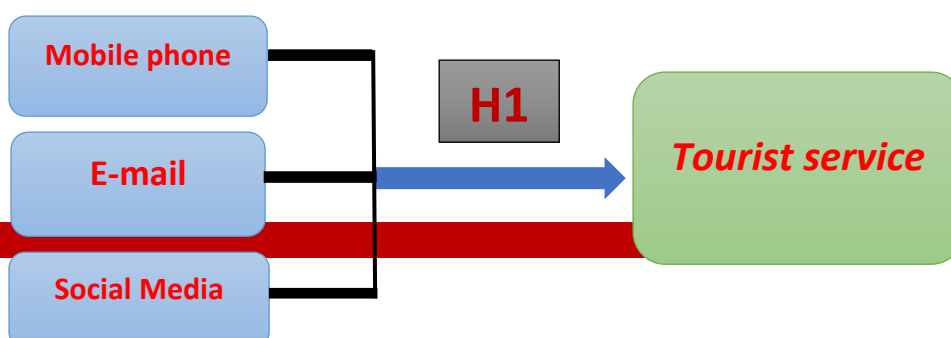
Through the main problem, the following sub-questions can be formulated:

- What is the role of using smartphones in enhancing the tourism service?
- What is the role of using social networking sites in promoting tourism services?
- What is the role of using e-mail in promoting tourism services?

### 1.2 Default Study Plan:

To address the research problem requires the design of an integrated chart showing the dimensions of each variable and the relationship of the variables with each other.

The research outline is an intellectual construction of a set of facts that provide it with a simplified, brief, and hypothetical representation of the phenomenon in question and its potential interactions.





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## Digital Marketing

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### 1.4 The Importance of the Study

The importance of the study is highlighted by the significant growth in modern technology, as digital marketing has become the most competitive field in the tourism marketing environment, which has led to the adoption of this type of marketing by tourism establishments in order to develop its various facilities. Especially in the field of tourism service, the subject of the study, Therefore, the importance of the study lies in the following:

- Clarifying the important role that modern marketing trends play in promoting and upgrading tourism services in tourism companies in the holy city of Karbala.
- Trying to link digital marketing to the most important areas of the tourism sector, which are tourism services.

### 1.5 Aims of the Study

- Employing digital marketing in tourism management because of its great importance as a feature of the current era.
- Identifying the extent of applying digital marketing (smart phone, e-mail, social networks) in the tourism sector, especially its application in the promotion of tourism service.
- Proposing a number of recommendations that seem to us necessary to advance the reality of the tourism sector through digital marketing and its importance in the process of developing tourism service.

## Section (2) The theoretical framework of the study

### 2.1 Digital Marketing

#### 2.1.1 The concept of digital marketing:



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In order to understand digital marketing, we have to review a number of definitions of researchers and specialists in this field, including:

Promoting services and products through the digital environment in order to reach the final consumers at the specified place and time through the correct channels. (Rao et al, 2016)

Both (Tugce & Fusun) defined it as those digital means of search engines, telephone, social networks, as well as websites and blogs that are used to achieve marketing activities. (Çizmeçi & Ercan, 2015).

Kotler sees digital marketing as the use of electronic tools such as online videos, interactive social networking sites, advertisements, as well as phones, with the purpose of engaging customers. (Kotler& Armstrong,2017)

Digital marketing depends on the promotion of services and goods using modern digital technology, whether online or offline, such as text messages (SMS), emails, search engines, social media, and other available digital means. (Dastane,2020).

Through the aforementioned, digital marketing can be defined procedurally as a set of activities that take place through digital means that go beyond internet marketing to include every marketing activity related to modern technology such as marketing via text messages and smartphone applications aimed at promoting goods and services in order to retain existing customers and gain new customers.

## 2.1.2 Digital Marketing Channels:

**2.1.2.1. E-mail:** It is one of the digital channels that takes place through direct communications through non-personal messages with the target group, which are carefully selected with the aim of obtaining an immediate answer and a permanent relationship with the customer, this process takes place from one person to another in order to achieve interaction between them. (Tuiza, & Qureshi, 2019).

**2.1.2.2. social media sites:** Those sites that allow owners of advanced products to find an opportunity to communicate with customers, whether they are current or potential customers, which were not available before, in addition to providing the customer with credibility in dealing. (Ben Houhou, 2016) Among the most important social media used in marketing are Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Google Plus and others.

**2.1.2.3. mobile:** It is all activities related to communication with the customer by using the phone for the purpose of promoting sales, whether they are goods or services. (Vinerean, et al, 2013). The telephone is an important digital marketing tool for the ability to contact large numbers of customers and target the desired customer in addition to the wide spread of its use. (Cordy,2014)

**2.1.2.4. website:** It is a set of web pages linked together to form a single entity that is used by a person or an organization, combining content, look, function, organization, and interaction. (Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2012). There is a set of criteria through which the customer can judge the quality of the website, including page clarity, ease of downloading, ease of use, and others.

## 2.1.3 Advantages and disadvantages of digital marketing:



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Digital marketing is considered the most popular type of marketing nowadays due to the spread of modern technology and the Internet that exists with almost everyone, digital marketing, like any field, has advantages and disadvantages, and this is what we will discuss.

## 2.1.3.1 Advantages of digital marketing:

✓ Digital marketing helps save money, it saves a lot of financial expenses, where it takes place without the intervention of any other “intermediaries”.

✓ Digital marketing is an advanced and modern technology that facilitates the process of reaching customers, the target group.

✓ Enables companies to display their services and products in detail, without regard to time and place.

✓ Small and emerging companies can compete side by side with large companies in cyberspace.

✓ companies gain big data about customers, and in return, it gives customers information and details about services and products.

✓ Digital marketing provides convenience and freedom for companies and customers alike to make a buying or selling decision.

✓ Makes the customer aware of the products or services: where digital marketing provides individuals with the possibility and ease of collecting more information about the service or commodity to be purchased before making a purchase decision and in a short time by seeking the opinions of others or searching for them on other sites. (Bala, M., & Verma, D.,2018).

✓ spatial boundaries: digital marketing allows the purchase of many types of goods and services that may not be available locally it can only be found on the internet. as well as the ease of obtaining the product through the home, and this provides overcoming spatial boundaries.

✓ It is possible to market any quantity of commodities as this is not available in traditional marketing because it requires a place where the commodity is displayed, in addition to electricity, taxes and rent for the place where the goods are displayed, all of these things affect the price of the commodity.

✓ Marketing throughout the day: there are no time restrictions when a customer wants to buy a product or service over the Internet.

## 2.1.3.2 Disadvantages of digital marketing:

Despite the advantages of digital marketing, which were mentioned above, it is not without defects, especially in the societies of third world countries, especially in our Arab society, and the most important of these defects are:



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✓ Lack of secrecy and privacy from the point of view of customers because of going through some of the experiences they had.

✓ Lack of confidence in the electronic payment process due to the ignorance of many customers about safe payment methods.

✓ Poverty and ignorance have an impact on the digital marketing process, in addition, the elderly do not have confidence in the digital environment and prefer to deal with traditional methods. (Todor, R.,2016),

✓ Digital marketing may allow some companies to market bad and poor services and goods through fake names and entities and publish pictures that do not represent the service or product in its true form, so that it reaches the consumer in a way that is different from what is offered by those companies.

✓ Any negative comments or criticisms of the service provided or the commodity can be visible to the public through social networking sites, and that negative comments or failure to respond effectively could damage the company's reputation.

## 2.2 Tourist Service:

### 2.2.1. The Concept of Tourist Service:

Before delving into the concept of tourist service, we must understand the meaning of service in its general form, Kotler defined it as that activity or benefit offered for exchange, One of its main characteristics is that it is intangible it does not result in any ownership it is not associated or associated with a physical product, As for tourism services, it is that mixture of moral and material elements that are concerned with providing the main components of the tourism offer, with the aim of satisfying the desire and need of the tourist in the tourism field through the contribution of a group of elements such as food, security, transportation and others. (Ayman. B,2009). and researchers and specialists in the field of tourism agree on the classification of tourism services, where they focused on the services that are based on satisfying the desires and needs of the tourist during the tours.

### 2.2.2. The Importance of Tourism Services

One of the main pillars of tourism development and success is tourism services, as it is considered one of the most important factors of tourism attraction for any country, especially if the institutions and companies affiliated with the tourism sector work to develop and improve these services in order to provide a high-quality tourism service with the purpose of staying in the competitive market.

Tourism services play a major role in the process of increasing the flow of tourist traffic as a result of the dependence of the tourism sector on the services provided by tourism institutions and companies whose main objective is the tourist and how to satisfy him by satisfying his desires because this process is the best way to ensure the continuity and development of tourism and the growth of its revenues, in addition, tourism has an important role in economic development by increasing the tourism movement in the country, and thus this increase will have a positive impact on the rest of the sectors related to the tourism sector, which in turn leads to an increase in economic



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and growth rates. and the importance of tourism services stands out through the elimination of unemployment and the contribution to the creation of new job opportunities. (Al-Nusour, I,F,A.2008), Accordingly, the success of any tourism product depends ultimately on the satisfaction of the customer (the tourist), which is determined by the customer himself by evaluating expectations with what is in reality for that tourism product. Therefore, it can be said that tourism is an intensive service industry, with a focus on customer experiences, not only during the stay but also before and after the stay (Stickdorn, M., & Zehrer, A. 2009).

### 2.2.3. Types of Tourism Services:

Tourism services include all services provided to the tourist from the moment of his arrival at the destination until his return to his home country, accordingly, tourism services can be classified as follows:

**2.2.3.1. Tourism and Travel Agency Services:** It is a type of service provided to tourists, which means that tourism companies organize various travel operations and trips across different countries. (Ayman& Brenji,2009)

**2.2.3.2. Ttransport Services:** It is represented in all means of transportation used in the process of facilitating the transportation of tourists from one place to another, where this service includes different types of land, sea and air transport.

**2.2.3.3. Accommodation Services:** This type of service includes hotels of all kinds, furnished apartments, chalets, etc.

**2.2.3.4. Catering services:** It includes all that meets the tourist's need for food and drink, this service is considered one of the basic services and the food service has become an important concept in the tourism sector, through it, it is possible to introduce the customs, traditions and legacies of countries according to the dish that is offered to the tourist. (Ayman, Brenji. 2009)

In addition to the aforementioned, there are other complementary tourism services represented by cultural services that mean cinemas, theaters, celebration venues, and sports services that enable tourists to participate and practice in various sports activities or watch them, and the tourist guidance service, which allows the tourist to know the things related to the tourist attractions that he visits in a detailed manner attached to the guides.

**2.2.4. Characteristics of Tourism Services:** Tourism services are characterized by a set of characteristics that can distinguish them from other services, the most important of which are:

- ✓ **It is Heterogeneous:** One of the most important features of the tourism service is the heterogeneity because it depends on the style and skills of its provider. Therefore, it is difficult to find qualitative standards for the production of tourism service, which prompted tourism companies and organizations to seek to reduce the difference in their services to the lowest possible extent. (Lovelock, C., & Gummesson, E.2004)
- ✓ **Immaterial:** Tourism services are described as intangible services, that is, they are not material, as it cannot be touched or seen, and therefore it cannot be felt before it is purchased. (Mittal, B.1999)
- ✓ **Non-transfer of ownership:** One of the characteristics that characterize tourism services is the non-transfer of ownership, because the tourist can use the services for a certain period without owning them, for example (the plane seat), unlike commodities in which there is a right of ownership. (Mandil, AJ.,2002)



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- ✓ **It is easy to imitate:** Since tourism services are intangible, this feature makes them relatively easy to imitate. Competitors cannot be removed from the production site of tourism services. Therefore, competitors can visit any tourist site and consume the tourist service, so it is easy to imitate. (Kandampouli et al., (2007)

### Section (3) practical framework

With the aim of identifying the nature of digital marketing represented by its three dimensions (social communication, e-mail, mobile phone), The dependent variable is the tourism service that includes a single dimension, and thus a random sample consisting of (20) companies affiliated with tourism was selected within the area of Karbala Governorate, and a modified special scale was used to reach the results of systematic scientific research, it will include hypothesis analysis as follows:

**The first requirement:** the influence relationships between the research variables:

This requirement deals with verifying the validity of the research hypotheses regarding the influence relationships that were formulated based on the research problem:

**Table (1) Indicators and results of the influence relationship of the dimensions of digital marketing in the tourism service**

Tourist service variable \ Digital marketing variable	B <sub>0</sub>	B <sub>1</sub>	R <sup>2</sup>	F	T
Social Media	0.120	0.984	0.481	47.470	6.89
E-mail	0.345	0.971	0.354	29.308	5.424
Mobile phone	0.811	0.618	0.224	14.618	3.961

**Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the SPSS program, 23  
N= 20 D.F.= 1.49 P≤ 0.05**

**Firstly: The relationship of the impact of social communication on tourism service:** Table (1) presents the degree of contribution of the social communication variable in explaining the variation in tourism service, as the results were extracted R<sup>2</sup> and its value is (0.481). As for the remainder (0.52), it is due to other random variables not included in the regression model. This is supported by the value of the regression coefficient (B<sub>1</sub>) of (0.984), which indicates that if the social contact dimension increases by one unit, the service tourism variable will increase by (0.120) units, it is a significant increase according to the calculated value of (F) which amounted to (47.470), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.27) at a degree of freedom (1.49) and within a significant level (0.05), as well as according to the calculated (T) value of (6.89), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.53) under a significant level (0.05). Through the results reached, it indicates the acceptance of the second main hypothesis, which states that "there is a significant effect of social communication on tourism services.

**Second: The relationship of the influence of the e-mail variable on the tourism service:** Table (1) presents the degree of contribution of the e-mail variable in explaining the variation in the





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tourist service, As the results were extracted  $R^2$  and the amount (0.354), as for the remainder (0.65) is due to other random variables not included in the regression model. This is supported by the value of the regression coefficient (B1) of (0.971), which indicates that if the e-mail dimension increases by one unit, the tourism service variable will increase by (0.345) units. it is a significant increase according to the calculated value of (F) which amounted to (29.308), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.27) at two degrees of freedom (1.49) and within a significant level (0.05), as well as according to the calculated (T) value of (5.424), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.53) under a significant level (0.05), through the results reached, it indicates the acceptance of the second main hypothesis, which states that "there is a significant effect of the e-mail dimension in enhancing and improving the tourism service."

**Third: The impact relationship of the mobile phone variable in improving the tourism service:** Table (1) presents the degree of contribution of the mobile phone variable in explaining the variation in the tourist service, as the results were extracted  $R^2$  and its value (0.224), as for the remainder (0.88) is due to other random variables not included in the regression model, this is supported by the value of the regression coefficient (B1) of (0.618), which indicates that if the mobile phone dimension increases by one unit, the tourism service variable will increase by (0.811) units. It is a significant increase according to the calculated value of (F) which amounted to (15.688), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.27) at two degrees of freedom (1.49) and within a significant level (0.05), as well as according to the calculated (T) value of (3.961), which is greater than its tabular value of (2.53) under a significant level (0.05). Through the results that have been reached, it indicates the acceptance of the second main hypothesis, which states that "there is a significant effect of the mobile phone variable in improving the tourist service."

**The second requirement:** calculating the reliability coefficient of the statistical questionnaire, and it shows the following:

Table No. (2)  
Reliability Statistics

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
20	.935

We note from the above table that the alpha value is very high, thus indicating the validity of the form used in the analysis.

## Conclusions and Recommendations:

### Conclusions:

- ✓ Digital marketing is one of the pillars of contemporary marketing.



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- ✓ Digital marketing is one of the most important factors affecting the development of tourism services.
- ✓ Digital marketing opens up great marketing opportunities for the tourism sector to be able to develop the performance of services and achieve the best with the lowest (cost, time and effort), which leads to supporting the economy and increasing the national product.
- ✓ Digital marketing contributes to increasing the number of tourists, which leads to access to new markets, increases competition and thus improves tourism services provided to tourists.
- ✓ Digital marketing helps in the careful study and continuous follow-up of tourist behavior.
- ✓ Digital marketing helps tourism companies to know the desires of tourists.
- ✓ Digital marketing contributes to improving the quality of tourism services by highlighting their characteristics and presenting distinguished marketing offers.

## Recommendations:

- ✓ Improving services related to digital marketing, due to its importance in developing and improving tourism services.
- ✓ Benefit from foreign tourism companies operating in the electronic field.
- ✓ Encouraging the electronic aspect and introducing more tourism services electronically
- ✓ The need to provide multilingual content on all websites to attract the largest number of tourists.
- ✓ Intensifying contact with the target group through programs and digital websites such as social networks, e-mail and text messages, and marketing tourism services in a more acceptable manner.
- ✓ Adopting good training for digital marketing users and raising the level of performance for workers in tourism companies by intensifying courses and setting up training programs that focus on developing and developing their behavioral skills in dealing with tourists.
- ✓ The necessity of optimal utilization of technological resources to show and highlight the quality of tourism services.

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