



Identification of the tourist's perception towards the destination Cuenca-Ecuador, through "Netnography"

Identificación de la percepción del turista hacia el destino Cuenca-Ecuador, mediante la "Netnografía"

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Abstract

This investigation analyzes the necessity and convenience of demonstrating that "Netnography" is a method that contributes to the development of tourism, because it helps to determine the tastes and preferences in relation to the resources/attractions existing in the locality and the level of satisfaction of the consumer's needs. The aim is to identify perceptions of tourists for the destiny Cuenca-Ecuador, the methodology selected for the study was the proposed by Vargas (2011), who establishes as steps of the procedure: the definition of the topic to investing, the virtual communities where the data will be extracted, and finally the interpretation of the information. The research integrated comments taken from the Facebook's page Visit Cuenca and the tourist forum of the Cuenca's city in Trip Advisor. The results show the perception of the tourists in relation to the attributes offered by the city, the existence of a greater influx of Ecuadorian tourism into the city and the composition by origin foreign segments, including tourists from Latin America and the Caribbean. It is observed that the most important attraction in order of preference was its architectural area and the natural attractions of the environment, findings that can be taken into account for the design of future marketing strategies for the destination.

Resumen

La presente investigación analiza la necesidad y conveniencia de demostrar que la Netnografía es un método que aporta al desarrollo del turismo, ya que contribuye a determinar los gustos y preferencias con relación a los recursos/atractivos existentes en la localidad y el nivel de satisfacción de las necesidades en los consumidores; el objetivo general, es identificar percepciones de los turistas para el destino Cuenca, Ecuador y la metodología seleccionada para el estudio, fue la propuesta por Vargas (2011), quien establece como pasos del procedimiento: la definición del tópico a investigar, las comunidades virtuales donde se extraerán los datos y por último, la interpretación de la información. El universo de la investigación integró la totalidad de comentarios extraídos de la página de Facebook de Visit Cuenca Ecuador y el foro de turismo de la ciudad de Cuenca en Trip Advisor. El análisis arrojó como resultado la percepción de los turistas con relación a los atributos que oferta la ciudad, la existencia de una mayor afluencia de turismo nacional y segmentación de turistas extranjeros por su procedencia, destacándose América Latina y Caribe; se observa que el atractivo más importante en orden de preferencia es el área arquitectónica y los atractivos naturales del entorno; hallazgos que podrán ser tomados en cuenta para el diseño de futuras estrategias de comercialización del destino.

Keywords | palabras clave

Attributes, tourist profile, tourist destination, marketing, data mining.
Atributos, perfil turista, destino turístico, mercadeo, minería de datos.

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1. Introduction

Ecuador has shown an increase in tourism in recent decades, developing new potential to diversify the country's economy. Thus, the experiences of other countries that allow to develop a sustainable tourism model must be taken into account (Castillo, Roget & Rozas, 2015). The country has a productive structure with a great dependence on the primary sector; therefore, there is the need to diversify the productive matrix and the search for income alternatives that improve its economy, an issue that is clearly expressed as a willingness policy in (SENPLADES, 2012).

To align with this purpose, it is necessary to incorporate new technologies into the tourism management process, since from the demand approach, tourists basically organize their trip through the use of technological devices; thus, it is important that there is a response consistent with these expectations from the offer. In relation to the domestic market, the INEC data (2017) show that the use of smartphones has increased over time, indicating that in 2017, 63.4% of people have a smartphone compared to 2016, 52.9%, an increase of 10.7%. Regarding the reason for the use of the internet, in 2017 40.7% of the population used it to obtain information, general communication (31%), education and learning (21.10%), work (3.3%) and other activities 3.9%. The use of ICT plays an important role for business growth, decision-making and the creation of new business models by diversifying the interaction between tourists and travel agencies, taking as reference a new technological structure (Tafur Avilés *et al.*, 2018).

As part of the boost to tourism development policy, Ecuador's Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) was established in 2017 in a partnership with Amadeus IT Group with the aim of promoting Ecuador as a preferred tourist destination for foreigners, through the use of a platform called "AMADEUS", which will agree to investigate and analyze current trends, based on the results of which strategies were formulated for the promotion of the country, applying them efficiently to various markets (MINTUR, 2017), these are positive signs that demonstrate the interest and concern in the country from government policies about the incorporation of technological advances into the tourism management process.

In the area of micro-enterprises in the city of Cuenca, Aucay Piedra and Herrera Torres (2017) state that 97% of establishments use social networks daily for communication activities, as they reveal advantages obtained by the management of social networks and mobile applications for communication and marketing. To take full advantage of the business opportunities provided by mobile tourism-linked services, it is necessary to make a well-detailed segmentation of the type of visitor entering the country, since there are several areas with a high degree of potential increase in revenue to the tourism (Quezada-Sarmiento *et al.*, 2018).

The bibliographic revision carried out with the aim of identifying the state-of-the-art about the elements that underpin the analysis of this research shows Dell Innocenti (2012), who summarizes social networks as a way to shorten the relationship between company-client, increasing its dynamics, they close the online-offline linkage, allow the integration of tools such as means of advertising and finally they stand out the value of applying digital media and non-digital by taking advantage of the goodness that each provides. Likewise, Sakulsureeyadej (2011) adds that most

travelers have high expectations in receiving personalized products or services to meet their demands and companies, therefore there must be tools to collect and control information.

From another perspective that supports the above approaches, it is necessary to take into account the need to promote the use of mobile applications and smartphones at a global level, since these are the ones that open up the possibility of using these applications, whose growth is exponential and their use differs depending on the market segment by ages, highlighting that the age group between 35 and 55 years is the one that has had the greatest growth dynamic in the last 3 years (Saura, Sán, & Reyes, 2017).

These authors also emphasize the use of these technologies in the last 3 years, the mobile communication and social media applications are the most used with 47%, followed by business, finance, shopping and sports applications (Saura *et al.*, 2017). The smartphone is an excellent intermediary between the traveler and the destination, as it allows to interact directly with the agents to decide alternatives of use of their leisure time (Quijano, Arellano & Naranjo, 2017); there is an increase in the use of mobile phones to obtain information used by 96 out of 100 inhabitants in the world, being a means to offer services through the internet. (Desplas & Mao, 2014; Dina & Sabou, 2012; Kang & Schuett, 2013) say that tourists prefer to use social networks as an online means of communication for the decision-making and the organization of their trip when choosing their tourist destination.

Marín and Torres (2017) mention that banking has been experimenting with the use of game elements in mobile applications in order to increase customer loyalty; however, Netnography is not mentioned as a means of obtaining information from its customers (likes, preferences, needs, suggestions) to develop or improve the loyalty of its customers.

Quijano *et al.* (2017) indicate that statistics show that the use of mobile devices in the field of tourism is widespread, with a high percentage of US tourists (85%), followed by Europeans with 50% in different modes of use, which has special significance for Ecuador given that the largest issuer of foreign tourism today is in the US, and in the future it must turn its view to the European market, due to the potential in the country in relation to the existence of resources/ natural attractions and their preference for tourists who come from these countries.

The dynamics of use of these technologies has challenged the market research, this step is the starting point of any management process, since it allows to analyze the variables of the environment with respect to competition, macro and micro environment and especially the demand; aspects that condition the tourist offer. The use of social networks, used as a source of information of tourist destinations, has grown omitting the traditional way of accessing trips for the enjoyment of leisure time; thus, netnography arises as a technological tool that investigates the behavior of users on websites through a statistical analysis of the data obtained. Gebera (2008) describes Netnography as a method to make the most of the information provided by the network, establishing ethnography as a basis to check the consumer's behavior in different virtual spaces.

The use of Netnography has allowed to establish a set of several factors that will serve as the basis for its future application in several companies specialized in its sector, since it facilitates the broad knowledge of the end consumers that are part of the virtual sites, integrating them as a strategic objective for the promotion and distribution (Colordo Prutsky, 2004).

This technique manages to obtain a wide difference compared to ethnography in terms of the generation of greater reliable knowledge; it prevents the researcher from getting directly involved in the field of research; it prevents any kind of manipulation of the information; it is simpler and quicker to apply; it provides immediate access to the information (Romeo, Abbot, Forgas & Huertas, 2014).

At the international level, countries have a greater interest in managing social networks as means of tourism promotion, standing out Instagram as the network with the most interaction between its users, being ideal for tourist communication (Gutiérrez, Sánchez & Galiano, 2018). Meanwhile (Celdrán, Mazón & Giner, 2018) mention that obtaining tourist information today through the use of mobile applications is essential to promote the enjoyment of a better experience on the part of the tourist and with it, increase the competitiveness levels, a trending topic of tourism-managing countries as a development alternative.

From this perspective, Ecuadorian tourism companies should use social media to provide as much information regarding their tourism proposal, as well as to focus on leveraging the information extracted from the comments of their followers in order to design new offers and positioning strategies based on the preferences of tourists. Unlike the traditional form of communication and information management, the vast amount of qualitative data that provide social media forces to look for alternatives to their measurement (Fisher, 2009); define the key points to achieve differentiation with respect to their competition, because tourists first review blogs and tourism forums to learn about their destination (Montserrat, 2014); understand that the use of social networks is essential for the attraction of customers and for maintaining their loyalty (Morales, 2016); social media has even become more impulsive in the decision to visit new tourist destinations (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013).

As a result, mobile apps for travel and tourism are not only increasing exponentially, but are changing the way tourists search for information, behave, consume and make decisions. Additionally, smartphones and Mobile apps allow the traveler to align their needs, preferences, resources and time constraints, with the offer of services and activities at the destination, giving them more freedom than ever when it comes to mobilization.

Therefore, there are clear certainties about the importance of the current use of mobile applications for the orientation of the tourist and the management of information, which allows to structure an offer consistent with their expectations; however, there is no evidence of documented experience linked to the use of Netnography as a market research tool. Thus, the aim of this research is to identify the perception tourists have of Cuenca through the methodological application called "Netnography" as it provides the ease of obtaining and analyzing various comments that tourists make in the different virtual communities related to tourism in Cuenca.

2. Materials and methods

Data mining was used for the development of the research, which facilitates the discovery of relationships, patterns and trends, examining large amounts of data extracted from different databases, the web, linked to statistical programs to quantitatively analyze the information obtained, such as the number of positive and negative comments. The Netnography method was applied from the procedure proposed by Vargas (2011). The steps to follow are:

2.1. Definition of the research question or topic to be investigated

The research question is created to identify factors in the different virtual communities related to tourism that provide information to determine the perception of the tourist destination to the city of Cuenca.

The selected analysis units were: Social Networks: Visit Cuenca Ecuador Facebook page; Tourism Forums: Trip Advisor Ecuador Basin Forum.

The following variables related to tourist preferences (cultural, natural), quality of accommodation and catering services, destination price perception, security, hospitality, climate, were identified, as well as the tourist's place of origin.

2.2. Community identification and selection

To select communities, the criteria of relevance, activity, interactivity, substantiality, heterogeneity and wealth of data are followed.

It should be emphasized that an observation was made to the different websites of travel agencies that provide a tourist package to the city of Cuenca, assessing its quality in the content of the offer and taking into account the interactivity between the page and tourists. Based on the criteria mentioned above, the following communities have been selected:

- Visit Cuenca Ecuador Facebook page: This page allows to have access to comments and opinions from tourists who have visited the city and get information about the people who plan to visit it in the future. This objective was assessed by analyzing the content of questions placed in the forum linked to tourist preferences. The selection is because it is the only one that has an interactivity space.
- Trip Advisor Ecuador Basin Forum: This forum is popular among travelers, as it provides information on the destination, hotels, tourist attractions, restaurants, among others. It gives comments or opinions to tourists in relation to topics such as safety, weather, transportation, places to visit.

3. Data collection

The procedure for data collection was carried out automatically and manually, aligned with the selected procedure. Two software were used for this purpose:

Facepager and Netvizz: This software allows to structure a database with comments and posts made on pages or public groups on Facebook. In this case, it was used to extract information from the Visit Cuenca Ecuador page on Facebook, and

comments were obtained from both the posts made by the page and the “Opinions” section of the page.

This software has limitations, since it can only obtain information from users who share or comment on it publicly. Once assessed the goodness of both software, it was decided to use only the Facepager, since it was verified that Netvizz gives similar results. IBM Statistics 22 statistical software was used for the statistical data processing.

The Facepager software allows to set a date range for data extraction, and it was decided to extract the comments made on the Facebook page of Visit Cuenca Ecuador between January 2017 to February 2019.

For the manual procedure, a database was created with all the comments made by travelers on the Ecuador Basin forum on the Trip Advisor website, then each comment was analyzed with the aim of eliminating erroneous or non-erroneous posts consistent with the object of study. The AntCont program was used to list the most repeated words in the database obtained through the Facepager software.

4. Data analysis and interpretation and presentation of results

Once the data was obtained, each of the messages was reviewed and classified in correspondence with the variables identified in the study; subsequently, the information was processed through the SPSS version 22 software.

5. Results

This section consists of two parts: the first shows the results on adequacy with the purposes of investigating the national and foreign agencies operating at the destination; the second part presents the results obtained through the Facepager software, IBM Estatistics and the AntCont program.

5.1 Part One

13 national and international agencies were selected (see Table 1), which manage tours or tourist packages to the destination Cuenca-Ecuador; the criteria for searching for information were:

1. If the website has a space for tourists to give their opinions or comments about their experiences when they enjoy the tour.
2. The number of comments on the pages that provide this option was identified.

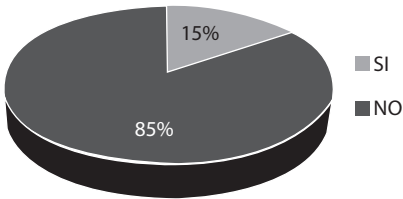
The results show that national agencies do not have any comment or opinion space, and 4 out of 13 international agencies have this space, representing 15%, as shown in Figure 1.

Table 1. List of national and foreign agencies offering tours to the destination Cuenca-Ecuador

Travel agencies			
National		International	
1	Sol Caribe Travel Agency	14	Get Your Guide
2	Spring Travel Tour Operator	15	Expedia
3	Nova Travel EC	16	Atrápalo
4	Corpo Viajes Agency Travel	17	World Travel
5	Virgin Rent a Car	18	Trip
6	La moneda Viaje Turismo & Eventos	19	Visit a City
7	Vive Now	20	Tours 4 Fun
8	Cazhuma Tours Travel Agency	21	Anywhere
9	Terra Diversa Ecuador Explorer	22	Gray Line
10	Cite Tour	23	Price Travel
11	Expediciones Apullacta	24	Viator a Trip Advisor Company
12	Tours Costa Ecuador	25	Inspirock
13	Turi Bus	26	Happy Gringo

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1. Percentage of national and international agencies with a space for comment



Source: Own elaboration.

This limits the study to 2 sources (Trip Advisor and Visit Cuenca), hence, the rest of the agencies have been excluded for the lack of information.

The observation made to the web pages shows that they only provide basic information about the offer (Table 2). Despite having a space for comments, these pages do not adequately take advantage of this availability.

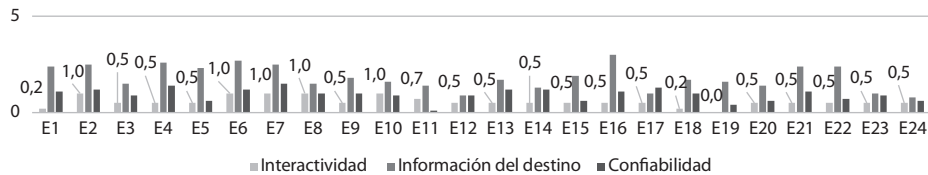
Table 2. Number of comments on the websites of national and international travel agencies

No.	Travel agency	Quantity of comments and opinions	No.	Travel agency	Quantity of comments and opinions
Nationals			Internationals		
1	Sol Caribe Travel Agency	-	14	Get Your Guide	1
2	Spring Travel Tour Operator	-	15	Expedia	-
3	Nova Travel EC	-	16	Atrápalo	-
4	Corpo Viajes Agency Travel	-	17	Mundo Travel	-
5	Virgen Rent a Car	-	18	Trip	-
6	La moneda viaje Turismo & Eventos	-	19	Visit a City	-
7	Vive Now	-	20	Tours 4 Fun	0
8	Cazhuma Tours Travel Agency & Tour	-	21	Anywhere	-
9	TerraDiversa Ecuador Explorer	-	22	Gray Line	-
10	Cite Tour	-	23	Price Travel	0
11	Expediciones Apullacta	-	24	Viator A Trip Advisor Company	1
12	Tours Costa Ecuador	-	25	Inspirock	-
13	Turi Bus	-	26	Happy Gringo	-

Note: The hyphen symbol (-) means that the page does not have a space to make a comment.
Source: Own elaboration.

The evidence found in a work carried out by Vázquez (2018) is corroborated, comparing the results of 20 tourism companies based on the quality variable of their websites. The interactivity factor is maintained at very low levels (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Quality assessment of tourist intermediation websites



Note: Abbreviation E1 stands for Company 1. Source: Vázquez, J. P. (2018).

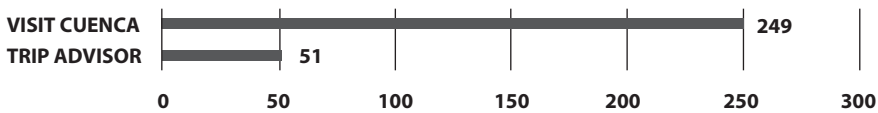
5.2 Part Two

Data collection manually and automatically.

The total comments on the Trip Advisor page were listed in the forums section linked to the city of Cuenca, 51 were valid, for which no software was used because the information was obtained manually.

Subsequently, the collection of information was carried out automatically, for this purpose the Facepager technology tool was used, obtaining information from January 1, 2017 to February 1, 2019, from the Facebook page Visit Cuenca, for a total of 249 comments collected. The total between both websites (Forum Trip Advisor and Visit Cuenca) was 300 comments.

Figure 3. Number of comments collected manually and automatically

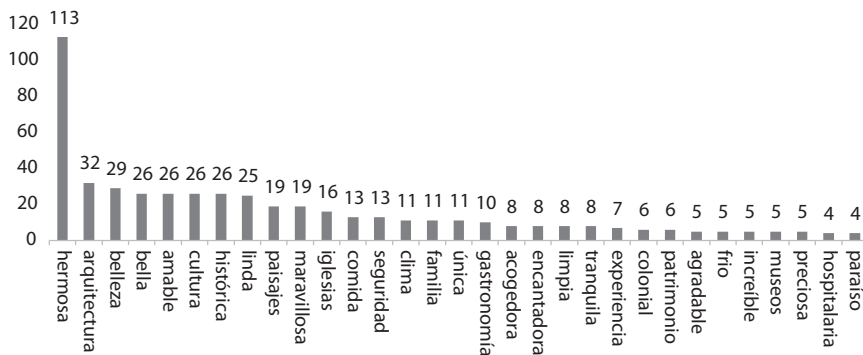


Source: Own elaboration.

An analysis of the comments was performed using the AntCont software to determine the frequency of the words or attributes that are most repeated in the comments of users of both the Trip Advisor forum and visit Cuenca's Facebook page.

The frequency index was calculated in relation to words that indicate the perception of tourists regarding the city of Cuenca, with an emphasis on tourist attractions (cultural, natural), quality of accommodation services and restaurants, price perception of the destination, security, hospitality and climate; and words that are repeated more than 4 times were chosen as illustrated in Figure 4, which results in price perception not being hierarchical as an attribute of preference.

Figure 4. Frequency of words most commonly used by tourists



Source: Own elaboration.

These results (comments) were processed for statistical analysis using IBM Statistics SPSS software, applying the cross-tabled option between variables Country and Gender, resulting Colombia, Peru, Argentina as the countries with higher emission levels, followed by the United States and Spain, as shown in Table 3, reaffirming the results of the Research Group on Regional Economy (GIER) in 2018, stating that the tourists who visit the city of Cuenca are from Latin America (35.3%).

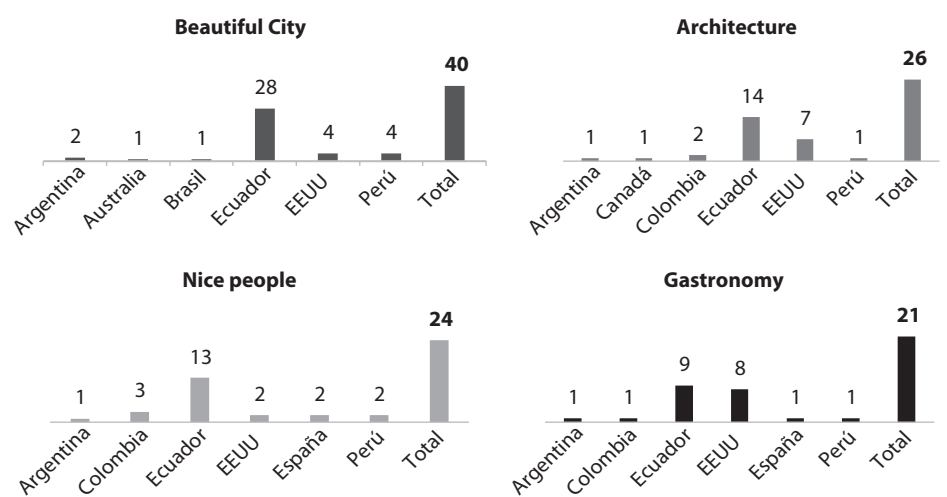
Table 3. People with more participation based on their home country

Country	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Ecuador	114	62	176
U.S	30	23	53
Peru	14	25	39
Colombia	9	8	17
Argentina	5	8	13
Spain	7	0	7

Note: Based on the results provided by IBM Estatistics SPSS software.
Source: Own elaboration

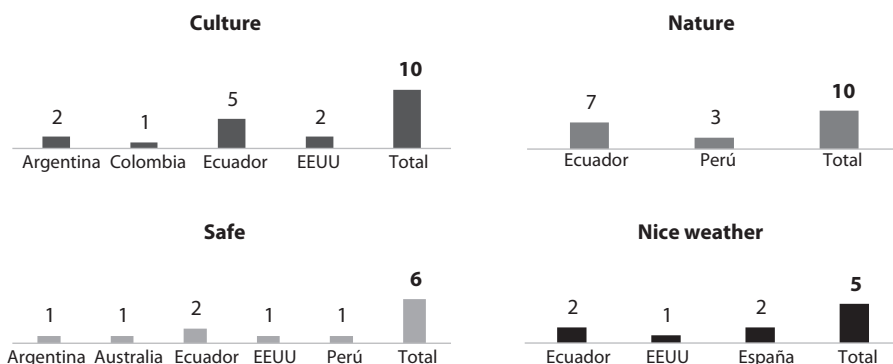
Tourists’ preferences when selecting the city of Cuenca as a tourist destination are located in variables such as “beautiful city, architecture, friendly people, gastronomy” (these were the most common, see figure 5), and factors such as safety, climate, culture and nature were less frequent (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Factors that tourists perceive from the city of Cuenca



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 6. Factors that tourists perceive from the city of Cuenca

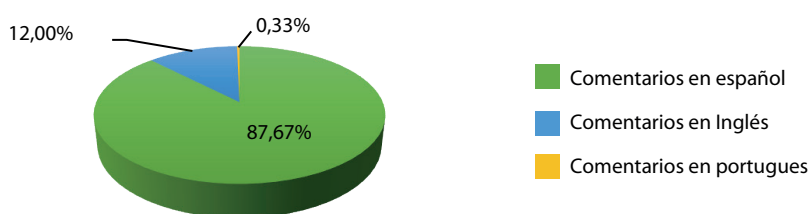


Source: Own elaboration.

There is also a greater participation of Ecuadorian tourism, who occupy the first place in the comments made about the city. Regarding the participation of foreign tourism, South America stands out, such as Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, followed by North American countries such as the United States and Canada and a single European and Oceania country such as Spain and Australia, respectively, reflecting more visits by domestic tourists.

This information may be skewed because the language used on the pages is Spanish, being this language most commonly used to express comments in 87.67%, followed by English and Portuguese (Figure 7), and there is evidence of a large presence of tourists who speak Spanish and a low participation of foreigners with another language.

Figure 7. Total of comments according to their language



Source: Own elaboration.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Studies conducted in 2018 by GIER (2018), show that tourism in the city of Cuenca during the years 2016-2018 has a slight trend for the growth of people from Latin America and the Caribbean with 1.19%; and a slight decrease for Europe (0.5%), North America (1.10%) and 0.4% for the rest of the world.

These studies reveal that there is little use of the websites of both domestic and foreign travel agencies; 7% of tourists get information through travel agencies, and in greater proportion by references from previous experiences (38.9%). While Vidal (2018) states that 74% of travelers use internet for planning their trip through the Google Travel site that reports generally on the world's tourist sites and only 13% in travel agency. Therefore, there is a coincidence with the results of this research by showing (see Table 2) the insufficient use of the pages as a means of information and choice of destination, reflecting a low interaction between users; hence, these pages should offer information as aid to the decision-making in the choice of the place to spend their holidays, visit options or activities related to resources/attractions.

In relation to previous reports and the findings obtained in this work, it is confirmed that the origin of the largest number of tourists visiting the city is from Latin American and Caribbean countries (Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico) 78.62%, followed by North America (USA, Canada) with 17.61%; as established by GIER (2018), in which 35.3% of visitors are from Latin America followed by Europe with 31% and America with 30.8%; this reaffirms the feasibility of using Netnography with the use of technological tools that lead to lower costs, as opposed to the survey-based data collection.

The observation of the pages showed that the websites that manage the tours operators to provide services to domestic and foreign tourists, offer basic information about the destination; thus, it is necessary to improve the content of these sites and encourage a comment space where people can interact by expressing suggestions or opinions that can contribute to the quick and immediate decision-making about the city as a destination, optimizing the time when choosing their trip, otherwise visitors will choose another place as a destination. In this sense, alliances between the different actors of tourism are necessary, fact that is expressed in the strategic tourism plan of the city (TurisConsulting, 2016) (strategy five), where the need to strengthen the tours operators is expressed in the market access and bargaining power, but unfortunately this remains as a policy statement and formulation of strategies that has not materialized within the destination. One of the activities that could contribute to it is to encourage access to technological systems of online booking and purchases by joining forces through cooperation. The document shows no results, even though it contains an execution plan with people who are in charge of it and with a budget established for it.

From the perspective of perception of attractions, there is also a coincidence with what GIER published (2018), since both show that people appreciate the city as beautiful, architectural, historical, friendly people, followed by natural attractions. However, it was found that very few people choose the city for its variety of churches (20 churches distributed throughout the urban area), variety of museums, which is the main characteristic of the city and what is most advertised in the pages or recreational spaces such as Turi, tours within the city. The latter shows that the content of the pages has gaps of information in correspondence with the preferences of tourists, dismissing the rest of cultural attractions such as other museums, the natural environment that surrounds the city, its gastronomy or its cultural richness in various artistic expressions.

GIER data (2018) show that tourists visit the city of Cuenca motivated by its historic downtown as a main attraction at 19%; this information agrees with the results obtained from the research (Figures 5 and 6), reaffirming the above. It should be noted that the research defined other factors such as climate and safety; however, the greatest preference in relation to the destination is its architectural area that enhances the city that is compared to European cities.

With regard to the extracted database, it is noted that most comments are in Spanish (Figure 7), so that tourists who communicate in another language do not have much interaction because the publications are only in Spanish. Therefore, it is urgent to publish the posts in other languages to give greater possibility of participation to foreigners who do not speak Spanish, this is very important since social networks have become a means of connection between businesses and people, who share ideas, suggestions and even complaints about the products or services that a company provides. Such information is relevant as it yields needs, desires and aspirational feelings of tourists to determine their tastes and preferences with the aim of improving or developing a new tourist offer which satisfies the national and international tourist, as defined by authors cited in the introduction.

Although the data extracted in relation to security are not representative, there are signs that it may be an attraction of interest especially to foreign tourists. Studies carried out by (Prada *et al.*, 2018) indicate that the average travel rating, attention to the population and the appearance of the city, are valued positively and similarly in the case of pure cultural tourists who visit the city, reaffirming that the city is at the levels of preference of tourists, which is significant for the case of the pure cultural tourist.

Knowing the different attributes of domestic and foreign tourists is important to determine what their behavior is. Netnography is a valid tool for this purpose, as it helps to determine the different behaviors and interactions of social groups on different websites based on the information obtained from them, using technological tools that cheapen cost, as evidenced in the discussion of the results shows.

Most tourists visiting the city are Ecuadorians; although this is due to the local economy, it would be significant to increase foreign tourism that contributes to the inflow of foreign exchange from foreign tourism; thus, strategies should focus on this area to continue moving in a growing dynamic.

Although the Municipal Tourism Foundation of Cuenca established four tourist routes called The Artisan Route, Route of Museums, Route of Mills and Bread and the Rural Route, with the aim of demonstrating that the City of Cuenca has other tourism alternatives to promote the length stay of tourists, these routes have not been promoted sufficiently, leaving aside the opportunity offered by the websites, even though sites have launched a mobile application that publicizes the different areas of city tours where the routes mentioned are defined tourist areas, such as churches, museums, parks, and others, with the ease of being guided by a GPS.

All these aspects limit market opportunities, since the gastronomic, artisanal, cultural, natural diversity that the city possesses are not taken advantage of. One of the causes is that it maintains the traditional way of seeking information about the behavior of the consumer, bypassing advances in technology, especially in the field of

tourism, where people look for information on the web, especially on social networks, to choose or know about their destination.

Regarding the comments obtained during the research, it has been observed that people visit the city of Cuenca for various recreational activities, but none related to the business, being a key point for the city, since it would encourage the participation of several local producers in order to increase the local productivity, while the Foundation states that the city of Cuenca is limited to developing with an image of business and conventions because of the lack of connectivity area, described in the third strategy of the Strategic Plan (TurisConsulting, 2016).

Another important aspect is that the different opinions of tourists about the city are positive, many people say that Cuenca is very quiet and they mention the good behavior of people during their stay, where they feel very comfortable generating a unique experience when walking or using public transportation. Such comments are favorable for the city and the tourism sector, people feeling calmer will generate good feedback towards other people, being of great help and influence to choose Cuenca as a destination, it will also increase the opportunity for a return and encourage the increase in tourism.

Tamara (2011) has established that the warmth and kindness of local people to tourists is a great motivation to return to the city, and potential tourists are influenced by the experiences and/or opinions of people who have already visited that destination when making decisions about their journey (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). The recommendations between family members and friends is the first source of information for the choice of destination, suggesting the importance of providing good experiences by the service providers (Consulting, 2011). One of the channels where this information is expressed is the virtual since it acts as influential through comments based on experiences (Barbery Montoya *et al.*, 2018); these elements are key to the target's players being motivated to develop new products that allow to take advantage of new market opportunities.

It is worth considering that the preservation of the cultural heritage of Cuenca is essential for the development of a sustainable destination, fact that agrees with (Prada *et al.*, 2018) when stating that the expense involved in creating a cultural good is insignificant compared to the cost demanded by its preservation over time, and the more extensive the life of the cultural good is the greater the investment that it demands.

7. Limitations

The limitations of the study focus primarily on the breadth and depth of data collection with respect to the population selection, given that there is a low level of use of technologies in the city by intermediation companies, reaffirming the results of studies carried out by (García & Vázquez, 2018).

On the other hand, the collection of personal data is limited because since 2018 there is a high data protection on the social network Facebook (Facebook, 2018), and it is only possible to have access to the name of the person and city of origin, thus restricting the possibility of determining a complete profile of the tourist through the use of Netnography, even though (DINARDAP, 2018) states that in

Ecuador regulations have not yet been implemented regarding compliance with the policy expressed in the Constitution.

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