

Urban experiential tourism marketing

Use of social media as communication tools by the food markets of Madrid

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Abstract

Purpose – The theoretical framework of this study focuses on the trends towards experiential tourism and new communication channels in the tourist sector. The specific areas of action that are covered in this research work focus on: a definition of experiential tourism, an analysis of markets as a resource of experiential tourism and communication strategies and the use of social media by the markets of Madrid to interact with the new experiential consumer.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is arranged as follows: first, a review of the documents on new tourist sector trends towards the demand of experiential tourism, on marketing 2.0 and on social media has been carried out; second, communication strategies of the food markets seen as tourist resources are described herein, including results of the research in the use of social media; and finally, conclusions of the study are developed.

Findings – According to the conceptual approach and after reviewing the documents cited in this paper, it is possible to conclude that food markets are tourist resources that shall be exploited as “experiential providers” for a market niche that is increasingly demanding and expects to have a “tourist experience”. The present paper contributes to the literature on experiential tourism, including new communication strategies as a tool to contact experiential tourists. Accordingly, an analysis is carried out of a specific product/resource, such as the food markets of Madrid as resources or experiential leisure centers, and a study on product strategies (offer of experiences) and communication strategies on their experiential tourism offer fundamentally based on social media and websites.

Research limitations/implications – Although this work represents an in-depth study of the food markets analyzed, the research could be extended to other markets or to other cities that are also working with markets as experiential tourism resources, though not in a structured design as in Madrid.

Practical implications – This work is different from previous studies for several reasons. In the first place, food markets are integrated as elements for the study of experiential tourism as tourist resources, and second, commercial interaction and other types of productive activities in urban centers are considered. In particular, social relations and collaboration between small retailers in markets, their managers and the institutions responsible for tourism management in the city of Madrid are barely analyzed in the literature. This includes the collaboration between public (Madrid City Council), cultural and business institutions (Madrid Fusión and Gastrofestival), hospitality and other businesses (established in the food markets) to promote cultural experiences and historic tourism.

Social implications – The performed study has several implications for employers and policymakers. As historical, cultural and experiential tourism are growing trends throughout the world, new tourist consumer profiles must be analyzed. There are new groups of tourists looking for unique experiences and “local”



activities, eager to visit renovated urban historical centers with a developed experiential leisure offer. This tourist activity facilitates the rebirth of the traditional food markets and promotes the creation of jobs and new opportunities for traditional businesses as shown in the present case study focused on the markets of Madrid.

Originality/value – The present paper contributes to the literature on experiential tourism, including new communication strategies as a tool to contact experiential tourists. Accordingly, an analysis is carried out of a specific product/resource, such as the food markets of Madrid as resources or experiential leisure centers, and a study on product strategies (offer of experiences) and communication strategies on their experiential tourism offer fundamentally based on social media and websites. The role played by food markets in the creation of an experiential tourism offer in Madrid and the communication strategies generated by them is described in this research. This study not only sheds light on the changes undergone by the tourist demand, specifically urban tourism but also it helps understand some of the strategies that big tourist cities are implementing in historic centers to reduce the risks of mass tourism.

Keywords Social networking, Tourist experience, Experiential marketing, Traditional food markets, Web 2.0 and 3.0

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

During the past decades, the concept of experiential economy has been defined and used not only in the consumer goods environment but also in tourism, architecture, urban planning and in other areas.

The current tourist demand is undergoing a great transformation, with experience becoming an essential part of the journey and clients feeling a greater need to experience a destination to optimize their trip. In this context, markets are being promoted as spaces that offer leisure experiences, expanding their traditional functions as food distributors.

The present article helps illustrate this reality in the case of Madrid, where markets are becoming cultural resources, spaces that vindicate gastronomy and local lifestyle as tourist experiences, promoting their leisure offer on social media to reach a new experiential consumer.

The theoretical framework of this study focuses on the trends towards experiential tourism and new communication channels in the tourist sector. The specific areas of action that are covered in this research work focus on: a definition of experiential tourism, an analysis of markets as a resource of experiential tourism and communication strategies and the use of social media by the markets of Madrid to interact with the new experiential consumer.

To achieve the purposes of this study, the qualitative information given by the promotional website of the Tourism Department of Madrid, the different traditional food markets websites and their respective social media were crucial to obtain data on different profiles and communication strategies.

The main contribution of this study comes from the analysis of food markets as experiential tourism resources and their interaction with social media as a communication tool with their clients.

A tourist seeking experiences is a person that wants to escape, discover, enjoy and interact with local people and know their customs; therefore, markets can and should be part of this experience pursued by tourists. Besides, it is also essential to reach that new market niche and regarding other previous studies on experiential tourism, this analysis focuses on the way social media contribute in the positioning of tourist resources that offer experiences and, specifically, the positioning of the food markets of Madrid.

This article is arranged as follows: first, a review of the documents on new tourist sector trends towards the demand of experiential tourism, on marketing 2.0 and on social media

has been carried out; second, communication strategies of the food markets seen as tourist resources are described herein, including results of the research in the use of social media; and finally, conclusions of the study are developed.

2. Literature review. The tourist sector in view of the tourist experience and the use of social media for communication purposes

The experiential marketing study is quite recent and is academically in full swing. Experiential marketing consists of an immersion of the consumers directly into the product through the senses, triggering feelings, emotions and thoughts that generate in them positive experiences related the product or service (Moral and Alles, 2012).

The goal of an experience-based marketing is to transform clients of a product in followers or fans. People eager to know the latest news on the brand or product offered are the target (Barkoza, 2013).

In short, the purpose of experiential marketing is not only to focus on a product but also on what the experience represents for a customer.

Experiential consumers do not go unnoticed by the tourist sector and, therefore, experiential tourism has become fashionable, with experiences being the essential object of the trip and clients feeling an increasing need to experience and optimize their stay at their destination. When integrating aspects such as culture and local traditions, tourists feel immersed in the local way of life and receive a positive image of the visited destination.

It has been observed that companies in the tourist sector are going from manufacturing products for their clients to getting involved in a co-creation process between producers and tourists. Advances in the communication networks are enabling both tourists and dwellers of the cities to be producers of tourism resources (Richards, 2016). This was inconceivable some years ago: when visitors recommended a place in a travel guide, their comments were seen much later by the readers. Now, people visiting hotels, museums or any other tourist spaces can publish comments on their experiences in websites that invite users to post recommendations for other tourists or interact in social media in real time.

According to Schmitt (1999, 2003), one of the first authors coining the term *experiential marketing*, there are five ways to promote an experience among the consumers:

- (1) via sensorial experience (perception);
- (2) via emotional experience (feel);
- (3) via physical experience or lifestyle (act);
- (4) via cognitive and creative experience (think); and
- (5) via social identity experience (relate).

Most recent experiential tourism studies focus particularly on sensorial, emotional and lifestyle dimensions, as shown by the studies carried out by:

- Volo (2009), Andersson (2007) and Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) who discuss the different dimensions of experiential economy.
- Mehmetoglu and Normann (2013) who study how the different dimensions of the experience affect the consumption of tourist destinations.
- Knobloch *et al.* (2017), Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) and LuJun *et al.* (2014) focused on experience and emotion in tourist consumption.
- Kasemsap (2017) on information and lifestyle and their influence on the consumption patterns.

- Haenel *et al.* (2017) have studied the effect of technology in the creation of emotions and how they are influenced by experiential marketing promotional strategies.
- Ballantyne *et al.* (2017) have analyzed cultural tourism, emotions and lifestyle.
- Su *et al.* (2016) study the participation of the consumer in the creation of the tourist experience.
- Mossberg (2007) makes a marketing approach on the tourist experience.
- Salerno (2009) and Williams (2006) study the sensorial and emotional dimensions for a consumer of leisure activities or tourist accommodation, respectively.

The comprehension of the tourist experience, particularly in its sensorial dimension (Schmitt, 1999, 2003), is relevant for the improvement of tourist destinations. Thus, innovative products shall be developed, as well as an attractive environment and experiences that leave a positive print on those visiting a destination while positively contributing to the quality of life of the local community (Agapito *et al.*, 2013, 2014; Kastenholz *et al.*, 2012).

According to the latest trends of the demand, the so-called “last or third generation tourists” use their stay at urban destinations to search rewarding and unique experiences. This turns passive viewers into active tourists. Instead of “observing”, they travel to a destination to “do” things, interacting more with local culture.

Richards (2004) already stated that cultural tourism was becoming an experiential product, whereby visits were evaluated according to all elements of a place and not only to its cultural value. Many consumers increasingly look for local aspects and consider everyday life an authentic experience (Richards, 2011).

Today, local people dwelling in tourist places are more aware of the tourist value and appeal of their town and are therefore more and more involved in the marketing process and creation of a destination.

According to an investigation on tourist profiles depending on traveling motivations (Beltrán y Parra, 2017), which focused on people’s motivations to travel, the need of information, the perception of the destination and the way decisions are made, among other issues, the most frequent profiles are now anthropological, emotional and hedonistic travelers.

A total of 85 per cent of travelers under 35 consider that “living a local experience” is one of their main reasons to visit a place (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2015).

In a business model where the expectations of emotions and experiences have a specific weight through the whole purchase process, it is fundamental to identify the most important trends for the tourist sector when designing a waybill aimed at improving the digital strategy of a destination, a company or a tourist resource.

Shedroff (2001) believes that there are tourists that travel to live unique experiences. According to him, there is a segment of tourist consumers, which he defines as “experiential”.

Hinojosa (2016) sees as the main tourist trends to consider in 2017: ask for the traveler’s opinion (to increase client fidelity), address *millennials* and offer them customized experiences in hotels and travel planning (customers shall be offered trip ingredients that not only involve more than airplane tickets and hotel stays but also include VIP access to the newest restaurants and many extraordinary experiences).

According to the Travel Market Report (2016), consumers prefer to control their itinerary, including appropriate, comfortable and convenient experiences. Clients know what they want and are becoming experts in transmitting their needs to the tourist agencies.

These changes and progresses have turned travelers into more autonomous subjects, customizing their journeys instead of consuming wholesale products. For this reason, cultural tourism entails not only the typical holiday trip where cities and their heritage and monuments are visited but also a journey where public spaces such as neighborhoods are seen to provide local experiences (Díaz y Castro, 2017).

The twenty-first century tourists are known by their refined and sophisticated taste, a preference for less exploited tourist products that highlight new, innovative experiences (Castaño, 2015).

A high tourist competitiveness demands differentiation in the supply of unique, one and only experiences, associated with a product, a service or a place. This new “experiential economy” stage (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) is defining the kind of products and services that are designed and marketed today.

On the other hand, the consumer must interact in the design of experiences and these must be well-balanced and harmonious. For this reason, an interactive tourism must be supported, where travelers have a wide range of options according to their tastes, likings and emotions, cherishing whatever they please to experience (Alvarez, 2015) and, if possible, something they can share in social media.

The development of the internet has revolutionized the operation strategy of the tourist industry (Theodosiou y Katsikea, 2012). The great impact of the Web 2.0 and 3.0 on the tourist activity reaches both providers, distributors and consumers. The “word of mouth” communication, which is extremely important in the tourist marketing area, is now empowered by the thousands of contacts that an active user can generate on the internet via blog, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram (García, 2016).

Today, internet enables the traveler to socialize the experience during the whole process, even in the preparatory stage. This socialization of the traveling experience entails an opportunity to promote the company when it has met or exceeded the expectations of its clients, having at the same time a negative side, considering that the process of sharing experiences among users takes place without any participation or control by the companies involved (García, 2011).

To dig deeper into these aspects, the British hotel chain “Four Pillars Hotels” has developed an interesting infographic tool that illustrates the impact of new technologies, mobile phones and social media in the tourist industry.

The study shows how social media have changed the perspective of many travelers. It has to be highlighted that 52 per cent of Facebook users have stated that their friends’ pictures have inspired them where to go before deciding a holiday trip.

A study performed by the World Youth Student Educational Travel Confederation indicates that 66 per cent of young travelers read travel blogs to find information on destinations (WYSE, 2014). This is another signal indicating that consumers participate in the creation process of information on the destination. Both bloggers and online travel review sites are becoming increasingly valuable in the decision-making of consumers.

The previous data show how new technologies and social media are having more influence than ever in the tourist sector. Traditional communication channels have been losing effectiveness in favor of new IT-related communication formats (Nail, 2005), which means to reinterpret the word-of-mouth concept as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

The tourist offer provider shall take into account that new tourists traveling on their own are more independent and use the internet and other online communication media to be informed on possible activities at their destinations.

The search of information is an important part of the purchase decision-making, which has significantly evolved thanks to the internet and the ICTs, as they reduce the uncertainty and the perceived risks (Gretzel y Yoo, 2008; Mackay y Vogt, 2012).

The opinions of those who have already been in a destination greatly influence tourist decisions owing to their experiential nature while reducing the risk perceived by potential consumers (Mansfeld, 1992; Mill and Morrison, 2002) and making it possible to imagine own tourist experiences (Henning-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). In other words, what is shared among users generates greater confidence and credibility (Litvin *et al.*, 2008).

Besides, these comments from third parties (users, bloggers, journalists, etc.) are perceived as more credible than official information from websites, tourist information offices, brochures of destinations or tourist services (Huertas, 2008; Litvin *et al.*, 2008) while gaining value in tourism decision-making (Niinen *et al.*, 2006).

The new communication channels generated by the Web 2.0 and 3.0 categories have extended the sense of communications and an unidirectional message has been replaced by a bidirectional one with strong participation of the final user in its generation and release (García, 2011), as the content of the pages can be developed by the company itself and by the information provided by users, bloggers or Instagrammers, which encourages interaction, participation and creation of social media or communities (O'Reilly, 2007).

In short, in the experiential economy the tourism sector must focus on this segment of travelers for whom the essential thing is to have experiences and emotions consistent with their lifestyle. In the case of urban tourism, tourist resources and destinations have to establish new forms of communication with customers. Such information/communication can be generated by these resources and destinations on traditional media, but above all, on their own websites, social media and third-party content sites (consumer portals, blogs or influencers) that contribute to the image generation of different experiential tourism resources.

3. Traditional Food markets seen as urban experiential tourism resources and social media used as marketing tools. The case of Madrid

The quest of differentiation and singularity to attract new visitors leads cities to adopt the management model proposed by the new experience-based economy, staging and offering unique experiences.

Cities have developed the urban regeneration process, promoting the emergence of new “tourist places” as cultural experiences that cover the new needs of experiential tourism.

As the effects of mass tourism increasingly affect the historic city centers, a segment of travelers emerges as a minority, which prefer to explore lesser-known urban areas or new resources (Hosteltur, 2016; Mora, 2011). These places are sought after by a new type of visitor who flees from crowds and attaches more value to cultural, culinary, artistic, social or creative alternatives in general.

Wishing to satisfy the new perceptions of the tourists, experiential tourism proposals arise, with neighborhoods offering spaces that show local idiosyncrasies while adding value and complexity to the cities (Santamaría, 2013).

A clear example of this overload is New York, with an abundant influx of visitors throughout the year, especially in Manhattan. The town council of New York has launched a strategy in five districts, taking visitors from Manhattan to other lesser-known neighborhoods such as Queens and Brooklyn, with less influx of tourists and where they would not have set foot 10 years ago. This is an escape route that diversifies the wealth generated by tourism and decongests big centers. This new idea was suggested by NYC & Company, who managed to bring tourists to the new neighborhoods by associating with

members of the community and launching contents that attract consumers while demonstrating that an association with small businesses can be a good idea to revitalize new target neighborhoods (Canalis, 2016).

Continuing with the tendency to mitigate mass tourism, a segment of minority travelers emerges, preferring to explore new zones that are apparently less attractive and less known. These neighborhoods are separated from the main centers of mass tourism and are sought by people who want to avoid historic centers and the main monuments of cities, wishing to live new experiences that are not only visual but gastronomic, cultural, social, artistic and creative. Some examples are Malasaña in Madrid, Dalston in London and Kreuzberg in Berlin.

These new seekers (“hipsters”), are middle class youngsters who wish to get away from the crowds generated by mass tourism, even if they have to travel to places located far from the center. They look for vintage items, healthy food and products that are generally “original”.

This hipster tendency will open doors to new neighborhoods and destinations for these new visitors, so that big cities are decongested from mass tourism (Canalais, 2016).

These young travelers share the same profile, which is a frequent user of social media capable of influencing other users by turning the areas they visit into new trends that start to be visited by other types of visitors.

In this sense, traditional food markets are tourist resources valued by new consumer profiles for the objective, constructive authenticity they add to the destinations.

The use of social media by markets aimed at planning communication strategies and promotion of activities and experiences in their facilities is key to reach their target market.

The interactivity generated in these networks and its use as public relations tools that enable dialog opportunities make it necessary to extract all the interactive potential from them. Therefore, it is relevant to know how the food markets of Madrid – new experiential tourism resources – use social media as communication channels with their target audience.

The generated social presence and social identity positively affect the knowledge of a product in virtual communities (Shen *et al.*, 2010). In the context of this research, it is evident that experiential travelers, people that consume experiences, *foodies* or gastronomic trend-lovers, belong to a community of users that practice word-of-mouth communication on social media when it comes to traditional food markets.

Using the tools made available by the experiential marketing, cities shall plan, design, create and communicate unique experiences that satisfy visitors, as well as activities that provide visitors an experience that is positive and exclusive of the city of destination (Alvarez, 2015).

In the case of cities like Madrid, as in other big cities, traditional food markets are exceptional spaces with rich local history and culture, emblematic buildings in locations considered architectural or historical heritage.

Some traditional food markets of Madrid have become important tourist attractions or must “sights” in the historical center of the city (García, 2017). Thus, Madrid is becoming a reference among market visitors, as markets have become a great way to approach the local culture of the city.

In view of this reality, the following has been considered convenient:

- Analyze the role of food markets as cultural value resources in urban tourism using the case study of Madrid.
- Madrid has 46 public food markets, 14 of which are located in central districts of the capital (6 in the central district, 2 in Retiro, 3 in Salamanca and 3 in Chamberí. 5 markets of the central district were picked from the 14, 1 from the district of Salamanca and 1 from Chamberí, as well as gastronomic leisure spaces or re-created markets (see the data sheet in Table I).

- Food markets such as San Antón, Antón Martín, San Fernando, Barceló, La Cebada (Centro), Vallehermoso (Chamberí) and Mercado de la Paz (Salamanca) are analyzed. Other gastronomic leisure centers included are San Miguel, Huerto del Lucas and San Ildefonso (center) and Platea (Salamanca). Both markets and gastronomic leisure centers or the analyzed re-created markets carry out the greatest amount of activities related to tourist experiences and those who have designed not only sales areas but also areas implemented for leisure and gastronomic learning activities.
- Study of social media as a communication tool used by food markets to promote their experiential tourism offer to a target public.

Most part of the food markets offered as tourist resources in Madrid are the so-called “traditional renewed markets” and “reinvented markets”. These are the two types of food markets that perform a greater use of social media as a communication tool. In both cases, the main attraction is the combination of traditional and modern elements (see [Table II](#)).

The first purpose of this article, as said before, is to analyze food markets as experiential tourism resources.

In the current tourist scenario, gastronomic tourism is becoming more and more relevant in Spain. Gastronomy as a tourist resource of our country is essential to our heritage, conveying an image of innovation, quality, excellence and authenticity, a concept that Turespaña is taking advantage of as a strategy to diversify our tourist offer. Therefore, food markets are becoming key services/resources of a cultural tourist offer based on the sale of a unique gastronomic experience, representing an intangible cultural heritage of a territory.

The arrival of tourists to these food markets increases local income while remodeling and diversifying market stands to refurbish the architectural ensemble (quite deteriorated and obsolete in some cases). It also provides a foreign visitor-oriented offer with businesses opening in the afternoons or on Saturdays and even on Sundays, which helps include these places as mandatory stops in tourist routes ([Crespi y Domínguez, 2013](#)). In short, it allows to create a new tourist offer made of experiential places ([Barrado, 2004](#)) to live an “extraordinary day-to-day experience” ([Quagliari and Russo, 2010](#)).

This change in the food markets offer, in the case of Spain, comes basically from the growing hospitality/catering industry in markets, fitting out leisure areas as places where to eat, with an innovative variety that includes “tapas” bars, small restaurants located near fruit, vegetable and fish stands and stores transformed into catering and tasting environments ([García, 2017](#)).

Universe	Traditional food markets, gourmet food spaces and reinvented food markets
Geographical area	Limits trade of the city of Madrid
Sample	7 traditional food markets located in Madrid (city center) 4 gourmet food spaces
Sampling procedure	Convenience sampling according to the offer of tourist services based on gastronomy as an experience
Sample error	According to the sample size, the maximum permissible error (to estimate proportions) is $\pm 4\%$ in conditions of maximum uncertainty ($p = q = 0.5$)
Technique of collection on the information	Observation Review of websites and social networks social of the units sample
Period of collection of the information	November-December 2016 (Social networks) March 2017 (websites)
Information processing	Univariable and descriptive bivariate analysis
Informartion processing	Excell/Similar Web

Table I.
Data sheet of the
research

Market	Distrit tourist area	Year	Type of food market
San Antón	Centro Chueca	2011	Reinvented markets
Antón Martín	Centro Las Letras Lavapiés	2012	Traditional renewed markets
San Fernando	Centro Lavapiés	2010	Traditional renewed markets
Barceló	Centro Salesas	2014	Traditional renewed markets
La Cebada	Centro La Latina	2009	Traditional renewed markets
Vallehermoso	Chamberí Argüelles Conde Duque	1943	Traditional renewed markets
Mercado de La Paz	Salamanca	2014	
Huerto de Lucas	Centro Salesas	2014	Gourmet food spaces
Platea	Salamanca	2014	Gourmet food spaces
San Ildefonso	Centro Chueca/ Malasaña	2014	Gourmet food spaces
San Miguel	Centro Austrias	2009	Reinvented markets

Table II.
Ranking of food
markets in Madrid as
a tourist resource

Source: [García \(2016\)](#)

[Table III](#) includes all the food markets that are launching experiential marketing activities according to the traditional and reinvented markets categories. Besides, new gastronomic spaces have been considered to operate as markets in areas where no markets existed before, focusing on gastronomic tourism-oriented hotel and catering facilities, apart from organizing gastronomic workshops and tastings.

On the other hand, one of the most important gastronomic activities in Madrid is Madrid Fusión. Among other similar activities that are parallel to Madrid Fusión, there is a key experiential marketing event taking place in the city known as Gastrofestival. In the 2016 Edition, markets have become an essential part in the marketing process of gastronomic activities (see [Table III](#)). Food markets are becoming a tourist resource that offers tourist services based on gastronomy as an experience.

The markets of Madrid seen as tourist and leisure offer are, therefore, very diverse. All of them focus on three concepts: Temporality (season products), flextime and tasting (try before buy).

There are some items that show how markets seek to adapt to new tourist and leisure habits (as shown in [Table III](#)):

- Operating hours in these markets are extended for leisure and catering purposes.
- There is an increase in employment in stands of leisure and catering businesses (restaurants, gourmet shops with bar service, bars or common leisure catering-centered areas).
- Food markets are increasingly becoming attractions in the tourist map of Madrid.
- Markets perform tastings of products, artistic events, cooking workshops and other experiential activities (see [Figure 1](#)).

Market	Open hours	Catering purposes	Gastrofestival activities 2016 in Madrid fusión	Experiential activities
San Miguel	10-24 J-V-S 10-2	✓		✓
San Antón	10-24 V-D 10-1:30	✓	Gourmet products Gastrofestival	✓
Antón Martín	9-21 9-23:30	✓	Opening of the Gastrofestival Workshop: cocina fusión Tapas in the market Workshop for five senses Workshop: kids cooking vegetables and fruits	✓
San Fernando	9-21 V-S 9-23 D 11-17	✓		✓
Barceló	9-20.30 V-D 9-24	✓	Blind tasting Kids food Shool	✓
La Cebada	9-20.30 D 10-16			✓
Vallehermoso	9-20:30 9-23:30	✓	Sushi cooking Tasting: Gran cocido madrileño Tea tasting Tasting of Italian appetizers Tasting of sobaos and quesadas Asian brunch Artisan cheese tasting	✓
Mercado de La Paz	9-20.30 10-23	✓	Tasting French products Tasting of Italian products Land and sea products	✓
Huerto de Lucas	10-22	✓		✓
Plaza	10-2.30	✓		✓
San Ildefonso	12-00	✓		✓

Table III.
Experiential tourism
actions performed by
the markets of
Madrid

Source: Own elaboration and food markets websites; www.esmadrid.com; www.tripadvisor.com; Fuente: www.gastrofestivalmadrid.com/es/cabecera/10/mercados-de-madrid

All the food markets have been able to take advantage of the beauty of their revamped facilities to surpass the gastronomy sales channel and enter the social culture dimension, providing the chance to live a complete gastronomic experience.

As seen in the activities of [Figure 1](#), the idea is to generate experiences for the clients to interact with them through the social media and transmit emotions, brands and values and share activities. In this way, experiential marketing enhances the effects of communication ([Segura and Garriga, 2008](#)).

In Madrid, the analyzed food markets have been able to upgrade their spaces, generating in the end important capital flow and social activity in their neighborhoods. In 2003, the Madrid City Council initiated an innovation and transformation plan for its markets, improving security, removing architectural barriers, reforming facades and facilities, etc. This reinvention has led food markets to become “experiential destinations” within the city, most of them based on the following model: traditional market + gourmet offer + gastronomy oriented cultural and leisure activities.



ESTOY
INVENTARIO
LUGARES ÚNICOS

Madrid y yo

Picnic en Madrid: Mercado de San Fernando (1ª parte)

• LA BUENA PINTA (JUEVES 11/20): Si te gusta la cerveza tienes que pasar en La Buena Pinta. Además de vender todo tipo de cervezas artesanales, made in Spain y en el extranjero, te ofrecen todo el tiempo que haga falta a explicarte las diferencias entre unas y otras y con qué combinan mejor. Uno de los puntos más interesantes del mercado y programación semanal, en los que siempre se hace un aperitivo.



Sources: Guía del ocio (February, 2016);
www.madridyyo.com; www.madridemprende.es; www.mercado47.com

Figure 1.
Example of
experiential tourism
activities performed
by the markets of
Madrid

4. Use of social media as communication tools for the food markets of Madrid as experiential tourism spaces

The second goal of the present study is to analyze the communication strategies and the use of social media by the food markets of Madrid to communicate with the new experiential consumer.

It must be considered that it is not unusual to find in social media pictures aimed at making an impact and arousing sensations and that a good digital marketing campaign can

transform the reader into a future client, as social media reach targets consumers faster and more straightforward (Dvojak, 2011; Ibáñez *et al.*, 2016).

Most analyzed food markets have become attractive spots in the tourist map of Madrid and in the promotional city website www.esmadrid.com (see Table IV). Besides, positioning in Web search engines such as TripAdvisor (see Table V) has become crucial, as internet is for new travelers an opportunity to play a quite active role in the communication process, providing and exchanging information and opinions more easily.

Food markets are trying to interact with clients via social media and transmit emotions. Experiential marketing enhances the effects of communication and the importance of

Market	Attractive spots in the tourist map of Madrid	Web www.esmadrid.com
San Miguel	✓	✓
San Antón	✓	✓
Antón Martín	✓	
San Fernando	✓	✓
Barceló	✓	✓
La Cebada	✓	
Vallehermoso	✓	
La Paz	✓	
Huerto de Lucas	✓	✓
Platea	✓	✓
San Ildefonso	✓	✓

Source: Own elaboration; www.esmadrid.com (December, 2016)

Table IV.
Communication
strategies of the
experiential food
markets of Madrid

Market	TripAdvisor information
San Miguel	Certificate of Excellence N°15/720 things to do in Madrid; 4,5/5 13.254 reviews (6.909 excelente)
San Antón	N° 87/715 things to do in Madrid; 4/5
Antón Martín	Certificate of Excellence; 4,5 N° 53/717 things to do in Madrid; 1122 reviews
San Fernando	Certificate of Excellence N°98/714 things to do in Madrid; 4,5/5
Barceló	N°441/708 things to do in Madrid; 3/5
La Cebada	N°10/202 things to do in Madrid; 4,5/5
Vallehermoso	NO
La Paz	N°122/708 things to do in Madrid; 4,5/5
Huerto de Lucas	N°1084/8174 restaurants in Madrid; 4/5
Platea	N° 368/8174 restaurants in Madrid; 4/5
San Ildefonso	Certificate of Excellence N°294/8466 restaurants in Madrid; 4/5 589 reviews

Source: Own elaboration and food markets websites: www.esmadrid.com; www.tripadvisor.com (December, 2016)

Table V.
Positioning in
TripAdvisor by the
experiential food
markets of Madrid

transmitting emotions and feelings that arouse the senses of the clients (Segura and Garriga, 2008).

Sørensen (2007) considered the use of social media as emerging communication channels one of the most important elements for innovation in the tourist sector.

In recent years, the Web and social media have become essential communication tools of the tourist sector (Huertas, 2012; Bulchand *et al.*, 2012), for promoting destinations and tourist resources and services.

It is evident that the development of the internet has revolutionized the operational strategies of the tourist industry. The great impact that the Web 2.0 and 3.0 has on the tourist activity reaches all participants in the purchase process, both providers, distributors and consumers. The “word of mouth” communication, which is extremely important in the tourist marketing area, is now empowered by the thousands of contacts that an active user can generate on the internet via blog, e-mail, or a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account.

Travelers generate on social media a drag effect, making certain destinations and neighborhoods fashionable, as pointed out in the “Global Trends Report 2015” of the World Travel Market.

These comments from third parties are perceived as more creditable than official information, being increasingly more important when making tourism and leisure purchase decisions (Huertas, 2008; Niininen *et al.*, 2006).

Faced with this panorama, markets have considered the use of social media and cyberspace as their main communications tool, using websites, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and blogs as promotional tools (see Table VI).

The analysis of follower measurement results in social media show very diverse data. After studying Table VI, several relevant data are observed:

- Instagram, as the latest network, is not used as a communication tool by all the food markets; nevertheless, El Huerto de Lucas and Platea have more than 10 million followers.

Market	Web	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
San Miguel	www.mercadodesanmiguel.es	42.749	14,4 k	✓ 2.514
San Antón	www.mercadosananton.com	35.073	6.582	✓ 3.473
Antón Martín	www.mercadoantonmartin.com	4.795	1.639	✓ 297
San Fernando	www.mercadodesanfernando.es	8.424	3.616	no
Barceló	www.mercadobarcelo.es	2.651		no
La Cebada	www.mercadodelacebada.com	2.535		✓ 67
Valleher-moso	No Web	2.940		no
La Paz	www.mercadolapaz.es	1.941		no
Huerto de Lucas	www.elhuertodelucas.com	11.310	2.493	✓ 13,5k
Platea	http://plateamadrid.com	26.545		✓ 11,4k
San Ildefonso	www.mercadodesanildefonso.com	18.759	4.677	✓ 1.716

Table VI.
Use of the Web and social media by the experiential food markets of Madrid

Source: Own elaboration (December 2016) and Similar Web (March 2017)

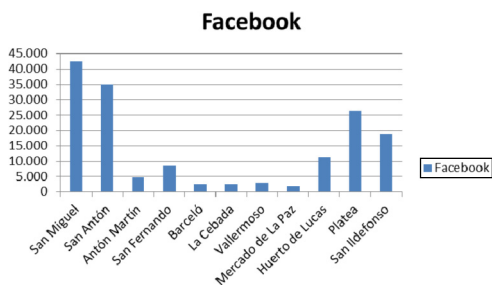
- Twitter also shows very different data, considering that all the food markets have less than 10,000 followers, although the market of San Miguel has more than 14 million in this platform.
- Regarding Facebook, food markets have been divided into three groups: those with more than 30,000 followers (San Antón and San Miguel), those with 10,000 to 30,000 followers (Huerto de Lucas, Platea and San Ildefonso) and the rest with less than 10,000 followers.

It seems, on the other hand, that there is a relationship between a greater use of social media and the fact of having a better position in TripAdvisor (which is the case of the markets of San Miguel and San Antón, with a very high-ranking position in the “what to do in Madrid” category, according to TripAdvisor).

In view of all these data, it can be said that there are markets with more activity in social networks and most of them are the so-called gastronomic leisure centers.

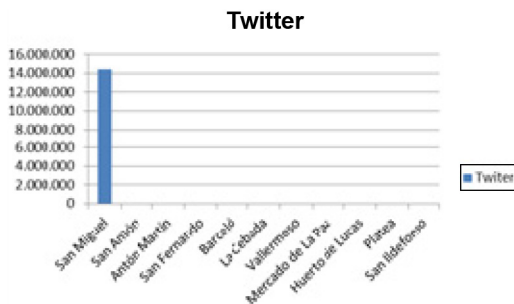
The markets with the greatest use of social media are clearly Platea, San Ildefonso, San Miguel, San Antón and El Huerto de Lucas (see Figures 2 to 4).

Not only the number of followers in social networks shall be investigated but also the use that markets make thereof to maintain contact with potential consumers via information feedback, *retweets* and the response to the questions posed by them in these networks.



Source: Similar Web (March 2017)

Figure 2.
Use of Facebook by
the food markets of
Madrid



Source: Similar Web (March 2017)

Figure 3.
Use of Twitter by the
food markets of
Madrid

Once analyzed how food markets use these networks, it is possible to extract the following results:

- Market of San Ildefonso. Although in Facebook there is a lack of feedback to the comments made by users, the market makes an excellent use of Twitter in each *tweet* where it is mentioned while answering by thanking visitors of the market facilities or providing information and even *retweeting* users.
- The market of San Antón has an updated Facebook page with at least one publication per day and provides a lot of information about the stands and what to do in the market. When any user makes a comment, the market develops a quick response. Regarding opinions, 60 per cent are valued by users with 5 stars, which highlights the Facebook rating of 4.4 of the market of San Antón.
- The market of Antón Martín makes good use of Instagram, considering that it shows its location, redirecting to the market's Web page. It uses Instagram particularly for promotion of its events, using geolocation in all of them to provide this information at all times.
- The market of San Miguel is generally the most active one in the use of social networks. In Facebook it has a very active profile with daily posts, informing on the activities that are planned on the day and, above all, it uses pictures, questions or familiar language to create a friendlier profile. Besides, comments made by users are answered quickly (not later than one day after publication). Twitter is used to have all users well informed on any changes or events that take place in the market. Another relevant detail is that its Instagram account posts high quality photos, sharing pictures of recent visitors and using *hashtags*, while all the images include their location. As in the other profiles, this market answers comments immediately.
- Platea does not have the greatest number of followers in Twitter, nevertheless it makes a very active use of its account towards its users, quoting *retweets* as an interaction mechanism and highlighting those mentioning the market.
- [El Huerto de Lucas \(2016\)](#), similar to Platea, generates a lot of *retweets* and comments, although it is more active in Instagram, with a very updated page and reposting of photos uploaded by market users, which provides information and feedback to users for promoting the market in their private networks.

5. Conclusions and implications of the study

According to the conceptual approach and after reviewing the documents cited in this article, it is possible to conclude that food markets are tourist resources that shall be

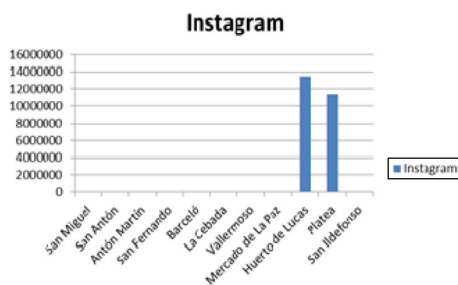


Figure 4.
Use of Instagram by
the food markets of
Madrid

Source: Similar Web (March 2017)

exploited as “experiential providers” for a market niche that is increasingly demanding and expects to have a “tourist experience”.

There are few studies that analyze the sensorial experience in urban areas and even less regarding leisure activities in food markets as an experiential tourism resource. This article analyzes the experiential tourism market with markets as a foundation of the tourist product and as a response of the current demand of new tourism consumers towards experiences in visited destinations.

The present paper contributes to the literature on experiential tourism, including new communication strategies as a tool to contact experiential tourists. Accordingly, an analysis is carried out of a specific product/resource, such as the food markets of Madrid as resources or experiential leisure centers, and a study on product strategies (offer of experiences) and communication strategies on their experiential tourism offer fundamentally based on social media and websites.

The role played by food markets in the creation of an experiential tourism offer in Madrid and the communication strategies generated by them is described in this research.

This study not only sheds light on the changes undergone by the tourist demand, specifically urban tourism but also it helps understand some of the strategies that big tourist cities are implementing in historic centers to reduce the risks of mass tourism.

The performed study has several implications for employers and policymakers. As historical, cultural and experiential tourism are growing trends throughout the world, new tourist consumer profiles must be analyzed.

There are new groups of tourists looking for unique experiences and “local” activities, eager to visit renovated urban historical centers with a developed experiential leisure offer. This tourist activity facilitates the rebirth of the traditional food markets and promotes the creation of jobs and new opportunities for traditional businesses as shown in the present case study focused on the markets of Madrid.

This work adds to the experiential tourism studies an analysis of social media and new communication tools used to generate interaction with the new tourist searching local experiences in visited destinations.

This work has allowed, on the other hand, to determine that the presence in social networks of companies in the tourism sector is key to their approach to consumers.

The new communication channels generated by the Web 2.0 and 3.0 categories have extended the sense of communications and a unidirectional message has been replaced by a bidirectional one with strong participation of the final user in its generation and release, as the content of the pages can be developed by the information provided by users, bloggers, Instagrammers, etc. which encourages interaction, participation and creation of social networks or communities.

Given this panorama, the markets have considered the use of social media and cyberspace as their main communication tool with the new tourist market niche that seeks new experiences, using websites, social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and Instagram as promotional instruments.

Thus, markets try to communicate the experiences generated via social networks and interact with customers, multiplying the effects of communication.

The study has allowed to conclude that the use of social media is not the same among markets, both in the intensity of use and in the type of networks used.

Finally, one must not forget that this is a tourism product in the first phases of its life cycle and most of the investment has been made in its design. Therefore, it is still early to carry out an in-depth study of communication tools and social networks

implemented for interaction with experiential tourism consumers, considering that Facebook has a more homogeneous use and Twitter and Instagram a more irregular use.

To conclude, this work is different from previous studies for several reasons. In the first place, food markets are integrated as elements for the study of experiential tourism as tourist resources, and second, commercial interaction and other types of productive activities in urban centers are considered. In particular, social relations and collaboration between small retailers in markets, their managers and the institutions responsible for tourism management in the city of Madrid are barely analyzed in the literature. This includes the collaboration between public (Madrid City Council), cultural and business institutions (Madrid Fusión and Gastrofestival), hospitality and other businesses (established in the food markets) to promote cultural experiences and historic tourism.

Further proposals for new activities to be carried out by the markets are possible from the different approaches on the collaboration analyzed:

- *Public institutions (City Council of Madrid)*: Our proposal includes: activate a tab on experiential tourism in markets in the tourism portal of Madrid with a complete list including contact links; achieve a better position in search engines of the @mercados_madrid Instagram profile managed by the City Council of Madrid; include signaling in subway stops near the food markets showing their locations; prepare an electronic tourist guide with basic information and activities in markets; and include in guided tours offered by the city tourism offices a link to the “Madrid most famous markets” route.
- *Cultural and business-related (Madrid Fusión and Gastrofestival)*: Another proposal is to work towards a greater implication of other food markets in Gastrofestival activities so as to diversify tourist flows to more neighborhoods of Madrid.
- *Catering and commerce (inside market facilities)*: We suggest more experiential activities related to entrepreneurs who give personality to their businesses and are demanded by the new tourist profiles as a “contact with local reality”.

Although this work represents an in-depth study of the food markets analyzed, the research could be extended to other markets or to other cities that are also working with markets as experiential tourism resources, though not in a structured design as in Madrid.

A future line of research proposed is to analyze the food market websites, the origin of users seeking information in these websites and the way they arrive at them. This will better help outline the profile of the experiential tourist.

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