



Digital marketing plan to boost tourism in the Portoviejo Canton

Plan de marketing digital para potencializar el turismo en el Cantón Portoviejo

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to design a digital marketing plan focused on strengthening tourism in the Portoviejo canton. A non-experimental, exploratory, and mixed-methods approach was adopted. The results revealed limitations in tourism investment, institutional communication, destination promotion, service quality, and the tourism infrastructure. Analysis of tourist perceptions identified a strong interest in local gastronomy and a high preference for using digital media as the primary source of information about the destination. Based on these findings, strategic communication axes and marketing mix actions were established, supporting a proposal structured around digital promotion programs. The study concludes that the implementation of the digital marketing plan contributes to strengthening the canton's tourism image and brand, thus enhancing its positioning and tourism development.

Keywords: tourism branding; digital marketing; tourism promotion; local tourism

RESUMEN

La investigación tuvo como objetivo diseñar un plan de marketing digital orientado al fortalecimiento del turismo en el cantón Portoviejo. Se adoptó un enfoque metodológico no experimental, de alcance exploratorio y enfoque mixto. Los resultados evidenciaron limitaciones en la inversión turística, la comunicación institucional, la promoción del destino, la calidad de los servicios y la oferta de la planta turística. El análisis de la percepción de los turistas permitió identificar un marcado interés por la gastronomía local y una alta preferencia por el uso de medios digitales como principal fuente de información sobre el destino. A partir de estos hallazgos, se establecieron ejes estratégicos de comunicación y acciones del marketing mix, que sustentaron una propuesta estructurada en programas de promoción digital. Se concluye que la implementación del plan de marketing digital contribuye al fortalecimiento de la imagen y marca turística del cantón, favoreciendo su posicionamiento y desarrollo turístico.

Palabras clave: marca turística; marketing digital; promoción turística; turismo local



1. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has become a strategic tool for the tourism sector by integrating technological resources aimed at promotion, commercialization, and customer relationship management. Its application goes beyond advertising dissemination, as it involves organizational adaptation processes that help optimize tourist attraction and retention, while also improving the visitor experience in increasingly competitive digital environments (Blanco-González et al., 2024).

In Ecuador, tourism represents an important sector of the national economy, supported by the country's natural and cultural diversity. However, its development faces challenges related to sustainability, infrastructure, and strategic management, which has encouraged the progressive adoption of digital marketing as a mechanism to strengthen destination visibility and respond to emerging dynamics in the tourism market (Pereira Cabrera et al., 2024).

In this context, the province of Manabí offers a diverse range of tourism resources; however, limitations persist in marketing management and in the efficient use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), hindering the positioning of the destination at both national and international levels (Cali Rivera & Indio Indio, 2025). Previous studies have shown that the digital information available on institutional websites presents shortcomings in terms of updating and accessibility, thereby reducing the effectiveness of tourism promotion (Zambrano-Yépez et al., 2019).

At the local level, Portoviejo canton has natural, cultural, and gastronomic tourism resources with significant potential for development. However, tourism development is constrained by the absence of a structured digital marketing plan, limited coordination between the public and private sectors, and shortcomings in the management of tourist attractions (Carrillo-Cedeño & Cedeño-Zambrano, 2021). These conditions restrict the economic diversification of the destination, whose productive activities are concentrated mainly in commerce and agriculture (Briones Alcívar & Morales Intriago, 2021).

From this perspective, the design of digital marketing strategies aimed at improving destination visibility and strengthening tourism competitiveness is particularly relevant. Despite receiving international recognition, such as Portoviejo's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, the canton has not yet succeeded in consolidating tourism as a driving force of its local economy (Félix Mendoza et al., 2021). Within this framework, the objective of the present study is to design a digital marketing plan aimed at strengthening tourism in Portoviejo canton, thereby contributing to greater tourism competitiveness and local economic development (El Telegrafo, 2022).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study aimed to design a digital marketing plan focused on strengthening tourism activity in Portoviejo canton, Manabí Province, Ecuador. A mixed-methods approach (qualitative–quantitative) was adopted, with a non-experimental and exploratory design structured into three sequential phases that integrated territorial diagnosis, market analysis, and strategic formulation.

Phase 1. Situational diagnosis of Portoviejo canton

In the initial phase, the analytical–synthetic method was applied to characterize the current state of tourism in the canton. A documentary review of primary and secondary sources was conducted, including the Development and Territorial Planning Plan, institutional reports, and academic repositories, in order to identify conditions related to infrastructure, basic services, tourism management, technology, and the socioeconomic context.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the tourism sector belonging to public institutions related to tourism, marketing, and communication at the cantonal and

provincial levels. The information obtained made it possible to identify the territory's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which were systematized using strategic analysis tools.

Phase 2. Analysis of the preferences of tourists visiting Portoviejo canton

The second phase was conducted using analytical-synthetic and deductive methods aimed at analyzing the tourism supply, demand, and competitive environment of Portoviejo canton. The tourism supply was examined using secondary information from official sources, Ministry of Tourism registries, and academic studies, which made it possible to identify relevant establishments, services, and tourism activities.

For the demand analysis, a structured survey was administered to visitors to the canton. Simple random probability sampling was used, considering a population of undetermined size. The sample consisted of 196 surveys, calculated with a 95% confidence level and a maximum allowable error of 7%. Data processing and analysis were performed using the SPSS statistical package, which made it possible to characterize the visitor profile and preferences regarding the search for tourism information.

The competitive analysis was conducted by comparing Portoviejo canton with destinations sharing similar characteristics, selected according to territorial, cultural, and tourism-related criteria. This facilitated the identification of differentiating elements and strategic gaps.

For the competitive profile analysis, a matrix was used to compare destinations with characteristics similar to those of the study area. The cantons of Jama and Montecristi were selected because of their similarities in terms of proximity to the sea, archaeology, culture, history, and other factors.

Phase 3. Design of digital marketing strategies for the promotion and positioning of Portoviejo canton's tourism image.

The final phase of the methodology focused on the strategic design of the digital marketing plan for promoting and strengthening recognition of Portoviejo's tourism image, using the analytical-synthetic method. This stage included the definition of communication axes by analyzing digital and traditional channels, such as social media and websites, to facilitate promotion of the canton. The current tourism image and brand of Portoviejo were then examined, including their components, slogan, and visual representation. Finally, comprehensive digital marketing strategies were designed based on the Marketing Mix (product, destination, price, and promotion). These proposals were structured through a 5W2H matrix and strategic planning with specific programs and projects aimed at addressing the identified marketing deficiencies and improving the destination's competitiveness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Situational Diagnosis of Portoviejo Canton

Portoviejo is considered an important commercial, industrial, and artisanal city. Handicrafts produced in communities near the city are particularly characterized by basketry and toquilla straw products. Its gastronomy stands out for dishes prepared with seafood, chicken, beef, and pork, as well as plantains, cassava, corn, and peanuts. The climate is warm, with an average annual temperature of 24 °C; during the rainy season, temperatures remain warm, whereas the dry season is characterized by milder conditions. The canton also has sanitation, security, rainwater drainage, fixed and mobile telephone services, public lighting, education, among other services (Cedeño Cedeño et al., 2020).

Portoviejo canton has a total of 217 tourist attractions distributed among its urban and rural parishes, reflecting a broad and heterogeneous tourism supply. These attractions include natural, cultural, recreational, and gastronomic resources, such as beaches, freshwater recreational areas, waterfalls, lagoons, hills, and rivers, as well as religious temples, museums, archaeological sites, traditional festivities, and artisanal expressions.

Rural parishes such as Crucita, San Plácido, Río Chico, and Abdón Calderón concentrate attractions associated with nature, sun-and-beach, and adventure tourism, while the Portoviejo parish has the largest number of attractions, mainly of a cultural and heritage nature. This territorial distribution enables the development of different tourism modalities and reflects the canton's potential as a diversified tourism destination.

The inventory of registered tourism establishments in Portoviejo shows a supply concentrated mainly in the gastronomy and accommodation sectors. Restaurants represent the largest number of establishments, with 196 units, followed by hotels, with a total of 88. Although less numerous, 20 travel agencies play an essential role in tourism commercialization. Finally, the canton has a limited presence of specialized tourism and recreational services, with four amusement parks and one community tourism center.

Currently, the Decentralized Autonomous Government (GAD) has expressed interest in strengthening the capacities of personnel involved in tourism and food services. However, implementation of these actions is constrained by weaknesses in interinstitutional coordination and collaboration with the provincial government and the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR). This lack of strategic alignment hinders the effective implementation of plans and projects aimed at territorial development and strengthening the tourism sector.

Analysis of perceptions of tourism management

To identify the main challenges affecting the tourism sector in Portoviejo in relation to digital marketing, interviews were conducted with technical staff and representatives of the tourism, marketing, and communications departments of the cantonal and provincial GADs of Portoviejo. These interviews provided insight into the current tourism situation and the actions undertaken by the main stakeholder groups involved in destination management.

The main responses provided by the interviewees regarding marketing, tourism management, and promotion in the study area are summarized below. The analysis strategically considered territorial problems, interest in tourism development and destination promotion projects, and conflicts among local stakeholders that hinder institutional action in addressing the identified issues.

Perceived problems: The main issues identified in the stakeholder matrix include the limited budget allocated to tourism, insufficient digital information on tourist sites, activities, and recreational opportunities in the canton, and the lack of an effective tourism marketing plan, since the existing plan is primarily focused on issues that are not directly relevant to promoting tourism, except for certain sections that address this activity.

Stakeholder interests: This dimension highlights the interest in strengthening relationships among the institutions involved in tourism development. Because these entities often work in different directions, there is limited knowledge regarding the approaches and information each institution uses to manage the destination. There was also interest in developing projects that benefit not only tourism but also local communities, such as improving road conditions and accessibility to certain parishes, which indirectly supports tourism growth in the areas concerned. Finally, stakeholders expressed interest in developing tourism-supportive regulations, creating marketing plans aimed at internationalizing the canton's tourism assets, and strengthening the dissemination and promotion of Portoviejo.

Potential conflicts: The conflicts identified are primarily related to the limited promotion of tourism resources, fragmented information, and insufficient visibility of the canton's tourism potential. These factors negatively affect demand and restrict tourism's contribution to local development. Furthermore, the allocation of resources to non-priority areas makes it more difficult to overcome these weaknesses. Therefore, strengthening tourism management through cooperation networks involving the public, private, academic, and community sectors represents a key strategy for improving coordination,

optimizing resources, and consolidating more competitive and inclusive tourism development (Vera-Vera et al., 2025).

Analysis of the tourism sector according to the perceptions of local stakeholders and managers.

Through the interviews, the main components of the destination and digital marketing were analyzed in order to understand the perspectives of the stakeholders involved and obtain different viewpoints regarding the identified problems. The following analysis summarizes the most relevant aspects of interviews conducted with tourism and marketing representatives of the canton.

Analysis of the interviews conducted with representatives of the Provincial Government of Manabí and the Cantonal Government of Portoviejo indicates that the canton has sufficient tourism infrastructure to meet demand. However, this infrastructure is concentrated mainly in the city of Portoviejo and the parish of Crucita, resulting in an unequal distribution of services. Likewise, limited coverage and operation of basic services at several tourist attractions negatively affect the visitor experience and generate dissatisfaction among the local population.

Regarding projects implemented for economic recovery during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, interviewees agreed that Portoviejo canton has developed several initiatives aimed at revitalizing tourism and the local economy. These include the development of the city's central plaza and the expansion of access to drinking water in rural areas, initiatives that benefit both the local population and visitors while contributing to the strengthening of tourism activity.

According to representatives of Portoviejo's Decentralized Autonomous Governments, digital marketing provides significant benefits for tourism management, particularly in a context characterized by the digitalization of promotional and communication processes. They indicated that implementation of the canton's tourism brand has strengthened promotional activities and improved destination positioning at the national level, demonstrating favorable results from the strategic use of digital marketing.

Strategic Analysis of Portoviejo

An analysis of the study area was conducted through a literature review, on-site visits, and interviews with the tourism, communication, and marketing departments of the cantonal and provincial governments of Portoviejo. The purpose was to identify the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to tourism and digital marketing and, based on these findings, determine the strategic problem and proposed solution. Table 1 presents the main characteristics identified from the responses to eight questions administered to representatives of these institutions.

Table 1. SWOT Matrix

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Presence of cantonal and provincial tourism offices and other organizations responsible for tourism management and promotion	1. Limited tourism services in rural parishes
2. Diverse range of tourism modalities within the canton	2. Limited effectiveness of the advertising media used to promote the canton.
3. Presence of a department responsible for marketing, communication, and multimedia.	3. Limited penetration of tourism distribution channels
4. Digital tourism promotion through campaigns such as Portoviejo nace de ti	4. Insufficient professional training in marketing and tourism promotion.
5. Growing interest in the canton's gastronomic tourism.	5. Absence of a marketing plan exclusively focused on tourism.
6. Recognition of Portoviejo as a "Pueblo Mágico" and smart destination.	6. Tourism establishments with limited digital information and Web 4.0 resources.
Opportunities	Threats

1. Development of tourism projects related to road access and connectivity by the provincial GAD	1. Seasonality of tourism demand in the canton
2. Interest among local managers in tourism development	2. Economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Internationalization of the destination through promotion in digital media	3. Nearby tourism destinations with stronger tourism influence.
4. Potential for economic growth through tourism.	4. Natural disasters
5. Inclusion of host communities in local, economic, and social development.	5. Lack of public investment in tourism.
6. World Tourism Organization projects related to smart destinations	6. Increasing insecurity.

Strategic problem

If the lack of public investment in tourism continues to increase, together with the limited effectiveness of the advertising media used to promote the canton, then fully leveraging the diverse tourism modalities available in Portoviejo could help capitalize on opportunities for destination internationalization through digital media promotion.

Strategic solution

Rapidly improve the limited effectiveness of the advertising media used to promote the canton while simultaneously strengthening the diverse range of tourism modalities available. This would make it possible to capitalize on opportunities for destination internationalization through digital media promotion and could help minimize the effects of insufficient public investment in tourism.

Strategies

Based on the results of the weighted SWOT analysis, strategies were proposed to counteract negative factors and strengthen positive aspects of tourism promotion in the canton. These strategies were formulated from an analysis of the main influencing factors and the quadrants with the greatest potential in the matrix. Their purpose is to increase tourism productivity and digital promotion, thereby contributing to tourism development in Portoviejo.

- Improve tourism promotion through digital media by leveraging the wide variety of tourism resources and the institutions responsible for marketing in the canton.
- Improve tourism services, including road accessibility, connectivity, tourism facilities, and related services, in order to meet destination demand.
- Develop marketing plans and projects specifically aimed at tourism and its development to attract national and international demand.
- Leverage destination resources and create products based on the canton's main market segment in order to attract demand, promote economic development, and involve the host community.

3.2. Market Study

Supply analysis

Portoviejo canton's tourism supply is structured around cultural, natural, and gastronomic resources that shape the destination's attractiveness. From a supply-analysis perspective, these resources provide the basis for developing tourism products, provided that there is adequate coordination among inventory management, destination management, and promotion.

Table 2. Tourism supply in Portoviejo canton

Tourism supply component	Type	Registered quantity
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Cultural and natural resources	Ranked tourist attractions	15
Food and beverage establishments	Restaurants, cafés, bars, and soda fountains	198
Accommodation establishments	Hotels, hostels, inns, cabins, guesthouses, and motels	81
Travel agencies	Registered agencies	20
Leisure and recreation	Nightclubs and recreational establishments	17

Source. Portoviejo GAD (2017)

In the cultural sphere, the canton possesses tangible and intangible assets associated with historical, architectural, and heritage manifestations, including archaeological sites, public spaces, and traditional celebrations. These elements contribute symbolic and identity-related value to the destination and are documented in official tourism inventories and previous studies (Carrillo-Cedeño & Cedeño-Zambrano, 2021). However, the available information is fragmented, which limits its effective use for tourism purposes.

Regarding natural resources, Portoviejo has beaches, rivers, parks, and lacustrine environments that support recreational and nature-based activities. Crucita Beach stands out as one of the main attractions in both the canton and the province of Manabí, showing a concentration of visitors compared with other resources that have received less tourism development and enhancement.

Gastronomy constitutes an important component of the local tourism supply, supported by Portoviejo's recognition as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy (El Telegrafo, 2022). This recognition is based on its culinary diversity and the presence of officially registered gastronomic events, supporting its importance within the tourism supply without attributing direct effects on demand in the absence of specific measurements (León García et al., 2020).

From the perspective of tourism services, the Portoviejo GAD registry (GAD Portoviejo, 2017) documents the existence of accommodation establishments, food and beverage businesses, travel agencies, and recreational facilities. However, because the information is outdated, its use is limited to a descriptive analysis of installed capacity, without allowing inferences regarding quality, competitiveness, or visitor satisfaction.

Analysis of tourism potential

Portoviejo has a variety of resources that attract tourists, many of which are nationally recognized. For this reason, several of these resources were selected for evaluation according to cultural, environmental, landscape, and sports-related characteristics. This assessment was based on a literature review of the selected sites in order to weight them and determine which had the greatest potential according to specific attributes and characteristics.

Analysis of the tourist profile showed that visitors to Portoviejo canton were primarily between 26 and 35 years of age. International visitors came from Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, and Peru, while domestic tourists mainly originated from the province of Manabí. Regarding travel motivations, 63% of respondents indicated gastronomy as a primary motivation, while 54% reported being motivated by the canton's tourist attractions.

Regarding trip planning, 74% obtained destination information through the Internet, 57% reported traveling with groups of friends, and 61% visited the destination without a prior reservation. In terms of accommodation preferences, 60% stayed in hotels. Regarding preferred services, visitors selected accommodation, food services, recreation, and tourism facilities. Average expenditure within the destination ranged from USD 40 to USD 60 for the services offered. Most respondents also indicated that

they would like the canton’s tourism website to include options such as a tourist map and information on tourism products and activities.

According to Cedeño-Zambrano et al. (2025), Portoviejo has high tourism potential because it combines history, cultural identity, and economic dynamism within a single destination. Founded in 1535, it is one of Ecuador’s oldest cities, giving it heritage value and attractiveness for cultural tourism. In addition, its recognition as the “City of the Royal Tamarinds” strengthens its image and local identity. As the capital of Manabí, it serves as a strategic center for commerce and services, facilitating visitor arrivals and stays. Its agricultural base—including coffee, cocoa, and tropical fruits—also creates opportunities for gastronomic tourism and agritourism through routes and experiences related to traditional products.

Competitive profile analysis

For the competitive analysis of Portoviejo canton, Jama and Montecristi, both located in Manabí Province, were selected as reference destinations because of similarities in tourism supply, cultural heritage, gastronomy, natural resources, and geographical conditions. These territories share characteristics related to proximity to the sea, climate, and visitor profiles.

The evaluation considered key success factors, including basic services, tourism resources, conservation status, tourism facilities, product offerings, promotion, accessibility, and prices. A rating scale was used to compare the performance of each canton.

The results positioned Portoviejo as the most competitive canton, with a score of 3.08, followed by Montecristi (2,50) and Jama (2,28). This positioning is explained by its strategic location, accessibility, urban infrastructure, and the integration of cultural, gastronomic, and rural activities, which contribute to strengthening tourism development (Cedeño Delgado et al., 2024).

3.3. Design of Digital Marketing Strategies

The plan was developed based on market characteristics, considering different components of digital marketing, including distribution channels, promotional activities, the tourism brand, and slogan. It concludes with an action plan aimed at positioning tourism as a tool for the management and development of Portoviejo canton.

Distribution channels

Traditional channels

Considering factors such as relevance, product diversity, online user reviews, geolocation, and social media presence, the following agencies were selected to contribute to the diversification of Portoviejo’s tourism offering.

Table 3. Tourism agencies in Portoviejo

Agency	Description	Contact
Ceibos Tour 	This travel agency and tour operator, located in Portoviejo canton, provides services to national and international visitors interested in tourism within the canton and throughout the country.	Social media Website
Passaporto travel	A Portoviejo-based travel agency that organizes domestic and international trips and offers various packages including accommodation, meals, insurance, guiding services, and other services.	Email

	It also offers packages within the canton.	Website
	A tourism agency located in Portoviejo that offers domestic and international tourism packages, travel insurance, ticket sales, cruises, tours, and other services.	

Digital channels

Portoviejo has several websites through which the canton provides information to the public about tourism developments and plans for destination development, including the Portoviejo Municipal GAD website and Portoviejo Digital, where information on public works, services, plans, and other matters is shared. However, tourism-related information on these portals remains limited. Therefore, the distribution and presentation of tourism information should be improved to reach tourists more efficiently and quickly.

Various social media platforms also promote the sector's resources, including accounts associated with the canton's most popular tourist sites. In addition, widely used distribution channels include metasearch engines and platforms such as Tripadvisor, Despegar.com, Trivago, and other digital media. These platforms are among the most popular because they are efficient and easy to use and are widely used nationally and internationally to promote destinations and provide information about tourism sites and activities.



Figure 1. Portoviejo tourism brand
Source. Portoviejo GAD

Portoviejo's current tourism brand is "Portoviejo nace de ti" ("Portoviejo is born from you"). It represents much more than a logo, as it reflects the identity, values, and history of the capital of Manabí, recognized as the province's political, economic, and administrative center. Based on elements characteristic of the canton, the brand has gained recognition through continuous digital marketing and physical advertising efforts, such as billboards, increasing destination awareness and encouraging tourist interest and visitation.

Marketing strategies

The design of the digital marketing strategies was based on the results of the Portoviejo canton diagnosis, which revealed limited destination visibility, weaknesses in the structuring of the tourism supply, and a high dependence on digital media as the primary source of information for visitors. In this context, an expanded marketing approach was proposed based on Product, Price, Promotion, Place, People, Processes, Presence, and Productivity, drawing on the analysis of the study area, its tourism development, and its needs.

Table 4. Digital marketing strategies for Portoviejo

Marketing element	Strategies
Product	- Create innovative products aligned with market trends. - Position the destination brand through emblematic tourism products. - Digitize the tourism offering to expand its commercial reach.
Price	- Establish affordable prices aligned with demand in the canton. - Develop offers and promotions to attract visitors during low seasons. - Conduct continuous research on price elasticity by market segment and season.
Promotion	- Improve Portoviejo's tourism promotion through effective digital media that facilitate destination dissemination. - Implement digital calendars and maps to promote tourism events. - Invest in digital platforms to expand the destination's global positioning.
Place	- Integrate digital platforms and metasearch engines into tourism establishments in the canton. - Establish partnerships with physical and digital stakeholders to expand tourism commercialization. - Strengthen the coverage and accessibility of tourism information for different actors in the value chain.
People	- Train personnel responsible for tourism management in Portoviejo. - Adopt recruitment policies focused on professional suitability. - Implement incentives to strengthen staff motivation and performance.
Processes	- Manage relationships with demand before, during, and after the tourism experience. - Personalize communication and follow-up to assess visitor satisfaction. - Integrate technology at every stage to digitalize information delivery and automate management and commercialization processes.
Presence	- Update the tourism website with multimedia content showcasing the canton's resources, services, and tourism assets. - Add sections for opinions and suggestions regarding the canton and its tourism resources. - Improve tourism spaces, services, and resources to project a stronger image and consolidate the brand.
Productivity	- Conduct visitor surveys to identify areas for improvement in tourism development. - Select a customer service team with a positive attitude and initiative. - Transform visitor needs and opinions into strengths and opportunities.

3.4. Discussion

The results confirm that, despite the tourism potential of Portoviejo canton, significant gaps persist in digital marketing management. This finding is consistent with Cali Rivera and Indio Indio (2025), who emphasize that the absence of integrated digital strategies limits the positioning of emerging destinations in Manabí.

The high dependence on the Internet as a source of tourism information is consistent with the findings of Pereira Cabrera et al. (2024), who showed that contemporary tourist behavior is strongly influenced by digital platforms and social media. In this regard, the limited updating of tourism-related content in Portoviejo reduces the destination's capacity to attract and retain visitors.

Likewise, the predominance of gastronomic tourism as the main travel motivation supports previous studies that recognize Portoviejo as a destination with a consolidated culinary identity (El Telegrafo, 2022). However, the results suggest that this recognition has not yet been fully capitalized on through structured tourism products or differentiated digital strategies.

Finally, the weak institutional coordination identified in this study is consistent with Vera-Vera et al. (2025), who indicate that the lack of collaborative governance affects the sustainability and competitiveness of local tourism destinations. In the case of Portoviejo, this fragmentation limits joint

strategic planning, reduces efficiency in the use of public and private resources, and hinders the consolidation of a coherent tourism image, negatively affecting the destination's ability to respond to current tourism market dynamics.

The set of strategies formulated reflects a comprehensive tourism marketing approach aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of Portoviejo canton through the main components of the extended marketing mix: Product, Price, Promotion, Place, People, Processes, Presence, and Productivity. These strategies respond directly to the weaknesses identified in the diagnosis, particularly the limited structuring of the tourism supply, insufficient digital visibility of the destination, and shortcomings in institutional management and coordination.

CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrates that, despite the high tourism potential of Portoviejo canton, weaknesses persist in promotion, institutional coordination, and strategic management, limiting its consolidation as a competitive destination. The results show that visitors' interest is mainly focused on gastronomy and tourist attractions; however, limited digital visibility and the weak structuring of the tourism supply restrict their full exploitation. In this regard, the implementation of coordinated digital marketing strategies involving both public and private stakeholders, together with continuous market monitoring, constitutes a key element for strengthening destination positioning and promoting tourism development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the subject matter of this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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