Revue-IRS

Revue Internationale de la Recherche Scientifique
(Revue-IRS)
ISSN: 2958-8413
Vol. 3, No. 4, Août 2025

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license.

Inbound Marketing as a Catalyst for Digital Transformation in the Moroccan Artisanal Sector: An Empirical Qualitative Inquiry

JABBOURI Jihad[1]
Doctoral Student in Management Sciences, Management and Development Research Laboratory, Faculty of Economics and Management, Hassan First University, Settat, Morocco

IDRISSI Khadija[2],
Professor of Higher Education, Management and Development Research Laboratory, Faculty of Economics and Management, Hassan First University, Settat, Morocco

Fatima Ezzahra EL ADRAOUI[3]**& Mohamed Mouad DIDI SEDDIK**[3],
PhD in Economics and Management, Economic and Social Studies and Research Laboratory, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences, Moulay Ismaïl University, Meknes, Morocco

Mounir RABAH–RABBOU[4]
Doctoral Student in Management Sciences, Entrepreneurship and SMEs laboratory, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences Ain chock, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco

Abstract: Prior investigations have empirically demonstrated the positive impact of Inbound Marketing (IM) application on enhancing promotional efforts and value in various sectors, particularly education (Bechir Mokline, 2019). Numerous studies demonstrate Inbound Marketing's (IM) impact across diverse sectors beyond education, highlighting its broad applicability. For instance, IM has proven effective in retail, where customer-centric digital strategies amplify engagement and retention (Vinerean, 2017). The healthcare sector also illustrates IM's value, with tailored content strategies enhancing patient outreach and engagement, as shown by studies focusing on improved communication channels (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). This evidence supports the study's exploration into the craft sector in Morocco, aiming to assess the value IM could add to Moroccan artisans through enhanced market presence and customer loyalty. Moroccan artisanal crafts are widely recognized as integral to the country's cultural heritage, which necessitates targeted strategies to preserve and promote this tradition amid global competition. Academic literature, including works by Moroccan cultural heritage scholars, underscores the value of craft preservation for economic sustainability and cultural identity. This context reinforces the study's objective of leveraging IM not only as a promotional tool but also as a means to sustain the Moroccan craft sector's authenticity and international appeal. This approach aligns with Morocco's strategic objectives to balance cultural preservation with economic progress, ensuring that traditional crafts can thrive in a digitalized global economy. Moroccan artisanal crafts are widely recognized as integral to the country's cultural heritage, which necessitates targeted strategies to preserve and promote this tradition amid global competition. Academic literature, including works by cultural heritage scholars like Naji and Benabderrazik (2020), underscores the value of craft preservation for economic sustainability and cultural identity. Their study highlights how Moroccan artisanal crafts contribute to cultural continuity and economic resilience, making them crucial assets within the heritage sector. The central research question that guided this inquiry was: "To what extent can the application of Inbound Marketing contribute to the successful promotion of Moroccan artisanal products?" This research adopted a qualitative approach with an exploratory objective. Data collection was achieved through semi-structured interviews conducted with Digital Marketing managers

from a representative sample of companies operating in the Moroccan craft production domain. The study's findings revealed a limited or superficial understanding of the IM approach amongst a significant portion of the participants. However, a noteworthy awareness regarding its potential benefits was observed, with most interviewees acknowledging the positive impact of IM on promoting artisanal products. This study primarily contributes to managerial practice by highlighting the significant role of IM in enhancing business performance. It also identifies key factors that facilitate its successful application, particularly in the Moroccan craft context.

The contemporary marketing landscape has become increasingly intricate, necessitating the adoption of novel models capable of effectively navigating this complexity. Though being under-researched within the academic arena, Inbound Marketing, as a recently introduced paradigm within the marketing discipline, has demonstrably yielded positive results. This study presents an opportunity to cultivate a multifaceted perspective, paving the way for a more comprehensive understanding of this critical theme.

Keywords: Inbound Marketing, Outbound Marketing, SEO, Social Networks Sites, Content Marketing, Digitalization, Digital Attractiveness.

Digital Object Identifier (DOI): https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.**16875579**

1 Introduction

It is an established tenet within the marketing discipline that customer centricity serves as a foundational pillar. Traditionally, marketing efforts have been predominantly directed towards informing consumers about a company's offerings, subsequently guiding them through the purchase journey, and ultimately fostering brand loyalty (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016). However, the advent of the digital age has rendered these conventional practices less efficacious due to their product-centric nature, neglecting the crucial aspects of customer experience (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

This shift necessitates the adoption of novel marketing approaches, such as Inbound Marketing (IM), which has revolutionized the field by placing the customer and their experience at the forefront. As evidenced by extant research (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015; Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016; Vinerean, 2017), IM strategically directs its focus towards attracting business customers. It effectively addresses the shortcomings of traditional marketing by empowering brands to optimize their online presence through the creation of objective, engaging, and high-quality content. This content serves the dual purpose of attracting a targeted online audience and fostering a close digital relationship built on shared experiences. Ultimately, this translates to an enhanced e-reputation for the company.

The burgeoning body of research on IM underscores its significance and utility for companies and organizations across diverse sectors. By embracing this strategy, entities can effectively promote their products or services by augmenting online visibility and bolstering digital appeal. Recognizing this potential, we embarked on an exploratory study to delve into the Moroccan craft sector.

Inbound Marketing (IM) has demonstrated versatility and success across various industries, underlining its potential adaptability for the Moroccan artisanal sector. Halligan and Shah (2014) provide foundational insights into how IM's customer-centric strategies have proven effective in attracting and engaging audiences across retail, technology, and hospitality sectors. Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) highlight IM's impact in the B2B landscape, where automated content and targeted engagement have transformed customer acquisition and retention strategies.

Further, IM's adaptability is illustrated within experience-based industries such as tourism, where Wang and Kim (2017) found that IM campaigns effectively attract and engage tourists by leveraging strategic content and social media presence. In the software industry, Benlian and Hess (2011) discuss how IM enhances both customer acquisition and retention through valuable, customer-focused content that aligns well with the Moroccan crafts sector's objectives. Additionally, Mishra and Modi (2020) review IM's applications in healthcare, showing how targeted educational content fosters trust and customer loyalty, underscoring IM's relevance in fields where knowledge-sharing builds audience rapport.

These studies demonstrate that IM's principles, engagement, educational content, and audience-centric strategies, are universally applicable across sectors. For the Moroccan artisanal industry, which seeks to expand its

international presence and enhance digital engagement, IM offers a robust framework. Through adapting these proven strategies, Moroccan artisans can harness IM's power to preserve cultural heritage while effectively reaching and engaging a global audience.

Our investigation aimed to assess the knowledge and perception of IM amongst personnel within these companies, identify factors that might facilitate its adoption, and elucidate the potential advantages associated with its application.

2 Research Design

1.1. Study Type

This research adopts a qualitative and exploratory design, consistent with the objective of capturing in-depth insights into the awareness, perceptions, and adoption dynamics of Inbound Marketing within the Moroccan artisanal sector. The qualitative orientation is particularly suited to uncovering the complexity of managerial representations and contextual influences in a relatively underexplored field.

1.2. Study Location

The study was conducted across various regions of Morocco, adopting a national scope to ensure contextual diversity and representativeness of the artisanal ecosystem. The selection of geographically dispersed cases allowed for the identification of both common patterns and locally embedded specificities.

1.3. Target Population

The research targeted individuals holding digital marketing responsibilities within Moroccan craft enterprises. More specifically, the Digital Marketing Managers (or their functional equivalents) were selected as key informants due to their strategic and operational involvement in digital communication initiatives. Their position granted them both visibility over the firm's current digital practices and the capacity to reflect on the potential integration of Inbound Marketing strategies.

1.4. Sample Selection

The sample consisted of 22 Moroccan artisanal production companies operating in various subsectors such as ceramics, textiles, leather goods, and woodwork. These companies were selected from a preliminary list of 95 enterprises identified through the national registry of the Federation of Craft Enterprises. The selection process was guided by purposive sampling criteria, with an emphasis on firms demonstrating a minimum level of digital maturity, including the presence of a functional website, active social media accounts, or ongoing digital marketing initiatives.

The inclusion criteria required that participants hold the position of Digital Marketing Manager or an equivalent role, ensuring that the individuals interviewed possessed direct experience and decision-making authority related to online marketing strategies. Companies lacking a basic digital infrastructure, such as a corporate website or any presence on social platforms, were excluded from the sample. This criterion was essential to guarantee the relevance of responses regarding the potential and actual use of Inbound Marketing techniques.

By focusing on companies already engaged in some form of digital practice, the study sought to explore the readiness, awareness, and barriers to adopting more advanced marketing approaches such as Inbound Marketing, while maintaining the empirical relevance of the selected cases to the research objective.

1.5. Sampling Justification

The sampling strategy adopted for this study was based on a non-probability purposive sampling approach, consistent with the exploratory and qualitative nature of the research. Participants were deliberately selected for their relevance to the research question, particularly their expertise in digital marketing within Moroccan craft production companies. In this context, only digital marketing managers were considered eligible, as they possess the necessary insights to assess the adoption and impact of Inbound Marketing strategies.

Initially, the research employed a typical case sampling technique, selecting companies that exemplify the general characteristics of digitally active artisanal enterprises. These cases were chosen to represent the most illustrative profiles of the phenomenon under investigation. As the data collection progressed, a snowball sampling method was subsequently used to expand the sample. Early participants were invited to suggest other professionals within their networks who met the inclusion criteria and could enrich the diversity of perspectives.

This sequential combination of purposive, typical case, and snowball sampling allowed for the construction of a theoretically grounded and information-rich sample, while maintaining methodological coherence with the principles of qualitative inquiry. It also ensured that the data collected would reflect both shared practices and contextual particularities relevant to the diffusion of Inbound Marketing within the Moroccan artisanal sector.

1.6. Data Collection and Analysis

This contextual qualitative study adopts a reasoned and theory-driven approach, in line with the methodological principles articulated by Yin (2023). Its primary objective is to conduct an in-depth exploration of the dynamics underlying the adoption of Inbound Marketing technology and to assess its implications for the commercial performance of Moroccan artisanal enterprises. By anchoring the inquiry in a robust theoretical framework, the study seeks to generate context-sensitive insights that illuminate both the facilitators and constraints shaping technological appropriation within this specific socio-economic sector.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method particularly well-suited to exploratory qualitative research, as it allows for both depth and flexibility in capturing participants' perspectives. An interview guide was developed to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing for the emergence of unanticipated themes. The guide was structured around three core areas: (1) participants' knowledge and perceptions of Inbound Marketing, (2) the organizational and environmental factors that could facilitate its adoption, and (3) the perceived benefits associated with its implementation in the artisanal sector.

A total of 22 interviews were conducted face-to-face with Digital Marketing Managers from Moroccan artisanal production companies that met the inclusion criteria. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the richness and accuracy of the discourse. This process resulted in a comprehensive qualitative dataset comprising detailed narratives from diverse companies operating in different regions and subsectors of the Moroccan craft industry.

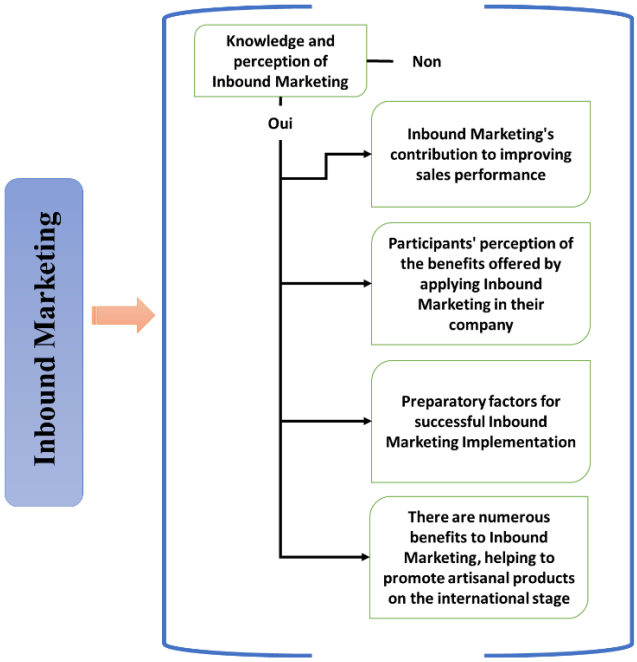
The data analysis was performed using thematic content analysis, supported by the qualitative data analysis software RQDA. Following an inductive logic, the coding process began with a careful reading of the transcripts to identify recurring patterns, categories, and emergent themes. These themes were then organized into analytical dimensions that reflected the structure of the interview guide, while also integrating cross-cutting insights that surfaced during the fieldwork. The analysis aimed not only to categorize the data, but also to interpret the underlying mechanisms influencing the adoption of Inbound Marketing practices within this specific socio-economic and cultural context.

3 Results and analysis

The figure below illustrates that the companies interviewed, particularly those familiar with the principles of Inbound Marketing, acknowledged its strategic importance in enhancing the international promotion of their products. Respondents identified several benefits associated with its integration into their digital marketing practices, and also highlighted the key organizational and contextual factors that facilitate its effective adoption.

These initial insights guided the structuring of our inquiry around three thematic axes, which served as the foundation for the subsequent interview questions and analytical framework, as detailed below.

Figure 1 : Overall scheme of content analysis on Inbound Marketing.



Source: Production des auteurs

3.1 Knowledge and perception of Inbound Marketing

The majority of people surveyed demonstrate little or limited knowledge of Inbound Marketing strategy, there are those who know this concept superficially which does not go beyond the declaration of a few key words or basic notions in relation with the dimensions and components of Inbound Marketing, which leads to unawareness of the advantages that could be gained from the use of this technique.

3.2 Inbound Marketing Adoption Factor

After an in-depth explanation of this approach, we were able to identify the factors that participants believed can facilitate the adoption of this strategy within their company:

- In-depth knowledge and understanding: of Inbound Marketing strategy and its fundamental principles through investment in specific training,
- Market research and precise targeting: The majority of interviewees emphasize the importance of market research to understand their target audience, define their buyer personas before publishing content on social media,
- Investment in research and development (R&D): Several participants highlight the importance of commitment to research and development. This allows them to innovate and differentiate themselves from the competition by offering unique products that perfectly meets their customers' needs.
- Differentiation: Most of the people surveyed declare that they aim to stand out from their competitors through the elevated quality of their products, their unique visual identity and their commitment to authenticity and eco-responsibility. This would certainly promote the achievement of core strategical objectives of Inbound Marketing.
- The involvement of all company staff: Engagement of company staff throughout the entire value chain, is paramount to reaching the objectives of IM.
- Use of Social Networks: Participants consider Social Networks, Instagram in particular, as an essential tool to reach their target audience, through regular presence and visibility.

They also underline that this operation must be conducted internally, instead of outsourcing it through subcontracting.

- Measuring the effectiveness of Marketing actions: Some interviewees recognize the importance of establishing a rigorous monitoring system to measure the return on investment and effectiveness of the various actions carried out, using KPIs that enable results to be assessed and discrepancies to be rectified.
- Branding and content strategy: Some respondents admit that they have yet to develop a strong brand strategy within their company to support their content. They recognize that content creation must be part of a brand expansion dynamic to attract new customers-which is an essential factor to be incorporated at the outset of a successful implementation of the Inbound Marketing strategy.

Figure 2: Facilitating factors for Inbound Marketing application.

Source: Production des auteurs

This figure visually depicts a constellation of factors that can demonstrably expedite the application of Inbound Marketing (IM) within Moroccan craft enterprises. These factors encompass, in particular, training in this approach, the involvement of all staff in the company, the use of social networks and the implementation of a brand and content strategy.

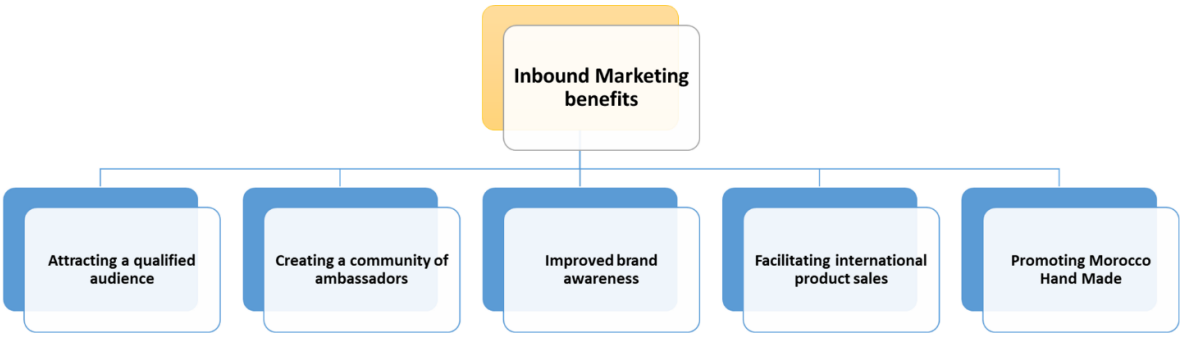
3.3 Benefits of Inbound Marketing

While acknowledging the potential benefits of Inbound Marketing (IM) for their businesses, participants provided a more nuanced perspective through a series of arguments. Despite a lack of in-depth knowledge about the approach, a clear majority of interviewees recognized the potential advantages of IM for promoting artisanal products. They specifically highlighted its capacity to:

- Cultivate a Qualified Audience: Attract a targeted customer base with a demonstrably high propensity for conversion.
- Foster Brand Advocacy: Nurture a fervent online community that actively promotes the company and its products, essentially transforming them into brand ambassadors.

- Enhance Brand Recognition: Elevate brand awareness within the target market through strategic marketing efforts.
- Stimulate International Sales: Facilitate the expansion of sales channels to an international audience.

Figure 3: Advantages of Inbound Marketing.



Source: Production des auteurs

Survey participants identified five key benefits associated with implementing an Inbound Marketing (IM) strategy within their respective companies. Notably, these advantages converged upon a central theme: the international promotion and sales of Moroccan handcrafted goods. Here's a breakdown of these perceived advantages:

- Enhanced Visibility for the "Morocco Hand Made" Brand: IM fosters a strategic approach to elevate the recognition and prestige of the "Morocco Hand Made" brand on a global scale.
- Facilitation of International Sales Channels: The application of IM empowers companies to establish and cultivate international sales channels, effectively reaching a broader consumer base beyond national borders.

3.4 Additional Perceived Advantages of Inbound Marketing

In addition to enhancing brand visibility and facilitating international sales channels, survey participants identified three further advantages that emphasize the strategic value of Inbound Marketing in expanding global outreach:

- Improved Targeting of International Customers: By leveraging data-driven insights and content personalization, IM enables companies to identify and address the specific preferences and behaviors of foreign customer segments. This targeted approach significantly increases the effectiveness of marketing efforts in culturally diverse markets.
- Enhanced Communication and Engagement with International Audiences: IM fosters sustained and meaningful interaction with global audiences through tailored digital content and active social media presence. This dynamic engagement strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and international consumers, fostering loyalty and advocacy.
- Strengthened Brand Reputation and Trust in Global Markets: Participants noted that the consistent delivery of high-value content, transparency, and authenticity promoted by IM contributes to building a positive brand image abroad. Over time, this enhances the company's credibility and trustworthiness in international business environments.

Together, these advantages consolidate the role of Inbound Marketing as a strategic lever for Moroccan craft businesses seeking to scale their presence in the international arena while maintaining the authenticity and values intrinsic to their artisanal identity.

3.5 Discussion of results

The exploratory qualitative study has shed light on the knowledge and perception of Inbound Marketing (IM) within the Moroccan craft sector. The findings reveal a critical juncture: while participants acknowledge the potential of IM, a prevalent superficial understanding hinders its full utilization. Many respondents exhibited a limited grasp of the strategy, often confined to a handful of key terms or basic concepts. This exposes a crucial need for educational initiatives to bridge the knowledge gap. Equipping professionals with a deeper understanding of IM principles will empower them to effectively translate theory into practice, unlocking the full potential of this approach in the Moroccan craft landscape.

The study further identifies several factors that can act as catalysts for IM adoption. The importance of in-depth knowledge and training on fundamental principles is paramount. Participants emphasized the value of continuous investment in education and professional development to cultivate a skilled workforce adept at leveraging IM's capabilities. Additionally, market research and precise audience targeting emerged as critical elements. Understanding target demographics and crafting detailed buyer personas were deemed essential before content creation commences. This meticulous approach ensures content resonates with intended audiences, maximizing impact. Notably, the study underscores the need for robust research and development (R&D) investments to fuel innovation and maintain a competitive edge.

Furthermore, successful IM implementation hinges on the full engagement of staff across the value chain. Strategic utilization of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, was highlighted as a vital component. Rigorous monitoring of marketing effectiveness using key performance indicators (KPIs) allows for continuous improvement and optimization.

The perceived benefits of IM were readily apparent among participants. They recognized its effectiveness in attracting a qualified audience, fostering brand loyalty, and building a fervent community of brand ambassadors. Furthermore, IM's potential to elevate brand awareness and facilitate international product sales was acknowledged. These advantages underscore the ability of IM to generate significant business growth, particularly for companies specializing in unique, eco-friendly products. This recognition of value signifies a burgeoning appreciation for IM's role within contemporary marketing paradigms. Integrating IM strategically into business operations presents a compelling opportunity for the Moroccan craft sector to thrive in the digital age.

4 Conclusion

Our exploratory qualitative study unveils a crucial situation within the Moroccan craft sector. While a substantial portion of the investigated companies lack in-depth knowledge of Inbound Marketing (IM) strategies, they express a willingness to integrate it into their overarching marketing efforts. This integration aims to bolster their digital marketing performance, enhance online visibility for strategic positioning, and achieve effective customer targeting. Consequently, companies can cultivate deeper customer engagement and loyalty. However, a preliminary investment phase is necessary. This phase entails conducting market research, defining buyer personas, and implementing ongoing internal training programs to facilitate successful strategy implementation within the surveyed companies.

Given the current landscape characterized by rapid technological advancements, intense competition, a diversified product landscape, and a digital shift, particularly within the Moroccan craft sector, the findings of our exploratory qualitative survey urge all Moroccan craft companies to embrace an inevitable migration towards this novel approach. The strategic implementation of Inbound Marketing empowers them to efficiently and effectively achieve their objectives of enhanced brand recognition, commercial development, increased profitability, and a larger market share on the international stage.

REFERENCES

[1] Bechir Mokline. (2019). The impact of inbound marketing on the promotion of private education establishments in Tunisia: The case of SUPTECH. International Journal of Business & Economic Strategy (IJBES), 11(1737–9237), 31–47.

[2] Benlian, A., & Hess, T. (2011). Opportunities of IM in the software industry: Customer acquisition and retention. Information Systems and E-Business Management, 9(4), 447-467. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10257-010-0141-8

[3] Halligan, B., & Shah, D. (2014). Inbound Marketing: Attract, Engage, and Delight Customers Online. Wiley.

[4] Järvinen, J., & Taiminen, H. (2016). Harnessing marketing automation for B2B content marketing. Industrial Marketing Management, 54, 164-175.

[5] Mishra, A., & Modi, S. (2020). Inbound marketing in the healthcare sector: A systematic review. Journal of Health Communication, 25(9), 700-711.

[6] Mokline, B. (2019). The impact of inbound marketing on the promotion of private education establishments in Tunisia: The case of SUPTECH. International Journal of Business & Economic Strategy, 11(1737–9237), 31–47.

[7] Naji, M., & Benabderrazik, F. (2020). Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability: The Case of Moroccan Artisanal Crafts. Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, 10(3), 293–305

[8] Opreana, A., & Vinerean, S. (2015). A New Development in Online Marketing: Introducing Digital Inbound Marketing. Expert Journal of Marketing, 3(1), 29–34.

[9] Patrutiu-Baltes, L. (2016). Inbound Marketing-the most important digital marketing strategy. Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov Series V: Economic Sciences •, 9(58).

[10] Vinerean, S. (2017). Content Marketing Strategy. Definition, Objectives and Tactics. Expert Journal of Marketing, 5(2), 92–98.

[11] Wang, X., & Kim, Y. (2017). Social media campaigns and IM: An exploratory study in the tourism sector. Journal of Travel Research, 56(6), 761-775.

[12] Yin, R. K. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. Evaluation, 19(3), 321–332. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389013497081