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Inbound Marketing Maturity in the Logistics Sector: The Case Study of Barranquilla

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Abstract

The objective is to analyze inbound marketing among companies operating in the logistics sector in Barranquilla, Colombia. A quantitative methodology with a descriptive and analytical scope was adopted to examine the phenomenon's behavior. The research design was based on statistical analysis, which enabled the measurement of variables associated with inbound marketing. The cluster analysis identified two distinct groups of companies based on their inbound marketing performance. Cluster 1 (n = 8) exhibited higher average scores across all funnel stages, particularly in Conversion (2.84) and Closing (2.19), indicating a more consolidated and structured implementation of inbound practices. In contrast, Cluster 2 (n = 5) showed markedly lower levels in all dimensions, especially in Conversion (1.70) and Retention (1.20), reflecting a less mature adoption of inbound strategies. These results highlight a clear segmentation between companies with advanced versus emerging inbound marketing capabilities.

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1. Introduction

Technological transformations have profoundly redefined business communication and marketing strategies within the digital landscape. In this context, inbound marketing has emerged as an effective methodology for attracting potential customers through relevant, personalized, and strategically distributed content, thereby fostering sustainable relationships between organizations and their audiences [1].

At the international level, companies operating in the industrial and logistics sectors have increasingly adopted inbound marketing to enhance the generation of qualified leads, improve visibility in search engines, and optimize conversion processes [2]. The continuous evolution of this approach has facilitated its integration into broader digital ecosystems through automation technologies, advanced audience segmentation, and the enhancement of user experience, which have consolidated inbound marketing as a strategic asset within B2B business models [3].

Moreover, in countries characterized by high levels of digitalization such as the United States, Germany, and South Korea, inbound marketing has become a fundamental component of corporate strategies in sectors including manufacturing, distribution, and supply chain management [4].

In Latin America, the growth of digitalization has driven the progressive adoption of strategies based on inbound marketing. In Colombia, various industries have incorporated this methodology into their digital marketing processes to strengthen corporate communication, improve digital positioning, and foster the loyalty of institutional clients [5]. The logistics sector, particularly in port regions, constitutes a strategic setting for its implementation due to the volume of operations, the need for differentiation, and the constant interaction with business clients.

Barranquilla, located in Colombia's Caribbean region, stands out for its prominent role in the country's logistics infrastructure, supported by intermodal terminals, port connectivity, and an expanding range of transportation and storage services. The city's entrepreneurial dynamism has stimulated growing interest in digital tools designed to attract and retain corporate clients, especially among B2B companies operating in the logistics sector of Barranquilla.

1.1. Problem Statement

The digital environment has generated profound transformations in the dynamics of interaction among companies, particularly within B2B models, where purchasing cycles are typically more rational, consultative, and prolonged [6]. Within this context, inbound marketing has emerged as a strategic response to the need to attract and engage customers through the creation of valuable content, the application of search engine optimization (SEO) techniques, marketing automation, and the development of long-term relationships grounded in trust [7].

Although significant progress has been made in the conceptualization and implementation of inbound marketing at the global level, its adoption in emerging economies such as Colombia continues to face challenges related to technological appropriation, organizational culture, and the evaluation of performance within digital channels [8]. In the logistics sector, which is characterized by stable commercial relationships and complex operational structures, the incorporation of digital strategies demands a comprehensive understanding of the stages of the conversion funnel and the expectations of institutional clients [9], [10], [11].

Barranquilla, as a strategic logistics hub in the Colombian Caribbean, hosts a diverse business ecosystem focused on land transportation and storage services, nevertheless, many companies within the logistics sector lack structured digital strategies aimed at attracting, converting, closing, and retaining customers through methodologies such as inbound marketing. This situation raises relevant questions regarding the degree of implementation of these practices, the factors influencing their adoption, and their impact on B2B commercial management [12], [13].

In this regard, the following research question arises: What is the level of maturity of inbound marketing in companies operating in the logistics sector in Barranquilla, Colombia? Similarly, the guiding question is formulated as: What inbound marketing actions are present in companies based in Barranquilla?

2. Theoretical basis

Inbound marketing is defined as a methodology aimed at attracting customers through the creation of relevant content and personalized experiences that address their specific needs [3]. Its theoretical foundation lies in the study

of digital consumer behavior, the customer lifecycle, and the automation of business processes through technological tools that integrate marketing, sales, and post-sales functions [7].

In contrast to traditional marketing strategies, inbound marketing operates on the principle of voluntary attraction, wherein the customer initiates the interaction via search engines, social media platforms, or corporate websites. This methodology is structured around a four-phase model: attraction, conversion, closure, and delight; each designed to strengthen the customer relationship and generate value throughout the interaction process [8].

Inbound marketing is structured around a series of interrelated phases designed to create a comprehensive and valuable customer experience from the initial point of contact to the consolidation of a long-term business relationship. This methodological framework comprises four sequential stages: attraction, conversion, closing and loyalty, each defined by specific objectives, tools and performance metrics that facilitate the monitoring of effectiveness and the optimization of results [9].

The attraction stage focuses on capturing the attention of potential customers through the generation of relevant content, search engine optimization (SEO), social media engagement and other digital platforms that function as discovery channels. Subsequently, the conversion stage seeks to transform visitors into qualified prospects through mechanisms such as forms, calls to action (CTAs), landing pages and value-based offerings including e-books, webinars and complimentary consultations [10].

2.1 Attraction

The attractive stage is the first point of contact between the company and its potential customers. Its main objective is to attract qualified traffic to digital channels through useful, contextualized content that addresses specific concerns or needs. Tools such as content marketing, SEO, social media, blogs, and digital advertising campaigns are essential for capturing the attention of the target audience and positioning the brand as a reliable source [3].

2.2 Conversion

Once prospects have been qualified, the closing stage enables the establishment of a formal business relationship supported by tools such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems, lead scoring and marketing automation, which facilitate the maturation of the purchase decision and the execution of the transactional process. The loyalty stage, in turn, is directed toward cultivating enduring relationships through personalized content, post-sales follow-up, loyalty programs and feedback mechanisms that strengthen customer bonds and promote repurchase or recommendation [4].

2.3 Closure

The closing stage aims to convert qualified prospects into actual customers. This is achieved through marketing automation techniques, lead nurturing, CRM tools, and personalized sales follow-up strategies. Effective closing requires identifying the optimal moment of lead maturity and providing timely information to facilitate decision-making [4].

2.4 Fidelity

Loyalty represents the stage in which the company–client relationship is consolidated through continuous satisfaction; post-sales support and the personalization of future interactions. Organizations that invest in this phase succeed in maximizing customer lifetime value, increasing organic recommendations and strengthening their digital reputation [3], [4]. In consequence of the above, this research aims to analyze attraction marketing among companies operating in the logistics sector in Barranquilla, Colombia.

3. Methodology

A mixed methodology was used, with a quantitative component of descriptive and analytical scope to analyze the behavior of the phenomenon. The research design was based on statistical analysis, which allowed for the measurement of variables associated with inbound marketing. The method employed was mixed. The unit of analysis corresponded to B2B companies in the logistics sector. The initial database included 110 businesses registered with the Barranquilla Chamber of Commerce, which served as the basis for identifying and filtering companies with a consolidated track record and verifiable links to the sector under study [11], [13].

Table 1. Inclusion Criteria.

Selection Criterion	Seniority	Digital Presence	Market Coverage	Participation	Information Accessibility
Description	More than 10 years	Active website	No export activity	Voluntary	Yes

After applying the criteria, 13 companies met the requirements, all of which have strategic relevance and accessibility to key information.

3.1. Data collection

1. Documentary and digital content review of the websites and social media platforms of the selected companies, aimed at identifying the presence of elements associated with each phase of the inbound marketing process.
2. Application of a diagnostic matrix developed from academic literature and designed to evaluate the digital practices observed according to the four stages of the inbound marketing model, see table 2.

Table 2. diagnostic matrix format.

Dimension	Actions	Observed Description	Rating
Attraction	Strategic keywords in content		
	Blog		
	SEO		
Conversion	Use of social media for attraction		
	Calls to action (CTA)		
	Contact forms		
	Landing pages		
Closing	CRM integration or lead tracking		
	Segment-specific content		
	Email marketing		
Loyalty	Post-sale value content		
	Digital loyalty strategy		
	User experience and intuitive navigation		

Note: To complete the matrix, the description must include an analysis of the content found on the page in relation to the action. In the "Rating" column, a score from 5 to 1 must be assigned, where 5 indicates excellent execution of the action and 1 indicates the absence of the action, [14].

3.2. Statistical Validation Procedures of the Instrument

Statistical procedures for reliability and model fit were applied. The internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.779, and a standardized version of 0.823, indicating an acceptable to excellent level of internal reliability according to established methodological literature. These metrics reflect an adequate correlation among items and a homogeneous dispersion across the overall scale.

Additionally, the goodness-of-fit of the parallel model was examined. This model assumes equality of true-score variances and constant error across items. The Chi-square fit test reported a value of $\chi^2(8) = 13.837$, with a significance level of $p = 0.086$. This result indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the observed matrix and the expected matrix under the parallel model assumption, thereby supporting the model's validity for reliability analysis. The log determinants of the matrices involved were -7.287 for the unrestricted matrix and -5.939 for the restricted matrix, demonstrating a structurally coherent relationship between the collected data and the theoretical model applied.

The metadata for 13 companies, including information on their websites, social media presence, and inbound marketing indicators, were compiled and processed using SPSS. The dataset enabled the calculation of descriptive statistics, reliability measures, repeated-measures analyses, and cluster identification to characterize the maturity levels of inbound marketing across the participating firms, see table 3.

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha.

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized Alpha	Total Mean	Total Variance	Standard Deviation
Value	0.779	0.823	76.154	2.808	167.586

The reliability of the instrument was further supported by the overall summary statistics of the scale. The total mean of the four dimensions was 7.6154, with a total variance of 2.808 and a standard deviation of 1.67586. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.779, while the standardized version reached 0.823, reinforcing the instrument's internal consistency. These indicators reflect the scale's homogeneity and the stability of the responses across the evaluated dimensions of inbound marketing.

4. Results and discussions

The results section is organized to provide a structured and progressive understanding of the empirical findings, where descriptive statistics are presented to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of the inbound marketing dimensions analyzed, followed by the cluster centers and dendrogram which illustrate the grouping structure and similarity patterns among the evaluated dimensions, and concluding with the cluster segmentation map that visualizes the differentiation of organizational profiles and supports the interpretation of the identified clusters within the studied sample.

Table 4. descriptive statistics.

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis
Attraction	13	1.75	1.00	2.75	1.75	0.51031	0.26	-0.195
Conversion	13	2.00	1.25	3.25	24.038	0.69626	0.485	-1.052
Closing	13	1.50	1.00	2.50	19.423	0.56967	0.325	-1.548
Retention	13	1.00	1.00	2.00	15.192	0.31394	0.099	-0.755

Presented in the following order: a) Cluster center and dendrogram, b) cluster segmentation map.

4.1 Analysis of production by year and growth models

Cluster 1 groups eight companies with higher levels of Attraction, Conversion, and Closing, indicating a more advanced inbound marketing maturity, while their Retention performance remains moderate. Cluster 2 includes five companies with consistently lower scores across all stages, reflecting an early or less developed level of inbound marketing implementation, see table 2.

Table 5. Final cluster centers.

Cluster	Attraction	Conversion	Closing	Retention	Number of cases in each cluster
1	1,94	2,84	2,19	1,72	8,00
2	1,45	1,70	1,55	1,20	5,00

The dendrogram illustrates the hierarchical proximity among the four inbound marketing stages, a) attraction and retention appear as the closest pair, forming the first cluster, followed by their linkage with closing, b) conversion remains the most distant element, merging only at the highest level of the hierarchy, its structure indicates that companies behave more similarly in attraction, retention, and closing, whereas conversion presents a distinct pattern within the overall inbound marketing process, see Fig. 1.

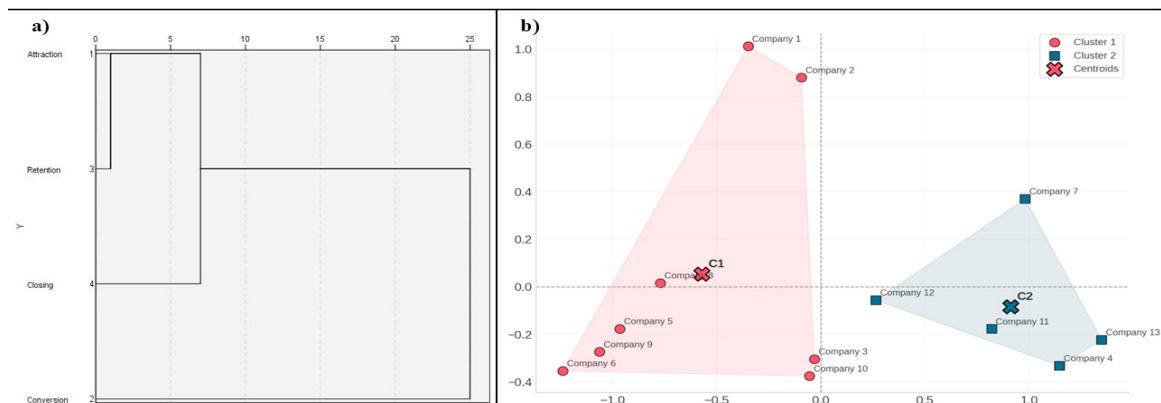


Fig. 1. (a) Publication projection model.; (b) Cluster Segmentation Map of Inbound Marketing Maturity.

The segmentation map illustrates the distribution of companies across two distinct clusters based on their inbound marketing performance. Cluster 1 groups firms with stronger indicators, positioned primarily on the left side of Dim1,

while Cluster 2 includes companies with lower maturity levels, located toward the right. The convex hulls outline the dispersion of each cluster, and the centroids (C1 and C2) summarize their central tendencies, its visualization highlights clear structural differences between the groups, allowing a more precise interpretation of organizational behavior patterns, when showing the uneven maturity in the stages of inbound marketing, especially the underdevelopment of retention and closing strategies, highlighting the low level of participation of B2B companies in emerging economies facing digital transformation , [14], [15],[16].

5. Conclusions

The results show that the level of inbound marketing maturity in the logistics companies analyzed exhibits structural differences across organizations, which allowed for the identification of two clearly distinct profiles. The first cluster groups companies with superior performance in the Attraction, Conversion, and Close stages, suggesting more consolidated digital processes and a greater ability to turn visibility into effective business opportunities. The second cluster comprises companies with lower indicators across all phases, reflecting an early stage of inbound adoption and less integration of digital marketing tools and practices. Inbound marketing implementation in Barranquilla is in a progressive development phase, with significant advances in attraction and conversion but clear opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty and relationships.

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