

REFLECTION ARTICLE ON THE COVID 19 POST-PANDEMIC DIGITAL CONSUMER PROFILE STUDY

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Abstract- This article is part of the research project: "Profile of the digital consumer post Covid-19 pandemic in the gastronomic sector of the department of Córdoba. Segment: fast food fast food emerging local brands" with this is intended to make a reflection on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in various variables of economic and social type globally; through a detailed search of original documents related to our project, mainly in the SCOPUS database. Among some of the results found in a partial sample is that the pandemic has influenced many variables among which we can highlight the changes in purchasing habits; in addition, the pandemic has forced companies to change many processes, among which stands out their sales and payment methods. In conclusion, the effects of the pandemic have caused major changes in the performance of all organizations, many of these effects are uncertain and unpredictable, which forces companies to be prepared with strategies to address the problem during and after the crisis in order to mitigate the potential economic impacts in the long term.

Keywords: Pandemic Covid-19, Digital Marketing Strategies, Digital Consumer, E-commerce.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on economic variables worldwide, including employment, consumption, GDP, and inflation. As the world continues to deal with the lags and consequences of the pandemic, it will remain important to continue to monitor these impacts and take steps to address all of the issues resulting from the paralysis in business activity experienced in the pandemic.

Covid 19 caused virtually all companies worldwide to experience changes, often due to multiple factors simultaneously. According to an analysis conducted by the World Bank, which was based on surveys of more than 120,000 companies in more than 60 countries, it was observed that, on average, company sales decreased by 27% between October 2020 and January 2021 compared to pre-pandemic levels, in addition; during the period from April to September, sales plummeted by 45%, however, it is important to note that performance has been highly variable, even within the same country or sector. (World Bank, 2021).

With this new reality, companies needed to adjust to a more electronic business model, moving away from traditional sales methods in physical establishments that required direct contact with the customer. The arrival of mobile devices, such as smartphones, boosted the birth of new forms of communication, such as social networks, which transformed communication from unidirectional to bidirectional, this evolution has caused an impact on traditional media (González, 2018).

Some companies have shown a remarkable ability to adapt during this crisis, implementing ingenious strategies to seek alternative sources of revenue or completely reinvent their business models. A clear example of this is the shift of their sales operations to the digital realm, leveraging the power of e-commerce to reach new customers and markets. This shift has allowed them to



expand their reach and diversify their consumer base, exploring opportunities that were previously unavailable. In addition, many companies have chosen to diversify their product offerings, identifying changing market needs and adapting quickly to offer innovative solutions.

The companies that made the decision to adapt to the crisis and reinvent themselves were able to see the benefits for their companies by making modifications to their products and implementing online sales platforms, thus mitigating the decline in sales.

In the case of exporters, the situation has also prompted a re-evaluation of their strategy. Some have chosen to change their customer mix, focusing on markets that have remained more stable or have experienced unexpected growth during the pandemic. This adaptation has enabled these exporters not only to maintain their operations, but also to discover new business opportunities and establish lasting commercial relationships with new international partners.

According to the World Bank (2021) numerous companies have found in e-commerce a solution to overcome the challenges imposed by social distancing and confinements during these difficult times. However, it is important to note that the adoption of online platforms has not been uniform across industries. Globally, approximately one-third of companies have increased their use of the Internet, social media and other digital platforms in response to the pandemic. However, less than 20% of companies have invested in new equipment, software or digital solutions.

These data reveal that there is still plenty of room for improvement and untapped opportunities in the digital arena. Despite the obvious benefits of digital transformation, many companies have faced barriers to adopting these technologies more broadly. Investment in technology infrastructure and staff training are key elements in driving a successful transition to digital. Those companies that have invested in new equipment, software and digital solutions have been able to take full advantage of the online economy, expanding their reach, diversifying their customer base and adapting more effectively to changing market demands.

Today, companies and consumers are facing new challenges. Digitalization, together with technological advances and the impact left by the COVID-19 pandemic, bring us face to face with an increasingly demanding and informed consumer, who has seen the need to modify his or her purchasing patterns. Added to this is the broad competition in the market, where marketing strategies go beyond segmentation, positioning and differentiation. It is necessary to review the business model, in order to initiate changes that allow understanding this new digital consumer and the changes he has undergone in his purchase decision process (Gonzales, 2021).

All this leads us to reflect on all the strategies implemented by companies to cope with the crisis caused by Covid-19. This analysis is relevant and provides a basis for companies of all sectors and sizes to design practical and effective strategies that adapt to this new digital environment and allow them to achieve the expected objectives.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this article involved a systematic and rigorous approach where relevant and updated information on the research topic was collected and examined. An overview of the methodology used is presented below:

First, a structured process of search, selection and analysis of academic and scientific studies published in journals, conferences or other specialized sources was carried out. To carry out this process, academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Springer Link, among others, were used, on the other hand, a reflection was made on the results of a research developed on the topic studied to a partial sample of 80 people. Table 1 describes the stages carried out in the process:

Table 1. Stages of the search according to (Fink, 2014).

STAGES	ACTIONS
	The research topic is defined and the inclusion and exclusion criteria are established to select the relevant studies (year of publication,

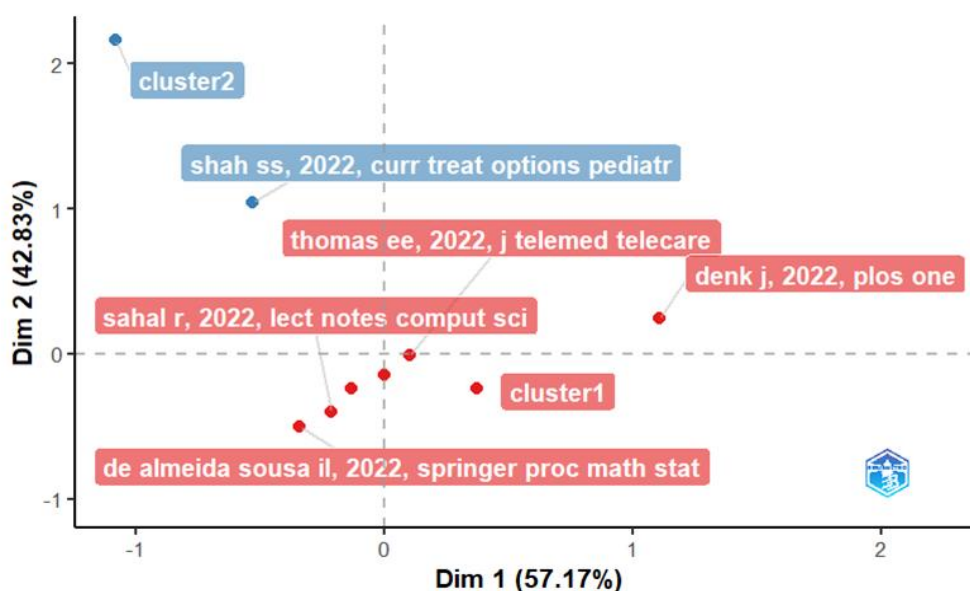


<p>Stage 1: Definition of the topic and research</p>	<p>relevance of the topic, database where it is found, type of publication) and an exhaustive search is made in the databases using relevant keywords and combinations of terms related to the study topic.</p>
<p>Stage 2: Evaluation and selection of results</p>	<p>Once the search has been completed, the relevant studies are evaluated and selected according to the established criteria.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Writing the article</p>	<p>After selecting the studies, a critical reading and systematic analysis of the literature is performed. This stage involves the extraction of relevant data, such as study objectives, methodology used, results obtained and conclusions reached. This information is organized and synthesized in a coherent manner to identify patterns, trends and gaps in the existing literature and correlation is made with the results found in the research, carried out through the application of an instrument that was disseminated digitally to a partial sample of 80 people.</p>

Note. The table shows the stages and what actions are developed to perform original information search according to (Fink, 2014). Source: Own elaboration.

Taking into account some of the most cited authors in SCOPUS, we analyzed the studies carried out by them to determine the dimension of the crisis in the world population. See Graph 1.

Graph 1. Most cited authors



Note: The graph shows the map with the most cited authors in the SCOPUS database.

Source: Own elaboration.

First, we have that (De Almeida Sousa et al., 2022), conducted a study in Brazil that sought to identify how Covid 19 influenced the purchases made by Brazilian digital shoppers, as well as to know their perception on the variables of shipping price and delivery time. For this study, the authors analyzed the online shopping behavior of Brazilian consumers during the pandemic and



their purchase intentions in the post-pandemic future, in addition to assessing their opinions on shipping costs and delivery time, a survey was conducted among Brazilian online shoppers. The survey collected data related to the profile of the participants, their isolation situation during the pandemic, their online shopping behavior during this period, and their perception of changes in shipping costs. As a result of this research, analyzing each variable and behavior of the organizations, it became evident that as time went by, the prices of shipments increased but also the long waits for the arrival of each product decreased, This has forced each company to look for strategies and methods to solve the nonconformities that arise, since the world had to change as well as the methods to which we were accustomed to operate in the market, but with the sole purpose that the economy was dynamic and did not arise a collapse, thus protecting business entities and people.

These findings reveal that a significant portion of the transformations observed in online shopping behavior during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic should hold true in the post-COVID-19 scenario. These changes have become fundamental for consumers, who have experienced greater comfort and convenience when shopping through digital platforms.

In the post-pandemic scenario, certain habits and preferences acquired during the confinement period are expected to continue. Consumers have discovered the benefits of online shopping, such as the wide variety of products available, the ease of comparing prices and features, and the convenience of receiving products at their doorstep. These aspects have led to greater confidence and satisfaction in the online shopping experience.

In addition, it has been observed that consumers have adapted to new ways of interacting with brands and vendors through digital channels. They have found more efficient and agile ways to communicate, resolve doubts and receive assistance, which has improved their overall shopping experience. These digital interactions have also enabled greater personalization and product recommendations, which has strengthened the relationship between consumers and companies.

In addition, the global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has had a significant impact on the commercialization of contactless consumer products as reflected by (Sahal et al., 2022) in their study where they seek to provide conceptual underpinnings of the contactless consumer products industry in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic. This study shows how the COVID-19 pandemic has generated significant changes in various aspects of the world, such as the contactless economy, healthcare systems, remote work and people's lifestyles. These changes have also impacted the consumer products (CP) industry, as consumer behaviors during the quarantine have generated the need to rapidly embrace digital transformation and update business models to adapt to the era of contactless consumer products. Initially, a conceptual framework was developed for the contactless consumer products industry, with the goal of integrating key advanced technologies, which once combined enable data tracking, transparency, traceability, automation and information sharing between consumers and consumer product partners.

This study demonstrates that after the Covid 19 pandemic it is important for companies to enhance and deepen digital and contactless solutions in order to meet the needs of consumers.

The growing trend of contactless solutions is due, in part, to the need to adapt quickly and offer a business alternative that fits today's health risks. Health concerns have impacted all sectors and disciplines, without exception. Therefore, it is critical to initiate and follow up on business initiatives and developments to address this "touchless" trend and thrive in the face of present and future challenges.

For its part (Membiela et al., 2019) from the Universidade da Coruña, Spain published on behalf of the Department of Business, Area of Marketing and Market Research, the article entitled Digital Marketing Tools and Competition: an approach to the state of the art, whose objective was to conduct a review of the state of the art regarding the concept, evolution and techniques of digital marketing. In particular, the document is based on understanding seven tools: the corporate website and online store, blogs, social networks, e-mail marketing, SEO, SEM, and digital advertising, and is divided into 2 parts: the first deals with the concept and importance of digital marketing, and the second part analyzes the different digital marketing tools.

At the end of the research it was concluded that the internet has allowed a new advance in the way brands communicate with customers, and that this has led companies to adapt to this new consumer. Similarly, digital marketing has affected all companies equally without distinction of sector and also gives them the opportunity to communicate in a more direct and simple way with users. Therefore, it is proposed that organizations make good use of the different tools to improve efficiency and adaptation to market needs and thus increase the number of transactions.

Social networks are becoming one of the tools most used by companies as a strategy to adapt to this new consumer, as expressed by

(Chipatecua et al., 2019) in his article derived from the research project entitled Impact of the use of digital marketing through Instagram for MSMEs in the city of Tunja. The objective of this was to determine and use the relevant marketing strategies to be carried out on Instagram in the best possible way, in order to increase their sales. This research had contributions of quantitative and qualitative methodology and was of descriptive type, and the sources and techniques of collection were primary and secondary and were given through observation, documentary collection and survey which was applied to a selected sample of companies in the Department of Boyacá.

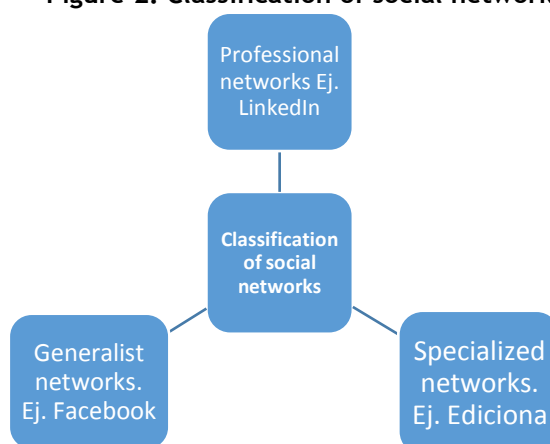
At the end of the research it was concluded that social networks have generated a strong influence on companies and the way they market their products and services, and that they help to position the brand and its products in a simple way. Likewise, it is evident that MSMEs in the city of Tunja have increased the use of the social network Instagram to attract their market niche and achieve an increase in sales.

Therefore, social networks allow companies to establish a much more direct contact with their audience, as well as to establish a more fluid and bidirectional communication. With them, companies can achieve many things, among which are: the constant promotion of their products and services, generate brand recognition, be able to know in real time the opinions of their consumers and build solid and lasting relationships. In addition to the above, they allow companies to reach a wider and more diverse audience, which allows them to reach new markets.

Other actions that a company can carry out with social networks include various forms of interaction ranging from the creation of channels that allow feedback, to the generation of spaces to promote, provide information and carry out other marketing activities. In this sense, they also offer the possibility of applying virtual surveys to know the opinion of the market, among many other possibilities (Hütt, 2012).

According to (Celaya, 2008) there are three main classifications of social networks:

Figure 2. Classification of social networks



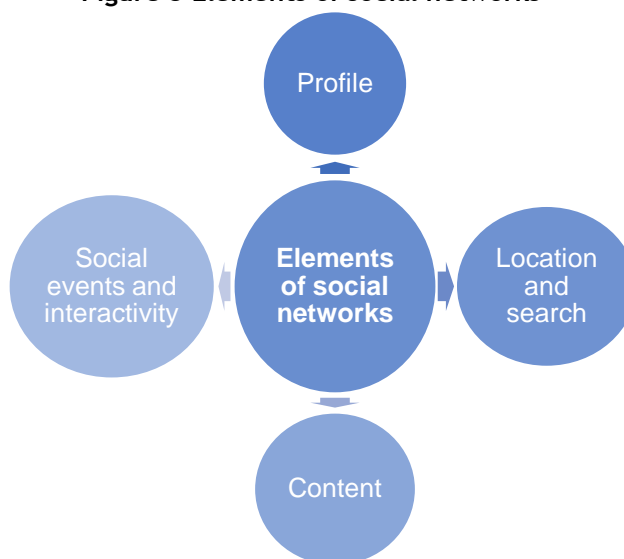
Note: The graph shows the characteristics of the digital consumer according to (Celaya, 2008).

Source: Own elaboration.

The purpose of social networks is for companies to achieve positioning in different segments. Following this purpose, they permanently incorporate new functionalities, applications and integrations with different websites. This allows them to establish their own space in the digital

environment. A review of existing social networks shows that they have certain elements that are common to all of them (Cárdenas et al., 2020).

Figure 3 Elements of social networks



Note: The graph shows the elements of social networks according to (Cárdenas et al., 2020).

Source: Own elaboration.

All this leads us to recognize the importance of social networks for companies and how they have become a fundamental tool, as they offer an effective platform to interact with their audience, promote their products or services, and build a solid online presence. With direct communication, they provide the opportunity to get instant feedback and keep abreast of new trends. In addition, the strategic use of social networks can help companies increase their visibility, strengthen their brand image and build trust and loyalty among consumers.

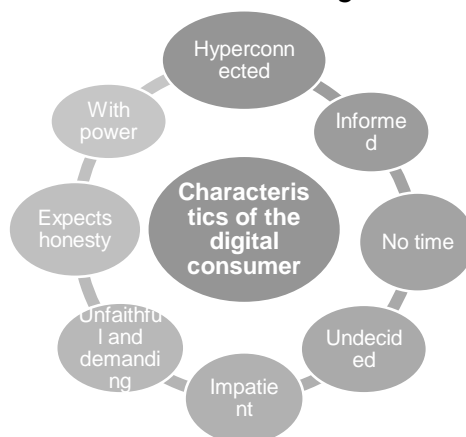
It is no secret that all these changes in the way companies interact with their customers, as well as market their products has originated a new type of consumer as expressed by (Flores et al., 2020) when exploring how technology has transformed the way consumers interact with companies and how the pandemic has accelerated this change. It is concluded that the new digital consumer is very different from 20 years ago, this is a consumer who is hyperconnected and thanks to this is much more informed, therefore, companies must adapt to this new world to meet their needs.

Changes in daily lifestyle as a result of digital transformation have an impact on consumer behavior and therefore the way in which companies must reach them is modified. Today, we are facing a multi-screen consumer, who uses and consumes information through several devices simultaneously, where in parallel they can be connected to the Internet while watching television (Torrado, 2018). This implies new challenges for companies, since their communication and marketing strategies must adapt to be able to reach this new consumer who is permanently connected to different information channels in a more effective way. Among the strategies that can be addressed, companies can improve the online user experience, using social networks to reach potential customers and offer personalized services.

Roberts (2005) gives us a new perspective on the consumer, seeing him as someone who has criteria, is less loyal and more difficult to understand. He also highlights that this new consumer interacts with a more diverse population. Consequently, this consumer must be captivated by creating solid and stable bonds. This consumer has some characteristics as expressed by (Quirós, 2019).



Figure 4. Characteristics of the digital consumer



Note: The graph shows the characteristics of the digital consumer according to (Quirós, 2019)

Source: Own elaboration.

The new consumer, as expressed by (Relaño, 2011), thanks to his high connectivity, is the one who makes the decision on how he will enjoy his products, as well as when he will do so, and more importantly, he determines how his environment will be with respect to the brands with which he wants to interact. The challenge for companies is to know them and in this way offer them products and services adapted to their needs, which will allow them to awaken the desire and intention to buy.

According to the thematic map addressed with respect to the topic of postcovid digital transformation (See Figure 5), it evidences the impact of digital marketing in companies; according to (Pitre et al., 2020) in markets around the world digital marketing has become a fundamental tool to improve competitiveness. Considering the above, today's consumers have very specific characteristics that derive from the adoption of these new technologies, which allow them to make more timely and accurate decisions thanks to the information they receive from them. All this makes it necessary to examine the conditions in which companies, mainly Colombian companies incorporate digital marketing strategies and the benefits they can obtain from them in terms of their development and growth, and thus understand how companies can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital environment to achieve their business objectives and adapt to changing consumer demands.

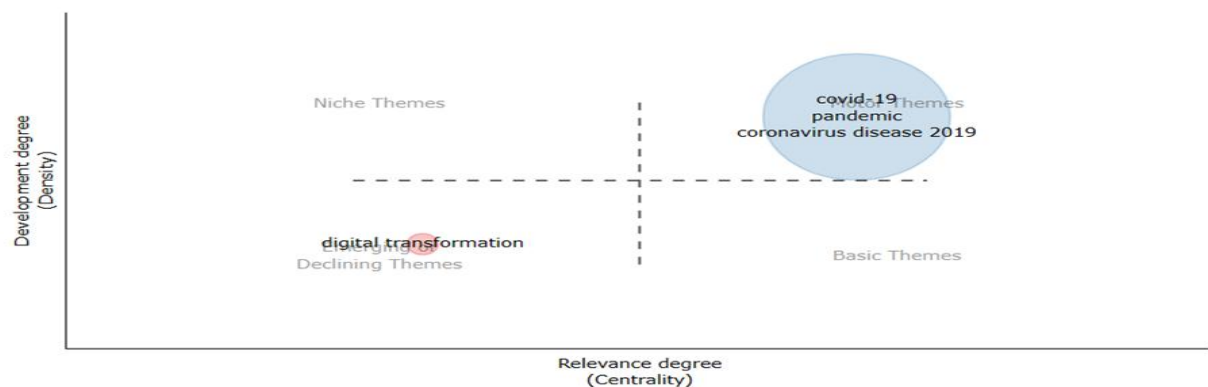
The objective of the study is to evaluate the main aspects that account for the importance of digital marketing, its development opportunity in Colombia and the benefits of its incorporation in the commercial strategies of national companies. It also seeks to analyze the conditions of access to ICTs in the Colombian population and their consumption trends through e-commerce, as well as the difficulties and cultural barriers that must be overcome by SMEs for their proper use. The methodology used in the study was the documentary review of scientific articles related to the research topic in databases such as Scielo, Emerald, Elsevier, Springer, among others, which was complemented with official statistical data and governmental information whose review was made taking into account a descriptive approach that analyzed the national and international context taking the most important results.

Among the most relevant results of the study is that the use of digital marketing has become an important tool for companies, especially for emerging ones, as it allows them to reach their target audience more accurately and at a lower cost than with traditional media, and thus increase their sales. The importance of understanding consumer trends through e-commerce and overcoming cultural barriers to take advantage of ICTs is highlighted. On the other hand, it highlights that the use of digital marketing in companies is very varied and that the selection of the tool will depend on the specific needs of each company. Among the tools are: websites, online stores, content marketing, social marketing, among others.



In order to select the most appropriate digital marketing tools, different factors must be taken into account. First of all, you must understand what are the needs and objectives sought by the company, as this will allow you to identify the required functionalities and features. It is also important to evaluate how accessible the tool is when using it, since it is important to make sure that it is intuitive and easy to use for the work team. It is also necessary to consider the ability of the selected tool to adapt to changes in the company and that its use is guaranteed as it evolves. Another key aspect is how it would be unified with other platforms and existing systems in the company, since for a digital marketing tool to be effective it must be able to connect seamlessly with other tools and databases. Finally, companies must take into account the cost of the implementation of such a tool and the time in which the return on investment will be given, making sure that the value it offers justifies the expense.

Figure 5. Thematic map



Note: The graph shows the thematic map of the studied topic. Source: Own elaboration with the SCOPUS database.

Taking into account the first aspect to select the best digital marketing tool, it is important that companies define their objectives and then once they design the strategies for those objectives, they can contemplate those tools that will be of vital importance to achieve them. A strategy can be considered successful when once it is applied, the company manages to be in a more favorable position than when it started the implementation process, all this with respect to the competition. Something that should be taken into account is that a strategy should not be qualified as good or bad, but it should be evaluated and compared in relation to the strategies implemented by competitors. Business strategy thus refers to that plan that is carried out and needs to be allocated resources in order to transform the competitive balance and restore it in favor of the company (Arce, 2010).

For his part (Striedinger, 2018) states that digital marketing becomes the ideal complement for SMEs in Colombia, when developing and implementing their marketing mix. These at the time of implementing digital marketing use various strategies. Among which are: create your website, use email marketing for customer contact, positioning through search engines, use social networks for marketing, as well as the use of blogs, among other strategies.

Taking into account the above, digital marketing becomes an integral strategy that facilitates the generation of customers as it strengthens communication with different target audiences, allows the exploitation of business opportunities, strengthens the image and positioning, and thus facilitates transactions. For this reason, digital marketing becomes a tool whose usability is very common and frequent in the daily operations of Colombian SMEs because thanks to it they have been strengthened in the market.

It cannot be ignored that digital transformation is here to stay, and it is currently the trend that has affected cultural patterns, consumption trends and has enabled innovation in many sectors. Therefore, it is necessary that entrepreneurs understand the importance of implementing digital marketing strategies, since its use allows them to market their products not only nationally, but

also favors the internationalization of companies. And this forces companies to be constantly updating themselves with new technologies in order to reach a better level of development, and thus be able to carry out their internationalization process with greater preparation, adapting to the new modernity of these increasingly competitive environments.

Below are some partial results obtained with the application of a survey to a sample of 80 people in the region of Córdoba Colombia, specifically in three of its municipalities, data that coincide and reaffirm what was found in the analysis of the literature found, which reflects the change in the consumer after the pandemic covid-19, within the data that stand out are the following:

Regarding the gender variable and digital consumption, no statistically significant differences were found in the age ranges studied, which implies that gender is not a barrier to digital consumption in those specific age ranges. The age range with the highest percentage of digital media use is between 21-30 years old, corresponding to generation Z or centennials. These individuals are considered digital natives and are constantly connected. See Table 1.

In terms of frequency of use and productive ages, 60% of the participants perform digital transactions sporadically, while the remaining 40% do so at least once a month. See graphs 1 and 2. Regarding the most used social networks to search for products and services, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Tiktok are mentioned. These social networks are preferred by companies to interact with digital consumers. In addition, the most used means to request an address are writing via WhatsApp and calling the establishment's telephone numbers. 71.3% of participants indicate that this change in the way they make purchases is due to the COVID-19 pandemic. See graphs 3 and 4.

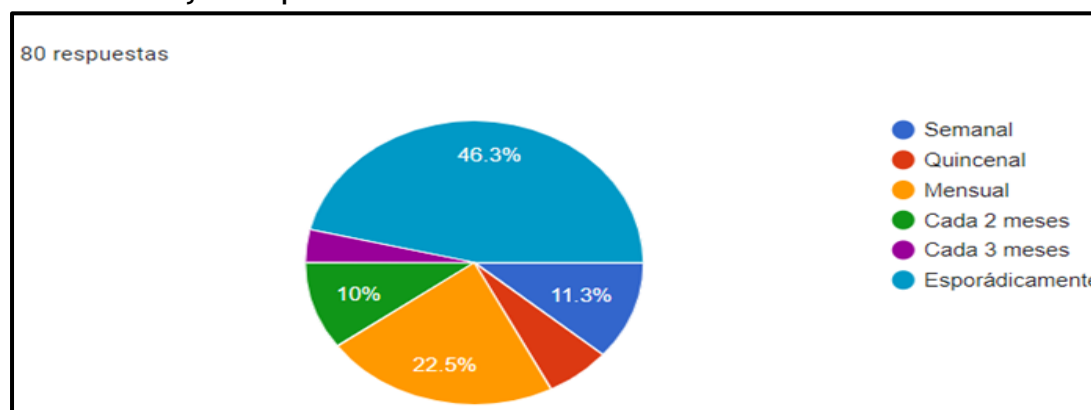
Table 1. Sociodemographic data

			GÉNERO			
MUNICIPIO	EDAD		Hombre	Mujer	OTRO	
Montería	18-20	13	8	5	0	
	21-30	43	22	20	1	
	74- (92.5%)	31-40	6	2	4	0
	41-50	4	2	2	0	
	51-60	3	2	1	0	
	Mas de 60	1	0	1	0	
Cereté	18-20	1	0	1	0	
	21-30	2	2	0	0	
Cienaga de oro	21-30	2	1	1	0	
	31-40	1	1	0	0	

Note: The table shows the sociodemographic data of the people surveyed in the region of Córdoba, Colombia. Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Question about frequency of online purchases

How often do you shop online?

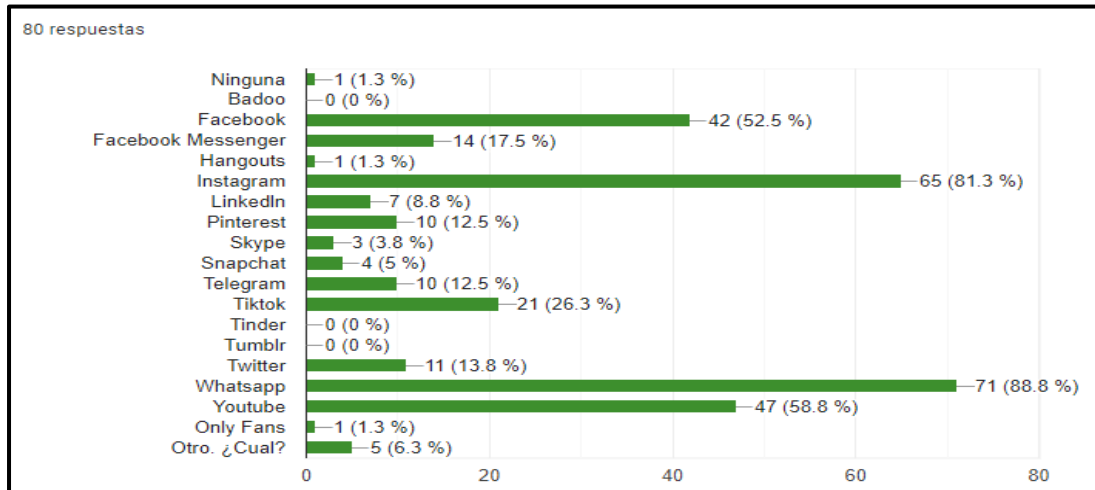




Note. The graph shows the data of respondents who make purchases or payments online and their frequency. Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Question about purchases through social networks

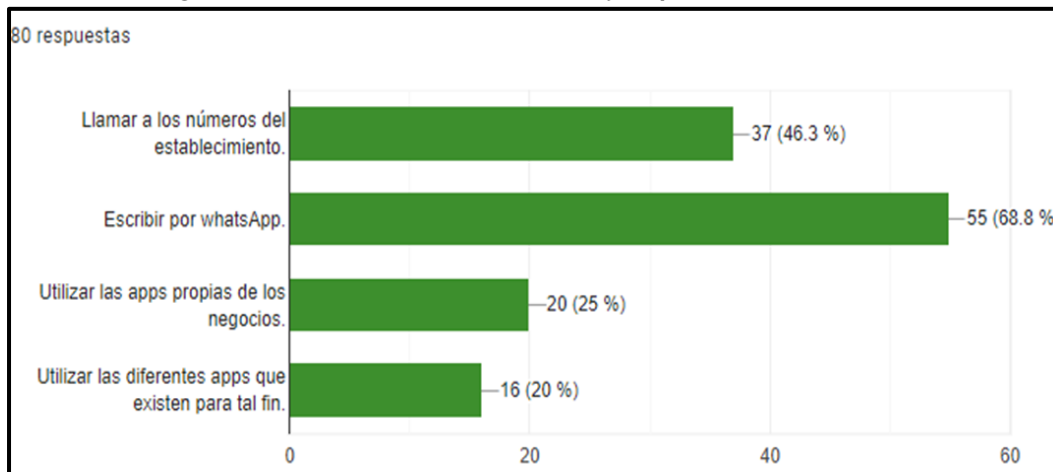
Of the following social networks, indicate which is your preferred one when searching for and purchasing products and/or services



Note. The graph shows the data of respondents who make purchases or payments through social networks. Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 4. Question about home delivery shopping

When ordering food at home, which method do you prefer?



Note. The graph shows data for respondents who make purchases at home. Source: Own elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

This reflection reveals a series of changes of great relevance that impacted companies in Colombia and the world related to the new consumer more focused on technology, social networks and all aspects related to digital marketing. As the world has adapted to the so-called "new normal", it has become evident the great transformations and changes that have occurred in the way companies operate and seek connection with their consumers.

We see how in the first instance, Covid 19 accelerated in a substantial way the adoption of technology and digitization in companies. This is due to the imperative need to have social distance and little or no physical interaction, coupled with the restrictions imposed by the government led to the increased use of digital channels to have the necessary interaction with customers. Companies were forced to adapt quickly to take advantage of the different digital platforms to stay connected and communicate with their audience.



The digital consumer has been undergoing a significant evolution. The Covid 19 pandemic brought with it important changes in consumer behavior and purchasing preferences, including greater use of digital platforms for online shopping, in search of new virtual experiences, as well as a greater preference for brands that have a greater commitment to the welfare and safety of their consumers. Therefore, companies have seen the need to understand and respond to these new needs and interests, adapting their marketing and sales strategies to meet them.

One of the tools most used by companies are social networks, which became a support for many companies during the pandemic, where thanks to them they were able to stay afloat during the quarantine period. The connection and interaction with their followers through these platforms has been intensifying, providing companies with a valuable opportunity to strengthen their digital presence, build lasting relationships with consumers and increase brand visibility. Among the strategies that companies apply in social networks are the generation of valuable and relevant content, the implementation of effective communication actions, as well as ensuring interaction and active participation in the networks to maintain contact with their audience and take advantage of the power of viral marketing.

All of the above shows that digital marketing with all its benefits acquired a more relevant importance in the post-pandemic scenario. Companies must recognize that it is necessary to adapt their strategies in traditional media to strategies focused on the use of digital channels, taking advantage of all these tools that are available in the market to get and retain these new digital consumers. The personalization of content, the realization of a timely segmentation, the constant measurement of results, as well as analyzing the statistics of the different platforms become essential for the success of the different digital marketing strategies in this new context.

Other conclusions drawn from the results of the research applied to the sample are: There are no statistically significant differences in terms of the gender variable, a finding that implies that gender is not a barrier to digital consumption in any of the age ranges studied in the sample, it can be observed that the age range where the highest percentage of digital media use is evidenced is between 21-30 years; that is, those belonging to generation Z (or centennials), which according to their main characteristic feature are considered digital natives and are always connected.

In terms of frequency of use, 60% make transactions sporadically while the remaining 40% do so at least once a month; this group is made up of participants in productive ages.

The social networks most used by respondents to search for products and services are (1) WhatsApp, (2) Instagram, (3) YouTube, (4) Facebook and (6) Tiktok, demonstrating why they are preferred by companies when interacting with the digital consumer.

The most used means by digital consumers when requesting an address are (1) Writing via WhatsApp and, (2) Calling the establishment's phones. In this same sense, 71.3% state that this is because the COVID-19 pandemic changed their way of making this type of purchases.

Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic brought relevant changes in companies, mainly related to the emergence of this new digital-focused consumer, the strengthening of the use of social networks and digital marketing. The companies that managed to adapt to these changes and transformations are those that demonstrated greater resilience and a greater ability to survive in the midst of the current challenges. Establishing a connection and an effective link with the digital consumer through different tools such as social networks has become a fundamental pillar for business success in the post-pandemic era.

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