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Adaptation versus standardization: from the essential marketing paradigm

La adaptación versus la estandarización visto desde el paradigma de marketing esencial

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Abstract

There is a lot of international marketing literature about the controversy of applying a product adaptation or standardization policy when launching them to external markets. Now, all of it refers to the consequence of using one or the other, but nothing is said about how the essential causes intervene in this important decision of international marketing. This document analyzes this problem from the perspective of the essential marketing paradigm and basically works on the analysis of the impact of the four essential aspects that are the activators of consumption, and how they impact on this problem in question. To address this problem, it has been decidedly entered both in the mind of the consumer and in the mind of the market. And this document presents not only the four activators or purchase motivators, but also what are their driving engines, in addition to what they represent from neuroscience.

Then to complete this document it is argued apologetically, as this theoretical conceptualization impacts international marketing decisions, at least, when deciding whether the product or service in question can be standardized or some type of market adaptation will have to be made of international destination. Finally, a value model is proposed in the form of "pattern" of consumption, and from which you can see all the essential problems.

Resumen

La literatura actual del marketing internacional acerca de la controversia de aplicar una política de adaptación o de estandarización de producto a la hora de lanzarlos a los mercados externos. Ahora, toda ella se refiere a la consecuencia de utilizar una u otra, pero ningún autor se ha detallado a identificar cuáles son las causas esenciales que nos permitan tomar tan importante decisión del marketing internacional. Este documento analiza esta problemática desde la óptica del paradigma del marketing esencial y trabaja básicamente sobre el análisis del impacto de los cuatro aspectos esenciales que son los activadores del consumo, y de qué manera estos impactan sobre esta problemática en cuestión. Para abordar esta problemática se ha ingresado de manera decidida tanto en la mente del consumidor, como en la mente del mercado. Y se presentan en este documento no solo los cuatro activadores o motivadores de compra, sino también cuáles son sus motores impulsores, además de lo que los mismos representan desde la neurociencia.

Luego para completar dicho documento se argumenta apologéticamente, como esta conceptualización teórica impacta sobre las decisiones de marketing internacional, por lo menos, a la hora de decidir si el producto o servicio en cuestión se puede estandarizar o habrá que realizar algún tipo de adaptación al mercado de destino internacional. Finalmente, se propone un modelo de valor en forma de *patronage* del consumo, y del cual se puede apreciar toda la problemática esencial.

Keywords | palabras clave

Activators, adaptation, archetype, code, meaning, standardization, perception, policies.
Activadores, adaptación, arquetipo, código, estandarización, percepción, políticas, significado.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Adaptive dichotomy versus standardization

When the Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan defined the concept of 'global village' in 1962, discussion began between those who wanted to boost their international businesses from the adaptation of their marketing plans and those who met in standardization the best path to the most profitable businesses. While McLuhan (1989) uses this new global village neologism to describe the endless possibilities of global human interconnection that were being enabled by new access to electronic media, the author also does not anticipate that he ended up opening up an in-depth debate about international marketing that goes as far as today. Then, to reaffirm all these ideas in 1989 McLuhan and B.R. Powers wrote The Global Village. Also in the 1960s the author Erik Elinder (1965) predicted that there were millions of Europeans who largely lived in similar conditions even if when living in different nations, although Elinder did not get to talk about globalization of consumption nor standardization, he did emphasize uniformity and suggested international communication.

R. Buzzell (1968) defined the concept of standardization by stating that it was an offer of identical product lines at similar prices through the same types of distribution channels and with identical communication plans in different nations and countries of the world. But, as stated in the book *International Marketing from Latin American perspective* (Paris, 2015a), it was Levitt (1983) who finally raised the great controversy in 1983 with his article on globalization of markets. Levitt claimed that the world's marketers were confronted in a 'homogeneous global village', arguing that it was gestating the emergence of a single global consumer. Thus, he recommended that companies design and produce products and services for this new market, i.e., generate highly standardized high-quality products and services to market them worldwide using global product, pricing, distribution and communication policies. And this idea was very well received by the leading international companies of that time, the first to take it were the Japanese: Toyota®, Sony®, Citizen®, Panasonic®, Cassius®, among others, and many of them achieved surprising results, especially those dedicated to electronics, automotive, digital and capital goods. This led to a new model of international business organization: transnational, a type of international company that, in addition to not making adaptations to local preferences, designs its products according to the preferences of an alleged global consumer.

But not all organizations that embraced this ideology of international marketing standardization succeeded, because they encountered enormous obstacles caused by regional traditions with deeply rooted customs that are the results of very different cosmogonies and the different cultures of nations. As the American author and political scientist Huntington (1997) proposes in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*, who predicted before his death (ɪ2008) that the future of the world's conflicts was to take place among the different civilizations that make it up. This new international reordering anticipates that new human and nation conflicts will not be economic, ideological, geopolitical but cultural. Thus, it is predicted by Samuel Huntington, while presenting a future full of conflicts, but in an environment governed by international relations openly contrary to Western interests, and this author ends up by recognizing the need for the West to gain a more accurate understanding of non-Western civilizations, in order to achieve a better approach to these cultures and enhance their maximum influence. There are not even a few authors who come to bestow much of the burden of blame for the 2009 crisis, at the enormous cost borne by international organizations that sought to impose the Western lifestyle on the rest of the world through the implementation of Levitt's global standardization policy.

This controversy of international marketing has led to three schools: the driver of adaptation, the promoter of standardization and then a third alternative emerged which holds the middle position:

1. The School of Adaptation: local culture is taken as part of the 'input' of international marketing by paying special attention to the customs of consumers in the destination country. The potential success of the international marketing plan is based on local knowledge and products and services adapt to the preferences of their consumers. Advocates of this approach argue that cultural differences between different nations, different phases of their economic cycles, uneven product lifecycle curves, and the many lifestyles of their citizens are barriers difficult to overcome, unless it is the organization that adapts to them with their products or services. Differences between political and legal systems are also problematic, in addition to social and economic structural variables that are often not similar. Authors such as Boddewyn, Soehl and Picard (1986) are strong advocates of this school.
2. The school of standardization: this ideology advocates that the consumer is globalizing at a speed never seen before thanks to ICT (computer and communication technologies), which has an impact on an accelerated convergence of markets, according to the ideas of Theodore Levitt (its highest benchmark). Peebles (1978) acknowledges differences from the local sphere, but does not believe that they are insurmountable or decisive. Then many authors argued this ideology, some forcefully like Bruhn (2004), who even argues that the concept should be implemented at the national level in other similar or even different markets, but without producing any modifications thereof. Other pro-standardization authors such as Madeira and Silveira (2013) and Postigo (2014) consider born global to be international companies that do not follow the traditional stages of their internationalization, but bet to their emergence on the global market.
3. The middle position school: it recognizes the advantages of both extremes and tries to reconcile them with an intelligent proposal for each case. This school promotes moderation in response to both extremes, as differences are recognized at the local level, but also defend the benefits of standardization as they welcome cost reduction. Other authors who have embraced this position or intermediate route include Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulus (1997), who pose a number of internal conditions and external circumstantial situations that modify market actions and opt for adaptation or standardization as the case may be; or as stated by Onkvisit and Shaw (1987) who claim that more than a number of differences are a matter of degrees. This position is criticized for being ambiguous, unclear, and sometimes confusing.

All approaches agree on what Sainz de Vicuña (2016) says, in which the decision to internationalize a business is due to the basic principle of having companies with the capacity to projecting internationally over time with returns that allow them to grow and expand. Although, all these schools mention the issue from the perspective of their consequences of their respective applications, none of them identify the essential causes from the basic problem of the international marketing plan. The aim of this paper is to analyze the essential causes and to do so strategic analysis will be used from the two research sites of the market: the mind of the consumer and the mind of the market. Sites from which were extracted the four essential consumer-activating aspects for home marketing and international marketing: perceptions and meanings in the consumer's mind, and codes of behavior and archetypes in the mind of the market.

2. The two sites of the basic aspects of an international marketing plan

As stated before, in order to study consumer behavior, we must definitively enter two sites: the mind of the consumer and the mind of the market. When Philip Kotler (2005) stated that marketing should be fully introduced into the consumer's mind, he did not really make it clear how to do it, since it is difficult to perform it without the tools that traditional marketing offers in this regard. On the other hand, this author also does not develop the mind of the market, and does not evaluate its real market potential, since the action of the 'collective unconscious' not only conditions but changes the consumer's purchasing decision when the consumer is influenced by others from the codes of behavior and links generated, but also from the positions they take when surrounded by others. Undoubtedly, all these problems provoked in marketing a deep crisis in which it is still immersed. As a result of this crisis arises 'the second myopia of marketing', which we have already denounced in our book named after it, and by which a level of failures of more than 85% of the products and services that are launched to markets are detected (Paris, 2012).

However, Kotler (Kotler, 2005) in his book *The 10 Capital Sins of Marketing* has identified and analyzed at least a dozen major failures in today's marketing, commonly incurred by international businesses. Among some of the reasons for this failure is the first sin that Kotler (2005, p. 15) states: "The company is not sufficiently market-oriented and aimed at consumers". Undoubtedly, it is the first cause of error, and this is due to the high unknowingness of the purchasing motivators, fact that was analyzed by the author in a very superficial way without reaching the essential causes of consumption. This is due, on the one hand, to the reason that marketing experts are not taking into account the changes that the market has undergone, since the consumer and the market have become much more complex and unpredictable at the domestic level, and it is much more complex internationally; and, on the other hand, the reductionism that marketing has been undergoing in terms of research, the time given to such market research and the limited investment made for the interpretation of the problem presented by today's market which, according to our essential marketing optics, it is the main cause, since the problem is not visualized in a heuristic, integral and holistic way. The great difficulty observed is that the problem is attacked from one marketing perspective, generated by some of its approaches: digital, social responsibility, green, mobile, viral, etc. But, it is never attacked from its different angles since essential marketing requires the integration of knowledge such as axiology, semiology, neuroscience, anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, communication and consumer behavior.

In addition, as the market is in constant change, a methodological update is required, since marketing is essentially heuristic, i.e., discovered and rediscovered every day in the mind of the consumer and in the mind of the market. Today nothing is static, as mentioned by the neuroscientific phenomenon of abruption, which states that everything that is no longer stimulated in the minds of the consumer and in the mind of the market ends up losing meaning or even disappearing as a concept in the minds of the consumer and the market. We maintain that the human mind is loaded with content through perception, acting as a basis of meanings which are interrelated and guided by codes, and end up standardizing in the form of archetypes. The Brazilian author and anthropologist Arduini (2006), has wondered in his book Anthropology, daring to recreate humanity: what is man? and his answer was even more surprising: "man is a mine of meanings". And with this phrase he invites us to look what man has to offer as a consumer. Therefore, the basics for marketing should be to interpret which agent is triggering the requirement for the product or service.

In Figures 1 and 2 it is observed how we can extract perceptions and meanings from the mind of the consumer, while from the mind of the market we can obtain symbolic/cultural codes and archetypes. Although, it is worth saying traditional marketing does not prepare us to carry out these research tasks, and when these aspects largely govern market laws and consumer behavior the situation becomes very difficult. Since these four aspects are the foundations of both home and international marketing plan, not understanding them clearly means falling into 'the second marketing myopia'.

Figure 1. The origin of the perception and meaning of the product

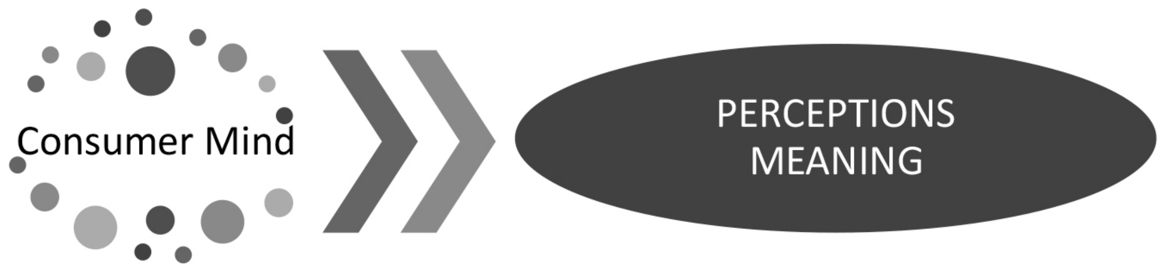
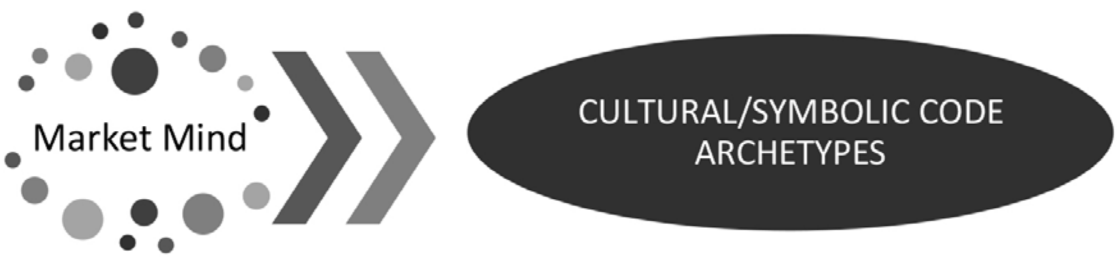


Figure 2. The origin of the symbolic/cultural code and archetypes



3. Greimas' semiotic square in the four essential aspects of marketing

In many of our books we have applied the semiotic square of Greimas (1983) and perhaps the most significant of our applications is the one that allows us to interrelate the four essential aspects of marketing, which are the natural mobilizers of consumption. To carry out this application we start from four research projects led by this author in the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the National University of La Plata, in which we have analyzed these basic aspects of essential marketing, and the two elements that we have assumed as different are the Meanings and Archetypes, which in turn have their respective opposites (Paris et al., 2016). See Figure 3.

However, when we talk about meanings we mean psychic representations of goods and services in the minds of the consumer. From a neuroscientific point of view, a meaning is a stable neural pathway, which is usually housed in the memories available to the limbic brain. At this point, as stated by biologists Audesirk et al. (2003), virtually all man's knowledge is defined as neural pathways, and by being in the mind of the human being, individuals can turn to them at any time. For this reason, meanings are the triggers of desires, since these are recovered and raised from the memories of the unconscious. Therefore, meanings are responsible for personal tastes, and by which people generate some interest and valorization for some things or ideas.

As for archetypal figurations (or archetypes), they are part of the collective unconsciousness of different societies and cultures, and must be interpreted in the mind of the market. It is a kind of preconceived box that can be charged with positive or negative emotional energy, resulting in archetypes on the light side or dark side, respectively. For example, if we load the box with positive emotional energy, such as sincerity, loyalty, trust, reliability, equanimity, joy, sympathy, and attachment, the archetypal figure to be obtained will be that of 'friend'. Now, if we load the same box with negative emotional energy such as hatred, envy, resentment, jealousy, disgust, pettiness, repudiation, revenge, intrigue and resentment, the archetypal figure will be that of 'enemy'. Now, from a neural point of view, we can visualize them as engrams of the reptile brain. According to Montserrat (2001), professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid, these engrams are stable neural interconnection structures (usually housed in the primitive reptile brain), and these complex neural networks stimulate the activation of automatic responses in which, when postures are activated, it is difficult to get rid of them; hence, the term of immovable postures. The archetypes are then primarily responsible for primitive social reactions, the origin of which lies deep within the collective unconsciousness of cultures and their societies. Examples of opposing archetypes include hero-coward, statement-tyrant, princess-witch, etc.

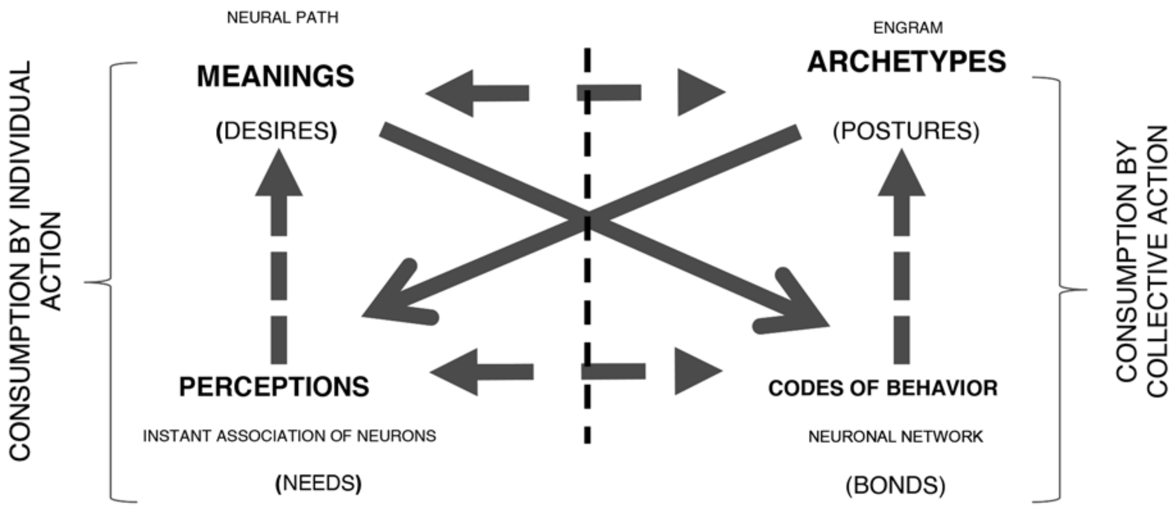
Following Greimas square, we now present the opposites of both previous concepts: perceptions versus archetypes, and codes of behavior as opposed to meanings.

We know that perceptions are in the boundary between external and internal reference systems. According to Mariano Sigman (2015), perceptions involve afferent and neural efferent systems, as expressed in the book *The Secret Life of the Mind*. It is the phenomenon from the human capacity to capture the physical signals of the environment that take the form of stimuli at the sensory level, and this happens from the five senses. Each of them has specialized cells that capture external physical stimuli to convert them into electrical signals, such as olfactory cilia, taste buds, visual poles, etc., which generate the electrical impulses and sensations that will foster the instant associations of neurons through the process of synapses, which are then processed in the corresponding brain areas (e.g. image signals in the occipital lobe). We call this instantaneous neural association perception. Therefore, perception is based on the basic and derived needs of the individual that requires to be activated, and of course, these have to be interpreted in the mind of the consumer and by each individual; thus, they are personal and will depend on what each person requires, although we must anticipate that human needs are generally similar.

Finally, the codes of behavior (whether cultural or symbolic) from a neuroscientific point of view are true 'neural networks' and are formed by the collective unconscious to generate relationships with the other individuals who respond to a certain society and culture. Therefore, its origin is in the collective action of people, who, when seeking to live in conflict-free and harmonious societies, create codes as networks of interrelated meanings. For this reason, the codes are based on the social conventions generated over time and from the interrelationship of various meanings already known by the individuals who are members of that society. These neural networks act as a kind of 'pass or not pass' filters of human behavior, and in the face of a certain individual behavior it is appreciated by other individuals as previously agreed or coded (in code), or totally misguided (out code). As is foreseen, in the first situation the behavior will be accepted as a common thing that follows the customs of that society-culture, while in the second situation it will be rejected by others, considering it misplaced, which will normally end up generating some kind of conflict, fight or dispute.

As can be seen in this analysis from the application of Greimas Square, the two essential marketing research sites for either the domestic market and international markets are: the mind of the market located on the right site of the figure, and the mind of the consumer on the left.

Figure 3. The four basic aspects of international marketing



In Figure 3, we can also see that when the same perceptions are repeated over time, they tend to generate new meanings in the consumer's mind (up arrow). As Lewis (2015) states "compulsively, continuously and effortlessly, the brain transforms sensory data into meaningful impressions and archives it in its 'own box' within the memory" (p.119). While, in the market mind sector, when codes of behavior are kept in force by successive generations of a given society-culture over time, they tend to form new archetypal figures in that market mind.

4. The mobilizing aspects in the mind of the consumer, the impact on adaptation or standardization

Perceptions are manifested in the mind of the consumer that act on needs (motivating basic and essential purchase). These needs come from the mandates of the body, mind, soul and even the social environment of man. Even more importantly, desires are also developed in the same mind of the consumer, which is always supported by his/her own meanings. Desire can be considered as part of necessity and, maybe, of expectation. All these aspects derive in the preferences, tastes, whims and motivations of purchase of the individual. It is also the field of 'insigths' (internal view of the individual) and their drivers (purchase activators).

In both aspects we will analyze how they directly or indirectly impact on adaptation and standardization policies, for which we will make a brief presentation of each topic and then propose the discussion.

4.1. Perception at the basis of necessity

Undoubtedly, perception has been a determining aspect of marketing since the individual acquires new information from the medium, to such an extent that it can even be considered the 'input' of the human mind. Although it is also the cause of many people's mental biases, since everything perceived by man is considered as absolute reality by him/her, and today we know for sure that there is no reality in people's minds, as our minds change things for phenomenological properties. For example, we know from the phenomena of a modal perception that a semi-hidden object can be perceived in its entirety, even if it appears only partially visible in our vision, because it is juxtaposed with other things. This phenomenon was called 'the error of experience', and the members of the Cognitivist school named this phenomenon 'data-driven processes' or simply pre-attentional. James Jerome Gibson (1974) in his classic work *Perception of the Visual World* refuted perception as an indirect phenomenon to adopt a stance based on the direct perception of man. The central strategy of Gibson's ecological approach states that when describing the stimulus available for perception, it must be distinguished between its two components: 'stimulus energy' and 'stimulus information'. According to this author, energy is in the stimulus, but also information, without requiring subsequent internal thoughts. This is part of the assumption that intellectual keys of perception as a survival mechanism are the natural laws underlying each organism, therefore the organism only perceives what it can learn and is necessary for it to survive. The ecological approach when conceiving the input of perception as information, in addition to energy only, states that stimulus no longer requires practically further interpretation, but is more direct (therefore, it does not depend only on the sensitivity of the sense or senses involved), which makes it possible to construct a direct explanation of perception as a human mechanism of the interpretation of the environment.

We can define perception as the set of processes and activities related to stimulation that is achieved with one or more of the senses, through which we obtain consistent information regarding our environment, as well as the actions we take with reference to our system of internal references. In this way, perception can be visualized as a mental image that is formed with the help of experience, based on prior knowledge and the particular needs of the individual.

Hence, perception works with the brain stimuli through the five senses (hearing, touch, sight, smell, and taste), which generate an apparent physical reality of the environment from the external stimuli already converted into sensations, which ultimately produce perception in the human mind. Therefore, it is the ability to receive through all the senses, sensations, impressions or images to interpret something, so all perception includes search, selection and processing to obtain any type of information. Perception occurs right on the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious, but it becomes conscious when we can report it. It also occurs between the crossing of the external reference system (from rumors, advertising, comments, communication, etc.) with the internal reference system (memories, episodes, experiences, meanings, knowledge, etc.). However, as the Argentine neuroscientist Sigman (2015) states: "perception always has some imagination. It is more like painting than taking a photograph. And, according to the confirmatory effect, we blindly believe in the reality we build" (p. 98).

We can finally define perception as the mental and cognitive process, through which individuals capture the information of the environment and interpret it directly or indirectly (depending on the information burden). And it is from sensory systems that such information reaches the individual, which is confronted with his/her system of internal references and in this way, the individual seeks to form a coherent representation or image of the environment that is often taken as real. Therefore, it is characterized by its subjectivity, selectivity and temporality, since perceptions are instant images. Although it is true they look "more like drawings than photographs", we can say that it is subjective since the response it generates by the same stimulus varies from individual to individual; it is temporary, as it is a short-term phenomenon defined by an instantaneous association of neurons, and is therefore not permanent as perception disappears once the stimulus finishes; and it is selective because it depends on the needs, interests and motivations that move individuals, i.e., we perceive what we want to perceive in a certain circumstance.

In addition, the emotional action of people causes perception to expand or decrease. For example, in an armed robbery, assaulted people pay so much attention to the gun because of the emotional impact it generates through fear, thus he/she loses the rest of the details of the scene. So it is the individual who selects the perceptual field based on what he/she wants to perceive. The truth is that we perceive what we want or need at every moment of our lives. If what we observe is pleasant then we expand our field of perception, if what we perceive is unpleasant, we reduce it significantly. The subject must have generated an internal 'input' of requirement to perceive something, for example, 'I am thirsty', either it has been impacted by a stimulus with very high intensity or linked to some aversion or pleasure.

It is clear that perception is always prior to significance, and there may even be perception without any significance. As an example, the psychological phenomenon of pareidolia, which consists of an ancestral ability to perceive faces, figures or hypothetical threats in certain places or that have nothing to do with reality, such as the architecture or facade of a building, the hood or the front of a vehicle, the back of an alarm clock, the bottom of a cup of coffee or tea, the whimsical shapes of clouds, etc. As we anticipated this phenomenon is ancestral and would be linked to man's innate ability to detect threats in wild or somehow hostile environments.

Having made a brief synthesis of perception, an analysis will be done to see whether this concept can be considered homogeneous in all cultures and nations or on the contrary if it behaves very differently. Since the phenomenon has two components, its information load and its intensity or impact energy are different. It is clear that the former is more linked to local culture and its worldview, while its second component is more universal since the energy of perception only points to the level of attention of the individual. Although sensitivity to the capture of these energy intensities may have some variations in the different ethnicities and nations that make up our world, in general when the intensity of a stimulus is above the level of the surrounding stimuli, then this stimulus will be imposed on others (Weber-Fechner's Law). In general, the impact of a certain perceptual stimulus will surely achieve the attention of the viewer in all nations and cultures, even if this does not mean that it will produce a positive or negative effect on it, i.e., this attention-calling mechanism can be considered universal and would support the standardization policy. Now, from the information burden of perception as an instantaneous union of neurons, it will depend on previous experiences, the sensations accumulated in episodic memory, and the worldview of their culture and society. Thus, it cannot be considered too universal, and this characteristic suggests a clearer inclination towards the policy of adaptation. For example, Bimbo® uses as its main argument sales and even in its slogan the perceptual concepts of 'cute and fresh', ideal for Latin countries, but for cooler or Nordic nations of the globe, the ideal in bread is 'hot and crisp'.

4.2. The meaning at the base of desire

The other essential aspect of the consumer's mind is found in the limbic memories, where the 'universe of meanings' is housed. Once the things of the environment become meaningful to man from successive perceptions, man provide meaning to them and in doing so he/she houses that meaning in one of the memories of the unconscious. Its importance lies in that it is by these meanings that man is managed through experience and knowledge, to such an extent that something that has already been meant does not require any interpretation; but rather the meaning or meanings associated with the question presented will emerge from the unconscious and thus conform the related mental ideas. Hence, the human mind functions as a huge 'bank of meanings' that are stored in the brain and are also responsible for much of the consumption. As Lewis (2015) states, "Consumers buy to meet their needs. But they go shopping to satisfy their desires" (p. 37). In other words, capitalism gives desire the role of the driving force for meaning-related purchasing. Many of these meanings, when generated and stimulated with a strong emotional burden, achieve durability thanks to their significant energy burden, which will even keep them active throughout their lives. In such cases, these meanings acquire the characteristics of impasses. In the opposite direction, when meanings are created in the mind with weak energy loads and without subsequent stimuli, they tend to disappear or re-signify.

Essential marketing, whether domestic or international, is based on all products and services being interpreted from the meaning created in the consumer's mind. These meanings were generated at some point in the person's life, and today we know, thanks to psychology, that the vast majority of everyday meanings were created in the first seven years of life (they are the ones we use automatically on a day-to-day basis). Our essential marketing paradigm also supports the fact that people can change their meanings (re-meaning process) over time, and these meanings can even disappear because of the phenomenon of abruption, as we also know that consumer memories are actually much more creative and ductile than before.

On the other hand, thanks to the work of the French psychoanalyst Lacan (2007), we can say that meanings constantly change due to circumstantial or context issues, without even being able to control it.

From a neuroscientific point of view, it is known by Damasio (2004) that meaning is physiologically constituted as a neural path created by neurons interconnected through synapses, all from the action of different neurotransmitters that interact to shape that meaning. In short, what all authors agree on is that a meaning is not a concrete thing, but the psychic representation of the thing.

Now, we must cite the sociologist Blumer (1982), who presented in 1937 his postulates based on symbolic interaction, where he practically relied on the importance of working with meanings as the basis of any social plan, and which were used in our essential marketing paradigm:

1. Humans act on things based on the meanings these things have for them, or what is the same, people act on the meaning they attribute to the objects and situations around them.
2. The meaning of these things derives from an individual's social interaction with other actors.
3. These meanings are used as a process of interpretation carried out by the person in his/her relationship with the things, and are modified through that process (p. 79).

In 1937 Herbert Blumer anticipated that meaning would require an eminently different methodology, which led to the development of our 'meaning outcrop techniques', and these techniques of meaning outcrop will respond to these postulates (Paris, 2015b).

To summarize, we will give a definition of meaning, such as the essential aspect of marketing, so we can affirm that meaning is any interpretation that a person of a given society, culture and circumstance will give to a set of material, intangible or combination concepts of both. It is the psychic representation of the thing. It is a pure creation of the human mind.

From the point of view of standardization policies versus adaptation of international marketing, meanings created by different cultures from their individuals are the main obstacles to standardization policies. Although it seems that the knowledge about things was actually very similar, the way it is structured is not, especially for those products in which free will and free determination of the individual are linked to local or national cultures. Both aspects are very questioned, whether by how simple it really is to manipulate the human mind and the collective unconscious, but also for the same automations and the consumer myopia, as well as for the numerous mental biases (Paris, 2019). As meanings are essential in the process of searching, selecting, evaluating and purchasing of each individual, then they become essential to any international marketing plan. For example, guinea pig in Argentina means friendly pet and it is very loved by children; while in Ecuador it means exclusive delicacy of the Inca emperor, much appreciated by diners for the exquisite of its meat and it is used to caress a special guest.

5. Mobilizing aspects in the mind of the market, the impact on adaptation or standardization

It appears that the obsession with consumption in the capitalist world involved fighting towards the achievement of personal desires, which makes each person act autonomously, even carefree of the interests of the rest of the human world, which seems to be a jungle and in which the motto "everyman for himself" seems to be the only law, although there is an element that keeps humanity away from chaos, which involves an infamous report of selfish individuals. It is the collective unconscious, which somehow induces us to behave socially and acts as an invisible force that leads us to relate to others. Hence, markets have a mind which leads to social conduct based on human values and a common ethic governed by rules of coexistence. This collective unconscious acts as a kind of magnetic force that tends to align personal interests with the collective interests of all people.

It was Karl Gustav Jung (1984a) who best developed the idea of the collective unconscious and defined it as the "psychic inheritance", and presents it as a type of knowledge or ancestral images that everyone has, behaves and shares with each other. According to Jung these images are inherited in the structure of the brain, and it produces different ways of seeing them. They would even explain why many different nations possess similar legends and myths despite thousands of miles from each other and without having any contact in their pasts. This leads us to the idea that we can differentiate between two mental layers of the unconscious, one personal and one collective. The problem underlies when the interests of the person go in a different direction from that of their social group; thus, in those cases cognitive dissonance occurs. According to Lewis (2015) "cognitive dissonance can be defined as the feeling of discomfort that we experience when we try to sustain two beliefs at the same time, and that when faced create a conflict" (p. 44).

The collective unconscious is endowed with purpose and intentionality, whose energy strength lies on primordial or archaic elements called "archetypes", but also in the form of "codes of behavior", which in turn are divided into "symbolic codes" and "cultural codes", aspects that cannot be taken lightly, since it is known that both archetypes and codes of behavior govern many of our actions in everyday life and even in our social, work, intellectual, professional and cultural activity, as they tend to align our behavior with that of others, and whose neuroscientific correlate is the engrams of the reptile brain[1] for archetypes, and neural networks for behavioral codes. For example, when we get on a bus to make a long journey to home after a hard and exhausting day of work, we act according to one of the following two archetypes: 'selfish' or 'courteous', depending on whether there are women or only men inside and whether there are women with infants or elderly people, and the level of physical exhaustion of the individual will be acted upon with one or the other archetype. By activating one of these positions we practically leave the other sideways, and it will be very difficult for us to change on the fly, because we have taken a stance. Therefore, these aspects govern much of the 'day-to-day' of people in their social behavior, and particularly in the consumer behavior, so it is imperative that international marketing deals with these essential aspects effectively, because they are responsible for many of our daily actions linked to our lifestyle and social and cultural consumption. Through our essential marketing paradigm, we know that the issues of the collective unconscious of the market act as an invisible but decisive force that re-directs the final behaviors of the consumer at the moment of truth, i.e., when making their purchasing decisions.

Therefore, in the second research space, i.e. the mind of the market, we will determine the following aspects: archetypes and codes of behavior.

5.1. Archetypes as the basis of posture

As Jung (2005) states, an archetype has the following characteristics that define it:

> These are not legacy representations, but legacy possibilities for representations. Nor are they individual inheritances, but essentially general, as can be seen as archetypes being a universal phenomenon. (para. 3)

As observed above, archetypes function as true empty boxes (pre-formed and that we all possess), which can be charged with positive or negative energy giving absolutely opposite results. For example, depending on the information a person has on a given subject, if the person has scientific arguments on the subject in question, this person can be considered 'wise' which is a positive archetypal connotation. Now, this same person, when he/she does not know the subject matter in question, but nevertheless thinks without valid foundations or arguments, archetypal character will be of 'chatty', which would be the dark side of the same box linked to the knowledge of the individual. Therefore, archetypal figures may be required to identify certain aspects of human behavior and in particular consumption (those that incorporate certain character postures). The interesting thing about archetypal figurations is that they are recognized by all individuals, even belonging to different societies and cultures.

1 An engram is a very complex structure of stable neural interconnection networks that produce automatic responses even of behavior, as psychic engrams are executed through the conscious action of the individual.

However, in order to determine the archetypes defined by Jung (1984b) we have promoted in our books the use of projective research techniques, as well as the application of opposite semantics among other tools (Paris, 2015b).

To address this exciting topic, it is worth asking the following question: what are archetypes? For Jung, archetypes are archaic remnants or essential images, i.e. unconscious representations. Archetypes are structures of the collective unconscious. Some of them are on their positive-negative side: mother-stepmother, father-guardian, hero-coward, friend-traitor, idol-failure, despot-martyr, prophet-phony, wise-charlatan, priest-witch, saint-demon, etc., but a common aspect among them is that they are present inall societies and cultures, since somehow societies and their cultures converge towards these archetypal figures.

A noteworthy aspect of the archetype is that it does not have a specific shape, but it functions as an 'organizing principle' about the things we see or do and determines a quasi-automatic course of action. That is why Jung refers to them as species of 'boxes' or as molds that are in our minds and are part of our being, and whose content can be charged with positive energy (light side of the archetype) or with negative energy (dark side or archetype shadow). For example, the hero and the coward share the same box and can be activated with either energy depending on the circumstances that occur. To clarify this aspect, imagine the same person: if having a positive box, he/she will become a hero in a plane crash (because was instructed for such accidents and knows what to do and possesses the energy to do it); but in the face of the eminent sinking of the ship on which he/she is sailing he/she will act as a coward in trying to save himself/herself first, as cannot swim and gets panic in the water. As is apparent in this case, the energy for having that box will depend on the situation presented to the individual and the previous experience and knowledge. Carl Gustav Jung (1984a), explains it as follows:

> The contents of the personal unconscious are affective burden complexes that are part of the intimacy of mood life. On the other hand, the contents of the collective unconscious are called archetypes. (p.10)

As Pepe Martínez states (2008):

> Archetypes are symbols that represent relationships that are especially meaningful to humans. For example, the hero is the archetypal model of courage. Archetypes are universal references, i.e. consistent icons across space (different countries and values) and time (different historical epochs). (p. 69)

Because of this aspect of the archetype from the point of view of standardization versus adaptation policies, it can be considered as the main ally of standardization policies by one of its main characteristics already identified by Jung. Archetypes occur in all cultures, and they are similar. Thus, it is lawful to use the hero figure in an advertisement linked to the sale of a toilet cleaner, at least in the capitalist world.

5.2. Behavior codes as the basis of the bond

Behavior codes function as a network of interrelated meanings that serve the task of filtering people's behaviors, i.e. they can be described as filters of human behavior, and are formed as constructs or pattern of interconnected meanings in neural networks called symbolic codes or cultural codes. The first of these codes is handled primarily with natural symbols (these derive from the unconscious contents of the psyche), and therefore represent a huge number of variations of primitive and essential images that manifest in gestures and body postures that are generally easily interpreted. Many of them have archaic roots with an origin in the most primitive societies, to such an extent that even some superior primates are handled with these types of symbolic codes. In fact, when a gorilla raises his arms and hits his breasts, he is using a dominant type of symbolic code; just as two people who threaten to move their arms suggestively and violently during a fight.

On the other hand, the cultural code occurs when a person uses cultural concepts and rituals that have been used to manage those 'truths' that come from the work of man in his quest for reality, and they do so through knowledge science, art, religion and other forms of cultural communication. Now, the more rational people act, the more they control their emotions, and the more arguments used the more priority they will be given to the so called 'cultural codes', whose origin is obviously found in culture, which is defined as the personality of a given society.

From a neuroscientific point of view, codes of behavior are neural networks made up of neural pathways that have been intertwined by the action of a group of dopaminergic neurons, as Jonah Lehrer explains (2011) the interesting thing about this system is that it has to do with expectations. Dopaminergic neurons continuously generate patterns based on experience. The same author states that evolution has programmed us to care about each other through bonds, hence the importance of generating mental constructs in the form of codes of behavior that facilitate and order human coexistence in harmony.

The French author Clotaire Rapaille (2007) mentions that the different behaviors, customs and habits that different societies possess and that are created between different cultures are not really defined by the knowledge they have, but rather by the way knowledge was structured, even sometimes by circumstantial, casual or fortuitous reasons.

We see the code of behavior as a pattern of mentally interrelated meanings, which forms a fabric that acts as if meanings were the filter elements of social and cultural behavior. The truth is that with them we manage ourselves in everyday life, and through them we generate bonds with others, permanently filtering the information of the environment, taking only the 'mandate' and what comes from the depths of our collective unconscious and that is transferred to our daily life, since all our social and cultural acts are practically governed from them.

Religious, military, academic, theatrical, etc. behaviors as well as gestures or customs represent ritualized behaviors, which are codified and assumed by societies as natural. These codes involve a number of meanings, and because the meanings are cultural, the codes are also cultural, so they are typical of each society. Hence, it becomes totally valid to study these rites from international marketing at the time they are brewing and we do so through the methodologies offered by anthropology, such as observation. The set of codes of a given society is what defines the filters through which it perceives, interprets and understands its world in the daily basis, and it is what usually makes us uncomfortable when we get in a different country, precisely the knowledge of its codes. The codes become collective patterns within a given society and in a certain culture, and these codes are transferred from one person to another through the generations (sometimes with some semantic changes with the corresponding contextual adaptations, and rarely with structural or background changes). Codes are the keys to the behavior of different communities and ethnicities, so if you want to understand them you will have to interpret them from deciphering what you are looking through them, since this knowledge is not written anywhere. Now, if the social bonds pursued by these codes are interpreted and create a bridge with the market and its consumers, a strategic alignment with the market mind code can be achieved, and then the communication will be aligned or 'in-code'. In this case, the consumer (subject to demand) will see how companies' promises are compatible with his/her illusions. And in this way the messages of the offer (object of the offer) will generate the desired response. But,

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when the perceptible elements do not match the code, then there will be dissonance, which will result in a strong rejection by the consumer. In these cases, we will say that the promise of the offer will be 'off-code'.

From the point of view of standardization versus adaptation policies, codes of behavior, when governing consumption, need to be analyzed in depth as they generally report changes in different cultures, becoming a real problem for standardization attempts. For example, the ritual of cognac consumption is very different in Mexico, Colombia and Argentina. Mexicans drink it cold and with soda or water, Colombians at room temperature and in a shot glass, and Argentinians have a ritual that requires heating the glass with a lighter and drinking the cognac by short sips while chatting. The product is the same, but its codes of behavior vary even between Latin American sub-cultures.

6. Consumer behavior from the essential marketing paradigm

Figure 4 presents how the consumer's lifestyle is formed by the personality itself and its culture, and it can also be visualized how the attributes must relate to the personal and social values of the individual to conform the new products and services of the offer, so that the orientation to the purchase facilitates the commercial action of the company.

Figure 4. Consumer values and lifestyle

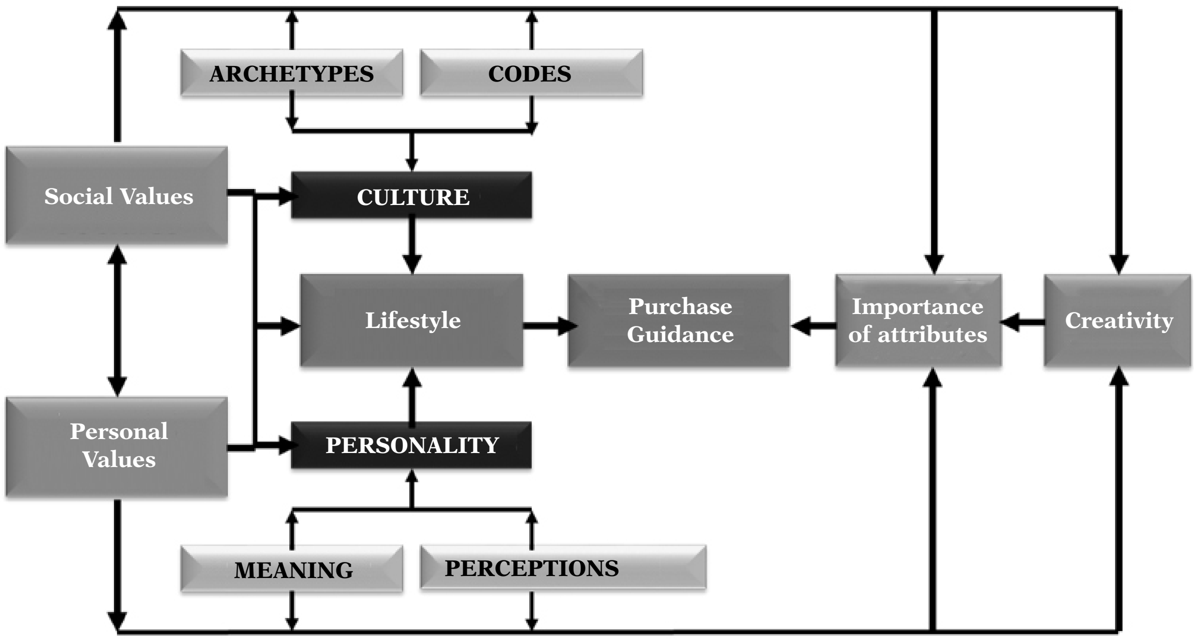

Figure 4 shows that we present a business management model from our essential marketing paradigm, and which is based on the one hand on perceptions and meanings that are created based on needs and desires; and on the other hand on codes of behavior and archetypes that are based on the bonds and postures. It is also seen that values are lifestyle precedents and act as determinants of both personal and social aspects and principles through ethics. Then, if values are cancelled, as a result identity would be lost, because it is linked to a certain culture (which can be seen as the personality of a certain society) and of course this is added to the individual's own personality.

One of the aspects that has been more interpreted is the so-called buyer behavior code or pattern of purchasing behavior, also referred to in the marketing literature as patronage. The model in Figure 4 inspired by Carman's work (1978) shows how values influence a particular pattern or model of consumer behavior. As Francisco Saravia (2009) states:

> Values become the causes of people's interests and they assume a number of roles that, in turn, are the reasons for the activities in which they spend their time. Each set of variables (terminal values, instrumental values, interests, roles, and activities performed in free time) influences purchasing behavior. (p.49)

In addition to the role of the researcher with his/her methodologies, it must also be added the marketer's own creativity, in order to provide distinction to the marketing plan, but always on the basis of what is researched both in the mind of the consumer and in the mind of the market.

7. Consumer analysis from the essential paradigm to its international application

It is expected that a new marketing paradigm will require a new research methodology, even more so today, when many authors have been criticizing the traditional methodology of consumer analysis and market research. Especially from the moment authors such as Clancy and Shulman (1998) who, in their book called *the marketing revolution* published in the 1990s, already anticipated that the marketing revolution would not be guided by new data or new technology (although both will contribute to it).

In reality, information is the input and technology is the tool. Inputs always contribute, tools change to adapt to the moment, but concepts are the ones that endure. After more than twenty years of having published the book, this assertion has demonstrated the success of their prediction, because these authors were already brazenly critical of the consumer analysis systems and research methodologies used. Even in the early 21st century, Kevin J. Clancy and Peter C. Krieg, in their book *Marketing, not intuition*, insist that most companies do not investigate well, so the authors state the following:

> We believe this is the case of many marketing successes: the right product was in the right place at the right time. Intuition, creativity and 'catching the wave' were surely much more important than a logical process or a solid investigation into obtaining the result. (Clancy & Krieg, 2004, p. 65)

But, the harsh criticisms continue to this day, for example, the Danish neuroscientist Martin Lindstrom in his book *Buy-ology* (2009) also stated:

> By 2003, it was clear that traditional market research methods or focus groups were no longer used to find out what consumers really think. That was because our irrational mind, endowed with cultural prejudices rooted in tradition, parenting and a whole series of subconscious factors, exerts a powerful but veiled influence in our decisions. (Lindstrom, 2009, p. 21)

Also from our experience as both domestic and international marketing consultants, we realized that an analysis methodology was required, which would adapt to the requirements that demanded the determination and interpretation of the four essential and basal aspects of the marketing plan: perceptions, meanings, codes and archetypes. For this reason, we developed a heuristic, holistic methodology with a marked eclecticism, without this meaning an ideological contamination that would involve using hybrid methods according to the expressions of Schütz (1999), since these are corruptible and often confuse the researcher when choosing subjective or objective methodologies, and to definitively end with the dichotomy that has caused so many problems to science. Hence, Schütz invites us to maintain the coherence of the research and to guide a research scheme without taking parallel routes, as tempting as they may seem to us. In other words, Schütz invites us to maintain the 'purity of the method'. Now, even if our methodology is fundamentally empirical, we do not neglect the scientific method in its application, as stated by Alfred Schütz (2012):

> We should emphasize that the careful description of the processes that allow one man to understand the thoughts and actions of another is a requirement of the methodologies of the empirical social sciences. The question of how a scientific interpretation of human action is possible can be solved only if it is previously adequately determined how man can understand the action of the other in the natural attitude of daily life and common sense. (p. 33)

Therefore, in our research methodology the aim is not to concentrate in the consequences of man's actions but to try to determine their causes. Therefore, we are interested in knowing "what for" and "why" people do what they do. What will force us to determine these "what for" and "why" of the consumer, since our field of action is the market and within it man, in his role as national or international consumer.

8. Integration of essential aspects in the face of consumer analysis

It is clear that according to our essential marketing paradigm the decision of the consumer to purchase has its base in some of these four motivators already presented in this article. It is also true that it is not always so easy to identify them and in many cases it seems that several of them act simultaneously, although it is also true that one of them is always the determinant.

One aspect to make emphasis on is that even though the essential market research methodology requires greater expertise, the implementation of the domestic or international marketing plan is greatly simplified, since the determination of the essential purchase motivator works as a facilitator of tactical marketing. To facilitate these initial difficulties, we have created specialized consumer research techniques, such as the meaning outcrop technique, and we have adapted other research methodologies to interpret perceptions, codes of behavior and dominant archetypal figures, which seek to give the researcher a powerful tool to narrow that appreciation. We have included these techniques in our book *Essential Market Research* (Paris, 2015b).

Although we must clarify that even though we will surely bridge the gap between meaning in the consumer's mind with the researcher's perception, it will remain being a perception, since reality will always be distinguished in what is scientifically perceived by man. According to Popper (1985), what we are doing with these research techniques and methodologies is try to observe the reality in order to get a greater number of aspects of that reality and thus achieve a greater approach to the truth, which in this case is in the mind of the market and the consumer. But, we must clarify that we are still assuming that what the specialized researcher will collect will remain being a perception, even if it is closer to reality and surely also more professional and effective. However, we are aware that the most rational decision does not involve obtaining the best results, because in human affairs there is almost always the chance and anticipated conjectures mobilized by the confirmatory effect and denial of variance that can also further hinder the results. But, with experience, expertise and the number of observations, chance tends to balance and disappear. For this purpose, the researcher must be free from all bias and particular interest and be a correct implementer of the techniques in order not to be part of the same result. Hence, expertise is a requirement when applying the research techniques and methodologies presented and that we promote to determine these important four aspects of essential marketing, mainly for their international application.

9. Discussion and conclusions

As presented in article, we have not questioned whether a standardization policy is feasible or not, or whether adaptation is required because of the consequences that this policy would entail, no arguments were described for or against both policies, neither for rejecting them, but the idea was to analyze through the essential foundations of the international marketing plan whether the four essential aspects drive or limit the concept of standardization or adaptation. On the one hand, perceptions and meanings act in the mind of the consumers on their needs and desires; and the codes of behavior and archetypal figurations act on the bonds and positions adopted by individuals. The real causes that can support or hinder one policy or the other are in this aspect. It means that from the essential marketing paradigm, we affirm that these four strategic aspects can collaborate or can also hinder the development of one or the other international marketing policy. Not identifying which of these are the factors, not interpreting them and then working with them from the basis of an international marketing plan means like working blindly on an unsteady conceptual basis, and of course with very little chance of achieving the long-awaited market success.

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Social advertising and its influence on the perception of social campaigns for the prevention of traffic accidents in Ecuador

Publicidad social y su influencia en la percepción de las campañas sociales de prevención de accidentes de tránsito en Ecuador

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Abstract

The present article analyzes the perceptions that the adult public of Cuenca city in Ecuador has about the social campaigns of traffic accident prevention. The theoretical framework is constituted by the theories associated with social marketing and social advertising, analyzing the relationship that exists between change agents and target adopters. The methodology consisted of a mixed research, allowing the administration of interviews and 400 surveys to citizens, between 18 and 49 years of Cuenca city. The fundamental objectives were aimed at knowing the perception of the citizenship regarding the social campaigns of accident prevention, discovering the level of citizen awareness towards the problem of traffic accidents in Ecuador, and investigating people´s opinion about the co-responsibility for road safety in the city. The results showed that there is a general lack of knowledge about road prevention campaigns, and that, in addition, the messages issued by agents of change are not clear enough. In conclusion, the target adopter remembers the messages in a very dispersed way, and does not get empowered either with the campaigns despite understanding the information of the messages issued. Finally, both change agents and target adopters agree that social advertising campaigns are necessary to change public behavior, reduce accidents and improve citizens´ quality of life.

Resumen

El presente artículo analiza las percepciones que el público adulto de la ciudad de Cuenca en Ecuador tiene sobre las campañas sociales de prevención de accidentes de tránsito. El marco teórico lo constituyen las teorías asociadas al mercadeo social y a la publicidad social, analizando la relación que existe entre los agentes de cambio y los adoptantes objetivo. La metodología se apropia de una investigación mixta, la cual permitió la aplicación de entrevistas y 400 encuestas a ciudadanos, entre los 18 y 49 años de la ciudad de Cuenca. Los objetivos fundamentales estaban dirigidos a conocer la percepción de la ciudadanía respecto a las campañas sociales de prevención de accidentes, identificar el nivel de conciencia ciudadana respecto a la problemática de los accidentes de tránsito en Ecuador, e investigar la opinión de los ciudadanos respecto a la corresponsabilidad de la seguridad vial en la ciudad. Los resultados evidencian que hay un desconocimiento generalizado sobre las campañas de prevención vial, y que, además, los mensajes emitidos por los agentes de cambio no son claros. Se concluye que el adoptante objetivo recuerda los mensajes de manera muy dispersa, no se empodera de las campañas a pesar de comprender la información de los mensajes emitidos. Finalmente, tanto agentes de cambio como adoptantes objetivo están de acuerdo que las campañas de publicidad social son necesarias para cambiar la conducta pública, disminuir la accidentalidad y mejorar la calidad de vida de los ciudadanos.

Keywords | palabras clave

Social advertising, social marketing, social campaigns, traffic accidents, Ecuador.
Publicidad social, mercadeo social, campañas sociales, accidentes de tránsito, Ecuador.

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1. Introduction

Social advertising (SA) has become increasingly important in the field of communication by multiple circumstances, being the most relevant the ones related to the large number of social problems affecting society, and by the need to improve the quality of life of citizens.

One of the difficulties that SA has had in Latin America is that theories and conceptual advances have been lagging behind, because the practice of campaigns has had more importance compared to a conceptualization that allows to create a theory with strong epistemological bases. However, in recent years SA has become the subject of research by important theorists such as Kotler and Roberto (1992), Muñoz (2001), Benet and Nos-Aldás (2003), Barranco (2005), Eguizábal (2009), Alvarado (2012), Kotler et al. (2013), Rodrigo and Rodrigo (2013), Rosario-Ubiera (2014), among others.

One of the biggest problems of Latin America is the high rate of car accidents, which affects negatively the quality of life of people. In Ecuador, infant mortality and morbidity from road traffic accidents reaches alarming figures, even though legal and coercive measures have had a positive effect on reducing mortality from car accidents (Ministerio del Interior, 2014).

For this reason, this article aims to know some of the fundamental theoretical elements of SA and the society's perception of car accident prevention campaigns in the city of Cuenca (Ecuador).

1.1. Social advertising

SA originated from the conceptual development of social marketing (SM), especially from the postulates of Kotler and Roberto (1992), who in their book "Social Marketing: Strategies to Change Public Behavior" reveal the differences with commercial marketing. Some of the fundamental elements of SM can be synthesized in the following postulates: (a) the focus is on seeking behavioral changes by citizens (Moliner, 1998; Pinilla, 2011); b) those who issue social messages are called "agents of change" because they seek changes in behavior (Orozco-Toro & Ferré-Pavia, 2015); (c) target audiences are known as "objective adopters", as they are called to adopt new behaviors and represent "individuals, groups, entire populations, which are the target of calls to change by the social marketing agent" (Kotler & Roberto, 1992, p. 20); d) we do not work with products but with problems to face, so the institutions must offer the solutions (Alvarado, 2005).

In addition, one of the most important changes is the focus in marketing since the product is considered intangible in the SM because it turns into ideas, beliefs, values or attitudes assumed by the adopting objectives. Price is conceived as the effort or time that the adopter assumes for social change. The promotion responds to the use of the integrated marketing communication actions used to disseminate the campaign. Finally, the location refers to the place where the benefits of social actions or distribution media to supply the social product are presented (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Gómez & Quintanilla, 1988; French et al., 2011).

While it is true that SM has been the fundamental basis for the generation of SA-related theories, the theories and functions of social campaigns led by agents of change with a view to generating new behaviors in target adopters are more important nowadays.

1.2. Social advertising

The concept of SA can be understood as "an organized effort led by a group (the agent of change), which seeks to persuade others (objective adopters) to accept, modify or abandon certain ideas, attitudes, practices and behaviors" (Kotler & Roberto, 1992, p. 7). Under these conditions, SA can be considered relatively new, because although this 1992 definition appears in the academic world, its origins are conceived in 1942 "when advertising tactics are put at the service of public utility issues away from any commercial interest" (Baños & Rodríguez, 2009, p. 218). From another perspective, Gumucio-Dagron (2011) assumes that the further development of SA is presented from 1997, when the Rockefeller Foundation discussed the role of communication in social changes.

In this context, SA has been gaining an important space in communication, especially in Latin American countries (Pérez, 2006; Taricco, 2009; Vergara & Rodríguez, 2010; Orozco-Toro & Muñoz-Sánchez, 2019). This type of more informative and educational advertising that looks for participation, is absolutely necessary for the solution of social problems that affect developing countries, and despite important social campaigns in Latin America: "the bulk of the industry has continued to work mostly for commercial causes, with social advertising being scarce and delegated to less dissemination in large mass media due to the scarcity of budgets" (Alvarado, 2012, p. 199).

SA campaigns must meet a number of conditions to make their communication more efficient (Orozco, 2010; Dueñas et al., 2015; López-Medina, 2019). In this regard, some of the most relevant condition are presented:

Persuasion and deterrence. SA campaigns must implement both deterrence (seek for citizens to abandon harmful behaviors such as drug use or driving when liquor has been ingested), as well as persuasive communication (incentivize blood donation or the use of seat belt when driving).

Preventive communication. The best possible strategy of SA is to try to prevent situations about a communication that appeals to contingency (prevention in drug use or warn about the danger of consuming liquor when driving).

Education and information. Communication should be sought to inform and educate adoptees (perform technical and mechanical reviews on cars to prevent accidents).

Intangibility. SA faces the difficult task of selling the idea of altruism, solidarity or volunteering; more complex tasks as they involve the mobility and effort of the target adopters.

Message type. SA may assume that messages do not frighten target adopters who are based on achievable ideas, that reality is not oversized, and especially may show problems but also possible solutions.

It is clear that SA has conditions that make it different from its commercial counterpart, even in the way the latest research on its performance has been addressed (Leal, 2000). From this area, the greatest efforts are made around the behaviors of citizens in the face of advertising action (Saghi & Lotfabadi, 2016), or changes in the behaviors and attitudes of target adopters (Aydin & Koc, 2016). In the Ibero-American context, the greatest efforts have been presented in Spain, with some specific contributions in Latin America. The studies are varied and focused on the effectiveness of SA on television (Rosario-Ubiera, 2014), advertising messages of social causes in times of crisis (Rodrigo & Rodrigo, 2013), SA in universities (Arroyo, 2014), rhetoric in the SA (Cano, 2015), or the incidence of SA in the image of a brand (Orozco-Toro & Ferré-Pavia, 2015), the abuse of the social aspect in advertising (Alvarado, 2009), and communication for social change (Dagron, 2011). The biggest difficulty of research in

SA is that its effects cannot be glimpsed, in most cases, in the short term. Since SA mainly seeks changes in behavior, these changes occur more slowly than those sought by commercial advertising (Martínez, 1998). Even SA will not be able to contribute to social transformation if it does not attack the true roots of social problems (Arely & Martín, 2017).

This is how road safety-related behavior transforms in any social group, and will also involve great efforts for the agent of change and for target adopters. From the perspective of car accidents, social advertising campaigns have shown to reduce the incidence of people driving when they have drunk alcohol (Sar & Anghelce, 2015).

Social advertising campaigns have a positive influence when are developed based on a previous strategy with a responsible intention (Saiz et al., 2018). Likewise, the impact of a campaign for social purposes should be measured not only by the number of people who have donated blood, by the amount of money raised for a charity, or by the decrease in accidents, but also by researching through surveys and studies of attitudes to the various adopter objectives.

2. Materials and method

The main objective of this research was to understand the perception of target adopters regarding social campaigns for the prevention of car accidents in the city of Cuenca (Ecuador).

The research methodology was mixed. In qualitative research, in-depth interviews were conducted (instrument of 27 questions), in order to know the perception of citizens about social campaigns carried out in the city of Cuenca, regarding the prevention of car accidents and the interest of people with regard to the subject.

400 surveys (8-question instrument) were applied to people from 18 and 49 years old for the quantitative research. The sampling method was carried out in high-traffic locations, where people of various socio-economic and cultural levels were surveyed. According to the estimate of the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Ecuador, the approximate population of Cuenca is 580,706 inhabitants in 2015, for this reason 400 surveys were applied, representing a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%; therefore, the sample is statistically representative.

The specific objectives of the investigation were aimed at highlighting the perception of citizens regarding social accident prevention campaigns; identify the level of citizen awareness of the problem of car accidents in Ecuador; investigate citizens' views on the co-responsibility of road safety in the city of Cuenca; and finally, investigate which factor they consider more important to improve road safety.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative research results

The survey was conducted by a face-to-face questionnaire to 400 individuals, men and women in the age range of the proposed target adopter; in this way, a representative sample was obtained. Some elements of the empirical study are described below (Table 1).

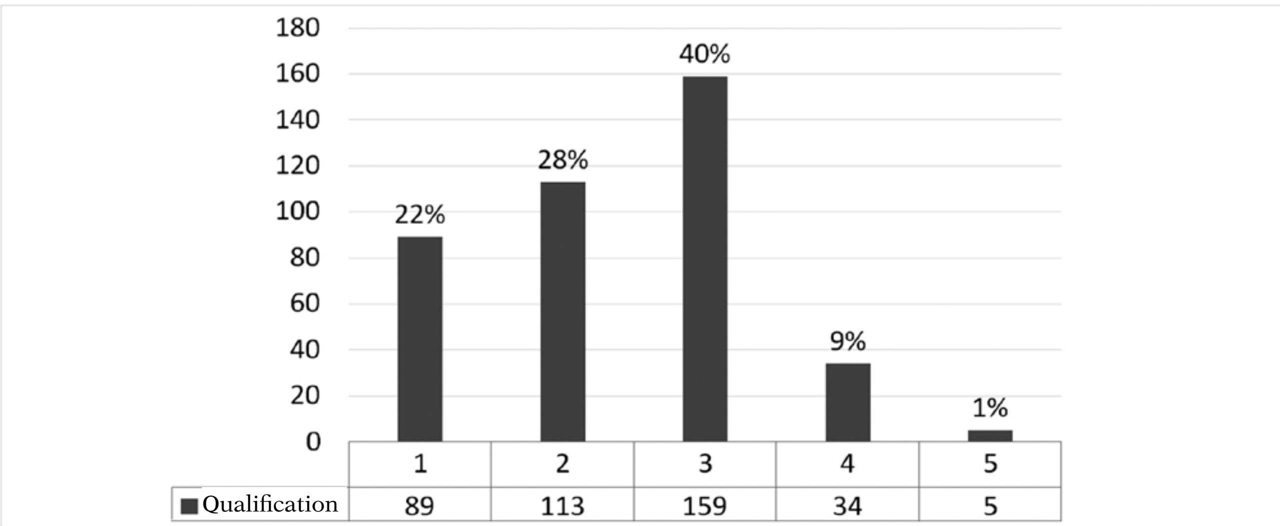
Table 1. Fieldwork specifications

Methodological procedure	Face-to-face survey	
Geographical area	Cuenca-Ecuador	
Total of questionnaires	400	
Gender	51% Women 49% Men	
Distribution of sample ages	32%	18 to 25 years
	29%	26 to 33 years
	25%	34 to 41 years
	14%	42 to 49 years
Distribution of the level of education	4%	Elementary
	47%	High School
	35%	University
	14%	Graduate

Source: Own Elaboration.

When answering the questions in the questionnaire when consulting respondents, how do you consider the behavior of most drivers in the city? On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 terrible and 5 excellent), the results determine that 50% of respondents answered 1 and 2 (no or little respect for pedestrians), at least 10% consider that there is respect from the driver to the pedestrian (sum of options 4 and 5). The average value of this rating is 2.38.

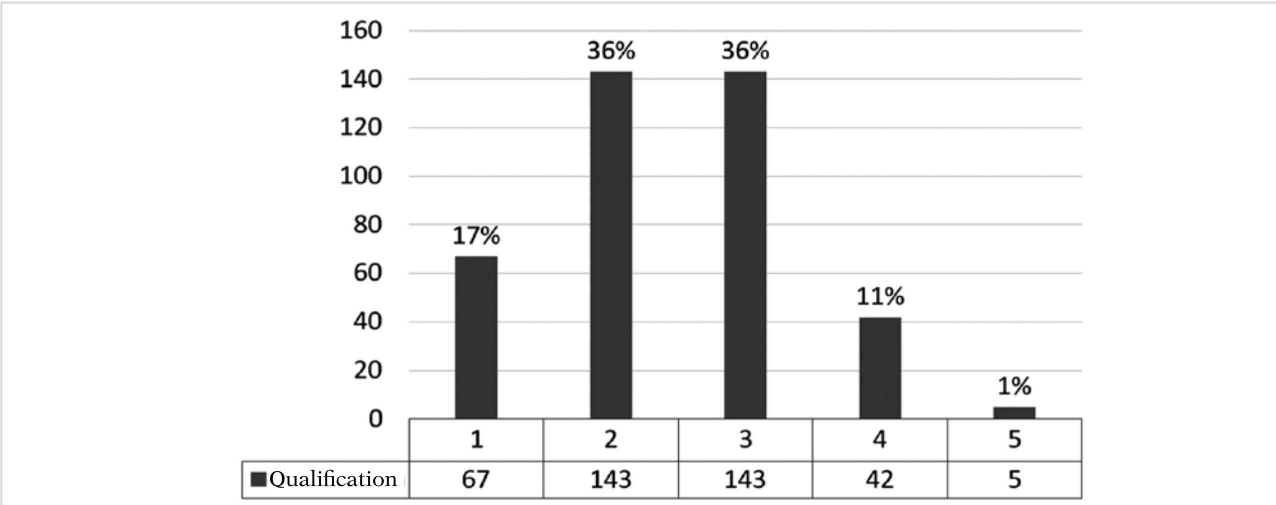
Figure 1. Perception of the respect that drivers have for the pedestrian



Source: own elaboration

The following question asks about the perception of a driver's respect for other drivers. 53% of respondents (answers 1 and 2) observe low respect among drivers, just 12% (answers 4 and 5). The average obtained from all respondents is 2.44.

Figure 2. Perception of the respect that drivers have for other drivers

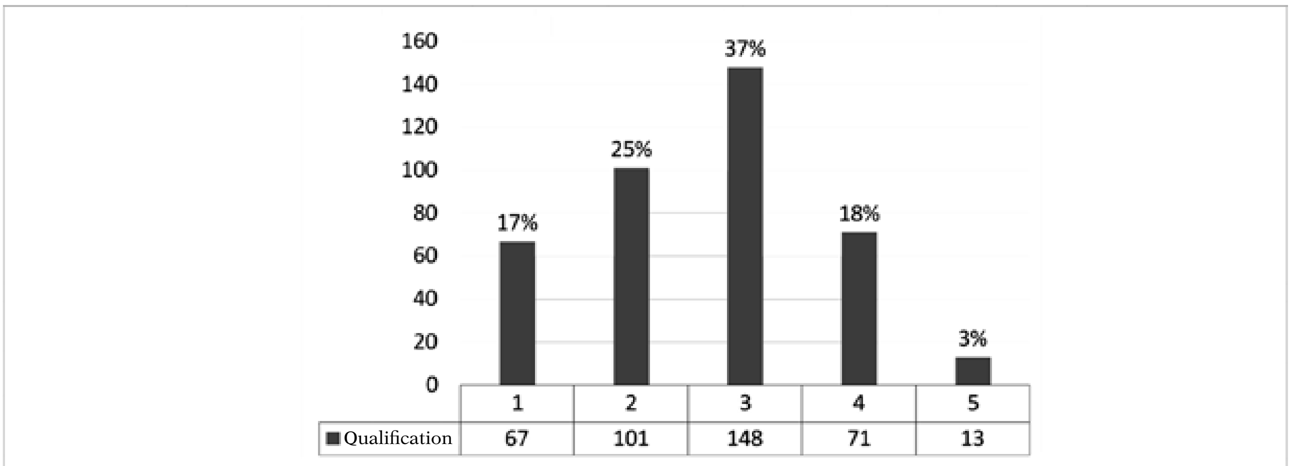


Source: own elaboration

The respondents were asked about the respect of the drivers at the pedestrian crossing. From the point of view of respondents, it is perceived that only 1% of drivers respect it, and on the other hand, almost 70% have low or no respect for this sign (answers 1 and 2). The overall average for this question is the lowest of all points evaluated with 2.06.

Similarly, when consulting on the perception of the respect that drivers have for traffic signs, it is observed that only 21% (responses 4 and 5) of the population perceive that drivers adequately respect traffic signals. 42% say drivers respect these signal very little or nothing. The average value for this review is 2.66.

Figure 3. Perception of drivers' respect for traffic signs

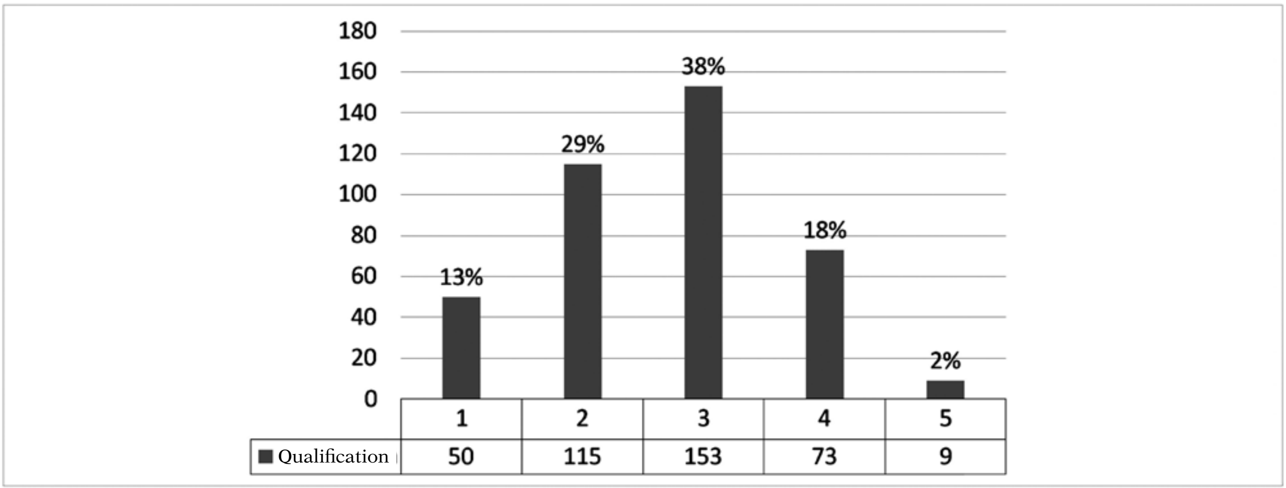


Source: own elaboration

In the question "how do you think pedestrians behave when walking the city?" the results indicate that approximately 31% (answers 1 and 2) consider this aspect as deficient, 29% (answers 4 and 5) rate it as appropriate. The average rate of all respondents is 2.94.

When requesting to assess pedestrian respect for drivers, 42% (answers 1 and 2) of the population think it is very low, while 20% think that there is adequate respect. The average rate obtained is 2.69.

Figure 4. Perception of the respect that pedestrians have to the drivers



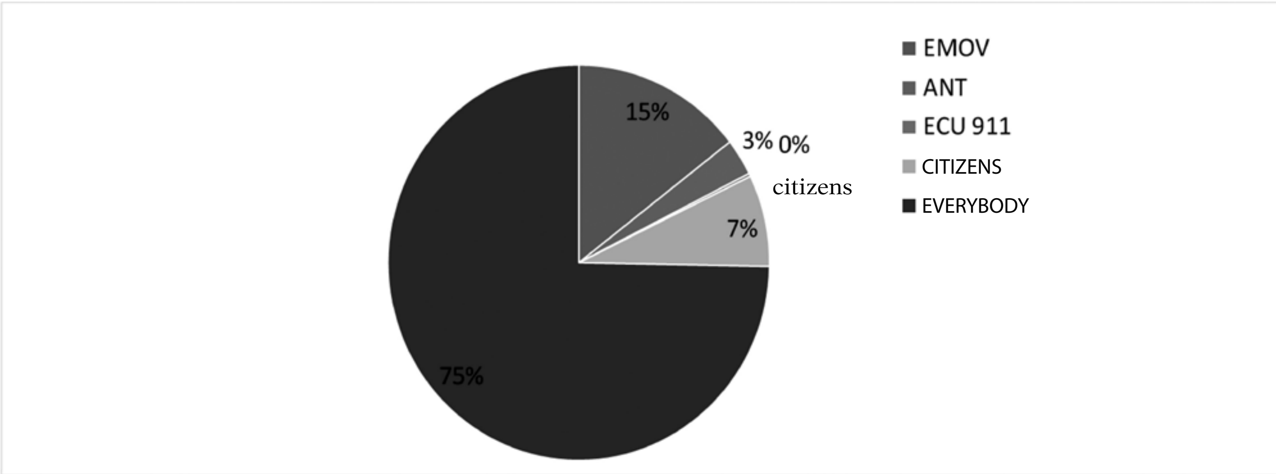
Source: own elaboration

The respect for traffic signs by pedestrians also has a very low rate on the part of respondents, since the perception of 51% of respondents (answers 1 and 2), is that there is very little or no respect for traffic signals. It should be noted that pedestrians may also be fined for disrespecting traffic signs. The overall average for this review is 2.5, the second lowest for pedestrians.

In relation to road safety responsibility, 75% of respondents consider it to be everyone's responsibility; however, 15% believe that government mobility entities are directly responsible.

When asking the adequacy of education for the prevention of car accidents, 89% of respondents stated that education is insufficient in relation to the prevention of car accidents. Finally, the question of the most important factor to achieve a change in behaviors, attitudes and behaviors to improve road safety, 59% of respondents consider that education is the factor with more impact to achieve a change of behavior in citizens, followed by 20% who request more information.

Figure 5. Perception of the responsibility of road safety



Source: own elaboration

3.2. Results of the qualitative research

There is a first approach to the perception and thinking of citizenship through the qualitative research. The results determine that the target adopters are willing to talking about road safety, making it easier to accept the messages to be communicated regarding road safety. However, when mentioning about social campaigns focused on road safety, there is no marked reminder about any. In this case, there is no social campaign with a strong positioning in the perception of the adoptive objective.

There is not any known agent of change for the road safety promoter in Cuenca. Although there is a presence in various media, there is no validation of the information issued by the agent of change by the target adopter.

Messages issued by agents of change are easy to understand by citizens. Most respondents recalled at least one message linked to the prevention of car accidents in current and previous campaigns. But, the receptivity to social prevention campaigns is limited, as an example, everyone understands messages of respect for speed limits, not to use the mobile phone while driving, among others, but the action requested in the messages issued by the agents of change is executed in a little effective way by the adopter objective.

When asking specific questions during the interviews, interviewees report certain basic conditions of road prevention campaigns. For example, when asking regarding campaigns related to accident prevention, most interviewees remember "some campaign," but with a zero level of recall for a specific campaign topic. Some relevant answers were:

> Yes. I once saw in downtown young men disguised as mimes, who promoted respect for pedestrian crossing. (Man, 35 years old) Yes. Do not park in bus stops (Woman, 30 years old) Yes. But I don't remember well. (Woman, 32 years old)

Subsequently, when asking for the opinion on the messages issued in road prevention campaigns, the interviewees conclude that there is no proper generation of the messages. Some responses account for the situation:

> Campaigns need to reach people. (Woman, 35 years old) Messages are interesting, but they should be more broadcasted (Woman, 30 years old) It is motivating, those messages are heard all the time on the radio with terms that are used here. (Woman, 32 years old)

In relation to the widespread ignorance of interviewees about road prevention campaigns, they were asked how they believe that messages should be issued by agents of change. The most important answers account for the following aspects:

> With more colors and a catchy phrase that really motivates (Woman, 30 years old With more road diffusion, on fences and with giant photographs. (Man, 27 years old) I would use characters as if it were a soap opera. (Woman, 26 years old) Campaigns must be included at schools, there are people who do not know the traffic signs and their meaning. (Man, 30 years old)

Generally speaking, responses are coincidental and are based on improving elements of communications, especially those related to images, colors, traffic signs, among others. In this way, the most relevant responses of qualitative research show that:

- Concepts in theory and information are clear about the importance of prevention and road safety.
- There is not a significant level of recall of any current campaign. Some interviewees still remember old campaigns.
- For most adoptive objective, there is no information from social campaigns concerning the prevention of car accidents.
- Citizens remember some messages and are willing to collaborating in the aspects they consider important.
- According to the criteria of the interviewees in relation to the perception of campaigns, a lot more needs to be done and campaigns have been insufficient to achieve results that last in the long term.

4. Conclusions and discussion

The adopting objectives are aware that there are social campaigns on car prevention, however, the messages issued by the agents of change do not have a good reception. The effort in communication by agents of change is important, but despite this, the adopting objective remembers messages in a very dispersed way, and does not empower thanks to the messages despite understanding the information of the messages issued, and the action proposed by the agents of change is not fulfilled.

Citizens are willing to comply with the laws and respect the rules, however, a change of attitude is required by conviction, which would lead to changing the behavior that would last over time, and take coercive action gradually as the social campaign process progresses.

There are very few campaigns aimed at adult audiences with the main objective of preventing car accidents. It is assumed that there were not specific actions at the city level and probably at the national level, or it was not possible to capture the attention of the adopting objective.

The unresponsiveness on the part of the adopter target towards social campaigns to prevent road traffic accidents in the city of Cuenca is confirmed.

Although there is an interest in road safety, the recall level of a specific campaign is very low. However, this element that relates to the scope of the campaign is not directly linked to the receptivity on the part of the adopter objective. But it can be observed in the behavior of individuals and their actions within the social group, that even if there are certain changes in attitudes, much needs to be done to achieve a real change of behavior that demonstrates greater social development.

Qualitative research shows that the messages that citizens remember are very scarce in terms of the prevention of car accidents. With regard to messages related to child safety, they are scarce and have reached very little in the perception of citizens.

Citizens are willing to talk about the subject, making it easier to accept the messages to communicate regarding road safety. It could also be seen that there is a certain level of awareness about the consequences of a car accident.

Several social campaigns related to road safety are alluded to, however, there is no marked reminder about any. Although the scope of campaigns cannot be measured by the level of recall, it is an important parameter. According to the qualitative research, there is no social campaign with a strong positioning in the perception of the adoptive objective.

Messages issued by agents of change are easy for citizens to understand, most interviewees remembered at least one message related to prevention of car accidents in current and previous campaigns, but receptivity to social car accident prevention campaigns is limited. To mention one example, adopters understand messages of respect for speed limits, not to use the mobile phone while driving, not to consume alcohol when driving. In contrast, the requested action on messages issued by agents of change is executed in ineffectively.

There is a perception that there has been no good media management, and that images, stories and graphs do not impact citizenship. Every element must transmit, identify emotionally with individuals, speak for themselves, generate feelings, become part of what the adopter seeks and that he/she gets involved with the cause of the campaign.

Citizens are willing to comply with the laws and respect the rules, but a change of attitude is required by conviction, and it would lead to changing the behavior that lasts over time and to take coercive action as the social campaign progresses.

The perception that there are no adequate controls for the prevention of car accidents is quite high. This factor contributes to the concept that the solution is not in the hands of social advertising only. Enduring behavior changes are achieved by conviction and also probably by cultural factors that require the support of control entities.

The adopting objectives, despite understanding the messages issued by the agents of change, do not generate a change of attitude. In this sense it is important to note that citizens are not visualizing the problem, do not see its importance, and do not recognize it as its own.

It is not expected that only social advertising will solve all the problems that exist in the area of social campaign performance and existing social problems. However, social advertising can become a promoter of social change for the adoption of new behaviors, and thus, at some point, to create different realities in a society that everyone wants to be part and be proud of.

It is essential to give a twist to the agents of change by designing strategies with the aim of improving the perception of citizens about social campaigns carried out for the prevention of car accidents in Cuenca, and successfully executing these strategies.

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Effects of Covid-19 on consumer behavior: Ecuador case

Efectos del Covid-19 en el comportamiento del consumidor: Caso Ecuador

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Abstract

Confinement as one of the measures decreed in the health emergency by the Ecuadorian government to counteract the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 or Covid-19 virus, has been reflected in consumer behavior. The purpose of this study is to know the effects that this emerging measure causes in the consumption behavior of people, using the measurement of variables related to personal, social, psychological and cultural factors. A sample of 658 consumers was surveyed in five cities in Ecuador: Cuenca, Guayaquil, Loja, Machala and Quito. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to check the theoretical hypotheses. These theories were accepted considering three dimensions: the loads of the indicators analyzed through the Loadings test> 0.7; the internal consistency reliability measured through the Cronbach Alpha composite reliability test (CR)> 0.7, for the constructs of purchasing behavior, social, personal, psychological and cultural factors; and the convergent validity observed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test> 0.5 for the five constructs. The results show that the relations between consumer behavior and personal, social, psychological and cultural factors are significantly associated, which provides some guidelines to understand consumer behavior and better meet needs in times of crisis.

Resumen

El confinamiento como una de las medidas decretadas en la emergencia sanitaria por el gobierno ecuatoriano para contrarrestar el impacto del virus SARS-CoV-2 o Covid-19, se ha visto reflejado en el comportamiento del consumidor. El propósito de este estudio es conocer los efectos que esta medida emergente ocasiona en el consumo de las personas, utilizando la medición de variables relacionadas con los factores personales, sociales, psicológicos y culturales. Se encuestó una muestra de 658 consumidores en cinco ciudades del Ecuador: Cuenca, Guayaquil, Loja, Machala y Quito. Se utilizó el Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales (SEM) para comprobar las hipótesis teóricas. Estas teorías fueron aceptadas considerando tres dimensiones: las cargas de los indicadores analizadas a través del test *Loadings* >0.7; la confiabilidad de consistencia interna medida a través del test de confiabilidad compuesta (CR) y Cronbach Alpha >0.7, para los constructos de comportamiento de compra, factores sociales, personales, psicológicos y culturales; y la validez convergente observadas a través del test *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) > 0.5 para los cinco constructos. Los resultados muestran que las relaciones entre el comportamiento del consumidor y los factores personales, sociales, psicológicos y culturales se encuentran asociadas significativamente, lo cual proporciona algunas pautas para entender el comportamiento del consumidor y satisfacer mejor las necesidades en tiempo de crisis.

Keywords | palabras clave

Consumer behavior, consumption in Covid-19, entertainment, personal relationships, sustainability, çemotional health, customs.
Comportamiento del consumidor, consumo en Covid-19, entretenimiento, relaciones personales, sostenibilidad, salud emocional, costumbres.

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1. Introduction

Once the World Health Organization declared the current Covid-19 coronavirus as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, countries have declared a state of emergency to prevent transmission of this disease.

According to CEPAL study (2020), Covid-19 will cause serious economic and social effects in the short and long term, the intensity and depth of which will depend on the conditions of each economy, world trade, the duration of the epidemic and social and economic measures to prevent contagion. Businesses in the commercial, education, tourism, transportation, manufacturing and natural resources sectors will be affected by the suspension of domestic productive activity, leading to unemployment and lower economic growth; the economy in Latin America and the Caribbean is projected to fall by -9.1% by 2020 due to Covid-19.

The Government of Ecuador, with 58 positive cases and 2 deaths, took six emerging measures on 16 March, 2020: (i) close public services except health, safety and risk services, (ii) open hospitals, neighborhood stores, markets and supermarkets, (iii) cancel public and private face-to-face working hours, (iv) implementation of curfew for vehicles and individuals, (v) suspension of domestic passenger flights; and, vi) suspension of interprovincial transportation. It is estimated that the country's stagnation will cost 3.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per month and estimated losses of $2 billion, according to Haro (2020).

Public and private organizations and consumers of products, services and activities will be the most affected by the public health problem caused by the SARS-Cov-2 or Covid 19 virus, and it will be observed on reduced sales and changes in consumption, posing great challenges to governments and productive sectors to emerge from the economic stagnation generated by the state of emergency and emergency condition.

In this context, some studies offer some guidance for understanding consumption in crisis. According to (Katz et al., 2020) they consider that Covid-19 pandemic has brought challenges to the global socioeconomic system and emphasize the role of digital technologies used to counteract confinement, disseminate prophylactic measures and facilitate the functioning of the economic system, social distancing and definitive end of stagnation.

The study of (Zwanka & Buff, 2020) predicts that the impact of the pandemic will bring changes in consumer behavior and point out that online shopping will be a practice during and after this public health problem.

In order to determine how the confinement measures caused by Covid-19 impact consumer behavior through the measurement of variables related to personal, social, psychological and cultural factors, it has been proposed to develop a model that explains these relationships through four hypotheses; H1: There is a positive relationship between social factors and consumer behavior; H2: There is a positive relationship between psychological factors and consumer behavior; H3: There is a positive relationship between cultural factors and consumer behavior; and H4: There is a positive relationship between personal factors and consumer behavior.

In order to achieve this purpose and to verify the proposed assumptions that explain the effects of the consumer during confinement, four sections are developed. The first presents some theoretical references on public health issues and factors that influence consumer behavior in a global context and from the perspective of marketing; the second refers to the methodology, which includes the sample, measurements of constructs and indicators and the method of analysis -Structural Equations Model (SEM)-. The third presents the results by empirically examining the relationship between consumer behavior and personal, social, psychological and cultural factors; and finally, the discussion and conclusions of the study.

2. Theoretical framework

The effects of Covid-19 are altering the world's economies. The pandemic has disrupted tourism, global value chains and labor supply, affecting trade, investment and total production in countries, leading to a widespread damage of the economy (Alonso, 2020).

Confinement, as one of the emerging measures taken by governments, has caused that daily consumption of products, services and activities usually conducted by the population have been modified. Knowing these effects and impacts is important because they have faced social, psychological, technological and cultural changes, which could impact new habits of behavior and consumption.

The analysis of consumer behavior is connected with sustainability and biodiversity. A variety of studies analyze the relationships between the environment and the consumption decisions of individuals (Weigel & Weigel, 1978; Berger & Corbin, 1992; Bansal, 2003; Haytko & Matulich, 2010; Kotler, 2011).

Currently, consumers are aware that purchases affect the environment, making changes in their purchasing behaviors and supporting companies in ecological strategies. Dagher and Itani (2014) mention the perceived severity of environmental problems which motivate the ecological purchasing.

On the other hand, Paetz et al. (2012) argue that environmental degradation and sustainability are one of the most serious problems facing the world today, followed by the economy, health care, unemployment and crime.

Li and Atkinson (2020) examine another factor affecting consumer behavior, related to the psychological factor named "consumer´s happiness", measured through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs; the results show that consumers feel happier when they have more psychological ownership over a product after its consumption. Likewise, the studies of (Chan & Mogilner, 2017; Caprariello & Reis, 2013; Carter & Gilovich, suggest that basic psychological property increases happiness.

Other studies examine how lifestyle, personality and economics affect consumer behavior. The empirical evidence of Muniady et al. (2014) applied to university students in Malasya state "personality" as the main influencer in the purchase of the investigated group.

To analyze consumer behavior, it is recognized in this study that not all consumers are equal. Therefore, the differences in their lifestyle will be subjected to internal factors such as perception, learning, emotions, motivations, needs and impulses; and external factors such as culture, social strata, demographic aspects, reference groups or coexistence that will determine the model to be developed in this research.

Abraham Maslow's needs model and Veblen's social psychological model will be used to determine how the confinement measures caused by Covid-19 impact consumer behavior, by measuring variables related to personal, social, psychological and cultural factors and creating the consumer behavior model, which explains the relevant elements in consumer behavior in times of crisis.

Maslow establishes the premise that a human being must first meet his/her basic needs to subsequently seek to meet the most advanced needs —physiological, security, belonging, esteem and self-realization (Maslow, 2013).

Incorporating the needs hierarchy into a public health problem framework means that people have a priority focus on purchasing behavior, which means that the most important needs must first be met than secondary needs.

Veblen's social psychological model considers humans to be social animals adapted to the norms of their culture; their desires and behaviors are subjected to the groups they belong to or those they would like to reach.

3. Materials and method

3.1. Data and sample

The geographical scope of the study is formed by five cities in Ecuador: Cuenca, Guayaquil, Loja, Machala and Quito, capital of the Republic of Ecuador – selected by the high power of hierarchy and economic influence compared to other regions (Hofstede, 2011); and these account 35% of Ecuador's population (INEC, 2010).

The twenty-four provinces of Ecuador struggle with Covid-19, registering a total of 20,937 according to the Ministry of Health (newsletter No. 064), out of which 16,386 (78%) correspond to the cities analyzed. The provinces of Guayas (Guayaquil) and Pichincha (Quito) covers 90% of the confirmed cases and this situation affects health, economy, and education; in addition to social inequality and unemployment, being uncertain the forecasts in the short and long term.

The investigation took place in the last week of April, during the health emergency period decreed by the Ecuadorian government on March 16, 2020, in the face of the global public health problem. A questionnaire was designed and used as an instrument, while data collection was online, sending links via email to consumers of four generations: Baby Boomers, consumers born between 1949-1968 and who made up 14% of the population surveyed; Generation X people born between 1969-1980 and who represented 16% of the population analyzed; Generation Y with consumers born between 1981-1993 and who constituted 34% of the population; and Generation Z, consumers born from 1994-2010 and who represented 36% of respondents. A total of 658 surveys were collected in six days.

The elaboration of the "online survey" for this research started with a careful review of the relevant literature on factors affecting consumer behavior in times of crisis. Twenty-seven indicators (questions) were built to make up the five constructs of the Structural Equations Model. Each value is evaluated considering the Likert scale, 5 (totally agree), 4 (agree), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 2 (disagree) and 1 (totally disagree); which is one of the most widely used psychometric instruments in the social sciences and market studies, according to (Matas & Matas, 2018). The final structure of the instrument consists on twenty-two variables that will measure personal, social, psychological and cultural factors; and five variables that focus on the buying behavior during confinement (see Table 1)

3.2. Measurements: constructs and indicators

The Structural Equations Model (SEM) consists of five constructs; one for the dependent variable and four constructs related to independent variables. Initially twenty-seven indicators were created that respond to the problem raised.

To examine the criteria for purchasing behavior, participants were questioned about the consumption of basic foodstuffs, changes in habits, brand loyalty and use of internet in their purchases; the information was extracted from the study of Xiao and Kim (2009) who point out that consumer changing value systems affect consumer behavior and satisfaction through consumer value-mediating variables.

Participants were asked about the massive consumption of entertainment during confinement as a use of streaming platforms for programs, movies, video games; increased reading, cooking activities; and socialization of the family through communication and hobbies. These personal and emotional factors are related to the buying behavior of brands analyzed by Xiao and Kim (2009).

Social relations and sustainability during confinement were measured through nine questions. The first five related to online communication and social networks as platforms to reconnect with family and work; while the four sustainable-related variables are measures through questions related to mobilization means, social causes, water consumption and plastic reduction, premises worked by Dagher and Itani (2014), who point out that the behavior of individual consumption affects the environment and the need for consumers to participate in friendly behaviors and ecological strategies.

The psychological factor is measured through indicators related to exercise and mental health, humor, and insurance purchase. Cao et al. (2020) investigate how a discreet positive emotion impacts consumers' choices about healthy versus unhealthy choices. On the other hand, Li and Atkinson (2020) examine the effect of psychological property on consumer happiness, measured through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs.

Finally, the culture perception factor was measured through indicators that determine family customs and preference, as well as local consumption of products. Rokeach (1968); Long and Schiffman (2000) point out that individuals' personal, social and cultural experiences explain the similarities and differences between individuals, groups or cultures..

3.3. Analysis method

To identify the effects on consumer behavior, the Structural Equations Model (SEM), a statistical technique recommended in the business field and social sciences (Henseler et al., 2016), was used as a statistical tool. It is a model with high reliability and validity for this type of research.

Morgan et al. (2009) used this methodology to examine market orientation and marketing capabilities, being complementary assets that contribute to superior performance. Martin and Javalgi (2016) analyze through this model the marketing capabilities to achieve more performance in foreign markets. Zack et al. (2009) conduct exploratory research to learn about the organizational impact of knowledge management; and Flatten et al. (2011) reveal through this model how the relationship between the absorption capacity and performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is mediated by strategic alliances.

SEM is used to analyze variables with dependency ratio and multiple relationships between dependent variables, combining two statistical techniques: factorial and regression analysis, consisting of constructs or paths — non-observable elements represented by multiple indicators and by the relationships of dependence between constructs (Hair et al., n. d.).

Based on the theoretical premises and empirical evidence, the model was developed to test the four hypotheses proposed in this study. The model has five constructs: the first one corresponds to the purchasing behavior; the second corresponds to social factors with sub-variables: personal relationships and sustainability; the third is made up of psychological factors that will measure variables of exercise and mental health;

the fourth construct is related to the cultural perceptions; and finally the personal factors that include massive entertainment consumption variables (see Table 1).

Table 1. Constructs and indicators of the model

Constructs	Code	Indicators	Sub-variables
Purchase behavior	CCweb_01	Web services for buying food at home.	Changes in consumption habits
	CCoint_02	Habits of consumption commodities.	
	CCpbas_03	Increase of purchases of basic needs products: food, health and personal care.	
	CCpsunt_04	Changes in the purchase behavior of sumptuous, financial and real estate products.	
	CCmarc_05	Brand loyalty	
Social factors	FSrede_01	Online communication and social networks as platforms to connect with people	Personal Relationships
	FSredp_02	Online communication and social networks as platforms to reconnect with work	
	FSmens_03	Use of messaging apps like WhatsApp.	
	FSvidr_04	Use of video conferencing applications (Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams) in recreational activities.	
	FSvipd_05	Use of video conferencing applications (Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams) for professional and training activities.	
	FSmovb_06	Bicycle as a means of mobilization.	Sustainability
	FSsoli_06	Support to local and/or national causes of solidarity.	
	FSagua_07	Reduction of water and electricity consumption and/or use of plastics.	
	FSsost_08	Consider that after Covid-19, sustainability is a key element for government, businesses (brands) and citizens	

Constructs	Code	Indicators	Sub-variables
Psychological factors	FGejer_01	Body and mind balance exercises in everyday activity.	Exercise and mental health
	FGhumo_02	Humor to keep up the mood.	
	FGsalu_03	Purchase of private health insurance to improve health care.	
	FSevol_04	Optimism on the development and evolution of the pandemic.	
Cultural factors	FCcost_01	Change in eating habits.	Customs
	FCploc_02	Preference to the consumption of local products.	
	FCpnec_03	Relation between the consumption of basic needs with family preference.	
Personal Factors	FPcpel_01	Watch programs and movies through streaming platforms.	Use of massive entertainment
	FPint_02	Interest on streaming platforms associated with video games and music.	
	FPerad_03	Increase of radio audience.	
	FPlect_04	Read and use of audiobooks.	
	FPcoci_05	Culinary activities.	
	FPfami_06	Socialization with the family through communication and hobbies.	

4. Results

The results of the analysis carried out on the measurement and the structural model, supported by the Smart PLS software are analysed below:

The demographic characteristics of respondents located in the five cities of Ecuador: Cuenca, Guayaquil, Machala, Loja and Quito are described in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic variables

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	297	45,3
Female	358	54,7
Generation		
Baby boomer (1952 - 1968)	93	14,2
X Generation (1969 - 1980)	102	15,6

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Y Generation (1981 - 1993)	225	34,4
Z Generation (1994 - 2010)	235	35,9
Marital status		
Single	332	50,7
Married	211	32,2
Divorced	35	5,3
Widow	3	0,5
In a Relationship	36	5,5
Separated	3	0,5
Free Union	35	5,3
Educational level		
Elementary	13	2,0
High-school	122	18,6
Technology	33	5,0
University	397	60,6
Master degree	90	13,7
Cities		
Cuenca	89	13,6
Guayaquil	125	19,1
Loja	182	27,8
Machala	72	11,0
Quito	187	28,5

4.1. Measuring the model

The first test of the measurement yielded insignificant results for ten indicators of the purchase behavior constructs, personal factors, social factors and psychological factors out of the twenty-seven indicators initially observed.

The indicator related to the brand's loyalty purchase behavior (CCmarc_05= 0.53) was not considered in the model. Likewise, four indicators related to personal factors -massive entertainment consumption- radio (FRfad_03=0.32), use of audiobook (FPlec_04=0,42), cooking (FPcoc_05=0.55) and family socialization (FPfamil_06 =0.55) are not part of the model. Four indicators of the social factor —sustainability— such as the use of alternative means of transportation (FSmobs_06=0.28) support of solidarity causes (FSsoli_07=0.45), reduction of water, light and plastics consumption (FSagua_08 =0.523); sustainability (FSsost_09=0.52) are not part of the model. Finally, the optimism indicator (FGopt_09=0.52) was eliminated for the psychological factor-related construct by presenting values lower than 0.6.

The appropriate scores for reliability tests and Cronbach's Alpha are higher than 0.7, guaranteeing good reliability of the constructs. The convergent validity, measured through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as shown in Table 3, is on the value 0.5 in all indicators, which provides validity to the model, considering what is established by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and (Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 3. Result of the measurements that make up the constructs

Constructs	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Behavior	0.5792
Social fact	0.5505
Psychological factors	0.4997
Cultural factors	0.5967
Personal factors	0.7492

Table 4. Correlations between constructs

Constructs	Customer Behavior	Social factors	Psychological factors	Cultural factors	Personal factors
Customer Behavior	0.5792				
Social factors	0.2129	0.5505			
Psychological factors	0.0944	0.0784	0.4997		
Cultural factors	0.1488	0.0974	0.1662	0.5967	
Personal factors	0.1124	0.1255	0.0742	0.0541	0.7492

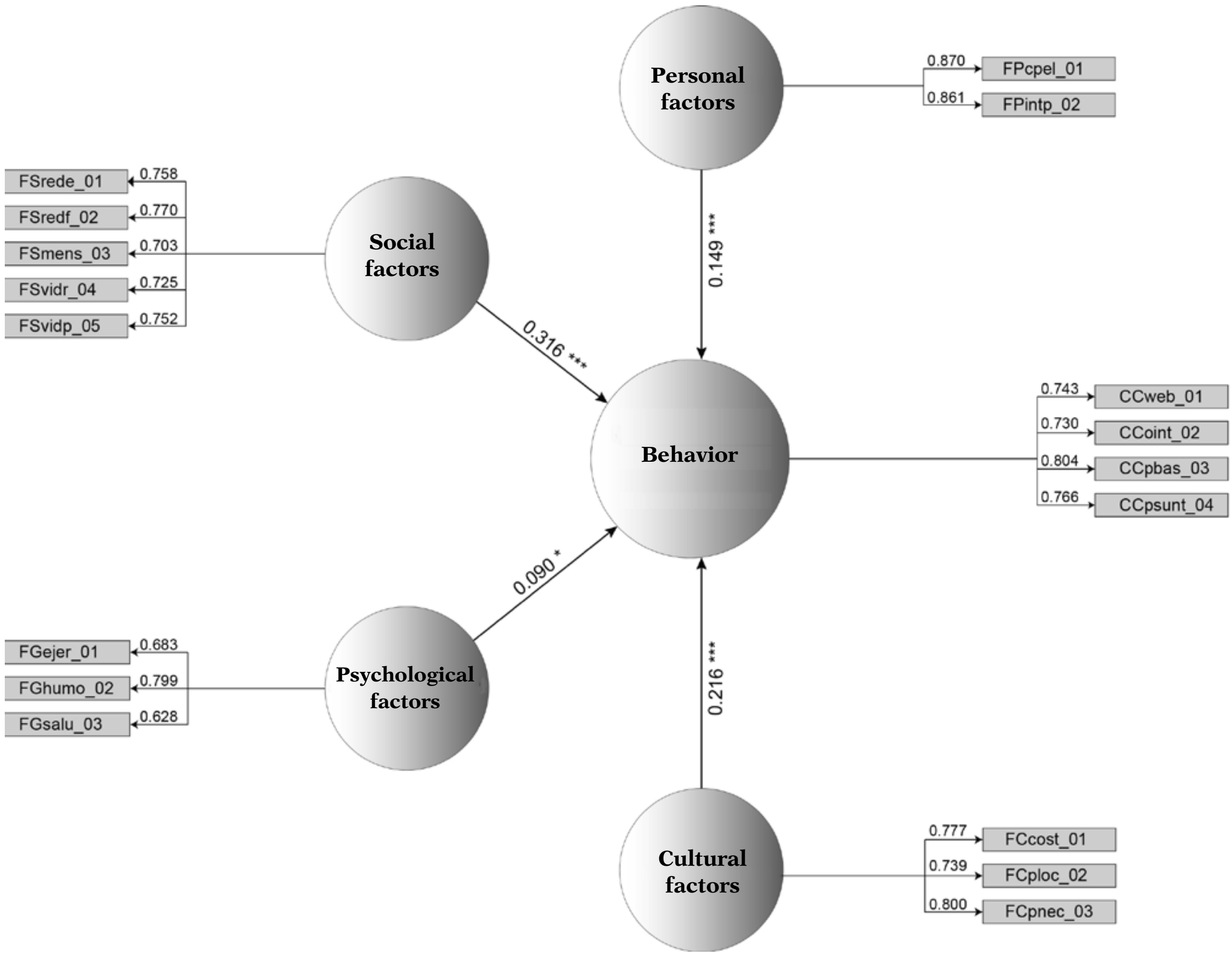
Squared correlations; AVE in the diagonal.

Table 4 shows that in all cases the AVE is higher than the correlation values presented between the constructs, providing evidence of adequate discriminatory validity. Model measurements provide good evidence on reliability and validity to represent the topics discussed in this study. The structural model will then be evaluated.

4.2. Structural model

The model developed in this study is shown in Figure 1. The results indicate a good Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) index of 0.078, below the maximum thresholds of 0.10 (0.08 in the most conservative approach).

Figure 1. Structural model of the consumer behavior



The verification of the model consistency measured through the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), square root of the sum of squared differences between correlation matrices —Euclidean distance— (Bentler & Yuan, 1999), states that the consumer behavior model explains 30% of the social, psychological, cultural and personal factors. This conclusion is based on the resulting R2 values of 0.3067, which indicate the percentage of variability explained by predictive constructs in the model. Adjusted R2 values 0.302 "take into account model complexity and sample size; and, therefore, they are used to compare different models or the explanatory power of a model in different data sets" (Henseler et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Churchill's study (1979) states that the reliability of the indicator must be above 0.7. In the research the fifteen indicators have loading above 0.7; CCweb_01>0.74; CCoint_02>0.72; CCpbas_03>0.80; CCpsunt_04>0.76; FPcpel_01>0.8704; FPintp_02>0.8607; FSrede_01>0.7581; FSredf_02>0.7702; FSmens_03>0.7027; FSvidr_04>0.72; FSvidp_05>0.75; FGhumo_02>0.79; FCcost_01>0.77; FCploc_02>0.73; FCpnec_03>0.79; except FGejer_01<0.68 y

FGsalu_03>0.62 indicators that do not justify their removal. This information confirms the goodness of the indicators and the reliability of the instrument.

After evaluating the validity of the indicators, constructs and explanation of the model through the adjusted R2, the analysis of the empirical evidence of the four hypotheses raised (H1), (H2), (H3) and (H4) is performed. The results obtained for the four hypotheses are statistically significant between purchasing behavior with social factors (0.316, p <0:01), purchasing behavior and psychological factors (0.090, p<0:05), purchasing behavior and cultural factors (0.215, p <0:01); and consumer behavior and personal factors (0.1485, p <0:01) as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Estimations, p value and Cohen's f²

Hypothesis	Beta	Mean value	Standard error	t-value	p-value	Cohen's f²
H1:Social factors -> Behavior compo	0.3163	0.3172	0.0455	6.9435	0.0000	0.1163
H2: Psychological factors -> Behavior compo	0.0904	0.0935	0.0374	2.4132	0.0159	0.0093
H3 Cultural fact ->Behavior compo	0.2156	0.2171	0.0413	5.2163	0.0000	0.0528
H4:Personal factors -> Behavior compo	0.1485	0.1500	0.0389	3.8162	0.0001	0.0266

In addition, according to the effect size classification (f 2) proposed by (Cohen, 2013), the model presents an average f2 in proven consumer behavior relationships with personal, social, psychological and cultural factors, providing good evidence on the predictability of the model as seen in Table 5.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Discussion

This study helps to understand the effects of Covid-19 on Ecuadorian consumer behavior with respect to personal, social, psychological, cultural and personal factors, for which the hypotheses raised and which have been statistically proven through the Structural Equations Model (SEM) are discussed.

H1, H2, H3 and H4 hypotheses related to social, psychological, cultural and personal factors and consumer behavior are accepted, because the structural model shows a significant relationship between variables, taking into account that the p value of these relationships is below 0.05; it can be mentioned that there is significance between these relationships, which concludes that there is a significant relationship between changes in consumption habits and factors that influence consumer behavior during Covid-19. These results are consistent with the findings of (Shigemura et al., 2020; Torales et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020;anxiety, depression, and stress during the initial stage of the COVID-19 outbreak. The data will be used for future reference. Methods: From 31 January to 2 February 2020, we conducted an online survey using snowball sampling techniques. The online survey collected information on demographic data, physical symptoms in the past 14 days, contact history with COVID-19, knowledge and concerns about COVID-19, precautionary measures against COVID-19, and additional information required with respect to COVID-19. Psychological impact was assessed by the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R Courtemanche et al., 2020).

These results allow reflecting of two important findings:

The first related to a new model of online buyer behavior, essential for the development of productive activities and satisfaction of needs after Covid-19.

A second finding is concerned with companies, which must design customer-focused and non-product-focused digital marketing strategies; in an uncertain context they will have consumer confidence during confinement, and post Covid-19.

5.2. Conclusions

This research allowed to design a Structural Equations Model (SEM) consisting of five constructs and seventeen indicators; the model was statistically validated through three dimensions: loads of indicators, reliability and convergent validity. The dimensions show significant associated relationships between consumer behavior and social relations and sustainability; habits in the mass consumption of entertainment; exercise and mental health; family customs and preferences

The descriptive study on consumer behavioral factors, in terms of the social relation indicator, indicates that online communication and social networks have been useful for reconnecting with the closest people and work; the use of video conferencing applications (Zoom, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams) for recreational, training and professional activities have been essential for maintaining these relationships. On the other hand, sustainability through support for local and/or national solidarity causes and the reduction of plastics has influenced consumer behavior.

The massive consumption of entertainment in Ecuador includes a high use of technology during confinement. Programs and movies have been watched on Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime, Hulu and Disney Plus; and the interest of streaming platforms associated with video games and music has increased.

Analyzing psychological factors, exercise and humor have been the means chosen to maintain the mood during confinement in Ecuador; meanwhile, food habits and increased preferences in consumption of local products have changed.

From all of the above, some future lines of research may arise such as: the impacts of technology and consumption in times of crisis; consumer behavior by generations—Baby Boomers, Millennial, and Centennial—during Covid-19; purchasing behavior and social responsibility of university students during confinement. In addition, there are possibilities to extend the study in time and space; as well as conduct comparative studies between Latin American countries to better understand this problem.

This research presented some limitations such as the response-time of consumers to provide information online, which decreased the number of observations and territorial scope. Therefore, it is recommended to expand this research at the national level and to other emerging contexts.

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Relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement

Relación entre el principio de reciprocidad y el compromiso del consumidor

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Abstract

The relational perspective of marketing has gained much relevance even in current transition towards an increasingly significant digitization. The objective of this article is to identify the relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement behaviors, in order to present the characteristics that a marketing should have in which the reciprocal links between organizations for profit with their clients are privileged. For this, a bibliographic review was carried out, in which 32 articles (published in academic journals) that studied the subject of consumer brands engagement were consulted and 30 that reference studies related to solidarity and altruistic manifestations in human beings, which are linked to the principle of reciprocity. From this review, it can be indicated that brands with human and hedonic characteristics are much more likely to encourage brand engagement behaviors in their customers, despite this it seems extremely ambitious to establish a relationship like the one that arises between humans, for this reason, many companies use incentives to strengthen ties to their buyers. In this sense, it is considered that a strategy based on the principle of reciprocity would be much more sustainable for this purpose, achieving that customers are linked to organizations based on a shared purpose, that contributes to the common good and that is remunerated in terms of engagement behaviors.

Resumen

El enfoque relacional del marketing ha ganado mucha relevancia incluso en medio de una transición hacia una digitalización cada vez más significativa. El objetivo del presente artículo es identificar la relación entre el principio de reciprocidad y comportamientos de compromiso del consumidor, con el fin de plantear las características que debería tener un marketing en que se privilegien los vínculos recíprocos entre organizaciones con fines lucrativos con sus clientes. Para esto, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica de 32 artículos, publicados en revistas académicas, que abordan el tema del compromiso del consumidor con marcas y de 30 que referencian estudios relacionados con manifestaciones solidarias y altruistas en seres humanos, las cuales se vinculan con el principio de reciprocidad. A partir de esta revisión, se puede indicar que las marcas con características humanas y hedónicas son mucho más proclives a incentivar comportamientos de compromiso en sus clientes, a pesar de esto parece extremadamente ambicioso lograr establecer una relación como la que se da entre seres humanos, por lo que muchas empresas usan incentivos para estrechar los vínculos con sus compradores. En este sentido, se considera que una estrategia basada en el principio de reciprocidad sería mucho más sostenible para tal fin, logrando que los clientes se vinculen con las organizaciones a partir de un propósito compartido, que aporte al bien común y que sea retribuido en términos de comportamientos de compromiso.

Keywords | palabras clave

Reciprocity, consumer engagement, relational marketing, prosocial behavior, organizational philosophy, organizational purpose, civil economy, corporate brand.
Reciprocidad, compromiso del consumidor, marketing relacional, comportamiento prosocial, filosofía organizacional, propósito organizacional, economía civil, marca corporativa.

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1. Introduction

Marketing has traditionally been understood as a set of practices conducted by organizations competing in capitalist contexts, in which the existence of other corporations offering similar goods affects the acquisition and retention of customers. Likewise, this discipline has been closely related to this economic model, based on contracts for the exchange of goods for money. From this perspective, the distant relationship between producers and consumers does not keep in mind the existence of various human motivations in any transaction; therefore, as Pareto explained (1945), the economy has reduced men to *homo* æconomicus only for analytical purposes. In this sense, the rationality of economic actors is nothing more than a scientific assumption, which is not predominantly evident (Kahneman, 2017).

In turn, this logic, based on human selfishness, which is defined as the constant search to maximize personal benefits when faced with economic decisions, does not contemplate that it is possible for people to take into account other factors when dealing with such circumstances. Sen (1989) says "denying that people always behave in an exclusively selfish way is not the same as claiming that they always act in a selfless way" (p. 36). According to theorists such as Bruni (2004), Frank (2005) and Gui (2011), both extrinsic motivations (linked to external incentives to the person and money) and intrinsic ones (which arise from within the subject) affect decisions and the commitment that a human being places in various situations in the economic aspect. For this reason, schools such as the civil economy emphasize the importance of the return of relationality in the economic field from the concept of reciprocity:

> [...] in its beginnings, it should be remembered that the market economy was based not only on the principle of the exchange of equivalents (of value) and on the redistributive principle, but also on the principle of reciprocity. With the outbreak of the industrial revolution and the consequent consolidation of the capitalist system, the principle of reciprocity, which disappeared even from the economic lexicon, was lost (Zamagni, 2013, p. 19)

Bruni and Calvo (2009) state that also in contracts, which allow all exchange of goods for money, there is a type of reciprocity named "without benevolence", because it is based:

> In the fact that subjects are not asked to sacrifice something of their own interest: cooperation emerges solely on the basis of interest, desire and convenience, which are added to institutional requirements. (Bruni & Calvo, 2009, p. 106)

However, these authors argue that there are other types of reciprocity, in which certain "dose of sacrifice and risk arise, and the relationship is not only a means of achieving 'external' interests to the relationship, but has a value in itself" (Bruni & Calvo, 2009, p. 110).

Calvo (2013) notes that transitive reciprocity proposed by Zamagni has three characteristics that differentiate it from other approaches of reciprocal behavior. The first realizes that the issuer of an act maintains an expectation of a response provided by the recipient, in order to have continuity and consolidate the relationship. The second characteristic indicates that, although this type of reciprocity has traits of unconditionality because the response is always free and voluntary, at the same time it presents conditioning to the extent that if expectations of response are not met, the relationship may be interrupted. Finally, the third characteristic is transitivity, which states that when an agent offers help, he/she expects a response provided by the receiver, even if it is not necessarily directed towards him/her. However, Calvo (2013) argues that this conception of reciprocity must be complemented by the recognition of dignity of the other as a communicative actor, bearing in mind that:

> By attributing the bond between people solely to gratuitousness, the approach seems to be suggesting that it is each other's self-realization functionality and not one's dignity that lies behind the justification of reciprocity. (Calvo, 2013, p. 134)

From this notion, it is possible to find common elements between the principle of reciprocity and what is named in marketing as a consumer commitment to a brand or organization, which manifests itself in behaviors such as the purchase with a high degree of loyalty and the recommendation of products or services through the classic voice marketing a lot used by digital platforms actions that denote a strong relationship between brands and the consumers or users who perform them. From this perspective, the repeated purchase, recommendation and even defense of companies in the face of questions and participation in the improvement and creation of products, now assumed as manifestations of customer engagement, could be observed as acts of reciprocity, to the extent that they are not regulated by contracts and are given free of charge in many cases, as compensation for a strong bond with a brand considered relevant.

In this sense, what is proposed "is that an economic space formed by subjects inspired by the principle of reciprocity" (Zamagni, 2013, p. 21), can be consolidated within the market, in so far as "neither pure selfishness nor pure altruism is capable of making a sustainable human-social order " (p. 245). From this logic, proposing the possibility of marketing consistent with the characteristics of societies such as those of Latin America could be based on this economic principle, which must transcend the notion of utility raised by the European neoclassical school of the late nineteenth century. Therefore, the objective of this article is to identify the relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement behaviors, in order to raise the characteristics that relational marketing should have, in which reciprocal bonds between private for-profit organizations and their audiences of interest are privileged.

2. Criteria for the selection of the corpus

Para dar cuenta del objetivo anteriormente mencionado, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica de artículos académicos publicados en las bases de datos digitales Scopus y Redalyc. Las palabras clave que se usaron para esta búsqueda fueron compromiso del consumidor, compromiso del cliente, compromiso de marca, *consumer brand engagement* y *customer brand engagement*, así como los términos reciprocidad, comportamiento *prosocial*, *reciprocity* y *prosocial behavior*.

A bibliographic review of academic articles published in Scopus and Redalyc digital databases was carried out. The keywords used for this search were consumer engagement, customer engagement, brand engagement, consumer brand engagement and customer brand engagement, as well as the terms reciprocity, prosocial behavior.

At the beginning, 32 articles were selected to address the consumer engagement, these articles were published in scientific journals from 2009 (the date on which academic interest in this category started to boom) until 2019, a situation that shows the relevance of this topic in the field of marketing, due to its relationship with customer retention strategies and promotion of recommendation especially on digital platforms.

At the same time, 30 articles that refer to studies related to solidarity and altruism in humans were selected in academic journals, which are related to the principle of reciprocity. These texts were published between 2001 (date on which emerged studies on this topic) and 2019 and show empirical evidence related to this human characteristic from various approaches and disciplines, which could be linked to manifestations of consumer engagement.

For the analysis of these documents, bibliographic data sheets were developed, in which, in addition to the identification elements of each publication, the most significant results of the selected studies were highlighted, either from an empirical or theoretical perspective.

3. Discussions of the state-of-the-art

3.1. Consumer/customer engagement with brands or organizations

Bowden (2009) defines consumer engagement as a psychological process that creates the mechanisms by which loyalty internalizes in new customers for a brand, as well as by which it can be maintained in the old ones. Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) claim that the intention to foster expressions of consumer engagement is a key issue from a customer-center marketing perspective. According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), while analysis has focused on purchasing, engagement behaviors go beyond these transactions and can be more widely regarded as those manifestations towards a brand resulting from motivational factors. In this regard, Goldsmith et al. (2011) notes that the concept of commitment describes the tendency of consumers to use trademarks to form their identities and to be able to express them to others. Frequent purchases and recommendation of products or services are behaviors associated with a customer's commitment to a trademark (Smaoui & Behi, 2011), which emerges based on a bond formed by interactive and co-creative experiences with it (Brodie et al., 2011). In this sense, Gambetti and Graffigna (2011) state that what seems to characterize this concept is the active role assumed by the consumer, who can be considered as a partner of the company, both in the construction of content for the brand as well as in the creation of a positive reputation through its recommendation.

Previous approaches show that the affective bond is a condition for the emergence of a commitment that can transcend eventual purchases, becoming an active and long-term relationship. In relation to this, if a brand can be modeled by a consumer, it articulates to its life, making part of its daily experiences as a trusted partner (Gambetti et al., 2012), for this reason, consumers are more likely to prefer brands with personality, because they can identify with them and use them to express themselves, for this reason this aspect could lead to brand engagement (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012). In this way, a greater commitment must generate more confidence in relationships, because people perceive that the company has social interests beyond monetary interests (Vivek et al., 2012), in turn, those brands that generate value based on the own benefits of the experience, will probably be considered more hedonic, a feature that could affect their ability to foster commitment in their customers (Hollebeek, 2012). Franzak et al. (2014) argue that hedonic benefits of goods generate more excitement, promoting responses such as emotion, fun and fantasy, for this reason brands have gained a deeper level of commitment from their clients by raising conversations on social issues and topics that are relevant to them, rather than focusing on the promotion of functional benefits of the goods they offer (Venkatesan, 2017).

According to the studies referenced before, brands that have significant anthropomorphic and hedonic characteristics are more likely to stimulate behaviors of commitment by fostering higher levels of loyalty and recommendation, but also by increasing the possibility of being judged by their actions, because the behavior of a brand is a relevant aspect to stimulate engagement in its customers, since it stablishes the organization's relationship with society (Wong & Merrilees, 2015). However, in many cases the strategy of engagement with audiences has occurred from a superficial approach, related to the construction of corporate reputation to avoid issues of sensitive interest to these audiences and a real commitment in a dual way (Biraghi et al., 2017). Guckian et al. (2018) point out that when a scandal happens and affects the reputation of an organization and customers perceive that it was due to individual actions and not as a result of corporate culture, there are more expectations that this company will behave ethically in the future. This is why interaction and close relationships are key factors in developing engagement behaviors in consumers, who engage with brands based on their behavior and marketing actions; in this regard, if commitment marketing conceives the customer as a kind of marketing manager, then the company should be configured as a pseudo employer, which encourages customer work and productivity, translating it into effective engagement initiatives (Harmeling et al., 2017). In this way, successful innovation of the service also depends on novel practices to motivate customer participation and promote their loyalty (Leckie et al., 2017). Therefore, the objectives sought by companies by fostering commitment of their customers relate to direct contributions such as purchases, as well as to indirect such as the recommendation of the products or services that the brand supports, and interactive behaviors with the company (Bleier et al., 2017).

Hollebeek et al. (2014) developed a scale of consumer engagement towards a brand in digital environments, finding that while participation is a precedent for this commitment, own-brand connection and intention to use are its key consequences. Additionally, participation in online brand communities can stimulate consumer engagement, however, a gradual decrease in this participation would negatively impact commitment (Bowden et al., 2017). For this reason, companies must offer opportunities to their customers to participate in the development of brands, why online communities enable communication with the company and other customers, and can reward the most active people in these communities and motivate them so that they can even modify products (Gong, 2017). Domínguez (2017) conceives online loyalty programs as psychological brand communities, to the extent that they are able to generate in members the feeling of sharing the same interest in a brand. In this way, as customers receive tangible and intangible rewards and reach a higher status within these programs, they develop a greater sense of belonging to the brand, achieving a more significant importance due to its quantity and frequency of purchase, but, also by an attitude towards the company, which can be translated into a positive recommendation for attracting new customers, and in a high level of involvement, to improve the goods offered by the organization (Bijmolt et al., 2017). For this reason, digital data can help brands build strong relationships based on the information they collect from their customers (Gómez-Suárez et al., 2017).

Algharabat et al. (2018) found that in contexts such as social media, customers' perception of being interactively immersed in a brand-created virtual world, the ability to allow customers to interact with others as well as participation positively impact on a commitment to a brand, which in turn incentivizes an electronic recommendation. In this way, commitment does not only originate in the interaction between the customer and the brand, for this reason, incentives and bonds with other actors are essential for high levels of engagement (Fehrer et al., 2018). Similarly, Adhikari and Panda (2019) ensure that participation and interactivity contribute positively and significantly to incentivize consumer engagement by trademarks, generating more loyalty and thus, specific strategies to drive engagement to be included in the promotion and monitoring of virtual communities on different social media platforms, as well as incentive-based strategies. Likewise, Gómez et al. (2019) point out that the participation of a brand in social networks (understood as the relevance that the virtual platform has for a client) is the most decisive precursor of commitment compared to online communication, thus improving the quality of the relationship with customers by incentivizing co-creative actions.

The identification between the self-image of the consumer and the image of the brand and the bond related to it and with other members in digital media are two drivers of commitment, which is the key element in inducing loyalty to a brand (Helme-Guizon & Magnoni, 2019). Similarly, having a defined positioning, even linked to a specific gender (male or female), can encourage commitment on customers, for this reason it is important to take these characteristics into account when designing pages on social networks and when making posts (Machado et al., 2019), in order to foster greater consumer interaction on these platforms, which in turn influences the creation of more intense emotional bonds with the brand, for which "active listening" can be used, as stated by Pina et al. (2019) who define it as a technique that does not require face-to-face interaction to succeed , so it can be applied via social networks, starting with the establishment of initial relationships and strengthening links with old clients.

From the revision of the concept of consumer/customer engagement with brands or organizations, it can be said that this is a relevant marketing objective, to the extent that it is directly related to greater loyalty, recommendation, defense against questions related to corporate action and participation in the creation or improvement of goods. In turn, brands with anthropomorphic and hedonic characteristics are identified as more likely to stimulate engagement behaviors in their customers; however, it is key that they are supported by behavior consistent with this personality and willing to stimulate dialogue and interaction with their customers, for which virtual communities and data-driven loyalty programs are a great tool.

3.2. Relationships and prosocial behavior

Having presented the findings on consumer engagement, below is a review of studies addressing human propensity for prosocial behavior, which relates to the manifestations described above.

According to Sheldon et al. (2001), having a feeling of closeness with others is one of the most relevant psychological needs for its influence on people's happiness. For this reason, although social relations are not a sufficient condition for great happiness, it does not present itself alone (Diener & Seligman, 2002); thus, the extent that attitudes such as the pursuit of personal growth, the cultivation of interpersonal relationships and the contribution to the community are increased or even supplanted materialistic effort, could become an alternative through which people can feel good about themselves, obtaining protection against existential anxieties related to the human consciousness of mortality (Arndt et al., 2004). In this sense, sociability is an element that can be significant in accounting trends in subjective well-being, so economic prosperity influences well-being, but knowing that it is not obtained in exchange for greater sociability (Bartolini & Bilancini, 2010). Dunn et al. (2008 and 2014), and Aknin et al. (2012 and 2013), carried out a research on how people spend their money, observing that when participants who were randomly assigned to spend money on others experienced a greater sense of happiness than those who spent money on themselves, so it might be suggested that the reward for helping others may be deeply rooted in human nature.

Nowak (2006) states that the most outstanding aspect of evolution is the ability to cooperate in a competitive world, for this reason it could be added as a third fundamental evolutionary principle, which includes mutation and natural selection. On this matter, Warneken and Tomasello (2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009) found in children of 14, 18 and 20 months a propensity towards altruism, detected in trends of this kind in early human ontogeny that reflect a natural predisposition. In this sense, the social function of empathy relates to the origin of the motivation of cooperative and prosocial behavior, supported by effective social communication (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Thus, the well-being of others presents itself as a human trait that can be observed when reacting to unequal situations that would seek to prevent the emergence of individual dissatisfaction that could have negative effects on long-term cooperation (Brosnan, 2013; Brosnan & de Waal, 2014, Brosnan et al., 2015; and Claidière et al., 2015).

Rodrigues et al. (2017), on a study that measured prosocial tendencies found that participants obtained the highest scores in the altruistic prosocial behavior subscale, which is induced from sympathy towards internalized principles and relates to helping others. From this perspective, it is understandable that being subjected to acts of generosity affects the emotions of human beings, increasing the likelihood of performing similar acts with other individuals (Mujcic & Leibbrandt, 2017). Likewise, Vaish et al. (2018) found in 3-year-olds kids a motivation to act positively with those who demonstrate goodwill towards them, suggesting an early sense of gratitude, which is most intensely presented in certain individuals, who are more generous and have greater confidence towards others (Yost-Dubrow & Dunham, 2018), assuming attitudes of prosocial behavior that are increased over time and reinforced by acts of this kind executed by others (Erreygers et al., 2018).

Additionally, while empirical evidence demonstrates a cooperative human willingness, it is clear that people assume such attitudes in the midst of relational processes, so their behaviors are largely due to the reactions and attitudes that other individuals assume. Snippe et al. (2018) argue that positive moods and prosocial behaviors tend to reinforce each other in daily life, hence greater positive affection produces more prosocial behaviors, strengthening positive affection. For their part, Brush et al. (2018), based on a model of cooperation with three types of agents, found that those call "discriminators" (who use information to determine their cooperative behavior towards others) can cooperate in a group with people without attitudes of cooperation. However, they found that more information on the cooperative attitudes of other actors hinders cooperation in discriminators. Likewise, Futamura (2018) argues that extraordinary prosocial behaviors (understood as those with relatively low situational and sociocultural demands) are highly assessed when those who assume them also engage in ordinary prosocial behaviors, defined as those involving relatively high situational and sociocultural demands, whose need is clear and in which a relatively large number of people are generally involved.

Similarly, some studies suggest that humans over the years tend to value the actions of others differently, which in turn result in their own behaviors. Futamura and Shima (2019) found that most of t young children, older children and young people who participated in their research ensured that they would act prosocially in reciprocal or unilateral emergency situations, regardless of age. However, in older children and young people, there was a more positive assessment of those who helped unilaterally compared to those who did so on a reciprocal basis. In turn, Padilla-Walker et al. (2018) indicate that high-cost prosocial behaviors such as defending and including decrease slightly during the transition to adulthood, however, they claim that adults, who exhibit high levels of the prosocial behaviors also showed high levels of sympathy, values and self-esteem during their adolescence, which would mean that they are more likely to remain in adulthood if presented from youth.

Finally, it is relevant to discuss whether this human prosocial willingness is determined only by intrinsic motivations or whether external incentives can stimulate it as well. On this issue, Shiraki and Igarashi (2018) argue that satisfying the relationship or affinity need increases intrinsic motivations, so the feeling of gratitude promotes prosocial behaviors such as charitable acts even towards strangers. In this regard, Lee et al. (2019) found that rewards such as monetary incentives encourage people to demonstrate a higher level of prosocial behavior, implying that this is mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and that an effectively designed reward system can work to improve this type of behavior.

Based on this bibliographic review, on the role of relationships and prosocial behavior in human life, it is undeniable that the principle of reciprocity plays a key role in everyday situations, in which a diversity of encounters that determine sociability are established.

4. Contributions to the state-of-the-art

It is possible to identify a relationship between human propensity towards cooperation and behaviors from the commitment to a brand, indicating how the principle of reciprocity can play a key role in understanding these attitudes and how companies, as corporate brands, could establish lasting value relationships with their customers.

According to some research, it is evident that people may assume attitudes of commitment towards a brand, such as more loyalty in their purchases, positive recommendation of the goods, defense against questions for their actions and participation in co-creation processes of products and services. For this to happen, it is essential that the consumer feels a relation with the brand, called brand love. In this sense, while empirical evidence shows that it is possible to have such feelings, it also shows that transcending the functional or useful relationship is very complex, so those brands that have anthropomorphic and hedonic characteristics are more likely to stimulate engagement behaviors in their customers.

The fact of carrying emotions and attributing human traits to trademarks seeks to be perceived by consumers as if they were other people, in order to establish relationships similar to those with relatives, for which it is key that the brand is consistent with their personality, stimulates active customer participation, promotes an interactive dialogue that goes beyond content for commercial purposes and, in turn, also establishes commitment to their consumers.

As can be seen in several of the studies cited, interpersonal relationships are a strong condition of subjective well-being and happiness. In addition, there is an innate tendency of the human being towards cooperation from an early age, also to assume attitudes of help and gratitude and to be emotionally affected by the behaviors of other individuals. Based on this, it is reasonable for trademarks to consider that establishing relationships similar to interpersonal ones with their customers is a good strategy, taking into account that human beings are willing to do so since it generates pleasant sensations and, in addition it allows humans to assume attitudes of cooperation with brands such as those derived from commitment.

In this way, it is clear that a brand with personality will facilitate the emergence of affective bonds that result in possible relationships, however, totally overcoming the utilitarian bond is considered an overly ambitious goal. For this reason, as some authors suggest, incentive-based loyalty programs have been created, seeking to reward those customers who are more loyal and active with the brand. This strategy is consistent with one of the studies cited, which argues that prosocial behavior is a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, hence a reward system can work to stimulate this type of behavior. This is the reason why the principle of reciprocity emerged, which is linked to the idea that acts of customer engagement such as loyalty, product recommendation, defense against questions and participation in co-creation processes could be considered as responses arising within the framework of a relationship with a brand, and that they are stimulated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

In this regard, Gui (2011) indicates that the effort that people made into a work can be affected by both types of motivations; however, the intrinsic can be displaced by extrinsic, affecting behaviors that were previously set without requiring external incentives, such as money or other material rewards. In this sense, it is much more sustainable for an organization to base the relationship by appealing to the intrinsic motivations of their clients. The question that immediately emerges is how, since it has already been mentioned that these incentives arise due to the difficulty of overcoming the functional relationship with the brand.

Therefore, organizations must perform a real humanization process that allows them to set up a corporate brand that supports their portfolio and that really works as a true ally for a person, making it easier for a relationship to emerge based on the principle of reciprocity. In other words, in order to appeal to the intrinsic motivations of their clients and promote acts of cooperation on their part, it would be significant for companies to present as true allies with shared purposes, allowing the relationship to be based on this aspect, therefore the utilitarian bond could transcend easily.

In this sense, a purpose that links a company with the customers allows to go beyond the fact of only obtaining money but instead to have affinity with the consumers (as an ally who share a purpose of life), and that customers would reward by buying the goods the company offers, recommending them to others, defending their corporate behavior and having bonds of co-creation processes based on gratitude and gratuitousness, typical of the principle of reciprocity. In turn, trademark communication, traditionally based on the Lack-Necessity-Desire triad, could give way to a foundation based on Beliefs-Purpose-Allied triad. From this perspective, corporate brands and their respective product/service brands can establish a genuinely two-way dialogue of key elements of the social purpose assumed as an organization, which is based on a set of beliefs and which help the company (corporate brand) to be an ally with an affective bond.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Relational marketing is a perspective that remains in force and has gained great relevance, even in the midst of a growing digitization of marketing actions. In turn, this approach is importance from the logic of stimulating consumer engagement, who assume extremely significant cooperation behaviors. The key point in this situation is how companies, which are finally the ones profiting from these behaviors, should come up with a sustainable relational strategy for which incentives can play a relevant role, but appealing to reciprocity could be much more strategic in the long term for organizations.

From the literature review, it is evident that it is possible to activate cooperation of clients, because the human being has a propensity towards solidarity, which coexists with the search for his/her personal well-being. In this sense, an organization could propose a relational marketing strategy that is supported by incentives but that should be strongly based on establishing a much deeper bond with its customers, for which integrating them with a purpose can be an alternative that allows it to transcend the bond from the utility approach.

In this way, private organizations can undertake a transition process from traditional exchange to relationality, based on the concept of reciprocity. What is intended with this approach is that consumption is based on the linkage of people for social purposes and that organizations assume as their *raison d'être*, and which go beyond their lucrative purpose. Corporate brands are profiled as allies, relating themselves to the individual values typical of the lifestyle of their consumers, and inviting them to participate in meetings in which commercial discourse gives way to issues of greater social significance.

This relationship occurs with the contact of the company (presence and virtual), for this reason, collaborators or employees become significantly relevant, since consumers in these contacts experience encounters with people that represent an entity with shared purposes. Organizational action is also key; again this is done by employees and managers of the company, taking into account that the public of the organization will be able to corroborate or question the coherence between the organizational philosophy and the performance, which could affect not only the company reputation but also the demand for the goods that the company offers to the market.

Today many for-profit organizations relate their purposes with social phenomena and problems, even companies such as B Corp and those of the Economy of Communion whose essence is above profit. From these experiences, it would be interesting to carry out studies that investigate the impact of the organizational philosophy of this type of companies on the emergence of engagement behaviors in their clients, in order to identify their relevance in a relational marketing strategy.

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Advertising transparency in the social media influencers

La transparencia publicitaria en los influencers de las redes sociales

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Abstract

Social media has contributed to a new marketing strategy where brands forge alliances with social media influencers to generate advertising content. This strategy is known as influencer marketing, finding itself growing and gaining substantial interest in the literature. However, the current understanding of the perception of social media influencers regarding the transparency of the content they advertise is still limited, where practically all studies focus on the perception of the follower and in developed countries where there is more regulation regarding advertising transparency. To address this issue, this research used the source credibility theory and the institutional theory with the aim of exploring the perceptions of social media influencers regarding the transparency of the content they advertise. Based on a qualitative study that incorporated semi-structured interviews with eight social media influencers from Chile. The results of this study show that social media influencers consider reliability, experience, online self-presentation and the normative aspects relevant in their credibility of advertising transparency. These findings contribute to the influencer marketing literature and have important practical implications for the broad and growing field of advertising, such as marketing professionals, brands and regulators responsible for protecting the consumer.

Resumen

Las redes sociales han contribuido a una nueva estrategia de marketing donde las marcas forjan alianzas con los influencers de las redes sociales para generar contenido publicitario. Esta estrategia conocida como marketing de influencer se encuentra en crecimiento y ganando un interés sustancial en la literatura. Sin embargo, la comprensión actual de la percepción de los influencers de las redes sociales frente a la transparencia del contenido que publicitan sigue siendo limitada, donde prácticamente todos los estudios se centran en la percepción del seguidor y en países desarrollados donde existe mayor regulación frente a la transparencia publicitaria. Para abordar esta problemática, la presente investigación utilizó la teoría de credibilidad de la fuente y la teoría institucional con el objetivo de explorar las percepciones de los influencers de las redes sociales frente a la transparencia del contenido que publicitan. Sobre la base de un estudio cualitativo que incorporó entrevistas semiestructuradas con ocho influencers de las redes sociales en Chile. Los resultados de este estudio muestran que los influencers de las redes sociales consideran relevante en su credibilidad de la transparencia publicitaria; la confiabilidad, la experiencia, la auto-presentación en línea y los aspectos normativos. Estos hallazgos contribuyen a la literatura de marketing de influencer y también tiene importantes implicancias prácticas para el amplio y creciente campo de la publicidad como son los profesionales de marketing, las marcas y los agentes reguladores encargados de proteger al consumidor.

Keywords | palabras clave

Self-presentation, trust, credibility, experience, influencer, advertising, follower, transparency.
Auto-presentación, confianza, credibilidad, experiencia, influencer, publicidad, seguidor, transparencia.

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1. Introducción

The influence of social media influencers is believed to be quite powerful and is likely to continue to grow in the coming years (Forbes, 2019). Until now, literature realizes that this influence emerges as the influencer captivates followers by generating content on social networks where he/she shares his/her personality and experiences (CNBC, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Because of this influence, the influencer plays a vital role in attracting brands or companies and advertising professionals (Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, while social media influencers are known to share experiences related to product brands, the literature has not delved into the tension that arises in the social media influencer for being transparent (about the personal benefits of advertising a brand) and the credibility with followers. Ignoring the perception of social media influencers versus advertising transparency prevents a greater understanding of the credibility of this new marketing strategy.

To address this literature gap, we presented one of the first studies in Latin America to provide information from the perspective of social media influencers. Consequently, this study will try to answer the following research question: What is the perception of social media influencers versus the transparency of the content they advertise? The aim of the study is to know the dimensions that social media influencers take into account when deciding whether (or not) to transparent the advertising of their content on social networks to their followers.

To answer this research question, a qualitative methodology was used with eight semi-structured interviews with influencers of the social network "Instagram", conducted in May 2019.

We rely on the theory of «credibility of the source» (Hovland et al., 1953) that sustains the confidence, experience, attractiveness and online presentation (social networks) of the influencer and that affects their credibility with followers (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Ohanian, 1990), and the institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). We hope that the results of this study will be in line with studies that emphasize, for example, that trust and experience of the social media influencer are positively involved in the perception of followers against the sponsorship of a product or brand (e.g. Amos et al., 2008; Friedman et al., 1976). Also, if we consider that the behavior of social media influencers affects the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of their consumers (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977; Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990), we hope that these will be dimensions that influencers value when it comes to making a transparent advertising in their content.

This study presents three contributions. First, we contribute to influencer's marketing literature. Considering that the above literature has focused on the perspective of followers, for example, the credibility of the influencer from the perspective of the follower (Djafarova & Trofimenko 2018), our study offers a look from the perspective of the influencer. Second, we expanded previous research by providing pioneering evidence on the dimensions that could affect credibility by considering advertising transparency. In addition, we focus on the influencer's perception of advertising transparency in a Latin American context. Finally, this research also has important practical implications for the broad and growing field of advertising, such as marketing professionals, brands and regulatory bodies responsible for formulating public consumer protection policies.

1.1. Influencers and advertising transparency

Traditional communication mass channels, such as television, radio and print media, are no longer the dominant sources of information for consumers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This has led consumers to no longer pay attention to traditional advertising (Carter, 2016), and increasingly use social media to gather information on which they base their decisions (Casaló et al., 2018). Thus, companies recognize the strategic resource of social networks to advertise their brands and build strong relationships with users (Shiau et al., 2018).

As digital and social media continues to grow in terms of use, influence and advertising expenses, the advertising industry continues to explore and develop innovative strategies to reach its target markets (Childers et al., 2018). One of these innovative strategies is influencer marketing.

1.1.1. Marketing influencer

The administration of social networks is increasingly relevant in the business success (Cano, 2017), and with mobile applications these are a key ally for business management in communication and marketing (Aucay & Herrera, 2017), creating virtual communities of brands and allowing users to be informed and interact with the content (Gutiérrez et al., 2018).

Thus, influencer marketing emerged as an important relatively new marketing strategy, in which brands collaborate or forge alliances with influencers of social media to promote their products and brands (De Veirman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017).

A social media influencer:

> Is primarily a content generator: someone who is experienced in a specific area, who has cultivated a considerable number of followers, with a marketing value to brands, by regularly producing valuable content through social media. (Lou & Yuan, 2019, p. 59)

Advertisers give some control to the social media influencer in the content creation, allowing to present a message that is considered more authentic than when directly presented by the brand (Childers et al., 2018). In turn, consumers are increasingly using social media to obtain product information (Stubb et al., 2019) and guide their purchasing decisions, rating and relying on the opinions of their peers on the internet (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). Thus, social media influencers convey their opinion of brands in their posts, having the potential to intervene in audience behavior (Stubb & Colliander, 2019).

However, social media influencers may remain neutral about their business relationship with the sponsoring brand (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). Therefore, influencer marketing can be classified as a form of native advertising by the nature of the paid relationship between the brand and the social media influencer, which may not be entirely clear to the audience (Evans et al., 2017). Native advertising is defined as "any paid advertising that takes the specific form and appearance of the publisher's own editorial content" (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016). The problem with native advertising is that people have difficulty recognizing the persuasive attempt behind the message (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016).

Therefore, marketing has evolved into a growing marketing tactic, the problem with these commercial social media posts is that they look and mix with non-commercial posts and therefore followers often do not recognize them as advertising (Boerman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017).

Thus, social media influencers must be transparent in any business relationship (Boerman, 2020). It is necessary to include labels or transparencies that effectively convey the nature of the message to the consumer so that there are informed consumers, especially when the paid nature of the message is obfuscated (Evans et al., 2017). Transparencies that are more explicit have been shown to be more likely to increase ad recognition (Boerman, 2020; Boerman et al., 2015; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016). However, while recognizing the relevance of transparency in the relationship between the social media influencer and followers, influencer marketing literature has focused on the vision of followers. Specifically, regarding audience perception of sponsorship transparency in social media influencers' posts and recognition of ads in brand responses, such as brand attitudes and purchase intentions by followers (e.g. Boerman, 2020; De Jans et al., 2018; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019; Evans et al., 2017).

1.2. Credibility of the source

Credibility is defined as "the extent to which the source is perceived to have experience relevant to the subject of communication and can be relied upon to give an objective opinion on the subject" (Goldsmith et al., 2000, p. 43). The "source credibility" model suggests that a promotional message from a credible source, in this case a social media influencer, would affect consumer beliefs, attitudes and behaviors (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977; Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). This theory allows to explain or predict the efficiency of the message (Hovland et al., 1953).

Previous studies analyze the credibility of the source in the context of social media influencers (e.g. Breves et al., 2019; De Jans et al., 2020; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019; Stubb & Colliander, 2019; Stubb et al., 2019; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016).

While the "source credibility" model suggests that the efficiency of the message communicated by a sponsor depends on consumers' perception of the experience, reliability and attractiveness of the product or brand sponsor (Amos et al., 2008; Friedman et al., 1976; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990), Newell and Goldsmith's previous study (2001) considers reliability and experience as dimensions typical of the source's credibility model. Below is an overview of the dimensions of the 'source credibility' construct to be used.

1.2.1. Reliability

The "perceived reliability" is defined as the attributes of dignity and honesty possessed by a source (Friedman et al., 1976). Trust in communication is the trust on the listener and the level of acceptance of the speaker and the message (Ohanian, 1990). Hovland et al. (1953) named it as listener's trust in a speaker "source of credibility" to a listener's trust in a speaker. When a consumer believes a source is reliable, it also assumes that the communicated message is highly believable (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Ohanian (1990) indicated that the reliability of the communicator (e.g. a social media influencer) is an important construction in to investigate persuasion and attitude change.

1.2.2. Experience

It is the second dimension of the "credibility of the source" defined by (Hovland et al., 1953). Research on source experience in persuasive communication indicates that perceived experience has a positive effect on changing attitudes (Ohanian, 1990). The level of experience also depends on audience perceptions (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990). If perceived as a source with valuable information and not necessarily as an expert in the product sold, the message will be more persuasive and generate more favorable reactions to the product and greater purchasing intentions (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). In Djafarova and Trofimenko's social media influencer study (2018), respondents referred to "competition" rather than "experience".

1.2.3. Online self-presentation

This dimension was introduced by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018). "Self-presentation" comes from social psychology and is the way a person wants to be perceived by others, there is pressure to self-present as an improved or desired self, depending on what the audience expects, and thus seem more believable (Goffman, 1959).

Social media has generated an interest in self-presentation (DeAndrea & Walther, 2011), as it helps to gain acceptance from others (Chiang & Suen, 2015). However, when people perceive self-presentations as misleading, then negative attitudes occur (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Therefore, there is a need to establish credibility through self-presentation (Ellison et al., 2006). In the case of social media influencers, their self-presentation on social media will influence the credibility perceived by the audience (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018).

1.3. Institutional theory

This theoretical perspective indicates that the institutional environment is composed of institutions that make pressure on the structures and practices of certain social actors (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Social actors can be businesses, consumers, business partners and governments that create institutional norms while responding to them. Therefore, social actors, in this case social media influencers, adjust and seek to meet institutional pressures to achieve and increase their legitimacy and their ability to survive (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

This theory proposes normative pressure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Regulatory pressures relate to the formal or informal structure of the social actor, in this case the influencer of social media in the face of compliance with a standard (Nwabueze & Mileski, 2008), specifically on how things should be done legitimately when pursuing certain values (Scott, 1995).

2. Materials and method

Social media influencers are a very unexplored phenomenon; for this reason, the design of this study was qualitative by being an appropriate method that provides a lot of information and understanding of under-researched phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This will allow us to answer our research question to know the perception of social media influencers regarding the advertising transparency of their content on social networks, specifically on the social network Instagram.

In order to collect the primary data source, semi-structured interviews were conducted. One advantage of using such interviews is the flexibility provided to the interviewer, being able to add questions that are considered relevant throughout the interview or delve into any point deemed essential to answer the research question and, in addition, the information is collected from the interviewee's perspective, which is very enriching and provides more detailed information (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2013).

A snowball sampling was applied (Creswell, 2013), where the first interviewee provided information to contact the next study participants who were active influencers of the social network Instagram. The Instagram platform was used, because it is currently the most widely used in influencer marketing (WFA, 2018) and Chile was the country selected as an interesting context for conducting interviews, since 87.5% of households have access to the Internet, which is a much higher percentage compared to other Latin American countries (OECD, 2019).

Participants who were recommended by the first interviewee were contacted by the same Social Network Instagram via text message, as it is an easy and direct way to communicate. The message explained the objective of the investigation and the procedures of the interview, eventually 8 social media influencers agreed to participate in the study of a total of 19 that were contacted. Social media influencers were interviewed regardless the products they advertise. Interviews were conducted in May 2019. Participant details are presented in Table 1.

Prior to data collection, two test interviews were conducted to verify the structure and understanding of the questions. These test interviews were conducted on two social media influencers, who were not considered within the final sample. The instrument was then modified with the observations identified and finally, the interview was reviewed and improved by a qualitative research expert.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews, as detailed in Table 1. The interviews were conducted in person when participants were willing to meet, and were conducted in an environment chosen by the interviewees, which was mostly in their workplace for the convenience of the participants. They were made by telephone to those social media influencers who could not perform it in person because of their schedule and little availability of time. The interviews were conducted by one of the members of the research team, who was also part of the design of the interview guide.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish. At the beginning of the interviews, each interviewee was informed of the confidentiality of their identity and the authorization of the audio recording of the interview. The names of the participants were modified in this study to maintain the confidentiality of personal data. The interviews lasted an average of 15 minutes, were recorded in audio format and transcribed verbatim by the three researchers to facilitate the analysis of the data (Miles et al., 2019).

The interview structure contained a series of standardized open questions to guide the process. Initially, a brief introduction to the topic to be addressed and a general warm-up question was presented about the interviewee's relationship with social media. Preliminary questions were then asked about the participant's personal background. Subsequently, the interviewee was asked to indicate whether he/she is transparent with the advertising on the content he/she creates (if he/she uses "hashtag") and shares it on the Instagram account. This question was designed to identify if social media advertising is transparent or not (Miles et al., 2019). After having identified some factors that answered the research question, participants were asked to deepen on their response. On some occasions, the participant veered into other responses, and the interviewer directed him/her back to the main objective of the study, which is to get the participant to respond freely about his/her experience with advertising transparency.

Interviews ended in interview number eight, without obtaining additional information, which allowed to complete the data collection process (Silverman, 2000). For the interpretation and analysis of the data, the methodology suggested by Spiggle (1994) and Corbin and Strauss (2015) was carried out. First the researchers immersed themselves in the data by carefully reading each of the transcripts. Subsequently, a manual analysis was performed with the highlighted key phrases encoding the primary units. The categorization was then conducted, classifying each data group related to the reasons for making a transparent advertising in the content. Subsequently, at a higher stage of abstraction, the number of categories was reduced, grouping those that presented similarities. A comparison was then made, and it was decided which

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categories were more relevant. Subsequently, to triangulate the data, secondary sources were reviewed such as relevant press articles and the content of Instagram profiles of social media influencers. Finally, at the integration stage, the researchers provided meaning to the data in the inferences, these were used to generate a connection with the research questions and the theoretical framework presented in the previous section (Spiggle, 1994). The findings of this research are described below.

Table 1. Characterization of social media influencers interviewed

	Gender	Age	Products advertised	No. of followers	Occupation	Indicates transparent behavior	Type of interview
A	Female	27	Beauty, fashion, travel and food.	170 000	Feminist model and communicator	Sí	Face-to-face
B	Male	30	Music, fashion, food.	129 000	Musician	No	Telephone
C	Male	26	Beauty, food and sport.	10 500	Model	No	Telephone
D	Female	28	Beauty, fashion, travel, food and sport.	197 000	Entrepeneur	No	Face-to-face
E	Female	30	Beauty, fashion, travel and food.	16 000	Model, doctor.	No	Face-to-face
F	Female	34	Beauty, fashion, travel and food.	976 000	Model, actress.	Sí	Telephone
G	Female	37	Food and sport.	11 700	Chef	Sí	Face-to-face
H	Female	34	Beauty, fashion, and food.	30 300	Web Designer	No	Face-to-face

Source: Own elaboration. Interviews conducted in May 2019.

3. Results

The data show that influencers interviewed of the social networks consider the advertising transparency relevant to their activity. First, the data identify the dimensions of the online source credibility model: reliability, experience (Amos et al, 2008; Friedman et al., 1976; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990) and online self-presentation (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018), dimensions found in previous studies of the credibility of social media influencers (e.g. Breves et al. 2019; De Jans et al., 2020; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019; Stubb & Colliander, 2019; Stubb et al., 2019; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016). Second, the data identify a specific aspect of the advertising transparency of social media influencers that corresponds to the normative character.

3.1. Dimensions of the source credibility model

3.1.1. Reliability

Trust in communication is the degree of trust of the listener and the level of acceptance of the speaker and the message (Ohanian, 1990). According to Breves et al. (2019), a social media influencer must be cautious and must incorporate high levels of authenticity on posts, even the influencer of social networks and the brand he/she advertises must even be shown. In this study, the social media influencer perceives that followers trust the content they post, mainly because they associate them with the brands they advertise. For example, interviewee E states:

> I never planned to be an influencer and I think it happened because people trust what, I recommend, for that reason I work with brands that I really like and represent me. (Interviewed E)

Specifically, reliability refers to honesty, integrity and credibility of the endorser (Erdogan, 1999), as well as the morality of a source in the provision of objective and impartial information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). While there are followers like teenagers who are unaware that social media posting is advertising (De Jans et al., 2020). There are studies that indicate that an influencer who is paid to recommend a brand on social media may be less likely to express an honest opinion about the product and therefore be biased. As a result, consumers may feel deceived (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). Despite this, when product recommendations arise from influential people, they are perceived as authentic and honest (De Veirman et al., 2017). In this study, social media influencers perceive that they are honest with the information they post by being intermediary actors of a brand that advertise and support through the "hashtag #" in their contents. For example, interviewee B states:

> People also appreciate knowing that we are advertising something to them, you know, not like we are trying to lie to them, and people already realize that you are advertising something, so I do not know, uh... advantages, that we as influencers are being 100% honest with the people who see that product. (Interviewed B)

Even a social media influencer points out that using the "hashtag #" is being informative and authentic at the same time by not fooling followers. As stated:

> In the end, you are not cheating on anyone, it is obviously advertising and you are getting paid for it. Besides, there is a lot of content that you do eh... to show another side (Interviewed F)

More importantly, previous empirical evidence points out that the justification of sponsorship generates more positive attitudes from consumers towards influencers, increasing the credibility of the source and message (Stubb et al., 2019). While Wojdynski et al. (2018) refer to sponsorship transparency as the extent to which sponsored communication notifies the viewer about the payment and the identity of the sponsor. It is known, at least in blogs, that readers appreciate transparency, and bloggers who accept sponsorship are perceived as highly credible, but if they do not provide sponsorship information or use vague expressions it can raise suspicion among readers and thus reduce the credibility of the source (Carr & Hayes, 2014). The results indicate that social media influencers do not agree to transparent their contents. One of the participants points out that, although he/she is being paid for advertising products/ services, through the social network Instagram, this does not mean that he/she should indicate that it is advertising. For the social media influencer, the products advertised are products that he/she normally uses. Participant D states:

> I do not like it very much because uh... I do work with brands, brands pay me to advertise them, but these are brands that I have used all my life, that, whether they pay me or not, I am still going to use them, it is like... you have been using Mac all your life or you have drunk Coke all your life... and one-day Coke tells you… continue drinking Coke but from now on I want to pay you so you use my brand, what are you going to say? (Interviewed D)

3.1.2. Experience

Ohanian (1990) notes that experience is associated with a positive change in attitude. Experience refers to the knowledge, experience and skills of the endorser (Erdogan, 1999). The skills that influencers demonstrate on social media can be a persuasive and favorable source for the consumer purchasing intention (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). In addition, previous studies indicate that product recommendations published by influencers are perceived as sincere if perceived as experts in the field (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Therefore, two types of experiences were observed when analyzing the data. First, the one related to the previous professional experience by becoming influencer of social networks, and second the experience of the influencers of social networks when advertising products. With regard to the first, some social media influencers perceive that their previous experience in the working context of communications has allowed them to see the transparency of the information more responsibly and, therefore, this has created some respect in followers and validity towards the information they provide on their networks. For example, social media influencer F states:

> I feel that for professionals who come from television, radio, communications, this is not new, it is something that we do every day. (Interviewed F)

> Regarding the latter, social media influencers indicate that they show in their advertising content the experiences they have had with products and services, and how that the "hashtag #" allows them to act with authenticity. Like influencer D that points out that it only advertises brands he/she uses.

> So that is why I do not agree, because I at least inside my filters promote brands that I actually use and that I really like. (Interviewed D)

3.1.3. Online self-presentation

Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) indicates that online self-presentation of the social media influencer will influence the credibility perceived by the audience. Some social media influencers interviewed point out that, by being on social media, influencers may present themselves in one way or another, i.e. they may experience role changes. As social media influencer E points out that they can be perceived as an opinion or as a seller, depending on the content they generate and the transparency perceived by their followers.

> I have seen a lot of influencers that in the end you go into their Instagram and they only show publicity. Well, good for them, but they look like sellers instead of influencers, and I think they are abusing their power. The advantage is to make it transparent that one is working with a brand. Disadvantage, become a seller (Interviewed E)

Thus, there are influencers who demand to be authentic and to show themselves in their social media content as they are in their work and association with brands. As interviewee H points out, who requires demonstrating a behavior according to her scale of values, in order to demonstrate legitimacy to her followers.

> I always have the chance to have a paid campaign, I explain this, that I always indicate when I am advertising or that it was a gift, anything in my stories, in the posts and on the blog. And there are several campaigns that have canceled me for that, that they say "no, but take it off" and I say "no, I can't take it away", "ah yes, if you don't take it off then you get out of the campaign" and I get out of the campaign hahaha!!! So, that's why I don't have that much work because I always demand to tell the truth and a lot of people tell me like that no one's going to realize legitimacy at work. (Interviewed H)

Even the same social media influencer points out that by having such a close relationship with her followers, she has been more engaged and has generated good intentions by behaving honestly with herself and her work.

> But maybe I could earn more of it, but in the end I hold on to my values and stop doing this and I also explain to them that it's not me, I don't care if my followers know it's advertising or not, because I have a super close relationship with them. But I care about me. Like me knowing I'm being honest with me and my job. (Interviewed H)

Because of the latter, social media influencers simply prefer to imitate others in their behaviors, without any interest, as indicated by participant G:

> Although it seems to me that it is ok, I would do it as well and I think it does not affect the activity of influencers at all, it does not affect me or the others. (Interviewed C)

3.2. Extension to the dimensions of the source's credibility model using institutional theory

Communication is associated with the level of acceptance of the speaker and the message (Ohanian, 1990), i.e. the degree of credibility that social media influencers perceive from their acting and the behavior of followers regarding the advertising and content presented. Therefore, the perception of credibility of the content presented by the social media influencer in the context of advertising transparency arises from pressures on the structures and practices of certain social actors (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Social media influencers perceive regulatory pressures on sponsoring brands and regulatory institutions to generate more transparent content.

3.2.1. Regulatory character associated with sponsoring brands

The social media influencers interviewed point out that demonstrating transparent behavior in their advertisements has consequences with the sponsoring brand, as social media influencer H points out, because she wanted to be transparent through honesty and she lost an advertising campaign.

> I'm not doing it for others, I'm doing it for myself, it's a thing of honesty that I know that it´s advertising. And they take me out of the campaigns so, in fact, I just lost one last week. (Interviewed H)

3.2.2. Regulatory character associated with regulatory institutions

A relevant aspect in the analysis of data is the regulations under which social media influencers are subjected to. Influencer B considers as a positive aspect that SERNAC (national consumer service in Chile) can obtain information about his work while governing the established rules of that institution. This institution and the consumer law allow to regulate and promote good practices in the transparency of markets in the Chilean context. Participant B mentions:

> So the people of SERNAC can see the brands we're working with and what we're doing—deep down—is being declared. (Interviewed B)

In addition, the social media influencer associates the normative with other contexts, comparing the use of the hashtag # with other types of transparency. As interviewee G points out, social media influencers in the United States transparent their contents by saying "Sponsored by".

> I like it more the way it works in the United States for example, where there is the… the… below the person's name. It says sponsored by… (Interviewed G)

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework proposed by our research, based on the credibility of the online source of Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) and the institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the perception of advertising transparency through the credibility of social media influencers

Reliability	Experience	Online Self-presentation	Regulatory Process
• Honesty • Transparence	• Prior professional experience • Experience with the brands	• Legitimity • Commitment • Good practice	• Sponsor brands • Regulatory institutions

Source: Own elaboration. Based on interviews conducted in May 2019 and on the credibility model of the online source of Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) and the institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The contribution of this research was to identify the perceptions that social media influencers have regarding the transparency of advertising. As a first approach, we note in the results of the interviews that the perception of social media influencers about advertising transparency on their networks is not homogeneous. About 40% of respondents perceive that they are acting transparently when advertising the products in their contents by using the "hashtag #". Conversely, more than 30% perceive that there is no need to transparent advertising and that there is nothing negative about omitting it. This first approach, once knowing the perception about the advertising transparency that social media influencers have in their content, allows us to mention that a lot more must be done on these issues.

Based on the credibility theory of the source, our results identify three of its dimensions. First, it was observed that the reliability dimension is linked to the honesty that social media influencers have in the relationship with their followers. The perception of social media influencers about the reliability of advertising is associated with an attribute of honesty and transparency, which are valued by their followers (this agrees with Wojdynski et al., 2018; Carr & Hayes, 2014).

Second, in the area of experience, social media influencers perceive that their previous professional experience working with brands gives them persuasive skills in advertising transparency. In other words, when there is knowledge of the content being shared, followers would tend to have greater credibility in the social media influencer. In line with De Veirman et al. (2017), social media influencers believe that valuable information as an expert about a product is more relevant to followers than to indicate it is advertising.

Third, the dimension of online self-presentation relates to the image that wants to be projected to followers, bearing in mind how they expect the influencer of social networks to be. The participants of this research say that they are moved by their values and by what their followers expect, thus they do not consider it beneficial to omit when it comes to advertising a product in its generation of content, causing more commitment and the development of good practices towards their followers.

Moreover, in agreement with Newell and Goldsmith (2001), our research does not identify the appeal dimension in the credibility of the source in the advertising transparency of social media influencers.

Finally, the extension to the model dimensions of the credibility of the source corresponds to the normative character. Associated with this dimension, it is important to mention that social media influencers want to respond to established regulatory pressures on the obligation to transparent advertising. In this way, social media influencers show an image of respect for the rules that, even though are not cross-cutting for all countries, social media influencers mostly agree to abide. In this case, social media influencers perceive that regulatory aspects are associated with both sponsoring brands and regulatory institutions.

Having identified the dimensions, we can conclude that we confirm previous studies that analyze advertising transparency with the credibility of the source of social media influencers (e.g. Breves et al. 2019; De Jans et al., 2020; De Veirman & Hudders, 2019; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Stubb & Colliander, 2019; Stubb et al., 2019; Wojdynski & Evans, 2016) confirming experience, reliability and online self-presentation from the perspective of the social media influencer, extending the model with the incorporation of the normative character. These results were illustrated in Figure 1.

This study enriches the current literature on influencer marketing, seeking to know these perspectives regarding advertising transparency from the perspective of the influencer of social networks. In addition, we contribute to the credibility model of the source by connecting it with institutional theory to analyze the advertising transparency of the content of social media influencers.

While this approach could be current and very common in developed countries, this article represents one of the first studies in an emerging economy, such as Chile.

Our research has limitations on the sample, so the data cannot generalize. With regard to future research, we can point out that while this study provided early indications of the credibility of the social media influencer in advertising transparency, comparative studies could add additional ideas. For example, considering different contexts in Latin America, or analyzing the effect of advertising transparency on different sponsoring brands.

Finally, the practical implications for decision makers, such as marketing professionals, is to know the perception from the eye of the social media influencer, which

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could consider the normative aspect by motivating these opinion bodies to explicitly and transparently indicate advertising to improve credibility. Thus, also in the case of regulatory actors, this study makes it possible to know that several social media influencers are governed mainly by the normative aspect, therefore stricter public rules or policies should be created to protect consumers from any deception or little transparency of advertising on social networks.

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Use of SME marketing practices in Mexico City and their relationship to competitiveness

Uso de las prácticas de comercialización de las PYME de la Ciudad de México y su relación con la competitividad

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to find out about the marketing practices used by Smes in Mexico City and to determine whether they are related to internal competitiveness, considering the size and sector in which they operate. The research method is empirical with a descriptive and correlational scope, working with a sample of 400 Smes collecting data through a field study, applied the IDB competitiveness map adapted by Saavedra (2014b), which measures the internal competitiveness of the companies considering 8 areas, for this work was only analyzed the area of marketing that includes the practices: Market plan, commercial strategies, knowledge of competitors, pricing, new products, marketing, customer service, sales force and distribution systems. The results show a low level of application of marketing practices, determined by the use of basic practices and a significant relationship between marketing practices and competitiveness, which implies the importance of the use of marketing practices to boost the competitiveness of Smes.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación consiste en conocer las prácticas de comercialización que utilizan las PYME de la Ciudad de México y determinar si existe relación entre estas y la competitividad interna, considerando el tamaño y el sector en que se desempeñan. El método de investigación es empírico con un alcance descriptivo y correlacional, se trabajó con una muestra de 400 PYME recolectando datos a través de un trabajo de campo, se aplicó el mapa de competitividad del BID adaptado por Saavedra (2014b), que mide la competitividad interna de las empresas considerando 8 áreas, para este trabajo sólo se analizó el área de comercialización que incluye las prácticas: Plan de mercado, estrategias comerciales, conocimiento de competidores, determinación de precios, productos nuevos, marketing, servicio al cliente, fuerza de ventas y sistemas de distribución. Los resultados muestran un bajo nivel de aplicación de las prácticas de Comercialización, determinado por el uso de prácticas básicas y una relación significativa entre las prácticas de comercialización y la competitividad, lo cual implica la importancia del uso de prácticas de comercialización para impulsar la competitividad de las PYME.

Keywords | palabras clave

Competitiveness, SMEs, marketing, profitability, competitors, customers, sales, products.
Competitividad, PYME, marketing, rentabilidad, competidores, clientes, ventas, productos.

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1. Introduction

SME[1] are necessary in the social development of nations, and a noteworthy aspect is their high employability rate (Saavedra, 2014a). According to official data published by INEGI (2020), 95% of the total economic units in Mexico are micro-enterprises, 4% are small and 0.8% medium, which contribute to 52% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generate 68.4% of employment. In terms of sectoral classification, 12.19% belong to the industry sector, 46.65% are companies in the trade sector, 39.15% are companies in the non-financial service sector and 2.01% are in the economic sector (INEGI, 2020), which allows to see that trade and services predominate in Mexican SMEs.

Also, in Mexico according to INEGI (2019) SMEs have had many deficiencies especially in the administrative aspect, since only 15% train their employees, only 14% take action and implement a process of continuous improvement to solve production problems, 65% do not monitor performance indicators, only 3% have an accounting system that allows to record their operations and obtain financial information for decision-making.

In addition to the above, background studies show that many SMEs do not adopt marketing practices or use basic practices, without implementing long-term strategies and even fewer digital marketing strategies that allow them to achieve competitiveness and long-term permanence (Sorina-Diana et al., 2013; Bretcu, 2014; Gutiérrez & Nava, 2016). In Mexico, the few existing studies (Saavedra & Saavedra, 2014; Alcántara & Goytortúa, 2013; Peterson & Crittenden, 2020) account for the incipient application of marketing practices in companies in this sector. Thus, although they are aware of these practices, they face serious limitations on their implementation due to their low financial capacity, lack of specific knowledge on how to implement these practices and lack of trained staff. This situation would be detracting from its competitiveness and is a disadvantage in the face of a highly competitive internal and external environment; on the other hand, there are few studies on marketing practices in SMEs, which generate ignorance about the practices used by SMEs and their impact on improving the performance of SMEs. Previous studies have been based on business practices in general, without specifying appropriate practices for SMEs (Bocconcelli et al., 2018), hence the importance of conducting this research that aims to know the marketing practices used by SMEs in Mexico City, and check whether there is a link between these and internal competitiveness, as measured by the IDB's competitiveness map, considering the size and sector in which they operate. It is appropriate to note that this article corresponds to one third of a broader project called "Determining the Competitiveness of SMEs in the Federal District" which includes eight areas of enterprises, using IDB's competitiveness map (adapted by Saavedra, 2014b) as described in section 2.1.

This work is divided into three sections 1. Literature review, where marketing practices in SMEs are developed, competitiveness in SMEs and marketing practices and their relationship to competitiveness; 2. Methodology, this section describes the IDB's competitiveness map and the operationalization of the study variables; 3. The competitiveness of SMEs in Mexico City, which presents the state-of-the-art that includes preliminary findings and findings on marketing practices; finally, the last section is the conclusions.

1 Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, in the case of Mexico: Companies with up to 10 workers are classified as micro, with annual sales revenues of up to 4 million pesos. Small from 11 to 30 workers (trade sector) and from 11 to 50 workers (Industry and Services sector), with annual sales revenues from 4.01 to 100 million pesos. Medium from 51 to 250 workers (industry sector), from 51 to 100 workers (Services Sector), and from 31 to 100 workers (Trade sector), who report annual sales revenues of between 100.01 and 250 million pesos (Secretaría de Economía, 2009).

2. Review of the literature

2.1. Marketing practices in SMEs

Studies on marketing practices stand out the usefulness of these practices to achieve better results, the way they can be implemented as well as the most common practices used by SMEs. In this context, Sheetal et al. (2012) refer to marketing as a strategy based on 4Ps and is able to influence the performance of small businesses; however, new and emerging concepts such as: network marketing, innovative marketing, standardization vs. adaptation and grouping have been developed in the current market; as well as contingency factors that relate to business, management, product, market and customer issues. On the other hand, marketing through three dimensions (cultural, strategic and tactical) can be applied in the case of SMEs. Also, Sheetal et al. (2012) state that only effective marketing could help SMEs gain competitive advantage through superior performance by using competitive marketing strategies, marketing mixes and market intelligence processes, which can benefit small businesses greatly while recommending the creation of business networks. On the other hand, Cepeda et al. (2017) and Petkovska et al. (2018) point out that SMEs have the opportunity to introduce new and better products thanks to their flexibility to adapt to market conditions, as well as apply marketing solutions according to the opportunities found in the market.

Likewise, Mehran and Zeinab (2020), refer that conventional marketing is not enough when SMEs face a turbulent moment of high competition, hence it is necessary for them to adopt innovative marketing constantly looking for new opportunities in the market with new processes, services and products that manage to place the company in advantage of the company over its competitors.

However, an empirical study conducted by Sheetal et al. (2012) revealed that SMEs do not apply marketing strategies appropriately to their context and are weak in the differentiation strategy; however, they follow low-cost pricing strategies, so they should seek differentiation in product development, i.e. look for market areas with specialized products. Also, small manufacturers need to use different selective product positioning strategies for each product. On the other hand, they need to improve their distribution channels in order to reach more customers and more markets, as well as incorporate e-marketing technology which can help the small entrepreneur reach a large number of buyers (Sheetal et al. 2012). In addition, Saavedra and Saavedra (2014) in the state of Hidalgo in Mexico found that SMEs use basic marketing techniques such as pricing based on production costs; in terms of innovation less than a third of entrepreneurs innovate in their products, concluding that they have little opportunity to reach international markets, thus limiting their competitiveness.

For their part, Petkovska et al. (2018), in a sample of 32 SMEs in Macedonia found that about half conduct market research, the other half stated that they do not do so because of lack of financial resources, lack of sufficient knowledge and trained staff, which is consistent with Cohen's findings (2017) that account for the limited marketing knowledge shown by SME employees, where only a quarter conduct promotional activities, 16% use customer satisfaction surveys and only 12% conduct marketing activities.

In order to understand the marketing practices used by SMEs in Table 1, a review of the background studies is presented, showing the SMEs that that have identified these practices and how they are implemented.

Table 1. Marketing Practices in SMEs

Marketing Practices in SMEs	Authors	Findings
Market research	Zapata (2001), Rojas and Briceño (2006), Coy et al. (2007), Alcántara et al. (2013), Wai-Sum (2005), Domínguez et al. (2012), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014), Petkovska et al. (2018)	It is expensive to make and they basically use it to know the size of the market and increase its sales. Customer oriented. They use the observation method and informal interviews with secondary sources of information.
Production-oriented marketing	Rojas and Briceño (2006), Domínguez et al. (2012), Monferrer (2013)	Products manufacture at the lowest cost with acceptable quality. Thy now their production capacity.
Customer-oriented marketing	Pelham (1997); Lin (1998), García (1998), Zapata (2001) Schlesinger and Useche (2005), Coca (2006), Coy, Shipley et al. (2007), Piedrahita and Paz (2010), Curmei et al. (2011), Lekmat et al. (2018), Sánchez et al. (2019), Peterson and Crittenden (2020)	They know their target market, but they do not know their characteristics: age, consumption habits, etc. They seek customer satisfaction. Relationships that last over time must be established. They use market segmentation. They are looking value for the customer.
Product	Rojas and Briceño (2006), Coy et al. (2007), Wai-Sum (2005), Curmei et al. (2011)	Emphasis on quality and its characteristics. Innovation should be considered as strategic.
Price	Rojas and Briceño (2006), Alcántara et al. (2013), Wai-Sum (2005), Curmei et al. (2011), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014)	Use of the cost method plus a profit percentage. Six out of ten set their price based on cost. The innovation approach should be included.
Place (distribution)	Rojas and Briceño (2006), Alcántara et al. (2013), Wai-Sum (2005), Curmei et al. (2011)	It is directed to the consumer willing to join innovation according to changes in markets.
Promotion	Rojas and Briceño (2006), Alcántara et al. (2013), Curmei et al. (2011), Wai-Sum (2005)	SMEs do not do any promotion, only personal sales, however, they must innovate in this practice.
Consuming of competition	Huck and McEwen (1981), Coca (2006), Lekmat et al. (2018)	The importance of knowing competitors is recognized, but they do not apply it. Although recent research refers that more than 50% applies it.

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Marketing Practices in SMEs	Authors	Findings
Market strategies (general)	García and Álvarez (1996), Luk (1996), Carson et al. (2004), Curmei et al. (2011), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014), Mone et al. (2013)	Direct personal selling predominates. They apply strategies that promote sales. Marketing techniques connect SMEs to the market. They follow a segmentation strategy. They seek to establish marketing networks.
After sales service	Warren and Hutchinson (2000) Wai-Sum (2005), Monferrer (2013)	SMEs rarely implement this technique. This service is coupled with the ease that customers must have to make claims, about the product or service.
Marketing Innovation	Verhees and Meulenberg (2004), O'Dwyer et al. (2009), Curmei et al. (2011), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014), Lekmat et al. (2018), Petkovska et al. (2018), Sánchez et al. (2019), Mehran and Zeinab (2020)	Improves performance by promoting value creation. Only a third party makes innovation in the product, process or organization. They have the ability to successfully introduce new products.
Sales forecast	Wai-Sum (2005), Curmei et al. (2011), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014)	Only a quarter met their sales goal. The marketing function in SMEs ensures that it achieves its objectives.
Brand	Wai-Sum (2005), Moferrer (2013), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014)	Own brand development. Differentiation should be sought through the brand. Less than half of SMEs have a registered trademark.

Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en los autores citados.

Thus, based on the previous review, it is concluded that the marketing area in SMEs includes the following practices: market plan, business strategies, competitor knowledge, pricing, new products, marketing, customer service, sales force and distribution system.

1.2. Competitiveness in SMEs

Competitiveness in SMEs has been studied and conceptualized differently; thus, according to Saavedra (2014b, p. 20) " competitiveness of a company depends on productivity, profitability, competitive position, position in the domestic and external market, inter-enterprise relations, regional sector and infrastructure and macroeconomic environment". This concept is derived from ECLAC's systemic competitiveness model, which states that business competitiveness is generated by the articulation of areas found in four levels or strata that are presented separately for a better study and analysis; these are (Esser et al., 1996, Saavedra, 2014b): 1) Macro level: Includes the economic environment consisting mainly on budget policies, monetary, fiscal, exchange rate, commercial, and competition; 2) Target level: sociocultural factors, which mainly include the scale of values of society, i.e. how it is organized and how it is able to find consensus through the use of strategies and policy; 3) Meso level: Identified as regional development, which is mainly determined by infrastructure and equipment policies, productive articulation (clustering), territorial articulation (between territories, communities and cities), logistical capital (multimodal transportation, telecommunications and technology), intellectual capital (innovation), imports and exports; and finally 4) Micro Level: Internal Company Factors, which can be measured with IDB Competitiveness MAP, as described in section 2.1.

If competitiveness of SMEs were measured only by productivity, it would show the great disadvantage compared to large enterprises, because according to Dini and Stumpo (2018) micro-sized enterprises in Mexico reach only 8% of productivity, small companies reach 24% of productivity and medium companies reach 48% of productivity (with reference to large enterprises 100%). The lag is even larger when compared to European countries where the productivity gap of small businesses with the large enterprise is much smaller, as in Italy where micro-sized enterprises reach only 25% of productivity, small companies reach 62% of productivity and medium reach 84% of productivity.

Business competitiveness scholars have proposed models and indicators to determine the competitiveness of SMEs, so the OECD (1992) notes that the elements driving competitiveness are (a) the efficient management of production and inventories, b) the integration of the marketing plan, R+D, design, engineering and production, c) the combination of R+D and the one generated in higher education institutions and research centers, (d) adaptation to changes in demand and market developments, and (e) the ability to integrate into the value chain. For its part, the Economic Commission for Latin America, Cepal (1999) proposed to analyze business competitiveness with a single indicator which is export capacity, which makes it possible to know the countries that compete in industries, as well as to analyze competitiveness considering nine factors: internationalization, government and institutions, finance, infrastructure, business management, science and technology, human resources and the environment.

Likewise, Gómez (2002) suggests that there are endogenous (technology, human resources, management and marketing) and exogenous factors (economic context and market formation), which influence the competitiveness of SMEs. Others such as Quiroga (2003), Solleiro and Castañon (2005), Rubio and Aragón (2006), De la Cruz et al. (2006), Martínez et al. (2009), Rohvein et al. (2012), Barrios et al. (2019) have proposed models ranging from mathematicians, even the ones that consider the resources and capacities of companies, as well as those focused on value chain and process management, varying in the number and conceptualization of variables used. Later studies, such as those of Rodríguez and Fernández (2006), Morales and Castellanos (2007), Montoya et al. (2010), Cano et al. (2013), Narváez et al. (2013) and Ibarra et al. (2017), have applied both systemic and internal models to determine the competitiveness of SMEs.

1.3. Marketing practices and their relationship to competitiveness

The importance of studying marketing practices is that only effective marketing could help SMEs gain competitive advantage through superior performance that is achieved through competitive marketing strategies (Yan & Chew, 2011). Thus, several authors have analyzed the ability of marketingin boosting competitiveness in small businesses, some of these authors are: Huck and McEwen (1991), García and Álvarez (1996), Luk (1996), Pelham (1997), Lin (1998), Warren and Hutchinson (2000) Pelham

(2000), Rubio and Aragón (2002), Verhees y Meulenberg (2004), Siu et al. (2004), Aragón and Rubio (2005), Piedrahita and Paz (2010), Franco et al. (2014), Lekmat et al. (2018) and Joensuu-Salo et al. (2018), who have found a significant relationship between marketing practices and the performance of SMEs. For their part, Pil and Holwelg (2003), refer that SMEs have advantages such as: proximity to their customers and networking, being able to gain a competitive advantage by serving their market in a better way.

Also, Sánchez et al. (2019), in a sample of 400 SMEs corresponding to the furniture industry in Jalisco found that innovative marketing creates value for the customer, and at the same time it also increases the competitiveness of the company, since it leads to cost optimization and a better use of technological capabilities. However, Mone et al. (2013) realizes that there are few SMEs that establish a measurement of the performance of the marketing area, although they consider it important.

In the same regard, Gamal et al. (2020) analyzed market orientation (including customer orientation, competition orientation and interfunctional coordination) in 393 SMEs in Saudi Arabia, finding a significant positive relationship between it and its performance, which is because market-oriented SMEs can better meet customer needs and expectations through the creation of innovative products and services, using its capabilities to take advantage of current opportunities, facing its competitors and thus creating a sustainable competitive advantage, as verified by García et al. (2014).

For their part, Cuevas et al. (2020) studied 341 SME companies in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico, and stablished the existence of a significant positive relationship between marketing innovation and the performance of companies, considering aspects such as: marketing methods, product design, packaging modifications, significant product changes to enter new segments, new distribution systems, new concepts and means of promotion, launch of products or services in new segments, new strategies to incentivize sales and new pricing methods.

Curmei et al. (2011) refer that among the factors that influence the competitiveness of SMEs can be included the high-impact innovation that must be considered from strategic marketing planning as a central element in the segmentation, positioning and sizing of the marketing mix, seeking to obtain competitive advantages.

Studies have proven the relationship between marketing practices and the competitiveness of SMEs (whether conceptualized as performance, productivity, competitive advantage), making it possible to formulate the following hypothesis:

Hi_1: There is a relationship between marketing practices and the competitiveness of SMEs in Mexico City.

From which the following null hypothesis is created:

Ho_1: There is no relationship between marketing practices and the competitiveness of SMEs in Mexico City.

Specific assumptions were also formulated in order to determine this relationship according to the size and sector of SMEs.

Hi_2: There is a relationship between the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and marketing practices

Ho$_2$: There is no relationship between the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and marketing practices

Hi$_3$: There is no relationship between the competitiveness of industrial, commercial and service enterprises and marketing practices

Ho$_3$: There is no relationship between the competitiveness of the industrial, commercial and service company and commercialization practices.

2. Method

A descriptive study with a correlational perspectie was carried out by identifying the marketing practices used by SMEs and establishing the relationship between internal competitiveness and the practices. Data collection was carried out using a structured direct questionnaire called IDB Competitiveness Map, which is described in paragraph 2.1. A sample of 400 companies corresponding to Mexico City's 16 mayoralties was determined on a population of 382,056 economic units (INEGI, 2010), with a confidence level of 95% and a maximum error of 5%. The questionnaire was applied in a personalized way to entrepreneurs who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.

Statistical testing of hypotheses was performed using chi squared method, with a confidence level of 95% and an error of 5%. Therefore, the hypothesis cannot be rejected when p> 0.05. Spearman's correlation test was also applied.

2.1. IDB Competitiveness Map

Competitiveness map[2] was developed by Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID) and adapted by the Chamber of Commerce of Medellin and Antioquía to carry out a business diagnosis that would allow to know the strengths and weaknesses of SMEs (Martínez & Álvarez, 2006), and the instrument adapted by Saavedra is used (2014b). This instrument consists of a questionnaire containing 145 questions that are grouped into eight areas, the answers of which are on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to does not comply and 5 fully complies. The eight areas on the map are: Strategic Planning, Production and Operations, Quality Assurance, Marketing, Accounting and Finance, Human Capital, Environmental Management and Information Systems.

On the other hand, Saavedra (2014b) established the assessment of global and area competitiveness according to compliance that mark the responses collected by the entrepreneurs, in the following ranges:

0-20%: Very low competitiveness
21%-40%: Low competitiveness
41%-60%: Medium competitiveness
61% to 80%: High competitiveness
81% to 100%: Very high competitiveness

The reliability of the questionnaire measured with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 91%, which means high reliability. This research used only the competitiveness data of the marketing area, given the importance of its study. Subsequently, the prac-

2 It is known as a map since the result is presented in a spider-like scheme by obtaining an assessment of each area of the company

tices that make it up are defined according to the structure of the IDB Competitiveness Map questionnaire (Saavedra, 2014b and Saavedra & Milla, 2017):

Market plan. Annual and written market plan, where the market strategies based on the structure of the market and the identification of opportunities are developed, allows to direct and coordinate the marketing effort that is necessary for the achievement of sales objectives and profits of the company (Kotler, 2001). Very few SMEs carry out a market plan which limits the implementation of business strategies (Wai-Sum, 2005; Saavedra & Saavedra, 2014).

Trading strategies. Definition of the target market, introduction strategies, positioning and marketing, as well as to know the market segments to develop trading strategies according to the objectives that want to be achieved. These are established based on the sales forecast, estimating the number of products or services to be placed in a given place and time (Longenecker et al., 2012). SMEs carry out business strategies considering that they serve the final consumer (García & Álvarez, 1996; Luk, 1996; Saavedra & Saavedra, 2014).

Knowledge of competitors. To have information from competitors as an essential element to carry out effective planning of market strategies; the company must constantly benchmark the marketing with its competitors in order to identify competitive advantages or disadvantages (Kotler, 2001). SMEs understand the importance of meeting competitors, but few perform this role (Huck & McEwen, 1991).

Pricing. Pricing based on total costs. Price is part of the value that consumers perceive, so a good definition and price strategy lead to success (Peñalosa et al. 2017). Price is the most effective component of marketing strategies because it is directly related to the profits, survival and growth of the company since it drives sales (Sheetal et al., 2012; Schnarch, 2013). SMEs mainly determine prices based on costs and a percentage of profits (Rojas & Briceño, 2006; Alcántara et al., 2013; Wai-Sum, 2005; Saavedra & Saavedra, 2014).

New products. It must be determined whether new products have generated significant sales and profits in the company. The key of success for SMEs is innovation through the continuous development of knowledge to achieve its positioning in a dynamic environment (O'Dwyer et al., 2009). This is how innovation becomes a fundamental aspect of the marketing process; it is important to innovate in technological advances and customer tastes and preferences. SMEs should emphasize the quality and characteristics of products that stand out (Rojas & Briceño, 2006; Coy et al., 2007; Wai-Sum, 2005); however, very few innovate (Verhees & Meulenberg, 2004; O'Dwyer et al., 2009; Saavedra & Saavedra, 2014).

Marketing. These correspond to all the activities carried out to facilitate and stimulate exchanges between different organizations, among which are planning, setting the price, promoting and distributing the products or providing the services, in order to know the needs of consumers and the evaluation of promotional activities to promote sales and achieve the objectives of the company (Peñalosa et al., 2017). SMEs can design production-oriented marketing strategies (Rojas & Briceño, 2006; Domínguez et al., 2012); or customer-oriented strategies (Pelham, 1997; Lin, 1998; García, 1998; Zapata, 2001; Schlesinger & Useche, 2005; Coy et al., 2007; Peterson & Crittenden, 2020; Piedrahita & Paz, 2010); however, very few use promotion strategies (Rojas & Briceño, 2006; Alcántara et al., 2013; Wai-Sum, 2005).

Customer service. It refers to the knowledge and satisfaction of the customer's needs, as well as having catalogs of technical specifications of the products. Franco et al. (2014) suggest that poor service of SMEs may lead to dissatisfaction of their customers and affect their image and competitiveness, thus, hindering customer loyalty. On the other hand, very few companies in the SME sector implement after-sales services (Warren & Hutchinson, 2000; Wai-Sum, 2005).

Sales force. Setting sales targets for sellers should be sought to have a trained, motivated and competent sales force to create an employment tie in the company. The sales force functions as a bridge between the company and customers, and for an efficient management it must be taken into account: sales objectives, strategy, organization, volume, promotions to sellers (Kotler, 2001). SMEs barely meet their sales targets (Wai-Sum, 2005, Saavedra & Saavedra, 2014), due to both internal and external factors that affect their performance.

Distribution system. Distribution is the process carried out to ensure that the products/services are delivered in the right time and place for the final consumer, i.e. an effective distribution. To carry out the distribution process, the type of distribution must be planned: mass, exclusive or selective and the distribution channel: direct or through channels including wholesalers, retailers and commercial agents (Sheetal et al., 2012; Peñalosa et al., 2017). SMEs generally use direct distribution to the final consumer (Rojas & Briceño, 2006; Alcántara et al., 2013, Wai-Sum, 2005).

2.2. Operationalization of variables

Table 2 shows how variables were operationalized according to the hypotheses of this research.

Table 2. Operationalization of variables

Hypotheses	Variable 1	Variable 2	Indicators Variable 2
Hi$_1$: There is a relationship between marketing practices and competitiveness of SMEs in Mexico City.	**Competitiveness** It is measured as the simple average of global competitiveness, applying the IDB's competitiveness map of companies that make up the sample.	Marketing Practices	Market Plan Commercial Strategies Knowledge of Competitors Pricing New Products Marketing Customer service Sales force Distribution System
Hi$_2$: There is a relationship between the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized.	**Competitiveness by size** It is measured separately as the simple average of the global competitiveness of companies according to their size: Micro Small Medium	Marketing Practices	Market Plan Commercial Strategies Knowledge of Competitors Pricing New Products Marketing Customer service Sales force Distribution System

Hypotheses	Variable 1	Variable 2	Indicators Variable 2
Hi$_3$: There is no relationship between competitiveness of the industrial, commercial and service enterprise and marketing	**Sector competitiveness** It is measured separately as the simple average of the global competitiveness of companies according to the sector: Industry Commerce Service	Marketing Practices	Market Plan Commercial Strategies Knowledge of Competitors Pricing New Products Marketing Customer service Sales force Distribution System

Source: Own elaboration.

3. La competitividad de las PYME en la Ciudad de México

This study presents a third of the research project titled "Determining the Competitiveness of SMEs in the Federal District"[3] which identified the internal competitiveness of SMEs by considering eight areas, so that first (paragraph 3.1), a summary of Saavedra's preliminary findings (2014b) is presented in order to contextualize this research, secondly, the interpretation of the findings of this research is presented (3.2).

3.1. Preliminary findings

These findings correspond to the first part of the research in which the competitiveness of SMEs was analyzed as a whole without separating by areas, as stated by Saavedra (2014b).

The sample consists of 41 (10.3%) companies in the industry sector, 192 trade companies (48.0%) and 167 service companies (41.8%), a similar proportion of the national sectoral classifications according to INEGI (2020). In relation to the size, it consisted on: 364 (91.0%) micro-enterprises, 29 (7.3%) small enterprises and only 7 (1.8%) medium-sized enterprises, as can be seen, there are more micro-sized enterprises (1-10 workers) in the trade and services sectors, information that agrees with the national stratification presented by INEGI (2020). Average global competitiveness was only 41.85%,[4] where 73.3% of companies present very low or low competitiveness and only 17% present high or very high competitiveness (Saavedra, 2014b). This difference in the level of competitiveness is because there are companies in this city with very modern production processes that use high technology and qualified labor capable of exporting their products, and also informal companies with artisan production processes and precarious working conditions, especially those found in the rural sector (Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal, 2013). Despite the importance of SMEs, in Mexico only 4.3% of GDP is used for financing, which shows lag when compared to some emerging and industrialized countries that Mexico competes with or is a partner,

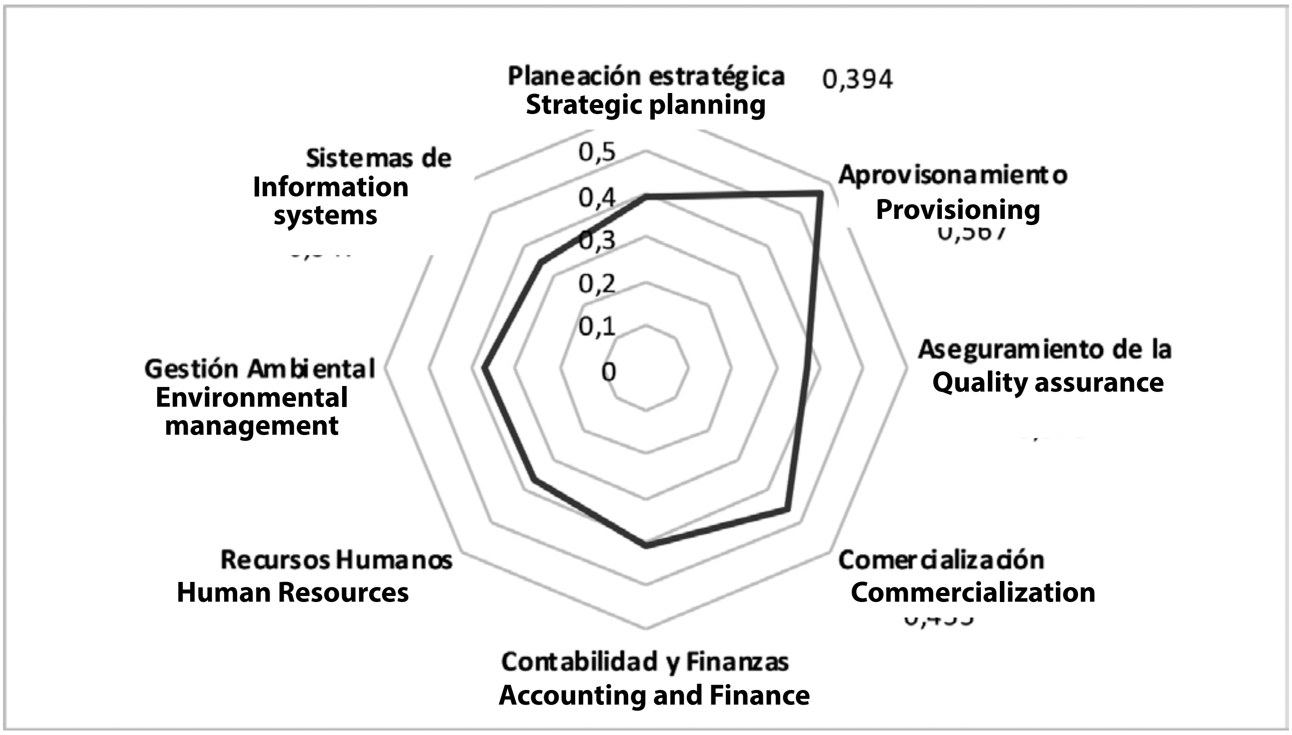
3 On February 5, 2016, the General Agreement of the Plenary of the Federal Judiciary is published in the Official Journal, changing the name of the Federal District to Mexico City throughout its normative body. For this reason, this work refers to Mexico City.

4 It was calculated as average for all sampled enterprises

such as Brazil where this amount is 9.6%, Spain with 19.6% and the United States with 29.4% of GDP (Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal, 2013).

The results of global competitiveness by area show that the only area that manages to go above 50% of competitiveness is that of supply, leaving all the other laggards; and as can be observed marketing reaches only 45.5% of competitiveness, which is worrying since an important part corresponds to service and trade companies that serve mainly the final consumer, showing the weakness in the performance of their internal processes which depend directly on their own resources (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Competitiveness Map of SMEs in Mexico City



Source: Saavedra, 2014b

Findings of competitiveness by sector account that only 36.6% show high competitiveness and about 60% low competitiveness. In terms of trade sectors, such as services, three-quarters of businesses have low and very low competitiveness. This situation is not beneficial, since SMEs in this city are in a risk, as these contribute to 17.5% of Gross Domestic Product, with an average growth rate higher than the national one, which shows a high economic dynamism with an economy focused on trade and services (Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico, 2019). In this city, tourism has caused the development of lodging, food and beverage companies, and investment opportunities have driven the development of industries that need to achieve high levels of competitiveness that allow them to remain in the long term and continue to generate the jobs required (Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal, 2013). However, this finding makes it possible to know that the industry sector has higher levels of competitiveness than the trade and services sectors, which predominate in this city.

In terms of competitiveness by company size, the results demonstrate that 80.2% of micro-enterprises show low competitiveness, while 75.9% of small business are highly competitive, and 100% of medium-sized enterprises are very competitive; this implies that competitiveness is related to the size of the company, which is reasonable because a larger company has more resources, technology, human staff, etc., that boost their competitiveness. These findings imply that the sixth part of the national tourist GDP in Mexico City and a high proportion of hotels and restaurants are produced by micro and small businesses (Gaceta Oficial del Distrito Federal, 2013), and it is a pending challenge to increase the competitiveness of companies in this sector, because of the importance that it represents for both the economy of Mexico City and Mexico.

3.2. Marketing practices and competitiveness of SMEs in Mexico City

This section presents the findings of competitiveness of the marketing area, and their relationship to global competitiveness by size and sector, which correspond to one third of the research where marketing practices are analyzed as well as their relationship to competitiveness, considering the size and sector.

3.2.1. Findings and discussion of the competitiveness level of the marketing area

The competitiveness level achieved by each of the marketing practices analyzed is presented in Table 3, i.e. the competitiveness measured according to the use of practices in these companies. As can be seen in Table 3, there are four practices in which predominate high and very high competitiveness: pricing (69.5%), customer service (57.75%), sales force (54%) and distribution system (70.75%, which could be considered as basic practices that SMEs should perform. These findings are in agreement with those by presented by Wai-Sum (2005), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014), Cohen (2017), Petkovska et al. (2018), which state that SMEs only carry out marketing activities based on sales, because they usually serve the final consumer. Thus, in the results shown in Table 3 stand out the practices of the marketing area in which predominate low and very low competitiveness, these are: Market plan (62.5%), trading strategies (52.75%), knowledge of competitors (64.75%), new products (55.75%) marketing (51.55%), which are considered to be advanced practices that have a direct relationship to the long-term vision of SMEs (Sheetal et al., 2012). This finding is similar to the one mentioned by Huck and McEwen (1991), García and Álvarez (1996), Luk (1996), Wai-Sum (2005), Rojas and Briceño (2006), Sheetal et al. (2012), Alcántara et al. (2013), Saavedra and Saavedra (2014), which account for the little or no use of these advanced practices in SMEs, implying the predominance of short-term vision in SMEs studied in this research. Therefore, it is necessary for these companies to implement advanced marketing practices, as Mehran and Zeinab (2020) point out, since traditional practices are insufficient in a highly competitive environment.

Table 3. Competitiveness of marketing practices (Percentage)

Competitiveness range	Marketing plan	Estrategias Comerciales	Conocimiento de competidores	Determinación de precios	Productos nuevos	Marketing	Servicio al cliente	Fuerza de ventas	Sistema de Distribución
Very high 81 – 100%	18.75	12.75	8.25	56.75	7.25	12.75	22.50	25.00	57.75
High 61-80%	7.00	10.50	11.00	12.75	15.00	16.50	35.25	29.00	13.00
Medium 41-60%	11.75	20.00	16.00	14.00	22.00	19.25	23.50	21.00	10.25
Low 21-40%	9.75	34.25	33.25	4.75	38.00	27.50	15.50	11.25	4.50
Very low 0-20%	52.75	22.50	31.50	11.75	17.75	24.00	3.25	13.75	14.50
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: own elaboration

3.2.2. Findings and discussion of the relationship between marketing practices and the competitiveness of SMEs

The results presented in Table 4 show that all marketing practices are significantly related to the competitiveness of SMEs, implying the importance of marketing practices in boosting the competitiveness of SMEs. Also, Spearman's correlation test allowed to determine the strength of this correlation, showing that all correlations are positive, and that there is a high correlation of this area with global competitiveness (68.2%). When conducting the individual analysis, the results of each of the practices show that the highest correlations were observed in sales force (64.7%), marketing (61.3%), customer service (53.6%) market plan (5.16%), which implies the importance of implementing the use of these practices to boost the competitiveness of SMEs. These findings are consistent with the studies conducted by Huck and McEwen (1991), Luk (1996), Pelham (1997), Lin (1998), Warren and Hutchinson (2000), Pelham (2000), Rubio and Aragón (2002), Verhees and Meulenberg (2004), Siu et al. (2004), Aragón and Rubio (2005), Piedrahita and Paz (2010), Franco et al. (2014), Lekmat et al. (2018), and Joensuu-Salo et al. (2018), who have found that there is a relationship between marketing practices and the competitiveness of SMEs. According to the above results, the null hypothesis (Ho1) is rejected and it is concluded that there is a relationship between competitiveness and all marketing practices.

Table 4. Relationship between global competitiveness and practices from the marketing area

Factor	*P* Value	Correlación de Spearman
Market Plan	.000	0.516
Commercial Strategies	.000	0.441
Knowledge of Competitors	.000	0.473
Pricing	.000	0.426
New Products	.000	0.409
Marketing	.000	0.613
Customer Service	.000	0.536
Productivity	.000	0.647
Distribution System	.000	0.411
Global productivity and competitiveness of the marketing area	.000	0.682

Source: Own elaboration.
Note: Ho is rejected if $p \geq 0.05$

3.2.3. Findings and discussion of the relationship between competitiveness by the size of the company and marketing practices

A summary of the result of the chi square test (*p*= statistical significance) and Spearman's correlation test, marketing practices and global competitiveness is presented in Table 5 based on the size of the companies. As mentioned, micro and small companies are important in market plan practices (with a correlation of 41% and 49%, respectively), new products (61% and 67% correlation), marketing (with 33% and 41% correlation), customer service (with 54% and 57% correlation) and sales force (42% and 48% correlation), in the competitiveness of these companies, this is because marketing practices allow the entrepreneur to have a long-term vision, innovate constantly, generate marketing strategies to stay in the market and improve customer service with a trained sales force, thus generating competitive advantages. This is similar to what was mentioned by Yan and Chew (2011) and Sheetal et al. (2012) in the sense that only competitive marketing strategies can help SMEs gain competitive advantage and therefore higher performance; this is considered necessary to increase the productivity of micro and small businesses since the gap with respect to the large enterprise is very significant (Dini & Stumpo, 2018). With regard to medium-sized enterprises, the results showed no competitiveness relationship with marketing practices, because, as these enterprises are larger they are more structured and have other factors that affect their competitiveness. The above results partially reject Ho2 and conclude that there is a relationship between the competitiveness of micro and small companies and marketing practices, involving a long-term vision by entrepreneurs and that could guarantee the permanence of SMEs.

Table 5. Relationship between competitiveness by size and marketing practices

Global Competitiveness and Marketing Practices/ Size	Micro *p*	Spearman´s correlation	Small *p*	Spearman´s correlation	Medium *p*	Spearman´s correlation
Market Plan	.000	0.412	.000	0.492	.214	0.076
Commercial Strategies	.000	0.492	.214	0.076	.569	0.070
Knowledge of Competitors	.456	0.040	.559	0.018	.732	0.057
Pricing	.837	0.000	.849	0.018	.166	0.043
New products	.034	0.512	.009	0.673	.650	0.066
Marketing	.001	0.334	.001	0.415	.300	0.010
Customer service	.000	0.547	.002	0.571	.531	0.075
Sales power	.000	0.422	.001	0.480	.348	0.086
Distribution system	.730	0.021	.476	0.039	.672	0.041

Source: Own elaboration.
Note: Ho is rejected if $p \geq 0.05$

3.2.4. *Findings and discussion of the relationship between competitiveness by sector and the marketing practices*

The results in Table 6 summarize the result of the chi squared test (*p*= statistical significance) and Spearman's correlation test, marketing practices and global competitiveness according to the sector the companies belong to. As can be seen, there is a relationship of only four practices in the marketing area (knowledge of competitors, 36% correlation; pricing, 44% correlation; marketing, 37% correlation and customer service, 39% correlation and competitiveness of industrial SMEs). This result is, on the one hand, because the industrial area does not serve the final consumer directly, and on the other hand, because there are other factors in the industrial sector that drive its competitiveness such as quality systems, qualified labor and technology and marketing practices in a reduced way. Additionally, it is observed that in the trade and service sectors, seven marketing practices are important for boosting competitiveness: market plan, business strategies, knowledge of competitors, new products, customer service, sales force and distribution systems, as a result of having a long-term vision, generating strategies that drive competitive advantage, paying attention to competitors' strategies, innovating, and putting the customers first, knowing their needs and delivering the products/services in a timely manner and with the agreed specifications, and providing advice at all times, because SMEs in these sectors serve mainly the final consumer. Since it was not possible to establish a significant relationship of all the practices used by sectors with global competitiveness, Ho_3 is partially rejected.

Table 6. Relationship between competitiveness by sector and marketing practices in the area

Global competitiveness and marketing practices Global competitiveness and marketing practices	Industry *p*	Spearman´s correlation	Commerce *p*	Spearman´s correlation	*p* Services	Spearman´s correlation
Market Plan	.357	0.088	.002	0.491	.016	0.400
Commercial Strategies	.647	0.028	.016	0.366	.016	0.345
Knowledge of Competitors	.032	0.360	.032	0.450	.011	0.511
Pricing	.033	0.440	.112	0.081	.516	0.078
New products	.783	0.023	.002	0.328	.009	0.459
Marketing	.041	0.371	.920	0.019	.113	0.089
Customer service	.022	0.391	.005	0.597	.018	0.613
Sales power	.378	0.066	.006	0.356	.008	0.417
Distribution system	.226	0.011	.001	0.317	.000	0.305

Nota: Se rechaza Ho si p ≥ 0.05

The results of this study make it possible to know that SMEs only use basic marketing practices that relate to cost-based pricing, customer service, sales force and distribution system, which shows the entrepreneur’s short-term vision, thus it is corroborated that he/she does not conduct market plans, does not design business strategies, does not know the competitors, does not innovate constantly, does not include promotions to boost sales, maintain and expand the market, hence resulting in a low competitiveness shown in the indicator of global competitiveness of this factor that only reaches 45.5%, and in a low competitiveness level of these advanced practices by not using SMEs. This is worrying since all marketing practices are related to the global competitiveness of companies, so it is necessary to encourage the use of advanced marketing practices, for which it is necessary the entrepreneur’s vision towards the long term, which allows him/her to survive and be in the market. Micro and small enterprises depend most on marketing practices to boost their competitiveness, as their implementation can help them achieve competitive advantages. Trade and services sectors depend most on marketing practices to boost their competitiveness, because there is great competition in these sectors due to their predominance in Mexico City, and also since they serve the final consumer. Thus, these findings indicate that entrepreneurs must understand the importance of using their resources and capacities in the implementation of marketing practices, given the important relationship with competitiveness that generates profitability in the long term and permanence in the market.

The main contribution of this research is to know the marketing practices used by SMEs and the establishment of a significant relationship between SMEs and competitiveness. The main limitation is the use of a sample of voluntary subjects, which does not allow the generalization of the findings to the entire population.

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Systematic literature review about key factors in the identification of business opportunities

Revisión sistemática de literatura sobre factores clave en la identificación de oportunidades de negocio

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Abstract

The identification of business opportunities is a determining task within the dynamics of entrepreneurship. Therefore, different researches have sought relationships between individual factors and the successful results of this first entrepreneurial step. Although numerous factors have been analyzed, there is still a considerable extension of definitions that vary between them. In response to this need, this article develops a systematic review of the literature, consolidating those factors that have been included in this research field during the last ten years. This review was carried out following the Jennifer Platt three-stage methodology, which has been widely used in similar articles. Starting from a total of 3119 articles, a systematic depuration was carried out resulting in an analysis of 30 articles. The results of this study indicate that there are about 22 proposed factors, with five being the most important among them, that facilitate the identification of business opportunities: prior knowledge, entrepreneurial alertness, self-efficacy, creativity, and contact networks. Other factors found in the analysis are: entrepreneurship experience, work experience, education, cognitive abilities, entrepreneurship intentions and the active search for opportunities in the market. This work contributes to the literature by summarizing the factors included in multiple investigations and offering future lines of research for academics interested in the area.

Resumen

La identificación de oportunidades de negocio es una tarea determinante dentro de la dinámica del emprendimiento. Por ello, diferentes investigaciones han buscado relaciones entre los factores individuales y los resultados exitosos de este primer paso emprendedor. Aunque numerosos factores han sido analizados existe todavía una extensión considerable de definiciones que varían entre ellos. Atendiendo a esta necesidad, este artículo desarrolla una revisión sistemática de la literatura, consolidando aquellos factores que han sido incluidos en investigaciones de este campo durante los últimos diez años. Esta revisión se llevó a cabo siguiendo la metodología trietápica de Jennifer Platt, la cual ha sido ampliamente utilizada en artículos similares. Partiendo de un total de 3119 artículos, se hizo una depuración sistemática teniendo como resultado final un análisis de 30 artículos. Los resultados de este estudio indican que existen alrededor de 22 factores propuestos, siendo cinco los factores más importantes que facilitan la identificación de oportunidades de negocio: el conocimiento previo, el estado de alerta emprendedor, la autoeficacia, la creatividad, y las redes de contacto. Otros factores encontrados en el análisis son: la experiencia en emprendimiento, la experiencia laboral, la educación, las capacidades cognitivas, las intenciones de emprendimiento y la búsqueda activa de oportunidades en el mercado. Este trabajo contribuye a la literatura resumiendo los factores incluidos en múltiples investigaciones y ofreciendo líneas futuras de investigación para académicos interesados en el área.

Keywords | palabras clave

Entrepreneurship, opportunity identification, prior knowledge, entrepreneurship experience, entrepreneurial alertness, self-efficacy, creativity, social networks.
Emprendimiento, identificación de oportunidades, conocimiento previo, experiencia de emprendimiento, estado de alerta emprendedor, autoeficacia, creatividad, redes de contacto.

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1. Introduction

Business opportunities are the core of the entrepreneurship process. From initial theories, such as Schumpeter's (1934), to existing entrepreneurship models, such as those posed by Venkataraman (1997), Shane and Venkataraman (2000) or Eckhardt and Shane (2003), these opportunities are defined as circumstances that favor entrepreneurship activities (George et al., 2016). More formally, business opportunities are situations in which new products, services, raw materials or organizational methods can be introduced to a market and sold at a price higher than production costs (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). However, entrepreneurs are not just traders who buy and sell resources at different times and at different values, but individuals able to recombine the resources available (Shane, 2012). In this way, the venture posed by Shane and Venkataraman (2000) is a three-stage process that consists in the identification, evaluation and exploitation of business opportunities.

One of the questions with more interest for researchers is why some people are able to identify business opportunities while others are not (Baron, 2006), which focuses on the first step of this entrepreneurial process. Several studies agree that there are cognitive, psychology and emotional differences between entrepreneurs, which condition and moderate a person's ability to recognize profitable business opportunities (Gartner et al., 2008). Based on these claims, other research has focused on identifying and studying the factors that enhance the identification of opportunities (Grégoire et al., 2011), however, these research makes it necessary to analyze the variety of concepts included in them.

This article aims to develop a systematic review of the literature on individual factors relevant to the identification of business opportunities. For Webster and Watson (2011) systematic reviews are high-value inputs that create a solid basis for the development of later knowledge: they facilitate the development of theories, it helps to get a conclusion in communication areas with excessive and unnecessary content or, on the contrary, discover areas where further research is needed.

This article is organized as follows. First, it details the methodology used for the search, selection and analysis of relevant publications which are included in the literature review. Second, individual competency-ranked factors are listed and explained. The last two sections summarize the most important findings obtained in this study and suggest future research based on the knowledge gaps found.

2. Methodology for the revision of the literature

The parameters used for this review have been obtained from practices used in previous similar analyses, such as the systematic reviews of Fayezi et al. (2017), Hmieleski and Powell (2017), George et al. (2016) and Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013); the meta-analyses developed by Bae et al. (2014), Martin et al. (2013) and Miao et al. (2017); and the recommendations made by Sánchez-Meca (2010) and Webster and Watson (2011). Based on these works, the following parameters have been taken into account: empirical articles evaluated by blind peers, published in scientific journals during the last 10 years (January 2009-April 2019), in English and Spanish. The databases used for the search were: ABI/Inform, Emerald and Web of Science as these include important research on entrepreneurship opportunities (George et al., 2016).

The search for bibliographic sources was carried out following the methodology proposed by Platt (1981), which has been used in previous revisions (Fayezi et al., 2017). This methodology proposes three stages that help identify and evaluate relevant publications on the subject through a systematic elimination process.

In the first stage, the search was carried out using the keywords: entrepreneurship, opportunity recognition, opportunity discovery, opportunity creation, opportunity identification, taking into account the three possible perspectives of identifying opportunities raised by Sarasvathy et al. (2003). From this search, 3119 items were obtained. From this total, those articles that did not belong to the field of entrepreneurship were separated, as well as publishers, chapters and revisions of book, news, duplicate documents and others with characteristics other than those of interest, after which 2495 articles were maintained.

In the second stage, an analysis of terms was carried out in titles, abstracts and keywords (Fayezi et al., 2017) to identify those that did not match the intentions of this review. To this end, only those documents that presented an approach to entrepreneurship were chosen as an opportunity-focused process and also those focused on the first stage of the model posed by Shane and Venkataraman (2000), resulting in 475 articles. Of this total, 15 literature reviews, two meta-analyses, two methodological articles, and 47 case studies were extracted.

In the third stage, the abstracts and conclusions of the resulting articles were thoroughly reviewed and those whose analysis units were not individuals or who did not consider one or more personality traits or factors were excluded. At the end of this process, 30 articles were obtained: 1 with the approach of opportunity creation, 4 with the approximation of discovery, 11 with the recognition approach and 14 with the approximation of identification of entrepreneurship opportunities.

This process was carried out manually and using Excel program. Some of the fields included in the table prepared for the analysis were: perspective on opportunity, author(s), titles, year, journal, intention of the document, conclusions, among others. The following section shows the most important findings obtained.

3. Main findings

Table 1 summarizes the most important results found in each of the articles included in this review. Table 2 lists the individual factors that are relevant to the identification of business opportunities, based on the items in which they have been included. Figure 1 is a visual representation of how factors have often been included in the analyzed articles through a tag cloud. Tables 1 and 2 are sorted chronologically.

To group the characteristics found, the classification of individual competences suggested by Lahti (1999) was considered, defined as an interrelated set of knowledge, abilities, skills, and other characteristics that contribute to the success of an individual (Lahti, 1999). Other researchers have also taken this definition by specifying, in some cases, other types of competences such as traits, motivations or interests (Ismail et al., 2015; Sánchez, 2011, 2013; Schelfhout et al., 2016). For this review the factors are grouped into knowledge, skills, traits and other characteristics.

Table 1. Summary of articles

Author (s)	Title of the article in Spanish	Results
Ucbasaran, Westhead and Wright (2009)	The scope and nature of the identification of opportunities by experienced entrepreneurs	• Individuals with previous ventures identify more opportunities. However, when the number of failed businesses is very high the number of identified opportunities decreases.
Westhead, Ucbasaran and Wright (2009)	Search for Information and Opportunity Identification: The Importance of Previous Business Ownership Experience	• Serial entrepreneurs identify more opportunities than novice entrepreneurs. • Portfolio entrepreneurs identify more opportunities than serial entrepreneurs and novice. • Higher levels of business capacity and greater intensity of information search favor the identification of opportunities.
Ramos-Rodríguez, Medina-Garrido, Lorenzo-Gómez and Ruiz-Navarro (2010)	What do you know or who do you know? The role of intellectual and social capital in the recognition of opportunities	• Access to external knowledge through social networks in which individuals contribute to the development of capacities for the recognition of new opportunities.
Shane, Nicolaou, Cherkas and Spector (2010)	Does openness to experience and opportunity recognition have the same genetic source?	• The gene from openness to new experiences has a mediating effect on the recognition of opportunities
de Bruin and Ferrante (2011)	Limited opportunity: a knowledge-based approach to recognition and opportunity development.	• The type of entrepreneurship knowledge that is possessed, whether topical or codified, models the type of recognized opportunity.
González-Álvarez y Solís-Rodríguez (2011).	Discovery of entrepreneurship opportunities: A gender perspective.	• Individuals who have a higher stock of human capital and have broader social networks discover more possibilities for business creation.
Grégoire and Shepherd (2012)	Combinations of technology and market and the identification of business opportunities: an investigation of the opportunity-individual nexus	• Individual differences in prior knowledge and business intent moderate the relationships between the superficial and structural similarities of opportunities and the perception of their identification.
Li and Gustafsson (2012).	Recent opportunities in China: social class identity, pre-experience affiliation and identification of innovative opportunities	• Social class identity and previous experience with other nascent entrepreneurs have a significant impact on innovation capacity at the opportunity identification stage.

Arentz, Sautet and Storr (2013)	Previous knowledge and identification of opportunities	• Prior knowledge not only influences the field in which an opportunity can take place, but also how alert a person can be to opportunities in a given field..
Wang, Ellinger and Wu (2013)	Recognition of business opportunities: an empirical study of I+R staff	• Individual self-efficacy, prior knowledge, social media and perception of the industrial environment about opportunities have positive effects on opportunity recognition.
Brockman (2014)	Entrepreneurial alert in the identification and development of opportunities.	• Prior knowledge, experience, creativity, scanning and active search attitude are factors that influence the business alertness, which in turn affects the discovery of opportunities.
Chang, Liu and Chiang (2014)	A study of the relationship between entrepreneurship courses and the identification of opportunities: An empirical survey	• Entrepreneurship courses have a significant impact on improving opportunities identification capabilities and entrepreneurship alertness acts as a mediating variable for this relationship. • Students with prior knowledge have a better opportunity to increase business alertness after taking business courses, thus strengthening their ability to identify opportunities.
Gielnik, Krämer, Kappel and Frese (2014)	Identification and innovation of business opportunities: Investigating the interaction of the acquisition and processing of information.	• Active search for information positively moderates the effect that low levels of business experience have on identifying opportunities, • Active search for information improves the positive effect of divergent thinking on identifying opportunities.
Foo, Uy, & Murnieks (2015)	More than affective valence: Discovering the influences in Valence and the activation in identifying opportunities	• Future research will benefit from the inclusion of affective valence and affective activation, in the research for the identification of opportunities.
Kedmenec, Šebjan and Tominc (2015)	Effect of Rurality and Human Capital Resources in the Process of Identifying Entrepreneurial Opportunities	• High levels of human capital sources, consistent education, skills training and entrepreneurship knowledge and experience have a significant and positive effect on identifying opportunities.
Ruiz-Arroyo, Sanz-Espinosa and Fuentes-Fuentes (2015)	Entrepreneurial alert and prior knowledge for the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities: the moderating role of social networks	• There is a negative influence on prior knowledge about the number of opportunities identified. The entrepreneurial alert leads to a greater number of identified opportunities.

Shane and Nicolaou (2015)	Creative personality, recognition of opportunities and tendency to start businesses: A study of genetic predispositions	• Individuals with creative personalities are more likely to identify new opportunities and start a business. • Genetic factors explain some of the correlation between creative personality and business behavior.
Tocher, Oswald and Hall (2015)	Proposing social resources as catalysts for the creation of opportunities.	• Social capital and social competence facilitate the entrepreneur's ability to navigate the complex process of transforming business ideas into viable opportunities.
Barucic and Umihanic (2016)	Business education as a recognition factor for business opportunities to start a new business.	• Entrepreneurship knowledge and skills are positively related to opportunity recognition.
Karimi, Biemans, Lans, Chizari and Mulder (2016)	The Impact of Business Education: A Study of Business Intentions and the identification of opportunities for Iranian students	• Elective and compulsory entrepreneurship education course programs had positive and significant impacts on students' subjective standards as well as on the control of perceived behavior. • Elective programs significantly increase students' business intention, although this increase is not significant for mandatory programs.
Mueller and Shepherd (2016)	Learning to the fullest the experiences of failure: Exploring the relationship between business failure and identifying business opportunities	• Learning based on failed experiences is greater for entrepreneurs with more cognitive tools. • Those with structured opportunities and an intuitive cognitive style, prior knowledge in professional fields, negatively moderate this relationship.
Nikraftar and Hosseini (2016)	Factors that affect the recognition of business opportunities in the tourism of small and medium-sized enterprises	• Individual self-efficacy, prior knowledge and social media have positive effects on the business alertness. • Enterprise alertness contributes significantly to business opportunity recognition.
Prandelli, Pasquini and Verona (2016)	Understanding the user: An experimental design on taking perspectives in the discovery of entrepreneurship opportunities.	• The cognitive mechanism of perspective-taking improves the ability to discover opportunities. • Understanding customers and markets allows entrepreneurs to fill their information brokers with relevant and original ideas.

Ren, Shu, Bao and Chen (2016)	Connecting network ties with the discovery and exploitation of business opportunities: the role of affective and cognitive trust.	• While affective confidence mediates the positive effects of network relations on the discovery and exploitation of opportunities, cognitive confidence moderates their relationships.
Song, Min, Lee and Seo (2017)	The Effects of Network Dependency on Opportunity Recognition: A Moderate Mediation Model of Knowledge Acquisition and Business Orientation	• Opportunity recognition is most effectively achieved through networking, knowledge acquisition, and business orientation. • Acquiring positively average the knowledge between network reliability and opportunity recognition.
St-Jean et al. (2017)	Can Business Mentors Act as Brokers and Opportunity Enablers among College Students?	• Mentors in the market improve the identification and exploitation of opportunities by their students. Therefore, mentors act as intermediaries and opportunity facilitators.
Hanohov and Baldacchino (2018)	Recognition of opportunities in sustainable entrepreneurship: an exploratory study.	• Knowledge of natural and community environments, motivation to develop individual gains and gains for others, and the knowledge of entrepreneurship influences the identification of sustainable opportunities.
Kim, Choi, Sung and Park (2018)	The role of problem-solving ability in innovative behavior and opportunity recognition in university students	• The more experience and knowledge of entrepreneurship, gained through problem solving and innovative behavior, the greater the chances of recognizing opportunities.
Schmitt, Rosing, Zhang and Leatherbee (2018)	A dynamic model of business uncertainty and identification of business opportunities: Exploration as a mediator and business self-efficacy as a moderator	• An increase in perceived uncertainty improves the identification of opportunities for entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy, but not for those with little self-efficacy.
Ploum, Blok, Lans and Omta (2019)	Educate for self-interest or transcendence? An empirical approach to investigating the role of moral skills in recognizing opportunities for the sustainable development.	• Moral competence, composed of regulatory competence and strategic action has a significant relationship with the number of recognized opportunities.

Table 2. Matrix of factors and authors

	Ucbasaran et al. (2009)	Westhead et al. (2009)	Ramos-Rodríguez et al. (2010)	Shane et al. (2010)	de Bruin y Ferrante (2011)	Gonzalez-Alvarez et al. (2011)	Grégoire y Shepherd (2012)	Li y Gustafsson (2012)	Arentz et al. (2013)	Yu-Lin et al. (2013)	Brockman (2014)	Gielnik et al. (2014)	Wen-Long et al. (2014)	Foo et al. (2015)	Kedmenec et al. (2015)	Ruiz-Arroyo et al. (2015)	Shane y Nicolaou (2015)	Tocher et al. (2015)	Barucic y Umihanic (2016)	Karimi et al. (2016)	Mueller y Shepherd (2016)	Nikraftar y Hosseini (2016)	Prandelli, et al. (2016)	Ren et al. (2016)	Song et al. (2017)	St-jean et al. (2017)	Hanohov et al. (2018)	Ji Young Kim et al. (2018)	Schmitt et al. (2018)	Ploum et al. (2019)
Opportunity perspective				*R*		*D*				*R*	*D*						*R*	*C*				*R*	*D*	*D*	*R*			*R*		*R*
Knowledge																														
Codified knowledge					x																									
Tacit knowledge					x																					x				
Previous knowledge			x			x	x		x	x	x		x			x			x	x	x		x		x		x			x
Education			x			x									x														x	
Experience as entrepreneur	x	x	x			x	x					x																	x	
Working experience							x	x			x															x				

	Opportunity perspective	Skills	Entrepreneurship alertness	Active search	Cognitive abilities	Normative competences	Divergent thought	Traits	Affection	Openness to experiences	Self-efficacy
Ucbasaran et al. (2009)											
Westhead et al. (2009)											
Ramos-Rodríguez et al. (2010)					x						
Shane et al. (2010)	R										
de Bruin y Ferrante (2011)											
Gonzalez-Alvarez et al. (2011)	D										x
Grégoire y Shepherd (2012)											
Li y Gustafsson (2012)											
Arentz et al. (2013)											
Yu-Lin et al. (2013)	R										x
Brockman (2014)	D		x								
Gielnik et al. (2014)				x	x		x				
Wen-Long et al. (2014)			x								
Foo et al. (2015)				x	x				x		
Kedmenec et al. (2015)											x
Ruiz-Arroyo et al. (2015)			x								
Shane y Nicolaou (2015)	R									x	
Tocher et al. (2015)	C										
Barucic y Umihanic (2016)											
Karimi et al. (2016)											
Mueller y Shepherd (2016)											
Nikraftar y Hosseini (2016)	R		x								
Prandelli, et al. (2016)	D		x								x
Ren et al. (2016)	D										
Song et al. (2017)	R										
St-jean et al. (2017)											x
Hanohov et al. (2018)											
Ji Young Kim et al. (2018)	R				x						
Schmitt et al. (2018)									x		x
Ploum et al. (2019)	R										x

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Table 2. Continuation

	Ucbasaran et al. (2009)	Westhead et al. (2009)	Ramos-Rodríguez et al. (2010)	Shane et al. (2010)	de Bruin y Ferrante (2011)	Gonzalez-Alvarez et al. (2011)	Grégoire y Shepherd (2012)	Li y Gustafsson (2012)	Arentz et al. (2013)	Yu-Lin et al. (2013)	Brockman (2014)	Gielnik et al. (2014)	Wen-Long et al. (2014)	Foo et al. (2015)	Kedmenec et al. (2015)	Ruiz-Arroyo et al. (2015)	Shane y Nicolaou (2015)	Tocher et al. (2015)	Barucic y Umihanic (2016)	Karimi et al. (2016)	Mueller y Shepherd (2016)	Nikraftar y Hosseini (2016)	Prandelli, et al. (2016)	Ren et al. (2016)	Song et al. (2017)	St-jean et al. (2017)	Hanohov et al. (2018)	Ji Young Kim et al. (2018)	Schmitt et al. (2018)	Ploum et al. (2019)
Opportunity perspective				*R*		*D*				*R*	*D*						*R*	*C*				*R*	*D*	*D*	*R*			*R*		*R*
Traits																														
Trust																								*x*						
Creativity											*x*												*x*					*x*	*x*	
Other Individual Factors																														
Attitude to entrepreneurship																				*x*										
Entrepreneurship intentions							*x*				*x*												*x*							
Motivation by personal profits																											*x*			

	Ucbasaran et al. (2009)	Westhead et al. (2009)	Ramos-Rodríguez et al. (2010)	Shane et al. (2010)	de Bruin y Ferrante (2011)	Gonzalez-Alvarez et al. (2011)	Grégoire y Shepherd (2012)	Li y Gustafsson (2012)	Arentz et al. (2013)	Yu-Lin et al. (2013)	Brockman (2014)	Gielnik et al. (2014)	Wen-Long et al. (2014)	Foo et al. (2015)	Kedmenec et al. (2015)	Ruiz-Arroyo et al. (2015)	Shane y Nicolaou (2015)	Tocher et al. (2015)	Barucic y Umihanic (2016)	Karimi et al. (2016)	Mueller y Shepherd (2016)	Nikraftar y Hosseini (2016)	Prandelli, et al. (2016)	Ren et al. (2016)	Song et al. (2017)	St-jean et al. (2017)	Hanohov et al. (2018)	Ji Young Kim et al. (2018)	Schmitt et al. (2018)	Ploum et al. (2019)
Opportunity perspective				*R*		*D*				*R*	*D*						*R*	*C*				*R*	*D*	*D*	*R*			*R*		*R*
Entrepreneurial orientation																									*x*					
User perspective																							*x*							
Contact networks			*x*			*x*				*x*						*x*		*x*						*x*	*x*					

Note: The opportunity perspective row mentions articles with a clear, sustained and consistent approach to identifying entrepreneurship opportunities posed by Sarasvathy et al. (2003), where “D” refers to the perspective of discovery, “R” to recognition and “C” to creation.

Figure 1. Tag cloud of the factors found

3.1. *Knowledge*

This competence represents the extent of the information learned by the individual, which relates directly to a task (Lahti, 1999). In the case of entrepreneurship this knowledge must be related to information from the sciences of administration, government laws and other rational aspects, such as experience and education (Ismail et al., 2015).

Prior knowledge stands out in this category, and it includes the collection of information that the individual possesses prior to the entrepreneurship process (Short et al., 2010). Relevant prior knowledge considers all the information that empowers the individual to be able to identify, understand, extrapolate, interpret and apply opportunities within a specific market (Ramos-Rodríguez et al., 2010; Ruiz-Arroyo et al., 2015). These opportunities have not been discovered by other individuals and can be transformed into profitable businesses (Gonzalez-Alvarez & Solis-Rodriguez, 2011).

The sources from which knowledge relevant to entrepreneurship can be acquired are generally classified into four categories. The first consists of education programs, where knowledge related to the administration and discovery of business opportunities is taught (Henry et al., 2005b, 2005a). The second refers to work experiences in general, which may have been developed in private, governmental or political institutions (Li & Gustafsson, 2012). The third refers to specific entrepreneurship experiences (Corbett, 2005; Driessen & Zwart, 2006), in which the individual has owned or managed to complete previous ventures (Gielnik et al., 2014). The fourth is the contact networks, which will be explained below.

3.2. *Skills*

According to Lathi (1999), skills are those capabilities that allow an individual to develop intellectual and physical tasks, which do not require the use of tools or equipment. In the case of entrepreneurship, these skills are defined as the skills to develop tasks typical of entrepreneurial activity (Ismail et al., 2015).

One of the predominant skills in the analysis is cognitive abilities. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) mention that the knowledge needed to undertake (mentioned above) is obtained more quickly if the entrepreneur possesses more cognitive abilities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). These cognitive abilities allow entrepreneurs to associate and integrate the fragmented information received from the market (Foo et al., 2015) and condition the probabilities that an individual will discover specific entrepreneurship opportunities on it (Wang et al., 2013). Other research has included indicators of cognitive abilities such as mediating factors or important moderators in entrepreneurship processes (e.g. Gaglio, 2004; Gielnik et al., 2014; Hartog et al., 2010). Cognitive abilities can be defined as those skills that the individual has, which allow to understand the information received from the different sources described above, obtaining from them relevant conclusions that allow to solve real entrepreneurship problems (Gielnik et al., 2014).

Another skill that enhances knowledge for entrepreneurship is active search, which involves efforts to find and accumulate relevant information related to the new opportunities already identified or that want to be identified (Foo et al., 2015). Two other skills, with less presence in this analysis, are: (a) regulatory competences, which are especially important for recognizing opportunities related to sustainable development, as mentioned by Ploum et al. (2019); and b) divergent thinking, which is related to creativity and it allows the individual to generate a greater amount of ideas, more original and more relevance to the entrepreneurship (Gielnik et al., 2014).

Finally, the entrepreneurial alertness has also been widely included in research related to the identification of opportunities. This factor is defined as an individual's ability to perceive opportunities, ignored by others, without intentionally seeking them (Chang et al., 2014; Kirzner, 1973). In other words, it is the individual's sensitivity towards the information about objects, incidents and patterns of behavior in the environment, especially to the problems of manufacturers and users, unsatisfied needs, interests and new combinations of resources (Ray & Cardozo, 1996, in Ardichvili et al., 2003, p. 113).

3.3. Traits

The personality traits are lasting and predictable characteristics of individuals, which help explain their behavior and the different ways they act in similar situations (Hwee Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010). These elements also help predict an individual's propensity to act (McCrae & Costa, 1990, in Rauch & Frese, 2007). More specifically, entrepreneurship-related traits are those that motivate or increase an individual's propensity to undertake

Generally speaking, contemporary theorists agree that there are five broad personality traits, explained by the model known as "Big five" or five-factor model (McCrae & Costa, 1997). This model, whose factors are: a) extraversion; b) neuroticism; c) affability, d) scrupulousness; and (e) openness to experiences, has been widely used and applied by multiple studies on entrepreneurship (e.g. Brandstätter, 2011; Obschonka et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2010)with agreeableness failing to be associated with either. Multivariate effect sizes were moderate for the full set of Big Five personality variables on entrepreneurial intentions (multiple R = .36. For example, openness to experiences describes the degree to which the individual is imaginative, curious, original and open to new ideas (Shane et al., 2010).

However, articles in this review, which include personality traits, have focused on more specific traits, which allow to identify specific characteristics of those who successfully manage to carry out the entrepreneurship process (Jain, 2011; Martin et al., 2013; Miao et al., 2017; Rauch & Frese, 2007; Unger et al., 2011). Self-efficacy is the most predominantly researched trait and is defined as an individual's belief in his or her ability to gather and implement the personal resources, skills, and competencies needed to achieve a certain level of accomplishment in a given task (Bandura, 1977). This concept is closely related to the level of trust that the individual possesses (Ren et al., 2016), another factor found in this review.

Another trait found is creativity and is defined as the "ability of the individual to discover something that is new, useful, and valuable" (Jain, 2011, p. 132). In its one-dimensional version, creativity has been a construct quite related to entrepreneurship, especially for the approach to creating opportunities (Gielnik et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2007).

3.4. Other individual factors

Another predominant factor refers to the contact networks held by the person. It is especially important for Kirzner's proposed opportunity identification perspective (1973), in which it is stated that contact networks are crucial sources of information, as they allow access to potential valuable knowledge (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004; Sarasvathy et al., 2003). According to Song et al. (2017) contact networks can be defined as the connections the individual has with other people or organizations in his/her environment, which are intended to exchange relevant information about the market.

This factor is also closely related to the information brokers mentioned by Shane (2000), who argues that such brokers provide greater possibilities for obtaining valuable information about clients, market changes and other important information (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Eckhardt & Shane, 2010; Lehner & Kaniskas, 2012). In addition, the contact networks represent a social orientation on the part of the entrepreneur (Abuzhuri & Hashim, 2017) once he/she has understood that in order to perform business ideas, connections with other individuals are required (Oosterbeek et al., 2010, p. 446). In the revised articles, some research was also found (Gonzalez-Alvarez & Solis-Rodriguez, 2011; Ramos-Rodríguez et al., 2010; Tocher et al., 2015) where the term social capital is used to refer to the contact networks and reciprocity rules associated with them. More specifically, Song et al. (2017) use the "network reliability" factor, which not only evaluates the size of the network but also its quality.

On the other hand, entrepreneurship intentions (an element that has been included in several of the research analyzed) represent the degree to which an individual considers starting a company in the near future (Grégoire & Shepherd, 2012), i.e. the willingness to become an entrepreneur (Prandelli et al., 2016). According to Ajzen's planned behavior theory (1991), the intentions of performing a particular activity represent an effective predictor of the current activity, thus being ideal for measuring actions that happen at uncertain moments, such as the beginning of an enterprise.

The last three factors found in this review have had a presence in a few articles. The first, the motivations for personal profits, which are included in the article by Hanohov and Baldacchino (2018), who argue that this type of motivation increases the individual's attention to viable and sustainable opportunities over time, so they also increase their chances of recognizing an opportunity for a sustainable entrepreneurship. On the other hand, entrepreneurial guidance provides the individual more propensity to take risks, greater innovation and proactivity, which foster a more appropriate attitude for entrepreneurship decision-making, such as identifying opportunities (Song et al., 2017). Finally, the user perspective is included in the research of Prandelli et al. (2016) as an important element for the identification of entrepreneurship opportunities since they generate skills in the entrepreneur that allow to interpret mental states and anticipate actions of potential consumers.

4. Conclusions

Of all the individual factors found in the analysis, five stand out by having more presence in the articles and by showing more positive and significant effects on the identification (or creation) of opportunities for entrepreneurship: prior knowledge, entrepreneurial alertness, self-efficacy, creativity, and contact networks. Prior knowledge allows individuals to have more tools to identify or develop profitable opportunities, as mentioned in Louis Pasteur's famous phrase: fortune favors the prepared minds. The entrepreneurial alertness allows an individual to identify business opportunities ignored by others, without the need to intentionally look for them. Self-efficacy is a factor that characterizes entrepreneurs who rely on the skills acquired over their lifetime, providing more determination when defining whether or not there is a real business opportunity. On the other hand, creativity is a very important personality trait for all types of ventures, but especially for those business ideas that are based on the creation of business opportunities. Finally, contact networks represent an important enhancer for other factors, especially for obtaining information and knowledge, which ultimately serve to connect ideas and thus identify a greater number of opportunities for entrepreneurship.

5. Limitations and future research

This research has limitations. The first is that the analysis of the revised articles was obtained from the ABI/Inform, Emerald and Web of Science repositories, which include an important research group on entrepreneurship opportunities (George et al., 2016). However, future research can be done including SCOPUS' SciVerse database, which is currently the most complete database of entrepreneurship-related articles.

The second limitation present in any review article is that relevant articles, that have not been properly catalogued or that did not include the key terms used for the search in their titles, abstracts or other important metadata, could have been excluded. On the other hand, while this review includes both articles published in English and Spanish, a non-negligible number of articles have been published in languages other than those mentioned. Therefore, future research would benefit from the inclusion of research conducted or translated in other languages.

Future research is also needed to reinforce the findings and conclusions reached in this review. In addition, it would also be important for future literature reviews to focus on the other stages of entrepreneurship, i.e. they can analyze the factors relevant to the evaluation and exploitation of entrepreneurship opportunities. An implication for researchers is that the findings of this research promote the search for research gaps, which can be analyzed in later studies.

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Attitude, satisfaction and loyalty of customers in Municipal Savings Banks of Peru

Actitud, satisfacción y lealtad de los clientes en las Cajas Municipales del Perú

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to extend the SERVQUAL model by adding the customer's attitude to its three main dimensions as one more component of measuring service quality and to investigate the causal relationship in customer satisfaction and loyalty in the microfinance sector, specifically in the municipal savings banks. and credit that have agencies in the Ancash Region, the survey technique was used, where data was collected from 391 clients through the questionnaire through simple random sampling. As it is a structural equation modeling (SEM) methodology, the partial least square (PLS) analysis technique was used to evaluate the theoretical model using the Smart PLS 3.3.0 software, the finding revealed that the extended model has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty in municipal savings banks and credit, the coefficients of determination were; customer satisfaction (r2 = 0.637), customer loyalty (r2 = 0.510) with a mean squared error of approximation (SRMR) of 0.06, the results make the confirmatory model relevant. Furthermore, the results of this study will be useful for managers and policymakers to improve the quality of service in municipal savings banks. It is recommended to extend this study in other developing countries, since it was contextualized in the reality of the Peruvian financial system.

Resumen

El propósito del estudio fue extender el modelo SERVQUAL adicionando la actitud del cliente a las tres principales dimensiones como componentes de la medición de la calidad del servicio e investigar la influencia en la satisfacción y la lealtad de los clientes en el sector microfinanciero, específicamente de las cajas municipales de ahorro y crédito que poseen agencias en la Región Ancash, Se utilizó la técnica de la encuesta donde se recopilaron datos de 391 clientes a través del cuestionario mediante el muestreo aleatorio simple. Por tratarse de una metodología de modelos de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) para evaluar el modelo teórico se empleó la técnica de análisis de Mínimo Cuadrado Parcial (PLS) mediante el uso del software Smart PLS 3.3.0. El hallazgo reveló que el modelo extendido tiene un impacto significativo en la satisfacción y la lealtad de los clientes en las cajas municipales de ahorro y crédito. Los coeficientes de determinación fueron; satisfacción del cliente (r2=0.637) y lealtad del cliente (r2=0.510), con un error cuadrático medio de aproximación (SRMR) de 0.06 que hace relevante el modelo confirmatorio. Además, los resultados de este estudio serán útiles para que los gerentes y los encargados de formular políticas mejoren la calidad del servicio en las cajas municipales. Se recomienda extender este estudio en otros países en vías de desarrollo, ya que se contextualizó en la realidad del sistema financiero peruano.

Keywords | palabras clave

Tangibility, reliability, security, customer attitude, customer satisfaction, microfinance, SEM model, Smart PLS.

Tangibilidad, fiabilidad, seguridad, actitud del cliente, satisfacción del cliente, microfinanzas, modelo SEM, Smart PLS.

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1. Introduction

The municipal savings and loan banks (CMAC) have been part of Peru's financial system since 1982 and are a very important support in the economic and social development of the country. Currently, there are 12 municipal banks: CMAC Arequipa, Huancayo, Piura, Cusco, Trujillo, Sullana, Ica, Tacna, Maynas, Paita, Del Santa, and Lima. In addition, there are agencies at the national level and these are even regulated by the superintendency of banking and insurance and pension fund manager (SBS), they also own 40.2% of Peru's microfinance market (Escobedo et al., 2019). They also offer retail financial services of placements and acquisitions for entrepreneurs and individuals who cannot access the banking system (Geraldo et al., 2020). There are similar institutions in Latin America, such as the savings and credit cooperatives in Ecuador, which is a clear example of the need for microfinance institutions that promote financial inclusion (Salinas, 2011).

The Ancash region is located in the west of Peru, bordering La Libertad to the north, the Lima region to the south, the Huánuco Region to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Located at an average altitude of 2,688 meters above sea level, it includes the provinces of Caraz, Yungay, Carhuaz, Huaraz and Chimbote. With a population of 1'213,900 inhabitants, it is the eighth most populated region and the sixth largest economy in Peru for contributing to Gross Domestic Product - GDP:3.5%. For this reason, the market of the Ancash Region is very attractive to municipal savings and loan banks, where they have operated for more than 20 years and with good results; currently the main concern of the managers of the CMAC's is the maintenance of customers, thus the aim is to improve the quality of their services (Escobedo et al., 2019).

Services in this group of financial institutions are increasingly becoming a competitive factor and are being considered an essential tool for the revenue stream of micro-enterprises (Escobedo et al., 2019). Efforts are evident to improve the quality of its services and meet the needs of its customers, but the diversity of its customers makes this task difficult (Morillo et al., 2011). On the other hand, customers determine quality based on differences in expectations of expected service and perceived expectations of what the bidder provides (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In addition, Vargas and Aldana (2014) define the quality of service as the result of the consumer's comparison between their expectations and perceptions. In the financial sector, quality of service plays a vital role in improving customer satisfaction (Arancibia et al., 2013). In addition, Berdugo-Correa, et al. (2016) mention that providing a quality service would generate a good level of satisfaction and also a long-term relationship with the customer.

With regard to the financial sector, Alnaser et al. (2018), described that financial institutions with competitive advantages maintain a strong relationship with their clients, providing favorable levels of customer loyalty. Also, managers perceive that quality of service can increase a company's performance (Guerrero, 2014; Ureña et al., 2016). However, quality of service and customer satisfaction are interchangeable terms (González, 2015). In addition, there is a positive relationship of the quality of service and the satisfaction of banking customers in the financial sector (Alnaser et al., 2018). Indeed, several studies have been carried out in the services sector to understand the dimensions of quality of service and customer satisfaction (Morillo et al., 2011).

The rapid growth of financial services has provided different alternatives to clients (León, 2018). Therefore, quality of service plays an important role in improving profits, market share, developing a good image and providing a competitive advantage (Rodriguez, 2014). In this sense, there is no consensus on quality of service, and its measurement in the financial sector is very complex; therefore, this study aims to measure the quality of service through four latent variables, as well as to demonstrate its

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influence on customer satisfaction and its impact on the loyalty of customers of Peru's municipal savings and loan banks.

While the quality of service has been addressed by many researchers, there are very few studies that relate the quality, satisfaction and loyalty of customers in the financial services sector. In addition, the customer's attitude has not been included so far as part of the SERVQUAL model. Therefore, the aim is to consider the customer's attitude as part of the SERVQUAL model, and complement the measurement of the quality of service in the customers of the Municipal Savings and Loan Banks of Peru.

1.1. Quality of service in the financial system

In recent decades, the quality of service has been a lot investigated from both academics and professionals, and customer expectation serves as the basis for quality of service. In addition, the SERVQUAL model has been used very successfully in the service sector to evaluate its quality. Several researchers have used the SERVQUAL model to measure the quality of service in the financial sector (Rodríguez, 2014; Berdugo-Correa et al., 2016). On the other hand, almost all models used to measure the quality of service have been criticized for presenting difficulties in their measurement (De Pedro, 2015). Over time, SERVQUAL model was expanded by several researchers (Ibarra et al., 2014; Numpaque-Pacabaque & Rocha-Buelvas, 2016; Valencia, Cruz, & Ospino, 2018).

1.2. Model of discrepancies - SERVQUAL

Organizations need to know the quality of the service offered. In addition, the advantages of achieving a good quality of service are improving customer loyalty and increasing market share (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Therefore, SERVQUAL model has been used to measure the quality of service in municipal banks. This model was proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985), in its beginnings it comprised ten dimensions and over the years it was grouped into five dimensions. These most important constructs were: tangibility, reliability, safety, empathy and responsiveness: a) Tangibility, it is the way physical facilities, personnel, equipment and materials are perceived. b) Reliability is the ability to run the promised service carefully and build customer trust. c) Safety refers to know the service and the know the perception of workers' attention, courtesy and their ability to inspire credibility and safety in the customer. d) Empathy is the ability to provide personalized attention, adapt to the customer, understand the customer and improve their experience in service. e) Responsiveness is the willingness to guide customers, appear fully engaged, pay full attention to customers and answer questions or complaints during service.

SERVQUAL model, despite being widely used in service marketing, has been criticized from experts of different specialties (Fernández & Bajac, 2018); this model has been applied in the United States and Europe (De Abreu et al., 2019), in addition SERVQUAL model has been used to investigate the quality of service in the context of the financial system (Fernández, 2000). On the other hand, Raajpoot (2004) proposes the PAKSERV model where it validates three dimensions of the SERVQUAL model (tangibility, reliability and safety) and adds three new dimensions. In addition, a significant relationship of the SERVQUAL model has been demonstrated with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Alnaser et al., 2018), taking into account these contributions, only the three dimensions of the SERVQUAL model that were used in the PAKSERV model are considered for this study and the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Tangibility significantly influences customer satisfaction
H2: reliability significantly influences customer satisfaction
H3: safety significantly influences customer satisfaction

1.3. Customer attitude

The behavioral intention is defined as the consumer's willingness and likelihood of using a service (San Martín & Prodanova, 2014). Previous studies identified many factors that could affect behavioral intention. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) present in the reasoned action theory (TRA) that both attitude and subjective norms are able to affect the human behavioral intention.

According to TRA, attitude consists of attitudinal beliefs about the consequences of performing behavior guided by the assessment of consequences (Aldás et al., 2011; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980); meanwhile, the subjective norm is defined as the person's perception towards the behavior he/she must or must not have based on the perception of others (Reyes, 2007, p. 15). Similarly, the hypothesis is raised.

H4: Customer attitude significantly influences customer satisfaction.

1.4. Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction is attributed to the customer's feelings of happiness when the service provider meets the expectations. In the literature on service management, customer satisfaction can be defined as a summary of the cognitive and affective reaction to a service incident or a long-term service relationship (Gosso, 2010). According to Kotler et al. (2017), customer satisfaction is the customer response that evaluates the previous expectations and actual service performance. Internationally, customer satisfaction has been considered as a very valuable component for an organization to be considered competitive (Moros & Pimiento, 2014). On the other hand, customer's lifetime loyalty with the service offered depends on a large extent to satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2017). In addition, quality of service has been identified as a key strategy for a higher level of customer satisfaction (Guerrero, 2014), thus, according to Gosso (2010), both customer satisfaction and the perception of quality of service have a positive impact on the customer's repurchase intention. In the same sense, the hypothesis is raised.

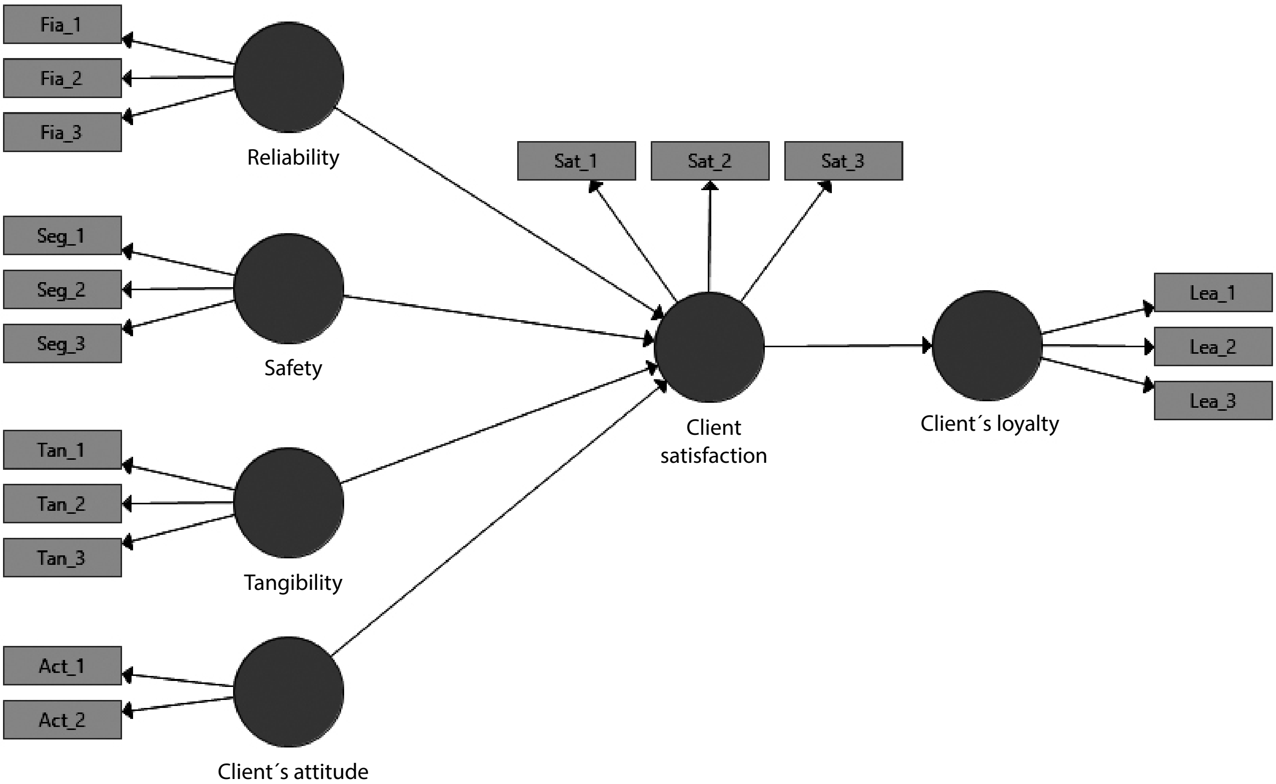
H5: Customer satisfaction significantly influences customer loyalty.

1.5. Customer Loyalty

The quality of service is an effective tool to keep customer´s loyalty with an organization. According to Baptista and León, (2013), loyalty is a specific attitude and behavior. In addition, customer loyalty has been an important element in increasing the profitability of the company (Gosso, 2010). Also, customer loyalty has been defined as a deeply rooted commitment to re-purchase or re-sponsor a preferred product consistently with future situational influences and marketing efforts that could cause a change in the behavior (Kotler et al., 2017, p.104).

No matter the type of measurement, quality has been shown to be positively related to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Baptista & León, 2013). On the other hand, behavioral loyalty demonstrates the positive response of the client to repurchase a particular product or service (Cavazos, 2010), i.e. customers who are loyal to a financial institution spend much more than other customers (Vargas & Aldana, 2014). For this reason, several studies confirmed that loyalty in the banking sector has been attributed based on customer satisfaction (León, 2018; Arancibia et al., 2013; Berdugo-Correa et al., 2016). The theoretical model shown in Figure 1 is presented with the above information.

Figure 1. Theoretical general model



2. Materials and method

The aim of this study was to analyze the quality of service in the Municipal Savings and Loan Banks of Peru, expanding the SERVQUAL model by adding the customer's attitude by considering the contributions and criticisms about this model. The research used three dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, proposed in a non-Western context (Raajpoot, 2004). Therefore, the model would have six latent variables (reliability, security, tangibility, customer attitude, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty) and seventeen observable variables (Figure 1). The type of research was explanatory, with a quantitative approach and a cross-cutting design (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

2.1. Data collection instruments

Two questionnaires were used; one was formed by three constructs of the SERVQUAL model, and had a total of nine items and were adapted from the scale previously developed by (Parasuraman et al., 1988); the othere was based on the customer's attitude and it was formed by two items adapted from the previous study proposed by Alnaser et al. (2018); then three items corresponding to customer satisfaction adapted by Sayani (2015), and finally, customer loyalty with three items previously proposed by Rahi et al. (2017). The second part was composed by the demographics of CMAC's clients such as age, gender and level of education.

2.2. Sampling design

The population of the study corresponded to Municipal Savings and Loan Banks, the survey was self-administered to collect customer data located in the cities of Huaraz, Caraz and Chimbote of Peru's Ancash Region. Prior to conducting the survey, the researcher obtained permission from each agency's manager to collect the data.

The simple random sampling method was used in this study. According to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018) simple random sampling ensures that the sample is representative because it maintains randomness and equally. Therefore, for collecting the data surveyors personally visited municipal agencies and asked customers to fill out the questionnaire; the required sample size was 391 customers, the data collection process ran during November 2019, including the provinces of Caraz, Yungay, Carhuaz, Huaraz and Chimbote of the Ancash Region.

2.3. Respondent profile

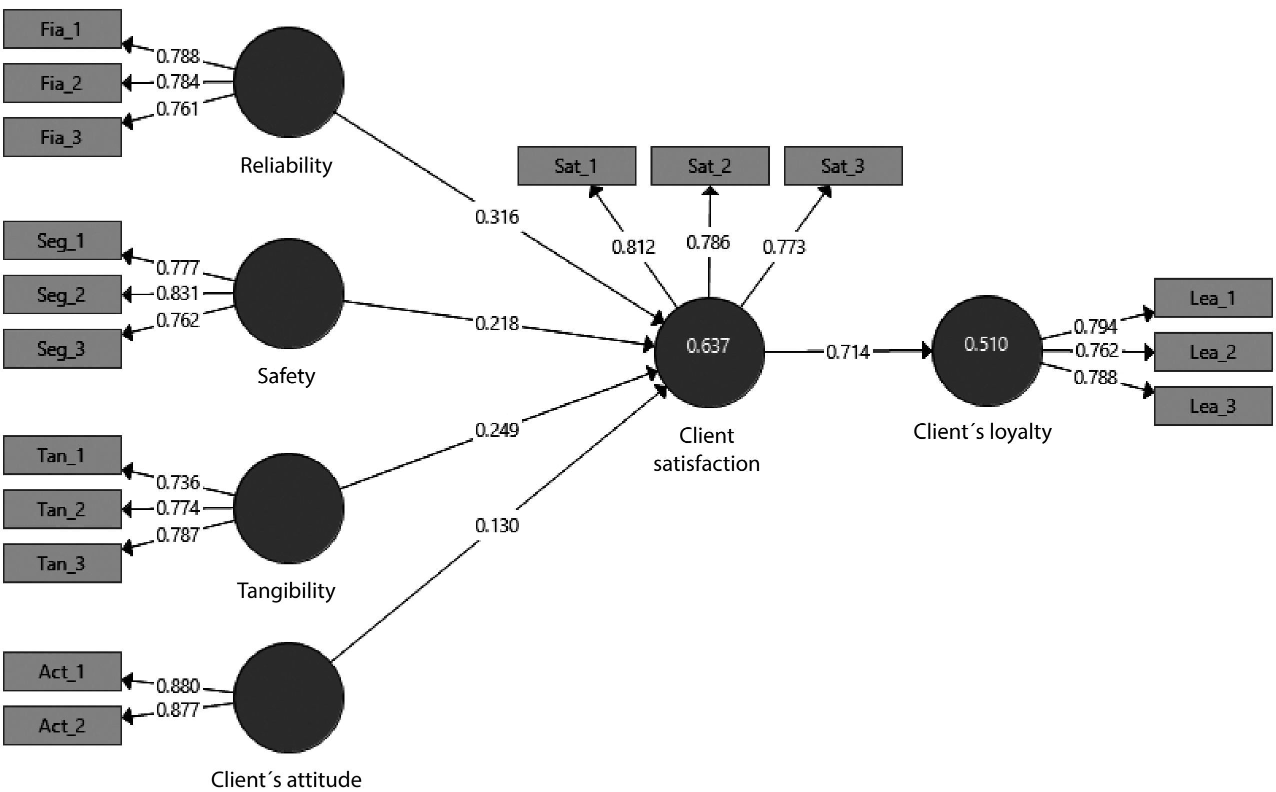
Demographic results of the selected sample were 56.25% male and 43.75%. female. The age of respondents indicated that 7.0% are under the age of 25; 23.4% are in the range of 26 to 35 years, 42.2% are between 36 and 45 years and 27.4% are over 46 years. In addition to the level of education of respondents, 19% of respondents did not complete High School, 48% had completed High School, 26% of respondents had a college degree, 6% had a master's level education. With regard to the type of activity, 52% is engaged in the service sector, 24% to manufacturing, 13% are engaged in activities related to agriculture and 11% are dependent workers (public and private sector).

3. Results

3.1. Measurement model

To evaluate the research model, the Partial Least Square Analysis (PLS) technique was used with Smart PLS 3.3.0 software (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). Figure 2 shows the results of factorial loads as recommended by the Threshold Level of Henseler et al. (2009) of 0.6. All values were above 0.6, which shows the convergent validity of the model.

Figure 2. Research Model



3.2. Converged validity

To evaluate convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) should be taken into account, which should be a value higher than 0.5 (Becker et al., 2018). In addition, Table 1 shows the degree of composite reliability (CR), where the indicator (observable variables) of the construct represents the latent variable (Esposito et al., 2010), the values exceeded 0.70 and the convergent validity is demonstrated.

Table 1. Results of the Measurement Model

Construct	External Loads	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer Attitude	Act	0.871	0.772
Act_1	0.880		
Act_2	0.877		
Reliability	Fia	0.821	0.605
Fia_1	0.788		
Fia_2	0.784		
Fia_3	0.761		
Security	Gar	0.833	0.625
Seg_1	0.777		
Seg_2	0.831		
Seg_3	0.762	0.810	0.587
Tangibility	Tan		
Tan_1	0.736		
Tan_2	0.774		
Tan_3	0.787	0.834	0.625
Customer Satisfaction	Sat		
Sat_1	0.812		
Sat_2	0.786		
Sat_3	0.773	0.825	0.611
Customer Loyalty	Lea		
Lea_1	0.794		
Lea_2	0.762		
Lea_3	0.788		

3.3. Discriminating validity

Discriminating validity is the degree to which the elements differ between constructs; in other words, it indicates the extent to which a given construct is different from other constructs (Martínez & Fierro, 2018). Table 2 shows in bold the square root of the mean variance extracted and these are presented diagonally; this value was greater than the values of each row and each corresponding column.

Table 2. Discriminatory validity of the measurement model

Construct	Attitude	Reliability	Security	Customer Loyalty	Customer Satisfaction	Tangibility
Attitude	**0.878**					
Reliability	0.619	**0.778**				
Security	0.668	0.699	**0.791**			
Customer Loyalty	0.609	0.683	0.663	**0.781**		
Customer Satisfaction	0.625	0.722	0.699	0.714	**0.791**	
Tangibility	0.614	0.693	0.690	0.662	0.699	**0.766**

3.4. Cross-loading

Discriminating validity can be measured by examining the cross-factorial loads of the observed-indicator variables (Leyva & Trinidad, 2014). It can be done by comparing the external loads of an indicator in the associated constructs and it must be higher than all its burden in the other constructs (Ruiz et al., 2010). Table 3 shows that, in all items that measure a particular construct, loads get higher values in their respective latent variables and values are obtained lower in the other latent variables. Thus, the latter confirms the discriminatory validity of the constructs.

Table 3. Cross-loading on factorial analysis

Items	Attitude	Reliability	Security	Customer Loyalty	Customer Satisfaction	Tangibility
Act_1	**0.880**	0.566	0.597	0.546	0.552	0.514
Act_2	**0.877**	0.521	0.576	0.524	0.545	0.565
Fia_1	0.517	**0.788**	0.589	0.545	0.590	0.538

Items	Attitude	Reliability	Security	Customer Loyalty	Customer Satisfaction	Tangibility
Fia_2	0.439	**0.784**	0.540	0.534	0.562	0.543
Fia_3	0.488	**0.761**	0.499	0.513	0.532	0.537
Seg_1	0.541	0.563	**0.777**	0.531	0.533	0.544
Seg_2	0.533	0.580	**0.831**	0.547	0.602	0.574
Seg_3	0.511	0.515	**0.762**	0.494	0.518	0.517
Lea_1	0.474	0.534	0.509	**0.794**	0.585	0.520
Lea_2	0.458	0.525	0.544	**0.762**	0.531	0.504
Lea_3	0.496	0.542	0.504	**0.788**	0.557	0.528
Sat_1	0.504	0.571	0.583	0.615	**0.812**	0.577
Sat_2	0.504	0.578	0.564	0.567	**0.786**	0.550
Sat_3	0.473	0.565	0.507	0.507	**0.773**	0.530
Tan_1	0.420	0.488	0.477	0.448	0.513	**0.736**
Tan_2	0.500	0.560	0.550	0.517	0.559	**0.774**
Tan_3	0.488	0.541	0.557	0.554	0.533	**0.787**

3.5. Structural equation model (SEM)

After achieving the measurement model, the hypotheses were tested by executing a resampling or bootstraping process using a number of subsamples of 1000, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017). Table 4 shows the results of hypothesis contrast, and it can be observed that the five hypotheses have a significant influence with their corresponding latent variables. H1: Tangibility significantly influences customer satisfaction (β = 0.249, t = 4.976, p <0.001); similarly, reliability significantly influences customer satisfaction, H2: (β = 0.316, t = 5.676, p <0.001). H3: safety significantly influences customer satisfaction is supported by (β = 0.218, t = 4.553, p <0.001). Similarly, H4: customer's attitude significantly influences customer satisfaction (β= 0.130, t = 3.324, p <0.01). Finally, H5 hypothesis customer satisfaction significantly influences customer loyalty due to values (β = 0.714, t = 16.154, p <0.001). This demonstrates the validity of the model in the financial sector. In addition, $\beta2$ was used to measure the size of the effect. The $\beta2$ for customer satisfaction was 0.637 and for customer loyalty 0.510, which is acceptable according to the limit suggested by Cohen (1988). Finally, the root mean square deviation (RMSD) was 0.06 where a RMSD value of <0.08 is acceptable and RMSD < 0.05 is optimal.

Table 4. Structural Model Analysis (Hypothesis Test)

hypothesis	Ratio	Path Coefficients (Standardized) (β)	Standard Deviation (DE)	t Student (Boostrapping)	p-value
H1	Tangibility -> Satisfaction	0.249	0.050	4.976	0.000***
H2	Reliability -> Satisfaction	0.316	0.056	5.676	0.000***
H3	Security -> Satisfaction	0.218	0.048	4.553	0.000***
H4	Attitude -> Satisfaction	0.130	0.039	3.324	0.001**
H5	Satisfaction -> Loyalty	0.714	0.044	16.154	0.000***
Note: Significance level where, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001.					

4. Discussion and conclusions

Despite the acceptance of the SERVQUAL model to measure the quality of service, it has also served as the basis for making some modifications or adaptations to generate new ways of measuring the quality of service in specific environments. For this reason, it has been adapted as the SERVQHOS scale created to measure the quality of hospital care services; it has 19 items, where expectations and perceptions are combined in order to obtain its quality assessment (Numpaque-Pacabaque & Rocha-Buelvas, 2016). On the other hand, there is an adaptation of the SERVQUAL model to a so-called PAKSERV, where the impact of personal values and the orientations of an Asian culture are considered and are included in the following dimensions tangibility, reliability, guarantee, sincerity, personalization, formality and responsiveness, and it has 24 items (Raajpoot, 2004).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to integrate the dimension of the customer's attitude into the SERVQUAL model, and the results revealed that attitude significantly influences customer satisfaction. In addition, Peruvian reality is different from the reality of the United States or Europe; therefore, it is confirmed that attitude had a moderate role in the satisfaction of service in the municipal banks of Peru. On the other hand, the influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty has turned out to be strong ($\beta = 0.714$). Likewise, all hypotheses were tested, these results have also been supported by several researchers (Rahi et al., 2017; Leyva & Trinidad, 2014; Fernandez, 2000).

Several studies have been conducted to investigate quality of service in different contexts (Yalley & Agyapong, 2017; Valencia et al., 2018). In this way, current research has two main contributions. First, the results of the research showed that the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, such as safety, tangibility and reliability are relevant for measuring the quality of service in Peru's municipal banks. Second, this study also expanded the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model with the customer's attitude to measure quality of service in the financial sector. The model proposed in this research has a significant effect on customer satisfaction with 63.7% of variation, and customer satisfaction with 51% of variation in customer loyalty of the Municipal Savings and Loan Banks of Peru. Hence, the results of the study confirm a new model that expresses Peruvian culture with the addition of the customer's attitude as a component of quality of service.

The growing number of financial institutions such as Edpymes, rural banks, cooperatives among other microfinance institutions in Peru (Escobedo et al., 2019), create an opportunity for municipal banks to be integrally involved in improving relations with their customers and finding new ways to generate value for customers. According to the results of the proposed model, attitude plays an important role in the perception of quality of service; therefore, contacts are critical and the credit officer must be well prepared, since these interactions can improve the relationship with customers. It is not just about providing information, but also about strengthening customer relationships (Baptista & León, 2013) and leading municipal banks to a customer-centered model; achieving it requires time, but it is definitely the right moment to start this process.

Taking into account the customer's attitude, it is suggested that municipal banks should implement consumer protection modules and improve access to their product information to avoid confusion and clarify the conditions when using their services, and thus improve the customer's perception of quality of service and generate the necessary conditions for the financial system to remain for the benefit of the financial inclusion.

The main limitation of the study could be the type of sample, i.e. only the customers in a region were considered; also, another limitation could be the non-longitudinal nature of the analysis. However, future research is suggested by extending the study to other financial institutions, or with a sample that would represent a wide variety of countries to investigate potential differences in customer´s behavior.

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Analysis of relational marketing strategies in higher education institutions in Colombia and Spain

Análisis de las estrategias de marketing relacional en instituciones de educación superior de Colombia y España

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Abstract

Marketing strategies in universities have allowed a better understanding of the audiences and the classification of actions that generate value to the university brand. That is why this research project aims to identify the importance of relationship marketing strategies in the education sector, especially in the main universities in Colombia and Spain to know how they implement marketing actions that generate value. The methodology used to achieve this objective was based on a review of literature, where the evolution and models of marketing applied in education were analyzed; likewise, the main variables of marketing with a relational approach were examined and comparisons were made between the countries mentioned to find the difference in the strategies that each one implements. It is concluded that, both in Colombia and in Spain, marketing strategies with a relational focus are beginning to be planned that generate value to academic and administrative management; likewise, it is evident that the main variables - creation of value, satisfaction and confidence - for the different actions implemented in the universities of the countries analyzed are fundamental pillars for the incorporation of good relational marketing in education.

Resumen

Las estrategias de marketing en las universidades han permitido una mejor comprensión de las audiencias y la clasificación de acciones que le generen valor a la marca universitaria. Es por esto que el presente proyecto investigativo pretende identificar la importancia de las estrategias de marketing relacional en el sector educativo, especialmente en las principales universidades de Colombia y España para conocer de qué manera implementan acciones mercadológicas que generan valor. La metodología utilizada para lograr este objetivo fue a partir de una revisión de literatura, donde se analizó la evolución y los modelos de marketing aplicados en educación; de igual manera, se examinaron las principales variables de marketing con enfoque relacional y se hicieron comparativos entre los países mencionados para encontrar la diferencia en las estrategias que cada uno implementa. Se concluye que, tanto en Colombia como en España, se empiezan a planear estrategias de marketing con enfoque relacional que generan valor a la gestión académica y administrativa; así mismo se evidencia que las principales variables —creación de valor, satisfacción y confianza— para las diferentes acciones implementadas en las universidades de los países analizados son pilares fundamentales para la incorporación de un buen marketing relacional en educación.

Keywords | palabras clave

Marketing, relationship marketing, strategy, management, higher education, student, teacher, service.
Marketing, marketing relacional, estrategia, gestión, universidades, estudiante, docente, servicio.

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1. 1. Introduction

Understanding marketing is an important challenge for organization managers. Marketing was previously used in companies, and it focused on the commercialization of tangibles, but almost all companies today require incorporating strategic marketing plans to potentialize results. Analyzing this market discipline in universities shows the incorporation of innovative actions that allow the positioning and visibility of the university brand (Peralta-Silva & Linares-Cazola, 2013). The focus of marketing on administrative management has evolved towards much closer communication with different audiences in order to construct a more lasting relationship with them (Hennig-Thurau, Langer & Hansen 2001) as well as a relevant brand concept and content commitment from the different digital platforms they currently have (Peruta & Shields 2018). The formation of individuals is a relevant aspect with great impact on global development, because of the significant changes it can have in society. Education is the route towards knowledge that allows to improve both personally and professionally; to this extent it is of great importance for the development of a city, a country and the world (Ceballos-Lozano et al., 2012). However, the globalization of education services, the funding crisis and the growing competition that comes from the private sector have forced higher education institutions to consider strengthening relations with their stakeholders as the key to future success (Fernández et al., 2007), to offer quality services that generate value in each action to consolidate in the market (Sakthivel & Raju, 2006), being effective in service and responding promptly (Cownie, 2019).

It is necessary to analyze how relationship marketing has permeated into the management of universities to build quality portfolios along with stakeholders (Arnett et al., 2003; Webster & Hammond, 2008). For this purpose, the concept of relationship marketing has become especially important in the field of services, since it has considered variables such as trust, value, commitment or loyalty (Bryce, 2007), where all these are necessary for the development, maintenance and strengthening of long-term relationships with different stakeholders (Trullas et al., 2018). However, the interrelationship between studies in the field of educational services and the research in service marketing is still very scarce (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001). This study aims to analyze relationship marketing in the educational context, as a discipline specialized in the study of service, quality and satisfaction, which is necessary in every organization to understand the competitive environment, focused on demonstrating how relationship marketing is an important tool for the conduction of new strategies that allow university institutions to have a greater strengthening in relation with their stakeholders to which their educational services are directed. Likewise, it is oriented on the relationship marketing in the universities of Spain and Colombia, observing the strategies these implement for constant relationship in the education sector. Hence, it is appropriate to answer the following question: What are the strategies implemented by higher education institutions in relational marketing for a better relationship with stakeholders? For this purpose, a theoretical development was carried out in the evolution of marketing in education, relationship marketing and the importance of educational management; subsequently, the method of the literature review and the results obtained are presented, along with the conclusions of this study.

1.1. Evolution of marketing from 2000 to the present

Marketing has evolved over the years and it has taken different perspectives depending on the need of the market (Oplatka & Lapidot 2018), thus there have been different marketing trends such as: educational, relational, transactional and traditional marketing (James et al., 2019). Marketing should be understood more as an interactive management process rather than as a function, since market-oriented management is created better on the relationship than on the transaction (Barroso & Martín, 1999). Therefore, it is observed that from the development of individuals, market behavior is affected and organizations implement actions that generate a culture of service, concluding that marketing is found everywhere, not only in the formal but also in the informal (Córdoba-López, 2009). Over the last 60 years, marketing has passed from being focused solely on the product to doing so on the customer, which was formerly called marketing 1.0. Later, when companies realized that the customer is the vital source and fundamental part of their companies, they preferred to make of this new force the center of their strategies and decisions, thus creating marketing 2.0. Currently, marketing has had a further evolution in the new dynamics of the market, where it can be seen how companies expand their business focus towards more humanistic issues, where profitability must be much more balanced with corporate responsibility (Gómez & Uribe, 2016); therefore, creation is given to what is currently known as marketing 3.0 (Kotler et al., 2018). Over the years, there are a variety of concepts in which different authors have defined relationship marketing, where different thoughts of how to maintain and intensify customer relationships are presented (Chan-Tien et al., 2019). Marketing helps with customer relationships and make them much more durable over time. It also focuses on the management of the relationship between the company and its customers, and in order to facilitate the success of this management it must be considered that other market players may be involved on it, such as suppliers, distributors, partners and financial institutions (Barroso & Martín, 1999, pp. 34-35).

1.2. Relationship marketing: a look from different authors

There have been different definitions of relationship marketing throughout history. Grönroos (1996) defines relationship marketing as the identification, establishment, maintenance and improvement of relationships with customers and other stakeholders, in order to generate a common benefit. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define it as all marketing activities aimed at establishing, developing and maintaining relational exchanges that are successful. In terms of the educational context, relationship marketing encompasses strategies designed to attract, establish and consolidate the relationship with stakeholders, such as students, parents, reference groups and high-profile government agencies, with an emphasis on student retention and the search for new prospects (Moore & Bowden-Everson, 2012); but previously Grönroos (1994) would define it at the basis of the relationship that identify needs to be met from the development of products that generate closeness with consumers (Dzimińska et al., 2018), based on exchange and benefit with those involved in the organizational process (Liu et al., 2016).

On the other hand, relationship marketing is defined as long-term exchange, where relationships can be established and generated with customers (Alet i Vilaginés, 1994). Christopher et al. (1994) state that it helps to achieve a “realignment” focused on two points, attracting the attention of customers and their retention (Popovic, 2006).

1.3. Educational management and its importance from marketing

Educational marketing has become the main driver of change in education (Llorente, 2019), which is an adaptation of service marketing that serves educational institutions to design new strategies, so that they allow to expand student coverage and satisfy the different interests of members of the academic community by planning, developing and disclosing academic programs (Ospina-Díaz & Sanabria-Rangel 2010).

In addition, the strategies of educational marketing are to create and facilitate customers-consumers, in this case students, to be able to interact in participatory learning situations inside and outside educational contexts, with the conviction that learning is an experience process that leads to reflection, discussion, analysis and interaction (Khoshtaria et al., 2020) and group feedback (Naranjo, 2011). The same is the process of researching social needs, aimed at developing and elaborating new educational projects that meet the needs (Hashim et al., 2020), also generating an individual's growth through the development of educational services (Solís, 2004).

Marketing has been established as an innovation tool, so that universities achieve their presence and consolidation in the educational market (Mogaji & Yoon, 2019). It is important to note that the use of marketing only took place in organizations engaged in the marketing of products, however, this discipline has gained greater credibility with this advance mainly seen in the field of consumer behavior (Peralta-Silva & Linares-Cazola, 2013). With changes in the environment and progress in knowledge, the concept and applications of marketing have evolved (Kureshi & Thomas, 2020), since this was initially understood as a discipline that studied distribution activities from the producer to the consumer. Currently marketing is considered to be part of the human sciences, whose scope is not limited only to economic activity, but also to other activities in which people work. This development is evident in WADA's recent definition, which more accurately presents the essential characteristics of marketing as an organizational function, such as a set of activities to create and give value, providing benefits for all individuals and institutions involved in the activities (Ponce, 2005). Likewise, Córdoba (2009) indicates that relationship marketing is not only aimed at creating loyalty in customers and generating higher revenues, but also lasting relationships with mutual benefits with the consumers.

2. Method

This study is a systematic literature review, in which it is possible to have greater accuracy and synthesis of the information obtained (Beltrán, 2005), on Dialnet, Scopus, Redalyc, SciELO and google Schoolar databases, whose search keywords were "relational marketing" and "m marketing in education", in order to respond to the objective posed in the research question (Tranfield et al., 2003). The inclusion criteria for this article were books and articles published in Latin America, just as the main topics were focused on the marketing of educational services. The only exclusion criterion occurred in thesis, and the final number of articles was 61 nationally and internationally.

The research presented is exploratory, because a topic, where not many answers are found and a specific answer cannot be given, is being analyzed (Sabino, 2014). The analyses carried out identify the different generational changes between the years 2000 to 2018 of the concept of relational marketing, which is shown in Table 1. Table 2 and 3 present the different models created and applied in Colombia and Spain. The sample to be evaluated is obtained from the QS ranking, where the top ten universities of Colombia and Spain are included, and where the different relational marketing strategies used to reach their stakeholders are presented.

3. Results

The results were classified as follows to meet the objective. Initially, Table 1 shows the description of the evolution of relational marketing from 2003 to 2018; subsequently Table 2 contains the relational marketing models created and applied in Colombia; then, Table 3 presents the relational marketing models analyzed in Spain. On the other hand,

Table 4 provides a comparison between the most commonly used variables of relationship marketing models by universities in the countries mentioned above; and Table 5 identifies the top 10 of universities in both countries; finally, two graphs synthesize the importance of digital communication and the classification of different stakeholders.

Table 1. Evolution of the concept of relational marketing

Concept	Bibliography
Relationship is understood as a repetitive exchange, where there is a benefit for those involved in the transaction	(San Martín , 2003)
Create and communicate processes that generate value to individuals, with the aim of having long-term relationships that benefit the company and consumers	(AMA, 2005)
"Relationship marketing is the process of managing company relationships in a cost-effective way"	(López-Pinto Ruiz, Mas-Machuca, & Viscarri-Colomer, 2008, p. 363)
A process where relationships with stakeholders are created, managed, and endured	(Wakabayashi, 2010)
Development of lasting customer relationship to find organizational loyalty and profitability	(Gummesson, 2011)
"It seeks to create the exchange relationship that is generated and maintain it over time or break it at any given time"	(Mejía-Galeano, 2014, p. 156)
"Relationship marketing could be a strategy that contributes to strengthening relations between Higher Education Institutions and their stakeholders within the internationalization process"	(Palacio de la Cruz & Rondón , 2018, pp. 1-2)

Source: Own elaboration.

In Table 1 can be seen the evolution of the concept of relationship marketing over the last 15 years, defined by a variety of authors who have been very important in terms of impact, not only of relationship marketing but also of marketing in general (Gómez & Uribe, 2016). It can be concluded from Table 1 that the definition has not changed much, but that it has been adapted to the different stages of the evolution of marketing, helping the business and educational sector to understand what is the way to achieve the goals.

The literature found in different journals in Colombia and Spain allows to infer that Spain is the country with more studies on relationship marketing models in education. It is observed that this country has institutes where research on marketing stands out, in which as a result models are generated to measure variables such as image, quality, trust, satisfaction, identification and loyalty, contributing greatly to the organizational management that benefits the well-being of those who make up the academic community, thus generating actions based on topics such as the motivation and transformation of individuals to be happier in organizations (Foncubierta-Rodríguez & Sánchez-Montero 2019). The following table presents some models applied in Colombia in terms of relationship marketing.

Table 2. Models applied and developed in Colombia in relationship marketing

Author	Objective of the model
(Duque, 2005)	Comprehend the concepts of service and quality of service, to understand the object and characteristics of the measurement models and identify which measurement model can be applied.
(Duque, 2009)	Present the different stakeholder-based perspectives to implement a strategy focused on strengthening the connection between customers and the organization. (University and its clients).
(Ospina-Díaz & Sanabria-Rangel, 2010)	Propose the MIGME model to better meet the needs of society and the productive sector.
(Vergara-Schmalbach, Garavito-Díaz, Guerra-Mercado, & Posso-Quintana, 2015)	Present the different stakeholder-based perspectives to implement a strategy focused on strengthening the connection between customers and the organization. (University and its clients).
(Nader, Peña-Bernate, & Sánchez-Santa-Bárbara, 2014)	Determine whether perception of the social environment, job description (meaning, responsibility and knowledge of results) and experience predict satisfaction and well-being at work.
(Amaya-Guio & Carrera-Siabato, 2014)	Apply the MUSA method to the results of the study surveys to monitor satisfaction and to diagnose the current level of satisfaction of undergraduate students and identify the importance and performance of each of the aspects evaluated by the institution.
(Castro, 2014)	Strengthen the relations of the National University of Colombia, its campus in Bogotá and its graduates, by generating a value proposition that allows a mutual benefit.
(Guerrero, 2015)	Address the educational program and the so-called mixture of educational marketing: satisfactor, exchange, facilitation and communication, which modifies the mix in the traditional market: product, price, distribution and promotion.

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2 shows the different models applied and developed in Colombia throughout history; it can be seen that education models in this country continue with a traditional method, where many universities have not realized that they must change their mindset or strategy that they generate, and must look for incentives in order to make their services better known so that students and other stakeholders are more constant to them, i.e., implement new alternatives, such as new models that help them strengthen relationships and innovate in their strategies, making them more suitable for the stakeholders.

Every institution of higher education must be aware that at present, there is a greater offer in educational services, whether face-to-face and/or virtual; for this reason, universities must create strategies and think that the decisions made will be the best for a future (Arrubla-Zapata, 2013). The following table will show the relational marketing models applied in Spain.

Table 3. Applied and developed models of relationship marketing in Spain

Author	Objective of the model
(Rueda Osuna & Rosa Díaz, 2010)	Develop a social and economic system, which plays with the dual role of input and output: interacting with each other, exerting influences and generating influence in others.
(De la Fuente Mella, Marzo, Navarro, Riquelme, & Jesús, 2010)	Allow the Engineering Faculty of the University of Talca to evaluate the influence of these proposed variables on the satisfaction of the staff and indirectly of the general satisfaction experienced by the students with the services received.
(Schlesinger, Taulet, Bonillo, & Fernández, 2014)	Conceptualize and measure variables related to the behavior and perception of graduates. Likewise, of the quality, loyalty and identification with the University.
(Larentis, Antonello, & Slongo, 2018)	Develop an inter-organizational culture based on initial elements such as: shared meanings and symbols, openness to new ideas, frequency and quality of interactions, among others. It is influenced by inter-organizational relationships, through intermediate elements such as trust related to information, actions and people, commitment to actions, results and people, learning processes and results, which can contribute later to the results.

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3 presents five models, which in terms of research are the most relevant in Spain, because they are the most used by the best universities in that country, such as University of Valencia and University of Sevilla, which are the pioneers in terms of marketing. It can also be understood with this table, compared to Colombia, that Spain has a certain advantage in terms of research on this topic due to its research activity. However, the Spanish mentality with regard to the adaptation to the different stages of changes in terms of the relationship with consumers-customers is much stricter and more effective in assimilating the situation; on the other hand, Colombians find it more difficult to adapt.

Table 4 shows the most repeated variables in terms of the models described above.

Table 4. Comparison of the different models focused on their most repetitive variables between Colombia and Spain

Models	Most repetitive variable	Bibliography
Colombia: Different models based on stakeholders Spain: Model of Graduate-University Identification	Creating value	(Duque, 2009) (Schlesinger, Taulet, Bonillo, & Fernández, 2014)
Colombia: Route model Spain: Theoretical model of the graduate-university relationship	Satisfaction	(Nader, Peña-Bernate, & Sánchez-Santa-Bárbara, 2014) (Schlesinger, Taulet, Bonillo, & Fernández, 2014)
Colombia: Nordic school and American school Spain: Model of Structural Equations	Trust	(Duque, 2005) (Schlesinger, Cervera, & Pérez-Cabañero, 2017)

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4 identifies the different models studied between Colombia and Spain and in the same way it compares the variables that these countries analyze the most and also their similarities.

The first item in Table 4 shows that models in Colombia and Spain repeat the value creation variable, where each model has a specific approach to it, i.e. they have a different perspective. In the Colombian model, this variable focuses on how the university creates value in each of the interest groups, not only in the students but in each of the groups that make up the university, such as managers, secretaries, faculty, among others (Duque, 2009). In the Spanish model the idea is to see how focused the student is with the university and also to realize whether they are doing their job properly or not (Schlesinger et al., 2014).

The second item contained in Table 4 shows one of the main bases that a university has, which is the identification of the level of satisfaction that its students have with universities. In Spain, the satisfaction variable seeks to be measured in graduates, trying to know the satisfaction degree they have with the institution, and in the same way identify the deficiencies to improve them (Schlesinger et al., 2014). In Colombia this variable seeks to measure the satisfaction of students, identifying whether they are in compliance with teachers and the personnel, where the idea is to have a balanced well-being at work (Nader et al., 2014)

As for the last item in the table, the variable trust is observed. In Spain it is measured in terms of the image the students have of the university and in their trust for the institution, i.e. if the institution is actually doing its job in the best way (Schlesinger et al., 2015). However, in Colombia students do not look at this trust in the internal sector but in the external one, identifying how reliable the university is in the sector, this being a way of perceiving how reliable the university is for agents outside the institution, i.e. those who are not part of it (Duke, 2005).

Spain, as a pioneer, is one of the main countries in marketing research, as seen in University of Valencia which is one of the best universities with more research in this area. Not only is this university among the researchers and leading exponents of marketing, but also University of Sevilla.

Comparing Colombia with Spain, it is noted that the research in Colombia in terms of marketing is important, but compared to Spain it is not significant, not in terms of quality, but on the amount of research that is generated; however, there are universities in Colombia that point at the subject of marketing research, specifically in relationship marketing.

Taking into account the literature review, some relationship marketing strategies that focus on the most repeated variables expressed in Table 4 and which are the creation of value, trust and satisfaction are observed in both universities in Colombia and Spain. In relation to value creation, it is flexible in both academic and administrative processes, so that students can see the subjects of the curriculum and pay through funding and partnerships with entities. In relation to confidence, they create strategies based on coherence between what universities promise and what they offer. The most representative strategies in satisfaction are observed in the constant improvement of the infrastructure and facilities that provide significant experiences to individuals, at the same time in the quality of professors and academic processes implemented by universities at the national and international level.

3.1. Strategies of the top universities according to the QS

Table 5 shows the top 10 of universities in Colombia and Spain (QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited), based on the QS ranking, which is responsible for naming the list of the best universities worldwide.

Table 5. Top 10 universities in Colombia and Spain

Country	Logo	University
	Universidad de los Andes	Universidad de los Andes
	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	Universidad Nacional de Colombia
	Universidad de Antioquia	Universidad de Antioquia
	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
	Universidad del Rosario	Universidad del Rosario
	Universidad del Valle	Universidad del Valle
	Universidad EAFIT Abierta al mundo	Universidad EAFIT
	Universidad de La Sabana	Universidad de la Sabana

Country	Logo	University
		Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana
		Universidad Industrial de Santander

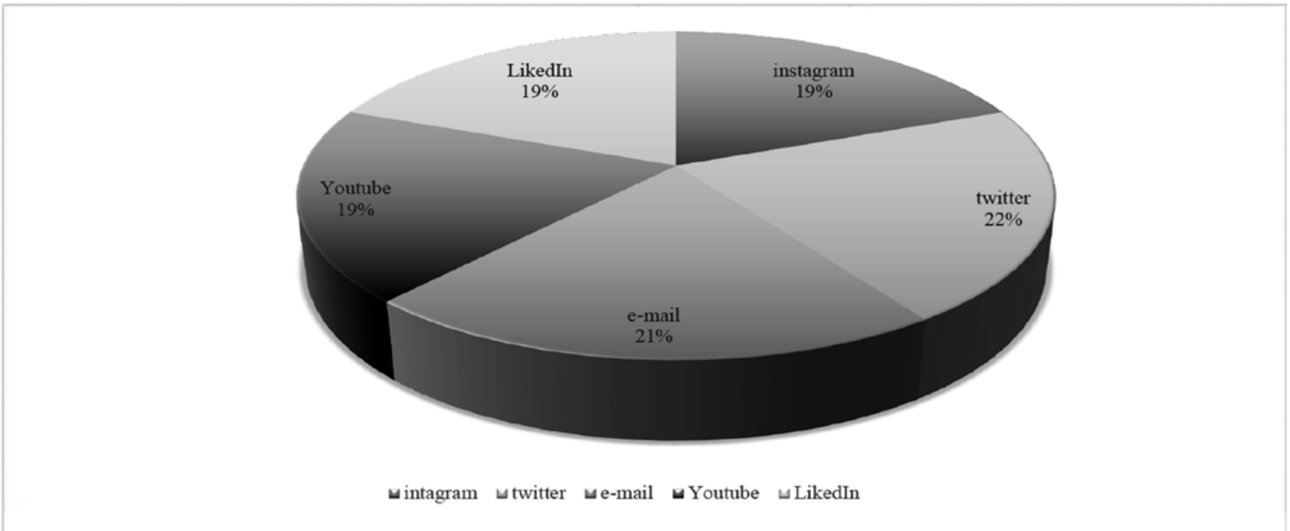
Country	Logo	University
		Universidad de Barcelona
		Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona
		Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
		Universidad Complutense de Madrid
		Universidad de Navarra
		Universidad Pompeu Fabra
		Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
		Universidad Politécnica de Catalunya
		IE University
		Universidad Politécnica de Valencia

Source: Own elaboration based on the QS ranking.

It is observed in Table 5 that Spain has two institutions in its top 10 of universities that are widely recognized for their research in relationship marketing at the educational level; these are University of Navarra and IE University, in which some marketing studies can be found, but the universities that conduct the most research on relationship marketing do not appear in this top. Similarly, three very well positioned universities in Colombia with research on marketing are in the top 10. Among these institutions are the National University of Colombia, this being the most relevant to marketing, making great contributions not only to its entity but also to the educational community at the national level. In addition, University of Andes and EAFIT University, which also make research contributions to marketing.

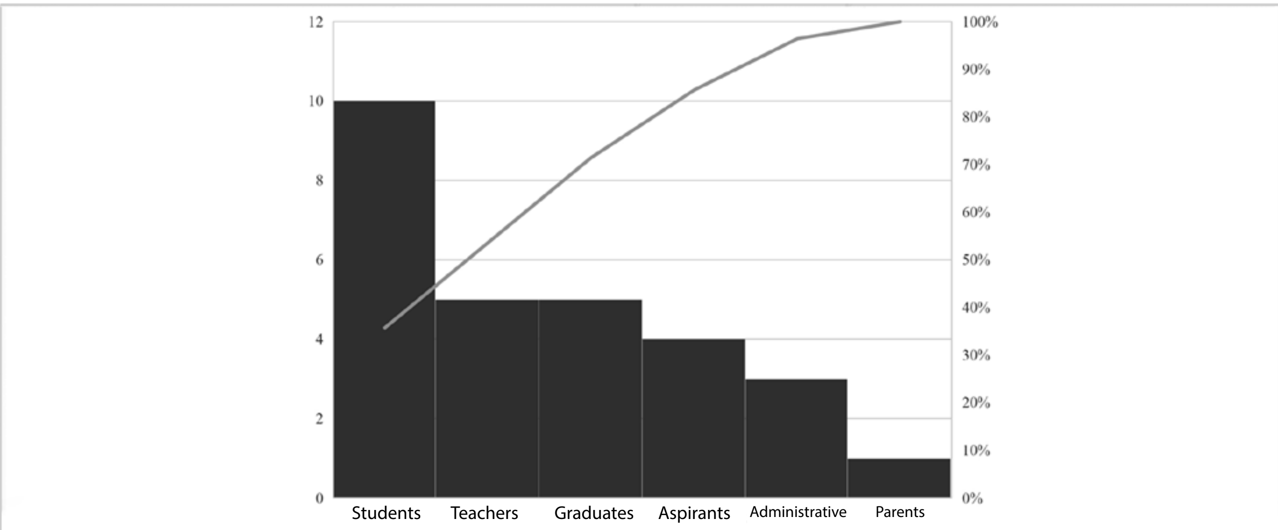
In order to synthesize the different strategies implemented at the communication level by the universities analyzed, Figure 1 shows the social media communication scheme, and Figure 2 presents the stakeholders they relate the most. The latter is created based on the observation technique with relationship sheets of the universities and their use of digital tools. The different communication strategies implemented by the universities mentioned in Table 5 can be seen, where their social networks are evidenced as well as their impact in education for a better relationship of the institution with their stakeholders as shown in Figure 2, observing that universities have a different observational approach for the different target groups.

Figure 1. Social networks used by the universities of Colombia and Spain



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Interest groups targeted by the universities of Colombia and Spain



Source: Own elaboration.

In terms of strategies, universities in Spain provide housing services where foreign people can access in an easy and convenient way; in addition, these offer financial service support through scholarships, donations and exchanges to different universities around the world. As for scholarships and donations, these can also occur by students and teachers, giving certain donations, whether economic or university-related such as books, easing the entry of new people to the university.

4. Conclusions and discussions

It can be concluded that relationship marketing has been gaining importance in the work schemes for the administrative management of universities, and different variables have been involved, providing more strength to this concept, and making it more attractive to be applied in the different stakeholders of the university; however, although the concept is important and it requires more attention by university managers, little has been used in relation to management models and strategies applied to generate value.

Likewise, relationship marketing focused on education has caused satisfactory results, not only in the institutions that carry out research on this topic, but also in the administrative management of education in general, with the elaboration of different models that implement strategies that can be used as a guide to achieve better benefits in indicators of satisfaction and loyalty of the community. With the construction of models, it is evident that Spain and Colombia base their approach on three variables, which are value creation, satisfaction and trust.

While it is true that there are some strategies focused on relationship marketing that generate value in universities, progress must be made in incorporating strategies that involve different audiences and that would relate them to the market objectives to improve the visibility and profitability of administrative management. Additionally, there are schemes that focus on the commercialization of services, but not on creating satisfaction to generate loyalty.

However, in analyzing the comparisons between countries it is found that Spain is a generator of new knowledge on relational marketing, and authors have created several models that universities can apply to generate new strategies, and even to measure variables, providing instruments that validate the answers. Spain, in relation to marketing, is important since it has universities with significant research on relationship marketing in education, one of this is University of Valencia. Likewise, Colombia has a wide variety of studies carried out by recognized and well positioned universities at the Latin American level, generating models and tools that help to obtain more knowledge on the subject, serving these models not only for educational institutions, but also for the business sector in terms of the internal organizations. In this topic of relationship marketing, it is observed that universities such as the National University, EAFIT, University of Antioquia and University of Andes are the most important in terms of research.

Due to the need to deepen on the topic of marketing in education, it is considered appropriate to continue to research the importance of relationship and communication strategies in educational management from the different stakeholders the institutions interact with, while comparing the work done in Colombia with countries other than Spain to identify which strategies can be contextualized in the Colombian educational environment.

Relationship marketing has evolved throughout history, and it not only focuses on an audience but it also evaluates all stakeholders to identify the best strategies to generate better added value. From an educational perspective, higher education institutions must continue evolving in specific aspects such as their brand, attention and social networks, which are the most visible variables that the internal and external community has to know about the university.

3.2. Supports and financial support of the research

Entity: University of San Buenaventura, Medellin campus
Country: Colombia

City: Medellin
Project: Relationship marketing in higher education, 2019

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An exploratory framework for Entrepreneurship from an evolutionary perspective

Un marco exploratorio para el emprendimiento desde una perspectiva evolutiva

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship research is evolving more than ever (Carlsson et al., 2013). As a research stream that is gaining more and more attention, it is imperative to understand it more deeply, given the relevance of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship, and businesses in today's global economy, and under a multidimensional lens. Through an extensive literature review, an exploratory view of its evolutionary perspective was made, from a Darwinian initial point, where the lack of a formal framework was found and therefore a 3-dimensional theoretical model (Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneur and Firm, EEF) is proposed for its study, where the multidimensional context and the involvement that the family generally has, influence the back and forth and iterative relationships that appear between the dimensions, and that is influenced by the evolutionary perspective. The results suggest that there is great interest in the academic field in this evolutionary view, a need to further explore this approach, theoretically and empirically under the relationships the model proposed among the various lines of research in entrepreneurship, family business, economics, and firm theory, population ecology, and strategic choice, as well as in the entrepreneur himself and its entrepreneurial cognition and learning, to develop strategies and public policies that support the organizations and the various stakeholders of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Resumen

La investigación en emprendimiento está evolucionando más que nunca (Carlsson et al., 2013). Como una línea de investigación que está ganando cada vez más atención, es imperativo entenderla más profundamente, dada la relevancia del emprendimiento, el emprendedor y las empresas en la economía global actual y bajo una lente multidimensional. A través de una extensa revisión de la literatura, se realizó una visión exploratoria de su perspectiva evolutiva, tomando como punto de partida aquella darwiniana, donde se encontró la falta de un marco formal y, por tanto, se propone un modelo teórico tridimensional (Emprendimiento, Emprendedor y Empresa, EEE) para su estudio, donde el contexto multidimensional y la participación que generalmente tiene la familia influyen en las relaciones ida y vuelta e iterativas que aparecen entre las dimensiones y que están influenciadas por la perspectiva evolutiva. Los resultados sugieren que existe un gran interés en la academia en esta visión evolutiva, una necesidad de explorar más este enfoque, teórica y empíricamente bajo las relaciones que el modelo propone entre las diversas líneas de investigación en emprendimiento, empresa familiar, economía y teoría de la empresa, ecología de la población y la elección estratégica, así como en el propio emprendedor y en su cognición y aprendizaje emprendedor, para desarrollar estrategias y políticas públicas que apoyen a las empresas y al ecosistema emprendedor.

Keywords | palabras clave

Evolution, entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, firms, strategic choice, population ecology, entrepreneurial ecosystem, context.
Evolución, emprendimiento, emprendedor, empresa, elección estratégica, ecología poblacional, ecosistema emprendedor, contexto.

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1. Introduction

All start from Imagination, Creativity, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Tina Seelig's Inventure Cycle. A virtuous circle under which it is proposed is based on the genesis and dynamics of an enterprise (whatever its nature is, not only focused on business).

Once such a social fact begins, how to ensure its evolution (or Devolution) and avoid its failure? Everyone knows the high mortality of small businesses in all contemporary economies. Their importance is more than evidenced throughout multiple studies, as well as the high impact that these companies have on various national indicators, such as employment.

Therefore, investigating and recounting the dynamics that various companies in this sector currently present, remains superlative. The socialization of these experiences that allow these sectors to permeate and be informed, as well as various interest groups such as government and educational institutions present in the so-called entrepreneurial ecosystem (Malecki, 2011; Jackson, 2011) something vital and angular, even when it might be under discussion if this construct exists or is only a biological allegory.

Given our economy, affirming that there are such ecosystems it seems to be quite pretentious. From the moment there is an innovation policy, there is an innovation system? Even if it does not work (Mexico, and in general, in Latin America, it is dysfunctional)? Just as there is a typology for companies (micro, small, medium, as well as large), then perhaps there should be one in ecosystems, and that, if no more emphasis is placed to categorize it, the risk is run to prostitute this concept. Therefore, it would be necessary to place some previous ones and, once it is functional, now call it an ecosystem. Thus, it is proposed to call it an innovation system, and when it is functional to call it an ecosystem, since, being complex dynamic systems, the flows and stocks of capacities are energized. An example of what might well be an evolution of its analysis.

In the current literature on family businesses, the relationship between entrepreneurship and small businesses is a constant concern. It is suggested there is a convergent evolution in them. In evolutionary biology, this is considered to take place when species of different ancestors share similar traits because of a shared environment or other selection pressure. Whales and fish have similar characteristics, both developed methods to move through the same medium: water. In this case, the market.

Thus, ensuring the evolution of these ventures towards strong, established firms is necessary for any public policy related to the subject. It is not possible to continue allowing their failures. Because not only, as mentioned, are those first years where the organization struggles to survive. And what about the evolution (involution?) presented by these and the entrepreneur himself as the years goes by? What happens when the entrepreneur and the organization start the entrance to a comfort zone?

Various factors can create fertile ground for this. The problem of succession, lack of innovation, altruism, the dilemma of the Samaritan, the dark side of family businesses. Without forgetting its multidimensionality, the creation of a theory grounded in contributions from, for example, of social evolution, which can address, the diverse links and effects between entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, and small firms, but also as a preventive of their future mortality. Millions of jobs demand it, as do national economies and society.

There is a constant, almost obsessed need to a quantitative view on entrepreneurship, trying to explain and detect influencing factors on the firms' success, the human capital of the entrepreneur (education, experience, locus of internal control, need for achievement and resilience), financial resources, number of partners, frequency and breadth of external communication, missing the point that all of this variables need to

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evolve just because of this simple fact: Markets, organizations, and people, are always changing its patterns. Evolution, an evolutionary perspective that might provide a powerful framework for bringing the three pillars (entrepreneurship, entrepreneur and the firm) back into theory precisely because is the activity of introducing new activities, production methods, and products into an economy, and economic variation is the prerequisite for economic transformation and development, the fundamental historical fact about capitalism is its internal capacity for transformation (Metcalfe, 2006).

2. Methodology

An extensive literature search was made throughout multiple databases (e.g. Google Scholar, Scopus, Springer, Proquest, etc.). A systematic review was considered not to be made since this evolutionary approach, as the literature review shows, it is scarce in the Entrepreneurship Field. We use keywords in both Spanish and English "Entrepreneurship", Evolution", "Theory".

3. Literature review

It is fair to acknowledge that voices are calling for a more conservative view. For example, Freeman (1991) warns on the discussion to use biological analogies in the theory of evolutionary economics, whilst recognizing the positive role of such analogies in stimulating a historical approach to economic systems and that selective processes do indeed play an important part in the development of science and technology, nevertheless argues that there are serious dangers in pushing the biological analogy too far. He stated that not only is the social environment much more complex than the natural environment, but the role of purposive intervention is altogether different in the evolution of technology. This position is shared by Aldrich et al., (2008) who recognize that Darwin himself suggested the idea of generalizing the core Darwinian principles to cover the evolution of social entities. But authors additionally emphasize the risk of misunderstanding, misrepresentation, generalization, analogy, or biological reductionism of their principles. However, in evolutionary biology, a few "biologically insane" species like the human species are neither other-limited nor self-limiting. Natural selection for reproductive fitness eventually enables all successful self-limiting species to overcome their self-limiting demostatic characteristics; the most competent do this immediately but the less competent either become extinct through Darwinian scarcity-extinction, persist, or take a little longer to become extinct (Meredith, 1982). The notion of devolution, in the (strict) sense of degradation, with repercussions in terms of cognitive and practical consequences is employed (Wolff et al., 1999; Atran et al., 2004).

Economists and other social scientists, therefore, have no other alternative but to leave the models of the natural sciences, whether mechanical or biological and develop their models appropriate to the systems which they investigate. One such possible approach is the notion of the techno-economic paradigm. But Freeman misses the point that even this paradigm is subject to evolve, since technology, by definition, involves innovation, so philosophically what he proposed contradicts itself.

Based on the literature review, it is proposed to explore the evolutionary perspective from 3 closely interrelated dimensions (entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, and the firm.), a novel view in the literature.

3.1.Dimension 1: Entrepreneurship

Veciana (1999) gives an outlook (Figure 1) on the (evolutionary in itself) diverse theoretical approaches to entrepreneurship. There, on the Meso level of analysis, it is the Evolutionary theory. Two elements appear to be missing on this table: Chaos theory (Bygrave and Hofer, 1991) and Complexity theory (Mitchell, 2009) applied in Entrepreneurship (Lichtenstein, 2000), Innovation and Technology research (Berger and Kuckertz, 2016). By definition, the Evolutionary theory should be at every level.

Table 1. Theoretical approaches to Entrepreneurship

Approaches / Level of analysis	Economic approach	Psychological approach	Socio-cultural approach	Managerial approach
Micro (Individual level)	• Función emprendedora como cuarto factor de producción. • Theory of the entrepreneurial profit.	• Traits theory • Psychodynamic theory	• Margination theory • Role theory • Network theory	• Leibenstein's x-efficiency theory. • Behavioral theory of the entrepreneur. • Modes of new enterprise creation. • Modes to become an entrepreneur.
Meso (Corporate level)	Transaction cost theory		• Network theory • Incubator's theory • Evolutionary theory	• Mode of new enterprise success and failure. • Corporate entrepreneurship.
Macro (Global-country level)	• Schumpeter's theory of economic development.	• Kirzner's entrepreneur theory	• Weber's theory of economic development. • Theory of social change • Population ecology theory • Institutional theory	

Source: Veciana (1995-1999), in Veciana (2007, p. 35).

This evolutionary view is also tacit e.g. when in the entrepreneurial setting, financial intermediaries such as venture capital firms (VCs) select were to invest with, startups that might born global as a must evolutionary process both from an organizational and strategy lens (Madsen and Servais, 1997), or when a firm must apply the sustainability trend of today's economy (Moore and Maring, 2008). The naturalistic approach requires that associated understandings as to how humans react to states of uncertainty be explicitly dealt with.

Entrepreneurship is in constant evolution (Landström, 2020), expanding constantly its domain and edges (Su, 2020; Kantis and Federico, 2020). As entrepreneurship is being seen more and more like a multidimensional construct (Montiel and Rodriguez, 2017), even more, wide views are being explored from multiple angles, e.g. from an evolutionary perspective.

This contrast with the Punctuated Equilibrium Paradigm conceptualizing change as an alternation between long periods when stable infrastructures permit only incremental adaptations, and brief periods of revolutionary upheaval. Gersick (1991) compares models from six domains-adult, group, and organizational development, history of science, biological evolution, and physical science to explicate the punctuated equilibrium paradigm and show its broad applicability for organizational studies, juxtaposed to generate new research questions about a revolutionary change in organizational settings: how it is triggered, how systems function during such periods, and how it concludes. But evolution never ends.

3.2. Dimension 2: The Entrepreneur

Breslin (2008) reviews the evolutionary approach to the study of entrepreneurship at both the population level (population ecology of organizations) and the organizational level (strategic choice).

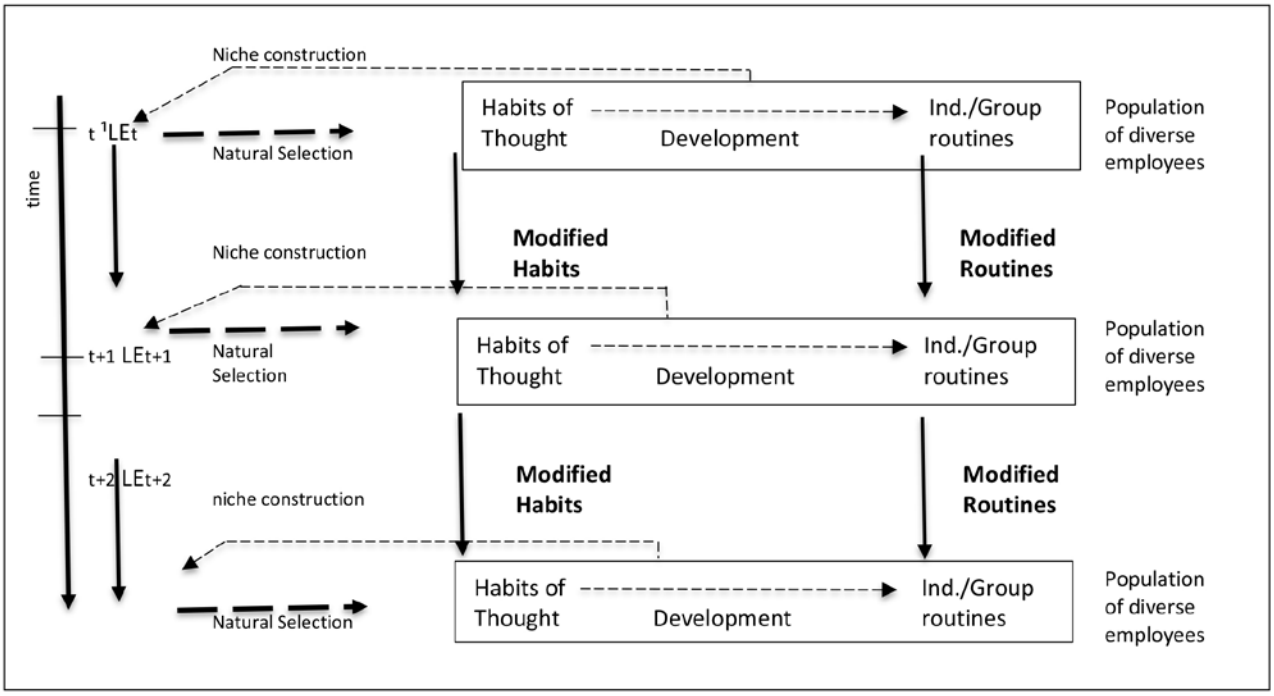
Breslin states that the strategic choice has developed over the years from a generalized focus on entrepreneurial traits to approaches that focus strongly on process and context, including entrepreneurial cognition and learning. While entrepreneurship research has been focused on the level of the entrepreneur and the start-up, research using an evolutionary approach to develop a firm-level theory of new venture creation has been limited. Therefore, while the evolutionary approach has been used to examine organizations in general at the strategic choice level, future research should focus on applying the approach to examine small business (family business and involvement) adaptation and learning.

Also, Breslin mentions that the evolutionary approach offers more than both the cognition-based and learning-based approaches because it allows for multi-level analyses of the new venture creation process, encompassing both the population ecology (population level) and strategic choice (organizational level) perspective, and the resultant interactions between both hierarchies. By definition, a multidimensional view acts as a synergy (like chaos and complex theories), both from the 3 (and other) approaches, giving valuable insight into the whole evolutionary process.

While population ecology and strategic choice offer interesting perspectives on entrepreneurship, there are limitations associated with each. Breslin states that population ecologists are largely silent on the role of individual action, focusing on the selection process under an organization survive in a market, while strategic choice approaches are silent on the role of population evolution.

This process can be applied, e.g., to learning, where Breslin and Jones (2012) present an evolutionary perspective on entrepreneurial learning, accounting for fundamental ecological processes by focusing on the development of key knowledge components within nascent and growing small businesses, and organizational evolution, multi-level co-evolutionary perspectives that capture hidden ecological processes within the idea processes, such as niche-construction (Figure 2), a multi-level struggle for survival, where the managerial capabilities on the top management team must change (evolution) in new ventures, evaluating changing firm needs (high & low growth, strategic diversification), the capability to adapt (team experience, functional diversity), and the ability to execute change (manager & CEO ownership, board independence, VC involvement, (Boeker & Wiltbank, 2005).

Figure 1. The process of *niche construction*



Source: Breslin and Jones (2012, p. 300), adapted from Jones (2006).

Entrepreneurial competencies (Rasmussen et al., 2011) where they build upon the evolutionary perspective considering the creation and early growth of four university spin-offs within the UK and Norway, identifying three competencies of opportunity refinement, leveraging, and championing that appeared crucial for the ventures to gain credibility, although selected competencies were inherent within the academic founders, the specific competencies for venture creation had to be developed or acquired. Even in failure (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018), an entrepreneur must evolve to achieve success in the future (e.g, to learn to be resilient).

A new venture creation that might be the result of the testosterone level (White et al., 2006).

Consistent with evolutionary psychological theory, the biological (testosterone level) effect upon behavior (new venture creation) they found is partially mediated by the psychological (risk propensity).

3.3. Dimension 3: Firms

Campbell's seminal contributions, especially for organization theory, was his selection model based upon the analogy between "natural selection in biological evolution and the selective propagation of cultural forms" (Campbell, 1965, p. 26). Campbell used aspects of his selection theory to explain vision (1956a), problem-solving (1956b), creative thought (1960), and socio-cultural evolution (1965, 1979). Then he proposed two antinomies that coexist in organizations: (1) obedience to cultural routines, norms, and habits versus creativity/experimentation and play/make-believe; and (2) altruism versus egoism. From the standpoint of the present paper, both constantly in tension, but also if managed well, can become a competitive advantage.

Entrepreneurial business conceptions have important coordinative and motivating functions in the firm (Witt, 1998). The repeated personal interaction allows for the diffusion of nonverbal tacit knowledge through observational learning and the imitation of role models. A shared business conception provides meaning to the firms' routines, thus facilitating the coordinated transfer and adaptation of routines within the firm. Understanding and identifying with the firm's objectives add to firm member's intrinsic motivation and helps keep opportunistic behavior in check (Witt, 1998).

According to Bergstrom (2002) group selection sustains cooperative behavior. Forces that support this behavior include associative matching in groups, group longevity, and punishment-based group norms. (And most evolve in time so that this business conception remains meaningful for its members, and market competitive).

Being firms worldwide the vast majority family structured, the key to the firm's dimension is what Hodgson (2013) explains from the Darwinian focus, the terms 'evolution' and 'coevolution', widely used in organization studies but often rarely defined an unclear whether they refer to single entities or populations. For example, he states that in the debate over the roles of individual adaptation and competitive selection, the 'selectionist' position of Hannan and Freeman (1989), which emphasizes the role of selection and stress the limits of individual firm adaptability, is often described as 'Darwinian' whereas opposing views that emphasize adaptability are described as 'Lamarckian'. Scholars have shown that the core Darwinian principle, resulting from abstract ontological commonality rather than an analogy, apply to social evolution, to help understand the evolution of organizations.

So the different views have emerged, a naturalistic approach to the Theory of the Firm, where the role of cooperation and cultural evolution has been explored (Cordes et al., 2008), where they postulate that one reason firms exist is because they are suitable organizations within which cooperative production systems based on human social predispositions can evolve, and how an entrepreneur – given these predispositions – can shape human behavior within a firm, since humans lived in tribal scale social systems based on significant amounts of intra- and even intergroup cooperation for centuries, so firms rest upon the social psychology originally evolved for tribal life, but modern organizations have functions rather different from ancient tribes, leading to friction between our social predispositions and organization goals, proposing that firms that manage to reduce this friction will tend to function better.

In this line, Grabher and Stark (1997) examine the innovative character, born of necessity, wherein post-socialist settings actors are restructuring by redefining and recombining resources, not conceiving these recombinations as accidental aberrations, but more of an evolutionary potential, where the actual unit of entrepreneurship is not the isolated individual personality but the social networks (tribal system) that link firms and the actors within them, giving the context where the scarce of capital and government/ecosystem support. Networks that are key to startups, since, from a longitudinal perspective, Schutjens and Stam (2003) describe the evolution of networks during the first three years after start-up and puts forward explanations of the nature of networks of young firms after that period.

Family firms are under constant evolution as a research field (Bird et al., 2002). Zellweger and Sieger (2012), when they apply entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in the context of long-lived family firms, showing that a permanently high level of each of the five EO dimensions is not a necessary condition for long-term success. Rather, they claim that the level of EO is dynamically adapted over time, implying then that this construct must have an evolution, rather than just keep growing.

This evolutionary perspective can be also applied on the evolution on firm-size (and organizations in general, such as universities; Montiel and Rodriguez, 2017), where recent research suggests that firms founded by individuals with pre-founding experience in the same or similar industries (related PFE) tend to survive longer than other de novo entrants (Roberts et al., 2011) or when the firm growth and a reflexive point is reached where a decision must be made to keep the founding team or bring in a more experienced one, with a diverse background.

Concerning the evolution of family business, Gersik et al., (1997) propose the Three-Dimensional Development Model. The model considers the evolution independent but interconnected of three subsystems: ownership, family, and enterprise. This consideration is a great contribution to the general theory of systems (Von Bertalanffy, 1940). According to the evolution model, the ownership developmental dimension is composed of three stages: controlling-owner; sibling partnership and, cousin consortium. The family developmental dimension is composed of four stages: young business family; entering the business; working together; and, passing the baton. Finally, the business developmental dimension is composed of three stages: start-up; expansion/formalization; and, maturity. In this model, every family business, according to its characteristics finds a stage of each subsystem. In evolution, the family business will go through known critical periods and challenges.

Breslin (2008) on the entrepreneurial transitions, explore factors influencing founder departure, using entrepreneurship and life cycle theories of the firm, since new ventures may outgrow the managerial capabilities of their founding teams, point where the founders may be replaced by professional managers (a departure also from the structural inertia, organizational change, Hannan and Freeman, 1984). Also, there is a growing interest in apply evolutionary psychology into the family business stream, where Nicholson (2008) propose that will have a unique contribution to that field, outlining the Darwinian framework and its implications to an analysis of kinship dynamics, ownership identity, intergenerational transmission, wildcard inheritance as central to understanding the roots of cooperation and conflict in the family firm.

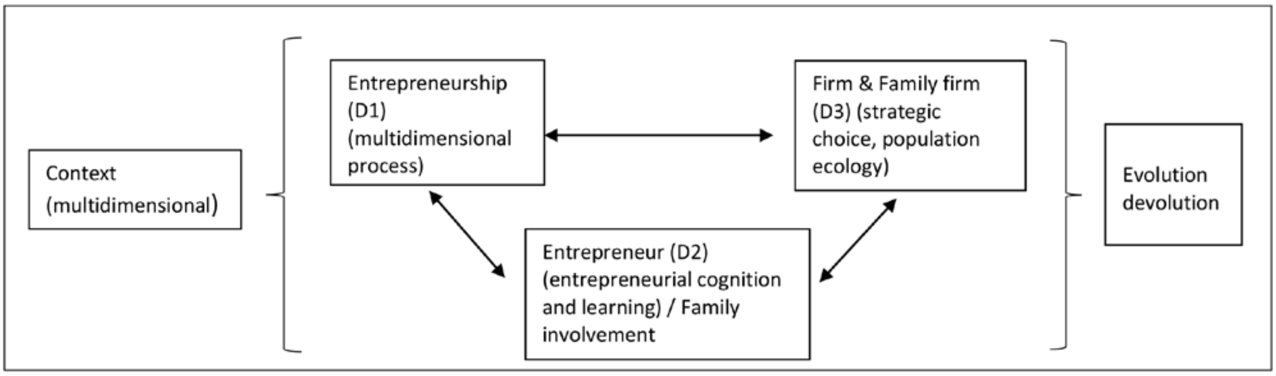
In this kind of firm, succession is a key obstacle to its viability. From the evolutionary economics approach, Kansikas and Kuhmonen (2008) analyze family business continuity from founder generation to the 2nd generation. Family business succession and evolutionary thinking in organizational and economic change are reviewed and combined to provide insights to understand the nature of family business succession. Operation of the key evolutionary forces —the variation, selection, retention, and struggle— in family business succession are illustrated.

Regarding variation, the authors are a concern for understanding the importance of having enough diversity within the family firm, since this diversity of routines and competencies comprises the pool of variation from which to select when the environment changes. With regards to selection, there is a concern for understanding the risk of selection bias easily rooted in the family firm culture because of family relations, emotions, and values, including decisions on who will succeed and who will own the firm in the future.

4. Findings: Proposed Model

Figure 3 is the proposed model, which follows Whetten (1989) advice on what constitutes a theoretical contribution. The model includes factors logically considered as part of the explanation of the evolutionary perspective, following the comprehensiveness (i.e., are all relevant factors included?) criteria for judging the extent to which we have included the "right" factors. Also, it states how are they related (operationally, using "arrows" to connect the "boxes", explicitly delineating patterns, introduces causality (in the model an iterative and back and forth constant relationship between all its elements). Next, the model, based on the literature review, shows the underlying psychological, economic, or social dynamics (multidimensional context), factors in the social and economic environments that alter and put pressure into the model to evolution/devolution that justify the selection of factors and the proposed causal relationships, its logic.

Figure 2. An exploratory framework on EEF, from an evolutionary systemic multidimensional perspective



Source: Own elaboration

This initial model has the purpose to integrate past discussions and findings into a more cohesive view, so a starting point might be made to see how this evolutionary perspective impacts the basic elements of an economic system viewed from the entrepreneurship angle. Following Whetten, the purpose of a theoretical paper should be to alter research practice. Our model incorporates other elements apart from the strategic choice and population ecology ones suggested by Breslin (2008) into this evolutionary perspective, starting with a more systemic view of it by incorporating the multidimensional emphasis on both context and entrepreneurship as a process (and as a theoretically construct), also, adding family involvement into a key factor that influences the evolution of the entrepreneur, family firms, in which there is plenty of literature on how they differ from those non-family firms, and how they are managed differently because of their different context, thus affecting its operation and adaptation (evolution), or even devolution (i.d., when a company refuses to growth, preferring not to take the risks involved with, a choice to keep a small operation instead and not sacrificing personal or family time).

Under the model, a systemic view, more integrated, multidimensional approach, is proposed, to empirically analyze the evolutionary perspective in the elements that constitute it, opening debates on how evolution plays in each element and between them.

5. Conclusions and discusión

There are obvious differences between biological and human social evolution in terms of the latter's ideational dimension, reliance on artificial selection, and need to incorporate notions of social power as a force in artificial selection and inheritance, to name only a few. Both biological and human social evolution share an increasingly well-articulated foundation of generalized evolutionism, which is neither purely Darwinian nor purely Lamarckian.

Organizations cannot be in a state of hysteresis. We have offered a brief review of the advances made toward an integrated evolutionary study of entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, and firms, concentrating more on their actions and the outcomes, but not forgetting the evolution that studies on the entrepreneur itself are always growing and making discoveries. In that sense, a better understanding of it can make a huge difference.

An integrated view of the context, process, and outcomes of entrepreneurial activities requires more complex empirical tests. Years ago, testing hypotheses in our field was relatively easy. Entrepreneurial success "depended" on relatively simple and static variables. Complexity was minimized.

Following an evolutionary approach (and the later trend, complexity studies), the next step in entrepreneurial research should be integrative mixed-methods, so a deep and better understanding of this social fact can be achieved. Additionally, integrative mixed methods with areas of evolutionary research, such as with evolutionary anthropology and evolutionary psychology. Because it migrates to business schools, institutes of innovation studies, and elsewhere, it is also needed to adopt a similar perspective.

In the same perspective based on game-theoretic models of gene-culture evolution, the dual-inheritance theory can help to explain the mechanism behind the heritability of behaviors involving knowledge, beliefs, and interactions with other individuals. Despite this entrepreneurial activity, even if heritable, will be highly contingent on environmental forces.

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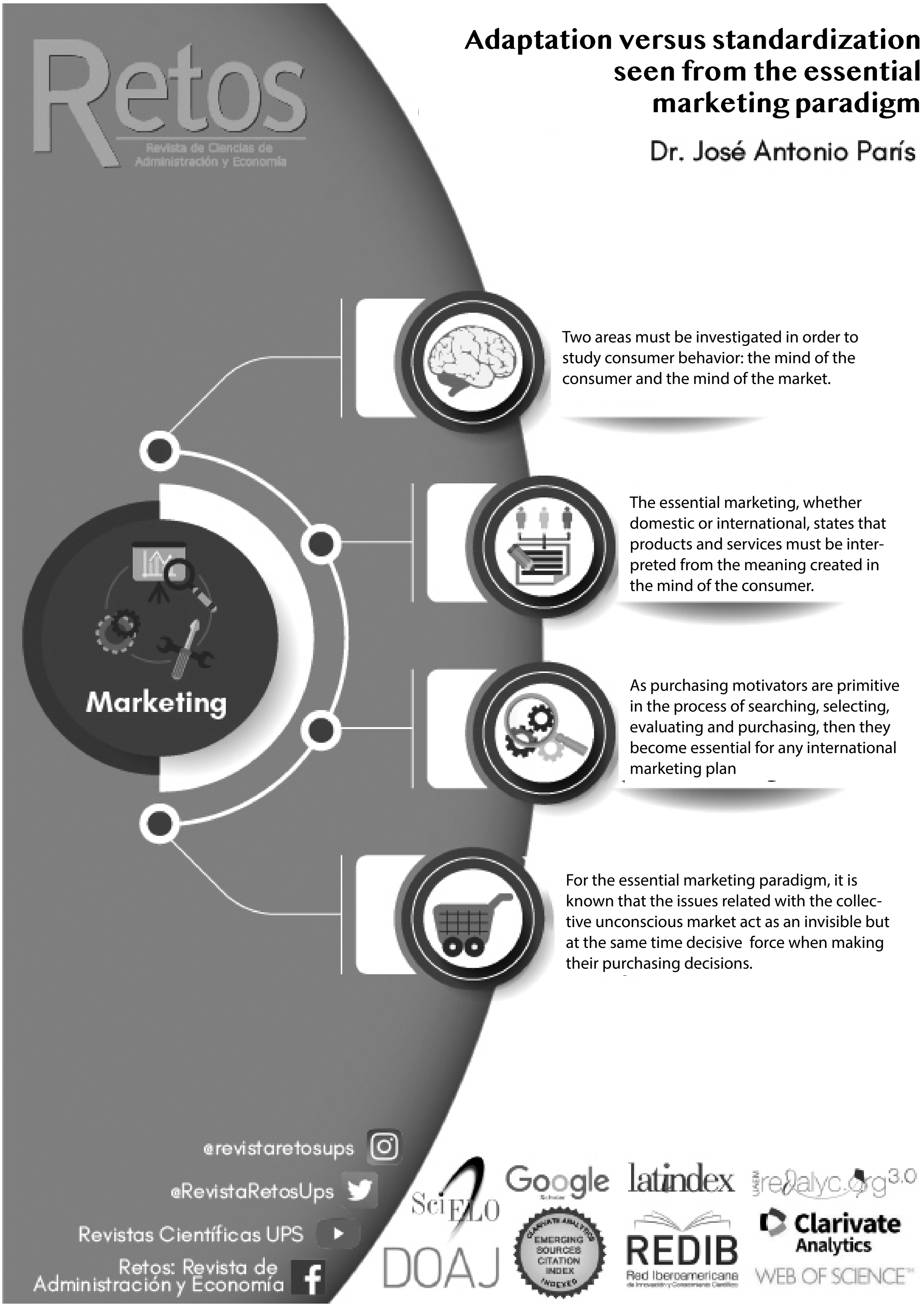
Anexos



Retos
Revista de Ciencias de Administración y Economía
Adaptation versus standardization seen from the essential marketing paradigm
Dr. José Antonio París
Marketing
Two areas must be investigated in order to study consumer behavior: the mind of the consumer and the mind of the market.
The essential marketing, whether domestic or international, states that products and services must be interpreted from the meaning created in the mind of the consumer.
As purchasing motivators are primitive in the process of searching, selecting, evaluating and purchasing, then they become essential for any international marketing plan
For the essential marketing paradigm, it is known that the issues related with the collective unconscious market act as an invisible but at the same time decisive force when making their purchasing decisions.
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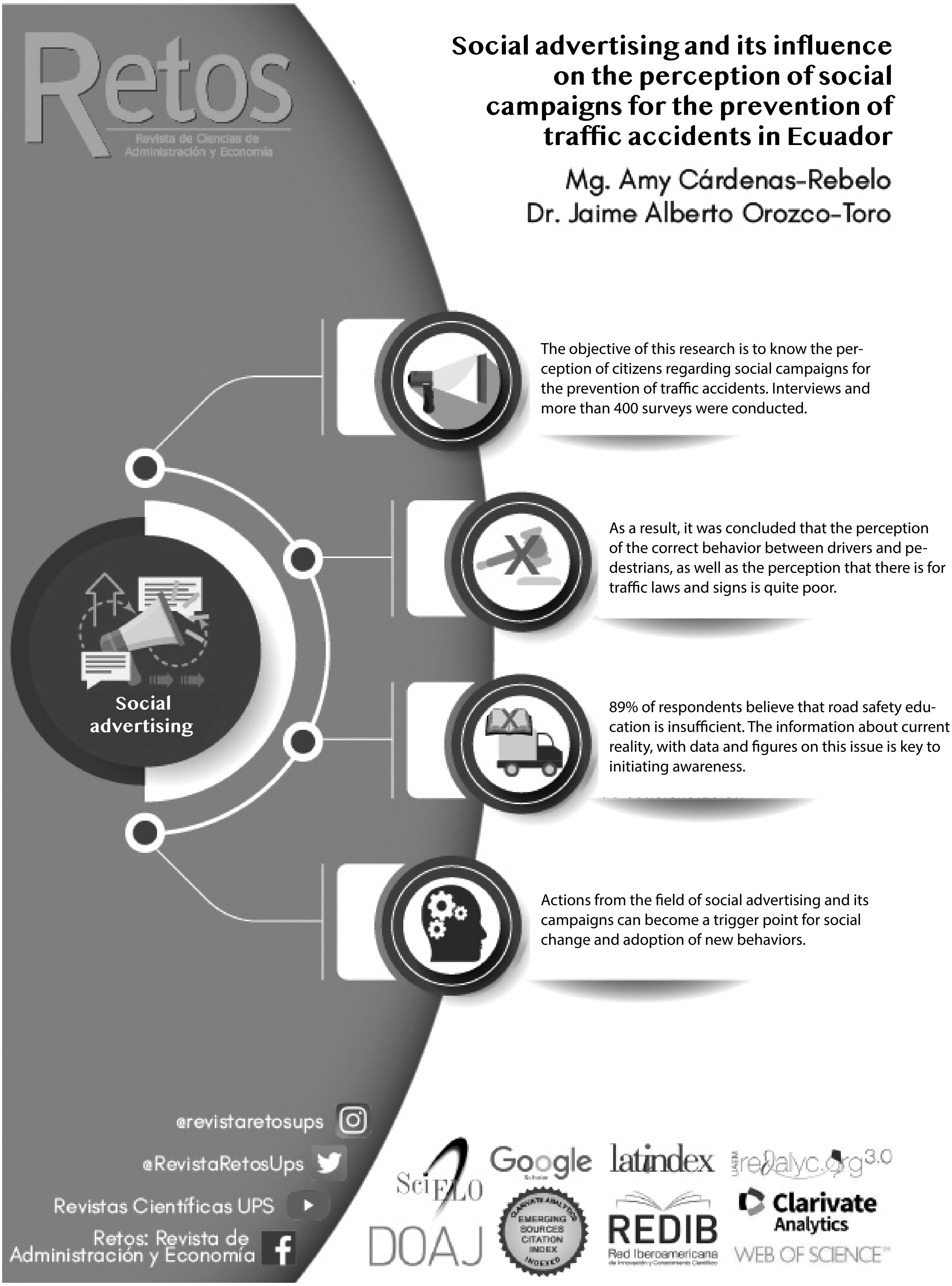

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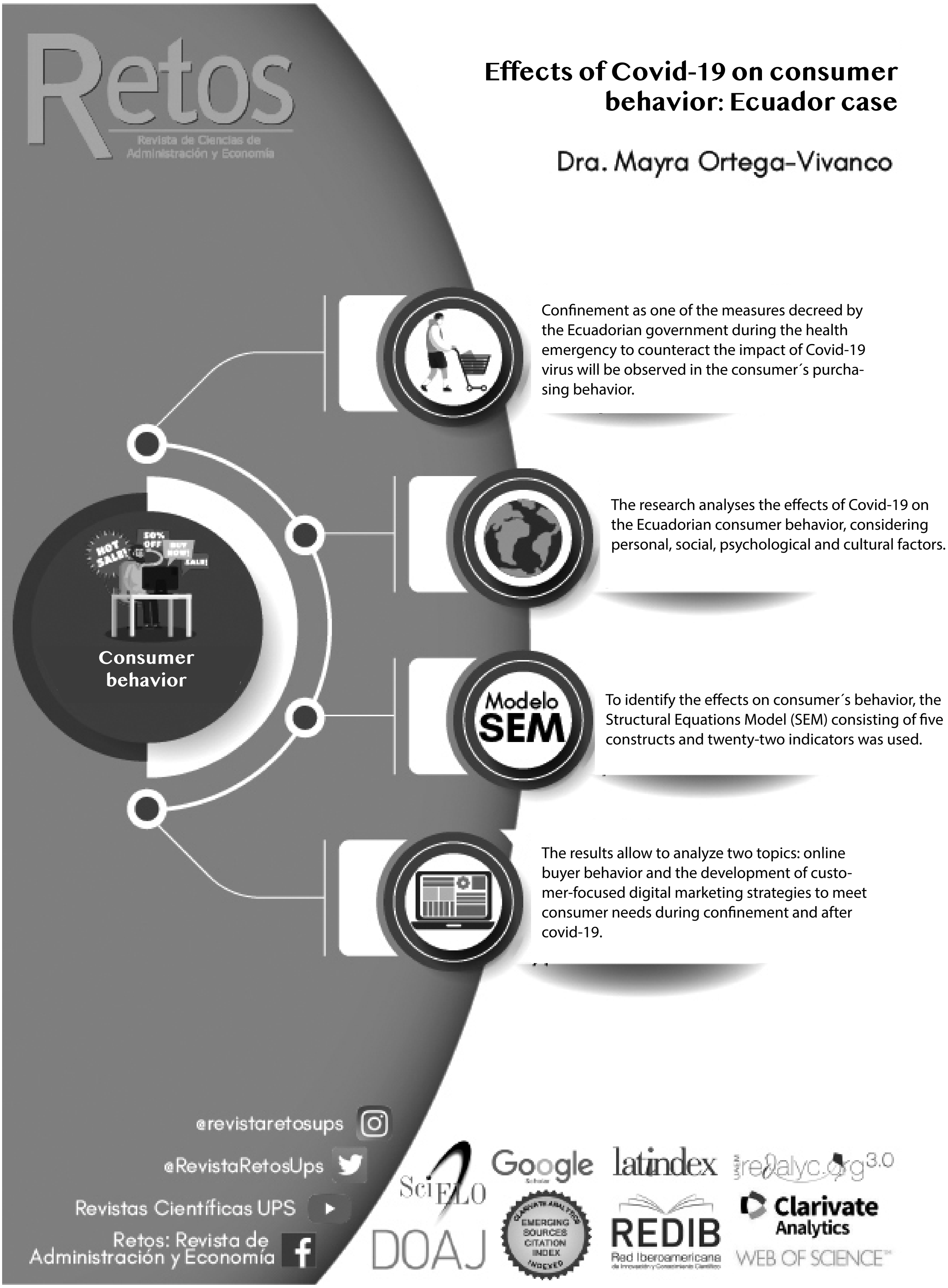

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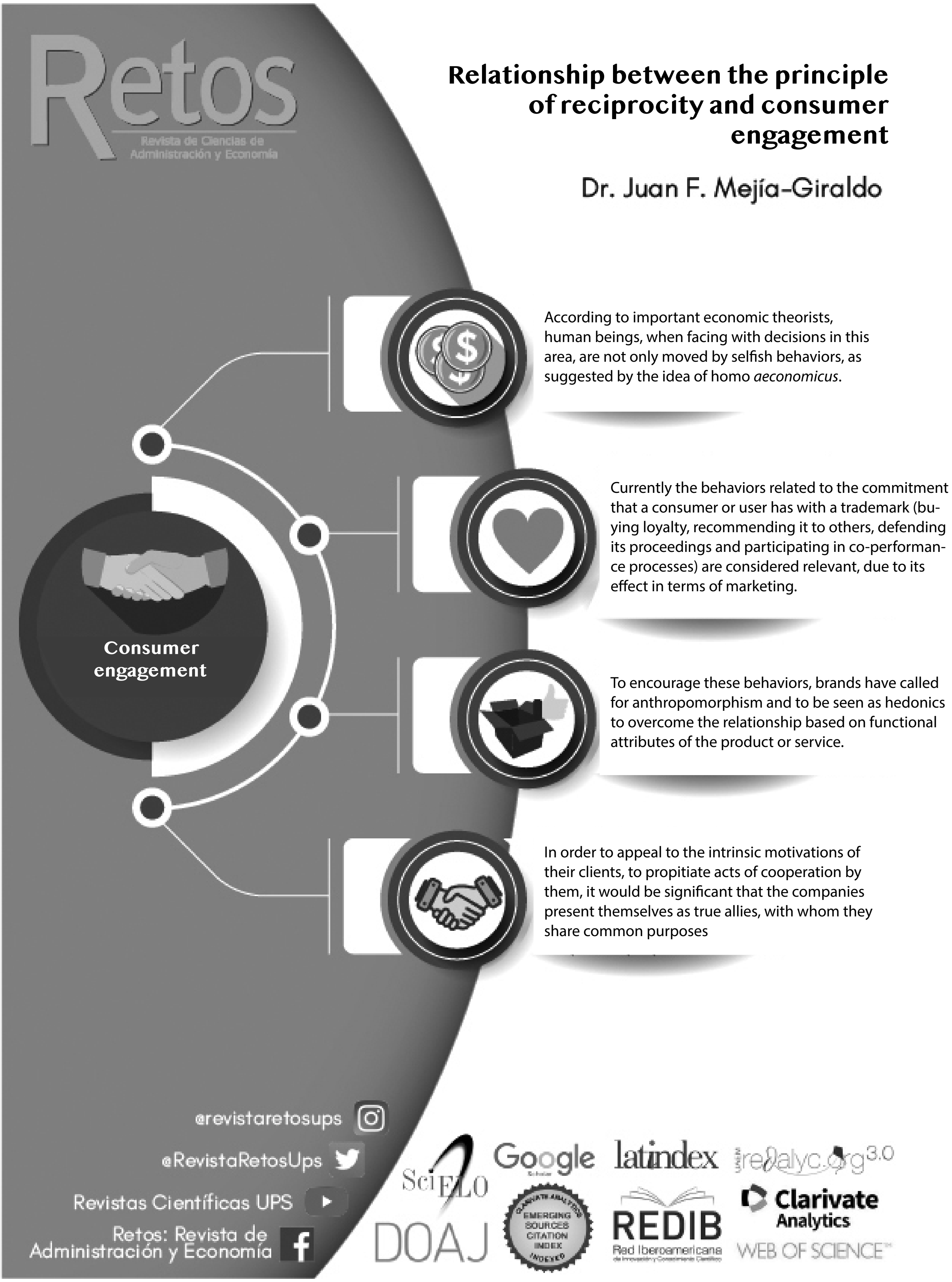
Retos
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Relationship between the principle of reciprocity and consumer engagement
Dr. Juan F. Mejía-Giraldo
According to important economic theorists, human beings, when facing with decisions in this area, are not only moved by selfish behaviors, as suggested by the idea of homo *aeconomicus*.
Currently the behaviors related to the commitment that a consumer or user has with a trademark (buying loyalty, recommending it to others, defending its proceedings and participating in co-performance processes) are considered relevant, due to its effect in terms of marketing.
Consumer engagement
To encourage these behaviors, brands have called for anthropomorphism and to be seen as hedonics to overcome the relationship based on functional attributes of the product or service.
In order to appeal to the intrinsic motivations of their clients, to propitiate acts of cooperation by them, it would be significant that the companies present themselves as true allies, with whom they share common purposes
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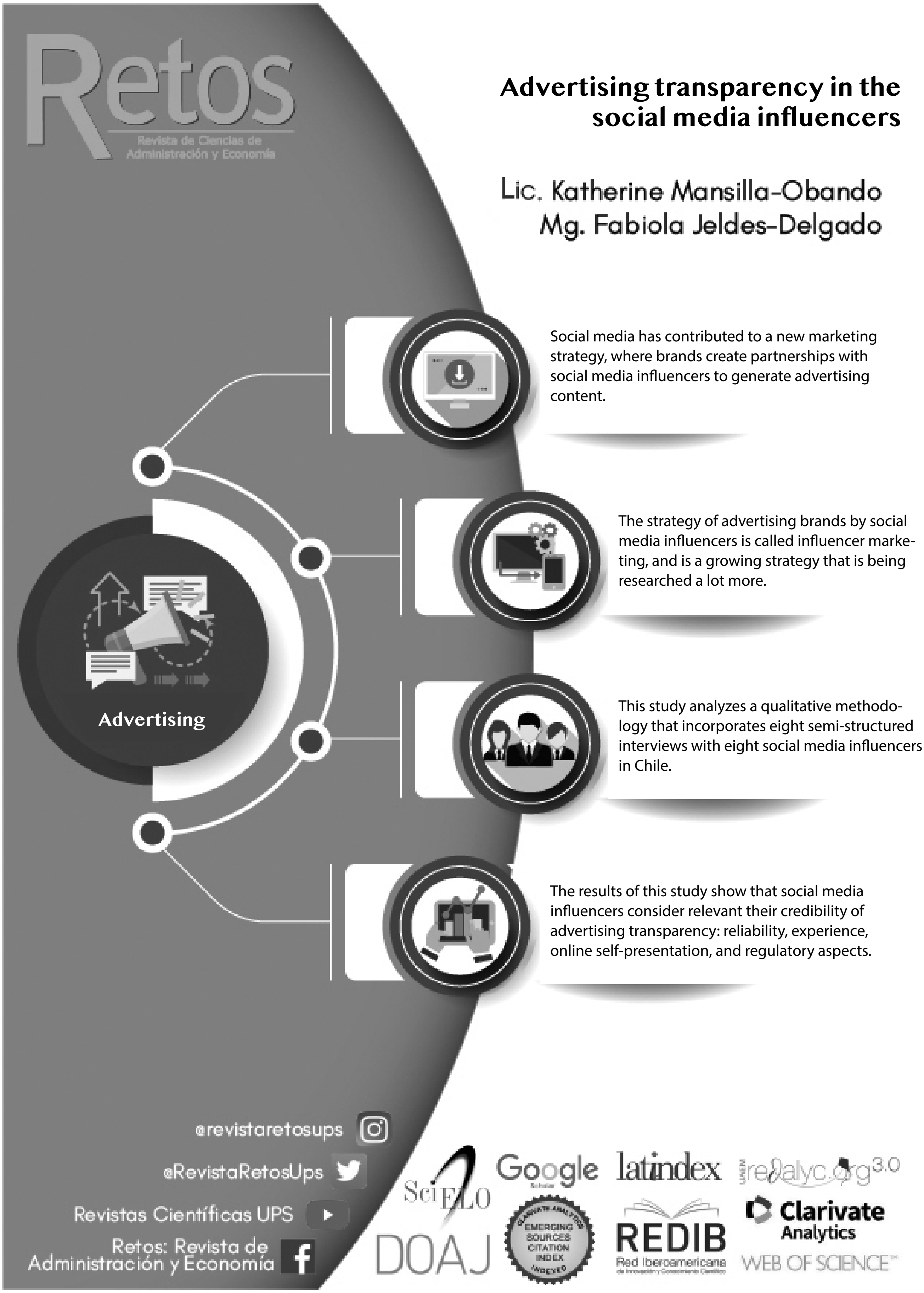
Retos
Revista de Ciencias de Administración y Economía
Advertising transparency in the social media influencers
Lic. Katherine Mansilla-Obando
Mg. Fabiola Jeldes-Delgado
Social media has contributed to a new marketing strategy, where brands create partnerships with social media influencers to generate advertising content.
The strategy of advertising brands by social media influencers is called influencer marketing, and is a growing strategy that is being researched a lot more.
This study analyzes a qualitative methodology that incorporates eight semi-structured interviews with eight social media influencers in Chile.
The results of this study show that social media influencers consider relevant their credibility of advertising transparency: reliability, experience, online self-presentation, and regulatory aspects.
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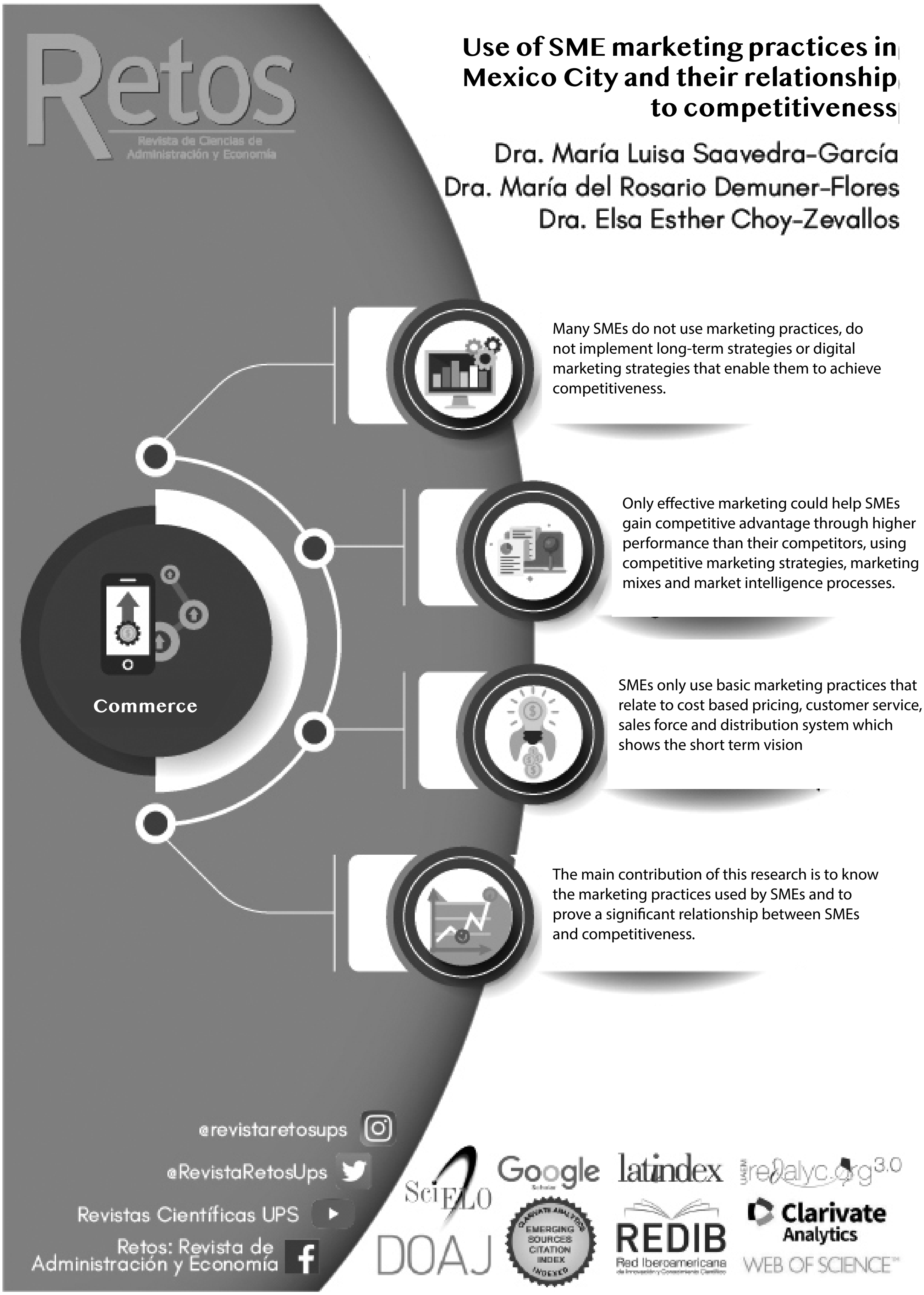
Retos
Revista de Ciencias de Administración y Economía
Use of SME marketing practices in Mexico City and their relationship to competitiveness
Dra. María Luisa Saavedra-García
Dra. María del Rosario Demuner-Flores
Dra. Elsa Esther Choy-Zevallos
Many SMEs do not use marketing practices, do not implement long-term strategies or digital marketing strategies that enable them to achieve competitiveness.
Only effective marketing could help SMEs gain competitive advantage through higher performance than their competitors, using competitive marketing strategies, marketing mixes and market intelligence processes.
SMEs only use basic marketing practices that relate to cost based pricing, customer service, sales force and distribution system which shows the short term vision
The main contribution of this research is to know the marketing practices used by SMEs and to prove a significant relationship between SMEs and competitiveness.
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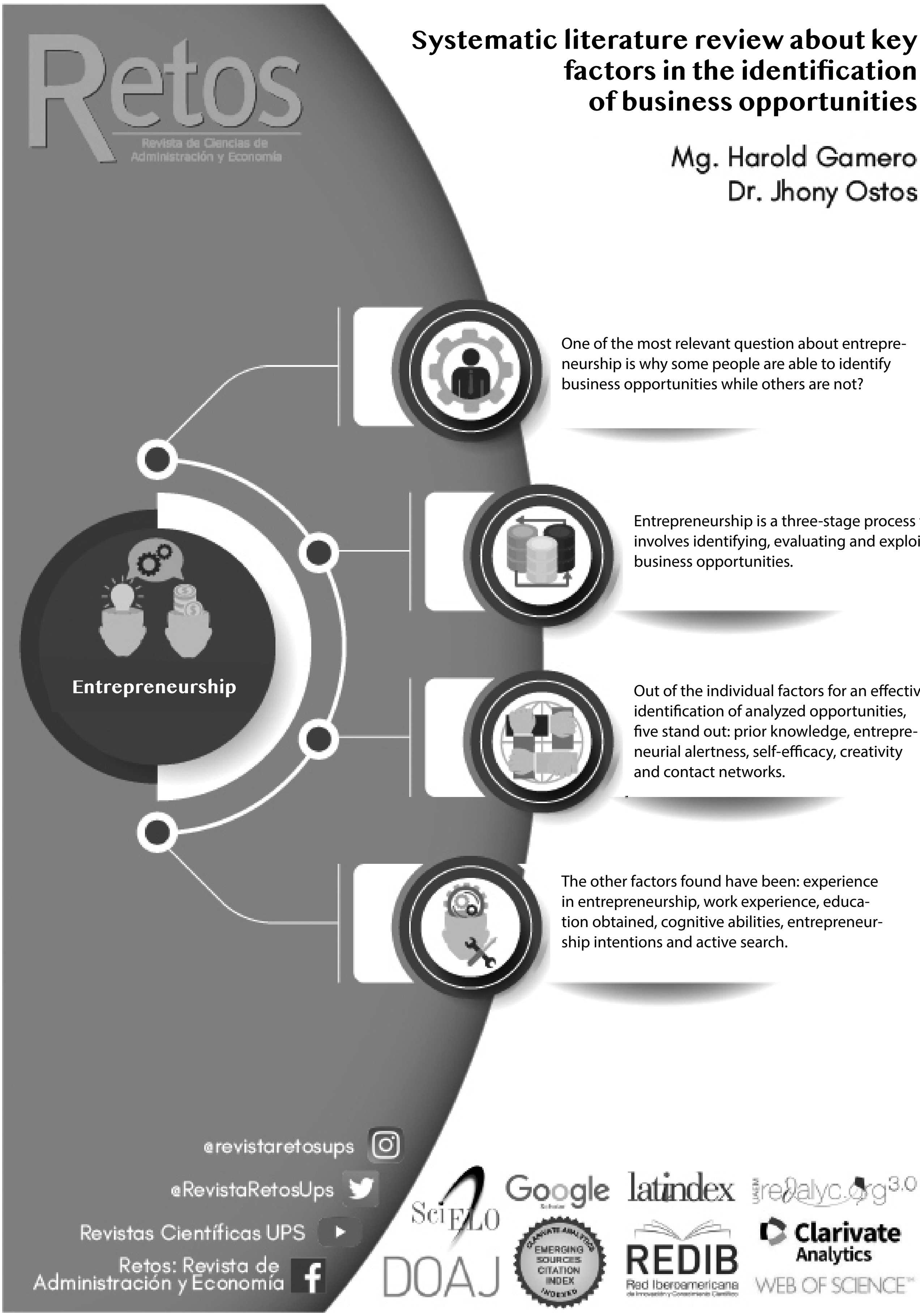
Retos
Revista de Ciencias de Administración y Economía
Systematic literature review about key factors in the identification of business opportunities
Mg. Harold Gamero
Dr. Jhony Ostos
Entrepreneurship
One of the most relevant question about entrepreneurship is why some people are able to identify business opportunities while others are not?
Entrepreneurship is a three-stage process that involves identifying, evaluating and exploiting business opportunities.
Out of the individual factors for an effective identification of analyzed opportunities, five stand out: prior knowledge, entrepreneurial alertness, self-efficacy, creativity and contact networks.
The other factors found have been: experience in entrepreneurship, work experience, education obtained, cognitive abilities, entrepreneurship intentions and active search.
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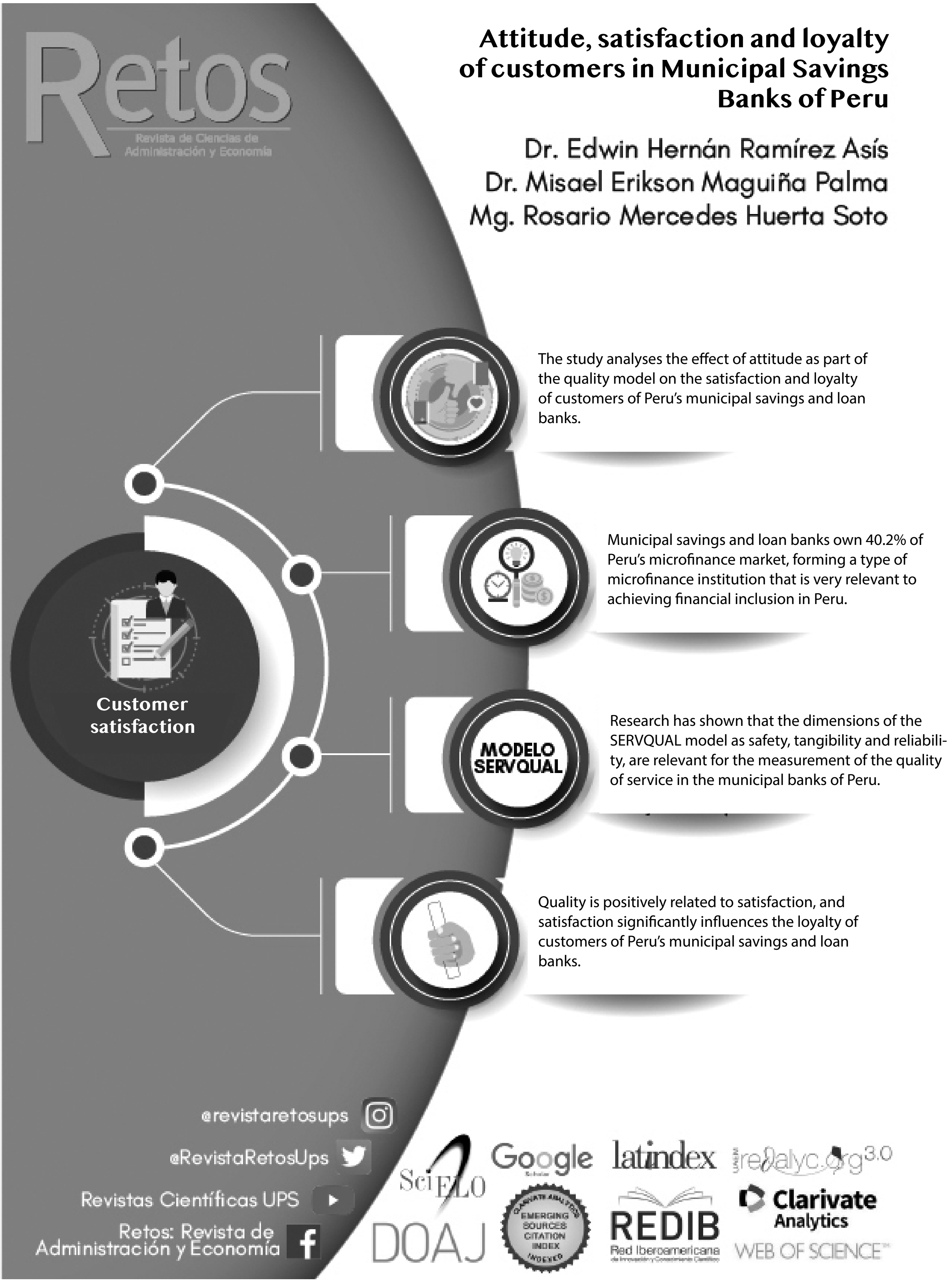

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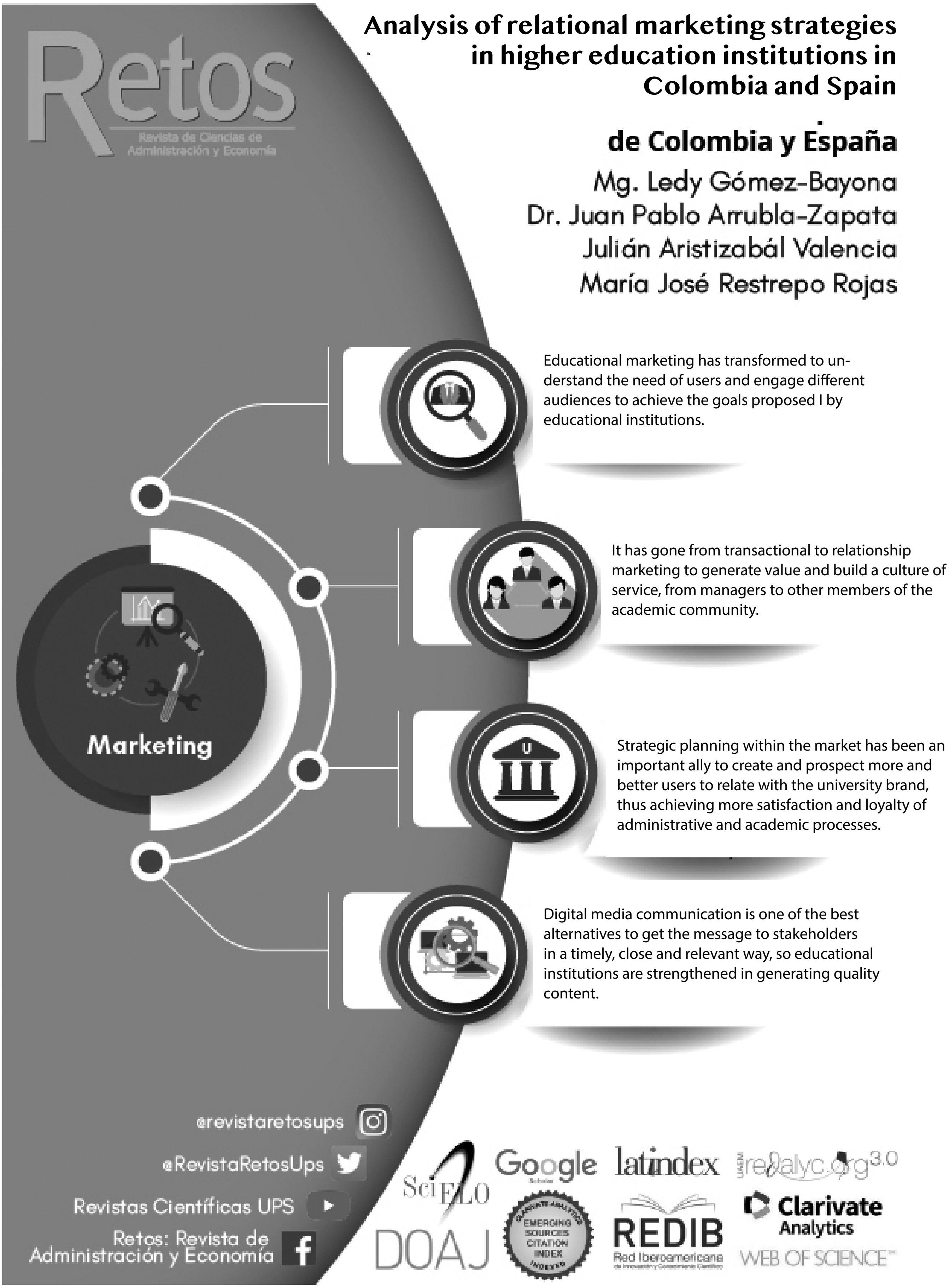
Retos
Revista de Ciencias de Administración y Economía
Analysis of relational marketing strategies in higher education institutions in Colombia and Spain
de Colombia y España
Mg. Ledy Gómez-Bayona
Dr. Juan Pablo Arrubla-Zapata
Julián Aristizabál Valencia
María José Restrepo Rojas
Marketing
Educational marketing has transformed to understand the need of users and engage different audiences to achieve the goals proposed l by educational institutions.
It has gone from transactional to relationship marketing to generate value and build a culture of service, from managers to other members of the academic community.
Strategic planning within the market has been an important ally to create and prospect more and better users to relate with the university brand, thus achieving more satisfaction and loyalty of administrative and academic processes.
Digital media communication is one of the best alternatives to get the message to stakeholders in a timely, close and relevant way, so educational institutions are strengthened in generating quality content.
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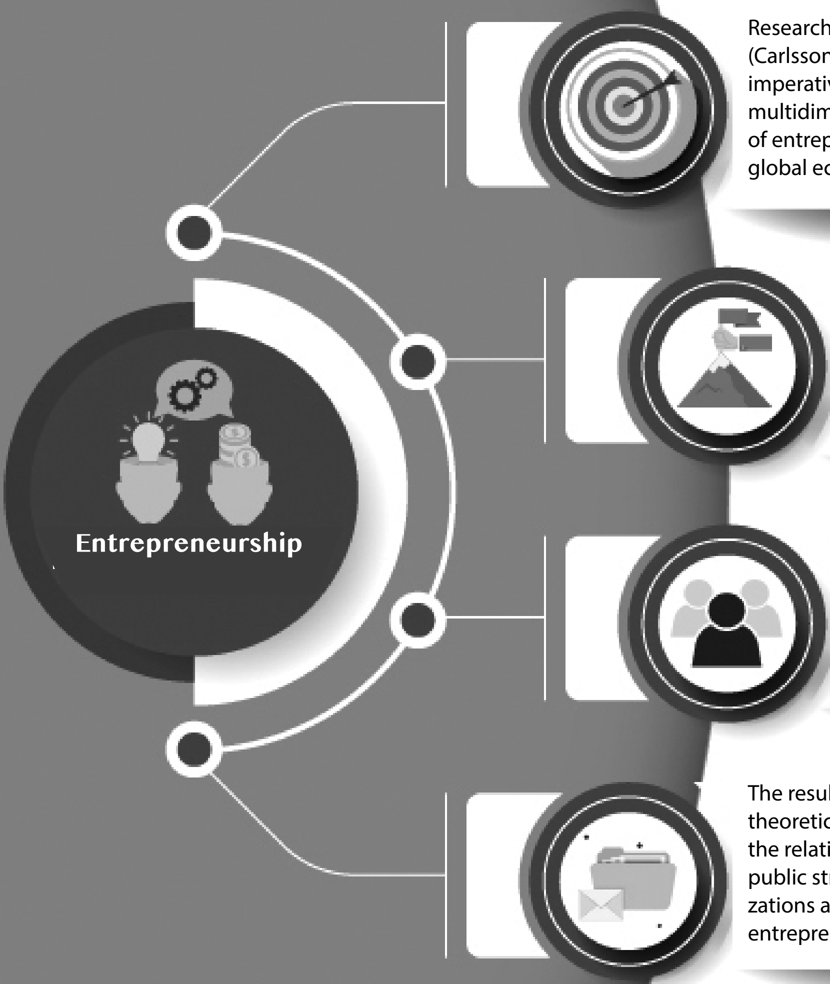
An exploratory framework for Entrepreneurship from an evolutionary perspective

Dr. Oscar Javier Montiel Méndez
Dra. Argentina Soto Maciel



Research on entrepreneurship has been evolving (Carlsson et al., 2013). As a line of research, it is imperative to understand it more deeply through a multidimensional perspective, given the relevance of entrepreneurship and businesses in today's global economy.

Through an extensive review of the literature, an exploratory review of its evolutionary perspective was carried out from an initial Darwinian perspective, and a three-dimensional theoretical model (Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneur and Enterprise, EEE) was proposed.

Family engagement is added as a key factor influencing the evolution of the entrepreneur; there is a lot of literature about family businesses and how they differ from non-family companies and how they are managed differently.

The results suggest that there is a need to deepen theoretically and empirically on this approach, under the relationships proposed by the model to develop public strategies and policies that support organizations and the various civil society actors in the entrepreneurial environment.

Basic writing rules

Universidad Politécnica Salesiana del Ecuador

1. General information

"Retos" is a bilingual scientific publication by the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana de Ecuador, which has been edited on a bi-annual basis since January 2011. The journal focuses on Development and transdisciplinary issues including Public Administration, Social Economics, Marketing, Tourism, Entrepreneurship, Management, Administrative and Economic Science, etc.

It is an arbitrated Scientific Journal that uses an external evaluation system known as *peer-review*, employing *double-blind review*, in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) style rules. By using this system, the authors have access to an objective, impartial and transparent review process, which facilitates their publication being included in databases, repositories, and international indexed references.

"Retos" is indexed in the selective directory and catalog of the Online Regional Information System for Scientific Journals in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal (Latindex), in the REDALYC Scientific Information System, the Directory of Open Access Journals in repositories, libraries, and specialized catalogs in Ibero-America.

The Journal is published with two different editions: printed (ISSN: 1390-62911) and electronic (e-ISSN: 1390-8618), in Spanish and English, and each article is identified with a DOI (Digital Object Identifier System).

2. Scope and policies

2.1. Themes

Original contributions in Development issues, as well as related fields: Public Administration, Social Economics, Marketing, Tourism, Entrepreneurship, Management...and all other disciplines related to the central thematic issue.

2.2. *Contr*ibutions

"Retos" preferably publishes the results of empirical research about Development, written in Spanish and/or English, while reports, studies, and proposals are also accepted, as well as reviews of state-of-the-art literature.

All of the publications must be original, never have been published in any other journal, and not be undergoing any arbitration or publication processes. Contributions to the journal can include any of the following:

- **Research:** 5,000 to 6,500 words of text, including the title, abstracts, keywords, tables, and references.
- **Reports, Studies, and Proposals:** 5,000 to 6,500 words of text, including the title, abstracts, tables, and references.

- **Reviews:** 6,000 to 7,000 words of text, including tables and references. Justified, current, and selective references shall be evaluated, and should include around 70 publications.

"Retos" is published bi-annually (20 articles per year), in April and October, and each edition has two sections with five articles each, the first containing a **Monograph** theme edited by subject matter experts, and a second **Miscellaneous** section, made up of diverse contributions related to the publication's theme.

3. Presentation, structure, and submission of manuscripts

Papers are to be presented with Arial 10 typeface, single line spacing, all justified, without indentation or blank spaces between paragraphs. A space is only to be included between the major sections (title, authors, abstracts, keywords, credits, and epigraphs). All margins on each page must be 2 cm.

The papers are to be presented in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx), and the file is to be anonymous in the File Properties such that the author(s) is(are) not identified.

Manuscripts are to be submitted only through the OJS (Open Journal System), in which all authors must first register. Original papers sent via email or another interface are not accepted.

3.1. *Manusc*ript Structure

For papers that are empirical research, the manuscripts are to follow IMRDC structure, while Notes and Contributions epigraphs are optional. Papers that constitute reports, studies, proposals, and reviews are afforded greater flexibility in terms of epigraphs, especially in relation to Materials and Methods, Analysis and Results, and Discussion and Conclusions. All types of papers are required to include References.

1) **Title (Spanish) / Title (English):** Concise but informative, the first line in Spanish and the second, in English. Maximum 80 characters are accepted, including spaces. The Editorial Board is allowed to propose changes to the author's title.
2) **First and last names:** of each of the authors, organized in order of priority. Maximum three authors are accepted per original paper, although justified exceptions may be allowed, based on the theme, complexity, and length. The names are to be followed by the professional category, workplace, each author's email address and ORCID number. It is mandatory to include whether the author has a doctorate degree (Dr. before the name).
3) **Abstract (Resumen, Spanish) / Abstract (English):** This section can contain a maximum of 230 words, first in Spanish and then in English. The abstract shall concisely contain the following, and in this order: 1) Justification of the theme; 2) Objectives; 3) Methods and sample; 4) Main results; 5) Main conclusions. It should be written impersonally "This paper analyzes..." In the abstract, automatic translation is not accepted due to its poor quality.
4) **Keywords (descriptores, Spanish) / Keywords (English):** Six keywords are to be included for each language, and must be directly related to the paper's theme. This requirement shall be scored based on whether the keywords can be found in the UNESCO Thesaurus.
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6) **Material and Methods:** This is to be composed in such a way that the reader can easily understand how the research was performed. As appropriate, describe the method, sample, sampling, and refer to the type of statistical analysis used. If it is an original method, present the reasons for applying it, and describe any possible limitations.
7) **Analysis and Results:** This section should seek to highlight the most important observations, and without including any value judgments, describe the methods used. Throughout the text, essential tables and figures shall be included in a logical sequence, without repeating any data.
8) **Discussion and Conclusions:** This section summarizes the most important findings related to any observations from relevant studies, pointing out contributions and limitations, without repeating data from other sections. The discussion and conclusions paragraph is to include inferences and new lines of research for the future.
9) **Contributions and acknowledgment (optional):** The Science Editors Board recommends that the author(s) specify the financing source for their research. Priority shall be given to work endorsed by competitive national

or international projects. Regardless, for the manuscript to be scientifically evaluated, it is to be anonymized with an XXXX only for the initial evaluation, in order to avoid identification of any of the authors or research teams, which are to be named in the Cover Letter and later, in the final manuscript.

10) **Notes** (optional) are included, only if necessary, at the end of the article (before the references). They are to be included manually, since the Word footnotes are not recognized by the layout systems. Note numbers are to be included using superscript, both in the text and in the final note. Notes including simple bibliographic references (without comments) are not allowed, since these are supposed to be included in the references.

11) **References:** Bibliographic references are to follow the text references. Under no circumstances should references be included that have not been cited in the text. There should be enough references in order to contextualize the theoretical framework, and be based on criteria of contemporary relevance and importance. They are presented alphabetically, according to the author's last name (if the last name has more than one word, based on the first word of the last name).

3.2. Rules for references

Periodical publications

Journal article (one author) Valdés-Pérez, D. (2016). Incidencia de las técnicas de gestión en la mejora de decisiones administrativas [Impact of Management Techniques on the Improvement of Administrative Decisions]. *Retos*, *12*(6), 199-2013. https://doi.org/10.17163/ret.n12.2016.05

Journal article (up to six authors): Ospina, M.C., Alvarado, S.V., Fefferman, M., & Llanos, D. (2016). Introducción del dossier temático "Infancias y juventudes: violencias, conflictos, memorias y procesos de construcción de paz" [Introduction of the thematic dossier "Infancy and Youth: Violence, Conflicts, Memories and Peace Construction Processes"]. *Universitas*, *25*(14), 91-95. https://doi.org/10.17163/uni.n25.%25x

Journal article (more than six authors): Smith, S.W., Smith, S.L. Pieper, K.M., Yoo, J.H., Ferrys, A.L., Downs, E.,... Bowden, B. (2006). Altruism on American Television: Examining the Amount of, and Context Surronding. Acts of Helping and Sharing. *Journal of Communication*, *56*(4), 707-727. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00316.x

Journal article (with no DOI). Rodríguez, A. (2007). Desde la promoción de salud mental hacia la promoción de salud: La concepción de lo comunitario en la implementación de proyectos sociales. *Alteridad*, *2*(1), 28-40. (https://goo.gl/zDb3Me) (2017-01-29).

Books and chapters of books

Complete books: Cuéllar, J.C., & Moncada-Paredes, M.C. (2014). *El peso de la deuda externa ecuatoriana*. Quito: Abya-Yala.

Chapters of a book: Zambrano-Quiñones, D. (2015). *El ecoturismo comunitario en Manglaralto y Colonche*. En V.H. Torres (Ed.), Alternativas de Vida: Trece experiencias de desarrollo endógeno en Ecuador (pp. 175-198). Quito: Abya-Yala.

Electronic media

Pérez-Rodríguez, M.A., Ramírez, A., & García-Ruíz, R. (2015). La competencia mediática en educación infantil. Análisis del nivel de desarrollo en España. Universitas Psychologica, 14(2), 619-630. https://doi.org.10.11144/Javeriana.upsy14-2.cmei

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The epigraphs in the article's body are in Arabic numbers. These are to avoid all capital letters, underlining, or bold text. Numbering should use maximum three levels: 1. / 1.1. / 1.1.1. A carriage return is to be used at the end of each epigraph.

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