

Marketing Challenges since the Emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic

This new issue of *Innovar* is the extension of the results of the call for papers for the special issue "Marketing and consumer behavior during and amidst the overcoming of a pandemic," whose purpose was to offer the academic community in the marketing field a space to disseminate their research results on studies related to consumer behavior during and after the pandemic. We received a total of 48 documents and published 10 of the accepted manuscripts in Volume 32, Issue 86, October-December 2022, available at <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/innovar/issue/view/5877>. This new issue continues disseminating the knowledge of authors from various backgrounds and institutions in the face of the challenges the pandemic posed for various aspects of marketing and consumer behavior. We invite you to read the nine papers chosen for this special edition, Volume 33, Issue 87, January-March 2023.

The first paper, titled "Pet keepers' consumption habits in Valle de Aburrá, Colombia, before, during and after COVID-19 mandatory isolation," presents a new consumption outlook that is becoming a global trend: the increasing ownership of pets in Colombia. According to Sánchez-Alzate (2023), Gen Z'ers, Millennials, and Gen X'ers consider companion animals part of their families and own 70% of the pets worldwide (Statista, 2022). However, although the pet market is relatively stable, from the perspective of the data collected by the author, future research could review this change and new business models with the return of face-to-face business transactions.

The second paper, titled "Higher education student complaint behavior in a complex service ecosystem: A value co-creation perspective," examines a service whose provision was significantly affected during the pandemic. From the conceptual perspective of the service dominant logic (SDL), Zamora-Ramos *et al.* (2023) present possible approaches to achieve student satisfaction under the commitment to educational quality and the service ecosystem innate to higher education (Montoya-Restrepo *et al.*, 2020).

From a different perspective, in the article "COVID communications: Preferred brand tones for consumers during stressful times," MacSween and Canziani (2023) show consumer's preferences regarding brand tones in situations of

intense stress, such as lockdowns. Here, it is worth noting that although all economic activities were struck by the COVID-19 pandemic, advertising investment was one of the most affected sectors (Corredor-Lanas *et al.*, 2021), forcing a change in how brands connect with consumers. In fact, new social networks and forms of communication emerged and grew (such as, TikTok and BeReal), so this work provides a space to recognize new ways to create bonds with consumers in times of crisis with a view to greater customization.

The article "E-commerce adoption in the fruit and vegetable sector: An analysis in pandemic times," prepared by Romero-Sánchez and Barrios (2023), presents an interesting analysis of electronic commerce adoption levels by companies in the fruit and vegetable sector in the city of Bogotá (Colombia) during the pandemic. In this work, readers will learn about the application of the quantitative analysis model known as e-MICA to assess the stages and maturity levels of a business website, from promotion—basic stage—to processing—final stage. Main findings show that companies in the region display a high degree of maturity in adopting electronic commerce. The contributions of this study add to the line of research on Colombian electronic commerce, which has considerably evolved and grown (Rojas-Berrio & Vega-Rodríguez, 2011; Sánchez-Torres *et al.*, 2019; Sánchez-Torres, Berrío, *et al.*, 2021; Sánchez-Torres, Sandoval, *et al.*, 2021; Tavera-Mesías *et al.*, 2011).

Coming next, the paper "Online food shopping: Determinants and profile of Portuguese buyers in the pandemic context," by Gomes *et al.* (2023), studies food purchasing through electronic platforms in Portugal during and after COVID-19 pandemic. This study is grounded on the strong impact of the pandemic on food purchasing and consumption habits, as well as on the purchasing of other high-consumption products worldwide. The contributions of this study can be expanded by our readers and refer to experiential factors of online purchases generated by the pandemic and its implication in the continued use of this channel after the health emergency, as well as the analysis of demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational level. The insights of this study add to research

findings on the differences among electronic buyers by previous works on the field (Sánchez-Alzate & Sánchez-Torres, 2017; Sánchez-Torres, 2019; Sánchez-Torres *et al.*, 2018; Sánchez-Torres & Arroyo-Cañada, 2016), and show how the pandemic has altered consumption habits.

The paper by Leyva-Hernández *et al.* (2023), titled "Main factors that explain the organic food purchase intention, a systematic review," is unique in its method to conduct a qualitative-type research study. This work has a well-developed methodological design that takes the reader on a journey to understanding the main factors in the intention towards organic food purchasing. It also excels in the theoretical strength presented concerning the theory of planned behavior. Furthermore, it shows the changes in consumer values as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for the sale of organic foods. Finally, the selection criteria of reviewed studies are noteworthy, since structural equation modeling (SEM) is particularly useful for theoretical testing and explaining marketing phenomena (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 2000). Furthermore, in social research, these tests allow adding numerical and predictive strength to the phenomena under study, in this case, attitude and purchase intention. Thus, by analyzing product consumption and integrating SEM, it is possible to define more detailed consumption profiles and patterns. The main findings show that trust in organic food, brand, retailers, and producers are relevant variables in the purchase decision. This is a cutting-edge issue since the intention to purchase this type of product is primarily linked to environmental sustainability (Gallenti *et al.*, 2019), motivation, changes in the scale of values, and consumer perceptions.

The paper by Osuna-Ramírez and Escobar Sierra (2023), titled "Getting past the crisis: Marketing communication of university sustainability," presents an exploratory ethnographic research study that deploys a series of techniques to extract information from websites, intending to verify whether the Facebook accounts of five private universities in Colombia effectively implement marketing communication tools to inform their sustainability strategies. These are critical tools that enabled organizations to maintain strong relationships with their stakeholders during the pandemic. As such, digital media, and their ability to create a new type of culture, allow the audience to meet their communication, socialization and self-realization needs at a completely different level, compared to traditional media (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020). The results of this paper show that, despite good intentions and reasonable efforts, the higher education institutions analyzed do not seem to have a systematic strategy to communicate

sustainability issues. The innovation of university services and a sustainable institutional image are crucial to stakeholder satisfaction and loyalty. However, the pandemic reshaped organizations' communications internally and externally. Consequently, a continuous dialogue with the audiences of an institution or company, whether public or private, profit or non-profit, could strengthen the ties between the individuals that comprise an organization and test commitment and trust.

The paper "Evaluation of the effects of consumer trust on electronic word-of-mouth (e-wom) in e-commerce stores in Colombia," by Hernández-Díaz (2023), analyzes consumers' trust regarding electronic word of mouth —e-wom—, considering the dimensions of benevolence, competence and perceived honesty in the information coming from these sources. The results showed that consumer trust in this type of information is positive and, therefore, of significant importance in the purchasing process (Sánchez Torres, Cañada *et al.*, 2018).

This special issue ends with the paper "Influence of promotional profit frameworks on the purchasing decisions of detergent consumers in online stores: An experimental contribution in the COVID-19 channel," presented by Bermúdez-Sosa and Duque-Oliva (2023), which presents an interesting analysis of the effect of promotional campaigns on the purchase price of mass consumer products. The experiment results showed that, during the pandemic, offering an additional product did not generate an incremental effect on the purchase intention, while "2 × 1" and "50% more" sales had the most significant incremental effects (Sánchez Torres, Rivera González *et al.*, 2018).

We hope that this special issue fosters critical reading, analysis, community building, and relationships between audiences from the professional and academic fields and, in general, the community interested in or affected by the phenomena of marketing and consumer behavior during and amidst the overcoming of a pandemic. From our distinct roles in society, we invite you to review these 19 documents, published in two editions, keeping in mind that we could have a promising future that makes us proud of our work and contributions, which are now our present and then will become our past.

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