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## Performance of electronics e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic: a comparative analysis

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## Performance of electronics e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic: a comparative analysis

### Abstract

**Objective(s):** This study aimed to analyze the performance of electronics e-commerce during the pandemic and verify which were the most used resources in this process, listing the digital marketing strategies used to boost online sales within organizations. **Method(s):** Thus, a basic, descriptive, and quantitative research was developed in the first half of 2022, when a structured questionnaire was applied to the e-commerce of electronics in Sananduva, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. By the results presented, it was found that digital marketing is important for companies and organizations that seek to apply it on social media, in which the number of users and consumers has increased. It was found that 37% of companies believe that digital marketing has increased the dissemination of products and services and improved communication and connection with customers. **Results:** It is concluded that the interactivity that digital marketing provides between market and consumer has improved the approach of companies with their potential customers, since the internet offers an opening to expose products and services, in addition to knowing the opinion of the public. **Contributions:** It is suggested to verify consumer behavior and e-commerce after the pandemic period in the municipality of Sananduva, with the possibility of extending the study to the region.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing. Social Media. Pandemic.

## Desempenho do comércio on-line de eletrônicos no período pandêmico de Covid-19, uma análise comparativa

### Resumo

**Objetivo(s):** O estudo teve como objetivo analisar o desempenho no comércio on-line de eletrônicos durante a pandemia e verificar quais foram os recursos mais utilizados nesse processo, elencando as estratégias de marketing digital utilizadas para impulsionar as vendas on-line dentro das organizações. **Método(s):** Assim foi desenvolvida uma pesquisa básica, descritiva e quantitativa, no primeiro semestre de 2022, quando foi aplicado um questionário estruturado ao comércio de eletrônicos em Sananduva, Rio Grande do Sul. Por meio dos resultados apresentados, constatou-se que o marketing digital é importante para as empresas e organizações que buscam aplicá-lo nas mídias sociais, em que o número de usuários e consumidores tem aumentado. Verificou-se que 37% das empresas acreditam que o marketing digital aumentou a divulgação de produtos e serviços e melhorou a comunicação e conexão com os clientes. **Resultados:** Conclui-se que a interatividade que o marketing digital proporciona entre mercado e consumidor aprimorou a aproximação das empresas com seus potenciais clientes, pois a internet proporciona uma abertura para expor produtos e serviços, além de se conhecer a opinião do público. **Contribuições:** Sugere-se verificar o comportamento do consumidor e o comércio on-line pós período pandêmico no município de Sananduva, com possibilidade de estender o estudo para a região.

**Palavras-chave:** Marketing Digital. Mídias Sociais. Pandemia.



## Desempeño del comercio online de productos electrónicos en el periodo de la pandemia de Covid-19, un análisis comparativo

### Resumen

**Objetivo(s):** El estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el desempeño en el comercio online de productos electrónicos durante la pandemia y verificar cuáles fueron los recursos más utilizados en este proceso, enumerando las estrategias de marketing digital utilizadas para impulsar las ventas online dentro de las organizaciones. **Método(s):** Se desarrolló una investigación básica, descriptiva y cuantitativa, en el primer semestre de 2022, cuando fue aplicado un cuestionario estructurado al comercio de productos electrónicos en Sananduva, Rio Grande do Sul. A través de los resultados presentados, se constató que el marketing digital es importante para las empresas y organizaciones que buscan aplicarlo en las redes sociales, donde el número de usuarios y consumidores ha aumentado. Se encontró que el 37 % de las empresas cree que el marketing digital ha aumentado la divulgación de productos y servicios y ha mejorado la comunicación y la conexión con los clientes. **Resultados:** Se concluye que la interactividad que proporciona el marketing digital entre mercado y consumidor mejoró la aproximación de las empresas con sus potenciales clientes, pues internet proporciona una apertura para exponer productos y servicios, además de conocer la opinión del público. **Contribuciones:** Se sugiere verificar el comportamiento del consumidor y el comercio online después del periodo de la pandemia en el municipio de Sananduva, con la posibilidad de extender el estudio a la región.

**Palabras clave:** Marketing Digital. Redes Sociales. Pandemia.

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic (SARS-CoV-2) emerged at the end of 2019 in China and quickly spread throughout the Asian continent, and later to the world. Many guidelines and measures were passed to the population to prevent the proliferation of the virus, including isolation. In view of the impossibilities of physical commercialization, there was an above-average growth in the modality of e-commerce, “that is, those who carried out for the first time an online purchase, emerging as an effective alternative to supply the population and avoid complete paralysis of the economy” (Fortes et al., 2021). Thus, the lives of many companies and potential customers were connected, favoring interaction, creating possibilities for the use of resources, resulting in an advantageous relationship for both companies and society.

In this sense, technological advancement is presented as a strategic instrument for communication between companies and customers. Society is inserted in a complex digital system, in which information technology is considered one of the pillars of development (Silva et al., 2019). Due to increased competitiveness and accelerated changes, companies have to innovate and seek more new ways to captivate customers. One of the ways to attract the attention of potential customers is the creation of content and brand promotion – thus, managing social media is crucial for an organization, since digital marketing has become a way for companies to obtain their differential (Saraiva, 2019).

Thus, this study aimed to answer the following question: did the enterprises that sell electronic products in Sananduva, Rio Grande do Sul, use digital marketing in the pandemic period and, if so, what were the strategies used? From this, we sought to analyze digital marketing in electronics e-commerce in Sananduva in the pandemic period, verifying: the potential of online tools; what are the main social media used by the surveyed establishments;



the main reasons that led the enterprises to use digital marketing; and digital marketing strategies to boost online sales within organizations.

The following sections present the theoretical framework of the research, the methodological procedures, analysis of the results, and the final considerations and references of the study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The emergence of the press and mass media played an important role for advertising and propaganda to boost consumption. First in print, which dominated the dissemination of products and services for a long time, and then by sound and audiovisual, converging in the media, by tools that allow greater interactivity (Costa et al., 2021).

Queiroz (2006) divided the history of advertising and propaganda into five cycles: oral tradition; the press, with newspapers and magazines in the nineteenth century; radio stations from the 1920s; the arrival of television in the 1950s; the convergence of media, by the internet, allowing virtual ads to last for days, hours, and even minutes. This section covers the following topics: advertising; the emergence of the internet; social media; digital marketing; and the importance of e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Advertising***

Advertising is in the life of all Brazilians, even when there was no TV or radio. According to Marcondes (2002), street vendors and drovers were the first to advertise, innovating in the forms of sales, when consumers were not customers, but shoppers. Still according to the author, Tiradentes, in the 1780s with his pamphlets and flyers, begins the political campaigns for the independence of Brazil.

According to Macedo (2009), television emerged in Brazil in the 1950s, and over time it turned into a very powerful advertising mechanism, which changed advertising. For the next few decades, TVs were the great center of the world's information, until other screens arrived to bring about an even greater change in technology. For Marcondes (2002), throughout this growth of TV advertising, some techniques have emerged to engage viewers and connect them to brands, such as the use of celebrities in advertisements, with the sale of a “lifestyle”. According to Costa et al. (2021), in Brazil, unlike other countries, television came from the radio and its texts were radiophonic – with the evolution of technologies, advertising and propaganda were also improved, and in just over 30 years, advertising on television came to be considered one of the most creative in the world.

Years passed before an invention was able to downgrade the success of TV. According to Marcondes (2002), the personal computer is one of the most important devices of the new era of communication. From its popularization, the world would see a series of innovations including the largest of them, which was the internet – its emergence changed the entire context of advertising. For Souza (2015), the printed media began to be reduced, while digital media increasingly grows. With this evolution, the internet has transformed the world, and advertising and marketing agencies adapt every day to these changes.

### ***Emergence of the internet***

The business environment has undergone many changes, which, according to Lins (2013), happened more intensely with the emergence of advanced technologies and new forms of communication between market and customers. With the emergence of the internet, society



began to get used to these communication tools, which made the speed of purchase decisions to become faster. In 1989, the Brazilian internet began to be implemented as a communication infrastructure for academic purposes. The backbone of the network, which received the name of National Research Network (NRN), was complemented by state networks, funded with resources from state research support foundations. The network grew rapidly: in 1996, it already had 7,500 domains; in 2000, 170 thousand; in 2006, one million; and in 2014, three and a half million (Lins, 2013).

E-commerce – the sale of products in retail with the use of computer networks – originated, according to Lins (2013), in Europe in 1981; the internet and the improvement of encryption also allowed confidential information, such as credit card numbers, to be sent in a more secure way at the time of online purchase. The internet is linked to people's personal and professional lives and, with this, according to Bulhões (2021), the amount of hours that Brazilians spend on applications and social media to work from home has practically doubled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Insper website (Mundo..., 2022), based on the study *Digital 2022: Global Overview Report* published by the Datareportal website, the world is approaching the mark of 5 billion internet users, which corresponds to 63% of the population. The study also says that Brazil is one of the countries where people spend most time on the internet, on average 10 hours and 19 minutes a day. The rapid advancement of this technology can be considered a great growth factor for organizations, so that they can expose their products faster and reach their customers also faster.

### ***Social media***

It was in the 1990s, with the internet available, that the idea of social media also migrated to the virtual world. Social media are part of the modern world, which encompasses several tools, whose objective is to empower people to publish their content (Marques, 2018). According to Marteleto (2001, p. 72), social media represent “a set of autonomous participants, uniting ideas and resources around shared values and interests”.

According to Goossen (2009), the adaptation of social media in the world of information technology has generated many important changes for society, providing knowledge and information in a more practical, faster, and more far-reaching way, serving various levels of the electronic market.

The spread of social media around the world is considered the greatest technological revolution that society has witnessed in this millennium (Shih, 2010 *apud* Crespo et al., 2014). In the new digital world, a company not having a social media presence is almost unthinkable. Being in social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, according to Safko et al. (2010), enables organizations to establish a relationship of trust that influences their users. Also according to the authors, for a brand, developing and cultivating a profile on social media can be the chance to win the customer and, subsequently, lead to an improvement in its marketing results.

According to Crespo et al. (2014), when a brand manages to establish a level of integration between users of social media, with credibility, high reputation, and recommendation of use of its products, it is more likely to create and expand an affective involvement of social media users with its products.

In the same sense, for Gouveia (2018), “social media are one of the most powerful tools of marketing,” because by them one can know customers and potential customers in a simpler way, which was previously not possible. Gouveia (2018) also says that adding value to users is the focus of digital marketing, and that *posts* must concentrate on this, so that the interaction



rates increase. Facebook and Instagram are the two most relevant platforms in the industry right now.

### ***Digital Marketing***

In decades past, retail businesses used the point of sale, its location, as a powerful weapon to attract new customers. Currently, one can see that everything has changed, and very quickly. Consumers now have many search tools in their hands, which allow them to locate commercial establishments close to where they are, for example (Brasil, 2017). Social media have become the main source of information for many consumers, according to Torres (2009), and also a constant communication channel between them, where each one reports in detail what they bought and what they thought of the products and services.

It is in this scenario that digital marketing arises, a set of communication actions carried out by the *web* – on mobile phones, tablets, and laptops – to disseminate and market products and services quickly and assertively. These actions are idealized, structured, and applied in digital channels, from websites to messages via applications (Assad, 2016, p. 29).

Gioia (2006) conceptualizes digital marketing as: *e-business* – all operations involved in the organization, such as product development and research and inventory management and production, are conducted using electronic media; *e-commerce* – includes all electronic commerce for the purchase and sale of products, as well as offline deliveries and of products digitized and marketed online; *electronic marketing channel*: by electronic media, this digital platform manages the offer and access to products and purchase by the target audience (Gioia, 2006).

This context of digital marketing has led to a wide range of benefits for organizations, including micro and small businesses, among which stand out, according to Cobra (2009): *affordable costs* – online marketing is affordable in terms of budget, especially compared to traditional marketing channels such as television or radio; *control, optimization and correction of campaigns* – due to the speed with which information is disseminated, companies have the opportunity to track processes in real time; *flexibility and dynamism* – ability to run tests and changes on the fly, based on the results obtained and the behavior of users for a campaign; *personalization and precise targeting* – in an online marketing publication, the company can segment its campaigns considering the behavior of users' profiles on the internet.

Companies make campaigns, publications, and actions, and on the other hand consumers can interact, review, and refer to others with just a few clicks, thus increasing engagement with brands, as well as public demands. Thus, the way of speaking to an audience is increasingly necessary (Peçanha, 2020).

### ***The importance of e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic***

There are several types of e-commerce that exist; according to Tomé (2021), they can be divided into two groups: formal and informal, which in turn can be 100% online or mixed (online and also with physical stores), as shown in Chart 1.

#### **Chart 1**

##### *Types of e-commerce.*

<b>Formal e-commerce</b>	<b>Informal e-commerce</b>
Websites, online stores; Applications;	Facebook stores; Instagram stores;



According to Semrush (2020), one of the points that drove e-commerce companies was the crisis of the coronavirus pandemic, which helped them stay in the market and even strengthened their positions in the context of an unstable economy. Economic difficulties pass, but consumer behaviors remain. According to Silva et al. (2021), during the period of social isolation due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, there was a significant increase in sales by e-commerce, given that most people could not leave their homes.

According to Fortes et al. (2021), several were the companies that gained prominence during the isolation of the coronavirus. One of them is Amazon, a retailer that increased its market value by US\$ 401.1 billion (R\$ 2 trillion). During the pandemic, Amazon became an important tool for people who wanted products indispensable for survival. Another company that stood out was *PayPal*, a pioneer of online payments that found greater relevance in the pandemic, releasing features for merchants to handle contactless payments in physical stores, which raised its market value to US\$ 65.4 billion (R\$ 343 billion). The Magalu company, which, in this period, registered an increase of 185% of new brands entering into partnerships and 10% of individuals also selling by the platform, had an increase of 40% in the average *ticket* of the brands, pulled by the 82% growth in the number of orders placed in the virtual store.

One of the great demands in the pandemic period was electronics, especially in the scope of laptops, computers, and mobile phones. According to Hildebrand (2021), a “study by IDC Brasil shows a 17% increase in retail computer sales throughout the first quarter of 2021”. This great demand may be related to the popularization of home office during the pandemic; on the other hand, the prices of these items have also increased a lot. Attention is drawn to the growth of 22.1% in the final value of desktop personal computers and 20.5% in laptops, which now cost, on average, R\$ 3,842 and R\$ 4,450, against R\$ 3,146 and R\$ 3,692 practiced in the first quarter of 2020 (Hildebrand, 2021).

During the pandemic, according to the website Positivo Tecnologia (2021), several technologies have become a trend in the market. The area of Information Technology (IT) was also of utmost importance, assuming a strategic role in companies of all areas, and further accelerated the phenomenon of digital transformation within organizations. “IT professionals are responsible for preventing serious failures and making the home office work efficiently”. According to CNN Brasil (2021), “technology was essential in the pandemic and will be even more so in the country's future”.

## Methodological Procedures

The research was developed in the e-commerce establishments located in the city of Sananduva, Rio Grande do Sul, including the ten enterprises of this area in the municipality. During the research, articles indexed in Scielo, Capes, and Google Scholar were used as references. The research was characterized as basic and descriptive in terms of objectives, survey in terms of technical procedures, and quantitative in terms of approach.

The data were collected with the application of a closed questionnaire, in April 2022, which was based on the studies by Saraiva (2019), Bitu (2014), Minjoro et al. (2021), and Favorete et al. (2021), containing 13 multiple-choice questions. Each question contained alternatives associated with each question, being elaborated in accordance with the objectives proposed for the research. The companies were asked about their participation in the data collection and, when they agreed to participate, they received a printed questionnaire with a response deadline of one day, which was then collected for analysis.



The questionnaires were tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet, and later analyzed and systematized for the construction of the graphs. The data analysis sought to relate the primary and secondary data, which are presented in the research discussions.

### Analysis of Results

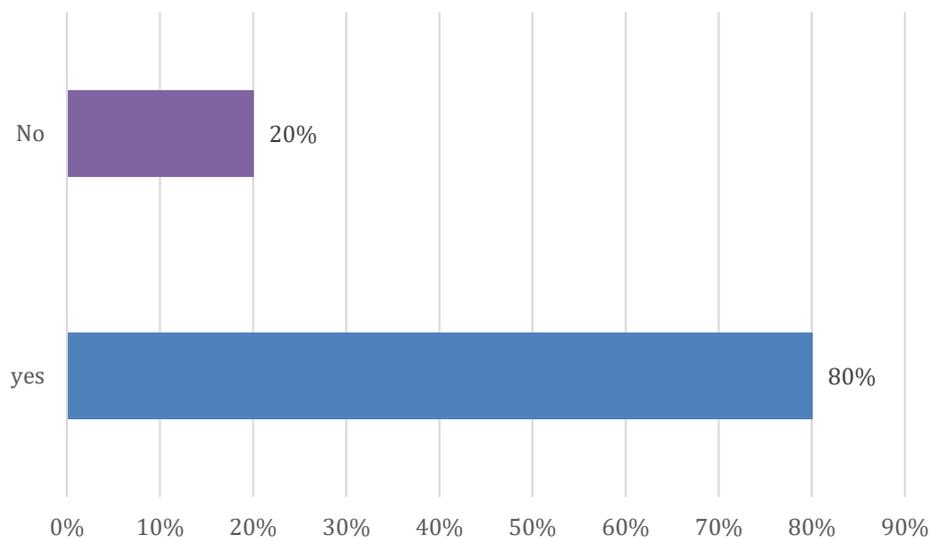
The following discussions are related to the questionnaire applied to companies and their respective responses, in addition to presenting the analysis of recent publications that converge on the theme.

#### *Use of digital marketing in the computer and electronics sector in Sananduva*

When asked about the use of digital marketing by companies surveyed in the commerce of computer and electronic materials in Sananduva, it was found that 80% of these are present in social media, and only 20% are not yet, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Companies using digital marketing*



According to Moreira (2021), digital marketing and technology have a capacity to open totally new markets and impact existing ones. In view of the importance of using digital marketing for any company, one must point out that at the time of the economic crisis that the world is facing due to the pandemic of the coronavirus, the media and digital business platforms are one of the best survival strategies for numerous companies, especially small ones (Moreira, 2021).

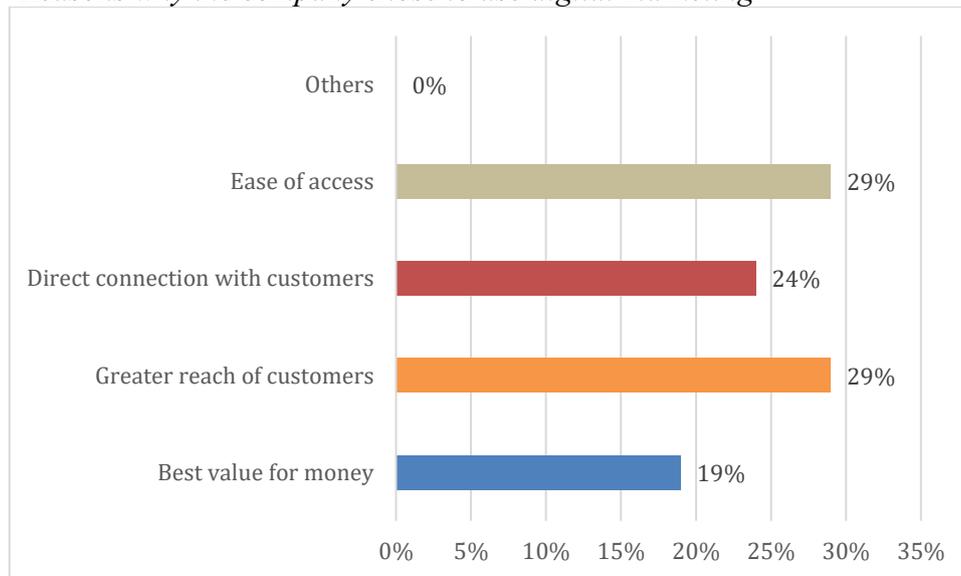
According to the Sebrae website (Marketing..., 2022), a survey conducted by the digital results consulting agencies Mundo do Marketing and Rock Content, "Maturity of Digital Marketing Sales in Brazil," shows that 67% of organizations consider their digital marketing strategies efficient. The research also showed that investing more in social media, in the infrastructure of blogs or websites, and in paid media are also some of the main goals of Brazilian companies.



Thus, for companies this represents being where their target audience is, and the greater the visibility and the number of people who are interested in their products and services, the faster the growth of that company and its business will take place. For companies that affirmed using digital marketing in the promotion of their products and services, it was asked what reasons led them to use it. Figure 2 shows the graph with the results.

**Figure 2**

*Reasons why the company chose to use digital marketing*



Companies stated that the main purpose that led them to use digital marketing was a greater reach of customers and ease of access, with 29%. A direct connection with customers is also one of the factors that made companies opt for digital marketing, with 24%.

As mentioned earlier, digital marketing is designed to facilitate relationships, thus increasing the chances of closing deals and customer loyalty; it can also go much further, contributing to increase customer satisfaction and bringing several opportunities to present the brand, product, or service to the customer.

One of the main advantages of using digital marketing tools is the possibility for companies to have access to segmented audiences. That is, by dividing its audience into different groups of users (segments), the company can provide different ads for each segment, and then compare the results, thereby directing its actions to a specific target market in accordance with the interests, professional profiles, and nationality of users. In addition, social media does not require higher initial investments and the results are measurable in the medium and long term (Kotler et al., 2015).

Kotler et al. (2007) say that “marketing is an administrative and social process by which individuals and organizations get what they need and want by the creation and exchange of value with others”. Therefore, marketing is a two-way street, that is, both the supplier and the consumer satisfy their needs, since the buyer needs the product and the company needs to sell its product or service.

All companies consulted during the survey claim to be present on social media. When asked whether the company uses digital marketing, as shown in Figure 2, 80% of companies answered in the affirmative, while only 20% denied it. When comparing this to the results of Figure 4, which shows that 100% of the companies surveyed are present on social media, the question arises: do these companies know what digital marketing is? Many do not know the



term, but apply it in the organization without realizing it. Most companies are not in the habit of researching the impacts of digital marketing and social media on the company. It is not only about making publications – one must analyze the behavior of the consumer when interacting with them, by feedbacks such as likes, views, and comments.

There are several tools that one can use within social media to reach a customer, in addition to promoting one's product/service and brand much more. According to Xavier (2021), with the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, social media have increasingly become part of people's routine, consequently attracting entrepreneurs.

The pandemic compacted classes, work, and other occupations, which increased the number of users on social media. According to the Insper website (Mundo..., 2022), the world approached the mark of 5 billion internet users in January 2022, which corresponds to 63% of the population, thus doubling the number of internet users in the world (in billions) in 2022. The data also points out that a user currently spends approximately 7 hours a day online: “assuming that a person sleeps an average of 7 to 8 hours a day, the typical user now spends more than 40% of their active time connected to the network”.

The amount of time people spend online increased last year by four minutes a day. It seems like an insignificant number, but adding up all the internet users in the world, these four extra minutes per day corresponded to 5 billion additional days of internet use in 2021. In all, internet users worldwide will spend more than 12.5 trillion hours online this year (Mundo..., 2022). The *website* also shows that Brazil is one of the countries where people spend the most time on the internet: 10 hours and 19 minutes a day, only behind South Africa (10 hours and 56 minutes) and the Philippines (10 hours and 27 minutes).

According to Torres (2009), social media has a very important role for organizations, since a large part of the population is concentrated in these media. Thus, the reach of a brand becomes much greater if it is present in some social media tool.

### ***Social media and the impact on sales***

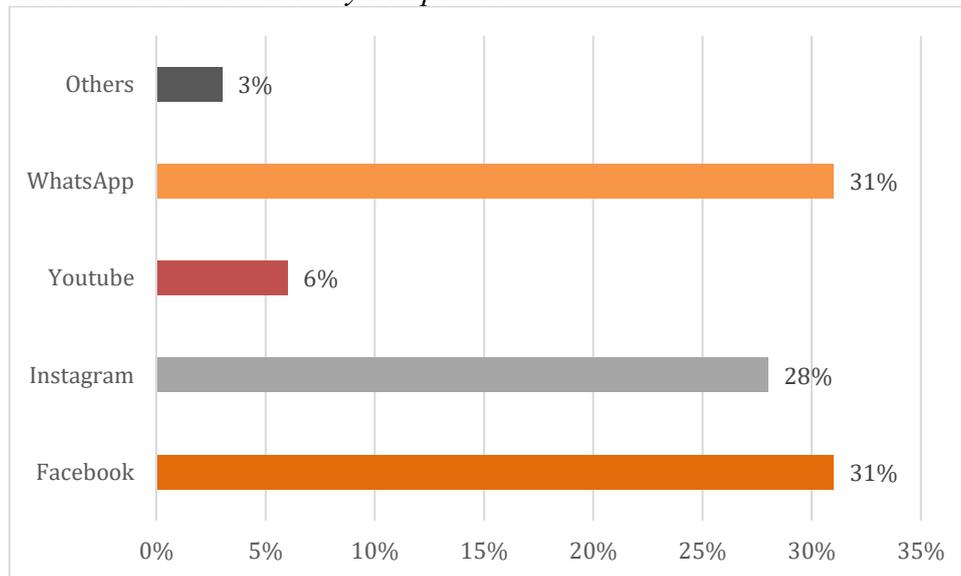
Gabriel (2010, p. 202) states that “the websites of social networks like Facebook, for example, are platforms that enable, facilitate, and enhance the connection of people with other people”. This connection with people, between company and consumer, increases business possibilities, bringing ease to both the company and those who are viewing the product.

Figure 3 shows the social media most used by the companies participating in the research. 31% of companies are on WhatsApp, 31% on Facebook, 28% on Instagram, 6% on Youtube, and only 3% is on another means of communication, such as the Oto application, which, according to the App Store, is an application that integrates all customer data (sales, navigation, interactions, and behavior), helping sales in physical stores and taking sales from the store to e-commerce, with the assignment of the seller. Thus, a company being present on social media is very important to obtain a greater reach of consumers and expose its brand and its product.



**Figure 3**

*Social media most used by companies*



Social media for companies are a very promising way to win new consumers and increase profits in Brazil. According to Prado (2021), according to information from Facebook's Worldwide Audience, the country had 120 million active users in April 2020.

According to Rossi (2012), an important tool on Facebook is the Fanpage: a page intended precisely for use by companies, businesses, or some type of venture. Facebook can also be employed as a strategic marketing and advertising tool, aiming to reach the largest number of users.

WhatsApp, in turn, is a tool for communication and interaction between people. For companies, it is a way to keep their customers in direct and personal contact. WhatsApp Business is a great option for companies to take the relationship with their customers to another level by allowing their users to improve the way they interact with customers by automation tools, message classification, and creation of a business profile.

WhatsApp Business is a free application designed to meet the needs of small businesses. The application helps the company connect with its customers, highlight its products and services, and answer questions during the purchase process of its customers; it also allows one to create a catalog to display products and services and to use special tools to automate, sort, and respond quickly to customer messages. WhatsApp can also help large and medium-sized companies support and send important notifications to customers (WhatsApp..., 2022).

According to data from Datareportal.com (Mundo..., 2022), Facebook continues to lead as one of the most popular platforms, dividing the *ranking* with Youtube and WhatsApp.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of social media around the world has increased significantly, especially by companies. One of the biggest highlights in Brazil and in the world in social media since the pandemic was the growth of livestreams. The 2021 GWI report Connecting the Dots showed that 29% of Brazilians frequently attend lives from brands and digital influencers, and 79% of them say they are likely to buy the products displayed. The company also suggests some explanations for this specific increase. The reasons include entertaining the user and generating an experience that we have lost in the pandemic: browsing the store. The lives made people interact, even if digitally, at a time when everyone in the world was experiencing social isolation. This helps to maintain the audience, increase engagement,



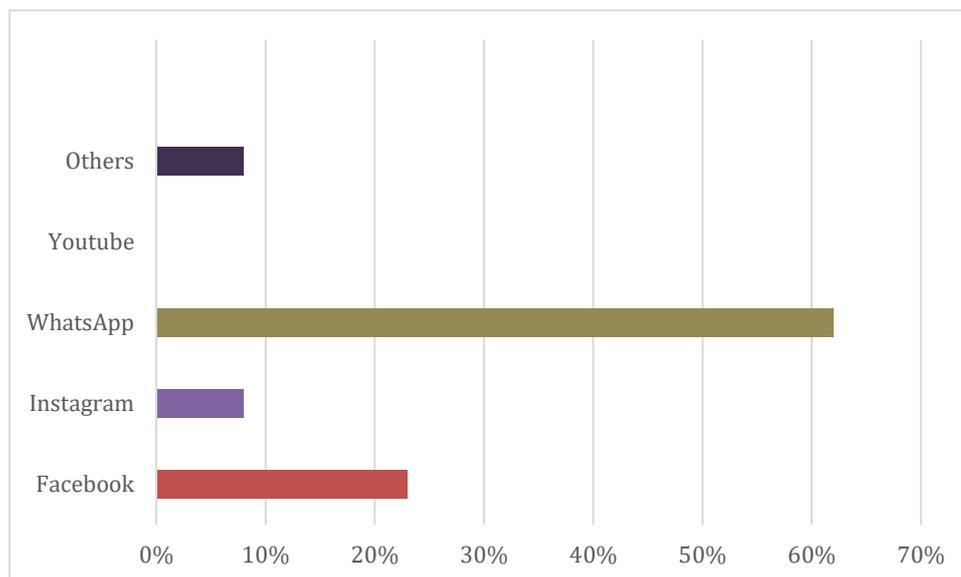
better direct the customer to the final stage of purchases, and to solve questions in an interactive way, showing the products live (Minjoro et al., 2021).

Santos (2014) states that social media help companies to measure their investments, and also to verify how the public was reached and what attracted users the most, either by the amount of views, comments, or various feedbacks originated by social media. Thus, the organization can better establish the next actions and products aimed at the public.

We verified that the highest engagement of the studied companies takes place by Whatsapp, as can be seen in Figure 4, with 62%; then comes Facebook, with 23%; Instagram, with 8%; and others with 8%, in which companies included the Oto platform.

**Figure 4**

*Social media in which companies have higher customer engagement/return*



Engagement on social media happens when the user communicates with the company by likes, comments, and responses to any request. This represents an engagement between the brand and the consumer. The more the audience interacts with your page, the greater the reach of your publications. The published content will reach more people, giving visibility and relevance to the company.

At this point it is realized that relationship marketing is present in some way in the social media of companies, because it is through it that one can have better communication with customers, have a greater user engagement with the brand, and understand how to attract them into the company, by good service, in addition to ads and publications that captivate the customer.

A research developed by professor Cláudio Sampaio, from the School of Business, and other researchers, analyzing customer engagement on social media, entitled “Customer engagement in social media,” was recently published in the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, one of the world's leading marketing journals, and in the Baylor University's Keller Center for Research, a trusted source of academic research in the area (Pesquisa..., 2021).

According to the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (Pesquisa..., 2021), customer engagement by social media has skyrocketed in recent years. Medium and



large companies worldwide invest about 11% of their marketing budgets targeting social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

According to the Digital Global Overview Report, in addition to Brazil being in second place in the ranking of countries that spend the most time connected to the internet, it also has 70% of the total population active in social media, about 150 million people. Brazilians have an important share in the audience volume of Instagram and Facebook in the world, being in 3rd and 4th place respectively. Therefore, both media have a good part of the responsibility to promote brands and especially online stores. According to Instagram itself, its use is indispensable for good performance and enhances users into customers. Facebook IQ studies indicate that 59% of Brazilians buy products after seeing them on Instagram. In addition, the appearance of the product or service not only generates revenue but also engagement. 91% of respondents said they follow the brands, visit the website, comment with friends about the product or service, or actually buy it (Minjoro et al., 2021).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, social media was the way found by companies to stay close to their customers, acquire new consumers, and maintain their economy. According to Maia (2022), for this reason, it is important that communications are proactive, direct, and honest, always focused on delivering a positive experience to the consumer.

According to Obal et al. (2020 *apud* Maia, 2022), since the beginning of the pandemic, people have been spending more time on social media. A typical user now spends about 15% of their waking life using social platforms. This data is overwhelming when it comes to thinking about a digital marketing strategy to know which consumer to reach, how and where to position your brand, retain it and also sell it (Obal et al., 2020 *apud* Maia, 2022).

For Kotler and Armstrong (2007, p. 10), the process of building relationships involves understanding the market and customer needs, and thus devising strategies, building marketing programs until profitable relationships are constructed. In this sense, the authors mention that the essential elements in this process is the value for the customer and their satisfaction – this being the last resort to be achieved, only when the value perceived by the customer exceeds their expectations for a product or service. All this is possible by a good relationship with the customer, always being aware of their needs and trying to stay connected.

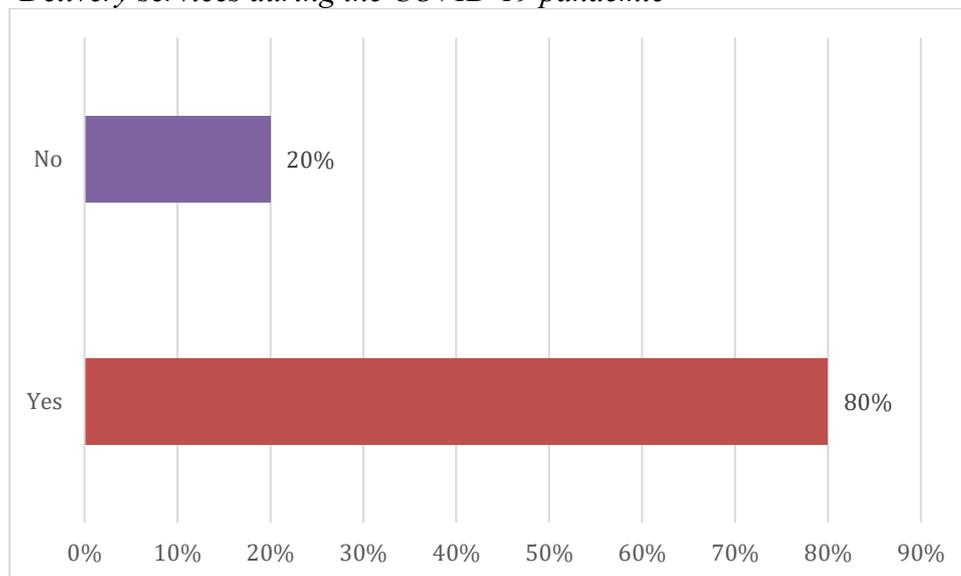
### ***Marketing strategies and resources used by companies***

There is no doubt that the pandemic has required companies of all sizes to mature digitally in record time. According to Oliveira et al. (2021), e-commerce made many companies look for alternatives to stay in the market, thus generating a boost in the delivery system. In Figure 5, it can be analyzed that 80% of the companies surveyed used delivery during the pandemic, and only 20% chose not to use them.



**Figure 5**

*Delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic*



According to Carneiro (2021), mentioning a study by Mobills, a financial control company, internet purchases have grown 187% since March 2020. Delivery has grown a lot due to applications, which are more present in people's lives because of smartphones. All this is only possible by the technology that advances, and, with the 5G network arriving, we will have an internet not only much faster, but also with infinite possibilities of connection between machines. In view of all this, the delivery movement tends to keep growing. New generations, more dependent on technology, will further strengthen this segment. That is why it is up to companies, whether selling flowers, tires, bread, televisions, *smartphones*, or glass cups, to bet on this convenience; otherwise they will lose sales (Souza et al., 2021).

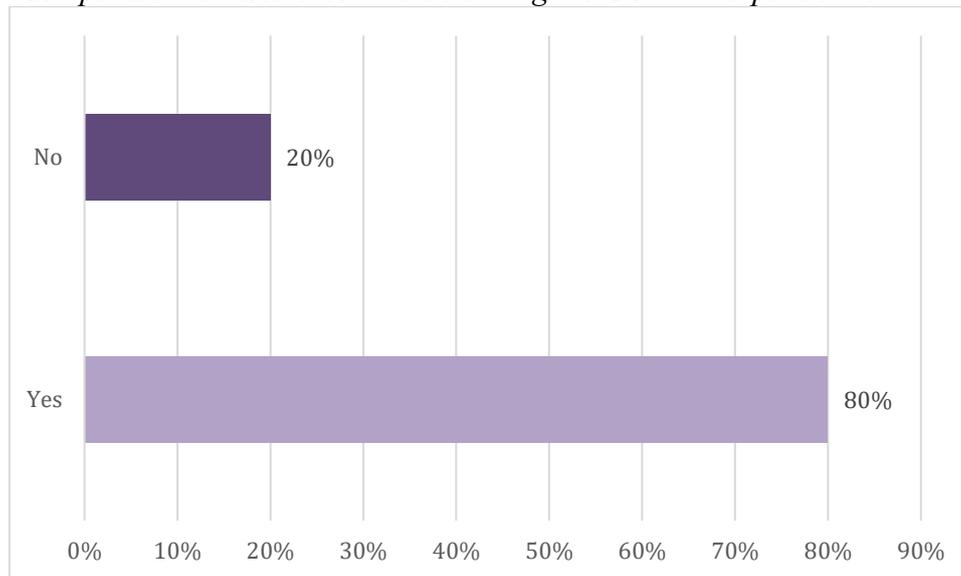
According to Oliveira et al. (2021), it is in moments of crisis that opportunities arise, but unfortunately most people get worried about the crisis, and few are able to notice the opportunities. In the course of the pandemic, it could be observed that many companies worried about the crisis and did not note the opportunity to innovate, while others saw their earnings increasing, thanks to e-commerce and delivery.

When asked whether the company used e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be analyzed that 80% of companies used online sales and only 20% did not (Figure 6).



**Figure 6**

*Companies that used e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic*



According to Instituto Propague (E-commerce..., 2021), online sales continue to grow in 2021, according to data from the MCC-ENET indicators of e-camara.net in partnership with Compre & Confie. It is estimated that e-commerce represents 12% of retail trade currently; monthly indicators show a stabilization, with a 1% drop in sales and 1.49% in turnover in the comparison between May and June 2021.

The MCC-ENET Index also tracks the evolution of e-commerce in each region of the country. Between May and June 2021, online sales grew by 2.9% in the South, 1.6% in the Northeast, 1.7% in the Southeast, and 3.4% in the North, but fell by 1% in the Midwest. Compared to June last year, e-commerce had a growth of more than 25% in the South, 12.5% in the Midwest, and 11.8% in the Northeast. In contrast, the Southeast and North regions had an annual drop of 3% each (E-commerce..., 2021).

According to Rezende et al. (2020), a survey conducted by Ebit after the confirmation of the first case of COVID-19 in Brazil showed a higher than average growth in relation to new consumers in the Brazilian e-commerce, as can be said of those who made a purchase on the internet for the first time.

The sales of large Brazilian retail chains such as Lojas Americanas, Magazine Luiza, among others, which operate in the format of physical store and e-marketplace, stood in solidarity and gave space on their sales platforms so that small producers and merchants could offer their products. Retail chains benefit from broadening their product portfolio, while seeing their online sales grow exponentially, as well as reinforcing their images of citizen and socially responsible companies. On the other hand, small producers and traders are able to sell their products, maintaining their sales and revenues, benefiting from the entire sales structure and delivery logistics of large networks (Rezende et al., 2020).

According to Minjoro et al. (2021), from 2014 to 2019, the number of online stores in Brazil grew with a variation of 21.3% per year. In 2020 alone, there was a growth of 40% compared to the previous year, and the first half of 2021 shows a growth of 22.1% over 2020. Thus, 45% of the current number of e-commerces in Brazil until the first half of 2021 were conquered post-pandemic.

Figure 12 shows the data from the Brazilian e-commerce profile report, by BigDataCorp. According to Minjoro et al. (2021), 89.38% of the e-commerces until the first



half of 2021 are from a niche that offers less than 100 products, that is, that of small businesses. This is the highest number since 2015.

Of the companies that migrated from offline to online, we observed that from 2019 to the first half of 2021, the share of companies that earn up to R\$ 1 million grew 33.9%, while the rest had an average -22.3% participation (Minjoro et al., 2021).

From this, one can see how micro and small companies were the most affected during the pandemic, and that they increased their share in Brazilian e-commerce. Minjoro et al. (2021) also report that, in 2015, 14.53% of websites also had a physical store, and currently this number is at 5,79%, a drop of 60%. It can be understood then that there was a “migration” in sales channels from offline to online, optimized by the COVID-19 pandemic.

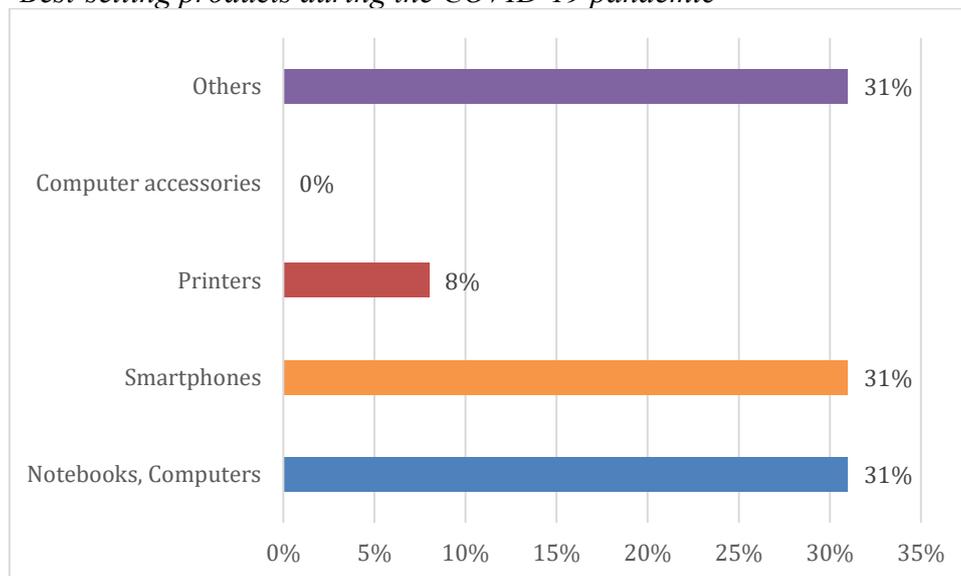
### ***Best-selling products in the pandemic***

With the coronavirus pandemic, social isolation came as one of the main preventions against the disease, but it brought numerous challenges for everyone.

Figure 7 shows the best-selling products by the companies surveyed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Laptops, computers, smartphones, and also other products such as mobile phone accessories, printing supplies, televisions, upholstery, mattresses and building materials stood out with 31%; printers make up the remaining 8%.

**Figure 7**

#### *Best-selling products during the COVID-19 pandemic*



With several professionals and students at home, laptops, smartphones, computers, and printers have become indispensable to continue with the usual activities, which has resulted in the need to purchase these devices.

When analyzing the performance of the electronics sector in the area of informatics, the International Data Corporation (IDC) – a leader in market intelligence, telecommunications, and consumer technology – reported a 16% increase in sales in the first quarter of 2020. Still in this matter, the Brazilian Association of Electrical and Electronics Industry (Abinee) disclosed that the sale of laptops, desktops, and mobile devices resulted in revenues of R\$ 34,846 million, 31% more compared to 2019 (Borges, 2021).



The prices of these products are governed by the variation of the dollar, and, due to the considerable increase in the North American currency, the price of electronics has increased. According to Borges (2021), according to IDC data, in 2019, 31% of laptops were sold for R\$ 3,000 or more. In 2020, this percentage increased to 48%. Smartphones also stand out, registering an increase of 70% with prices above R\$ 900.00.

According to Instituto Propague (Pesquisa..., 2021), most of the Brazilian e-commerce market goes to office equipment and supplies, computer, and communication (43.2%). This category has always been the largest in the online sales market, but it has grown since March 2020. Several products had a lot of sales during the pandemic, such as masks, food, hygiene products, which also stood out in online shopping.

Mercado Livre revealed the best-selling products of the platform during 2021. According to the Istoé website (Mercado..., 2022), Mercado Livre reached 66 million buyers and 17 million sellers in Latin America in 2021, and revealed which products sold the most on the platform during the mentioned year: supermarket items – including beer, condensed milk, chocolate chip cookies, ground coffee, and olive oil – were the most highlighted.

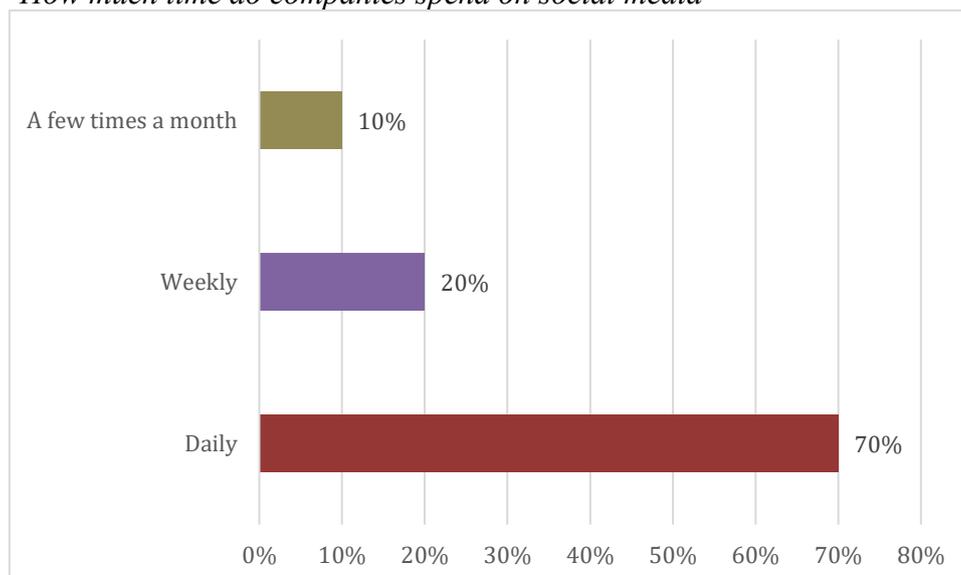
Considering all of Latin America, the most sought-after items during the year were protection products against coronavirus (Sars-CoV-2), leading sales in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay. Consumers in Chile and Colombia stood out in searches for smartphones and LED devices, while in Paraguay and Uruguay they stood out for orders in the construction category (Mercado..., 2022).

### ***Business relationship and digital marketing***

When asked about the frequency that companies dedicate themselves to social media, the results indicate that 70% have daily access, 20% have weekly access, and 10% access their social media a few times a month, as shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

*How much time do companies spend on social media*



According to the data of the survey Digital 2022: Global Overview Report (DATAREPORTAL, 2022), Brazil is one of the countries in which people spend most time on the internet, being among the most connected ones (in hours and minutes per day), with 10h

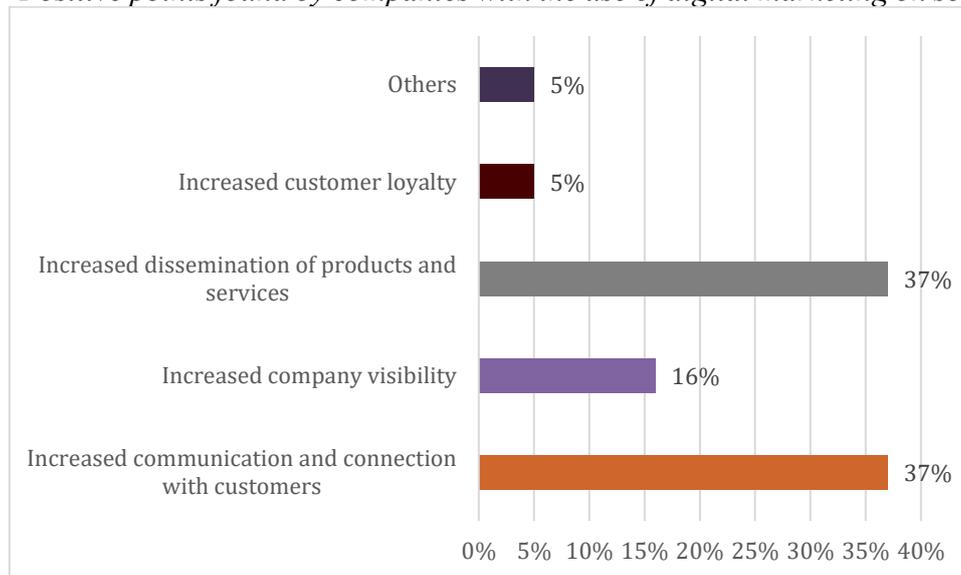


and 19min per day. Brazil is only behind South Africa (10h 56min) and the Philippines (10h 27min). This shows the importance of companies being present on social media and dedicating their time to the dissemination and publication of their products and services.

With the survey, one can observe in Figure 9 that 37% of companies believe that the biggest positive point that digital marketing brought was an increase in the dissemination of products and services, communication, and connection with customers. Then, 16% consider the increase in the visibility of the company; 5%, the increase in customer loyalty; and in “others,” with 5%, companies declared an increase in sales.

**Figure 9**

*Positive points found by companies with the use of digital marketing on social media*



According to Kotler (1998), the benefits that digital marketing – online services – bring to companies are many, such as rapid adaptations to market conditions, lower costs, the development of customer relationships, and the increase in audience. Digital marketing strategies allow the brand to establish effective and positive communication with its customers, promoting interactions.

For the companies surveyed, digital marketing is efficient in the sense of attracting new customers – their responses are unanimous on this issue. According to Georgiana (2019), Content Trends 2019 shows that more than 90% of the audience is on the internet, and thus encourages marketing strategies to be agile to attract potential consumers.

The right audience is known in the marketing world as persona. The persona created by a company has the mission of characterizing the ideal customer to consume the products or services of a business, in a way that is possible to meet their needs. It is necessary to know in which particular social media your persona is, how it searches for information, and how it behaves on the network. Once this information is clear, one can create a personalized digital strategy focused on the results that the company wants to achieve (Georgiana, 2019).

According to Rodrigues (2020), digital marketing is an essential tool for attracting new customers, and with a good strategy it yields great results, as long as there is constant monitoring of social media and the establishment of a strategy that is studied and elaborated.

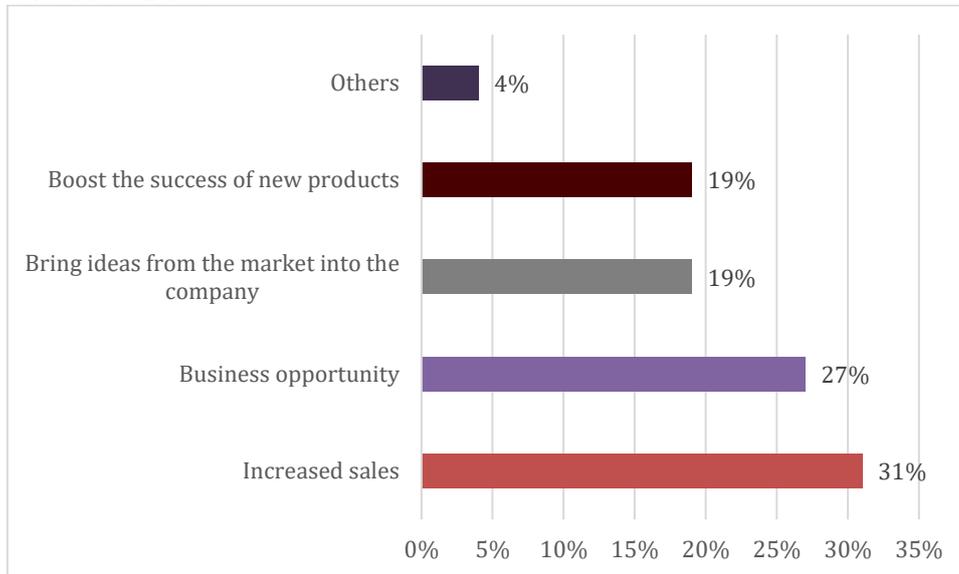
According to the survey carried out with companies, as can be seen in Figure 10, 31% believe that the greatest competitive advantage is the increase in sales; 27% say that digital marketing brings a business opportunity; 19% declare that it enhances the success of new



products and brings market ideas into the company; and 4%, listed in “other,” say it promotes direct contact with the consumer, as cited by the companies.

**Figure 10**

*Competitive advantages that companies consider with the use of digital marketing on social media*



The internet has totally changed the way businesses can attract their customers. Before, we had the traditional media for advertising, such as radio, newspapers, and flyers. These were the only ways for someone to see the offer of a product or service.

Another great advantage of digital marketing is that this environment allows the company to interact with its audience and understand what it needs, facilitating communication between company and customer, and allows promotions and sales to occur faster.

The consumer searches for information about a particular product that interests them and that meets their needs. Therefore, if the company appears in ads and publications offering a content, product, or service that meets their need, and the customer buys the product, having their expectations met by the purchase, consequently they will start to trust the brand, which translates into more possibilities of generating future sales.

According to Silva Junior et al. (2020), knowing the expectations and product needs of consumers makes it possible to identify in advance which services add more to their target audience, and thus gain competitive advantages.

In the survey, when asked whether the company believes that social media can help in their business, 100% said yes, that social media can be a great ally to win and keep customers, in any area of activity, creating the possibility of understanding consumer behavior, promoting a relationship, raising brand reputation, and also selling.

It is no longer news to say that the digital world is already a reality in the market. According to Stival (2022), the market saw the need to increase investments in the marketing. In a society marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, by the need for social isolation and remote work, “strengthening the image of the company (and its products and services) in the virtual world has practically become a matter of survival”.

A Hotsuite survey, for example, points out that 83% of marketers trust quantifying the return on investment (ROI) of their efforts in social media (Stival, 2022), showing that the growth and strengthening of digital marketing within companies bring various results. The



author also points out that 55% of the advertising strategy in social media was fully integrated with other marketing activities; 40% of marketers consider LinkedIn strategic to achieve results; 29% of organizations already carry out some form of consumer service in the marketing or sales department (Stival, 2022).

Companies that have good planning must carry out a strategy that goes far beyond strengthening the brand. According to Stival (2022), advertising actions, service, and after-sales themselves act in the company in a personalized way, adding value to the organization.

According to Mendes (2021), it is estimated that globally there will be a 61.9% increase in investment with digital advertising by 2024. Also according to the author, companies that are invested in digital marketing continue to grow. “The companies that started their trajectory in this reality, entered betting heavily on the digital format for the dissemination of products and services, thus reaching a much larger audience”. Digital marketing is increasingly becoming a valuable tool to attract, capture, and retain customers.

### Final Considerations

The COVID-19 pandemic was a period of great pain and anguish for society, with social, economic, political, cultural, biomedical, and epidemiological impacts and repercussions. However, the internet has facilitated some aspects of life in this pandemic period, such as work, relationships, leisure, studies, and also shopping.

*E-commerce* generated a growth in online sales and accelerated digital transformation, as well as brought possibilities and opportunities for companies to keep their businesses going in full isolation. In addition, by social media, one can see more easily whether the audience has been impacted by ads and publications by indicators such as likes, comments, engagement, reach, and others. The performance of companies in social media has achieved significant results, and has been gaining more and more followers. The strategy of regular posts, together with the publication of targeted content, makes more and more people follow companies on their profiles. In addition, it was noted that WhatsApp and Facebook are the social media that have brought the most audience to companies.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, people changed their behavior in the face of technological advances, not due to their influence, but due to the factors generated by the spread of the virus, in which there was a need for technology for both companies and people, since people had to continue working, studying, and, especially, it was necessary for companies to move their economy.

Thus, we concluded that digital commerce has revolutionized the way many companies and entrepreneurs maintain their businesses; something that before was an alternative to solve a problem temporarily has become one of the main means of selling. In this sense, digital marketing has enabled business opportunities, with the dissemination of products and services, an increase in connection with customers, and, consequently, an increase in sales.

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