

CONTENT

Approaches to the Development of Effective Strategies for the Adoption of Emerging Technologies in Healthcare Institutions: Overcoming Organizational Barriers Cristóbal Beltrán	05
La distancia temporal y su efecto sobre la actitud hacia los lanzamientos Irina Salinas, Gonzalo Pardo	30
Brand Hypocrisy and Brand Equity: A Review and Future Research Agenda Lisgrey Barrera Legorburo, Cristóbal Beltrán	46
The Impact of Social Media on the Personal Well-being of University Students Krishna Letelier, Matías Parada, Gonzalo R. Llanos	71
Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey: An Exploratory Bibliometric Review Diana Sánchez-Riera	88
SMEs intervention in Mexico: Case study Carmín C. L. Montante, Ricardo Arechavala	110

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Approaches to the Development of Effective Strategies for the Adoption of Emerging Technologies in Healthcare Institutions: Overcoming Organizational Barriers

Keywords: tecnologías emergentes, instituciones de salud, resistencia al cambio.

Received: 2023 | **Accepted:** 2024 | **Available online:** 2025

Cite this article as: Beltrán, C. (2025). *Approaches to the Development of Effective Strategies for the Adoption of Emerging Technologies in Healthcare Institutions: Overcoming Organizational Barriers*. *Estudios de Administración*, 30 (2), 5–29.

<https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0816.2023.79971>

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of emerging technologies in the healthcare sector has significantly transformed service delivery, improving operational efficiency, quality of patient care, and clinical decision-making. This study aims to explore the barriers in the adoption of emerging technologies, such as Mobile Health (mHealth) applications, Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Internet of Medical Things (IoMT), Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, telemedicine, artificial intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), to propose effective strategies to overcome them. The main barriers were identified through a literature review, including organizational resistance, power dynamics, and the lack of an integrated approach. The study is based on the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and the Distributed Cognition Theory. The analysis indicates that successfully adopting these technologies requires effective change management, visible and committed leadership, and ongoing training programs. The findings of this study provide a comprehensive framework that guides the effective and sustainable implementation of emerging technologies in health institutions, suggesting future lines of research to evaluate the impact of these technologies and develop specific theoretical models for the health context.

Keywords: emerging technologies, health institutions, resistance to change.



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INTRODUCTION

Healthcare in the 21st century faces increasing complexity that traditional approaches can no longer adequately handle. Linear and reductionist models of medicine and organizational management are no longer sufficient to address the contemporary challenges arising from the emergence of emerging technologies in healthcare organizations (Plsek & Greenhalgh, 2001).

Understanding the structure, behavior, and dynamics of a health institution's operation is a complex challenge due to its high institutionalization, hierarchical governance systems, multidisciplinary work teams, and particular idiosyncrasies. These rigid structural characteristics are opposed, to a greater or lesser extent, when implementing emerging technologies. Therefore, resistance to change, as they indicate, is influenced by individuals' predispositions towards change, perceptions of threats, benefits and trust in management Erwin & Garman (2010).

On the other hand, studies on multidisciplinary teams in healthcare settings highlight how power dynamics and interpersonal relationships affect the acceptance of new technologies, highlighting the importance of an integrative and collaborative approach to overcoming barriers to change (L. Rogers et al., 2023).

Health institutions face several challenges when incorporating emerging technologies into their operations. These challenges can be influenced by affective, cognitive, and behavioral factors, as well as resistance triggered by uncertainty or distrust towards technological changes and their implications in daily work. Similarly, multidisciplinary teams, power dynamics, and interpersonal relationships can make it difficult to accept emerging technologies. These dynamics can influence the perception and adoption of emerging technologies, generating additional trade-offs and barriers (Erwin & Garman, 2010. L. Rogers et al., 2023).

This is why the lack of an integrated approach that considers both technical and social aspects hinders the effective implementation of emerging technologies. Without proper integration, these may not be used optimally, thus reducing their potential to improve the efficiency and quality of healthcare (Pasmore et al., 2019).

Consequently, this study sets out to address the following research question: What strategies are most appropriate for overcoming organizational barriers and adopting emerging technologies in healthcare organizations? To answer this question, a theoretical approach based on organizational theory will be adopted, considering scientific evidence related to emerging technologies, resistance to change, power dynamics, and approaches such as sociotechnical. Specific objectives include identifying the main technologies related to health institutions, distinguishing the impact of power dynamics and interpersonal relationships on the adoption of emerging technologies, including organizational resistance phenomena, and proposing effective strategies to mitigate organizational resistance.

The structure of this article begins with a theoretical framework, which allows us to analyze health organizations from a perspective of institutional theory, followed by the irruption of digital transformation with emerging technologies (ET). Continuing with the barriers involved in the implementation of ET and how to overcome them. Then describe the methodology, literature review and selection criteria. Finally, the discussions, most

relevant conclusions, and implications for future research are established.

METHODOLOGY

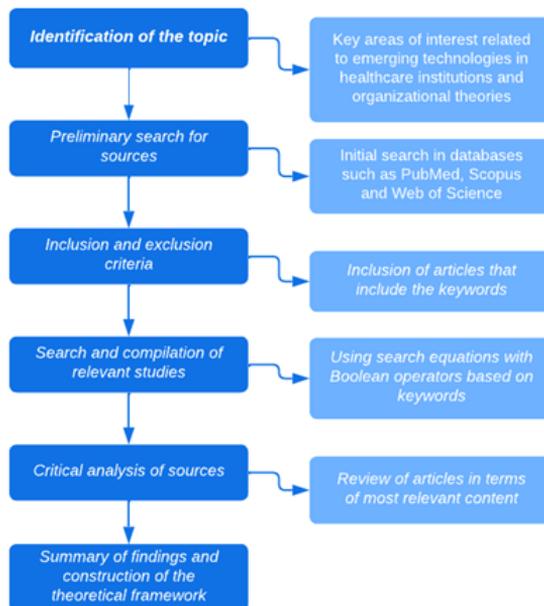
The methodology of this study is based on a systematic review of the existing literature on the adoption of emerging technologies in healthcare institutions, organizational theory, and resistance to change. For these purposes, relevant academic sources were selected using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science.

The inclusion criteria were limited to studies that developed research with keywords that can be visualized in the search equation with Boolean operators, as well as the best-rated journals according to the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) indicator, see **Diagram 1**.

Search Equation:

(“emerging technologies” OR “technological innovation” OR mHealth OR “mobile health” OR “Big Data” OR “Cloud Computing” OR IoMT OR “Internet of Medical Things” OR “Virtual Reality” OR “Augmented Reality” OR telemedicine OR “telehealth” OR “artificial intelligence” OR AI OR “machine learning”) AND (“health sector” OR “healthcare” OR “health institutions” OR hospitals OR clinics) AND (“technology adoption” OR “technology implementation” OR “digital transformation” OR “innovation in health”) AND (“organizational barriers” OR “resistance to change” OR “change management” OR leadership) AND (“operational efficiency” OR “patient care quality” OR “clinical decision making” OR “health services”).

Diagram 1, Search process.



Source: Authors.

The literature review was carried out in two phases: first, a preliminary review was carried out to identify key themes and areas of interest, through the identification of the titles, abstracts, and keywords of each article; then, a search was carried out focused on delving

mainly into the introduction, result, discussion and conclusion. Finally, the most relevant concepts were included that would allow us to broaden our understanding of the dynamics of organizations in the health sector when implementing emerging technologies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

Health institutions are formal organizational structures, such as hospitals, clinics, and care centers, that respond not only to technical and production demands but also to the institutionalized rules that prevail in society and that function as myths. These institutionalized rules confer legitimacy, stability, and resources on organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

These formal structures can take on isomorphism resulting from formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations and by cultural expectations in society. Thus, institutional isomorphism helps explain why and how health institutions tend to adopt similar structures and practices. Coercive regulations, imitation of successful models under conditions of uncertainty, and professional standards contribute to homogenization in this critical sector (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983).

Consequently, the evolution of organizations and specifically the new institutionalism, is of vital relevance to understanding the current dynamics of institutions in the health sector, in terms of how they operate and adapt to the demands of their environment (Selznick, 1996).

These organizations operate in a complex way due to the interaction of multiple factors and elements. These include the diversity of services and specialties, the interdependence of departments, human resource management, the use of medical technology and information systems, compliance with regulations and standards, financial management, patient-centered care, innovation, and continuous improvement (Ginter et al., 2018).

In short, healthcare organizations, such as hospitals, clinics, and care centers, operate in complex ways due to interactions with internal and external stakeholders. These interactions reflect the technical demands and institutionalized rules that confer legitimacy and resources, and that lead organizations to adopt similar structures and practices. The evolution and adaptation to the demands of the environment are based on factors such as the diversity of services, the interdependence of departments, the management of human and financial resources, the use of technology, compliance with regulations, and patient-centered care.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In that vein, the healthcare industry has witnessed a profound digital transformation driven by rapid advances in emerging technologies. Digital transformation refers to changes in digital technology used to benefit society and the healthcare industry. Health systems need to use digital technology to find innovative solutions that improve health service delivery and achieve improvements in medical problems (Stoumpos et al., 2023).

In recent decades, emerging technologies have emerged as powerful catalysts for innovation in healthcare. Telemedicine, wearable devices, electronic medical records, the Internet of Things (IoMT) in healthcare, artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain technology are just a few examples of the technologies that have rapidly transformed the industry.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Emerging technologies, protagonists of digital transformation, are defined as those that present a radical novelty, characterized by introducing completely new principles or applications. These technologies experience relatively rapid growth in terms of stakeholder involvement, publications, patents, and product development (Roll et al., 2015).

There are several emerging technologies that are having an impact on healthcare. These technologies use digital platforms, connectivity, and data to transform various aspects of healthcare delivery, patient engagement, and research. Regardless of technology, they are all primarily aimed at connecting healthcare workers and patients to enable a seamless flow of medical information between healthcare settings to make informed decisions (Mariano, 2020).

Below are 8 emerging technologies, summarized in Figure 1, that have been strengthened in recent years and have taken a relevant role in the dynamics of organizations in the health sector.

1. Mobile Health Applications (mHealth Apps):

mHealth apps are apps designed for mobile devices, such as smartphones, smartwatches, or tablets, that aim to support healthcare delivery and promote wellness. They vary widely in terms of content, accessibility, interactivity, connectivity, and security. Within the various functionalities they offer, they can be classified into several types according to their uses. Some applications focus on health tracking, allowing the monitoring of data related to physical activity, sleep patterns, nutrition and vital signs; others are medication-oriented, sending dose reminders, tracking compliance, and providing information on drug interactions, as well as allowing users to maintain a medication schedule. There are also telemedicine and telehealth applications, which facilitate the connection with health care providers through video calls, text messages or voice calls, allowing remote diagnosis, monitoring and treatment. On the other hand, fitness apps offer workout tracking, personalized plans, and step counting, while those dedicated to mental health provide resources for stress management, mental health support, and mindfulness practices. In addition, health record apps allow users to store, access, and manage their personal health information, including their history, test results, immunizations, and appointments. Finally, health education apps provide health-related information and resources, with the goal of keeping users informed (Nouri et al., 2018;Nouri et al., 2018).

This wide variety of mHealth applications are essential for healthcare delivery and wellness, offering different functionalities that improve connectivity and accessibility in healthcare (Id et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2020; Nouri et al., 2018; Smuck et al., 2021).

2. Big Data Analytics:

Big Data analysis refers to the process and analysis of a large amount of data that is essential for the proper functioning of health institutions. Processing can vary in terms of data volume, speed of generation, heterogeneity, inconsistency, quality, and value. Big data analytics has increasingly been used to improve clinical decision-making, identify trends, contribute to drug development, and improve public health management (Batko & Ślęzak, 2022)(Batko & Ślęzak, 2022; Cozzoli et al., 2022; Do Nascimento et al., 2021).

Big data flows include various types of data, such as clinical (electronic medical records, hospital information systems, imaging centers, laboratories and pharmacies), biometric (from medical devices that monitor vital signs and body composition), financial (records of relevant financial transactions), from scientific research (information provided from

academia), and those of patients (including treatment preferences, satisfaction levels, self-administered information about their lifestyle, and sociodemographic factors), (Batko & Ślęzak, 2022).

Thus, big data analysis transforms clinical decision-making, improves public health management, and optimizes drug development, benefiting the efficiency and quality of medical care.

3. Cloud Computing:

Cloud computing offers scalable and cost-effective storage and processing capabilities for healthcare organizations. This enables secure access to medical records, facilitates data sharing and collaboration, and supports telemedicine and remote monitoring. The implications of cloud computing in healthcare can be summarized in several key aspects, such as trust in software (especially in models such as software as a service - SaaS, platform as a service - PaaS, and infrastructure as a service - IaaS), security and interoperability, support for clinical tasks, patient-centric approach, the facilitation of collaboration, and the increase in mobility and flexibility of the service (Mehrtak et al., 2021).

However, lack of regulations, system outages, lack of control, and security issues remain potential challenges. Thus, cloud computing improves operational efficiency, facilitates collaboration and ensures secure access to medical data, driving innovation in healthcare (K. Cresswell et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2018; Gu et al., 2020; Mehrtak et al., 2021).

4. Internet of Medical Things (IoMT):

The Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) refers to the interconnected network of medical devices, sensors, and wearable technologies, such as smartwatches, fitness trackers, and monitors, such as glucose monitors. These devices collect and transmit instant health data, enabling remote patient monitoring, early detection of disease, and personalized care (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Sadhu et al., 2022).

Digital healthcare based on the IoMT framework includes several stages. First, patient data is collected using wearable or implanted smart devices that are connected by a network of wearable or wireless sensors, which are then analyzed to make predictions. Also, healthcare providers, patients, or other medical devices can be automatically contacted to be informed of the current medical condition. Finally, the IoMT provides real-time recommendations on what should be done to manage the current medical condition and prevent future complications. However, the IoMT faces challenges such as privacy, a potential lack of accuracy, especially when processing big data, and the high cost of installing and maintaining the devices (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Sadhu et al., 2022).

5. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR):

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies create interactive experiences for medical education, surgical planning, and patient education. While VR can simulate realistic medical scenarios for healthcare professional training, AR overlays digital information on the real world, aiding in surgical navigation and medical imaging (Bhugaonkar et al., 2022; Kan Yeung et al., 2021; Kassutto et al., 2021).

VR and AR technologies improve medical training, surgical planning, and patient education, providing advanced tools for healthcare improvement.

6. Telemedicine:

Telemedicine is considered one of the most important innovations in health services, not only from a technological point of view, but also from a cultural and social point of view, as it benefits accessibility to health services and organizational efficiency (Gochhait et al., 2020).

Telemedicine refers to the remote delivery of healthcare services, including medical consultations, diagnoses, and treatments. This presents several advantages, such as providing alternative access to healthcare, especially for those in remote areas, and eliminating travel times (Al- Hazmi et al., 2021; Gajarawala & Pelkowski , 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Kichloo et al., 2020).

The terminology has also been expanded with the concept of Telehealth, which encompasses a broader area of healthcare services and activities, beyond the consultation provided by physicians, including other healthcare professionals (Al- Hazmi et al., 2021; Gajarawala & Pelkowski , 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Kichloo et al., 2020).

Thus, telemedicine improves the accessibility and efficiency of healthcare services, especially benefiting patients in remote areas and facilitating continuity of care.

7. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML):

AI refers to the ability of machines to mimic human behavior by learning from data using self-learning technologies (such as data mining, pattern recognition, and natural language processing) to understand the way the human brain works. On the other hand, ML is a subset of AI that can also improve with experience. With these techniques, AI and machine learning have the potential to revolutionize healthcare. It can analyze large amounts of medical data, including medical images, lab results, and patient registration, to aid in the diagnosis of diseases. By analyzing individual patient data, AI and ML can develop personalized treatment plans based on factors such as medical history, genetics, and lifestyle (Bajwa et al., 2021; Brigands & The Monk, 2020; Habehh & Gohel, 2021).

As a result, AI and ML revolutionize healthcare by improving diagnoses, personalizing treatments, and analyzing large volumes of medical data, increasing accuracy and efficiency in healthcare.

Undoubtedly, the wide variety of emerging technologies is transforming the institutional dynamics of health organizations and their ways of offering services. The degree of adjustment required to absorb emerging technologies poses challenges for any organization. Some of the main difficulties in incorporating emerging technologies become barriers that, in some cases, are insurmountable. Some identified barriers are highlighted below.

Figure 1. Main Emerging Technologies in the Health Sector.



Source: Authors.

BARRIERS WHEN IMPLEMENTING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

The implementation of emerging technologies in healthcare institutions offers significant opportunities to improve the quality of patient care, operational efficiency, and medical data management. However, this process is not without its challenges, and various barriers can emerge from different perspectives, making it difficult to adopt and fully exploit these innovations. Among the main barriers are organizational resistance due to cultural and psychological factors, structural obstacles related to systems compatibility and bureaucracy, lack of financial resources and adequate training, the need for effective communication and strong leadership, and the complex ethical and legal aspects surrounding data privacy and security (Ash, 1997):

Addressing these challenges requires a deep understanding of the internal dynamics of healthcare organizations and a comprehensive strategy that considers each of these barriers. The main barriers identified are described below, see **Figure 2**:

CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

Change Management:

Healthcare institutions are no strangers to the concepts of organizational change and resilience; consequently, change management is defined as the process of continuously renewing the direction, structure, and capabilities of an organization to meet the ever-changing needs of internal and external customers. Mastering strategies to manage change is more important because the market is changing dramatically with the emergence of emerging technologies (Moran & Brightman, 2000; Vial, 2019).

Organizational Resistance:

On the other hand, resistance to organizational change can be understood as a three-

dimensional negative attitude towards change, where an affective component is first recognized, which refers to the negative feelings that a person has regarding change, such as anger, anxiety, or fear. Second, a cognitive component involves negative evaluations and thoughts about change, for example, questioning its necessity or benefits. Finally, a behavioral component that includes actions or intentions to act in response to the change, such as complaining, actively opposing, or trying to convince others that the change is harmful (Erwin & Garman, 2010).

Resistance to change can also be understood from the psychological point of view, as “the action taken by individuals and groups when they perceive that a change that is occurring is a threat to them”. The threat does not have to be real (or great) for resistance to occur. In their usual description, threat refers to change within organizations, although it is also found in other forms elsewhere. “Resistance can take many forms, including active or passive, overt or covert, individual or organized, aggressive or timid.” Another definition from management psychology states that resistance to change is “any behavior that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressures to alter the status quo” (Mares, 2018; Mares, 2018).

Therefore, we consider that the definition that best fits to understand resistance to change is: “a form of organizational dissidence to a process (or practice) of change that the individual considers unpleasant or inconvenient based on personal and/or group evaluations. Resistance to change intends to benefit the interests of the participant or group (to which they belong) without broadly undermining the needs of the organization. Resistance to change manifests itself in non-institutionalized individual or collective actions and can take the form of non-violent, indifferent, passive, or active behavior.” (Mares, 2018).

Therefore, implementing change within a healthcare organization involves great complexities. For example, researcher Block (2010) has described that only a small number of medical workers are willing to change; that is, they are willing to participate in changes, or their personality tends to adjust or accept changes. Also, psychologists who work in management warn that resistance to change is a natural part of the entire change process, and those who make the change must consider this. Seen in another way, the difficulties of change imply that workers must exchange something they know for something unknown (Block et al., 1998; Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Bovey & Hede, 2001).

HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

Structure of Health Institutions:

In general, organized activities within an institution require both a division of labor into specific tasks and the coordination of those tasks and activities. An organizational structure refers to how the assignment and coordination of tasks within an organization are designed. Most health services, such as hospitals, are structured around medical specialties, with organizational units that are based on specific knowledge and skills that are needed to perform certain complex tasks, i.e., by functions. Therefore, health services usually have a functional design: an organizational structure based on specialized skills (Mintzberg, 1989; Chairwinder, 1990).

Hospital organizational structures have been repeatedly criticized for impeding coordination, hindering efficiency, and providing suboptimal patient care. Moreover, much of this criticism is empirically supported (Cook et al., 2017; Porter & Lee, 2021; Vera & Kuntz, 2007; Hartnick et al., 2020; Ludwig et al., 2010; Steinmann et al., 2021). However, although health organizations can adopt different operating structures, the main or most recurrent ones are:

Hierarchical Structure: The traditional model used in many large institutions such as

hospitals. Where the hierarchy is organized from the Board of Directors and the Medical Director, through various levels of management, to medical, non-medical, and support staff. This clear structure facilitates decision-making and monitoring, although it may be less flexible in the face of rapid changes in the healthcare environment (McLean et al., 2020).

Matrix Structure: This approach combines functional and project-based teams to improve collaboration and efficiency. Although it can complicate reporting lines and roles, it promotes greater flexibility and responsiveness to various patients.

Flat Structure: Frequently used by smaller organizations or digital health startups, this structure reduces management levels and grants greater autonomy to employees. This encourages innovation and quick decisions, although it can present challenges in scalability and clarity in decision-making as the organization grows (Palepu et al., 2020). These antecedents denote the variability of forms of structure that health institutions can adopt and that are intrinsically related to human capital. Both structure and human capital will face challenges in adjusting to the changes driven by emerging technologies.

Resources & Training

It is inherent to any organization to consider the available resources as an essential variable in any innovation process. Lack of financial resources is a significant barrier to the implementation of emerging technologies in healthcare institutions. These technologies, which include patient data management systems, advanced diagnostic tools, and telemedicine solutions, often require substantial upfront investments. Not only is a budget needed for the acquisition of equipment and software, but also for the infrastructure needed to support these technologies, such as high-speed networks and secure servers. In addition, the costs of maintenance and technological upgrades can be high, and budget-constrained institutions may find it difficult to justify or raise the necessary funds. This lack of adequate funding can delay technology adoption or even prevent it altogether (K. M. Cresswell et al., 2013; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005).

On the other hand, insufficient staff training is another critical obstacle to the adoption of new technologies that require employees who are adequately trained to use and maintain these systems efficiently. That is, without effective and ongoing training programs, employees can feel overwhelmed, insecure, and resistant to change. Training should not only focus on technical skills, but also on integrating new technologies into daily workflows and understanding the benefits these technologies can bring to both patients and staff. Also, a lack of proper training programs can lead to operational errors, decreased efficiency, and a negative perception of technology, which reinforces organizational resilience (Bhattacharjee & Wisdom, 2007; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005).

Communication and leadership:

Effective communication is an essential element for the successful implementation of emerging technologies in the field of health. Without clear and transparent communication about the benefits and expected impact of new technologies, employees can fall into misinformation, rumors, and resistance. It is critical for organizational leaders to clearly articulate the reasons behind technology adoption and how this transformation will affect the various roles within the organization. A lack of proper communication can result in

misunderstandings and fear, which can amplify resistance to change (K. M. Cresswell et al., 2013; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005).

In addition, leadership plays a crucial role in promoting and supporting the adoption of new technologies. Leaders must demonstrate a visible commitment to technological change and provide the necessary resources to facilitate this transition. This includes not only financial support, but also emotional and motivational support, creating an environment where employees feel safe and supported during the change process. Without this active support from senior management, employees may perceive technology adoption as a low-priority initiative and may therefore show a lack of commitment and resistance to adopting new technologies. Effective leadership also involves the ability to manage change strategically, addressing concerns and resistances proactively and constructively (Bhattacharjee & Wisdom, 2007; Joke & Grimshaw, 2003; Weiner, 2020).

Ethical and Legal Aspects:

Ethical and legal aspects are primary concerns when implementing emerging technologies in healthcare institutions. The management of sensitive data, such as patients' medical information, poses significant challenges in terms of privacy and confidentiality. Concerns about who has access to this data, how it is protected, and how it is used can lead to resistance among both employees and patients. Healthcare institutions must establish robust policies and procedures to ensure data security and privacy while complying with current regulations. However, these measures can be complex and expensive to implement, adding another layer of difficulty to technology adoption (Beef, 1997; Westbrook et al., 2009).

In addition, healthcare institutions must comply with a series of strict regulations governing the handling of data and the implementation of new technologies. These regulations are designed to protect patient privacy and ensure the security of medical information, but they can also pose a significant obstacle. Aligning new technologies with these regulations may require additional time and resources, which can delay their implementation. Institutions must ensure that any new technology complies with local and international laws and regulations, which may involve audits, compliance reviews, and modifications to technology systems. The complexity and cost of this regulatory process may discourage organizations from adopting emerging technologies, despite the potential benefits they could offer in terms of operational efficiency and quality of patient care (Garg et al., 2005; Beef, 1997).

Figure 2. Main Barriers to Implementing Emerging Technologies



Source: Authors.

FINDINGS:

STRATEGIES FOR ADOPTING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

A constant challenge for the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of emerging technologies in health services is to their use within the complex field of health care. Below, we describe 5 approaches identified from the literature review that we believe are relevant to looking for fit models between emerging technology and health institutions, see **Figure 3:**

THEORY OF INNOVATION DIFFUSION

The innovation diffusion model will provide an essential theoretical framework for understanding how new ideas and technologies spread within a society or social system, and as a beneficiary in the adoption of emerging technologies. This theory identifies key factors such as innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system in which the innovation spreads. When incorporating emerging technologies into healthcare institutions, this model helps break down the process by which such technologies are adopted by different categories of healthcare professionals, from innovators to laggards. In addition, studies such as those highlight how organizational factors, the structure and functionality of the clinical team, influence the adoption and use of these technologies. In this context, the successful diffusion of technological innovations in the health sector depends not only on the technology itself, but also on the organization's ability to support and promote its adoption through an appropriate organizational culture, committed leadership, and sufficient resources (E. M. Rogers et al., 2014; Ash, 1997; Gosling et al., 2003).

UNIFIED THEORY OF ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY (UTAUT)

It is a theoretical model developed whose purpose is to consolidate and simplify the understanding of the factors that determine the acceptance and use of technology, based on the TAM technology acceptance model. The UTAUT is built based on eight previous theories and models of technology acceptance, offering a unified approach to predict the intention of use and the actual use of information technologies by users (Venkateshet al.,

2003)(Davis, 1989a)

The UTAUT identifies four key constructs that directly influence use intent and use behavior:

- **Performance Expectancy:** Reflects the degree to which an individual believes that the use of a technology will improve their performance at work.
- **Effort Expectancy:** This refers to the degree of ease associated with the use of technology.
- **Social Influence:** Represents the degree to which an individual perceives that the people important to them believe they should use the new technology.
- **Facilitating Conditions:** These are the individual's beliefs about the existence of a technical and organizational infrastructure that supports the use of technology.

In addition to these main constructs, the UTAUT incorporates four moderators that affect the relationship between these constructs and the intention to use, as well as the actual use of technology, which are gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use.

The implementation of UTAUT has proven to be effective in various contexts, including the health sector. For example, they highlight the importance of the model to understand the acceptance of information technologies in the health field (Holden & Karsh , 2010)

DISTRIBUTED COGNITION THEORY

The theory of distributed cognition, developed by Edwin Hutchins in his book "Cognition in the Wild" (1996), argues that cognition is not a process that occurs exclusively within an individual's brain but is distributed through a system of interactions that includes people, artifacts, and the environment. Hutchins studied how navigators on a U.S. Navy ship coordinate their actions and use tools and procedures to perform complex navigational tasks. He found that cognition emerges from collaboration between crew and navigational instruments, demonstrating that cognition is a property of the system as a whole and not just of individual minds. In other words, making an analogy between technologies and organizations, for Hutchins, technologies would be the navigation instruments, and the crew would be health professionals. Therefore, the contributions of the theory of distributed cognition allow us to comprehensively understand how the different actors are linked in the processes of adoption of emerging technologies (Hutchins, 1995)

HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION MODEL

The Human-Computer Interaction Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how people interact with technological systems, highlighting the importance of designing interfaces that facilitate user cognition and actions. In the context of the health sector, this model is particularly relevant due to the growing adoption of emerging technologies such as decision support systems and artificial intelligence. These technologies have the potential to significantly improve the quality of healthcare, but they also present challenges in terms of usability and workflow. The application of Norman's model in critical care settings, such as those described by and (Norman, 1988)(Malhotra et al., 2007)(Sheehan et al., 2009), demonstrates how proper design can improve decision-making and operational efficiency. By following the seven steps of the model, designers can create systems that are not only technologically advanced but also intuitive and effective, thus facilitating the integration of these technologies into daily clinical practice.

SOCIOTECHNICAL APPROACH:

Finally, sociotechnical systems (STS) design, as conceived by Trist, Emery, and others, aimed to improve the performance of work systems by recognizing how human behaviors affect the functioning of technology. More specifically, better operational performance could be achieved when workers’ knowledge and capabilities were harnessed to help address technological uncertainty, variation, and adaptation (Pasmoremar et al., 2019). Thus, the sociotechnical approach is defined as a perspective that considers both the social and technical aspects of a working system to achieve a joint optimization that benefits both workers and the organization. This approach promotes the active participation of workers in the design and control of technical processes, thus improving performance and job satisfaction (Pasmore et al., 2019).

Evidence of technological advancements has shown exponential growth in recent decades, while advances in organizational design are almost non-existent, resulting in a widening gap between the promise of technical solutions and our ability to leverage them (Pasmore et al., 2019).

Sociotechnical Models:

An integrative approach, such as sociotechnical models in the field of health, provides essential frameworks for understanding and optimizing the interaction between human, technical, and organizational components. Table 1 describes the most recognized models together with their authors and the most representative key elements.

Table 1. Sociotechnical Models in Health

MODEL	AUTHORS	KEY ELEMENTS
Henriksen et al. Model	Henriksen, Kaye, Morisseau (1993)	1. Individual characteristics of providers: personal skills and competencies. 2. Work complexity: task specificity. 3. Physical environment: design and ergonomics. 4. Human-system interfaces: interaction between providers and technologies. 5. Organizational characteristics: social and managerial aspects.
Vincent et al. Framework	Vincent, Taylor-Adams, Stanhope (1998)	Hierarchy of factors influencing clinical practice: a structure for identifying and analyzing factors that affect safety and risk, facilitating a causes and solutions assessment.
SEIPS Model by Carayon et al.	Carayon, Schoofs Hundt, Karsh, Gurses, Alvarado, Smith, Flatley Brennan (2006)	1. Characteristics of providers, tools, and physical/organizational environment: elements affecting medical care. 2. Interpersonal and technical aspects: human interactions and procedures. 3. Change in patient condition: impact on the patient and the healthcare system.
ISTA Framework by Harrison et al.	Harrison, Koppel, Bar-Lev (2007)	Interrelations between health information technologies (HIT), physicians, and workflows: analysis of mutual influence and unintended consequences of technology implementation.

Source: Authors.

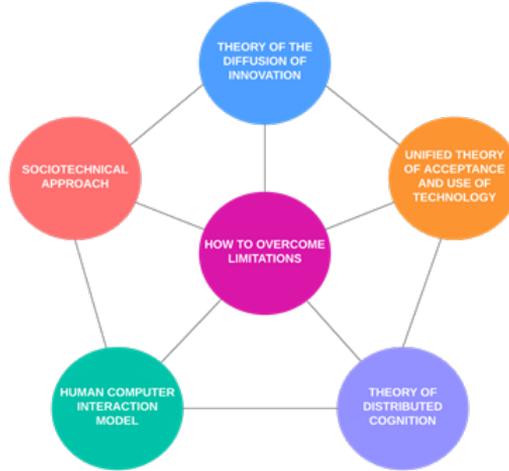
For example, the model of Henriksen et al. (1993) focuses on supplier skills, task complexity, environment design, interaction with technologies, and organizational characteristics. The framework of Vincent et al. (1998) proposes a structure for analyzing factors that affect safety and risk in clinical practice. The SEIPS model by Carayon et al. (2006) assesses provider characteristics, tools, and environment, human and technical interactions, and the impact on patient health status. The ISTA framework by Harrison et al. (2007) analyzes the interrelationships between health information technologies, physicians, and workflows, addressing the unintended consequences of technological implementation. These models promote patient safety and operational efficiency in healthcare systems. (Damn it et al., 2006; Harrison et al., 2007; Henriksen, 1993; Vincent et al., 1998)

Building on the models above, Sittig and Singh have developed an eight-dimensional sociotechnical model to study health information technology (TIS) in complex and adaptive health systems that addresses the challenges of designing, developing, implementing, using, and evaluating TIS, considering the interdependence and relationship between various dimensions. The eight dimensions are:

1. **Hardware and software infrastructure:** Equipment and software needed to run clinical applications and medical devices.
2. **Clinical content:** Textual, numerical, and image data that constitute the “language” of clinical applications.
3. **Human-computer interface:** Aspects of the system that users interact with, including what they see, touch, or hear.
4. **People:** All individuals who interact with the system, from developers to end users to patients.
5. **Workflow and Communication:** Processes and steps necessary to ensure that patient care tasks are performed effectively.
6. **Internal organizational characteristics:** Policies, procedures, and culture of the organization that can facilitate or restrict various aspects of the TIS.
7. **External rules and regulations:** External rules and pressures that influence the design, development, implementation, use and evaluation of TIS.
8. **System Measurement and Monitoring:** Processes for measuring and evaluating both intended and unintended consequences of TIS implementation and use.

This multidimensional model allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities associated with the implementation and use of TIS in real clinical settings, highlighting the importance of considering all dimensions in an interrelated manner to improve patient safety and operational efficiency (Sittig et al., 2015).

Figure 3. How to overcome barriers.



Source: Authors.

About what has been described above, a combination of theoretical approaches and practical strategies is presented. These approaches, adapted to the needs and dynamics of each specific barrier, not only provide a solid structure for understanding internal resistances and constraints but also allow for the outlining of strategies to facilitate the transition to technological integration (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Strategies to overcome barriers

ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS	THEORETICAL APPROACHES	PROPOSED STRATEGIES
Organizational Resistance	Theory of the Diffusion of Innovation	Identify and train "innovation champions" within the organization to lead change, leveraging their influence to reduce organizational resistance.
Resources and Training	Unified Theory of Technology Acceptance and Use	Implement communication campaigns that demonstrate the specific benefits of technology and ease of use, focusing on performance and effort expectations.
Power Dynamics and Interpersonal Relationships	Distributed Cognition Theory	Encourage the creation of interdisciplinary working groups that integrate end users, so that the technology is adapted to the needs of each team and consensus is generated.
Ethical and Legal Challenges	Human-Computer Interaction Model	Conduct pilots that adjust the user interface and collect feedback from staff to ensure that the technology respects ethics and privacy.
Technical and Infrastructure Compatibility	Sociotechnical Approach	Develop a technology integration plan that includes technical infrastructure upgrades and collaborative training for all levels of the organization.

Source: Own elaboration

To overcome organizational resistance, it is proposed to identify “innovation champions” in the institution. These individuals, who may include formal or informal leaders, will be trained to understand and value the benefits of emerging technology. These champions will then have the responsibility of positively influencing their colleagues, helping to dispel doubts and build trust in technology. The diffusion of innovation is facilitated when key people model change, which can significantly reduce organizational resistance.

The implementation of technology often fails due to a perceived lack of utility or complexity. To combat this, it is proposed to develop internal communication campaigns that clearly explain the benefits of technology in terms of individual performance and efficiency at work, addressing the expectation of performance and effort. These campaigns should include testimonials from users in similar roles to reduce the perception of difficulty and offer concrete examples of improvements they can achieve with the new technology.

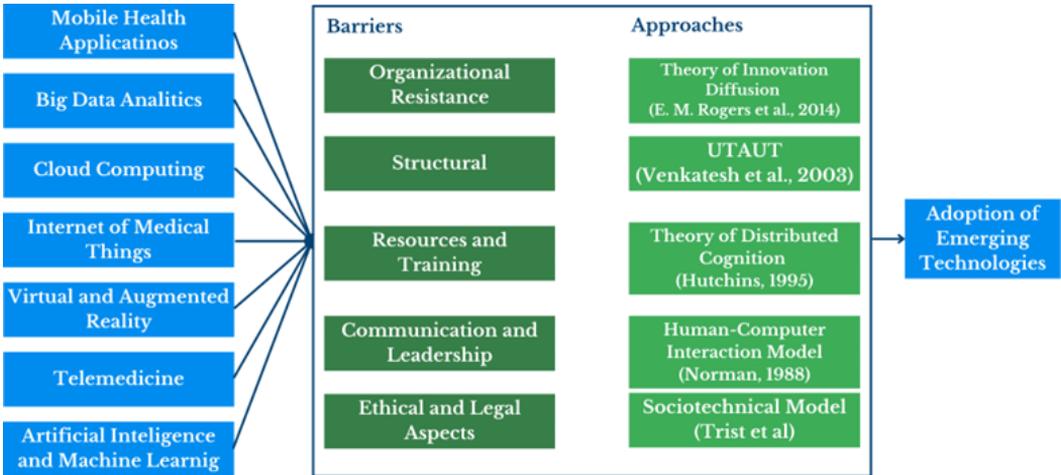
To address power dynamics, the creation of interdisciplinary teams where all members have an active participation in the adaptation and personalization of technology is suggested. By involving end users in the implementation process, these teams can modify the technology according to the specific needs of each group. Not only does this strengthen the sense of belonging and acceptance of technology, but it also allows power dynamics to be overcome, as each member contributes to a common goal.

Data privacy and security are major barriers in the healthcare sector. Conducting pilot tests, in which staff feedback is collected, will allow the technology to be adjusted to comply with ethical and legal standards. These tests will also help ensure that the user interface is intuitive and secure, minimizing the risk of misuse or errors. With the right fit, technology can be integrated in a way that respects the fundamental ethical values and principles of industry.

To integrate the technology into the existing system, a socio-technical approach is required that coordinates infrastructure improvements with continuous staff training. This includes conducting infrastructure audits to identify areas that require upgrades and, in parallel, developing collaborative training programs. This strategy ensures that the technology is operational and functional in the specific context of the institution, facilitating efficient and long-term adoption.

Finally, the visualization of the barriers, approaches, and strategies allows for clarification of the path towards an effective implementation of emerging technologies in the field of health. Each identified barrier finds its answer in a theoretical approach that, in turn, facilitates the formulation of practical strategies, aligning human, technical, and organizational resources. This structured approach not only supports organizational adaptation but also lays the foundation for an innovation-responsive organizational culture, allowing healthcare institutions to adopt and optimize these technologies sustainably and effectively, see **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. Emerging Technologies Integration Framework and Approaches



Source: Own elaboration

DISCUSSION

The implementation of emerging technologies in healthcare institutions represents both significant opportunities and considerable challenges. Throughout this study, it has been shown that the adoption of technologies such as mHealth, Big Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, IoMT, Virtual and Augmented Reality, Telemedicine, and Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning can radically transform operational efficiency, quality of patient care, and clinical decision-making.

However, each emerging technology presents its advantages and challenges. mHealth apps, for example, have proven essential in improving connectivity and accessibility in healthcare. However, its effectiveness depends largely on acceptance and appropriate use by patients and health professionals. Similarly, Big Data Analytics has the potential to transform clinical decision-making and public health management, but it requires robust infrastructure and adequate training to handle and analyze large volumes of data.

On the other hand, the barriers identified for the implementation of these technologies include organizational resistance, power dynamics and interpersonal relationships, and the lack of an integrated approach that considers both technical and social aspects. Resistance to change is a significant obstacle, influenced by affective, cognitive, and behavioral factors. Power dynamics within multidisciplinary teams can also make it difficult to accept new technologies, while a lack of financial resources and adequate training programs can delay or impede technology adoption.

Therefore, to overcome these barriers, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that can handle the different variables, such as the socio-technical approach that would integrate both the technical and social aspects of health systems. Thus, change management could be a priority, with clear strategies for communicating the benefits of emerging technologies and addressing staff concerns. Engaged, visible leadership would

also be essential to promote and support emerging technology adoption. In addition, it is important to develop ongoing training programs that not only address technical skills but also the integration of new technologies into daily workflows.

Finally, theoretical models such as Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Unified Theory of Technology Acceptance and Use (UTAUT) provide valuable frameworks for understanding and facilitating the adoption of emerging technologies. These models highlight the importance of factors such as innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system in technology adoption. In addition, Trist and Emery's sociotechnical approach and Norman's human-computer interaction model underscore the need for systems design that facilitates interaction between users and technology.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the adoption of emerging technologies in healthcare institutions has the potential to revolutionize healthcare, improving operational efficiency, quality of patient care, and clinical decision-making. However, its implementation is not without significant challenges. Organizational resistance, power dynamics, and the lack of an integrated approach are barriers that must be addressed through effective change management strategies, engaged leadership, and appropriate training programs.

Adopting a socio-technical approach and using theoretical models such as the Innovation Diffusion Theory and UTAUT can facilitate the successful adoption of these technologies. Healthcare institutions need to develop a deep understanding of internal dynamics and staff needs to ensure effective and sustainable integration of emerging technologies.

The successful implementation of these technologies requires not only investments in infrastructure and training but also a cultural change within organizations. With a strategic and collaborative approach, healthcare institutions can overcome barriers to technology adoption and fully harness the potential of emerging technologies to improve healthcare and public health in general.

LIMITATIONS:

One of the main limitations of this study lies in the theoretical approaches and conceptual frameworks proposed to develop strategies for the adoption of emerging technologies, which, although solid, could benefit from the inclusion of other complementary approaches that allow the creation of more specific frameworks adjusted to the particularities of the health sector. This raises the need to expand the analysis through additional theories that could enrich the understanding of the factors that influence the adoption of these technologies.

Second, the literature-based methodological approach has inherent limitations, as it focuses on theoretical aspects that, in practice, may not respond uniformly in various institutional and organizational contexts. The lack of empirical studies or specific case studies in different types of health institutions limits the capacity for generalization and direct applicability of the strategies proposed in real scenarios.

Finally, the study does not explore the possibility of proposing multiple strategies that address barriers on different fronts simultaneously. A multifaceted approach, which allows solutions to be implemented at different organizational levels in a coordinated manner, could significantly improve the effectiveness of adoption strategies and facilitate the transition to a more integrated technological environment in health institutions.

FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH:

As emerging technologies continue to transform the healthcare sector, the need for further research into various aspects to ensure the successful adoption of emerging technologies is becoming apparent. That is why it is proposed as lines of research, first to carry out a global impact assessment of emerging technologies using a longitudinal research design that would allow capturing the long-term impact of specific technologies such as mHealth, Big Data analytics, cloud computing, IoMT, virtual and augmented reality, telemedicine, and AI and ML on operational efficiency and quality of patient care. These studies should include both quantitative and qualitative measurements to provide a comprehensive understanding of the associated benefits and challenges.

Second, although there are models that explain the acceptance of technology, such as the famous technology acceptance model (TAM) and the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT), the development of new theoretical models specific to the health context is required. These models must consider the particularities of the healthcare environment, including power dynamics, organizational resistance, and sociotechnical aspects. Because the usual focus of these constructs is positional at the person level and not at the organizational level, studies should be adapted considering multilevel theory and evaluated in individual, group, and organizational terms (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Third, since change management and leadership are critical to the successful adoption of new technologies, studies are needed to explore best practices in these areas. Future research could focus on identifying effective leadership strategies and training programs that foster an organizational culture that is open to change and technological innovation. Fourth, it is critical to further investigate the specific organizational barriers that impede the adoption of emerging technologies and develop effective strategies to overcome them. This includes studying how power dynamics and interpersonal relationships affect technology implementation and how a sociotechnical approach can facilitate an optimal fit between technologies and organizational structures.

Fifth, collecting and analyzing successful case studies in the implementation of emerging technologies can provide valuable lessons and best practices for other institutions. These studies should document the processes, challenges, and solutions applied, offering practical guidelines for technological adoption in various health contexts.

Finally, investigating how emerging technologies are transforming the education and training of health professionals is essential to ensure that staff are adequately prepared to use these tools. This includes the development of educational programs that integrate digital technologies into the medical and continuing education curriculum.

By addressing these lines of research, it will be possible to make significant progress in the effective and sustainable integration of emerging technologies in the health sector, thus improving operational efficiency, quality of patient care, and clinical decision-making.

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La distancia temporal y su efecto sobre la actitud hacia los lanzamientos

Keywords: Uncertainty, Temporal distance, Temporal cues, Attitudes toward the product, Mental images.

Received: 2023 | **Accepted:** 2024 | **Available online:** 2025

Cite this article as: Salinas, I., & Pardo, G. (2025). *La distancia temporal y su efecto sobre la actitud hacia los lanzamientos*. *Estudios de Administración*, 30 (2), 30–45.

<https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0816.2023.76217>

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ABSTRACT

This article studies how the information from an advertising message can alter the temporal distance of a product launch, and thus explaining variations in perceived uncertainty and its impact on attitude towards a product not yet in the market. Using construal level theory, the article shows how temporal distance affects uncertainty, and using mental image formation theory, the article shows how this uncertainty affects attitude towards the product to be launched. An experiment with 198 participants allows to test our hypotheses and validate that signal type moderates the relationship between temporal distance and uncertainty, and mental image formation mediates the relationship between uncertainty and attitude towards the product. Additionally, there are no significant differences in attitudes towards the product when the temporal distance is short versus when the product has already been launched, which implies a base level of uncertainty towards a product that hasn't been bought yet. Future research lines are proposed.

Keywords: Uncertainty, psychological distance, temporal cues, product attitudes, mental images.



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RESUMEN

En este artículo se estudia como la información del mensaje publicitario puede alterar la distancia temporal del lanzamiento de un producto y mediante ello explicar las variaciones de la incertidumbre percibida y su consiguiente impacto en la actitud hacia un producto que aún no se encuentra en el mercado. A través de la teoría de nivel de conceptualización se muestra cómo la distancia temporal influye en la incertidumbre, y a través de la teoría de la formación de imágenes mentales se muestra cómo esta incertidumbre influye en las actitudes hacia el producto que aún no se lanza. Un experimento con 198 participantes permite comprobar que el tipo de señal modera la relación entre la distancia temporal y la incertidumbre, y que la formación de imágenes mentales media la relación entre incertidumbre y actitud hacia el producto. Adicionalmente, no se observan diferencias significativas en la actitud hacia el producto cuando existe una distancia temporal cercana versus el producto ya lanzado, lo que implica un nivel de incertidumbre basal respecto de un producto que no se posee. Futuras líneas de investigación son propuestas.

Palabras clave:

Incertidumbre, distancia temporal, indicadores temporales, actitudes hacia el producto, imágenes mentales.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Los consumidores necesitan información para poder tomar decisiones (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). Sin embargo, los consumidores rara vez tienen información completa para tomar estas decisiones. Esta brecha de información entre lo que se conoce y lo que se desea conocer se llama incertidumbre (Ben-Haim, 2004). La capacidad para tolerar la incertidumbre varía entre individuos (Kellermann & Reynolds, 1990) y entre culturas (Hofstede, 2011). Los eventos más alejados del presente suponen una mayor incertidumbre dado que aspectos relacionados con la factibilidad se vuelven menos salientes (Liberman & Trope, 1998). Cuando el consumidor tiene suficiente información, puede formar representaciones mentales más claras que pueden evocar emociones y sensaciones (Holmes & Mathews, 2010) e incluso cambios actitudinales (Lee & Qiu, 2009) en las personas. Por ejemplo, Ketelaar et al. (2018) encontraron diferencias en actitudes de los consumidores al comparar anuncios en donde el momento en donde el producto puede ser adquirido por los consumidores es variable. La distancia psicológica (entre ellas, la distancia temporal; Trope et al., 2007) afecta la efectividad del encuadre de mensajes publicitarios (White et al., 2011) y los esfuerzos de autorregulación (Freitas et al., 2004). Sin embargo, poco se sabe sobre cómo la distancia temporal y la incertidumbre pueden afectar los cambios de actitud orientados hacia el producto (Sordi et al., 2022).

Según Adler & Sarstedt (2021), la investigación de efectividad de mensajes publicitarios usando la teoría de nivel de conceptualización (Trope & Liberman, 2010) va en aumento en los últimos años. En esta investigación se estudia como la información del mensaje publicitario puede alterar la distancia temporal de una simulación y mediante ello explicar las variaciones de la incertidumbre percibida y la actitud hacia un producto que aún no se encuentra en el mercado. De esta forma, este artículo contribuye a la teoría al combinar la distancia temporal y la incertidumbre para explicar cambios en la actitud hacia un producto, y a la práctica a través de validar dos herramientas típicamente disponibles para los gerentes para afectar las actitudes de los consumidores: el tiempo y la forma en como este es comunicado.

El artículo continúa definiendo las bases teóricas de la incertidumbre, la distancia temporal y las actitudes hacia el producto. Luego se plantea un experimento para testear las

hipótesis planteadas. Finalmente, el artículo concluye con una discusión de los resultados, limitaciones del estudio y futuras líneas de investigación.

INCERTIDUMBRE, DISTANCIA TEMPORAL Y ACTITUDES

El futuro es desconocido y siempre lo será. Con acceso limitado a la información no es factible emplear una medida objetiva de probabilidades que aplique a situaciones futuras reales (Knight, 1921). Esto ha llevado a una discusión sobre el significado de probabilidad entre las visiones frecuentistas (Gigerenzer, 1996) y bayesianas (Kahneman & Tversky, 1996). En este artículo usamos la definición bayesiana de probabilidad, es decir, probabilidad como una medida subjetiva de creencia en la ocurrencia de un evento (Kahneman & Tversky, 1996). Por lo tanto, la incertidumbre está relacionada con la falta de información (Ben-Haim, 2004) para poder calcular esta probabilidad subjetiva y aumenta en la medida que la información que se encuentra disponible disminuye.

La intolerancia es un término descrito como la tendencia a calificar un determinado suceso como molesto y se usa en repetidas oportunidades para hablar de incertidumbre (Grenier et al., 2005). La tolerancia a la incertidumbre ha sido estudiada tanto a nivel individual (e.g., Kellermann & Reynolds, 1990) como a nivel cultural (e.g., Hofstede, 2011). Cuando el ser humano se enfrenta a un peligro del que es consciente pero no puede ser evitado, la respuesta emocional que manifiesta es menor a la que se tendría sin conocimientos ni certezas sobre una potencial amenaza (Deane, 1961). Para minimizar la “probabilidad” de encontrarse con un imprevisto sin preparación, el individuo se mantiene alerta y sobreestima los peligros a los que cree tener que enfrentarse (Krohne, 1989). Al pensar de forma pesimista el individuo se está cuidando de la posibilidad de sentirse decepcionado ante un eventual fracaso (Wells, 1995). Al volverse consciente de la incertidumbre del entorno el individuo experimenta malestar. La preocupación excesiva es incluso la causa de varios trastornos emocionales y juega un rol central en el desarrollo del trastorno de ansiedad generalizado (Dugas et al., 1998). Por lo tanto, el aumento en la incertidumbre genera actitudes negativas, o formalmente:

Hipótesis 1: La incertidumbre tiene un efecto negativo sobre la actitud.

A partir de una iteración de reglas, los escenarios potenciales que resultan de la información disponible pueden ser infinitos (Suddendorf & Corballis, 2007). Con la información que tiene disponible el individuo puede crear imágenes de sus alternativas y estimar la probabilidad de que ocurran (Olson et al., 1996). Sin información es imposible recrear escenarios mediante el acto imaginario. Imaginar le permite al individuo limitar sus opciones a un número acotado. Al mismo tiempo, cuando imagina un evento la probabilidad subjetiva de ocurrencia crece para ese suceso particular (Carroll, 1978).

Una simulación mental es un trabajo meramente cognitivo que estimula los recuerdos almacenados con anterioridad en la memoria (Decety & Ingvar, 1990). Al imaginar, las personas son capaces de “sentir” como si el evento estuviera realmente pasando y eventualmente pueden llegar a confundir la construcción imaginaria con uno de sus recuerdos (Mathews et al., 2013). La reconstrucción de eventos pasados y la creación de situaciones futuras comparten los mismos principios (Suddendorf et al., 2009). Klein et al. (2002) encuentran una relación en la dificultad que tienen algunas personas para recordar hechos del día anterior con la capacidad de hacer predicciones para el día siguiente. Los

recursos mentales que se ocupan para recordar también se parecen a los que el individuo usa para imaginar el futuro. Mediante el uso de la neuroimagen Okuda et al. (2003) observan una superposición en la actividad cerebral de los lóbulos frontales y temporales cuando se le pide al individuo realizar ambas actividades. Consistente con esta idea, Tulving (1985) observa que en promedio las personas que sufren de amnesia presentan mayores limitaciones para reproducir imágenes mentales. En la medida que aumenta la distancia desde el presente, se afecta la capacidad de las personas de evocar estas imágenes mentales. Por una parte, las personas prefieren satisfacción inmediata antes que postergada (Chabris et al., 2010). Por otra parte, la distancia temporal es inversamente proporcional al detalle y especificidad de la imagen (D'Argembeau & Van Der Linden, 2004). Liberman et al. (2002) comentan que al construir una imagen suelen omitirse detalles considerados irrelevantes para el objetivo de la representación, y que la abstracción en las representaciones de futuros lejanos podría ser una consecuencia de la irrelevancia con la que estos se perciben.

Hipótesis 2: La incertidumbre afecta la actitud mediante la imagen.

Según la teoría de nivel de conceptualización (Liberman & Trope, 1998; Trope & Liberman, 2010), la distancia temporal (ahora vs. en el futuro) afecta el nivel de conceptualización de hechos, objetos y situaciones, de forma que mientras más en el futuro (i.e., mayor distancia temporal) está una situación o un objeto, se utilizará una conceptualización de más alto nivel, es decir, más abstracta, y cuando está más cerca del presente (i.e., menor distancia temporal), este objeto o situación se conceptualizará de forma más concreta. Luego, Trope et al. (2007) extendieron esta teoría para incluir otras distancias como la distancia social (dentro del grupo vs. fuera del grupo), distancia física (cerca vs. lejos) y distancia hipotética (cierto vs. improbable) dentro de un concepto llamado distancia psicológica. Se ha demostrado que diferencias en nivel de conceptualización afectan la estimación de probabilidades de ocurrencia de eventos futuros (Wakslak & Trope, 2009).

Antes de usar un producto, el consumidor sabe muy poco acerca de él y parte del conocimiento puede ser adquirido buscando información. Sin embargo, cierta información no puede adquirirse de ninguna forma sin antes usar el producto (Kalish, 1985).

Luego de verse usando un producto, el consumidor estaría más inclinado a adquirirlo (Gregory et al., 1982). Esto se explica a través de un proceso de reducción de la disonancia cognitiva (Festinger, 1957), donde el individuo ajusta sus actitudes hacia el producto (Bem, 1972; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Este efecto se debilita cuando el protagonista de la imagen mental no es el individuo (Anderson, 1983). Cuando la distancia entre la versión actual del individuo y la versión imaginada aumenta demasiado, se produce un proceso de subtipificación (Taylor, 1981) donde se genera una separación de su futuro yo (Parfit, 1971). Por lo tanto, un aumento en la distancia temporal puede llegar a un punto en el cual el individuo ya no tiene la capacidad de imaginarse con el producto.

Para asignarle valor a un objeto, el individuo primero debe relacionarlo con el valor de otros objetos (Ariely, 2010). Lo mismo ocurre con el tiempo. El ser humano nace con un “reloj” interno cuya velocidad es determinada por más de un factor (Ulrich et al., 2006). La noción del tiempo se elabora a partir de la confianza en la idea de que todas las actividades tienen una duración y pueden ordenarse de forma secuencial (Fraisse, 1984). Le Poidevin (2013) se cuestiona sobre como las personas perciben el tiempo comparando el tiempo con estímulos que pueden percibirse mediante los sentidos, y concluye que lo que las personas realmente notan es el cambio de estados en el tiempo y la relación temporal entre ellos.

Hipótesis 3: Un aumento en la distancia temporal de un lanzamiento afecta positivamente

los niveles de incertidumbre.

Un individuo puede esperar que un suceso se concrete en un determinado intervalo de tiempo de acuerdo con sus aprendizajes sobre ese suceso. Las expectativas son adaptativas y cambian en base a la información que se recolecta con el tiempo (Evans & Honkapohja, 2012).

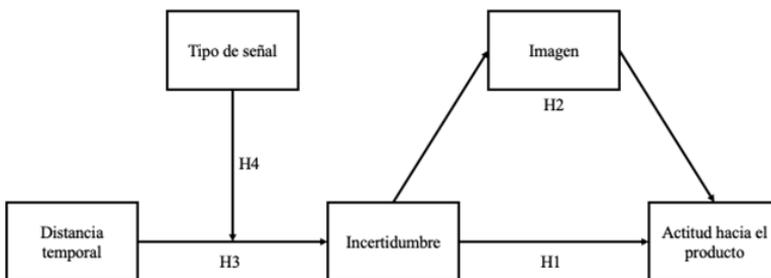
Las personas siempre están recibiendo información en forma de señales que luego interpretan para entender mejor la concepción de las cosas. Estas señales pueden venir en la forma de mensajes verbales y no verbales. Por ejemplo, las marcas de lujo suelen mantener cerradas las puertas de sus tiendas para distanciarse con los consumidores y señalar su carácter exclusivo (Debenedetti, 2021). Como se comunique un mensaje puede terminar por cambiar la interpretación del cliente y su posterior respuesta. Cuando los mensajes se transmiten de forma verbal, la elección de palabras puede ser importantísima para interpretar su significado. Por ejemplo, no es igual enfocar un mensaje en términos de ganancias que en potenciales pérdidas (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Lagomarsino & Lemarié (2022) usan dos señales verbales distintas para mostrar cómo aun cuando se transmiten mensajes similares la actitud hacia un anuncio puede resultar siendo muy distinta. Un momento en el tiempo puede comunicarse directamente mediante una fecha o a través de un indicador temporal (e.g., “próximamente en cines”). Al usar un indicador temporal el individuo tiene libertad para estimar el instante de tiempo al que apunta el indicador. Sus estimaciones estarían influenciadas por toda la información que reúne respecto al suceso junto a su propia percepción del tiempo. Dependiendo del tipo de señalización con la que se comunique el momento de un lanzamiento, la distancia temporal tendría un efecto distinto. Esto porque la percepción del individuo tendría influencias sobre la distancia esperada hasta el lanzamiento.

Hipótesis 4: El tipo de señal modera la relación entre la distancia temporal del lanzamiento y los niveles de incertidumbre.

METODOLOGÍA

El propósito de esta investigación es el de cuantificar el efecto que tienen distintos niveles de incertidumbre en enunciados que anuncian un lanzamiento sobre la valoración del producto. Luego, entender los mecanismos que operan para que el efecto ocurra. Se realizan dos estudios, un pretest con el fin de determinar que enunciados pueden ser usados en el estudio principal y el estudio principal para probar las hipótesis propuestas. El modelo a investigar se presenta en la Figura 1.

Figura 1. Modelo de investigación



Pretest

Se realiza un primer estudio con el objetivo de determinar la posición temporal que le asigna una persona a un lanzamiento luego de exponerse a una señal verbal. Para ello se muestra uno de cuatro anuncios de forma aleatoria y se pide a los participantes que estimen el tiempo hasta su lanzamiento en meses. Los estímulos están disponibles en el Apéndice 2, Figura 2. Se trata de un diseño experimental simple que usa un factor con cuatro niveles. Se utilizan los enunciados: “enseguida en tiendas”, “pronto en tiendas”, “luego en tiendas” y “más tarde en tiendas”. Luego, se pide que ordenen los cuatro enunciados de mayor cercanía a menor cercanía.

Se utilizan cuatro anuncios para el lanzamiento de un celular de marca Samsung. Se seleccionó esta categoría de producto porque su consumo es transversal en la población objetivo. Mujeres y hombres de distintas edades ocupan celulares como parte de su cotidianidad. Para el año 2021, el número de usuarios de telefonía móvil en Chile era de 26,5 millones (SUBTEL, 2022). Es decir que, en promedio, cada persona tenía 1,3 celulares para el año 2021. La selección de la marca Samsung fue elegida porque las personas no tienen asociaciones sobre las fechas de sus lanzamientos (como ocurre con Apple), lo que les permite calcular el tiempo hasta el lanzamiento con libertad.

Resultados

Un cuestionario online autoadministrado fue llenado por 124 personas en Chile. Luego de eliminar observaciones por respuestas incompletas se obtuvo un total de 90 respuestas. La edad de los participantes se encuentra entre 18 y 60 años (52% mujeres). El orden temporal promedio para cada indicador temporal es consistente con la distancia promedio en meses que los participantes le atribuyen al lanzamiento luego de estar frente al estímulo. En orden del más cercano al más lejano: “Enseguida en tiendas” (2,8 meses), “Pronto en tiendas” (3,2 meses), “Luego en tiendas” (3,9 meses) y “Más tarde en tiendas” (4 meses). Se realiza un ANOVA usando como factor el indicador temporal y como variable dependiente el tiempo que el participante cree que queda para el lanzamiento. La distancia en promedio no es significativamente distinta para los cuatro enunciados ($F(3,86) = 1,286, p = 0,284$). Esto puede deberse a que las expectativas que tienen los participantes para la distancia temporal del lanzamiento se construyen a partir de factores aislados del enunciado, como la categoría de producto en cuestión. Con ello, puede intuirse que los participantes esperan que los lanzamientos de celulares ocurran entre dos y cuatro meses luego de su anuncio. Para el estudio principal se utilizan el enunciado con mayor cercanía y el enunciado con mayor lejanía: “enseguida en tiendas” y “más tarde en tiendas”, respectivamente.

Estudio principal

Esta investigación es de tipo causal y tiene un diseño experimental factorial 2x2. A los participantes del estudio se les presenta de manera aleatoria uno de los siguientes cuatro enunciados: “enseguida en tiendas”, “mayo 2023”, “más tarde en tiendas” y “diciembre 2023”. Los primeros dos enunciados se perciben como cercanos mientras que los últimos dos enunciados son percibidos como lejanos. La forma en la que se señala el momento del lanzamiento es mediante un indicador temporal para “enseguida en tiendas” y “más tarde en tiendas”. Por el contrario, la forma en la que se señala el momento del lanzamiento para los enunciados de “mayo 2023” y “diciembre de 2023” es a través de comunicar el mes del lanzamiento directamente. Los estímulos están disponibles en el Apéndice 2, Figuras 3 y 4.

Se añade además un enunciado que señala que el producto se encuentra ya disponible para consumo para determinar si existe un nivel basal de incertidumbre. El enunciado “Ya en tiendas” se usa como grupo de control y los datos correspondientes se excluyen de los

análisis principales pero serán usados para comparar diferentes lejanías.

Luego de exponerse al estímulo, se les pide a los participantes que se imaginen a sí mismos usando el producto. A continuación, se les pregunta sobre la complejidad de la representación, su valoración hacia el producto y la incertidumbre asociada a él. Finalmente, responden una serie de preguntas que permitirían conocer su grado de tolerancia a la incertidumbre y caracterizar la muestra.

Medidas

La Distancia Temporal es manipulada a través de los estímulos (0 para “Enseguida en tiendas” y “Mayo 2023”; 1 para “Más tarde en tiendas” y “Diciembre 2023”). El Tipo de Señal también es manipulado a través de los estímulos (0 para “Mayo 2023” y “Diciembre 2023”; 1 para “Más tarde en tiendas” y “Enseguida en tiendas”). Para medir la variable “Imagen” se utilizarán 8 ítems de la escala de Fitzgerald & Broadbridge (2013) que mide la capacidad que tiene una persona de viajar en el tiempo a través de imágenes mentales. Se pidió a los encuestados que seleccionaran todos los ítems que aplicaran a su caso. El efecto sobre las actitudes será mayor en personas con una imagen más detallada. Se asigna a cada ítem el valor de uno y la complejidad de la imagen se construye a partir de la suma que se obtiene. Para cuantificar la “Actitud hacia el Producto” del encuestado, se utilizaron los 6 ítems de Ketelaar et al. (2018) en escala Likert de 7 puntos ($\alpha = 0,826$). Se construyó una escala de Likert de siete puntos con cinco preguntas enfocadas en la información disponible. Una puntuación alta en cualquiera de los puntos implica un menor nivel de incertidumbre en ese factor. Sin embargo, se reversaron los ítems para promediarlos y formar la variable “Incertidumbre” ($\alpha = 0,824$). Los ítems de las escalas para Imagen, Actitud hacia el Producto e Incertidumbre están disponibles en el Apéndice 1.

Resultados

El análisis de datos se realizó mediante el software SPSS. El análisis se realiza en dos partes usando la macro PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004): se usará el modelo 4 para probar las hipótesis 1 y 2, y el modelo 1 para probar las hipótesis 3 y 4.

La encuesta fue respondida por 257 personas pero se eliminaron 59 registros correspondientes a individuos que no respondieron correctamente la pregunta de filtro. La muestra se compone de 198 instrumentos válidos (40% mujeres). El rango de edades va desde 18 años a 70 años, pero no existen diferencias significativas de edades entre las distintas condiciones ($p = 0,475$). 48 participantes cayeron en la condición “Ya en tiendas”, por lo que los análisis para testear las hipótesis 3 y 4 se realizan con los 150 participantes restantes. La encuesta fue tomada en febrero de 2023, por lo que la distancia real con los estímulos con fechas es de 0 para “Ya en tiendas”, 2 meses para “mayo 2023” y 9 meses para “diciembre 2023”. En cuanto a los indicadores temporales, el promedio de distancia temporal percibida fue de 2,8 meses para “Enseguida en tiendas” y 6,9 meses para “Más tarde en tiendas”.

Usando el modelo 4 de la macro PROCESS, se realizó un análisis de mediación a través de un bootstrap con 5.000 muestras e intervalos de confianza al 95% para encontrar que Imagen media la relación entre Incertidumbre y Actitud ($b = -0,0284$, IC $[-0,0542, -0,0084]$). Esta mediación es parcial, puesto que el efecto directo entre Incertidumbre y Actitud es significativo ($b = -0,12$, $p < 0,001$, IC $[-0,1881, -0,0519]$). Estos resultados soportan las

hipótesis 1 y 2. La Incertidumbre tiene un efecto negativo sobre la Actitud y esta relación es mediada parcialmente por la capacidad de imaginarse el producto (Imagen). Excluyendo los participantes de la condición “Ya en tiendas” (por lo tanto, $n = 150$), se utilizó un análisis ANOVA usando Incertidumbre como variable dependiente y Distancia Temporal y Tipo de Señal como variables independientes, y el modelo 1 de PROCESS para testear la moderación del Tipo de Señal en la relación entre Distancia Temporal e Incertidumbre. Se observa un efecto principal entre Distancia Temporal e Incertidumbre ($F(1,149) = 9,524$, $p = 0,002$), de manera que cuando aumenta la distancia temporal, aumenta la incertidumbre ($b = 1,0953$, $p = 0,0004$). Sin embargo, no hay un efecto principal entre Señal e Incertidumbre ($F(1,149) = 3,481$, $p = 0,064$). Por último, existe una interacción significativa entre Señal y Distancia Temporal ($F(1,149) = 5,109$, $p = 0,025$), de manera que usar indicadores temporales debilita la Incertidumbre generada por una mayor Distancia Temporal ($b = -0,8657$, $p = 0,0486$). En efecto, cuando se utilizan fechas, el efecto de la Distancia Temporal en la Incertidumbre es significativo ($b = 1,0953$, $p = 0,004$), pero cuando se utilizan indicadores temporales, el efecto deja de ser significativo ($b = 0,2295$, $p = 0,4685$). Estos resultados soportan las hipótesis 3 y 4. La Distancia Temporal afecta la Incertidumbre siempre y cuando se haga a través de fechas concretas. Cuando la distancia temporal se refleja en indicadores temporales, la Distancia Temporal no tiene un efecto sobre la Incertidumbre.

Resultados auxiliares

Al comparar las medias para el nivel de incertidumbre entre el grupo de control (condición “ya en tiendas”) y los grupos con distintas lejanías, se encuentra que si bien en los tres grupos existe incertidumbre no todas las diferencias son significativas. El grupo que presenta en promedio un menor nivel de incertidumbre corresponde a los participantes que se expusieron al lanzamiento sin distancia temporal ($M_{\text{sin distancia}} = 3,17$). Luego de este viene el grupo que fue expuesto a un lanzamiento cercano ($M_{\text{cercano}} = 3,50$) y lo sigue el grupo al que se le mostraron lanzamientos lejanos ($M_{\text{lejanos}} = 4,17$). Estos resultados son consistentes con lo observado en los análisis anteriores donde la incertidumbre aumenta en función de la distancia temporal.

La diferencia entre el grupo de control y el grupo expuesto a un lanzamiento cercano no es significativa ($p = 0,19$). Las diferencias entre el grupo de control y el grupo expuesto a un lanzamiento lejano sí son significativas ($p < 0,001$). Esto podría deberse a que buena parte de la incertidumbre presente en el lanzamiento de menor distancia se debe a elementos que se desconocen del producto que no pueden conocerse hasta su consumo y que también se encuentran presentes en el lanzamiento cuando no hay distancia temporal. Así, la incertidumbre que existe en este lanzamiento podría no estar explicada por el momento del lanzamiento sino por otros factores. Sin embargo, en el futuro más lejano, más componentes móviles implican mayor incertidumbre, lo que también está en línea con lo encontrado en respecto de la relación entre Distancia Temporal e Incertidumbre (hipótesis 3).

DISCUSIÓN

Los resultados muestran que existe una relación causal entre la proximidad del lanzamiento y los niveles de incertidumbre. Lanzamientos lejanos tendrían niveles de incertidumbre más altos que lanzamientos cercanos. Esto tiene sentido en la medida que la brecha entre lo que se conoce y no para tomar una decisión crece (Ben-Haim, 2004). Es más difícil para los individuos saber que tan satisfechos se encontrarán con el producto y si tomarían la decisión de comprarlo cuando el momento en el que estará disponible se encuentra distante.

Se observa que el tipo de señal funciona como un moderador para el efecto de la proximidad sobre la incertidumbre. El efecto de la distancia es mayor cuando además ocurre que el momento del lanzamiento se comunica mediante una fecha en lugar de un indicador temporal. Es decir, cuando el encuestado no puede especular sobre el momento del lanzamiento el efecto de la distancia es mayor. Esto puede deberse a que al permitir que el individuo defina un instante en base a sus propias expectativas, el mismo incluye en su cálculo la fecha que considera óptima para el lanzamiento de un producto con las características que puede observar en el anuncio. Este instante podría no ser el mismo para el ofertante y para sus clientes. Así, al usar un indicador temporal el ofertante estaría asegurándose de que el momento que las personas definan para el lanzamiento se encuentre en un rango considerado aceptable para ellos.

Por otro lado, aun cuando al usar un indicador temporal existe incertidumbre asociada al momento del lanzamiento los niveles de incertidumbre que son registrados disminuyen. Esto puede ocasionarse porque al usar un indicador temporal la incertidumbre se enfoca solo en el momento del lanzamiento. En cambio, al distanciar el lanzamiento el número de variables que se vuelven inciertas crece en la medida que se aleja en el tiempo. Como el indicador temporal previene al lanzamiento de encontrarse demasiado distante en el tiempo, el número total de variables inciertas disminuye. El indicador temporal evita que la incertidumbre crezca. Esto último indicaría que la incertidumbre también puede ser usada para abrir el espacio donde la persona pueda usar sus recursos para llegar a una respuesta.

También se encontró que no existen diferencias significativas entre un lanzamiento cercano y un lanzamiento sin distanciamiento temporal para los niveles de incertidumbre. Esto concuerda con lo establecido por Kalish (1985) que postula que hay al menos un nivel base de incertidumbre que no puede ser resuelto hasta probar el producto. Si se define un momento lo suficientemente cercano para lanzar un nuevo producto, los niveles de incertidumbre pueden mantenerse con pocas alteraciones.

Existe además una relación causal entre el nivel de incertidumbre y la actitud del individuo hacia el producto. Al incrementar la incertidumbre la actitud se vuelve menos positiva. Este efecto opera mediante alteraciones en la complejidad de la imagen mental. Cuando la representación mental creada por la imaginación es menos compleja, la actitud es menos positiva. Los resultados son consistentes con lo establecido por Gregory et al. (1982), donde es más probable que un producto sea consumido luego de que el consumidor se imaginara primero con él. Que el individuo se imagine con el producto lo obliga a mejorar también su actitud. Tener menos información hace más difícil construir una representación mental en donde se encuentre con el producto. Por lo tanto, mayores niveles de incertidumbre reducen la complejidad de las representaciones. Como establecen Lee & Qiu (2009), los cambios en la actitud del individuo se logran solo cuando la imagen es lo suficientemente detallada. De esto se desprende que menor proximidad en la fecha del lanzamiento tendría como consecuencia una actitud más negativa. Sin embargo, los resultados muestran que esto solo es así cuando se establecen fechas en lugar de indicadores temporales. Al usar indicadores temporales no se le permite a la incertidumbre crecer lo suficiente y al no experimentar variaciones importantes la actitud debiese mantenerse en un nivel cercano al de no haber distancia.

Limitaciones

En esta investigación se establece la importancia de imaginarse con el producto para mediar el efecto de la incertidumbre sobre la actitud. A los participantes del estudio se les dio la tarea explícita de imaginarse con el producto, pero no hay como estar seguros de si al quitar esta instrucción alguna de las combinaciones pueda generar por si sola una imagen mental que pueda traducirse en mejoras de la actitud. Aun cuando se produzca la imagen mental, el individuo podría no ser el protagonista de la representación lo que podría alterar el efecto final sobre la actitud (Anderson, 1983).

Implicancias y futuros estudios

En esta investigación se exploran formas de alterar las expectativas del cliente sobre elementos no relacionados directamente con el producto y como estos pueden repercutir en la actitud del individuo. Aun cuando una marca no tiene control sobre todos los elementos que el cliente utiliza para generar expectativas, si puede influir sobre cómo interpreta la información alterando factores como la manera en la que es comunicada. En particular, se usa el tiempo como elemento variable y se encuentra que es más conveniente establecer momentos cercanos en la medida que la incertidumbre crezca junto a la distancia. Ocupar indicadores temporales le permite al individuo usar sus recursos para llegar a una respuesta en cuanto al momento del lanzamiento. Ambos factores pueden ser decididos por la marca y demostraron ser útiles para alterar la actitud del cliente.

Sería interesante explorar si existen formas en las que la incertidumbre que se produce a partir de la distancia temporal pueda ser compensada. Si bien puede ser imposible eliminar por completo la incertidumbre asociada a un producto completamente nuevo, en condiciones adecuadas podría ocurrir que la incertidumbre alcance su nivel más bajo.

Estudiar los indicadores temporales con mayor profundidad podría ser de utilidad para lograr un efecto aún más positivo en la actitud. Podría encontrarse que para ciertos segmentos un indicador temporal en específico sea mejor recibido u opere con mayor eficacia en lograr el objetivo de señalar un momento óptimo para el lanzamiento de un nuevo producto.

Los resultados de este estudio motivan a investigar sobre formas en donde la tarea imaginaria se ocasione naturalmente, forzando al individuo a modificar sus creencias en base a las representaciones que construye. Queda por estudiar variables que vuelvan a la imaginación más vivida, así como que le permitan al individuo identificarse en mayor medida con el protagonista de su representación.

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APÉNDICE 1: ESCALAS

Imagen (Fitzgerald & Broadbridge, 2013)

- › Ver el evento en su mente
- › Ver el evento en primera persona
- › Verse a usted o a otras personas hablando
- › Escuchar el evento en su mente
- › Sentir emociones asociadas al evento
- › Sentir como si viajara en el tiempo al momento del evento
- › Ver detalles del evento
- › Ver el lugar del evento

Incertidumbre

- › Puedo decidir hoy mismo con la información que tengo si comprar o no el producto.
- › En este momento y sin haber usado el producto, puedo determinar qué tan satisfecho estaré con él.
- › Sé cuándo usare más el producto.
- › Sé cómo usare más el producto.
- › Sé que usos le daré al producto

Actitud hacia el producto (Ketelaar et al., 2018)

- › Estoy interesado en el producto
- › Quiero probar el producto
- › Quiero comprar el producto
- › El producto es de calidad
- › El producto es mejor que el promedio
- › Es un buen producto

APÉNDICE 2: ESTÍMULOS

Figura 2. Estímulos del pretest



Figura 3. Estímulos del estudio principal con indicadores temporales



Figura 4. Estímulos del estudio principal con fechas



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Keywords: Brand hypocrisy, Brand equity, Systematic literature review.

Received: 2023 | **Accepted:** 2024 | **Available online:** 2025

Cite this article as: Beltrán, C., & Barrera Legorburu, L. (2025). *Brand Hypocrisy and Brand Equity: A Review and Future Research Agenda*. *Estudios de Administración*, 30 (2), 46–70.

<https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0816.2023.79985>

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the phenomenon of brand hypocrisy and its impact on brand equity within marketing—a pressing issue for brands aiming to uphold consumer trust and authenticity. The study synthesizes and analyzes significant theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to clarify how these constructs influence consumer behavior and brand value. Twenty peer-reviewed articles were sourced from the Web of Science and Scopus databases; after a rigorous screening process, seven studies were selected for in-depth analysis. The review utilized bibliometric analysis and co-occurrence mapping to pinpoint influential studies, key themes, and trends across various regions. Results indicate that brand hypocrisy, as a multidimensional construct, critically undermines consumer trust, loyalty, and brand equity. The analysis highlights a predominant reliance on quantitative methodologies within the literature, suggesting an opportunity for qualitative and mixed method approaches that could offer deeper insights into consumers' emotional responses to brand hypocrisy. The findings also emphasize the need to consider cultural, generational, and geographic differences in consumer reactions, and to investigate the roles of mediators and moderators—such as brand transparency and consumer values, shaping the effects of perceived hypocrisy on brand equity. The review concludes by outlining a future research agenda, advocating methodological diversity and broader contextual analysis to fully capture the complex dynamics of brand hypocrisy. These insights provide a valuable foundation for both scholars and practitioners looking to mitigate the adverse effects of brand hypocrisy and strengthen brand equity in today's conscientious market landscape.

Keywords: brand hypocrisy, brand equity, systematic literature review.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic realm of modern business, brands are consistently under pressure to establish authenticity and build loyal consumer relationships, particularly as consumer expectations evolve towards greater accountability and ethical responsibility (Gabrielli et al., 2021; Xiao, Wang, & Guo, 2022; Aaker, 1996). Brand equity, a strategic asset pivotal in differentiating a brand from its competitors, is profoundly influenced by perceptions of authenticity and trust (Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Zollo et al., 2020). However, a significant challenge arises with the phenomenon of brand hypocrisy, where discrepancies between a brand's claimed values and its actions lead consumers to question the brand's sincerity (Cheah et al., 2023; Erol, 2024; Li, 2022). Recent studies suggest that brand hypocrisy, especially prevalent in areas involving corporate social responsibility (CSR), can severely damage a brand's equity by eroding consumer trust and loyalty (Guèvremont, 2019; Lee et al., 2023; Xiao et al., 2022).

Consumer behavior is increasingly influenced by a heightened awareness of social issues (Altaf et al., 2017), prompting brands to align their messaging with sustainable and ethical practices (Kumar & Kaushik, 2018). Yet, this shift brings a new set of risks, as brands failing to meet these expectations are often seen as hypocritical, leading to adverse outcomes like brand avoidance and negative word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Gabrielli et al., 2021; Zollo et al., 2020). These effects highlight the need for brands to maintain consistent and genuine communication strategies to uphold consumer trust and, by extension, their brand equity (Datta et al., 2016).

Despite a substantial body of research affirming the impact of authentic brand communication on brand equity (Altaf et al., 2017; Beverland & Farrelly, 2009; Datta et al., 2016; Zollo et al., 2020), empirical studies directly addressing the specific intersection between brand hypocrisy and brand equity remain limited, particularly in certain high-stakes contexts like CSR or brand activism (Lee et al., 2023). Prior studies have extensively validated the role of authenticity in strengthening brand loyalty and perceived quality (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). Research demonstrates that brand authenticity contributes positively to brand equity by enhancing consumer trust and reinforcing favorable brand associations (Gabrielli et al., 2021; Spry, Pappu, & Bettina, 2011).

However, while studies in fields like CSR and ethical branding underscore the repercussions of perceived insincerity on consumer attitudes (Gabrielli et al., 2021; Zollo et al., 2020), few have rigorously investigated how explicit perceptions of brand hypocrisy might uniquely erode brand equity across varying contexts (Cheah, Shimul, & Teah, 2023; Xiao et al., 2022). This gap suggests that while the general dynamics between authenticity and brand equity are well-documented, the nuances of how perceived hypocrisy—especially in domains where brands champion social or environmental values—affects brand equity, warrants deeper exploration.

This systematic literature review seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How can we systematize and describe the advancements in the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity, considering key studies, authors, affiliations, and prevalent themes in literature?

RQ2: In which specific contexts (e.g., CSR, brand activism, luxury branding) has the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity been studied?

RQ3: What are the most applied methodological approaches in the literature on brand hypocrisy and brand equity, and how could alternative methods, such as qualitative or longitudinal studies, enhance the findings?

RQ4: What gaps have been identified in the current research, and what directions for future studies would help deepen our understanding of the consumer-brand relationship in the context of perceived brand hypocrisy?

This review explores the conceptualization and application of brand hypocrisy and brand equity in the field of marketing. Through a synthesis of existing models and empirical studies, we will analyze how these constructs have been measured and evaluated, as well as identify the impact of factors such as consumer consciousness, brand behaviors, and the rise of socially conscious consumers on brand trust and loyalty (Guèvremont, 2019; Lee et al., 2023; Z. Xiao et al., 2022).

Finally, this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides definitions of brand hypocrisy and brand equity found in the literature. This is followed by a detailed description of the methodology used in the review in Section 3. In Sections 4 and 5, the findings of the study are presented, while Section 6 presents the gaps and future research directions. Finally, Section 7 concludes the paper, addressing practical and theoretical implications and limitations of this study.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Brand Hypocrisy

Brand hypocrisy is a critical construct in contemporary marketing (Cheah et al., 2022), defined as the perceived inconsistency between a brand's publicly stated values and its actual practices (Guèvremont, 2019). This perception arises when consumers detect a gap between what a brand professes—particularly regarding ethical, social, or environmental commitments—and how it behaves, leading to a sense of deceit or insincerity (Guèvremont, 2019; Cheah, Shimul, & Teah, 2023). The conceptualization of brand hypocrisy builds upon psychological theories of moral and ethical consistency, where consumers expect brands to exhibit congruent behavior across their communications and actions (Alicke, Gordon, & Rose, 2013; Barden et al., 2005). When brands fall short of these expectations, particularly in high-stakes areas like corporate social responsibility (CSR) or social causes, consumers may interpret this as an intentional attempt to manipulate or deceive, viewing it not merely as an operational failure but as a moral failing (Erol, 2023; Fassin & Buelens, 2011). This perceived misalignment has significant implications, as it undermines consumer trust and authenticity, two foundational elements in building brand equity and loyalty (A. C. Chen, 2001; Lee et al., 2023).

Alicke et al. (2013) suggest that Hypocrisy is complex and doesn't always stem from a deliberate attempt to deceive. Even when a brand is transparent, contradictory behaviors can still evoke perceptions of hypocrisy (Cheah et al., 2022). For instance, a brand may openly acknowledge past mistakes but, in promoting values that diverge from its historical actions, might still be perceived as hypocritical (Fassin & Buelens, 2011; Guèvremont, 2019).

Additionally, the expectation that a brand's behavior should align with its declared principles is central to the concept of brand hypocrisy (Guèvremont, 2019). When this alignment is missing, consumers often feel betrayed, leading to negative consequences such as reduced trust, brand avoidance, and negative word-of-mouth. Unlike traditional corporate missteps, which may be attributed to operational issues, brand hypocrisy is seen as striking at the core of a brand's identity and values, making it particularly damaging as it signifies dishonesty or manipulation in the eyes of consumers (A. C. Chen, 2001; Erol, 2023).

Consumers today, especially those attuned to social and environmental values, are highly vigilant in evaluating brand authenticity. For instance, brands that advocate for environmental sustainability but engage in harmful practices or promote inclusivity without supporting diverse communities are often quickly called out (Gabrielli et al., 2021; Z. Xiao et al., 2022). This growing awareness, fueled by social media and increased information accessibility, has amplified scrutiny, making it challenging for brands to avoid backlash when their actions diverge from their stated values (Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell, 2011). Consequently, brands must carefully navigate the balance between advocacy and authenticity (Veloutsou & Guzman, 2017), ensuring that their actions consistently align with their messages to maintain consumer trust and safeguard brand equity (Lee et al., 2023).

1.2. *Brand Equity*

Brand equity (BEq) is a multifaceted concept shaped by perceptions of a brand's image, quality, reputation, and the sense of community it fosters among customers (Datta, Ailawadi et al., 2017; Yang, 2020). Scholars have approached BEq from two primary perspectives: financially based brand equity and customer-based brand equity (CBBE) (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2003). For this study, we emphasize CBBE, as it offers significant insights into the marketing field by examining how consumer perceptions drive brand value (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013).

The concept of BEq was formally introduced by Farquhar (1989), who defined it as the "added value" a brand confers on a product. This additional value, according to Farquhar, strengthens business by fostering consumer engagement with the brand, leading to increased recognition and brand preference. Consumers who recognize a brand's influence are more likely to choose it over others and exhibit a willingness to pay premium prices for it indicating that "a brand enhances the value of a product beyond its functional purpose" (; Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996; Farquhar, 1989).

Building on this foundation, Aaker (1991) described BEq as a collection of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, which can generate value for both customers and businesses. Keller (1993) further expanded on this idea by developing the concept of CBBE, framing it as the "differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand". Keller's model underscores how identical marketing efforts can yield diverse customer reactions depending on brand knowledge, highlighting the construct's impact on CBBE. This model has been further refined by contributions from other scholars, including Netemeyer, Krishnan et al. (2004), and Yoo & Donthu (2001).

Rust (2000) later characterized BEq as a subjective, intangible assessment that consumers hold toward a brand, which goes beyond its functional attributes. BEq can thus embody

consumers' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors associated with the brand, ultimately enhancing its market share and competitive advantages (Lin, 2015). Notably, while brand value typically refers to the brand's financial contribution to the company, BEq encompasses broader, consumer-attributed importance beyond mere financial impact (Chen, 2001).

Since Farquhar's initial work, BEq has evolved into a fundamental construct in both marketing theory and strategic business practice (Zollo et al., 2020). As consumer interactions with brands have diversified, emerging dimensions such as sustainability, social media engagement, and online brand communities have broadened the BEq concept, leading to new variants like Green BEq (Chen, 2010) and online BEq (Rana, Bhat et al., 2015; Rezaei & Valaei, 2017; Veloutsou & Guzman, 2017).

1.3. *Brand Hypocrisy and Brand Equity*

The intersection of brand hypocrisy and brand equity has gained significant attention in contemporary marketing research, as the implications of perceived brand incongruence increasingly affect consumer trust and loyalty (Erol, 2023). When a brand's actions are perceived as misaligned with its statements or social responsibilities, the resultant perception of hypocrisy can lead to a deterioration in brand equity (Lee et al., 2023), a construct that encompasses consumers' overall perceptions and attitudes toward a brand, ultimately impacting loyalty and willingness to engage (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996).

Brand equity, as posited by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), is traditionally seen as a multi-dimensional construct, including perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand associations, and brand awareness. Within this framework, brand hypocrisy can act as a negative antecedent, directly eroding each of these dimensions (Cheah et al., 2022). When a brand is accused of hypocrisy—such as promoting environmental sustainability while engaging in environmentally harmful practices, consumer perceptions of quality and trustworthiness can sharply decline (Guèvremont, 2019). Studies have shown that brand hypocrisy triggers adverse consumer responses, such as reduced brand loyalty and negative word-of-mouth (Erol, 2023), which are key factors diminishing brand equity (Lee et al., 2023).

Furthermore, brand associations, which contribute to a brand's overall image, are also at risk (Guèvremont, 2019). Consumers who perceive a brand as hypocritical are likely to form negative associations, linking the brand to dishonesty or opportunism (Fassin & Buelens, 2011; Barden et al., 2005). This shift in perception can diminish the emotional connection that consumers have with the brand (Lee et al., 2023), which is essential for building strong brand equity over time (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Additionally, the impact of brand hypocrisy on brand equity is particularly pronounced in today's socially conscious marketplace, where consumers are increasingly holding brands accountable for their actions (Gabielli et al., 2021). Brands that fail to authentically engage with the values they promote are at greater risk of consumer backlash, which can lead to brand avoidance, negative word-of-mouth, and a decline in market share (Lee et al., 2023; Gabielli et al., 2021), key indicators of weakened brand equity (Keller, 1993; Yoo et al., 2000).

2. Methodology

This study conducts a hybrid literature review followed a rigorous protocol inspired by guidance from Paul & Criado, (2020) and Xiao & Watson, (2019) integrating a bibliometric analysis with a structured systematic review. This combined approach allows for a comprehensive synthesis of research findings on brand hypocrisy and brand equity, providing both a meta-level overview and an exploration of gaps where further research is needed. By doing so, we aim to present evidence to address specific research questions, outline the historical development of the field, and identify avenues for future studies on this topic (Fisch & Block, 2018).

2.1 *Bibliometric and Social Network Analysis*

To capture the leading trends and academic landscape surrounding brand hypocrisy and brand equity, this study employs a bibliometric review. Bibliometric methods, which involve the quantitative analysis of scientific publications, enable a structured examination of the evolution and patterns within this area of study (Kamran, Khan, et al., 2020). In line with Donthu, Kumar, et al. (2021), our bibliometric analysis comprises two core steps: (1) a performance analysis that examines the global development of research on brand hypocrisy and brand equity by tracking the number of publications, citations, and authorship by geographical region and source, and (2) science mapping, which uses Social Network Analysis (SNA) to visualize and represent connections between topics within the literature (Callon, Courtial, et al., 1983; Chen, et al., 2016). Data analysis was conducted using VOSviewer (version 1.6.15) to map co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence networks. By applying VOSviewer to the Web of Science database, this study provides insights into the structure of research in this field, highlighting key contributors, foundational studies, and dominant research topics.

2.2 *Systematic Review*

Following the bibliometric analysis, a systematic review of the principal documents identified in the bibliographic coupling network was conducted. This review sought to address primary topics, common methodological frameworks, and the predominant theories and contexts linked to brand hypocrisy and brand equity. By synthesizing these findings, we aim to highlight existing knowledge gaps and establish a research agenda focusing on the conceptual and empirical advances within this field. A systematic literature review provides a rigorous, replicable method to appraise and consolidate research, creating a solid foundation for theory development and practical recommendations (Callahan, 2014; Snyder, 2019).

This systematic literature review (SLR) followed a rigorous protocol inspired by guidance from Xiao & Watson, (2019) and a structured approach detailed in Figure 1. The review was carried out in three key stages: planning, conducting, and reporting, each consisting of specific steps to ensure a thorough and replicable process for analyzing literature on brand hypocrisy and brand equity.

2.2.1 *Planning the Review*

The systematic literature review (SLR) conducted for brand hypocrisy and brand equity follows a structured and replicable process based on established guidelines for conducting SLRs. The review was planned and executed to address the main research question: How

can we systematize and describe the advancements in the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity, considering key studies, authors, affiliations, and prevalent themes in literature? This primary question was divided into sub-questions focusing on the evolution of definitions, influential factors, industries studied, and proposed mitigation strategies for brand hypocrisy.

The planning stage involved developing a review protocol that outlined the steps for conducting the review, including the formulation of inclusion and exclusion criteria, database selection, search strategy, and data extraction methods. This protocol was validated by independent experts to ensure its alignment with best practices and the study's objectives.

2.2.2 Conducting the Review

We conducted a comprehensive search using major academic databases, Web of Science and Scopus. The search utilized a Boolean equation combining keywords such as “Brand Hypocrisy” AND “Brand Equity” and single “brand hypocrisy”. This ensured coverage across a wide range of relevant literature.

2.2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure relevance, studies were included that focused brand hypocrisy and brand equity contexts, were peer-reviewed journal articles or conference papers, and were available in English. Studies unrelated to brand hypocrisy and brand equity, such as those addressing corporate hypocrisy, as well as non-peer-reviewed materials such as opinion pieces and publications or book chapters, were excluded. This selection process ensured that the focus remained specifically on brand.

2.2.4 Study Selection Process

The study selection process followed a multi-stage approach see Figure 1. First, an initial screening of titles and abstracts was conducted to filter out irrelevant studies. Subsequently, a thorough full-text review of the remaining studies was performed to ensure they met all inclusion criteria. Finally, key information from each study, including theoretical frameworks, contextual details, and main findings, was extracted using a standardized data extraction form.

2.2.5 Quality Assessment

Each study's methodological quality was assessed based on criteria including the clarity of research questions, the appropriateness of research methods, the rigor in data collection and analysis, and the consistency of findings with the stated objectives. Only studies that met these quality criteria were retained in the final dataset.

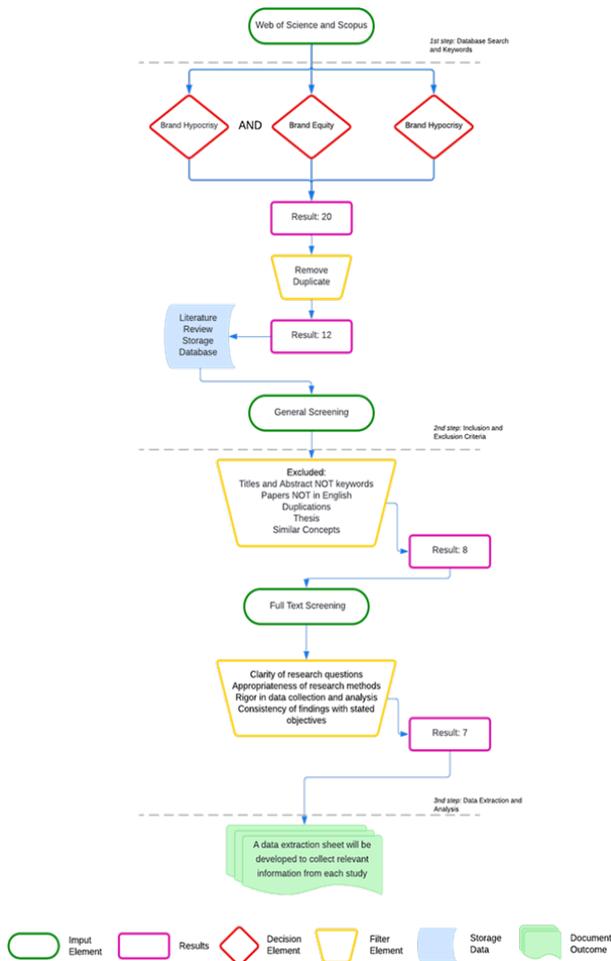
2.2.6 Data Extraction and Analysis

Using a data extraction sheet, we systematically gathered information on each study's

Title Paper, Author, year, Journal, Research Design, Data Collection Metho, Sample Size, Service Sector and Theories or model used. Additionally, we documented the theories or models applied, variables and dimensions related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity, and any identified research gaps.

The data analysis consisted of three stages. First, a descriptive analysis provides a summary of study characteristics, including the number of studies, research methods, and frequently used theories or models in user resistance research. To systematize the information from the selected studies, an Excel data extraction sheet was used, which included detailed fields. Second, Atlas.ti software was employed to conduct in-depth thematic analysis codes like BRAND HYPOCRISY and BRAND EQUITY, a were generated, enabling the identification of patterns and recurring themes in the literature. This combined approach facilitated a thorough analysis and structured data organization, providing a solid foundation for the interpretation and discussion of findings in the Brand field. Finally, a gap analysis highlighted areas with limited empirical support, inconsistent findings, or under-researched topics, allowing us to outline avenues for future research on user resistance.

Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review Process



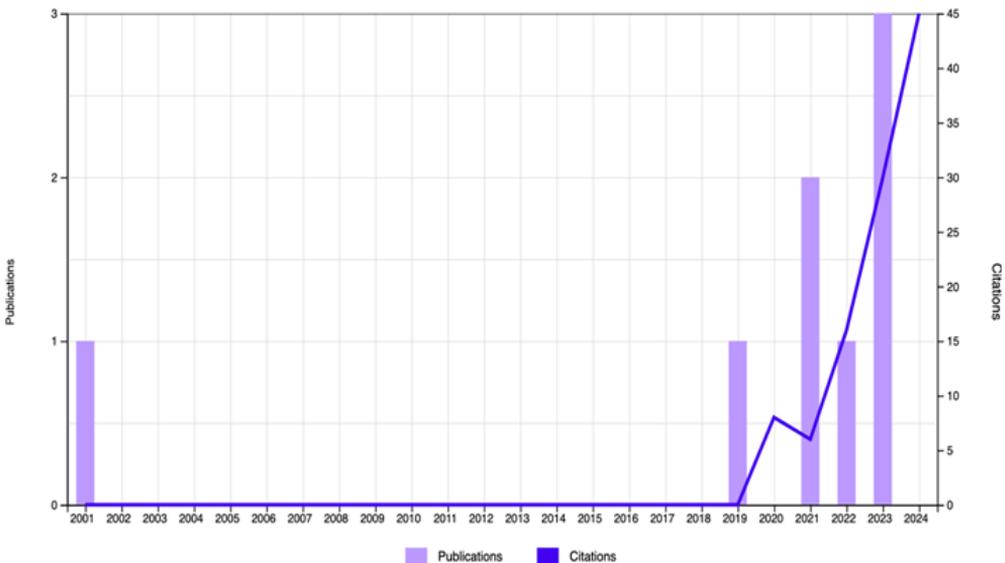
3. Results

3.1. Time Analysis

The time analysis examines the temporal trends and research distribution related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity, highlighting key developments in the field. Research in this area was sporadic, with the first study emerging in 2001, but little activity followed until around 2018. This lack of attention shifted as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand authenticity gained prominence in the marketing discipline, leading to a noticeable increase in publications after 2018. The trend continued to grow steadily, particularly between 2020 and 2023, when research on ethical branding, consumer trust, and brand activism became highly relevant. The rise in studies during this period reflects the growing importance of these issues as brands faced increased scrutiny for their ethical and social stances. As illustrated in Figure 2, this growth in both publications and citations marks a significant increase in academic interest.

The citation trend mirrors this growth, with a sharp increase observed in recent years, signaling that these publications are gaining significant academic influence. Key years such as 2021- and 2023-mark peaks in both publication volume and citations, indicating that the research on brand hypocrisy and brand equity is becoming both more prolific and impactful. This surge in interest is likely driven by consumer demands for greater brand transparency and accountability, particularly as social movements and ethical consumerism shape the market. The upward trend in both publications and citations underscores the importance of these topics in understanding modern consumer-brand relationships, where trust and authenticity are critical for maintaining brand equity. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of these trends, showing the steady rise in publications and citations over time.

Figure 2. Time Analysis



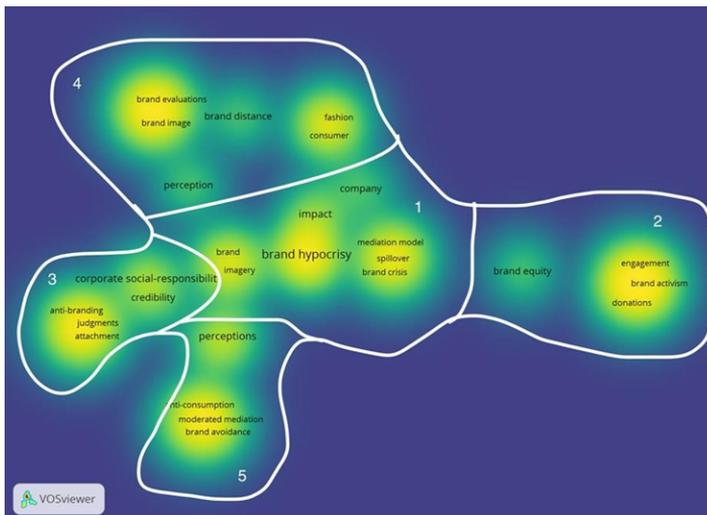
3.2. The co-occurrence analysis of author keywords

The co-occurrence analysis of author keywords, as illustrated in Figure 3, provides a conceptual structure that maps the core themes and interconnected concepts in brand hypocrisy and brand equity research. This visualization reveals the centrality of brand hypocrisy, situated prominently at the core of the network, emphasizing its critical role within literature. Surrounding this core are closely associated terms such as impact, perceptions, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and credibility, indicating that much of the research is centered on understanding how brand hypocrisy influences consumer perceptions and a brand's credibility, especially in CSR contexts.

Further key terms—brand equity, brand distance, and brand evaluations—appear near the central theme, underscoring the interest in how perceived brand hypocrisy affects brand equity over the long term. The presence of terms such as mediation model, spillover, and brand crisis suggest that scholars are investigating the mechanisms through which hypocrisy can trigger brand crises and mediate consumer responses. Additionally, peripheral terms like brand activism, engagement, and donations highlight emerging topics, signaling a growing focus on how brands' social and political engagements shape their consumer relationships in the context of perceived hypocrisy.

This mapping methodology, based on a keywords co-occurrence network, allows for an in- depth examination of the scientific landscape of brand hypocrisy and brand equity. Developed using VOSviewer, the network identifies cluster groups of closely related keywords that automatically form based on their proximity, with possible refinements by authors as needed (Callon, Courtial, et al., 1983; Chen, Chen, et al., 2016). These clusters represent meaningful scientific structures (Van Raan, 2005) and reveal the development and interconnectedness of research themes. A deeper examination of these structures through systematic review further clarifies the dynamics within these clusters, allowing insights into the motivations and mechanisms behind these interrelationships. This bibliometric approach thus highlights the intricate, multifaceted nature of research on brand hypocrisy and brand equity, with a particular emphasis on the influence of consumer and organizational factors.

Figure 3: Clusters and Their Respective Keywords



The keyword co-occurrence image has been divided into several clusters. The central nodes reflect the focal concepts of the network, and these nodes name the respective clusters: brand hypocrisy (28 occurrences), brand equity (15 occurrences), and engagement (12 occurrences). These terms are interconnected and share common variables, providing a joint explanation of how brand perception and consumer reactions are related.

The strength of the link (frequency of co-occurrence of two keywords in the same document) is strongest between brand hypocrisy and corporate social responsibility, followed by the link between brand hypocrisy and brand image, and between brand equity and engagement.

Cluster 1: Brand Hypocrisy and Impact

This cluster centers on the concept of brand hypocrisy, with key terms such as impact, company, mediation model, spillover, and brand crisis. The focus here is on understanding how perceived hypocrisy within a brand can lead to significant negative outcomes, including spillover effects and crises that damage the company's reputation. The mediation models mentioned highlight the pathways through which these impacts are realized, emphasizing the need for brands to align their stated values with their actions to maintain consumer trust and minimize crises.

Cluster 2: Brand Equity and Engagement

The second cluster highlights brand equity, engagement, brand activism, and donations. It explores how brands can build and sustain equity by actively engaging with consumers through social causes and activism. The terms suggest that when brands demonstrate a commitment to societal issues and engage in philanthropic activities, they can foster deeper consumer loyalty and enhance their brand equity. The growing interest in brand activism reflects a shift in consumer expectations, where proactive engagement with social matters can positively influence perceptions of the brand.

Cluster 3: Corporate Social Responsibility and Credibility

This cluster includes terms like corporate social responsibility, credibility, anti-branding, judgments, and attachment. It underscores the role of a brand's social responsibility efforts in establishing or undermining credibility. When brands fail to live up to their ethical commitments, they may face backlash in the form of anti-branding sentiments and negative judgments from consumers. Conversely, credible CSR initiatives can strengthen consumer attachment to the brand, reinforcing positive brand associations.

Cluster 4: Perception and Brand Image

The fourth cluster focuses on perception, brand evaluations, brand image, brand distance, and consumer. It examines how consumer perceptions of brand image and the distance they feel from a brand shape their overall evaluations. The emphasis on brand image highlights the impact of marketing efforts and consumer experiences in forming perceptions that influence purchasing decisions. This cluster shows the interplay between brand image and consumer judgment, crucial for understanding brand strategy effectiveness.

Cluster 5: Negative Consumer Reactions

The final cluster, comprising anti-consumption, moderated mediation, and brand avoidance, delves into adverse consumer responses. It focuses on behaviors where consumers actively reject or avoid brands, often as a reaction to perceived inconsistencies or hypocrisy. The concept of moderate mediation suggests that certain factors may

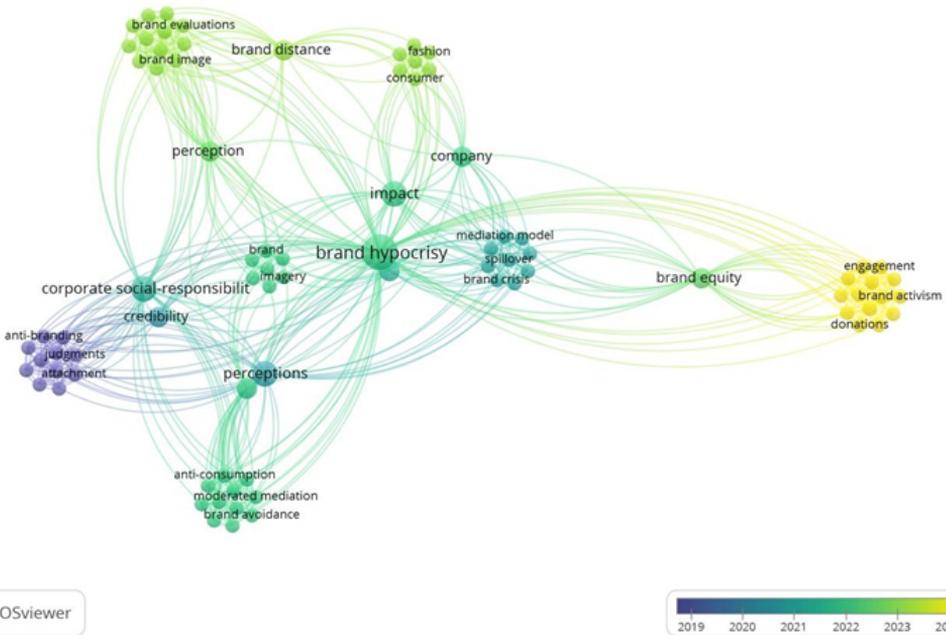
influence the intensity of these negative reactions. This cluster reveals the emotional and behavioral impacts that brand hypocrisy or unmet expectations can trigger in consumers, emphasizing the complexity of brand-consumer relationships.

3.3. The co-occurrence analysis of temporal dimension

Figure 4 illustrates the evolving relationships between key concepts related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity over time. At the core, brand hypocrisy is strongly connected to terms like perceptions, impact, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), reflecting early research focused on how consumer perceptions of hypocrisy affect brand credibility and ethical behavior. This foundational work, marked by darker colors, set the stage for examining the role of CSR in shaping consumer trust and brand loyalty.

In more recent years, represented by lighter shades, the focus has shifted toward brand equity and its links to concepts like brand activism, engagement, and donations. This shows increasing interest in how brands' social causes influence their equity, depending on how authentic they are perceived. Emerging themes such as mediation models, spillover effects, and brand crisis indicate that scholars are now exploring the mechanisms by which hypocrisy can lead to crises, and its impact on brand equity, including consumer behaviors like anti-consumption and brand avoidance.

Figure 4. The co-occurrence analysis of temporal dimension



3.4. Definition Analysis

The concept of brand hypocrisy has been defined in various ways throughout recent literature, reflecting its complexity and the different contexts in which it manifests. Guèvremont (2019) presents a straightforward definition, describing brand hypocrisy as a brand intentionally projecting false or unrealistic appearances, emphasizing the

deliberate nature of the brand's deception. This definition focuses on the intent behind the brand's actions, suggesting that the brand is fully aware of the misalignment between its projected image and reality.

In contrast, Gabrielli, Baghi, and Bergianti (2021) introduce the idea of misalignment between actions and CSR messaging, specifically linking brand hypocrisy to failures in corporate social responsibility efforts. This highlights that hypocrisy often becomes evident when a brand does not live up to its ethical claims. Li (2022) further specifies this misalignment, focusing on the discrepancy between brand claims and actual actions in relation to specific issues, such as LGBTQ+ support. This definition underscores the importance of consistency in a brand's actions across various social and political domains.

Xiao, Wang, and Guo (2022) shift the focus to the consumer perception aspect of brand hypocrisy, defining it as when a brand claims to be something it is not, particularly regarding social responsibilities. This approach emphasizes that hypocrisy is often subjective, depending on how consumers interpret and react to the brand's behavior. Erol (2023) also addresses intentionality but describes it as the deliberate creation of an incorrect or unrealistic image, broadening the concept to include brands that manipulate consumer perceptions through unrealistic or exaggerated claims.

In a similar vein, Cheah, Shimul, and Teah (2023) define brand hypocrisy as a brand perceived as intentionally projecting false or unrealistic appearances, specifically highlighting the dissimulation or manipulation of a brand's attributes, motivations, or beliefs. This definition further emphasizes the deceptive nature of brand hypocrisy. Finally, Lee et al. (2024) explore hypocrisy within the context of brand activism, arguing that it arises from a misalignment between activism claims and actions. This reflects the increasing importance of social activism in branding and how failure to authentically support such causes leads to accusations of hypocrisy.

This analysis demonstrates the evolving understanding of brand hypocrisy, with definitions ranging from deliberate intent to broader perceptions of inconsistency, particularly in ethical and activist contexts. See Table 1 for a summary of these definitions across different studies.

Table 1. Main Definitions of Brand Hypocrisy

DEFINITION BRAND HYPOCRISY	AUTHOR	YEAR
"Brand hypocrisy is defined as a brand intentionally projecting false or unrealistic appearances"	Guèvremont, A	2019
"A Brand perceived as failing to live up to its ethical claims, creating a misalignment between actions and CSR messaging"	Gabrielli, V; Baghi, I; Bergianti, F	2021
"Discrepancy between brand claims and actual actions regarding LGBTQ support"	Li, MJ	2022
"Is a perception in consumers' minds that a brand claims to be some-thing it is not, especially regarding corporate social responsibilities"	Xiao, ZR; Wang, Y; Guo, DJ	2022
"The deliberate creation of an incorrect or unrealistic image by brands, thus imitating and/or manipulating features, motivations or beliefs"	Erol, F	2023
"A brand perceived as intentionally projecting false or unrealistic appearances, thereby implying the dissimulation or manipulation of attributes, motivations or beliefs"	Cheah, I; Shimul, AS; Teah, M	2023
"Brand hypocrisy arises from misalignment between activism claims and actions"	Lee, Z; Spry, A; Ekincl, Y; Vredenburg, J	2024

4. Results of Systematic Review

4.1. Summary of Extractions

Table 2 provides a summary of the key characteristics of the selected studies on user resistance included in this systematic review. This table captures essential details, including the title, authors, publication year, and journal for each paper, offering a foundational overview of the literature sample. Additionally, it categorizes each study by research design, data collection method, sample size, service sector, and the theoretical frameworks or models applied. By organizing the sample in this format, Table 2 allows for a quick comparative analysis of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives. This structure highlights the diversity within the research field, with studies spanning various service sectors, employing distinct research designs, and drawing from multiple theoretical models to explore user resistance.

Table 2 provides a detailed overview of studies examining brand hypocrisy, showcasing the diversity in research designs, sample sizes, sectors, and theoretical frameworks employed. One of the notable patterns is the wide range of research methodologies used. Studies such as Cheah et al. (2019) employed a multiphase scale development process, while others like Lee et al. (2021) and Xiao et al. (2022) utilized experimental study designs, specifically examining how consumers react to brand hypocrisy in controlled settings. Cross-sectional survey studies, such as those by Erol (2024) and Li (2023), focus on collecting consumer perceptions through self-administered online surveys, reflecting the prevalence of quantitative data collection in this field.

Another key finding from the table is the varied sample sizes and sector focus across studies. For instance, Cheah et al. (2019) conducted a large-scale survey involving 559 consumers, while Gabrielli et al. (2023) divided their study into three distinct samples, ranging from 127 to 150 participants, within the luxury brand sector. Li (2023) focuses specifically on the fast food industry, indicating the application of brand hypocrisy across different sectors, while other studies like Guevremont (2022) did not specify a particular sector, suggesting that brand hypocrisy is a concept that can be applied broadly across industries.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, the studies draw from a variety of well-established models to explain the mechanisms behind brand hypocrisy and its effects on consumer behavior. For example, Social Identity Theory and Signaling Theory are frequently used to explore how consumers align themselves with brands and how brands project their values to the public. Lee et al. (2021) uses a combination of Spillover Theory and the Attribution–Affect–Intention Model to examine how brand scandals affect consumer perceptions, while Li (2023) applies the Theory of Planned Behavior to assess how brand hypocrisy influences consumer evaluations and behaviors in the fast food industry. These frameworks reflect a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the dynamics of brand hypocrisy, ranging from psychological models to communication and consumer behavior theories.

Overall, the studies provide a comprehensive view of how brand hypocrisy is conceptualized and studied across different industries and regions, using diverse research methods and theoretical models to explore its impact on brand equity, consumer behavior, and corporate social responsibility.

Table 2. Summary Of Extractions

TITLE PAPER	AUTHORS	YEARS	JOURNAL	RESEARCH DESIGN	DATA COLLECTION METHO	SAMPLE SIZE	SERVICE SECTOR	THEORIES OR MODEL USED
Brand hypocrisy from a consumer perspective: scale development and validation	Cheah, Isaac; Shimul, Anwar Sadat; Teah, Min	2019	JOURNAL OF PRODUCT AND BRAND MANAGEMENT	Multiphase scale development process	Survey (Online Consumer Panel)	559 consumers (across four studies)	Not specific to a sector	Not mentioned directly
Brand scandals within a corporate social responsibility partnership: asymmetrical effects on for-profit and non-profit brands	Lee, Zoe; Spry, Amanda; Ekinici, Yuksel; Vredenburg, Jessica	2021	JOURNAL OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT	Experimental study	Survey (two experimental studies)	Study 1: 160 participants, Study 2: 219 participants	Not specific to a sector	Spillover theory, Signaling theory, Attribution–affect–intention model, Signaling theory,
From warmth to warrior: impacts of non-profit brand activism on brand bravery, brand hypocrisy and brand equity	Erol, Fuat	2024	JOURNAL OF BRAND MANAGEMENT	Cross-sectional survey study	Online self-administered survey	518 UK residents	Non-profit (Greenpeace)	Virtue signaling, Brand bravery, Brand hypocrisy
Influence for social good: exploring the roles of influencer identity and comment section in Instagram-based LGBTQ-centric corporate social responsibility advertising	Xiao, Zengrui; Wang, Ying; Guo, Dongjie	2022	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVERTISING	Experimental study	Online experiment using Instagram-based CSR ads	645 participants (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ)	LGBTQ-centric social responsibility campaigns	Match-up hypothesis, Social identity theory, MAIN model
Sustainability claim, environmental misconduct and perceived hypocrisy in luxury branding	Gabrielli, Veronica; Baghi, Ilaria; Bergianti, Francesca	2023	SPANISH JOURNAL OF MARKETING-ESIC	Three studies (Survey)	Online self-administered survey	Study 1: 150 participants, Study 2: 127 participants, Study 3: 130 participants	Luxury brands	Social Identity Theory, Self-categorisation Theory, Disidentification Theory
The Effects of Brand Hypocrisy on Consumer Evaluations and Behaviors: Moderating Role of Nutrition Consciousness	Li, Minjie	2023	ORGANIZATIONS AND MARKETS IN EMERGING ECONOMIES	Cross-sectional study	Online self-administered survey	463 participants	Fast food industry	Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980); Attribution-Emotion-Action Model (Weiner, 1980)
Will Greenwashing Result in Brand Avoidance? A Moderated Mediation Model	Guevremont, Amelie	2019	SUSTAINABILITY	Cross-sectional survey	Online questionnaire	317 participants	Not specific to a sector	Social Identity Theory, Institutional Theory, CSR–CA Tradeoff

5.3 *Methodological Approach*

We examined the methodological approaches employed in the selected articles, as outlined in Table 3. A dominant reliance on quantitative methodologies was observed, with all reviewed studies employing quantitative methods to explore brand hypocrisy and related phenomena. For instance, the development of a 12-item scale to measure brand hypocrisy in consumer perceptions highlights the empirical emphasis on quantifying consumer attitudes and behaviors (Guèvremont, 2019). Similarly, research exploring the effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) scandals on brand equity, brand bravery, and brand hypocrisy uniformly adopted quantitative designs to measure the asymmetric impacts on for-profit versus non-profit brands (Gabrielli et al., 2021). Although quantitative methods provided structured and statistically robust insights, the absence of qualitative or mixed methods highlights a methodological gap, limiting a deeper exploration of the contextual nuances surrounding brand hypocrisy.

While quantitative analyses provide structured insights, incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as interviews or focus groups, could yield richer perspectives, particularly in exploring complex constructs like brand hypocrisy, brand trust, and consumer-brand relationships. To address this gap, future studies should integrate qualitative approaches to capture the subtleties of consumer perceptions and emotions regarding brand hypocrisy. In addition, employing longitudinal designs and mixed methods can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interactions between CSR practices, brand equity, and brand hypocrisy. This approach will enable scholars to address the potential biases inherent in purely quantitative analyses and uncover underlying factors influencing consumer responses to brand hypocrisy.

5.4 *Future Research Guidelines*

Finally, by delineating gaps in the existing literature, proposing directions for future research, and highlighting their implications (refer to Table 3). The identified information is based solely on the guidelines provided by the reviewed authors. The gaps identified can be categorized into three primary domains: (1) examining novel contexts; (2) diversifying methodological approaches; (3) exploring new relationships with additional variables. Many authors propose extending the analysis of brand hypocrisy and CSR-related brand controversies to other contexts, including diverse industries, brand types, and consumer segments (Gabrielli et al., 2021). For example, the unique impacts of brand scandals on for-profit versus non-profit brands suggest a need for further exploration across various organizational forms and sectors. Expanding to other cultural contexts, such as non-Western societies, could also reveal cultural dimensions influencing consumer perceptions of brand hypocrisy.

To generalize findings, some authors recommend adopting longitudinal research designs to examine the temporal evolution of consumer perceptions of brand hypocrisy and brand equity (Cheah et al., 2022). Additionally, incorporating experimental designs could enable researchers to investigate causality more rigorously, such as testing how different types of CSR communications influence perceptions of brand hypocrisy over time. Qualitative research approaches, such as in-depth interviews, would also enrich the understanding of nuanced consumer attitudes and behaviors towards brand hypocrisy, providing insights beyond quantitative metrics.

Future studies should consider the role of mediators and moderators in the relationship between brand hypocrisy and consumer outcomes, such as brand loyalty, trust, and advocacy (Erol, 2023). For example, brand attitude and corporate reputation could act as moderators in this relationship, providing a more nuanced understanding of how consumers process and react to instances of brand hypocrisy. Moreover, considering variables like brand status, message characteristics, and consumer demographics as potential moderators can enhance the conceptual model and refine the predictions regarding consumer responses to brand- related scandals and hypocrisy.

In conclusion, the existing literature reveals a strong reliance on quantitative methodologies, yet there is a compelling need for a more diversified methodological approach to comprehensively capture the complexity of brand hypocrisy and CSR dynamics. Integrating qualitative and experimental methods, as well as exploring additional variables and novel contexts, will enrich future research on this topic and address current knowledge gaps effectively.

Table 3 - Main goals, methodologies, conclusions and directions for future research

STUDY	OBJECTIVE	METHODOLOGY	FINDING	FUTURE RESEARCH
Brand hypocrisy from a consumer perspective: scale development and validation	Conceptualize the construct of brand hypocrisy from a consumer perspective and develop a scale to measure it.	Quantitative	A 12-item scale measuring brand hypocrisy was developed and validated.	What role would a brand scandal play in generating perceptions of brand hypocrisy? How important is brand response for attenuating or fuelling judgments of hypocrisy?
Brand scandals within a corporate social responsibility partnership: asymmetrical effects on for-profit and non-profit brands	Investigate the asymmetrical effects of brand scandals within a corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnership on for-profit and non-profit brands.	Quantitative	Non-profit brand is negatively affected by a scandal, but the effects are stronger for the for-profit brand in cases of domain consistency.	Future research should explore other domains of brand scandals and investigate cross-cultural contexts.
From warmth to warrior: impacts of non-profit brand activism on brand bravery, brand hypocrisy and brand equity	Examine the impacts of non-profit brand activism on brand bravery, brand hypocrisy, and brand equity.	Quantitative	Brand activism leads to positive brand equity mediated by brand bravery; brand hypocrisy has negative effects.	Explore longitudinal effects, cross-cultural comparisons, and other non-profits besides Greenpeace.
Influence for social good: exploring the roles of influencer identity and comment section in Instagram-based LGBTQ-centric corporate social responsibility advertising	Explore the roles of influencer identity and the comment section in Instagram-based LGBTQ-centric corporate social responsibility advertising.	Quantitative	LGBTQ influencers generate less perceived brand hypocrisy among LGBTQ participants; positive comments increase ad trust and brand attitude.	Explore cross-platform effects; extend to other social causes.
Sustainability claim, environmental misconduct and perceived hypocrisy in luxury branding	Examine consumers' evaluation of and reaction to the coexistence of brand misconduct and sustainability claims in luxury branding.	Quantitative	Environmental misconduct leads to perceived brand hypocrisy and distancing. Brand trust and desire for exclusivity reduce perceived brand distance.	Future research can test consumer evaluation and reaction to CSR communication and the dissemination of misconduct through a combination of communication platforms and also sources.
The Effects of Brand Hypocrisy on Consumer Evaluations and Behaviors: Moderating Role of Nutrition Consciousness	Investigate the effects of brand hypocrisy on consumer evaluations and behaviors, focusing on the moderating role of nutrition consciousness.	Quantitative	Brand hypocrisy has direct effects on brand evaluations, brand distance, and nWOM; Nutrition consciousness moderates these effects.	Focusing on other dimensions of brand hypocrisy (image, message, and social hypocrisy). Exploring alternative mediators and moderators in the relationship between brand hypocrisy and consumer behaviors, or looking at intangible factors such as brand equity and corporate reputation as potential moderators.
Will Greenwashing Result in Brand Avoidance? A Moderated Mediation Model	Investigate whether greenwashing results in brand avoidance, incorporating the mediating role of brand hypocrisy and the moderating role of CSR-CA belief.	Quantitative	Greenwashing positively affects brand avoidance, mediated by brand hypocrisy. CSR-CA belief moderates these effects.	Further research could explore the cultural differences in greenwashing responses and investigate other mediating mechanisms.

6. Agenda for Future Research

This section presents a future research agenda for analyzing the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity. Drawing upon the research questions and the insights from the reviewed studies, the following recommendations aim to expand the current understanding of brand hypocrisy in various contexts and methodological frameworks.

The empirical studies in literature primarily focus on quantifying the impact of brand hypocrisy on consumer perceptions and brand equity, with an emphasis on CSR, luxury branding, and social causes (Cheah et al., 2022; Erol, 2023; Gabrielli et al., 2021). However, research gaps remain in exploring brand hypocrisy within other brand categories, such as B2B sectors, personal brands, and specific service industries. Potential areas for future research include retail, health and wellness, education, and digital influences. Additionally, emerging environments such as the metaverse present unique opportunities for examining brand hypocrisy, particularly as consumers become more immersed in virtual brand interactions. Comparative studies across generational, cultural, and geographical contexts would also provide valuable insights into how brand hypocrisy affects brand equity in diverse consumer segments.

Diversifying Methodological Approaches

The reviewed studies reveal a predominant reliance on quantitative methodologies. Integrating alternative methods, such as qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews, case studies, and ethnographic analysis), can enrich understanding of the subjective nuances and emotional responses related to brand hypocrisy. Additionally, longitudinal and experimental studies could provide insights into the temporal dynamics of brand hypocrisy's impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Employing mixed-methods research would enable scholars to triangulate findings, enhancing the robustness of results and offering a comprehensive view of brand hypocrisy's influence on brand equity.

Exploring New Relationships with Additional Variables

Future research should investigate the roles of mediators and moderators in the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity. For example, brand trust, brand attitude, and perceived transparency may mediate or moderate the effects of brand hypocrisy on consumer loyalty and advocacy. Other variables, such as demographic factors, brand type, and message framing, can further refine the conceptual models, helping to predict consumer responses to perceived hypocrisy more accurately. Analyzing these variables can deepen the understanding of the conditions under which brand hypocrisy negatively impacts brand equity, providing actionable insights for brand managers aiming to mitigate these effects.

In conclusion, the current literature reveals a need for diversified methodologies and the exploration of brand hypocrisy in novel contexts and with additional moderating factors. By addressing these gaps, future research can advance the theoretical frameworks and practical strategies for managing brand hypocrisy, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of brand equity dynamics in today's ethically conscious market.

7. Conclusions, Theoretical Implications, and Limitations

Despite the increasing academic and managerial interest in understanding the impacts of brand hypocrisy on brand equity, there has been limited prior effort to systematically examine this relationship. This study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive review of the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity, utilizing a systematic literature review combined with bibliometric analysis. Through the analysis of existing studies, this review identifies key themes, conceptual frameworks, and trends that outline the current state of research on brand hypocrisy and its effects on consumer perceptions and brand equity.

Based on a sample of seven peer-reviewed articles, we developed a conceptual framework that highlights the predominant research perspectives, provides insights into consumer reactions to perceived brand hypocrisy, and proposes a future research agenda. The findings underscore that brand hypocrisy is a multidimensional construct with significant implications for consumer trust, brand loyalty, and overall brand equity. The impact of perceived hypocrisy is especially pronounced in areas where brands promote ethical or social values, such as CSR initiatives and brand activism, making it a crucial factor in modern consumer- brand relationships.

The bibliometric analysis (addressing RQ1) reveals a growing body of research focused on brand hypocrisy, particularly in Western contexts, with emerging themes around CSR, brand activism, and consumer trust. Key theoretical constructs, such as brand bravery, perceived hypocrisy, and consumer-brand relationship quality, frequently appear in these studies, underscoring the centrality of these factors in shaping consumer attitudes towards brands.

In terms of research contexts and samples (addressing RQ2), most empirical studies are concentrated in Western countries, focusing on consumer-facing brands within sectors like luxury, food, and social responsibility advertising. While these contexts provide valuable insights, they also highlight a limitation in terms of the generalizability of findings. Future research could explore non-Western markets, as well as other brand types, such as B2B or digital influencers, to better understand the global implications of brand hypocrisy.

The methodological approaches used in the analyzed literature (addressing RQ3) are predominantly quantitative, with all studies employing quantitative methods to assess the effects of brand hypocrisy on consumer evaluations. Although this provides robust statistical insights, it also presents a gap in qualitative or mixed-methods research, which could offer a richer understanding of the underlying perceptions and emotions that drive consumer responses to brand hypocrisy. Incorporating interviews, focus groups, and longitudinal studies could add depth to the findings, revealing how perceptions of hypocrisy evolve over time and across cultural contexts.

The future research agenda (addressing RQ4) emphasizes the need for a more diversified approach to studying brand hypocrisy and brand equity. Expanding the analysis to include different industries, cultural contexts, and consumer demographics could provide valuable insights. Additionally, exploring mediators and moderators, such as consumer values and brand transparency, would deepen the understanding of how and when brand hypocrisy most significantly impacts brand equity.

This study, however, is not without limitations. Firstly, the focus on specific keywords may have restricted the scope of our review, potentially omitting relevant studies that use alternative terminology. Secondly, the number of citations should not be viewed as a direct measure of quality due to factors such as self-citations or the relative novelty of some studies. Thirdly, the limited sample size may constrain the generalizability of our findings. Lastly, while this study primarily contributes to academic literature, implications for managerial practices, such as strategies for addressing perceived hypocrisy, were not thoroughly explored.

In conclusion, this review offers a structured foundation for future research on brand hypocrisy and brand equity. It highlights the importance of aligning brand actions with stated values to maintain consumer trust and underscores the need for diverse methodological and contextual approaches to advance our understanding of this critical relationship in contemporary marketing.

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APÉNDICE 1: PROTOCOL FOR SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Question:

RQ1: How can we systematize and describe the advancements in the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity, considering key studies, authors, affiliations, and prevalent themes in literature?

RQ2: In which specific contexts (e.g., CSR, brand activism, luxury branding) has the relationship between brand hypocrisy and brand equity been studied?

RQ3: What are the most applied methodological approaches in the literature on brand hypocrisy and brand equity, and how could alternative methods, such as qualitative or longitudinal studies, enhance the findings?

RQ4: What gaps have been identified in the current research, and what directions for future studies would help deepen our understanding of the consumer-brand relationship in the context of perceived brand hypocrisy?

Develop and validate the review protocol:

The primary goal of this systematic literature review (SLR) will be to explore how *brand hypocrisy and brand equity* has been conceptualized and applied in the Marketing. The review will aim to identify the main theories and models that explain *brand hypocrisy and brand equity* and will reveal gaps in the current research.

Databases:

- > Web of Science
- > Scopus

Keywords and Search Terms:

The search will use a combination of the following keywords:

- > “brand hypocrisy”
- > “brand equity”

Strategies Search:

Search equation with Booleans:

- > (“brand hypocrisy” AND “brand equity”
- > “brand hypocrisy”

Back Search:

Because the field of publications is limited, secondary citation papers that include relevant information on brand hypocrisy and brand equity will be added.

Principal author search:

Publications by the most cited authors addressing brand hypocrisy and brand equity will be reviewed for inclusion in the review.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies will be included if they meet the following criteria:

- > Peer-reviewed journal articles or conference papers.
- > Focused on brand hypocrisy and brand equity.
- > Available in English.

Exclusion Criteria

The following types of studies will be excluded:

- > Articles not related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity.
- > Opinion pieces, blog posts, or non-peer-reviewed material.
- > Studies that do not focus on brand hypocrisy and brand equity

Study Selection Process:

The study selection process will follow these steps:

1. **Initial screening:** After conducting the search, titles and abstracts will be reviewed to identify relevant studies. Irrelevant studies will be excluded at this stage.
2. **Full-text review:** The remaining articles will be read in full to ensure they meet the inclusion criteria. Studies that do not meet the criteria will be excluded.
3. **Data extraction:** Relevant information (e.g., theories used, context, findings) will be extracted and organized.

Quality Assessment

Each study will be evaluated for methodological quality using a predetermined set of criteria, such as:

- › The clarity of the research questions.
- › Appropriateness of the research methods used.
- › Rigor in data collection and analysis.
- › Consistency of findings with the study objectives.

Data Extraction

A data extraction sheet will be developed to collect relevant information from each study, including:

- › Title and year of publication
- › Author(s)
- › Year of publication
- › Journal or conference
- › DOI
- › Research method (qualitative/quantitative/mixed)
- › Data collection method
- › Sample size
- › Geographic context of the study
- › Service sector(s)
- › Approach research
- › Theories or models used to explain brand hypocrisy and brand equity
- › Variable type
- › Dimensionality and components
- › Key findings related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity
- › Gaps or limitations identified by the study

Analyze and Synthesize Data

- › Descriptive analysis: A summary of the number of studies, types of research methods, and the main theories/models used.
- › Thematic analysis: Identification of recurring themes related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity, such as individual factors and organizational factors.
- › Gap analysis: Identification of under-researched areas in user resistance

Report Findings:

The review will be reported following this structure:

- › Overview of included studies: A table summarizing key information (author, year, journal, findings).
- › Thematic findings: Discussion of recurring themes in the literature related to brand hypocrisy and brand equity, including definitions, models, and influencing factors.
- › Research gaps: Identification of areas for future research based on under-explored themes or inconsistent findings.
- › Implications for practice: Recommendations for organizations on managing us brand hypocrisy and brand equity.

The Impact of Social Media on the Personal Well-being of University Students

Keywords: Social Media Addiction, Satisfaction With Life, Perceived Stress, Intensity of Social Media Use, Internet Addiction, Social Media Disorder, Instagram Use Intensity.

Received: 2023 | **Accepted:** 2024 | **Available online:** 2025

Cite this article as: Letelier, K., Llanos, G., & Parada, M. (2025). *The Impact of Social Media on the Personal Well-being of University Students*. *Estudios de Administración*, 30 (2), 71–87.

<https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0816.2023.77622>

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ABSTRACT

Social media are now an essential part of our everyday lives and people's mental health has hence become a relevant collective issue. This research analyzes the relationship between social media usage and the psychological well-being of university students. It studies the relationship between their activity on Instagram and its effect on their mental health in terms of stress and certain underlying factors that may be contributing to this influence. This was undertaken using structural equation modeling of a sample of over 400 university students. We believe our study provides valuable information for present and future mental health care in this digital age.

Keywords: Social Media Addiction, Satisfaction With Life, Perceived Stress, Intensity of Social Media Use, Internet Addiction, Social Media Disorder and Instagram Use Intensity.



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RESUMEN

Las redes sociales son esenciales en la vida cotidiana de las personas, y la salud mental se ha impuesto como un tema relevante para la sociedad. Esta investigación analiza la relación entre el uso de las redes sociales y el bienestar psicológico de los estudiantes universitarios. Estudia las relaciones entre la participación de los estudiantes en Instagram y su efecto en la salud mental en términos de estrés y otros posibles factores subyacentes. Esto se llevó a cabo mediante un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales con una muestra de más de 400 estudiantes universitarios. Este estudio proporciona información valiosa para el cuidado de la salud mental en la era digital.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media have transformed the way people interact with each other. Among young adults, it is now common to spend a large part of the day connected to one or more of the numerous digital platforms. Around 84.43% of the Chilean population interacts through social media, where the platforms most used in terms of the number of persons subscribing are YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram (Kemp, 2024).

Our study seeks to understand the impact of digital interactions on the emotional well-being of university students; it focuses on young university students whose stage of development and search for identity make them especially susceptible to the effects - both positive and negative - of social media.

Although social media offer numerous benefits, such as connection and exchange of information, they also suggest a worrying issue for the mental health and well-being of their users. In brief, does the fact of being constantly connected to the internet and social media represent a risk for the Chilean university students who regularly use them?

The relationship between the use of social media and their impact on mental health is by no means a novel topic in academic research. A study conducted by Kross et al. (2013) recognized that the constant use of Facebook is associated with a considerable decline in the subjective well-being of young people. Twenge et al. (2018) later found that excessive use of social media directly increases symptoms of depression and anxiety. In the Latin American context - specifically in Mexico - a study conducted by Gómez et al. (2020) demonstrated that problematic use of social media is linked to high stress levels and lower Satisfaction With Life ("SWL"). These studies emphasized the importance of examining these effects in a range of geographical contexts.

The literature we've mentioned motivated the development of this research, which focused on the Chilean context. The study examined the complex relationships between the Intensity of Social Media Use ("ISU"), Perceived Stress ("PS"), and students' Satisfaction With Life. It advances academic knowledge and offers valuable practical implications for educational institutions in Chile.

Given the relevance of this situation, a fundamental question arose that guided our research:

How do social media influence psychological well-being in terms of the stress levels of university students? This question is important because of the growing influence of social media on young people and the need to understand better how these interactions can impact mental health. This was why we sought to understand if the time and attention

dedicated to social media can indeed contribute to the stress of university students.

The more specific intention was to analyze the impact of social media on the personal well-being of university students in Chile. This objective was fundamental because it would allow us to understand this relationship, providing concrete evidence on the key aspects that influence that well-being. It would also clarify what we in fact know about these relationships' positive and negative effects. To verify the relationships and hypotheses, specific objectives were established that would allow for achieving the general objective of the research. These objectives were set out to evaluate the relationship between the different variables that influence the perception of Satisfaction With Life, study the impact that the variable of Social Media Addiction ("SMA") has on Perceived Stress (PS), examine the patterns of Instagram use and their relationship with stress and, lastly, evaluate the moderating factors that influence this relationship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media are now integrated into people's routines worldwide (Guan & Subrahmanyam, 2009). Digital platforms allow users to connect, share information and communicate. This has changed how people interact, giving rise to a new concept called 'cyberculture' (Dery, 1995; Scolari, 2019). However, to this day, the harmful effects of excessive social media use at the psychological level are still questioned. While this form of communication of course has positive effects - in that it facilitates relational processes through more direct communication - precedents and documented cases also point to certain negative aspects of their use.

2.1 Positive aspects of using social media

Use of the Internet and social media often has the most noble of intentions, such as business, studies, interpersonal relationships, work, search for information, or simply for fun (Chóliz & Marco, 2012). In Chile, the main reasons for staying online are to keep in touch with family or friends, see new stories or content, pass the time, or search for products to buy (Kemp, 2024).

It must be highlighted that there is ample evidence of the positive impacts of using social media. For example, Hampton et al. (2014) suggests that the use of technology by women is related to lower stress, since the more photographs they share or the more they use social networks (like Twitter), the less stress they report.

A study conducted by Manzanero (2022) concluded that the use of social media has a positive impact on improving communication, helping to strengthen relationships established among adolescents. It also encourages participation in social groups, thus alleviating the stress that young people experience at this stage of their lives. Needless to say, positive interactions and emotional support from friends and family serve to mitigate stress. Finally, according to Liu and Ma (2018), using social media can provide significant social support, a safety net that can help reduce users' Perceived Stress in determined cases.

2.2 Negative aspects of using social media

The intensive use of social media has been the subject of numerous studies. We found plentiful relevant research that guided our analysis when identifying whether there is an impact on people's Satisfaction With Life. This was the case of a study conducted by Verduyn et al. (2015), which provided experimental evidence that passive use of the social network Facebook is linked to a decline in affective well-being, implying that excessive use of social networks can harm people's Satisfaction With Life. Shakya and Christakis

(2017) found a relationship between the use of a social network (Facebook) and impaired well-being. Investigators' findings therefore suggest that intensive use of social media can indeed damage an individual's Satisfaction With Life.

University students and adolescents are those most likely to spend part of their day on social media (Primack et al., 2017; Andreassen et al., 2017), and use of these media and smartphones can generate a certain degree of addiction, dependence and even undesirable behavior, (Qudah et al., 2019). Being in constant interaction with information from other people leads to users comparing themselves with others, thus causing self-esteem and anxiety problems that impact mental health (Bisen & Deshpande, 2020). The following hypothesis is therefore proposed for the case of Chilean university students.

H1: The Intensity of Social Media Use negatively affects students' Satisfaction With Life.

In the case of Chile, 67% of Instagram users are between 18 and 34 (Social Networks in Chile, 2024). This group is particularly relevant for this study, as its members are at a fertile stage of development; they are searching for identity, and social factors highly influence their self-esteem (Naranjo, 2007). Moreover, during this period of their lives they are going through changes or complex situations and the university years represent a turning point in every student's life. This transition occurs during a cycle where emotional or mental difficulties commonly arise (Auerbach et al., 2018). According to the results of the WHO's World Mental Health International College Student ("WMH-ICS"), mental health problems in college students have an annual prevalence of 31%, with depressive disorders, stress and generalized anxiety being the most common (Auerbach et al., 2018).

Furthermore, social media abuse poses a growing risk because the ability to control the time spent on the platforms is lost, and this can have a negative impact on other areas of the person's daily life. This is why Echeburúa & Corral (2012) suggest that stress and anxiety are among the risk factors that generate Social Media Addiction in young people and adolescents. A study by Loro (2015) of university students aged 19 to 24 in Madrid reveals that excessive use of social networks can cause problems in various areas of the user's life. Apart from threatening an addiction to these platforms, it can generate uncontrollable impulses to stay online, social isolation, and both cognitive and emotional disorders (Andreassen et al., 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed for the case of Chilean university students.

H2: Internet Addiction positively affects the Perceived Stress of university students.

Studies show that depression is the primary illness suffered by university students who excessively use social media, since they tend to avoid their own circumstance and immerse themselves in a type of virtual reality. Moreover, stress is already one of the common ailments among university students (Dissing et al., 2019); thus, the following hypothesis is proposed for the case of Chilean university students.

H3: The stress perceived by students negatively affects their Satisfaction With Life.

3. PROPOSED MODEL

A quantitative methodology with Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (“**CB-SEM**”) is employed in the development of this research to analyze the relationships between Perceived Stress, the intensity of Instagram use and Social Media Addiction and how they impact Satisfaction With Life. A survey including certified and validated scales was conducted for data collection and it was administered to 415 business students at a university in Chile. After applying the respective filters, 359 students were ultimately considered for this research.

Structural Equation Modeling was deemed appropriate for obtaining objective results and valid conclusions about the relationship between social media use and personal well-being, since this study aims, precisely, to corroborate this relationship. Structural Equation Models allow for the simultaneous analysis of multiple variables and their relationships, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students’ well-being. This approach considers specific contextual factors - in our case Perceived Stress and Social Media Addiction - which are essential for capturing the complexity of digital interactions in the lives of university students.

Based on the above theoretical framework, we proposed a Structural Equation Model based on the variables Perceived Stress (“PS”), Social Media Addiction (“SMA”), and Intensity of Social Media Use (“ISU”). We quantified these variables’ impact on Satisfaction With Life (“SWL”) and through this variable, we studied the impact on personal well-being.

Various studies have shown that problematic and excessive use of social media can increase Perceived Stress. Keles et al. (2020) found a significant relationship between problematic social media use and the increase in stress levels in adolescents and young adults, suggesting that the constant need to be connected and the social pressure involved contribute to these elevated stress levels. This relationship can be explained by the constant flow of information and the pressure to maintain a positive social image, which in turn generate anxiety and stress (Primack et al., 2017). The intensive use of social media produces higher stress levels due to exposure to information overload and the social pressure to always be available and respond quickly to messages and posts (Lin et al., 2016; Lee, 2014).

Moreover, Perceived Stress negatively influences Satisfaction With Life. Chao (2011) investigated this relationship, finding that elevated stress levels are associated with lower Satisfaction With Life. He further highlighted the role that self-efficacy plays in this relationship, suggesting that the ability of individuals to manage their expectations is crucial for mitigating the adverse effects of stress on their well-being. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of this and our research, since the academic environment can per se be a significant source of stress (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Students who experience high stress levels tend to have a lower perception of Satisfaction With Life, which highlights the importance of stress management strategies to maintain well-being (Beiter et al., 2015). Cohen and Williamson (1988) had already confirmed that Perceived Stress is inversely related to Satisfaction With Life, thus emphasizing the need for interventions to reduce stress and improve well-being.

On the other hand, the Intensity of Social Media Use has also been directly linked to Satisfaction With Life. Huang (2017) found that intensive use of social media is associated with lower levels of Satisfaction With Life. This negative effect is partly due to social comparison and exposure to detrimental content, which can impair overall well-being (Vogel et al., 2014). In the case of university students, the time spent on social media

can displace more rewarding or necessary activities, such as studying, physical exercise, or face-to-face social interactions, negatively affecting their well-being (Levenson et al., 2016; Kross et al., 2013).

Constant exposure to images and posts of others' success and happiness can lead to feelings of inferiority and decrease Satisfaction With Life (Chou & Edge, 2012; Tandoc et al., 2015). Satici and Uysal (2015) further state that excessive use of social media is related to lower Satisfaction With Life due to constant exposure to the idealized lives of others. Thus, by integrating these relationships into a Structural Equation Model (SEM), we can demonstrate that Social Media Addiction increases Perceived Stress and reduces Satisfaction With Life. At the same time, the Intensity of Social Media Use has a direct negative effect on Satisfaction With Life. This SEM will allow us to quantify these relationships in the Chilean context.

Current research emphasizes the importance of understanding social media's impact on young people's well-being. Although social media offer opportunities for connection and communication, excessive use can negatively affect personal well-being and mental health. Therefore, addressing these issues and developing effective strategies to promote healthy use among Chilean university students is crucial.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Structural Equation Model

Four variables were included in the development of the structural equation model: Satisfaction With Life (SWL), Perceived Stress (PS), Internet Addiction (IA), and Instagram Use Intensity (IUI). A set of items defines each of these latent variables. Based on existing literature, the structural relationships between the variables are formed to investigate the underlying interactions.

We have decided to use CB-SEM to analyze the Structural Equation Model in our study due to its extensive use in social sciences and our focus on corroborating theoretical relationships rather than exact predictions (Kline, 2015). This methodology strategically aligns with our goal of exploring the underlying structure of latent variables and verifying our hypotheses. See Figure 1.

4.2 Instrument

Four scales validated by previous studies were used to develop the instrument, in addition to a scale adapted to the context of our research. The selected scales ensure the reliability and validity necessary to obtain precise and relevant data for the study. The scales used were the following:

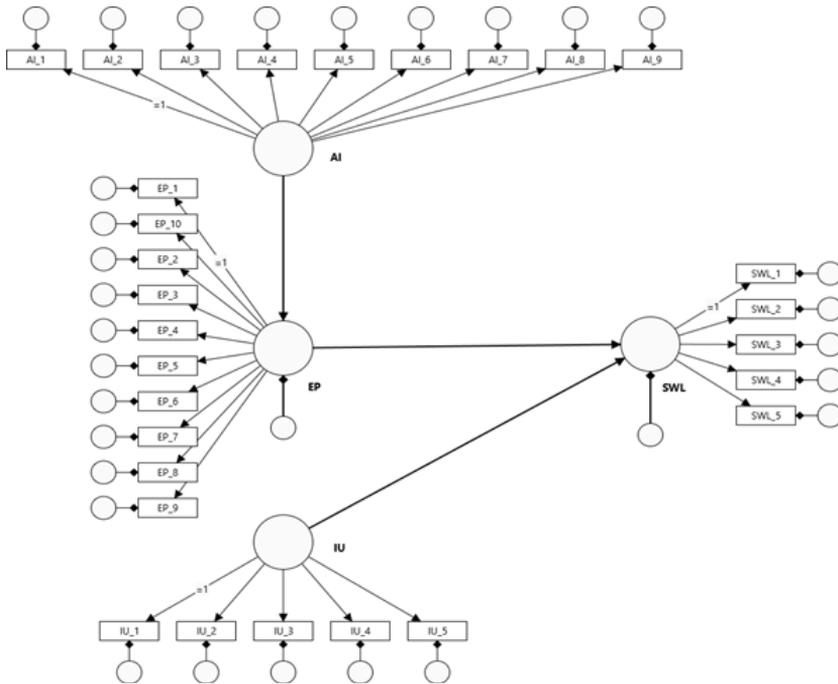
1. *Satisfaction With Life (SWL) Scale*: Diener et al. (1985) developed this instrument to measure individuals' overall Satisfaction With Life. It consists of five items, each evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale has demonstrated high test-retest reliability in various studies conducted previously.

2. *Perceived Stress (PS) Scale*: The Perceived Stress Scale is a tool created by Cohen et al. (1983) to measure the degree to which life situations are perceived as stressful. The version used in this study consists of 10 items, each rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

3. *Social Media Disorder (SMD) Scale*: The Social Media Disorder Scale is based on the instrument developed by Van Den Eijnden et al. (2016) to assess the symptoms of Social Media Addiction. It consists of 10 items that are scored using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale measures concern about social media, continued use despite adverse consequences, and lack of control over usage.

4. *Instagram Usage Intensity (IUI) Scale*: The Instagram Usage Intensity Scale is adapted to the context of our research. It consists of a survey designed to measure how many hours a day users spend browsing the Instagram social network, the number of followers, posts, and days per week they use the application.

Figure 1. Proposed structural model



Source: Authors.

4.3 Participants

After the purification process, the sample considered for this study consisted of 359 university students aged between 18 and 30, with an average age of 22. See Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of students by gender, age, major, and income range

	Male n - %	Female n - %	Total n - %
Total	179 (49.86%)	174 (48.47%)	359 (100%)
Ages			
18-21	67 (49.63%)	65 (48.15%)	135 (47.02%)
22-25	104 (49.76%)	103 (49.28%)	209 (58.21%)
26-30	8 (53.33%)	6 (40%)	15 (4.77%)
Study program			
Commercial Engineering	45 (45%)	55 (55%)	100 (27.86%)
Management Control Engineering	49 (57.65%)	35 (41.18%)	85 (23.68%)
Auditor Accountant - Public Accountant	34 (47.22%)	36 (50%)	72 (20.06%)
Public Administration	30 (46.15%)	33 (50.77%)	66 (18.11%)
Bachelor's degree in administration and economics	21 (56.76%)	16 (43.24%)	37 (10.31%)
Income			
\$0 - \$30,000	57 (44.88%)	70 (55.12%)	127 (35.43%)
\$30,001 - \$60,000	34 (50.75%)	33 (49.25%)	67 (18.66%)
\$60,001 - \$90,000	33 (50.76%)	31 (47.69%)	66 (18.33%)
\$90,001 - \$120,000	44 (47.83%)	46 (50%)	90 (25.07%)
\$120,001 - \$150,000	11 (52.38%)	8 (38.09%)	21 (5.85%)

Source: Authors.

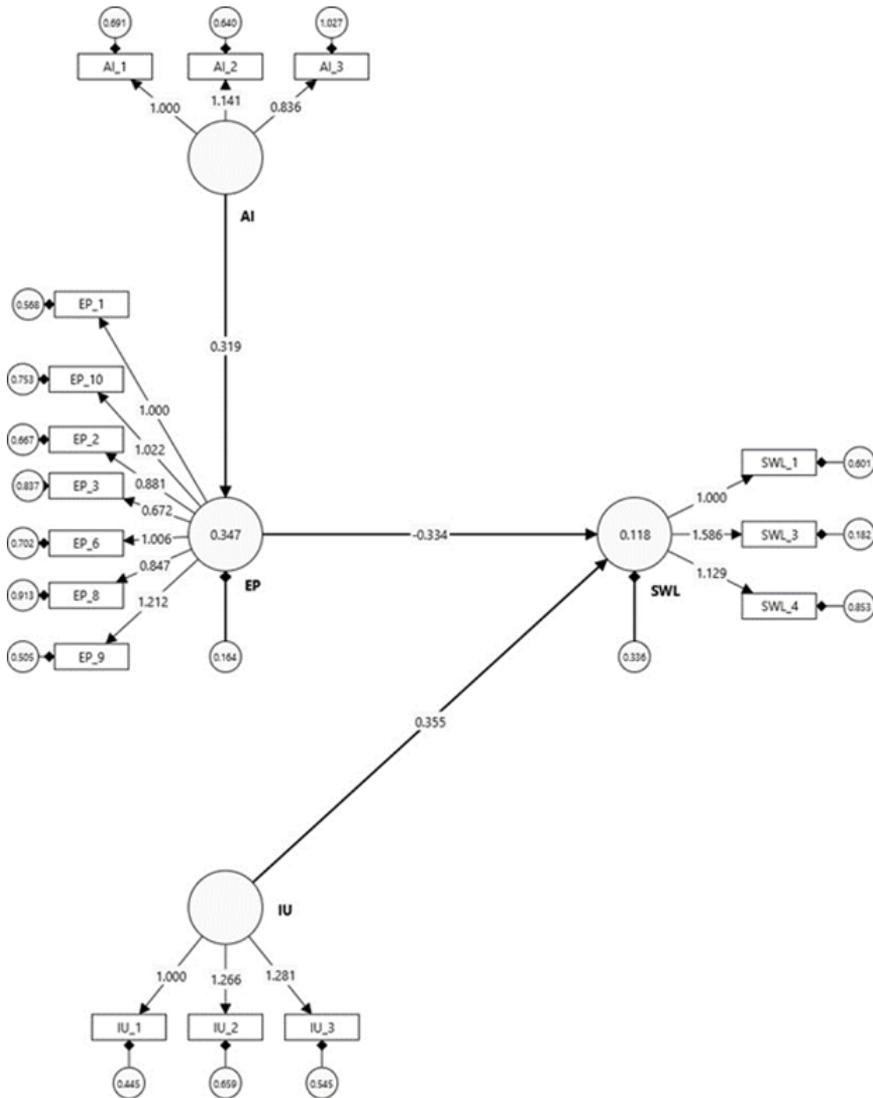
5. RESULTS

The figure illustrates the adjusted Structural Equation Model, estimated using the covariance-based partial least squares method (CB-SEM). It shows the latent variables and their respective measurement items.

The relationship between the latent variables is detailed below:

- **IA and PS:** The relationship between Internet Addiction and Perceived Stress is significant, with a loading of 0.319.
- **PS and SWL:** The relationship between Perceived Stress and Satisfaction With Life has a loading of -0.334, indicating a negative and significant relationship.
- **IUI and SWL:** The relationship between Internet Usage Intensity and Satisfaction With Life is positive and significant, with a loading of 0.355.

Figure 4: Model results



Source: Authors.

These results suggest that an increase in Internet Addiction raises Perceived Stress. Moreover, if stress increases, Satisfaction With Life decreases. On the other hand, a higher intensity of Internet use increases Satisfaction With Life.

These new values indicate a significantly better fit than the original model and are within the recommended levels. See Table 4.

Table 4: Fit indices of the adjusted model for estimated and null models.

Model Fit	Estimated Model	Null Model
RMSEA	0.045	0.157
SRMR	0.053	n/a
NFI	0.853	n/a
TLI	0.918	n/a
CFI	0.931	n/a

Where: **RMSEA**: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; **SRMR**: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; **NFI**: Normal Fit Index; **TLI**: Tucker Lewis Index; and **CFI**: Comparative Fit Index

Source: Authors.

To measure the model fit, we evaluated it using various indices, such as Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which measures the discrepancy between the observed data and the data predicted by the model, where lower values indicate a better fit (≤ 0.08). The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) also measures this discrepancy but with values less than 0.05. Normal Fit Index (NFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) evaluate the model’s overall fit, where values above 0.90 are desirable. The results obtained after eliminating the variables suggest that the model fits the data well and is valid and reliable.

Considering those indexes of reliability and validity in the model, there are still areas that require special attention, as Table 5 shows.

Table 5: Reliability Indices Adjusted model for different constructs

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha (standardized)	Cronbach’s Alpha (non-standardized)	Composite Reliability (rho c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
IA	0.755	0.755	0.763	0.519
PS	0.691	0.687	0.692	0.252
IUI	0.506	0.502	0.507	0.256
SWL	0.748	0.745	0.763	0.530

Source: Authors.

Cronbach’s Alpha shows that IA and SWL have high internal consistency, indicating reliability (0.755 and 0.748, respectively). PS and IUI have a consistency below the acceptable level (≤ 0.7), suggesting lower reliability. The standardized version of Cronbach’s Alpha confirms these results, showing that IA and SWL are the ones that exhibit greater consistency and representativeness in the model. The Average Variance Extracted (“AVE”) shows that IA and SWL are well related to their underlying constructs, thus capturing the variance better, while PS and IUI are not. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) shows that IA and SWL are well related to their underlying constructs, thus capturing the variance better. At the same time, PS and IUI are not as well related. The possible reasons for a low AVE in the PS and IUI constructs could include unrepresentative items, low factor loadings, ambiguous or poorly-worded items, inadequate item construction, diversity in interpretation, insufficient number of items, lack of content validity, and measurement method effects.

Although some fit indices in the research model show acceptable values, others do not meet the recommended theoretical standards, which suggests that the model may not adequately reflect the relationships proposed in the literature review. Specifically, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the PS and IUI variables is below the recommended 0.5. This result could be due to the theoretical structure of the model, as it may not adequately capture the dimensions of all the constructs. The stress and coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posits that Perceived Stress should significantly influence variables related to well-being, so if the model does not capture this influence, it may be poorly formulated or incomplete.

This is why the actual indices obtained versus the optimal ones indicate that the model or the survey conducted needs a more detailed review to align the constructs better or rephrase the questions so that they are more representative, thus adjusting the model to the revised theoretical expectations.

The variables were examined using the adjusted Structural Equation Model to determine their relationships and how they influence students’ well-being. The results reveal several significant relationships that shed light on social media’s positive and negative effects. The following sections detail the research findings, comprehensively analyzing the correlations observed and discussing their implications.

Table 6 shows the unstandardized coefficients obtained from the CB-SEM analysis, which provide the direct relationship between the variables in their original units. It also includes the relationship between the variables, estimated parameters, standard errors, t-values, and p-values.

Table 6: Hypothesis

	Parameter estimates	Standard errors	T values	P values	Hypothesis
IUI →	0.355	0.163	2.179	0.030	H1. Not supported
SWL					supported
IA → PS	0.319	0.048	6.710	0.000	H2. Supported
PS → SWL	-0.334	0.090	3.730	0.000	H3. Supported

Source: Authors.

It was found that a higher Social Media Addiction (SMA) is related to an increase in Perceived Stress (PS), which in turn causes a decrease in Satisfaction With Life (SWL). On the other hand, the Intensity of Social Media Use positively impacts Satisfaction With Life, meaning that moderate use makes students feel more satisfied.

Table 7 presents the standardized coefficients, which help us to understand the direct relationship regarding standard deviation. These standardized coefficients compare the magnitude of the effect of different variables on each other, in this case, among the studied variables.

Table 7: Standardized Path Coefficients

Relationship	Path Coefficient
IUI → SWL	0.202
IA → PS	0.631
PS → SWL	-0.272

Source: Authors.

The relationship between Internet Addiction (IA) and Perceived Stress (PS) with a non-standardized coefficient of 0.319, a standardized coefficient of 0.589, and a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$) can be interpreted as a positive and significant relationship. The above suggests that a higher level of Internet Addiction is associated with a higher level of Perceived Stress among students. Internet Addiction among students can lead to compulsive behavior and cause difficulties in time management, which increases Perceived Stress (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).

The relationship between Internet Usage Intensity (IUI) and Satisfaction With Life (SWL) yields an unstandardized coefficient with a value of 0.355, a standardized coefficient of 0.211, and a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$), which is interpreted as a positive and significant relationship. A higher use of social media is associated with greater Satisfaction With Life among students. Social media can provide students with social support, entertainment, and a platform that allows them to express themselves, which helps contribute to greater Satisfaction With Life (Verduyn et al., 2017).

The relationship between Perceived Stress (PS) and Satisfaction With Life (SWL) has an unstandardized coefficient of -0.334, a standardized coefficient of -0.271, and a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$), which is interpreted as a negative and significant relationship. The higher the students' Perceived Stress level, the lower the Satisfaction With Life. Literature apparently supports the above finding, as high stress levels negatively affect mental and emotional health, thereby reducing Satisfaction With Life (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate a need to implement strategies and programs that help students manage their social media usage time much more effectively and mitigate adverse effects associated with the excessive use of these platforms. As our contribution to the improvement of the well-being of students at Universidad Diego Portales, we present below a series of recommendations. The main objective would be to implement a digital education program that teaches students to use social media responsibly and in a balanced manner, thus reducing the adverse effects of excessive use and Internet Addiction. An action plan is proposed for the correct implementation, consisting of an initial diagnosis, program development, implementation, and subsequent monitoring.

- **Initial Diagnosis:** To obtain an initial diagnosis, we propose a survey to evaluate social media usage habits, including additional variables not asked in this study, and to determine students' level of knowledge about the effects of social media use.
- **Program development:** We propose educational modules that study different topics, such as the responsible use of social media, techniques for managing online time, identifying when a person is addicted to the Internet and how to cope with this, and finally, strategies to reduce stress.
- **Implementation:** Organize workshops and seminars given by psychology and digital well-being experts. The program could be integrated into an existing subject or implemented as an elective course.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Conduct follow-up surveys to assess the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
- **Resources:** The budget allocated for the program must be sufficient for its development and implementation. A program coordinator must also be appointed, and a support team must be defined.
- **Communication and awareness:** Launch awareness campaigns to inform students about the importance of responsible social media use.

We believe that the correct implementation of this recommendation will improve the well-being of the students and create a much healthier and more pleasant academic environment.

This study investigated the impact of social media use on personal well-being among university students in Chile. The tested model indicates that Internet Addiction is positively related to Perceived Stress, which, in turn, negatively impacts Satisfaction With Life. This relationship reinforces the idea that excessive and compulsive use of social media can increase stress, negatively affecting students' overall well-being. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that digital platforms can lead to a higher perception of stress and, consequently, lower Satisfaction With Life (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).

Conversely, the research also revealed that a higher Intensity of Social Media Use is positively associated with Satisfaction With Life. It should be noted that the intensity of use and Social Media Addiction are different concepts. The first one measures the hours and times per week spent on the platform (Instagram), the number of followers, or the frequency with which they change their profile picture, while Social Media Addiction is

measured based on the respondents' emotionality, the dependence they may have on these platforms, how that dependence affects personal life, and whether they believe they cannot stop using them no matter how hard they try.

Once this distinction is made, we note that this finding indicates, under certain conditions, that social media use can be beneficial since it provides social support and opportunities for self-expression that contribute to personal well-being (Verduyn et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that the relationship between Perceived Stress and the Intensity of Social Media Use is weak, suggesting that the impact of social media use on stress is not as direct as one might assume.

The results of this research underscore the need for strategies and programs that promote a balanced use of social media among students. Responsible use of social media, time management techniques, and strategies to reduce stress are aspects to work on.

It is important to mention that this study faced some limitations. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for some scales was relatively low, which may have impacted some results. Despite these limitations, the results are significant and demonstrate the hypothesis of a significant relationship between the Intensity of Social Media Use and students' personal well-being.

For future research, we suggest that these limitations be addressed by improving the reliability of the scales through greater quality control in data collection and considering alternative measures to assess AVE in IUI and PS.

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Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey: An Exploratory Bibliometric Review

Keywords: Augmented Reality, Marketing, Customer Journey, Bibliometric Review.

Received: 2023 | **Accepted:** 2024 | **Available online:** 2025

Cite this article as: Sanchez, D. (2025). *Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey: An Exploratory Bibliometric Review*. *Estudios de Administración*, 30 (2), 88–109.

<https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0816.2023.79813>

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ABSTRACT

The reactions regarding consumers and interactive environments through the purchasing process are still unknown. This article aims to deliver a quantitative approach of the relationship between Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey research. Manifested in 86 articles published in the Web of Science core index in the last decade (between 2013 and 2023). General results show that the topic has been gaining attention over the last 5 years and it is expected to keep growing in the future. Main authors are Chylinski, De Ruyter, Heller, Rauschnabel, Javornik, Hilken. Whilst Flavian, Lemon, and Kumar stand crucial to link AR to the Customer Journey; and Pantano, Dacko, and Grewal to Digital Marketing. Overall, AR technologies have a significant role in adding value to the customer experience throughout the Customer Journey by building customer confidence, helping shoppers make the right choice, making the shopping experience easier and more engaging, and increasing the purchase intention.

Keywords: Augmented Reality; Marketing; Customer Journey; Bibliometric Review.



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INTRODUCTION

Augmented reality (AR) is defined as a computer graphic enhancement of reality (Milgram & Kishino, 1994). AR technologies can overlay the user's direct view with virtual content, enabling the coexistence of virtual and real elements on the same space (Azuma, 1997). To date, AR has been defined from many perspectives, some authors have also used the terms mixed reality (MR) or extended reality (XR) which encompasses the full Reality-Virtuality continuum, nevertheless AR is a particular subset on its own (Azuma, 2019). AR has been receiving increased attention over the last years, both from managers and scholars alike (Rauschnabel et al., 2022a). From a marketing-related perspective, some authors have recently examined how the usage of AR elements enriches the customer experience, improving marketing-relevant outcomes (Heller et al., 2023).

Customer experience is understood as the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Experiential economy focusses firms' actions toward creating experiences for the consumers (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), distinguishing from traditional marketing by treating consumption as a holistic experience and recognizing both rational and emotional drivers for consumption (Schmitt, 1999). Customer experience is a definition that can be conceptualized, organized, and driven by Customer Journey models characterized by time stages of the purchasing process, namely pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase and the different touchpoints with firms (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The pre-purchase stage encompasses the customer encounters with the firm before the purchase and is characterized by behaviors such as consideration, information search and the need of recognition (Broilo et al., 2016). It is not uncommon for a consumer to be aware of a product from a specialty magazine, to evaluate the product based on an in-store demonstration, to read product reviews and research in-store product availability online (Berman, 2020). Consequently, the purchase stage encompasses all consumer contacts with the brand and the environment during the purchase event itself, and it is distinguished by behaviors such as choice (selecting a product), ordering (asking for said products), and payment (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The literature set mainly focuses on these first two stages (Tueanrat et al., 2021). Ultimately, the post-purchase stage includes client contacts with the brand and its surroundings after the purchase. Post-purchase activities include delivery, product in-hand, return and exchange, customer support, benefits, and feel-good factors (Kumar & Anjaly, 2017). The academic literature offers a consensus that touchpoints reside within Customer Journeys and can be split into brand-owned, partner-owned, and customer-owned touchpoints, and these touchpoints may involve multiple actors (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The interactions regarding consumers' drivers/outcomes of marketing-based with computer-mediated interactive environments through the Customer Journey are still unknown (Hollebeek et al., 2020). There have been only a few studies that tackled both Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey concepts together, most of them being published during the last ten years. It is not clear if AR-based technologies enhance the customer experience across the different touchpoints (Hilken et al., 2018), "successful AR Marketing depends on understanding the user experience and unique characteristics within the AR customer journey" (Rauschnabel et al., 2022a), to do so, the new technologies frameworks across the Customer Journey should consider how the technology-mediated experiences enhance the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions to create value (Hoyer et al., 2020).

The main objective of this review is to explore the relationship between AR and the Customer Journey using bibliometric analysis. This paper continues with the following

structure: Section 2 will address the methodology to be used. Section 3 will provide exploratory results and discussions. Section 4 regards limitations and future research. Finally, Section 5 encompasses the main conclusions of this investigation.

METHODOLOGY

Pritchard introduced bibliometric techniques as a quantitative approach to work with broad bibliographic records (1969). The author defined the term as “the application of mathematics and statistical methods to books and other media of communication” (Pritchard, 1969). Bibliometric analysis works as a tool used to look for relevant information regarding the research state of a certain area, allowing academics to identify and partake in possible future research in the desired field of study (de Battisti & Salini, 2013). Bibliometric reviews have gained attention in business-related research in recent years, for its utility for handling large corpus of data and inherent capacity to produce high impact research (Donthu et al., 2021).

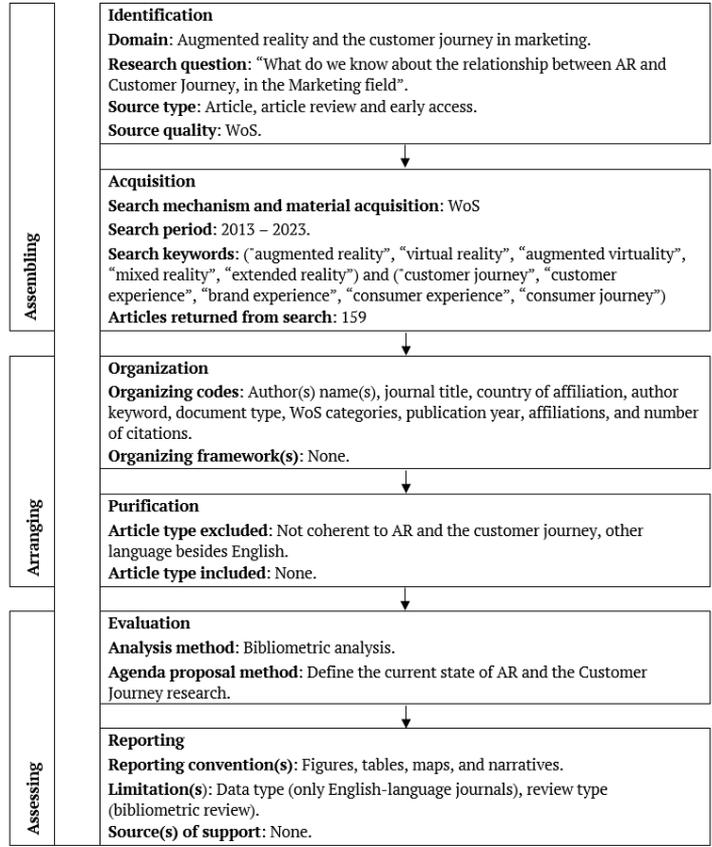
This study employed a bibliometric analysis relationship between Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey following the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews Protocol (SPAR-4-SLR). This methodology was developed by (Paul et al., 2021) and allows researchers to assemble and arrange literature reviews thoroughly with logical and pragmatic rationales, and transparently reported stages and sub-stages: The first stage is known as Assembling—identifying and acquiring articles for evaluation—, the second as Arranging—organization and purification of the corpus collected in the research—and Assessing—evaluating and reporting the reviewed articles from the research.

The Assembling stage is divided into two sections, Identification and Acquisition. Identification requires four defined segments, domain, research questions, source type and source quality, the review domain chosen for this bibliometric analysis was Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey in marketing, whereas the research question is What do we know about the relationship between AR and Customer Journey in the Marketing field? The novelty of the issue provides the exploratory nature of the present review. Among the source types, article, article review, and early access are taken into consideration, alternatively proceeding paper is not included in this research. The Web of Science (WoS) platform is used as our source quality measurer for articles. The refinements this bibliometric analysis includes are the addition of the “*” symbol to obtain singular and plural variations of the selection of keywords. In terms of Acquisition, the WoS database is used as the main resource. The search period is a 10-year band, between 2013 and 2023, as most articles on AR and the Customer Journey appeared in journals from 2013 onwards — as indicated by WoS —. The search was done using the keywords “augmented reality”, “virtual reality”, “augmented virtuality”, “mixed reality”, and “extended reality” in the field “topic”. Due to the nascent nature of research in VR and AR thus far, studies had used the terms virtual environment, VR, and virtual worlds inconsistently and often time, without including definitions of the terms (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). The second search row was added using the connector “AND”, with the keywords “customer journey”, “customer experience”, “brand experience”, “consumer experience”, and “consumer journey”. Multiple definitions were used because particularly concerning the relation between customer experience and the customer journey perspective, issues concerning customer journey terminology (Følstad & Kvale, 2018).

The Arranging stage involves the Organization and Purification of articles returned from the search. In terms of Organization, the set of articles were coded according to author(s) name(s), journal title, country of affiliation, document type, author keywords, WoS categories, publication year, and number of citations. No organizing framework was used. Regarding purification, articles were manually excluded due to not being coherent to the subject of interest.

The Assessing stage involves the evaluation and reporting of articles under review. In connection with evaluation, the analysis methods involve the use of bibliometric analysis and software to describe the relationship between Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey. Microsoft Excel was used to compute the article metadata, whereas VOSviewer and WoS tools were used to sort tables and map information. Concerning reporting, findings are displayed in figures and tables. The amount of information presented is based on the Web of Science h-index. Limitations are acknowledged towards the end of this article.

Figure 1: Adapted SPAR-4-SLR Protocol



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

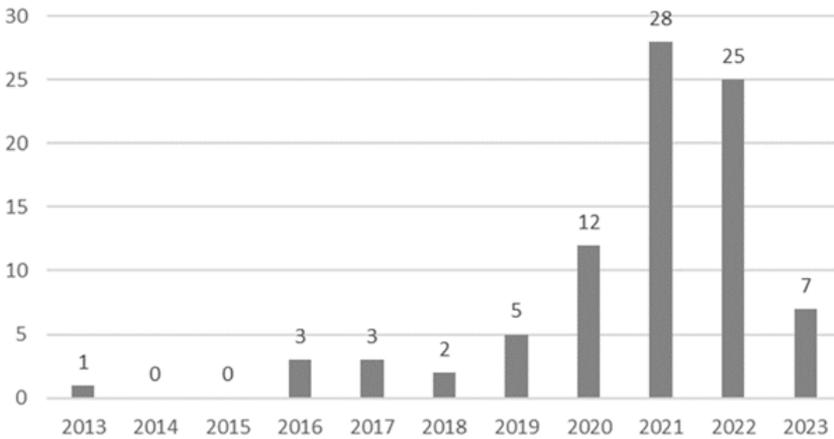
This section presents the results and discusses the findings. It considers the number of articles published between 2013 and 2023, highlighting the most influential articles, authors, institutions, and countries. VOSviewer is used in this study to run a co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, and co-occurrence analysis. Various relevant metrics are

examined, such as AR types, research areas, and experimental main findings. The data used in this study was downloaded on July 6th, 2023. In total, 86 working papers have been used out of the 159 papers that have been returned from the WoS database. The selected papers were written in English.

Number of Articles Published Between 2013 and 2023

Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of the field based on the number of publications in the core collection of WoS corresponding to the search topic Augmented Reality and Customer Journey.

Figure 2: Number of articles published between 2013 and 2023



The first five years (2013 to 2018) reflect the publication of a few articles, which indicates that the field had a slow growth in its beginnings. The next five years (2019 to 2023) show that AR technologies have been gaining attention in current research (Rauschnabel et al., 2022). The most productive year was 2021 (n=28). 2023 has only seven articles, as the search was done in July, but as an expanding market (Bloomberg, 2023; Deloitte 2023), AR shopping tools to enhance customer experience research are expected to grow in the future.

The Most Influential Articles, Authors, Institutions, and Countries

Table 1 summarizes the most cited articles that relate to Augmented Reality and the Customer Journey, retrieved from WoS core collection.

Table 1: Twenty-one most-cited publications of AR and the Customer Journey

DOCUMENT	CITATIONS	TITLE
(Flavián et al., 2019)	326	The impact of virtual, augmented and mixed reality technologies on the customer experience
(Dacko, 2017)	203	Enabling smart retail settings via mobile augmented reality shopping apps
(Scholz & Smith, 2016)	177	Augmented reality: Designing immersive experiences that maximize consumer engagement
(Hoyer et al., 2020)	164	Transforming the Customer Experience Through New Technologies
(Javornik, 2016)	133	It's an illusion, but it looks real! Consumer affective, cognitive and behavioral responses to augmented reality applications
(Roy et al., 2017)	127	Constituents and consequences of smart customer experience in retailing
(Mishra et al., 2021)	121	Consumer decision-making in omnichannel retailing: Literature review and future research agenda
(Parise et al., 2016)	118	Solving the crisis of immediacy: How digital technology can transform the customer experience
(Wedel et al., 2020)	104	Virtual and augmented reality: Advancing research in consumer marketing
(Hilken et al., 2018)	103	Making omnichannel an augmented reality: the current and future state of the art
(Heller et al., 2019)	94	Let Me Imagine That for You: Transforming the Retail Frontline Through Augmenting Customer Mental Imagery Ability
(Pillai et al., 2021)	92	COVID-19 and hospitality 5.0: Redefining hospitality operations
(Chylinski et al., 2020)	63	Augmented reality marketing: A technology-enabled approach to situated customer experience
(Chandra & Kumar 2018)	56	Exploring factors influencing organizational adoption of augmented reality in e-commerce: Empirical analysis using technology-organization-environment model
(Barhorst et al., 2021)	52	Blending the real world and the virtual world: Exploring the role of flow in augmented reality experiences
(Rauschnabel et al., 2022)	46	What is augmented reality marketing? Its definition, complexity, and future
(Sung, 2021)	40	The effects of augmented reality mobile app advertising: Viral marketing via shared social experience
(Tan et al., 2022)	38	Augmented Reality in Retail and Its Impact on Sales
(Cruz et al., 2019)	33	An augmented reality application for improving shopping experience in large retail stores
(Batat, 2021)	30	How augmented reality (AR) is transforming the restaurant sector: Investigating the impact of 'Le Petit Chef' on customers' dining experiences
(Gatter et al., 2022)	29	Can augmented reality satisfy consumers' need for touch?

Flavián et al. (2019) was the most quoted article (326). It might be because it contains the whole continuum of Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR) technologies influence throughout the customer's entire "purchase journey". Their work describes the "core experience" of the customer as the baseline experience, which encompasses the fundamental, traditional experience in which technology is absent or plays a limited or secondary role. Establishing the core experience is critical for any study and company since it serves as the starting point for developing improved experiences using AR, VR, and MR technology. The integration of technology-mediated experiences with current customer core experiences leads to integral technology-enhanced experiences, which enhance the value delivered to customers, according to the key findings.

Following suit, the author Dacko (2017) has the second most cited article (203). A difference of over 100 citations from the most cited article. Their research investigates, in a retail environment, how adopting mobile augmented reality apps relate to both experiential value for customers and value for retailers. Extrinsic value is formed by the utilitarian advantage of efficiency, while intrinsic value is created by the aesthetics and playfulness of applications, according to the primary results. Additional data indicates that purchasing satisfaction is prioritized in mobile augmented reality buying apps.

The third author, with the paper Augmented reality: Designing immersive experiences that maximize consumer engagement, is Scholz and Smith (2016) with 177 citations. The purpose of this paper is to make recommendations for effective Augmented Reality marketing campaigns by developing more interactive advertising and allowing customers to experience products and venues in new ways. The main findings indicate that marketers

should consider the following: Experiences, nurturing engagement, target audiences, aligning AR with the marketing program, neutralizing risks, objectives, leveraging brand meanings, and enticing customers.

Hoyer et al. (2020) was the fourth most cited article (164). The article focuses of the Customer/Shopper Journey, and how AR/VR/MR is particularly important in the pre-transaction phase (as it is referred as in their research), as such devices facilitate imagination, allowing consumers to experience and test products or services in 3D in real-time. In the transaction phase it augments beyond the physical and facilitates payment. For example, a virtual cash register enables the shopper to virtually authorize a transaction. With this technology, the customer journey proceeds seamlessly from pre-transaction through the stages of the customer journey; post-transaction phase, AR/VR/MR upgrades and enriches consumption for consumers.

Javornik (2016) was the fifth most cited article (133). The research works with the augmentation of on-site/application-related responses, such as application attitude, number of application-related thoughts, and intention to use it again and to talk about it to friends, are mediated by flow. Reacting positively on affective responses towards the application and behavioral intentions in terms of revisit and recommendation intention, especially for the AR app with virtual try-on. However, on cognitive responses, in a negative way.

The common thread across the aforementioned articles is their shared articles is their shared acknowledgment and consensus regarding the positive influence that AR has on the Customer Journey, primarily during the pre-purchase and purchase stages.

Furthermore, Table 2 presents the results of most cited authors that relate AR to the Customer Journey retrieved from WoS core collection.

Table 2: Twenty-one most-cited authors of AR and the Customer Journey.

AUTHOR	DOCUMENTS	CITATION
Flavian, C	2	354
Ibanez-Sanchez, S	2	354
Orus, C	2	354
Chylinski, M	4	270
De Ruyter, K	4	270
Heller, J	4	270
Mahr, D	4	270
Dacko, S	1	205
Scholz, J	2	193
Smith, A	1	177
Hilken, T	3	176
Hoyer, Wd	1	164
Kraume, K	1	164
Kroschke, M	1	164
Schmitt, B	1	164
Shankar, V	1	164
Javornik, A	3	149
Balaji, M	1	127
Bang N	1	127
Melewar, T	1	127
Roy, S	1	127

Considering only citations, Flavian, Ibanez-Sanchez and Orus are the most influential authors, with 354 citations each, followed by Chylinski, de Ruyter, Heller and Mahr with 270 citations.

Table 3 summarizes the journals that have published articles that relate AR to the Customer Journey retrieved from the WoS core collection. In which articles of AR and the customer journey—the first fifteen publishers from WoS are taken into consideration in the development of table 3—.

Table 3: Twelve journals that published AR and the Customer Journey.

JOURNALS	RECORD COUNT
International Journal of Retail Distribution Management	6
Journal of Business Research	6
Psychology and Marketing	5
Journal of Service Management	4
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	4
Journal of Services Marketing	3
International Journal of Consumer Studies	3
Australasian Marketing Journal	2
Business Horizons	2
Fashion Style Popular Culture	2
International Journal of Hospitality Management	2
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	2

In terms of the principal journals, or publications titles as it is referred to in WoS the gathered information shows that the two leading platforms were the International Journal of Retail Distribution Management and the Journal of Business Research, with six publications present in their archives, at the time of the collection of data (July 6, 2023).

After these two main publishers, the record count for the next journal—Psychology and Marketing—declines in comparison, reaching five publications. From then on, the numbers plummet to four (Journal of Service Management and Technological Forecasting and Social Change), three (Journal of Services Marketing and International Journal of Consumer Studies), and two for the rest of the journals.

Please note that only journals with more than one article associated with them are detailed in Table 3, the ones that have one publication are not detailed in said table.

On the other hand, Table 4 summarizes the county of origin from the articles retrieved from WoS core collection.

Table 4: Record count of countries that published AR and the Customer Journey.

COUNTRIES/REGIONS	RECORD COUNT
England	20
USA	19
Australia	10
China	9
France	8
Germany	8
India	7
Netherlands	5
South Korea	5
Italy	4
Scotland	4
Spain	4
Austria	3
Canada	3
Finland	3
Singapore	2
Taiwan	2
Tunisia	2

Lead researching countries in the topic of AR and the customer journey are England, USA, and Australia, leading the board with nineteen, nineteen, and ten publications respectively. England having Dako and Javornik as two of their most cited authors, the USA with Scholz and Hoyer, and Australia with Roy and Hilken (Table 2). Following, with nine publications, we have China, and France and Germany with eight. India with seven, and the Netherlands and South Korea five publications each. For this list and the ones that follow, countries with only one publication associated with them are not included in the list, therefore Taiwan was the last country included on Table 4 for this section. The information provided by the number of publications per nation directly correlates with the list of universities that published articles with the topic of this bibliometric analysis, Table 5.

The list summarizes principal universities that have affiliated articles that relate AR to the Customer Journey the most retrieved from WoS core collection.

Table 5: List of twenty universities that published AR and the Customer Journey the most.

AFFILIATIONS	RECORD COUNT
University of London	6
Maastricht University	4
N8 Research Partnership	4
University Of Sussex	4
Bundeswehr University Munich	3
Kings College London	3
Manchester Metropolitan University	3
Swinburne University of Technology	3
University of New South Wales Sydney	3
Columbia University	2
Management Development Institute Mdi	2
Royal Holloway University London	2
Udice French Research Universities	2
Univ Lyon II	2
Universite De Lille	2
Universite De Lille Isite	2
University of Manchester	2
University of Texas Austin	2
University of Texas System	2
University of Western Australia	2
University of Zaragoza	2

Regarding the affiliation with universities, the University of London leads the chart with a record count of six publications associated with them; within the first three universities, two are from England, and from the universities displayed in Table 5, six of the mentioned above are from that same nation (University of London, University of Sussex, King’s College London, Manchester Metropolitan University, Royal Holloway university London, the N8 research partnership of Universities from the north of England, and University of Manchester); for the USA, Australia, and the other countries mentioned in the previous section, there were many universities from these nations with only one publication associated with them, most of these institutions could not fit the list that we used for Table 5, as we decided to consider universities with more than one publication associated with them.

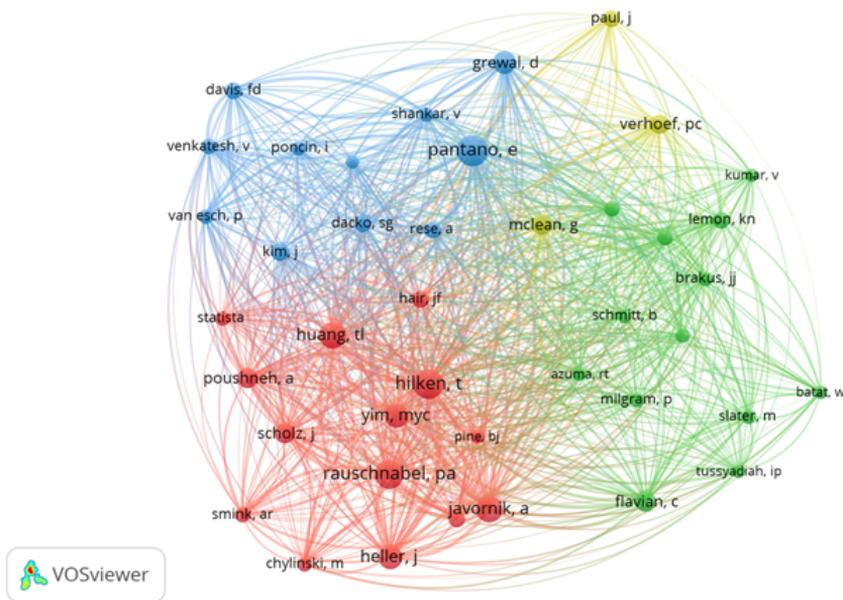
These results follow the lines of the information reflected in the principal countries section, validating the numbers of publications associated with certain countries (Table 4) and connecting this information with the universities that back up and there are filiated with authors of this area of research —AR and Customer Journey—.

***Bibliometric Relationship Maps
Co-citation Analysis***

Academy is constantly changing with the evolution of certain terms, or innovative ideas that are introduced into this field of study, as was stated by Llanos-Herrera and Merigo, it is vital, for researchers, to gather and analyze articles previously published, in this case with AR and customer journey, to lay a foundation for future research (Llanos-Herrera & Merigo, 2019). As a result, understanding the structure of academic production and publication of articles, in terms of the authors who are referenced together —co-citation analysis—, and their citation structure in terms of common patterns in author citation — bibliographic coupling analysis— is necessary.

The first analysis made with VOS viewer is ran to identify the authors who had citations in common in works related to AR and the Customer Journey—as it is stated in the methodology section —, it is necessary to start with a co-citation analysis to see the relationships that these documents have with one another’s (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Co-citation is selected as the type of analysis and cited authors as the unit of analysis; with fractional counting as the counting method to create a map with VOS viewer. A minimum of 15 citations per author are selected, from the 4458 authors detected by the program, 41 met this threshold.

Figure 3: Bibliographic data Map of co-citation analysis based on authors.



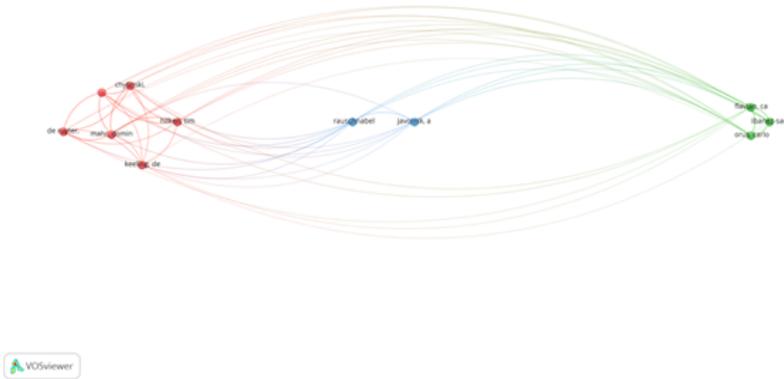
The four clusters, red for cluster one, green for cluster two, blue for cluster three, and yellow for cluster four, represented in this map, show the network visualization of co-citation of the authors that are present in WoS’s data.

As it is reflected in Figure 3, Rauschnabel, Flavian, Pantano, and Verhoef are part of the main co-cited authors for their respective clusters, in the collected data of 86 articles from WoS in relation to AR and Customer Journey. In the red cluster of authors, as we can see from the size their names occupy in the map, Hilken, and Javornik are sharing the spotlight with Rauschnabel—all authors related with digital marketing—. Lemon, and Kumar, are the representatives for the second cluster alongside Flavian, authors focused on traditional marketing. Following, Dacko, and Grewal work as the main researchers in Marketing and Customer Journey alongside Pantano. And lastly, Verhoef, McLean, and Paul.

Bibliographic Coupling Analysis

A second analysis is processed to identify the groups of authors that have a similar structure of quotations. To complete this task, VOSviewer is used to make a bibliographic coupling analysis by using authors as the unit of analysis and a fractional counting modality. With a minimum of 2 documents and 80 citations per author, only 11 authors of 243 met this threshold.

Figure 4: Bibliographic data Map of bibliographic coupling analysis on authors.

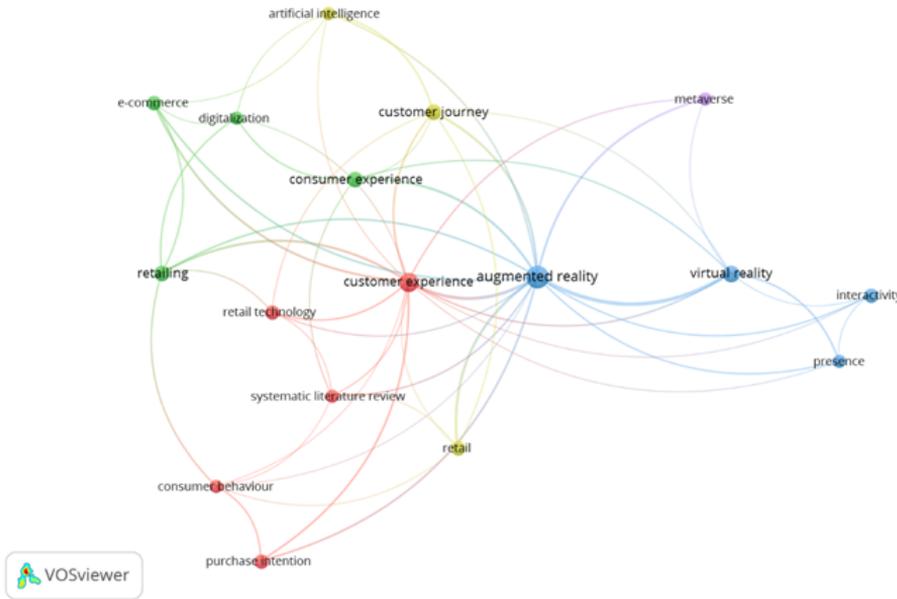


When examining the findings of the bibliographic coupling analysis (Figure 4), it is crucial to note how the various theoretical frameworks are used to construct the research are different. After analyzing this information through VOS viewer, three clusters were formed. The red group, also known as cluster 1 is constructed by the following authors: Chylinski, De Ruyter, Heller, Hilken, Keeling, and Mahr; this group is characterized by the usage of the main topic of this bibliography, their work mostly focuses on virtual shopping, and AR and its effect on the Customer Journey—measured through customer experience—. In the second cluster (green) only three representatives are present: Flavian, Ibanez-Sanchez, and Orus; Customer experience (CX) becomes their top priority, they research how new technologies, such as AR, VR, and MR, have an impact (positive or negative) on the interaction between them and CX throughout any stage of the Customer Journey—pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase—Authors Javornik and Rauschnabel are the representatives for cluster number three (blue), they mainly focus on a variety of AR advertising.

Co-Occurrence Analysis

The last analysis with VOSviewer sought to identify the underlying structure of the concept related to Augmented Reality and Customer Journey. This method allows for the display of the concepts associated with each research as well as the concepts that are relevant by the keywords chosen by the authors. Therefore, for the sake of this type of analysis, authors' keywords selected, with a fractional counting method; the minimum number of occurrences of a keyword was set to three. Of the 317 keywords, only 18 of them met the threshold. The results can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Bibliographic data Map of co-occurrence analysis based on authors' keywords.

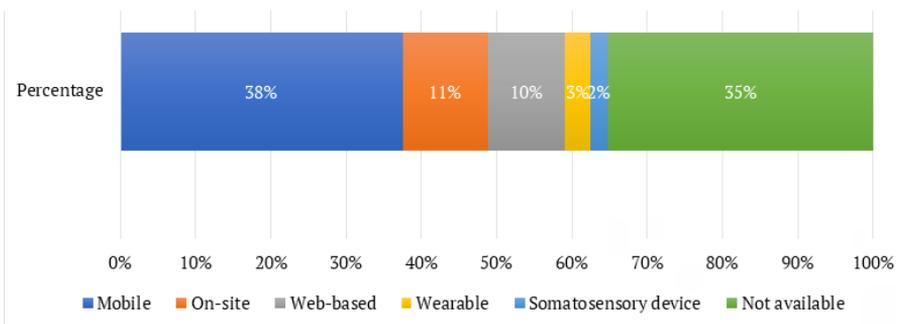


After running the search in VOSviewer, five clusters were formed. From these we can highlight Customer Experience and Augmented Reality as representatives of their clusters (red and blue respectively), and in the middle of the map, validating not only their co-occurrence, but also the importance of these keywords in the analyzed articles. The results show that AR and customer experience are related to not only the technology, but also the journey, and all the stages that a customer goes through when interacting with the process of buying a certain product.

AR Relevant Metrics

Figure 6 presents the distribution of AR types for the selected literature.

Figure 6: Type of AR



Note. Papers may have mentioned more than one type. AR technologies are typically installed on stationary,

mobile, or wearable devices (i.e., mirrors, smartphones, and glasses respectively) (Rauschnabel et al., 2018). Other authors have also documented the usage of web-based (i.e., virtual try-on) and somatosensory devices (i.e., Kinect by Microsoft) (Du et al., 2022). Firstly, the results show that mobile technology is in fact the dominant AR type. The studies in 33 articles (38%) use mobile AR as their research context. On-site AR follows suit, the studies in 10 articles (11%) use mobile AR as the research context. Thirdly, web-based technologies are found. The studies in 9 journal articles (10%) use web-based AR. wearable AR (3%) and Somatosensory devices (2%) were rare. Lastly, no clear AR type is claimed in 31 journal articles (35%).

The results show that now AR has many instances in which it can be used, and it's not limited to one context. Table 6 presents an overview of studies investigating the effects of consumers when using AR in different retail contexts.

Table 6: Customer Journey using AR in marketing settings summary

CONTEXT	RELATIONSHIP AR AND THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY	REFERENCES
Fashion	The potential value generation of NFTs from premium enterprises (NFT shoes from RTFKT studio and NFT couture garment from The Fabricant) remains low among typical customers. Despite their good perception, the challenges to adoption are interoperability, poor customer interaction with the metaverse, technological acceptability, and environmental and social concerns. Because of the novelty associated with NFTs, value-generating potential is expanding but remains mostly restricted to marketing and promotion for luxury firms.	(Alexander & Bellandi, 2022)
Cosmetic	Using AR-enabled virtual make-up try-ons enhances the customer experience, influencing positive purchase behavior in Gen Z women due to the positive perception of their body image and self-esteem.	(Ameen et al., 2022)
Food and Beverages	Flow theory, in which individuals often enter a state where they are completely switched off to the outside world and become engrossed in an activity that makes them feel like they are encountering a natural and highly enjoyable out of body experience (flow is related to interactivity, novelty, vividness, and enjoyment). The 249 participants were exposed to a shopping experience with AR, while the 251 participants in the control group were supposed to have the same experience without AR. It was shown that an AR shopping experience is more satisfactory for the customer than a regular shopping experience, especially for pre-purchase.	(Brannon Barhorst et al., 2021)
Food and Beverages	The use of AR menus (which virtually place the food before ordering) improves a customer's dining experience by increasing food literacy and knowledge (the intellectual dimension) during the contemplation stage (pre-purchase), providing a highly sensorial experience (purchase), and improving consumers' overall food well-being (leading to positive post-consumption behaviors).	(Batat, 2021)
Cosmetic	The use of AR applications in online beauty platforms has a beneficial impact on consumer satisfaction, which leads to a company's customers' ongoing intent to purchase the brand. This impact was discovered among forward-thinking consumers who embrace such technology while purchasing beauty goods online.	(Butt et al., 2022)
Travel and Tourism	The use of AR allows brands to create a personalized customer experience across different touchpoints during the buying process. Hyper-targeted advertising (pre-purchase) such as content and recommendations in the travel and tourism sectors influence positively the preference and purchase intention.	(Chaudhary et al., 2022)
Food and Beverages	The customer experience is directly related to the effectiveness of the AR marketing activity (continuance intention, purchase intention, and customer engagement). Eight factors influence the user's experience with AR applications. Perceived usefulness, Interactivity, Vividness, Novelty, Sense experience, Feel-experience, Act-experience, and Relate experience are all factors to consider.	(Chen et al., 2022)
Food and Beverages	Focuses on the ARRA app and its relationship with the user (in the retail food chain), studying the impact that AR has on the consumer's online shopping experience. There hasn't been much research on AR in a physical store setting (only three studies), and most of them use prototype AR under simulation in a laboratory. I am mainly interested in improving the current customer experience that a person can have with augmented reality retail applications.	(Chiu et al., 2021)
Fashion	Augmented reality marketing has a positive impact on their customers by closing the bridge of contextual relations, showing the product and the intended use context, here the content is digitalized and seen as a physical product through a hologram, showing how the product is, and reducing the time in which the customer decides on buying a certain product or not.	(Chylinski et al., 2020)
Fashion	AR mobile applications provide a helpful experience when shopping in large stores. Customers frequently feel lost when shopping in big stores. Thanks to the developed mobile application, users can easily locate themselves in the store.	(Cruz et al., 2019)
Fashion	AR tools were considered efficient by customers' pre-purchasing supports and to be purchased without assistance, thus enhancing the functional dimension (brand trust and security) in the use of fully immersive technologies. On the contrary, the emotional dimension of the augmented brand experience, linked to sharing information with other consumers or linked to entertainment, was considered less important by the participants of both the treatment group and the control group in co-creating brand added value.	(Cuomo et al., 2020)
Online services	In a retail context, adopting mobile augmented reality apps is positively associated with providing experiential value to consumers in their shopping as well as value to retailers. Extrinsic value is created by the utilitarian benefit of efficiency. Intrinsic value is created by the aesthetics and playfulness of apps. Other findings suggest that purchase satisfaction gets a predominant view on MAR shopping apps.	(Dacko, 2017)
Food and Beverages	HMD devices have the potential to grow exponentially within a short period of time in terms of retail sales. Engagement, engrossment, and total immersion will increase the quality of user satisfaction during the use of WMR devices.	(Dehghani et al., 2020)
Furniture and Home	Presenting foods (such as desserts) in AR has a positive effect on purchase (the average amount of money spent on dessert was higher than the control group) as it improves desirability. Also, the pre-purchase AR menu reported greater post-consumption enjoyment than those in the control group.	(Fritz et al., 2022)
Cosmetic, Furniture and Home	When it comes to consumers' autotelic demand for touch while interacting with AR content, those with a higher autotelic need for touch enjoy greater hedonic advantages than those with a lower autotelic need for touch. These hedonic benefits also result in more favorable marketing results, such as increased brand, product, and app attitude (pre-purchase), and purchase intention.	(Gatter et al., 2022)
Travel and Tourism	The novelty primarily implies the use of on-site AR technology for the check-in and check-out operations. And the feasibility of removing the human interaction of the hotel's receptionist in order to concentrate on promotion for the hotel in question. More technological advances should be used in "pre-arrival experiences" and "post-arrival experiences," where tourists will "face advanced robots through augmented reality glasses as inspiration, communication, sales channels, and means for collecting information about tourists' needs and interests."	(Golja & Paulišić, 2021)
Travel and Tourism	According to the survey, people primarily use ICTs to gather information; for other purposes, the percentage of individuals who utilized AR or 360 films was quite low; ICTs are also used to better grasp the cultural offer.	(Guo et al., 2021)
Fashion	The research reveals that utilitarian considerations have a favorable and direct influence on the two dimensions of customer experience. Hedonic benefits appeared to generate a positive experience with the retailer's mobile application and are likely to generate favorable rational and emotional responses; findings confirm that they affect purchase intention in the affective and cognitive dimensions of experience, with a stronger effect for the connective dimension over the affective dimension.	(Hamouda, 2021)
Furniture and Home	The application of augmented reality (AR) in retail frontline operations improves both the offline and online consumer experience. Customers are more inclined to (i) select a product; (ii) select a pricier product; (iii) be more committed to making the purchase by improving their odds of receiving the product; and (iv) be willing to spend more money overall.	(Hausmann & Schubbauer, 2021)
Food and Beverages	Customer/Shopper Journey: AR/VR/MR devices are especially significant in the pre-transaction phase, allowing customers to explore and test items or services in 3D in real time; in the transaction phase, it augments beyond the physical and enables payment. A virtual cash register, for example, allows the consumer to electronically authorize a purchase. With this technology, the customer experience flows smoothly from pre-transaction to post-transaction; in the post-transaction phase, AR, VR, and MR updates improve consumer consumption.	(Heller et al., 2019)
Furniture and Home	To improve relations with the consumer, use AR devices to monitor the self-body state in real time. Via the AR try-on system, consumers with high body surveillance may obtain a synchronous feeling of body ownership control, giving them more control over how they view themselves, which impacts their purchase decision since it provides them a sense of competency in their experience.	(Hoyer et al., 2020)
Fashion	Flow mediates the enhancement of site- and application-related reactions (application attitude, quantity of application-related thoughts, intention to use it again, and desire to tell people about it). Good emotional responses to the application and behavioral intents in terms of revisiting and recommending, particularly for the AR app with virtual try-on. Yet, it has a deleterious impact on cognitive responses.	(Huang et al., 2019)
Furniture and Home	AR opens up new opportunities for luxury firms in the context of the client experience, going beyond the just utilitarian. Two distinct approaches were explored: customized customization (the consideration phase, also known as the pre-purchase phase) and effortless continuation (not bound to a specific journey phase).	(Javornik et al., 2021)
Furniture and Home	Using genuine AR shopping scenarios improves the sensory brand app experience and indirectly boosts the sense of presence during the purchase stage; AR also has a direct effect on attitudes toward technology through interaction but has no direct effect on behavioral intention (willingness to shop).	(J. H. Kim et al., 2023)

Furniture and Home	When offline retailers use smart retail technology, the overall satisfaction of the customer rises, and the perceived risk decreases while satisfaction grows. Contact with these devices was critical to these outcomes. Pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (consumption experience).	(Y. Kim, 2021)
Fashion	Each facet of the digital kiosk consumer experience (sensorial, pragmatic, cognitive, and social) has a substantial effect on shopping value and self-mental imagery. They emphasize the strongest effects, as well as the quasi-generalized mediating function of these values and self-mental imagery in the relationships between experience components and behavioral intentions.	(Lao et al., 2021)
Travel and Tourism	The try-on phase allows potential visitors to get valuable 'try-before-you-buy' experiences. According to the findings of the study, watching genuine materials produces a stronger sensation of presence than viewing digital contents. It demonstrates that when a person has a clear picture of how a room will look, they are more inclined to book it. It performs better with VR headsets, but it also does well with smartphones.	(Orús et al., 2021)
Online services	QR codes; (a) company/association data; (b) use and introduction of QR-codes; (c) use and introduction of mobile applications; (d) utility of QR-codes and mobile applications across the three stages of the consumer journey; and (e) evaluation of consumer experience and implications for the value of 'Made in Italy' products. Pre-purchase: to positively influence the buyer's purchasing intention; to avoid international falsification.	(Penco et al., 2021)
Footwear	Non-location-specific and product-oriented Augmented Reality (AR) apps (i.e., virtual try-on) obtain higher ratings, leading consumers to see the brand as more interesting, honest, competent, and smart. Furthermore, users' sentiments toward the AR app are influenced by the app's fun and enjoyment. Moreover, AR apps increase brand personality perceptions among more inventive and adventure-seeking customers.	(Plotkina et al., 2022)
Online services	In an online retailing setting, AR applications on the customer experience stimulate spontaneous purchase and a good attitude of customers toward purchasing (purchasing). The results are explained by a greater perceived ease of use, perceived utility, and perceived quality of the online retail technology website.	(Rajagopal, 2022)
Furniture and Home	When using 5G for AR technologies, particularly for spatial audio and cultural heritage applications, a higher quality of Internet access provides a positive quality of experience to users, making the experience more enjoyable when leveraging many advantages of the 5G architecture, such as guaranteeing almost real-time sound spatialization as a function of users' movements for the most generic client device.	(Rinaldi et al., 2021)
Footwear	Augmented reality (AR) purchasing solutions have a diverse influence on the customer experience across different consumer categories of varying sizes, which are supported by distinct characteristics. Customers are not all the same. The segments with a more positive attitude toward AR had better experience value and decision confidence (purchase), as well as lower perceived information overload.	(Romano et al., 2022)
Footwear	The use of cutting-edge technological developments, such as augmented reality, on footwear online stores improves the customer experience on websites (E-commerce - pre-purchase) by better exploring dimensions such as merchandise, reliability, customer service, privacy and security, customization, and connectedness; low-price segment brands outperform high-price segment brands on these indicators.	(Silva et al., 2025)
Travel and Tourism	The study on 62 international students at a US institution revealed that AR marketing through the AR mobile app built for this specific study had a favorable influence on the customers' entertainment, education, and escapism experiences.	(Sung, 2021)
Cosmetic	Utilizing data from an international cosmetics shop, they discover that air usage on the retailer's mobile app relates to increased sales for less popular brands, goods with a narrower appeal, and more costly products. AR has a greater impact on customers who are new to the online channel or product category, implying that the sales rise is due to online channel adoption and category expansion. These findings suggest that a car is most successful when there is a significant level of product-related uncertainty. This study focused mostly on the initial phase of the customer journey, particularly try-on.	(Tan et al., 2022)
Furniture and Home	Telepresence and customer experience are measured. Pre-purchase: According to reports, AR advertising has more marketing technology and click-through than traditional web ads, generate good brand attitudes, and increase purchase inclinations. Purchase: AR is changing retailers into showrooms and aiding planned purchases by letting buyers locate things in the store via reverse image search (such as via apps by Home Depot and IKEA). Several applications (e.g., Ikea Place, Amazon AR View) enable users to place things in their homes using smartphones or an interactive showroom that provides an immersive HMD-based experience. Post-purchase: VR and AR applications can improve the post-purchase experience and evaluation by offering additional contextual information or re-enacting the consuming process.	(Wedel et al., 2020)
Food and Beverages	An AR application for product shelf selection on a smartphone shows that AR approaches improve user experiences and raise buy intent by increasing product attribute search efficiency and minimizing cognitive load throughout the purchase process.	(Wu et al., 2022)
Furniture and Home	The focus group was instructed to imagine a product and all the steps of the purchasing process, after which they were shown a video of an AR tech wearable and tried on the software. It seems 'like in-store and online connection because if you don't want to walk outside, you simply take it like... it's actually an in-store vibe, it's sort of the same thing,' according to participants. It has a good relationship with the participant. (A mobile app that lets consumers test things in real time; wearable technology that can choose items off a rack and display them on an augmented mannequin.)	(Yillehto et al., 2021)
Eye-wear	AR-based product displays enhance purchase intentions both directly and indirectly via affective responses and, as a result, cognitive and behavioral responses, albeit this effect is dependent on the technical implementation of AR features and customers' AR knowledge, among other factors.	(Zanger et al., 2022)
Eye-wear, Cosmetic, Furniture and Home	The impact of AR-based product display on the consumer experience varies depending on whether the product is hedonistic or utilitarian. For hedonic items, perceived coolness and spatial presence are both parallel mediating factors that boost online shop appeal, but only the mediation impact of spatial presence improves online store attractiveness for utilitarian products.	(M. Zhang et al., 2025)
Fashion	Marketers must broaden their technology gadgets with garments try-on to cater to diverse body shapes to have and leave a positive impression on the customer. This would have a significantly good impact on the client.	(X. Zhang, 2021)
Fashion	Discusses how technologies (VR, AR, etc.) have an involvement in the customer journey through his telepresence; the paper introduced digital value propositions as a new approach to investigating the transformative effects of digital technologies on customer experience in the retail sector, it bridges the knowledge gap between digitalization and consumption theory, and it demonstrates how digital technology adds value to consumption elements.	(Ziaie et al., 2021)

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This article opens a path, not only through its limitations but providing ideas for future research in AR and Customer Journey. As with any research, this study has faced limitations. Most importantly, the current research focuses on the usage of the WoS database, other collecting databases for articles (e.g., Scopus, Google Scholar) could be used by other researchers to investigate further in this area. Keyword selection is another limitation present in this bibliometric review, there were some exceptions where not only they mentioned AR, but VR and MR as well, as it is seen in Hoyer et. Al. (2020), therefore a larger sample of keywords is necessary now, as this area of research is still in its early stages of development; further research can be made in the future when more articles on this topic are published.

Moving forward, this article will shed light on the potential knowledge in the field that prospective authors can consider as future directions and inspiration for their journey through the academy.

CONCLUSIONS

This article tries to provide a quantitative approach to the link between Augmented Reality and Customer Journey research, which has been represented in 86 publications published in the Web of Science core index during the last ten years (2013- 2023). Consequently, general findings reveal that current research is gaining traction and is predicted to continue

to increase in the future. Authors such as Chylinski, De Ruyter, Heller, Hilken, Keeling, and Mahr were major influences in this field of research, according to VOSviewer, while Flavian, Lemon, and Verhoef supplied the essential background for Customer Journey; nevertheless, Pantano, Dacko, and McLean work alongside this trains of thought with their own influence in digital marketing.

The results of this bibliometric review contribute to several strands of the literature, especially for marketing and the influence that new technologies currently have in the market, easier access for customer to certain products, through the usage of try-on AR-mobile apps to see how an item (clothing) can look on them before they buy it. The findings contribute to the AR marketing and online retailing literature by showing how this technological advancement has positive effects on the customer journey.

To the best of our knowledge, this paper is the first to provide an extended recompilation of the relationship between the use of Augmented Reality features throughout the customer journey, especially in the current context of technological advancement that we have in the 21st century. Results suggest that AR technologies have a positive impact in the Customer Experience of the customer, therefore nurturing and benefiting the customer journey where AR becomes a mediator between retailer and customer interactions.

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SMEs intervention in Mexico: Case study

Keywords: SME, COVID-19, Economic interventions, Business relationships, Financial Accessibility for SMEs.

Received: 2023 | **Accepted:** 2024 | **Available online:** 2025

Cite this article as: Arechavala, R., & Montante, C. (2025). SMEs intervention in Mexico: A case study. *Estudios de Administración*, 30 (2), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0816.2023.74377>

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ABSTRACT

Historically, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries have always suffered from a lack of support from local governments (Aftab et al., 2021; Bartik et al., 2020; Basuno et al., 2010; Lu et al., 2020). Although they do hold a significant position in their contribution to the overall GDP of the country, they are left to their own devices in finding a solution to their problem. In 2020 the temporary closing of non-essential businesses due to COVID-19 as part of a sanitary contagion method took a toll on many SMEs in Mexico and affected the overall economy. In a state where 94.6% of SMEs are micro-size, 4.46% are small, and 0.46% are medium size businesses (INEGI, 2022) there were a series of programs that were implemented by the regional government as well as a university center focused on economics and business topics. This case study aims to contribute to understanding SMEs' challenges during a health and economic crisis and provide insights into future policy needs that should include university involvement.

Keywords: SME, COVID-19, Economic interventions, Business relationships, Financial Accessibility for SMEs.



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INTRODUCTION

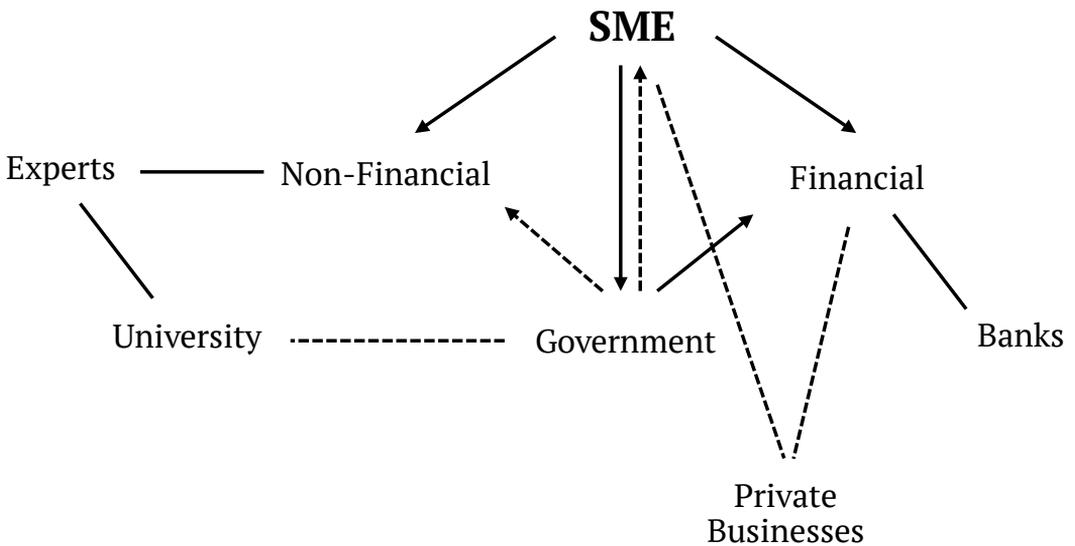
Studies have proposed that during a situation of economic crisis similar to that of what was seen during the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, government interventions, specifically economic ones, can be of benefit, especially for local businesses that contribute significantly to the overall regional GDP (Antwi-Boasiak et al., 2021; Sullivan & Wolfe, 2021). Certain sectors, during this latest pandemic, were far more strongly affected due to their economic activity that was deemed as not essential and were temporarily closed or limited due to mobility restrictions and local health measures (Ashford et al., 2020; Aspachs et al., 2021). Support for local banks did help provide quick loans with flexible repayment plans, restructured payments in the forms of moratoriums or flexible means of payment as well as government-sponsored subsidies that benefited SMEs in an attempt to stimulate economic activity and keep the economy going (Oyewele, Adebayo & Kehinde, 2020; Zarembe, Kizys, & Aharon, 2021; Danielli et al., 2020).

Covid-19 was first detected in the western region of Mexico around March of 2020 after the confirmation that the first case had been reported in February in the Central area of the country (Suarez et al., 2020) which provoked the temporary shut-down of many businesses and a disruption in the supply chain in some regions due to its health concerns and restrictions as well as limited mobility between states enforced by local governments. SMEs in developing countries like the case of Mexico tend to suffer from a lack of support from federal and local government agencies in general and more so in times of economic crisis (Aftab, Naveed, Hanilo, 2021; Bartik et al., 2020; Basuno, Yusdja, Ilham, 2010; Lu et al., 2020). In Mexico, SMEs make up 42% of the national GDP and generate 78% of national employment. Of these, 95.4% are micro-enterprises, 3.6% are small and another 0.8% are medium-sized enterprises (INEGI, 2022). In developing countries with similar characteristics, there is a trend for SMEs to rely on their own created relationships with other businesses and local banks that can help them acquire cash liquidity, access to more markets as well as credit (Adomako et al., 2019; Lehmann & Neuberger, 2001; Mesquita & Lazzarini, 2008; Narjoko & Hill, 2007). This encompasses some unique challenges such as the inability to secure loans that are meant for larger businesses or not having the business connections necessary to access more clients or a bigger market outside their sector or location (Cole & Damm, 2020; Jimenez et al., 2012; Popov & Udell, 2012). In addition, micro and small enterprises might not have the hindsight that a business that has been in existence for a long period and that has a stable clientele and working system enjoys due to experience and the high demand for their product and services. These last businesses also tend to have a better understanding of their market and foresight into some of the challenges that they will have to face to keep on expanding.

During times of economic crisis such as one SMEs endured in 2020, there was a demand for government interventions of any degree to help keep businesses afloat. Banks introduced loans with certain interest rates and flexibility geared towards SMEs and large businesses (IMF, 2020; Banco de México, 2021). Some SMEs also began restructuring their business to accommodate new market demands as a way of maintaining a competitive advantage (Fitriasari, 2020). However, the challenges for SMEs have also been known to stem from an inability to easily access resources when compared to large businesses which can hinder an economy of scale from taking place and can affect its overall production costs negatively, making it vulnerable to outside influences (Grondys et al., 2021). Non-financial information can also be of vital importance for the survival of SMEs as they try to navigate through the turbulent economic crisis being experienced in 2020 in which the temporary

lockdown and mobility were limited by sector and economic activity. Such orientation can prove to help SMEs evaluate their decision-making, better assess their options as well as create connections to other businesses (Altman et al., 2010). As noted by Adam and Alarifi (2021) having access to valuable information and maintaining two-way communication with other members of the business community and business experts can be of help to create new plans and provide important insight into the process of implementing new ideas. A visualization of what contributes to financial and non-financial SME well-being can be seen in graph 1 below.

Graph 1: Relationship between SME and other major actors



Source: Authors.

The graph shows how SMEs' needs can be categorized between financial and non-financial needs. Government can decide to play a role in supporting SMEs if it desires to do so, but SMEs tend to contribute to government decisions based on the percentage of SMEs contributing to the overall economy. The government then has the option of contributing with financial assistance usually, through loans, grants, or directly through banks. Although in the case of some countries in which there isn't a centralized banking system, the banks can be directly associated with a financial option for SMEs directly through interest rates and favor towards some SME businesses. Private-owned Businesses can help SMEs connect to financial assistance through their credit system or their bank based on recommendations. From the non-financial support, experts in the field of business that provide services can be identified by a university and can be part of a university system through affiliation or as alumni. University and government collaboration are not always established, these dotted lines mark that same idea that although at times they do it is not as direct in cases in which a university program seems of interest to the government. With this in mind, there was some initiative from local governments and organizations within universities to help

local entrepreneurs as well as local SMEs. One such organization was initiated through a university-sponsored program as an effort to provide a local business with several free consultancy services since knowledge is also a form of currency that will help SMEs make informed decisions. This case study is meant to describe some of the challenges SMEs go through during economic crises and advise government agencies as well as universities' involvement that can in possible future policies offer additional support to SMEs from not only a financial advantage but a strategic and insightful decision-making point of view. For the case study, we analyzed only data that is relevant to the study of relationships and business connections since these are seen as essential to SMEs in developing countries which include: the number of years in business, key issues, supply chain, and production cost (Markovic et al., 2021; OECD, 2021; Shanka & Buvik, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This case study is based on survey results that were gathered in 2020, during the pandemic regarding the main challenges and perspective issues for regional SMEs in a state located in central west Mexico that came about due to a collaboration between local government and a local public university. The results were the average responses by the business size of participants in the survey on a Likert scale.

Towards April 2020 up to mid-2022 a recurring survey was filled out to understand the needs of SMEs around the western state of Mexico. During that month, only 3.7% of businesses received some form of financial assistance whether that was government or a third party, with 92.2 % being SMEs nationwide. This economic intervention from government agencies covered 99.1% of the assistance received with the rest being supplemented by chambers of commerce and other financial institutions (ECOVID, 2020). A few factors were considered that would be important when formulating a questionnaire that would help better understand the growing needs of SMEs in the region. Some of these included the lending relationship with banks, as well as its size and years in the business as part of its overall risk evaluation as had been noted in certain studies as indicators of evaluating risk (Ayyagari et al., 2007; Grondys et al., 2021). Taking into account the literature review on practices supporting SMEs that included financial and non-financial support such as the direct financing of micro-businesses, tax stimulus, financial guarantees from central banks, tax reliefs, low-interest loans, moratoriums, extended loan repayment plans, and payment flexibility, a structured program was initiated to look into what non-financial support the public university could be of service. It was determined that non-financial issues involved a need to understand issues concerning labor laws, financial advice relevant to the current financial policies that were changing rapidly, supply chain concerns, digitalization of a business, length of time operation of the business has to remain halted or temporarily closed, how to recover or restructure their product and/or service, access to liquidity, competitive advantages, and overall survival of the business. Since mobility and access to the public university's campus were limited, it was thought best to make the survey and the meetings virtually. The public university contacted local government officials and discussed their interest in providing non-financial services to SMEs.

A list of questions was made and tested to check for relevance to local businesses' needs during the trying times of 2020. The questions were exhausted to a total of 11 sections based on feedback from preliminary survey testers whose backgrounds had to be current owners of an SME, experts, and university staff (Annex 1). These questions were meant to identify the type of business and their most urgent needs so as to connect them to the correct expert consultant in that field quickly so as to help them partially survive. This was done

on volunteer bases free of charge for the first five sessions per client and with professors and experts from various departments within the public university including business administration, faculty of economics, school of accounting, engineering department, and a third-party organization within the university that served as the main organizer and implementer of the program. Those questions were then made available online and could be managed through volunteers and students who would receive prior training in handling incoming data efficiently and connecting each request to the correct area that would then be responsible for connecting the SME to the expert for their sessions. Each SME would be assigned to an individual for follow-up and feedback both with the SME and the expert directly. In the area of privacy and confidentiality, it was suggested that individuals from both sides would agree to the standard terms and conditions but only within the five sessions offered by the university. In case the individual needed further assistance or had matters that required higher confidentiality standards, they would no longer be under the program and were encouraged to contact the expert externally from the platform. All SMEs within the state were invited through a formal press conference hosted by the public university and local government to contact a hotline in case of specific non-financial needs they faced. Volunteer experts were categorically placed under five main areas: accountants, lawyers, coaches, and experts who provide relevant services in those fields. These fields were based on the initial research and evaluation of the literature review followed by advice from SME experts and professors from relevant fields of study. Although the survey was primarily used to connect concerned SME business owners with a professional advisor, it also provides insights into the situations faced by many SMEs, especially in times of economic crisis and uncertainty.

FINDINGS

The collaboration with the local government and a local public university provided non-financial support for SMEs that reported suffering impacts on their supply chain and a rise in production cost regardless of how much time they had operating in their sector. The main unique topics of concern for micro businesses were their need and request for administrative advice from experts and small business ideas on how to re-engineer their processes. All types of SMEs required advice on fiscal policy related to business and found that as a beneficial service to have.

The survey was conducted on 480 SMEs of which 88.5% of respondents were micro size, 9.7% small, 0.2% medium, and 1.4% large from within the state. A set of questions was asked containing relevant information regarding the characteristics of their business, the area in which they need assistance, current challenges, and forms of communication. Of the businesses that participated in the survey, an average of 50% had been open for less than a year, 3.1% for up to three years, 2.6% for up to five years, and 6% for more than ten years of business experience, and 18.9%. As can be seen in table 1 below, the type of business with less than one year of experience tended to be micro, small, and medium size businesses. In terms of experiencing a level of slight complications, table 2 indicates that small businesses were more likely to request re-engineering processes, whereas micro, medium and large businesses were more likely to require financially related consultancy services. The re-engineering process included virtual and downloadable tools such as how to map the current business, and analyze each of the processes with guidance from the expert as to how to identify gaps or disconnected pathways in their current process with

questions being answered during sessions and some type of homework being provided for owners to report back about. For more detailed guidance after the five sessions, it could be taken individually by the expert and business owner outside of the university’s platform.

One thing that was affected due to the pandemic was the supply chain of business-to-business providers that were struggling to meet the demand for certain goods due to shortages, limited mobility policies, and rising transportation costs and container shipping prices. In this particular region, it affected SMEs regardless of time in business. Similar situations were announced to be a major issue around the world as well due to multiple circumstances in other countries that affected the arrival of goods from one country to another (Coibion et al., 2020; Paunovic & Anicic, 2021). As for the cost of production, it was one that hit all types of businesses in these circumstances since inflation rates, blocks in the supply chain, availability of products, and mobility was overall affected worldwide as well as within the country. These insights helped build connections between the public university with SMEs and the government to an extent that can be something that might be able to continue even after the 2020 temporary lockdown. The program itself has received a positive response with it being highly recommended and included to further university-government intervention programs for SMEs in the region with other intervention programs like woman-owned businesses and first-time entrepreneurs. It has provided an example of what actions can be done from the university’s side towards dealing with real-world problems that can benefit SMEs by connecting them to experts that they wouldn’t have access to so easily or that they hadn’t considered as a possible ally.

TABLES

Table 1: Years in operation per business size

TYPE	>1 YEAR	>3 YEARS	>5 YEARS	>10 YEARS	<10 YEARS
MICRO	0.491	0.20	0.084	0.098	0.124
SMALL	0.51	0.063	0.021	0.148	0.255
MEDIUM	1	0	0	0	0
LARGE	0	0	0	1	0

Table 2: Percentage of services demanded

TYPE	TRAINING	RE-ENGINEERING	FISCAL	OPT	LABOR	COACHING	MARKETING	FINANCES	FUNDS	DIGITAL
MICRO	0.4	0.122	0.371	0.16	0.026	0.092	0.087	0.042	0.03	0.007
SMALL	0	0.574	0.148	0.17	0	0	0.065	0.021	0	0
MEDIUM	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LARGE	0	0	.60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.2

Table 3: Percentage of supply chain status

TYPE	SUPPLY CHAIN IS GOOD	SUPPLY CHAIN IS SOMEWHAT RESPONDING	I HAVE HAD COMPLICATIONS WITH MY SUPPLY CHAIN
MICRO	0.188	0.244	0.567
SMALL	0.066	0.177	0.755
MEDIUM	0	0	1
LARGE	0.2	0.2	0.6

Table 4: Percentage of production cost

	PRODUCTION COST NOT AFFECTED	SOMEWHAT AFFECTED	PRODUCTION COST AFFECTED	SEVERELY AFFECTED
MICRO	0.136	0.16	0.298	0.404
SMALL	0.09	0.045	0.75	0.113
MEDIUM	0	0	1	0
LARGE	0	0	0.6	0.4

DISCUSSION

In the case of developing countries in which SMEs play a significant role in the overall economy in terms of creating jobs and contributing to the GDP, policies that incorporate financial and non-financial interventions might benefit from including public universities as allies in guaranteeing access to experts that can help business owners see a different perspective and/or consider more variables in their decision-making process. This can benefit economic growth as well as innovation in various economic sectors.

Interventions during economic crises are essential in providing support for SMEs as an attempt to keep businesses from closing since they play an important role in creating jobs especially if they already contribute a significant amount to the regional and national GDP and overall economic development (Chen et al., 2007). With Covid-19, non-essential businesses were temporarily closed worldwide, causing disruptions in supply chains and rising production costs. The lessons learned from Covid-19 should include providing business support to SMEs that would otherwise lack a means of connecting to experts that can help them adjust to change since they might suffer from limited insights due to the nature of their work or the overall way of business. Experts might provide new perspectives due to constant research in the area, interaction with various businesses, and being up-to-date with what is up and coming or what works as well as a clear understanding of some of the opportunities and barriers due to local culture (Alves et al., 2020; Chrisman & McMullan, 2004; Fitriyari, 2020). Although financial support is also

necessary, it might be more complicated to secure on time or might not be the only means capable of assuring survival especially during trying times, in addition, access to credit can be limited due to risk factors and/or limited clientele base (Song, 2020; Thorgren & Williams, 2020). In addition, supply chains can sometimes have external complications that are unavoidable in which international interdependence hinders access to certain goods and services making quick adjustments slower especially for SMEs (Coibion et al., 2020; Paunovic & Anicic, 2021).

The issue with economic contagions is that they are a surprise to most by nature and the ability to survive by SMEs will depend on access to funds as well as flexibility and motivation. As some studies have shown, it can be a combination of service, product quality, clientele base, leadership, motivation and the overall cultural organization that will decide how likely the SME is to survive despite economic challenges (Altman, Sabato, & Wilson, 2016; Markovic et al., 2021; Shanka & Buvik, 2019). Which non-financial support is critical in SMEs that are learning as they go or are adjusting their business to clientele needs and wants that might not always be clear due to their limited perspective of an issue or a lack of understanding of the market demand. One of the options that were chosen by small businesses that should serve as an indicator of their shortcomings was that of training on key topics involving business administration. Becoming aware of what these shortcomings are, can help better gear public policies that support the collaboration and contribution of public universities with local governments which would benefit not only SMEs but overall economic development.

The case study involving a public university with the overall SMEs in the western region of Mexico provides further insights into the need for SMEs during times of crisis. However, such a study also sheds light on the possible strategic advantage of public universities in being part of the plan to help support SMEs and entrepreneurial initiatives with local government. These types of collaborations and cooperation can help the business community strengthen their relationship with other businesses that might be offering desirable products and services as well as access to valuable insight and information that might help them keep their business going by connecting them to a university center that possibly already has some connection with another business (Chrisman & McMullan, 2004). Strengthening these partnerships from a public policy level could provide a way to meet the financial and non-financial needs of SMEs for economic development and social well-being (Alves et al., 2020). Especially in developing countries in which SMEs' resilience includes factors of success through collaboration, strategic diversification, and self-motivation, these types of incentives can help them go a long way (Ahmed et al., 2021; Adam & Alarifi, 2021). In the case of Mexico, a particular region with a significant amount of SMEs and with an important contribution to the overall economic growth in the region makes these policies strategic to follow and implement. Other developing regions can implement them as a means of forming a community that involves government, private and public sectors, and universities along with other educational institutions that can through their experts offer much-needed support to SMEs who are struggling. Public universities can be points of contact with other local businesses that can through these collaborations help bring in a circular economy in cases the supply chain is interrupted for a prolonged period of time or get acquainted with other potential business partners since most public universities might have alumni and business partners that can help make this transfer of knowledge and networking possible. Within developing countries, not many cases in which the collaboration of public universities and government agencies have been documented although its existence might already be in place, perhaps in affiliation

and connection with other public and private sector participants and main actors. Further extensive research on these collaborations may help understand the dynamics that influence the regional development of a country and provide roadmaps that can help understand the complex interplay between beneficial financial and non-financial SME-focused policies. This can be of great relevance in developing countries in which SMEs are left on their own by most governments.

CONCLUSION

SMEs face many challenges regardless of the economic times in the market and there is a need to include the universities in these types of non-financial support policies, especially in developing countries in which finding financial help can be deemed too risky by local governments. Universities, especially those considered public institutions, hold within them a network of experts and alumni that form part of the overall business community and can benefit from collaborations for the well-being of the overall economic development of the physical region it is in. A book edited by Kenney and Mowery (2014) mentions how public universities sparked regional growth in the case of California, which is located within a developed country. Although applying their experience to that of a developing country can be difficult, the current case study shows a non-financial intervention and alternative way in which two seemingly autonomous ecosystems can come together and collaborate in cultivating a new culture open to university interventions within the public policy economic sphere since SMEs will need additional support in their decision-making process as well as an institution that serves as a contact to other possible business partnerships.

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ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

BASIC INFORMATION	Name, Business name, Business address, number of employees, years in business, type of business (sector)
PROBLEM	<p>I will make it through this crisis completely</p> <p>I will make it through this crisis with some struggle</p> <p>I will make it through this crisis with difficulty</p> <p>Perhaps I won't make it through this crisis</p> <p>I won't make it through this crisis</p>
NEED HELP WITH	Coaching, professional development (acquiring new skills), re-engineering my business, adjusting supply chain, marketing, digitalization, guidance in matters regarding fiscal policies, guidance in labor laws and regulation, optimizing processes, or other
CHALLENGES	Low sales, lack of a business strategy, new competitors, difficulty to keep employees, lack of liquidity, problems with supply chain, or other
MEANS OF SALES	<p>Physical location</p> <p>Online business</p> <p>Hybrid (physical and online)</p> <p>I am currently closed</p>
SUPPLY CHAIN	<p>Having issues with receiving products, suppliers, and prices</p> <p>Having some issues</p> <p>My supply chain is under control</p>
CONTROL OVER INVENTORY	<p>I have control over supplies</p> <p>I have some control over my inventory</p> <p>I have minimum sales</p> <p>I don't have control over my supplies</p>
COSTS	<p>My costs are rising considerably</p> <p>My cost are somewhat rising</p> <p>My cost are not being affected</p>
STRATEGIES	<p>I have a business strategy</p> <p>I have a business strategy but have a few questions</p> <p>I don't have a business strategy but would like to have one</p> <p>I am not interested in a business strategy</p>
DO YOU NEED TO RE-ENGINEER YOUR PROCESSES?	<p>Yes, absolutely</p> <p>Maybe</p> <p>No</p>
ONCE ALL BUSINESS CAN REOPEN WILL YOU GO BACK TO NORMAL?	<p>It will improve immediately</p> <p>It will improve gradually</p> <p>It will improve somewhat</p> <p>It will improve slowly</p>

Información Editorial

CONTENIDO GENERAL

Estudios de Administración [ISSN: 0719-0816] es una revista de negocios revisada por pares a doble ciego, publicada semestralmente por el Departamento de Negocios de la Universidad de Chile desde 1994, creada para brindar un foro académico para la comunidad académica de negocios chilena y latinoamericana. Estudios de Administración publica artículos de investigación empírica, artículos metodológicos, revisiones sistemáticas de literatura, artículos conceptuales y estudios de casos en todas las disciplinas empresariales tanto en inglés como en español.

Manuscritos de investigación originales y casos de enseñanza no publicados anteriormente en otros lugares, que abordan temas de Estrategia, Finanzas, Marketing, Contabilidad, Operaciones, Innovación, Gestión y Desarrollo de Recursos Humanos, Cambio Organizacional, Sistemas de Información, Cadena de Suministro, Emprendimiento y Toma de Decisiones, entre otros temas relevantes para los negocios latinoamericanos son el principal foco de publicación.

ÁMBITO Y OBJETIVOS

Apuntamos a lectores de académicos, estudiantes graduados y ejecutivos de negocios de Iberoamérica y del mundo que buscan un conocimiento nuevo y sólido en el campo. Alentamos a autores e investigadores de la comunidad académica a presentar sus manuscritos para ser sometidos a revisión por pares en cualquiera de las siguientes categorías:

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- **Casos de enseñanza:**

Artículos de investigación basados en situaciones reales de negocios, diseñados para instruir a los estudiantes en las facultades de administración y empresa, proporcionando experiencias organizacionales sujetas a la realidad, que permiten aplicar proposiciones teóricas y conjugarlas con simulaciones prácticas y la toma de decisiones.

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Estudios que respondan a la creciente necesidad de un mayor enfoque en cómo funcionan la gestión y la administración de empresas, o en la forma en que los profesionales (practitioners) desempeñan su labor en la práctica organizacional. Aproximaciones a la investigación como Strategy-as-Practice (SAP), Marketing-as-Practice (MAP), Innovation-as-Practice (IAP), Entrepreneurship-as-Practice (EAP), etc. son bienvenidas.

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APÉNDICES

Si su manuscrito necesita incluir Apéndices, identifique cada tema por separado y etiquételo con una letra en secuencia (Apéndice A, Apéndice B, Apéndice C, etc.), de acuerdo con el orden en que se mencionan en el cuerpo del manuscrito. Para citar un Apéndice, utilice citas entre parentéticas. Por ejemplo, escriba en el cuerpo del manuscrito (ver el Apéndice D para indicadores y proyecciones económicas para América Latina y el Caribe), o simplemente (ver el Apéndice D). Cualquier cita dentro del Apéndice debe incluirse en la lista de Referencias.

Si sus apéndices incluyen Tablas, Figuras, Fórmulas y/o Ecuaciones, agregue la letra del Apéndice, dando una numeración separada: Por ejemplo, numere la tercera Figura en el Apéndice D, como "Figura D3". Cada etiqueta de sección del Apéndice presenta un "Título de formato de nivel 1" y debe tener un subtítulo, encabezado con un "Formato de nivel 2". Por ejemplo:

Apéndice D **Indicadores y proyecciones económicas** **para América Latina y el Caribe**

La Tabla D1 muestra los indicadores económicos más importantes de...

TABLAS, FIGURAS, ECUACIONES Y FÓRMULAS

Las Tablas y las Figuras (si es posible) deben enviarse como texto editable y no como imágenes para facilitar el proceso de revisión. Las Figuras y Tablas se pueden colocar junto al texto relevante en el artículo o en páginas separadas al final. Si se presentan en páginas separadas, se debe hacer referencia a ellos dentro del cuerpo del manuscrito para indicar su ubicación en líneas separadas como "INSERTE LA TABLA X AQUÍ".

No incluya archivos o imágenes que tengan una resolución demasiado baja. Asegúrate de que:

- Las líneas y letras son legibles para su revisión, manteniendo las letras y el tamaño de las Figuras y Tablas uniformes (aproximadamente 8-12 pt, o 2-3 mm) variando mínimamente el tamaño entre sus elementos (p. Ej., Ejes, títulos de gráficos, etiquetas de datos, encabezados, etc.).

- Asegúrese de que las Figuras, Tablas, Ecuaciones y Fórmulas tengan un número correlativo (1, 2, 3, etc.), para distinguirlos, y nombre sus archivos como “Figura” o “Tabla” seguido de su número (por ejemplo, Figura1 o Tabla 1).

- Los archivos de Figuras, “Guarde como” formato .JPG, con un mínimo de 300 ppp (evite los archivos optimizados para el uso de la pantalla, por ejemplo, GIF, BMP, PICT, WPG). La importación/escaneo de Dibujos de líneas debe estar en formato de mapa de bits (.BMP o .DIB), con una resolución mínima de 1200 ppp.

- Guarde sus archivos de tabla con formato .xls o .xlsx. Las Notas para tablas y figuras deben especificarse debajo de ellas, utilizando Times New Roman de 8 puntos, siguiendo el orden General (primero), Específico (segundo) y Probabilidad (tercero).

- Las notas generales explican, califican o proporcionan información sobre la Tabla / Figura, incluidas las abreviaturas, los símbolos y las unidades de medida. Incluyen la cita de la fuente original de publicación en forma de referencia siguiendo el formato de Autor (es), (Año).

- Las notas específicas identifican elementos clave dentro de la Tabla/Figura utilizando letras minúsculas en superíndice (p. ej., a, b, c).

- Las notas de probabilidad muestran los resultados de las pruebas de significancia estadística (p. ej., * $p < .05$, de dos colas. ** $p < .01$, de una cola, *** $p < .001$), etc. Para Figuras, cite cualquier tipo de gráfico, cuadro, dibujo, mapas, diagramas, fotografías, etc., en su manuscrito como Figura.

Utilice el Editor de ecuaciones o Math Type para Ecuaciones y Fórmulas. En el caso de ecuaciones y fórmulas que no quepan en una columna, indique los puntos de corte apropiados.

El Material Complementario (p. ej., imágenes, archivos de video o audio, aplicaciones) son bienvenidos para revisión y estarán disponibles para los lectores exactamente como estén en la versión definitiva; por lo tanto, asegúrese de haber proporcionado un archivo actualizado en la fase previa a la publicación.

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Para cualquier cita directa o parafraseada en el texto (entre paréntesis o narrativa), siga el formato -Último nombre, Año-, como sugiere el Manual de la American Psychological Association. Todas las citas dentro del texto dentro del cuerpo del manuscrito deben incluirse en la lista de Referencias. Las notas a pie de página no deben usarse para citar o referenciar.

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El orden en la lista de referencias es alfabético, por el nombre del grupo o el apellido de un autor individual. Si hay varias publicaciones por autor, ordénelas de la primera a la más reciente. Use solo las iniciales para el nombre de un autor individual: ‘Serrano, J.’, no ‘Serrano, Juan’.

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Editorial information

GENERAL CONTENT

Estudios de Administración [ISSN: 0719-0816] is a double-blind peerreviewed business Journal that has been published

on a semester basis by the Business Department of the University of Chile since 1994, created to provide an academic forum for Chilean and Latin American business academic community. Estudios de Administración publishes empirical research papers, methodological papers, systematic literature reviews, conceptual papers, and case studies in all business disciplines in both English and Spanish.

Original manuscripts not previously published elsewhere, addressing matters of Strategy, Finance, Marketing, Accounting, Operations, Innovation, Management and Development of Human Resources, Organizational Change, Information Systems, Supply Chain, Entrepreneurship and Decision-Making, among other topics, relevant for Latin American business are the main focus of publication.

AIMS AND SCOPE

We target a readership of Ibero-American and world scholars, graduate students, and business executives looking for new and solid knowledge in the field. We encourage authors and researchers from the academic community to present manuscripts for peer review in any of the five categories:

- **Empirical research papers:**

Results of original research projects with empirical data analysis (qualitative, quantitative and/or mixed) associated with existing literature, and research replicas with consistent or non-consistent results.

- **Methods, methodological approaches and measuring instruments:**

Manuscripts presenting the use of different methodologies and the application of models in different contexts, as well as studies that validate measurement instruments, bibliometrics, meta-analysis, or verifications of experimental procedures, which can be replicated are welcomed.

- **Literature reviews:**

Contemporary articles that conceptually

and theoretically synthesize, integrate or advance different scopes in business administration disciplines, particularly in Latin America and emerging countries.

• **Teaching cases:**

Research articles based on real business situations, designed to instruct students in the faculties of administration and business, providing organizational experiences subject to reality, which allow the application of theoretical propositions and combine them with practical simulations and decision making.

• **Connection to practice:**

Research studies that respond to the growing need for a greater focus on how business management and administration function, or on the way in which practitioners carry out their work in organizational practice. Research approaches such as Strategy-as-Practice (SAP), Marketing-as-Practice (MAP), Innovation-as-Practice (IAP), Entrepreneurship-as-Practice (EAP), etc. are welcome.

AUTHOR GUIDELINES

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To publish manuscripts in Estudios de Administración, authors should send their contribution via the Open Journal Systems platform by registering or logging in at the platform.

The Editor will review the manuscript and will return it to the author(s), in no more than a week, indicating whether or not the manuscript will be sent for peer review, suggesting different paths for the manuscript.

Manuscripts will be blind reviewed by two referees according to different criteria including: clarity, literature review and conceptual development, method and data analysis, implications and relevance for theory and practice, and contribution to the discipline.

Reviewers may suggest: Acceptance; Acceptance with minor revision; Conditional acceptance with major revision; Rejection

of the manuscript.

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PREPARATION

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- Confirm that the manuscript has been submitted solely to this Journal and has not been published, is not in press, nor has it been submitted elsewhere.
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- Confirm that all the research meets the Journal's ethical guidelines, including adherence to the legal requirements of the study country.
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- The author(s) must also provide from three (3) to six (6) KEYWORDS, and at least three (3) JEL Codes (Journal of Economic Literature codes) for indexation and search.

GENERAL FORMAT:

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- Font: 12-pt Times New Roman.
- Double-spacing is required throughout the document.
- Paragraphs should be indented 5-7 spaces or ½ inch. Use tab stops or other commands for indents, not the spacebar.
- Page numbers should be located in the upper righthand corner. Use the automatic page numbering function.
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TITLE PAGE (first page)

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All authors must include given name(s) and family name(s), institution, email and ORCID id (if applicable). Please check that all names are accurately spelled. Avoid identifying the author(s) in the rest of the manuscript in order to ensure anonymity.

ABSTRACT:

All manuscripts must include a 250-word abstract in both English and Spanish, synthesizing the main topic addressed by the paper, the research method used and the major findings.

KEYWORDS AND JEL CODES:

Authors must also provide from three (3) to six (6) keywords and three (3) JEL Codes for indexation and search.

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NOTE: Estudios de Administración will translate the English Abstract, Keywords and Declarations for those non-English-speaking authors.

BODY OF THE MANUSCRIPT

SECTION TITLES, LABELS AND SUBDIVISIONS

Texts in traditional research reports usually include the following sections:

1) Introduction; 2) Review of literature or theoretical background - which may or may not serve as grounds for formulating hypotheses -; 3) Research methods; 4) Results and analysis; 5) Discussion; 6) Conclusions; 7) Limitations and implications of the research (if any); 8) Practical or managerial implications (if any); 8) Directions for future research (if any); 9) Appendices (if any); and 10) References.

Similarly, for Literature reviews, Teaching cases and Connection to practice articles, divide your manuscript into clearly defined and numbered sections and subsections, always including the References section at the end.

Titles and Subtitles must be brief, clearly defined, and on their own separate line. Number your headings so that top-

level headings are numbered 1, 2, 3, for example, starting with the Introduction section, and finishing in the Conclusions section. Second-level subheadings must be numbered 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc. Do not use field functions.

APPENDICES

If your manuscript needs to include Appendices, identify each separate topic, and label it with a letter in sequence (Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, etc.), according to the order in which they are mentioned in the body of the manuscript. To refer to an Appendix, use parenthetical citation. For example, write in the body of the manuscript (see Appendix D for Economic indicators and projections for Latin America and the Caribbean), or just (see Appendix D). Any citation within the Appendix must be included in the References list.

If your appendices include Tables, Figures, Formulae and/or Equations, add the letter of the Appendix, giving separate numbering: For example, number the third Figure in Appendix D, as 'Figure D3'.

Each Appendix section label follows a 'Level 1 Format Heading', and must have a subtitle, headed with a 'Level 2 Format'. For example:

Appendix D

Economic indicators and projections for Latin America and the Caribbean

Table D1 shows the most important economic indicator of the ...

TABLES, FIGURES EQUATIONS AND FORMULAE

Tables and Figures (if possible) should be submitted as editable text and not as images to facilitate the revision process. Figures and Tables can be placed either next to the relevant text in the article, or on separate page(s) at the end. If they are presented on separate pages, they must

be referenced within the body of the manuscript to indicate their location on separate lines as “INSERT TABLE X HERE”. Do not include files or images that are too low in resolution. Make sure that:

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- Ensure that Figures, Tables, Equations and Formulae have a correlative number (1, 2, 3, etc.), for distinction, and name your files as “Figure” or “Table” followed by their number (e.g., Figure1 or Table 1).
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Estudios de Administración

Business Administration Studies

ISSN 0719-0816

An Academic Business Journal Published by the Department of
Business of the University of Chile

La Revista Estudios de Administración,
fue editada por la Escuela de Administración, de la
Facultad de Economía y Negocios de la Universidad
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Estudios de Administración

Business Administration Studies

ISSN 0719-0816

