



Instagram as a channel to connect Córdoba's entrepreneurs from the clothing sector with their target audience

Instagram como canal para conectar a emprendedores cordobeses del rubro vestimenta con su público objetivo

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the points of confluence between the tools offered by Instagram for Córdoba's entrepreneurs of clothing and the habits of use that its target audience has on this platform, in order to give entrepreneurs guidelines on how to use the resources to your favor. The investigation had a mixed approach with a mainly descriptive scope, with correlational components, and a non-experimental cross-sectional approach. The data collection technique applied was an observation guide and surveys through Instagram and WhatsApp. From the observation, it was identified that Instagram offers 25 resources as a communication channel that allow the entrepreneur to work on identity, interactions, dialogue, content generation and sales. Regarding the surveys, most of the women have considered Instagram a space where they spend most of their time, using it in situations as a search engine for information, content, products, brands, and entertainment. On the other hand, for most consumers it is important that brands have a profile on Instagram and they consider that this platform helps them to get to know and get closer to brands related to the clothing sector. This research is done based on entrepreneurs who still don't have the income to invest in someone who only handles the communication of their business. Therefore, knowing about these tools that Instagram offers, their functions and their importance based on the characteristics of their target audience, helps them to understand more about this social network in which they are forced to be present today.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs; Fashion; Instagram Business; Communication Channel.

RESUMEN

El objetivo del presente estudio fue identificar los puntos de confluencia entre las herramientas que ofrece Instagram para emprendedores de indumentaria cordobeses y los hábitos de uso que tiene su público objetivo sobre esta plataforma, para así poder darle pautas a los emprendedores de cómo utilizar los recursos a su favor. La investigación se abordó desde un enfoque mixto con alcance principalmente descriptivo, con componentes correlacionales, y un abordaje transversal no experimental. La técnica de recolección de datos que se aplicó fue una guía de observación y encuestas a través de Instagram y WhatsApp. En base a la observación, se registró que Instagram ofrece 25 recursos como canal de comunicación que permiten al emprendedor trabajar sobre la identidad, las interacciones, el diálogo, la generación de contenido y las ventas. Con respecto a las encuestas, la mayoría de las mujeres afirmó considerar a Instagram un espacio donde pasan la mayoría de su tiempo, empleándolo en situaciones como buscador de información, contenido, productos, marcas, y entretenimiento. Por otro lado, para la mayoría de las consumidoras es importante que las marcas tengan un perfil en Instagram y consideran que esta plataforma las ayuda a conocer y acercarse a marcas relacionadas al rubro indumentaria. Esta investigación estuvo hecha en base a emprendedores que aún no cuentan con los ingresos necesarios para invertir en alguien que se encargue solo de la comunicación de su negocio. Por lo que el saber de estas herramientas que ofrece Instagram, sus funciones y su importancia en base a las características de su público objetivo, los ayuda a entender más esta red social en la que se ven obligados a estar presentes hoy en día.

Palabras clave: Emprendedores; Moda; Instagram para Empresas; Canal de Comunicación.

INTRODUCTION

The world advances, mutates, and develops at a rapid pace, in which some are left behind while others take advantage of these advances and use them as opportunities to grow. Within this advanced, globalized world of constant changes, new generations of people are born and, with this, new ways of communicating with them, and precisely in the business world, new ways of selling to these generations.

In this sense, technology is advancing very rapidly and most people are now connected to the Internet. In the field of e-commerce, this is reflected in the study “Digital 2020: Argentina”. This study showed that 87% of respondents search online for a product or service to purchase it, 93% visit an online store on the web, and 64% purchase a product online.⁽¹⁾ The same study revealed the total amount spent in e-commerce categories, with the fashion and beauty industry leading with a total of \$960.0 million U.S. dollars, followed by the travel industry.

On the other hand, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs are increasingly gaining ground, as they attempt to carve out a place within the difficult Argentine economy. It should be noted that for the present study, we refer to entrepreneurs as those individuals who start a project with the purpose of providing a product or service. In the case of this study, we refer to those who provide products such as accessories, footwear, and clothing. And it is not enough merely to say that they emerge in a complicated context at the country level, and that they face millions of initial challenges; rather, they must also adapt to this world that reinvents itself at an accelerated pace, investing, of course, the least possible capital since they do not have a large initial investment.

And if we focus specifically on the clothing sector, it could be said that the supply is among the most varied in the market. Therefore, these apparel entrepreneurs—a term used in this work to refer to entrepreneurs who trade in clothing, footwear, and accessories—must be innovative in order to differentiate themselves in some way from the number of competitors running the same race. Thus, perhaps it is necessary that, in order to win the race, they adapt to the new social media ecosystem and know about all the resources and advantages that these provide them, so as not only to survive but also to grow in this fast-paced and demanding world.

Aguilar (2) anticipated this by stating that the benefits obtained through the use of social networks would lead all companies to want to have a profile on social networks in order to make themselves known. They are gaining ground and becoming established with increasing strength, each with its advantages and disadvantages, and audiences with characteristics that differ among them, which have different purposes in relation to what they expect from brands online. Romo Toral (3) emphasized that social networks generate a favorable climate for the creation of online communities in which content and ideas are shared, users can interact, and where effective and innovative customer service can be proposed. And he saw it as a great advantage for entrepreneurs to be able to carry out actions that would be almost impossible to perform in the offline world. Aguilar (2) gave an opinion on the topic and considered Facebook and Instagram to be the most optimal social networks as a business tool, because they help companies to make themselves known, to build an audience, to segment advertisements, and to easily reach target audiences.

In this case, we are interested in the specific analysis of the social network Instagram. And it is according to the study “Digital 2020: Argentina” that Instagram ranked 3rd this year in the Argentine ranking of mobile applications by average monthly active users.⁽¹⁾

It would appear that Instagram is a medium that adapts to the new culture of the image, of consumerism, and of the search for differentiating factors. According to Cooper (4), “43 % of Internet users use social networks when they are researching something they want to buy,” and new consumers seem to be more active in seeking reasons to purchase products and/or services, analyzing their options through images, videos, hashtags, and interactive content with which they feel identified. This is something that must be in entrepreneurs’ minds from the zero moment of their implementation. After surveys conducted with specialists, De la Vega Montenegro (5) mentioned that Instagram has greater engagement than Facebook because it is an optimal social network for creating a business profile according to the brand’s personality. According to her research on the potential and difficulties of Instagram as an advertising tool among entrepreneurs in Guatemala City, Vega Montenegro (4) concluded that most entrepreneurs try to maintain a close relationship with their followers, and thus establish digital communication with them through messages, photographs, videos, Instagram stories, etc. And all these formats turn out to be facilitators for growing the brand with users who truly feel identified with it.

Thus, relationships have changed, and so have we, and we owe much of this change to the impact of the Internet on our lives. “What originally emerged as an interconnected set of computers transmitting data evolved into the basis of a social and cultural ecosystem.”⁽⁶⁾ “We moved

from the Internet as a non-place to the Internet as a place that, when it consolidates, becomes an ecosystem.”(6) In this sense, Stephan Fuetterer (7) compares the invention of the Internet with that of the printing press, referring to the revolution it generates in the way we communicate.

On the other hand, within this new ecosystem, we find the so-called social media. These create a new entertainment and information system that takes elements from traditional media but is more evolved, pointing more toward audiovisual and virtual media than toward the characteristics of the print press.(8) It therefore remains to reflect on these new spaces as communication tools. Indeed, social media are spaces where people share information and experiences; they are platforms where communication and exchange are encouraged.(7) It is in this sense that companies have been led to use the online world to migrate their advertising, because it is easier and faster to reach their respective customers. Social media are one easy and economical way to reach current and potential customers, given that companies can reach them at any time due to the omnipresence of smartphones.(9) Audiences of traditional media, tired of such direct selling and constant advertisements, are migrating to digital media, which have a different format and adapt to new demands. So, could it be said that social media are displacing traditional communication media? Although many followers of these new platforms argue that they definitely are, a deeper study on the matter would be needed. However, we can argue with complete certainty that new media have great appeal, whether due to their broad reach, their cost-effectiveness, their speed, or their constant capacity to offer new innovations. This turns out to be an interesting proposal for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who do not have all the resources of a large company and who cannot pay for advertising or space in traditional media. The networks are this new and attractive channel that brands can use to listen, segment, speak, converse, and engage potential customers in order to turn them into loyal users.(8)

On the other hand, there is the entrepreneur, the individual who dares to launch into the roller coaster that entrepreneurship entails in order to take a further step in their life and career, facing multiple initial obstacles. The activities and benefits that revolve around social networks can be their allies, and that is why Fuetterer (7) places special emphasis on the fact that “Organizations need to adapt to economic and social trends to continue being competitive.” Because they seek constant innovation and to comply with the demands that society imposes on them, but at low cost, and also because of the need to use social networks such as Whatsapp, Twitter, Facebook, among others, many entrepreneurs and MiPymes have been led to choose their benefits.(10) Social networks allow entrepreneurs to make themselves known in an interactive way, providing them with a large amount of data, descriptions of their products and/or services, the ability to upload videos, photos, and images to the network, to be fully visible to their audiences, among other advantages. This is why many entrepreneurs, like companies, count on these platforms as their first option for advertising use.(10)

“Through online marketing and social media, various strategies can be developed for a brand to increase its awareness, number of sales, and popularity.”(11) And regarding this, there are 3 value contributions that today are within reach of entrepreneurs if they use social media platforms: “Voluntary affiliation that each user makes by joining a network, the collaborative contribution of content by each user (photos, videos, information, comments, votes, participation), and the attention that all pay to the advertising that most of them broadcast.”(8)

And although the world of social networks is broad, comprehensive, diverse, and each platform has its benefits and characteristics, the social network that is gaining ground in the entrepreneurial field due to all the resources it provides at a very low cost is the specific business tool called Instagram Business, Instagram for Business, or Instagram for Companies, which is part of Instagram. It offers the creation of business profiles with particular resources, metrics, and the possibility of creating advertisements directly within the application. This tool allows entrepreneurs to show who they are and why we should purchase their products and/or services in these times when the variety and options we have to choose from are immense.

“People visit Instagram to discover things that inspire them, which includes content from brands and businesses of all sizes”.(12) And in this sense, the Instagram Business blog shows us some of its statistics to demonstrate the reach of Instagram and why it is a key social network for all types of companies. In this regard, they mention that: 60 % of people discover new products on Instagram, more than 200 million Instagram users visit at least a business profile every day, and 1/3 of the most viewed stories on Instagram are from businesses.(12)

Instagram is a relatively new social network, which was born in October 2010, although in terms of globalization and the acceleration of today’s times, 10 years may seem like an eternity. In 2014 it was acquired by Facebook because in its beginnings it showed a promising future. It is based on the exchange, in general terms, of photos and short-duration videos, in order to share with

your friends and followers the content desired within the platform. "People come to Instagram in search of visual inspiration and advertising on the platform has the power to touch, inspire, and move people".(13)

For entrepreneurs, it is a medium through which they can publish attractive images related to their reason for being and which allows them to create a bond through which it is in their interest to know more about the company or venture.(10) This is why Instagram has become one of the most widely used media by fashion influencers, large brands, and small entrepreneurs in the clothing sector. Fashion, image, and technology would seem to be a powerful combination today. Fashion lovers on Instagram value the community generated by the platform, and almost half of its accounts follow a company to feel connected with it and thus feel part of an exclusive group.(14)

This new era of interaction and content generation entails a shift in thinking and strategies, which, fortunately, many entrepreneurs are readily adopting. Speaking specifically of the fashion or apparel sector (which in this paper we refer to as the sector in which clothing, footwear, and accessories are marketed), it is a sector that is especially affected by these new trends, and its entrepreneurs cannot overlook what is happening, because fashion is precisely a sector that today cannot be conceived without social media.

Instagram Business (15) states: from runway trends to trends in news sections and stories, the relationship between fashion and Instagram has never before been so immediate, immersive, and international. With more than 200 million people on Instagram connected with fashion accounts around the world.

The entrepreneurs in this sector cannot limit themselves to selling only functional characteristics of their products. They must sell even more, go beyond, think about their potential customers and what they are like, what they long for, how they live, what worries them. People gathered to consume a certain type of content (social audiences) will move from a company's page to another company's page to the extent that they are offered more attractive content or promotions.(16) Paz (17) points out to us that "People seek entertainment, and the more entertained they are, the more time they will be willing to spend in that place".

There are studies that position Instagram above Facebook and Twitter in terms of engagement. This means that each publication on Instagram has a higher interaction rate than publications on the other Social Networks. While on Twitter less than 0.03 % of users interact with each publication made, on Instagram the figure rises to more than 3 %, even reaching 4 % according to some of the studies carried out. In the case of Facebook, this percentage stands at 0.07 %.(18)

Now, delving further into the world of Public Relations, Avilia Lammertyn (19) mentions 2 principles of action regarding the stakeholder groups that receive our communication. Of these, the motivating principle refers to making a persuasive effort seeking the most efficient actions according to the desires and needs of these groups. And the other is the creative principle, which refers to attracting the interest of the groups by initially making [the message] known, then seeking understanding of the message, then convincing, and finally securing commitment.

Previously, the use of these principles mentioned by Avilia was linked solely to traditional communication media and to large companies that could pay for their participation in these media. Today, it is available to small entrepreneurs who do not have a large budget to make use of these principles, more quickly, with greater reach and a better ability to measure results than traditional media.

So, what is the place of Public and Institutional Relations in all this? First, readers are invited to reflect on its definition according to Gruning et al.(20):

Public relations is the distinctive management function that helps establish and maintain lines of mutual communication, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; it involves the management of problems or conflicts; it helps management to be informed about and responsive to public opinion; it defines and emphasizes management's responsibility to serve the public interest; it helps management keep abreast of change and use it effectively, serving as an early warning system to facilitate anticipation of trends; and it uses research, rigor, and ethical communication techniques as its main tools.

Continuing with this new era of communication and the advancement of new media and digital channels, it could be said that all the actions corresponding to the discipline mentioned in that definition are perfectly applicable to social media, and indeed its professionals cannot be left behind. Until a few years ago, neither the activities nor the usefulness of Public Relations were fully understood, and the understanding of their meaning was limited to the organization of events and the management of relations with the publics of large companies through more traditional media. Today, it is impossible to think of the existence of public relations without social media and social media without public relations. And on the other hand, new currents of thought show us

that the profession does not occur only in large companies, but is part of the daily life of each of us.

Thus, it could be said that Public Relations could also be part of the strategies of a small entrepreneur who needs to establish relationships with their publics in order to increase their income.

The studies and works mentioned above indicate that Instagram is a space to be part of. However, Instagram is not magical, and not everyone knows how to take advantage of it as the communication channel that it is. This point must be considered in light of the meaning of communication channel, which in marketing terms is a space in which information is transmitted between senders and receivers. That is, communication channels can serve as a bridge between audiences and brands, generating mutually beneficial relationships.

Studies mention figures on how many people use this social network, how widely it is used today, and the impact it has on the business and apparel sector. However, small merchants in this sector who do not know how to use this social network to present themselves in the market are not mentioned. They are rendered invisible through generalizations and figures that encompass the entire ecosystem, of which various actors are part, such as large companies that have financial and knowledge resources very different from those of small entrepreneurs. For this reason, a study is necessary to demonstrate how entrepreneurs in the apparel sector can use Instagram Business to generate results in their favor. To this end, it is necessary to know what tools Instagram Business offers and what those tools offer. On the other hand, one cannot consider the use of these tools without first considering whom the communication is aimed at. This is why not only is a description of the resources indispensable, but it is also important to understand which resources to use depending on how the target audience of these brands uses Instagram.

For this reason, the present research attempts to provide an answer to this question and is developed around entrepreneurs from Córdoba in the clothing sector and their target audience, within the framework of the months of September, October, and November of 2020.

Research question

How can entrepreneurs in the clothing sector leverage Instagram Business based on how their target audience uses this social network?

General objective

Identify the points of convergence between the tools that Instagram offers to Córdoba clothing entrepreneurs and the usage habits that their target audience has on this platform.

Specific objectives

- Identify all communication resources for business profiles offered by Instagram and describe their functions.
- Describe the consumption habits of female consumers in the apparel sector on the social network Instagram.

METHODS

Design

A non-experimental research design was selected because it is based on the observation of phenomena occurring in a natural context, which are then analyzed.

This research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach with a mainly descriptive scope, since this study identifies the characteristics of an existing phenomenon, which are, on the one hand, the tools offered by Instagram Business and, on the other, the usage habits of a sample in relation to Instagram.

However, there are also correlational components because, as Salkind (21) mentions, descriptive studies allow obtaining a broad picture of a phenomenon that is occurring in the present and that might be of interest to explore. But to go beyond the mere description of events and analyze the relationships that might exist among them, the type of research that could answer questions about the relationship among those events is correlational. This examines relationships among results without necessarily implying causal relationships.

The research objective focused on the analysis of variables through anonymous surveys conducted via social media, but elements were also described through observation. Both instruments were used in order to respond to the research problem.

On the other hand, a cross-sectional approach was considered appropriate because the variables and their incidence and interrelation at a given point in time were described and analyzed.

The phenomena studied were 2:

- The different resources that Instagram Business offers to business profiles and their functions.
- The relationship and usage habits of the selected audiences with the social network Instagram.

Participants

The sampling procedure used was non-probabilistic incidental in both the surveys and the observation, since the type of individuals who would form part of the sample was intentionally defined, and the Instagram resources to be analyzed were specifically selected, leaving aside those that did not correspond to this research.

For the first specific objective, it was decided, from a population that includes all the resources offered by Instagram, to use as a sample only Instagram Business resources referring to company profiles.

For the second specific objective, a non-random sample of women aged 15 to 30 years who live in Córdoba and have one Instagram account was selected.

This type of sampling was considered appropriate since the selection of both samples was carried out intentionally to be relevant and to meet the research objectives.

The selection criteria used to select the aforementioned samples are as follows:

- Sample No. 1:
 1. To have some involvement in the transmission or reception of information.
 2. To be available to Instagram business profiles.
 3. To be part of the September 2020 update.
- Sample No. 2:
 1. Women aged between 15 and 30 years.
 2. Women residing in Córdoba Capital.
 3. Belonging to an upper-middle class.
 4. Having a personal Instagram account.
 5. Purchasing accessories, clothing, and/or footwear.

Clarification: Explicit consent was not requested to respond to the survey. Within the survey form, before answering the questions, this clarification was provided, and anonymity was guaranteed, since no personal data are requested.

By answering the questions, the female respondents were considered to have given implicit consent for the information they provided to be used in this final degree project.

Data collection instruments

To obtain data on the variable Instagram Business resources and its functions, the observation guide was used. This instrument was chosen because systematic observation allows the Instagram resources available to business profiles to be named and described in detail and objectively.

On the other hand, as a second data collection instrument, a questionnaire model with a virtual survey format was administered through an anonymous Google Forms form, in order to understand how current and potential female consumers (the target audience of clothing entrepreneurs in Córdoba) use the social network Instagram and thus decipher their consumption habits on Instagram.

The choice of this method responds to the need to reach a large number of people with specific characteristics within a pandemic context in which in-person surveys of these characteristics cannot be conducted. Moreover, it is a more convenient and simpler method for both the surveyor and the respondent than by e-mail or telephone.

Data analysis

A data analysis was carried out regarding both what the platform offers to display a product and/or service and to serve as a bridge with its audiences, and how those audiences use the platform, in order to ultimately address, based on the analysis of the data collected with each instrument, the research objective, which focused on identifying points of confluence between the way the sample uses Instagram and the tools that the social network provides to apparel entrepreneurs to act on the basis of those consumption habits.

Regarding the first specific objective, through the description of Instagram resources and their functions from the data collection stage, the aim was to analyze which of them allow an adequate approach to its target female clients, based on how they use this social network.

In relation to the second specific objective, the respondents' familiarity with the platform was analyzed to determine whether the sample effectively knew and understood the application; the usefulness in terms of the uses they make of the platform; and the incidence of Instagram in attracting and connecting the sample with brands, products, and services.

This analysis is important because if the target audience did not use or had no relationship with this social network, which is considered a communication channel, the channel would lose its usefulness as a bridge between this audience and entrepreneurs, regardless of any resource that could be offered to the entrepreneur.

RESULTS

Observation results: A total of 25 resources that Instagram makes available to business profiles, such as the entrepreneurs in this study, were detected.

Regarding the different variables that make Instagram a communication channel, a series of resources available to the entrepreneur were identified within these variables:

Visual manifestation of identity

- Profile photo: allows the logo or an image that represents and identifies the brand to be set.
- Instagram Stories or Stories: allows the brand to share visual/audiovisual content, such as photos and/or videos, and to customize it through tags, gifts, polls, music, and effects. Its content is fleeting, since it lasts only 24 hours and appears both on the account profile and on the consumer's account home feed, along with stories from all the accounts that the consumer follows.
- Publication or post: these are the photos and/or videos that are uploaded to the profile, accompanied by a description (also called a caption). From 1 to 10 videos and/or photos can be selected for the same post; they can be taken at the moment or from the gallery of the electronic device from which the content is being uploaded, and they can be edited in the application.

Manifestation of identity in written form

- "Name" and "Username": display the business name and allow it to be identified.
- The "Category" option in the "Profile Information" section allows selecting the category that best describes the brand's activity. Examples: "entrepreneur", "fashion designer".
- The "Presentation" option in the "Edit profile" section is a space that allows the brand to introduce itself or write content it considers relevant, within a certain character limit.

For the variable "Promotion and Sales," the following resources were identified, along with their respective functions:

- Promotion buttons: these allow the promotion of a post or story. When the button is pressed, users can also view currently active promotions and promotions that were active in the past.
- The "Website" option in the "Edit profile" section is a space to enter website links, which consumers can select and which automatically direct them to the site.
- Customizable online store on the profile: a support tool for businesses during COVID-19. It allows the brand's products to be displayed in a customizable way on the Instagram profile, products to be tagged in posts and stories, shopping content to be created, and statistics such as product views to be presented.

On the other hand, the following resources of the "Dialogue and contact" variable were identified:

- The "Quick Replies" option in the "Creator" section is an option for creating predefined messages that can be used to answer frequently asked questions, such as schedules, prices, etc., without having to draft each message individually.
- Direct messages: business profiles can receive messages from and send messages to followers and non-followers. They can also search and filter them by "inbox", "unread", and "flagged".
- The "Contact options" option in the "Profile information" section is a resource that allows the brand to enter its email and phone number so that people can easily contact it using the buttons that appear on the profile. It can be shown or hidden whenever

desired.

Regarding the fourth variable, "Interaction," the following resources were identified:

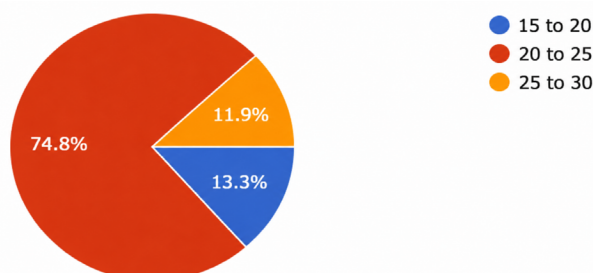
- Hashtags: a word or series of words preceded by the numeral sign. They are used to classify and categorize content published on social media. Consumers can go to the hashtags section and search for keywords such as "#botas", and all profiles that have written "#botas" in any of their posts will appear in their search.
- The "Call-to-action buttons" option in the "Profile information" section connects the Instagram profile with other online services so that customers can perform actions with the business directly from the profile. Examples: "Book", "Start order".
- The "Share to..." options allow sharing a post on other social networks or with other Instagram profiles by forwarding it from Instagram.
- Comments button: a section below each post where people can comment, ask questions, or write whatever they wish.
- Like button: a way to let people know that the post is liked or has been liked without having to leave a comment.
- Follow button: when the user starts to "follow" the brand, its content begins to appear in their home feed (posts, stories, etc.).
- The "Invite customers to follow you" option in the "Connect with your friends" section of the business help tools during COVID-19: people can be invited to follow the brand on Instagram through multiple channels, such as WhatsApp, Gmail, and SMS.
- Tags: before publishing an image or video (both in the feed and in stories), other Instagram accounts can be tagged (this is a mention that links another account to the content). The same can be done in the text of captions. People can also tag others in the comments on the brand's posts.
- Instagram Stories stickers: Instagram Stories offers so-called stickers that can be selected for various specific purposes but with the ultimate goal of achieving interaction with followers. The most relevant are "Quiz," "Product," "Location," "Mention," "Poll," and "Questions." These stickers also apply to the variable below, since they are also content generation resources.
- Live, Instagram Live, or Instagram Live: a resource within Instagram Stories that allows people to create their own live broadcasts, and people can interact through hearts, comments, or by participating in the same Live.

Finally, the following resources of the "Content generation" variable have been identified:

- Live, Instagram Live, or Vivo de Instagram: a resource within Instagram Stories that allows people to create their own live broadcasts.
- Instagram Stories or Instagram Stories: This resource has already been explained in relation to the identity manifestation variable.
- Featured Stories: These are sections below the biography description where groups of stories that have been published in the past can be assembled.
- Publication or post: This resource has already been explained in relation to the identity manifestation variable.
- Reel: a way of creating short, entertaining videos and content, with a range of tools for people without the necessary editing knowledge.
- Instagram TV: a section that allows users to upload vertical videos between 10 and 60 minutes.

Survey results: incidental surveys were conducted through social media, and responses were obtained from 226 women. Most of them were between 20 and 25 years old, followed by the 15 to 20 age range and, finally, with the lowest percentage, the 25 to 30 age range.

Figure 1. Age range of the female respondents



Regarding the variable of platform use, the following results were obtained:

To determine how useful the social network Instagram is to the sample in their daily lives, respondents were asked about this. Of 226 women, 134 (59.29%) stated that it is quite useful, while 44 (19.46%) found it extremely useful and 46 (20.35%) found it not very useful in their daily lives. However, when asked how often they use or turn to Instagram, 91.6% of those women answered that they do so most of the time, 8.4% a few times a day, and no woman answered that she never turns to or uses this platform.

On the other hand, the aim was to investigate the usefulness of this platform as a means of unwinding. When asked how much they use Instagram to view content that interests them and distracts them from their obligations, 88.1% stated that they always do so, and 11.9% stated that they do so only sometimes. None of the respondents considered that Instagram is not a resource for relaxation and entertainment.

Female respondents were asked how much they use Instagram to search for information, content, profiles, products, brands, etc. 81.4% stated that they always do so and 18.1% do so only sometimes, with no respondent reporting that they never do so. These results may also be related to the variable of use of the aforementioned platform. However, although the entire sample uses Instagram as a search medium (in some cases always and in others only sometimes), when they were asked how much they use the platform to actually purchase products and/or services, 35.8% responded that they always do so, while 62.4% do so only sometimes and 1.8% do not use Instagram for this purpose.

Regarding the variable incidence of Instagram in the brand–public relationship, the following results were obtained:

Regarding the frequency with which the sample considered that it interacts with brands through messages, reactions, likes, comments, polls, and mentions, 35.8% stated that they always do so, while 60.6% do so depending on the content that brands upload, and 3.5% said they never do so.

Subsequently, the sample was asked whether it considered that it would know the brands it currently follows on Instagram if they did not have an Instagram profile. 80.5% stated that it would know only some of them because it had discovered most of them through Instagram, 13.7% stated that it would not know them at all since it had discovered all of them through Instagram, and only 5.8% stated that it would know them because it is easy to find brands through other media.

Finally, the sample was asked how important and/or necessary it is for a brand to have an Instagram profile. The results showed that for 79.6% (180 people) it is indispensable, while, to a lesser extent, for 19% (43 people) it is important but not indispensable, and only for 1.3% (3 people) it is of little importance. This predominance of the “indispensable” response occurred in all the age ranges analyzed individually, being the response selected by more than 50% of the female respondents within the 3 different age-range groups.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the work was initially to identify the points of confluence between the tools that Instagram offers to Córdoba entrepreneurs in the clothing sector and the usage habits that their target audience has on this platform, within the time frame of September, October, and November 2020, with the intention of understanding how these entrepreneurs can make use of these tools in a way that coincides with the way their target audience uses the platform.

It is of interest to show the resources that Instagram makes available to entrepreneurial brands and their functions, with the intention of demonstrating how beneficial the use of this platform can be. In this sense, although various studies on Instagram have been carried out around the world and also in Argentina, these are mostly oriented toward the analysis of content tactics from real cases of large apparel brands and luxury brands, without considering small entrepreneurs and the little or no understanding that many of them have regarding the use of Instagram. In the City of Córdoba, no research has been carried out on the usefulness of this social network as a communication channel and on what it offers to Córdoba entrepreneurs (large or small) in the aforementioned sector. This is why the present study is the first on the subject that has a descriptive and correlational orientation regarding the tools that these entrepreneurs can use, taking into account the way in which their potential and current clientele use this social network, with the intention of serving as material or an orientation guide for those who have little knowledge or understanding of social networks and of Instagram in particular.

As mentioned above, a first objective proposed in this research is to identify the platform resources available to entrepreneurs in the clothing sector. Not only were 25 resources identified,

but they could also be described so that the purpose of terms such as “Instagram Live,” “Posts,” or “Stories” is clearly understood; these terms are often heard, but their purpose is not always understood. This allows for an even greater understanding of the purpose of using Instagram to showcase a product, service, or the business itself.

The resources related to the manifestation of both visual and written identity, such as the profile picture, Instagram Stories, posts, the username, the category option, and the bio option, enable differentiation from others in the eyes of target audiences. These resources offered by the platform might seem unimportant; however, they are important because we live in an era of information overload, where supply exceeds demand and social media is saturated with brands competing and attempting to differentiate themselves. On Instagram, for example, millions of accounts sell clothing, footwear, and accessories; therefore, it is necessary to differentiate oneself visually and in writing so that consumers can recognize who is who, who offers what, and how the brand operates, among other characteristics. Visual identity is highly relevant because it is the first thing perceived. Therefore, it is important that brands manifest their identity through colors, images, videos, etc., so that when consumers view on their cell phones the information overload that overwhelms them upon opening their Instagram account, they know whose content they are viewing, can store it in their memory, and, when needed, turn to that brand they remember.

On the other hand, this study identifies resources that facilitate and enable promotion and sales from the same platform. These allow the brand to reach more people, which can benefit entrepreneurs who are just starting their business from 0, as well as those who have already grown and want to grow further. Instagram Business tools also allow entrepreneurs who want to grow to reach a broader audience, better showcase their products, and implement calls to action that encourage sales. Moreover, these promotion and sales tools make data such as prices or available stock quickly and easily accessible to the consumer. Everything people need both to learn about a product and to purchase it immediately is within their reach, which is important for consumers who are not interested in conducting exhaustive searches to obtain information or the product itself. This is why promotion and sales tools serve both the buyer and the brand owner. Since some tools (such as the promotion button) allow the entrepreneur to reach more people without the need to do so organically and help female consumers so that brands they do not know but that relate to what they consume reach them “by chance.” Other tools (such as the online store or the option to enter the website link) save time both for the female customer when checking stock and products and for the entrepreneur when answering those messages.

As the research progressed, two groups of resources that enable closer contact with female clients were also identified. Dialogue and contact resources prove to be sources of information transmission and reception, feedback, and relationship-building with clients, similar to the interaction resources identified.

Finally, the results obtained from the description of content generation resources allow the identification of another advantage of Instagram as a communication channel. These resources allow entrepreneurs to generate content based on their products, services, and values in an entertaining manner for their current and potential customers. In addition, all of this is designed for easy use even by those entrepreneurs who have no knowledge of editing, technology, or content production.

Regarding the second specific research objective, it was possible to describe the consumption habits of female consumers in the clothing sector on the social network Instagram, and the results provide reasons for using it as a seller. Based on the results obtained regarding the frequency with which the sample uses Instagram, it is important to highlight that this is a social network where the entrepreneurs’ audience spends most of their time, which justifies active content generation through Reels, Instagram TV, stories, etc. Because if female consumers spend most of their time in this space, the content uploaded by brands can capture their attention at any time of the day.

The fact that 88 % of the sample always uses Instagram as a means of relaxation, leaving a small number of women who do so only sometimes, means that Instagram is considered a medium where some type of entertainment is sought. This is consistent with Cooper (4), who in his article for Hootsuite mentions that “finding fun and entertaining content is the fastest-growing reason for using social media.” This is relevant for considering how to strategically use the tools found within the variables: identity manifestation, interaction, and content generation. This involves thinking of Instagram as a space in which entrepreneurs can sell their business and their products through play and entertainment of their audiences, rather than relying solely on basic selling based on the characteristics of a product.

The combination of these resources for generating entertaining and informative content with those related to the transmission of messages, dialogue, interaction, and others is a valuable oppor-

tunity for entrepreneurs to reach their target audiences and bring their products closer to them.

However, there is an element that must be taken into account, namely the fact that although female consumers seek brands and products on this app, not all of them actually purchase products through it. Although the percentage of women who never purchase products through Instagram is minimal (in this case only 1.8%), there are many who use it only sometimes to make purchases and others who, on the other hand, always do so. These results tell us that these women use the platform as a means to see, search, know, stay informed, and find out. This can be leveraged through tools for: expressing visual and written identity, which help the seller show what they offer and present their business; promotion and sales, such as the online store, so that they know which products are for sale and their prices; contact, to be able to advise and answer inquiries; and content generation, to attract people to the brand for reasons that go beyond the products they offer (personalized advice, experiences, friendliness, unique value propositions, etc.).

What is important to highlight from these results is that having a company profile on Instagram does not necessarily lead consumers to complete the purchase through the platform, but it is a channel that allows them to become familiar with the products. And if it does not lead them to acquire the products through this virtual space, it will at least lead them to approach the physical space (store, showroom, etc.) to do so. Although in his article for Hootsuite based on a GlobalWebIndex study, Cooper (4) mentions that for 13 % of social media users, one button with the option to buy would increase the likelihood that people purchase products or services on social media. This depends on the characteristics of each customer and the generation to which they belong, since not all of them buy in the same way and, in most cases, their purchasing habits depend on social, cultural, and demographic factors.

Regarding the sample's interaction with brands, the results show the high level of interaction generated depending on the content published by the brand. Although one group of women considers always interacting with brands and others consider doing so depending on the content they see, this demonstrates that the strategic and combined use of content-generation and interaction tools can generate more traffic toward the brand's profile and lead the target audience to a possible inquiry that may result in a future sale. This is a conclusion that partly coincides with the study of Instagram as a digital marketing tool in Chile by Torres Carmona (18), in which he cites one study, taking into account that the relationship the brand has with its followers on the social network it uses helps improve the brand image they have of it, and in this way, a greater sales volume is generated, which is the main objective.

On the other hand, the importance of brands having an Instagram profile is confirmed, since the results indicate that for the vast majority of women (current and potential consumers of clothing, accessories, and footwear brands from Córdoba), it is indispensable. In addition to this observation, it should be noted that if the brands these women know did not have Instagram today, they would probably know only a few of them, since they have discovered most of them through this social network, while some women state that they would not know them at all, since they found all of them through Instagram. This is relevant to understand that if someone is an entrepreneur in this sector with a segment of women between 15 and 30 years old, it is indispensable that they have a profile on this social network. Mainly in a pandemic context in which restrictions on leaving home make it difficult for potential customers to carry out their usual trips in search of items in which they are interested in investing their money, and there is no other option but to start managing the brand's social networks to reach those women who cannot leave their homes, whether due to restrictions or fear. And although the restrictions in the country and in the province of Córdoba are becoming less rigid, they are a trigger for new and future consumption trends that are already emerging. Trends in which female consumers, in order not to leave their home for so long, first search for brands online, view products, prices, and even stock, and finally go to the physical store to simply try on the product they have already seen and pay for it. Although this, again, depends on the demographic characteristics of each female consumer.

The study adds evidence to the discussion about the opportunities and advantages that social networks, in this case Instagram, offer to new ways of communicating based on how the social network is used on a daily basis. And its importance and value is even greater considering that the research is based on the months of September, October, and November of 2020, during which a pandemic is being experienced that especially affects entrepreneurs in Córdoba.

In this sense, the research serves to make them aware of how Instagram can positively affect their business, based on knowledge about each resource that the platform offers in order to sell themselves, and also on the relationship that female consumers from Córdoba have with it and how that relationship affects the bond, closeness, and acquisition of products of the brands.

On the other hand, after carrying out an exhaustive search for background on the topic, it

can be stated that this is the first research study to address the correlation between the resources offered by Instagram Business and the usage habits of female clothing consumers from Córdoba, with the aim of making it a useful work for clothing entrepreneurs from Córdoba.

However, beyond having obtained valuable results in this research, it presents some limitations to consider. A key limitation relates to the lack of analysis of the effects of each aforementioned tool. Although the results manage to answer the research question, the problem is that by analyzing only the resources that Instagram has and its functions, it is assumed that the desired effects occur merely by using them. However, the mere and simple use of these resources does not mean that traffic to the brand's profile, interactions, engagement, and selling will effectively be achieved. All these possible outcomes may depend on different factors, such as the type of content that brands present, the type of use they make of the resources, the correct application of strategies, or simply the real effects generated by each resource. Because Instagram may have many tools that have no effect at the time of their implementation, or it may have many resources that can indeed help entrepreneurs grow, but if they do not know how to use them effectively, no results will be seen. It is the strategies and the effects of each resource that are not analyzed in this research, and these are important variables to take into account for future research on the subject.

Another limitation of the present study relates to sampling, and some points in this regard are presented below. First, among the limitations present is the sample size. The sample is very small (226 women aged 15 to 30 years) relative to the actual number of women aged 15 to 30 years living in the province, which according to the city government would be a number greater than 180 000. If the sample were larger, the results could be more representative. Regarding the sample selection process, which in this case is non-probabilistic incidental and was carried out through social media (Instagram and WhatsApp), the limitation is that 30 women aged 15 to 20 years, 169 women aged 20 to 25 years, and 27 women aged 25 to 30 years were obtained. Such a significant difference in the number of people per age group makes it impossible to perform representative comparisons based on age differences if so desired.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, it can be said that the results answer the research question and meet both the general and specific objectives initially proposed. In response to the research question, the way in which entrepreneurs in the clothing sector can take advantage of Instagram Business based on how their target audience uses this social network is through an active presence on Instagram, because this audience uses the application most of their time. Also through the use of resources that allow them to entertain this audience in order to attract them and bring them increasingly closer to the purchase of products, although this does not mean that purchases will actually take place on the same platform. And finally, entrepreneurs can also take advantage of Instagram through the resources available to them to actively interact with current and potential customers, since they are accustomed and willing to do so if what the brands propose captures their attention.

Finally, it is recommended that Córdoba entrepreneurs in the proposed sector, or those responsible for their communication, not be afraid to use this space and see it as an opportunity to engage with their current and potential customers.

For future research regarding the usefulness of Instagram as a communication channel, progress can be made in analyzing the platform from a deeper perspective and in investigating what type of content can be generated; what type of relationships, events, and trends occur on this platform; and how entrepreneurs—in the apparel sector in this case—can make use of all of this and leverage it to incorporate it into their own business strategies. This research has already made progress in presenting to Córdoba entrepreneurs what resources they have at their disposal and their relevance, but research can go a step further and analyze what to do with those resources based on the trends of the platform and of the social, cultural, economic, and technological context being experienced at that moment. Based on another of the limitations of this research, it would also be important to analyze the true usefulness of each resource when it is put into action. To determine, among all the tools that Instagram offers, which ones have the greatest effects and on which primary focus should be placed in order to succeed in customer acquisition and loyalty.

Finally, it is considered that the topic addressed can be leveraged by Public Relations professionals interested in digital communication. Currently, it is difficult to think of organizations, people, or ventures that can sell themselves without social media, or that can communicate effectively through media that focus only on traditional means. And if public relations practitioners are responsible for managing relationships between two or more actors, for those interested in this

management and communication through social media, it is important to understand how these types of platforms work and how we must adapt to the characteristics of those who consume them, so that communications are effective. And it must be taken into account that although channels, strategies, audiences, and resources change, the need for good and strategic communication remains equally important.

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