

Use of Social Networks as an Administrative Management Tool in the Business Sector*

Uso de las redes sociales como herramienta de gestión administrativa en el sector empresarial

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Abstract

In addition to driving technological change, the digital age has fostered the adoption of tools that simplify administrative management in businesses. For instance, companies have found in social networks a strategic ally to perform their various business operations, which also gives them a competitive advantage considering the innovation activities supported by these tools. The purpose of this study is, thus, to analyze the use of social networks as an administrative management tool in the business sector. For such a purpose, a descriptive, empirical, and quantitative methodology was employed. As the primary source of information, a questionnaire was administered to senior management, middle management, and operational staff from 93 companies based in Boyacá (Colombia). Moreover, as secondary sources of information, previous studies and publications on the use of social networks in organizations were reviewed. According to the findings, social networks have become a strategic ally for companies and their management. They allow businesses to optimize

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their operational, strategic, and administrative processes, which, in turn, constitutes a fundamental step toward their strengthening and growth. In conclusion, social networks should be employed as a management support tool because they greatly enhance business performance. Using them not only creates competitive advantage but also fosters sustainability and competitiveness in the market.

Keywords: business management, social networks, administrative management, conduct of organizations.

JEL classification: M1, M12, L86, L1, D22

Highlights

- Social networks are considered a strategic ally because they help companies improve their management and business performance.
- Social networks allow companies to optimize their operational, strategic, and administrative processes.
- Social networks are not only used for communication purposes but also as a work productivity and organization tool and for enjoyment and entertainment.
- Social networks support companies in their internal and external operations or activities.
- The adoption of social networks could have a negative impact on the organization if managers and administrative staff do not use them properly.

Resumen

La era digital en el sector empresarial no solo conduce a la transformación tecnológica, sino que, además, promueve la incursión de herramientas que facilitan la gestión administrativa en las organizaciones. Las redes sociales se han convertido en un aliado estratégico para el desarrollo de las diferentes operaciones en las empresas, hecho que genera ventaja competitiva a partir de la innovación en el desarrollo de procesos apoyados por estas herramientas. El objetivo del estudio fue realizar un análisis del uso de las redes sociales en la actualidad como herramienta de gestión administrativa en el sector empresarial. El método que se utilizó fue descriptivo, empírico, cuantitativo. Como fuente primaria se tomó la información de encuestas a personal administrativo en cargos de alta dirección, gerencia media y cargos operativos de noventa y tres empresas en Boyacá, labor que se complementó mediante fuentes secundarias a partir de la revisión documental de estudios e investigaciones previas sobre el uso de las redes sociales en las empresas. Los resultados mostraron que las redes sociales se han convertido en un aliado estratégico para las empresas y su gestión, y permiten optimizar el funcionamiento de los procesos operativos, estratégicos y de administración, lo que a su vez representa un aporte elemental para el fortalecimiento y crecimiento empresarial. En conclusión, las redes sociales se deben incorporar como herramienta de apoyo en la gestión, ya que mejoran notablemente el desempeño de las empresas, de manera que su implementación no solo genera ventaja competitiva, también permite la sostenibilidad y la competitividad en el mundo empresarial.

Palabras clave: dirección de empresas, redes sociales, gestión administrativa, conducta de las organizaciones.

Clasificación JEL: M1, M12, L86, L1, D22

Highlights

- Las redes sociales son un aliado estratégico, ya que mejoran notablemente la gestión y el desempeño de las empresas.
- Las redes sociales optimizan el funcionamiento de los procesos operativos, estratégicos y de administración en el mundo empresarial.
- Las redes sociales son incorporadas, no solo como medio de comunicación, también como medio de productividad laboral, organización laboral y como medio de diversión y entretenimiento.
- Las redes sociales favorecen y apoyan el desarrollo de las operaciones o actividades internas y externas de la empresa.
- La incorporación de las redes sociales puede tener un impacto negativo si el uso no es el correcto por parte del personal directivo y administrativo en las organizaciones.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is becoming essential to companies due to the technological transformation inherent to the digital age. Social networks are part of the implementation of ICTs and currently play a key role in companies (Hugo Cardenas et al., 2020). Their adoption not only simplifies administrative management but also improves business processes, which favors business modernization (Kafi Laleh et al., 2020).

In addition, social networks are becoming increasingly relevant thanks to their popularity among users (We Are Social, 2021). The same should occur among companies if they base their actions on the needs of the market and the demands of the business environment (Limas Suárez, 2020a). In fact, the business sector is also showing a growing trend in the use of ICTs and, specifically, social networks (Epsilon, 2020). The adoption of these technologies, together with leadership skills and organizational change, substantially improves the performance and business model of companies (Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicaciones [Colombian Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies], 2019; Onetiu, 2020).

In management, social networks bring about significant changes in the production, administration, and economy of organizations (Moncada Blanco et al., 2018). They are considered an important tool to support management, which helps to rethink and streamline processes related to, for instance, operations, human resources, marketing, commercialization, and customer service (Slavić et al., 2017; Ewerth & Giroto, 2021). Consequently, social networks increase productivity and competitiveness, thus becoming indispensable to organizations (Hugo Cardenas et al., 2020; García, 2015). Furthermore, they facilitate corporate communication with internal and external customers (Uribe Saavedra et al., 2013; Miranda Zavala & Cruz Estrada, 2017; Rodríguez Herráez et al., 2017), which, ultimately, is an opportunity for business growth and strengthening.

For the purposes of this study, investigations on the adoption of social networks in organizations were taken into account. However, no studies were found that analyzed their use in the administrative

management of companies or that empirically addressed their current implementation in companies in Boyacá (Colombia) from a broad and detailed research perspective. This led to the following research question: How are social networks currently used in administrative management in the business sector, and what are the internal and external processes best supported by them?

The interest in the use of social networks in the administrative management of companies and the concern for the processes that they best support (Aucay Piedra & Herrera Torres, 2017; Tricoci et al., 2014) stemmed from the above research question and motivated the development of this study. The study, in turn, considered the need for and importance of adopting social networks as an administrative management tool (Hugo Cardenas et al., 2020), which translates into productivity, innovation, and positioning, as well as into competitive advantages for organizations (Real Pérez et al., 2014; Alderete & Jones, 2019).

In summary, the main objective of this article was to analyze the use of social networks as an administrative management tool in the business sector today. Subsequently, based on this analysis, it sought to describe in detail the internal and external processes best supported by these technological tools. To this end, the study followed a descriptive, empirical, and quantitative methodological design.

The rest of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework, which provides background information and describes the discussions held on this subject in the academic field. Sections 3, 4, and 5 describe the methodology, results, and discussion on the findings of the study. Finally, Section 6 draws conclusions regarding the need to adopt social networks as a management support tool and encourage their use in internal and external business processes, aiming to improve organizational performance to achieve sustainability and competitiveness in the business world.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

ICTs have been successfully adopted in companies thanks to the variety of tools they provide (such as social networks) and the efficiency they offer (Moncada Blanco et al., 2018). Conceptually, ICTs can be said to be digital tools used in companies to develop strategic processes that dynamize management models and market behaviors and to create competitive advantages. Therefore, they are considered an opportunity to build more competitive organizations (Limas Suárez et al., 2021).

The growing use of the internet in recent years has considerably increased the relevance of social networks among users and companies. These channels play a prominent role and have been adapted so that companies can serve their customers more closely and dynamically (Lorduy, 2021).

In previous studies, authors such as Vázquez Brotto (2015) argued that the participation of social networks in companies should be based on strategic analysis. Said analysis, in turn, should lead to the establishment of business objectives to determine the suitability of each network at the time of creating a profile. Similarly, Vázquez Brotto stated that the implementation of social media should focus on brand positioning, communication, and customer service.

Torres Covarrubias et al. (2016) and Mao et al. (2020) affirmed that companies are increasingly turning to social networks to publicize their portfolio of products and services, which brings benefits and radically changes the global context in which they operate. However, the analysis of the use of social networks by employees also revealed excesses that affect companies' performance and productivity.

Sánchez Jiménez et al. (2020) pointed out that social networks started to be perceived as a decisive factor for businesses, hence many organizations take them into account in their strategies. They highlight advantages such as visibility; ease of access to information; and possibility of establishing better communication, relationship, and interaction with users.

Similarly, Ocaña Echeverría and Freire Aillón (2021) claimed that social networks are an essential tool for disseminating and promoting a product or service; therefore, their contribution is key to enhancing business management. The authors also explained that participating in social networks is not only about creating a business account but also about building and sustaining virtual communities. In other words, social networks should not be seen as a requirement of the digital world; they should be employed to create expectations among future customers and build loyalty among current ones by promoting the corporate image and positioning the brand.

For their part, Zurita Mézquita et al. (2021) stated that social networks are a fundamental tool for any company, given that they favor commercial management. They not only facilitate access to the digital space but also help in doing business, promoting products, sharing content, informing about the company, and communicating and interacting with customers, which translates into competitive advantages. The authors added that social networks offer companies a positioning space based on innovation thanks to continuous contact with the market. They concluded that these tools make it possible to design communication, positioning, and innovation strategies, thus contributing to business permanence and growth.

These studies agree on the contribution and strengthening of processes in companies as a result of the use of social networks, especially regarding the formulation and management of communication, marketing, and customer service strategies.

From the conceptual perspective, García (2015) stated that a social network is a social interaction system. Such a system is open, under constant construction, and based on a dynamic exchange between people, groups, and institutions in different contexts, who always share needs and organize themselves to maximize their resources and competencies. In addition, García added that social networks are tools, applications, and platforms whose main objective is to facilitate content distribution, collaboration, interaction, and relationships among users.

In other words, social networks are technological platforms found in the virtual environment that facilitate connection, interaction, communication, and information exchange (Limas Suárez, 2020b).

Furthermore, as observed in previous studies, social networks favor administrative management in companies. Therefore, this term needs to be conceptually defined because it is the object of analysis of the present study.

According to Orellana Palomeque et al. (2019), administrative management leads to the analysis and diagnosis of what happens inside and outside the company to improve its competitive performance. This implies ensuring the development of all areas of the company to maintain its growth in the market. According to González Rodríguez et al. (2020), administrative management is:

el conjunto de actividades que se realiza para dirigir una organización, mediante la conducción tareas, recursos y esfuerzos, la capacidad para coordinar y dirigir las acciones y las actividades que se desarrollan en la empresa para prevenir problemas y alcanzar los objetivos planteados (p. 34).

Which refers to the set of activities involved in running an organization, by leading tasks, resources and efforts. It also refers to the ability to coordinate and direct initiatives and activities aimed at preventing problems and achieving objectives.

For Chávez Haro et al. (2020), administrative management seeks to achieve the business objectives by reaching a series of stages inherent to the administrative process, such as planning, organization, direction, and control. This allows the company to be more effective and efficient in achieving its development, growth, and profitability.

Similarly, Soledispa Rodríguez et al. (2022) affirmed that administrative management is the el “conjunto de actividades coordinadas que ayudan a utilizar de manera óptima los recursos que posee [la empresa]; es el conjunto de actividades que se realiza para dirigir una organización mediante una conducción racional de tareas, esfuerzos y recursos” (pp. 281-282). This is the set of coordinated activities that help to make optimal use of the company’s resources. It is also the set of activities undertaken to run an organization by rationally coordinating tasks, efforts, and resources. Furthermore, the authors argued that there are internal (strengths/weaknesses) and external (opportunities/threats) factors that define management.

For the purposes of this study, administrative management refers to the activities performed to run an organization, aiming to achieve its objectives in an effective and efficient manner. Accordingly, this study makes an analysis inside the companies (microenvironment) to identify those management processes best supported by the use of social networks in each of the areas of operation.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study followed a descriptive, empirical, and quantitative methodological design. On the one hand, it performed an analysis of the current use of social networks in administrative management in the business sector. On the other hand, it sought to identify those management processes inside the companies that benefit most from the implementation of social networks in each of the areas of operation, thus improving competitiveness. Finally, it collected, manipulated, and numerically examined data on the Excel statistical package to carry out statistical analyses using frequency ranges.

The sample consisted of 93 companies based in Boyacá (Colombia) of which 69% were service companies, 28% were commercial companies, and 3% were industrial companies. According to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), adapted for Colombia

as Clasificación Industrial Internacional Uniforme (CIIU) by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE, 2020), the economic activities in which the companies were engaged were classified as follows: 31% wholesale and retail trade; 22% human health and social work activities; 18% education; 8% other service activities; 6% administrative and support service activities; 5% financial and insurance activities; 4% information and communication activities; 2% arts, entertainment, and recreation activities; 2% professional, scientific, and technical activities; 1% mining and quarrying; and 1% accommodation and food service activities. Regarding size, 34% were large companies; 20% were medium-sized companies; 13% were small companies; and 33% were microbusinesses.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of ten closed-response, multiple-choice, dichotomous questions. The questionnaire was administered to executives and administrative support staff, according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) adapted for Colombia by DANE (2015), in senior management, middle management, and operational positions of 93 companies based in Boyacá. As shown in Table 1, a total of 197 questionnaires were administered using the simple random probability sampling method.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample by position

Tabla 1. Datos de la muestra por cargos

Positions held (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
Senior management staff	14	7%
Middle management staff	57	29%
Operational staff	126	64%
Total	197	100%

Source: Authors' own work.

For the validation of the instrument, a literature review was carried out to identify the main variables of the analysis according to the objective of the study. The instrument was subsequently examined by expert judgment. For the reliability of the instrument, a pilot sample of 25 respondents was taken and the Kuder–Richardson 20 (KR-20) coefficient was employed, yielding a result of 0.90, which indicates that the instrument is highly reliable.

For the processing and organization of the results, an Excel information matrix was used to classify the information based on the variables analyzed in this research. This coding method offered a better systematic organization of the primary source, which facilitated the definition of categories and hierarchies and the integration of variables that might be relevant to future studies.

Finally, the results were schematically structured in seven parts: the most used networks in administrative management, the reasons for their use, the types of use, the positions that most use these tools, the reasons for their internal and external use in the companies, the company processes that benefit most from them, and the problems arising from their use. This made it possible to identify those management processes best supported by the use of social networks in each of the areas of operation of companies.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the current use of social networks as an administrative management tool in the business sector reveals that they are being increasingly employed in companies and represent an important factor in the development of their operations. An analysis performed inside the companies made it possible to identify those management processes that benefit most from the use of social networks in each of the areas of operation. In this sense, as displayed in Table 2, when executives and administrative support staff were asked about the use of social networks in the workplace, 84% of them indicated that they use these tools for the development of work activities.

Table 2. Use of social networks in work activities
 Tabla 2. Uso de las redes sociales en las actividades laborales

Answer option (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
Yes	165	84%
No	32	16%
Total	197	100%

Source: Authors' own work.

However, not all companies see social networks as an essential tool in the work environment. In fact, some organizations do not even consider them necessary for the development of their operations. It can be observed that 16% of the executives and administrative support staff did not use them in the workplace (see Table 2). Thus, the reasons for not using social networks in the workplace were related to limitations and restrictions on their use and on the use of the internet in some companies. Consequently, according to Table 3, 7% of the sample indicated that social networks were not necessary for the position they held, 6% stated that they were not allowed to use phones and social networks in the company, 2% affirmed that they were allowed to use only corporate phones and social networks, and 1% reported that they did not have internet coverage or signal.

Table 3. Reasons for not using social networks in the workplace
 Tabla 3. Razones de no uso de las redes sociales en el campo laboral

Findings (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
They are not necessary for the position held	14	7%
The use of phones and social networks is not allowed in the company	12	6%
Only the use of corporate phones and social networks is allowed in the company	4	2%
There is no internet coverage or signal	2	1%
Total	32	16%

Source: Authors' own work.

Regarding the social networks most widely used in the workplace for the development of business activities, there is a marked preference among executives and administrative support staff for WhatsApp, a messaging tool that facilitates corporate communication. This is followed by Facebook, a platform that displays corporate information and favors interaction and closeness with users. Instagram, in the third place, is an application for sharing content, photos, and videos of companies

and their products. Twitter can be used to post ads and short corporate messages. E-mail platforms are useful for exchanging messages with multiple recipients. Telegram works as a messaging channel for sending mass communications and information. Zoom and Google Meet are videoconferencing channels for holding virtual meetings in companies. YouTube is a visual and interactive platform for sharing videos and tutorials. Microsoft Teams is used for chat communication and offers the possibility of scheduling meetings with work teams. Lastly, Yammer is a corporate social networking service. Consequently, as summarized in Table 4, 99% of the staff use WhatsApp for the development of their work activities; 49%, Facebook; 25%, Instagram; 6%, Twitter; 4% institutional e-mail; 3%, Telegram, Zoom, and Google Meet individually; and 1%, YouTube, Microsoft Teams, and/or Yammer.

Table 4. Social networks most widely used in the workplace

Tabla 4. Redes sociales de mayor uso en el campo laboral

Communication tool (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
WhatsApp	163	99%
Facebook	81	49%
Instagram	41	25%
Twitter	10	6%
Institutional e-mail	7	4%
Telegram	5	3%
Zoom	5	3%
Google Meet	5	3%
YouTube	2	1%
Microsoft Teams	2	1%
Yammer	2	1%

Source: Authors' own work.

Furthermore, social networks are characterized by being easy to use and operate. They make it possible to share content among millions of users and generate interaction between companies and users or customers. Also, social networks have achieved wide acceptance, not only among users but also among companies, which has contributed to their rapid growth and popularity. In addition, communication through social networks increases reliability, credibility of contents, and closeness with users. Therefore, as Table 5 illustrates, when executives and administrative support staff were asked about the reasons for using social networks in the workplace, 70% mentioned the quick and easy way of using them; 62%, their reach and interaction level; 27%, their growth and popularity; and 18%, their reliability, credibility, and closeness.

Table 5. Reasons for using social networks

Tabla 5. Motivos de uso de las redes sociales

Reasons for use (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
Quick and easy to use	115	70%
Reach and interaction	102	62%
Growth and popularity	45	27%
Reliability, credibility, and closeness	30	18%

Source: Authors' own work.

However, companies must use social networks strategically. These tools not only optimize operational processes but also dynamize strategic and management activities. Therefore, their

implementation not only offers competitive advantages but also increases sustainability and competitiveness in the business sector. In administrative management, social networks have been adopted in companies as a means of communication, work productivity, work organization (e.g., teleworking, as a result of the current public health conditions derived from the pandemic), and amusement and entertainment. In summary, as shown in Table 6, 94% of staff use social networks as a means of communication; 56%, as a means of work productivity; 38%, as a means of work organization (teleworking); and 20%, as a means of amusement and entertainment in short breaks.

Table 6. Types of uses of social networks in the workplace
 Tabla 6. Tipo de uso de las redes sociales en el campo laboral

Type of use (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
Means of communication	155	94%
Means of work productivity	92	56%
Means of work organization: teleworking	63	38%
Means of amusement and entertainment	33	20%

Source: Authors' own work.

Table 6 shows greater use of social networks as a means of internal and external communication in the business environment. They have been consolidated as tools that facilitate, dynamize, and enhance corporate communication and favor interaction among the staff, thus facilitating management within organizations. According to Table 7, executives and administrative support staff use social networks to interact with immediate superiors (83%), internal customers or coworkers (77%), external current and potential customers (59%), and the management (37%).

Table 7. Actors in the company with which staff interacts on social networks
 Tabla 7. Cargos con los que se usa las redes sociales en la empresa

Actors (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
Immediate superior	137	83%
Internal customers (coworkers)	127	77%
External customers (current and potential customers)	97	59%
Management	61	37%

Source: Authors' own work.

Another significant contribution regarding the implementation of social networks in the business context is related to the management of operational and administrative processes. These networks contribute to the dynamization, optimization, and innovation of processes, as well as to the modernization of the business fabric, thus impacting the competitiveness of the companies. In other words, their use is aimed at favoring and supporting the development of companies' internal and external processes or activities.

Therefore, as displayed in Table 8, when asked about the internal use of social networks, 89% of the staff indicated that they employ them to perform their daily duties; 56%, to support internal business processes; 51%, to execute administrative and productive tasks; 46%, to solve problems; 41%, to share knowledge and work experiences; 38%, to implement continuous improvement strategies; 34%, to make timely decisions; 27%, to discuss ideas and innovation initiatives; and 1%, to promote active breaks and keep up-to-date on work-related issues.

Table 8. Internal use of social networks (staff)

Tabla 8. Uso interno de las redes sociales por el personal de la empresa (funcionarios)

Internal activities (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
To perform daily duties	147	89%
To support internal business processes	92	56%
To execute administrative and productive tasks	84	51%
To solve problems	76	46%
To share knowledge and work experiences	67	41%
To implement continuous improvement strategies	62	38%
To make timely decisions	56	34%
To discuss ideas and innovation initiatives	44	27%
To promote activities, positive messages, and active breaks	1	1%
To keep up-to-date on work-related issues	1	1%

Source: Authors' own work.

Regarding business processes, integrating social networks into their dynamics can help companies enhance and optimize them and make them more competitive. In organizations, the business processes best supported by the use of social networks are corporate communications, customer service, marketing and sales, production and service provision, human resource selection and recruitment, and internationalization. As observed in Table 9, when asked about the processes best supported by the use of social networks in their company, 65% of the surveyed executives and administrative support staff selected corporate communications; 58%, customer service; 49%, marketing and sales; 32%, production and service provision; 10%, human resource selection and recruitment; and 1%, internationalization.

Table 9. Business processes best supported by the use of social networks

Tabla 9. Procesos de la empresa que mejor apoya el uso de las redes sociales

Business process (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
Corporate communications	107	65%
Customer service	96	58%
Marketing and sales	81	49%
Production and service provision	53	32%
Human resource selection and recruitment	16	10%
Internationalization	1	1%

Source: Authors' own work.

When it comes to external activities, the adoption of social networks has encouraged businesses to strengthen and enhance their relationships with customers through the use of cutting-edge technologies. In addition to serving and improving their relationships with current and potential customers, companies employ social networks to build relationships with suppliers and partners. Hence, these tools not only serve to attract, interact with, and be in touch with customers but also to promote and advertise products, access the corporate website, position the brand, interact with other companies, do business, place orders, create a virtual community, and reach specific audiences. As can be seen in Table 10, when asked about the external use of social networks, 51% of the surveyed executives and administrative support staff reported to use them to attract, interact with,

and be in touch with customers, as well as to promote and advertise products; 32–%, to create a virtual community; 28–%, to access the corporate website; 21–%, to position the brand; 15–%, to interact with other companies; and 10–%, to do business.

Table 10. External use of social networks (customers, suppliers, partners)

Tabla 10. Uso externo de las redes sociales (clientes, proveedores, socios)

External activity (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
To attract, interact with, and be in touch with customers	84	51%
To promote and advertise products	84	51%
To create a virtual community	53	32%
To access the corporate website	46	28%
To position the brand	35	21%
To interact with other companies	25	15%
To do business	16	10%
To reach specific audiences	13	8%
To place orders	1	1%

Source: Authors' own work.

Finally, although the use of social networks can benefit organizations by contributing to the efficiency of their operations, it can also have unfavorable effects if they are not employed properly. For instance, it may result in them being used for leisure during working hours, being overused, or being used for social and personal purposes unrelated to the job. As observed in Table 11, when asked about the problems arising from the use of social networks at work, 56–% of the surveyed executives and administrative support staff reported no problems, 39–% said that it could result in them being used for leisure during working hours, 35–% claimed that they could be overused, and 32–% said that they could be employed for personal and social purposes unrelated to their jobs.

Table 11. Problems arising from the use of social networks in the workplace

Tabla 11. Problemas con el uso de las redes sociales en la empresa

Problem (Xi)	Absolute frequency (ni)	Relative frequency (fi)
None	92	56%
Leisure use during working hours	64	39%
Excessive use	58	35%
Use for personal and social purposes unrelated to the job	53	32%

Source: Authors' own work.

Based on the results presented above, social networks should be used as a management support tool because they have become a strategic ally for companies and their management and significantly contribute to the development of their operations (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Use of social networks for administrative management
 Figura 1. Uso de las redes sociales en la gestión administrativa de las empresas
 Source: Authors' own work.

5. DISCUSSION

In the digital age of the 21st century, technology advancements have become a strategic ally for companies and their management (Limas Suárez & Vargas Soracá, 2020). Particularly, the integration of social networks into the business environment has helped organizations manage their operations and has contributed to the digitization of their processes, which is essential to the growth of their business operations (Limas Suárez, 2020b). Moreover, social networks give companies a competitive advantage considering the innovation activities supported by these tools. In fact, they are used as the primary management tool by organizations (Hugo Cardenas et al., 2020).

According to previous studies, competitive environments force businesses to improve their innovation and management strategies to achieve efficient, effective, and productive outcomes (Hernández Palma et al., 2021). As a result, companies have started to adopt new management models (Hugo Cardenas et al., 2020). For example, the use of social networks, when combined with organizational change and innovation, has been found to greatly enhance business performance (Limas Suárez, 2020a). These tools cause substantial changes in organizations' production, administration, and management activities (Limas Suárez et al., 2021), allowing them to optimize their standard processes for efficiency (Hugo Cardenas et al., 2020).

Concerning the use of social networks in business management, the findings of this study suggest that these tools are increasingly being employed in companies and have evolved to the point where they are essential to the growth of their operations. In this vein, previous research has also revealed the increased relevance and use of social networks by businesses (Hernández Ramirez et al., 2020), particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled companies to reconsider how they were doing business (Demuner Flores, 2021).

Based on the findings, the most widely used social network platform among the surveyed population was WhatsApp, followed by Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, e-mail, Telegram, YouTube, and other business platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Yammer, as well as Zoom and Google Meet for video conferencing. These tools are easy to use, have a high reach (they reach a large number of users), and foster increased interaction (they make content visible and shareable and encourage contact between businesses and users or customers). Additionally, social networks have received widespread acceptance from both users and companies, which has contributed to their increased use and popularity. Likewise, they increase reliability in network communication, credibility of contents, and closeness with users. As reported in other studies, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are the preferred social networks among businesses, with WhatsApp providing the biggest benefits (Demuner Flores, 2021), a finding that is consistent with those of this study.

According to the annual Global Digital Report (We Are Social, 2021), Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the most popular social network platforms around the world. In Latin America, WhatsApp is the most frequently used service to connect with others, share information, or find, discuss, or share news about COVID-19; Facebook is the most frequently employed network to obtain information that could influence management models; Zoom and Meet are the most frequently used platforms for video conferencing; and Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are the most widely used applications among the young population (Newman et al., 2020). In Colombia, YouTube, Facebook,

WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook Messenger are the most popular platforms (We Are Social, 2021).

Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that businesses must use social networks strategically. These tools allow them to optimize not only their operational processes but also their strategic and management processes, which gives them a competitive advantage and boosts their sustainability and competitiveness in the business world. Social networks are promoted as tools that improve and encourage interaction and internal communication among employees (Hütt Herrera, 2012), which supports management in organizations. In fact, they are often used to interact with immediate superiors, internal customers (coworkers), external customers (actual or potential customers), and the management.

Concerning operational and administrative processes in businesses, the use of social networks was found to help streamline, optimize, and innovate such processes, as well as to modernize the business fabric. Since their use is intended to support and favor internal and external activities or operations, it has a direct impact on companies' competitiveness.

The findings of this study on the use of social networks in administrative management are consistent with those of Mena Mera et al. (2019). For these authors, social networks play a significant role in the development of the business strategy by making it possible to connect with a variety of customers through innovative practices. Likewise, according to Armijos Delgado (2019), businesses need innovation, integration, and a strategic vision to enter the market, and for this, they must use tools (such as social networks) that support business development and foster communication with customers. Luque Ortiz (2021), for his part, asserts that social networks boost business performance by increasing corporate visibility and, most importantly, providing a new channel for customer service and communication—a goal that every company strives for. Finally, Duque Jaramillo and Villa Enciso (2016) point out that the information and knowledge age has led to the development of strategies, tools, and applications that help companies manage their internal and external activities, which is consistent with the findings of this study. They also state that social networks allow businesses to collect information on user behavior, which they can use for data analysis and synthesis and strategy formulation. This is demonstrated in this study by their intended use in the formulation of strategies to improve processes and their management.

Based on the analysis conducted here, however, not all businesses view social networks as a fundamental management tool because if not employed properly, their use could have a detrimental effect. According to the surveyed population, their incorporation could result in them being used for leisure during working hours, being overused, or being used for personal and social purposes unrelated to the job. These reasons prevent social networks from being employed as a management support tool or lead companies to limit or restrict their use at work. In fact, in some companies, employees cannot access the internet. In this regard, Valarezo Romero et al. (2020) believe that the use of digital media is not a driver of business success because it has no impact on a company's profitability. Rather than as a determinant to increase business profits, they emphasize their use as support tools for B2C (business-to-customer) communication.

In summary, the results show that social networks should be used as a management support tool (see Figure 1) because they greatly enhance business performance in areas like corporate

communications, customer service, marketing and sales, production and service provision, human resource selection and recruitment, and internationalization. In terms of administrative management, they allow businesses to optimize not only their operational processes but also their strategic and management processes. Thus, their incorporation into the various business processes gives companies a competitive advantage while boosting their sustainability and competitiveness in the business world.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the use of social networks as an administrative management tool in the business sector. In broad terms, social networks have become a strategic ally for companies and their management. They are increasingly used by businesses and significantly contribute to the growth of their operations, as well as their strategic and management processes, which considerably boosts their performance.

According to the findings, the use of social networks, combined with organizational change and innovation, not only greatly improves business performance but also aids in the design of the business strategy. This, in turn, causes significant changes in organizations' production, administrative, and management activities and encourages them to adopt new management models.

In terms of administrative management, the social network platform that was found to be the most frequently used by companies was WhatsApp, followed by Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, e-mail, Telegram, YouTube, and other business platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Yammer, as well as Zoom and Google Meet for video conferencing. The choice of these tools is based on the fact that they are easy to use, have a high reach (they reach a vast audience), and foster increased interaction (they make content visible and shareable and encourage contact between businesses and users or customers). Additionally, these tools have gained widespread popularity due to their wide acceptance among users and companies and because they increase reliability in network communication, credibility of contents, and closeness with users. Based on the analysis conducted in this study, social networks were found to be mostly used for corporate communications. Particularly, they are often employed to interact with immediate superiors, internal customers (coworkers), external customers (actual or potential customers), and the management.

Regarding operational and administrative processes in businesses, the results show that social networks support companies in their internal and external activities or operations. In fact, they contribute to the dynamics of internal operations and processes such as corporate communications, customer service, marketing and sales, production and service provision, human resource selection and recruitment, and internationalization.

In conclusion, social networks should be used as a management support tool in processes like corporate communications, customer service, marketing and sales, production and service provision, human resource selection and recruitment, and internationalization because they greatly enhance business performance. Additionally, they allow companies to optimize their operational, strategic, and administrative processes, which gives them a competitive advantage and boosts their sustainability and competitiveness in the business world.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could inappropriately influence the obtained results or the proposed interpretations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors have made a substantial contribution to the manuscript.

Sonia Janneth Limas Suárez: Methodology, application of the instrument, results, discussion, and conclusions.

Libia Esperanza Sierra Forero: Introduction, application of the instrument, and theoretical framework.

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