

## **Studying the Evolution of Business in the field of Nutrition using Instruments Specific to Online Social Networks in the Context of the New Covid-19**

**David-Florin CIOCODEICĂ**

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
ciocodeicadavid@yahoo.com

**Raluca-Giorgiana CHIVU**

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
raluca.chivu0126@gmail.com

**Ionuț-Claudiu POPA**

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
popa.claudiu3@yahoo.com

**Adrian MOCIU**

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
adrianmociu@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Entrepreneurship is the most widespread process in the economy today. A large part of the young people who complete their university studies in a particular field, decide at the end of their studies to open their own business, applying the accumulated information. Most choose this opportunity out of a desire for independence and individualization. One area that has expanded quite a bit is that of nutrition and dietetics. Because of the chaotic lifestyle of the population, most of them choose to turn to a nutrition expert for advice on nutrition. The main reason why they turn to such an expert is the lack of time and the fact that, due to the busy schedule, they fail to have a proper and consistent diet for the health of the body. In 2020, a global pandemic caused by COVID-19 broke out, which automatically generated the closure of many institutions and companies, predicting a drastic decline in the economy. In this article, we will present how the nutrition and dietary companies in Romania coped with the current situation and how they managed to keep their business active and profitable.

**Keywords:** nutrition, entrepreneurship, online social networks, mobile networks, economy, marketing, promotion.

**JEL classification:** L26, M31, I12.

### **Introduction**

"It is confirmed worldwide that entrepreneurs influence both economic development and evolution. They are the ones who try to create and make available to consumers the requested products and services, thus contributing to a better life, increasing labour productivity and helping to improve health. Therefore, the presence of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs contributes to encouraging and initiating changes in society,, (Borza et al., 2009).

So, entrepreneurship is what contributes significantly to the whole of economic growth, entrepreneurs being the ones who create new businesses. Subsequently, new jobs are created in newly established businesses, various goods and services are made available to consumers, competitiveness is increased, and a positive impact on the lives of individuals is highlighted. (Amorós&Bosma, 2014).

The technological evolution characteristic for the contemporary society produces and supplies new products/services, thus determining the appearance of new needs at the level of consumers, who are no longer satisfied with the existing goods/services. (Audretsch&Thurik, 2004). Thus, it is entrepreneurship that brings innovations that help meet the ever-changing demand.

Entrepreneurs are people in the economic field who can combine the results of research and development with various factors of production, to generate the desired economic growth then, thus transforming the knowledge held into economic growth. That is why it is essential to remember that it is not knowledge that generates economic growth, but how it is applied in the current economy. (Landström, 2008 p.302).

### Entrepreneurship in Romania

Entrepreneurship is first and foremost a way of thinking and then an economic process that is vital in the new knowledge-based economy. It needs to be encouraged as it generates future economic development and rising living standards. Entrepreneurial information is generally valid and available to all individuals worldwide. Despite this transparency, the economic index regarding entrepreneurship varies depending on the position on the globe, the culture and the development of the countries. (Rusu, 2015)

In order to analyze the study of the evolution of the entrepreneurial environment, the project called “Global Entrepreneurship Monitor - GEM” was initiated. The project has a significant contribution in increasing the representative information for the field of entrepreneurship, annually updating the relevant international data in this field, but also in assessing the intensity of entrepreneurship felt in the adult population according to international scientific criteria specific to this field.

The 2015 GEM global report covers 62 countries, 70% of the world's population and 83% of GDP. In Romania, the study is led by Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, FSEGA.

According to GEM 2015, Romania is among the countries with the highest rates of medium-high growth entrepreneurs along with countries such as Colombia, Chile, Taiwan, China, Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Ireland.

The figure below shows the evolution of Romania presented in this report.



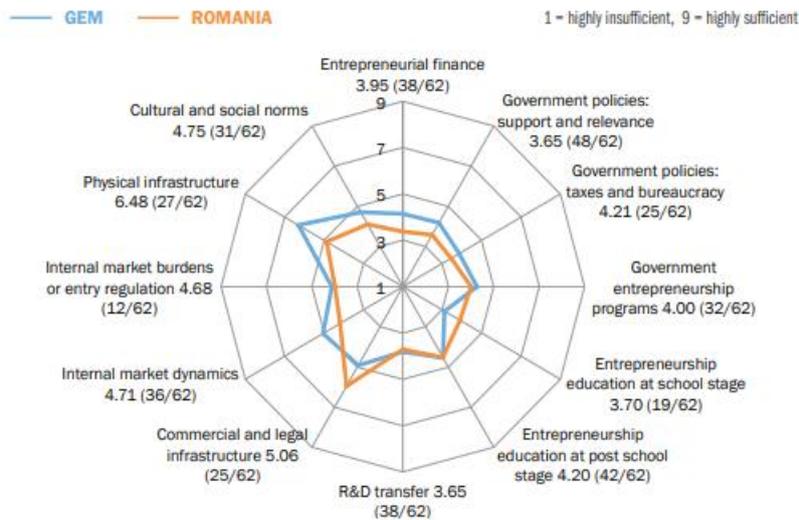
**Population:** 19.9 million (2014)  
**GDP:** \$200.0 billion (2014)  
**GDP per capita:** \$10,035 (2014)  
**SME contribution to GDP:** 50% (2014)  
**World Bank Doing Business Rating:** 74/100; **Rank:** 37/189  
**World Bank Starting a Business Rating:** 92/100; **Rank:** 45/189  
**World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Rating:** 4.3/7; **Rank:** 53/140  
**Economic Development Phase:** Efficiency-Driven

Gender Equity		
	Value	Rank/60
Female/Male TEA Ratio	0.5	38T
Female/Male Opportunity Ratio	1.1	3T

Entrepreneurship Impact		
	Value %	Rank/60
Job expectations (6+)	39.8	4
Innovation	3.2	27T
Industry (% in Business Services Sector)	17.6	29

Societal Value %s About Entrepreneurship		
	Value %	Rank/60
High status to entrepreneurs	75.1	18
Entrepreneurship a good career choice	72.4	12

**Expert Ratings of the Entrepreneurial Eco-system** (rank out of 62 recorded in brackets)



**Figure 1 - Entrepreneurship in Romania**

Adaptation by: <https://www.gemconsortium.org/economy-profiles/romania>

**Online social networks**

The online environment, also known as the virtual society, generates a social impact, it represents the phenomena and relationships in the online environment to the entire society. Within it are found several numerous interpersonal, societal, communication, economic and cultural interactions (Grosseck, 2006, p. 93).

Globally, this phenomenon of social networks has significantly expanded in recent years, reaching almost half of the current population.

Online social networks are a channel of communication with all Internet users and are often used as a marketing channel, offering the possibility of inserting messages, distributing them and accessibility.

In conclusion, online social networks are the ones that provide the basis for maintaining social relationships, communication between TEA individuals and the exchange of information in real-time, thus managing to identify users with common interests. (Iordache&Petre, 2017, p.25).

**Entrepreneurship in the context of COVID-19**

At the beginning of 2020, a pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus appeared worldwide, which affected the entire population, both psychologically and financially. In March 2020, this virus also reached Romania, affecting the entire system, even if the population expected it. The immediate effects of this crisis were observed at the economic level, requiring the closure of several companies, or the transfer of activities to the homes of employees.

Along with these measures, the restaurants and shops specializing in food preparation were closed, which were mostly used by people working in multinationals and other companies. Thus, from a precisely established meal schedule, at fixed hours, according to the work schedule and break hours, they quickly switched to an irregular schedule, being tempted due to lack of activity and the obligation to stay at home, to eat several times a day and regardless of the health of their body.

The only ones which could have helped those in this situation are the nutritionists who, unfortunately, were also affected by the COVID-19 crisis which created an economic imbalance, being quite dangerous for them to interact with customers.

Thus, in order to overcome this crisis, but also to come to the aid of isolated or self-isolated people at home, they chose to move their business to the online environment and continue to advise on various methods in the virtual environment.

### Research methodology

In the context of COVID-19, it has been quite difficult for many companies to continue to grow and prosper. Thus, many of them have chosen to move their businesses on various online social networks.

These companies include companies in the field of nutrition and dietetics, companies that have also had real success with this method.

The purpose of this research is to study the specific tools of online social networks used by nutrition and dietetics companies to develop and function in the current conditions.

The main objectives pursued were:

- O1. Identify the main tools used by nutrition companies to interact with customers
- O2. Determining the degree of adaptation of nutrition companies to the current situation
- O3. Identifying the impact of using specific tools on online social networks to attract new customers.

- O4. Determining the degree of interest at the level of nutrition companies that have resorted to such tools for their use in the future.

For the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained, the information was organized in the form of graphs and tables, being more comfortable with highlighting the main distinctive elements of the tools specific to online social networks used by nutrition and dietetics companies to develop and function in current conditions.

The research was conducted online, through a questionnaire distributed to nutrition companies, the sampling method being an unlikely one, the snowballs. The sample consisted of several 150 respondents, nutritionists, aged between 30 and 45, who have companies operating in Romania.

### Analysis and interpretation of research results

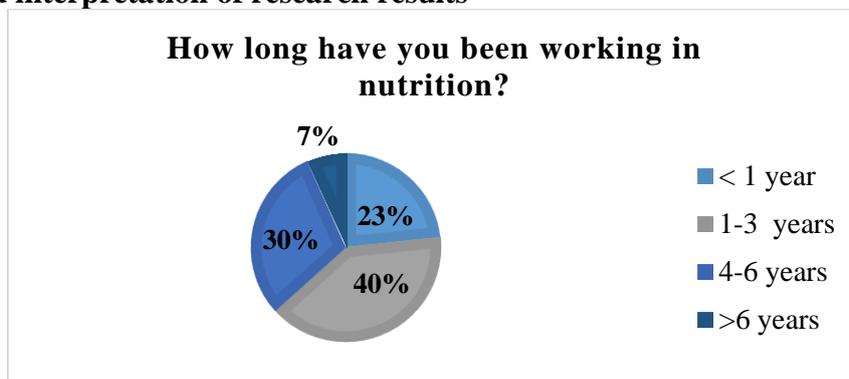
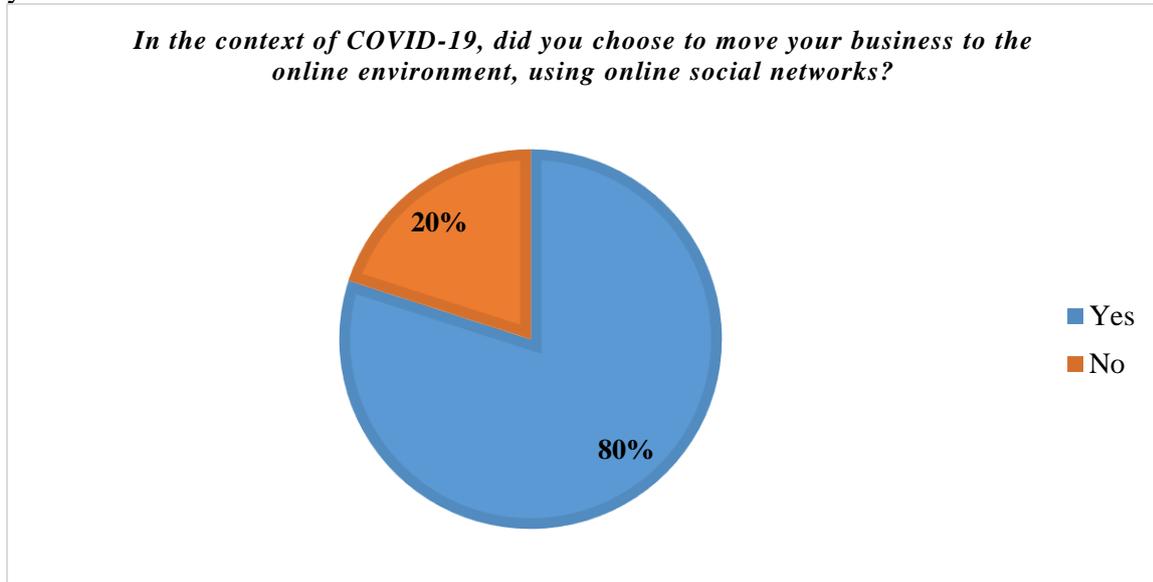


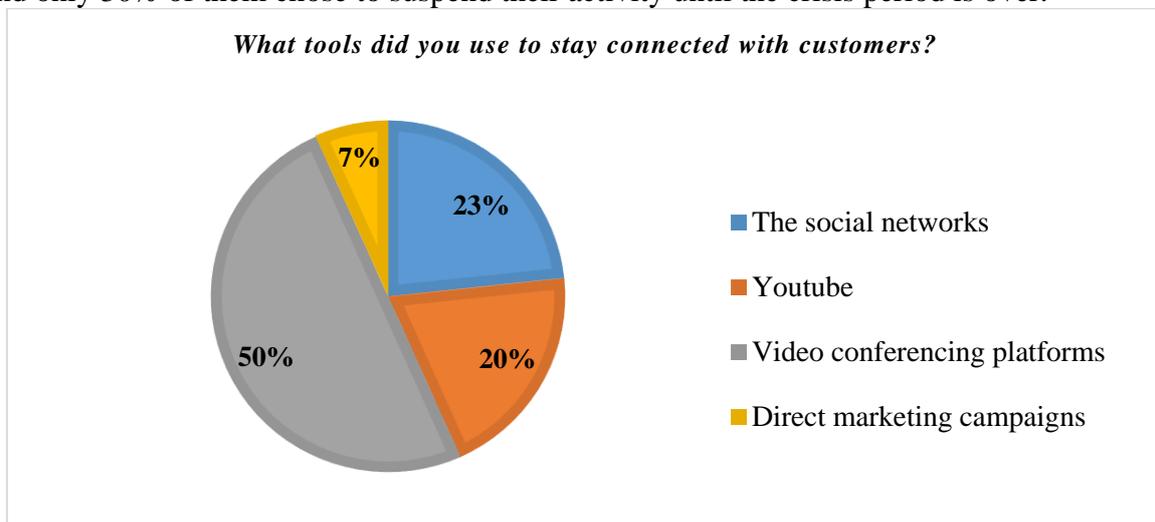
Figure 2 - Nutrition seniority

Most of the respondents were people working in the field of nutrition for 1-3 years (40%), a percentage of 30% are 4-6 years old, 23% of those who answered are less than a year old in the field, and the remaining 7% are veterans in this field, with a seniority of more than six years.



*Figure 3 - Choosing the online environment for business development*

80% of the respondents moved to the online environment, using online social networks, and only 30% of them chose to suspend their activity until the crisis period is over.



*Figure 4 - Tools used*

The questionnaire concluded that most nutritionists used video conferencing platforms because they wanted to make their information available only to people who paid for a subscription or a meeting. 23% of respondents specified that they chose to present information by keeping in touch with customers through social networks, free of charge, thus attracting potential future customers. A percentage of 20% chose to use YouTube to keep in touch with customers, through live videos, thus leaving the information available to other people for an indefinite period, being easy to access. However, only 7% chose direct marketing campaigns to retain customers.

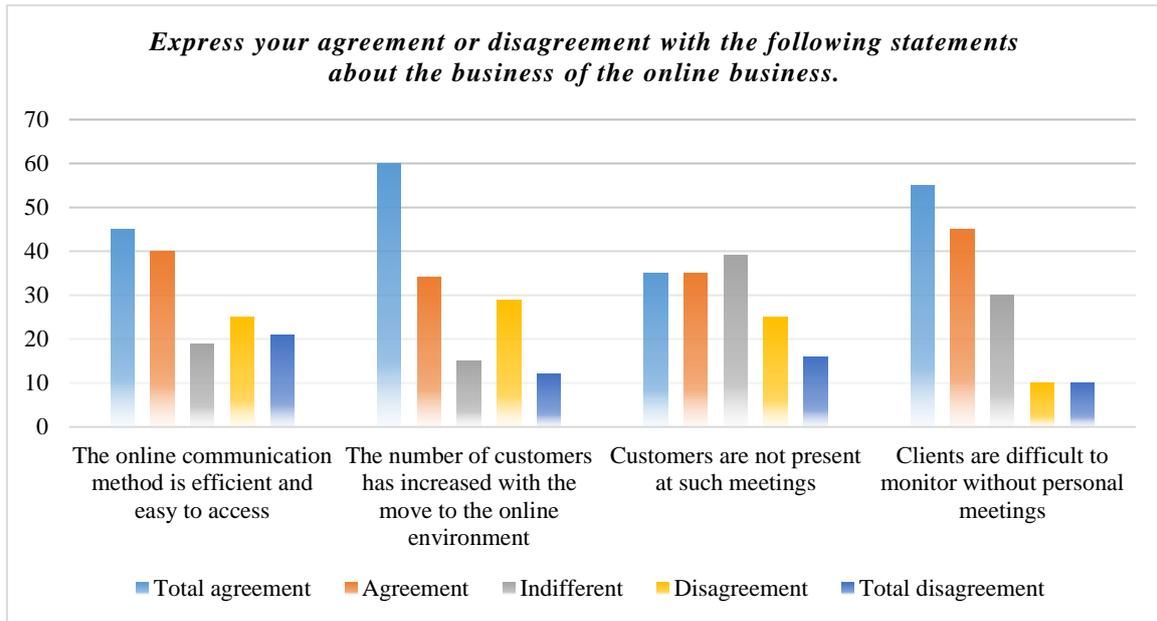
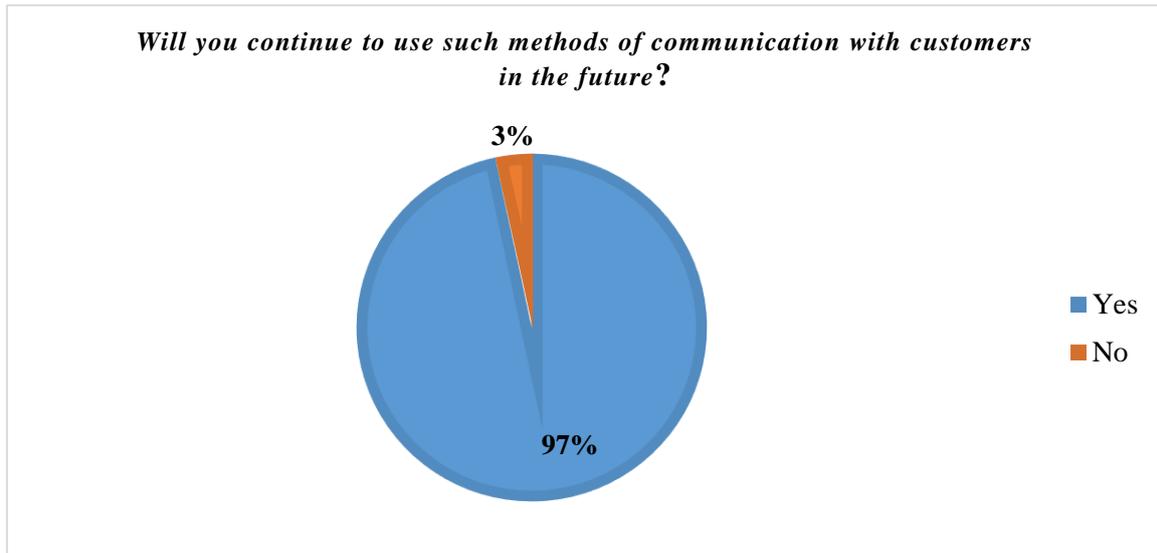


Figure 5 - Carrying out the online activity

Table 1 - Compared statements regarding the meetings with clients

positive statement	2	1	0	-1	-2		
affirmations	Total agreement	Agreement	Indifferent	Disagreement	Total disagreement		Individual score
The online communication method is efficient and easy to access	45	40	19	25	21	63	0.42
The number of customers has increased with the move to the online environment	60	34	15	29	12	101	0.67
Customers are not present at such meetings	35	35	39	25	16	-48	-0.32
Clients are difficult to monitor without personal meetings	55	45	30	10	10	-125	-0.83
negative statement	-2	-1	0	1	2	<b>Overall score</b>	<b>-0.015</b>

Compared to the four statements regarding the meetings with clients in the online environment, the distribution of the opinions of the 150 interviewed subjects was the above. After calculating the individual score on the statement, on a scale from -2 to +2, the conclusion is that the number of customers increased with the move to the online environment, because it is much easier to take part in such a meeting from the comfort home, but also that online communication is more comfortable to access and efficient. It is considered that clients cannot be monitored at all in this method of education, but also that some are quite reluctant about these methods of meeting.



**Figure 6 - Choosing the online environment for the future**

A percentage of 97% of the respondents stated that they would use this method of communication with customers in the future, while only 3% chose to stay with the classic method in the future.

### Conclusions

Following the realization of this research at the level of nutritionists in Romania, with experience from 1 to 6 years in the field, we concluded that most chose to move to the online environment during the crisis.

Their favourite tools are video conferencing platforms because they wanted to make their information available only to people who paid a subscription or a meeting, social networks, for free, thus attracting potential customers or YouTube to keep the connection with the clients, through live videos, thus leaving the information available to other people for an indefinite period.

Moreover, the most important thing is that almost everyone would prefer to stay with the business in the online environment, through these tools and in the future.

### Acknowledgements

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