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Individual Report on Knowledge and Information Management of Amazon.com

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Executive Summary

An overview of the meaning of Knowledge Management and how Amazon makes use of it through methodologies and theories, with the aim of expanding even more worldwide, especially during a pandemic crisis called Covid19. The author intent to involve the reader in a greater learning of how Amazon.com uses knowledge management by applying theories that will be analysed during the reading. A brief analysis of the DIKW Model, to then investigate the spiral model theory of Nonaka and Takeuchi and compare it with the epistemological methodology of Von Krogh and Ross. In addition, the report will feature a brief reading on Amazon's background, how the company itself applies knowledge management among employees, with the aim of increasing information sharing, and what management techniques it uses to increase sales. To conclude, a brief explanation on the use of SOPs within Amazon, and what are the future projects according to the opinion of the writer.

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1.0 Introduction

The report focuses on the Amazon company and the intent is to demonstrate how this global giant is able also and above all in the light of Covid19, to connect an undeciphered number of users on the acquisition of information on the products it offers, using gigabytes. The report will be supported by research, explaining first of all what Knowledge Management is and how Amazon manages it internally, what are the conversion processes to transform Tacit knowledge into Explicit form and what are the challenges that the company must constantly interface to be able to have organized Knowledge Management.

1.1Amazon.com

In 1994 he was born for the first time with the name of Cadabra.com, Bezos was then vice president of a company, but after the idea of starting a journey alone with his wife, he decided to resign and moved to a coast in the United States, Bellevue Washington. On the spot Bezos buys a house with garage, and it is there that the first phases of his business begin but having space problems he decides to start a practical and at the same time tiring job, that is to pack books and send them one by one to the appropriate addresses. Amazon's plan at the time did not have a large margin of development, but Bezos had already thought of a plan b to extend throughout the American territory and why not: even overseas. He had sensed that the e-commerce sector was growing sharply, and for this reason he and his wife had very carefully compiled a list containing twenty products that could be used by ordinary people, among which the most promising for him were CDs, hardware, videotapes. and books. Even though various products on his list were popular, Bezos focuses on selling books and within a year of starting his business, he managed to sell books with incredible success, and the thing that amused his customers the most. it was the option of being able to review the book, and as time went on it made it possible for customers to also issue reviews on delivery timing and packaging. Cadabra.com soon after becomes Amazon.com inspired by a name of a river, and it is precisely that in 1995 it is already confirmed as one of the most useful sites for the consumer, from a simple e-commerce site it becomes a real huge community, where users ask what they need, and Bezos satisfies them. *(Capitalism.com, 2020)*

1.2 Knowledge Management theories, models, and principles

Furthermore, the reading will be supported by a brief introduction on the background of the company itself, of how it uses E-commerce, favouring its customers to buy seated comfortably from home, at discounted prices and simply thanks to the use of devices they provide to the

user an indefinite number of information and therefore of data, and with specific use of techniques and theories such as: The DIKW Model "The pyramid of knowledge, a theoretical scheme aimed at explaining the cognitive and learning process, which connects four elements in a linear hierarchical way: data, information, knowledge, wisdom", The Knowledge Management Cycle "The process that transforms information into knowledge and explains how it is acquired, processed and distributed in the company". Also, The Nonaka and Takeuchi model “is probably one of the most comprehensive of the knowledge model’s management since it touches the environmental and process context aspects as well as those of knowledge classification”, and continuing, a discussion of Van Krogh, Ross, and Slocum’s two patented strategies: survival and advancement. In conclusion, a demonstration of how important information systems are, and which ones are implemented by Amazon, to ensure that the customer continues to purchase products and therefore continues to increase turnover, making sure that even during a global pandemic, where millions of people have lost their jobs, homes, etc., Amazon increased the number of workers and tripled profits during Covid19.

1.3 Outcomes and Expectations

In this report, we can also see an evolution of the e-commerce sector, being a sector in continuous growth, analysing the present situation and what will happen in the future, since given the creation of various ways of purchasing products, it completely revolutionises the current world economy. When a person decides to use the online marketplace, he does not do so only for the convenience of receiving the goods at home, but gives the seller the opportunity to improve his services, leaving comments, opinions, what can improve, the quality of the product etc.

A good website is the basis of any company willing to sell online successfully, and in the case of Amazon.com the expectations are very tempting, as the effectiveness of the knowledge management methods and strategies used mean that people with little interest in digital, are able to take an interest in technology with the aim of understanding and discovering what is behind it, what and who manages the intelligence and use of a website, how to transform data into information with a simple click and above all curiosity grows in understanding even more how a digital company, during a global pandemic, was able to increase the sales flow more than 50%, and create millions of jobs while the rest of the world was in full crisis and we still see companies today close hour after hour.

2.0 Knowledge and Information management - Amazon Background

As already mentioned above, Bezos' intent was to create an online "Everything Store", but he had not calculated that space was essential and he did not have much available, the demand

from customers was constantly increasing but precisely in that moment Amazon begins to face various problems, sales increasing but the costs of packaging and shipping began to weigh on the entire business and this caused a crisis that lasted a few years, but thanks to its strong skills and thanks to a unique business model, in 2005 Bezos decided to take a risk by investing a huge capital in Amazon Prime, an IT service that gives the customer the opportunity to receive free and fast shipping, from one to three days at the most based on the size of the object purchased, all characterized by from a subscription to a premium subscription, which plans to pay a monthly fee and take advantage of the benefits that the subscription includes. This way customers have priority in terms of new promotions, benefits, and last-minute offers. Over time this service has generated several changes, the improvements are evident as Amazon has a high number of premium subscribers. Another sector that has evolved is that of cloud computing, through web services, practically Amazon through various IT services, has meant that the customer could take advantage of his skills in storing the necessary space, a wide choice of contents aimed at those who are the tastes of the customer himself, all based on a virtual infrastructure of which Amazon today has full control. *(Capitalism.com, 2020)*

2.1 Amazon during Covid19

Between January and October, Amazon added 427,300 workers to its global workforce, which has now reached the population of a small European capital with its 1.2 million employees, not counting the hundreds of thousands of drivers who are not employees of the company. These are numbers never seen in history for a US company, in agreement with The New York Times hardly comparable to the mass hiring of heavy industry during the Second World War. Within a couple of years, Amazon could overtake the Walmart supermarket chain as a company with the most employees in the United States (Walmart currently has 2.2 million).

In the third quarter of 2020, Amazon recorded three times the net profit matched to the same time of the preceding year, for a total of 6.3 billion dollars, reaching an operating cash flow of 55.3 billion between September 2019 and September 2020, more than 50% more than the year before. Since the end of February, the value of Amazon's shares has risen by about 60% and in recent months the company has achieved the highest profits in its history, thriving in a period of severe economic crisis for many categories of workers: including the owners of physical stores, those who for years in many cases already suffered from e-commerce competition. *(Weise, 2020)*

2.2 Knowledge Management

Knowledge is one of the are argument that have always made men curious. In the Western world we can find the first evidence in the works of the most important Greek philosophers and then continue to the present day. Similarly, Eastern philosophers such as Lao Tzu and Confucius and Indian ones have placed knowledge as an essential path for a truly fulfilled spiritual and earthly life. Many of these attempts were aimed at being able to understand what knowledge really is. The continuous technological advancement has then made the human component of the industrial process increasingly marginal, shifting its skills from the material realization of goods to intellectual activities. This constantly evolving phenomenon has convinced many that information has become the most important marketable commodity of our age. Although the KM now enjoys an international reputation and is at the centre of the activities of many businesses.

It can be a fact the explanation of this principle, and I would like to mention the definition by *Karl Wiig:* "KM is the systematic, explicit, and deliberate building, renewal, and application of knowledge to maximize an enterprise's knowledge-related effectiveness and returns from its knowledge assets." *(Liebowitz, 2012)*

Transformed in real, KM must make them explicit, and consequently usable to most, it will be a real benefit for all the company who have done the tacit and implicit knowledge, so that the business benefit economically. In fact, if we consider knowledge from the point of view of accessibility, we can arrive at these three definitions:

- tacit: accessible indirectly and with difficulty only through the formalization of knowledge and the analysis of habits.
- implicit: accessible through questions and interviews but must first be identified and then transmitted.
- explicit: easily available, e.g., documented and organized with suitable tools.
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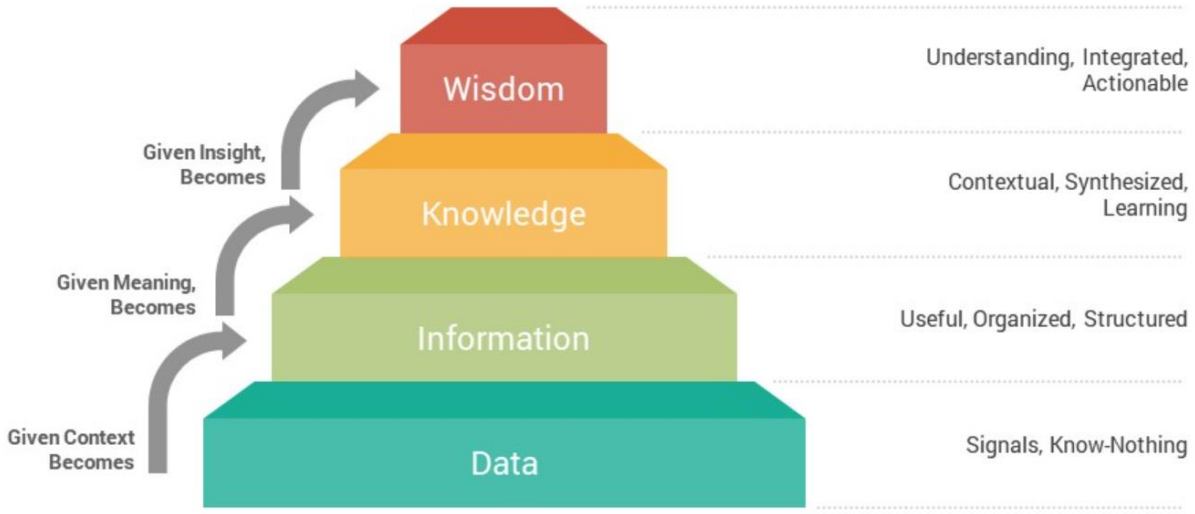
However, this first point of view must be accompanied by another to better focus on the problem. It is good to observe knowledge from the point of view of its hierarchical organization. And this is where we analyse the DIKW model:



Graphic by Slidesalad.com

In the information age we are already used to the search for added value concretized in the general accumulation of information. *(Kirsch, 2015)* What KM proposes instead is a rationalisation of this process, a greater attention to cognitive mechanisms and to the centrality of the human resource. One of the main objectives becomes to make explicit the mechanisms that allow the passage from information to knowledge and wisdom, but at the same time to bring out the importance of learning as an indispensable and fundamental resource even when (or especially when) data is transformed into information as Amazon continues to do.

2.3 The importance of Knowledge Management in Amazon

With globalization, the digital world has become increasingly competitive, and companies must be ready to exploit all the smallest factors for an eventual advantage over others. Adaptation to reality is something static, it is not always good for companies, so it is necessary to stay one step ahead and always at the forefront, and everything can be done thanks to the use of knowledge, since it remains the one and only factor that can bring benefits to a company. The main objective for companies that use KM is to create a source of material internally, easy to use and share among employees and with the sole purpose of making the information as easy as possible to be able to transfer it to the newly arrived employee, obviously subjected to a real preliminary induction. The company using KM aims to make individual experiences and skills, the real information assets for any growth and generic benefits. Not simply the attention to data and information but above all to the tacit knowledge that must be able to be codified and shared. This can be done by observing the work of a master who transmits his knowledge to apprentices as it did in the Middle Ages. A collaborative working environment must be created for knowledge to spread.

The role of human resources is important and vital for the company at this specific moment, since the workers are aware of the information to benefit the company, the HR department has the task of facilitating them through awards, permits and thanks for not leaving the

company but share that information with new staff members and so continue the expansion. To ensure that all this happens, many companies and mostly Amazon, have decided to invest and use information technology, with the aim of transferring information within the company itself the technology must support three processes:

1. The search for documents and information to allow people to do their jobs better by increasing productivity.
2. The gathering and management of information.
3. Collaborative staff can carry out project and build knowledge.

Thanks to the use of special platforms, social software and web tools, knowledge management is increasingly participatory. Furthermore, there are specific companies that develop ad hoc solutions to meet the needs of companies in relation to document management and knowledge management, but at the basis there must be the willingness of people to consider knowledge as an asset to be shared.

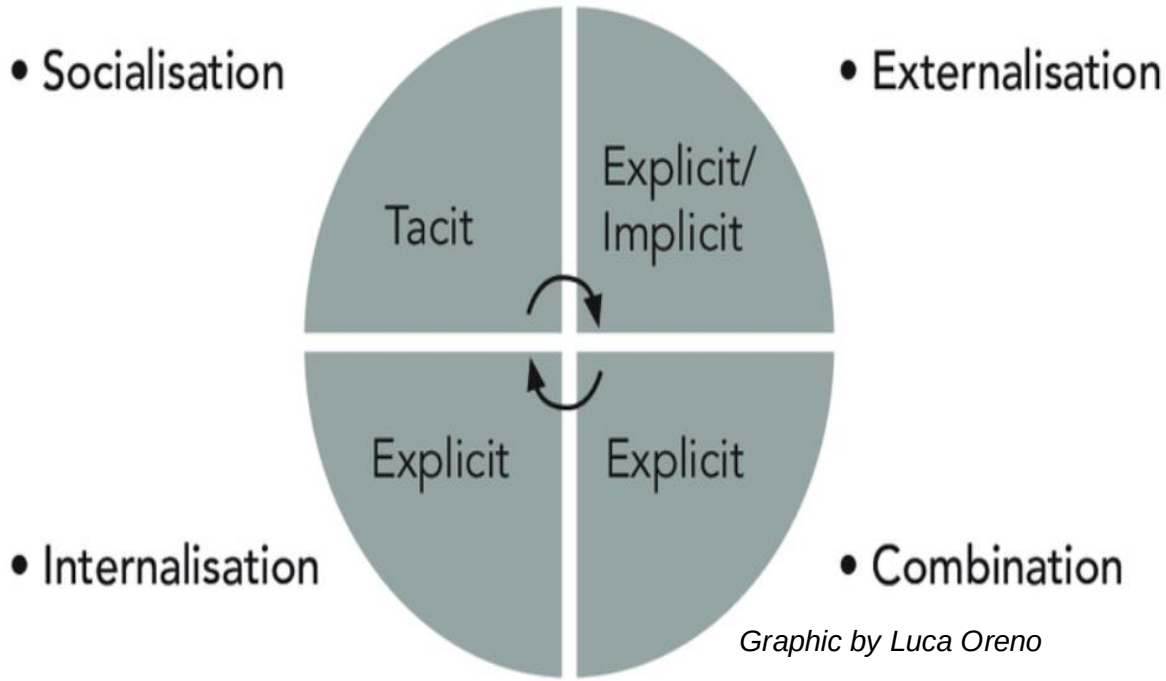
2.4 How KM helps the organisations in satisfying customers

Since Amazon is aware of the strengths of its competitors, its customers, and especially its products, to be successful it must exploit this knowledge by providing new technologies and new internal processes, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information, and therefore be constantly improvement in the efficiency of the company, especially when it comes to a global pandemic called Covid19. Thanks to the storage, the information used, in digital and non-digital format, are simplified, and collaboration is supported at any time and place. Internet and wireless communication, company portals, new data analysis technologies and all new information technologies simplify access to information relevant to the company with the consequent increase in efficiency. Amazon has conveniently invested in IT systems, such as data warehouses, enterprise resource management (ERP - Enterprise Resource Planning) systems and customer relations (CRM - Customer Relationship Management). *(Surbhi, 2019)* However, Amazon managers are fully aware that information must be shared within the company as easily as possible, following this way:

- ✓ Possibility of added value to customers: accurate information at short notice ensures that customer needs are met.
- ✓ Innovative products and services: the higher the quality of the products, the greater the participation of future customers.
- ✓ Excellent organizational skills: the company organization is important to increase the efficiency of business processes; the more employees are motivated the happier they will be and therefore there will be a better service.

3.0 Evaluation of Knowledge and Information Management

How knowledge is incorporated in products and the concept of service in the tacit knowledge of individuals we will discover by analysing in depth the knowledge management cycle of Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi, who in 1995 designed their model for the first time knowing as a spiral of knowledge management, this model is also known as "SECI", and is focused on addressing all the links that exist between tacit and explicit knowledge and above all how this knowledge is extended to each other during the conversion process.



Graphic by Luca Oreno

• Socialization knowledge - is often increased by the individual experiences of the employees. Socialization is nothing more than an important process to ensure that information is shared through communication, through support activities such as mentoring or coaching, the company in doing so promotes the dissemination of tacit knowledge throughout its departments.

• Outsourcing – tacit converted in explicit knowledge thank to the applications of models and theories, usually the knowledge in this case can only be theoretical, but it gives the possibility to create the basis for a new knowledge.

• Combination - explicit knowledge can often be combined, through methodologies, skill structures and knowledge sets on project management, all these numerous factors cause the combination to generate other information that is important to the company.

• Internalization - this happens when the employee assimilates knowledge and becomes an integral part of it in his daily life in the workplace, all this does nothing but increase the learning of new knowledge and then disseminates it within the company through socialization. The cycle in the model reveals that each time knowledge goes around, this cycle is expanded and improved. *(Clayton, 2016)* To make this model practical and simple, it is possible to see the graph published by Amazon.com, on the internal cycle of management of knowledge directed to the individual:

By Amazon.com

3.1 KM approach in sharing and exchanging an organisation's knowledge base.

The transfer of knowledge, a very important element part of a KM system, is difficult and problematic since those who take part in it usually do not have an integral vision of the company, and it is common to see the usefulness of new activities but not understand why, such as the filling in documents at the end of the day or attending weekly meetings that were previously annual, etc. Often, they even think that they are harmed by them because of the waste of time they involve. If sharing is not part of common business practices, it is necessary to develop this concept through management changes. To do this, first the belief that the best information comes from those in the highest positions in the company. This is not at all true and sharing must be stimulated at every level of the organization, regardless of the hierarchical position of individuals. To reduce the problem of cultural resistance, managers must explain the benefits of knowledge sharing to all employees and try to demonstrate the importance of

these tools and the benefits they will bring. Widely used to encourage knowledge sharing is a system of incentives and rewards (monetary or career advancement) that motivates people by leveraging the individual needs of each.

This graph explains in a very simple way the steps of sharing information within any company, Amazon thanks to innovation and intuition, has meant that the knowledge sharing system within the company generated a large advance on competitors and therefore always be in first place in the ecommerce sector. *(Goh, 2002)*

3.2 The model of organizational epistemology of Von Krogh and Roos

So far, we have analysed the knowledge management cycle through the DIKW model and analysed the Nonaka and Tacheuki model, but it is necessary to distinguish the difference between individual knowledge and social knowledge that is part of Amazon's knowledge management. The model of organizational epistemology of Von Krogh and Roos, (1995) is the first model based, from an epistemological point of view, on knowledge management. On this model, it is essential to analyse how knowledge reaches the workers and the company. *(Căpaţînă, 2009)*

On the one hand we have the cognitive perspective, it states that it does not matter if a cognitive system can be human or artificial, what matters is that it creates models of reality, and when they are manipulated and there that the learning process is created. On the other hand, we find cognitive epistemology, where organizational knowledge follows a pattern of self-organization, where the message introduced in the company is very clear and precise. The human brain here is the key to everything, as it is used as a machine and therefore does not undergo changes based on logic, so the organization is schematic and cumbersome. Krogh and Roos also noted the nature of knowledge management by examining it for workers, for communication, for the entire organizational structure and especially for the management of human resources.

4.0 Knowledge Management techniques used by Amazon.com

When we talk about Amazon's growth strategies, we are dealing with a huge e-commerce that can boast more than two billion monthly visitors. What other store could ever go that far? So, at this point I will list what for me are the best marketing strategies used by this giant using knowledge management.

4.1 Losses, to increase future sales

Much of his fortune, in fact, was built around the book, and continued to be so even when the bookstore was only one among the many categories of this multifaceted e-commerce by now. Not surprisingly, the first of Amazon's growth strategies is linked to a book, or rather, to a digital book. At Amazon, an e-book is necessarily something that must be read with a Kindle, there are mainly two roads along which the Kindle store acquires customers, namely through the sale of Kindles and through the sale of digital content, through the sale of Amazon Kindle does not generate profits, on the contrary, the one that results from the sale of this technological devices is only and exclusively a loss, which is however compensated and repaid enormously with the subsequent sale of eBooks, in short, a loss of money, however that those same shoppers will spend significant amounts of money in the future to purchase content to read on their new device. *(Kennedy, 2016)*

4.2 Google AdWords

The use of Google AdWords is one of the top strategies of Amazon, this is justifying the big investment of nearly 6 million PPC keywords daily in AdWords, but how do they follow this huge amount of online advertising and be at the same time certain that everything goes in the best way? In fact, there are many companies that throw their money away despite having to focus only on a dozen keywords! How do they keep up with millions of keywords, and manage them all well?

In fact, Amazon uses Dynamic Keyword Insertion (DKI), thanks to which the most searched keywords are automatically and as if by magic inserted within the sponsored ad. Thanks to the DKI technique, in fact, Amazon manages to have good results both in terms of relevance and in terms of clickthrough rate and landing page experience. *(Ejiofor, 2019)*

4.3 Amazon's philanthropy

From 2013 to today, Amazon continues to collaborate with millions of charity companies, and during this time it is estimated that Amazon, thanks to the Amazon Smile platform, has donated

more than 62 million dollars to charity. For each sale affiliated with the Smile program, Amazon donates 0.5% of the final price to the association chosen from time to time by the customer. In short, every $ 100,000, $ 500 goes to charity. Every 100 dollars, 50 cents.

Users, faced with the possibility offered by this service, feel much better after completing a purchase, as they know they have done a good deed, and are thus encouraged to go back to shopping on the same platform, to do other good deeds. Plus, Amazon can only come out in a better light, as a partner of charities and a generous donor - without asking customers for an extra cent. *(Amazon, 2020)*

5.0 Amazon's SOP (Standard Operating Procedures)

There is an explanation for the fact that almost all the most famous companies in the world, including Amazon, develop standard operating procedures, or better known as SOP. When a company hires a new employee, it must calculate that the employee needs information, and that is why these standard procedures are created, to avoid prolonged waste of time, and update the employee in the fastest and most detailed way possible. SOP are nothing more than documents, with detailed explanations on how to complete a critical process within a company, they guarantee the company to continue to use without interruption due to the teaching of the new employee, the managers of a company are in possession of these SOP and not only that, human resources also play an important role, since once all the steps of entry into the company have been passed, the employee with the guidance of a supervisor can be trained to learn new information by following a well-detailed SOP scheme. At this point it is natural to say that an SOP is simply a documentation of how a process works. SOP perform best when viewed as a list of procedures to follow with accompanying training, and a well-written SOP can only help the company not stop at any problem or hitch.*(Hajric, 2020)* The fundamental reason why standard operating procedures must be written is to ensure continuity, and it is precisely this continuity that Amazon continues to adapt in its staff to ensure that knowledge continues to expand and above all continues to beat the world rankings as the most famous e-commerce. of the planet.

6.0 What area Amazon.com can improve in the future

Amazon and all related services are always and exclusively intertwined with the web. We can list services like: Amazon Web Services, Alexa, (acquired by Amazon last year), etc. In the past, Amazon used companies such as UPS to ship goods to their destination, but today they have created their own shipping company. For several years he has been in collaboration with

Oracle, and this is how he created one of the largest cloud computing companies. In short, it is quite plausible to predict that in the future Amazon will be the main Internet service provider, but from my point of view what will be the real challenge of the future is Visual Advertising, where advertisements on Amazon platforms will always be more direct and customer oriented. Compared to other equally popular mobile apps, Amazon has surprisingly static content. Amazon will double in ads, videos, GIFs, live streams, etc. Videos, animations, and interactive elements will be introduced in all standard content. *(Caporaso, 2018)*

7.0 Conclusion

If so far I have simply analysed some fundamental aspects that have made and are making the company successful and differentiate Amazon from most e-commerce, I come to one of the aspects that is literally making Amazon take off at the expense of competitors: the program affiliation. How does a company make itself known all over the world and by as many people as possible, managing to make people talk about it without spending "anything"? An interesting affiliate program, easy to activate, effective and above all manageable immediately is the perfect solution. Amazon is doing its wealth on this and the proof is there for all to see. Telegram channels of offers that appear from everywhere, articles on practically all websites in the world, even newspapers, with offers that push the purchase of products on Amazon, and YouTube channels that have evolved, transformed, or precisely born with the final intention to sell something on Amazon (and beyond). In practice, Bezos has managed to ensure that, every day on a huge amount of channels, the Amazon brand is pushed, recommended, suggested in practically all possible product categories, All at no cost. To conclude it must be said that it is true that everyone earns from the affiliate program, including users who do not spend anything more in the face of a probable service offered by the channel, site, video, it is equally true that no one pays for that content that, if you want to watch it in a general way, it is nothing more than an advertorial or sponsored content where we talk about a product or more products and invite them to purchase them without talking about the goodness or otherwise of that particular item and all this with the advent of Covid19 does not other than improving knowledge management and above all increasing revenues.

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