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SMALL, BOXY ROBOTS ARE DELIVERING ORDERS IN BOGOTA

 MOBILITY & TRANSPORT

Users ordering digitally have the option of accepting delivery from the bots to avoid any coronavirus transmission

Spotted: Colombia-based delivery company Rappi works in a similar way to services like GrubHub or UberEats, with delivery drivers picking up orders and bringing them to customers’ doors. However, with coronavirus spreading rapidly throughout Latin America, the company has started testing the use of robots to complete deliveries.

Rappi has partnered with fellow Columbian startup Kiwibot to begin using small, boxy robots for deliveries. The bots travel on four wheels and are equipped with orange flags to make them more noticeable. They can carry deliveries measuring up to 35 square centimetres (5 square inches), which is a bit small for a pizza, but will fit many other takeaway meals.

The robots are being used in a trial run in Bogota, but the company hopes to roll them out in a wider area soon. Users ordering digitally have the option of accepting delivery from the bots, and to avoid any coronavirus transmission, the robots are disinfected before and after each delivery.

According to Rappi’s Colombia country manager, Matias Laks, “We believe that by partnering with technology we will be able to continue meeting our aim of safely making people’s lives easier, especially in situations like the one we find ourselves in.”

While the use of robots has been increasing for a number of years, the coronavirus pandemic has supercharged this trend. Thanks to COVID-19, robots are seen as a safer option for delivery and contact than humans. Springwise has seen this in the recent use of robots to patrol parks and to give museum tours.

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Takeaway:

Rappi has so far completed close to 120 deliveries a day, using 15 robots in the pilot area in Bogota. As in other countries, the home delivery market is especially competitive in Latin America, where Rappi operates across nine countries. Last year, Softbank invested a billion dollars in the company, which reported a 30 per cent year-on-year increase in deliveries during the first two months of 2020. If the robots are able to make last-mile deliveries safer and more efficient, they could represent a major advantage to Rappi in this highly competitive market.