Role and importance of social networks in corporate communication: case of tourism and hotel sector in Algeria.

Noureddine DAOUDI*

University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Algeria

noureddine.daoudi@hotmail.fr

Baghdad KOURBALI

University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Algeria

kourb_bagdad@yahoo.fr

Received: 03/11/2024 *Accepted*: 11/12/2024 *Published*: 14/12/2024

Abstract:

The hotel sector in Algeria is thriving. Hotels are required to multiply and diversify their commercial and communication actions in order to survive in this sector which is directly affected by the Covid-19 health crisis. The development of the Internet, social networks, and the popularization of their use in Algeria is an opportunity for the tourism sector and mainly hotels to develop commercial communication. In this article, there was an attempt to measure the impact and importance of social networks on hotels' communication in Algeria, and how do they influence customers' behavior. We came to the conclusion that the hotel sector must go digital. Besides, hotels are encouraged to incorporate and utilize social networks as the main means of communication with a view to reach more customers. firstly, we will bring together a literature review on digital marketing, and secondly, we will measure the impact and role of social networks on the hotel sector in Algeria

Key Words: Digital Marketing, Social networks, Communication, Hotels, Tourism.

JEL Classification : L83, M31, M37

* Corresponding author: Daoudi Noureddine noureddine.daoudi@hotmail.fr,

Introduction:

With all the current economic changes in the world and the rapid evolution of technological means, companies in all sectors combined must, more than ever, integrate and rely on digitalization in sales, communication, and marketing actions.

Digitalization offers a great opportunity for companies to succeed in their marketing approach. Therefore, brands have had no choice but to adopt this new approach of communication in their marketing strategy.

Brands rely on the advantages offered by information and communication technology to efficiently convey their messages to the general public. Hence, economic actors are called upon to pay great attention to digital marketing and digital tools, because nowadays, millions of people have access to the Internet and are connected on a daily basis to the various social network platforms (Gaikwad,

2016). Social networks are a set of applications connected to the Internet which can constitute a solid technical base, such as Web 2.0, which allows the creation of value, contributes and reinforces the exchange of content created by users (CGU) (Kaplan, 2010). Moreover, in the era of experiential digital marketing and web 3.0 and 4.0, online social interactions can be eased by immersive technologies, such as 3D and 4D, avatars, augmented reality, etc. (Batat W. , 2016).

The tourism sector, which has undergone more than two years of health crisis linked to covid-19, must take into consideration and use increasingly the various means of digital communication to recover. In Algeria, the number of internet users has increased by 3.6 million in the space of a year to reach a total of 26.35 million, according to the latest report from the website datareportal, (Dataportal, 2021), which specializes in fixed and mobile internet statistics worldwide.

The hotel sector in Algeria must take into account these data on the evolution of the use of technological means to guide its communication strategy, and put digital on the spur of all commercial and communication actions in making prominent the offers to reach as many people as possible.

Research Problematic: The main question of this research work can be subdivided as follows: **What is the impact of social networks use on the hotel companies communication in Algeria?**

In an attempt to answer our main questions and based on the research model and the literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated to test the research variables:

- H1: Social networks are an important crowbar for hotel communication
- H2: Interaction with Internet users, updating of content and the presence of hotels on several social networks intensify hotel communication.

Research Aims: Our research work consists of measuring the impact of hotel communication through the use of technology, especially the use of social networks to highlight all offers and enter into direct and permanent contact with customers and prospects.

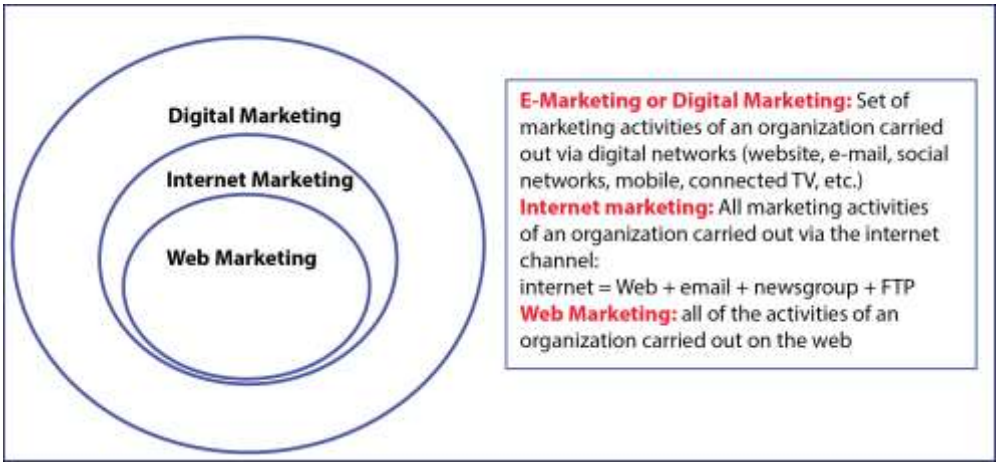
Population and Sample: We worked on a sample of consumers from 5-star hotels in the western region of Algeria. 3 hotels in Oran (Royal hotel MGallery, Oran Bay Ex Sheraton, Le Meridien) and 1 hotel in Tlemçen (Renaissance by Marriott) during the year 2002/2023.

I.The Digital Marketing (Literature review):

Digital marketing also called e-marketing can be defined as the process of planning and implementing the development, pricing, communicating, and handing out an idea, a product, or a service allowing creating exchanges carried out, wholly or partly, via the use of digital technologies, in accordance with individual and organizational objectives (GREGORY, 2016).

It is important to mention that the term “digital” is an Anglicism used instead of the word numeric inappropriately. In French, the adjective digital relates to the fingers (as in "fingerprint"). This term is nevertheless strongly adopted by many professionals in the sector. We then talk about digital marketing, digital strategy or digitalization (REMY, 2016).

Figure 1: **Digital Marketing, Internet Marketing and Web Marketing**



Source: (Scheid, 2012)

According to Scheild, in Figure 1, the Digital marketing includes internet marketing and web marketing

1.1 Advantages of Digital Marketing

Why do companies use digital marketing or hire a digital marketing agency? Quite simply because a digital strategy offers multiple advantages, applicable to all types of companies, of different sizes and means:

- Digital marketing allows direct interaction with the customer;
- The information obtained on consumers helps you adapt the offer and offer a customized product or service that meets their needs;
- Digital marketing promotes customer loyalty and satisfaction throughout a lasting and quality relationship;
- It also saves costs and budgets: owning a website costless than setting up a physical store;
- Digital marketing creates 24/7 availability of your business;

- International exposure is facilitated;
- Gaining visibility improves your brand's image and allows you to reach a wider audience;
- Digital marketing offers a lot of more facilities and possibilities (for the company, but also for employees due to telework);
- The results on the performance of your business are much more precise than before thanks to the analysis of KPIs;
- Digital marketing also makes it possible to target new customers, detect leads and thus distinguishes yourself from the competition because of a tailor-made strategy.

1.2 Social Networks Marketing:

According to (SCHEID, 2012) : Social network marketing performs a double mutation compared to "classic" online marketing:

- Moving from action to interaction: the user is in the spur of the marketing approach;
- Pass on from the site to the network: the creation of value is moved to a network of sites.

There are tens of thousands of social media platforms. We can mention the six most important (Tasner, 2014) that calls the Big Six: Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn.

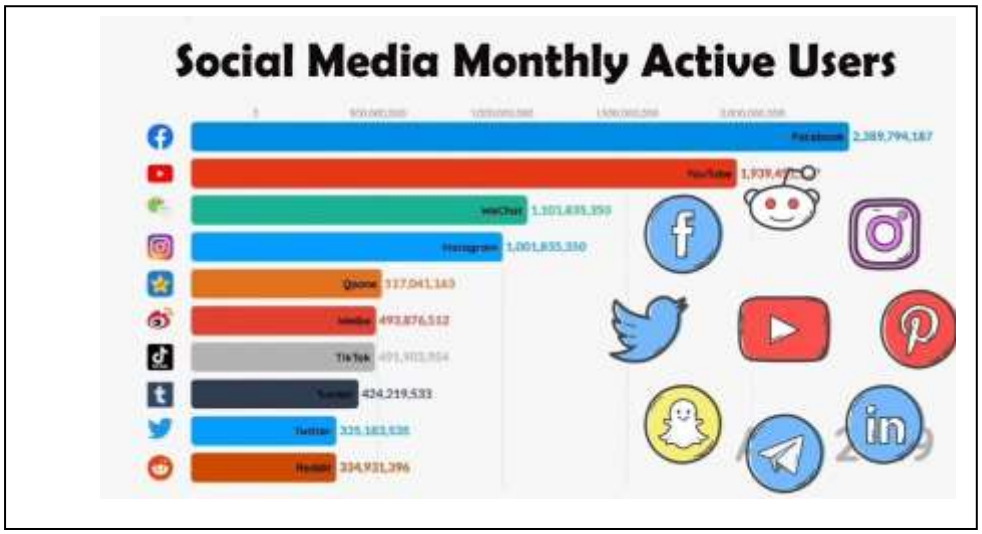
A social network is a set of relationships between a set of actors. This set can be organized (a business, for example) or not (like a network of friends) and these relationships can be of a very diverse nature (power, exchange of gifts, advice, etc.), specialized or not, symmetrical or not (Lemieux, 1999).

Boursin and Ludovic define it as follows: "the social network is defined as a platform for creating a profile to build relationships with other members, form common interest groups and exchange. It makes possible a dialogue or a conversation, in a framework that is certainly controlled and organized, but freed from the physical constraints of proximity and synchronization. (Boursin, 2011).

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Viadeo, Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest… are social networks examples.

According to the data portal website, (2021) Fig2, the social network most used by Internet users monthly is by far Facebook. youtube, wechat and instagram come in second, third and fourth position. other social networks such as TikTok, Twitter or Qzone are little used.

Figure 2: Social Media Monthly Active Users



Source: (Dataportal, 2021)

Companies must now go beyond the borders of the brand's website in order to generate more traffic to the content they offer, and to prevent their customers or prospects from visiting their site. Companies should rather go where Internet users are already present and active: social networks (Darban, 2012).

Social networks are now platforms where the individual develops his public profile, shares his experience, publishes information and communicates with other individuals with the same interests. To this end, the interaction between the consumer and companies is influenced by social networks.

Social networks are considered a medium in their own right allowing companies to get in direct contact with their future customers and in a more personal way.

1.3 Social Networks a Method of Developing Communication:

Thanks to the Internet, brands can create communities around their products. The concept of communities or brand tribes must take place in marketing thinking, especially since their role is positive for brands (COVA, 2005).

Compared to traditional media, social media has a low cost of use but has a large audience. A major asset that has enabled companies to develop their digital communication and thus win new customers while retaining existing ones.

Social networks allow companies to increase their brand image by communicating about their products and news, without forgetting to build relationship with their communities.

Involving customers, knowing their recommendations, gathering their opinions are actions among others that allow brands to promote interactivity, something that encourages users to stay on the network and share information about the brand.

According to the latest *Hootsuite* Social Media Barometer conducted in 2018, which surveyed 9,000 respondents from 19 countries around the world: social media are essential for brands. The figures convey that 90% of survey respondents use social media to increase brand awareness.

According to the barometer, 67% of respondents agree that social media is increasingly contributing to the profits of their company, and more than 54% of organizations note that social media has an impact beyond marketing.

Today, in order for large firms to reach the customer as effectively as possible, they have to be present where the client is: it is no longer through the paper press, but via the major social networks. The same goes for traditional media (Faesslern, 2011).

II. Social Networks and Digital Communication in the Hotel Industry in Algeria:

1.1 Social Networks in Algeria:

The number of internet users in Algeria has increased by 3.6 million in the space of a year to reach a total of 26.35 million, according to the latest report from the website Datareportal, which specializes in fixed and mobile internet statistics worldwide.

Algeria had 26.35 million internet users on January 31, 2021, which represents an increase of 3.6 million (16%) since January 2020, specifies the report which also contains statistics relating to social media and e-commerce, as well as trends and information on the state of digital in the world.

This figure represents the number of effective internet users and not the number of internet subscribers in Algeria which was 41.8 million in the third quarter of 2020, according to the latest report from the Postal Regulatory Authority and Electronic Communications (PRAEC).

The Datareportal site also notes that the Internet penetration rate in Algeria was 59.6% in January 2021, out of an estimated population of 44.23 million.

The number of social media users (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter etc...) in Algeria has also changed on January 31, 2021.

Some 3 million new social media users were registered, an increase of 13.6% in one year, bringing the total number of users of these applications to 25 million, or 56.5% of the total population, estimates Datareportal.

The majority of social media users (24.48 million, or 97.9%) use mobiles (smartphones, tablets, etc.) to logging to these networks.

1.2 Research Methodology :

To carry out our study, we carried out a survey. The approach adopted to conduct this study is a descriptive analysis. A questionnaire was designed to collect data and intended for the target population, which consists of users of social networks. It is made up of three parts: the first part relates to demographic data, the second part is devoted to the characteristics of social networks and the third part constitutes the body of the study.

This research adopted two types of sources to collect the required data. It aims to achieve the objectives and test the hypotheses of the research. The first type consists of secondary sources, such as relevant studies (books, indexed journals, periodicals, etc.); while the primary sources are collected from a questionnaire administered to hotel guests in Algeria.

The process involves a series of operations through which several individuals were chosen in order to represent the target population of the said study. Based on a literature review, hotels in Algeria have relied heavily in recent years on e-marketing as a significant element of their strategies, particularly through the use of social media platforms and Apps.

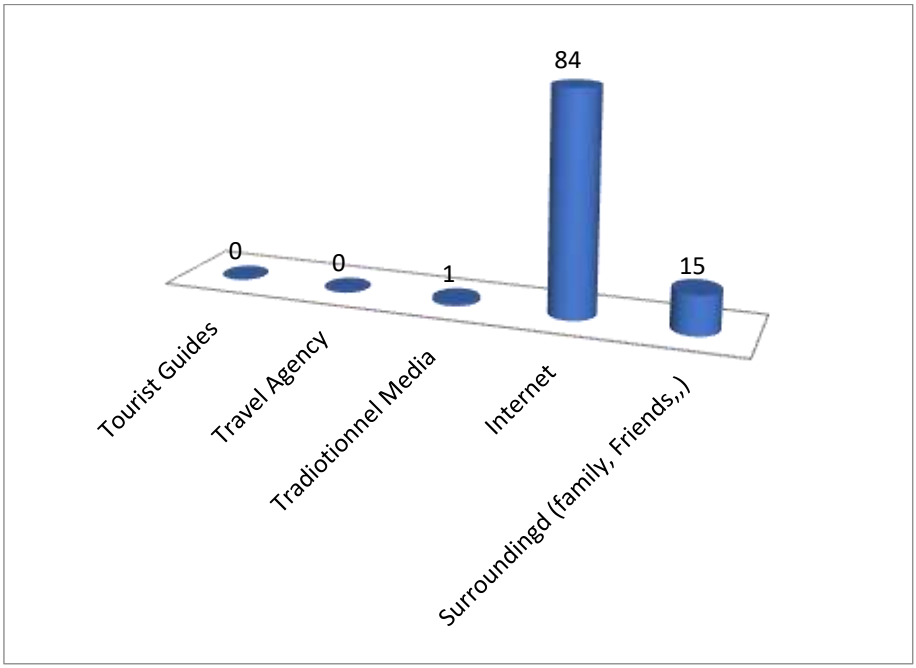
A questionnaire for data collection and analysis was administered online to social media users. This methodology is not only limited to describing the phenomenon, but it also covers the analysis, measurement and interpretation of data in order to present a detailed description of the phenomenon or problem and its results and to propose solutions and recommendations to resolve them.

1.3 Results Analysis

First of all, we wanted to know how hotel customers search and book their stays. We note that 84% of people use the internet to choose their hotels and their destination, 14% rely on the various people around them (family, friends, colleagues, etc.) for their reservations.

The figure below (figure 3) confirms that the old means of booking and choosing hotels are no longer appropriate, such as tourist guides, travel agencies and traditional media...

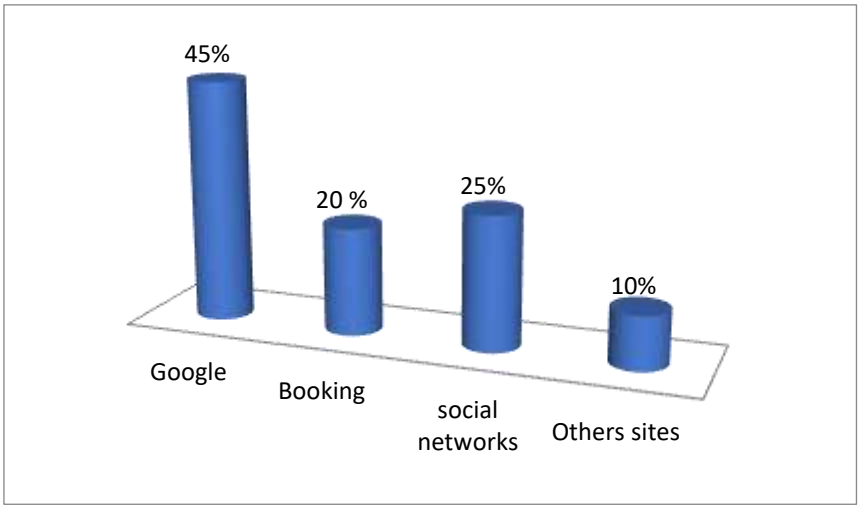
Figure 3: The means used by customers to choose their hotels



Source: (Established by authors from the study case)

We note that 45% of Internet users use Google for looking for and choosing hotels. In the second position they use social networks, then more than 20% the website Booking.com, and finally 10% of Algerian users connect to other sites such as Tripadvisor, Nreservi.com, Trivago, etc.

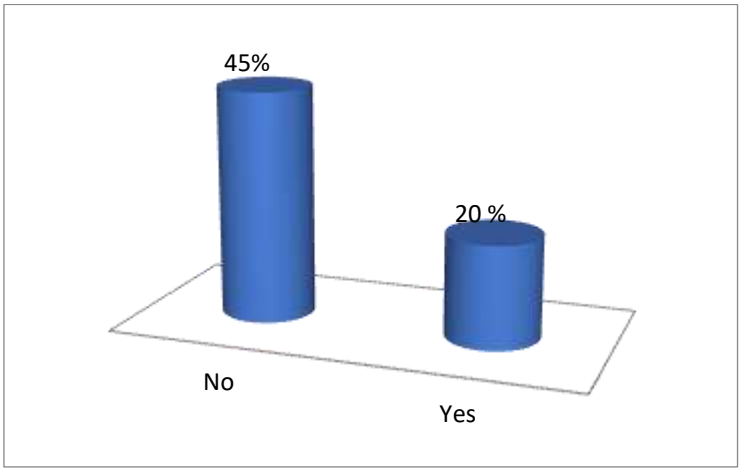
Figure 4: Search and choice of hotels on internet



Source: (Established by authors from the study case)

Figure 5 shows that 65% of Internet users use at least one social network to choose their destination or hotel.

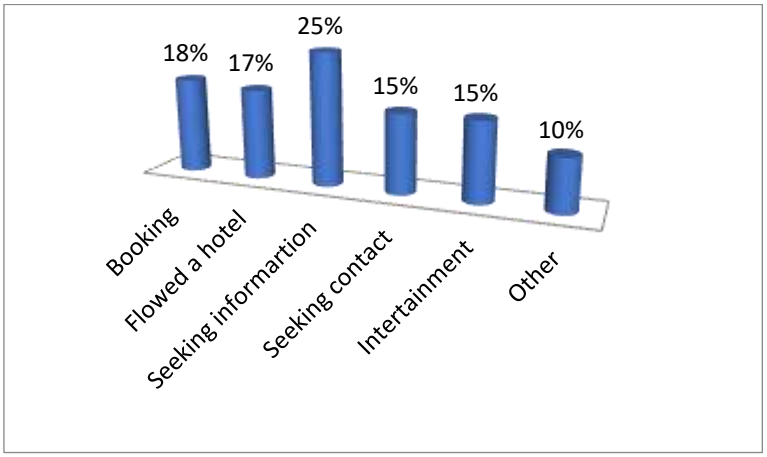
Figure 5: Search and choice of hotels on internet



Source: (Established by authors from the study case)

Through Figure 6 we can see that social networks are increasingly used by Algerian Internet users: for information research 25%, monitoring of daily hotel activities 17% or even for reservations 18%.

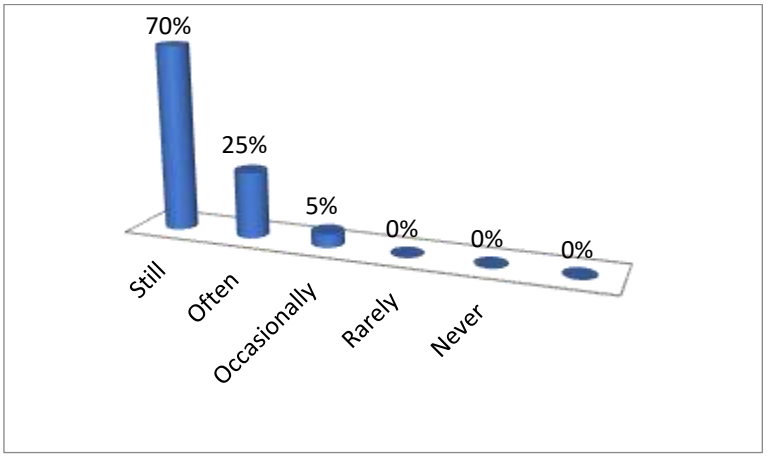
Figure 6: Reasons for using social media



Source: (Established by authors from the study case)

Internet users are very sensitive to the Interaction and Update of content on social networks, by hotels. As it displayed in figure 7, more than 70% of users find this factor very important and influences directly the choice of their destination and their hotel choices. The interaction and updating of content on social networks keep communication and contact between customers and hotels contained.

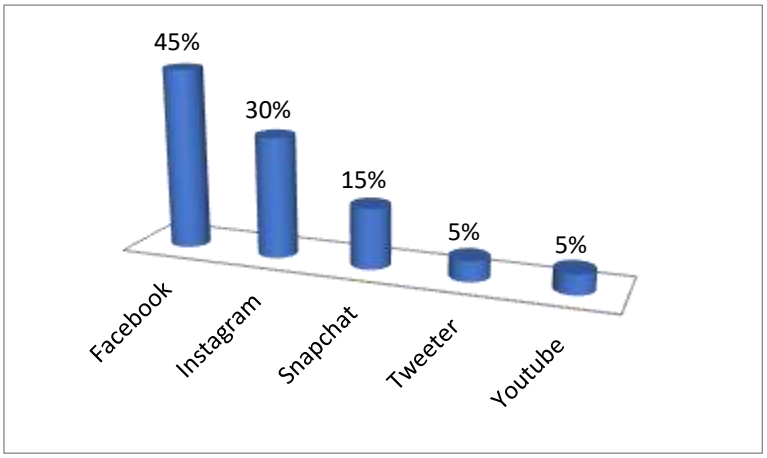
Figure 7: Interaction and updating information on social networks



Source: (Established by authors from the study case)

The networks most used by users to choose a hotel or a destination for their stays are as follows: Facebook in first position with more than 45% of users, then Instagram with more than 35% and finally other networks such as Snapchat 15%, Twitter 5% and YouTube 5%. Essential data for choosing the distribution of information on the networks.

Figure 8: The most networks used by the internet users to choose their hotels



Source: (Established by authors from the study case)

The main objective of our study is to know the importance of communication via the hotels' social networks in Algeria and their impacts. All in all, we can confirm that the use of social networks by hotels is an effective way for communicating and disseminating information.

With the popularization of the use of the Internet in Algeria, hotel customers increasingly use the Internet to search for information on hotels. The

old means (tourist guides, travel agencies, etc.) of research and decision-making are progressively abandoned to the detriment of the Internet.

Social networks; namely, Facebook and Instagram, the two most used networks in Algeria, have become the most important way for customers to look for and learn about hotels.

Hotel customers are very sensitive about the daily updating of information and the interactivity of hotels on social networks, as this allows them to stay in constant contact with hotels and also aids in decision-making relating to booking choices.

Conclusion

The Algerian tourism sector in general and that of the hotel industry in particular, continues to develop and flourish. Proof of this is the multiplication of the opening of hotel establishments in recent years throughout the national territory. Hotels are more than ever required to communicate well on their product and service offerings in order to win and acquire more market share.

The Internet and especially social networks have become important and unavoidable or even mandatory means for the communication of hotels on all of their offers. The Algerian consumer has become addicted to the use of the internet more than 26.35 million users in 2021 (APS 2021). This confirms the importance of the use of social networks by hotels, which become, year by year, one of the most effective means of disseminating information.

According to APS 2021, 25 million Algerians use social networks (Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, etc.), a significant and significant rate to be taken into consideration by hotels in Algeria, as the main means of communication in order to reach a maximum of prospects. In addition, a daily update of social network content is more than necessary to be in direct and daily contact with current and future customers.

Our study first allowed us to affirm the first hypothesis, namely that social networks are an important or even mandatory communication lever. Secondly, for the second hypothesis, hotels must be present and communicate on a daily basis in all social network platforms without exception, with the obligation to update their content and be interactive with users because this a positive impact on the behavior and decision-making process of customers.

Hotel establishments in Algeria must review their communication strategy and integrate communication via the main social networks as the main means and dedicate staff to manage social networks called "Community

Manager", the main role of the community manager is to follow all hotel accounts on social networks but also ensure interactivity with Internet users.

Our study has some limitations, an objection can be raised as to the representativeness of the sample questioned, in fact, we established our research on a sample of 200 people.

Other studies must be carried out in this direction and in this field, given the rapid and continuous development of the Internet and social networks and their use, as well as quantitative studies to measure the real impact of social networks on communication hotels in Algeria.

Bibliographic References

- Batat, Wided. (2016) Introduction to the experiential pleasure of food: How does pleasure advance consumer wellbeing and promote healthy eating behaviors?. In : *Food and Experiential Marketing*. Routledge. p. 1-15..
- Boursin, L., & Puyfaucher, L. (2011). *Le média humain: dangers et opportunités des réseaux sociaux pour l'entreprise*. Editions Eyrolles. vol. 126127, no 1, p. 63
- Cova, B., & Pace, S. (2005, January). Tribal branding sur le net: le cas my Nutella The Community. In *actes du IV Congresso Internazionale Italia-Francia, Le Tendenze del Marketing, Parigi* (pp. 21-22)
- Desai, Vaibhava, Vidyapeeth, b (2019). Digital marketing: a review. *international journal of trend in scientific research and development*, , vol. 5, no 5, p. 196-200.
- Faesslern. (2011, avril mai). les resaux sociaux un nouvel outil marketing. *market ch*, pp. 57-62.
- Gaikwad, Jyotiram et Kate, Parikshitkumar Hiralal. E-marketing (2016): a modern approach of business at the door of consumer. Clear International Journal of Research in Commerce & Management, vol. 7, no 9..
- Kaplan, A. H. (2010). users of the world: the challanges and opportunities of the social media. business horizons, 59-69/68.
- Lemieux, v. (1999). les reseaux sociaux . presse universitaires de france .
- Li, W., & Darban, A. (2012). The impact of online social networks on consumers' purchasing decision: The study of food retailers.
- M. Bala, d. Verma (2018). a critical review of digital marketing. international journal of management, it & engineering, 2018, vol. 8, no 10, p. 321-339.
- Remy, m. c. (2016). le grand livre du marketing digital. dunod.
- Scheid, f. v. (2012). Digital markeing: developing your strategy in the digital age. eyrolles.
- Shahbaznezhad, Hamidreza, Dolan, Rebecca, et Rashidirad, Mona. The role of social media content format and platform in users' engagement behavior. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 2021, vol. 53, no 1, p. 47-65

- Stieglitz, S., Basyurt, A. S., & Mirbabaie, M. (2022, January). SMART-Portal: A data tracking tool for research purposes from social media and news websites. In *HICSS* (pp. 1-10).
- Tasner, M. (2014). Marketing in the Moment: The Digital Marketing Guide to Generating More Sales and Reaching Your Customers First. Hardcover. Pp 59-65
- https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-algeria
- www.aps.dz/sante-science-technologie/117728-algerie-le-nombre-d-internautes-a-augmente-de-3-6-millions-en-une-annee (2021).