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Influencers as a lever for the electronic reputation of companies in Algeria

المؤثرون كرافعة للسمعة الإلكترونية للشركات في الجزائر

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Abstract:

the advent of influencers has disrupted social networks. With their popularity and notoriety, companies are compelled to adopt an influencer marketing strategy to confront tough competition. Influencers accompany companies in their communication efforts, embodying the brand image, digital identity, and e-reputation. To address the research question, we conducted a survey with a sample of 121 internet users. The results obtained confirmed the proposed research hypothesis.

Keywords: Influencer – social media – E-reputation

JEL Classification : M310. M300. M390.

المخلص:

أدى ظهور المؤثرين إلى زعزعة شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي. ومع انتشارهم وشهرتهم، أصبحت الشركات مجبرة على تبني استراتيجية التسويق عبر المؤثرين لتواجه المنافسة الشديدة. ويرافق المؤثرون الشركات في جهودها التواصلية، حيث يجسدون صورة العلامة التجارية والهوية الرقمية والسمعة الإلكترونية. ولمعالجة

سؤال البحث، أجرينا دراسة استقصائية على عينة مكونة من 121 مستخدماً للإنترنت. وأكدت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها فرضية البحث المقترحة. الكلمات المفتاحية: المؤثرون - وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي - السمعة الإلكترونية

M310. M300. M390 JEL Classification

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing is a doctrine that continues to evolve, seeking solutions to understand and identify customer needs and convince them. It is appropriate to mention new concepts such as Influencer Marketing, an important marketing approach over the past decade for decision-makers: 'the objective is to provide brands with the opportunity to connect with consumers and establish informal and friendly relationships, without overly polished and less credible advertisements' (ALVAREZ-Monzoncillo, 2023). It has become an essential tool for spreading information and promoting the image and reputation of any company through the expertise and popularity of influencers. According to Seth godin, 'People don't buy products, goods, and services. They buy relationships, stories, and magic' (Goden, 2019). Today, consumers are more receptive to influencer marketing strategies than traditional advertising, showing sensitivity to the arguments presented by influencers. According to Hype Auditor, certain categories of influencers are considered the most profitable and cost-effective for the brand or organization, as they make their content more specialized and specific. Certainly, these influencers share opinions, recommendations, advice, product placements, promotional codes, etc. By the definition (Camille Jourdain, 2019), an influencer is 'an individual who, by their status or media exposure, can influence consumer behaviors in a given domain'.

Due to their audience, companies are increasingly interested in them to get closer to their customers and work on their digital identities, brand images, and e-reputations. E-reputation or digital reputation, web reputation, cyber reputation, is the conveyed image of an organization or product. On the web, it is the definition of what the company represents in the eyes of its clients, competitors, and society in general. Moreover, it is the way people will talk about you, whether it be good or bad; positive or negative. To better understand the statement described above, we will clarify several points in the theoretical part, elucidating the role of the influencer on the E-reputation of companies. On this basis, we will try to answer the following research question: 'What is the role of the influencer on the E-reputation of companies in Algeria?'

To address the main issue of our research, we posit the following hypothesis: The influencer has a positive and significant impact on the E-reputation of companies in Algeria. The methodological approach we plan to adopt is as follows: our work will begin with a literature review, followed by an empirical study.

2. Study methodology

The objective of this study is to identify the role of influencer marketing practices on the online reputation of firms, a phenomenon that has gained momentum in recent times thanks to the evolution of e-commerce and information and communication technologies. In the first part, we carried out a documentary research to relate the current and conventional approaches deployed by marketing researchers and practitioners to promote the role of influencer marketing on set objectives such as notoriety, brand image and E-reputation. The second part, of an empirical nature, focuses on the consistency of the measurement scales as well as the degree of effect of influencers

on the e-reputation of companies. We conducted our research on a randomly selected sample of 121 Internet users. We examined our hypotheses using structural equation modelling to determine the existence of linear relationships between the study variable.

3. Literature review

3.1 Influencer marketing

Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and TikTok are names that seem familiar to us. Social media has become indispensable in today's society, to the point of being part of our daily lives, accompanying us in our purchases, leisure activities, and even during our work (Walsh, 2023). This phenomenon refers to Web 2.0, which emerged in the 2000s, and has continued to expand ever since (Sabah, 2017). According to Petein.t (2020), 'There is much talk about influencers at the moment, especially as Instagram regains popularity' (Azkiah & Hartono, 2023). (Camille Jourdain, 2019) provide a definition, often referred to as the true definition of influence: "To have influence, one must first be known. And to be known, one must publish, but that alone is not sufficient to be influential", they add that: "Being influential does not mean just launching a temporary campaign (with more or less dubious means)." All definitions converge towards the same meaning, which is to influence the opinions of a number of people through the notoriety and the size of others' communities. Therefore, the idea is the transformation into gold of every product, service, or offer proposed, which means the ability to influence and convince people. Moreover, it is the popularity that the thing will gain afterward through both traditional and electronic word of mouth.

3.2 The influencer

The strategy adopted by firms is centered around the significant role of the influencer who has made the web their profession, an effective mode of persuasion and communication. According to (Peteint, 2020) 'An influencer is " an individual who, by their status, position, or media exposure, can influence consumer behaviors in a given domain. This power or potential influence on consumption justifies the fact that brands and organizations seek to reach or collaborate more or less directly with influencers in the context of marketing actions and devices'. The term 'influencer' was mentioned before the arrival of media and social networks, but these latter have changed the factors that defined an influencer

Before the phenomenon of digitalization, opinion leaders or influencers were mainly political figures, celebrities, and journalists who, through their fame, enjoyed credibility derived from their status. Their influence spread through traditional media such as television, press, and radio, or even cinema. Today, social networks have allowed these personalities (politicians, journalists, celebrities) to transform or transpose the offline influence they enjoyed onto social media platforms, where they acquire a community of followers. Their opinions now carry weight due to the fame they already had and continue to benefit from.

However, with the democratization of social networks, internet users have demonstrated and developed their networks, becoming influential solely through their activity or the popularity they have gained through a blog or a buzz effect. They bring together a large audience and represent digital influencers, meaning online influencers. 'An influencer or opinion leader can be defined as a person who is prominently and regularly present on many social networks. They often

contribute to one or more blogs, regularly sharing content with their community, which over time expands and becomes loyal. Influencers are generally categorized based on the size of the community, characteristics, and benefits:

Table 1. Types of Influencers

Type	Characteristic	Advantage
The nano-influencers	- 1,000 to 10,000 subscribers - Develops close relationships with their subscribers	- Free or at a lower price - Good brand ambassador
The micro-influencers	- 10K to 100K subscribers - Opinion leaders	- More effective in sales - Content that enhances the brand
The macro-influencers	- More than 100K subscribers - Regular content distribution - Unquestionable notorie	- Increase in the number of visits - Brand partner
The celebrities	- More than 3 million subscribers - Much more expensive - Harder to obtain	- Higher reliability - Privileges by the audience

Source: (Ismail, 2023)

3.3 Collaboration between the brand and the influencer

Brands and influencers establish various types of collaborations and/or partnerships to achieve certain objectives, These collaborations can take the form of payment in kind or in cash; the stakeholders are free to choose (negotiation).

Fig.1. Representative diagram of types of partnerships between brands and influencers

Product testing and unboxing	The most classic model, the influencer tends to test products received from the brand and shares their opinion (negative or positive).
Product placement	Showcasing the product through a post, a story to better inform about the qualities and usefulness of the product.
Takeover	The influencer is entrusted with taking control of the brand's social media for a specified period.
Event promotion	The influencer is invited to promote the event through their pages, sharing all the details with their community.
Contests and giveaways	The influencer shares a game, a contest organized by the brand, or directly on their pages, encouraging their community to participate (to win a product, for example).
Exclusive offer	Implementing actions with the aim of increasing sales. For example, setting up a promo code dedicated specifically to influencers and measuring the return by tracking sales associated with this investment.

Source: (Sergio Ibáñez Sánchez, 2021)

4. Digital identification of the company: e-reputation

reputation is part of the reputation based on email contact. There are different terms used by various authors: reputation, digital reputation, Internet reputation, etc. The concept of reputation is ancient, existing since humans have lived in society. Reputation pertains to the individual and, of course, extends to the business as well. It is a perception, an evaluation that others may have of someone or something. This expression is also synonymous with celebrity, meaning the positive or negative opinions about a person as a subject. The term also includes terms such as reputation, popularity, and opinions on the subject. Etymologically, the Latin word 'reputare' means 'to create and recreate a story,' 'to reflect,' and 'to animate.' (Dax K. Basdeo,

2006). The term 'E-reputation' is rather recent that encompasses everything related to reputation. Reputation is as old as the world. The letter 'E' on the Internet signifies modernity and enables people to exchange on social networks. It also means 'Any information about a person can be found on the Internet through search engines, websites, blogs, social networks, forums, instant messages, or simple emails. This digital reputation is published on the Internet by us. The information is created individually and voluntarily, as well as indirectly, so that others can post information about us. In other words, E-reputation is defined as 'The public opinion for or against someone or something (Mary-Margaret, 2023).it can also be defined as "The consensus public perception of an individual or company based on their digital presence." (Admin, 2022). Internet users have access to literally millions of pieces of information. When they are searching for a person or business, what that information contains can positively or negatively influence the next actions taken.

4.1 The importance of e-reputation

Even more important, the importance of E-reputation should not be overlooked. We will briefly emphasize the significance of electronic reputation for both businesses and individuals (Castellano, 2015).

As online shopping has become an extremely common practice, consumers are increasingly inclined to check others' perspectives on products before making a purchase. According to a study conducted by FIG for VIP reputation, 85% of consumers made a purchase online, and 80% of consumers consulted reviews before making a purchase.

A poor online reputation can now mean significant losses. In fact, according to a study by IFOP, 66% of consumers seek

advice before buying. If they encounter negative reviews, they will postpone the purchase, and in 30% of cases, they may even abandon the purchase. Therefore, 96% of Internet users are influenced by the brand's electronic reputation when making a purchase.

Table 2. Essential Spaces of E-reputation

Most effective advertisements in terms of consumer trust.	Digital spaces involved in the E-reputation of companies and brands
Recommendations from known individuals.	Social networks; Blogs
Websites of the brands.	Company websites. Brand websites.
Online consumer reviews.	Forums; Blogs; Social networks. More broadly, the entire web 2.0.

Source: (Clément, 2023)

Many companies now have community managers whose main function is to cultivate the brand image among internet users. On Facebook, Twitter, or anywhere else, a embarrassing tweet or post can lose thousands of customers in a few hours and cause the company's stock market to plummet. If companies want to retain their existing customers and attract new ones, they are now very concerned about preserving their electronic reputation.

4.2 Influencers, actors in the e-reputation of companies

Influencers represent the new opinion leaders. As true content communicators, they use various spaces of expression (not only blogs but also social networks) on the Internet (especially high-tech and multimedia products, fashion and beauty products, tourism, travel, and restaurant services). Internet forums, etc.) and various general community platforms. Faced with this

increasingly significant new power of real audiences, companies must be able to consider and analyze the intervention of influencers at various levels of their activities: marketing, customer relations, and monitoring of their E-reputation.... No one can escape their electronic reputation. Companies, politicians, and individuals: Everyone is judged based on the results provided by Google or the opinions expressed by users on social networks.

5. Empirical study

5.1 Methodological approach to empirical research

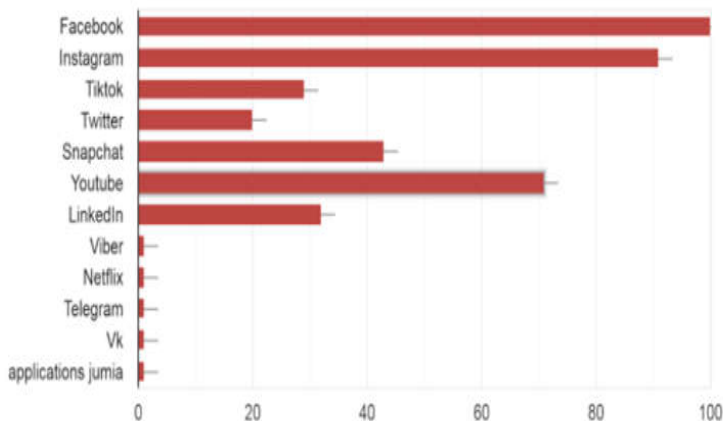
The methodology of empirical research and the test to validate the research hypotheses lead us to adopt a research method that allows better exploitation of the collected data. This can only be relevant with an appropriate choice of the sample, measurement scales, and questionnaire processing. The results obtained are then analyzed in order to confirm or refute the hypothesis. Our study was conducted with a sample of 121 individuals, and for the administration of the questionnaire, we chose the electronic route via Google.

5.2 Analysis and interpretation of results

5.2.1 The most coveted social networks

Above all, we wanted to know which sites are most visited and used by our surveyed sample. The results are presented in Figure No. 2.

Fig.2. Distribution of the sample on social networks.



Source: According to the results of the SPSS v22 study. According to Figure 2, we observe that Facebook is ranked first with a percentage of 82.6% active users, followed by Instagram with 75.2%. So far, this seems logical and fair. Next is YouTube with 58.7% of internet users using this platform, followed by Snapchat at a rate of 35.5%. We note 26.4% of communicators on LinkedIn, subsequently TikTok with 24%, followed by Twitter at a rate of 16.5%. As for the others, they are divided into two percentages, the highest being 2.5% for Viber, and finally, 0.8% is distributed as follows (Netflix, Telegram, VKontakte, and the Jumia app). It is worth noting that Jumia is not a social network but an online shopping application, and Netflix is a streaming service.

5.2.2 Reliability and correlation testing of the research model

In general, the results of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) in our study indicate good internal consistency of the measurement scales. The ANOVA and Fisher tests are very conclusive, allowing us to proceed with our confirmatory factor analysis. The results of the Principal Component Analysis.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Axes	Expressions	Reliability coefficient α Cronbach	Credibility Coefficients
Total	1-42	0.840	0.917

Source: According to the results of the SPSS v22 study.

We note that the value of the Cronbach's α coefficient is greater than 0.840, which we consider excellent as it exceeds the minimum threshold required of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Although this threshold is arbitrary, it is widely accepted by the scientific community. Thus, we can say that our measurement model has satisfactory internal consistency.

Table 4. Correlation Test

Model	Sum of square	Ddl	Mean square	Calculate d F	Sig
Regression	4.982	1	4.982	13.560	0.000
Residuals	43.719	19	0.367		
Total	48.701	120			
Variable	coeffi cient	standard deviation	(t) calculate d	Probable value	
Constant	3.224	0.253	12.763	0.000	
The influencer	0.230	0.062	3.682	0.000	
Dependent variable: E reputation		correlation coefficient = 0.320		determinat ion coefficient R ² = 0.102	

Source: According to the results of the SPSS v22 study.

According to the results in Table No. 4, it becomes clear that the calculated F value was (13.560) with a significance probability (sig) of (0.000), which is lower than the significance level (α =

0.05). This proves the validity of the model for testing the hypothesis, which is subsequently tested using the simple linear regression method to determine the effect of the independent variable (Influencer) on the dependent variable (E-reputation). It also emerges from the above table that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is estimated at 0.320, indicating a significant positive correlation between them.

Through the same table, it is observed that there is a statistically significant relationship at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the independent variable (Influencer) and the dependent variable (E-reputation). The calculated T value is equal to 3.682 with a probability value (Sig) equal to 0.000, which is lower than the significance threshold of 0.05. Consequently, we accept the postulated hypothesis.

5.3 Discussion of results

This study allowed us to:

- To note that most of the Internet users questioned use the social network with preferences for Facebook; Instagram; You tube and Snapchat which shows the interest in promoting marketing actions on social networks (content marketing, influencer, etc.).
- To highlight the importance of influencers on social networks because respondents follow and are interested in the content offered by influencers on the various social networks. This result offers Algerian companies a wide range of maneuvers in terms of advertising content on networks and a collaborative vision with influencers by favoring Facebook, Instagram and You Tube.
- It should also be noted that the influencer has an impact on the perception of Internet users and on the

reputation of online companies, without forgetting and/or neglecting other factors related to online reputation

6. CONCLUSION

Influencers have managed to establish themselves by creating a space for themselves in our society. They have not only influenced us but also changed our perspectives and the way we perceive things. We are constantly connected with them, and collaboration with an influencer proves to be very useful for any organization. It can be said that effective communication contributes to strengthening the reputation of companies.

The objective of our research is to study the role of influencers on the E-reputation of companies in Algeria. Through a literature review, we have gained insights into the influencer and E-reputation in the theoretical part. Subsequently, we conducted an empirical study analyzing our studied sample. This survey allowed us to understand the impact of a communication strategy on the online reputation of organizations.

Our analysis revealed the evolution of the concept of Influence Marketing (influencers) in Algeria. Our study is enlightening, providing a general view of influence marketing, which is not widely practiced in Algeria. We explained that influencers are part of the company's communication strategy, and E-reputation encompasses manageable elements of the company, such as digital identity. The combination of these elements constitutes the core of the company, and influencers are indispensable actors in online reputation.

On a practical level, we confirmed the positive and significant influence of influencers on the E-reputation of companies in Algeria. This is due to the increasing importance of influencers as an essential digital lever for companies and brands, especially

when a brand seeks visibility and qualitative promotion to boost sales among its target audience.

The contributions of this research:

Our research provided a general vision of influencer marketing which is evolving in Algeria, we also explained that influencers are part of the company's communication strategy and e-reputation is the set of controllable elements of the company such as the digital identity. The combination of them forms the core of the company, in addition, influencers are indispensable players in online reputation.

Suggestion:

It is essential for any company to take advantage of the advantages that online currently offers, specifically social networks through diversified marketing practices, for this it is suggested to:

- Adopt and integrate an influencer marketing strategy into marketing practices.
- A strategic desire based on the follow-up of the best online media and the most active influencers on networks.
- Make partnerships with influencers trying to benefit their audience (Promo Code, Discount.....ect) and at the same time keep a continuous control over the content offered to avoid any deviation that can damage the company's reputation online.

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