

Algerians’ online customer experience in the international online shops: is Algerians customers experience affected by AliExpress’ social media marketing activities?

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Received: 23/02/YAccepted: 09/05/2025Published: 01/06/2025

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Abstract:

In this era of digital progression, social media marketing has a remarkable impacts different aspects of customers journey and one of them is their experience. This study delves into AliExpress social media activities chances in enhancing Algerian’s customer experience.

We examined quantitative data from 130 answers of Algerian customers. We found that Algerian consumers of AliExpress had a good online buying experience, with only trendiness of social media content impacting their experience. Entertainment, interaction, customization, and word of mouth had limited effect. These results highlight the importance of an impactful posts to reinforce the customer experience.

Keywords: social media, social media marketing activities, customer experience (CX), Algerian online customer, online shops, AliExpress.

Jel Classification Codes : M31, M37, L81, L86.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For multiple consumers, shopping is an indispensable, both a social and a personal and task (Doolin et al., 2005, p. 4). And amidst today's advancements, e-commerce and rates of people endorsing online shopping grew following the rising adoption of digital media, and further amplified by the corona virus outbreak (Ahmad et al., 2022, p. 12). The overall number of online buyers reached 2.64 billion as of 2023, this is approximately 33.3% of the worldwide population (eMarketer, 2023). With both customers and businesses supposing that the buying and selling of any products is easier using online shops (Salehi et al., 2013, p. 1628), customers must regularly adapt their online stores to the standards and believes of their target consumers (Doolin et al., 2005) which is troublesome in the online shops space, because appraising the qualities of products and discovering whether they meet the customers' preferences can only be based on how its demonstrated online (Ayoub & Balawi, 2022, p. 93; Hong & Pavlou, 2014). Therefore, retailer should pay special attention to reach an efficient experience management since it has a considerable impact on consumer satisfaction (Molinillo et al., 2022, p. 7).

Concerning when and where customers can communicate with a firm online, the Internet's development, as channel for distribution and communication, has permitted many online business-customer interactions (Rose et al., 2011, p. 24). according to that, customer experience is considered one of the aspects affected by the rise of social media (Ayoub & Balawi, 2022, p. 100). We noticed that Traditional media has been overtaken by social media as a source of product information for consumers. Consequently, businesses must comprehend how marketing materials' schedules, style, and standards could potentially assist them attain their goals, and sustain durable performance (Wibowo et al., 2020, p. 14). This can be achieved through adjusting to the fast and widespread impact that social media has on many facets of customers life, especially with the surge of active users. Nowadays, in order to boost the attraction of the products to customers, businesses attempt to leverage social networking channels to stay current with information about their target audience.

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Furthermore, social media platforms influence word-of-mouth and customer-to-customer contact. (Ayoub & Balawi, 2022, p. 97).

social media usage in Algeria, like the rest of the world, is in a steady growth that reached 24.85 million users in January 2024 (KEMP, 2024), which pushed all types of businesses to become present on several social media platforms to link with their customers, pushed by the realization of the importance of marketing using social media to reach and enhance relations with customers. Correspondingly, 2014 was the year Algeria's e-commerce started to thrive following the emergence of the website Jumia. OuedKniss, Batolis, and IdealForme followed in dominating the Algerian online shopping space (International Trade Administration, 2023). The interest of Algerian online customers reached the international stores like Shein and AliExpress and that is Due to the development and expansion of delivery services and the option to reach resources of payment.

We intend through our study to discover if AliExpress' social media marketing activities enhance the Algerian customers' experience, and this aims toward better understanding to online Algerian customers and social media usage in marketing, and finally to improve the businesses customers' targeting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. ONLINE SHOPPING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

A good experiential marketing strategy is the ideal way for retailers to gain loyal customers (Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles, 2021, p. 9) because customer experiences, including product, packaging and display and point of purchase performances, form Customer attitudes (Fatma, 2014, p. 39), customer experience (CX) can be regarded as the customers' individual and biased reaction to any face-to-face or non-direct interaction with a business (Meyer & Schwager, 2007), (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, p. 6) identified it as the tangible operations and the feelings induced by the business, evaluated with regard to the customers' assumptions in various points of interaction.

With using only mobile devices (smartphones, computers and tablets) Online shopping facilitates buying products or services straight from

internet retailers. (Gladson et al., 2023, p. 27), in 2021 retail e-commerce worldwide sales totaled to approximately 5.2 trillion U.S dollars, and it is predicted that over the next years, it will reach 8.1 trillion dollars by 2026 (56%) (Chevalier, 2022). The arrival of internet created an entirely new channel of customer experience and response. It has immensely affected the way customers interact with and respond to product, services and the business overall. (Kumar & Anjaly, 2017, p. 3), this is consistence with the effect of internet on businesses, where we observe its reinforcement to various functions of the enterprises' (marketing, sales, customer contact personnel and managers) by providing them with considerably more information about their customers. (Peppers & Rogers, 2017, p. 19).

E-commerce Businesses can have a competitive advantage by Creating and maintaining online channels that induce pleasant feelings and create a memorable online experience (Bilgihan et al., 2016, p. 14). Accordingly, a happy customer: a quick, secure transaction, rapid shipping, a high-quality product when the buyer opens the box, and a painless return process if they don't like what they find inside it. When the customer feels well served, the marketplace is positioned to thrive (Corrot & Nussenbaum, 2023, p. 141), a good customer experience creates not merely satisfied but loyal customers who return to do business with you but also praises and advocates on your behalf. (Hyken, 2009, p. 8)

According to (Gulfraz et al., 2022) and (Rose et al., 2012), we can evaluate the online customer experience by seven elements: enjoyment, interactivity, trust, visual engagement, informativeness, ease of use and convenience.

- Enjoyment: when joining different online brand communities, entertainment and socialization are a major focus for users (Sümer & Parilti, 2023, p. 91), customers feel more attached to social media platforms if they perceived them to be enjoyable, which elevate their possibility to revisit them (Gulfraz et al., 2022, p. 11). For this reason, customers should generate positive feelings through delivering pleasant, relaxed, captivating and entertaining experiences. (Molinillo et al., 2022, p. 7).

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- Interactivity: In a reliable and innovative environment, employees can create the circumstances of a successful business with the help of customer experiences (Peppers & Rogers, 2022, p. 437), this occurs by empowering and giving them feelings of confidence and control, and encourage building a relationship through interacting with retailers and others customers (Rose et al., 2012, p. 316).
- Trust: This dimension measures customers' perception of security when using online shops, this concerns credit card and personal information protection and the transactions security. Trust is also affected by the professional appearance of the website, presumably leading to a better trust in the internet retailer (Vafaeva, 2013, p. 55).
- visual engagement: A well-designed visual aspect is important for how customers see the products and may persuade them to ignore or overlook little issues (Moran, 2024). For customers, the website's visual appearance is crucial to draw in consumer, after all, creating a pleasant environment allows consumers to enjoy shopping. (Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles, 2021),
- Informativeness: This concerns information about the products' attributes and charges, thus making effective decision-making easier for customers (Gulfraz et al., 2022, p. 10) . presenting customers with the knowledge that aligns with their inquiry journey will enhance feelings of assurance and serenity (Rose et al., 2012, p. 316).
- convenience: During shopping online, the customer evaluates shopping convenience by different features including chances to categorize their liking and offering customized goods and services, and having engaging elements on the online shop (Vafaeva, 2013, p. 55).
- Ease of use: customers evaluate retailer's Website's usability by focusing on factors like the ease of browsing, visual appeal, information structure, elements placement, convenience, and purchase process. It is connected to customers' pragmatic experience while shopping online and is akin to website ease of use measured in

traditional service quality online (Vafaeva, 2013, p. 54).

2.2. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ONLINE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Businesses share knowledge and information to a significant number of consumers and make user-generated content using websites; this is what we call social media. It alludes to the sum of social networking websites such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) (Sharmila & Kavitha, 2018). we can consider social media marketing as a key part of digital marketing that entails encourage consumer engagement on a businesses' social media accounts, it may be used in the same manners as traditional media channels. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). it is considered a marketing approach that involves creating content online, create direct contact with target customers, and interacting with them (Thorat et al., 2013). social media also functions as an indispensable tool for marketers to foster lasting relationships with customers, it is a way to understand and accommodate the demands and worries of their customers, market their products and services, and obtain recommendations and inputs (Sümer & Parilti, 2023, p. 90).

Even with no certainties blueprint for business success in the social media space, it is important to approach social media in a customer-centered way, listening more than talking, and to patiently cultivating relationships with customers rather than stopping at sales (Funk, 2013). Brand managers need to be consistent while handling securing the business's reputation, establishing novel ways to communicate with customers, and foster closer connection. (Killian & McManus, 2015, p. 2), businesses also need to develop and regularly adjust the online marketing strategy based on the interests of customers to achieve long-term success (Vinerean et al., 2013). If they develop a successful campaign, they will capture both new and existing customers. Ultimately, they will discover that social media is one of the most cost-effective, impactful, and highest-return tool in their business. (Funk, 2013)

Technological developments allowed businesses to improve managing

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their interactions with consumers and provide a better customer experience, however, technology has also empowered customers to educate themselves and others and demand substantially more from the businesses they deal with (Peppers & Rogers, 2017). Afterall, with the rise of social media, even the businesses that do not fully grasp the idea of social networking phenomena recognize the necessity to adapt and join in this trend. If millions of people are in a room, you have to be in that room (Peppers & Rogers, 2017).

By properly practicing social media marketing, businesses seek to involve customers in the online social spaces where they frequently visit. Meanwhile, they try picking up on their interests and topic of conversation, this information is collected and brought back to management where it can be processed and implemented to create the next phase of customer experiences and therefor the next phase of conversations (Evans & McKee, 2010, p. 7). By informing others about their productive interactions with their preferred brands on social media, customers inadvertently encourage them to join these communities and reap the benefits. (Sümer & Parilti, 2023, p. 91), at the same time, a bad customer experience can also be posted in a social media website in an instant for numerous people to see and be effect with (Shaw & Ivens, 2002, p. 71).

3. DESIGN OF HYPOTHESES

Studies found that when users join multiple online brand communities, they priority of the is socialization and entertainment. Interactive, easy, and fun services provided by brand and what could nurture positive attitudes (Sümer & Parilti, 2023, p. 91). So, in accordance to (Bleier et al., 2019; Cheung et al., 2020; Jamil et al., 2022; Kim & Ko, 2012) social media marketing activities is formed by Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Customization, Word of mouth. Thus, according the content of literature reviews, as represented in figure1, our study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: entertaining social media activities enhance AliExpress' Algerian customer experience.

H2: interactive social media activities enhance AliExpress' Algerian

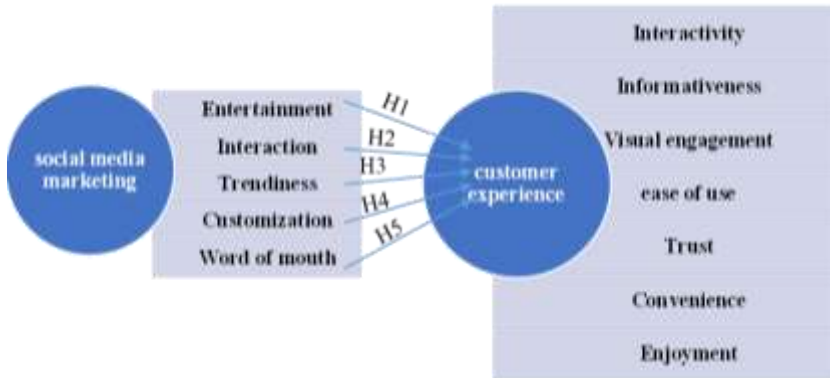
customer experience.

H3: trendy social media activities enhance AliExpress' Algerian customer experience.

H4: customized social media activities enhance AliExpress' Algerian customer experience.

H5: word of mouth on social media enhances AliExpress' Algerian customer experience.

Fig.1: Study hypotheses.



Source: Written by the researchers, relying on the study hypotheses

4. METHODS

4.1. MEASUREMENT

As a measurement tool, we used a survey addressed to AliExpress' Algerian customers. we divided it to 3 segments, social media marketing activities segment that is based on (Cheung et al., 2020) study, it's a total of 17 expressions distributed into 5 parts. Customer experience is the second segment and it was taken from (Gulfranz et al., 2022) study with some changes to adapt it to our study, it includes 7 parts and consists of 27 expressions. Finally, the Demographic questions about our study sample with the total of 8 expressions.

4.2. SAMPLING

Our online survey is directed at AliExpress' Algerian customers, due to the legalities around Algerians online purchases which complicate knowing the exact number of AliExpress' customers, this led us to use Convenience sampling, that we reached through targeting social media

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groups and pages interested in buying from AliExpress.

4.3. ANALYSIS METHODS

The next stage Following data collection, we used SPSS 26 to prepare and do descriptive statistics on our data, we also used SEM (Partial Least Squares), Path coefficients β , t-value, and p-value significance to determine the influence of the key factors.

5. RESULTS

5.1. SAMPLE PROFILE

We analyzed 130 responses collected from 130 participants, our findings indicates that from the participants, 87 (66.9%) are males and 43 are females, most of the sample members 120 (92.3%) are aged between 20 and 40 years, 7 (5.4%) are aged between 41 and 50 years old, the rest 3 (2.3%) are less than 20 years old, the majority of the sample are with university degrees 89 (68.5%) or higher 28 (21.5%), and 12 (9.2%) with a secondary education certificate and one individual with an intermediate education certificate.

56 (43.1%) of the sample are privet business workers, and 32 (24.6%) working at a government establishment, 26 (20%) are Students, and 16 (12.3) are without work, on the time spent on social media, 58 (44.6%) of the sample spend between one and 3 hours, 35 (26.9%) Spend between 4 and 6 hours and 29 (22.3%) spend more than 6 hours, and 8 (6.2%) of the sample spend less than an hour on social media sites.

15.6% of our participants have a Facebook account, 14.9% have an Instagram account, 14.4% have a Telegram account, 13.7% have a YouTube account, 12.4% have a WhatsApp account, 8.7% have a TikTok account, 7.8% have a LinkedIn account, 6.3% have a x(Twitter) account and 6.2% have a Snapchat account.

for the following of AliExpress' social media accounts, 42.7% of the participants follow Facebook accounts, followed by Instagram at 21.9%, YouTube at 6.8%, TikTok at 3.6%, X(Twitter) at 2.1%, and LinkedIn at 0.5%. the rest 22.4% don't follow any of AliExpress' social media accounts.

Concerning the platform used while shopping, 16 participants prefer to use the website and the rest 114 prefer to use the app. participants had an

overall good experience shopping on AliExpress, as 38.5% said they had a very good experience, 54.6% had a good experience and 6.9% stayed neutral.

5.2. CONSTRUCT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Remarks
Social Media Marketing	0.914	17	Accepted
customer experience (CX)	0.930	27	Accepted

Source: drafted by the researchers, based on the results of SPSS26 software

To determine of the reliability of the data we collected, we used Cronbach's alpha coefficients to calculate the internal consistency of each measurement scale. As shown in Table 1The value of each scale was greater than 0.80. The closer Cronbach's alpha value is to 1, the higher the consistency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, the adopted scales are considered to be reliable.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

		Social Media Marketing	Customer experience
KMO Sampling Adequacy results		.866	.851
(Bartlett) Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	1204.417	2062.861
	Df	136	351
	Sig.	.000	.000

Source: drafted by the researchers, based on the results of SPSS26 software

To ensure the accuracy of the gathered data, we employed Sampling Adequacy (Bartlett) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin tests. The results are shown in Table 2. It shows that KMO values are 0.866, 0.851 (above 0.60), which means that the sample is sufficient and acceptable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Sphericity tests were significant as their values were equal to 0.000; (less than 0.05), this shows that our data considered appropriate for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

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Table 3. General Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	Cx
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	3.3353	.83243	.424
Customer experience (Cx)	4.1211	.53646	1

Source: drafted by the researchers, based on the results of SPSS26 software

To demonstrate the direction, intensity, and relevance of the bivariate relationships among the measured variables we used Pearson correlation matrix (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This test was performed to evaluate the relationships between social media marketing and customer experience. We put the results in Table 3. Social media marketing was moderately and positively correlated to customer experience, $r(398) = .717, p < .001$.

Table 4. Discriminant validity, correlation matrix, mean, and Standard Deviation

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	Cx	mean	S.D
1.Entertainment	1.000	.596	.580	.644	.476	.374	3.2212	1.12866
2.Interactivity	.596	1.000	.497	.495	.465	.313	3.2385	.93015
3.Trendiness	.580	.497	1.000	.601	.303	.418	3.7692	.96345
4.Customization	.644	.495	.601	1.000	.368	.325	3.4744	1.08300
5.eWOM	.476	.465	.303	.368	1.000	.234	3.0436	1.25780
Customer experience (Cx)	.374	.313	.418	.325	.234	1.000	4.1211	.53646

Source: drafted by the researchers, based on the results of the SPSS 26 software

Pearson correlation matrix in Table 4 shows all of the measured variables' bivariate relationships, this involves the direction, strength, and significance of the relationships, we can see that they are all correlated in a low to moderate way, ranging from 0.234 to 0.418.

To elaborate, customer experience has a medium correlation with entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization ($r = 0.37$ $r = 0.31$ $r = 0.41$ $r = 0.32$) and a low correlation with eWOM ($r = 0.23$).

5.3. HYPOTHESES TESTING

Our study investigates the factors of social media marketing effecting online shopping customer experience in Algeria, particularly AliExpress' customers. after testing regression, we displayed results in Table5 . The results of Hypothesis testing coincide with the conceptual model illustrated in Figure2. The test of exact fit (SRMR) is used to validate the model (Henseler et al., 2014). Because the estimated model's SRMR value of 0.073 is less than the suggested limit of 0.080, it indicates that the model is a good match (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

The value (R^2) is the fraction of variation in the independent variable that contributes to the variance in the dependent variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Interpreting the R^2 value in Figure 2 showed that entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization and eWOM jointly explain approximately 21% of the variation in the Algerian customer experience.

Regression results facilitate the comparison of the relative impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. The findings presented in Table5 suggest that Entertainment and AliExpress' customer experience has a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.374$, $t = 4.564$, $p \leq 0.050$). Given that the results are statistically significant at the level of 0.05, we can accept the results to hypothesis H1 assumed that entertainment enhance AliExpress' customer experience. Likewise, the path coefficient between interactivity, trendiness, and customization, AliExpress' customer experience was found to be positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.313$, $t = 3.724$, $p \leq 0.050$), ($\beta = 0.418$, $t = 5.211$, $p \leq 0.050$), ($\beta = 0.325$, $t = 3.981$, $p \leq 0.050$), suggesting that they have a positive relationship with AliExpress' customer experience, with trendiness having the biggest effect size, we can say that it have more potential to enhance AliExpress' customer experience, therefore confirming hypothesis H3. Lastly, the relationship between eWom and AliExpress' customer experience was also positive ($\beta = 0.234$, $t = 2.717$, $p \leq 0.050$); even if Interactivity, customization and eWom have little effect on AliExpress' customer experience, we can validate the Hypotheses H2, H4 and H5.

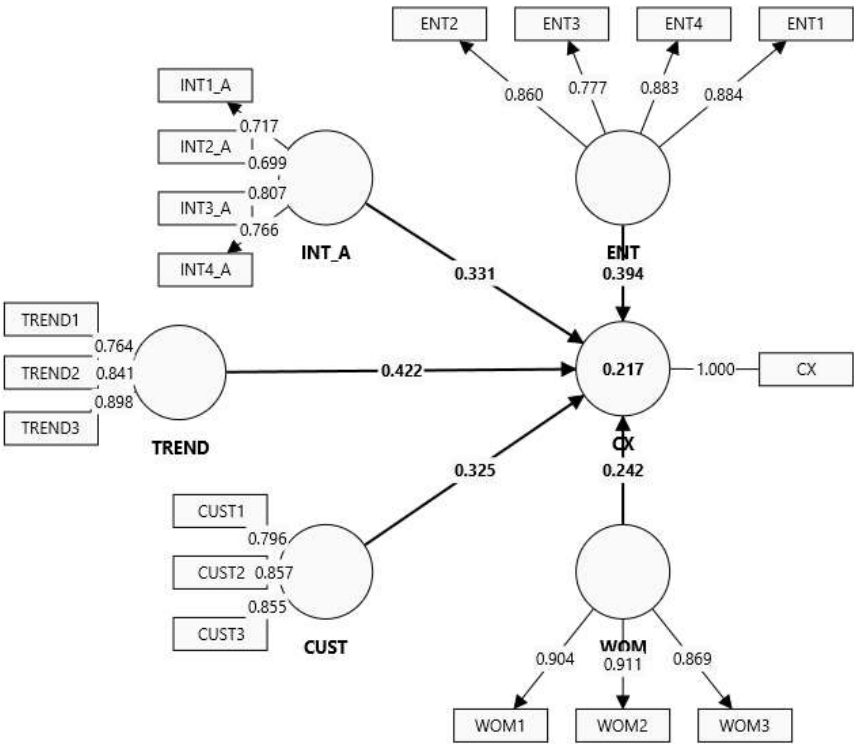
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Table 5. β , t value, p-value and f^2 (Hypotheses Testing)

	β	t value	p-value	f^2	Effect size
H1. Entertainment -> customer experience	0.374	4.564	0.000	0.1628	Small
H2. Interactivity-> customer experience	0.313	3.724	0.000	0.1086	small
H3. Trendiness -> customer experience	0.418	5.211	0.000	0.2121	Medium
H4. Customization -> customer experience	0.325	3.981	0.000	0.1186	small
H5. .eWOM -> customer experience	0.234	2.717	0.000	0.0582	Small

Source: drafted by the researchers, based on the results of the SPSS 26 software

Fig.2. results of Hypothesis testing.



Source: made by the researchers, relying on the results of SmartPLS4 software

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As social media becomes increasingly indispensable in daily routines, fueled by a rapidly expanding community of active users, it is undeniable that it influenced all aspects of human existence. Social media marketing has revolutionized the approaches businesses use to connect with their customers. These websites can be used to make content for users, and also serves as a marketing tool for companies to manage the buying process and improve the customer experience (Ayoub & Balawi, 2022). Social media has undeniably reconstructed the online shopping customer experience by offering a platform for brands to connect with consumers that is dynamic and multifaceted, cultivating a more knowledgeable, immersive, and interactive shopping journey. Other researches covered themes on the social media marketing and customer experience, their findings revealed that customer experience is improved and upgraded by social media marketing activities to a significant extent (Ayoub & Balawi, 2022; Bataineh, 2022; Liegeois, 2023).

In our study, we targeted AliExpress' Algerian customer. given the increasing prevalence of social media and the expanding appeal of buying using local or international online shops, Algerian customers became more inclined to buy from AliExpress shops. Alibaba, the Chinese retail conglomerate, is recognized as a leading e-commerce website globally at the moment, as online sales surpassed 700 billion U.S. dollars in 2022 (Madasoglu, 2023). It is imperative for businesses operating in Algeria to understand the unique social and cultural variables that mold consumer behavior on social media. Global trends can offer a helpful foundation, but to achieve effective interaction with Algerian customers, local attributes must be taken into consideration. This requires being aware of domestic social media trends, language preferences, and the types of products that draw in local users the most. while most literature and studies' findings may indicate that online customer experience is significantly influenced by marketing using social media, but AliExpress' social media activities based on the data from our research do not have a notable effect on the Algerian online shoppers' experience.

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With more Algerians heading toward online shops and buying from them, our results show that AliExpress' Algerian customers had a good shopping experience, we noticed they have a favorable opinion of using AliExpress' platforms, and that it allows them to have a enjoyable, easy, and secure experience. As stated in the study's data, the dimensions of social media marketing activities have a low effect on the Algerian customer shopping experience and a minor role in enhancing it. We can notice a disinterest in following and paying attention about to what AliExpress posts on its social media accounts. The shortage of obvious means and laws in Algeria that regulate purchasing from international overseas online shops, as well as the Lack of international payment channels may have a hand in that. After analyzing our study's data, trendiness of AliExpress' social media activities is the only element affecting the Algerian customer experience, we can link that the AliExpress' social media account containing information about sales and discounts following trends and events occur, such as football league and black Friday. The linguistic gap and the contrast in AliExpress' social media culture obstruct Algerian customers from commenting and sharing, which could be the reason why eWOM had the least effect on their experience. It is evident through observation and the number of followers that Algerian AliExpress' interest groups on multiple social media sites, that Algerian customers prefers to use information shared by other buyers from social media pages and groups as a major source and go straight to the website or app, rather than visiting accounts for updates and information, and could be a reason for the low effect of AliExpress's social media account entertainment, interaction, and customization on the Algerian customer's experience.

In conclusion, social media marketing has manifested as an indispensable element of the marketing setting, Findings show that successfully using social media platforms may improve customer experiences and deepen bonds with their clients. Contrary to what other studies have stated, ours found that AliExpress' social media marketing did not have a significant impact on the Algerian customer experience, this is due to many factors, including cultural and language reasons, and lack of

international ways of payment, which could lead to absence of direct interaction with AliExpress social media accounts. Our results suggest that the nature of the content posted by businesses on social media may determine their ability to have an effect on the customers, so investing in an effective social media marketing strategy will create a more dedicated following and boost consumer engagement, which in turns will boost their earnings.

It is important to envision emerging trends and growth potentials for online shops like AliExpress as Algeria's e-commerce undergoes further development. The country's efforts to improve its regulations and support establishments can significantly contribute to the sustainable growth of e-commerce in the years ahead. Through this research, we can recommend and advocate for the development of future studies in Algeria to increase our understanding on how to use social media platforms to develop potential marketing strategies, all the while highlighting the key role that customer experience plays in the business' success. Studying this topic is essential, especially for online shops and retailers.

We also recommend studies about the customer experience of local online shops to differentiate between the characteristics of local and international online shops' customers, and the social media marketing effect in each case. All of this will help shape the attributes of the online Algerian customers to aid and support future business judgments.

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