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Promotion through social media as a mediator between ncustomer satisfaction and loyalty in travel agencies in the city of Skikda

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Abstract :

When marketing its tourism services, institutions seek to exploit social networking sites in an ideal way in order to enhance customer satisfaction while ensuring the sustainability of their loyalty. In this context, this study aims to analyze the role of customer satisfaction as an intermediate variable between promoting through social media sites and achieving the loyalty of customers of tourist agencies to the city of Skikda. This study relied on a simple random sample of 250 respondents from the customers of the tourist agencies of the city of Skikda. After distributing and retrievingthequestionnaires,itwas indicatedthatalltheanswersareanalyzable, and therefore the final analysis was based on 250questionnaires. The data were analyzed using the **Smart-PLS4** statistical program, where the results of structural modeling using **Structural Equation Modeling** showed a statistically significant relationship between social media promotion and customer loyalty, with a relationship with full mediation of customer satisfaction.

Keywords:customersatisfaction,customerloyalty,socialmediapromotion.

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1. Introduction.

The rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has transformed the tourismindustry and intensified competition among travel agencies. In this context, social media platforms have emerged as powerful marketing tools that enable tourism organizations to communicate directly with customers, promote their services effectively, and build long-term relationships. Through interactive communication, social media marketing contributes to enhancingcustomer engagement and influencing purchasing behavior. (Ziyadin, Raigul , Alex, Aizhan , & Aigerim , 2019, p. 2)

Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are among the most important indicators of organization al success in the tourism sector. Satisfied customers are more likely to continue dealingwith the organization, recommendits services to others, and developa long-term relationship with the brand.(Leninkumar, 2017, p. 451) Consequently, tourism agenciesinc reasingly invest in promotional activities through social media platforms to streng then customer satisfaction and transformit into customer loyalty.

Despite the growing importance of social media promotion in tourism marketing, empiricalevidenceregardingitsrole in strengthening the relationshipbetweencustomer satisfaction and customer loyaltyremains limited in the Algerian context. Most previousstudies have been conducted in European and Asian countries, while few studies have examinedthisrelationship in Algerian travel agencies.

Therefore, the main problem addressed by thisstudy is:Is there a mediating effect of social media promotion on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty among customers of travel agencies in SkikdaCity?

The significance of thisstudy lies in enriching the tourism marketing literature by examining the relationship samong social media promotion, customer satisfaction, and customerloyaltywithin Algerian travelagencies. The studyalsoprovidespractical insights for tourism managers seeking to improvecustomerretentionstrategies.

To achievethese objectives, a quantitative approachwasadoptedusing a structured questionnaire distributed to customers of selectedtravelagencies in the city of Skikda. The collected data wereanalyzed using Smart PLS 4 software and the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature and develops the research hypotheses. The following section presents the research methodology and data analysisprocedures. Subsequently, the empirical results are discussed, and finally, the paper concludeswith the main findings, implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Literature Review.

To better understand the relationships proposed in the conceptual model, it is necessary to review the theoretical foundations of social media promotion, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

2.1.Social Media Marketing.

Social media areplatforms through whichpeople build relationships and share information and/or feelings. Thanks to their distinctive peculiarity of being “dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian and interactive beings**”** (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013, p. 282)**.**

Marketersusesocialmediatoachievemarketinggoalssuchascustomercare, advertising, and promotion. Social media marketing is the use of social media technologies,channels,andprogramstocreate,deliver (Tracy & Alma , 2018, p. 2), and share offers that have value to the organization and its stakeholders. This hasbeenmadepossiblebytheshapeofthedigitalstructureoftheweb,whichhas been facilitated by the emergence of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others, as it has

brought about three fundamental transformationsinthe market.Socialmediaempowersbusinessesandcustomers to communicate in ways that were not possible in the past. This connectivity is enabledbytheaforementionedplatforms,suchassocialnetworkingsites suchas Facebook and Instagram, microblogging sites such as Twitter, and content communitiessuchasYouTube,whichallowsocialnetworkstobuildrelationships basedonsharedinterestsandvalues.(Fangfang, Jorma , & Leonidas C. , 2021, p. 52)

2.2.Customer Satisfaction.

Oliver 1997 sees satisfaction as the emotional and cognitive response of the consumer to the level of performance. It is also defined as: an overall evaluation of the performance of a product or commodity. This opinion is based on the consumer's personal experience with a product(Claudia, 2014, p. 997). In Kotler's (2000) view,customer satisfaction is the customer's senseofpleasureor disappointmentresultingfromcomparingperceivedproductperformancetotheir previousexpectationsofthatproduct(ADEBAYO & JOSHUA, 2021, p. 78).” Customer satisfaction is the result of comparing product performance with customerexpectation.Somesuccessfulorganizationstodayraiseexpectationsand performancethatmustbealignedwiththemandthataimtoachievetotalcustomer satisfaction. (Kotler, 1997, p. 41)

Researchinmarketingfocusesheavilyonmeasuringcustomersatisfaction.The literature in this area is voluminous and (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993, p. 133) varied. Some research papers focus on developing and testing more accurate measurement metrics, while others use these metrics and focus on the link between satisfaction (or quality) and future sales, purchase intentions, customer retention, loyalty, and other revenue-related indicators. Other research tests intermediateandauxiliaryvariables,exploresmultipleconnections,andimproves the perception of satisfaction to develop an understanding of the causal relationshipforformingsatisfaction,oftenbasedonbehavioralexplanationssuch as varying expectations, fairness, comparison criteria, and different motivating values.(Hauser, Simester, & Wernerfelt, 1994, p. 329)

2.3.Customer Loyalty.

Philip Kotler defined loyalty as that "sincere commitment by the customer to repurchase his favorite product or service in the future despite the attitudinal influences exerted and aimed at transforming his behavior," and added that " obtaining customer loyalty depends on providing high value to him."(Aimee, 2019, p. 831) Accordingly, customer loyalty is the most important goal for the implementation of marketing activities in the relationship, and it also means frequent purchasing behavior, and working to recommend the organization to other customers. (Hafez & Akther, 1997, p. 142)

It is difficult to determine customer loyalty in general. There are three distinct methods to measure it: behavioral measurements by studying the customer's buying behavior and habits, and attitudinal measurements by the customer's preferences for the organization's product. Here is a complex method that relies on the two previous dimensions by judging loyaltyby behavior and attitudes. (Bowen & Shiang-Lih , 2001, p. 213) Beyond this, loyalty can be described as a situation in which someone makes a purchase routinely based on the decision- making process. Loyalty has four distinctive characteristics: making regular repurchases, buying the product or service in the same place, referring or recommending to others, and not being able to be influenced by the competitor tomove(Khairawati, 2020, p. 17). Customerloyaltybecomestheloyaltythatthe customershowstowardstheinstitution.Theloyalcustomerisconsideredthemost valuable to the institution to maximize its profitability and (Budianto, 2019, p. 302) to be able to win loyal

customers. It requires a great commitment from the institutiontowardscustomersinallrespects,byachievingthewishesofcustomers andcreatingagoodmentalimageofthecustomerinaccordancewithqualitywith what he requests. In this case, if the customer's satisfaction is achieved, it is expected that he will not transfer to another organization.

3. Development of The Research Hypothesis.

According to a study(Handri & Cesya, 2021, p. 285), social media has become a partofpeople'slivesandanintegralpartofmarketingstrategiesinthedigitalage. This set of technologies creates new communication mechanisms and tools for companies to interact and communicate with potential consumers. This study explores the impact of social media marketing on satisfaction and consumer response through perceived value and brand value. The results of this research show that social media marketing directly affects the perceived value and value of the brand and indirectlyaffects the satisfaction and response of the consumer. It also confirmed the satisfaction and response of the consumer in responding to social media marketing by the company.

Theresultsofastudy(irem & mesut, 2012, pp. 1358,1359)indicatethateffective promotionalcampaignsthroughsocialmedia sitesareoneofthemostprominent driversofcustomerloyaltyforthebrand,followedbytherelevanceofthecontent, its popularity among friends, and the multiplicity of platforms and applications associated with the brand. The importance of providing entertaining and participatory content that reflects the interests of the audience is highlighted, whileavoidingnegativecontent,associalmediasitesareanenvironmentinwhich individuals seek to entertain and exchange information.

Thestudyconfirmsthatconsumerloyaltyisenhancedthroughcreativeinteraction with the brand, providing attractive reasons to connect, as well as leveraging word-of-mouth marketing among friends. It is also recommended to measure customers' interests and analyze their lifestyles to provide relevant content that enhances community engagement and emotional attachment to the brand.

Basedontheforegoing,thefollowingresearchhypotheseswereformulated:

H1 : There Is a positive impact of social media promotion on Customer satisfaction

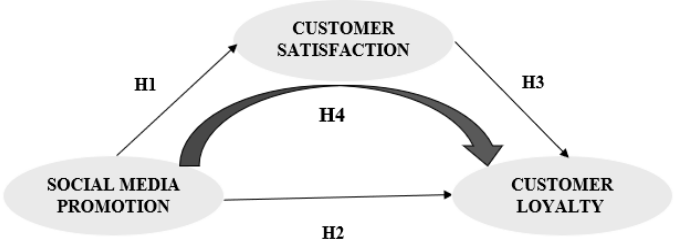
H2:ThereIsapositiveimpactofsocialmediapromotiononCustomerloyalty.

H3 : There Is a positive impact of satisfaction on Customer loyalty

H4 : Customer satisfaction Is the mediatorthatmediates the relationshipbetween social media promotion and Customer loyalty

Figure No. (01) shows the relationship between the variables of this research for the purpose of studying them, which have been dealt with previously in many studies, in community samples and specific circumstances.

Figure No. 1 : Conceptual Model



Source:Developed for studypurpose

4. Operationaldefinition of research variables.

To ensure a clear understanding of the study variables and facilitate their empirical measurement, the following operational definitions were adopted:

• Social Media Promotion (SMP): Refers to the use of social media platforms by travel agencies to promote their services, communicate with customers, share tourism-related information, and encourage customer interaction. In this study, this variable was measured using 20 items adapted from previous studies. (Yogesh K, Kawaljeet Kaur, & Hsin, 2015, pp. 5-6)

• Customer Satisfaction (CS): Refers to the degree to which customers perceive that the services provided by travel agencies meet or exceed their expectations. It reflects customers' overall evaluation of their experience with the agency. This variable was measured using 10 items. (Karoline, 2013, pp. 327-328)

• Customer Loyalty (CL): Refers to customers' intention to continue purchasing services from the same travel agency, recommend it to others, and maintain a long-term relationship with it. This variable was measured using 8 items. (AmirAzlan bin & Mohd , 2020, p. 5)

5. Data and Method.

The sample of the study was composed of various clients of the selected tourist agencies in the city of Skikda, Algeria. The research model includes three latent variables: Social Media Promotion (independent variable), Customer Satisfaction (mediating variable), and Customer Loyalty (dependent variable). Social Media Promotion was measured using 20 items, Customer Satisfaction using 10 items, and Customer Loyalty using 8 items adapted from previous validated studies. The questionnaire was distributed to 250 customers of travel agencies operating in the city of Skikda, and all valid responses were retained for analysis. The reflective measurement model was assessed using SmartPLS 4 software. (tlilani & bouteldja, 2024, p. 43)

5.1.Assessement of Muserrment Model.

This research consists of three variables: social media promotion, customer satisfaction,andcustomerloyalty.Weanalyzedthedataofthisresearchbyusing themethodofpartialleastsquares(pls).Beforewedothis analysis,wemusttest that the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of thismodel depends on the analysis of the convergent validity of the model, which indicates the extent to which the results are related between the variables of the study, in addition to examining the discriminatory reliability.

a. Convergent Validity.

Convergentvalidityistheprocessofevaluatingitspurposetomeasurethedegree of interdependence between multiple indicators that reflect the same agreed structure. This authority focuses on the extent to which the questions are in harmony with each other. In order to prove the convergent validity, it is first necessary to load the factor (factor loading), which means determining the external loading coefficients of the variables, which express the ability of the phrases used to accurately measure those variables. These values are considered scientifically acceptable when they exceed 0.70, as this contributes to enhancing the convergent credibility of the underlying variables and ensuring the consistencyoftheresultsobtained,andtheverificationandknowledgeofthe compositereliability(CR),asthevalueofthisindicatorshouldbehigherthan 0.70toensuretheacceptanceofthemodel.Afterthat,theaverageoftheextracted variance(AVE)iscalculated,whichisanindicatorwhosevalueisbetween0and 1.Toachieveasufficientlevelofconvergentvalidity,theAvevaluemustexceed 0.50.(Handri & Cesya, 2021, pp. 288-289)

Table No. 1 : Outer loadings

	CUSTOMER LOYALTY	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION
CL1	0,851		
CL2	0,761		
CL3	0,969		
CL4	0,785		
CL5	0,781		
CL6	0,782		
CL7	0,036		
CL8	0,567		
CS1		0,207	
CS2		0,886	
CS3		0,849	
CS4		0,644	
CS5		0,843	
CS6		0,641	
CS7		0,071	
CS8		0,878	
CS9		0,891	
CS10		0,862	
SMP1			0,053
SMP2			0,801
SMP3			0,851
SMP4			0,849
SMP5			0,883
SMP6			0,751
SMP7			0,778
SMP8			0,769
SMP9			0,814
SMP10			0,852
SMP11			0,750
SMP12			0,807
SMP13			0,809
SMP14			0,808
SMP15			0,797
SMP16			-0,067
SMP17			0,882
SMP18			0,886
SMP19			0,071
SMP20			0,196

Source: Smart-PLS4 report

We note from Table No. (1) that all the loads of variables are greater than 0.70 except for the phrases CL3, CL7, CL8, CS1, CS4, CS6, CS7, SMP1, SMP16, SMP19 and SMP20, which were deleted. After repeating the analysis, all the results ofconvergent validitywere acceptableand good, as thevalues of all CRs exceed 0.70 and are yellow from 0.95, while the value of the average variance Aveforbothcustomersatisfactionandpromotion throughsocialmediasitesand customer loyalty is greater than 0.5, which is the acceptable value according to. (ghozlan & djamel, 2025, p. 172)

Table No. 2 : Convergent validity

Variables	Items	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a) CR	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CUSTOMER LOYALTY	CL1	0,851	0,833	0,901	0,493
	CL2	0,761			
	CL4	0,785			
	CL5	0,781			
	CL6	0,782			
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	CS2	0,886	0,875	0,918	0,540
	CS3	0,849			
	CS5	0,843			
	CS8	0,878			
	CS9	0,891			
	CS10	0,862			
SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION	SMP2	0,801	0,937	0,965	0,539
	SMP3	0,851			
	SMP4	0,849			
	SMP5	0,883			
	SMP6	0,751			
	SMP7	0,778			
	SMP8	0,769			
	SMP9	0,814			
	SMP10	0,852			
	SMP11	0,750			
	SMP12	0,807			
	SMP13	0,809			
	SMP14	0,808			
	SMP15	0,797			
	SMP17	0,882			
	SMP18	0,886			

Source: Smart-PLS4 report

b. Disciminant Validity.

Differential validity in the measured factors is verified by the use of crosse loadings, as this procedure helps to assess how distinct the latent variables are fromeachother.TheFornel-LarckercriterionandHeterotrait-MonotraitRatio (HTMT**)** is one of the most widely used methods for determining the level of discriminatoryvalidityandensuringitsaccuracy.Thediscriminatoryvaliditywas verifiedinthisresearchbasedontheFornell-Larckercriterion,whichdetermines thediscriminatoryvaliditywhenthesquarerootoftheaveragevarianceextracted (Ave) for each factor exceeds the values of its correlation with any other factor. Table No. (3) came with acceptable and confirmed results for the discriminatory validity, as it was found that the square root of the average variance extracted (Ave) exceeds the country values. These results thus indicate an absence of correlation between any two measured factors. (Handri & Cesya, 2021, p. 289)

Table No. 3 : Discriminant Validity Test (Fornell-Larckercriterion test)

	CUSTOMER LOYALTY	**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**	**SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION**
CUSTOMER LOYALTY	**0,702**		
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	0,698	**0,735**	
SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION	0,383	0,378	**0,734**

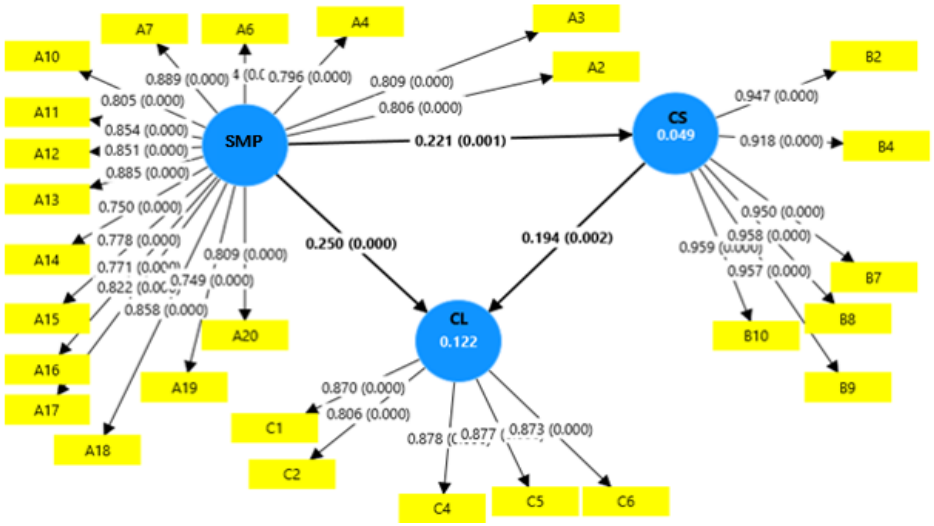
Source :Smart-PLS4 report

5.2. Structrul Model.

Modelling with structural equations using **smart PLS4 software was used to** estimate the relationship between the study variables. The adequacy of the structural model was verified by the Q-square index, where the results showed thatthe**Q²**valueofthesatisfactionvariablewas0,049,whilethe**Q²**valueofthe customer loyalty variable was 0,122. Since these values are above zero, this indicates that the model has an acceptable predictive ability, although it is classifiedwithintheaveragelevel.Thisindicatesthat(Vinsi, 2010) thismodelcan be applied in many different contexts and circumstances, and based on the evaluationofthequalityofthemodelusingthe**GoodnessofFit(GoF)indicator,** which measures the reliability of the model. The value of the indicator reached 0.2116, and indicates a weak level of predictiveefficiencybecausethis indicator came at a level between 0.1 and0.25. This model cannot be relied on to a high degree. (wetzels, odekerken- schroder, & van oppen, 2009, pp. 177-195)

$$GOF = \sqrt{\overline{AVE} \times \overline{R^2}} \quad GOF = \sqrt{0.524 \times 0.0855}$$
$$GOF = 0{,}2116$$

Figure No. 1 : Structural Model



Source: Smart-PLS4 report

Theresultsof theanalysisof TableNo. (4)representedinFigureNo. (2)of the structuralmodelshowthatthe**R²**indicatorindicatesthatthepromotionthrough social networking sites explains 31.6% of the variation in the variable of satisfaction of the customer and the rest is due to different factors. As for the changeincustomerloyalty,itexplainsbothcustomersatisfactionandpromotion through social media by 44.3%, and this relationship was confirmed by **p-value** values,asthepathsbetweenthestudyvariables showedasignificantrelationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty(**p-value = 0.002 ≤ 0.05**).In contrast, theresultsshowedthattherewasasignificantrelationshiptothedirectimpactof social media promotion on theloyalty ofthe individual (**p-value = 0.000≤ 0.05**). However, it was found that there is a moral andpositive impactof social media promotion on customer satisfaction, as the **p-value = 0.001 ≤ 0.05**.

a. Hypothesis Testing.

Table No.4:PATH COEFFICIENTS OF THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

HAYP	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T. value	P.value	Decision
H1	CSSMP➡	0,221	0,067	3,308	**0.001**	Supported**
H2	CLSMP➡	0,250	0,065	3,831	0,000	Supported**
H3	CL CS➡	0,194	0,062	3,112	**0.002**	Supported**
H4	CL SMP➡CS➡	0,044	0,019	2,240	**0,025**	Supported**
SMP= Social Media Promotion, CS= Customer Satisfaction, CL= Customer Loyalty						
**= significant at 1% *= significant at 5%						

Source: Smart-PLS4 report

Based on the results shown in Table (4), the analysis of the research hypotheses will be presented as follows:

- There is a positive impact of promotion through social networking sites on customer satisfaction, as itwasfoundthrough the resultsthatthereis a moral relationship P= 0.001≤0.05 and the path coefficient β=0.221, and thisisalsowhat a studyfound(Handri & Cesya, 2021, pp.

289-290), as itwasfoundthat promotion through social networking sites has a positive impact on customer satisfaction, including acceptance of the first hypothesis H1.

- HypothesisH2Theresultsweresimilartothefirsthypothesis,asitwasfoundthatP=0.000≤0.05Thus,therelationshipbetweensocialmediapromotionand customerloyaltydirectly and morale, thatis, thereis a positive and direct impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, whichisconfirmed by the strength of the relationshipthrough the path coefficient β=0.250, whichis a very large value.
- The results of the studyshowedthat the relationshipbetweencustomer satisfaction and customerloyaltyissignificant P= 0.002≤0.05and the value ofthetrackβ=0.194,includingtheacceptanceof thehypothesisH3 asitwas in a study(Abu Elnasr, Elshear, & Alnaim, 2022)thatprovedthatcustomer satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on customerloyalty, thatis, thegreatercustomersatisfactionwiththeproduct,thegreateritsloyaltytothe product, brand or institution as a whole.
- By examining the results of thetotal indirect effect, itwasfoundthat the promotion through social networking sites has an impact on customer satisfaction on theirloyalty, whichis an indirect relationship, as itwasfoundthat the level of morale P=0.025≤0.05 and the value of the pathβ =0.044, including the acceptance of hypothesis H4.

Table No.4:PATH COEFFICIENTS OF THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

PATH	**Std Beta**	**Std Error**	**T Value**	**P Value**
SMP➡ CS➡ CL	0,044	0,019	2,240	**0,025**
SMP= Social Media Promotion, CS= Customer Satisfaction, CL= Customer Loyalty				

Source: Smart-PLS4 report

b. The Role of The Mediator.

Social media promotion does not indirectly affect customer satisfaction and loyalty, as the relationship is moral as shown in Table 6. There is also a direct impact of social media promotion and customer loyalty (**p-value = ≤ 0.05**)0,025 whenanalyzingbootstrappedconfidenceintervals,(meisyitah & vidyarini, 2023, p. 1635) from which it can be said that customer satisfaction does not have the role of total mediation of the impact of social media promotion on customer loyalty.

Table No. 6 Mediation -test

	Direct Effects	**Confidence intervals 97,5٪**	**T- value**	**P- value**	**mediation type**
SMP➡ CL	0,250	(0.012 0.085)	3,831	0,000	**Partial mediation**
	Indirect Effects	**Confidence intervals 97,5٪**	**T- value**	**P- value**	
	0,044	(0.012 0.085)	2,240	0,025	

Source: Smart-PLS4 report

6. Conclution.

SocialThis study aimed to examine the relationships between social media promotion, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty among customers of travel agencies operating in the city of Skikda, Algeria. Using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach through SmartPLS 4, the proposed conceptual model was empirically tested. (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014)

The results confirmed that social media promotion has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.221$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that effective promotional activities through social media platforms contribute to improving customers' perceptions and satisfaction levels. The findings also revealed a significant positive effect of social media promotion on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.250$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that digital interaction and communication through social media can directly strengthen customer attachment to travel agencies.

Furthermore, customer satisfaction was found to positively influence customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.194$, $p = 0.002$). This result confirms that satisfied customers are more likely to maintain long-term relationships with travel agencies and recommend their services to others. The mediation analysis also demonstrated that customer satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between social media promotion and customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.025$), highlighting the importance of customer satisfaction as a mechanism through which social media promotional efforts enhance loyalty.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the tourism marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on the interrelationships among social media promotion, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty within the Algerian tourism sector. It extends previous findings obtained in different international contexts and validates them in the environment of Algerian travel agencies.

From a managerial perspective, the findings emphasize the importance of investing in social media promotion as a strategic marketing tool. Travel agencies should focus on creating attractive and interactive content, maintaining continuous communication with customers, responding promptly to inquiries, and using digital technologies to improve customer experiences and satisfaction levels.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. The research was conducted only in travel agencies located in the city of Skikda, which may limit the generalization of the findings. In addition, the study focused on three variables only and did not examine other potentially influential factors.

Future studies are encouraged to investigate additional variables such as service quality, trust, customer engagement, perceived value, and electronic word-of-mouth. Researchers may also expand the geographical scope of the study to include different regions of Algeria or conduct comparative studies across countries to obtain broader insights into customer behavior in the tourism industry.

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