

SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN TUNISIA: QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research looks at the motivation of using social media in Tunisia. Social networks are a primary tool for transmitting information quickly and efficiently. The use of this means of communication is essential for any self-respecting company that wishes to promote its products and services to the public. With connection getting faster and faster on mobile, social media also allows users to connect with the community anywhere. In our research work, we focus on the impact of social networks on business as well as their advantages and disadvantages. Thanks to them, merchants can make the existence of their products and services known to as many people as possible. The use of these networks is also very democratized. Most companies have their Facebook page, or LinkedIn, etc. They use these means of communication to advertise and inform their customers of the arrival of new products, promotions, etc.

Keywords: Social Media; Negative Effects; Positive Effects; Tunisia.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an important way to reach new aspects. These networks also make it possible to have a direct connection with customers and especially the most ideal ones while improving their engagement with the company. It is also a great way to attract consumers to the products, and to emphasize the image and increase traffic to the website. As mentioned above, businesses can also offer better customer service through social media by seeking to solve consumer problems while tailoring their products to their consumers' needs and minimizing product delivery distance. Each platform also offers paid advertising services for those who need to showcase their advertising. On the other hand, these platforms are the way many share negative comments. These negative reviews can prevent lead generation for a business. The continued increase in the number of Internet users creates a huge global market in which many businesses can operate. Internet users constitute a significant potential market.

The objective of this article is to examine the use of social media in Tunisia. A qualitative study was carried out with 12 people, through in-depth individual interviews, using a convenience sample with semi-structured questions. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media

According to (Chopik, 2016), individuals can use the means of browsing the Internet to access and share information, learn, communicate with other people, etc.

On the other hand, According to (Khan et al., 2016), technology becomes the vital element of any organization. As an important part of technology, social media allows

businesses to adapt to the market and create a completely new market opportunity. The use of Internet navigation tools can improve the quality of life of businesses in commerce and people in collaboration with each other. It can also maintain or improve their cognitive functions. Through social media, older adults can improve their perceptions of social support and social connections and reduce isolation (Yu et al. 2022). Through a longitudinal study, Yu et al (2022) found that social media activates neurons in the brain, which helps reduce brain destruction. They also mentioned that social media is a “form of social engagement” that stimulates brain and functional development.

Studies admit that people who browse the Internet to communicate, collaborate with others, obtain social support, search for information, social services and online banking, shop online to minimize transportation and save time (Kuss et al., 2013). The use of technology and social media is increasing especially after the coronavirus. Social networks are a reliable tool to respond to the challenge of this disease. In fact, seniors were afraid of the spread of infection and the risk of contamination, which is why they took certain measures such as reducing physical interactions, social distancing and isolation. (Chen, 2020; Wan et al. 2022). Chopik (2016) mentioned that many previous studies have looked at the reasons for non-use of technology among seniors. This is why he looked into “the benefits of using social technologies among older people”. He found that technology facilitates interpersonal relationships because it “has the potential to cultivate successful relationships among older adults.” He explained this by the positive attitude of seniors towards technology. Previous research (Delello & Whorter, 2017) has shown that the brain is malleable and can change “in response to new information” (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). This malleability, caused by neuronal plasticity, activates “brain training” reducing “cognitive decline linked to aging” (Callaria, Ciairano, & Rea, 2012; Guglielmo, 2012; Merzenich et al., 2014; Williams & Kemper, 2010). Through learning, neurons combat changes due to aging (Vance et al., 2008). Longer lifespans and technological advances make older adults and seniors an important current and potential segment of social media users (Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2018). A larger portion of this segment believes that technology has a positive effect on society (Anderson and Perrin, 2017 in Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2018).

The age of the individual influences the use of social media (Teo and Lim, 2000; Koyuncu and Lien, 2003; Hills and Argyle, 2003, Middleton et al. 2010; Khan et al., 2016). The use of Internet browsing is continuously increasing over the years. A study by the PEW Center showed that older and younger sub-Saharaners have similar views on the impact of social media on their country (Silver and Johnson, 2018). Age has always been considered to have the greatest weight in explaining behavior. Work research has shown that younger people are the main factors using social media as a tool for communication, browsing, and training, compared to older generations (Olson et al 2011). Older individuals use technology as often as adults (Olson et al 2011). Seifert and Wahl (2018) focused on social media use among older adults in Switzerland. They found that 67.9% of seniors (72-79 years), 35.9% (82-89 years) and 9.8% (90 and plus) apply navigation on social networks and all feel younger than their chronological age. Even among the oldest, feeling younger pushes older people to discover and understand how to use new technologies, particularly social media (Seifert & Wahl, 2018). Social media can push older people to adopt new behaviors characteristic of younger people such as online activities and social media use (Kotter-Gröhn et al., 2016, Wan et al, 2022). It is nevertheless surprising to read the conclusions of Capsi et al. (2019), who mention that using “technology makes you feel older.” Khan et al (2016) found that the more people use social media, the more social networks and forums there are that allow individuals to establish social connections online and promote their social status. Internet browsing allows older individuals to preserve their social networks. (Chopik, 2016). The youngest new generation is the most subordinate to the Internet. Being digital natives,

they are more vulnerable to social media addiction than the other cohort. Nowadays, the use of social media is increasing, creating addiction. Trolling, fake news, etc. are also increasing and changing people's attitudes towards using social media.

Social Media Use In Marketing

Individuals use social media to post or share ideas or things related to their interests (e.g. food, clothing, travel etc.) and then gain likes, retweets etc. Some people also use it to search for people, to expand their circle of friends or to sell products. These social interactions on Face book, Twitter, Instagram, You tube, etc. are not only useful for individuals but also for traders who take advantage of them to expand their customer portfolio and increase their brand awareness. Thanks to these social media, retailers can make the existence of their products and services known to as many people as possible. This increase in visibility gives them a better chance of reaching a larger number of prospects and creating a fan group. Moreover, they do not need to invest in having a page on these social networks, while these tools help them to more easily target potential customers interested in their brand. The use of social networks is also very democratised. Most companies have their own Face book page, or Twitter or LinkedIn account. They use these means of communication to inform their customers about the arrival of new products, current promotions, the end of liquidation etc. The information thus quickly reaches the right people. The information reaches the right people quickly, especially if it is relayed. These pages also allow companies to make direct contact with customers who in turn feel part of the 5 group. The latter can then recommend their products or services to others in their circle of friends. This allows these structures present on social networks to establish their reputation without too much financial expenditure while retaining the customers already acquired. The fact of being active on these communication tools thus allows traders to create a close relationship with their fans, followers, to sell their products while improving their image. Customers feel supported and listened to. This is all the more important as the influence of a brand's e-reputation affects the majority of consumers when they make a purchase decision. These means of communication also make it possible to obtain the opinions and feedback of consumers and to better define the needs of its targets and expectations. Of course, there is constructive advice, insults, inappropriate opinions, etc. on the comments, but by selecting the most relevant opinions and feedback from consumers, the organisation can improve its products or services. Internet users spend a lot of time on social networks. Chaffey (2022) estimates the time spent on social media at 3 hours per day. Mingonia et al (2017a) mentioned that adolescents also spend three hours a day on social media.

Research studies have mentioned that individuals browse the Internet because it allows people to know how they are really doing and to know themselves better through sharing information (Chang & Hsu, 2016). This can improve their self-esteem (Best et al (2014). Unlike Kross et al., (2013), for whom, using Facebook makes people feel negative and decreases their life satisfaction over time because they waste a lot of time on the Internet.

While using it, individuals feel free to express their thoughts and opinions and share ideas. This way, they can influence their friends to make a change. Fuchs (2021) stated that "broadcasting and newspapers play a much smaller role than the Internet." In Tunisia, in 2020-2023, Facebook contributed to the Arab Spring movement. Social networks have pushed information to spread very quickly. For other researchers (Chang and Hsu, 2016), social networks are a good way to communicate with others and obtain their recognition.

Qualitative Study

Convenience sample is a “sample composed of nearest and most available participants” (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). As the topic is about social media’s usage, individuals found it easy to do, they are already social media ‘ users.

The interview guide is about 10 Open questions. The questions were developed from literature and from the aim of the research. We asked the interviewees sometimes the same question to check if the interviewee is telling the truth or to help him to better understand the question. Each interview took from 30 to 45 minutes.

We transcribed all the collected information before we realised thematic analysis. The themes are developed from framework and from the most significant reply gotten from interviewees.

RESULTS

Sample Description

Respondent data was taken from December 7, 2023 to January 15, 2024 with 12 persons.

The demographic data is collected includes several categories, namely gender, age group, etc. (Table 1).

Table 1 AGE GROUP		
Demographic Data		Number
Gender	Male	5
		7
	Female	
Age	18-25 years	3
	26-39	
		5
	>40 years	
		4
level of education	high	10
Average		1
Low		1
Social media	Facebook and Instagram	12
	Twitter	5
	LinkedIn	10
	Youtube and TikTok	11

Qualitative Analysis

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. The Office of Communications and Marketing manages the main Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube accounts.

“.....I want to keep in touch with my contacts.....”

“.....I want to share the information I know with my friends.....”

“.....I want to tell others some recommendations.....”

Internet users have multiple motivations for going to Facebook and Instagram: communicating with loved ones, finding inspiration, etc. Facebook has just released a study which allows us to refine user motivations: Facebook positions itself on “empowerment”, recognition and interactivity between users. Instagram is more focused on fun, relaxation and discovery. Indeed, users on Instagram seek to “travel” visually by following accounts of celebrities, artists, etc. while on Facebook users share the lives and adventures of their families and friends.

“.....I want others to have a good picture concerning me.....”

“.....I use it as an entertainment.....”

During events such as concerts, exhibitions... Facebook is used to collect opinions and reactions while Instagram is used to have images from inside the event, behind the scenes...

“..... I want to tell others if I have a bad experience with a product or a company.....”

The use of social media by adolescents is a social phenomenon that has been growing rapidly over the past twenty years. In Tunisia, a lot of people have access to a smartphone and they go online “almost constantly” to connect with their peers or seek new stimuli. Researchers define social media use by interactions and communications occurring online on different platforms (Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, etc.) and aimed at exchanging information and ideas with peers. The arrival of social media is associated with questions and fears regarding the social and emotional well-being of adolescents since their use encourages comparison with peers and causes difficulties in emotional regulation.

“..... I give all attention to comments and likes ...”

First, the feeling of social connection concerns the feeling of being emotionally close to others (sense of belonging, intimacy, mutual support). This crucial feeling is associated with positive development (consolidation of identity, social learning and value placed on interpersonal relationships) and a satisfying life as well as better physical and mental health.

“...What they said is very important It allow me to know my value in others’ eyes.....”

Next, the irresistible urge for social interactions is defined by the desire to access more social connections. This would be exacerbated by a feeling of loneliness or social isolation and would be particularly apparent, when motivation towards social learning and social interactions is at its peak. Finally, the search for new sensations refers to the motivation and drive towards new, intense and exciting experiences. In this sense, social media offers the opportunity to engage in exciting communications with friends and peers, or to view new and interesting images and videos, with or without text. This may be associated with the tendency to seek new sensations and take risks (for example through substance use or engaging in risky sexual behaviors).

CONCLUSION

Results are in line with previous research. Tunisians use social media for personal activities (entertainment, as pass time etc.) or to maintain relationship with contact.

Social media behaviour studies are growing. We suggest in a future work to establish a model that test the relation between the concepts. Future research should consider online word of mouth and incorporate other concept in relation with digital.

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Received: 02-Apr-2024, Manuscript No. ASMJ-23-14506; **Editor assigned:** 04-Apr-2024, PreQC No. ASMJ-23-14506(PQ); **Reviewed:** 17-Apr-2024, QC No. ASMJ-23-14506; **Revised:** 22-Apr-2024, Manuscript No. ASMJ-23-14506(R); **Published:** 28-Apr-2024