MARKETING

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON E-REPUTATION – ANALYSIS OF MARRIOTT HOTEL CHAIN IN ALGERIA

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Abstract. This research aims to examine the impact of social media on the e-reputation of Marriott hotels in Algeria, while focusing on electronic word-of-mouth. The main purpose is to analyze the way interactions on digital platforms can affect customer perception and, consequently, the online reputation of establishments. A literature review was conducted to develop a conceptual framework specific to Marriott hotels' activities on social media. In addition, interviews were conducted with 125 customers who stayed in these hotels. The collected data were processed with SmartPls software, which provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between social media, electronic word-of-mouth, and e-reputation. The findings indicate that social media play a crucial role in building the e-reputation of hotels. In particular, positive reviews published online are strongly correlated with an improved perception of the quality of services offered in these hotels. It must be emphasized that this study was limited to the analysis of social media and word-of-mouth, without taking into account other equally important factors, such as the process of monitoring and engagement on social networks, which deserve to be further exploited. On the practical side, the results obtained are highly valuable for hotel managers, community managers, and stakeholders in the tourism sector, because they provide them with leads that help them maximize customer satisfaction and loyalty. Finally, the originality of this research on hospitality and social media lies in its orientation on the Algerian market which, in our opinion, remains little studied.

Keywords: E-Reputation, social media impact, ewom, Marriott hotel Chain, Algeria.
JEL Classification: M31, O33, Z33.

INTRODUCTION

According to the website wearesocial.com, the number of individuals who are presently active on social media throughout the world is estimated at around 3.5 billion, which clearly demonstrates the growing enthusiasm for this new means of communication, both on the part of individuals and

companies (Kemp, 2023). It should be mentioned that, due to their integrated communications, social media have proven to be an extremely effective means for the promotion of tourism (Abdel-Maksoud, 2020; Bhandari & Sim, 2023). From this point of view, the advent of the Internet has brought about a fundamental transformation in the distribution of information related to tourism and in the way people plan and organize their trips (Ferreira & Sousa, 2022). Moreover, it should also be noted that in the hotel industry, online reviews of hotels, restaurants and tourist services are essential for people without previous experience. Indeed, customers generally share their past experiences, which allows potential customers to consult them before making their decision (Versailles, Dutot, & Lacalle Galvez, 2016). Furthermore, online reviews have taken a prominent place in today's business world, replacing traditional word-of-mouth (Viglia, Minazzi, & Buhalis, 2016; Book & Tanford, 2019). However, online review platforms have become highly popular, which means that positive reviews can play a decisive role because they can favorably influence customers' choices by encouraging them to opt for a specific hotel. Conversely, negative or bad reviews can dissuade customers and encourage them to book in another establishment. Indeed, travelers seek to book hotel rooms in well-known establishments that have an increased presence on social media that offer them better visibility and effective communication. On the other hand, online reputation is mainly developed and established through electronic word of mouth, mainly through online comments (McDonald & Slawson, 2002; Parvez, Moyeenudin, Arun, & Anandan, 2018; Rchika, 2018).

Also, the literature review on digital communication has made it possible to note that almost all researchers have come to the conclusion that social media have a major impact on the e-reputation and the success of a hotel business. Thus, the reasons for our choice for this essential area which, to the best of our knowledge, remains insufficiently studied in Algeria are justified by the above mentioned observations.

Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to examine and explain the impact of social media on the online reputation of hotel establishments. The present work seeks, therefore, to answer the following problem:

What is the impact of social media on the online reputation of hotel establishments, particularly the Marriott Hotel Chain in Algeria?

For analyzing this issue, it was deemed appropriate to develop the following main hypothesis H1, divided into two sub-hypotheses.

H1: *Social media have an impact on the e-reputation of hotel establishments*

H1.1: *Social media affect electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).*

H1.2: *Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) influences e-reputation.*

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this research are to:

• Determine and elucidate the theoretical foundations of social media and online reputation.

• Examine social media, online reputation and electronic word of mouth in hotel establishments.

• Propose a conceptual model with a view to testing it with travelers in Algeria.

This paper aims first to assess the importance of social media for the hotel industry, and second to identify the digital tools and strategies used by hotel establishments to disseminate information, attract customers, and have a good virtual image.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media in the hotel industry

It is widely admitted that, today, the hotel industry, which is part of the tourism sector, is radically transforming its marketing strategies while favoring new interactive media rather than traditional marketing and public relations practices (Albayrak, Caber, & Sigala, 2021). This approach allows maintaining constant communication with customers. People who are looking for

general or specific information about hotels are increasingly using the Internet, and more specifically social networks (Lončarić & Radetic, 2015; Leng, Sun, & Bai, 2019; Lakha & Vaid, 2021). Nowadays, the Internet is viewed as a highly credible source of information because this information is generated and provided by users (Attia, 2017; Book & Tanford, 2019).

The Internet is a huge computer telecommunications system that allows a whole community to share information and experience, and also to have the opinions of users around the world (Aichner, Grunfelder, Maurer, & Jegeni, 2021). With regard to social media, they help managers to implement an effective system of appreciation for a brand, visibility, reputation. In addition, they assist companies in organizing low-cost promotions. No one denies that, actually, an active and solid presence on social media is highly important and essential for hotels, because without this alternative, the hotel establishment risks going unnoticed by potential customers, which can consequently lead to a loss of numerous opportunities offered by digital transformation. Social media algorithms collect huge quantities of data about their users, and use them to better know their behavior, interests, and interactions. They also exploit these data to personalize the user experience in order to obtain relevant content on the preferences of these users. Therefore, in order to make the most of these opportunities, it is necessary to regularly share attractive content on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

E-reputation - A crucial issue for hotel establishments

E-reputation, commonly known as online reputation, refers to the perceived image of an entity, whether it is a person, a company, a brand, a product, etc., on the WEB (Adamy, 2013; Achabe & Aamoum, 2022). This image, which can be positive or negative, is based on all the information available online which can be institutional information, opinions, comments, or exchanges on forums (Leng, Sun, & Bai, 2019). Nowadays, it has been found that 74% of consumers search on Google before purchasing a product or service, while 64% consult the opinions and ratings left by other Internet users before deciding to make a purchase. These percentages show that it is essential and crucial for a company to monitor its e-reputation well and manage it carefully.

There is no doubt that the emergence of social networks has profoundly changed the rules of the game, as they allow users to communicate instantly on a copious amount of subjects (Dowling, 2016). These users are then provided the opportunity to publicly give their opinion on the products and services offered by companies.

Furthermore, a large number of Internet users, i.e. potential buyers, customers, consumers, and others, have the opportunity to express their opinions on different online platforms (Sotiriadis, 2017). Consequently, e-reputation is now of significant importance for companies in general, and hotel establishments in particular (Hue, Loc, & Hong, 2022). Indeed, companies are now called upon to establish a marketing strategy that must allow them to better control their communication, practice constant monitoring, and have an active crisis unit. In addition, it is worth highlighting that e-reputation is highly important and deserves special attention because of its impact on customers' purchasing decisions (Lai & Huang, 2021; Lakha & Vaid, 2021).

Electronic word of mouth - A new dimension of communication

It is evident that, thanks to the massive diffusion of data on the Internet and the omnipresence of new information and communication technologies, consumers now have a powerful tool that allows them to search for information and share their experiences with other consumers online (Chu & Choi, Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Social Networking Sites: A Cross-Cultural Study of the United States and China, 2011; Hamouda & Srarfi, 2014; Gvili & Levy, 2018). Today, people can more easily access online information on a large number of hotels. Thus, the performance of these hotels certainly depends on the nature of this information that is continuously available on the Net. It was revealed that most users no longer trust the promotion of the hotel or the brand; they instead rely on the opinions or testimonials of other people, based on real experiences. This phenomenon is known as electronic word of mouth.

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is generally defined as all those informal communications that are addressed to consumers, through internet technology, in order to convince users to purchase certain goods and services, while making available to them the characteristics of the product, services or seller. Regarding (Attia, 2017), he considers e-WOM as a technique that relies essentially on a written communication process, through email exchanges, forums, or websites.

It must be recognized that communication by word of mouth has always existed. However, its electronic dimension and speed of propagation have significantly changed.

Nowadays, the social media that are used to propagate an electronic WOM are blogs, social networking sites, virtual discussion forums, online shopping sites, and consumer comment sites (Moliner-Velazquez, Fuentes-Blasco, & Gill-Saura, 2021). Furthermore, media such as Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, etc. have become an important source of communication. They are all based on e-WOM.

In order to verify the research hypotheses mentioned above, it was deemed appropriate to consider a set of variables, as illustrated in Figure (1). This figure presents the different relationships where social media is considered as an exogenous variable, that is, an independent variable. On the other hand, e-reputation and electronic word-of-mouth are endogenous variables that depend on social media.

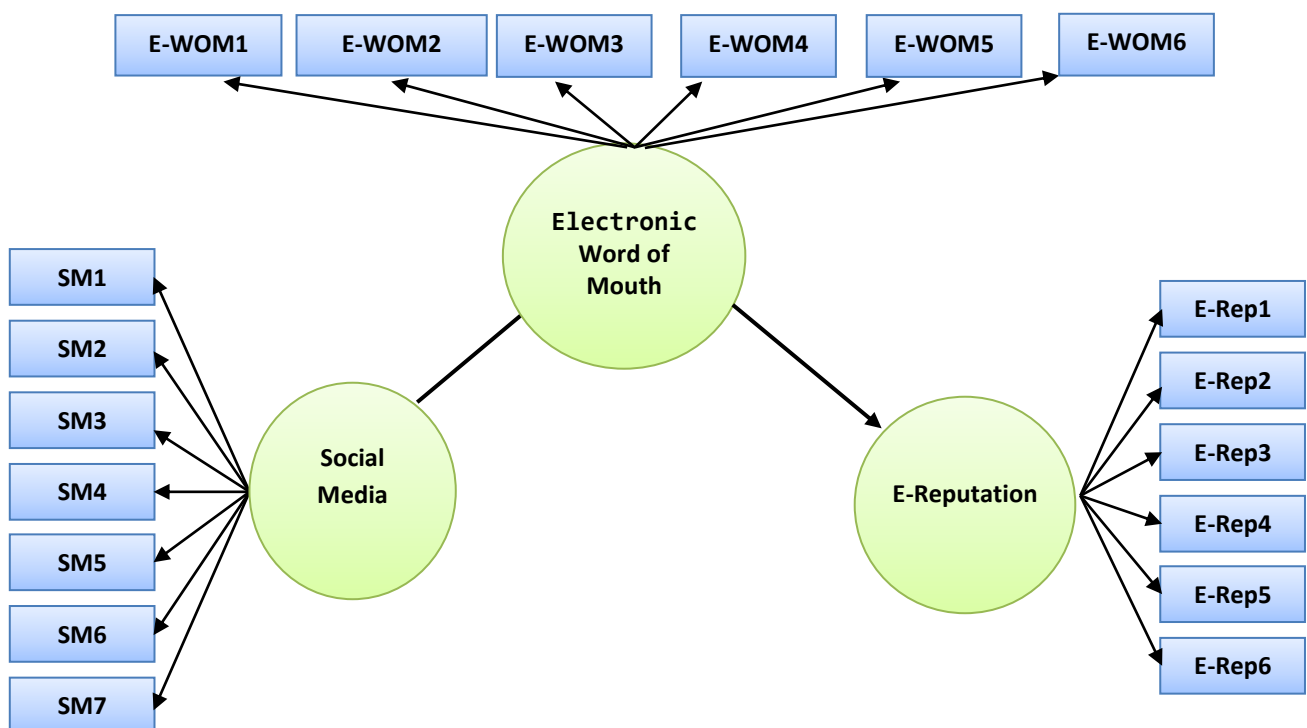The figure below describes the conceptual model considered here.

Figure 1. Structural Model

Source: Compilation by Authors

This study is based on a sample of 125 visitors to Marriott Hotel Chain in Algeria.

It is worth noting that Marriott International is one of the leading hotel groups worldwide; it specializes in luxury hotels. It was founded in 1993 in the city of Bethesda in the state of Maryland, United States. Today, this hotel group has more than 8,500 properties that are spread across 138 countries, making it one of the largest and most diversified hotel networks in the world. With its 31

brands, Marriott International offers a diverse range of brands, from iconic luxury hotels to upscale establishments, including boutique hotels, holiday homes and vacation rentals. Indeed, The Ritz-Carlton, St. Regis, JW Marriott, Marriott Hotels & Resorts, Renaissance Hotels, Sheraton, Westin, Le Méridien and many others are among the most renowned brands of the group (Marriott.com). In Algeria, the Marriott hotel group owns nine establishments which are Sheraton Hotel in Annaba, Renaissance Hotel in Tlemcen, Marriott Hotel in Bab Ezzouar (Algiers), Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Oran, Residence Inn in Bab Ezzouar (Algiers), Meridien Hotel & Convention Center in Oran, Marriott Hotel in Constantine, Sheraton Resort in Club Des Pins (Algiers), and Protea Hotel in Constantine.

The questionnaire that was developed for this study consists of 15 questions, including open and closed questions. This questionnaire was developed primarily for the purpose of collecting all the data necessary to meet the objectives of our study. For this, social media, such as Facebook, Linkedin and Whatsapp, were utilized. Also, to publish the questionnaire online, it was deemed necessary to use the Google Forms tool. Afterwards, this questionnaire was sent to people who were quite familiar with the Marriott group. The approach adopted made it easy to collect responses, specifically targeting individuals present on social media. The SmartPLS software was then applied to analyze and verify the hypotheses, by selecting the characteristics of the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
In this part, reliability tests were carried out using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which varies between 0 and 1. This coefficient is valid from the value 0.6. It allows evaluating the homogeneity of the measurements of a set of items. Thus, the convergent validity and the discriminant validity can then be determined.

1.1. Cronbach's alpha
The recorded data allowed asserting that the internal consistency is satisfactory and that each Cronbach's Alpha value is between 0.925 and 0.960.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media	0.960
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.925
E-Reputation	0.944

Source: Survey Results Using Smart-PLS 3 Software

1.2. Validity of the measurement scales
The validity of the constructs was evaluated by the convergent validity and the discriminant validity.

1.2.1. Convergent validity
The results obtained indicate that the convergent validity values, between 0.67 and 0.83, as shown in table (2), are satisfactory. In addition, the analysis carried out allowed us to conclude that the variables considered, namely the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR), present values higher than the chosen thresholds, which confirms the good reliability of the measures and a satisfactory convergent validity.

Bessouh, N., Grari, Y. & Boukli-Hacene, G. (2024). Impact of social media on e-reputation – analysis of Marriott hotel chain in Algeria. Management and Entrepreneurship: Trends of Development, 4(30), 94-105. https://doi.org/10.26661/2522-1566/2024-4/30-08

Table 2

Convergent Validity

Construct	AVE
Social Media	0.833
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.769
E-Reputation	0.782

Source: Survey Results Using Smart-PLS 3 Software

1.2.2. Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity method was applied to all the variables of the model based on the calculation of the average variance extracted (AVE). In addition, the cross-correlation matrix was evaluated as follows:

Table 3

Discriminant Validity

	Electronic Word of Mouth	E-Reputation	Social Media
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.912		
E-Reputation	0.790	0.877	
Social Media	0.802	0.751	0.884

Source: Survey Results Using Smart-PLS 3 Software

In addition, the discriminant validity aims to ensure that the measurement indicators of a construct are weakly correlated with the measurement indicators of other constructs. The findings indicate a good quality of the measures. Based on the above, one can say that these measures are reliable and have acceptable convergent validity. In addition, the discriminant validity of the measures has been well established. Finally, the quality of the measurement model has allowed the structural model to be tested.

2.2. Evaluation of the structural model and hypothesis testing

The second step of the SEM-PLS approach is to assess the model by examining the extent to which the causal relationships are consistent with the available data. According to Table (4), the model can explain 64.3% of the variance of Electronic Word of Mouth and 62.4% of the variance of E-reputation, which means that R2 > 0.1.

Table 4

The Explained Variance and the Relevant Prediction Test

Endogenous Constructs	The variance Explained R^2	Relevant prediction Q2
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.643	0.694
E-Reputation	0.624	0.617

Source: Survey Results Using Smart-PLS 3 Software

The second criterion for evaluating the model is based on verifying its predictive capacity. To do this, it was decided to employ the Stone and Geisser-Q2 test , which states that the values of Q2 must be greater than zero for the model to be considered relevant.

Similarly, Table (4) shows that the values of Q2 are greater than zero, which implies that the exogenous variables do have a predictive power. In the structural model, Q2 values greater than zero, for a specific endogenous latent variable, indicate that the model has a predictive relevance for that particular construct. In our model, a relevant prediction is ensured with Q2 values equal to 0.694 for e-BAO and 0.617 for e-reputation, which are both greater than zero.

2.2.1. Hypothesis testing

The Bootstrapping method was employed in this study to test our hypotheses and determine the importance of the structural links between the latent variables. This should allow us to validate or not these hypotheses. To do this, the direction of the causal coefficients of the path coefficient was examined in the original sample. Then, the results obtained were validated using the Boostrap method, as depicted in Figure (2).

Testing the first hypothesis (social media, word of mouth, e-reputation)

Social media have a positive and significant effect on electronic reputation (H1), ($\beta = 0.790$, t = 19.977, $\rho < 0.001$), and on electronic word of mouth (H1.1) ($\beta = 0.802$, t = 22.057, $\rho < 0.001$). Similarly, electronic word of mouth positively influences e-reputation (H1.2) ($\beta = 0.633$, t = 12.561, $\rho < 0.001$).

Table 5

The Influence of Social media and Electonic Word of Mouth

Hypotheses	Sample Original	Average	Standard Deviation	T student	P value
H1- Social Media →E-Reputation	0.790	0.796	0.040	19.977	0.000
H 1.2- E-WOM→E-Reputation	0.802	0.807	0.036	22.057	0.000
H 1.2- E-WOM→E-Reputation	0.633	0.642	0.050	12.561	0.000

Source: Survey Results Using Smart-PLS 3 Software

Examination of the results obtained allows concluding that hypotheses H1, H1.1 and H1.2 are significant at the 5% level because the values of T-student exceed 1.96. This result is consistent with previous studies, such as : (Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Leng, Sun, & Bai, 2019; Achabe & Aamoum, 2022).Therefore, the research hypotheses may be confirmed.

Social media have a major impact on the choice of hotel establishments. They offer a valuable opportunity to interact directly with other tourists. Moreover, social media promote the establishment of strong links with potential customers and strengthen the exchanges between the hotel and its visitors.

Based on the above, it can be said that the main hypothesis (H1) of this study has been validated. Thus, social media have an impact on the e-reputation of Marriott hotel establishments. As these hotels have a notable presence on social media, the information and data they disseminate on the internet have a remarkable influence on their e-reputation. Furthermore, over the past few years, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has acquired considerable importance in the tourism sector.
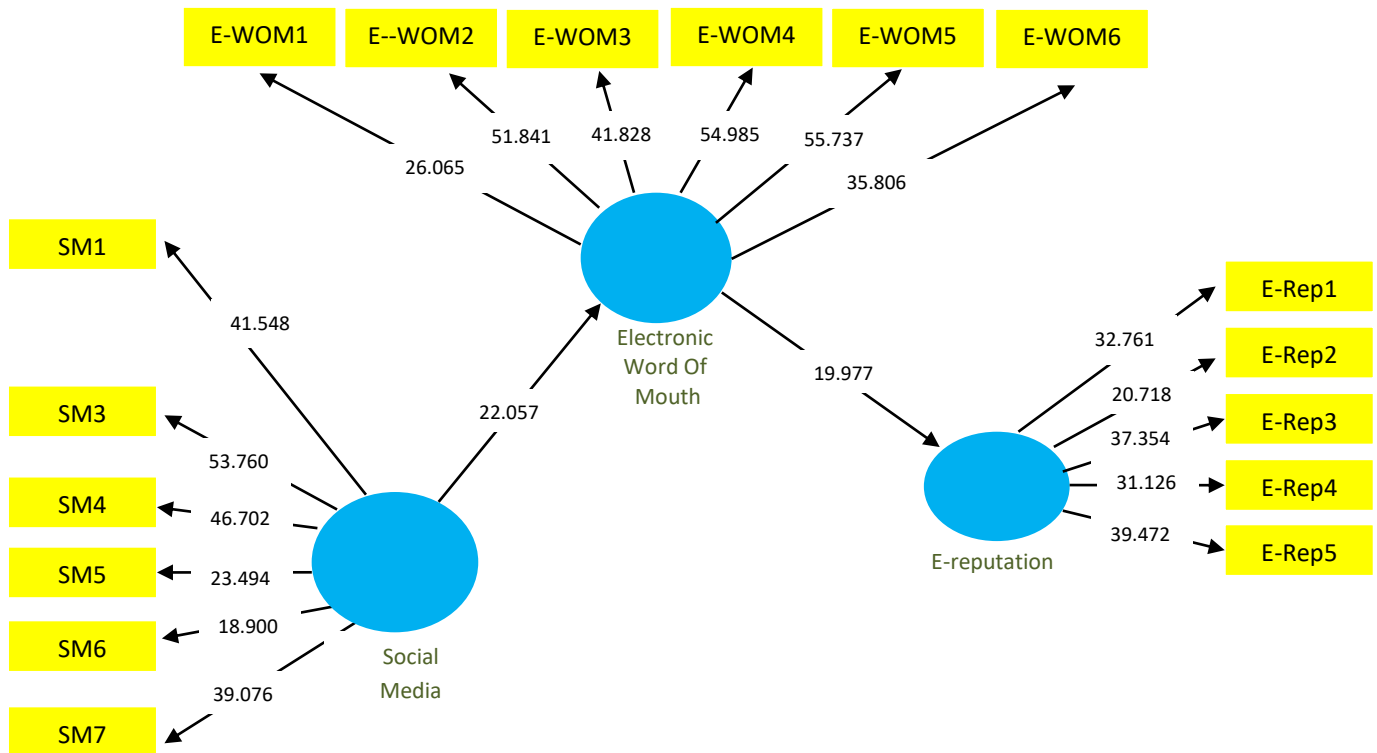
Fig. 2. Structural Model Results

The research conducted as part of this work has shown that visual content, the number of subscribers on social media, the management of comments by the community manager, as well as the information disseminated by Marriott establishments, have a significant impact on the opinions and comments of other tourists, which allows us to validate Hypothesis (H1.1). Likewise, it was revealed that electronic word-of-mouth has a major impact on the online reputation of Marriott hotel establishments in Algeria. Indeed, travelers frequently consult online reviews, comments from Internet users, and experiences shared by other tourists to evaluate the quality of services offered by hotels. Thus, Hypothesis (H1.2) is validated. It is worth adding that all these opinions and comments play a crucial role in the decision-making process to make a reservation in a hotel. Also, they influence the general perception of Internet users towards hotel establishments such as the Marriott hotel chain.

CONCLUSION

It has been proven that social media can represent a real added value for hotel establishments. They are a powerful tool that can be used to attract more customers and can help to better manage the hotel's e-reputation. Today, the image perceived by tourists is more important than ever. This image can be further strengthened when social media is used wisely and effectively. Although the opinions of tourists in the real world are relevant and authentic, they are still limited compared to the immense amount of experiences that are shared on digital platforms. Therefore, hotel establishments are highly advised to take advantage of this opportunity to use social media in order to take care of their e-reputation and build and maintain a positive image, attract and retain customers through effective review management, taking into account negative comments and publishing, and last but not least by sharing engaging and authentic content. This research aimed to examine the link between social media and online reputation, while considering Marriott hotel establishments operating in Algeria as a case study. This hotel chain is well known for its luxurious

offers and services, its top-of-mind notoriety, and its outstanding reputation. The present work allowed us to identify the social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, Youtube, on which Marriott establishments are operational and active. This step is essential because it helped us to know whether the measurement of online reputation was simple or complex depending on the digital presence of these hotels. Hence, the results of this study can be used wisely to better understand travelers' behaviors, identify success factors, and also identify the most effective digital communication channels. Likewise, this research showed that proactive e-reputation management has enabled the Marriott hotel chain to change customers' perceptions, influence their booking decisions and, ultimately, increase its revenues.

Managerial Implications

This research is of great importance for the hotel industry, as it can really contribute to developing its influencer marketing strategy. Such an approach can help provide valuable information on the main factors that can persuade hotel managers to use social media. This technique allows hotels to implement more effective strategies to promote their products and services. In addition, the findings of this study can be used to raise awareness among hotel managers about the importance of supporting and encouraging the development of digital marketing in the Algerian context. Recommendations Based on the above findings, the following recommendations may be suggested:

• Marriott hotels should use social media much more and more wisely to improve their online reputation.

• Negative reviews should be well managed, and should be taken into consideration in order to enhance their online image.

• Marriott hotels must train their Community Managers so that they can adapt to new information and communication technologies.

• Adopting new communication strategies on social media, such as sharing videos on Youtube, influencer marketing, or storytelling, can greatly contribute to establishing a good online reputation.

Limitations of this research

Despite the insights provided by the results of this study, some limitations given below deserve to be highlighted:

• One of the limitations of the study is that it was conducted on luxury hotels (4 - 5 stars) in which the concepts of social media and e-reputation are already well integrated. A study on non-starred hotels is now urgent in order to increase their competitiveness by being aware of the needs of their customers and by handling their concerns much better than their competitors.

• The dimensions of this study were analyzed only in the hotel sector, and not in the entire tourism sector (catering, beverage consumption, travel agency, transport, etc.).

• This work focused in particular on the Marriott chain establishments in Algeria. It would be more interesting and very relevant to include other establishments.

• Some dimensions, such as tourists' opinions and the credibility of the information disseminated, were not taken into account.

Research perspectives

It should also be highlighted that the limitations mentioned above have opened new research perspectives for hotel management professionals. Therefore, it would be:

- Desirable to examine how hotels can maintain, improve and optimize their e-reputation in a sustainable way over the long term.

- Relevant and enriching to conduct a study on the harmonious integration of traditional and digital media to strengthen the brand image of hotel establishments.

- Interesting to conduct a study on the platforms that travelers use to search, plan, buy and share their opinions on the services offered.

- Important to analyze the e-reputation of hotels in the context of Planning - Organization - Direction - Control (PODC). This approach constitutes an interesting strategy.

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- Interesting to study the best practices in communication on social networks for the purpose of strengthening the online presence of hotels, which would be an extremely promising research avenue.

Finally, it is crucial to carry out research on the influence of online reviews on travelers' decisions regarding the choice of hotels in the Algerian context.

In conclusion, given the characteristics of the new environment and challenges that hotel businesses face, it is highly essential today that these establishments pay special attention to the advantages offered by the use of social media. To do this, they must use these opportunities wisely and also manage them with relevance.

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ВПЛИВ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖ НА ЕЛЕКТРОННУ РЕПУТАЦІЮ - АНАЛІЗ МЕРЕЖІ ГОТЕЛІВ MARRIOTT В АЛЖИРІ

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Це дослідження має на меті вивчити вплив соціальних мереж на електронну репутацію готелів Marriott в Алжирі, зосередившись на електронному сарафанному радіо. Основна мета - проаналізувати, як взаємодія на цифрових платформах може вплинути на сприйняття клієнтів і, відповідно, на репутацію закладів в Інтернеті. Для розробки концептуальних засад діяльності готелів Marriott у соціальних мережах було проведено огляд літератури. Крім того, було проведено інтерв'ю зі 125 клієнтами, які зупинялися в цих готелях. Зібрані дані були оброблені за допомогою програмного забезпечення SmartPls, яке забезпечило комплексне розуміння взаємозв'язків між соціальними мережами, електронним сарафанним радіо та електронною репутацією. Отримані дані свідчать про те, що соціальні медіа відіграють вирішальну роль у формуванні е-репутації готелів. Зокрема, позитивні відгуки, опубліковані в Інтернеті, тісно пов'язані з покращенням сприйняття якості послуг, що пропонуються в цих готелях. Слід підкреслити, що це дослідження було обмежене аналізом соціальних медіа та «сарафанного радіо», без урахування інших не менш важливих факторів, таких як процес моніторингу та залучення в соціальних мережах, які заслуговують на подальше вивчення. З практичного боку, отримані результати є дуже цінними для менеджерів готелів, менеджерів громад та зацікавлених сторін у туристичному секторі, оскільки вони надають їм інформацію, яка допомагає їм максимізувати задоволеність та лояльність клієнтів. Нарешті, оригінальність цього дослідження про гостинність і соціальні медіа полягає в його орієнтації на алжирський ринок, який, на нашу думку, залишається малодослідженим.

Ключові слова: Е-репутація, вплив соціальних мереж, ewom, мережа готелів Marriott, Алжир.