Role of Social Networking Sites in Stay-At-Home Women's Handmade Products Marketing" an Exploratory Study" Dr.Talha Messaouda

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Abstract:

This study tries to investigate the role of social networking sites, specifically Facebook, in marketing products handmade by stay-at-home women, through identifying their habits and patterns when using the 'H'rair Biskra' Facebook page, as well as defining the motives influencing their use of the page, and mastering the marketing mix element of handmade products. So, in order to fulfill our study goal, we relied on a social survey method, based on a purposive sample consisting of 60 individuals, members of the 'H'rair Biskra' Facebook page. For their interrogation, we used the electronic form questionnaire, with the aim of collecting data. We reached several important results; mainly that members of the 'H'rair Biskra' page use the still images advertising method to promote their handmade products, since consumers are more responsive to these products. We also noted that the 'H'rair Biskra' Facebook page has helped its members in the process of product pricing within the page, depending on customers' demands. This also has allowed the members to compare the quality of their products to other similar offers. Lastly, the 'H'rair Biskra' Facebook page simplifies the means and tools by which members of the page are distributing their products as well as their delivery process, including direct sales and hand-deliveries methods.

Key-words: Social Networking Websites, E-Marketing, Facebook, Handmade Products.

الملخص:

حاولت هذه الدراسة البحث في دور مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي وبالتحديد موقع الفيسبوك في تسويق المنتجات اليدوية للمرأة الماكثة في البيت، عبر معرفة عادات وأنماط استخدامها لصفحة حراير بسكرة ودوافع استخدامها للصفحة في التسويق لمنتجاتها اليدوية، وكذا كيفية التحكم في عناصر المزبج التسويقي للمنتجات اليدوية، لأجل ذلك اتبعنا منهج المسح الاجتماعي، اعتمادا على العينة

القصدية والتي قوامها 60 مفردة من اللاتي يمثلن عضوات صفحة حراير بسكرة، ولاستجوابهن استخدمنا أداة الاستبيان في شكلها الإلكتروني لجمع البيانات، ومن خلالها توصلنا إلى نتائج كان أهمها: استخدام العضوات لأسلوب إعلانات الصور الثابتة في الترويج لأعمالهن اليدوية لأنها تجعل المستهلكين يتجاوبون بشكل دائم مع هذه المنتجات. كما أن الصفحة ساعدتهن في تحديد السعر المناسب للمنتجات التي ينشرنها حسب مستوى طلبات الزبائن وسمحت لهن بمقارنة جودة منتجاتهن بالمنتجات الأخرى المعروضة، وسهلت الصفحة أيضا لعضواتها المسوقات طرق توزيع منتجاتهن وإيصالها للزبون والتي من بينها البيع المباشر والتوصيل يد بيد بين المسوقة وزبونها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، التسويق الالكتروني، الفيسبوك، المنتجات اليدوية.

Introduction:

Economic activities which are bound to time and place, have now turned into virtual activities, thanks to the Internet, information and communication new technologies, as well as social networking platforms, which contributed hugely to this matter of fact. The communication revolution and information technology opened up to a new marketing world, for economic institutions, disregarding their size or forms.

As social networking is considered as the most popular and up-to-date trend in communicative technologies, even if it was originally established to socially link individuals, social networking has shattered spatial and time barriers, leading to an effective social penetration amongst different groups and classes of society, including several activities, using the social networks as a real tool to market different products and services, by economic institutions and even individual users in their personal businesses. As a matter of fact, social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. are hugely used by different social groups interested in commercial and marketing activities, becoming a real way of making a living, for them and their families.

It is an established fact that there is an increasing interest in our society, towards women of today and their social status, the latter being an important criterion when assessing society development status. The Algerian woman in general and stay-at-home women specifically have drawn a path to themselves in such a way that they are now considered as an entity in today's society, highlighting their great abilities and successes in several fields and domains, and their capacity to work and create personal projects, especially for handmade products. Algerian women advance slowly but surely in a path of success and development, it is also clear that their aptitude for elaborating new ideas and roles is of a great deal, far from that traditional image of unemployed, unpaid stay-at-home women, only needed for home chores and household tasks, completely devoting themselves for the better good of the family. At the present time, the Algerian woman powerfully broke into the working world and created new private businesses in order to take care of herself, ultimately empowering her role in today's society, thus developing materially and financially, and making a good living out of her new sources of income.

The Facebook social networking platform is one of the most prominent and widespread one, if not the most, and it is heavily used on the Internet, which in itself is a an effective tool that allows people to stay connected, by creating communicative channels in order to sell or trade products and services for potential clients. Some see marketing through social networking platforms as a main marketing component, because it is a practical means to define clients' behavior as well as their wants and needs, in order to meet those desires subsequently.

The Algerian stay-at-home woman who offers to sell handmade products such as pastries, traditional clothing, tapestries and rugs, etc. takes advantage of that exact social networking platform in order to advertise, publish and essentially

market her handcrafted products on several pages and profiles on this website. This eventually leads to a broader exposure in Facebook groups and pages thanks to a more proactive interaction, steered principally by clients whom can be considered as the basic pillar and the end goal of any production process, in any successfully planned marketing strategy. This can be achieved by creating and maintaining relationships and contacts with clients, giving them the opportunity to express their needs, opinions and providing comments regarding products development and improvement.

It is also noted that stay-at-home women use numerous pages in a way to reach the best one, to assure the greatest marketing process for their products. In this research document we try to examine a sample of stay-at-home women, who are members of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, by answering the following question:

What it the role of "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page in marketing handcrafted products for stay-at-home women in Algeria?

Based on this query, we pose the following questions:

- 1. What are the habits and patterns of stay-at-home women in browsing the 'H'rair Biskra' Facebook page, and what are the motives laying behind their use of the page in marketing their handmade products?
- 2. What are the employed methods by the page members in advertising their handmade products?
- 3. Did the 'H'rair Biskra' Facebook page help in the process of handmade products pricing, which are being offered by stay-at-home women?
- 4. What are the methods provided by the page for its members in distributing and delivering the advertised products to the customers, and how did it contribute to increase the product demand?

1-Study Significances:

- **1-1- Importance of the Study:** The relevance of this study lies in the following:
- The Algerian stay-at-home woman role purpose and the development of a brand-new self-image, for a greater contribution in both local and national economy;
- This topic is also significant for stay-at-home women marketers, who use the Facebook site frequently;
- The domain of marketing is considered as one important up-to-date topic for this social class, through social networking platforms;
- Providing researchers with results and material essentially gathered from exact statistics and information concerning stay-at-home women activities, and what they make as profits directly from the Facebook social networking site.;
- Women lobbying parties who are interested in encouraging women to work and providing them with the necessary opportunities, specifically to a large faction of stay-at-home women; pushing them more towards this field;
- Results of this study are also essential for web-based content developers, by helping them find new technical formulas and solutions that contribute effectively in the process of marketing, precisely for stay-at-home women.
- 1-2- Study Objectives: In this study, we aim to reach the following goals:
- Defining the habits and patterns of stay-at-home women when using the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page in their business marketing process, regarding their handcrafted products;
- Determining the motivation(s) behind the use of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page by women, in order to market their handcrafted goods;

- Describing the helping factors in "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page which could enhance the trading and selling of handcrafted products by the members of the page;
- Figuring out the methods used by members of "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page in marketing their handmade products:
- Specifying the way by which the examinees could set up a price for various handmade products and goods, offered by stay-at-home women via the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page;
- Characterizing the ways and means by which the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page is helping members in distributing their products and delivering them to the customers:
- Providing informative details about the role of "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page in an aggregate demand for products marketed by stay-at-home women.

2- Defining Study Concepts:

2-1- Social Networks:

Also known as social media tools, social communication networks, social networks, can be defined as: "Built websites on the Internet, which allow individuals to provide a preview of sorts of their lives, and offer an opportunity to communicate with registered users, as well as express personal opinions or community points of view through the process of communication. The nature of socializing changes heavily from one site to another."

Social networks are also "A group of sites on the World Wide Web, which appeared with the Web 2.0, allowing communication and socialization between individuals within a virtual society, whose members share a common interest, pertinence or relationships (Country, school, university, company, etc.). Communication between users can be achieved through messages, or accessing

personal profiles in order to learn about connections' offered information and whereabouts. It is an efficient way to socially communicate between individuals, whether they are real-life friends or long-distance relationships." (BenKarran, 2015).

2-2 E-Marketing:

Short for Marketing through the Internet; "Which basically relies on the World Wide Web in the process of every single marketing activity such as advertising, selling, pricing, products and services distribution, market research and new products design."

2-3 Product:

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines the 'product' as follows: "A product is defined as a bundle of attributes (features, functions, benefits, and uses) capable of exchange or use; usually a mix of tangible and intangible forms. Thus, a product may be an idea, a physical entity (a good), or a service, or any combination of the three. It exists for the purpose of exchange in the satisfaction of individual and organizational objectives. While the term "products and services" is occasionally used, product is a term that encompasses both goods and services.", "As for material goods, a process of filling, packaging and trademarking is essential, as well as operations of data inputs, product components, weighing, how to use directives, instructions on optimal product conservation, etc." (Rahli, 2015)

As explained above, a product can be any exchangeable good, service or tangible idea, which may be obtained by the end consumer via monetary compensation. It is also any material and physical good that can be accessible to the client, or every benefit and gratification that the end buyer is expecting by being on the receiving end of the sale. (Azzam, 2008)

Procedural definition of handcrafted products:

Handmade/handcrafted products describe several products and merchandises whose production process is essentially dependent on craft and handcraft goods and services provided by stay-at-home women, from food, clothing, decorative apparatuses and simple handmade tools bearing creativity and art, which can spark public interest and can be the target of a selected audience, depending on the nature of the product or the craft. (El-Mahmudy, 2011)

3-Study Methodological Procedures:

3-1-Study Type and Methodology:

Exploratory research methods are resorted to when in lack of sufficient information and knowledge, regarding a phenomenon or a considered problem. This also occurs in the absence of data which is paramount to the issue solving process or certain past problematics, since not enough research work has been accomplished on the study topic. Exploratory researches are conducted primarily to gain a better understanding of the study problematic (khawandeh, 2018-2019), "By establishing a precise definition of the problem or developing research hypothesis and research queries destined for future study references, as well as determining variables linked to the problematic and categorizing it into independent and dependent variables" (Zolfaker, 2009).

This study falls within the exploratory research spectrum, and the survey methodology is the most appropriate method to attain the best scientific results on our topic. The survey method can be described as: "every questionnaire studying a phenomenon in its actual present state, in order to characterize it and specify its aspects and determine the existing relationships between its elements...", (BenMorseli, 2010)"The survey methodology can either be an on-the-field type (questionnaire) or documented." (Deliou, 2014)

In our study, we relied on the survey method on the basis that it is one of several descriptive methods, which is essentially independent in its own style and means, as it helped us in both the describing and the interpretation processes. It is also a useful tool for determining the circumstances and relationships existing within the studied variables.

3-2- Data Collection Tools:

• Questionnaire:

Every survey method is unique regarding its tools, which are usually preferred to be used; when analyzing and determining study results. Typically, more than one tool may be used in a single method and this depends on the researcher and his ability to develop those tools to serve later in his study and research. So in our study we trusted the electronic questionnaire as our main survey method, directed towards stay-at-home women, who make various types of products to be marketed electronically; this is to assess the actual state of realities regarding the roles of the Facebook social media platform, as well as the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page specifically in the marketing process of these products. We also aim to identify some factors that may or may not affect their marketing process performance via the mentioned platform.

This questionnaire is used as a means to collect data, in which the researcher directs specific questions towards the questioners, in regards to the subject of our study; thus, obtaining raw data to be analyzed and used later on in the study. (Kazem, 2008)

On that basis, we set up a questionnaire form, composed of a group of twenty-six (26) open-ended and closed-ended questions, divided onto four (04) main themes, which contain subsidiary questions related to our study. This questionnaire is available on Google Drive, via the following URL:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/10H1WJpLBxWseV-

%20G15UxlbFlxeqtYFj7LMfBtTg-fHso/edit

This form was prepared in order to reach members of the study sample.

After retrieving the filled forms and importing and dumping the obtained data, the study sample was evaluated on the basis of its variables as the following:

Table 02 Distribution of the studied sample according to intermediate variables

Variable	Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
	18 to 24 y/o	22	36.7%
Age	25 to 35 y/o	26	43.3%
	35 y/o and above	12	20%
	Middle school	7	11.7%
Level of	High school	21	35%
Education	Academic (University)	32	53.3%
	Single	31	51.6%
Social Status	Married	28	46.6%
	Divorced	1	2%
I:i	Below Standards	20	33.3%
Living Standard	Decent	30	50%
(Quality of Life)	Excellent	10	16.7%
	Less than a year to 3 years	26	45%
Craft Experience	3 to 5 years	14	24%
(Years)	5 years and above	18	31%
TOTAL		60	100 %

4-Study Results:

After conducting the exploratory on-the-field study about the role of "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page in marketing handmade products by stay-at-home women, we collected an array of results, which are presented as follows:

- 4-1- First theme results; which defines stay-at-home women's habits and patterns, belonging to the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page:
- 41% of the questionees have joined the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page a year (01) or two (02) ago. The higher their level of education; the longer the period of their membership is. This period also increases for single members of the page, when compared to married and divorced members of the same page. We also noted

that an unsteady, low quality of life goes with longer membership periods, whereas both age groups and craft experience variables have no effect on our study results.

- Usually 48% of the questionees use the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page intermittently, while 46% of them are on the same page consistently. The higher their educational level, the more persistent their presence on the page is. We also observed that the page is more used by single women, when compared to married and divorced members of the page. The higher their craft experience, the more frequent their use of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page is, specifically on a daily basis. We similarly observed that a lower quality of life (standard of living) means more presence and use of the page, increasing their activities in order to gain more product exposure; thus, reaching a higher number of users. The age variable has no effect on this result.
- 86% of the questionees prefer to browse the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page in the evening period of the day, statistical data shows that a big portion of the members choose to use and check the page during the evenings, in a unanimous fashion. This is probably due to the fact that evenings are usually a period of resting and inactivity for stay-at-home women, whom are generally engaged in household tasks, chores or handcrafts during the morning period. This leads to the evenings being a favorable time of the day, for stay-at-home women to use the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, leaving the rest of the day to a whole another set of activities, such as products creation and orders arrangements for customers. We observed that studied variables have no effects on the obtained results.
- 55% of the questionees spend an hour or less browsing the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, this is valid for younger members of the page specifically, whereas older members (35 and above) spend at least two (02) hours on the same page. We

concluded that the older the members; the longer their presence on the page is. The rest of the studied variables have no effect on our results.

- 80% of the questionees prefer to use smartphones to browse the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page. The rest of the variables have no effect on the obtained results.
- In our sample study of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, members tend to browse the page in order to be acquainted with anything new regarding handmade products, trying to keep up with every development on this specific topic. This result is represented by 24% of the questionees, while members belonging to an age group between 25 and 35 years old prefer to use the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page solely as a tool for exposing their products and gain more attraction from new members and followers. According to the quality of life variable, we find that most of the respondents use the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page motivated by the need to know more about handcrafted products and again; attract more users; to eventually convince them to make the sale. Based on the latter we conclude that the study variables did not affect this result.
- 4-2- Second theme results; regarding the methods used by women members of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, to promote their handmade products:
- 28% of stay-at-home women frequently use the Facebook social networking platform to promote and expose their handmade products and goods. This result is exemplified specifically by the group of ages of 25 to 35 and above, whereas the 18-24 years old members use the Facebook platform only occasionally, in order to advertise their products. This leads to the evident fact that the older the users are, the more frequent is their use of the Facebook platform for promoting their handmade products is, and according to the members' social status, we notice that married questionees use their profiles frequently to promote their products,

whereas single members only tend to use Facebook on a reduced basis. We also noticed that the quality of life variant does not affect our results.

- 90% of the respondents, members of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, use static images sponsored ads, to boost the sale of their products. A very considerable effort is put into taking the perfect photograph for the product, in a professional fashion, to give the best of representations and increase product desirability on one hand, and to attract a larger number of customers on the other hand. Study variables did not affect our results and it is established that the questionees were positively adamant about this method of product advertising, all throughout different study variables.
- A good image / shot helps in product representation and advertising for 52% of the questionees, to promote their handmade products via the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, provided the consensus of various study samples. According to study variables which did not affect the results, we assert that good quality of product image representation is an essential aspect of promoting hand-crafted products made by stay-at-home women, members of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page. A good shot is dependent on the tools used to take the picture; camera quality and brand, angle of shot, etc. increasing the product attraction to entice the customer, as it is a known fact for any other product. Purchasing power is another pivotal factor when dealing with product imagery and attractiveness, especially given that most of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page members belong socially and financially to the middle class.
- 48% of the questionees are responsive and interact rather positively to promoted handmade products, in "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page and it is depicted via their "likes" ratio.

- 52% of the questionees assert that the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page is the most effective page on Facebook when it comes to the business of marketing their handmade products.
- 4-3- Third theme results; about clarifying "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page role in product pricing and the increasing product demand:
- Study results indicate that there is an abundant diversification in promoted products in "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page, most importantly traditional foods and pastries, both modern and traditional, by a 24% rate of study sample questionees.
- "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page helps stay-at-home women in the process of product pricing by a percentage of 33%, in order to fix a fair price for their handmade products through customer request, while 30% of respondents determine products prices by comparing them against other products prices and quality.
- 80% of the questionees find that influence and persuasion methods used to promote and advertise their products on the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page sensibly increase traffic towards the page, specifically targeting hand crafted products made by stay-at-home members of the page.
- Amidst the most common reasons keeping users from being farther interested into the products provided by questionees being the huge similarities in different products, as well as the increasing concurrence between the respondents, at a 44% rate. This has been established relying on the years of craft experience variable.
- 4-4- Fourth theme results; treating the methods of distribution of products made by stay-at-home women, and the approaches adopted to deliver the products to the end-customer:
- The "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page has helped 70% of its stay-at-home members who promote their handcrafted products via the mentioned page; in elaborating effective ways in dealing with product packaging and conservation.

Members of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page significantly benefited a clear increase in product demand, and they are kept up-to-date regarding what is brand new; packaging and conservation-wise, thus preserving their precious products against any perishability.

- 27% of single questionees rely on the direct sale method, while married respondents would rather count on home sales as a way to distribute their handmade products. Accordingly, we noticed that the single social status means that members would rather rely on more than one method to distribute and sell their products, as opposed to married questionees; who count on indoor-sales as a main method for selling. This significantly hinders their marketing process rendering it less effective.
- Based on our results, we found that 62% of the questionees count on the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page partially; in marketing and promoting their handmade products. This is due to the importance of the social network platform in helping women, whom try to promote and gain more attraction for their handcrafted products, especially the Facebook site. This is why especially stay-at-home women use the platform.

Conclusion:

When dealing with stay-at-home women, members of "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page habits and routines, in their process of promoting their products, we found that most of the questionnaire respondents joined the page within a period of time of one (01) to two (02) years ago. Their use of the page occurrence ranges from intermittent to frequent. Members of the "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page prefer the evening period of the day for browsing, spending between one (01) and two (02) hours daily as a peak time value. Members of the page tend to use their smartphones, for a faster browsing experience as well as to be kept up-to-date about

the topic of handcrafts. Questioners' responses were not affected neither by the age nor the years of craft experience variables.

Members of "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page use the static image advertising method in order to promote and gain wider exposure for their handcrafted products. Those sponsored posts are enriched by attractive portrayals via professional shootings of the products, in such a way to get regular end-customer feedback, increasing the demand for the products; thanks to a good presentation added-value.

"H'rair Biskra" Facebook page has helped its members in the pricing process, by defining a fair price for the available products on the page, as well as qualifying several products of the same type, according to customers demand. "H'rair Biskra" Facebook page offers for its marketing members several methods and ways to deal with their products distribution process, to eventually make the delivery to the customer; including the direct sale approach as well as the hand-to-hand delivery system, between the product marketer and the end-customer.

"H'rair Biskra" Facebook page has greatly contributed its questionees members in elaborating efficient ways to package and preserve their handmade products, which positively increased the demand for their creations, since they are well-maintained, cleaner and safer to use.

Throughout all previously obtained results, it is evident that social networking platforms play a significant role in helping vulnerable society classes such as stay-at-home women. They were able to improve their quality of life and prove themselves within their local environments, which contrasts with the global nature of the social networking tools. This group of society has been able to create a new source of income within their aptitudes, thanks to the social network platforms; which granted them access to an uncharted territory of business and financial

opportunities, even inside their simple habitats, and allowed for little known handmade products to be recognized and become commodities of need and demand.

However, this does not prevent the emergence of obstacles and difficulties facing this specific social class, including what is associated with:

- The technical aspect: as it is a well-known fact, the women in question do not take full advantage of the technological medium offered to their use, which could be a potential yet effective factor in facilitating product marketing.
- The social aspect: study results show that married women encounter more complications in delivering their products to the end-customers, this is due to their limited reach to every segment of society in a comfortable fashion, without falling into social sensitivities and bad clichés.
- The institutional aspect: the studied social class has yet to receive any form of help from authorized government administrations, such as the Arts & Crafts Chamber or the Trade Directorate, which makes identifying them as marketers much harder and ambiguous, especially in the absenteeism of any associative and cooperative framework that can develop their marketing activity, and refine their professionalism. In theory, this could increase women marketers' commercial skills, even perfecting their use of new media and in general, their technological communication abilities in the marketing process.

Therefore, it is imperative that every party involved has to play its own role fully, to bypass any of the mentioned difficulties and guarantee that this social class has the means to become more powerful, for themselves, their families and for the society as a whole.

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