

## The Role of Social Selling in Customer Loyalty :Case of the Traders of the Wilaya of Batna

### دور البيع الاجتماعي في ولاء الزبون: حالة تجار ولاية باتنة

|  |   |                                 |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Kahina Berkoune<br>كهينة بركون<br><a href="mailto:kahina.berkoune@univ-batna.dz">kahina.berkoune@univ-batna.dz</a> | Information and<br>communication sciences | University of Batna 1 / Algeria |
| DOI : 10.46315/1714-013-001-46   |   |                                 |

Received: 29/06/2023 Accepted: 06/01/ 2024 Published : 16/ 01/ 2024

\*\*

#### Abstract (English):

With the digitalization of the world, organizations are opting for new information and communication technologies to communicate with what surrounds their sector of activity.

Social selling is one of these new techniques that allow any organization to keep in touch with its target. This new form of communication consists of using digital social networks to sell, it is also a way of building customer loyalty. During the present study, we dealt with the role of social selling in customer loyalty among Batna merchants in order to measure the impact of digital social networks on consumer purchasing behavior. Through an online questionnaire, we have reached the results that confirm that social selling actually influences customer loyalty.

**Keywords:** Social selling; digital social networks; loyalty; customers; consumer behavior.

#### ملخص:

مع رقمنة العالم ، تختار المنظمات تقنيات المعلومات والاتصالات الجديدة للتواصل مع ما يحيط بقطاع نشاطها. البيع الاجتماعي هو أحد هذه التقنيات الجديدة التي تسمح لأي منظمة بالبقاء على اتصال مع هدفها. يتكون هذا الشكل الجديد من الاتصال من استخدام الشبكات الاجتماعية الرقمية للبيع ، وهو أيضا وسيلة لبناء ولاء العملاء. خلال هذه الدراسة ، تناولنا دور البيع الاجتماعي في ولاء العملاء بين تجار ولاية باتنة من أجل قياس تأثير الشبكات الاجتماعية الرقمية على سلوك شراء المستهلك. من خلال استبيان عبر الإنترنت ، توصلنا إلى النتائج التي تؤكد أن البيع الاجتماعي يؤثر بالفعل على ولاء العملاء.

كلمات مفتاحية: البيع الاجتماعي؛ الشبكات الاجتماعية الرقمية؛ الولاء؛ العملاء؛ سلوك المستهلك.

\*\*

## 1- Introduction

Communication occupies a considerable place in all sectors, especially in the commercial sector which is one of the elements of the success of an organization. Today, communication is not considered as a simple means of exchanging information, but it has become the key element in the proper functioning of an organization's services, mainly thanks to digital social networks that make a strong contribution to maintaining good relations with the target audience.

Social selling is a new form of communication adopted by organizations in order to be in direct contact with the target, it has become an essential element in improving the image and increasing the notoriety of any organization, it allows sales representatives to target their prospects accurately, to establish good relationships as well as a relationship of trust thanks to existing connections and networks which are none other than digital social networks which have become one of the most powerful tools thanks to their functions of sharing messages and information, it is a new ideal communication channel to reach a large target.

As defined by Cyndie Guez in her article, "social selling, Sometimes called social selling in French, represents the fact for a company to use social networks for the purpose of making direct sales, often called lead" (ADAMS & Hazlehurst, 2015).

Social selling simply consists of using the tools that are social media to develop strategies consisting of building relationships, which the most savvy sales professionals have always put at the heart of their priorities that is why it is important to include digital social networks in its sales process in order to be close to the consumer and have a participatory audience, which is important in order to maintain its place in the market. According to Sophie Attia "Using social networks also means that you are naturally on the lookout for what is happening in your market or your sector" (ATTIA, 2019).

An organization needs public engagement to give life to this kind of social platform of which it is a part, "social media are based first and foremost on engagement, co-creation and image enhancement" (DUPIN, 2010). Therefore, they are mainly based on the creation, development or strengthening of notoriety, otherwise the communication activities initiated by the organization cannot function and achieve their communication objectives.

For an organization it is necessary to have active customers for the smooth running of sales, customer loyalty is a process not to be neglected to have a positive feedback.

Before arriving at the loyalty stage, it is important to sort out to know which are the most successful customers to target, "the objective of segmentation is to identify relatively homogeneous groups of customers for whom it is a question of developing a specific world of action" (DE CERTAINES & CHAUBET, 2021).

Identifying customer expectations serves to guide production because not all customers are alike and do not have the same needs, knowing these differences is necessary to design and implement loyalty programs different and adapted by identified customer groups.

Indeed, integrating social selling into your marketing strategy is not negligible, especially because it is an essential way to reach your target at the lowest cost, because it is true that advertising on digital social networks costs much less than television advertising or other traditional media. In addition, it is a way that allows direct and two-way communication between merchant customers.

The merchants of the wilaya of Batna have noticed that digital social networks can allow them to have more customers, which is why they have adopted the method of social selling.

In order to know the influence of social selling on customer loyalty, we have opted for visits to the various merchants of the wilaya of Batna and it is at this level that our concern is about the role of social selling in customer loyalty, in our research we aim to answer the following problem:

What is the role of social selling in customer loyalty?

And in order to better understand our topic and provide more information, we have extracted the following secondary questions from the problematic:

-Are digital social networks a method to retain customers?

-Is it essential for Batna merchants to be on digital social networks?

D'après GIROUX Sylvain et TREMBLAY Ginette, l'hypothèse est une « Prédiction émise par le chercheur quant aux résultats de sa recherche » (GIROUX & TREMBLAY, 2009, p. 44)

As far as we are concerned, our research is structured around three hypotheses that need to be verified at the end of our study to answer the question of our problem. So here are the three hypotheses proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: Social selling positively influences customer loyalty among Batna merchants;

- Hypothesis 2: Social selling facilitates communication with the target;

- Hypothesis 3: Social networks make it possible to have a loyal clientele.

## 2- Methods

Our main goal in carrying out this study is to deepen and apply our acquired knowledge on the subject of social selling or selling on digital social networks. Our objectives are also to discover the relationship that exists between digital social networks and consumer purchasing behavior, determine the importance of the adoption of social selling by Batna merchants to retain customers, know the level of use of digital social networks among merchants and consumers to communicate and discover if the use of social networks influences consumer purchasing behavior.

All researchers must be guided and supervised by a theoretical approach; the latter aims to obtain results in the analysis of the phenomenon treated.

For the case of our study, we opted for the managerial approach, it was defined by Maurice Imbert as "an approach built on information, arguments, listening and dialogue carried and animated by the entire managerial line to give meaning to decisions and mobilize teams at the service of the economic and social performance of the company. It translates into management actions to involve and engage employees in the implementation of projects and decisions" (N'GAHANE, 1996 p. 8).

Our choice was focused on this study because we considered it appropriate to our theme and will allow us to analyze the role of social selling on customer loyalty.

Using a method in your research allows you to gather information about the topic being treated, so it is important to follow an adequate method with the theme to achieve reliable results.

According to Maurice Angers, the method is "a set of techniques that guides the development of research that guides the scientific approach" (ANGERS, 1997, p. 40).

We opted for a quantitative analysis method because we considered it adequate to our theme "the role of social selling in customer loyalty" and in order to measure the influence of RSNs on consumer behavior and analyze the change that social selling can bring.

According to Angers "The quantitative method aims first of all to measure the phenomenon of the study. The measurements can be ordinal of the larger or smaller type or numerical with the use of calculations" (ANGERS, 2014, p. 60).

Any research method has different techniques that are the object of carrying out the study. These scientific techniques allow the investigator to collect information concerning his investigation.

According to Madeleine Grawitz, technique is "the set of investigative processes and instruments used methodologically in order to collect data in reality" (GRAWITZ, 2001).

Regarding our work, we have chosen to carry it out using the questionnaire technique that seems to us the most appropriate for our research objective.

Our questionnaire consists of thirty-three (33) questions diversified between closed and open and which are related to our research topic. We did it with Google forms, so it's an online questionnaire.

According to the framework of our research, we divided our questionnaire into four axes:

Axis 1: personal data of our respondents;

Axis 2: information relating to the use of digital social networks;

Axis 3: the degree of customer consultation for merchants' pages on RSNs;

Axis 4: knowledge of social selling.

The study population "corresponds to the set of all individuals who have specific characteristics in relation to the objectives of the study" (DEPELTEAU, 2000, p. 213).

Our study population is composed of all Internet users (customers) who consult the digital social networks of merchants in the wilaya of Batna.

Sampling has been defined by Maurice Angers as being "all the operations making it possible to select a subset of a population in order to constitute a representative sample of the targeted population" (ANGERS, 1997, p. 100).

We formulated our sample of non-probabilistic type which refers to a type of sampling where the selection of a population is done in a non-random way. It is a quick, easy and inexpensive way to obtain data. However, there is no way to estimate the probability that an element will be included in the sample because the elements are chosen arbitrarily.

As for our study, we opted for an identification of a study population not an accidental sampling which was defined by Gotteland and Haon as "a sample in which individuals are included who are easily accessible and ready to cooperate" (GOTTELAND & HAON, 2005, p. 105).

That is to say, the respondents are selected because of their accessibility and because they are easier to recruit for the study.

### 3- Results

#### ▪ *Univariate analysis*

This analysis led us to interpret the results of our study in a general way; during this step we analyzed the variables one by one in order to measure each variable individually.

We have noticed from these tables that our sample was varied, we had responses from different categories of people, regarding personal data we have female and male respondents, different age categories, level of education and profession, etc. Indeed, this allowed us to draw conclusions about our study; however it is important to clarify that we cannot afford to advance our results which are representative of the general population due to the low number of responses and the underrepresentation of all age categories.

However, we can say that in general, digital social networks influence the consumer's purchasing behavior, which is why it is important for Batna merchants to be there and adopt the social selling method to retain their customers.

- We have noticed that the number of women who answered the questionnaire is higher compared to the number of men with a rate of 88.2%;

- we note that the most present age category is between 16 and 26 years old with a rate of 80%;

- We found that the most common level of education among our sample is the university level with a rate of 87.1%;

- The study shows that 74.1% of the people who answered our questionnaire are students;
- The majority of our sample is single;
- We noticed that 91.8% of our respondents do not fit the category of children;
- The largest number of our respondents lives in Batna rural area, with a rate of 62.4%;
- We found that 38.8% of our sample prefer to shop with friends;
- With regard to registration on digital social networks, we noticed that all the people who answered our questionnaire are registered on at least one digital social network.
- We noticed that the preferred social network of our sample is Facebook because 45.9% chose it among the other networks;
- Our sample spent time daily on digital social networks;
- The majority of people who answered our questionnaire, that is, 95.3%, declare that they have become aware of the presence of Batna shops on digital social networks;
- 91.8% of our sample say that they subscribe to web shops;
- Regarding the nature of the shops to which they subscribe, among the choices we have proposed, clothing is the one that comes back the most with 38.8%;
- The respondents of our questionnaire follow the news of shops on digital social networks, indeed 90.6% answered yes to this question;
- 83.5% of our sample react to the publications of the pages of the shops;
- Mainly, our respondents are content with just likes as a reaction to publications;
- Our sample does not often consult the pages of the shops, about 30.6% of the respondents sometimes answered this question;
- 63.5% of our sample has already placed an order on a store's digital social networks;
- 85.9% of our sample chose physical stores;
- In general, our respondents believe that it is important for Batna merchants to be on digital social networks because it facilitates the purchase to customers and allows merchants to have more visibility and more customers;
- 89.4% of our respondents affirm that the presence of shops on digital social networks contributes to customer loyalty;
- Regarding the influence of digital social networks on the customer's purchasing behavior, 38.8% of our sample feel influenced by RSNs;
- To find out what are the advantages of social selling, we asked our sample, the answers that came back the most were the ease of selling and the increase in the notoriety of the shops. However, the advantage that was cited by most of the people who answered our questionnaire was the fact of avoiding the displacement of customers;

- As for the disadvantages of social selling, the majority of our respondents do not find it a disadvantage, nevertheless a category of respondents finds that the quality of the product remains to be improved in addition to the scams that may occur in the purchase action;

- Regarding the knowledge of social selling, we asked this question in order to find out if our sample has already become aware of this new method, indeed 94.1% answered yes to this question;

- 92.2% affirms that social selling is a good method of buying all types of products;

▪ Bivariate analysis

After investigating and collecting data concerning our research theme entitled the role of social selling in customer loyalty among Batna merchants, we came to results that we collected from our sample from a questionnaire where we sought to measure the influence of digital social networks on customer loyalty.

Following the analysis made with the SPSS 26 software, by relating two variables in order to see if there is a relationship between the two, we extract ten variables having a relationship.

First of all, we noticed that the age variable influences the frequency of use of digital social networks in our sample, the purchasing behavior among consumers and the contribution of digital social networks to customer loyalty, show that it is important to define the age categories representative of our communication objective. Then, with regard to the gender variable, it has an influence on the purchase preference between physical stores and online stores, the use of social selling as a loyalty method and on the variable that determines which stores have more interaction, this relationship proves that it is important to determine with whom we should communicate. We also analyzed the variable profession, and we deduced that its influence relates to the purchase and the influence of consumer behavior. Regarding the variable concerning the place of residence, it only influences the frequency of consultation of the pages of the shops on the digital social networks. Finally, we have found that the marital status has an influence on the completion of the purchase.

#### 4- Discussion

After interpreting and analyzing the results of our survey of customers consulting the digital social networks of Batna merchants, we can now talk about the existing relationship between our assumptions and our results.

Regarding the results relating to social selling and customer loyalty, we found that the use of digital social networks in the marketing strategy positively influences consumer behavior, which is the case for Batna merchants since 95.3% of our study population knows the shops of Batna merchants on digital social networks and 91.8% are subscribers. According to this research and what

our sample thinks, being present on digital social networks is a significant strategy for a remarkable improvement in the merchant customer relationship since 89.4% declare that the presence of Batna merchants on digital social networks is important and contributes strongly to customer loyalty.

Indeed, it is important for merchants to adopt the social selling technique to communicate directly with their customers since it is a modern, elaborate tool and facilitates interaction between merchants and customers. Recall that 92.2% of our sample believes that integrating social selling into its loyalty strategy is nowadays essential for customer loyalty and increasing sales.

From there, we can share the results that have led us to say that social selling positively influences customer loyalty.

Regarding the results relating to the use of digital social networks to influence the purchasing behavior of consumers, we noticed during our survey that the totality of our sample is registered on at least one social network, and given that social selling consists of using digital social networks to sell, we asked our study population if they have ever ordered an item via a store's digital social networks and the answer was yes with a percentage of 63.5% , which leads us to say that this method does not only retain the consumer but it also influences the purchasing behavior. However, it is necessary to remember that despite the presence of merchants on social networks, consumers nevertheless prefer to buy in physical stores since 85.9% chose it over buying online.

According to our results, what is preponderant to achieve customer loyalty and have an important influence on the consumer's purchasing behavior is to integrate social selling into its sales process. However, among our respondents, we have those who exposed the risk of scam; just seeing the articles on a screen is not necessarily enough for some.

In general, the majority of consumers are in favor of merchants being on digital social networks, so we can say that social selling positively influences customer loyalty and social networks, on the other hand, influence consumer purchasing behavior.

## **5- Conclusion**

Digital social networks are only at the beginning of their heyday and are really calling into question the communication strategies of the largest organizations. Throughout our research which focuses on the role of social selling in customer loyalty among Batna merchants, we have been able to feel that this phenomenon is taking an increasingly considerable place in the market.

During this study, we found that the use of digital social networks is essential for a successful marketing strategy. The merchants of Batna have adopted this method in order to be close to consumers but above all to be able to influence their purchasing behaviors. By carrying out our research we were able to validate our hypotheses which allowed us to say that social selling must be



integrated into the sales process. Especially since using this method the risk rate of failure is low because the financial risk is not included since it is a method that costs nothing.

As we have seen throughout our research, it has become essential for Batna merchants to be present on digital social networks since it is here that customers are located. Subscribers are a power that many do not yet know the value, it is these subscribers who become loyal customers.

Facebook Instagram We noticed during our survey that quite a few merchants in Batna use digital social networks to sell, however, the two most used networks are Facebook and Instagram which have more interaction. They have adopted the social selling method for almost three years, a period that allowed them to analyze the changes to come to the conclusion that social selling is a revolutionary method in the loyalty process.

Thanks to social selling, customers feel more valued because they also have a say. The results that we have reached after our investigation have led us to conclude that consumers find the presence of Batna merchants on digital social networks important and say that they influence their shopping behavior and make them more loyal to certain stores.

What we remember from our research is that the integration of social selling into a communication strategy to communicate directly with the target is today one of the best methods to adopt to keep its customers in the long term.

Being holders of the current research that focuses on social selling, we have acquired knowledge that allows us to give some recommendations to Batna merchants present on digital social networks.

- Highlight the exchange with the community and not provide only material without taking into account feedback and comments;
- Offering a quality product for everyone to wear is also important, to improve the image of the shop;
- Having creativity should not be neglected to succeed in social selling, users need to have new products so that they don't get tired easily;
- Organize raffles for the most loyal customers to motivate others to become one.

\*\*\*\*

## 6- The bibliography

- Angers, M. (1997). Practical Introduction to the Methodology of Human Sciences. Algiers: casbah
- Angers, M. (2014). Practical Introduction to The Methodology of the Human Sciences. Quebec: CEC.
- Attia, S. (2019). Social Selling. Paris: Dunod.
- De Certaines, P. E., & Chaubet, A. (2021). Inbound Marketing. Lyon: Emlyon.
- Depelteau, F. (2000). The Approach of a Research in Human Sciences. Quebec: Boeck.
- Dupin, A. (2010). Communicate on Social Networks. Paris: Flyp.
- Giroux, S., & Tremblay, G. (2009). Methodology of the Human Sciences. Quebec: Pearson.
- Gotteland, D., & Haon, C. (2005). Develop a New Product. France: Pearson.
- Grawitz, M. (2001). Methods of Social Sciences. Paris: Dalloz.
- N'gahane, P. (1996). Management Dictionary. Paris: Armaund Colin.