

The Influence of Social Networks on Corporate E-Reputation: Examples of e-reputation crises

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Abstract:

Social networks have become among the most developed, simple, and free tools for communication. People use it daily for different personal or professional reasons. Although it offers new challenges and opportunities, companies have become mindful of its significance and are paying more attention to their presence on social networks in order to protect their online reputation. A single negative comment about their products or services, no matter if it is true or not, can influence the decisions of consumers and ruin their reputations, which is the most valuable asset for the firm.

Any theoretical concept can be easily understood with the help of cases and examples.

This paper discusses three cases of scandals or boycotts against multinational companies where social networks have had a direct impact on public opinion and have impacted the company's reputation, as the opinions of netizens are heard and such information goes viral.

Key Words : *Corporate e-reputation, social networks, corporate e-reputation crisis, case studies.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the internet and the evolution of the web has led people to become much closer and connected regardless of where they may be physically located; it has virtually eliminated geographic barriers. Furthermore, people have become addicted to their devices, and it is considered weird to not be connected. According to statistics from April 2021, in the last 12 months, global internet users increased by 7.6% (330 million), reaching 4.72 billion people, representing 60% of the world's population (KEMP, 2021).

The Internet is currently the largest computer network on our planet (Puspita & Rohedi, 2018). It has become an essential element of communication and information (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2013). For that, Castells (2002) states that developing without the Internet today would be like industrializing without electricity yesterday. The benefits of the Internet and the advent of Web 2.0 have led to the success of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on, which represent a free virtual space that allows people to stay connected with friends in a fast and effortless way. It also serves as a place where users can share opinions, upload, and download digital materials such as photos and videos, to discuss, chat, retrieve information, and ask for suggestions (Di Pietro & Pantano, 2012). People's communication styles have changed fundamentally. It is possible now for unknown people all over the world to interact with each other and build friendships (Schultz & Peltier, 2013).

People must recognize that the digital revolution and the advent of free and accessible tools mean that anyone can now create and publish content on the web. These functions are no longer reserved for professionals or limited to universities, industries, or governments. Researchers have begun discussing the participatory or collaborative web (Grębosz & Otto, 2013) (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012), which gives consumers more power to express their opinions with freedom and leads to behavioral changes such as becoming more demanding in meeting their needs, spending more time online seeking information about products they want, and communicating with others about their purchase experiences. They play influencers' roles by posting opinions that can be positive or negative.

Also, companies cannot turn a blind eye to the necessity of the growing popularity of social networks on the web, as creating and maintaining an identity on social networks then becomes an essential and effective pillar for their business strategy. To meet consumer needs (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011), they must take advantage of the promotional tools provided by new technologies and not exclude themselves from opportunities that exist in the digital realm. They can reach their clients at any time and any place; they just need to be present where they are. Social networking sites are still developing and still attracting people every day; this remarkable development is illustrated by Castells, who says: "Who wants to live in society at this time and in this place will necessarily be confronted with the social

network since we are well and truly entered the Internet Galaxy” (Ltifi, 2014).

Hence, the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread use of social networks offer small businesses many opportunities to promote their businesses and compete with big companies (Sadiku-Dushi, 2017).

Marketers must integrate digital marketing into their strategies; it is no longer acceptable that a company is not present online. They should be aware of the use of social networks as a platform to communicate and share simply and profitably.

Most research has focused on the impact of the online environment on companies. This study discusses one of the most important intangible resources for organizations; it is structured as follows: First, based on the literature review, we identify perspectives on e-reputation, followed by presenting social networks and background exploring the influence of social networks on e-reputation. Second, we illustrate that literature by presenting examples of cases where social networks directly impact a company’s reputation. We then offer a conclusion.

2. Perspectives on E-Reputation

According to Henry Ford, “The two most important things in any company do not appear in its balance sheet: its reputation and its people.” (Klewes & Wreschniok , 2009). Veh, Göbel, & Vogel (2019) note that after reviewing 5,885 articles about corporate reputation, “there is no agreement on one definition.”

Some authors state that corporate reputation can be characterized as the aggregate impression of the company’s previous activities and assumptions about its future actions, taking into account its productivity comparable to the fundamental competitors (Fombrun & Rindova, 2001) (Walker, 2010).

Before the information technology revolution, comments were based on word of mouth; negative feedback would be repeated in circles of family and friends, but now, with the evolution of the web and the sharing of information, a single comment can be visible to thousands of people. The business environment has become increasingly complex and out of control. Jeff Bezos, the CEO of Amazon, sums up the new reputation challenges posed by Web 2.0 very well when he says: “If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell six friends but if you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends “ (Newman, 2015).

Since the advent of Web 2.0, the netizen has shifted from being a receiver of information to being a content publisher. His opinions and ideas are heard more often than at any time, and he becomes an actor and a consumer at the same time.

Within this digital ERA, where the company must defend its reputation, the term “e-reputation” was used for the first time by (Chun & Davies, 2001) when they stated: “this reputation element that is specifically derived from electronic contacts “; according to GFII, e-reputation encompasses reputation and the internet.

In addition, corporate e-reputation takes different names depending on the authors:

digital identity, cyber reputation, Web-reputation, digital reputation, or internet reputation, but represents the same reality. Corporate e-reputation is none other than corporate reputation from the Internet in the digital age, which means a set of information shared on the Internet about a subject for a certain company, including its employees, products, and services via different media.

The objective of corporate e-reputation is to manage a company's presence on all digital platforms so that they can provide a digital identity that the user can understand (Fueyo, 2015). It is because of it that a company can differentiate itself from its competitors and generate revenue (Rosoor, 2012).

Furthermore, the internet has created a transaction link between companies and their stakeholders, who have the power to express their opinions or dissatisfaction with their brands, services, and management on social networks, blogs, and wikis.

Therefore, companies now have no more control than before; they need to digitize their marketing in order to promote their products and maintain their brand awareness.

They should bear in mind that a simple negative comment could destroy their reputation. As Warren Buffet, a businessperson and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, and one of the world's most famous businessmen, once said, "It takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to damage it" (Marshelia & Irwansyah, 2019).

However, the social web is still evolving; support and use are constantly changing. Consumers give opinions but also ask for them; they share their experiences with their communities and describe their enthusiasm, but also flare up their anger (Rosoor, 2012). Therefore, e-reputation allows companies to differentiate themselves from their competitors and therefore generate sales and boost clientele faithfulness.

3. The definition of Social Networks

The term "social network" was coined by Australian anthropologist John A. Barnes in 1954 in a Human Relations article. In defining a network, Barnes, (1954) said: "The image I have is of a set of points, some of which are joined by lines; the points of the image are people, or sometimes groups, and the lines indicate which people interact with each other."

As Mercklé (2004) shows, "Barnes's goal is to account for the social organization of a small community through the analysis of all the relationships its members have with each other."

Social networks are platforms where people can build their personal public profile, share their stories, post data, and interact with others of similar interests (Hani, Marwan, & Andre, 2018); each platform has different functions that can affect one's behavior (Meshi, Turel, & Henley, 2020). They are not just utilized for communication and entertainment, but also for information seeking and sharing (McClure & Seock, 2020).

Social networks are now accessible from everywhere, no matter the country or continent you are in, because of PCs, smartphones, and tablets, not to mention new

devices connected to the Internet that will appear with the Internet of Things and applications related to mobility (Balagué & David , 2016).

The number of netizens increases from one day to another. This is for many reasons, including their roles as consumers. When making decisions that have a significant personal impact, they are more inclined to seek out online comments from others and use product rating sites. Marketers have reacted to this key shift by expanding their utilization of digital marketing channels (Patel & Lakhataria, 2018).

Social networking users could be information creators, commenters, or reviewers in a social community (Chang, Liu, & Shen, 2017).

4. The Influence of Social Networks on E-Reputation

A company's success no longer depends on its expertise, the quality of products, employees, or the excellence of its management; now its reputation is an essential factor of success and it doesn't depend on the opinions of the stakeholders in the offline environment. Anticipation and management of online environments are required (Zraková, Demjanovičová, & Kubina, 2019). Marketers must pay attention to the information published through pages or groups, which may be a mine for their strategy; it can also be shared in groups and interact with customers and future clients (Balagué & David , 2016).

Customers sympathize with each other on social media and share posts with their friends, which can worsen the problem. Negative electronic word-of-mouth can be instantaneously communicated to millions of people, all of which can cause negative consequences for a company (Dwivedi, et al., 2021). A satisfied customer can tell their friends about a company or product, but an angry customer can tell as many of their friends as possible.

Since consumers today need reassurance before launching a purchase request, they are turning to online review sites to consult others' opinions; they have become more demanding and make thoughtful purchases. Hence, each negative comment or dissatisfaction can prevent a customer from making a purchase and affect the company's reputation, which creates a real risk for them.

From a customer perspective, a favorable company reputation is important when making buying decisions; otherwise, it brings competitiveness and can better react to and resolve crises (Zraková, Demjanovičová, & Kubina, 2019).

Reputation is an extremely crucial factor for gaining and strengthening consumer trust and confidence in the virtual as well as the real world. A favorable corporate reputation is thought to safeguard an organization at times of crisis (Shamma, 2012); and it is difficult for companies to deal with the complaints posted on their social media platforms. It is therefore no longer just a question of communicating, but also of knowing how to listen to consumers, whose opinions become public. Internet users are sharing their opinions about products or services online to feel like they are part of an online social network and to help those reading the posts make better buying decisions

(Kaiser, Ahuvia, Rauschnabel, & Wimble, 2020).

Most social media websites make it easy to share with other internet users. For example, on Facebook and Twitter, there is the possibility to share on these two, as well as the possibility of linking videos to other networks (Veil, Sellnow, & Petrun, 2012).

Benjamin Franklin states, "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it."

With the advent of social networks, a company's e-reputation can be characterized as its general evaluation presented on one of its platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Moreover, a positive reputation offers the company more chances to attract new clients and create market entry boundaries for rivals, and it ensures client devotion and retention (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001). But reputation is vulnerable; it can be ruined in one moment and get battered by hostile comments and lose its strength. One negative electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on a social network can affect a customer's brand evaluation and purchase intention negatively (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008), or his perception of a company.

Online reviews have become a trusted benchmark for consumers and have a direct impact on their behavior. Statistics show that 97% of consumers who want to buy a product or service look for reviews online first; 93% of people say online reviews directly affected their decisions. Hence, 65 million opinions are uploaded to review sites and forums every month. According to Wadsworth (2019), businesses with low star ratings fail to convert 90% of potential customers.

This leads to a serious risk for companies. According to an online international survey in 2019 by Aon about global risk management, which included responses from 2,672 business decision-makers in 60 countries, reputational or brand damage is the second most significant risk out of 15 risks. In the past, a major scandal was essential to making its entry into the daily news. However, this is no longer the case; we are now living in the digital era. Inappropriate tweets from a CEO, employee, or customer can go viral and ruin a company's reputation (Ramos-Salazar, 2021).

In 2020, another survey by Weber Shandwick, in partnership with KRC Research, was conducted among 2,227 executives worldwide in 22 countries, excluding CEOs about "The State of Corporate Reputation in 2020" found that customer loyalty is a competitive advantage for companies that focus on reinforcing their reputations. As a result, even when other companies' products and services are available at the same cost and quality, they will be loyal customers of companies with a stronger online reputation. For this reason, companies have become more aware of its importance and have paid more attention to their presence on social networks.

This does not mean that there have been no scandals or negative opinions in the past; they have been around for a long time, but the widespread use of social networks as a platform that unites people from all over the world has made it easier to disseminate information and conduct all the opinions together in certain cases, as it happens in those

examples that we will discuss, where launching a hashtag, creating groups on Facebook or making a video is the easiest way to tell the story.

Any theoretical concept can be easily understood with the help of cases and examples.

In this paper, we will present three cases of scandals or boycotts against multinational companies where social networks have had a direct impact on public opinion and influenced the company's reputation.

4.1 CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

Social networking sites are platforms that allow people to connect and communicate with each other on various subjects, such as sociology, politics, and daily life. Indeed, its influence goes beyond family or friend circles, and Facebook is among them. In a few years, it became the biggest social network worldwide and is described as the most prevalent global cyber meeting place for multiple categories of stakeholders (Sharifrazi & McCabe, 2014).

The company stated that in the first quarter of 2021, 3.45 billion people used at least one of its products (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, or Messenger) every month (Statista, 2021) to share their opinions and ideas and be up to date with the rest of the world; but those users faced in March 2018 a "breach of trust," as Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook CEO, described it (US Senate, 2018). Facebook was challenged, and the company was thrust into its biggest crisis ever (Confessore, 2018).

A data scientist, Aleksandr Kogan, along with a few people connected to the University of Cambridge, has created a company called Global Science Research to market a Facebook application, "thisisyourdigitallife." It's an identity quiz that allows around 300,000 Facebook users who downloaded the app to answer some questions for a psychological profile to harvest their private information such as profile information and Facebook activity.

But the app also gathers information about those users' friends who had their privacy settings set to allow it, which reportedly resulted in Kogan having access to the data of 87 million Facebook profiles (Brown, 2020) (Ashworth & Gillespie, 2018) (Kang & Frenkel, 2018).

That data was passed to a political consulting firm, Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL), which owns Cambridge Analytica (CA), to determine voter personality traits and behavior to help conservative campaigns target online advertisements and messaging (Rosenberg, Confessore, & Cadwalladr, 2018).

For the first time, there was a mishandling of social data for political purposes on a mass scale (Vaidhyanathan, 2018), and Facebook faced issues related to its data collection.

On March 17, 2018, The Guardian (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018) and the New York Times (Rosenberg, Confessore, & Cadwalladr, 2018) revealed how the data of millions of Facebook users ended up being given to Cambridge Analytica.

Increasingly, people became aware of this scandal and started posting their reactions to and reflections on it, announcing publicly that they would leave Facebook and encouraging others to do so. In the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, an increase in tweets with the hashtag # deletefacebook trended for several days, serving as a backlash to what some perceived as Facebook's inability to avoid privacy invasions (Hsu, 2018).

In a mere three days of the news breaking, a sharp drop in the share price erased nearly \$50 billion of the company's market capitalization (Molla, 2018).

Even though all users of the application have technically agreed to have their personal data collected by not changing their privacy settings, the public outcry suggests they don't think they have allowed the app to access their data, let alone share it with third parties, e.g., CA (Kozłowska, 2018).

However, Facebook quickly understood that for millions of users whose data was mishandled, the incident looked like a data breach (Richterich, 2018).

In a Facebook post, Zuckerberg (2018) apologized for the breach of trust customers experienced and said he had made some changes.

For example, Facebook will no longer allow app developers to access their user data after three months of inactivity. They have tightened up some APIs that allow applications to collect data, such as information about events that users host or attend, groups they belong to, and page posts or comments. It will reduce the amount of information people need to hand over to third parties.

Zuckerberg took out full-page ads in nine major US and international newspapers to apologize for a "breach of trust." (Meredith, 2018).

In the months that followed the first news reports of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, around 79% of Facebook users made a few changes to their privacy settings by taking a break from the service, or deleting the application totally from their phones (Perrin, 2018); they kept on worrying about web security and the trustworthiness of some online data.

After this crisis, users started thinking about the reality behind Facebook and the personal information shared. The findings propose that numerous users don't truly know how Facebook makes money and what aspects of their Facebook utilization are monetized (Brown, 2020); there is a limited understanding of how data privacy issues are changing around the world.

The Cambridge Analytica scandal sparked widespread discussion on social media about the collection of a user's data (González, Yu, Figueroa, López, & Aragon, 2019).

Facebook had a difficult year on many fronts, as they were engulfed by controversies over fake news, privacy violations, and a widespread backlash from smartphone addiction. Wall Street noticed that the company that year had lost nearly \$100 billion in market value (Klein, 2018).

Additionally, Facebook has come under fire from the U.S. government for not being

proactive enough to stop this privacy breach (Brown, 2020).

4.2. DANONE CENTRAL

Social networks empower a firm to realize business development, reach the target audience, and create and reinforce relationships.

Nevertheless, due to the developing use of these platforms, customers are eligible to communicate freely and, thus, widen their thoughts about an organization (Floreddu, Cabiddu, & Evaristo, 2014).

Once these thoughts are communicated, they can either support or threaten a company's online reputation, and they can be represented in the form of hashtags or images that may yield higher engagement scores (Kywe, Hoang, Lim, & Zhu, 2012).

Hashtags are tools used to increase awareness of world events and social issues. Any social media user can start them, so hashtag research is necessary, likely more than SEO keywords (DeBois, 2020). Hence, the customer can express his discontent through a few means, including a boycott. The word "boycott" is used to refer to a type of disapproval of a person, a group, or social movement for a particular situation, but within social media, the word "boycott" has more effect and power to explain the situation and reach the largest number of people (Makarem & Jae, 2016).

In recent years, netizens through social networks have given major brands a tough time. Consequently, we have seen reputation crises that are the result of viral data; real or not, spread through social media websites (Warin, Marcellis-Warin, Sanger, Nembot , & Mirza, 2015).

As an example, on April 20, 2018, a boycott against three companies was organized in Morocco.

Danone central, a French dairy company, is one of the companies that suffered losses due to the boycott. An anonymous comment accused Danone of taking advantage of a monopolist situation in Morocco and denounced the high price of basic products.

This resulted in a viral campaign that spread across social media networks; there was widespread citizen mobilization; and a dozen Facebook pages, followed by hundreds of thousands of people, massively relayed the message and called for a boycott through sharing, comments, and tweets (Hervé, 2018).

This campaign was more popular than any previous boycott call in Morocco. Within two weeks of its launch on April 20, 2018, over 90% of Moroccans were aware of the campaign, with nearly three-quarters of citizens taking part. Of those who supported the campaign, 95% targeted Danone Central (Salah, *Enquête L'Economiste-Sunergia/Boycott: Danone, un cas très spécial*, 2018).

The milk boycotter's slogan was "Let the milk flow." Danone adopted the same slogan in an attempt to regain consumer confidence, but it did not work since the brand's image was already damaged. Marc Drillech said: "The bond between a brand and its buyers is very easy to break, much more difficult and long to rebuild."

In a survey commissioned by "l'economiste", the boycott appears to be collective action

by young people; 93 percent of participants aged 15 to 24 were aware of the boycott campaign, and 70 percent of them actively participated in the boycott; while 31 percent were elderly (55 years old) (Salah, 2018). This can be explained by the strong presence of young people on various social media platforms.

The Central Danone decided to reduce its prices, and it was hard for the authorities to contain the boycott because of the rapid diffusion of the campaign through social media. It demonstrates that it isn't just a strategy utilized to support consumer protection efforts, but also a tool for political mobilization, as it was able to mobilize a large portion of society around an organized cause (Masbah, 2018).

In the end, Moroccans got the result that boycotters wanted, and different types and categories of people, whether working-class or bourgeoisie, responded to this boycott.

According to the company's own data, Central Danone sales in Morocco fell by 178 million euros in 2018, compared to 2017, within a few weeks after the campaign was launched, leading to a decrease in operating income of 43 million euros over the same period (Writer, 2019).

The internet was the main source of awareness of the boycott. This social initiative has united Moroccan individuals who were involved in this boycott and made them talk with one voice, communicating their frustration about their current social and financial situation (El Arraf & Biddou, 2019).

The persistence of the boycott had implications for the political spectrum and the reaction of the companies and societies that were boycotted. Ordinary citizens seem to be the main agents of change, not just passive consumers (Masbah, 2018). Central Danone has found itself in a delicate situation where it has lost the brand image and trust of its Moroccan customers. Months after the boycott, Central Danone was still complaining about campaign losses (El Arraf & Biddou, 2019).

Regardless of the main cause that launched this boycott, it is enough that anonymous comments have upset the general situation of people and reached international businesses.

Social networks are platforms that help to spread information in an extremely fast way and gather all the opinions together. For that, companies must pay attention to their power.

The Internet, besides providing a variety of technological tools for self-expression or mass communication, also enables public discussion and civic participation (Cheng, Liang, & Leung, 2015).

Even though traditional media still has the ability to frame issues and crises, social media has an increasing influence on crisis communication because ordinary people can participate (Tampere, Tampere, & Abel, 2016).

Analysis of the campaign on social media shows that it resonated with ordinary citizens because of the accessible content since social media itself is an open source of information. Also, the online movement sustains the boycott over time and expands its

reach from large urban cities to remote areas.

As the movement progressed, so did the expectations of campaigners. Through advertising, promotions, and press releases, Central Danone and the other companies failed to slow down the boycott (Zairig, 2018).

4.3. NESTLE

Within the digital era, social media platforms may benefit companies by collecting information about their fans and gathering rich insights. For instance, Facebook, the world's largest platform, has become the target for companies to modernize their communications strategy, but it has also become the bullseye of angry mobs to spread their message. Corporate wrongdoing and unsatisfactory service that originated offline are quickly transferred to the realm of social media platforms by netizens (Champoux, Durgee, & McGlynn, 2012).

Nestlé's case illustrates how information can become viral through social media; an independent global campaigning network, Greenpeace, decided to head to social media for the first time after years of pressuring giant food company Nestle to stop using palm oil.

In 2010, Greenpeace's online campaign accused Nestlé of contributing to deforestation by buying palm oil to produce its popular chocolate bars Kit Kat from an Indonesian supplier, Sinar Mas, who clears large areas of orangutan habitat forest and breaks Indonesian law for its plantations (Armstrong, 2010).

This campaign included a video clip that shows an office worker enjoying a Kit Kat, and instead of being the popular chocolate bar, he finds an orangutan's finger, and while he's eating it, it oozes blood over his chin. This 60-second clip ends with Kit Kat's famous slogan: "Take a break?" Let the orangutans rest, and ask Nestlé to stop buying palm oil from companies that destroy the rainforest (Warin, Marcellis-Warin, Sanger, Nembot, & Mirza, 2015).

After the launch of the Greenpeace video, Nestlé asked YouTube to withdraw it due to a breach of copyright claim (Chandrasekhar, 2015).

People who wanted to view the video found out that the video was no longer available. Furthermore, Nestle denied their relationship with Sinar Mas (Hickman, 2010). It appeared that Nestle wanted to quell the efforts of the Greenpeace campaign, but the video had already gone viral and Greenpeace started to circulate it again on alternative platforms (Seibt, 2010).

This video gave people a clear idea of what Nestle does and explained the danger behind it in a very clever way, as most people are unaware of the destruction of palm oil production in the Indonesian rainforest.

Moreover, in a report titled "Caught Red-Handed," Greenpeace (2010) said it had evidence that Indonesia's largest palm oil producer, Sinar Mas, was not only deforesting but also destroying carbon-rich peatlands. It is said that burning and draining these peatlands releases huge amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, helping to

make Indonesia the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Therefore, Greenpeace has even encouraged activists to use the Kit Kat "killer" logo, orangutans, or rainforest as their profile pictures, while urging Nestlé to change its approach on the Facebook wall.

People quickly responded to this campaign call; netizens headed towards Twitter and the Facebook fan page to spread the campaign messages by posting comments criticizing the company's practices (Champoux, Durgee, & McGlynn, 2012).

The video reached over 1.5 million people, and almost 300,000 sent an email to Paul Bulcke, Nestlé's CEO. Hundreds of people made phone calls, and Nestlé struggled to respond to criticism from angry consumers (Owyang, 2010).

Instead of listening with gratitude and apologies, Nestlé threatened to block Facebook users who continued to publish negative stories about the brand, and asked users who disagreed to stop following Facebook's Kit-Kat page and started eliminating negative comments. As comments were deleted, many users created accounts with the sole purpose of continuing to discredit KitKat, and that led to an increase in the shrillness of the protest (Chaudhari & Purkayastha, 2011).

Nestle failed to manage its Facebook page effectively and entered into a full-blown social media meltdown in minutes. It ended up on the pages of famous news outlets such as The Guardian, which described Nestlé's anti-social responses (Fox, 2010).

According to a social media expert, Telofski (2011), on average, Nestlé got a hit every 90 seconds for more than three weeks on its Facebook fan page, which did tremendous damage to its corporate reputation.

Greenpeace took this initiative and headed to social media because it had already tried to set up talks with Nestlé on this issue, but there had been no response, and it did not look like Nestlé was going to deal with the problem. The increased awareness and reaction to this issue is another success for the Greenpeace campaign (Owyang, 2010). The campaign proved to have a high impact. On March 19, 2010, Nestlé apologized for its rude approach on its Facebook page and announced that it wanted to use sustainable palm oil by 2015 (Cornelissen, 2014).

Greenpeace is well-known for its activism and education around environmental and biodiversity problems (Hunter, 2004), but because of the Kit Kat campaign, Kumi Naidoo, Greenpeace's executive director, discovered the power of the internet and social media and says that Nestle never answered their demand to stop buying palm oil. But with social media, it was possible to strike harder and in an organized fashion.

This online initiative concretely achieved its first goal; it is a shining example of the online movement (Seibt, 2010). Social media provides a more anonymous platform for feedback and discussion, where everyone can have their say.

As a result, consumers are more likely to engage and interact with others because they do not have to reveal their true identity and are therefore less afraid of interaction and criticism (Lyon & Montgomery, 2013).

This campaign was designed to stop the palm oil industry from destroying forests and to ensure the protection of the climate. The power of social media forced nestle to listen and to walk with the flow.

Such crises can easily cripple a company's reputation and cause an enormous monetary loss, or even cause its demise.

5. CONCLUSION

Social networks, like so many other information technology tools, can be used to improve a company's presence in the market. Their use allows business owners to communicate with potential customers and find new recruits, receive feedback on products and services, and stay up to date on the news in their environment.

Companies must look to gain a positive reputation to compete and drive more engagement in this competitive world. Social networks can be a powerful weapon in the corporate realm, but they also give consumers the chance to share their ideas. They are the ideal platform to communicate one's thoughts with other customers who have used them to receive for years what was available on the market and bought it without expressing to the world their point of view or dissatisfaction with the product or the quality of service.

So, it can be helpful for companies to follow their customers and to be close to them in order to meet their needs and understand their demands, but it can also be deadly because a single negative comment can destroy their online reputation. As Internet technology grows rapidly, consumer complaints can now be communicated to millions of people immediately, all of which will have a negative impact on related companies (Ismagilova, Dwivedi, Slade, & Williams, 2017) (Javornik, Filieri, & Gumann, 2020).

The findings of these cases provide evidence that some consumers are willing to boycott companies for perceived reasons or behavior, and that consumers can affect a company's reputation.

As Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley(2014) recommended, academics have been focusing on checking negative electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in social networks. These researchers defined the term "online firestorm" as a wave of negative outrage on social media platforms that affected brands, organizations, politicians, or celebrities after publishing less than desirable information.

Over time, a company's reputation can become an important marketing asset on which they build the social and economic standing of the company. The topic of online reputation assessment is not new. It has been the subject of several international regulations and standards. Research conducted over the past few years has shown that social networks greatly affect a company's online reputation. Therefore, it makes the company a well-known brand in the market and society.

Accordingly, this impact differs in developed and developing countries depending on the company's work environment.

Reputable companies and brands are always more valuable and more capable of achieving highly competitive results in the marketplace. Hence, the absence of a business on social networks in this digital age is no longer the right choice, and they cannot ignore the fact that a company's reputation can meet a social crisis at any time.

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