The impact of social networks on marketing the tourist destination in light of the Covid-19 pandemic "An analytical study of the tourism agencies in Algeria".

أثر شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في تسويق المقصد السياحي في ظل جائحة كوفيد-19 "دراسة تحليلية في الوكالات السياحية في الجزائر".

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Abstract:

The tourism sector is considered one of the sectors that benefit the most from social networks; The status of these sites has increased through the role they played in marketing the tourist destination, especially the internal tourism products of countries during the pandemic (covid-19); to achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive analytical approach was used, and data was collected through published literature and international statistics, as well as relying on interviews. The study concluded that the use of social networks contributed to an increase in the number of clients dealing with the agencies of the research sample

Key words: social networks, tourism, tourism marketing, COVID-19 pandemic, e-tourism

JEL Classification Codes : L14, L83, M31.

ملخص:

يعتبر القطاع السياحي من القطاعات الأكثر استفادة من شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي، وقد تعاظمت مكانة هذه المواقع من خلال الدور الذي لعبته في تسويق المقصد السياحي، وخصوصا المنتجات السياحية الداخلية للدول خلال فترة الجائحة العالمية (*covid-19*).

ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم الاستعانة بالمنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وتجميع البيانات من خلال الأدبيات المنشورة والاحصائيات الدولية والاعتماد على مقابلة. وخلصت الدراسة الى أنّ استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي ساهم في زيادة عدد الزبائن المتعاملين مع الوكالات عينة البحث.

كلمات مفتاحية: شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي، السياحة، التسويق السياحي، جائحة كوفيد -19، السياحة الالكترونية.

تصنيفات JEL: M31، L83، L14 .

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Introduction :

In view of the rapid development in the techniques, tools and means used in marketing and tourism activation globally, which multiplied and diversified in the first decade of this century, most notably the international trend of ICT applications, or what is currently known as social networks, the importance of social networks in development has emerged. Change, through awareness of the need to harness these sites as a marketing tool for all products and services by organizations, especially in the tourism sector, as the tourism industry is currently one of the most growing and well-established industries in most of the developed and developing countries of the world, whether on the economic, social or cultural level.

The Corona pandemic, which isolated the world and obliged people to stay at home, has led to more popular use of social networking sites, and daily browsing has become an urgent need to read news and learn about emerging events, as well as for self-entertainment, which in turn contributed to strengthening what is known as electronic tourism (e-tourism), through which the tourist can Access to the world of the Internet to choose his favorite tourist destination, and make remote reservations.

Based on the foregoing, the main problem of our study can be put forward and formulated as follows:

What are the results of social networks for marketing the tourist destination in light of the Covid-19 pandemic in Algeria?

Sub-questions of the study:

- What is the concept of social networking sites?

- How effective are social networking sites for marketing the tourist destination in Algeria?

- Did social networking sites contribute to increasing the number of customers dealing with tourism companies in light of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Study hypotheses:

 Social networks have a significant impact on the marketing of tourist destinations in Algeria.

 - Social networks have affected the increase in the number of customers dealing with tourism companies in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The importance of the study:

The importance of the research lies in the importance of the variables whose impact it seeks to measure, and it can be summarized in the following points:

- Shedding light on the most widely used and widespread social networking sites in the electronic tourism marketing of services.

- Clarifying the importance of social networks in e-marketing for tourism companies in Algeria.

Explaining the importance of the role these sites played in marketing and advertising for tourist destinations during the Corona pandemic.

Research Methodology:

In the research, we relied on the descriptive analytical approach through the use of library sources represented in books, letters, theses and scientific articles, and the field method represented by a questionnaire and an interview to explore the opinions of the researched sample.

Research plan:

The study was divided into three main themes:

The first axis: an introduction to the phenomenon of social networks.

The second axis: the recovery of marketing tourist destinations electronically in light of the Corona pandemic and its repercussions.

The third axis: descriptive analysis of the study data.

First subtitle: Introduction to the phenomenon of social networks

1-The concept of social networks:

Social networking sites are defined as: "websites that allow individuals to create their own page, in which they present a glimpse of their personality in front of broad or specific audiences, according to a specific system that shows a list of a group of users with whom they share contact, with the ability to view the pages of others as well, and the information available. It should be noted that the nature and name of these links differ from one site to another**.** (tala lamia, 2015, p. 168)

Wang defined it as "a system on the Internet that allows a group of people to communicate and communicate in real time**".** (Rahma Hamdi Bushra Thamid, 2020, p. 106)

The Web Encyclopedia defines social networks as "a term used to describe any website on the World Wide Web that allows its users to put a public profile page on display, and allows the possibility of forming personal relationships with other **users.** Social networking sites can be used to describe sites of a social nature". (Aela Aicha, ELoud Nouri , 2016, p. 174)

2- The most prominent social networks:

It can be summed up in the following:

Face Book: Facebook online social networking sites such as Facebook are typically used to support pre-existing social relationships; diverse networks of weak ties; Facebook supports the accumulation and maintenance of social capital; by allowing users to build; invest and maintain social ties with distant; geographically dispersed friends. (Mark W.Newman , Debra Lauterbach , Sean A, Munson, 2014); It is a social network that allows its users to enter their personal data and share it with the rest of the site's users; It is a social site that allows users to join several sub-networks of the same site to fall into a specific category such as a geographic area, a school, and other places that help them discover more people who are on the same network**.** (Lbsir fatima, 2022, p. 594)

Instagram: Instagram is a free application for iPhones and Android, it allows the user to take pictures and short videos(3-15seconds), modify them and share them on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr or on Instagram itself, the application became available in October 2010 and currently has more than 400 million users around the world. (Carceller-Maicas , Natalia , 2016), Instagram is a newly emerging social networking site, but it has captured the public's attention in a short period of time compared to other sites, to refer to the speed and ease of taking and posting photos. It is a social networking service for sharing photos and videos, which allows writing a text containing 2,200 characters with any post, with hashtags marking the content to facilitate the search process, in addition to the feature of sending messages and the story feature that helps users to publish content; It can only be accessed for 24 hours and then disappears, and it is the leading photo-sharing social media platform. (cherif djamel , 2021, p. 87)

You tube: YouTube is a key international platform for socially-enabled media diffusion. According to public statistics, more than 48 hours of video content is uploaded every minute and 3 billion views are generated every day. To complement the content broadcast/consume experience, YouTube connects seamlessly with major online social networks (OSNs) such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ to facilitate off-site diffusion. (Mirjam Wattenhofer , Roger Wattenhofer , Zack Zhu , 2012), is a website that allows and supports the activity of uploading, downloading and sharing **movies and videos in** a general and free manner; It allows gradual downloading and displaying of short

films, from public films that everyone can watch to private films that only a certain group is allowed to watch. (Nehar Khaled , Lahole Fattoum , 2019, p. 111)

3- Users of social networks in Algeria during the period (2021-2022):

The ranking of social networking sites at the end of last year and the beginning of this year in Algeria in terms of visits can be shown as follows:

Fig (1): A graphic display showing the users of social networking sites in Algeria during the period (2021-2022)
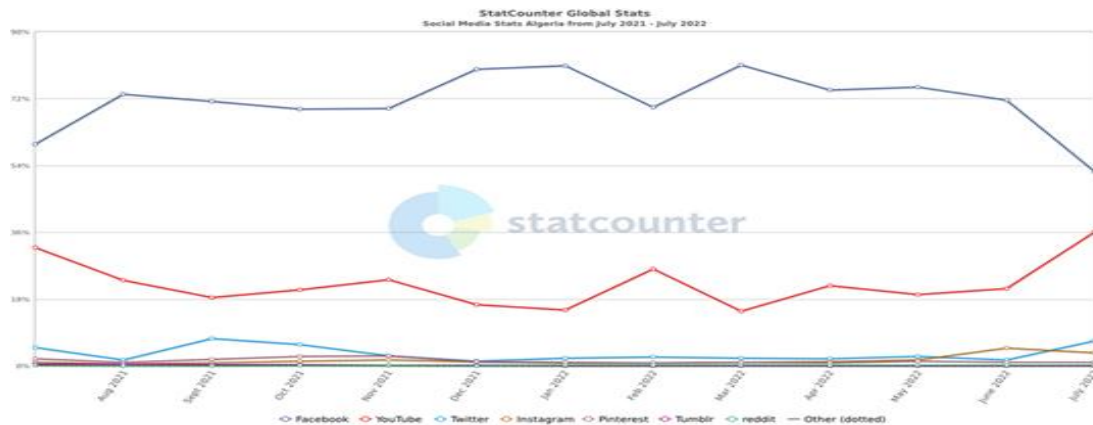
Source: statcounter

The number of users of social networking sites in Algeria is increasing at a very large rate more than any other Arab country, as the total percentage of people who own accounts through social networking sites reached 54%, with an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes spent by these browsers on the mentioned sites, where the site occupied Facebook ranked first in social media platforms in general with a percentage of (52.53%), followed by YouTube with a percentage of use (36.02%), then Twitter (6.58%), Instagram (3.51%), Pinterest (1%)), Reddit (0.18%), and perhaps these developments are due to the openness of Algerian society to modern communication technologies and to the need to keep pace with new events around the world.

Second subtitle: the revival of marketing tourist destinations electronically in light of the Corona pandemic and its repercussions:

1- the concept of e-tourism:

The concept of e-tourism is one of the modern concepts related to tourism, which is associated mainly with the emergence of modern technologies, which have transformed the world into an open and diverse market, in which all actors are connected via the Internet, which provides an excellent opportunity to promote various products and services, including tourism; Accordingly, e-tourism can be defined as: "a tourism pattern in which some of its transactions are carried out between a tourist

institution and another, or between a tourist institution and a consumer (tourist) through the use of information and communication technology. Or it is a tourism pattern in which offers of tourism services converge through network international information (the Internet) with the wishes of tourists wishing to accept these tourist services provided via the Internet. (Zgheib Malika, Zerik Sawsan, 2013, p. 03)

2- **The benefits of marketing tourist destinations through social networking sites:**

The benefits of marketing through social networking sites for the tourism establishment and its services can be summarized in the following points: (Zaghez Sarah , 2021 , p. 118)

- Tourism is an industry that relies heavily on the availability of information, so the Internet is a complementary service to it. Tourism services are products that are characterized by a wide variation in information, so their quality can only be measured by experience, and here comes the role of the Internet, which may play an important role in providing a large amount of detailed written and visual information, and sometimes it may provide a live depiction of the tourism service, which gives the information credibility.
- The conviction that travelers and the social networks they communicate through have a high ability to maximize the mental image of the destination and the tourism product.
- The conviction that tourists can promote tourist destinations through their interaction with others through social networks.
- The expansion and common use of websites leads to the ease of developing the tourism product and the emergence of new tourism activities in line with the different segments of tourists.

The widespread use of electronic tourism leads to a reduction in the costs of tourism services, which in turn is reflected in lower prices; The use of electronic tourism would reduce the costs of tourism marketing (contact with tourists, broadcast tourism information).

3- **International tourism in light of the coronavirus (covid-19) crisis:**

International tourism received a severe blow during the Corona pandemic, when at one time all forms of tourism succeeded, due to the great ban and the policy of closure that most countries of the world knew.

Defining the emerging health crisis (Corona epidemic):

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the Corona pandemic, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and the virus responsible for the outbreak is known as (SARS-CoV-2), a newly discovered virus closely related to coronaviruses in bats, and coronaviruses found in pangolins; Corona virus type 1 is associated with severe acute respiratory syndrome. (Afef Abd Ellah Ahmed Ismaaile , 2021 , p. 124), The virus was first identified and reported from Wuhan city of China in December, 2019, (SARS-CoV-2) is highly contagious, spread globally in a short period of time, and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, As of 18th April, 2020, 10:00am CEST, WHO reported more than 2.1 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 142,229 deaths in 213 countries, areas or territories , The most-affected countries with more than 30,000 confirmed cases of (SARSCoV-2) are the United States of America, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, China, Iran, Turkey, Belgium, the Russian Federation, Canada and Brazil , However, the number of cases continues to rise throughout the globe and became a serious menace to public health. (Shabir Ahmad Lone , Aijaz Ahmad , 2020)

Effects and repercussions of the Corona virus on international tourism:
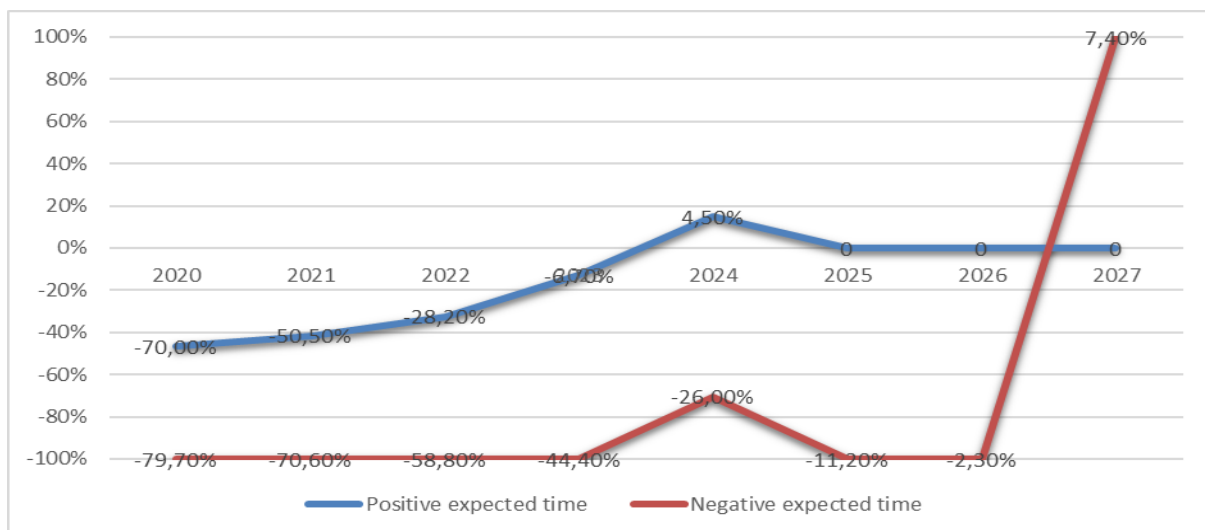
Fig (2): The impact of the Corona virus on international tourism and international tourism revenues.

Source: Arab air carriers' Organization 53rd Annual General Meeting 3 November

The graphs show the estimates of international tourism for the year 2020 compared to the year 2019, where the noticeable decrease in the number of international tourist arrivals, which amounted to 70.0% in the year 2020 compared to 2019; It was expected that the number of tourist arrivals would reach 437 million, while it achieved a decrease of 5.4% from previous expectations. As for international tourism revenues, it achieved a decrease of 73.0% in 2020 compared to 2019, when it was also expected that international tourism revenues would reach 399 billion US dollars, while achieving a decrease of 5.0% from previous expectations. (arab air , 2021)

Fig (3): International estimates of the recovery of international tourism from the repercussions of the Corona pandemic

Source: Arab air carriers' Organization 53rd Annual General Meeting 3 November

The chart shows the expected time for the international tourism sector to recover from the repercussions of the Corona pandemic, which was measured by the number of international tourist arrivals. The positive estimate shows that international tourist arrivals will not rise to higher levels between 2019 until 2024; As for negative estimates, it is estimated that international tourist arrivals will not reach higher levels between 2019 and 2027, and that tourism is a major sector rich in jobs, so the longer the recovery period, the more jobs that this sector gives, which affects the broader economic cycle. (Statcounter , 2020).

<u>Third subtitle</u>: descriptive analysis of the study data

1-Presenting the results of the interview:

An interview was conducted with an official of the CYNTHIA Agency for Tourism and Travel, based in Constantine, on August 12, 2022 at 14.00, and we relied on the regular interview, and it includes a set of questions that were as follows:

- **The first question:** Does CYNTHIA Tourism and Travel Agency provide, through social networks, various information about tourism products in Algeria in general and in Constantine in particular, in interactive ways that enabled it to attract the largest number of tourist clients?

Answer: The agency did not rely primarily on social networks in its early beginnings of activity, but it has recently become more aware of the importance of these sites in marketing and promoting the tourism services provided by the agency

- **The second question:** Did the use of social networks in marketing the tourist destination contribute to improving the promotional process for the services provided by the company?

Answer: Yes, and this was evident in the turnout that the Agency enjoyed by those who followed its pages, especially the Facebook page.

- The third question: Did the use of social networks contribute to increasing the number of customers dealing with the company?

Answer: Yes

- **The fourth question:** Did these social sites contribute to facing the challenges posed by the Corona pandemic on the tourism movement in Algeria in general and in Constantine in particular?

- **The fifth question:** Have social networks been able to take the place of mass media in marketing the tourism product in light of the Corona pandemic?

Answering the fourth and fifth question: The agency's activity has stopped during the period of the Corona pandemic, as it did not work during the period 2020-2021, neither by traditional means nor through websites, due to the preventive measures that affected the entire world, especially the tourism and transportation sector, for the agency to return to its work in the second half of 2022 is within what is currently in place.

- **Question Six: What is your future strategy that you will rely on to market tourist destinations through social media, after the Corona pandemic?**

Answer: Pay more attention to the field of electronic marketing in order to expand the agency's activity and scope of work to attract the largest number of customers, as well

as to ensure the development of services provided to customers on a regular and seasonal basis.

2- The results of the interview:

Through the interview, we reached the following conclusions:

- Results of the independent variable social networks:

- Reliance on social networks has become an inevitable necessity that reduces time, effort and cost.
- Social networking sites have become an important role in the tourism promotion process for tourism agencies, because they create an atmosphere of interaction and exchange of information between customers and agencies, which contributed to attracting more dealers in the agency under study, as well as other agencies.
- The Facebook network is one of the most widely used networks, whether by tourism agencies or by Internet users in Algerian society.

Results of the adopted variable marketing for the tourist destination in light of the Corona pandemic:

- Many tourism companies have resorted to suspending work during the pandemic period, and this is due to the closure of borders within the framework of the measures taken to limit the spread of the Corona epidemic.
- The Corona pandemic has affected e-tourism through social networking sites and made it the ideal solution for introducing tourists to tourist destinations; It also changed the features of dealings and working with tourism companies during the recent period, with the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, when most of these companies return to work, as most of the transactions are made through websites

Conclusion:

The study concluded with the following results and recommendations:

Results:

- Social networks are websites created for the purpose of acquaintance, gathering users and friends, and sharing activities and interests.
- There is a change in the habits of using social networking sites due to the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, and an increase in the period of their use significantly as a result of home confinement that was implemented during the year 2020.

- Facebook is one of the most widely used social networking sites in Algeria, where the number of Facebook users in Algeria recorded 52.53% as the highest usage rate compared to other sites.
- The use of social networks contributed to increasing the number of customers dealing with the agencies of the research sample
- Through the interview, it was found that social networking sites have a significant role in tourism advertising in Constantine by the agency under study

Hypothesis testing:

In light of the results obtained, we can prove both hypotheses put forward in the introduction, where the study proved the great impact of social networks in marketing the tourist destination, whether in Algeria or in the world as a whole; The Corona experience also left a large imprint in the institution's dealings, as it has become intensively using modern technologies in communication, especially social networking sites.

Recommendations:

- Virtual competition has become an inevitable necessity under the current circumstances, so companies must rely more on e-marketing through social networking sites in order to ensure that they reach the consumer who tends to see and buy a lot through websites.
- Tourism companies in Algeria should work on expansion, focus on the use of social networks and develop their marketing activities for the purpose of benefiting and obtaining a competitive advantage, and to reduce time, effort and cost.
- Exerting efforts to revitalize international tourism and restore passengers' confidence in travel and aviation, provided that governments take measures commensurate with the level of risks of spreading infections and viruses.

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