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## Roles of social media in the retail sector in Tunisia: the case of Facebook

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to study the effect of information on the viability of a relationship with a retail store via Facebook through the effects of perceived quality and perceived credibility of information the usefulness of the information source and the intention to continue to use this source by the consumer. The data from this study were collected from a survey via Internet. The survey was conducted on a real fan page of a retail enterprise. The sample consists of 210 users Tunisians. A model was developed based on existing research in the area of quality of service online, quality, credibility and information via Facebook and intention to use this source utility by the customer. Data were analysed using structural equation modelling.

The results show that the quality and credibility of information have a positive and significant impact on the usefulness of the information source and indirectly leads to an intention to continue to use this source of information by the customer, especially the fan page of retail enterprises. On the practical level, this research enables the retail companies to consider social media and especially Facebook as a means of communication because of the importance of information and communication technologies and the growing number of Internet.

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### 1. Introduction

Technologies, especially social media are changing the way stakeholders have access to the information on companies' retail. Social media allows companies to create an online presence and awareness of their purpose and their activities and to build relationships by offering various ways to communicate with their stakeholders to interact with them and provide them with information. The ubiquity and popularity of social media have changed the way people communicate and the Internet has acquired an important role in the dissemination and use of the information [1].

In the last two decades, the Internet has become an important element even essential for communication and information [2]. This is why Castells [3] states: "to develop without Internet today would be like to industrialize without electricity yesterday".

The emergence of social networks has changed the way information transmission [4]. This is why Bruno [5] states: "... in the context of online social media, influence is a broadcast communication step by step and in addition to that of the transmission of word of mouth in the physical world ...".

The Expression social media refers to a group of services such as blogs, social networks or blogs pickups to develop exchange files (point of view) social interaction (influence, structuring of individual groups in networks, acquisition notoriety) and the creation of content on the internet.

The last year marked a remarkable development of social networking sites [6]. This remarkable development is illustrated by Castells [5] 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".

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Networks allow users to communicate with each other in different ways, either by mail or instant messaging, and share personal information, but also to discuss both public and private as well the use of this media issue is very important for the development of retail enterprises [7].

The most popular social networks are Facebook, Myspace or Twitter but want social media in general may seem illusory. This is why this study will focus on one of these social media to know that Facebook has become the favourite and most used social network by Internet within a few years.

This craze towards Facebook has attracted the attention of researchers in the social sciences, especially in the American context. But Facebook is now an international phenomenon and is invited to various aspects of social life. Facebook provides an alternative for individuals to obtain information not only from a few people they know but also a large group of individuals geographically dispersed and connected by the Internet [8].

Such information may relate to natural persons and be of different types and including public information (e.g., schools attended or religiously) and private (e.g., sexual orientation or amorous situation) or legal persons as retail enterprises.

The Internet sometimes poses an identification and the presence of the people of evil intent [9] and problem identification can go along a continuum whose one end is an implicit presentation and the second an explicit presentation [7]. Generate this information on Facebook can be used by retail companies [10]. But being issued in a virtual environment such information may raise the issue of the credibility and quality of information and lead to the questioning of the intention to continue using the source [8].

Others have looked at the credibility of information on the Internet using blogs [11]; [12] as scarce or nonexistent are the studies on the quality of information on Facebook and the credibility of the source of such information and their effects on the usefulness of the information but also the viability of the relationship with the source in the context of retail.

One of the youngest networks Facebook in a context marked by a strong virtual communication. Unlike other social media Facebook is used as both a blog and social network. Founded in 2004, Facebook accounted for 200 million users worldwide in 2009 and more than 400 million users in 2010 [13]. Facebook, whose previous figures announced in September 2013 estimated to 1.155 billion active users, has unveiled new figures up. End of September 2013, they're estimated to 1.19 billion active users\*.

Like other continents in the world, Africa faces the explosion of social networks whose success is encouraged by the widespread use of mobile phones on the continent. According to a report by the International Telecommunication Union, with over 400 million subscribers, the most important North American market African market preceded the rest of the world in the transition from fixed telephony to mobile telephony.

Facebook, already among the first 700 social networks used in the world with 700 million users, or 10% of the world population, is also the main

online social networking visited in most African countries (61.6% of penetration rate in the top 10 countries that use the most this site).

The rate of Internet penetration is 38%, or 125 million Internet users. The region has over 53 million active on social networks. 80% of Internet users use social networks daily. The number of Facebook users has multiplied by 3 between 2010 and 2012

In Tunisia, despite the increasing number of Internet users in 2012<sup>2</sup> to more than 4.2 million, nothing has been done to understand the reasons and exploit this situation.

Like other countries around the world, Tunisia has a high penetration rate. Indeed, the percentage of users of facebook in relation to the total population is among the highest percentages. The Maghrebien level, after Morocco and Algeria Tunisia comes with 4.6 million Tunisians on Facebook with 400,000 new since January 2014.

A small revolution seems to walk on the Tunisian web. His name: Facebook. This online social network collects 1.4 million followers, 14% of Tunisians. And they are more than a hundred thousand new users join each month.

### Research objectives

The goal of our research is to investigate the effect of information on the viability of a relationship with companies in the retail via Facebook through the effects of perceived quality and perceived credibility of the information on the usefulness of the information source and intention of consumers to continue to use this source. This work focuses on two research questions:

(1) *What are the effects of perceived quality and credibility of information on the perceived usefulness of the information to the consumer in the context of retail?*

(2) *What is the effect of the perceived usefulness of the information with the intention to continue to use the source of the information by the consumer in the context of retail?*

The structure of this paper is as follows. The next section focuses on the literature review, the theoretical research model and hypotheses, methodology, evaluation of the model research and discussion of results. Finally, we close this section by presenting the implication and opportunities for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

A social network is a set of entities such as individuals or social organizations, interconnected by links created during social interactions. Today these social interactions are reinforced by the development of virtual networks, links are created between entities increasingly distant and whose contacts are more numerous. A social network is a form of interpersonal interaction [14].

With great success, several researchers have used data from social media for many purposes like, forecasting stock market movements [8], revenue forecasting films [3] and even predicting election results [15]. Recently, Granka [16] proposed a model of electoral forecast for the United States based on web search data and past election results, not a single election.

Franch [17] follows a similar approach combining data from many social media sites, not just Twitter or Facebook. Social media allow users to interact, share content, and collectively create content [18]. Social media include, among others, blogs, social networking sites and platforms for

\* <http://www.cnetfrance.fr>  
2 : <http://www.ati.tn>.

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