

***The Role of E-WOM in Shaping Corporate E-Reputation:
A Case Study of Algérie Télécom***

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) on corporate e-reputation, focusing on the case of Algérie Télécom. With the rise of digital platforms and social media, consumer opinions and online interactions play a crucial role in shaping a company's image. E-WOM amplifies the visibility of consumer feedback, influencing trust, engagement, and purchasing decisions. This study examines how positive and negative reviews impact brand perception and explores the strategic importance of monitoring and responding to online discussions. By analyzing social media publications and using digital monitoring tools, the research highlights the necessity of proactive e-reputation management. The findings emphasize the role of advanced analytics and communication strategies in leveraging E-WOM as a competitive advantage while mitigating reputational risks.

Keywords: E-WOM; E-Reputation; Consumer Influence; Digital Communication; Social Media.

Jel Classification Codes: M31; L86; M37

1. Introduction :

The Web has revolutionized the way consumers share and access information about businesses, their brands, and their products. By providing instant communication tools, the Web enables users to exchange information in a more autonomous manner, often perceived as less biased than that disseminated through formal corporate channels (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). These exchanges facilitate better decision-making and strongly influence consumers' perceptions of brands. Additionally, the rise of Web 2.0 has significantly transformed the interaction between consumers and businesses, making online reviews, forums, and social media central to purchasing decisions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Research by Mangold and Faulds (2009) further highlights that social media serves as a hybrid element of promotion, allowing consumers to influence each other through peer-generated content. In this ecosystem, the internet user plays a central role. They have the freedom to publish, search for, and utilize information in real-time. Content from other users, such as reviews or discussions within online communities, often holds more weight than messages from companies. These interactions, which fall under the scope of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), significantly contribute to shaping a company's digital reputation (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Studies by Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008) indicate that E-WOM is particularly impactful in the tourism and hospitality industry, where customer reviews play a decisive role in purchasing decisions.

On the Internet, opinions about businesses, brands, or products vary widely. While this diversity is an asset, it also presents challenges. The information shared may lack credibility, particularly when the authors have questionable motives or biased intentions (Park & Lee, 2007). These challenges complicate the interpretation and use of such data by stakeholders, especially when it comes to managing e-reputation. Furthermore, Filieri and McLeay (2014) suggest that consumers evaluate online reviews based on credibility, relevance, and accuracy, emphasizing the need for companies to monitor and manage online discussions proactively.

Research by Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, and Wiertz (2013) demonstrates that consumers engage more actively with brand-related content when they perceive it as trustworthy, further reinforcing the link between E-WOM and e-reputation. In an environment where family, friends, and strangers constantly interact within digital circles, the key question this study aims to explore is: ***How does Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) influence the corporate e-reputation?***

The primary objective of this study is to clarify the concept of electronic word-of-mouth and assess its influence on consumer behavior online, particularly regarding corporate brand image.

To address the research question, the following objectives have been defined:

1. Examine the evolution from traditional word-of-mouth to electronic word-of-mouth.
2. Analyze the transition from traditional reputation to e-reputation.
3. Identify the impact of e-reputation on businesses.

To illustrate this impact, a case study was conducted on the company Algérie Telecom, a leader in telecommunications in Algeria. Through an in-depth analysis of online interactions, this research aims to assess the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) on the company's e-reputation. The objective is to understand how consumer opinions and comments on digital platforms shape brand perception, influence customer trust, and affect purchasing decisions. Using content analysis and digital monitoring tools like: Talkwalker, Google Trend, Ahrefs and Glassdoor. This study highlights essential strategies for managing and optimizing e-reputation in a constantly evolving digital environment. However, the artificial intelligence-driven sentiment analysis tools are becoming essential for businesses to track and respond to online feedback in real time, improving their overall reputation management strategies.

2. Background

2.1. E-WOM: Definition and Scope

E-WOM is described as a continuous and dynamic process of information exchange between consumers regarding products, services, brands, or companies, accessible to a vast audience via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). According to Harrison-Walker (2001), it refers to informal, person-to-person communication between a non-commercial communicator and an interested recipient. Goldsmith et Clark (2008) add that this form of communication relies on Internet technologies and primarily concerns the characteristics of products or services. Additionally, Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan (2008) highlight that E-WOM encompasses various online platforms, including social media, consumer review sites, and discussion forums, making it a highly influential source of information.

2.2. The Role of E-WOM in the Purchasing Process

E-WOM plays a role at all stages of the purchasing process: before the purchase, consumers seek information; during the purchase, they validate their choices; after the purchase, they share their experiences. For businesses, E-WOM is a strategic tool that helps engage customers, influence their decisions, and establish a strong online presence (Chu & Kim, 2011). Studies by King, Racherla, & Bush (2014) indicate that the credibility and volume of E-WOM significantly affect consumer trust and purchase intentions. Furthermore, Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol (2012) argue that negative E-WOM can have a more substantial impact on consumer behavior than positive E-WOM, reinforcing the need for effective reputation management strategies.

2.3. E-Reputation: Definition and Evolution

E-reputation, or online reputation, is the public perception of an entity based on shared information and opinions on the Internet. According to Frochot & Molinaro (2007), it relies on content published by internet users. Daniel (2008) highlights that it is influenced by online reviews, comments, and opinions. The rise of social media and e-commerce has accelerated this evolution, making e-reputation a key strategic asset. More recently, Meilhan (2023) emphasizes the growing role of artificial intelligence in monitoring and managing online reputation, as automated sentiment analysis tools become increasingly sophisticated in detecting consumer sentiment and brand perception.

2.4. The Impact of E-WOM on E-Reputation

E-WOM has a significant influence on e-reputation by amplifying the visibility of consumer reviews. Positive reviews strengthen consumer trust and engagement, while negative feedback can harm the company's image. A study by Weber Shandwick (2014) found that 63% of a company's perceived value is based on its reputation, highlighting the importance of actively managing online reviews. Furthermore, E-WOM redistributes power online, shifting some control over brand narratives from companies to consumers. This dynamic requires businesses to monitor and respond effectively to online feedback to maintain a positive e-reputation (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013). Research by Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006) also shows that online reviews directly affect sales performance, emphasizing the financial implications of managing E-WOM effectively.

The impact of E-WOM on corporate e-reputation can be analyzed from multiple perspectives:

A. Strengthening Credibility and Trust

Positive reviews shared through E-WOM help reinforce a company's credibility in the eyes of consumers. Unlike traditional advertisements, which may be perceived as biased, consumer reviews are seen as more authentic and impartial (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2009). This increased trust directly influences purchasing intentions and customer loyalty (Erkan & Evans, 2016). According to Zhang, Ye, Law, & Li (2010), businesses that actively encourage and manage E-WOM can achieve higher levels of consumer engagement and brand advocacy.

B. Expanding Online Visibility

E-WOM contributes to greater online visibility for businesses. Each review, comment, or share acts as a multiplier, broadening the audience and increasing the reach of positive messages (Park & Lee, 2009). This is particularly crucial in industries where digital presence is a key competitive factor. Research by Dellarocas (2003) highlights that E-WOM serves as a powerful mechanism for viral marketing, allowing companies to expand their reach without significant investment in traditional advertising.

C. Reputation Crisis Management

Negative reviews can significantly impact e-reputation, but a prompt and appropriate response can mitigate their consequences. By responding transparently and proactively to negative comments, businesses can not only limit damage but also turn negative situations into opportunities to strengthen customer relationships (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2011). Studies by Einwiller & Steilen (2015) show that brands that actively engage in crisis communication strategies on social media can recover faster from reputation damage and rebuild consumer trust more effectively.

D. Influence on Search Engine Rankings

User-generated content, such as reviews and recommendations, is taken into account by search engine algorithms. A high volume of positive interactions can improve a company's organic SEO ranking, thereby increasing its online visibility (Fileri & McLeay, 2014). Moz (2022) further supports this by stating that online reviews account for nearly 15% of Google's local search ranking factors, making E-WOM management essential for businesses aiming to enhance their search engine presence.

E. Impact on Customer Retention and Acquisition

E-WOM plays a key role in both customer retention and acquisition. Positive recommendations and reviews encourage new customers to trust a company, while existing customers feel valued when they see their opinions acknowledged (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Research by Anderson (1998) confirms that satisfied customers who engage in positive E-WOM act as brand advocates, ultimately reducing customer acquisition costs and increasing lifetime customer value.

3. Methods and Materials

As part of this research, we explored the impact of E-WOM on the e-reputation of Algérie Télécom using content analysis tools and e-reputation evaluation instruments. To conduct this study, an analysis of social media publications was essential. We targeted the official accounts on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Additionally, we assessed the company's online reputation using various digital monitoring tools.

3.1 Content Analysis Tools

In this research, we adopted a systematic and objective analysis method: content analysis. This method relies on tools that collect, organize, and interpret data from online sources such as social networks and websites.

For our study, we applied Laurence Bardin's method, which allows us to structure the analysis around quantitative and qualitative indicators. These elements formed the foundation of our study, helping us collect and analyze publications from social media accounts.

3.2 E-Reputation Analysis Tools

E-reputation evaluation involves analyzing the general perception of a company online. To measure Algérie Télécom's reputation, we followed a systematic approach using digital monitoring tools, which provided a comprehensive overview of how the company is perceived.

First, we conducted a quantitative analysis of mentions using tools such as TalkWalker and Google Trends. TalkWalker provided us with insights on the number of mentions and engagement rate over a 7-day period. Meanwhile, Google Trends allowed us to measure the search volume associated with Algérie Télécom.

E-reputation is not limited to quantitative data; it also includes qualitative elements. With TalkWalker, we were able to analyze the tone of online mentions, generating keyword clouds related to Algérie Télécom, as well as an overall sentiment evaluation regarding the company.

To complement our analysis, we examined the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) performance of Algérie Télécom's website. Using Google, we verified the visibility of keywords related to the company and observed the top suggestions made by the search engine. A strategic keyword was defined to assess the company's presence in Google search results.

Finally, we took into account the reviews of current and former employees via the Glassdoor platform. This platform allows employees to give anonymous feedback, which enabled us to evaluate the company's star rating and determine the percentage of employees recommending Algérie Télécom to others.

Table (1) : E-Reputation Analysis

Methods	Digital Monitoring Tools	Indicators
Quantitative Analysis of Mentions	TalkWalker	- Number of mentions, - Engagement rate
	Google Trend	- Search volume
Qualitative Analysis of Mentions	TalkWalker	- Keyword clouds
SEO Analysis	Ahrefs	- Backlinks
Review Analysis	Glassdoor	- Star rating out of 5

The source: Designed by the authors

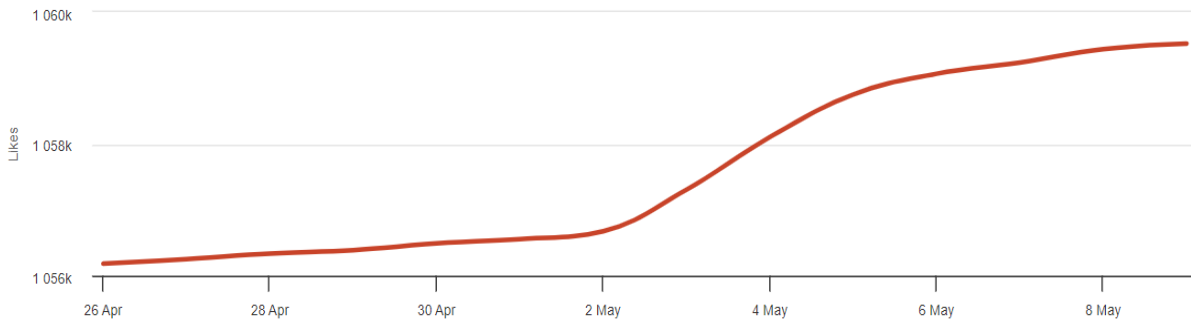
4. Results and discussion

Social media content analysis is a process aimed at evaluating and understanding user-generated data across different social platforms. In our study, we utilized the Social Blade analysis tool, which enables the assessment of engagement trends such as likes, comments, and shares to evaluate the performance of each social network. Our analysis covers the period from April 26, 2024, to May 9, 2024.

Results on the Facebook Social Network

The graph below (figure 1) illustrates the evolution of the number of likes on AT's Facebook page between April 26, 2024, and May 9, 2024. We observe that on April 26, 2024, the lowest engagement period recorded a total of 1,056,000 likes. In contrast, May 8, 2024, marks the most active period, with the number of likes reaching 1,060,000.

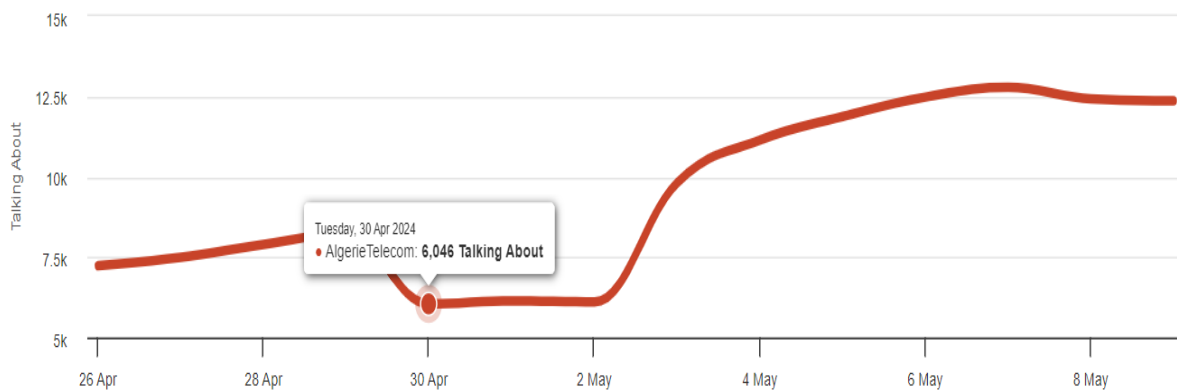
Figure (1): Total Number of Likes on the Facebook Page



The source: Social Blade

The graph below (figure 2) illustrates user interaction on AT's Facebook page over the same period. We observe that on April 30, 2024, the least engaging period recorded approximately 6,046 interactions. In contrast, on May 7, 2024, a significant increase was noted, with around 12,787 interactions. These interactions include comments, content shares, reactions such as "Like" or "Love," and mentions of the page in other users' posts.

Figure (2): Overall Engagement on the Facebook Page



The source: Social Blade

Results on the Twitter Social Network

Table 2 below presents the evolution of engagement on AT’s Twitter page between April 26, 2024, and May 9, 2024. We observe an increase in the number of followers, indicating audience growth and rising interest in the shared content. Additionally, a significant rise in the number of tweets has also been noted.

Table (2): Evolution of Engagement on the Twitter Page

DATE		FOLLOWERS		FOLLOWING		TWEETS	
2024-04-26	Fri	–	528,968	–	21	–	8,391
2024-04-27	Sat	+20	528,988	–	21	+10	8,401
2024-04-28	Sun	-6	528,982	–	21	+7	8,408
2024-04-29	Mon	+26	529,008	–	21	+4	8,412
2024-04-30	Tue	+31	529,039	–	21	+7	8,419
2024-05-01	Wed	+26	529,065	–	21	+5	8,424
2024-05-02	Thu	+10	529,075	–	21	+5	8,429
2024-05-03	Fri	+18	529,093	–	21	+2	8,431
2024-05-04	Sat	+49	529,142	–	21	+18	8,449
2024-05-05	Sun	+23	529,165	–	21	+18	8,467
2024-05-06	Mon	+30	529,195	–	21	+2	8,469
2024-05-07	Tue	+7	529,202	–	21	+3	8,472
2024-05-08	Wed	+32	529,234	–	21	+6	8,478
2024-05-09	Thu	+64	529,298	🟡 LIVE	–	+5	8,483

The source: Social Blade

Results on the Instagram Social Network

During the period from April 26, 2024, to May 9, 2024, engagement on AT’s Instagram page showed a positive trend, as illustrated in Table 3. An increase in the number of followers was observed, suggesting growing interest in the page and strong interaction with the published content.

Table (3): Monthly Number of Followers on the Instagram Page

DATE		FOLLOWERS		FOLLOWING		MEDIA	
2024-04-16	Tue	–	68,395	–	1	–	2,806
2024-04-17	Wed	+314	68,709	–	1	+1	2,807
2024-04-18	Thu	+362	69,071	–	1	+4	2,811
2024-04-19	Fri	+470	69,541	–	1	+2	2,813
2024-04-20	Sat	+350	69,891	–	1	+2	2,815
2024-04-21	Sun	+533	70,424	–	1	+1	2,816
2024-04-22	Mon	+532	70,956	–	1	+2	2,818
2024-04-23	Tue	+263	71,219	–	1	+1	2,819
2024-04-24	Wed	+336	71,555	–	1	+3	2,822
2024-04-25	Thu	+144	71,699	–	1	+1	2,823
2024-04-26	Fri	+50	71,749	–	1	+1	2,824
2024-04-27	Sat	+10	71,759	–	1	+3	2,827
2024-04-28	Sun	+20	71,779	–	1	+2	2,829
2024-05-09	Thu	+746	72,525	–	1	+14	2,843
Daily Averages		+260		–		+3	

The source: Social Blade

Results on the TikTok Social Network

Table 4 below presents the evolution of engagement on AT’s TikTok page between May 9 and May 12, 2024. A positive trend was observed during this period, with a notable increase in the number of followers on May 11, 2024, reaching over 27 new followers, reflecting growing interest in the page. At the same time, the number of likes also increased, suggesting heightened user engagement.

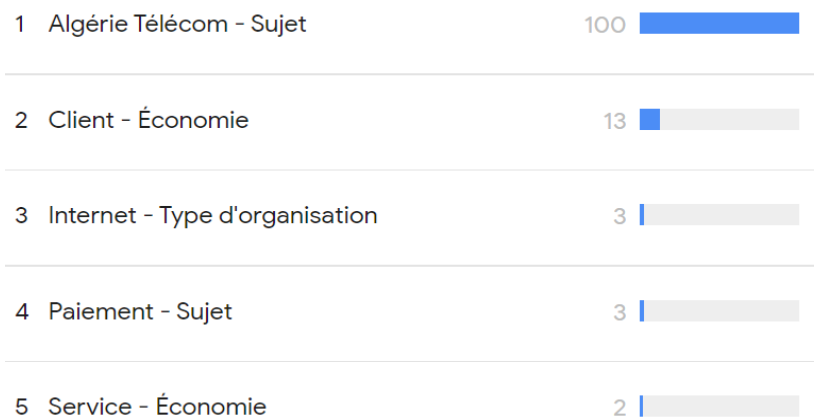
Table (4): Monthly Number of Followers and Likes on the TikTok Page

DATE	FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWING	LIKES
2024-05-09 Thu	– 2,484	– 0	– 2,616
2024-05-10 Fri	– 2,484	– 0	– 2,616
2024-05-11 Sat	+27 2,511	– 0	+74 2,690
2024-05-12 Sun	– 2,511	– 0	+10 2,700
Daily Averages	+14	–	+37
Last 30 days	+27	–	+74

The source: Social Blade

Figure 3 below presents the search volume by associated topic, where "Algérie Télécom - Topic" dominates with a score of 100, indicating strong public interest. In comparison, "Client - Economy" ranks second with a significantly lower score of 13, followed by "Internet - Type of Organization" and "Payment - Topic" (both scoring 3), and finally "Service - Economy" in last place with a score of 2. This distribution highlights a significant gap between "Algérie Télécom" and the other topics, suggesting a major news event or issue surrounding this company, while the other themes generate much lower interest.

Figure (3): Search Volume by Associated Topics



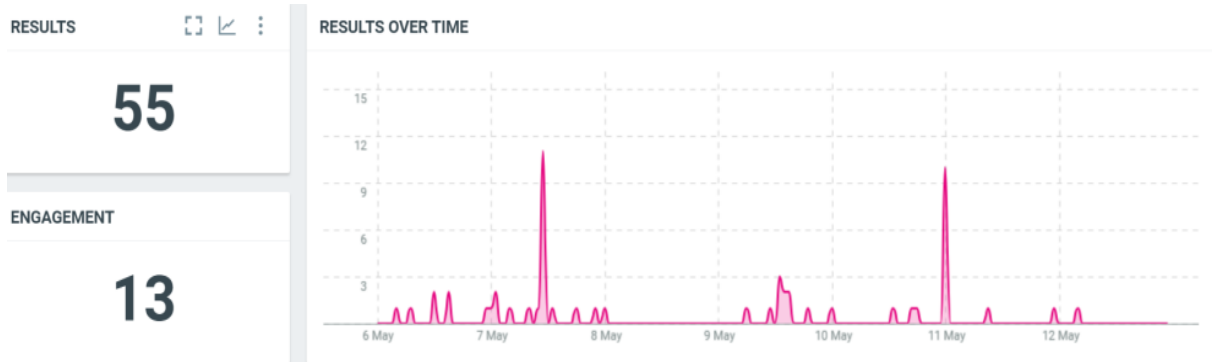
The source: Google Trend

Quantitative Analysis of Mentions

In this first part of the analysis, we conducted a quantitative analysis of mentions using monitoring tools such as TalkWalker and Google Trends. Our e-reputation analysis of Algérie Télécom covers the period from May 6 to May 12, 2024.

The graph below (figure 4), generated by TalkWalker, presents the results. We observe a total of 55 results, indicating the number of recorded occurrences for the analyzed topic. The engagement rate is 13, reflecting the public's interaction with these results (likes, shares, comments, etc.). The trend graph shows fluctuations over time, with two peak points on May 8 and May 11, suggesting a significant increase in interest or activity on these dates.

Figure (4): Total Mentions and Engagement Rate



The source: Talkwalker

Among the 50 mentions of Algérie Télécom (figure 5), 30.9% are positive, while 20% are negative. This suggests an overall positive perception of the brand, while also highlighting the presence of negative mentions. These results reflect a mix of favorable and unfavorable reactions from the public, indicating that the company's online reputation is generally positive. Additionally, approximately 1.3 million unique users could be reached by these mentions, suggesting a large audience exposed to content related to Algérie Télécom.

Figure (5): Sentiment Rate and Potential Reach



The source: Talkwalker

In figure 6, we observe influencers mentioning Algérie Télécom (AT). One notable influencer, "Télécom dz", frequently shares content related to AT and has 1.5K subscribers on YouTube, with an engagement rate of 126 on their posts. This influencer could play a key role in spreading positive messages about the brand. A collaboration with this influencer could help expand the brand's reach and strengthen its online reputation.

Figure (6): Influencers Mentioning AT

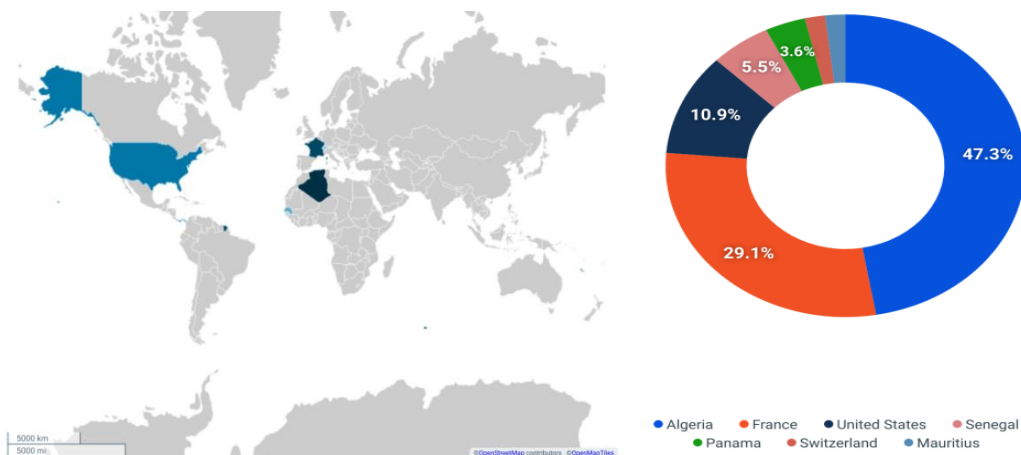
Influencer	Network	Posts	Reach	Reach per mention	Engagement	Engagement per mention
Télécom Dz http://www.youtube...	YouTube	1	1.5K	1.5K	126	126
Fête du 1 http://news.radioalge...	Radio	1	60.5K	60.5K	1	1
official reporter http://www.gccbusin...	Global	1	5K	5K	1	1
@Choeuaib	Twitter	1	1.5K	1.5K	1	1
hachemi b. http://www.jeune-ind...	Global	2	73.5K	36.7K	1	0.5
admin http://1001infos.net/	Global	2	0	0	0	0
Hichem Aissat http://algerietelecom...	Blog	1	0	0	0	0
ahend http://domus-wolf.bl...	Blog	1	0	0	0	0
R. N. 47 http://elwatan-dz.co...	Global	1	161.4K	161.4K	0	0

The source: Talkwalker

Geographical Distribution and Media Type

Figure 7 shows that the majority of mentions of Algérie Télécom (AT) come from Algeria, followed by France. This may indicate the key markets where the brand is most popular, as well as areas where its online presence could be further improved.

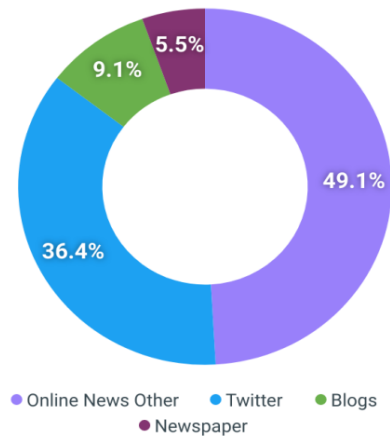
Figure (7): Geographical Distribution



The source: Talkwalker

Figure 8 highlights that the majority of mentions of Algérie Télécom originate from social media, with 49.1% coming from online news, followed by 36.4% on Twitter and 9.1% on blogs. This underscores the significance of social media in the dissemination of information related to AT.

Figure (8): Media Type Distribution

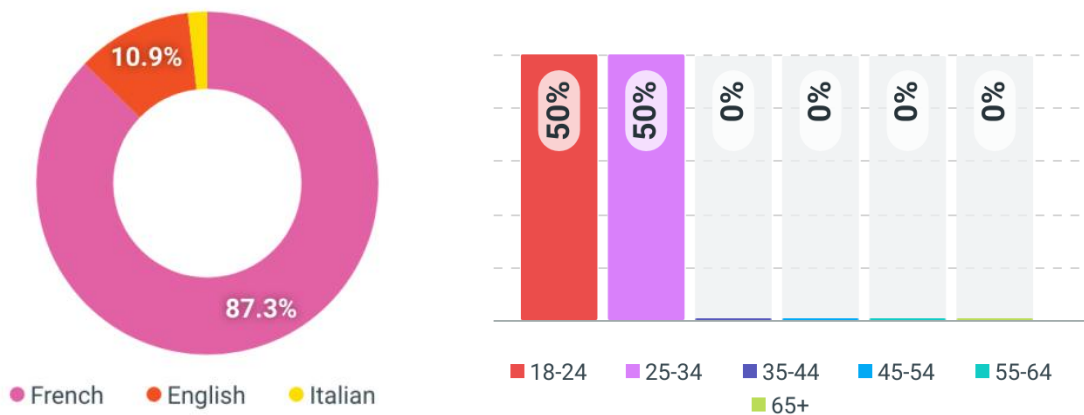


The source: Talkwalker

Figure 9 below illustrates that the majority of searches were conducted in French (87.3%), followed by English (10.9%), with a minor presence of Italian. This dominance of French suggests that the sample analyzed is primarily francophone.

Furthermore, the age group analysis reveals that only the 18-24 and 25-34 age categories are represented, each contributing 50% of the searches, while older age groups (35+) did not participate in the analyzed searches. These findings indicate that interest in Algérie Télécom is mainly driven by a young and predominantly French-speaking audience.

Figure (9): Search Language and Age Group Distribution



The source: Talkwalker

Qualitative Analysis of Mentions

In this second part of the analysis, we focus on the quality of mentions. Using Talkwalker, we generated word clouds in figure 10, highlighting the most frequently used terms in mentions. The keywords include terms such as "telecom," "services," "event," "mobile," "commerce," etc. These insights help the company better understand the concerns and interests of its audience.

Figure (12): Employee Reviews of Algérie Télécom



The source: Glassdoor

5. Conclusion:

The rise of the Web and digital platforms has profoundly transformed the dynamics of communication between consumers and businesses. The emergence of electronic word-of-mouth gives internet users a central role in disseminating information and influencing purchasing decisions. Today, the perception of a brand or company is no longer solely dependent on formal communication strategies but is largely shaped by online interactions and shared opinions.

The study of E-WOM and its impact on corporate e-reputation highlights the growing importance of digital interactions in brand perception. The internet, particularly social media, has transformed the way consumers search for and share information, directly influencing their purchasing decisions and the credibility of businesses.

The findings, particularly through the analysis of Algeria Telecom's e-reputation, confirm that E-WOM plays a key role in shaping a company's image. Positive reviews enhance consumer trust and improve online visibility, while negative comments can damage reputation if not managed appropriately. Thus, a company's ability to monitor, analyze, and respond to online exchanges becomes a crucial strategic factor in maintaining a positive brand image and ensuring competitiveness.

This study emphasizes the importance of proactive e-reputation management by integrating advanced analytical tools and effective digital communication strategies. In a constantly evolving digital environment, businesses must adopt a dynamic and responsive approach to leverage the opportunities offered by E-WOM while minimizing the risks associated with negative reviews.

Ultimately, E-WOM is a powerful lever that companies must utilize by adopting a proactive and strategic approach. Transparency, responsiveness, and the ability to engage with consumers are essential elements in transforming e-reputation into a sustainable competitive advantage. The digital era requires businesses to rethink their online image management—not merely as an extension of traditional marketing but as a fundamental pillar of their consumer relations and market positioning.

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