Social Media and Customization of the Relationship: The Case of Coca Cola Tunisia's Facebook Fun Page

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Abstract- *This paper aims to investigate the role of social media in the customization of the relationship between a company and their customers. Customizing the relationship is determined by four observable variables: the pre-purchase phase (Co-creation), customer knowledge, speed of feedback and online interactivity. Personalized relationship may be facilitated by the use of new technologies and especially social networks. By using this media, company can create databases allowing it to know perfectly the customer. In this context, the contribution of employing such media by company, led us to ask about the effect of using this social network on customizing relationship with client. Based on an empirical study on a sample of 136 Tunisian students, we show that the use of social media haven't directs and positive effects on customizing relationship with client. Indeed, the obtained results confirm that social media have positive and statistically significant impact only on co-creation and online interactivity between the company and its customers. So, customizing customer relationship should go through co-creation and online interactivity.*

General Terms- *Consumer behavior, Web marketing, Social Media.*

Keywords- *Social media; customization; data bases; co creation; rapid feed-back; online interactivity; customer knowledge*

1. INTRODUCTION

Introducing ICT, in particular social media, to manage corporate information shows how it has become a need. According to a survey published by Global Web Index[1], out of about 2.986 billion Internet users worldwide in 2014, 2,016 billion are active on social networks, i.e. 68% of Internet users and 28% of the world's population. By the end of 2015[2], the number of users of social media is expected to exceed 3 billion. Accordingly, ICT breakthrough has led companies to think of social media as a customer relationship channel. These technologies have significantly changed how companies view their customer relationship management models. Currently, the priority is no longer about conquering new markets but rather maintaining and developing business / customers exchanges. The success of such a priority depends on involving and participating more customers in the formulation of offers by customizing customer / company relationship. This would imply greater customer participation in developing the company's offer process. New technologies and more specifically social media can greatly help improve interaction between the company and its customers, leading thus to developing a more customized relationship with customers. This raises the question on the relationship between social media use and customization of customer / company relationship. In other words, we try to show how social networks, especially Facebook, can help the company to customize its relationship with its customers.

To this end, our study uses a hypothetical-deductive approach. Through a review of the literature, we formulate our research hypotheses on the impact of social media use on offer customization. These hypotheses were then validated on a sample of 60 young Tunisians who are fans of Coca Cola Tunisia's Face Book page.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we define the two main theoretical concepts related to our research problem. These concepts are respectively social media and customization of customer / company relationship. Second, we present our hypotheses and research model. Then, we present the methodology, data collection method, data analysis, and we discuss the results. Finally, we draw conclusions and present future research.

2. THEORY AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

2.1 Social networks and their impact on customization of customer relationship

Corporate communication is increasingly growing, and firms now have become more convinced of the importance of internet in their marketing strategies. For this reason,

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[1] www.globalwebindex.net
[2] http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/

most of them opt for social media use in view of presenting "promotions, direct marketing, interactive customer service and technical support" as recommended by Cho and Cheon (2005), according to Agrebi and Flores (2013). Therefore, they reach more and more their targets, "improve their reputation and remodel their image in case of crises" as noted by Argyriou, Kitchen and Melewar (2006), as cited in Agrebi and Flores (2013).

In our study and to better define these tools, we refer to Stenger & Coutant (2013), who used Kaplan & Haenlein's definition (2010). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) define these tools as "a set of Internet applications which use Web 2.0 ideology and technology, and which allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Indeed, the studies of Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) use social presence and media richness theories. Likewise, referring to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), we sketch the nature of the content of social media, their functions and components. With their nature and function in mind, it is estimated that social networks are interactive sites that provide users with a richer context. They rely on the principle of communication, mass participation (group interests / friendship) and sharing (socialization tools with friends, professionals and family). Thanks to their single-use applications, they provide users with an opportunity to become changing content co-producers and information consumers. Nevertheless, use-wise, these tools still remain free for online consumers "offering unlimited opportunities to learn while contributing to knowing others" (Uloma Doris, 2013). However, social networks still are not free for companies since information published by users is their real database which is later adopted for their e-marketing strategies.

In the same vein, Stenger & Coutant (2013) highlight the nature of the steps for the use of social networks proposed by Ito et al. (2010), like Facebook in our study. These are: "A third party content publishing process, made possible by sharing multimedia data (text, image, video)" and "A self-publishing process that rests on self-visibility (daily life, skills, relationships, tastes, personal data)" whose manipulation helps firms to propose attractive as well as customized offers to their customers and to ensure an ongoing marketing intelligence.

In conclusion, referring to the contributions of Agrebi and Flores (2013), we can say that: in order to guarantee its sustainability, the firm should maximize visitors' satisfaction with its online Page, which in turn opens up the way to benefit from positive effects in terms of visitors' recommendations and word of mouth to other prospects.

2.2 Customization of customer relationship

Up to this day, offering each customer a targeted and customized offer, thanks to the knowledge we have of him/her (databases), seems a competitive advantage. Consequently, it would result in a mutual gain for the consumer. This customized approach allows customers to benefit from a product that meets their needs and preferences in terms of time and, above all, quality. Company-wise, this approach helps reduce its stocks and implement more flexible processes in view of satisfying better its customers and developing a positive and a lasting relationship with them. To reinforce this customization, the firm should enable customers to participate in the design of its offers (Co-creation) and should set up an interactive platform to jointly ensure a better knowledge of the customer, a quick feedback on the latter's request and a real-time interactivity.

For Merle (2005) customization is "a strategy that makes the offer more personal, it can be considered customization if we take into account the role played by the customer during its phases: the pre-purchase phase (Co-creation) or the post-purchase phase (Co-production)". Merle (2010) divides customization into two categories: "explicit customization and implicit customization. The first is about directly asking customers about their needs and preferences and then proposing offers that will best meet their needs. They do not, however, participate in the design of the product/service. The second is to profile the customer using information collected indirectly, i.e. the company recommends the customer a product by reference to his/her past choices". To make these two types of customization possible, new technologies, especially social media, can be a useful tool. The plethora of pages on social networks remains the main reason that makes it difficult for customers to choose and encourages the firm to customize its customer relationship .This is why the company should make sure to follow new methods to increasingly get close to the customer.

Against the above, we formulate the basic hypotheses for our research:

H1: The use of social networks has a positive and direct impact on customization of customer relationship.

The concept of customization is described in the literature as a multidimensional construct. The different dimensions of customization as proposed by Merle (2010) are co-creation, customer knowledge, speed of feedback and online interactivity.

2.2.1   Co-creation

Like Julie Leroy (2008), we believe that "co creation is to offer customers the possibility to participate in any or all phases of the servuction process (production of services) in order to exceed customer expectations". Such a strategy would provide a more competitive advantage. It would promise a durable customer loyalty. Co-creation often evokes two concepts: net feeding and creative consumers. In the relationship marketing literature, several definitions have been proposed for these two concepts. We opted for the one proposed by Mencarelli & PULH (2009) as it applies to our context and our research problem. According to these authors, net feeding or User Generated Content (UGC) is a set of media whose content is produced or directly influenced by end users in contrast to content channeled through traditional media. However, UGC is not possible without the concept of creative consumers. UGC is developed mainly through the use of

particular social networks. According to this trend, consumers are interested in all kinds of products, new and old, and innovate more out of love and passion rather than for the sake of meeting a specific need (COVA, 2008). This trend seems to agree with the assumption that explains the success of co-creation through motivation. Indeed, motivation remains the main factor that can induce the customer to participate in the formulation of the offer. However, there are other elements which contribute to the success of co-creation: (a) absence of an opportunistic behavior from the company, (b) customer trust that is accumulated by the consumer through his/her experience with the firm (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987), and (c) commitment, empathy and interaction between the firm and the customer (Leroy, 2008) .Once achieved, co-creation gives customers an offer which they themselves are the creators. Likewise, co-creation gives the company the opportunity to often refer to lead users who, thanks to their knowledge and their frequent use of a product, help determine the characteristics of a new product that will be liked by other customers. Therefore, they can contribute by designing an offer that truly meets customers' expectations (Ivens & Mayrhofer, 2003).

Under both approaches, social media can be very useful and can positively contribute in customizing customers/company relationship through co-creation or customer involvement in the formulation of the offer as suggested by Leroy, hence our first sub-hypothesis:

H1.1: The use of social networks positively influences customization of customer / company relationship through co-creation.

2.2.2 *Knowledge of the customer*

Despite the many definitions given to customer knowledge, some researchers agree that knowing customers amounts to constructing databases. These latter are defined as entities for storing structured data with minimal redundancy. These data will be later used by programs or users. Indeed, this concept reproduces closely the concept of network[3]. To ensure management, any database uses a database management system DBMS which is simply "a high level software that allows users to structure, insert, edit, search so effectively specific data in a large amount of information stored on secondary memories shared by several users in a transparent way"[4]. Databases may contain different types of information the company collected from its customers through satisfaction surveys that have been launched on social networks. Martin, Topol and Gable (1990) argue that "one of the main foundations of a successful direct marketing is developing a database containing demographic and

psycho-graphic detailed customer information and customer purchase history. This latter includes data on recency, frequency and monetary value of their purchases, and other relevant data. Moreover, Bernard (2004) argues that exploratory testing, assessment, validation, and comparisons are also a source of information from which the company can approach its customers. In addition, the company may collect information on customers' tastes and preferences, why they rejected a product or a service and why they are dissatisfied. Accordingly, improving the database often requires an integrated management programme (ERP or CRM) that will be used for different purposes such as loyalty-raising campaigns. Then, "customer information will be transformed and taken into account in the company's offer or while reviving purchases to know about customers motives and also to correct for errors and optimize the service offered to customers" (Wagner.C & Majchrzak. A, 2007). However, a database is "the backbone of the marketing action in customer activation and loyalty, which can target and customize offers"[5] and should always be updated, facilitating thus targeting for marketing purposes and reinforcing the firm-customer relationship. Hence the importance of the use of social media. Indeed, social media helped create a new form of marketing, which is that of real time interactivity, i.e. the ongoing dialogue with internet users, which helped act on pre-established databases to refine them and make them more relevant (Boris, 2012)[6]. At this level Dussart, (1996) states that: "Extending the use of databases to other sectors, a key advantage of new information management, has established itself: the discovery of the possibility of creating a customized and a continuous dialogue with the customer, and of managing everything continuously". Brohier and Salerno (1996), advocating that "Brands now have the ability to develop and maintain sustainable customer databases (behavioral and declarative) that will enable them to develop targeted direct marketing promotional and relational activities ". In the same vein, Hugo (2012) states that these social media tools "help businesses to communicate more easily with users whom they can 'follow' and to collect their impressions, also called 'feedback'. To illustrate this idea, the author argues that certain commercials highlight the words "like" of your friends with their profile pictures"[7].

All this information allow companies to directly reach the most interesting customers or prospects. Indeed, thanks to social media companies can get much closer to their

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[3]Pillou, J.F. : Bases de données –introduction available online on :< http://www.definitions-marketing.com/bases-de-donnees-introduction-104-mqkmzn.pdf> (accessed 01-02-2013)

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[7] Idem

customers and thus win over quality of services provided to them.

Against the above, we formulate our second sub-hypothesis:

H1.2: The use of social network positively influences customization of customer / company relationship through knowledge of customers.

2.2.3   Quick feedback

Under a relationship-based approach, setting up a monitoring system is essential. Indeed, through interactive platforms launched on social networks, the company may control the comments, questions and requests suggested by Internet users. Indeed, a monitoring system cannot only provide the necessary information on current and potential customers, but also on competitors, partners and more generally on the business environment. Social media helps the company to collect information in real time at relatively lower costs. This information promotes business responsiveness and speed of feedback (Viot, 2010). Company's responsiveness, its immediate response to customer demands, implies listening carefully to customers. According to Viot (2010), this can take different formats: active (direct and indirect) and passive (direct and indirect). In our study, only indirect passive listening will be important for the firm. First, because it is done through social networks, and second because it is covered by web 2.0 logic. Messages sent by customers will be treated in an instantaneous and spontaneous way. This fosters business responsiveness and improves its relationship with its customers. In addition, the company's quick feedback to information collected through social networks enhances customer trust in the company's products or services thanks to transparency and taking into account their comments and complaints. Hence, our third hypothesis:

H1.3: The use of social networks positively influences customization of customer / company relationship through the company's quick feedback.

2.2.4   Online interactivity

With reference to Haübl & Trifts (2000), online interactivity consists of five elements: reciprocity in the exchange of information, availability of information on demand, response contingency, customization of content and real time feedback. We adopt this definition because it fits very well our research context and it highlights the variables communication, exchange and message content.

The firm uses several tools to interact online and to get much closer to their customers. Of these tools, we mention social networks, online forums, online communities and blogs. Certainly, the synergistic effect of interactions between these technologies provide a better result and a finer understanding of customers' opinions, attitudes and motivations extracted from their stories, lived experiences and feedback as to the company's actions (Clouet, 2005). These technologies, in particular social media, provide the company with the opportunity to collect real time reactions from its customers, its "friends" and fans of the company's Facebook page. However, some social media are more interactive than others. Thus, social networks like Facebook or LinkedIn or Twitter offer more opportunities for interaction with customers than other media such as blogs, wikis, mashups or RSS flows (Berthon & Pitt & Plangger & Shapiro, 2012). The company's blogs and youtube channel can be very useful to present better the company and its services. However, interactivity is not its strong hold. Indeed, social networks and Facebook in particular are the most used media that provide the best results (Hsuan Hung, 2011). These authors add that although blogs allow for a good feedback through identifying the most used key words by visitors of the company's blog, their impact on a customized relationship remains very limited. However, interactivity-wise social networks stand out as the best tool. Thanks to interaction with customers, the company can better understand them and customize its relationship with them. Indeed, the use of social networks, in particular Facebook, assumes the development of an interactive platform that allows for a permanent control. This platform, called also a monitoring system (Viot, 2010), allows the company to have passive listening mechanisms, real-time information and immediate feedback on customer demand by following the methodology of Cova. In addition, Clouet (2005) and Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro (2012) found that when the company uses social media-type technologies, online forums, blogs, Youtube channel and virtual communities, it ensures real-time exchanges. Indeed, through social networks, the company can immediately respond to a customer request or a question posted on its Facebook page. This interactivity necessarily favors customization of the company's relationship with its customers. Hence, our fourth sub-hypothesis:

H1.4: The use of social network positively influences customization of customer / company relationship through more online interactivity between the company and its customers.

All these hypotheses and relationships between the variables mentioned above can be summarized in the following research model:
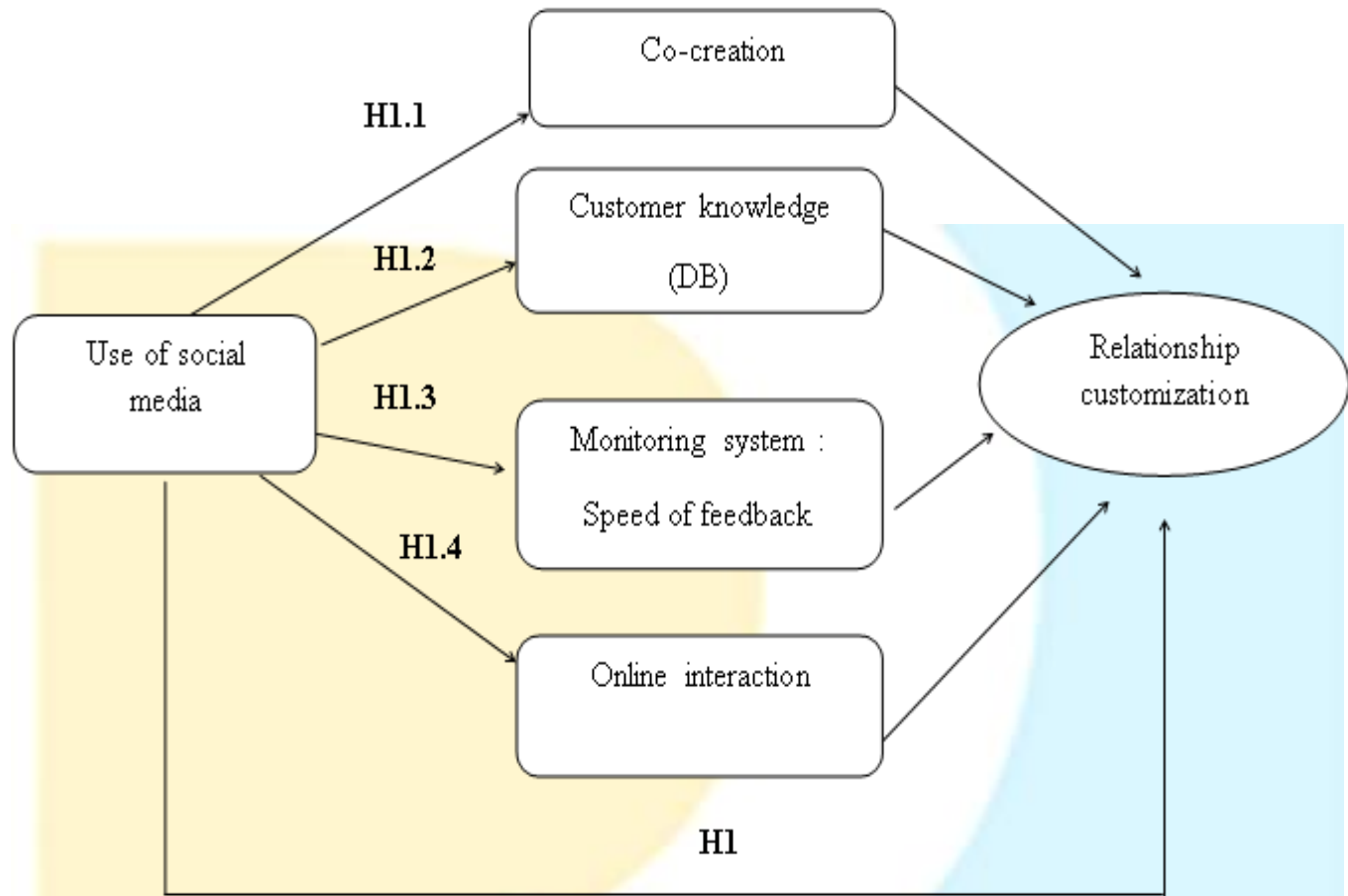
Figure 1: Research model

3. METHODOLOGY

To test our research hypotheses and model, we conducted a survey on a sample of 136 Internet users who have visited or are members of the fan Facebook page of Coca Cola Tunisia. First, these users, members of the Fan page, were randomly selected from a list of members provided by Coca-Cola Tunisia's webmaster. Then, given the small number of respondents, we had to extend our sample to include users who visited the Fan page of Coca-Cola Tunisia and who responded to our questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions. It was administered exclusively online. Data from the questionnaire were processed using SPSS 20.0. The main data analysis methods used to confirm or reject our hypotheses are regression and ANOVA.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A descriptive analysis of our results indicates that our sample consisted of 69% men and 31% women. It consists of a majority of young people aged between 20 and 35 years (59%). The age group (<20 years) represents 12%, the group between 35 and 50 years represents 26.5% and the rest (2.5%) represents the group over 50 years. They are mostly single (65%) and with monthly incomes between 500 and 1000 TND (52.2%).

Table 1 Respondents' Monthly incomes

		work force	%	Valid percent	Cumulative percentage
Valid	<500 d / month	28	20,6	20,6	20,6
	Between 500et1000 d / month	71	52,2	52,2	72,8
	Between 1000et 1500 d / month	34	25,0	25,0	97,8
	>1500 d / month	3	2,2	2,2	100,0
	Total	136	100,0	100,0	

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Table 2 shows the results of the reliability analysis, pointing to acceptable reliability coefficients (above 0.70) for all variables except for the variable "speed of feedback" (0568). Given the limited number of items of this variable (2) and the relatively small sample size (136), we decided

to keep this variable despite a Cronbach's alpha close to 0.6

Table 2: Reliability Analysis[8]

Built	No. of items	Reliability
Utilisation (util)	4*	0.782
Co Creation(CoCr)	3**	0.722
Interactivité (inter)	3***	0.713
Customer knowledge (conn)	4****	0.785
Rapid FeedBack (rfb)	2	0.568

* Construct initially measured with 5 items. We have removed an item to improve reliability
** Construct initially measured with 4 items. We have removed an item to improve reliability
*** Construct initially measured with 5 items. We have removed 2 items to improve reliability
**** Construct initially measured with 5 items. We have removed an item to improve reliability

Factor analysis using a PCA with a varimax rotation on the different variables of the model allowed us to factor out these items into five main factors:

Table 3 Factor Analysis[a]

	component				
	Uti	Co Cr	Inter	Conn	Rfb
uti1	,621				
uti2	,547				
uti3	,397				
uti4	,..573				
uti5	,287				
cocr1		,707			
cocr2		,685			
cocr3		,145			
cocr4		,343			
inter1			,427		
inter2			,663		
inter3			,722		
inter4			,252		
inter5			,689		
conn1				,493	
conn2				-,102	
conn3				-,396	
conn4				-,664	
conn5				,518	
rfb1					,760
rfb2					-,499

Extraction Method : Analyse en composantes principales.
Rotation Method : Varimax avec normalisation de Kaiser.
 a. Rotation converged in 2 iterations.

According to this table, most items are well represented on their own factor. Although some items are relatively poorly represented by their respective factor loadings (uti3: 0.397 for factor Uti, Cocr4: 0343 for factor CoCr conn3: -0396 for factor Conn) we decided to keep them. Reliability of the measurement scale of these variables has not improved significantly when removing them. However, the following items have been removed: uti5: 0287, Cocr3: 0145, inter1: 0427, Inter4: 0.252 and Conn2: -0102.

In addition, calculating means and standard deviations, we were able to better understand dispersion of these variables (Table 4):

Table 4: Final regression variables

Variable	# Items	Mean	Stand. Dev.
UTIL	4	5.451	0.971
COCR	3	3.214	1.442
INTER	3	3.547	1.604
ICONN	4	4.541	1.077
RFB	2	2.241	1.492

Finally, we retained an independent variable (use) and four dependent variables: Co-creation, interactivity, customer knowledge and speed of feedback. To simultaneously test all the relationships making up our research model and because we have more than one dependent variable, methods of structural equations were used. The various fit indices are found acceptable (close or even above 0.90). RMSEA is about 0.05 which is consistent with the standards established in the literature (Sharma et al, 2005). Therefore, we can conclude that our model's overall fit to the data is generally satisfactory. Indeed, even if the GFI is below the recommended standards (0.824 <0.9), RMSEA (0.062) and chi-square (p -value = 0.000) were satisfactory. However, Hu and Bentler (1998) does not recommend the use of this index. We believe then that the model is satisfactory and can be improved.

Table 5 Summary of the Main Results

X2	GFI	RMSEA	AGFI	NFI	CFI
319	0.824	0.062	0.812	0.91	0.912

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[8] Factor analysis through PCA with a varimax rotation has been used to assess validity of the construct under study. The analysis allowed for improving reliability of the measurement scales by reducing the number of items (see Table 3).

To test our research hypotheses, we chose the t-Student (t-value) and the standardized regression coefficients (lambda and beta). To accept a hypothesis, the t-value should be greater than 1.96 while the regression coefficients should be between 1 and -1. The results are reported in Table 6:

Table 6: Hypothesis testing

Hypo	t-value		Sig.	Conclusion
H1	.015	0.671	.409	No
H2	.306	4.401	.001	Yes
H3	.039	1.811	.284	No
H4	.566	3.847	.006	Yes
H5	.098	0.782	.604	No

The multiple regression helped us infer that there is a relationship between the independent variable 'use of social networks "and the dependent variables" co creation "," interactivity "knowledge" and "speed of feedback". Three of the relationships between use of social networks and components of customized relationship are proved to be significant. Table 4 shows the results of the different tests.

For the variable customer knowledge, regression and ANOVA, whose role is to determine the interdependent relationship between two variables (nominal / ordinal and metric or quantitative), are used. The result for customizing the relationship and customer knowledge variables was negative and significant, rejecting thus the hypothesis:

H3: Customer knowledge has a positive and direct effect on customization of customer relationship

We applied the same method on the variable speed of feedback and online interactivity. For the first variable, the test is significant accepting thus **H4**: speed of feedback has a positive and direct effect on customization of customer relationship. However, the result was different for the second variable, rejecting thus the hypothesis. Therefore, we can say that **H5**: online interactivity does not have a positive and direct effect on customization of customer relationship.

Our results can be summarized as follows: **H2** is accepted, **H3** is rejected, **H4** is accepted **H5** is rejected where **H1** is rejected: The use of social media does not have a positive and a direct effect on customization of customer relationship.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Our aim was to test the possible relationship between use of the Coca Cola Fan page Tunisia on customization of customer relationship through these four variables: co-creation, customer knowledge, interactivity and speed of feedback.

The obtained results confirm that customizing customer relationship should go through co-creation, i.e., give customers the possibility to participate in the formulation of the offer. This latter can be achieved by triggering customers' motivation to remain longer on the brand's fan page by offering games, for example. Added to this is speed of feedback, i.e. an immediate response to customers greatly favors customization of the offer.

We hypothesized first that all our research variables will allow for customizing customer relationship. However, we found that neither online interactivity, sharing between the company and the customer via social networks, nor customer knowledge, through creating databases, allowed to reach closely the customer and to offer customized products or services.

Analyzing the responses of the fans of the Coca Cola page, we found that information updated by the brand, in particular information on the brand's new exclusive products and services, motivates and attracts customers to stay longer on the Coca Cola homepage. Information is exchanged between customers via a positive B to O, either through comments, private messages or event publication. Neither deadlines respect nor listening to customers favors customization of the company/customer relationship through social networks, rather it is quality of information published on the home page that makes the relationship between the two providers personal.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In conclusion, this study showed that the use of social media moderately influences the quality of the relationship between the customer and the company. First, the customer is ready to spend only 5 to 15 minutes on the Coca Cola Facebook page. Second, the customer does so just to see the latest comments or to participate in competitions in view of winning some promotions or special offers. Then, customers grow committed to the firm once they participate in sharing a publication, brand information or they give an opinion about a content posted by the firm and this is by clicking "like". Finally, customers' trust towards this firm is considered balanced if we consider their satisfaction with the brand Coca Cola during their past experiences. These results finally indicate that customers are often pressed by time and they are motivated by competitions. They long on to quickly give their opinions, yet sometimes they do not feel too motivated to do so. They always judge the company's products or services referring to their past experiences. At this level, our results may help the company to focus on the means and methods that promote more and more its relationship with the customer. Indeed, this study may be extended by another study that examines the best ways to optimize the use of social networks in customizing customer / company relationship. The aim is helping ambitious firms to integrate new means of communication like social networks not only into their management strategy but also into their customized customer relationship processes.

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