



Digital marketing as a tool to achieve interactive communication with customers of public institution

Case study: The Algerian Post Institution

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Abstract ;	Article info
<p><i>This research paper aims to explore the extent of the public institution's application of the concept of digital marketing, specifically focusing on the Algerian Post Institution as a national entity providing postal financial services. It sheds light on the key digital marketing tools used by this institution, and how digital marketing contributes to achieving interactive communication with its clientele. One of the most finding is that the Algerian Post Institution employs various digital marketing tools, including its website, mobile marketing, social media platforms, and content marketing (texts, videos, and images). This has contributed to increasing the number of its clients engaging in electronic services, reaching a proportion close to 50%.</i></p>	<p>Received 25/12/2023</p> <p>Accepted 15/03/2024</p> <p>Keyword:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Digital Marketing. ✓ Interactive communication: ✓ Algerian Post Institution:

1. Introduction

The digital revolution has contributed to the development of communication between institutions and their markets (customers), transforming dialogues led solely by the institution into interactive conversations between these institutions and their customers. The emergence of modern communication technologies has spurred institutions to adopt digital marketing practices to enhance their performance, achieve customer satisfaction, and foster their loyalty.

Considering the information presented above, our research paper aims to tackle the core question as follows :

"How do digital marketing tools contribute to achieving interactive communication between the Algerian Post Institution and its customers?"

To answer this question, the following **hypotheses** were relied upon :

1. The institution's website is an effective tool for achieving interactive communication between the institution and its customers.
2. Among the key digital marketing tools are mobile marketing and the applications used therein.
3. Interactive communication between the Algerian Post Institution and its customers primarily occurs through social media platforms.

The **objective** of this research paper is to identify the key digital marketing tools used by the institution to achieve effective interactive communication with its customers. **The descriptive and analytical methodology** was employed in preparing this research paper, the first was relied upon in describing the topic under study based on documented references as well as by referring to the official website of the Algerian Post institution, while the analytical approach was relied upon mainly in studying the most important tools approved by the institution in applying the concept of digital marketing and its contribution to achieving communication with its clients and drawing results.

The research paper is **divided** into two main sections :

- **The First Section** – Conceptual Framework about digital marketing, its tools, and interactive communication
- **The Second Section** – Analysis of Digital Marketing and its Relationship with Interactive Communication in the Algerian Post Institution

2. Conceptual Framework:

2.1 - Introduction to Digital Marketing :

Organizations are currently striving to implement the latest marketing concepts, among which digital marketing stands out. The following discusses the definition and importance of digital marketing.

2.1.1 – Definition of Digital Marketing :

There are several definitions of digital marketing, including :

- Kotler & Keller define digital marketing as a direct means of communication and sales, allowing interaction between two parties (the institution and the customer) and providing individualized offers to each customer. (KILANI, 2022, p. 186)
- Dumitriu & Popescu describe digital marketing as the use of modern technologies like social media platforms, websites, multimedia, mobile applications, online advertising, and email to deliver goods and services to customers in a more interactive manner. (EL-Sherbiny, 2023, p. 2)
- Emanuelle, Eric & André-Benoit view digital marketing as a strategic channel for managing customer relationships, enabling relationship development and maintenance through listening and attentiveness. (De Jaegère, 2011, p. 186)
- Grégory Bressolles defines digital marketing as a process involving planning, development, pricing, communication, or distribution of ideas, products, or services using digital technologies, aiming to acquire new customers or improve relationships with existing ones. (Kessmi, 2023, p. 129)

A comprehensive understanding of these definitions highlights that digital marketing involves using digital means of communication, including the internet, social media platforms, mobile applications, emails, and innovative marketing methods, to attract and

retain customers, increase sales volume, and enhance an institution's market image and position.

2.1.2 – Importance of Digital Marketing :

The significance of digital marketing for institutions lies in: (EL-Sherbiny, 2023, p. 2)

- Providing institutions the opportunity to showcase their products (goods and services) globally 24/7.
- Facilitating effective communication with customers by providing necessary information, allowing them to express opinions and criticisms.
- Enabling institutions to reach a wider range of potential customers.
- Acquiring a robust customer database.
- Speeding up the delivery of marketing messages and targeting specific customer segments.
- Reducing advertising costs, particularly for small and medium-sized institutions.

Key features of successful digital marketing campaigns include: (EL-Sherbiny, 2023, pp. (2-3)

- Using high-quality websites accessible to internet users 24/7.
- Leveraging social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram for swift access to potential customers, aiding in identifying purchase intentions.
- The classification of a company's activity relies on better marketing through search engines, which is a continuous process based on good teamwork.
- Sending emails to network users helps in obtaining quick responses.
- Involving the customer in advertising and service content, seeking their opinion, helps in prompt response and product purchase, and encourages them to share with friends and close acquaintances through social media platforms.
- A significant part of digital marketing heavily relies on mobile phone technology. Therefore, the company should ensure compatibility and alignment of its advertisements with mobile applications.

2.1.3 - The similar terms for digital marketing:

There are differing opinions on distinguishing between digital marketing, electronic marketing, and internet marketing. Here, we attempt to clarify the main differences between these three terms based on one of these opinions: (Brunet, 2020)

- **Digital marketing** is a set of systems and procedures implemented to acquire new customers and increase sales. In essence, digital marketing is a tool for data collection used for prospecting and identifying potential customers. It is also employed for marketing campaigns and managing customer relationships. The term "digital" reflects the power of various technological foundations that utilize the internet, such as computers, tablets, and smartphones.
- On the other hand, **internet marketing** (or web marketing) is related to the web. It is, in fact, an internet tool that allows an institution to access information available on web pages from a specific internet site. Consequently, it is marketing specifically harnessed on the web or the internet. Following this, other digital technological foundations are considered less important. While digital marketing employs all communication foundations, internet marketing solely utilizes information related to the institution's internet presence.
- Meanwhile, **electronic marketing** is a set of techniques used for marketing and advertising, primarily aimed at improving and attracting targeted customer segments. Modern communication technology such as websites, online research, email, and the most commonly used social media platforms are significant in this case.

2.2 - Generalities about Digital Marketing Tools :

Digital marketing utilizes several tools to reach and attract the largest possible segment of potential customers, engaging and communicating with them. Below, we explain the most important of these tools: (Kessmi, 2023, p. 129)

2.2.1- Social Media Platforms : Social media platforms are crucial tools used by companies to communicate with their customers. They hold significant credibility, as information related to a product shared by a friend on a social media platform is considered more credible than information directly provided by the producing company. Social media platforms are electronic networks that allow users to create their own space and connect with others who share similar interests and hobbies. These platforms enable users to meet online, exchange information, engage in discussions, and share content. Examples of major social media platforms used in marketing include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

2.2.2 – Email: Email allows marketers to inform and communicate with customers. Well-timed, targeted, and relevant email messages can be highly effective sales tools. Email provides several benefits to companies, including direct communication with potential and existing customers, creating a targeting advantage by qualifying potential customers one by one, and can be cost-effective for the organization.

2.2.3 – Company Website: Companies usually create their own website to market their products. This website is used to engage with customers in a way that encourages direct product purchases or achieves other marketing objectives set by the company. These websites may contain marketing mechanisms such as catalogs, marketing incentives, promotional activities, sales activation, and more.

2.2.4 – Mobile Marketing: Mobile marketing involves delivering various marketing messages, promotional offers, and marketing content to customers while they are on the go using their mobile devices. It engages customers anywhere and at any time during their purchase processes. Mobile marketing includes SMS, MMS (supporting graphics, images, and videos), and smart applications that store digital data like Android.

2.2.5 – Online Advertising: It refers to clickable ads or ads displayed through search engines. These are standardized visual ads typically shown on the side of a website being browsed, messenger apps, emails, and more. Their importance lies in their ability to pique curiosity and stimulate the browser's need, allowing them to evaluate different options and make purchase decisions through convincing content and attractive offers.

In addition to the aforementioned tools, we also have digital billboards or signage. This modern advertising tool utilizes digital signs to promote a brand, product, or idea, aiming to communicate with customers or the target audience. It attracts customer attention, stimulates curiosity, encourages them to seek more information about the product, raises awareness about the brand or advertised product, promotes interaction with the audience, directs them to websites or points of sale, and motivates them to make purchases. (the arabic marketer, 2023)

2.3 - General Concepts about Interactive Communication:

Organizations strive to ensure continuous communication with their customers by presenting key information about the products they offer and persuading them to purchase. However, this alone is not sufficient to build a strong relationship with customers. It requires more than that. Currently, it is imperative for the institution to provide customers with the opportunity to express their opinions, voice their concerns, and have their say.

Listening and responding to their questions, inquiries, and criticisms are essential, which is known as interactive communication.

2.3.1 - Definition of Interactive Communication:

The word "communication" originates from the Latin word "Communicare," which means: (Mouri, 2020-2021, p. 2)

- **Participation** : Making something shared with others.
- **Transmission** : Expressing individual ideas and feelings through speech, writing, and gestures for others to understand.
- **Relationship** : Establishing a connection or relationship with others.

Interactive communication is defined as a type of communication where there is a direct relationship between the sender and the receiver. The receiver has the ability to organize the flow of information as desired. This ability depends on making decisions about structuring the information provided through the channel used to send the message. This modern communication model has primarily evolved within networks, achieving interaction between the sender and recipient through various tools such as forums, chat rooms, emails, online gaming, social media platforms, and other tools. (50A, 2023)

Effective interactive communication means clear transmission and reception of information and active communication with others in an efficient manner consistent with the organization's objectives. (Agence du revenu du Canada, 2016)

2.3.2 - Importance of Interactive Communication :

Communication represents a fundamental pillar among the foundations of human societies by contributing to disseminating values and concepts and fulfilling the needs of society members. Understanding communication in any society entails comprehending its social reality, components, and concepts. With the increasing importance of communication and its technological advancements, community institutions have sought to enhance their communicative capabilities, diversify their methods and means to achieve greater persuasion and influence. These institutions have transitioned from unidirectional communication to interactive communication, resulting in significant impacts in the fields of information flow direction, the roles of communication process participants (sender and receiver), the nature of their interaction. Optimal media utilization now requires consideration of two aspects: (Al-Shahri, 2011, pp. (11-12)

➤ **The first:** Interactive communication in society is a subsidiary system within the framework of broader and more comprehensive systems prevailing in society, interacting with each other, influencing and being influenced.

➤ **The second :** Interactive communication is an integrated system in itself, encompassing several interactive and integrated elements and components with each other.

The theoretical foundations of communication agree that an individual's perception of their environment mainly relies on their communicative experiences. This means that within the framework of various complex and interconnected communication processes, individuals do not act passively. Instead, they interact through various means to form multiple concepts and developments about the surrounding factors. This interaction helps in making decisions and judgments regarding their relationship with these factors. Consequently, these concepts, meanings, and interpretations are social constructs resulting from interaction between individuals through different communication channels. (Al-Shahri, 2011, p. 13)

2.3.3 - Types of Interactive Communication :

It might not be long before traditional unidirectional communication becomes a thing of the past. Interaction through social media, smartphones, and other visual means increases awareness and productivity while promoting collaboration among individuals. The effectiveness of interactive communication relies on several elements, including the message, sender, receiver, the support relied upon in communication, and feedback. Among the types of interactive communication, we note : (50A, 2023)

a) **Multimedia:** In the current digital age, it's no longer necessary to be in the same geographic location for interactive participation. Multimedia plays a significant role in redefining communication. It includes elements like audio, video, graphics, text, animations, or any combination of these elements. These applications can be used at work, school, or home, according to the user's preferences. This makes multimedia a more sustainable alternative to traditional verbal interaction, as messages don't have a specific beginning or end. Multimedia is more powerful than other types of non-verbal communication, such as posters and books, as it includes components that allow recipients to provide feedback and interact with the content.

b) **Business and Education:** Advertising is a common type of business communication, whether it influences viewers to purchase a product, respond to surveys in magazines, or offer promotional content. Smartphone applications and scanning devices facilitate organizations in providing consumers with more useful information than ever before.

WIKIS sites, which represent fact-based interactive web communities, are increasingly used in classrooms. This educational approach calls for collaboration to create a rich educational environment for both students and teachers.

c) **Social Networking** : Social network communication values and promotes creativity and collaboration, facilitating the establishment of relationships and communities. Social networking platforms have indirect connections to education and business because they represent more than just a means of communication. Concepts like crowdsourcing, gathering comments from a large and integrated user base, have emerged on social networking sites and significantly influence today's commerce. The web also facilitates a new form of education-based interaction by relying on an unlimited number of contributors to create and maintain vast amounts of information.

3. A Review of Digital Marketing and Its Relationship with Interactive Communication in Algerian Post Institution

Throughout the centuries, postal services managed to sustain their existence. However, it's not surprising that international results indicate a continuous decline in postal service volumes for decades. This decline came about as digital media such as emails, text messages, and social networks have replaced traditional mail for quite some time, resulting in a significant decrease in the use of these traditional services. Nonetheless, in the current era of technological advancements, global communication, and social networks, which have brought unprecedented challenges to postal operators, these developments have concurrently created new opportunities, particularly in the realm of postal financial services and e-commerce. (Directorate of Statistics, 2022, p. 2)

3.1 - Introduction to the Algerian Post Institution :

The Algerian Post Institution holds a significant position due to its provision of various services to different segments of society, including postal, financial, and other commercial services. The establishment of the Algerian Post Institution resulted from several reforms that encompassed the restructuring of the postal and telecommunications sector. These reforms granted the state complete discretion for this economic operator to participate in the economic and social growth of the country. The Algerian Post Institution operated according to the provisions of Order No. 75-89 dated December 30, 1975, which included the Postal and Telecommunications Law, making the postal and telecommunications sector a single public institution with an industrial and commercial nature under the supervision of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. It had its own budget and its implementation

was subject to general accounting principles. It also had control over various wired and wireless postal and communication activities.

This transformation was reflected in the issuance of Law No. 2000-03 dated August 5, 2000, which aimed to : (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 119)

- Develop and provide postal and communication services with qualitative specifications in competitive conditions, ensuring the public interest.
- Specify the general conditions for exploitation in the fields related to postal and communication services by operators.
- Define the framework and how to regulate activities related to wired and wireless postal and communication services.
- Transform the exploitation of postal and communication services conducted by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications into a public institution with an economic and commercial nature for the postal sector and for wired and wireless communication operators.

The exploitation system applied to each postal service was determined by Executive Decree 01-418 dated December 20, 2001, whereby postal services, postal transfers, postal vouchers, issuance of postage stamps, and all clearance marks for postal services were subjected to the postal clearance system (exclusive regime). The exploitation and provision of express international postal services were subject to the licensing system, and finally, other postal services were subject to the simple declaration system. The establishment of 'Algerian Post' was established by virtue of Executive Decree No. 43-2002 dated January 14, 2002. The main institution is located in Bab Ezzouar, 20 kilometers from the capital city of Algiers, adjacent to Houari Boumediene International Airport. The general rules for postal and electronic communications were defined by Law 18-04 dated May 10, 2018. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 119)

Algerian Post is responsible for managing postal and financial services for citizens, covering the needs of over 40 million people. The institution possesses an effective and extensive local network deployed across the entire national territory, constituting the largest African postal network with over 4000 post offices fully connected to the internet. The institution endeavors to maintain a mechanism to modernize its structures and aims to become a leader in distributing local and household services, a reference for financial inclusion of citizens, and the most effective entity concerning mail and large parcels by accelerating its digital transformation and aligning its physical and digital network.) Algeria Awras(2023 ,

3.2- Indicators of the Development of Postal Infrastructure in Algeria

3.2.1 - Evolution of the Number of Post Offices :

Algerian Post is committed within the sector policy to consistently provide high-quality public service and to reach out to citizens. In this context, the number of its offices continues to increase, as shown in the following table :

Table 1 : Evolution of the Number of Post Offices in the period from 2017 to 2022.

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
The number of post offices	3824	3907	4000	4057	4106	4189
The number of operational post offices	3743	3811	3862	3984	4055	4143
The number of post offices that have been rehabilitated	314	545	279	143	149	234
The postal density (population/post office)*	11035	11005	10975	11004	10965	10933

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 3)

*Recalculation by the office of Statistics, Studies, and Prospects (Population Data Source ONS)

The total number of post offices has shown continuous positive growth since 2010, moving from 4,106 offices in 2021 to 4,189 offices at the end of 2022, indicating an addition of 83 new offices. It's worth noting that the estimated number of post offices in service is 4,143, representing 98.9% of the total. This considers that post offices not in service are either recently received offices not yet opened or closed post offices undergoing rehabilitation and modernization. As for postal density, it remains stable at around 10,000 to 11,000 people per post office, despite efforts to reduce it. However, this can be partially explained by the significant population growth.

The digitization of postal services has introduced over 1,900 ATMs into service, and Algerian Post's integration into the Automated Cash Group, facilitating transaction exchanges between bank/golden cards. All these factors have contributed to improving postal services and making them available 24/7. Additionally, it is expected that in the coming years, the rate of increase in the number of offices will be greater, thanks to the agreement signed between the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and the Ministry

of Population to reserve spaces for establishing post offices in new cities. (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 4)

3.2.2 - Evolution of the Number of Counters :

As part of improving service quality and reducing waiting times at postal offices, the count of counters has been continuously increasing, as illustrated in the following table :

Table 2 : Evolution of the Number of Counters in the period from 2017 to 2022.

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
The number of counters	11857	12132	12275	12511	12616	12813
The density (population/counter)*	3559	3544	3576	3589	3569	3574

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 4)

* Calculated by the Directorate of Statistics, Studies, and Prospects (Population Data Source ONS)

By the end of December 2022, 197 additional postal counters were recorded compared to the year 2021, and 956 counters were recorded compared to the year 2017, in line with the increase in the number of offices. Regarding density, it remained somewhat stable at around 3,600 individuals per postal counter, as mentioned above, due to demographic growth. Additionally, in the context of assisting citizens with special needs, it is noteworthy that 1,073 counters were established for this population group to aid and ensure their empowerment. These counters are added to the range of online services and other home services for people with special needs and the elderly. (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 4)

3.2.3 – The Evolution of the Number of ATMs machines and TPE/CIB Card Reader Devices:

The number of ATMs has been continuously increasing in recent years thanks to the efforts made by the Algerian Post to introduce and enhance these financial services, thereby ensuring better service quality around the clock. The following table illustrates this :

Table 3 : Evolution of the Number of ATMs and TPE/CIB Card Reader Devices in the period (2017-2022).

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
The number of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in service	1300	1378	1403	1407	1409	1920

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 4)

In 2022, the number of ATMs in service reached 1920 machines compared to 1409 machines in 2021, meaning more than 500 ATMs were deployed in service in 2022.

3.3- Indicators of the Evolution of Postal Financial Services in Algeria :

The use of postal financial services provided by the Algerian Post has increased in recent years, as illustrated in the following table :

Table 4 : Evolution of Postal Financial Services in Algeria during the period (2017-2022)

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
The number of CCP accounts	20413478	21374419	22629707	23613552	24714867	27039740
The number of cnep accounts	4266000	4304569	4335648	4353030	4377213	4400231
The number of electronic cardholders (including the gold card)	7492508	5781104	5602684	6766383	8841339	10124456
The number of electronic cards	4097010	4849537				

Source: (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 5)

The postal network extends to 4189 fully connected post offices to the internet, covering all corners of the country and actively contributing to financial inclusion. By the end of 2022, the number of current postal accounts reached over 27 million accounts, reflecting an increase of approximately 9.41% compared to 2021. Additionally, the number of CNEP accounts exceeded 4.4 million accounts by the end of 2022, and starting from 2019, all electronic cards became gold cards.

3.3.1- Financial Transactions and Operations Indicators:

a) Transactions on CCP accounts :

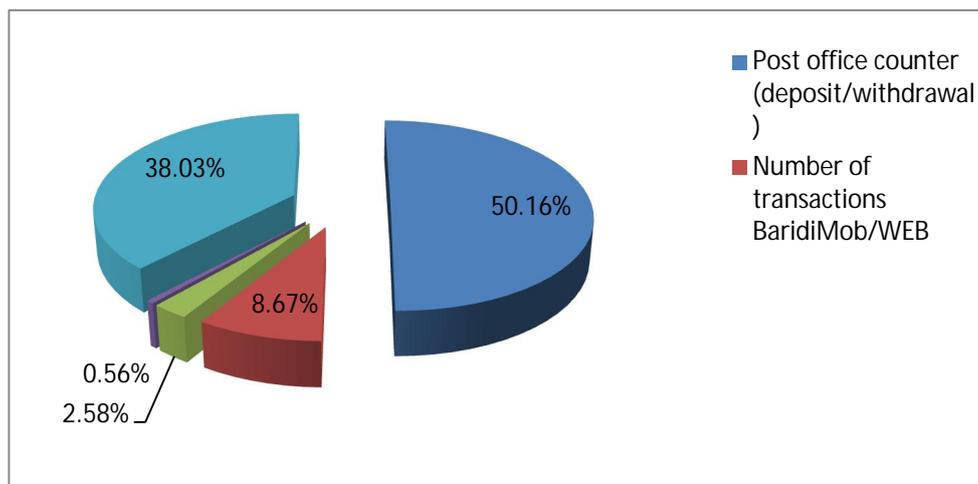
Transactions on CCP accounts are conducted through various means (post office counters, ATMs, GAB, Electronic Payment Terminals TPE, online, among others). Concerning the year 2022, the number of transactions on CCP accounts (deposits/withdrawals) exceeded 302.34 million transactions, as shown in the following table :

Table 5 : Transactions on CCP accounts for the year 2022

Indicators	The value in 2022	percentage %
Number of transactions at post office windows (deposit/withdrawal)	151648137	50.16%
Number of ATM (Automated Teller Machine) transactions	114972914	38.03%
Number of Electronic Payment Terminal (EPT) transactions	1704278	0.56%
Number of online payment transactions	7798558	2.58%
Number of BaridiMob/WEB transactions	26221904	8.67%
Total number of CCP transactions (deposits/withdrawals)	302345791	100%

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 5)

The analysis of the figures for the year 2022 presented in the table above indicates that CCP transactions through electronic means (GAB, online, TPE, and BaridiMob/WEB) represent more than 49% of the total transactions (deposits/withdrawals). This reflects the extent of the spread of electronic usage among Algerian citizens in conducting their postal financial transactions. The following chart illustrates the distribution of CCP transactions according to the means used during the year 2022.

Figure 1: Distribution of CCP transactions by means used during the year 2022

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 6)

b) Transactions on CNEP accounts : The following table illustrates the volume of these transactions during the period (2022-2017) :

Table 6 : Transactions on CNEP accounts during the period (2017-2022)

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of CNEP transactions (debit/credit)	2148753	2097139	1976569	1322056	1503439	1606291

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 6)

The number of transactions on CNEP accounts in 2022 reached 1,606,291 transactions compared to 1,503,439 in 2021, representing an increase of 6.84%.

3.3.2 - Indicators of online services and multi-services : In addition to withdrawals and deposits from CCP accounts, numerous other services are available online on the Algerian Post platform, witnessing widespread usage, as illustrated in the following table :

Table 7: Online services and other various services during the period(2022-2018)

Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of online applications for the gold card	892	677764	1368182	1368620	1775336
Number of transfers from account to account	22778	67661	1171965	3601083	8562929
Number of online CCP consultations	23945301	28907165	34395769	36842045	37885627
Number of online CCP account statement requests	5756729	5540498	7155191	7542109	9590144
Number of subscribers to the SMS notification service	684122	733241	973808	1060622	1926876
Number of SMS notifications (financial transactions)	48381602	67787580	86999626	127293933	172141085
Number of online requests to open a CCP account	25476	35784	47329	67758	184432
Number of online consultations with CNEP	1500	1052	2125	5353	7217

source: (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 7)

The table above illustrates the increased demand for postal services online. The requests for gold cards have significantly surged since its launch, starting from 892 requests in 2018, reaching 1,775,336 requests in 2022, a multiplied increase. The same trend applies to other services such as account statements and SMS notifications. This trend indicates the growing interest among Algerian citizens in using electronic postal services (through electronic means), owing to their advantages in saving time and effort.

3.3.3- Postal Dispatch Indicators (Number of Distributed Items):

The following table illustrates the number of distributed items during the period 2017-2018 :

Table 8 : Postal dispatch indicators during the period(2022-2017)

Indicators	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	the) 2022 third trim)
Number of distributed items	191690000	176963611	173107968	166758101	210178156	147734991

Source : (Directorate of Statistics, Report on the evolution of postal indicators in Algeria 2022, 2023, p. 7)

Regarding the postal dispatch indicator (number of distributed items), this indicator experienced fluctuations during the period (2017-2022). Initially, it decreased from 2017 to 2020, then saw an increase in 2021, only to decrease again in 2022.

3.4- The most important tools of digital marketing used by Algerian Post Institution and the extent of their contribution to achieving interactive communication with its customers:

3.4.1- Algerian Post Services :

Algerian Post Institution plays a significant role in providing various postal and financial services in Algeria. Keeping up with the ongoing technological advancements in the postal sector worldwide and the increasing use of electronic communications, the institution has made substantial strides in adapting to these technological advancements and digital innovations. This has been aimed at enhancing, developing, diversifying, digitizing, and expanding its financial postal services. Consequently, the institution has strived to provide electronic services online and through post offices across the country, facilitating citizens' postal and financial transactions efficiently and conveniently. Moreover, Algerian Post has disseminated the increased use of modern technology to serve Algerian citizens. These efforts aim to propel the Algerian postal sector, achieve further advancements by enhancing performance, and provide advanced and flexible public services that elevate the quality of service to meet the aspirations of Algerian citizens, ensuring their satisfaction and confidence in the institution. (Algeria Awras, 2023)

Algerian Post has launched various digital services targeting a wide spectrum of Algerian society, including customers, professionals, and various economic operators. The institution has seen notable progress in providing modern digital services, whether through ATMs, remote services, or through post offices, including mobile post offices in the form of buses. These digital services have become a distinguishing feature of the institution. Additionally, the Institution offers an extensive range of modern remote services (online), allowing citizens to conduct multiple transactions without the need to visit post offices or commercial agencies. (Algeria Awras, 2023)

In this context, Algerian Post announced the release of its new official application, "eccp-Algérie poste," on July 16, 2023. The app serves as a gateway to access the Institution's financial services easily and securely. Notably, it introduces a new feature allowing the request for a PIN code for the gold card directly through the application, eliminating the need to fill out a request at post offices. This application represents a significant step towards technological advancement, meeting citizens' needs by providing a user-friendly interface and various functionalities to access numerous Algerian Post services. Citizens can download the application from the Play Store for Android smartphones. It should be noted here that there are two official applications for the Algeria Post Corporation, which are « **Baridi Mob** » and the new application « **eccp-Algérie poste** ». (Algérie presse service, 2023)

Some of the essential services offered by Algerian Post include :

➤ ***The service of opening a private account through the institution's official website :*** where the beneficiary opens his own account through the institution's official website in order to benefit from its many postal financial services, as well as its other services available on the institution's website easily and conveniently.

➤ ***Online postal current account opening service (CCP) :*** The Algerian Post institution launched the online postal current account opening service directed to every natural or legal person of Algerian or foreign nationality residing in Algeria, provided that he meets the applicable legal and regulatory conditions. New students who have recently obtained a baccalaureate degree can also undertake the initial process of opening postal current accounts remotely, as this process allows for accelerating the pace of processing the application, this process also includes those who have received an unemployment grant, so that the method and file that must be included are clarified through the website. (Algeria Awras, 2023)

- **Services for viewing the current postal account balance** : the internet provides electronic services to all individuals and customers of Algerian Post institution, who have a current postal account, where they have the ability to view the balance of their postal account, using a secret number specific to each customer's personal account, where it is used on the institution's official website or via Baridi Mob Application, or by inserting the postal debit card with each customer's PIN at post offices or ATMs. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, pp. (121-122)
- **Services for obtaining a detailed account statement extract** : So that customers of the Algerian Post institution can view a detailed statement of the operations that took place through their current postal account via the internet (withdrawals, deposits, etc) through the official website of the institution or using Baridi Mob application. This option allows customers to view the details of their postal accounts easily, and the user can obtain a detailed statement of the transactions that took place through his postal account authenticated by Algerian Post using a secure QR code. (Algeria Awras, 2023)
- **Services for requesting forms of postal checks (Checkbook)** : Every current postal account holder can request forms of postal checks (checkbook request) after filling out the electronic form that is displayed on the automatic paper money dispenser or through the institution's website. He can also track the delivery to get him. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 121)
- **Publications download services** : The Algerian Post institution provides a free publications download service via its website, which includes publications related to postal services, such as a spare postal check (Emergency check) and others papers, which can be downloaded in PDF or Docx format, and this service facilitates obtaining the necessary papers easily, without having to wait in offices. (Algeria Awras, 2023)
- **Electronic window or Electronic teller counter services (ATM)** : It provides various services to customers, such as automatically withdrawing banknotes, checking the balance, etc. these services can be used around the clock, and these devices have supported traditional operations. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 121) It also saved customers with the Algerian Post institution effort and time, and spared them standing in queues for long hours.
- **SMS notification service** : The SMS text notification service allows customers to receive alerts and notifications via SMS on their mobile phones for every deposit, transfer, withdrawal, or any other financial transaction that takes place through their postal accounts. (Algeria Awras, 2023) with this feature, the account holder (such as employees and those

with monthly salaries) can know his balance the moment his salary enters through instant short messages that he receives via his mobile phone. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 123)

➤ **Baridi Mob application services :** The Algerian Post institution provides a group of mobile phone services to improve the customer experience, provide convenience and speed in managing postal and financial transactions, and some other services, and it is represented by the Baridi Mob application service, which is an application for smart phones that allows for a group of electronic banking services and postal financial services. By downloading the application, the customer can manage his postal account and the financial transactions he wants from anywhere and at any time with complete ease. (Algeria Awras, 2023)

➤ **Electronic withdrawal card :** It is an electronic card that is used to obtain financial services at the Algerian Post institution, which works with the presence of the electronic counter, through which the automatic dispenser across the Algerian country. This card also provides several advantages, namely speed and security. Avoid standing in queues for long hours, as well as not adhering to working hours in order to benefit from postal financial services at any time. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 121) This card was later replaced with a gold card.

➤ **Gold Card (Carte Edahabia):** Understanding the need to modernize the sector and provide better services to customers, Algerian Post launched in December 2016 the "Gold Card," replacing the magnetic card. This card allows the holder to perform various operations such as cash withdrawals from ATMs at Algerian Post centers or other banks, payment for purchases at merchants supporting the card, paying water and electricity bills through the institution's online virtual post office, and using the card for online purchases on websites that support CIB card payments, including mobile phone operators and Air Algérie. The card can be obtained through simple steps via the official website of the institution by selecting the reception office (post office) from which the card is to be collected or at local post centers. (Belmahdi, 2017-2018, p. 122)

➤ **Internet and Mobile Phone Credit Recharge Services:** This service enables easy and quick recharging of mobile phone credit and internet data using the Gold Card. Additionally, it facilitates payment of landline phone bills securely and without risks. This service is available for all telecommunication companies in Algeria (Ooredoo, Mobilis, and Djezzy), including various types of connections like 4G LTE, ADSL, and fiber. It provides convenience for anyone wishing to recharge their phone or purchase internet credit remotely without the need to visit telecommunication stores or agents. (Algeria Awras, 2023)

- **Various Bill Payment Services:** Algerian Post allows customers to pay bills online, including electricity and gas bills (SONELGAZ), water bills (ADE or SEAAL), thereby avoiding the need to travel to post centers and endure long queues. This can be done by entering the Gold Card information and the desired payment amount, followed by payment confirmation. (Algeria Awras, 2023)
- **Travel Ticket Purchase Services:** Algerian Post provides its customers with the possibility of purchasing travel tickets and airline tickets using the Gold Card in collaboration with various companies like Air Algérie and Tassili Airlines, all online without the need to visit travel agencies. (Algeria Awras, 2023)
- **Insurance Purchase:** The institution offers an online insurance purchase service, whether it's for car insurance, home insurance, or others, providing multiple insurance options covering various risks like traffic accidents, fires, theft, weather-related damages. Insurance costs vary depending on the type, location, and value of the property to be insured. (Algeria Awras, 2023) The institution collaborates with companies like SAA, CAAT, and MACIRVIE.
- **Online Book Purchasing Service:** Algerian Post offers an online book purchasing service through Store -anep.poste.dz, where a wide range of books and other products can be browsed, ordered, and purchased securely. The website provides delivery to the customer's specified address, and payment can be made using the Gold Card, making the purchasing process easy and convenient. (Algeria Awras, 2023)
- **Purchase of Postage Stamps:** Postage stamps can be purchased online via the website ephilatelie.poste.dz, which offers a wide range of postage stamps that can be bought directly from the store easily, securely, and delivered to the home. Different payment options are available, including payment on delivery or payment using the Gold Card. (Algeria Awras, 2023)
- **Express Mail Services and Tracking of Messages and Parcels:** The institution provides distinguished services allowing customers to send and receive documents and parcels from the sender's address to the recipient's. It ensures faster delivery through express mail while offering high-security standards for messages and parcels. Tracking and monitoring of deliveries can be easily done online or through smartphone applications using the Tracking courier & parcels service. This enables tracking shipments nationally or internationally in real-time, allowing customers to know the shipment's location and check expected delivery times. Additionally, it offers a customer service hotline for any inquiries regarding shipment

tracking or necessary assistance, especially for customers needing timely delivery of their shipments. (Algeria Awras, 2023)

3.4.2- Social media platforms for Algerian Post : The Algerian Post institution is present across several social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Concerning the Facebook social media platform, the institution owns a page with 1.5 million followers and subscribers. Additionally, the page has garnered 1.4 million likes. It's worth noting that the page is regularly and consistently updated. The institution strives to engage its audience by showcasing current events and discussions. For instance, it posts about joining the national campaign against breast cancer under the title "Pink October" during the current month, as well as supporting the current Palestinian cause, among other national or international issues and events. Moreover, the page publishes updates about the institution's activities and the various services it offers, along with reports broadcasted on various television channels. Users of the page can interact with its content and communicate with the institution through comments and likes left on the page. Regarding the opinions expressed on the institution's Facebook page, there is a diversity of opinions about the institution and its services, including supporters and opposers, satisfied and dissatisfied individuals, and those recommending the page and those who do not. The comments encompass numerous negative remarks about ATM machines' functionality and the frequent unavailability of financial liquidity in them, as well as complaints about the slow delivery service of mail and parcels and the poor reception and handling of customers by the institution's workers at some postal centers. It's essential to emphasize here the importance of addressing and responding to these complaints. This is because they have a negative impact on the institution's image and reputation among its customers, leading to a loss of credibility and reducing its standing among its supporters and advocates.

3.4.3 - The role of digital marketing tools in achieving interactive communication with Algerian Post customers :

There is no doubt that the Algerian Post Corporation uses several digital marketing tools to offer a wide range of advanced electronic services. However, the question posed here concerns the extent to which these tools contribute to achieving interactive communication with their customers. In this regard, it can be said that the institution achieves interactive communication through various means, including :

✓ *The institution's website* : Through which it presents rich content of services offered online, allowing customers to interact with these services, such as opening postal accounts, checking balances, viewing statements, paying bills, and other services available on the institution's official website.

✓ *Smartphones and the Poste Mobile application*: Facilitating customers' use of various services provided by the institution conveniently, irrespective of office hours, without the hassle of traveling to post offices and standing in long queues.

✓ *Social media platforms* : Through which it presents rich content of texts, videos, and images. Users of these platforms interact with this content through comments and likes, enabling them to express their opinions and criticisms regarding the institution and its services.

✓ *SMS messages sent via mobile phones* : These messages provide instant updates to users about all the current operations carried out on their accounts. This aids them in interacting with this service, such as withdrawing salaries or paying bills after receiving a text message about the monthly salary deposit, among other reactions.

4. CONCLUSION

Technological advancements have imposed the necessity of change on institutions (both public and private) towards digital marketing. The Algerian Post has sought to adopt these advanced methods to provide more modern services. In this context, the institution has developed its electronic services using several pillars. It launched the Poste Mobile application, the website (eccp.poste.dz), encouraged the use of the Gold Card, and provided ATM machines, among other efforts aimed at improving its services.

The most important **finding** of this research paper is that the Algerian Post uses various digital marketing tools, including the official website, mobile marketing, social media platforms, and content marketing (texts, videos, and images), which have contributed to increasing the number of customers utilizing electronic services to nearly 50%. However, the institution can improve the use of these tools to enhance its services and achieve better interactive communication with its customers.

In this context, the following **suggestions** can be made:

- Increase the deployment of ATM machines and encourage customers to use electronic services to alleviate the pressure on post offices and their counters.
- Include a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) service on the institution's official website, offering pre-answered queries commonly asked by users about the institution or the various services it provides.

- Implement a live chat feature with customer service representatives on the institution's official website and its social media pages to provide advice and support to customers, aiding them in various transactions or the use of the institution's electronic services, thereby building a good relationship and enhancing customer loyalty.
- Attempt to diversify the books offered through the institution's online store by collaborating with international publishers, especially regarding academic books, to facilitate access for students, researchers, professors, and professionals. This would increase the institution's financial transactions and improve its image among customers.
- Facilitate postal and other financial transactions for people with special needs and seniors. The institution could allocate a team specialized in serving these groups, equipped with digital tools.
- Answering customer's negative comments on social media sites, as well as responding to their complaints, with the aim of improving the organization's mental image among its customers and trying to gain their trust and achieve their satisfaction.

Finally, the following **topics** could be proposed as **future prospects** for this study :

-  Study the role of social media platforms in improving the image of the Algerian Post.
-  Customer satisfaction with the delivery service of letters and parcels by the Algerian Post.
-  The impact of the Poste Mobile application on improving the quality of services provided by the Algerian Post.

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