

## Chapter 75

# The Impact of Rumors on Social Media Sites in Behavior of Purchasing Food Products in the Egyptian Market

**Ali Ahmed Abdelkader**

*Faculty of Commerce, Kafrelsheikh University, Kafrelsheikh, Egypt*

**Hossam El Din Fathy Mohamed**

*International Academy of Engineering and Media Sciences, Giza, Egypt*

### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this article is to detect the impact of rumors on social media on the purchasing behavior of food products. The descriptive approach on four rumors related to food products were identified in the Egyptian market. A sample of 387 participants were selected from consumers who use Facebook in Egypt. The primary data was collected via an E-Questioner method. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between the rumors on social media, and purchasing behavior of food products. There is also a significant difference between the products and the impact of rumors. These results assure the importance of social media and its impact on a customer's decision to purchase food products. This article not only explains the importance of rumors on social media in the food sector but also enhances the understanding of the influence of social media on consumer's behavior. It also provides some insights for facing the rumors. Organizations are advised to adopt social media in their business.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that SM indicates to a collection of online services that support social interactions among users and allow them to create, find, share and evaluate the online information. It is “a set of Internet-based applications which is created on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that permit the innovation and exchange of customer created Content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p.

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61). SMhas changed users from passive content readers into content publishers, thereby making their role more significant. SM take many platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube, Twitter and many others of those networks that go up dramatically.

Most of these individuals use products or services like the ones you sell. Heads-up business people are learning how to leakage SM tools to encourage the online population to talk positively about their Products) Safko, 2010). It's true that SM platforms excel in the level of effectiveness in the transfer of information and events, but no wonder if we say that SM have negative effects, it is a good environment for the growth of rumors, because of the simplicity of production and dissemination of information in a short time, which led to the spread of rumor via SM networks, with the inability to control and difficulty of monitoring content attached by individuals on these sites. It has been observed in recent times, the spread of rumors through SN and their rapid circulation among members of society, which led to change the purpose of rumor, and the way it spread in society, because of the difference of nature and the features of SM platforms (Zubiaga, 2015).

The objective of the publication of the rumor varies based on the objectives of their promoters and their ideas, the objective of publishing rumor may be related to the type of rumor. In some cases, the purpose is commercial, seek to increase the demand for a certain product as a marketing technique, or to confuse a competing company by distorting the facts, or a faked story that has no basis in reality or contains a small part of the truth. Therefore, rumors are a major source of crises for commercial organizations. (Roux-Dufort 1993) (Coombs, 2002) (Zubiaga, 2015) (Chen 2016). Crisis can, and often does begin with rumors. In fact, a crisis can indeed be a rumor. A rumor can be defined as "information passed by word of mouth and SM with no verification of fact and no credible source" (Fearn-Banks, 2007, p. 81).

One of the most important features of SM is the ability to quickly reach large numbers of web browsers and consumers through these sites, and to identify the needs and desires of existing or potential customers, prompting many companies to develop content on SM, to benefit from Marketing opportunities offered by SM. The great use of SM is an opportunity to promote rumors about organizations and their products. Hence, affect the purchasing decisions of consumers, Therefore, the promotion of rumors leads to the loss of many consumers, and thus the decline in sales, and the loss of competitiveness of organizations.

Food companies and fast-food restaurants became an integral part of our society, far from the rumors; the researchers have noticed many rumors related to food on SM. Four rumors related to food products were identified in the Egyptian market for the present study, as follows:

- The employ of rotten meat which is not suitable for human use in many famous restaurants such as Umm Hassan, and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). As well as the use of (donkey meat) in the meal industry provided by these restaurants and spread in many districts in the Egyptian governorates;
- The video shows damaged and unsuitable tomatoes in the factory (Heinz Egypt). The video shows that these tomatoes are used in making sauce and ketchup;
- The video contains fruit (Guava) damaged which is unsuitable for use in the factory (company Betty). The video shows that the guava is used in the juice industry;
- Many of the videos that explain the health damage that occurs to humans as a result of eating noodles prepared by the company (Indomie).

Both Heinz Egypt and Betty Company have been quick to react with these rumors. Both companies have published short films (videos) explain the manufacturing process of these companies, additionally, publishing some documents that confirm the quality and safety of their products. On the other hand, the

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