

Digital trends and social values across digital platforms: a field study of a sample of university students.

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Received: 12/03/2026 ; **Accepted:** 05/07/2026 ; **publication:** 31/07/2026

Abstract

The research paper aims to reveal the relationship between digital trends and social values among university students, as well as their impact on digital life through daily interaction via social networks. The problem was: How do digital trends across social media platforms affect college students' perceptions of social values in daily life? Based on the descriptive approach to analyze the phenomenon of trend and the nature of content in conveying social values such as solidarity, creative ideas, and positive behaviors. Using the questionnaire as a basic tool in collecting data on an intentional sample of university students, about 140 students.

The results showed: Digital trends have become part of the daily lives of university students with the diversity and multiplicity of applications that use them. Many positive social values emerge, such as solidarity and creativity, as trends move spontaneously, reflecting social reality. Students interact with trends through imitation, which has led to the emergence of new values. The policy of reporting content that is contrary to ethics and societal values may restrict or block it on social media sites.

Keywords: Digital trends; social values; students; interaction; culture.

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I- Introduction :

The phenomenon of digital trends is new and has gained wide spread across social media sites via the Facebook application, TikTok...etc. However, if we look at the concept of the word "trend", it appears to be old, as it was used through traditional means of communication such as the press, radio, and television through the most popular topics or popular topics in newspapers. With the transition to the world of digitalization, trends have been able to appear, especially with the feature of interactivity and speed of spread, as they are known to be spontaneous in nature and reflect social issues and reality.

With the rapid development and intense competition of social media, applications to attract the public, digital algorithms have played a role in the process of spreading digital trends through the increase in the percentage of views by users of digital applications, as well as by adding some features such as reposting and commenting.

Although the content of trends is by nature spontaneous and interactive, in many cases it knows an orientation to specific goals and presents various values. Trends are positive in their presentation of values such as solidarity, creative, educational and cultural ideas, and sometimes trends emerge that contradict accepted social values. In addition, several factors intervene in trend creation. We said previously that interactivity is its most important characteristic, unless the role of digital influencers emerges, who know high viewing rates and the content of their values varies from cultural values to consumer values such as product promotion, awareness and education. These factors have a significant overlap in the process of trend creation, which is at first it is spontaneous and simple. Trends, such as the chocolate and sweets trend, have been very popular with students for the professor, and they highlight the value of respect and appreciation for the university professor, this is a way to thank him, as it can be said that trends have produced new values. However, trends have emerged that have tried to erase local cultures and identity and distort society in indirect ways. Trends, when their content is analysed, may carry positive messages or negative messages. Therefore, it has become necessary to study university students' perceptions of digital trends, which have become part of their daily lives in the digital world, as well as knowledge that is reflected in their individual behaviours within society. The degree of awareness in interacting with these trends.

I.1. Problem and objectives of the study:

Problem of the study: How do digital trends across social media platforms affect university students' perceptions of social values in daily life?

Study objectives: Identify students' interests through social networking sites and the most widely used applications.

Revealing university students' opinion about the nature of digital trends.

Learn about the most important social values prevailing in digital trends.

Uncovering the impact of digital trends of local cultures within the community in light of daily interaction via social media.

I. 2. Theoretical framework of the study (previous studies - concepts and variables of the study):

2-1- Previous studies: The current study relied on a group of previous studies that have a direct relationship with the topic or one of its variables. This is because studies do not start in a vacuum, and they help in understanding and interpreting the results in addition to knowing where the researchers have reached in their studies.

The first study is entitled: "the Impact of digital technology use on adolescent well-being." (Dienlin& Johannes, 2020).The study provided a general review of the literature on digital technology use and adolescent well-being and found that digital technology use has a strong effect on short-term markers of well-being.

The second study is about" digital media and attention. A scoping review of experimental methods. Theories. In addition, evidence". (Wiradhany et al, 2026) Digital media contributes to anxiety and may jeopardize our ability to concentrate. Whether daily use of digital media leads to permanent changes in attentional disease.

The third study is entitled:" THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRENDS ON MARKETING" (Blazheska et al, 2020) the increasing presence of the Internet in people's daily lives gives us the right to think about the increasing use of digital marketing.

2-2Similarities and differences with previous studies:

Similarities: The current study is similar to the previous study in focusing on the topic of the phenomenon of trends across digital platforms. How it affects young people in general through behavior within society as well as patterns of socially valuable thinking and cultural identity.

Differences: The current study focuses on social values, solidarity, cooperation...Through digital trends, while previous studies focus on general mental health.

As for the research sample, the current study relied on the descriptive approach of selecting an intentional sample of university students affiliated with University of El-Oued. This is different from previous studies. The current study also aims to reveal the relationship between digital trends and social values in the daily lives of university students.

2-3- Concepts and variables of the study:

Social Media: Social media is a type of new online media used by people all over the world from children to adults, making it an important part of daily life.(Ridzuan& Nurhazwani,2025)

Many events around the world are accompanied by social media platforms. The whole idea behind this is to create an application that will undoubtedly help market products and services through social media platforms. This

technique is still called social media marketing, which is a subset of digital media marketing. □ Bhor et al, 2018)

Symbolic interactivity and social media: Symbolic interactivity focuses specifically on how individuals develop a sense of self through social experience. Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the glass self describes how a person's self-image arises from personal interactions and perceptions of others. In simple terms, others act as a "mirror" for us - we imagine how we appear to others, interpret how they judge us, and then adjust our self-concept accordingly. (McLeodL, 2022) The symbolic meaning of social media can be shaped

By the technical features of the media and the social relationships between users. (Chen ET al, 2020)

For example, fans often interpret the activity of following and unfollowing celebrities as evidence of personal transformations and sometimes even breaking news about a previous breakup for official announcements, and in 2004 Billie. Strategically added all of her followers to his "close list" to build hype for her album using the limits of social media as a promotional tool in daily life. (Patnaik&Jha, 2025) Expressive symbols act as important symbols that convey tone and emotion in textual interactions. The meaning of these symbols is not inherent but appears through collective use and interpretation. A simple emoji can indicate approval or acknowledgment or sarcasm depending on the context relationship between the communication. (JOSE ,2025)

I .3. Methodological framework of the study:

3-1Study methodology: The current study relied on the descriptive approach, which is one of the most widely used approaches in social research and studies. It describes and analyses the phenomenon of digital trends and their relationship to social values among university students. Study sample: The study was based on a purposive sample of students from University of El -Oued. The sample size was **140** students selected from students using social media.

3-2The human field : It is a group of respondents from the research sample of university students affiliated

With the College of Social and Human Sciences.

Spatial field: represented by University of El-Oued College of Social and Humanities. Mandatory field: The study period extended at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year.

3-3Data collection tools: The questionnaire tool was used in the data collection process as a basic tool and it includes topics on closed and open questions.

Data analysis methods: The study used the descriptive statistical method of frequencies and percentage with the aim of explaining the university student's trend towards digital trends, and the SPSS 2026 program was adopted

Table 1. Do you follow digital trends regularly?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage (%)
Yes	29	20.7
Sometimes	81	57.9
Rarely	30	21.4
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table above shows that respondents are constantly following trends on social media sites. **57.9%** of the sample stated that they sometimes follow trends, which is the highest percentage. While we find that **20.7%** of the sample stated that, they do not follow trends continuously on social media. While **21.4%** of the sample stated that, they rarely follow digital trends on social media.

Table 2. What social media sites do you see trends on?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Facebook	36	25.7
Tik Tok	49	35.0
Instagram	55	39.3
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table above shows the social media sites through which he follows the trends the most. A sample of **39.3%** reported using Instagram to follow digital trends. While we find that, the lowest percentage of the sample members use the Facebook application, at **25.7%**, as a digital platform for

following trends. Tik Tok has received **35%** as a platform used to follow trends.

Table 3. What type of trends do you follow the most?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Social content	55	39.3
Content Challenges	13	9.3
Educational content	21	15.0
Comedy content	51	36.4
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table above shows the types of trends that are of interest to the respondents. We find that **39.1%** of the sample prefer social content. While challenging content receives **9.3%** less attention from respondents, comedic content is found at **36.4%** of the favorite content among sample members. Followed by **15%** of the sample who stated that their favorite content was educational content.

Table 4. How long does it take to follow daily trends on social media platforms?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Less than 30 minutes	67	47.9
More than an hour	46	32.9
More than 3 hours	27	19
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

Table No. 4 shows the period that sample members spend following trends via social media. **47.9%** of the sample stated that they spend less than half an hour following digital trends. While **19%** of the respondents stated that, they spend more than three hours following digital trends per day .While we find that **32.9%** of the sample spend from half an hour to an hour following trends via social media applications.

Table 5. Do you find trends to be spontaneous or directed content?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Spontaneous content	58	41.4
Directed content	38	27.1
I don't know	44	31.4
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table shows the opinion of the respondents about the nature of the trend, as we find that a percentage of about **41.4%** of the sample of research individuals find that trends are spontaneous because of the interaction used via social media applications. While we find that, a sample of research individuals, **27.1%**, finds that the nature of the trend is directed, i.e. it has been created and worked on to spread. While we find that **31.4%** of the respondents do not know the nature of digital trends.

Table 6. What is the relationship between trends and values in society?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Reflects social values	53	37.9
Distortion of social values	45	32.1
Reshapes values	42	30.0
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table shows the respondents' opinion about trends and their relationship to social values. As **37.9%** of the sample stated that trends reflect values within society, as trends form part of social reality. While we find that **32.1%** of the sample find that trends distort social values. While we find that **30%** of the sample members believe that trends are reshaping values within society.

Table 7. What are the most common values in trends?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Solidarity	29	20.7
Sarcasm	18	12.9
Tradition	34	24.3
Violence	11	7.9
Surface content	20	14.3
Creative	28	20.0
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table shows the guaranteed most popular trends according to the research sample. We find that **24.3%** stated that the content of imitation is the most followed trend, while we find that the content or value of solidarity, at **20.7%**, is the most interacted with by trend followers on social media platforms. In addition, **14.3%** of the research sample found that digital trends contain superficial content across social media platforms, and this type lacks ideas

Table 8. Do you feel that trends conflict with social values?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Conflict	66	47.1
Do not conflict	14	10
Sometimes	60	42.9
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table shown above indicates the opinion of the respondents about their feeling that some trends conflict with values within society. The highest percentage, **47.1%** of the sample, stated that trends conflict with values within society. While we find that **10%** of the sample members believe that trends do not conflict with societal values. In addition, a group of **42.9%** stated that sometimes these trends may conflict with societal values. This indicates that trends are diverse in terms of content.

Table 9. How do you interact with trends on social media platforms?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Imitate content	39	27.9
Share the trend	56	40.0
Criticized the trend	45	32.1
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table shows the forms of interaction with trends on social media sites. **40%** of the research sample stated that they had previously interacted with trends by re-sharing the trend in their accounts or sending it to their friends. While **32.1%** of the research sample stated that, they had previously interacted by commenting and criticizing the content of digital trends. In addition, we find a significant percentage who stated that they imitated trends by **27.9%**, and imitating trends allows them to spread on a larger level and continue for a period.

Table 10. How do you react to trends that do not fit your values?

Response	Frequency(N)	Percentage(%)
Ignore	87	62.1
Comment	20	14.3
Participation	6	4.3
Report it	27	19.3
Total	140	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher using SPSS. 26

The table shows the reaction of the research sample members to viewing trends on social media sites. We find that **62.1%** of the sample members chose to respond or ignored the trend that contradicted their values. While we find that, the research sample stated that **19.3%** of them report content that is unacceptable or contrary to their values publicly. The study showed that a sample of respondents preferred to respond by commenting on digital trends to defend their position, at a rate of **14.3%**.

II- Results and discussion :

The field study shows that university students at a rate of 57.9% follow digital trends continuously, and this is due to the nature of trends themselves. It is natural for trends to appear for a limited period, spread widely and quickly, and then disappear. This means that the content of trends is not stable, which is what makes

university students follow them on social media platforms, as we have previously mentioned in various times.

As shown by the field study, students prefer to use Instagram by 39.3% as an application across social media platforms, as well as TikTok. This is due to the distinctive feature of the applications, although Facebook is more popular, but it is considered content that focuses on news more than the previous two applications. These applications support and contain trends well.

What we notice is that the applications are competing and diversifying greatly to attract the audience by improving their services and updating them continuously.

Through this field study on digital trends, it became clear to us that the follow-up of content differed, as social content topped the list with 39.3%, as did comedy content with 36.4%, which was the most followed by university students. This is what distinguishes digital trends, as their content includes a variety of ideas, as well as music or stories.

While we find that, the duration of university students' follow-up of digital trends per day varies, as we found that the duration of follow-up of digital trends is less than half an hour per day, at a rate of 47.9%. This is also because the content of digital trends does not exceed a minute and sometimes seconds, which facilitates the process of its spread, as well as so that the follower does not get bored of digital trends.

It became clear to us from university students' perceptions of digital trends that it is spontaneous content, as the audience interacts with it in a simple way, and we find this at a rate of 41.4%. While there are university students who believe that, the content of digital trends can contain simple or sometimes directed intervention, such as spreading a trend of solidarity and sympathy by many celebrities at the same time.

It also became clear from a study that the trends that make them quickly spread are receiving great interest from the public across platforms because they reflect the interests of followers, reflect social values, and work on the process of reproducing content and ideas.

In addition, through field study of the topic of digital trends, we found that the present contents include solidarity, imitation, fame, and creative content. This means that digital trends meet the needs and motivations of followers through a variety of content provided across social media platforms.

We also found in the current study through university students' perceptions of digital trends that they sometimes conflict with values within society, as not all trends are content of society, but rather reflect several cultures. We find that they may sometimes conflict

with family or moral values, and sometimes express these cultural family values.

Through the current study, the process of interaction and impact of digital trends on university student followers was revealed through their interaction with digital trends: either by imitating the content or by re-sharing the content on their pages or with their friends and family or through the feature of expressing their opinion about digital trends through criticism or comment.

This may help the platform's algorithms speed up the spread of popular content on the digital platform, which is also known as most viewed content.

While university students, when they see trends that violate their values, they largely ignore digital trends and do not interact with them, while there are those who report them on the platform in order to restrict their publication.

III- Conclusion:

A field study on digital trends showed that they play a major role in followers' interaction and reflect their interests. The most popular content is spontaneous. Trends can transform from comedic or cultural content to communicative content that changes ideas and beliefs. Digital trends can also reflect positive values that contribute to maintaining community cohesion and meet the needs and motivations of followers.

However, these trends carry different cultures, values, customs and even different behaviors that will affect the local culture and affect the structure of society, especially superficial, non-purposeful content. If it becomes widely spread, it affects good and purposeful content, which requires monitoring and using digital platforms in a way that suits young people in developing and getting to know cultures and ideas that support them and their development.

Through the results reached in the end, we can present in the form of points some recommendations in order to protect young people from using social networking sites on the one hand, and on the other hand, about the good exploitation of digital trends in a way that suits the values and customs of society, which are as follows:

Conducting field studies: The phenomenon of digital trends on social platforms is one of the modern phenomena that studies can be conducted to uncover and its impact on values and customs within Algerian society.

Conducting scientific demonstrations: to raise awareness about the use of social media platforms, introduce digital trends, and clarify the seriousness of challenging and violent content, as well as superficial content that poses a danger to teenagers as well as young people.

Reporting: Digital platforms have the feature of blocking and restricting inappropriate content, so it is recommended to use them if the content provided through digital platforms does not suit your values and beliefs.

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