

The Role of Facebook in Destination Image Formation and Visit Intention: A Theoretical Framework for Domestic Tourism in Bouira Province

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Abstract:

This theoretical study examines the role of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, in shaping the destination image of Bouira's internal tourism assets and enhancing visit intention within the context of domestic tourism. The article adopts a sociological perspective grounded in the concepts of cognitive, affective, and conative destination image, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and tourism behavior models, while drawing on Arabic, English, and French literature on social media and digital tourism. The theoretical findings suggest that Facebook operates as a socio-digital space that produces meanings and social representations of destinations, where digital interactions (likes, comments, shares, following) contribute to the construction of a positive destination image and strengthen visit intention, especially for domestic tourism. The study also indicates that user-generated visual content, online recommendations, and virtual tourism communities represent key mechanisms for enhancing the symbolic value of Bouira's tourism resources and stimulating domestic tourism demand in Algeria, highlighting the need for more professional and coordinated strategies by local tourism stakeholders and page administrators to harness Facebook more effectively for internal tourism promotion.

Keywords:

Social media; Facebook; Destination image; Visit intention; Domestic tourism

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Introduction:

Social media platforms have become central actors in the contemporary production, circulation, and consumption of tourism-related meanings, images, and experiences. Within this digital transformation, Facebook occupies a particularly influential position as an interactive communicative space in which destinations are no longer represented exclusively by official institutions, but are continuously reconstructed through posts, comments, images, videos, and user-generated interactions. In the field of tourism, this shift has deeply affected the way potential visitors perceive places, evaluate their attractiveness, and develop intentions to travel, especially in the context of domestic tourism where proximity, familiarity, and symbolic attachment to place often intersect with digital visibility and mediated representation.

From a sociological perspective, the importance of studying Facebook in relation to tourism lies not only in its promotional function, but also in its capacity to shape social representations of destinations. Tourism destinations are not merely physical settings; they are socially constructed spaces whose meanings are produced through discourse, images, collective imagination, and interaction. Facebook contributes to this process by enabling a continuous flow of symbolic content that frames the destination, highlights selected attractions, and attaches emotional and cultural value to them. As a result, the tourist destination emerges as a mediated social reality, perceived through a combination of visual cues, narratives, peer evaluations, and digital engagement.

In this regard, destination image has become one of the most significant analytical concepts in tourism research. It refers to the set of beliefs, impressions, emotions, and expectations that individuals hold about a given destination, and it plays a decisive role in tourism decision-making. Contemporary studies indicate that social media platforms, including Facebook, strongly influence the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image by offering users a rich stream of information and symbolic stimuli that affect how places are imagined and evaluated before the actual visit. This influence is particularly powerful when digital content is interactive, visually appealing, and perceived as authentic, because such characteristics increase users' trust and emotional involvement with the destination.

The research problem of this article emerges from this theoretical and empirical background: How does Facebook contribute to shaping the image of Bouira's internal tourist destination and enhancing visit intention in the context of digital communication transformations? This question is especially relevant in the case of Bouira province, which possesses diverse internal tourism assets, including natural landscapes, mountain sites, forest areas, and cultural features, yet whose attractiveness increasingly depends on how these assets are communicated, represented, and socially valued in digital environments. In this sense, Facebook is not only a medium for circulating information about tourism resources, but also a social arena in which the symbolic value of the destination is negotiated and where potential visitors form anticipatory perceptions that may later translate into actual travel behavior.

The significance of this study is therefore rooted in the perspective of tourism sociology, particularly through the concepts of social representations, destination image, and digital tourist behavior. Social representations help explain how collective perceptions of Bouira as a tourist destination are formed and shared in online spaces. Destination image provides a framework for understanding how cognitive and emotional evaluations are produced through digital exposure. Digital tourist behavior, in turn, makes it possible to analyze how online interaction—such as liking, commenting, sharing, and following tourism pages—may shape intentions, preferences, and decisions related to domestic travel. By combining these perspectives, the article seeks to move beyond a purely marketing-oriented understanding of Facebook and to consider it instead as a socio-digital environment involved in the production of meanings, identities, and behavioral orientations linked to tourism.

This article aims to achieve three main objectives. First, it seeks to clarify the theoretical relationship between Facebook and the formation of destination image in the context of domestic tourism. Second, it examines the mechanisms through which digital interaction on tourism-related Facebook pages can influence visit intention. Third, it applies this theoretical discussion to the case of Bouira province in order to better understand how social media may support the symbolic and communicative valorization of its internal tourism assets. To achieve these objectives, the article adopts a theoretical and analytical approach based on the review and interpretation of relevant Arabic and foreign literature dealing with social media, destination image, digital communication, and tourist behavior.

Structurally, the article is organized into two main sections. The first section discusses Facebook and the tourist destination from a sociological perspective, with particular attention to Facebook as an interactive communicative space and to the concept of destination image and its sources of formation. The second section examines the relationship between digital interaction, destination image, and visit intention, and then connects these theoretical insights to the context of domestic tourism in Bouira province. Through this structure, the article aims to provide a coherent theoretical reading of the growing role of Facebook in shaping how local tourist destinations are perceived and desired in the age of digital communication.

1. Facebook and the Tourist Destination from a Sociological Perspective

1.1 Facebook as a Space for Tourism Communication and Interaction

A. Facebook as a Social Network Producing Meaning and Representations

Social networking sites have become one of the most influential communication environments in contemporary society because they do not merely transmit information; they also organize social interaction, shape symbolic exchanges, and contribute to the production of meanings shared by individuals and groups. In this sense, social media can be defined as digital interactive platforms that enable users to create content, exchange opinions, build networks of connection, and participate in ongoing processes of communication mediated by text, image, video, and reaction tools. Their importance lies in the fact that they have transformed communication from a largely one-directional model into a participatory and networked process in which users are both receivers and producers of content, and therefore active contributors to the construction of social reality rather than passive.

Among these platforms, Facebook occupies a distinctive place because of its broad diffusion, multifunctional architecture, and strong ability to connect personal interaction with public visibility. Facebook is not limited to interpersonal communication between friends and relatives; it also acts as a platform for communities, institutions, brands, local actors, and destination promoters to circulate narratives, visual materials, recommendations, and evaluations. As a result, it has developed into a social arena where places, events, lifestyles, and identities are constantly narrated and reinterpreted through communicative practices that combine immediacy, visibility, and interactivity. From a sociological perspective, this makes Facebook a powerful symbolic environment in which meanings are socially negotiated and collectively stabilized through repetition, engagement, and circulation (Ayeh, 2015, p. 2; Baka, 2016, p. 131).

This sociological reading becomes especially relevant in tourism studies because tourist destinations are not simply geographic spaces; they are social representations produced through discourse, memory, images, and expectations. A destination becomes attractive not only because of its objective natural or cultural resources, but also because of the symbolic value attached to those resources by communication processes. Facebook contributes directly to this production of value by allowing destinations to be represented through visual storytelling, users' comments, promotional posts, collective recommendations, and digitally mediated experiences. Through these mechanisms, the platform does not merely display the destination; it participates in constructing its meaning, framing its identity, and orienting the

public gaze toward selected aspects of place, such as beauty, authenticity, accessibility, hospitality, or cultural uniqueness

In this framework, Facebook may be understood as a network producing representations of space. It reshapes the way individuals imagine places they have not yet visited by exposing them to a continuous flow of signs and symbols: photographs of landscapes, videos of local practices, testimonials of visitors, maps, captions, live streams, and interactive reactions. These digital forms do not operate in a neutral way; they select, highlight, and aestheticize certain dimensions of the destination while marginalizing others. Consequently, the image of the place that emerges through Facebook is a socially mediated image shaped by communicative choices, algorithmic visibility, and audience interaction. This is why the platform plays an essential role in the formation of destination image, particularly in contexts where tourists rely heavily on online information and peer-generated content before making travel-related judgments (Munar, 2012, p. 1020)

From this perspective, Facebook also transforms social relations around tourism itself. It allows users not only to consume travel-related information but also to perform belonging, distinction, aspiration, and collective identification through their engagement with tourism pages and destination content. Liking a tourism page, sharing a video about a mountain landscape, or commenting on a local heritage site are not purely technical acts; they are social gestures through which individuals express preferences, affiliations, and representations of place. In this sense, Facebook contributes to the emergence of what may be called a digitally mediated tourist sociability, in which the destination becomes part of online interaction and symbolic exchange. Tourism here is embedded in broader social practices of communication, identity display, and community participation (Baka, 2016, p. 132; Mariani et al., 2016, p. 321).

This role is particularly significant in the case of domestic tourism, where the destination is often linked not only to leisure but also to territorial attachment, cultural familiarity, and local identity. In such contexts, Facebook can amplify the visibility of internal tourism assets by transforming local landscapes and heritage elements into communicable symbols shared within digital communities. It enables residents, associations, content creators, and local tourism pages to participate in the symbolic promotion of their own territory, thereby contributing to a collective redefinition of the destination from an ordinary lived space into a desirable tourism space. Several Arab and Algerian studies have also emphasized that Facebook has become one of the most consulted platforms in shaping perceptions and choices related to tourism destinations, especially because of its accessibility, visual richness, and interactive functions (Ben Jeddou & Jakhdam, 2025, p. 6; Boudjelida, 2023, p. 88).

Accordingly, Facebook should not be approached merely as a technical communication tool, but rather as a socio-digital field in which meanings, representations, and spatial imaginations are produced and circulated. Its role in tourism goes beyond information dissemination to include the symbolic construction of destination identity and the social framing of attractiveness. This is precisely what makes it analytically relevant for a sociological understanding of the tourist destination in the digital age, and particularly for examining how the internal tourism assets of Bouira may be re-signified, valorized, and made desirable through mediated interaction on Facebook pages and networks (Chebli et al., 2020, p. 7; Mariani et al., 2016, p. 320).

B. Tourism Uses of Facebook

The tourism uses of Facebook can be better understood through the perspective of the **uses and gratifications theory**, which assumes that media users are active agents who select communication channels according to specific needs and expected benefits. In the tourism field, Facebook is used not only as a source of practical information, but also as a platform for entertainment, social connection, symbolic belonging, and the sharing of lived or imagined

travel experiences. This means that the user's engagement with tourism pages is motivated by a combination of utilitarian, emotional, and relational factors, rather than by a purely informational logic (Huang, 2022, p. 103; Munar, 2012, p. 1021).

One of the main motivations for using Facebook in tourism is **information seeking**. Before deciding to visit a destination, users often search for photographs, videos, comments, recommendations, and practical details related to attractions, accessibility, prices, or services. Facebook facilitates this process because it combines official and unofficial information in one communicative environment, thereby allowing the user to compare institutional discourse with peer evaluations and experiential testimony. In this way, the platform functions as a hybrid information source that influences the tourist's preliminary knowledge of the destination and reduces uncertainty related to travel planning (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, p. 180; Mariani et al., 2016, p. 321).

A second major motivation is **entertainment**. Tourism-related Facebook content often relies on visual attractiveness, emotional storytelling, short videos, scenic imagery, and immersive representations of landscapes and experiences. Users may follow tourism pages simply because the content offers pleasure, escape, curiosity, and aesthetic enjoyment, even before any concrete travel decision is made. Entertainment, therefore, is not marginal in tourism communication; it is one of the mechanisms through which destinations become desirable, memorable, and emotionally charged in the digital imagination of users (Munar, 2012, p. 1022; Sjöberg, 2017, p. 36).

A third important motivation is the **need for belonging and social connection**. Facebook enables users to feel part of a wider community of followers, travelers, residents, and place enthusiasts who interact around a shared destination or tourism interest. From the angle of symbolic interactionism, this form of engagement is meaningful because individuals attach value to destinations through interaction with others and through the interpretive frameworks circulating within the digital group. Joining a tourism page, reacting to a post, or following discussions about a place becomes a way of participating in a collective symbolic world where places are endowed with meanings such as authenticity, beauty, prestige, or familiarity. Tourism communication on Facebook thus contributes to the formation of a mediated sense of community and belonging around destinations (Baka, 2016, p. 132).

A fourth motivation is **experience sharing**, which is central to the logic of social media tourism. Users are not only consumers of tourism representations; they are also producers of narratives about places they visited, desired, or imagined. Through posting photos, sharing videos, writing reviews, and commenting on tourism pages, they transform personal experience into public discourse. This sharing process has a double sociological significance: first, it extends the tourism experience beyond the physical visit into the digital space; second, it contributes to the collective production of destination meanings by turning individual memories into socially visible representations. In this sense, Facebook allows travel experience to circulate as a shared symbolic resource that affects how others perceive the same destination (Ayeh et al., 2013, p. 638; Mariani et al., 2016, p. 322).

Taken together, these motives show that the tourism use of Facebook cannot be reduced to technical consultation or online promotion alone. Rather, it is anchored in a broader socio-communicative process in which information, pleasure, identity, and symbolic exchange are intertwined. This makes Facebook particularly relevant for the study of tourism from a sociological perspective, since it mediates not only access to places, but also the meanings, expectations, and interpersonal frames through which those places are socially interpreted (Leung et al., 2013, p. 6; Sigala, 2018, p. 15).

1.2 Destination Image and Its Sources of Formation

A. The Conceptual Framework of Destination Image

Destination image is one of the most central and widely used concepts in tourism studies because it explains how individuals perceive, evaluate, and anticipate a place before, during, and after the travel experience. In general terms, destination image refers to the set of ideas, beliefs, impressions, feelings, and behavioral dispositions that a person or a group holds about a tourism destination. It is not a simple or static mental picture; rather, it is a multidimensional social and psychological construct formed through information, prior knowledge, mediated exposure, and symbolic interpretation. For this reason, the image of a destination is deeply connected to communication processes and cannot be separated from the channels through which the destination is represented and discussed (Beerli & Martín, 2004, p. 658).

The tourism literature commonly distinguishes between three main dimensions of destination image: the **cognitive**, the **affective**, and the **conative** dimensions. The cognitive dimension refers to what individuals know or believe about the attributes of the destination, such as natural attractions, infrastructure, accessibility, services, safety, or cultural richness. The affective dimension concerns the emotional responses associated with the destination, such as pleasure, excitement, relaxation, attachment, or curiosity. The conative dimension, finally, relates to behavioral intention, including the intention to visit, revisit, recommend, or engage further with the destination. These three dimensions are interrelated, and many studies have shown that cognitive evaluations influence affective responses, which in turn affect behavioral intention (Stylidis et al., 2022, p. 3).

Among the most influential models in the tourism literature is the cognitive-affective-conative model, which conceptualizes destination image as a progressive process moving from perception to feeling and then to action. This model is particularly useful because it highlights that the destination image is not limited to descriptive knowledge, but includes emotional valuation and practical orientation toward behavior. Other models of image formation have also emphasized the importance of information sources, personal factors, social influences, and prior experience in shaping destination image. In this respect, image is not formed in isolation; it results from an interaction between the attributes communicated about the destination and the interpretive frameworks of the audience receiving them (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 870; Beerli & Martín, 2004, p. 659).

From a sociological viewpoint, destination image may also be considered a form of social representation. It reflects not only individual perceptions, but also collectively shared meanings about what a place symbolizes, what kind of people it attracts, and what forms of experience it promises. Consequently, destination image is inseparable from broader processes of classification, identity-making, and symbolic valuation. This is especially important in domestic tourism, where the destination may already be part of collective memory, local identity, or national imagination, and where digital communication can reactivate or transform these representations in new ways (Marine-Roig & Huertas, 2020, p. 4; Boudjelida, 2023, p. 91).

B. Social Media as a Source of Destination Image Formation

In the digital age, social media has become one of the most influential sources in the formation of destination image because it differs substantially from traditional sources such as official brochures, institutional advertisements, travel agencies, and conventional mass media. Traditional sources generally produce a controlled and one-directional image of the destination, often centered on idealized promotion. By contrast, social media platforms generate a more dynamic, interactive, and multi-voiced image through the constant circulation of user-generated content, comments, reviews, reactions, and peer recommendations. This plurality of voices contributes to a more socially negotiated image of the destination, one that

is perceived as closer to lived experience and therefore often more credible (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010, p. 578).

A key element in this transformation is **user-generated content (UGC)**. Photos shared by visitors, videos posted by local residents, reviews written by tourists, and informal descriptions of places all contribute to building an online destination image that is continuously updated and socially circulated. UGC has a particular influence because it is often perceived as spontaneous and authentic, in contrast to official tourism discourse. As a result, users tend to rely heavily on such content when evaluating destinations, imagining the quality of the experience, and deciding whether the place corresponds to their interests and expectations (Ayeh et al., 2013, p. 638).

Comments and digital recommendations also play a decisive role in shaping destination image. Through comment sections and page interactions, users collectively interpret tourism content, reinforce positive impressions, question negative aspects, and validate the desirability of specific places. Recommendations, whether explicit or implicit, function as forms of social endorsement that can significantly affect trust and attractiveness. In this sense, the image of the destination is not produced only by the original post, but by the entire chain of reactions and conversational exchanges surrounding it. The destination image therefore emerges as a relational product of communication rather than a fixed message transmitted from one sender to one receiver (Chebli et al., 2020, p. 8; Baka, 2016, p. 131).

What distinguishes social media most clearly from traditional media is its capacity to merge representation with interaction. A brochure may present a destination visually, but it does not normally allow immediate feedback, emotional reaction, peer comparison, or content resharing on a mass scale. Social media, by contrast, transforms the destination into a communicative object that is continuously discussed, endorsed, modified, and recirculated by users. This means that image formation becomes more decentralized and participatory. For tourism sociology, this is highly significant because it shows that attractiveness is increasingly co-produced by institutions, residents, tourists, and digital communities rather than imposed solely by official tourism actors (Mariani et al., 2016, p. 320; Marine-Roig & Huertas, 2020, p. 5).

In the context of internal tourism, this role of social media becomes even more strategic. It allows lesser-known local destinations to gain symbolic visibility without depending entirely on formal promotional systems. Through Facebook pages and other social platforms, local actors can circulate images of landscapes, heritage, cuisine, and everyday cultural life, thereby re-signifying ordinary spaces as desirable tourist destinations. This communicative process is especially relevant for territories such as Bouira, where the richness of tourism assets may require stronger digital mediation in order to become more visible, more legible, and more attractive to domestic audiences. Social media thus acts not simply as a marketing instrument, but as a social mechanism of symbolic production and territorial valorization (Boudjelida, 2023, p. 93).

2. From Facebook Interaction to Visit Intention and Tourist Behavior

2.1 Digital Interaction as a Mechanism Influencing Representations and Behavior

A. Patterns of Interaction on Tourism Pages on Facebook

Digital interaction on Facebook tourism pages may take several visible forms, including liking, commenting, sharing, following, tagging, and reacting to visual or textual content. These actions may appear technically simple, yet from the perspective of digital sociology they constitute meaningful forms of symbolic and social participation. They indicate not only attention to the content, but also degrees of endorsement, emotional response, public alignment, and communicative involvement with the destination being represented. In this sense, interaction is not merely a metric of online activity; it is a social sign through which

users express their relation to places, values, and communities in a digitally mediated environment (Mokdad, 2016, p. 18).

The **“like”** is often the most immediate and frequent form of interaction. Although it may seem minimal, it functions symbolically as a sign of recognition, appreciation, or emotional agreement with the tourism content displayed. In the context of tourism pages, liking a photo of a landscape, a local heritage site, or a promotional video reflects a basic form of symbolic adhesion to the image of the place. It signals that the user finds the destination attractive, interesting, or socially worthy of acknowledgment. The like therefore has sociological value because it transforms private perception into a visible public gesture that contributes to the collective validation of the destination’s desirability (Baka, 2016, p. 131; Mokdad, 2016, p. 27).

The **comment** represents a deeper and more discursive form of interaction. Through comments, users do not simply react; they interpret, evaluate, compare, remember, recommend, or question what is shown on the page. Commenting opens a dialogical space in which the destination becomes the object of negotiation and collective meaning-making. In digital sociology, such exchanges are important because they reveal how social actors co-construct public understandings of place through language and interaction. A destination’s image is thus reinforced, nuanced, or contested not only by the original post but by the conversational layer generated around it (Huertas, Setó-Pàmies, and Míguez-González, 2015, p. 798; Baka, 2016, p. 132).

The **share** has an even broader symbolic reach because it moves the content from one interactional circle to another. When users share tourism content, they act as intermediaries in the circulation of destination meanings, extending the visibility of the place to their own networks and implicitly recommending it to others. Sharing therefore combines personal endorsement with network diffusion. It turns the user into a relay of symbolic promotion and contributes to the viralization of tourism representations. From a sociological angle, this means that destination visibility on Facebook is not only institutionally produced, but socially redistributed by users themselves through their everyday communicative practices (The Role of Facebook in Activating Local Tourism, 2019, p. 94).

The **follow** function also deserves attention because it indicates a more durable relationship between the user and the tourism page. Following a page suggests repeated interest, anticipated exposure to future content, and a willingness to remain connected to the symbolic universe of the destination. In many cases, the act of following a tourism page is associated with motivations such as information seeking, entertainment, self-expression, and group identity. It reflects a form of sustained digital proximity through which the destination becomes part of the user’s routine media environment and, gradually, part of their horizon of desire and familiarity (Mokdad, 2016, p. 32; Leung et al., 2013, p. 6).

Taken together, these interaction patterns show that Facebook tourism pages function as spaces of **symbolic participation**. Users do not simply receive information; they contribute to the social life of the destination by endorsing, discussing, redistributing, and normalizing certain representations of place. This is why interaction should be understood as a meaningful social process rather than a purely technical response. In the field of digital sociology, these practices illustrate how platforms mediate the relationship between individuals and places through low-threshold but socially consequential forms of participation, visibility, and recognition (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 73; Huertas et al., 2015, p. 799).

B. Digital Interaction, Identity Construction, and Belonging to Place

Interaction with tourism pages on Facebook does not only influence the perception of the destination; it can also contribute to the construction of identity and to the reinforcement of belonging to place. This occurs because digital communication about places often carries emotional, cultural, and symbolic meanings that exceed the simple consumption of tourism

information. When users repeatedly engage with content related to a city, region, or province, they may begin to develop a stronger sense of familiarity, attachment, and identification with that place, even before or beyond a physical visit. In this respect, digital interaction becomes one of the channels through which place attachment is activated and socially expressed (Middleton, 2018, p. 4).

From a sociological perspective, identity is not a fixed substance but a relational and communicative process. Facebook offers users a platform where places become part of self-presentation and collective belonging. By posting about a destination, reacting to local tourism content, or sharing images of familiar landscapes, users communicate not only what they like, but also who they are, where they belong, and what territorial meanings they identify with. In this sense, place-related interaction contributes to the symbolic construction of self and group affiliation. The destination is not merely viewed; it is incorporated into identity narratives and social positioning within digital space (Baka, 2016, p. 133).

This is especially important in the context of internal tourism, where the destination may overlap with local memory, regional identity, or cultural intimacy. Interaction with Facebook tourism pages can reinforce users' attachment to their city or province by re-presenting familiar sites as valuable, beautiful, and worthy of collective pride. Such processes contribute to what may be termed **digital place-making**, that is, the production of place meanings through mediated communication and participatory representation. Recent studies suggest that digital environments can accelerate place attachment by combining narrative, imagery, and repeated engagement in ways that strengthen emotional bonds with place (Wilson, 2025, p. 9; Alhasan, 2023, p. 71).

At the collective level, this interaction may foster what can be described as a **virtual tourism community**. Tourism pages gather users around shared interests, common evaluations, similar aspirations, and recurring symbolic references to a destination. Even when participants do not know one another personally, their repeated interaction around the same place creates a sense of common orientation and interpretive community. Through comments, reactions, and shared memories, users participate in a loose but meaningful collective space centered on the destination. This virtual community can help normalize certain positive representations of the place and can generate a feeling of co-presence and belonging among followers (Mokdad, 2016, p. 29; Ayeh et al., 2013, p. 639).

Moreover, the formation of such virtual tourism communities may have practical implications for tourism behavior. When users see others repeatedly valuing, recommending, and emotionally investing in a destination, their own perception of its social worth may increase. Belonging here operates not only emotionally, but normatively: it signals that this place matters to "people like us," that it belongs to a shared symbolic map, and that visiting it can become a meaningful social act. Thus, digital belonging may serve as an intermediate mechanism linking interaction to visit intention, especially in local and domestic tourism contexts where social recognition and territorial attachment are particularly influential (The Role of Facebook in Activating Local Tourism, 2019, p. 95; Community Attachment and Place-Identity, 2024, p. 3).

Accordingly, interaction with tourism pages on Facebook should be understood not simply as audience activity, but as a process of identity expression, place attachment, and symbolic community formation. Through everyday acts of liking, commenting, sharing, and following, users engage in digital practices that help shape both the social image of the destination and their own relation to it. This makes Facebook a particularly important site for analyzing how digital communication contributes to the emergence of new forms of territorial belonging and tourism-oriented collective identification in contemporary society (Georgakopoulou, 2015, p. 5; Wilson, 2025, p. 11).

2.2 Visit Intention and Domestic Tourism in Light of Destination Image

A. From Destination Image to Visit Intention

One of the most established assumptions in tourism studies is that destination image plays a decisive role in shaping the tourist's behavioral intention. A destination is not chosen solely on the basis of its objective attributes, but according to the way these attributes are perceived, interpreted, and emotionally valued by potential visitors. Visit intention, in this sense, emerges as the behavioral translation of a positive destination image, especially when that image succeeds in combining informational credibility, emotional appeal, and symbolic desirability. The literature consistently shows that when individuals hold favorable beliefs and feelings about a destination, they become more willing to visit it, recommend it, or include it in their travel planning (Nazir et al., 2022, p. 3).

A useful theoretical entry for understanding this relationship is the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, which explains behavioral intention through three principal determinants: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In tourism, destination image contributes directly to these determinants. A positive image improves the individual's attitude toward visiting the destination; favorable comments and digital approval from others strengthen subjective norms; and clear, accessible, and reassuring information may enhance perceived behavioral control by reducing uncertainty and increasing the sense that the trip is feasible. In this way, destination image functions not merely as a set of impressions, but as a cognitive-affective framework that orients intention toward action (Soares, 2024, p. 6).

Tourism behavior models also support this relationship by suggesting that the path from image to action passes through sequential stages of perception, evaluation, desire, and decision. In these models, the cognitive dimension of image provides knowledge about the destination's attractions and characteristics, while the affective dimension creates emotional proximity, pleasure, curiosity, or admiration. These two dimensions together influence the conative dimension, which refers to the behavioral disposition to visit, revisit, or recommend the destination. Thus, intention is not an isolated decision; it is the outcome of a process in which knowledge and emotion interact to make the destination meaningful and desirable (Stylidis et al., 2022, p. 4; Papadimitriou et al., 2018, p. 74).

Within this process, **emotions** play a particularly important role. A destination may be known for its natural beauty or cultural richness, but unless these features are translated into feelings such as relaxation, excitement, nostalgia, safety, or wonder, they may not generate strong behavioral intention. Emotional attachment often acts as the bridge between perception and motivation. Social media intensifies this emotional dimension because it presents destinations through immersive images, videos, stories, and testimonials that make the place more vivid and emotionally resonant. Consequently, emotional responses generated by destination image can significantly reinforce the desire to transform virtual exposure into physical mobility (Chebli et al., 2020, p. 8; Soares, 2024, p. 9).

Expectations are equally central in the transition from destination image to visit intention. The image of a destination shapes what the tourist expects to find in terms of scenery, atmosphere, service quality, authenticity, and overall experience. When the projected image aligns with the tourist's aspirations, needs, and imagined self, the probability of intention rises. Conversely, weak or ambiguous destination images may fail to create sufficient motivational force. In this regard, destination image works as a form of anticipatory representation through which individuals mentally simulate the travel experience before making the decision to visit. The more coherent and attractive these expectations become, the more likely they are to be converted into behavioral intention (Wang, 2021, p. 145; Nazir et al., 2022, p. 5).

Therefore, the relationship between destination image and visit intention should be understood as multidimensional. It is shaped by cognition, emotion, expectations, and social influence. The destination image does not simply inform the tourist; it prepares, motivates, and legitimizes the possibility of travel. This is why contemporary tourism studies increasingly treat destination image as one of the strongest predictors of tourist intention, especially in contexts where social media content amplifies emotional appeal and social validation (Baber et al., 2022, p. 14; Soares, 2024, p. 7).

B. Domestic Tourism in Bouira Province in Light of the Theoretical Framework

Applying this theoretical framework to the case of **domestic tourism in Bouira Province** reveals the relevance of Facebook in enhancing the visibility and attractiveness of local destinations. Bouira possesses a wide range of tourism assets, including mountainous landscapes, forest areas, rural scenery, cultural heritage, and sites suitable for leisure, eco-tourism, and family outings. However, the value of these assets in tourism terms does not depend only on their physical existence; it also depends on their symbolic visibility, communicative circulation, and capacity to generate a positive image among domestic audiences. In this regard, Facebook can function as a mediating space through which these assets are narrated, visualized, and socially valorized (Benmamar & Bensmain, 2023, p. 452; Ghadjati, Merabti, and Bennafla, 2024, p. 3).

Available studies on Bouira indicate that the province possesses important tourism potential that remains underexploited at the national level, partly because it is still insufficiently discovered by Algerian tourists despite its natural, cultural, and historical richness. This gap between objective tourism wealth and actual tourist flow suggests that the problem is not only one of resources, but also one of communication, image formation, and destination positioning. From this angle, Facebook becomes strategically important because it can reduce the symbolic invisibility of Bouira by circulating compelling images and local narratives capable of transforming ordinary or little-known spaces into attractive domestic destinations (Benmamar & Bensmain, 2023, p. 455; Khettab, 2025, p. 449).

The role of Facebook in stimulating **domestic tourism demand** can be explained through several mechanisms already discussed in the theoretical sections above. First, it provides informational access to local destinations through posts, videos, and recommendations. Second, it builds an affective image by showcasing scenic landscapes, cultural identity, and leisure possibilities. Third, it encourages social proof through comments, shares, and positive interactions that validate the desirability of the place. Fourth, it creates expectations of accessibility and familiarity, which are particularly important in domestic tourism, where people often seek destinations that combine beauty, affordability, proximity, and cultural comfort. Through these mechanisms, Facebook contributes to moving users from passive awareness to active visit intention (Ghadjati et al., 2024, p. 5; Algerian Tourism from Facebook, 2025, p. 2).

The Algerian literature also offers useful support for this interpretation. Studies on domestic tourism and Facebook in Algeria have shown that digital content published on Facebook contributes to improving the image of local tourism, shaping tourist impressions, and influencing destination choice. One study found that many Algerian users rely on Facebook content when selecting their domestic tourist destination and that the impressions shared online help attract additional visitors by generating a favorable image of local tourism. This confirms that Facebook is not merely a promotional channel, but an active site where tourism impressions are formed, circulated, and socially reinforced (Khettab, 2025, p. 460; Ghadjati et al., 2024, p. 7).

In the specific context of Bouira, Facebook pages devoted to tourism, local discovery, mountain landscapes, family outings, and seasonal activities can play a crucial role in constructing a recognizable and attractive internal destination image. By publishing visual

content about forests, villages, peaks, cultural traditions, and recreational events, such pages contribute to associating Bouira with values of natural beauty, authenticity, relaxation, and local richness. At the same time, users' reactions, comments, and shares amplify these meanings and help circulate them among broader domestic audiences. This creates the conditions for a gradual activation of internal tourism demand, particularly among young people and families seeking nearby destinations promoted through familiar digital platforms (Benmamar & Bensmain, 2023, p. 456; *The Role of Facebook in Activating Local Tourism*, 2019, p. 96).

From this perspective, Bouira may be read as a case in which social media, especially Facebook, can bridge the gap between **territorial potential** and **tourism recognition**. The province's tourism assets gain social effectiveness only when they are inserted into meaningful communicative circuits capable of generating destination image, emotional appeal, and intention to visit. Therefore, applying the theoretical framework of destination image, digital interaction, and behavioral intention to Bouira helps explain why Facebook can be considered an important mechanism for revitalizing domestic tourism: it not only informs users about the destination, but also contributes to making the province visible, valued, and desirable within the symbolic economy of digital tourism communication (Benmamar & Bensmain, 2023, p. 458; Khettab, 2025, p. 462)

Certainly. Here is an academic **conclusion in English** that matches your article's theoretical orientation and includes the three elements you requested.

Conclusion

The theoretical discussion developed in this article shows that Facebook should be understood not merely as a communication platform, but as a socio-digital environment that contributes actively to the construction of destination image and to the reinforcement of visit intention in the field of domestic tourism. Through its interactive architecture, visual affordances, and participatory logic, Facebook allows places to be represented, interpreted, evaluated, and circulated through a continuous flow of posts, comments, shares, and recommendations. In this sense, the platform does not simply disseminate tourism information; it shapes cognitive perceptions, stimulates affective responses, and supports conative orientations that may lead users from digital exposure to actual travel intention

The article also confirms, at the theoretical level, that destination image remains one of the key explanatory variables in tourism behavior. The cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of image are closely interconnected, and Facebook strengthens this interconnection by combining information, emotion, and social validation in a single environment. Likes, comments, shares, and follow-up practices work as forms of symbolic participation through which users not only consume representations of place but also help co-produce them. This participatory dimension is especially relevant in domestic tourism, where familiarity, territorial attachment, and collective identification can significantly influence the attractiveness of a destination and the desire to visit it

Applied to the case of Bouira Province, this framework suggests that the effectiveness of local tourism promotion depends not only on the objective richness of natural, cultural, and territorial resources, but also on the way these resources are symbolically framed and digitally communicated. Facebook can therefore play a strategic role in transforming Bouira's internal tourism assets into socially visible and desirable destinations by amplifying scenic value, circulating local narratives, and fostering positive interaction around place-based content. In that regard, the platform may contribute to bridging the gap between territorial potential and tourism recognition, particularly among domestic audiences such as youth and families who rely heavily on digital platforms for information, inspiration, and social endorsement (Benmamar & Bensmain, 2023, p. 458; Ghadjati et al., 2024, p. 7).

At the practical level, several recommendations may be addressed to tourism managers and administrators of local tourism pages. First, Facebook use should move beyond spontaneous or purely aesthetic posting toward a more structured communication strategy that combines visual attractiveness with reliable and useful information about access, activities, prices, and services. Second, page managers should give greater attention to user interaction by responding to comments, encouraging experience sharing, and building trust through regular and credible communication. Third, local tourism actors should diversify content formats by integrating short videos, testimonials, thematic storytelling, seasonal promotion, and place-based narratives capable of strengthening both destination image and emotional connection. Fourth, tourism officials and local page administrators should coordinate their efforts in order to ensure that Facebook is used not only as a promotional outlet but as a platform for digital place-making and domestic demand activation.

Ultimately, Facebook appears, in the light of this theoretical analysis, as an important mechanism in the contemporary sociology of tourism because it links communication, representation, emotion, and behavior within a single digital ecosystem. Its relevance to domestic tourism lies in its ability to make local destinations visible, socially meaningful, and behaviorally appealing. For Bouira Province, this means that the digital construction of destination image is not secondary to tourism development; it is one of the essential conditions for transforming local resources into recognized and desired tourism opportunities within the national space..

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