

The Role of Social Media Sites, Specifically Facebook, in Promoting Mountain Tourism in the Chelia Mountains of Algeria

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Abstract: The present research paper focused on examining the role and significance of social networking sites in promoting mountain tourism, highlighting their function as a bridge between customers and tourism providers, with Facebook being a primary example. We structured our research into two main components: a theoretical section that outlines the research concepts, and an applied section that involved distributing a questionnaire to 384 Facebook users. This questionnaire aimed to gather their opinions and impressions on how social networks contribute to raising tourism awareness and promoting tourism, as well as enhancing the tourism product itself. For this case study, we used the Chelia Mountains in the state of Khenchela, Algeria, as our focus area. To provide a practical example from our research, we found that Facebook plays a positive and effective role in the electronic promotion of tourism products. It has significantly reduced promotional costs and simplified the process of obtaining information about tourist destinations through content published on pages. However, despite these benefits, some users express concerns about the credibility and accuracy of the information provided on the site. In response to these findings, we have developed a series of recommendations and suggestions aimed at enhancing mountain tourism and improving electronic promotion methods to make them more comprehensive, reliable, and effective.

Keywords: Electronic promotion - mountain tourism - social networking sites

Introduction:

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in driving development in any country, serving as a fundamental pillar of the alternative economy. This sector has garnered significant attention from various development stakeholders, who aim to utilize it to align with contemporary advancements and adapt accordingly. Their goals include diversifying the tourism product and meeting the needs of tourists to achieve high levels of satisfaction with the services provided. However, these efforts to enhance service quality and attract a larger number of tourists will only succeed if the

reputation of the tourism facilities extends beyond their premises. This is typically achieved through promotion activities, which have traditionally included issuing tourist publications.

Magazines, exhibitions, and tourism festivals all require substantial budgets to execute effectively. As these promotional activities increase, so do the costs and overall budget of the tourism product. Therefore, it is essential to control these expenses by identifying methods that reduce both cost and effort during the promotion process, opting for less expensive yet more effective alternatives. This goal is pursued by relevant authorities through electronic promotion, leveraging the internet and its features. Social networking sites, particularly Facebook—which ranked first among the most popular and widely used platforms with 2.8 million users at the beginning of 2023—are central to this strategy.

Facebook offers numerous features that have established it as the most influential platform globally, serving various fields due to its rapid dissemination of information in record time. This has prompted those responsible for the tourism sector to utilize Facebook for managing, promoting, and marketing their tourism products through both formal and informal pages dedicated to this purpose. Today, this platform significantly influences the opinions and trends of customers. Customers can now quickly and cost-effectively communicate their concerns and requirements to relevant authorities, a stark contrast to the past when they had to visit tourist offices and agencies in person to obtain information and make reservations for their tourist destinations.

Khenchela region is one of Algeria's areas rich in a diverse array of tourist attractions. These attractions include natural elements, such as mountains and forests, as well as historical and archaeological sites, such as Roman and Berber monuments. Additionally, the region is known for its mineral baths and traditional industries, most notably the renowned Babar carpet industry. Despite this abundance of potential, the tourism sector in Khenchela remains underdeveloped and far from achieving optimal exploitation. One of the most prominent types of tourism in Khenchela is mountain tourism, due to its geographical location within the Aurès mountain range, particularly the resource-rich Chelia Mountain. This geographical advantage makes it an attractive destination for tourists, despite the shortcomings in the service sector of this tourist area. Therefore, it is crucial to maximize this potential to increase tourist traffic and promote mountain tourism. Achieving this goal requires the relevant authorities to adopt modern technology and integrate it into tourism operations, particularly through the Internet and social networking sites, which play a vital role in communication, knowledge dissemination, and service provision.

The lack of tourism infrastructure in the state of Khenchela has resulted in a tourism sector that falls short of meeting the expectations of tourists. Despite the abundant tourism resources in the region, the absence of specialized competencies in the field of tourism has hindered the marketing of tourism services and products. The sector continues to rely on outdated methods for hotel reservations, providing information about tourist destinations, and marketing and advertising. This makes it difficult for tourists to choose Khenchela as their destination if they cannot find sufficient information. Effective promotion and detailed information about the services offered are essential, yet these are insufficient by themselves. It has become imperative to provide all necessary information and facilitate reservations through modern means, allowing tourists to make arrangements without needing to travel to Khenchela. Unfortunately, this modern approach is largely missing in the service aspects of the region's tourism institutions.

The Chelia Mountains, a significant contributor to the tourist attractions in the state of Khenchela, are rich in natural resources. The landscape and dense forest cover are home to rare plant species not found in other forests in the country, with 174 plant species and over 180 animal species. This unique biodiversity led to its classification as a nature reserve under Presidential Decree No. 84-623, placing it under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The inadequate promotion of tourist regions in the state of Khenchela using modern methods such as the Internet and social networking sites, particularly for mountain tourism in the Chelia region, has deprived these areas of their deserved share of tourist attention and development programs. Effective promotion is essential for transforming a tourist region into an attractive destination and a focus of attention for authorities who can support it by improving its services to boost tourist attraction. Conversely, areas that are poorly or incorrectly promoted remain marginalized and isolated, despite their rich tourist attractions. This results in tourists not considering them as viable destinations, and these areas consequently do not receive their share of development projects.

This study aims to highlight the importance of electronic tourism promotion and its impact on tourism in general, with a specific focus on mountain tourism, and to demonstrate the role of social networking sites in the promotion process. By measuring the effectiveness of Facebook in introducing tourism products and attracting tourists, we aim to identify the obstacles that may hinder the promotion process on social networking sites from achieving the goal of increased tourist attraction. We propose a set of suggestions and recommendations as solutions. To ensure the credibility of our research, we selected a representative sample to address the following main question:

- **How effective is Facebook in promoting mountain tourism?**

The following follow-up questions were derived from this main question:

- **What are the most important tourist attractions in Chelia as a tourist site?**
- **To what extent is the quality and effectiveness of the services provided in Chelia to attract tourists?**

- **Hypotheses:**

- Facebook plays an effective role in promoting mountain tourism through the features it contains
- Some obstacles prevent Facebook from being a means of tourism promotion and hinder the transmission of information through it.

- **Data collection tools:**

- Main tools: Data was collected using a questionnaire, with questions carefully formulated to address the research topic and respond to the concerns raised, based on a study sample.
- Secondary tools: this represents collecting sources such as books, magazines, articles, and Internet sites that we exploited during the process of collecting data that serves the research.

- **Study methodolog :**

The descriptive statistical approach was employed to determine the role of social networking sites (Facebook) in the processes of promoting (internal) mountain tourism in the state of Khenchela, where we processed the data by distributing a questionnaire on four local pages that we selected based on the percentage of High interaction, which is represented by four local Facebook pages that are very popular at the local level. These pages were intended for instructional, entertaining, and social purposes. They also care about citizens' issues by presenting them and attempting to communicate their ideas and goals through their publications.

I. Theoretical framework :

I.1 The concept of electronic tourism promotion :

Several definitions of electronic tourism promotion have been provided, including:

"One of the most crucial components of the marketing mix, electronic tourism promotion is becoming increasingly important in the tourism sector. It facilitates continuous communication between tourism organizations and both current and potential tourists. This communication aims to persuade and encourage tourists to acquire tourism services through various promotional methods, known as the promotional mix. Electronic tourism promotion encompasses the efforts made through various media and communication channels" to clarify and enhance the country's

tourism image, capture tourists' attention, and attract them to visit and purchase the tourism product .⁽¹⁾

Tourism promotion is a critical element that is both influenced by and impacts media and communication. Recently, tourism promotion methods have evolved towards digitization, increasingly relying on the Internet as a primary means of delivering services to customers and simplifying many processes without requiring the customer to travel. This digital approach has become an essential link between tourists and their desired destinations, helping to clarify details about the areas they wish to visit. It streamlines the process of managing reservations and providing information, achieving these tasks more quickly and cost-effectively.

I.2 The importance of electronic tourism promotion:

The emergence of social networking sites has triggered a digital revolution across various fields, including the promotion and tourism sectors. These platforms have become crucial in the promotion process, serving as a significant driver. The importance of electronic promotion for tourism products can be highlighted as follows:

- a) Achieving tourism awareness: Low tourism awareness among the public is a significant factor hindering the tourism sector's ability to develop and improve society. It also contributes to the loss of key components that make the tourism product distinct. Therefore, enhancing tourism awareness is crucial for maximizing the sector's potential.⁽²⁾
- a) Achieving tourist persuasion: Utilizing promotional activities and persuasive methods helps to boost the number of both actual and potential tourists, whether from within the country or abroad.⁽³⁾
- b) Spreading tourism knowledge: Promotion is a key method for spreading tourism knowledge and culture to both domestic and international audiences. By sharing information about monuments, tourist attractions, services, programs, and investment opportunities, it shapes public opinions, trends, and attitudes. This positive influence benefits the tourism establishment specifically and society at large.⁽⁴⁾
- c) Stimulating demand for tourism content: The tourism subject matter of a country or organization is simply the sum of the tourist attractions that draw tourists to that country or territory and encourage them to visit to experience tourism there.⁽⁵⁾

As a result, the importance of tourism promotion can be summarized as simplifying and facilitating access to and learning about the tourism product to improve it by attracting the greatest number of tourists both locally and internationally, which contributes to spreading awareness and tourism culture to develop the tourism sector in particular and the country receiving them in general, as well as empowering those in charge of the industry. Tourism is

centered on understanding the flaws of the tourism product and the most significant obstacles that the customer will face during his stay, and then attempting to develop solutions to improve it.

I.3 Steps in the tourism promotion process :

Zaki Khalil Musaed considers⁽⁶⁾ that the fundamental steps for building a tourism promotion policy are:

- a. **Determining the target audience:** The target audience that will obtain the promotional message must be identified, as well as decisions made to verify intermediaries of Tourism, such as travel agents, tour operators, and tourists who will receive the promotional message.
- b. **Defining goals and tasks:** The next step is to establish promotion goals and tasks. The goals should outline the desired outcomes, while the tasks must be designed to achieve these goals. Examples of communication tasks that a tourism organization may encounter include:
 - Potential tourists attracted to the organization
 - Maintaining the image of the intended tourist area
 - Providing information about what is offered by the tourist area
- c. **Deciding on the appropriate promotion and choosing promotional elements:** The idea is based on the fact that promotional elements can replace or complement each other, and some promotional tasks can be accomplished through advertising, personal communication, propaganda, or public relations.
- d. **Determining the appropriate budget:** The tourism promotion budget can be determined through one of the above-mentioned methods.

I.4 The concept of social networking:

Also known as social networking sites, this term refers to a group of websites that emerged with the second generation of the Web, or Web 2.0. These platforms enable communication between individuals and business organizations within a virtual community, connecting them through interest groups or affiliation networks (such as by country, university, school, or organization). This interaction occurs through direct communication services, such as sending messages or viewing others' personal Facebook profiles and updates. Among the most significant, longstanding, and popular social networking sites is Facebook. Known for its role in social networking, Facebook facilitates the exchange of photos, information, news, and videos through features like adding friends or creating pages and groups.⁽⁷⁾

I.4.1 The importance of social networking sites in tourism promotion:

Internet sites have increased in total sales from \$2 billion in 1996 to \$61 billion in 2000, reaching about \$6.17 trillion at the end of 2022⁽⁸⁾. Internet technology is an appropriate

tool for promoting and distributing hotel and tourism services because of the nature of these services on which it depends. Its success in providing sufficient, appropriate, and attractive information capable of attracting tourists/guests to order and purchase it, highlights its importance in making the tourism and hotel markets able to access the websites of tourist establishments everywhere in the world to view their many services directly via the line (on-line shopping). These are computers and their software, travel, leisure, and entertainment.

Tourism and hotel organizations began to study the tourism market and to promote and stimulate sales by:

1. To expand the areas of promotion, marketing, tourism advertising, and sales promotion through the communication of all tourist attraction sites and services to the consumer/tourist/
2. The Internet helps give equal opportunities to compete in the tourism market
3. The Internet plays a crucial role in achieving cost savings, allowing tourism and hotel organizations to promote and distribute their services at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing and promotional methods.
4. Tourism promotion—encompassing advertising, publicity, public relations, sales promotion, and direct marketing—often requires a substantial budget, which small tourism organizations may find difficult to afford. The Internet has leveled the playing field, offering equal opportunities for competition and exposure through the promotion of tourism sites and services.
5. Tourism promotion via the Internet helps the tourism organization find tourists/consumers quickly and easily through websites, activities, or promotional mixes such as advertising, publicity, public relations, and sales promotion.
6. The Internet helps measure the effectiveness of tourism promotion elements through feedback and reactions from beneficiaries and presenting new, innovative, and direct ideas by answering questionnaire questions, complaints, or suggestions.
7. Marketing opportunities for sales representatives and personal selling are enhanced by accessing information and data at a convenient time and lower cost.⁽⁹⁾

I.5 Mountain tourism:

Before defining mountain tourism, it is essential to understand the concept of mountainous areas to provide a comprehensive definition. According to Law 04-03 of 05 Jumada al-Awwal 1425 AH, dated June 23, 2004, concerning the protection of mountainous areas within the framework of sustainable development, mountainous areas are defined as: "All spaces formed by mountain ranges or blocks characterized by geographical features such as indentation, elevation, and slope, as well as all adjacent

spaces related to the region's economy, preparation factors, and environmental systems. These characteristics collectively define the intended mountainous area"⁽¹⁰⁾. Hence, mountain tourism is defined as: "The type of entertainment and self-recreation that demonstrates the relationship between tourism and the environment."⁽¹¹⁾

From this, we can infer that mountain tourism encompasses all leisure and recreational activities undertaken by tourists in mountainous areas. These areas, with their unique characteristics and attributes, serve as tourist attractions, offering opportunities for exploration, adventure, and entertainment in a pristine and tranquil environment.

Mountains, which make up 10% of the Earth's land area, are among the most important tourist attractions due to their association with various natural phenomena. These include diverse plant and natural formations, unique animal and fungal life patterns, running water, pure air, the specific nature of sunlight, and their refreshing health benefits, all attributed to their distance from pollution sources. In moderate or cold latitudes, mountains are popular for snowboarding in winter, the most common activity worldwide, and for recreation in summer due to the fresh air and tranquility they offer. Notable examples include the highlands of the European Alps, especially in Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and Germany, as well as the Rocky Mountains in the United States and Canada.

As for the highlands in warmer regions, they are characterized by moderate temperatures, making them ideal for summer vacations. Examples include Lebanon, Algeria, Turkey, parts of Africa, and southern Mexico. Some governments even use these highlands as their retreat headquarters, such as Taif in Saudi Arabia and Baguio City in the Philippines⁽¹²⁾. From this, it is evident that tourism in mountainous areas is primarily driven by several key points of attraction, which can be summarized as follows:

- Topography of the area: The region is characterized by its high altitudes and numerous hills, which appeal to tourists' curiosity for exploration and their love of adventure.
- Flora and Fauna: The diverse plant life gives mountainous areas an aesthetic appeal that attracts tourists. Additionally, the livestock in these regions is equally significant, contributing to the area's biodiversity and adding to its overall attraction.
- Water Network: Rivers, valleys, and waterfalls serve as major drivers of tourism activity in mountainous areas, attracting camping enthusiasts and other tourists who seek natural water features.
- Climatic Conditions: Mountainous areas are typically well-protected from pollution, offering pure air and a clean environment. The specific climate of each area determines the type of tourists it attracts and the nature of tourism

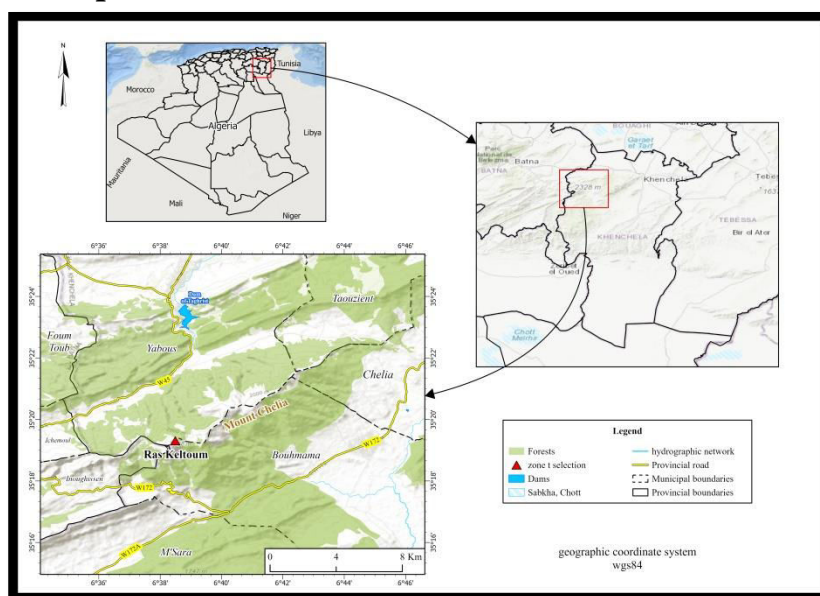
activities. For instance, regions with a moderate to cold climate often become popular destinations for skiing enthusiasts, particularly in winter.

II. Research Fieldwork :

II.1 Introduction to the field of study « Chelia mountains » :

The Chelia Mountains are situated in eastern Algeria, spanning the states of Batna and Khenchela. They encompass several municipalities, including Ashmoul in Batna and Yabous, Bouhamama, and Chelia in Khenchela. The range is distinguished by its highest peak, which reaches an elevation of 2,328 meters and is part of the Saharan Atlas mountain system. The Chelia Mountains are notable for their diverse and rugged terrain, with altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 2,328 meters above sea level. This elevation contributes to their breathtaking natural landscapes, which are rich in vegetation, including prominent Atlantic cedar trees. The mountains also boast a significant animal population, including wild horses and various bird species, leading to their designation as a nature reserve⁽¹³⁾.

Map No. 01: Location of the Chelia Mountains



Source : the author 2024

This region boasts a range of tourist attractions, categorized as follows:

1. **Climate Station:** Located 12 km from Bouhmama at the edge of Mount chelia, this 80-hectare station serves as a health resort and recreation center. It features a hotel with four beds and wooden residences with a total capacity of 100 beds.
2. **National Park in the Ouled Yacoub Forest:** This park, the second largest in the state after Qala Park in El Tarf, is home to rare plant species, including Atlantic cedar trees, and 174 plant species in total, with 61 being aromatic and medicinal herbs. It also supports diverse wildlife, with 141 bird species, 4

amphibians, and 33 mammals, including purebred wild horses, which are a significant draw for tourists.

3. **Hydrographic Network:** The Chelia Mountains feature various valleys, some perennial and others seasonal, which create picturesque waterfalls and natural freshwater springs. This network enhances the area's appeal for camping and outdoor activities.
4. **Historical Sites:** The Chelia Mountains are historically significant as the site where the first shots of the liberation revolution were fired. The area is rich with historical sites, including Mujahideen hideouts and colonial watchtowers, adding to its cultural and historical value.

The tourism sector, and mountain tourism specifically, in the state of Khenchela encounters several challenges that impact tourism activities and may serve as obstacles to the state's tourism development. Among the most significant challenges are:

- a. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** The region's challenging terrain has impeded the development of new projects for road networks, paths, and infrastructure. This limitation affects tourism activities in the Chelia region, particularly for visitors unfamiliar with the area's terrain and paths.
- b. **Land Ownership Issues:** Land ownership often poses a problem, as properties may be privately owned, which hinders the development of projects across various sectors, including tourism.
- c. **Limited Hotel Facilities:** The area has a scarcity of accommodation, with only one hotel located on the edge of Mount Shelia. This small capacity, relative to the size of tourist groups, is a significant obstacle to attracting tourists. Adequate lodging is crucial, and its absence can lead to hesitation or reluctance among tourists to visit the region despite its numerous attractions.

II.2 Analysis of questionnaire results:

We distributed electronic questionnaires on these pages on September 5, 2023, and collected 384 responses. Within just 48 hours, we analyzed this sample for the study, having determined its size using Richard Geiger's equation :

$$n = \frac{\left(\frac{Z}{d}\right)^2 + p^2}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left[\left(\frac{Z}{d}\right)^2 \times (p)^2 - 1 \right]}$$

We obtained a set of findings and analyses organized into several axes, which can be stated as follows:

II.2.1 The first axis: Characteristics of the study sample :

The majority of the sample population is male, comprising 72.14%, while females represent 27.86%. This discrepancy is attributed to the popularity of mountain tourism among males rather than females. Several factors contribute to this trend, including the conservative nature of Khenshali society, which typically restricts females from visiting such areas unless accompanied by their families. Additionally, the rugged

terrain appeals more to males, especially athletes, whereas females may find it challenging and somewhat strenuous for recreational purposes.

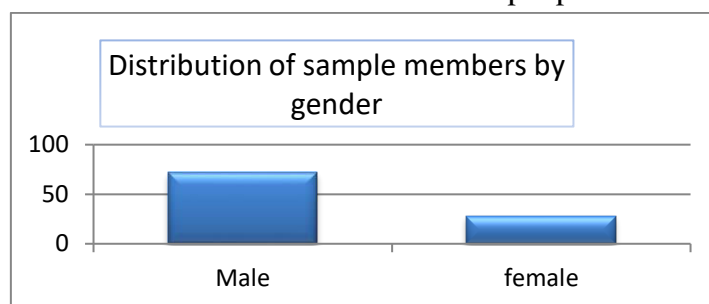


Figure 01: Distribution of sample members by gender

The sample members live in the state of Khenchela, with an estimated percentage of 84.3%. This is due to the fact that the pages we chose for the study are local pages that citizens follow to learn about their state, although this did not prevent residents from other states and expatriates from following them, as their percentages reached 11.4% and 4.16%, respectively.

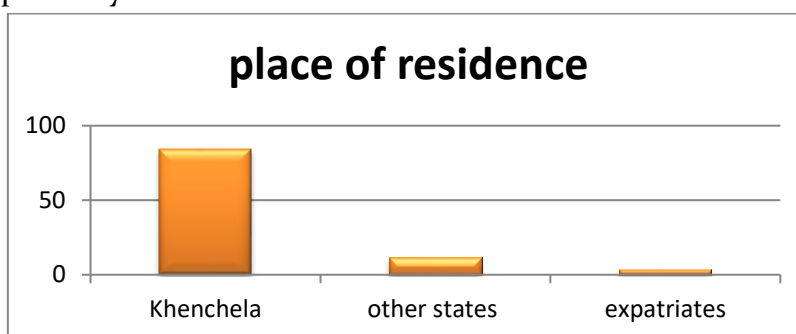


Figure 02: Distribution of sample members according to place of residence

II.2.2 The second axis: The behavior of the study sample and their usage of Facebook :

The results of the questionnaire revealed that most of the study sample had a Facebook account for over three years, with their percentage estimated at 95.05%. This is attributed to the site's long-standing presence, ease of use and access, and the speed with which users can browse and select content that interests them. This also explains the extended period of usage, as we found that the study sample spent more than four hours a day on the site, mostly during the night after completing their work and other concerns, with their percentage estimated at 73.13%. The reasons for usage were varied, including communicating with friends and family (67.18%), staying updated and searching for topics of interest (29.42%), while the remaining 3.4% used Facebook for purposes such as managing their businesses like e-commerce and various activities such as offering lessons or managing pages.

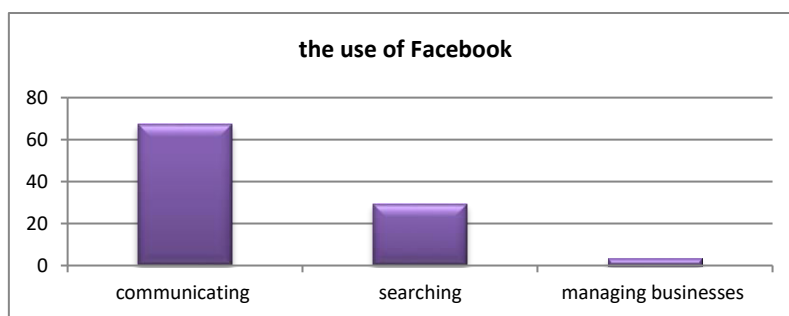


Figure 03: Distribution of sample members according to the use of Facebook

Furthermore, we discovered that the posts that piqued the interest of the study sample and elicited interaction ranged from cultural and tourism issues to news, particularly sports. Tourism posts accounted for the highest number, estimated at 59.89%, while the remaining sample members' interests ranged from sports, politics, and food to general daily news coverage. When asked about the reasons for their significant interaction with tourism posts, we discovered that 49% of the study sample interacted because they searched for these posts using the Facebook search engine, as mountain tourism is one of their interests, and 51% interacted because they were plentiful.

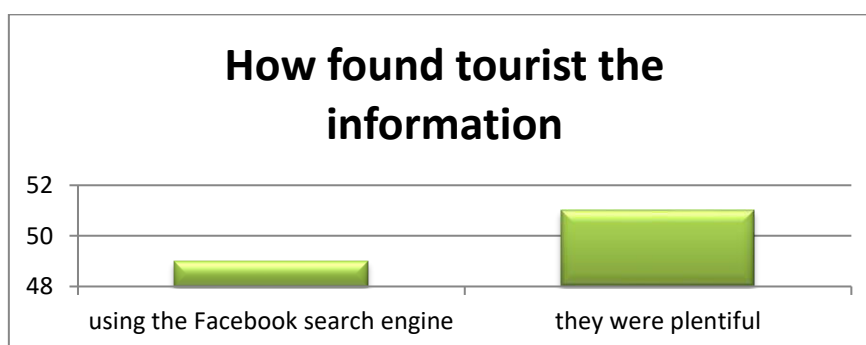


Figure 04: How the study sample found tourist information

II.2.3 The third axis: The impact of Facebook on the opinions and destinations of tourists arriving towards Chelia Mountains:

According to the questions in this section, the majority of the study sample members had previously visited tourist destinations in the state of Khenchela, such as Mount Chelia, Hammam As-Salihin, and Teberdaga, with a proportion estimated at 65.62%. As previously said, the bulk of these tourists are to the Chelia Mountains, as the topic of mountain tourism piques their interest, owing to the fact that the majority of the sample members are male. They stated that Facebook had a significant part in helping people learn about the features of mountain tourism in the state of Khenchela, and that the posts shown on the pages inspired them to visit Mount Chelia.

The sample percentage of individuals who became aware of Mount Shelia through this site was estimated at 49.81%. In contrast, the remainder of the sample, who were already familiar with the area prior to the advent of Facebook, either because they were residents of the region or state or were invited by friends, accounted for 37.23%

and 12.96%, respectively. These two groups engaged with all publications related to mountain tourism and shared them on their personal pages and groups, thereby increasing the reach of these publications. The percentage of those who share publications related to tourism topics was estimated at 66.1%. This likely accounts for the high percentage (77.5%) who believe that the site's publications have significantly contributed to promoting mountain tourism in the state of Khenchela, as they encourage adventure, exploration, and camping enthusiasts to visit these areas

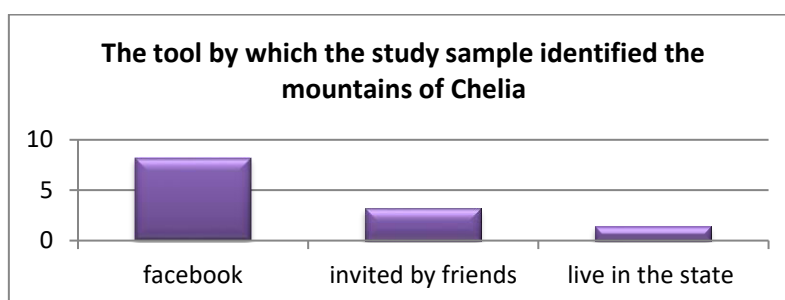


Figure. 05: The tool by which the study sample identified the mountains of Chelia

II.2.4 The fourth axis: Facebook is a window towards mountain tourism attractions:

Facebook has significantly contributed to providing essential information for tourists planning to visit the Chelia Mountains, particularly regarding the names of regions and directions to reach them. This view is supported by 52.5% of the study sample. However, the remaining respondents caution against fully trusting all information published on this platform, noting that it may be inaccurate or exaggerated. They attributed this concern to the many edits and enhancements applied to published images, which often lead to a disparity between the visual representation and the actual appearance of the locations. Such discrepancies can result in tourists feeling disappointed upon discovering that the real environment does not match the edited images they saw online, potentially causing them to avoid visiting the area in the future. Consequently, the sample emphasized the importance of presenting images and information with accuracy and authenticity.

II.2.5 The fifth axis: The mountains of Chelia between reality and Facebook promotion :

The study sample identified several key deficiencies in the Chelia Mountains tourist area that became evident during their visit, despite not being mentioned in the promotional publications that initially drew them to the region. These shortcomings can be summarized as follows:

- There is a notable lack of sufficient hotel accommodations and poor service quality in the existing facilities.

- The lack of a dedicated organization to provide tourist guides hinders visitors from exploring the Chelian forests and appreciating the natural scenery.
- The accumulation of waste, particularly from campers who discard leftover food, bottles, and cans, has marred the natural beauty of the area.
- There is a shortage of amenities and activities that would attract tourists, such as entertainment venues, well-equipped restaurants, and secure parking areas.
- The irresponsible behavior of some visitors, coupled with the lack of enforcement, poses a significant risk of forest fires. Recent fires in the Khenchela forests have caused extensive damage, with losses estimated at 2,500 hectares, highlighting the urgent need for preventive measures.

- **Conclusion:**

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire results, it is evident that social networking sites, particularly Facebook, play a significant role in promoting mountain tourism in the Chelia region of Khenchela. The study sample confirmed this through their feedback, highlighting Facebook as the primary platform they use daily. The majority of respondents rely on the site to gather information about their travel destinations. Facebook facilitates their understanding of the mountainous region through the images and reports shared on the platform, which often motivates them to visit. Although some discrepancies may exist between the published content and reality, the overall feedback underscores the platform's crucial role in tourism promotion. The extensive number of related posts and the high level of engagement with them have positioned Facebook as a valuable resource for discovering and learning about tourist attractions in the Chelia region.

Facebook has significantly reduced the costs associated with promoting tourism, including mountain tourism, by gradually replacing traditional methods such as brochures and exhibitions. The platform provides comprehensive information and videos about tourist destinations, including location details, key landmarks, and regional customs, traditions, and cuisine. This enables potential visitors to make informed decisions based on the range of available activities—whether it's beach outings for swimming enthusiasts or mountain excursions for those interested in sports, skiing, and climbing, as exemplified in our study area. Additionally, Facebook facilitates communication with both promoters for further details and with previous tourists to gather their opinions, experiences, and any potential challenges they encountered.

Tourists can access most of the information they need quickly and efficiently through these sites, which facilitates reservations and service acquisitions at reduced costs and effort. This ease of access has enhanced tourist attraction and intensified competition among tourism institutions, driving them to improve their services. However, despite these advancements, there remains a deficiency in both the quantity and quality of information provided on these platforms, with a need for greater credibility. Accurate

and honest representation of information is essential to avoid disappointing tourists with discrepancies between what is advertised and what is actually offered. Otherwise, tourism institutions risk losing their credibility and diminishing the trust tourists place in the information they receive.

- Suggestions to support and improve electronic tourism promotion services for mountain tourism:

We developed a set of suggestions and recommendations aimed at upgrading and improving the procedures of electronic promotion of tourist attractions in the mountainous regions based on our analytical study of the mountainous region of Chelia, our findings regarding the overall challenges of mountain tourism in the Chelia region, and the information we obtained from the results of the electronic questionnaire distributed via Facebook. In addition to the following suggestions, which aim to boost mountain tourism in the research region and raise the standard of services offered there to attract more visitor delegations:

- A smartphone software that assists those who enjoy mountain travel in finding trails and off-road routes. This application's operation relies on the utilization of a fundamental database that connects to geographic information systems and identifies each of the following:
- The application should include details on various easy routes, including their distances, altitudes, and terrain that tourists will encounter. It should also highlight significant natural and archaeological landmarks along these paths. Additionally, the app should provide alerts about weather conditions and safety, along with interactive maps displaying nearby services and facilities. A feature allowing users to share their experiences and tips could further enhance the app's utility.
- An official website should be established to consolidate all tourist agencies, facilitating reservations and fostering competition among agencies. This will encourage them to offer better services and broaden their scope, simplifying the booking and trip planning process for tourists.
- A dedicated platform managed by official bodies should be created to publish articles, photos, and videos about travel and tourist destinations, especially mountainous regions. This platform should offer suggestions and advice to visitors.
- Marketing campaigns should be managed to promote mountain tourism through various social media channels, focusing on credible advertising and publicity to ensure accurate information is conveyed.

The proposals for enhancing the electronic promotion of mountain tourism and ensuring its credibility can only be effectively implemented if the quality of services in the tourist area is improved. This can be addressed through the following measures:

- ✓ It is essential to provide lodging that meets tourist expectations for comfort, including security, heating, and dining options. This can be achieved by upgrading existing chalets in Shelia and constructing a new hotel in the region that adheres to international standards, ensuring that tourists are both comfortable and satisfied with the services.
- ✓ Establish a dedicated recreational area with a garden suitable for all age groups and an equestrian club, capitalizing on the region's reputation for horse breeding. This space would enhance the overall tourist experience.
- ✓ Implementing a cable car system in the Shelia region would facilitate access from the base of the mountains to the summit, benefiting snowboarding enthusiasts and other visitors by making the area more accessible during the winter months.
- ✓ Strengthen security to prevent reckless behavior and protect the region's forests from pollution and other violations. Ensuring the safety of both vegetation and wildlife is crucial for maintaining the area's appeal and ecological balance.

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