



**The Use of Social Media in Enhancing the Mental Image of Higher Education Institutions:
A Field Study on a Sample of Students Following the Facebook Page of the Faculty of
Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla**

Nadjwa Djeddi ^{1*} , Ziani Ghaouti ²

¹ University of Kasdi Merbah Ouargla (Algeria), djeddi.nadjwa@univ-ouargla.dz
Laboratory of Qualities of Programs quality in special education and adapted education

² University of Kasdi Merbah Ouargla (Algeria), ziani.ghaouti@univ-ouargla.dz
Laboratory of Qualities of Programs quality in special education and adapted education

Received: 07/10/2024

Accepted: 15/12/2024

Published: 31/12/2024

DOI: 10.53284/2120-011-004-005

Abstract:

This research paper aims to explore the role of Facebook in improving the mental image of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kasdi Merbah University in Ouargla, from the perspective of its students who follow its page on the same network.

The study employed a survey methodology, both descriptive and analytical, utilizing observation tools and an electronic questionnaire distributed to 75 individuals. After analyzing the data, we found that Facebook contributes to enhancing the college's mental image based on the quality of content it focuses on, in addition to facilitating the exchange of information, receiving feedback, and sharing experiences.

Keywords: Social media networks; mental image; higher education institutions.

* Corresponding author



1. INTRODUCTION

With the widespread adoption of social media networks and their deep integration into the lives of individuals and institutions, organizations have begun to view them as strategic partners and essential tools in communication processes. These networks are considered effective, cost-efficient, and highly efficient means of enhancing and creating relationships between the institution and its audiences, with the aim of improving their mental image and attracting more individuals to engage with and request its services, regardless of the nature of its activities.

Despite the availability of many social media networks, each institution has its preferences. The choice of the appropriate network is dependent on the likelihood and potential for achieving its communication goals and reaching its target audience, whether to modify their existing perceptions or to instill new ones that, in turn, contribute to improving its image in their minds.

Recently, social media networks have witnessed tremendous growth, attributed to technological advancements that have enabled them to reach a wide audience around the world. This has led the majority of people to own accounts on these platforms. These networks offer advanced capabilities for the ease and speed of receiving information, news, and even opportunities. Facebook serves as a prime example of such networks, which individuals and institutions rely on equally for communication and achieving professional goals.

For higher education institutions in a highly competitive environment, improving the mental image of Qasdi Merbah University in Ouargla is one of the top priorities of its administrators. This is achieved by leveraging the advantages of social media networks to enhance this image and attract more students, academic staff, and even collaboration with institutions and companies. Consequently, the mental image of higher education institutions has become an important subject for study to understand its details and methods of improvement. From this standpoint, a research problem arises that this paper seeks to address:

What is the role of Facebook in improving the mental image of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla from the perspective of its students?

A set of sub-questions arise from this, which we will attempt to answer as follows:

- 1- What is the status of communication among students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla?
- 2- What are the motivations for students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla to use Facebook?



- 3- What type of mental image do students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla have of their faculty?

2. Importance of the Study:

The significance of the study arises from its focus on a contemporary and relevant topic, exploring aspects that are still under discovery according to researchers' studies. It concentrates on the image of higher education institutions within the virtual environment. This connection is driven by the demands of the era, especially those imposed by the recent global crisis, which compelled institutions, regardless of their field or type of activity, to adapt and manage their services through their websites and social media accounts. This urgent necessity has led higher education institutions to utilize social media networks for greater flexibility in the services they provide while simultaneously preserving, improving, and enhancing their image among the audiences present on those networks. We have witnessed numerous studies focusing primarily on the mental image of economic and service institutions, with more recent studies beginning to concentrate on the image of higher education institutions.

3. Study objectives:

3.1 The primary objective of this study is to answer its main question, which seeks to measure the ability of Facebook to improve the mental image of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences from the perspective of the college students who follow its page on the same network.

3.2 To identify the importance of communication among college students.

3.3 To understand the motivations behind college students' use of Facebook over other networks.

3.4 To determine the type of mental image formed by college students about their faculty, whether it is a positive image that enhances their faculty's status in their minds and brings it closer to them, or a negative image that adversely affects their perception of their faculty and fails to establish any connection with it.

4. Concepts and Terms of the Study:

4.1 Social Media Networks: The term began to be used in 2005 and refers to web-based services that allow users to create a profile and specify a list of other users with whom they share connections. These networks also offer various features such as sharing, exchanging, and uploading texts, images, and videos (Aichner, Grünfelder, Maurer, & Jegeni, 2021).

4.2 The mental image: Ajwa defines it as "the final outcome of the subjective impressions that individuals or groups form towards a particular person, a specific system, a certain nation, a particular ethnicity, an establishment, an institution or an international organization, a certain profession, or anything else that can have an impact on human life. These impressions are formed through direct and indirect experiences, and are linked to individuals' emotions, attitudes, and beliefs. Regardless of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the information contained in the summary of these experiences, they represent a real reality for their owners" (Samari & Aiwaj , 2022).



4.3 Mental image of the institution: It refers to the meanings, attitudes, knowledge, and shared opinions between the audience and the institution resulting from organizational strategies, which are perceived and interpreted by others (Daoudi, 2022).

4.4 Higher education institutions: The education sector comprises independent institutions that focus on specific activities. Before delving into this, we first define the concept of an institution. An institution is a system of social factors (i.e., human-made and intangible) that exist externally to each individual and influence their behavior. It consists of rules, values, beliefs, and organizational possibilities, providing individuals with the cognitive, coordinating, evaluative, and informational foundations for behavior. (Samari & Aiwaj , 2022), It enables, directs, and motivates them to follow a certain behavior (Gräbner & Ghorbani, 2019).

4.5 Higher education: According to the official gazette and in accordance with Law 99-05 in Article 2, higher education is defined as: "Any form of training or research provided at the post-secondary level by higher education institutions accredited by the state." (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 1999).

5. The Importance of Communication for Higher Education Institutions:

In addition to the importance of communication in human life in terms of enabling participation, interaction, and the exchange of opinions, ideas, and information that enhance individuals' opportunities, it is considered the cornerstone upon which higher education institutions rely to effect change. It serves as the oxygen for these institutions that seek to achieve scientific and moral non-material goals. The significance of communication can be summarized in the following points:

5.1 It has the ability to connect all sections of the organization, as Murphy sees communication as fundamental to any successful organization.

5.2 It enables employees to prepare plans based on the reality of existing material and human resources, supported by accurate statistical studies. The process begins with diagnosing the problem, followed by searching for alternatives, evaluating each alternative, and concluding with the selection of the optimal alternative.

5.3 The effectiveness of control depends on the ease of communication and the clarity of its channels.

5.4 It boosts the morale of employees, enhancing their importance and role within the university, leading to improved performance.

5.5 It provides information about the surrounding conditions of the institution to its employees, along with clear explanations and divisions of decisions, effectively countering rumors (Aiwaj, 2020).

6. Motivations for Using Social Media:

The motivations for using social media networks vary and are numerous. Facebook is a prime



example of such networks that attract university students for various goals and reasons, including the following:

6.1 Accessibility: These platforms are easily accessible to everyone and are free to use.

6.2 Multimedia Options: They allow users to embed images and videos easily.

6.3 Experience Sharing: They enable users to share experiences, engage in discussions, and exchange advice in ways that transcend geographical boundaries.

6.4 Unfiltered Information: Users can access information that is not subject to censorship or revision.

6.5 Diverse Features: Social media offers multiple dimensions, including pages, groups, events, and community pages.

6.6 Mobile Connectivity: Users can connect via mobile devices and integrate various tools seamlessly.

6.7 Bridging Social Gaps: They help overcome social differences, age gaps, and gender disparities.

6.8 Combating Social Isolation: In an era where individualism prevails, social media can help mitigate feelings of isolation by fostering a sense of community and shared experience (Darbale & Haddad, 2021).

7. Types of Mental Image:

7.1 Mirror Image: This is the image through which the institution perceives itself.

7.2 Desired Image: This is the image that the institution wishes to create for itself in the minds of the public.

7.3 Ideal Image: This represents the best possible image that can be achieved when considering other institutions and their efforts to influence the public. It can also be referred to as the expected image.

7.4 Multiple Image: This occurs when individuals are exposed to different representatives of the institution. It is natural for this multiplicity not to last long; it may either evolve into a positive or negative image, or it may combine elements of both into a single image (Djabbari, 2021, pp. 288-289)

8. Importance of a Positive Image for the Institution:

8.1 Performance Positivity: A positive image for the institution necessarily means the satisfaction of the customer, client, or user with the institution, regardless of its nature, whether public, service-oriented, economic, or educational. It indicates that the institution has achieved its communication goals.

8.2 Sustainable Development: The institution's ability to maintain its positive image over time ensures sustainable development, especially when the mental image transforms into a stereotype. This enables the institution to maintain a positive performance trend. Many institutions have spent



substantial budgets to enhance their mental image, and higher education institutions are among those (Sardouk & Ziyaita , 2023)

9. The Mental Image Model and its Applicability for Managing the Image of Higher Education Institutions in Social Media:

This model addresses the concept of "Image" which refers to the impression or mental idea expressed through a photograph or drawing. Ultimately, it represents an individual's unique perception of a person, group, city, or specific topic. The formation of this idea or image results from the individual's interaction with their environment through various situations and experiences. Therefore, each person's idea or image may differ from others, as it is related to personal experiences (Mamdouh Mohamed Noor El-Din Mahmoud, 2022), The researcher Walter Lippmann was the first to use this term in his 2022 book *Public Opinion*, in which he discussed how individuals become accustomed to perceiving the material world with their minds. This view was shared by Katz and Brilly in their study in the 1930s, which addressed the 'Analysis of Cognitive Processes,' as well as Allport's study on 'Prejudice' in the 1950s (Majid Al-Saffar, 2006), The image of institutions, particularly the image of higher education institutions, is considered one of the most recent topics being discussed in recent times. It is considered a rich subject analyzed through the mental image management model, which is based on the main idea that the process of managing an institution's mental image follows the following stages:

9.1 Creating the Image begins when the institution is unknown. At this stage, the institution must work on creating a positive image for itself and maintaining it. This stage is difficult because most people are skeptical of what they do not know. Therefore, the organization needs a communication strategy in this phase to build its image, and it needs to enhance the capabilities of its staff, especially in public relations management, to produce messages that build a positive image for the organization (Baltah & Brigitte , 2022), Those in charge of these institutions are responsible for the quality of the experiences their audiences have, and the communication officers are responsible for the type of information published in the name of the institutions. It is their duty to protect the institution's reputation from any misleading information being circulated through traditional media, such as television, or new media, such as websites and social media networks.

9.2 Maintaining the Image: If the institution succeeds in creating a positive image of itself, it must maintain it. This process requires continuous communication with both the internal and external audiences. The institution must analyze internal and external feedback, and if the majority of these responses are negative, they directly threaten its reputation (Baltah & Brigitte , 2022), This leaves the institution with only one solution: to strengthen its communication links with its audience and correct any misconceptions about it. Despite the difficulty of the matter, the idea of utilizing media



or social media platforms is effective in directing the information it wants to convey to them (Mamdouh Mohamed Noor El-Din Mahmoud, 2022).

9.3 During a Crisis: This occurs when the institution faces a crisis, which could be internal, affecting the institution itself, or external, impacting its environment and operations. However, not all institutions will necessarily experience a crisis in its broad sense. The idea of a decline in the image depends on the circumstances. In this stage, the institution must develop a communication plan to restore its image by adopting more innovative communication methods, such as showcasing its social activities on social media and engaging in humanitarian issues (Baltah & Brigitte , 2022). An institution that has not started managing its image through social media will be judged as declining and fading, as these networks have become official communication tools used to promote everything, including images. Institutions may even use them to target their competitors. The communication officers within the institution must be aware of the presence of competitors on these networks.

In addition, the power of these platforms qualifies them to replace traditional media. Television relies on the principle of repetition to influence audiences, while these networks, combining several features such as interactive television, represent a strength that communication officers must leverage before it works against them.

10. Methodological Procedures for the Field Study:

10.1 Study Fields:

10.1.1 Spatial Field: This refers to the spatial framework in which the study was conducted, represented by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kasdi Merbah University in Ouargla. The faculty has a Facebook page with 21,000 likes and 26,000 followers. It is an active page that publishes general college news, event schedules like exam dates and timetables, as well as organizational matters related to teaching. The page also shares a variety of topics, making it a scientific platform for both students and professors. It is one of the official pages of the university, launched during the recent global crisis, in response to the circumstances at that time.

10.1.2 Temporal Field: This refers to the period during which the researcher communicated with the respondents via the survey questionnaire and received their responses. This phase lasted for four intermittent months, starting in May, which is the end of the academic year for students, and responses were completed by the first of August. The delay was due to the researcher's personal commitments and the students' break, which tends to encourage them to disengage from academic activities during that period.

10.2 Human Field: This refers to the human scope targeted by the study. In this research, the human field consists of students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ouargla



University who follow the faculty's Facebook page.

10.3 Study Method: The study belongs to the category of descriptive and analytical research, aiming to identify the role of social media, specifically Facebook, in improving the mental image of higher education institutions. The survey method, both descriptive and analytical, was used by conducting a survey on students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kasdi Merbah University who follow the faculty's Facebook page. This method was selected to provide an appropriate description of how Facebook is used to enhance the faculty's mental image among its students.

The choice of this approach is due to the large size of the study population, requiring sufficient data collection.

10.4 Research Population and Sample: The population of this study consists of all Algerian students who use Facebook. Given the large size of this population, the researcher chose to focus on students from the University of Ouargla, specifically those following the Facebook page of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, which has approximately 26,000 followers. Due to this vast number, the researcher opted for a sample survey approach to reach the required sample size.

Since probabilistic samples are not suitable for virtual communities with flexible and changing characteristics, the researcher used one of the non-probabilistic sampling methods suitable for this type of community. The purposive sample was considered the best option to match the nature of the community and achieve the study's objectives by obtaining reliable scientific indicators. A purposive sample of 75 individuals was selected from the page's followers, reached through their continuous interaction with the page's posts.

10.5 Data Sources:

10.5.1 Observation: The primary reason that motivated the researcher to choose this topic was observation. The researcher noticed the activity and constant interaction of the page with its followers over a period of time. Given the study's focus, the researcher selected the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Facebook page, rather than other university pages. As a second step, the page was reviewed multiple times to identify the type of content being posted or emphasized and to observe followers who regularly engage with the posts, aiming to determine their likelihood of responding to the study.

10.5.2 Online Questionnaire: An online questionnaire was used as a data collection tool because it suited the nature of the study, which targets virtual audiences. Additionally, it allowed for quick access to the sample. The questionnaire was distributed to 80 individuals, and 75 valid responses were obtained.

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A valid questionnaire, noting that 5 responses were discarded due to incomplete answers to the questions.

As for the justification for choosing this tool over other methods, the researcher believes it is the most suitable for the topic of examining the image of an institution on a virtual network, as well as the nature of its audience, who are users of this network. Therefore, it is logical and very natural to rely on it.

11. Analysis of Results and Discussion

11.1 First Axis: The Value and Importance of Communication from the Perspective of Students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

11.1.1 Students' Personal Data:

Table 1: Shows the personal data of the respondents

Options variables	Male		Female		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Gender	22	29.33%	53	70.66%	75	100%
Age	18 -25		26-35		36-45	
	More than 45		Total			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
	44	58.66%	20	26.66%	9	12%
					2	2.66%
					75	100%
Academic level	Bachelor's		Master's		Doctorate	
	Total					
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
	34	45.33%	35	46.66%	6	8%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The first table pertains to the sociodemographic data of the respondents, which highlights the characteristics of the study sample of students. It is observed that the presence of females ranks first with a frequency of (53) respondents, accounting for 70.66%, while males rank second with a frequency of (22) respondents, representing 29.33%.

This disparity can be attributed to students' preferences in choosing academic disciplines. It is well-known that the field of Humanities and Social Sciences attracts a higher percentage of females compared to males, who, in turn, tend to prefer scientific and technical fields at a higher rate than Humanities. However, this does not negate the fact that some males are pursuing degrees in Humanities, as there is a notable percentage of them studying various



specializations in this field.

Table 2: Shows the preferred communication methods of students with the college

Communication Method	Frequency	Percentage %
Direct Meeting	17	22.66%
Online	07	9.33%
Both	57	68%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data in the table show that the majority of respondents, represented by 57 individuals out of the total sample size, which equals 68%, support two methods of communication with their faculty. They prefer, in addition to direct meetings with the student affairs administrators and professors to solve problems and exchange information, also communicating via the internet through the page provided by the faculty administration to serve their academic interests. Meanwhile, another group of 17 respondents prefers direct communication with the management of their faculty, accounting for 22.66%. The remaining individuals prefer the internet as a method of communication, indicating that the first choice for the respondents is due to a considerable number of students being knowledgeable about how to use technology and benefit from it in the academic field.

Table 3: Shows the most commonly used social media platforms by students

The most commonly used social media platforms by students	Frequency	Percentage %
Facebook	42	56%
LinkedIn	0	0%
Telegram	5	6.66%
WhatsApp	7	9.33%
YouTube	3	4%
Snapchat	0	0%
Instagram	15	20%
Twitter	9	0%
Others	3	4%

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Total	75	100%
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Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

It is clear from the table data that a large sample of respondents (42) prefer the Facebook network over other platforms, accounting for 56%, while some respondents (15) prefer Instagram, representing 20%. A portion of the respondents (7) chose WhatsApp, accounting for 9.33%, and some prefer Telegram (5) at a rate of 6.66%. The remaining respondents equally chose YouTube and other networks at 4%. It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents use Facebook to keep up with all the news, activities, and events that their faculty publishes. Instagram comes in second, which is justified as many students and doctoral researchers are increasingly turning to study influencer pages that create events, whether for product marketing and targeting consumers or for promoting trivial content. These topics have recently attracted the attention of researchers.

Table 4: Shows the duration of students' presence on the Facebook network

Duration	Frequency	Percentage %
Less than 5 years	60	80%
More than 5 years	15	20%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data from the table shows that a large group of respondents (60) started using Facebook five years ago or less, accounting for 80%. Meanwhile, the remaining group (15) has had their accounts for more than five years, representing 20%. This high percentage of those who have had their accounts for less than five years can be attributed to the ages and academic levels of the students, as Master's and Bachelor's students dominate the sample, making them more likely to fit into these categories. Furthermore, the lower representation of doctoral researchers also explains the smaller percentage of those who have been using Facebook for more than five years.

Table 5: Shows the number of accounts students have on Facebook

Number of accounts students have	Frequency	Percentage %
One account	49	65.33%
Two accounts	21	28%
More than three accounts	5	6.66%
Total	75	100%



Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data from the table indicate that a large percentage of respondents (49) have one account on Facebook, representing 65.33%. Meanwhile, another percentage (21) has two accounts, accounting for 28%. The remaining respondents from the total sample (5) have more than three accounts on Facebook. The researcher attributes this to their longer presence on the platform compared to others. Additionally, it is suggested that this phenomenon is linked to individuals using pseudonyms, which is more common among female respondents.

Table 6: Shows the estimated duration of use

Estimated Duration of Use	Frequency	Percentage %
Daily and Regularly	44	58.66%
Intermittently	31	41.33%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data in the table shows that a considerable number of respondents (44) use their Facebook accounts on a daily and regular basis, accounting for 58.66%. Meanwhile, the remaining respondents (31) use their accounts intermittently, representing 41.33%. This is a natural and expected situation, given the abundance of networks and the diversity of content that attracts users. It is possible that some of the group using their accounts less consistently are the same students who continue their lessons online through the platforms established by the ministry during the years of the global crisis.

11.2 Motivations for Students' Use of Facebook

Among a series of four proposals, each student was asked to identify the main reasons that lead them to use Facebook as part of their communication practices. The relative distribution of the choices is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Shows the motivations for students' use of Facebook

Motivations for Use	Frequency	Percentage %
Ease of access and free of charge	37	49.33%
Speed and immediacy	8	10.66%
Diverse content	29	38.66%
Elimination of social differences	1	1.33%
Total	75	100%

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Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

It is evident from the data presented in the table that Facebook attracts a moderate number of the total sample (37) due to its characteristics, primarily its ease of access and free usage, accounting for 49.33%. Meanwhile, a significant portion of the sample (29) is drawn to the diverse content, representing 38.66%. Another group (8) uses it for its speed and immediacy, distinguishing it from other applications, which accounts for 10.66%. Additionally, one individual selected Facebook as a means to eliminate social, geographical, and temporal disparities, representing 1.33%.

From this, we can categorize these motivations into two types: external motivations related to the technical characteristics of the device (speed and immediacy, diverse content) and social and cultural dimensions (discourses on ease of access and free usage, and the elimination of social disparities). This has contributed to forming convictions among users (internal motivations), as discussed by Philippe Breton and Serge Proulx (Breton & Proulx , 2006).

All these motivations are considered an important part of the communication strategies provided by universities to interact with students, faculty, and administrators, serving as a tool to enhance their mental image among students (the customers) and satisfy them. The services offered contribute to the university's ability to maintain a positive image, ensuring sustainable development, especially when the mental image transforms into a stereotypical perception that enables the institution to sustain a positive performance trajectory. Many institutions have allocated substantial budgets to improve their mental image, and higher education institutions are among those entities (Sardouk & Ziyaita , 2023).

Table 8: Shows the Purpose of Students' Use of Facebook

Purpose of Using Facebook	Frequency	Percentage %
Making friends and forming friendships	15	20%
Gaining information	40	53.33%
Knowing the news	13	17.33%
Communicating with teachers	1	1.33%
Entertainment and amusement	6	8%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The results of the table indicate that 40 respondents aim to use Facebook specifically, rather than other networks, to obtain information, accounting for 53.33%. However, some respondents (15)



primarily use Facebook for socializing and making friendships, representing 20%. Facebook is viewed as a platform for building and establishing connections in various fields, particularly in the academic realm. Following this, there are 13 respondents who rely on Facebook to keep up with news, which represents 17.33%. Thanks to its quick access features, Facebook serves as an important means for disseminating various events and news related to academic activities. Meanwhile, a minority (6) use it for entertainment purposes, making up 8%, and finally, one remaining respondent uses Facebook to communicate with professors, accounting for 1.33%. Despite the fact that Facebook is not a professional tool for communication due to privacy controls, some students use it to connect with one another or even with academic staff.

Table 9: Shows the content that students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences prefer to see on the college's Facebook page

Contents Preferred by Students to be Present	Frequency	Percentage %
Links to Facilitate Access to Courses	38	50.66%
Links Related to Exam Dates and Schedules	17	22.66%
Referral Links to View Semester Grades	7	9.33%
Announcements for Various Pedagogical Competitions	8	10.66%
Preference for Privacy and Not Disclosing Student Information	5	6.66%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data from the table indicate that the majority of respondents (38) follow their college's Facebook page to facilitate their academic journey, accounting for 50.66%. They prefer having links that make it easier for them to access the course materials they are studying remotely, especially since many new students do not fully understand how the site works, in addition to the issues of logging in and forgetting passwords that often arise for the professors and experts overseeing the platform. Therefore, the presence of these links alleviates a lot of burdens from the students. Following this, 17 students chose to have links directing them to exam schedules and dates, representing 22.66%. Meanwhile, some students (8) follow the page to keep up with the latest news regarding employment competitions, accounting for 10.66%. It is likely that these students are on the verge of graduation, as well as those in the doctoral research phase. After them, 7 students follow

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the page to stay informed about results or any updates regarding exams, representing 9.33%. Finally, the remaining researchers (5) prefer not to disclose students' information and results and to maintain their privacy, accounting for 6.66%.

Table 10: Shows the contribution made by the faculty to students by joining Facebook through its page

The contribution made by the faculty's Facebook page to the students	Frequency	Percentage %
Learning and communicating with professors	15	20%
Discussion of what has been shared on distance learning platforms	06	8%
Establishing a network of relationships with other students	05	6.66%
Following up on the activities and events organized by the faculty	48	64%
Exploring talents through articles, photos videos, and recordings	1	1.33%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data in the table shows that the majority of the sample members (48) believe that the college has significantly contributed through its Facebook page in communicating activities, events, and various happenings organized by the college, with a percentage of 64%. Meanwhile, some others (15) view it as a link between them and their professors, accounting for 20%. To a lesser degree, others (6) believe it encourages them to discuss remote learning conditions, with a percentage of 8%. Following that, 5% of the students chose that it helped them to connect with other students and build a network, accounting for 6.66%. One last respondent believes that it helped him discover talents, whether among students or researchers who have managed to publish in prestigious journals or various competitions organized by the college, such as the Golden Microphone and other contests in which college students participate.

These results align with what a group of researchers have noted regarding the image of the university institution. They emphasized that if a university aims to improve its image, it must consider the needs of its users (students) through the websites and social media platforms it



promotes. This should not solely rely on the number of views but, more importantly, on the ability of social networks to build trust in the published information. This approach helps establish an appropriate connection between the online environment and the university's official website.

Table 11: Shows the impact of the absence or weakness of communication on the college's image among students

The absence or weakness of communication affects the image of the faculty among students	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	43	57.33%
Somewhat	31	41.33%
No	01	1.33%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

We observe from the data in the table that most researchers (43) believe that the absence or weakness of communication between the faculty and students affects its image in their minds by 57.33%. This is followed by 31 researchers who think it affects somewhat, with a percentage of 41.33%. Finally, there is one respondent who does not support this idea, with a percentage of 1.33%. We note from all of this that the majority of students have a clear awareness of the value of communication between them and their faculty, and that any poor activation or usage could undermine that image.

Table 12: Shows the extent to which the faculty's page facilitates access to information relevant to students

The extent to which the faculty's page facilitates access to information relevant to students	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	50	66.66%
Somewhat	22	29.33%
No	03	4%

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Total	75	100%
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Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data from the table indicate that the majority of respondents (50) believe that the faculty has facilitated students' access to information relevant to them, ranking it as the top choice among students with a percentage of 66.66%. Meanwhile, some others (22) think it has somewhat facilitated access, with a percentage of 29.33%. The remaining respondents (3) believe that it has not provided any facilitation, with a percentage of 4%. The facilitation referred to here involves the documents that students should extract directly, for which the faculty administration publishes links for electronic retrieval.

11.3 The Type of Mental Image Formed by Students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla about Their Faculty

Table 13: Shows that the availability of all information relevant to students on the faculty's page reflects a good image of it

The availability of student information reflects a good image of it	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	45	60%
Somewhat	24	32%
No	06	8%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The data from the table indicate that the majority of respondents (45) believe that the availability of student information reflects a good image of it, with a percentage of 60%. This is followed by 24 respondents who think it somewhat affects the quality of the image, with a percentage of 32%. Finally, there are 6 respondents who believe it does not affect the faculty's image at all, with a percentage of 8%.

Table 14: Shows that the lack of availability of information relevant to students on the faculty's page reflects a poor image of it



The lack of availability of student information reflects a poor image of it	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	21	28%
Somewhat	32	42.66%
No	19	25.66%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The respondents (32) believe that the lack of availability of information on the faculty's page affects the faculty's image somewhat, with a percentage of 42.66%. This is followed by students (21) who agree that it affects the faculty's image with a percentage of 28%. Finally, there are students (19) who believe that the absence of information does not affect the faculty's image at all, with a percentage of 8%.

The latest data indicate that the faculty's image is affected by any disruption in communication between it and the students, as well as its various academic audiences. In reality, the faculty's image is composed of several internal and external elements, and effectively managing all of them enhances its image among students.

Table 15: Shows the impact of enabling the replies and comments feature on building effective communication between the faculty and students

Enabling replies and comments reflects a constructive and equitable communication between the faculty and students	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	47	62.66%
Somewhat	25	33.33%
No	03	4%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

We observe from the data in the table that the majority of respondents from the sample (47) chose that enabling communication, replies, and comments through the faculty's Facebook page reflects

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constructive and equitable communication between the faculty and students, with a percentage of 62.66%. Following them are the respondents (25) who believe it has an effect, but somewhat, with a percentage of 33.33%. Finally, there are the respondents (3) who think that enabling the replies and comments feature does not affect the effectiveness of communication, with a percentage of 4%. This illustrates the importance of communication at various levels for higher education institutions in the current era, as building and activating it requires attention to even the smallest details in order to garner positive feedback regarding it.

Table 16: Shows that disabling the replies and comments feature indicates weak and fragile communication between the faculty and students

Disabling replies and comments reflects weak communication and a fragile bond between the faculty and students	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	45	60%
Somewhat	22	29.33%
No	08	10.66%
Total	75	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the Excel program

The results of the table show that the majority of students (45) agreed that disabling replies and comments indicates weak communication and a fragile bond, with a percentage of 60%. To a lesser extent, there are students (22) who believe it has somewhat of an effect, with a percentage of 29.33%. Finally, there are students (8) who think it has no effect at all, with a percentage of 10.66%. This serves as another piece of evidence for the importance of electronic communication through social media in building the image of the university institution.

12. General Results of the Study:

❖ The results of the study indicated that higher education institutions, like other public institutions, have become increasingly attentive to communication in their relationships with their audiences, including students, academics, and various stakeholders. Several departments have been established to enhance communication with them. After the recent crisis, a platform for distance



learning was created, in addition to the university's open website, which serves students in retrieving the various documents they need for their university registrations and facilitating their studies. Moreover, a notification feature has been implemented to inform them about various national and international scientific events, as well as to announce the available scholarships. Additionally, the deans of the faculties have tasked their vice deans with opening pages on more than one social network, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, to connect with students and facilitate the dissemination and accessibility of various news and information. The page of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is a model of this approach.

Answer to the First Question: What is the significance of communication among students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences?

The study reached an important conclusion: the presence of female respondents dominated that of male respondents, with a percentage of 70.66% for females compared to 29.33% for males. This was interpreted based on the interests and preferences of the students regarding their choice of majors, where females tend to choose the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences more than males. The study also indicated that the surveyed students support the idea of using social networks as a means of communication, as the majority chose two methods of communication with the faculty, accounting for 68%. This value reflects the importance of communication in all its direct and electronic forms for students in the current era, and their openness to adopting new communication methods and utilizing media and applications to serve education.

Facebook emerged as the most widely used network among the student audience, with a usage rate of 56%, justifying the faculty's presence on the platform as appropriate and serving its goals of connecting with students and strengthening communication ties, which in turn aims to improve its image among them. The results also revealed that the majority of respondents have had a Facebook account for less than five years, accounting for 60%, while a slight percentage have had theirs for a longer duration. This reinforces the idea of activating communication that higher education institutions are striving for. Most students possess a single account, as indicated by a rate of 65.33%. We have reached an era where having at least one account on social networks is considered essential for managing various needs.

For doctoral students, their presence on various social networks is vital for staying updated on the latest news regarding publications, conferences, and national and international scientific gatherings. Although announcements are made on university websites, few people will browse all the sites daily, as Facebook provides easier access and use—one click allows them to see the latest updates,



compared to multiple clicks that require time and mental effort on university sites. Regarding usage frequency, it is balanced among students. Thus, the study concluded, in response to the first question, that communication is crucial for the student body in managing their academic affairs and conducting their studies, particularly for researchers in the doctoral stage, which the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla aims to leverage to the fullest extent.

Answer to the Second Question: What are the motivations of students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla for using Facebook?

The study concluded that the majority of respondents among the students identified the primary motivations for using Facebook over other networks as its ease of access and its free nature, accounting for 49.33%. Additionally, its diverse content was cited by 29% of respondents, as Facebook serves as a varied space that includes individuals, institutions, and governments, driven by the immense number of people present on the platform, which exceeded two billion users in 2021 alone. Its features, such as being free, attracted this vast number of users, creating an environment that hosts various opinions.

In return, students aim to use Facebook to obtain information, with a rate of 53.33%. This reinforces the idea that students' presence on this network is not only necessary but also inevitable, as it provides services that allow for faster information access and direction compared to other networks. In this context, students expressed a preference for having links on the faculty's page that direct them straight to lessons or to the remote learning site, with a preference rate of 50.66%. This choice serves as a solution to the access issues that students face when directly using the website.

Furthermore, students also indicated that they prefer coverage of scientific activities and events organized by the faculty, with a rate of 64%. Therefore, it can be said that the motivations behind the interest of students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Facebook include the presence of the faculty's page on the network and the provision of diverse scientific services that save them time and effort in terms of transferring necessary information and communicating regarding their various affairs. The page also acts as a third eye for them, keeping them informed about everything happening in the faculty and sharing their interests while recommending others.

Answer to the Third Question: What is the type of mental image formed by students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Ouargla about their college?

Through this study, we found that communication plays a significant role in improving or detracting from the overall image of the college in the minds of its academic audience. It is the core responsible for its identity internally and its reputation externally. Thanks to the college's presence and proximity to students on this network, as well as through other means, it has been able to enhance its communication with students more than before by opening the floor for expression and feedback.



Respondents indicated that, in their opinion, communication significantly impacts their perception of their college, with a rate of 57.33%. This percentage reflects students' awareness of these elements. We also received positive responses regarding the college's awareness of all matters concerning students through its page, with a rate of 50%. These efforts made a positive difference for them, with a rate of 45%. It was noted that the more there is communication and interaction between those in charge of student affairs, the more improvement occurs on several levels.

Thus, we conclude that the college's image in the minds of its students and academic audience is continuously improving and developing, thanks to the efforts of those who ventured into Facebook to understand and discover the preferences of their students in order to implement improvement methods. Today, the college has reached a balanced level due to the combined efforts on various fronts, which, if maintained, could lead to further advancement.

13. CONCLUSION:

After conducting in-depth research on the subject and carrying out a descriptive analytical study aimed at understanding the role of social networks, represented by Facebook, in improving the mental image of higher education institutions, we focused our study on the students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Qasdi Merbah University in Ouargla.

The results obtained indicate that communication through the social network contributes to enhancing the mental image of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, relying on three factors.

The first factor is represented by the activities undertaken by the faculty, such as providing content that the students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences prefer to find on the faculty's Facebook page (links facilitating access to lessons, links related to exam schedules, news about semester grades, announcements about competitions, etc.), which has contributed to improving students' perceptions of the faculty.

The second factor lies in the added value that the faculty has provided through Facebook, such as learning and communicating with professors, discussing topics related to distance learning, networking among students, and keeping up with the activities and events organized by the faculty. This has made Facebook a communication tool that allows students to provide feedback by sharing ideas and exchanging information and experiences. In other words, Facebook contributes to the collective improvement of the mental image of the faculty.



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