

*The image of Algerian Women on Facebook: From Stereotypes to
Cynicism*

A Semiological Study of the Image of Women on Facebook Pages

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Abstract:

This study aims at identifying the image of Algerian women and their representations on social networking sites, specifically Facebook, among users. Is the image of women drawn by society in social reality different from those that circulate on social networking sites? Social networking sites have formed a new world for Algerian women in terms of their presence and interaction. Has this contributed to presenting a different image from the stereotypes that prevailed in our society? To answer this question, we have chosen a set of pictures circulating on Facebook pages. The audience interacted with them, using the semiological analysis of the image.

Key words: Algerian women, Facebook, image ,the image of women, social networking sites, Stereotypes.

المخلص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على صورة المرأة الجزائرية وتمثيلها على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي وتحديدًا فيسبوك بين المستخدمين. هل صورة المرأة التي يرسمها المجتمع في الواقع الاجتماعي مختلفة عن تلك التي يتم تداولها على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي؟ شكلت مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي عالماً جديداً للمرأة الجزائرية من حيث حضورها وتفاعلها. هل ساهم ذلك في تقديم صورة مختلفة عن الصور النمطية السائدة في مجتمعنا؟ للإجابة على هذا السؤال، اخترنا مجموعة من الصور المتداولة على صفحات الفيسبوك، والتي تفاعل الجمهور معهم باستخدام التحليل السيميولوجي للصورة، وتوصلنا إلى أن تمثيلات المرأة الجزائرية عبر مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي تغلب عليها الصور النمطية والتي تعكس النظرة التقليدية لأدوارها في المجتمع .
الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة الجزائرية; فيسبوك ; صورة ; صورة المرأة ; مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي ; الصور النمطية.

INTRODUCTION:

The image, with its different uses and types in the mass media and new media, has become one of the most important pillars of the media work because of its persuasive and influential advantages for the recipient to achieve success and spread, so we cannot imagine the existence of any activity that transfers and exchanges information without a strong and decisive presence of the image, especially in the era of digital communication. This is through social media platforms, specifically Facebook, as the world of the digital image has not only dominated our contemporary lives but it has also directed our attitudes towards various current issues.

Perhaps the image in its many forms in which we express our perceptions, feelings and representations of the identity of women and their behaviors, which many await because of their great impact on the minds of the recipients and the connotations and symbols they carry, which reflected opinions about the reality of women and the changes that the media contributed to through the content they provide in changing the stereotypes, demands and aspirations that women await from the virtual space, the content, participation, interaction and freedom of expression.

From this standpoint, our study comes to semiologically analyze models of images, and how iconic elements were used to convey meanings and symbols. This study is an attempt to address the following research question:

What are the connotations conveyed by the pictures of Algerian women on Facebook?

This research question highlights the following sub-questions:

- What are the meanings and connotations of these pictures?
- How are the various iconic and semantic elements used to highlight the image of Algerian women?
- What are the dimensions, messages and symbols used in the images of women?

2 - Defining the concepts

Image:

Language: It is stated in the Cultural Encyclopedia that the image in the language indicates the meaning of the reality of a thing, its appearance, as well as the meaning of the attribute of a thing.

It is said that the image of the action is so and so or any form and the image of the matter as well as its attribute, and the image corresponds to “**Image**” in French, which is a Latin word derived from the word “**Imago**” which means an emotional and subjective image, while the word “**Soura**” in Arabic corresponds to a drawing of a mental perception, a reflexive image (person), impressionism Mentalism. (Cultural Encyclopedia).

Idiomatically:

The image as an expression of the mental representation of the sensory experience or its repetition, and that within the field of constructivism in psychology, the image was considered one of the three sub-components of consciousness or feeling, and the other two components were sensations and emotions (or emotions), and the image was treated in the context of this use as a mental representation of a previous sensory experience, and this representation is like another version of this experience. (Shaker, 2005, p. 09)

Procedural concept:

The pictures that we covered in the study are still photographs and drawings, and specifically some pictures of Algerian women in the form of a picture, a caricature or a drawing, which were published on a number of Facebook pages and were greatly admired and interacted on these pages.

Woman Image**1– IdiomaticDefinition**

According to the Arab Cultural Center, the image of women is defined as: the image formed by situations that contradict the description with the Arab woman and her intellectual and social role, in addition to the extent of her interaction with members of her society. (Khaled, 2008, p. 5).

2– ProceduralDefinition

A procedural definition of the image of the woman in our study can be given as follows: The image of the woman: the image is the mental construction that takes place at the level of symbolism, subjectivity and imagination, which is related to the reality of man in the sense that the person is aware of the surrounding world through the presence of things themselves in the mind, so he is aware of him in an indirect way, where things are found through the images of these images are metaphorical entities but framed Our lives and our behavior in society

As for the image of the woman, the subject of our study, we mean how this image appears on Facebook pages and the indications and suggestions it bears.

3– Significance of the Study

Our study is of great importance due to the unprecedented spread and presence of digital communication in our daily life, and the use of the method of semiological analysis in communication research has an important role in getting closer to this world that is getting more complex day by day, especially by employing the image of women. Through social networking sites and their implications, does it reflect an image that is in line with society's view of women, or does it carry new connotations of the image of women, especially with the new changes and transformations and the development of social media and their uses, which have become an open space for discussion, dialogue, expression of needs and fulfillment of gratifications.

4– ResearchMethodology and Research Tools

In our study, we relied on the method of semiological analysis because it is the most appropriate in analyzing images, which JULIA KRISTEVA defines as a set of techniques and steps used to research the formulas of completeness of the semantic ring in a specific format, and it is the scientific method that reveals, analyzes, criticizes, the meaning in a system Ma, and criticizes the elements of this meaning and its laws "(FayzaYakhlef, 2012, p. 77).

5– Research Tools

The sample is defined as "a part of the society in which the study is conducted, and the researcher chooses it according to special rules in order to properly represent the

community” (Rahim YunusKru Al-Azzawi, 2008, p. 161). We relied on purposeful sample, and this is due to its good knowledge of the research community and its important elements that represent it properly (Ben Morsli, 2003, p. 197), and we have selected some of the pictures published on the most popular Facebook pages, visited and chosen by the Algerian public.

Images and their Analysis

First picture: A caricature of a woman pulling a man, written in the commentary, Soon, in the Algerian streets.



First Reading

Descriptive Level

This picture was published on several Facebook pages in Algeria and is widely circulated and it is a cartoon, where in the center of the picture appears a girl wearing a white dress, and she is holding a man wearing a suit pulling him from his collar, as it appears on the guise of the man to surrender while the woman raises her hand to express About victory, in addition to the presence of the phrase “I hunted one ” while the title at the top of the graphic is' soon in the Algerian streets.

Designation Level

Bearer: This photo was published on several Facebook pages and it was repeated on more than one page, account, and groups.

Dimensions: PIXEL (595 x 595)

Frame: a rectangular frame surrounds the image in a vertical direction that is open on all four sides.

Framing: The subject of the drawing is a young woman or girl wearing a white wedding dress and pulling a man wearing a suit (groom) and by focusing on the faces, we notice the man appears forced and not satisfied, but the girl raises the joy of victory by raising her hand.

Viewing angle and Target Selection: position the drawing with a corresponding (normal) vertical viewing angle so that all objects appear directly opposite the viewer's eye.

Colors

Gray was used in drawing and black and white were used, and the two characters were clearly shown through the dress worn by the girl, which is a wedding dress and the black suit worn by the man.

Iconic Message

This message expresses the idea of spinsterhood of the girl and the acquisition of a man, even by using force, which was embodied in the withdrawal of the man. It is a sarcastic method that embodies a stereotype of the idea of marriage for women.

Linguistic Message

The linguistic message in this picture is represented in the top heading, which is a sentence written in Arabic: "Soon in the Algerian streets, and it contains a message to arouse the viewer of what will come in the picture and the commentary in the vernacular language," Said Wahid "and it included a clear mockery of the idea of marriage and the connection of the Algerian girl and the woman.

Second Reading**Implication Level**

This image expresses a traditional social perception of the idea of marriage today in Algeria, and the idea that there are more women than men, and this is what drives women to feel victorious when getting married and having a man. It is a social stereotype that spreads among members of society, especially young people who consider themselves a prize for girls regardless of their cultural, economic, and social level, and looking at the details of this cartoon, they feel the presence of symbolic connotations and values, the most important of which are as follows:

1 - This girl, whose image is represented by the image of young Algerian women who dream of marriage and engagement, as if she is looking for a "man". It is a symbolic indication of the high rates of spinsterhood and figures about the number of women that outnumber men. It is incorrect information but popular as if it is a reality among young men.

2- It also bears an indication of the reverence of the man, while the value of the woman is diminished in the context of a marriage relationship. Both parties are supposed to be equal in order to build a family. Marriage carries very important religious and social values that cannot be reduced to the idea of "hunting" and recklessness and ridicule the idea of marriage in our society.

3 - The association of marriage in society with social preconceptions that put the idea of marriage for Algerian women as if it were hunting, and thus it strikes the true values and legitimate goals of marriage, including the formation of a family. It also makes the man a goal that is hunted by girls, which is the significance of the mocking image of women on the one hand and the value of marriage in the society on the other hand.

The Second Picture

A Picture of a Veiled Woman (Al-Ajjar) Wrapping up (traditional haik)



First reading

Descriptive Level

This photo was posted on several Facebook pages on March 9, 2019, including (fibradiAlegria, the traditions of my country, the girls of Manayel Tower and several other pages and even via Twitter...) and it is a photograph of a woman wearing the traditional Algerian haik with a veil. Embroidered, she took part in a rally for the popular movement in Algeria on International Women's Day, March 8th.

Designation Level

A - **The Bearer:** This photo was published on Facebook pages on March 8, 2019 in Algeria.

B - **The frame:** the picture is surrounded by an open frame on all four sides.

Dimensions: PIXEL (259 x 194)

C - **Frame:** the subject of the photo is an Algerian woman, who appears to be in her twenties, as this image centers on the frame through a zoomed shot, which fills most of the frame.

D - **Viewing angle and target selection:** This image was taken with a corresponding (normal) vertical viewing angle, as all the elements of this image appear directly opposite the viewer's eye.

However, the background image appeared blurry for people who participated in the march. The image of the prominent woman was very clearly met by the method of the zoom technique (le zoming).

Iconic Message:

This picture shows an Algerian woman in her twenties or 30s wearing a traditional Algerian dress, a white haik.

However, we notice the presence of a black veil covering this woman's head, indicating that she is veiled under a haik, as she wears a white embroidered veil.

Linguistic Message:

There is no phrase or linguistic indication in the image.

Second Reading:

Implication Level

This image expresses the departure of Algerian women in peaceful marches and their contribution to the side of the men in demanding political change as they have

always been in their struggle and militancy to achieve independence and have never given up this role.

The symbolic connotations and the values that this image bears can be summarized as follows:

- The exit of this woman in her twenties or thirty years to participate in the people's movement rallies in Algeria contains a clear message that Algerian women have always been and continue to support men for change, especially on the occasion of International Women's Day,

which carries in itself deep connotations related to the status of women and the demand for their rights.

This woman, wearing a hayek, symbolizes her authenticity, her adherence to her values, her pride in her belonging and her cultural heritage, which forms part of her personality and identity.

- The image carries connotations related to our cultural heritage and our identity as Algerians. Hayek has always been a symbol of Algerian women and an important element of our identity, and the image bears strong indications of the great role of women that they played through the stages of struggle and militancy against colonialism and is still continuing today

Third image: A Satirical Caricature



First Reading

Descriptive Level

I published this picture on one of the Algerian Facebook pages, which is a satirical cartoon, where a meeting appears between a woman and a man they met on Facebook, the woman appears ugly

and puts a large amount of cosmetics, and yet he did not hide the extent of her ugliness and the man was astonished and screaming, and it seemed that he did not recognize her until she spoke She knew herself by commenting the books, "I am Lily, we are from Facebook, oh, you know me."

Designation Level

Bearer: This photo was published on several Facebook pages, but in fact it is a satirical cartoon published on social networking sites Twitter and Facebook and through Egyptian pages with an Egyptian comment. I took the same cartoon image and changed the comment to the Algerian dialect, and it is now a picture circulated on Facebook pages in Algeria.

The Frame: An open square frame surrounds the picture on all four sides.

Dimensions: PIXEL (660 X 720)

Framing: subject of the photo, virtual dating via Facebook between genders and using wrong personal information regarding photo and age

Angle and Target Selection: All the elements of this drawn image appear against the viewer's eye, with a clear background to show the location (public park).

Shapes: they appeared in the background image as an indication of the location.

Iconic Message

This message expresses the virtual relationships on social media between young people and the manipulation and deception between the two parties about information and personal data and falsification of reality, and in this picture the woman is the one who deceives the man and when they meet on reality, he is surprised at her hideous and frightening appearance, contrary to what he imagined.

The linguistic Message

The picture bore a banner that read "I am Lily," and it concerns the name and identity of the fake woman on Facebook, indicating that the name does not apply to the shape of the woman and also to the man's perception of her true form during their virtual acquaintance.

Second Reading

Implication Level

Using wrong information and in this cartoon, the woman is the one who manipulated the man. The symbolic and value connotations that this image carries can be summarized as follows:

1 - This girl, which is represented by the image of young Algerian women who resort to the virtual space, specifically social networking sites, with the aim of getting acquainted with free from censorship by using false information about their names and shapes, i.e. false identities, which is common on social networking sites and it applies to both men and women, not just women.

2 - It also carries an indication of the reverence of the man, while the value of the woman is diminished in the context of a marriage relationship. Both parties are supposed to be equal in order to build a family. Marriage carries very important religious and social values that cannot be reduced to the idea of "hunting" and recklessness and ridicule of the idea of marriage in our society.

4 - The association of marriage in society with social preconceptions that put the idea of marriage for Algerian women as if it were hunting, and thus it strikes the true values and legitimate goals of marriage, including the formation of a family. It also makes the man a goal that is hunted by girls, which is the significance of the mocking image of the woman on the one hand and the value of marriage in the community on the other hand.

Fourth Image: An image



First Reading

Descriptive Level

I posted this photo on a Facebook page in Algeria. It is a cartoon showing a woman sitting in the kitchen.

Designation Level

Pregnant: This photo was published on several Facebook pages in Algeria

Dimensions: PIXEL (544 X355)

Frame: A rectangular frame surrounds the picture, open on all four sides

Framing: Photo subject: A woman sitting in the kitchen while she is working at a computer and is compared to her eating above the cook while it is burning

Angle of View and Target Selection: This image was taken with a corresponding (normal) vertical angle of view, as all the elements of this image appear directly opposite the viewer's eye.

Shapes: the picture has no shapes

Colors: black and white image

The linguistic Message: The linguistic message in this picture is represented in the top heading, which is a sentence written in Arabic: "Behind every burned dish; there is a woman who loves Facebook." It contains a mocking message from the woman who uses Facebook and who does not care about kitchen affairs to the extent that she burned the dish without noticing her. It is a clear mockery of the woman's relationship with social media, her addiction and neglect of home affairs.

Iconic Message

This image expresses the image of the Algerian woman, who is addicted to social networking sites such as Facebook, to the point of neglecting the kitchen and home affairs, as it was the dish that was burned while she is busy communicating via Facebook.

Second Reading

Implication Level

This image, like all the previous pictures, expresses an irony view of the presence of women on social media, and in order for this image to be consistent with the traditional image of women, women are depicted as giving up their traditional role and function at home through their preoccupation on social networking sites, and this is what is considered in many. One of the cases is that it presents a negative image of women, their presence and their contribution through the virtual space, and it reflects the traditional view of women in our society where their roles are limited to preparing food and raising children.

It also looks at her within the scope of the traditional role and her inability to develop herself outside the context of stereotypical roles in her social reality, which puts her always in the field of cynicism and

lack of recognition of her presence and contribution in the virtual space, on the contrary, social media, which was supposed to be the space that gives women freedom. She did not find her in her realistic surroundings, and to enable her to express her opinion and contribute to what is happening around her.

On social media, however, many women faced ridicule, bullying, and various other forms, such as symbolic violence ... etc.

Findings

Based on our study related to the semiological analysis of a group of pictures of Algerian women that were published on the pages of the social networking platform "Facebook" with the aim of knowing how to use this image in the era of digital communication through new media the results of this study can be summarized in the following points:

- It became clear that Facebook plays the driving role in highlighting the image of Algerian women, in their various forms
- The image as a means of communication has a great role in transmitting the image of women and representing them to individuals and society.
- Sweeping the image of this woman on social media platforms came in a variety of ways, between stereotyping and sarcasm.
- The image of the woman wearing the "haik" had a good effect, and the image received great interaction because it symbolizes the authenticity and culture of Algeria among Algerian women.
- Some of the images came as a mirror reflecting the prevailing social culture about the role and status of Algerian women and the ability of society members to accept the changes that have occurred as a result of technological developments, which allowed the emergence of virtual spaces and new roles that women can play and express themselves.
- The transmission of the prevailing societal thinking regarding women in our society from the reality to the virtual world and the difficulty of separating the physical and the virtual presence.
- It seems that the image of women is based on personal judgments, stereotypes and projections, and mental images of individuals and groups, as well as cultural

classifications, which impede the development and participation of women as a main and influential actor in the virtual space.

- There are negative images on social networking sites about women and their roles in society. Their declared goal is entertainment and amusement, but their content is based mainly on mocking the idea of a smart, creative and educated woman.
- The stereotypical image of women in social sites is caused by the fact that most men pay attention to the shape of women at the expense of her intellect, and although she has been able to invade social sites through her creativity, society's view of her has not changed much, and most men still view her as an image more than intellect and creativity. .
- The image of women on social media carried connotations that are consistent with society's view of women, which is often described as a traditional view, and this is due to the multiplicity of images that women have appeared on the topics raised on social networking sites. In a cynical character that reduces the value of women and the goals of their marriage, to the image of manipulative and hideous women who hide behind a false identity, to the image of neglected women in their home as a result of their preoccupation with social networking sites, which is to diminish their status and highlight bad examples of women.

Conclusion:

social networking sites have a lot to bring about change about the image of women through social networking sites, and to get out of the stereotypes and traditional images that they often encountered in their social reality, and it is necessary to use the virtual space, specifically social networking sites, effectively by women and for their benefit and to be more effective. Far from any exploitation of pseudo-consumer patterns or being led to the unconscious use of sites, but rather to properly employ them to contribute to building their productive and distinguished personality capable of facing life's problems while preserving its religious, social and cultural values.

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