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*Cultural Identity Representations of Tebessian Women in Virtual Spaces
Between Empowerment and Discrimination: A Survey Study on
Facebook Group Users*

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the predominant cultural identity representations within Facebook groups dedicated to the women of Tebessa and examine how this virtual platform has facilitated their expression as virtual personas, enjoying a degree of liberation from traditional social constraints. Additionally, the research seeks to discern the privileges and implications associated with the utilization of Facebook groups and their consequential impact on the cultural identities of Tebessianwomen.

Findings indicate that these virtual spaces significantly mold the cultural identity of Tebessianwomen, introducing substantial changes in their lifestyles, thought processes, and interactions. This transformation influences their self-representation and overall cultural identity.

Keywords: *Cultural Identity, Cultural Identity of Tebessian Women, Virtual Space.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The preservation of cultural identity among nations and peoples holds paramount importance, serving as the bedrock for national unity and cohesion and bestowing communities with a unique character and distinctiveness. The identity of any people or nation emerges from a confluence of religion, language, thought, history, arts, literature, heritage, values, customs traditions, morals, sentiments, mental standards, behavior, and other distinguishing societal characteristics.

For example, the cultural identity of Algerian society, with its distinct characteristics, composition, history, architecture, language, arts, customs, traditions, rituals, and accumulated heritages, stands apart from other nations. This identity is the product of a dynamic interplay and exchange of cultures through historical encounters with the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, French among others, yet it has retained its unique essence and personality.

It is noteworthy that Algerian women have played a critical role in preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of Algerian society through generations, despite facing numerous risks, threats, and challenges. Their steadfastness in maintaining their cultural roles within their families and communities symbolizes their resistance and resilience against cultural colonialism. They have managed to safeguard the foundational elements and pillars of Algerian cultural identity, ensuring its continuity and transmission from one generation to the next.

Despite numerous challenges, Algerian women have forged a distinctive identity, creating a cultural mosaic that integrates elements of Amazigh, Shawia, Mzabi, Tuareg, Nubian, Arabic and French influences within a cohesive society under the banner of Arabism and Islam. Within this diverse society, each woman, whether from Algiers, Oran, Tlemcen, Constantine, Kabylia or other regions, uniquely defines and portrays her cultural identity.

This study focuses particularly on the women of Tebessa, whose daily, historical, and traditional nuances contribute to their distinctiveness from women both within and outside Algeria. They translate their cultural identity into an array of symbols, signs, poetry, colors, arts customs, traditions, clothing, food, celebrations, and rituals—embodying the essence of local heritage and culture, which serves as a recognizable code for others.

In today's digital age, communication technologies have opened vast avenues for interaction via various applications, including social media platforms. These platforms enable Tebessian women to introduce themselves and freely express their opinions, exhibit the unique aspects of their cultural identity and regional belonging, share their real-life experiences, and discuss their cherished customs, traditions, and cultural heritage, as well as their aspirations for modernization. However, these virtual spaces, while offering numerous advantages, also present significant threats to the original components of their cultural identity.

The freedoms and allure of these platforms facilitate the adoption of new cultural patterns a spectrum of foreign values, and global influences, leading to economic and cultural dependency on the West. This creates a challenging dilemma and imbalance, leading to confusion between maintaining and enhancing their identity and protecting it from cultural fragmentation and alienation from their authentic cultural roots, versus the allure and prestige of aligning with Western cultural norms.

Through this discourse, the central question arises:

What are the cultural identity representations of Tebessian women in virtual spaces, and how have Facebook groups enabled them to manifest their authentic identity and distinguish it from foreign influences?

Sub-questions framing this study outline its scope, objectives, and investigative axes as follows:

1. What are the habits and usage patterns of Tebessian women in Facebook groups?

2. What motivates Tebessian women to use Facebook groups and what satisfactions are achieved from them?
3. What are the privileges and implications of using Facebook groups on the cultural identity of Tebessian women?

This study aims to ascertain the primary cultural identity representations as manifested within Facebook groups dedicated to Tebessian women, examining how this virtual platform has empowered them as virtual entities to fulfill their desires with a degree of autonomy that is free from societal constraints. Further, the research seeks to explore both the advantages and the implications of utilizing Facebook groups, assessing their influence on the cultural identity of Tebessian women.

Motivated by the quest to determine whether Tebessian women today still uphold their customs, traditions, and folk heritage, or if they have adapted their lifestyles in response to modernization and globalization, thus potentially losing touch with the elements that form their original cultural identity, deeply rooted in history and civilization, we crafted an electronic survey as a principal instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

This survey, disseminated via an electronic link across several Facebook groups specifically tailored to Tebessa, serves as the primary community for this investigation. The survey is structured around four pivotal axes, each containing questions aimed at addressing the research objectives and probing the central issues of this study, thereby facilitating the analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon. Complementarily, interviews have been utilized as a significant tool in amassing a wealth of information, data, and insights concerning the cultural identity of Tebessian women.

Given the focal point of this study on Tebessian women, who have been selected as a representative model due to the challenge of encompassing the broad and diverse cultural identity of Algerian women across different regions, we chose Tebessian women as a purposive sample.

The nature of this study necessitated reliance on survey methodology in its descriptive and analytical dimensions to illuminate the phenomenon under scrutiny. This methodological approach is designed to depict the representations of cultural identity of Tebessian women across virtual spaces and social networking sites, with Facebook groups exemplifying this model. This methodology is adjudged most apt for the phases of data collection, both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and interpretation, and is categorized under the scope of descriptive research. (Ahmed Hassan Al-rifai, 1998).

1. Study concepts:

1.1. Virtual space:

Ali Rahouma conceptualizes virtual (cyber) space as an environment where the Internet community congregates, forming virtual communities. These communities are composed of individuals who foster special relationships, which are largely grounded in natural human organizations and institutions such as education, scientific research, marketing, investment media and journalism, communication, and various cultural types. (Ali Mohammed Rahouma 2005).

Among the more lucid definitions of virtual space, we find that of Mr. Yassine, who depicts it as a novel human and technological realm for expression, information, and exchange. This realm fundamentally consists of individuals from all countries, cultures, ages, and professions, interconnected through a global network of accounts facilitated by a communication infrastructure that enables the digital transfer and exchange of information. (Sayed Yassin, 2001).

1.2. Facebook Groups as a Virtual Space:

Facebook groups are considered a distinct form of virtual space owing to their unique features and multimedia capabilities. The personas typically associated with these groups often

hail from specific professional fields, geographical areas, colleges, or schools, among other types of gatherings and locales that aid users in connecting with more friends and people who share similar network categories. Additionally, the feature of creating groups typically involves assembling those with a keen interest in the subject matter. (ChafikHusseini, 2010).

1.1. Cultural Identity:

Al-Jabri introduces a conception of cultural identity, instilling the notion that even in the presence of a political will to forge cultural unity, it remains unattainable because cultural identity is the culmination of long historical accumulations. Thus, it stands as a fundamental pillar in the formation of nations. (Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, 1998).

Cultural identity encompasses the array of cultural elements through which a person's or a specific human group's cultural affiliation is recognized. It generally refers to the implicit or explicit awareness of belonging to a human group in a specific geographical space, characterized by a unique cultural heritage that includes a shared history, language, customs, traditions, and future aspirations. (Abdel Razzak Al-dawi, 2013).

2. Cultural Identity Of Tebessian Women:

The cultural identity of Tebessian women is encapsulated in a vibrant tapestry of cultural elements that shape the societal fabric just as religion, language, history, ethical values, and significant achievements mold the cultural identity of any nation. This study delves into the multifaceted cultural identity of Tebessian women, particularly through their customs and traditions.

2.1. Customs and Traditions Of Tebessian Women:

The mention of the Tebessa region conjures images of the rich and varied customs and traditions of its women, marked by unique and special rituals. A quintessential example of this is the traditional Tebessa wedding, celebrated in distinct stages:

2.1.1. The proposal:

This initial phase precedes the official marriage contract, serving as a crucial period to assess the compatibility and understanding between the two parties and to lay the groundwork for their future together. During this stage, the groom's family visits the bride's family, bringing with them dates and milk as symbols of goodwill. They are greeted with the customary phrase "We come to you with honorable intentions," to which the bride's family responds, "We accept and are pleased."

Subsequently, the families discuss and agree upon the dowry, which typically includes livestock, gold, and wool. Upon reaching an agreement, a ring is presented to the bride as a symbol of commitment and the sacredness of their bond. The Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran, is recited to bless the union, and gunpowder is fired to ward off the evil eye and neutralize any malevolent magic. As part of a folk tradition, the mother sprinkles black cumin at the main door's threshold and in the bride's sitting room, while the house is perfumed with amber and incense to honor the significant occasion. (BiyaKheman, 2024).

As the wedding day nears, wheat is ground for preparing couscous, and the women engage in singing traditional folk songs known as "Al-Tawahi," which forms an integral part of the folk heritage. Among these songs are "ShadwayaAhma," "Rouh Al-ShaibRouh," and "Sabaka RabbywaNabi..." The wedding festivities typically span three days, with the dowry being paid to the bride before the celebrations commence.

2.1.2. The first day of wedding:

On this day, a sheep, referred to as "Al-Halal" (the lawful), is brought to the bride's family. It is believed that the slaughter of this sheep legitimizes the marriage. A group of respected elders accompanies the sheep, which is adorned with a piece of green muslin cloth tied around its neck symbolizing its significance.

The elders also bring with them sugar, tea, coffee, tomatoes, oil, couscous, fruits, and other necessities for the feast, typically provided by the groom's family. In a ritual performed

before slaughtering the sheep, a small or medium-sized mirror and sugar are placed in the sheep's mouth and the muslin cloth is tied around its neck. The bride then mounts the sheep's back and, after dismounting, the sheep is slaughtered by the bride's family, a custom believed to bring prosperity and good fortune to the bride ("her luck stands tall").

The Fatihais recited again to reaffirm the marriage contract, and ululations echo from the women, with the first to ululate receiving a monetary reward from the groom's family, the liver from the slaughtered sheep is grilled and shared among the attendees, symbolizing the bride's official inclusion into the groom's family.

2.1.3. The Second Day of the Wedding, the Henna Day:

This day is distinguished as the Henna Day, signifying the core festivities of the wedding where all guests convene to celebrate. On this vibrant day, the groom's family dispatches the bridal attire to the bride, a collection of traditional garments that had been previously exhibited at the groom's family home, allowing all relatives an opportunity to view these splendid outfits before their presentation to the bride.

It is a customary practice to transport four to six pieces of each garment. As these garments are paraded to the bride's home, the women involved in the procession serenade the air with traditional songs, the most renowned being "Reem Al-Ghali...". As night falls and the Henna Night commences, the groom's family makes their way back to the bride's home.

Here, an esteemed elder woman, revered by the community, delicately applies henna to the bride's hands, adorns her with a silver bracelet, and places a piece of sugar in her mouth symbolizing sweetness and prosperity in her new life. The bride is then escorted in a grand procession comprised of a group of women who hold a large piece of cloth, creating a veil between them and the men.

This procession, enriched with songs and ululations, also includes the bride riding a mule while men, including horsemen and those discharging gunpowder, form a protective circle around the procession. Upon her arrival at her new residence, oil is anointed above the doorway, dates are tenderly handed to her, and a small child is placed on her lap, echoing the community's hopes that she will be blessed with offspring. (NafissaMizab, 2015).

2.1.4. The Third Day, the Morning After:

The third day ushers in traditional practices mixed with contemporary adjustments. Traditionally, the women would prepare 'Asida', a beloved dish, engaging in playful antics with it in the bride's presence. However, this custom has largely been phased out due to religious considerations.

On this day, both the bride's and groom's families reconvene at the bride's new abode bearing sweets, pastries, and coffee. If circumstances allow, they bring lunch; otherwise, it is kindly prepared by the groom's family. Among the customs still fervently practiced is the 'Hizam' (belting of the bride), where one of the groom's brothers ceremoniously places a belt on the bride. Some families perform this ritual the morning after the wedding, while others may defer it until the seventh day.

Demonstrating her adeptness in household duties, the bride is tasked with kneading 'Ksra' (a traditional bread). In a playful test of her skills, seven wheat grains are surreptitiously embedded in the dough, which she must locate and extract one by one. As part of a folk belief aimed at fostering marital permanence, a nail is driven into the ground with a piece of the bride's dress attached, symbolically anchoring her to her new home and preventing divorce. (Rafaa Al-Hajja, 2024).

2.2. Tebessian Women's Cuisine:

The traditional dishes of Tebessa province are distinguished by their variety, deliciousness and high nutritional value, not to mention the special touch Tebessian women themselves bring to cooking. Tebessian women are faithful ambassadors of the Tebessa kitchen traditions handed down from grandmothers and mothers to this day.

2.2.1. Couscous:

One of the most famous traditional dishes, couscous is a staple dish no Tebessian woman doesn't know how to cook. Made from wheat or barley flour with a light broth, it is cooked by steaming over its broth. After grinding the wheat grains into flour, the woman moistens her hands and starts to roll the flour in a large bowl until it gradually turns into small grains. Once done, the couscous is placed in a 'Keskas'- a perforated pot cover that allows steam to pass through to the couscous. The broth typically contains water, vegetables- especially zucchini, meat, and enough salt.

Despite the abundant resources in Tebessa, people do not eat meat daily but reserve it for festive occasions. Instead, women cook with preserved sheep fat, which is dried, salted, and then stored until it turns yellow. This dish is usually not prepared well except for special occasions or feasts, and it's customary to cook it on steam alone and then use milk instead of broth (Arbi Agoun, 2015), some add milk to the couscous steeped in broth, calling it 'Rghoud'. Couscous is typically served in a dish called 'Mthard' or 'Gasaa'.

2.2.2. Mesfouf:

Made from couscous, it is enriched with dried fruits, nuts, and dates and is extensively consumed during the holy month of Ramadan.

2.2.3. Berkoukes:

A type of couscous with coarser grains, especially consumed in winter. Tebessian women use various spices, seasonal vegetables, dried beans, prunes, cloves, as well as preserved and fermented meat in its preparation. It is also made by mixing with milk, known as 'Rghoud', and there is a special Berkoukes for nursing women.

2.2.4. Asida:

Another distinctive dish of the Tebessa cuisine, prepared either sweet by mixing flour with water and adding butter and honey or date syrup (Rub) or sugar, or served savory with a red sauce. (Biya Khaman, 2024).

The Tebessa cuisine is very rich with dishes too numerous to be fully listed in this study; we will mention only a few such as barley bread, butter, some dates, fried barley flour ('Rouina'), Chakhchoukha, Mermez, Mhadjeb, and from the sweets, Bradj, different types of R'fis Meltoukha, Zlabia, Baghrir (Ghraif), Raghda or Boutchich made from green wheat, cheese or 'Laklila', along with special spices prepared by Tebessian women especially for the blessed month of Ramadan, which carries its own flavor and special rituals and dishes emanating from the depth of identity.

2.3. Traditional Attire of Tebessian Women:

Among the many traditional outfits of Tebessian women, we highlight:

2.3.1. Melhfa Tebessian:

This is a traditional garment worn by Tebessa and Aurès women in general, with slight regional variations that signify the specific area the woman comes from. What distinguishes the Melhfa Tebessia and makes it unique is its fabric, usually made of muslin, known for its lightness which facilitates daily wear and movement. It is typically pink, verging on red, though Tebessian women tend to vary their colors to enhance their beauty.

However, they have a particular affinity for black, which is tailored, embroidered, and decorated with silver. The sewing of the Melhfa requires it to include four and a half meters of fabric, sleeves must be included, sewn on one side while left open on the other, and stitched at the chest.

This feature distinguishes Tebessian women from those of neighboring areas as the MelhfaTebessia has a part of the fabric hanging from the belly downwards. In contrast, the ShawiyaM'lahfa lets this piece of fabric drape from just below the neck covering the belly (at the belt)(Najwa Fares, 2015), Alongside the Melhfa, a piece called "Chelika" or "Abkhanouk" made of wool is worn over the shoulders in winter for warmth and over the head in summer to protect from the heat.

The Melhfaconsists of an inner quilt called "Dakhila" and a wide, wavy outer quilt that covers the woman's body, adorned with patterns that reflect the authenticity of Tebessa culture and symbols. What adds uniqueness and elegance to this attire is the silver jewelry that adorns the woman from head to toe, which is an essential accessory that Tebessian women never forego.

Accompanying accessories include "Alak" (a necklace), "Ikran" (which ties the quilt), "J'bin" (forehead adornment), "Bzim" (medallion), "Madawar" (bracelet), "Khalkhal" (ankle bracelet known for its heavy weight), "Radeef", "Belt" ("Jreedi" made of wool), and "Miqyas" (a woolen tape measure), "Lalaayiq", "Alaq", "Boumecherf", "Boutabla", "Chain of Ain Al-Hijla" "Libsayes", and silver rings.

These accessories collectively constitute the most important adornments for Tebessian women. The bride distinguishes herself by adding silver jewelry adorned with typically green or red stones to her Melhfa. Tebessian women also have a distinctive hairstyle when wearing the Melhfa, styled into a braid wrapped around the head, known as "Khwara". (NajibGuehairia, 2015).

In addition to the Melhfa, other garments will be briefly mentioned without detailed insertion such as "Gandoura Barak Al-Layl", "Gandoura Sabah Al-Khair", "SefsariBouawina" "Hayek Mrama , Al-M'laya, La'jar", and others.

2.4. Traditional Heritage Industries Performed by Tebessian Women:

Among these industries, the most notable include:

2.4.1. S'khab:

This cultural heritage reflects the deep identity of Tebessian women and accompanies them in almost all occasions. It is a women's necklace that comes in a dark brown color and emits very fragrant scents. Tebessian women make it from 100% natural materials including tar, ambergris, musk, natural powder, "Al-Kamha", "Al-Sanbul", "Al-Zabida" (a creamy substance with a honey color).

It also includes solid perfume brought by pilgrims from Hajj, which is natural and alcohol-free. Date pits are thoroughly washed and ground into a very fine powder. Nearly all components share a very pleasant and beautiful scent. All elements are mixed into a dough-like form, from which women shape small chickpea-sized pieces, pierce them with a needle, and leave them to dry until they harden.

Then, the beads are strung on a type of strong, good-quality thread and this necklace is adorned with pieces of gold and also embellished with gems or coral beads. Nowadays, modern touches have been added, and it is often embellished with a large piece of gold. (Saleh Barika, 2015).

Given that the Tebessa region is pastoral and has abundant raw materials, wool products are predominantly manufactured, especially wearable items. Tebessian women are renowned for making "Kashabiya", an authentic men's garment made from natural wool, and many other industries including:

2.4.2. Nemushiya Carpet:

Traditionally, every Tebessian woman was skilled in weaving the Nemushiya carpet, a craft they shared with men. Known for its rectangular size and the artful arrangement of its woolen threads, every Tebessa home had a Nemushiya carpet, an unshaken symbol of heritage from time immemorial to the present, rich with heritage images that narrate the cultural identity reflected in its patterns. (NahedBoukhelfa, 2015).

Upon completion, the Nemushiya carpet contains symbols and meanings that mimic the environment belonging to Tebessian women, which has distinguished it among its counterparts from various provinces, varying between "Al-Uqd", "Al-Draqa", "Al-Hanbal", and "Al-Hawli" requiring patience and mastery in its weaving. (Saleh Boughrara, 2024).

2.4.3. Sedaia:

This tool is used by women in weaving carpets and Hanbals. Women insert colored threads between the warp bars of the Sedaia and press them down with a wooden pen-like piece with a pointed end. They finish the stage by striking a rough steel plate shaped like a comb fixed at the top with a short cylindrical wooden rod with long teeth, continuing to strike across the entire decorated woolen strip to masterfully align its colors, ensuring it is firmly fixed. (NahedBoukhelfa, 2015).

Among the animal industries, Tebessian women are skilled in making "Guerba" or "Chekwa," crafted from goat leather. The leather is meticulously cleaned of all fat and flesh and tanned with special chemicals to preserve and prepare it for use. The "Guerba," positioned on three pillars, is utilized in the production of yogurt by the agitation process, involving pushing and pulling the suspended qirba until the yogurt reaches the desired consistency, at which point a floating layer of butter is obtained. (Rafiaa Al-hajja, 2024).

Similar to the aforementioned, there are also a series of inherited social, cultural, and economic customs and values that constitute the elements of the cultural identity of Tebessian women.

II. Methods and Materials:

1. Analysis and Interpretation of Field Study Results:

1.1. Personal Data Axis:

From the data obtained from the respondents, we found that 40% represent the age group over 30 years, while 28% belong to the age group of 25 to 30 years, and 20% are between the ages of 21 and 25. 12% represent the age group from 16 to 20 years.

The relative variance between the age groups reflects the usage of Facebook groups by different age categories, with those over 30 being the most responsive to the survey, which we interpret as indicating a greater interest in cultural identity topics due to this age representing maturity and awareness.

1.1.1. Educational Level Variable:

From the percentages obtained given the sample size, most respondents are university-educated at 60%, followed by 20% with postgraduate studies, 10% at the secondary level, 6% at the middle school level, and 4% at the primary level. We diversified the sample distribution

across these educational levels to study the implications of the phenomenon at each educational level of women.

This led us to interpret that Tebessian women strive to reach the highest levels of education as their society allows this, which also translates to their intellectual and cultural level and their awareness of cultural identity terms at the theoretical level.

However, based on our observations of Tebessa society and close family observations women with primary and middle education levels tend to preserve and practice their authentic cultural identity more, as their withdrawal from education means taking on household responsibilities, thus having more contact with the customs and traditions of their mothers and grandmothers.

1.1.2. Social Status Variable:

From the responses, 60% of the respondents are married, 20% are single, 16% are divorced and 4% are widows. This leads us to think that married women are more familiar with customs and traditions because marital life requires it.

In Tebessa society, women are bound to practice certain customs, traditions, and cultural heritages imposed first by their families and then by societal laws and local norms. Although we see that this percentage does not represent the reality since married women do not have much time to browse Facebook groups continually.

1.2. Second, Usage Habits and Patterns Axis for Tebessian Women on Facebook Groups:

1.2.1. Duration of Use:

It is evident that 66% of the respondents have been using Facebook groups for more than three years, 20% have used them for one to three years, and 14% have used them for less than a year. This high percentage of longstanding usage can be attributed to the widespread popularity of these groups, the interest in their topics, and engagement with their posts, indicating a risk of Tebessian women being influenced by various cultural contents presented to them.

1.2.2. Type of Name Used:

From the percentages obtained regarding the type of name used by the respondents to express themselves, we see that 62% use a pseudonym, while 38% have no problem using their real names. This predominance in the responses suggests that most of the studied group hides their name due to reputation concerns and to maintain greater freedom in posting topics, images and videos they are interested in.

1.2.3. Language of Communication:

From the obtained percentages, the Tebessa dialect is the most important language of communication at 44%, followed by the Amazigh language at 22%, French at 12%, while Standard Arabic is fourth at 10%, and English is spoken by 8% of users. This dominance in the use of the Tebessa dialect for communication among users is due to their familiarity with it and their desire to highlight a core component that helps spread their cultural identity and distinguishes them from others.

However, the use of the Amazigh language at 22% seems unrealistic in general, as historically the region belongs to the Aurès and its original inhabitants are Amazigh, but from our direct observations and interaction with Tebessa society, we find that speaking this language is limited only to the elderly and is no longer understood by most residents due to its absence in daily practice and educational institutions.

1.2.4. Regional Affiliation:

From the responses to the question of displaying their regional affiliation on their Facebook group profiles, 58% answered yes, and 42% no. From this, we can say that Tebessian women take pride in and are loyal to their region, which we also interpret as an acknowledgment of a part of their identity.

1.3. Third, Motivations for Tebessian Women's Use of Facebook Groups and the Satisfaction Gained from Their Participation:

1.3.1. Motivation for Joining Facebook Groups:

Based on the responses to this query, we found that 15.94% of the users are primarily motivated by the search for modern and innovative ideas for decor, organizing weddings and parties, making pastries, and everything new about the modern Tebessa bridal trousseau. Following this, 14.49% are motivated by the desire to communicate with friends and family.

Additionally, 11.59% use these groups to learn cooking, sewing, and hairstyling. 10.14% of them are driven by the opportunities for online shopping, and 8.70% use the application to develop personal lifestyle ideas and methods. Meanwhile, 7.25% are motivated by entertainment and keeping up with developments in women's issues, fashion, and beauty, as well as to learn about the heritage and history of the Tebessa region.

A portion of the users engages with Facebook groups to stay updated on current news and events in the Tebessa area and to participate in discussions, whereas a smaller percentage of 2.90% joins these groups to meet people and make new acquaintances outside their immediate social circles.

The same percentage also finds in these groups a way to pass time and break the routine and to reminisce about the lives of their ancestors and long for the past days. A very small percentage of 1.45% use this platform to freely express their opinions and positions on issues that interest them.

These data suggest that a minor proportion use Facebook groups as a tool for entertainment, indicating that the respondents are aware of and limit their use of Facebook groups to positive applications in daily life and in social relationships, particularly those over the age of thirty and women who have been using these groups for a longer duration, demonstrating a significant awareness and experience in utilizing Facebook for beneficial purposes in their lives.

1.3.2. Tebessian Women's Customs and Traditions Reflected in Facebook Group Posts Across Different Media:

This question aimed to ascertain whether these groups reflect the customs and traditions of Tebessian women in their authentic or modernized and Westernized forms. We found that 70% of the respondents indicated that the posts portray Tebessian women in a modern and Western manner, while 30% see them as reflecting the authentic traditions of Tebessian women.

This distribution can be explained by the inevitable social, cultural, and economic changes affecting various aspects of life across all societies, with Algeria and the Tebessian region, and women's segment not being exempt, especially since one of the tools used (Facebook) is designed to market global ideologies and ideas.

1.3.3. Impact of Tebessian Women's Use of Facebook Groups on Eating Habits in the Tebessa Community:

Regarding our question about whether eating habits in the Tebessian community have changed after Tebessian women started using Facebook groups, 58% of the responses indicated yes, while 42% said no. From these responses, we see that despite food being a prominent cultural identifier after religion, language, and history, there has been a significant shift.

We interpret this change as due to women entering the workforce and studying, finding less time for traditional cooking, and turning to quick and easy meals, finding many modern and Western dishes heavily promoted on social media pages, even though they are expensive.

It is also observed in reality that men's eating habits have changed, now preferring lighter meals as traditional dishes are marketed as rich and heavy. Regarding our supplementary question on whether this change has eradicated the traditional local eating practices, 30% responded that the change has not eliminated traditional Tebessa food as it remains prevalent during festivalsholidays, and when hosting guests, with some families maintaining the tradition of preparing it on Fridays.

15% responded no but noted that modern touches and presentation styles have been added to traditional dishes, now served in modern dishes in a contemporary style. 5% responded yes noting that families now mostly eat out or order fast food, which affects the mindset of Tebessian women, making them torn between an authentic identity and a foreign one due to keeping up with developments and changes.

III. Results and discussion :

The key insight derived from this comprehensive study is the profound transformation in the lifestyles, thought processes, and social interactions of Tebessian women, primarily facilitated by virtual spaces such as Facebook groups. These digital arenas have markedly influenced their self-perception and cultural identity.

The capability of these virtual platforms to permit the masking of real identities and the adoption of diverse, free, and globally oriented virtual personas plays a pivotal role. Such virtual identities, liberated from social constraints and traditional norms, empower women to explore and sometimes adopt foreign cultures, customs, traditions, values, and behaviors.

This may manifest in various forms, such as the inclusion of fast-food culture in their diets or the emulation of celebrity fashion trends, which often favor attire that is short, tight, torn, or transparent. Additionally, it influences the development of communication styles and relationships that are distinctly non-local in origin.

Despite potential perceptions of these influences as detrimental, with assumptions that virtual cultural identities might supplant real cultural identities, leaving them devoid of belonging and clear values, it is undeniable that these virtual spaces also serve as conduits for communal connection.

Facebook groups, among other platforms, enable women with shared identities to reminisce about, and continue practicing, their traditions. They foster a collective consciousness that transcends physical boundaries, thereby allowing these groups to both reflect and preserve elements of Tebessian women's cultural identity. These platforms facilitate a profound recognition and appreciation of the ingrained elements of their identity, which remain steadfast amidst the tides of change and globalization, thereby sculpting their distinctive personalities and setting them apart from others.

IV. Conclusion:

At the end of this study on the cultural identity representations of Tebessian women in virtual spaces, we conclude that the great importance of this topic stems from the fact that it addresses vital issues related to cultural identity in the era of globalization and the challenges it faces. The study highlights how Tebsi women, with all their values and authenticity, face many challenges in preserving their cultural identity amid the currents of globalization that seek to unify cultures.

Virtual spaces, although they are tools that may be used to threaten cultural identity, also provide platforms for Tebsi women to express their culture and share experiences and knowledge. Social media sites such as Facebook and Facebook groups have become empowering tools for women, allowing them to spread their culture and defend and promote their cultural identity.

Finally, the study confirms that Tebessian women have the ability to use virtual spaces positively to preserve and enhance their cultural identity, through communication, interaction and active participation in these spaces. Thus, virtual spaces remain a double-edged sword, which can be a tool of threat or a tool of empowerment, and the choice rests with the Tebessian woman in how they use these tools to their advantage and the benefit of their culture.

From these insights, the study proposes several recommendations aimed at preserving and enhancing the cultural identity of Tebessian women:

- It is recommended that women engage more deeply with their cultural roots by visiting historical museums, participating in cultural festivals, and engaging with traditional forms of art such as folklore, poetry, and literature. Taking children to these events can strengthen familial bonds and reinforce cultural identity.
- Women should strive to discern the mutable from the immutable in their cultural identity. This understanding can help mitigate the impacts of cultural globalization and instill a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to their cultural roots while navigating global interactions.
- By studying the significant contributions of historical female figures within their culture, women can keep their rich history alive. Preserving history is crucial, as losing sight of it can lead to the erosion of the most vital components of a nation's cultural identity.
- As a practical initiative, establishing a dedicated space at home or in the workplace that displays cultural artifacts such as pictures, sayings, proverbs, and poems can enhance the visibility and importance of cultural identity. This not only fosters nostalgia but also encourages efforts to revive and celebrate cultural heritage.
- Women are encouraged to actively participate in and defend their cultural identity on social media. By contributing thoughtful comments and content, they can become producers of culture rather than mere consumers, challenging and reshaping the narrative around their identity.
- Introducing media education programs in schools and community centers can equip the younger generation with the skills needed to critically engage with media, helping them to navigate and counteract the effects of globalization effectively.
- Emphasizing the importance of religious practices can fortify a unique and distinguished identity, pivotal in an era where diverse civilizations vie for prominence. Engaging in Islamic practices, in particular, can reinforce a sense of identity that is both distinct and superior to other prevailing cultural influences.

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