



The Impact of YouTube on Algerian Youth's Socio-Political Awareness : a Content Analysis of Selected Videos From Algerian Entertainment YouTube Channels

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<i>Abstract</i>	<i>Article info</i>
<p>Research has shown that exposure to online political and social content affects people's awareness, orientations and behavior. This effect is spotted amongst adults and youth similarly; and Algerian youth are no exception. This study attempts to investigate the impact of Algerian YouTube videos on Algerian youth's social and political awareness. A Content Analysis of selected videos from "Youcef Zarouta" and football music group "Ouled El Bahdja" YouTube channels have been used to explore the themes of videos viewed by Algerian youth and the emotions that can be triggered. Findings demonstrated that the selected videos which tackled social and political topics reflect on Algerian youth's social and political experiences, voice their views and contribute to raising their awareness.</p>	<p><i>Received</i> 30/05../2023 <i>Accepted</i> 03/06./2023</p> <p><u>Keyword:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ YouTube Videos✓ Entertainment✓ Socio-Political Awareness✓ Algerian Youth

1. Introduction

On February 22nd, 2019, thousands of Algerians went out to the streets; though their number is still incalculable but estimated to over 2 millions in the Capital Algiers and the rest 50 wilayas (Algerian districts). These protests are considered as a historical event and a turning point in the future of Algeria and its new generation of young protesters. While the internal structure of the protest and its tactics were initiated and prepared in social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and twitter ...etc these massive protests were carried out to a large extent, along with older generation, by young people; many of whom were university students, workers and unemployed and even secondary school pupils who are known as being technologically savvy but have struggled with social, economic and political marginalization for a long time.

The development of the internet and social Media applications is a major technological breakthrough of the last decades. Social Media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram ...etc play a prominent role in facilitating the dissemination of information and communication between people all over the world (Chen, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The innovative and ubiquitous nature of social media tremendously impacted peoples' lives, mainly that of youth, and that drew the attention and interest of many scholars and researchers in many fields: psychology (Zimmerman, 1995) sociology (Ruggiero, 2009), economics (Salem & Mourtada, 2012) and politics (Foran et al., 2008; Sharma, 2014; Zaghلامي, 2017).

Due to the culmination of social and political issues and the marginalization of youth in Algeria during two decades of the former Algerian president Abd El Aziz Bouteflika's government (from 1999 to 2019), the new generation adopted diverse expressive forms online and offline to voice their rights and engage in building their own future.

In Algeria, social media outlets, YouTube in particular, provided Algerian young users with common space to upload, watch, share a diverse types of entertaining content as it also allowed the discussion of social and political issues. To this end, the present paper aims to explore the impact of YouTube on raising Algerian youth's social and political awareness. This study attempts to address the main research problem : Does YouTube affect Algerian Youth's social and political awareness ? by answering the sub-questions: What themes do Algerian Youtube creators present in their entertainment videos to Algerian YouTube consumers? And what are the messages and emotions that have been depicted?

2.Method:

The data for the present study are videos gathered from YouTube platform. The selected videos represent entertainment videos created by Algerian YouTube content creators *Youcef Zarouta* and stadium music group *Ouled El Bahdja* YouTube channels. The selection of these entertainment videos was on the basis of diversity. The videos were confined to the top five viewed videos and restricted to those that tackle social and political issues only, and therefore; resulted in two videos for each category. The selection was based on the study's objectives, the researcher's observation and the time limit of the study. This purposive selection based on the researcher observation is advocated by John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell who emphasized the role of the researcher in qualitative research that includes: "*Reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture*

that emerges. This larger picture is not necessarily a linear model of cause and effect but rather a model of multiple factors interacting in different ways. This picture, qualitative researchers would say, mirrors real life and the ways that events operate in the real world.(Creswell et al., 2018:p296)

The production of the selected videos were at the heart of discussion of national issues during the fourth term of the former president Abd El Aziz Bouteflika from 2014 to 2019 which significantly depicted Algerian youth's discontent and were related to the political campaigns of elections 2019 prior to the massive protest on February 22nd, 2019. A qualitative Content Analysis was applied for this latter "*can be used with a wide variety of data sources, including textual data, visual stimuli (e.g., photographs/videos), and audio data*" (Stemler, 2015: p1). The analysis of the YouTube videos underwent two stages; the first tackled the humour videos produced by Youcef Zarouta and the second stage tackled Ouled El Bahdja's stadium songs.

In each stage, the analysis focused on date of uploading, viewing rates, description of the images, the prominent themes in the video, the video creator's descriptions, if found, as well as the social and political context in which they were produced. Regarding themes, the script of the humour videos and lyrics of the songs were transcribed in their original language; Algerian slang, translated to English and then analyzed, decoded and verified according to Braun & Clarke's Thematic analysis; a qualitative method used for "*identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns(themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in rich detail*". (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Following ethical concerns, the videos selected for analysis are for public viewing and were used for academic research without any intention of harm under the terms and conditions of use of YouTube platform.

3.Litertaure Review:

3.1.The impact of social media on Youth's Awareness:

Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter...etc have played a great role in changing traditional political order in the Arab world (Howard & Hussain, 2013) and have drawn the attention of politicians, experts as well as scholars, towards increasing expression and engagement of youth in the change of politics during and after the Arab uprisings. Such events have demonstrated that awareness spread among youth online and offline. The Arab Spring spread as wildfire in the Middle East and Northern African countries (MENA) though people were expressing their discontent in public about social and political issues like austerity measures, inflation, unemployment, youth illegal migrations , corruption...etc. In his book entitled *Revolutions whithout Revolutionnaires; Making sense of the Arab Spring*, Asef Bayat explained why the revolutions in the Arab Spring was a surprise despite their public opinion was clear in a form of "*collective sentiments, shared feelings, and public opinions of ordinary people in their day-to-day speech, sarcasm, and acts that are usually expressed casually in urban public spaces, in taxis, buses, shops, main streets, backstreets, or deliberately in mass demonstrations.*(Bayat, 2017: p137)

Arab youth's power, who utilized social media as a tool , to bring the public opinion to the virtual

sphere was underestimated by their governments. The unexpected and surprising participation of young men and women who used social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc...to engage in talks, disseminate information and create a variety of content seen by thousands social media users helped them form strong connected networks in a digital space(Arafa & Armstrong, 2016; N, 2015; Vromen et al., 2015) . In the same vein, the power of the public opinion to which Charles. H.Cooley (1907) refers to as “*Social Consciousness*” explains how its connectedness and unity is perceived stating that:

“we may find social consciousness either in particular mind or as a co-operative activity of many minds. The social ideas that I have are closely connected with those that other people have , and act and react upon them to form a whole this gives us public opinion...The unity of public opinion, like all vital unity, is not one of uniformity, but of organization, of interaction and mutual influence.” (Cooley, 1907: p679)

According to Castells (2000), the structure of these Digital Networks rely on the individuals' interactions, sharing of experiences and the notion of power . these New Networks fulfill its characteristics of communication, unity and support based on the evolution of technological devices and applications that facilitate the flow of information for better coordination and performance (Castells, 2000: p 695). Another new concept is brought up and discussed in Loader's article “*The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement*” is “*the Networked young Citizens*” who are aware of their of their personal and social issues and skeptical of the political institutions. The networked young citizen's forms of social and political expressions using contemporary tools can be more revealing and reinforce youth engagement instead of their disconnection. (Loader et al., 2014).

Youth's participation in civic and political spectra through social media reveals their awareness and is considered as an indicator of their political's expectations, behavior and positive and negative outcomes. According to W. Lance Bennett (2008) in the midst of the growing culture of Youth's interest and participation and instead of going through the debates over their extent of engagement online and offline, citizenship styles and democracy models , scholars, educators, policy makers and political leaders need to understand and recognize their expression forms and bridge the gap between youth and their experience of democracy with innovative strategies making use of technological evolution and the production and consumption culture in this digital age (Bennett, 2008)

3.2. Entertainment Videos' Impact on Social and Political Awareness:

Video production and consumption on YouTube is widely spread and appreciated among youth all over the world. Since its creation in 2005, YouTube has gained an enormous base of subscribers. Due to this platform, all users can upload videos, view and share videos of their experiences and opinions with their families and friends and that of others. These practices are rooted on the expectation of fulfilling particular gratifications. Previous research have identified most prevalent types of gratifications associated with social media use, including information seeking, information sharing, entertainment, convenience utility, attention seeking, self-presentation, identification socialization and surveillance(Ruggiero, 2009; Zanatta, 2017)

Gratifications sought from the New media like entertainment, presentations, and information are better fulfilled than traditional media like : television, radio, newspapers.

Citizens' evaluation and recognition of mainstream media 's manipulation by the authoritative governments rendered their faith fragile A major trust gap between political authorities, people and the medium that reports news, information and truth .(Zaghlami, 2019). To lessen the weight of the grievances of pre-existing social, economic and political conditions , and the mixed emotions like disappointment and dissent with persistent desire to change the status quo, creative content creators on YouTube, whether professionals like artists or amateurs like YouTubers, created continuously relevant content in a humoristic or entertaining mode like podcasts, comedy, satire, songs and chants. The circulation and the trending effect that entertainment videos like comedy, stadium chants is due to the representation of social and political grievances of their audience. These forms of arts are significantly expressive and play a role in raising people's awareness. Patrícia Dias da Silva among others illustrate that :

“YouTubers employ remixing and humour as methods of exposing the weaknesses of politicians and the political system, following the long-standing tradition of satirists, countering messages created in the context of institutional political communication. Remixing implies that not only the strategies of political actors are exposed, but also the inner workings of the media and the relation between the two. Through image manipulation, politicians and media actors are turned into their own discrediting representatives, participating in their own mockery. Humour therefore plays a role in twenty-first century political discussion, rather than merely diverting the attention of citizens from such matters. In this sense, satirical remixing may be regarded as a new form of participation, especially as cause-oriented political action, and contribute to the formation of counter publics, bringing new vitality to democratic debate.”(Dias & Garcia, 2012: p109)

Regarding stadium songs or chants, we note that they also play an important role in both grabbing the attention and reflecting on the concerns of their audience and thus contribute to raising awareness on specific issues. Moreover, this form of expression appeals not only to the emotional side of citizens, but also to the intellect. By breaking down messages, and invoking references with scrutiny “ *Singing, dancing and chanting is therefore a self-empowering social process; for it becomes self-justifying, self-perpetuating and then succeeds, as it does, simply by deploying a ritualized control over the idea of interpreting what is true.*” (G. Armstrong & Young, 2009: p179)

In a study entitled: “*From the Stands to the Arena of Social Movements: Post-2011 Football Terrace Chants in Tunisia*” Football chants archives posted on social media represented a rich data base reflected on issues like migration, identity and oppression across the period spanning over 2007-2020 in Tunisia(Abdellatif et al., 2022) . In this vein, extensive scholarly attention should be attributed to study the different expressive forms and contributions that tackle social and political topics especially that created by youth in this digital age.

4.Findings and Discussions:

The analysis and discussion of the videos will be divided into two sections according to their genre. The analysis resulted in spotting three major themes in all the selected videos that revolve around: the deterioration of Algerian politics; rhetoric and policies, social grievances, and messages of awakening and unity.

4.1. Study One: Youcef Zarouta's Comedy videos:

Fig.2. A capture of Youcef Zarouta's YouTube Video "Eid EL Adha Feast".



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMjZSFlk6xk>

The scenes of the videos (**Fig.1 and 2**) start in a room of Youcef Zarouta ; a young Algerian youtuber. The room items reflect belongings of an ordinary Algerian in early twenties; a small room with a TV, sound sets, Muslim prayer rag, football items. Yet, the scenes are also filmed outside the room in different settings like the house yard, in the car, in the forest or using visual and computed effects when acting different topics.

The first video "Aid El-Kbir en Algérie" (Figure.1) meaning the Feast of Sacrifice in Algeria was uploaded on August, 2017 and have reached 3730315 views . The video tackles Muslims sacred feast which is an annual religious tradition that goes along with the pilgrimage. The video is not confined to the theme of the feast but expand to explore different economical and social issues. In this video, Youcef Zarouta starts from his room wearing T-shirt with the sentence: "hagrouna sadiki" meaning "They oppressed us pal" welcoming and then gets shot down by a an older man; his grandfather, himself wearing Men's traditional Algerian clothes Abaya and Amama saying: " *I will present this video today because I am fed up with this generation*". For the purpose of celebrating, incarnating and fulfilling Muslim duties, Algerians buy a sheep to slaughter and share with family and the poor neighbors. It is an occasion to reinforce human values as sharing and caring towards the poor who cannot afford to eat meat in the Muslim society. The Algerian YouTuber mocks the digital as well as the generational divide embodied in some youth's way of thinking and behavior; the comedian YouTuber Zarouta claims: " *in every Algerian family, you find one of these young people*" the one who is indulged in social media and that made some youth detached from the Algerian religious traditions and forgot about helping their elders in this sharing occasion or others...They regard the act of slaughtering and eating meat as disgusting act being influenced by outer views."

Inflation is the central debate of the video. The expensive price of sheep disabled citizens to fulfill their religious duty; and what seems as an incarnation of a spiritual ritual and an extension of human values; its affordance became a central concern of every middle class citizen. He showed, with a pitiful tone, how eating meat had become an annual occasion waited during the Feast only or even a far-fetched dream, he melancholically said: " *The good thing about buying the sheep is that you get to do barbecue all the day; at breakfast, at lunch and dinner but...as soon as the meat is consumed you get back to omelette.*"

He also criticizes people's attitudes and their incomprehensible thinking. He pointed out how the outrageous prices led to emergent phenomena like : sheep fight, bragging with sheep' size.

Purchasing sheep indicates the financial and economic disparities and reinforced social class division in the society regardless of values that that Eid Al-Adha Feast embodies. Zarouta mocked the prices saying: *“Sheep used to cost one million...Now, a good big one costs 20 MILLIONS ... oh! come on (habess Alina) 20 millions !! that will ensure My future”*

Austerity measures implemented during the term from 2014- 2018 has also been tackled when he says: *“what do you want from the poor citizen “zawali” to do ? borrow , steal or apply for ANSEJ... tell me what will they do?”* In a dialogue between an administrator and an applicant, the comedian summarized youth’s struggle in relation to economic policies ANSEJ (a National Agency for the Development of Opportunities and Jobs for youth) saying: *“I want apply for ANSEJ For what: to do a project, open a company, build a factory? The young applicant replies: to buy the Feast’s sheep..... Stop your nonsense, the state’s budget won’t be enough for that... get lost!...(and the applicant cries).*

Fig.2. A capture of Youcef Zarouta’s YouTube Video ‘ Legislative Elections in Algeria’.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdQi5oaghgQ>

In the second video (Fig.2) entitled “les elections legislatives en Algéries” meaning Legislative Elections in Algeria was uploaded on May 3rd, 2017 with 2937859 views. Youcef Zarouta described the election campaigns in Algeria and exposed the malicious intentions and acts of political elites. He made a comparison between election candidates in Algeria and in Europe right from the start by saying: *“ when in Europe candidates are known for having diplomas and certificates in medicine and in scientific laboratories, Algerian candidates have certificates too...yes!!they have: birth certificates..”*

The video also sheds light on the deterioration of politics in Algeria, the speeches that include empty discourse, vulgar and insulting words underestimating the people’s minds; and also unacceptable acts of candidates when they prepare for their campaigns: *“Their posters are everywhere on bottles, tramways, walls, stores and even on dumpsters ...in fact, this is their right place ..This is where they belong!”*, *“My main focus is on the deputies who are seen only few days in their towns bombarding people with empty promises and then when in parliament they vote for clear restrictions and measures implemented against citizens. You are pathetic...they all lie they Don’t care about people, they just want power”*

The video finishes with the YouTuber Zarouta’s clear message with a deep tone saying: *“To make it short, I am not going to vote... when elections come you remember me but when it ends you forget about me... so I am not voting... and if you too are not: support me , like and share*

this video so that they know it's not only me but we are many ...Peace"

4.2. Study Two: Ouled El Bahdja stadium songs

Football songs and chants uploaded on Youtube and sung by supporters in the terraces and benches of stadiums are an expressive art genre around the world; and can get beyond expressing loyalty to the football club but a dissent and protest arena.

Fig.3. A capture of Ouled El Bahdja's YouTube video "La Casa Del Mouradia"



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHZviPhZQxs>

The video of the song entitled "La Casa Del Mouradia" (Fig.3) means the house of the government EL Mouradia was uploaded on April 14th 2018 with 11 million views, referred to "the Palace of El Mouradia"; the official residence and the workplace of the president in Algeria. The title draws a comparison to the famous Spanish Netflix series " *la Casa de Papel*"¹ depicting episodes of gangsters' robbery of money. The video's image is black background with lyrics and lines in red. The words sung with the use of one instrument sound that of a guitar. The song started expressing of the sense of bewilderment, anxiety and despair of the singer as a young Algerian and moves to voicing up the sentiment of strong discontent of the whole society from the living standards, and this is reflected in the lines:

*"The first hours of dawn and I didn't fall asleep
I got consumed little by little
Who's the reason and who's to blame?
We are fed up with this living"*

Ouled El Bahdja's song mainly targeted the government and the political authorities and elites. The lyrics are, therefore, a mere exposure of the dictatorial plot of the Bouteflika's ruling government for twenty years. Ouled El Bahdja rejected the regime for extending terms without people's consent and exposed the fabricated plot of the bloody ten years of terrorism and crime. Themes like: Criticism and accusations of this government's corruption, involvement in acts of robbery of the country and serving their personal interests even on the expense of fooling the public opinion; when hiding the former president's severe health's situation are described in details and pointed at as conspiracy plot saying:

*"The first we can say it ended
They fooled us with the black ten years(al ochriya)*

¹La Casa de la papel or Money Heist in English is a Spanish series produced by Spanish author Alex Pina was diffused on Netflix TV on May 2nd, 2017. It depicts a group of thieves who take innocent people as hostages to manipulate the police to obtain money and in the meantime several acts of tortures and crimes occur.

*In the last the story was unfold
La casa del Moradia
In the third the country got bad
From the personal interests
In the fourth the puppet died and the case is still going on
And the fifth is following
Between them it is a conspiracy”*

Fig.4. A capture of Ouled El Bahdja’s YouTube Video “Final Say”



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_oFC5isVR8

In the music video “Ultima Verba” (fig.4) uploaded on February, 17th, 2019, the song reached 15 million views. The song was released and uploaded on YouTube 5 days before the February 22nd, 2019’s massive protest in the Algerian Streets to oppose Abd El Aziz Bouteflika’s extended fifth term. This song was later performed by the Algerian and International rapper “Soolking, with some additions of the rapper’s own words and a second title “La Liberté” meaning freedom was played in radio’s taxi’s amusement parks, homes and even in wedding ceremonies; a song that depicted Algerian youth’s anguish from the government. Ouled El Bahdja’s song “Ultima Verba” was described in the description box as:

“We chose “Ultima Verba” as a title for our song from Victor Hugo’s poem “Derrière Parole” meaning the last words for the thematic similarities. It resembles a trial picturing the power behind the walls of exile and a revolting response against the policy of the herd, and also a striking warning and a translation of the people’s voice and a confirmation of values of citizenship and freedom.”

The lyrics of this song tackled different themes, as it moved from describing the darkness, marginalization and oppression of the Algerian people that drove them to seek death testifying:

*“They made the poor(zawali) adores death”
The illusion you have drawn in the minds of the people
Gets coloured only with words
And this what happens to me when the glass spills over
My heart from hurt is still awaken writing these words
They hid the sun and left us underground
Don’t cry my country hardships will end”
We are here there is no doubt”
Free the hostage(my country)
Free the deceased (my country : marhouma)”*

Ouled El Bahja had also moved from expressing grievances of people that fuelled the sense of nationalism and union to exposing the corrupt government and the political elites and holding

them responsible for decisions that destroyed both the economy and deteriorated people's living:

"Let the government fall and those who built the highway

They hid the sun and left us underground

Those who sucked blood, sucked our petroleum"

Finally, This study examined the impact of YouTube entertainment videos ,created by Algerians, on youth's social and political awareness. The findings of this study are compatible with previous research . Since the prevalence of internet made social media outlets such as Facebook and Youtube as a primary resource of news and information in Algeria (Zaghlami, 2019) . Algerian Youtubers and content creators, tackling social and political issues shaped in the mould of entertainment videos, scrutinized the period between 2014 and prior to the 2019 massive protest in Algeria that rejected former president Bouteflika's running for a fifth term. The themes presented in the Youcef Zarouta and Ouled El Bahdja's selected videos covered three major themes that highlighted social and political issues exposing political figures and decisions that were the centre talk of the Algerian society are: the deterioration of politics , the social grievances and youth's awakening messages. Content creation culture through YouTube revolving around major social and political issues in the society , views rate and public opinion feedback, Algerian youth as users and consumers of this platforms have the opportunity to expand their awareness, participation and a potential access to political process (Bennett, 2008)

5.CONCLUSION:

This study remains exploratory using a limited number of videos for the time limit of the study. Instead, It aimed to provide some initial ideas focusing on trending videos produced by young Algerian content creators in the midst of social and political turmoil in Algeria. Entertainment videos in the mould of comedy and music has an impact on youth's awareness by depicting social and political topics that raise youth's awareness and also demonstrate the rise of online politics in Algeria(Turkheimer, 2007).In this vein, YouTube provides Algerian youth with a space for self-expression and a platform to disseminate information and a public sphere for criticism whether through satirizing or chanting fearlessly to speak up for youth's concerns in this digital age. This study , based on the findings, provides essential data for future research and suggestions that can be used by Algerian YouTube content creators to incorporate constructive topics promoting an active participatory culture, encourage education experts to assess YouTube content and provide needed information for Algerian youth to shape their opinion correctly; as well as, to persuade policy makers to gather online feedback about youth political interaction and interest to involve them in decision making in this digital age.

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