Review MECAS V° 22/ N°1 / June 2026

Digital storytelling of the Algerian destination by international YouTubers

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Received date: 29.03.2026, Accepted date : 06.05.2026, Publication date: 02.06.2026

Abstract:
This study examines how the YouTube creators Ahmed Elbadawy, Joe Hattab, and IShowSpeed contribute to a positive and multidimensional representation of Algeria. Adopting a qualitative and interpretative approach, the research aims to explore the discursive, visual, and symbolic mechanisms through which these videos help shape Algeria's image internationally. It focuses on analyzing how the content produced by these videographers participates in a digital nation branding strategy, distinct from official narratives. The study highlights how individual content creators can act as cultural mediators, promoting Algeria's image and soft power on the global stage. By combining education, immersion, and emotional engagement, they produce a coherent, attractive, and exportable image of Algeria, challenging traditional stereotypes and enhancing its international visibility.
Keywords: Tourism, digital nation branding, digital storytelling, YouTubers, brand image.
Jel Classification Codes: D83, F59, L82, M31, Z32, Z33.

Introduction:

In the context of media globalization and the accelerated circulation of digital images, the construction of a nation's image is no longer the sole responsibility of states or public institutions. Instead, it now emerges through a multiplicity of actors and discourses circulating within the global sphere (Anholt, 2007, p. 4). Within this logic, digital content creators, particularly YouTubers, have become central actors in producing and disseminating national representations. Their travel videos go beyond simple personal or tourist narratives, actively contributing to the global construction of a country's image.

In this context, Algeria, long underrepresented or associated with limited media imaginaries, has undergone a notable revalorization through content produced by international creators. These audiovisual productions fit into a contemporary dynamic of decentralized territorial communication, where a country's image is shaped not only by institutions but also by individual actors with substantial online

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visibility. In this sense, they exemplify a form of informal nation branding, where national attractiveness relies on experiential, emotional, and embodied narratives rather than conventional promotional strategies (Anholt, 2007, p. 75).

Through varied formats, documentary vlogs, viral content, or everyday immersive experiences, these YouTubers offer multiple interpretations of Algeria as a destination. Their contribution is evident in the international visibility they provide for the country, the diversity of audiences they reach, and the credibility of their external perspectives based on firsthand travel experiences. Coming from different countries and reaching diverse audiences, these contemporary influencers help introduce Algeria to a broad transnational public. Their distinctiveness lies in their ability to entice and attract rather than impose (Nye, 2004, p. 6), which gives these actors and their content a strategic dimension in terms of soft power.

From this perspective, this study aims to highlight the growing role of digital content creators in promoting Algeria's international image. This raises a central question: How do the videographic productions of these YouTubers contribute to an informal "nation branding" strategy by mobilizing narrative and emotional devices specific to digital cultural mediation and reconfiguring international perceptions of Algeria?

Addressing this question involves analyzing the hybrid communicational framework of these influencers, situated at the intersection of tourism, entertainment, and digital cultural mediation, and capable of contributing to the construction of a coherent, attractive, and globally exportable image of Algeria.

Thus, the objective of this analysis is to understand how these actors, through their distinct narrative styles, contribute to the symbolic revalorization of Algeria within the global media landscape. It involves examining the experiences depicted in their videos to demonstrate how these productions serve as new vectors for constructing national image in the digital age.

1- A Diversity of Influencer Profiles:

Following our exploratory survey on the social media platform YouTube, we identified a total of 20 YouTube channels that have dedicated at least a few long videos to Algeria. Examining these channels, which produce content favorable to Algeria as a tourist destination, reveals a variety of profiles in terms of audience size, editorial strategies, levels of influence, and specialization. They highlight several complementary dynamics in the process of tourist rebranding for a destination that remains relatively underrepresented in the media. Analysis of these profiles shows three distinct categories of channels:

Firstly, channels with very large international audiences serve as levers of global visibility, even if Algeria appears only sparingly in their content. Creators such as IShowSpeed, Joe Hattab (19.9M subscribers), or Ahmed Elbadawy (1.42M) have very broad audiences exceeding one million subscribers. Although the number of videos dedicated to Algeria may be limited, their potential impact in terms of international visibility is considerable, as they have significant dissemination power through massive and highly engaged communities. Their videos can generate strong viral effects and reach audiences outside traditional tourist circuits. In this sense, the vlog acts as a tool for rapid exposure, capable of sparking curiosity and interest on a large scale, thereby contributing to repositioning the country's image on the international stage.

Secondly, there are mid-tier influencer channels with between 100,000 and 600,000 subscribers, such as Tibijones (570k), FitClaire (522k), BenNco (334k), or Dabble and Travel (622k). These travel-focused creators publish several videos dedicated to Algeria and maintain loyal, engaged communities, which promotes broader dissemination. By producing multiple videos about Algeria, these creators offer a more nuanced and immersive representation of the country. They highlight landscapes, cultural heritage, and local experiences, helping to deconstruct certain stereotypes and enhance the destination's appeal. In this context, the vlog becomes a narrative and experiential tool, enabling viewers to imagine themselves traveling and to perceive Algeria as an accessible and authentic destination.
Finally, other channels such as Monor, TravelTomTom, or Bakisurlaroute have smaller audiences compared to the first group but produce a significant volume of content about Algeria. Their contribution is not negligible, as they help promote the destination by increasing its visibility among diverse audiences.
Overall, these channels constitute a strategic instrument for tourist rebranding. The vlogs gradually contribute to redefining Algeria's image, transforming it from a little-publicized destination into a territory of discovery, authenticity, and unique experiences. For the purpose of this analysis, we focus exclusively on three channels selected for their very large audiences: namely, IShowSpeed[2], Joe Hattab[3], and Ahmed Elbadawy[4].

Table: High-audience YouTube channels featuring positive content about Algeria

Channel Name	Subscribers (in millions)	Numbers of videos on Algeria	Average video duration	Total views
IShowSpeed	51,3 M	2	2h54mn	+ 14,3 M
Joe Hattab	19,9 M	4	16,5mn	+ 21,2 M
Ahmed Elbadawy	1,42 M	10	20mn	+5,2 M

Source: Prepared by the author

2- Three Narrative Models for Promoting Algeria:

The analysis of videos produced by Joe Hattab, IShowSpeed, and Ahmed Elbadawy highlights three distinct narrative models, which together contribute to constructing a positive image of Algeria within the framework of digital nation branding. These approaches, although differing in form and style, converge toward the same objective: producing an attractive, accessible, and exportable representation of the country in the global media space (Anholt, 2007, p. 75).
The documentary model embodied by Joe Hattab relies on structured, educational, and historically grounded storytelling. The creator adopts an explicit mediator role, guiding viewers through historical events, sites of memory, and national symbols. This approach gives the content an educational and identity-building function, articulating narrative, imagery, and contextualization. It aligns with the concept of cultural mediation as defined by Davallon, which aims to "make cultural content

[2] https://www.youtube.com/@IShowSpeed/search?query=algeria
[3] https://www.youtube.com/@JoeHattab/search?query=Alg%C3%A9rie
[4] https://www.youtube.com/@AhmedElbadawy1/search?query=ALGERIE

accessible to wider audiences" (Davallon, 2003, p. 37). Furthermore, the use of structured storytelling refers to the construction of foundational narratives as described by Benedict Anderson, where the nation is imagined through shared stories (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). The visual staging of monuments and symbols, using wide and aesthetically composed shots, also participates in a process of mythologization in the sense of Roland Barthes, transforming historical elements into signs carrying a collective imaginary (Barthes, 1957, p. 117). This model thus produces a coherent, legitimate, and culturally valorizing representation of Algeria.

In contrast, the viral and emotional model developed by IShowSpeed relies on spontaneity, interaction, and emotional intensity. The content is structured around immediate reactions, unexpected situations, and direct exchanges with locals, generating strong audience engagement. This approach corresponds to Henry Jenkins's notion of participatory culture, where audiences are no longer mere receivers but active participants in the circulation of content (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). Here, Algeria's image is constructed through emotion and personal experience rather than through the explicit transmission of knowledge. This logic also aligns with Guy Debord's analysis of the society of the spectacle, where reality is mediated and transformed into a visual and emotional experience (Debord, 1967, p. 12). By emphasizing spontaneous interactions and moments of conviviality, this model enhances the country's attractiveness, making it appear lively, accessible, and human, especially to a young and globalized audience.

The immersive model championed by Ahmed Elbadawy focuses on everyday life, lived experience, and cultural proximity. The creator highlights ordinary practices, transportation, accommodation, food, and social interactions to produce a sense of realistic immersion. This approach represents implicit cultural mediation, where understanding emerges from experience rather than explanation. It aligns with Michel de Certeau's perspective, for whom everyday practices constitute essential forms of social meaning-making (de Certeau, 1980, p. 91). Moreover, the emphasis on economic accessibility and the simplicity of the experience aligns with the principles of experiential tourism as developed by Pine and Gilmore, where tourism value resides in lived and memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). This model helps construct an image of Algeria as authentic, accessible, and close to everyday reality.

Although stylistically different, these three approaches share a common goal: enhancing Algeria's image, strengthening its cultural and tourist appeal, and producing an exportable and positive narrative in the global media space. Each illustrates a specific register of nation branding: educational documentary, emotional virality, and experiential immersion. Together, they offer a plural and complementary representation, combining information, emotion, spectacle, and authenticity (de Certeau, 1980, p. 91)—three essential dimensions in the contemporary construction of territorial attractiveness (Anholt, 2007, p. 78). In sum, these approaches demonstrate how content creators contribute to redefining national representations, producing a plural, dynamic, and deeply human-centered image.

3- Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research is based on a qualitative interpretive approach, aiming to understand the discursive, visual, and symbolic mechanisms

through which the videos contribute to the construction of Algeria's image. The main objective is to analyze how the content produced by Joe Hattab, IShowSpeed, and Ahmed Elbadawy contributes to a form of digital nation branding, while also representing a type of cultural mediation specific to digital platforms. This approach follows a comprehensive logic, focusing not on measuring quantitative effects, but on interpreting representations, narratives, and mediated experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3).

The analyzed corpus consists of all the videos (16) created by these three content creators about Algeria. These videos cover various aspects of the country: historical and architectural heritage, natural landscapes, social practices, gastronomy, mobility, and interactions with locals. Each video is approached as a complete communication device, integrating narration, visual staging, cultural symbols, and lived experience. This aligns with Stuart Hall's work on representation, which emphasizes that media do not merely reflect reality but construct it through systems of meaning (Hall, 1997, p. 25).

The analysis primarily relies on the theoretical framework of nation branding, as conceptualized by Simon Anholt, who defines it as the set of strategies aimed at constructing a coherent, positive, and competitive national image on an international scale (Anholt, 2007, p. 4). From this perspective, national identity is seen as a symbolic capital that can be mobilized in global communication, tourism, and cultural diplomacy strategies (Anholt, 2007, p. 75). The videos are thus analyzed as forms of informal nation branding, where the country's image is produced not by institutions but by individual actors, through experiential narratives and immersive storytelling devices.

The study relies on a thematic and cross-cutting reading of the corpus. Several analytical categories were identified both inductively and deductively, including hospitality, gastronomy, heritage, authenticity, economic accessibility, landscapes, and social interactions. These categories allow for the identification of recurring elements that contribute to constructing a positive image of Algeria. This approach aligns with qualitative content analysis methodology, where the goal is to detect regularities, discursive patterns, and narrative structures (Bardin, 2013, p. 125).

Furthermore, the analysis incorporates a narrative dimension, focusing on the storytelling techniques used by the creators. As Paul Ricoeur emphasizes, narrative constitutes a fundamental mode of organizing experience and constructing meaning (Ricoeur, 1983, p. 85). In this context, the videos are examined as media narratives structured around travel experiences, encounters, and discoveries. This approach enables an understanding of how Algeria's image is built not only through informative content but also through emotions, perceptions, and narrative framing.

Our approach also considers the experiential dimension of the content, in line with Pine and Gilmore's work on the experience economy, which highlights that value lies in lived and memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). The videos are thus analyzed as immersive devices, inviting viewers to "experience" the country vicariously. This immersion is further reinforced by social interactions, which can be interpreted through Bourdieu's concept of social capital, where human relationships constitute a valued symbolic resource (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 2).

The analysis adopts a comparative perspective, allowing for the identification of both convergences and specificities among the three creators. While their styles differ—documentary, viral, or immersive—they all contribute to a positive

reconfiguration of Algeria's image. This convergence is interpreted as the result of a hybrid communication device situated at the intersection of tourism, entertainment, and digital cultural mediation. In this sense, the methodology allows for an understanding of the complexity of contemporary processes of national image construction in the era of digital platforms.

4- A Convergent Revalorization of Algeria's Image:

Despite their different narrative styles and approaches, the three creators (Joe Hattab, Ahmed Elbadawy, and IShowSpeed) converge in promoting a positive, rich, and largely underestimated image of Algeria. This convergence fits within a process of social construction of reality, as defined by Berger and Luckmann, where representations of the world are produced and stabilized through discourse and social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 13). This complementarity fully illustrates contemporary logics of nation branding, where national image is shaped through a plurality of actors and narratives (Anholt, 2007, p. 75).

In this dynamic, Joe Hattab provides historical and cultural depth through a structured narrative focused on heritage, the war of independence, and national symbols. His approach aligns with explicit cultural mediation, in which the creator acts as an intermediary between the viewer and national history, making complex content accessible to a wider audience (Davallon, 2003, p. 37). In contrast, Ahmed Elbadawy favors a realistic and practical immersion, based on daily life, transportation, costs, and local experiences. This approach helps construct a perception of accessibility and authenticity, consistent with the principles of experiential tourism, where value resides in lived, concrete experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). Finally, IShowSpeed, through his viral and emotional style, generates immediate international visibility by transforming spontaneous interactions into highly engaging content. This strategy corresponds to the participatory culture described by Jenkins, where emotion and interaction promote the massive circulation of content (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3).

IShowSpeed explicitly expresses this reinterpretation when he states that "Algeria is slept on," implicitly critiquing dominant media representations. Joe Hattab, for his part, emphasizes the country's historical and cultural richness by highlighting emblematic sites such as the Casbah of Algiers, Cirta, and Tipaza, situating Algeria within a historical depth that reinforces its symbolic capital, in a logic similar to Braudel's "longue durée" (Braudel, 1985, p. 85). Ahmed Elbadawy conveys this revalorization through an emotional and immersive register, expressed in spontaneous statements such as "Algeria is beautiful, magnificent, and vast," contributing to an affective aestheticization of the territory.

These convergent narratives do more than represent Algeria—they actively help redefine it. By combining narrative, imagery, and emotion, these videos produce an alternative symbolic reality, countering negative stereotypes and forms of media invisibility. This dynamic aligns with Stuart Hall's analyses, which highlight the central role of media in constructing cultural meanings (Hall, 1997, p. 25).

Furthermore, this revalorization relies on a highly immersive and experiential dimension. While Joe Hattab uses structured storytelling centered on memory and symbols, IShowSpeed and Ahmed Elbadawy prioritize lived experience and spontaneity, producing a sense of proximity and authenticity. This articulation

allows for the construction of an image that is simultaneously plural and coherent: Algeria appears as an ancient, culturally rich, welcoming, and visually attractive country.

In addition, this convergence contributes to a reconfiguration of the country's international image, long shaped by representations associated with the "Black Decade." Whereas traditional media often focused on narratives of conflict or instability, these digital contents offer a positive narrative alternative centered on heritage, human interactions, and tourist experiences. This transformation fits within the logic of territorial spectacularization, where the country is staged as a visual and emotional object, consistent with Guy Debord's analyses of the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967, p. 12).

By presenting Algeria as a "continent-country" through wide shots, visual contrasts, and dynamic editing, the YouTubers transform the national space into an immersive experience designed to generate desire and curiosity in viewers. This convergence demonstrates the effectiveness of horizontal communication, where individual actors on digital platforms participate in redefining a nation's international image. By combining historical depth, practical immersion, and viral visibility, these three productions form a complementary narrative ecosystem, in which each register reinforces the others: the lived authenticity portrayed by Ahmed Elbadawy legitimizes the heritage staged by Joe Hattab, while IShowSpeed's virality amplifies the global reach of these representations. This articulation exemplifies a form of horizontal, decentralized, and non-institutional nation branding, characteristic of contemporary digital environments.

5- Hospitality as a Central Identity Marker:

Hospitality emerges as a structuring thread in the videos of Joe Hattab, IShowSpeed, and Ahmed Elbadawy, constituting a significant symbolic and cultural capital that actively contributes to building a positive image of Algeria. This human dimension is consistently staged and highlighted, revealing a salient identity trait that is immediately perceptible and understandable to an international audience. In IShowSpeed's videos, interactions with locals reflect spontaneous and warm welcome: citizens offer him dates and milk, invite him to share meals, or give gifts without expecting anything in return, summed up in his striking phrase: "The love in Algeria is crazy." Ahmed Elbadawy also emphasizes this generosity through repeated experiences of solidarity, highlighting frequent refusals of payment and spontaneous assistance: "everyone refuses that I pay" and "every Algerian wants to help me." Meanwhile, Joe Hattab films convivial scenes in markets, streets, and public spaces, where ordinary interactions become central narrative moments, reinforcing the impression of an accessible and welcoming society.

Within this framework, the practices of mutual aid, generosity, and conviviality depicted in the videos are not merely individual behaviors but constitute a collective symbolic resource, mobilizable in constructing the country's image. Hospitality thus becomes a strategic intangible capital, contributing to the enhancement of the destination and improving its international reputation. It generates a sense of trust and security, essential elements in the tourist perception of a territory.

Moreover, this centrality of human experience aligns fully with the logic of experiential tourism theorized by Pine and Gilmore, where a destination's value lies in the quality of lived experiences and emotions evoked (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). In the videos, hospitality is not a mere cultural backdrop but becomes a fully immersive experience, lived and shared with the viewer. Interactions with locals create a strong emotional dimension, transforming viewing into an experiential projection: the spectator does not simply observe the country but imagines being welcomed there.

This narrative of hospitality also aligns with Nye's concept of soft power, in which a country's attractiveness relies on its ability to appeal through its values, culture, and social practices rather than coercive means (Nye, 2004, p. 5). By highlighting the generosity and warmth of Algerians, the videos produce an affective and engaging image of the country, enhancing its appeal in the global media space. The emotion generated by these interactions thus becomes a strategic communication lever, helping to positively influence international perceptions.

Hospitality, therefore, is not merely a cultural or folkloric trait; it emerges as a central identity marker, recurrently and coherently mobilized by the three YouTubers. It constitutes a key lever of nation branding, presenting Algeria as a warm, accessible, and socially rich country. This affective dimension, combined with immersive experiences and authentic interactions, contributes to constructing a positive, coherent, and exportable image of the country. Despite differing narrative styles, Joe Hattab, IShowSpeed, and Ahmed Elbadawy converge in staging hospitality as a central element of valorization, offering viewers privileged access to Algerian culture through human experience.

6- Gastronomy as a Vector of Cultural Immersion

Gastronomy occupies a central place in the videos of Joe Hattab, IShowSpeed, and Ahmed Elbadawy, serving as a key anchor for cultural immersion and the valorization of Algeria. Far from being merely descriptive or tourist-oriented, it becomes a narrative, sensory, and identity-driven tool, allowing local culture to be conveyed to an international audience. In IShowSpeed's videos, culinary enthusiasm is expressed spontaneously and vividly through immediate reactions such as "The food is delicious here" or "Couscous is so good," reflecting an authentic and accessible experience. Ahmed Elbadawy emphasizes the generosity and abundance of Algerian dishes, highlighting the intensity of the culinary experience with expressions like "You feel like a lunch meal" evoking a full immersion in the local food culture. Joe Hattab, for his part, adopts a more aesthetic and heritage-focused approach, showcasing dishes through carefully composed visual shots, transforming gastronomy into a cultural and symbolic object.

This staging of gastronomy can be interpreted as a fundamental marker of cultural identity. As Fischler notes, "to eat is to incorporate a culture symbolically" (Fischler, 1988, p. 275). Eating practices go beyond satisfying a biological need; they structure social relations, group affiliations, and value systems. In the analyzed videos, gastronomy thus becomes a privileged medium of cultural mediation, making Algerian identity visible and understandable through a universal experience: taste. Scenes of tasting, close-ups of dishes, and interactions around

meals create a mediated sensory experience, inviting viewers to "taste" the country vicariously.

Moreover, this valorization of gastronomy aligns fully with the logic of experiential tourism, where lived experience and emotions form the core of a destination's appeal (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). Food becomes a medium for immersion, enabling the culture to be experienced in a concrete and embodied way. It reinforces authenticity by showing everyday practices, local recipes, and consumption habits rooted in the social context. This dimension also resonates with MacCannell's analysis (1976, p. 91), which highlights tourists' search for experiences perceived as authentic, in contrast to standardized forms of mass tourism.

Furthermore, gastronomy functions as a lever of soft power, in Nye's sense, since it allows a country to appeal and influence through cultural and symbolic means (Nye, 2004, p. 11). By highlighting the richness, diversity, and conviviality of Algerian culinary practices, the YouTubers contribute to creating a positive and desirable image of the country. Food thus becomes a universal language, capable of transcending linguistic and cultural barriers and generating a direct emotional connection with the viewer.

In these videos, gastronomy extends far beyond its nutritional function to become a strategic tool for nation branding. It contributes to constructing an immersive, sensory, and affective image of Algeria by combining pleasure, authenticity, and cultural discovery. Through the integration of visual aesthetics, gustatory experience, and social interactions, the three creators produce a coherent and appealing narrative, in which Algerian cuisine emerges as a central vector for promoting the territory and its cultural identity.

7- Heritage and History as Vectors of Cultural Identity

The historical and heritage dimension constitutes a fundamental pillar in constructing Algeria's image through the videos of Joe Hattab, IShowSpeed, and Ahmed Elbadawy. However, this dimension is mobilized differently depending on the narrative styles and media logics specific to each creator. In Joe Hattab's work, the approach clearly follows a quasi-documentary logic, where national history—particularly the War of Independence (1954–1962), national symbols, and emblematic figures—occupies a central place. This narrative gives the vlog both an educational and identity-building function, inviting viewers to understand the historical foundations of the Algerian nation. The staging of iconic sites, such as the Maqam Echahid (Martyrs' Monument), filmed in wide shots and accompanied by explanatory commentary, contributes to constructing a foundational national narrative in the sense of Benedict Anderson, for whom a nation is built on shared imaginaries (Anderson, 1983, p. 35). This dynamic is reinforced by the mobilization of collective memory, corresponding to what Jan Assmann describes as cultural memory stabilized and transmitted through symbolic media (Assmann, 1992, p. 78). Moreover, the transformation of monuments into emotionally charged symbols reflects a process of mythologization, as described by Roland Barthes, in which material objects become signs conveying a collective imaginary (Barthes, 1957, p. 45).

In contrast, Ahmed Elbadawy adopts a more immersive and sensory approach to heritage. By exploring sites such as the Casbah of Algiers, he does not simply convey historical information but seeks to make history felt through lived

experience. His expression “Si je ferme les yeux, j’imagine la révolution” illustrates this ability to embody the past, transforming heritage sites into living, emotional spaces. This approach aligns with implicit cultural mediation, where heritage is experienced through daily practices and social interactions, echoing Michel de Certeau’s analyses of the lived use of space (de Certeau, 1980, p. 91). Heritage is no longer just shown—it is experienced, making history accessible in an intuitive and sensitive way.

IShowSpeed, on the other hand, favors an approach based on spontaneity and immediate emotion, with minimal historical context. His discovery of sites relies primarily on personal feelings, live reactions, and interactions with the environment. This posture produces a more horizontal form of mediation, where viewer identification is guided more by emotion than knowledge. Such content can be analyzed through Stuart Hall’s concept of cultural mediation, which emphasizes that cultural representations are always the result of interpretation and translation for a specific audience (Hall, 1997, p. 45). Here, Algerian culture is conveyed in a simplified and immediate way, promoting accessibility and emotional engagement.

These three approaches thus illustrate different levels of cultural mediation: Joe Hattab acts as an explicit mediator, structuring and contextualizing historical discourse; Ahmed Elbadawy functions as an implicit mediator, emphasizing experience and immersion; while IShowSpeed positions himself as an external observer, whose spontaneous perspective offers minimal but highly emotional mediation. This diversity of mediations contributes to a broader and complementary diffusion of Algeria’s heritage image.

Furthermore, the question of national identity is constructed through a balance between cultural diversity and historical continuity. By incorporating multiple influences (Berber, Arab, Ottoman, European) while maintaining coherent identity, these representations resonate with Homi K. Bhabha’s analyses of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). However, this hybridity is strategically framed here to produce a readable, stable, and valorizing image, suitable for global media discourse and the logics of nation branding.

Finally, highlighting architecture and urban heritage contributes to an aestheticization of the territory, where buildings, alleys, and monuments become visual signs of modernity, history, and refinement. This transformation of space into an attractive visual object aligns with Guy Debord’s concept of the society of the spectacle, where reality is mediated and staged to generate desire and attention (Debord, 1967, p. 12).

Thus, the historical and heritage dimension, while a common thread among the three creators, unfolds according to complementary logics combining cultural education, sensory immersion, and spontaneous emotion. These different strategies contribute to constructing a positive, coherent, and plural image of Algeria, in which history and heritage become essential levers for nation branding and digital cultural mediation.

8- Economic Accessibility: An Attractive Argument:

Among the three YouTubers studied, Ahmed Elbadawy stands out for his particular focus on the economic aspects of travel. He emphasizes the financial accessibility of Algeria, citing examples such as “$7 for 5 hours of train” or “$25 per room,” frequently highlighting that “Algeria is not expensive.” This emphasis goes beyond

practical information: it serves as a narrative and symbolic lever, constructing the image of a destination that is accessible, realistic, and welcoming, helping to reduce psychological barriers for potential visitors.

This strategy aligns closely with the logic of democratized tourism, where the value of the experience and cultural immersion outweigh financial constraints (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 47). Highlighting moderate costs not only makes the country desirable but also attainable for a global audience, thus enhancing the effectiveness of grassroots nation branding (Anholt, 2007, p. 12).

Moreover, the perception of economic accessibility contributes to the authenticity of the experience: viewers are invited to share in the daily life of locals, use public transportation, and stay in modest accommodations, which heightens the sense of immersion and cultural proximity. According to Dean MacCannell (1976, p. 97), this approach corresponds to authentic experiential tourism, sought by travelers wishing to escape standardized tourist circuits.

Thus, economic accessibility becomes a strategic tool in constructing Algeria's image, complementing other emphasized registers: hospitality, gastronomy, and sensory immersion. This narrative dimension helps present Algeria as an attractive, inclusive, and concretely accessible country, reinforcing its appeal and credibility among a diverse international audience.

9- Narrativizing Authenticity:

Authenticity serves as a central thread in the narrative construction of Ahmed Elbadawy's, IShowSpeed's, and Joe Hattab's videos. All three creators highlight local living spaces, markets, artisans, narrow alleyways, and spontaneous interactions with residents to project the image of an Algeria that is preserved, vibrant, and culturally rich.

Ahmed Elbadawy explicitly emphasizes this dimension by underscoring the intact and genuine nature of the places he visits. IShowSpeed foregrounds unscripted exchanges with the local population, revealing the natural warmth and hospitality of Algerians, while Joe Hattab combines authenticity with cultural mediation to depict a living country through its traditions and heritage. This diversity of approaches illustrates the plurality of cultural mediation forms (Davallon, 2008, p. 52): explicit for Hattab, implicit for Elbadawy, and emotional and spontaneous for IShowSpeed.

This pursuit of authenticity aligns with Dean MacCannell's analysis (1976, p. 92), according to which tourists seek "real" experiences that escape standardized circuits and artificial staging. Here, authenticity is constructed by emphasizing local practices, gastronomy, and ordinary social interactions, which function as signifiers of a credible and immersive lived experience. As Fish (1990, p. 14) notes, authenticity is not merely an objective quality but a socially constructed perception based on the coherence between lived experience and cultural expectations.

The videos analyzed thus transform everyday life into an experiential and sensory adventure (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 47), combining immersion, spontaneity, and closeness to local life. Algeria emerges as a real, welcoming, and culturally rich territory, reinforcing its tourist and symbolic appeal. This authenticity becomes a strategic lever for grassroots nation branding (Anholt, 2007, p. 12), highlighting the human and cultural dimensions of the country in a direct way that international viewers perceive as credible.

Conclusion:

The cross-analysis of videos produced by the three creators, Ahmed Elbadawy, Joe Hattab, and IShowSpeed, demonstrates that the representation of Algeria on YouTube is characterized by a multidimensional and positive valorization. The content combines hospitality, gastronomy, heritage, authenticity, and economic accessibility, while adopting distinct narrative approaches: documentary, emotional, and immersive. Together, these videos contribute to an informal yet effective form of tourism marketing, capable of sustainably reshaping the country's international image and creating a coherent and appealing narrative for a global audience (Anholt, 2007; Nye, 2004).

The study highlights that these productions represent a contemporary form of digital nation branding, based on a hybridization of tourist storytelling, lived experience, and cultural mediation. The combination of structured narration, sensory immersion, and emotional virality illustrates how individual creators act as full-fledged cultural mediators, able to produce a positive and tangible perception of the country, in contrast to traditional stereotypes or media invisibility (Davallon, 2008; Jenkins, 2006).

Operating within the frameworks of soft power and global symbolic competition, these videos demonstrate that a nation's attractiveness no longer relies solely on official institutions. They show how digital platforms enable a horizontal and participatory construction of national image, where human experience, creativity, and emotion become strategic levers of communication (Debord, 1967; Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Far from being mere entertainment, these creators' videos function as genuine communicational devices, capable of redefining a country's image on the international stage. They reveal a profound transformation in the ways states are represented in the digital era, where heritage, daily life, and culture are mobilized as tools for nation branding, soft power, and sustainable tourism promotion.

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