

***Algerian women's Vlogs: A critical Analysis***

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**Received:** 31 / 01 / 2024**Accepted:** 29 / 04 / 2024**Published:** 30 / 06 / 2024**Abstract:**

Algerian women's uses of video-blogs is increasing, especially in personal blogging, and the transfer of details of daily life to others, this is largely related to the great attractiveness of social media platforms, especially visual ones. This study came to reveal the representations that Algerian women bloggers have about themselves, Thus, they market their image through videos published on YouTube and Instagram, the number of which is in the analysis sample 100 videos from 20 blogs, by invoking the theory of impression management by its owner Erving Goffman.

The results showed that the women blogger in Algeria focus on building their self-impressions with their audience on physical aesthetic standards, with a clear neglect of moral, educational and pedagogical standards.

**Keywords:** *self impression, blogs, vblogs, Algerian women bloggers*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human existence, various means of communication have been used to connect, communicate, and document moments in time. These captured moments, preserved through various media, help individuals construct their self-image, represent themselves, share details of their lives with others, and convey their identity. From the enduring cave and cavern paintings to the diaries hidden in drawers as mementos, to the present-day selfies on Instagram and Snapchat, and Facebook updates and stories, humans continue to experience successive revolutions, forever chronicled by the transformative impact of media on their lives. However, today, an exceptional phenomenon has emerged due to the ability granted by video blogging for users to share their self-representations with a larger audience than ever before.

User-generated content creation through video blogs, or Vlogs, has become one of the most popular forms of content worldwide. In essence, video blogs refer to those blogs created in a format that deviates from text-based blogging. Content is produced through video blogging, and it is considered a form of online publishing. Video blogging is accessible to all, especially given the freedom and ease of access to the web and simple video production tools (such as a computer, webcam, or smartphone). With the capabilities of mobile phones to create and publish content, most video blogs are typically composed of ordinary individuals, focusing on personal topics and issues. This is the core and foundation of vlogs.

From a gender perspective, studies do not indicate significant differences in the use of video blogs by males and females, whether as recipients or as content creators. On the contrary, some studies suggest that women's dominance in this field is emerging on the horizon, with the growth of feminist blogging on YouTube. Numerous statistics indicate that women have a strong presence in the blogging world. For example, in France, women represent 54% of bloggers, and most bloggers in the literary field are women who use blogs for pure literary writing or literary criticism. A recent American study found that women's engagement on social media platforms, particularly blogs, is increasing and evolving. Women are the primary drivers of the digital revolution and internet explorers. Approximately 56% of adult women use social networks to stay connected with people, while only 46% of men interact with social media sites.

It is not an exaggeration to say that women in Algeria – in the absence of serious statistics – fiercely compete with men in the world of vlogs. YouTube channels and the video platform on Instagram, in particular, have witnessed a remarkable increase in the creation of channels and stories by Algerian women who share details of their daily lives, experiences, and specific skills. Each of them seeks to convey these to others, whether their followers or viewers in general. Some may not have specific content other than revealing their private lives to others and gaining more followers for financial or fame-related purposes. However, in the process, they contribute to constructing their self-image by showcasing details of their lives through videos. They create representations of themselves that may not correspond to reality. Studies show that the image marketed about women, in general, is excessively stereotypical, emphasizing their physical appearance and visual pleasure. This is a historically ingrained view of women throughout the ages. Mental representations of women have long been associated with beauty and physical appearance, to the extent that the media and, subsequently, digital media have become primary agents in constructing these perceptions.

Based on the preceding discussion, we question the actual roles played by Algerian women bloggers on YouTube and Instagram, particularly in constructing their self-representations and the representations of Algerian women in general. This leads us to pose the main research question:

What are the most prominent features of the representations of Algerian female video bloggers (on YouTube and Instagram) about themselves?

## 1. Literature Review:

Three previous studies were relied upon and can be listed as follows:

### **1.1 Study entitled: Identities in Flux: An Analysis to Photographic Self-Representation on Instagram** (Sofia P. Caldeira, 2016, pp. 135-158)

"Fluid Identities: An Analysis of Self-Representations through Photography on the Instagram Application"

This study aimed to identify the uses of photography as a mechanism for self-representation through the Instagram application, to compare traditional uses with new practices that have emerged on this application, and to understand the underlying motivations behind its uses, with a particular focus on its functions in identity construction, especially those that help create visual self-representations in the internet environment. The study indicated that identity construction is understood as an active performance, where each user crafts their own identity and invents a concept of themselves in every moment they post their daily photos and display them to others through their personal account.

Content analysis methodology was applied to a sample of 104 user accounts between June 2013 and June 2014. Among these users, all still images (all video posts were excluded, as they did not fit the study) found in their accounts were analyzed, totaling 11,872 images, taking into account the variables of age, gender, and user location.

The most important results were as follows:

-Although digital technologies, especially social networks such as Instagram, have brought about a series of transformations in the practice of photography as we knew it before, the art of photography itself is a deep-rooted art with solid foundations and practices. Therefore, new technologies are understood through their practice as a continuation of the developments in photography itself, and there is no conflict between traditional models of photography and those provided by Instagram. The same can be applied to the use of images in constructing self-representations and one's image of oneself, and it helps achieve this long-standing desire.

-Self-representation, in particular, is considered one of the most important functions of Instagram, as it is an active application that is carefully used to create a kind of daily log and archive of users' daily presence through it, and to record events through their pages. By creating a regular and intensive photographic portfolio, users create a concept of identity that emphasizes the present moment as they post their photos weekly and sometimes daily.

-The owners of the accounts whose photographic images were analyzed to reveal self-representations in them carefully select camera shooting modes and appearances, thus abandoning spontaneity for more dazzling and impressive photos to attract followers and influence them. This is where the concept of selectivity and the virtual self that does not match the real self in reality appear.

### **1.2 Study entitled: Impression Management within Instagram Stories: A Phenomenological Study** (Vidi Sukmayadi, 2019, pp. 216-224)

Impression Management within Instagram Stories (A Phenomenological Study)

This study started from the assumption that the pattern of impression management in using Instagram Stories has become an integral part of the uploaded content, to achieve the highest self-satisfaction for users and the maximum impact on viewers as well as their virtual followers. It aims to explore the strategies of motivation and impression management for Instagram Stories users. The researchers interviewed 30 influencers on the Instagram platform who are active in updating their content on the stories feature. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to learn about the interviewees' expertise and levels of awareness in producing their content on the internet as part of managing their impressions.

The most prominent results of the study were as follows:

- Instagram Stories provided users with the opportunity to control information related to managing views and interacting with users.

- The interviewees used emotion as an important framework in the Instagram storytelling experience and employed a set of strategies to achieve this, including: sharing personal emotional moments, getting close to friends, family, and pets, and frequently using various "emoji" slogans to express their real feelings.

- The presentation of stories on Instagram - in the study sample - was characterized by humor and a sense of humor, as all interviewees in the survey admitted that Instagram stories were smoother, more peaceful, and more relaxing than other social applications, which were often filled with political discussions and mistreatment.

### **1.3 Study entitled: How May I Impress You? A Content Analysis of Online Impression Management Tactics of YouTube Beauty Vloggers**

#### **How Can I Impress You? Content Analysis of Online Impression Management Techniques of YouTube Beauty Bloggers**

This study aimed to investigate how beauty bloggers on YouTube use impression management tactics to convey the intended image of themselves in the internet environment. This was done by analyzing their self-behaviors, where two researchers analyzed the content of one hundred top-rated YouTube videos by bloggers who used English as their primary display language.

The results revealed that bloggers engaged in all four behavioral strategies of self-presentation (verbal expressions, non-verbal cues, posed performances, and selective behaviors) in the videos analyzed. Also, the common shared feature of the top trending visual blogs was that they had rich and varied content, suggesting that viewers prefer content over the structure and format of the blog. Finally, most presenters displayed endearingly eccentric personality traits, and viewers preferred watching blogs with natural props and in simpler digital environments.

Today, video bloggers participate in the process of building and presenting themselves and forming their identities online, and they often succeed in gathering groups of viewers on their channels that revolve around these identities. They continue to practice their activities through video, through dialogue and cooperation with subscribers, fans, and followers. Due to the widespread global popularity of YouTube and dedicated video platforms

**2. Definition of Terms :** The study was based on a number of key terms, which are :

**2.1 Self-Representations:** This refers to the regular cognitive formation of all the conscious perceptions and concepts of the individual, their personality, and the set of evaluations specific to this personality. It also refers to the perceptions that the individual forms about the characteristics of their self, their relationships with others, and the different aspects of life, along with the values associated with these perceptions.

In this study, self-representations specifically refer to those judgments and mental impressions, whether old or inherited, positive or negative, with all the values and dimensions associated with these perceptions. They are the judgments that summarize the image of Algerian women as presented in their video blogs.

**2.2 Video Blogs :** Many sources reveal that the origin of the word « blog » or the term « blogs » appears in the Arabic language in several places to refer to several different meanings and connotations : such as « don » meaning above, and « diwan » meaning a collection of newspapers, which is a Persian word, as Abu Ubaidah says. It also refers to the notebook in which the names of the army and those entitled to grants are written, as Ibn Al-Athir says, and « dona tadweentan » means to collect and has five meanings : scribes, their place, the notebook, every book, and a collection of poetry. Thus, the meaning and connotation of the blog is close to

its programmatic and technical form, as it brings together within the folds of its electronic pages, according to the field provided by hosting sites and platforms, a number of diverse media materials.

As for other languages such as English, French, and others, the meaning of the word « blog » or « blogs » comes with other names than what is common in the word « blog » in English or « blogue » in French... The word «

Facebook introduced its live streaming service in April 2016, and more than 3.5 billion videos have been streamed on the medium to date. If you divide that number over the past two years, that translates to 4,794,520 video broadcasts per day, 199,771 per hour, and 3,329 per minute around the world. Instagram Stories also quickly doubled its user base since its launch in August 2016. Statista says that Instagram Stories' daily active users grew from 100 million to 300 million in a single year. By July 2018, that number had climbed again to 400 million.

Many people confuse the terms "vlog" and "blog," believing that they refer to the same thing. However, they are actually different:

**2.3 • A vlog** is a type of blogging that uses visual content, such as videos, visual effects, and sound effects. The creator of this visual content shares the vlog after producing it on a video-sharing site such as YouTube or Instagram. There are many types of vlogs, which vary depending on the topic they cover. Some focus on sports, while others specialize in fashion and clothing, and still others deal with cooking and food preparation. However, the most popular type of vlog, and the one that vlogs were originally based on, is the one in which the blogger shares their daily events with their audience and followers.

- A blog, on the other hand, is another form and type of blogging. It is a type of blogging that relies on written text content, not visual or audio content. When the term "blog" was first used, it referred to websites or electronic blogs that their owners began creating to share their diaries, thoughts, and various opinions with a wide audience of readers, not only in their own countries but also from different countries around the world, thanks to the widespread reach of the internet.

Therefore, the word "blog" can be used to refer to websites that provide general or specialized digital content or in which their owners express their political, cultural, and social opinions and share their experiences and life stories with users (Khalid & Siddiqui, 2019, pp. 49- 77).

At the same time, it refers to digital articles that rely on written text content, which may include videos or audio clips but are primarily based on text rather than video or audio clips.

**2.4 Impression Management:** We mainly mean the theory of impression management that was popularized by the American sociologist Erving Goffman as a basic theory in analyzing the motivations and impressions of individuals in their various social interactions. The concept of impression management is based on several foundations, including "self-presentation or self-representations." Self-representations here refer to the activities that Algerian female bloggers on YouTube and Instagram carry out to generate a situational definition and social identity for themselves and present it to their audience of followers. This situational definition affects the diversity of interactions between the parties to the communication process (the blogger/audience/video content in the bblog)

### **3.The Path of Feminist Blogging in the Arab Region:**

Statistics indicate that the phenomenon of blogging is developing at a pace. According to "Technorati," an institution specializing in studies on blogs, a new blog is created every minute, and more than 1.2 million articles are published every day. Some blogs achieve high visit numbers that rival those of major media sites, with numbers ranging between 30 million and 100 million users.

Blogging's popularity grew in the 1990s after the spread of free specialized software such as

Blogger, Live Journal, and Weblogger, which allowed individuals to access the internet with ease. It can be said that the emergence of blogs went through three main stages:

The first stage: It began in the mid-1990s with the American blogger George Barr Gifford in 1994, who was behind the publication of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the private secretary of former US President Bill Clinton in 1994.

The second stage: This is the stage of the real birth of blogs and came after the events of September 11, 2001. During this stage, journalists entered the blogging arena, and blogs gradually began to gain their power. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was another reason for the spread of blogs, while some called them "racist war blogs." Since then, blogging has spread and become a popular and influential means of communication.

The third stage: This is the stage of maturity, and its indicators began in the second half of 2004, as blogging turned into a global phenomenon and became more widespread starting in 2005.

In a study conducted by Molino et al. in 2008, they examined "the potential uses of user-generated videos by women, how they create their own video blogs, and the areas in which they use them as well." The study results showed that the number of male bloggers is greater than female bloggers. However, women who create video blogs on a regular basis "tend to have a more personal video blog than male bloggers, and more women created video blogs that interacted with the YouTube community." (Molyneaux, O'Donnell, Gibson, & Singer, 2008)

Han et al. (2011) also analyzed online performance with a focus on gender and the differences between males and females in online presentation and reception spaces. These researchers found that technology and the internet, in particular, act as male-dominated spaces, partly due to the fact that women have historically and culturally been associated with domestic work, meaning that their need to learn technical skills was not a priority. According to the same study, some feminist intellectual trends argue that technology oppresses and excludes women because of its male bias. Many studies have shown that blogging is seen as a gendered technology that marginalizes women. Because of this, women have turned to using blogs, especially visual blogs, to make them a medium for female performance (Hans, 2011, pp. 302-323), marketing women, their status, and their roles in society, and delving into the marginalized spaces of their roles, those that have been hidden by men and the logic of male domination.

## **Caresteristics of the Algerian Woman's Self-Presentation through Vlogs:**

### **1. Beauty and Fashion:**

The content of the analyzed videos reveals an excessive focus on topics related to women, beauty, and fashion, which raises questions about the construction of self-image according to this criterion, what it can produce in terms of general self-performance and identity formation. Women's blogs on beauty and fashion often revolve around the centrality of fashion in the lives of Algerian content creators and the audience of potential consumers of digital videos, considering that most of the leaders of the Algerian trend in video blogging are actresses, artists, broadcasters, and makeup professionals... It includes: fashion trends, fashion style consultations, and daily practices related to clothing and its rituals. They are presented as the daily personal practices of the female blogger, and they certainly have extensions in the social and psychological circumstances related to her. In this regard, Algerian female bloggers on YouTube and Instagram rely on telling their stories and personal experiences in this field. They take pictures of themselves in fashionable clothes, targeting women in particular, in addition to teaching them the arts of makeup, beautification, and cosmetology. It is very similar to women's magazines in the tabloid press, where overwhelming beauty, body, and dazzle are the foundations of marketing and the criterion for reaching the masses.

## 2. Influencers and Personal Video Content Creators in Algeria:

These female bloggers - in Algeria as in other countries of the world - are called "social influencers" or "beauty influencers," two terms that entered the popular lexicon during the past decade when YouTube became increasingly popular. Social media influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent brand advocates who shape public attitudes through blogging, tweeting, and other social media use (K, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011, pp. 90-92). Although some researchers view social influencers as real competitors to institutions and companies, others recognize the potential for forming alliances with this type of blogger to promote a brand or institution. Due to the persuasive power of social media influencers, techniques have been developed to identify and track influencers relevant to products related to fashion, makeup, and all women's needs to look more beautiful and stunning. Therefore, owners of related companies and institutions rely on Algerian influencers on social media networks, especially through video blogs, to market their products and reach the largest possible audience, especially if the audience itself is made up of women, as consumerism increases in cosmetics, fashion, and clothing. The majority of these bloggers work on contracts to promote their products.

Daily observation and critical analysis of the content of videos by influencers in Algeria reveal a slight superiority of YouTube over Instagram in the number of videos that were monitored during the analysis period compared to Instagram. This is a clear indication of the rise of Instagram, which has become a strong competitor to YouTube in terms of the size of the following and its spread in Algeria, especially in recent years. This is due to the features that have increased its popularity and spread. Although it has a variety of features, its interface generally allows individuals who have created free accounts to upload media – both photos and videos. Users can then edit the media they upload using filters and organize them with location information and hashtags (a word or phrase preceded by a hash symbol, primarily used on social media platforms to identify posts about a particular topic).

Users can also make their profiles public or private. The difference is that with a public profile, the user's photos/videos can be viewed by every other user, while with a private profile, users can approve who they want to be able to view their posts. Users of this application can also browse other users' photos and videos by searching for hashtags, in addition to navigating and interacting with other users' photos and videos by clicking on buttons that allow them to « like » a post or add a text comment to a post. When a user « follows » another user, it means that they add the user's photos and videos to their page.

Despite the aforementioned features, « Instagram Stories IGTV » is now one of the most popular features on the app. Using it, bloggers can post photos and videos in a separate feed of content within the app. These types of posts can be viewed by other users for 24 hours after the original posting time. According to Instagram, 500 million people used Instagram Stories every day in 2020.

In fact, we cannot cross the threshold of talking about Instagram without delving into the principle on which this application was founded, which is based on showcasing beauty and searching for its apparent components, starting from its reliance on the image primarily and its presentation of filters that contribute to improving the quality of photography and making it more attractive, and ending with the excessive focus on women and physical display at the expense of other components and content.

The analyzed videos reveal that Algerian female bloggers are influenced by the way the application itself tries to impose on users, as most of them follow the stories in it, exposing the ways in which we manage our lives and organize our homes, and pay attention to the smallest details that add beauty to our daily lives, even the ways in which we drink cups of coffee, to displaying our destinations and tourist trips. In this regard, academic Sarah Frier points out in her famous book *No Filter «The Inside Story of Instagram»* that this application continuously

provides users with visually appealing images of life and showcases their favorite hobbies. Instagram has forced people to « increasingly make their lives post-worthy, » as the neglected details of their daily lives have become highly regarded. She points out how free time has become a symbol of status – and how it has gradually affected the economy and the world of marketing, as people began to prefer trying products that they saw through it and through their favorite social media stars. Frier says that more of us now, for example, « follow weekend getaways in increasingly picturesque locales, » partly because the photos taken at those locations look great on the app...

It's not just our lives that have to look interesting on Instagram – our faces do too. The popularity of photo-editing apps, such as Facetune, which digitally shrinks noses, slims waists, and airbrushes blemishes, has boomed. (One plastic surgeon told Frier that his clients now come in requesting impossible-to-achieve tweaks inspired by the app.)

### **3. From « Commodity Feminism » to « Post-Feminism » :**

Roberts (1998) pointed out that since the nineteenth century, women in Europe and the world began to play dual roles in the consumer culture that evolved from industrialism, as these women were used as consumers and as commodities (Roberts, 1998, pp. 817-844). This is still the case today, and it has even become more acute with the growth of social media networks, the development of video marketing and advertising, and its attraction to a wide range of users around the world. It is true today, and studies indicate that women are victims of consumer culture – both materially and economically.

Visual blogging spaces in Algeria, especially those related to women, their presence, and their use of video blogs, indicate significant changes in the commodification of female spaces in the digital world and the prevalence of a huge consumerist tendency, which is indicated by the increasing rates of use of blogs by Algerian women and those who constitute an artistic or social symbol in society, in order to market goods and services and alienate them from the main concerns that they should assume in order to increase their empowerment and defend their causes. In order to commodify the presence of female video content creators in particular, women are often presented in their modified image, with a lot of makeup and little thought, with shapely bodies and empty minds, with an aura of coquetry and pampering, and electronic flirting, which has become a feature of many Algerian female video blogs, especially those in which women are employed to promote goods and advertise various consumer products.

Algerian female video bloggers play the role of a model because of their behaviors towards viewers who follow them regularly. In order to achieve satisfaction, ambition, and influence, they deliberately publish personal photos, ideas, and opinions among followers. The weakness of viewpoints for these people contributes to creating beliefs and prejudices.

In general, the Algerian female blogger enjoys great popularity, and the more opportunities she has to be heard by a large audience and presented as a motivating model for her audience, the more opportunities there are for influence and spaces of influence. In this regard, Albert Bandura explains the reason by saying that modeling is an important element in the process of media consumption and the effects and consequences resulting from following a role model. Among other functions, Bandura mentions motivation, the best reward, inhibition, value formation, and behavior, which are the most common reasons for sharing content (for bloggers) and consumption (for viewers).

## **II. Results and discussion :**

Algerian women navigate the tension between conforming to beauty standards and expressing their personal identities on YouTube and Instagram in a variety of ways:

- Some women choose to conform to beauty standards in order to gain social acceptance and approval.\*\* This may involve using makeup, filters, and other tools to alter their

appearance to fit in with societal expectations. These women may also post content that is focused on beauty and fashion, and they may promote products and lifestyles that are associated with beauty and desirability.

- Other women choose to challenge beauty standards and express their personal identities in ways that are unique and authentic.\*\* This may involve posting content that is not traditionally considered to be beautiful, or that challenges traditional notions of beauty. These women may also use their platforms to speak out against sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

- Many women navigate the tension between conforming to beauty standards and expressing their personal identities by finding a balance between the two.\*\* They may choose to conform to some beauty standards in order to feel confident and accepted, but they may also express their personal identities through their content and their interactions with others.

Some specific examples of how Algerian women navigate this tension include:

- Using makeup and filters to enhance their appearance, but also posting photos and videos of themselves without makeup or filters\*\*.

- Posting content that is focused on beauty and fashion, but also posting content that is focused on their personal interests and experiences\*\*.

- Promoting products and lifestyles that are associated with beauty and desirability, but also using their platforms to speak out against sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

- Creating content that challenges traditional beauty standards, such as posting photos and videos of themselves in natural settings or without makeup\*\*.

- Using their platforms to share their stories and experiences as women in Algeria, and to challenge stereotypes and prejudices\*\*.

Overall, Algerian women navigate the tension between conforming to beauty standards and expressing their personal identities on YouTube and Instagram in a variety of ways. Some women choose to conform to beauty standards, while others choose to challenge them. Many women find a balance between the two.

### III. Conclusion:

Algerian women are increasingly using vlogging as a platform to express their individuality and share their perspectives, experiences, and knowledge with a wider audience. They employ various strategies to present themselves, including authenticity and transparency, showcasing cultural identity and heritage, advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment, sharing beauty and fashion tips, documenting travel and exploration, demonstrating culinary skills, and providing educational and personal development content.

Through their vlogs, Algerian women challenge stereotypes and societal norms, promote positive self-image and self-acceptance, and inspire other women to pursue their dreams and aspirations. They use their platforms to raise awareness about important issues, such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and the need for equal opportunities.

The study highlights the growing influence of social media and digital platforms in shaping self-expression and identity construction among Algerian women, particularly in a context where traditional media may have limited representation of women's voices and perspectives. Vlogging provides Algerian women with a powerful tool to bypass traditional gatekeepers and connect directly with their audiences.

The findings of the study contribute to a broader understanding of the role of digital media in empowering women and promoting gender equality in Algeria and beyond. They shed light on the diverse and multifaceted ways in which Algerian women use vlogs to present themselves and engage with their audiences, while also highlighting the challenges and opportunities they face in the digital sphere.

The study of Algerian women's self-presentation through vlogs provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of gender and digital media in Algeria. It demonstrates the potential of vlogging as a tool for self-expression, empowerment, and social change, while also highlighting the need for continued efforts to address gender inequality and discrimination in both the online and offline worlds.

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