



Rakmana

Journal of Media and Communication Studies

Volume 05 | Issue 02

December 2025

Pages 118 - 136

ISSN-2773-4285

EISSN | 2830-8417

Legal Deposit | 07/2021

Address | 11, Dodo Mokhtar Road, Ben Aknoun, Algiers

Fax | (023) 23 88 50

Phone | (0561) 62 29 75

Received on 10/26/2025

Accepted on 11/28/2025

Published on 12/28/2025

Corresponding author |
Nafissa Mizab

ASJP
Algerian Scientific Journal Platform



Women's Press in Algeria: A Critical and Analytical Reading of Cultural Identity Representations across Historical Transformations

Nafissa Mizab

PhD Candidate, University of Algiers 3 (Algeria)

nafissamizabitfc@gmail.com

Abstract

This study offers a critical discourse analysis of the representation of Algerian women's cultural identity in women's magazines across three historical phases: the single-party era, the pluralist transition, and the contemporary period. Based on a qualitative examination of six representative publications (Algerienne, Basma, Anoutha, Jalila, Dzariat, and Maw'id Hawaa), the research traces the evolving ideological and symbolic constructions of female identity within shifting socio-political and media landscapes.

The findings indicate that women's media discourse in Algeria has primarily functioned as a mechanism for reproducing political, economic, and symbolic hegemonies, rather than as a neutral mirror of social reality. Over time, representations of women have shifted from nationalist mobilisation aligned with state ideology, to constrained socio-moral portrayals during the pluralist phase, and more recently to commodified or traditionalised depictions in contemporary media.

Overall, the analysis highlights the persistence of stereotypical and homogenised narratives that inadequately reflect the linguistic, cultural, and social diversity of Algerian women, despite intermittent attempts at renewal. The study concludes by emphasising the need for a transformative media discourse that transcends ideological and commercial constraints, positioning women as reflexive cultural agents capable of reshaping collective consciousness.

Keywords: Women's press, cultural identity, Algerian women, critical discourse analysis, media representation, symbolic hegemony.

1. Introduction

Women's press in Algeria has historically served as a discursive space reflecting the country's evolving social, cultural, and political dynamics. Since independence, it has played a central role in shaping and circulating representations of Algerian women's identity. The portrayals of women have been continuously reconfigured in line with dominant power structures and shifting political–economic logics.

Algerian women's journalism has evolved through three key phases — the single-party, pluralist, and contemporary periods — each reflecting distinct socio-political and cultural transformations. Across these trajectories, the cultural identity of Algerian women has remained a central yet contested theme.

This study is guided by the following research question: **How has Algerian women's journalism represented women's cultural identity across different historical stages, and how have these representations evolved within changing socio-cultural contexts?**

To address this question, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

1. Women's journalism in Algeria has articulated a selective vision of cultural identity—privileging certain symbolic markers (language, religion, heritage, values) while marginalising others, thereby producing partial and ideologically framed representations of Algerian womanhood.
2. The magazines tend to reproduce stereotypical and reductive portrayals that obscure the linguistic, geographical, and social diversity of Algerian women, reinforcing homogenised conceptions of femininity.
3. Media discourse often embeds implicit ideological meanings that reproduce political, economic, or religious-cultural dominance, reflecting its dependence on prevailing power structures.
4. The visual and editorial design of women's magazines operates as a semiotic space that reinforces aesthetic and cultural norms of dominance, rather than fostering pluralism or critical engagement.

Methodologically, the study adopts a historical–analytical approach to examine how representations of women's cultural identity have evolved across political and media contexts.

The corpus comprises six women's magazines representing three historical stages:

- **Single-party phase (1980–1991):** *Algérienne* and *Basma*
- **Pluralist phase (1991–2003):** *Anoutha* and *Jalila*
- **Contemporary phase (2016–2023):** *Dziriat* and *Maw'id Hawaa*

A purposive sample of selected issues from each publication was analysed to explore how women's cultural identity is represented and how these meanings have shifted over time within changing ideological and socio-cultural landscapes.

The study aims to identify the evolution of women's cultural identity representations in Algerian women's journalism, uncover the ideological and symbolic patterns that shaped them, and propose a critical framework for renewing media discourse on gender and culture.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This article is grounded in a critical analytical approach that draws upon Stuart Hall's theory of representation (Hall, 1997) and the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) frameworks developed by Norman Fairclough (1995) and Teun A. van Dijk (1998). It seeks to understand how Algerian women's cultural identity has been represented in women's magazines across different historical stages.

According to Hall (1997, pp. 15–17), representation is not a mere reflection of reality but a process of meaning production constructed through language, images, and cultural symbols within specific social structures. The media, therefore, do not simply mirror the image of women as they are but actively reconstruct these images in ways that serve the interests of dominant social forces. From this perspective, analysing media representations becomes a crucial entry point for understanding the cultural and symbolic relations that shape collective self-awareness.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as articulated by Fairclough and van Dijk, focuses on uncovering the ideological structures embedded in media language and examines how discourse functions as a mechanism of power, domination, or symbolic resistance. Language is thus viewed not as a neutral tool but as a social practice that produces meaning within contexts of power and control (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998).

By integrating these two theoretical frameworks, the study explores how Algerian women's identity is linguistically and symbolically constructed in women's media discourse, while accounting for the political and social contexts that have shaped these representations across successive historical periods.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 The Concept of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity occupies a central position in the social and human sciences, as it reflects an individual's awareness of belonging to a system of values, symbols, and traditions that shape both personal and collective existence across time and space (Arraq, 2008). According to the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), it represents the core of personality and a key determinant of behaviour and decision-making. UNESCO similarly defines it as a sense of belonging to a linguistic, religious, or national community shaped by history, language, and tradition (Al-Mahrouqi, 2004).

In Western thought, Stuart Hall (1996) conceptualises cultural identity as a socially constructed and evolving process, while Anthony Giddens (1991) views it as a reflexive and continuously reconstituted project of the self under conditions of globalisation. Yahyaw (2018, p. 190) synthesises these views by framing cultural identity as a dynamic interplay between fixed elements that ensure continuity and fluid aspects that reflect historical and social change—making it an open and creative project of renewal.

This conceptualisation informs the analysis of how Algerian women's magazines construct and negotiate identity across historical contexts, highlighting the tension between ideological continuity and symbolic transformation.

2.2.2 The Concept of Women's Press

Defining women's press presents an epistemological challenge due to the diversity of approaches in media studies. Some definitions focus on audience characteristics, others on authorship, and some on thematic orientation. Salah Abd al-Latif (2002) describes it as journalism directed primarily toward women, addressing themes such as fashion, beauty, health, and domestic life. Other scholars trace its origins to early female contributions to journalism, such as Mariana Marrash's article in 1869, though not published in a specialised women's periodical (Klass, 1996, pp. 70–71). Karami (2008, p. 60) notes that the first genuine women's periodical was issued by a woman herself.

Farouk Abu Zaid (1986, p. 100) distinguishes between women's sections in general newspapers and specialised magazines exclusively addressing women's issues—both serving as mirrors of women's changing social roles. Ijlal Khalifa (1985) argues that the essence of women's journalism lies not in the gender of its producers but in its thematic content, with family journalism representing a natural extension due to women's central role in family dynamics.

Taysir Abu Arja (2000, p. 197) adds a functional dimension, defining women's journalism as a medium that reflects women's lived realities and contributes to shaping their awareness and challenging stereotypes. Nassar (2002, pp. 300–301) expands the concept to include all media forms dealing with women's issues, even if not produced by women, paving the way for the emergence of family press with broader societal relevance.

From these perspectives, women's press is not merely media targeting female readers but a symbolic field for constructing discourse that reflects societal representations of women's roles and contributes to reshaping their cultural and social identities within the media sphere. This understanding guides the study's analysis of how Algerian magazines have historically framed and redefined femininity.

2.2.3 Critical Media Discourse

Critical media discourse refers to an analytical perspective that treats media language as a socially embedded practice saturated with ideology and power relations. Emerging from the tradition of critical linguistics in the 1970s (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, Trew), this approach evolved into the broader field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), which examines how discourse functions as a mechanism of domination or symbolic resistance (van Dijk, 2014, p. 19).

The critical approach focuses on revealing mechanisms of control encoded in media texts through specific linguistic and narrative choices, and on analysing the dialectical relationship between text and social or political context. Norman Fairclough (1995) and Teun A. van Dijk (1998) emphasise that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) exposes the implicit ideological structures underlying communicative practices, viewing discourse as both a generator of meaning and a site of symbolic struggle (Shoman, 2007, p. 76).

This framework enables the study to interrogate how Algerian women's magazines embed ideological meanings in their representations, and how these discursive practices reflect broader socio-political transformations and power dynamics.

Together, these conceptual lenses—cultural identity, women's press, and critical media discourse—provide an integrated framework for examining how Algerian women are represented in media texts, and how these representations reflect and reproduce broader ideological and socio-cultural dynamics across historical periods.

3. Evolution of the Representations of Algerian Women's Cultural Identity across Media Phases

The historical trajectory of women's journalism in Algeria reveals profound transformations in the representation of women, closely intertwined with the country's shifting political and social dynamics.

Across decades, the image of Algerian women has evolved in tandem with broader changes in the national project and the media landscape. These transformations can be traced through three key stages:

the single-party era, characterised by ideological mobilisation and national reconstruction;

the pluralist phase, marked by the emergence of multiple voices and relative openness;

and **the contemporary stage**, defined by consumerist and aesthetic tendencies that mirror the transition toward a market-oriented media system.

3.1 Representations of Algerian Women's Cultural Identity in the Women's Press during the Single-Party Era (1980–1991)

During the single-party era (1980–1991), women's media discourse was highly ideological and mobilising in tone, as women's representations were instrumentalised within the socialist nation-building project. Women were portrayed not as autonomous cultural agents but as symbols of struggle and national reconstruction.

Magazines such as *Algérienne* and *Basma* functioned as platforms for disseminating official state discourse, promoting values of patriotism, discipline, and social commitment. Through the archetypes of the militant, the worker, the educator, and the mother, they conveyed the image of the Algerian woman as both a moral guardian and a productive citizen—an image fully aligned with the political vision of women's roles as contributors to, rather than shapers of, the national project.

The figures of the working woman and the teacher symbolised socialist modernity and continuity with the revolutionary legacy of the *mujahida* (female freedom fighter). However, their representation remained framed by a discourse linking public participation to duty—toward both the nation and the family—seeking to reconcile “active citizenship” with “committed femininity.” In this sense, the official stance on women positioned them as instruments of the national cause, not as independent producers of meaning.

Women's magazines also highlighted female participation in national events and cultural gatherings organised by the National Union of Algerian Women, portraying them as agents of mobilisation engaged in literacy campaigns, voluntary work, and community development programmes. This reflected the patriotic conception of female identity dominant at the time—where women were integrated into public life as executors of a political mission, not as partners in its design.

On the linguistic level, Arabic occupied a central place as the core of national identity—a symbol of sovereignty and cultural decolonisation. The press presented Arabic as a marker of authenticity and independence from colonial influence. This was evident in editorials such as “The Birth of a Law... The Birth of Identity”, which celebrated the adoption of the Arabisation Law as a national milestone and criticised forces hostile to Arab culture. The coverage of Arabic literature festivals and union-led cultural events reinforced Arabic as a vehicle of belonging and heritage, while entirely excluding Amazigh

language references—reflecting its ideological use to consolidate unity rather than represent cultural plurality.

Religion, meanwhile, occupied a complementary position within national identity. The ideal Muslim woman was portrayed as the virtuous mother, faithful wife, and conscientious worker—embodying modesty, dignity, and morality, drawn from both religious archetypes and historical models. This synthesis mirrored the slogan of the era: “The Algerian people are Muslim and belong to Arabism.” Religion appeared as a deeply rooted cultural force, often invoked to address women’s social issues through moral and scriptural reasoning. Articles such as “Women’s Right to Inheritance between Tradition and Sharia,” “Polygamy between Law, Religion, and Reality,” and “Women’s Property and What Is Said About It” typified this orientation.

Columns like “Problems Seeking Solutions” used Islamic pedagogy as a tool for moral and familial guidance, encouraging faith and religious education as remedies for social and emotional challenges. Readers’ letters frequently expressed strong religious sentiment, reinforcing the embeddedness of Islam within collective consciousness. Linguistic choices were heavily charged with religious and national vocabulary—terms such as dignity, struggle, sacrifice, duty, authenticity, and Islamic values—paired with criticism of “foreign” and “decadent” influences.

Culturally, even though the discourse did not explicitly address “cultural identity” as a plural concept, it nevertheless emphasised tangible and intangible heritage symbols—traditional clothing, crafts, folklore, popular songs, and national celebrations—as emblems of Algerian authenticity. Articles such as “Traditional Algerian Dress,” “Heritage Festivals and Women’s Creative Expressions,” and “Authenticity and Modernity: A Permanent Fusion” highlighted regional diversity and cultural pride. Reports from craft centres supervised by the National Union of Algerian Women celebrated artisanship as an expression of rooted identity. Photographs of craftswomen were accompanied by captions explaining the historical and regional symbolism of garments or artefacts, often framed by appeals to modernise traditional crafts without compromising their cultural essence. However, such representations rarely positioned women as cultural producers or interpreters of heritage—they remained custodians, not innovators.

Geographical representation extended beyond the urban woman, incorporating images of rural and working women through photo essays and field reports, such as “The Rural Woman in the Amsel Cooperative.” These depictions showcased women labouring alongside men in agriculture and industry, as well as participating in awareness campaigns on family planning and hygiene. This spatial diversity broadened the national image of Algerian womanhood, encompassing working-class, intellectual, and rural figures from across the country—yet still constrained by ideological framing that imposed a singular model: the patriotic, working, family-oriented woman devoted to nation and household alike.

Through a close reading of these magazines, it becomes evident that women’s periodicals of the single-party era were more than media outlets—they were feminist archives documenting crucial transitions in Algerian women’s social and cultural history. They preserved readers’ voices, recorded everyday concerns, and reflected a growing collective awareness, making them invaluable sources for understanding Algerian society from a gendered perspective.

Visually, the magazines adhered to a classical, text-dominated layout. When images appeared, they mostly depicted women in workplaces or at national and religious events, serving a documentary rather than aesthetic function. Photographs acted as visual evidence of women’s integration into the national project.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998), these publications reproduced relations of political and cultural domination through language and imagery. Women were constructed as objects rather than subjects of discourse, their agency confined within the linguistic and visual codes of state ideology. Thus, women's representation was characterised more by mobilisation and instruction than dialogue or diversity.

Notably, these magazines undertook significant archival work, recording first-hand testimonies of female revolutionaries such as Ben Arba Aïcha, Zhor Ounissi, Chama Boufji, and Julia Mebarka—making them rare repositories of women's participation in the liberation struggle, a practice later revived sporadically in magazines like *Maw'id Hawaa*, which featured interviews with figures such as Khadija Belkambour.

In light of Hall's (1997) theory of cultural representation, this discourse cannot be seen as a neutral reflection of reality but as a symbolic practice producing meaning within a system of political and cultural hegemony. Women's magazines in this period did not merely depict women—they constructed them symbolically as patriotic and religious subjects serving the state's nationalist project.

Consequently, the mobilising discourse of the 1980s laid the groundwork for subsequent transformations in the pluralist era, which diversified media references and opened limited space for alternative voices. By the late 1980s, amid political and economic shifts toward liberalisation, some publications such as *Algerienne* evolved from rigid ideological platforms into more family-oriented magazines—signalling an early adaptation to market logic and audience diversification. This transition paved the way for a deeper transformation in women's media discourse and its underlying representations of female identity.

3.2 Representations of Algerian Women's Cultural Identity in the Women's Press during the Pluralist Period (1991–2003)

Building on the mobilising discourse of the single-party era, the pluralist phase introduced a more nuanced and contested terrain of identity representation. The pluralist period in Algeria (1991–2003) marked a significant opening in both the political and media spheres, a transformation clearly reflected in women's magazines such as *Anoutha* and *Jalila*. These publications served as mirrors of a society in transition, capturing its contradictions amid democratic experimentation and the turbulence of the “Black Decade.”

Women's representations shifted from the singular, state-defined image of the mother, educator, and worker serving the one-party system to more diversified portrayals mediating between authenticity and modernity, conservatism and liberation. This evolution signalled a transition from the notion of “the dutiful woman” to that of “the self-aware woman.”

On the cultural and symbolic level, these magazines introduced a new archetype of the Algerian woman—educated, creative, and active in the cultural, political, and media spheres. This shift reflected the emergence of feminine subjectivity as an autonomous cultural force in public life. Articles and interviews, such as the *Jalila* feature with Anissa Boumediene and *Anoutha*'s profile “La réussite dans le monde du travail, des affaires et de la politique”, celebrated successful women in arts, academia, and leadership. Other pieces gave space to critical female voices advocating for equality and denouncing symbolic violence and gender discrimination, such as “Woman and Decision-Making” (*Anoutha*, 1991). These examples signalled a growing openness to rights-based and global discourses.

At the same time, religious representation was not excluded but rather recontextualised within a discourse seeking reconciliation between faith and modernity. The Muslim woman was portrayed as cultured, rational, and socially active, embodying both tradition and progress. This duality between “piety and openness” reflects what Hall (1997, p. 45) defines as “the rearticulation of identity through a constant negotiation between the self and the collective, the local and the global.”

On the linguistic level, the pluralist phase was characterised by bilingualism—Arabic and French—and occasional symbolic blending. Both *Revue Anoutha* and *Revue Jalila* published articles in French, such as “Être ou ne pas être ?” and “La Kahina, reine rebelle.” Amazigh, however, remained notably absent, while local dialects appeared sporadically in sections on customs, cuisine, or domestic life where lexical substitution was impractical. As Fairclough (1995) argues, this linguistic hybridity did not necessarily reflect cultural diversity; rather, it functioned as a discursive mechanism reproducing symbolic polarisation between Arabophone and Francophone orientations, turning language into an arena of ideological contestation.

On the religious–moral plane, the explicit moralism of the one-party period gave way to a subtler symbolic discourse that reflected both editorial prudence and the tense socio-political context. Articles such as “Al-Bukhari, Ibn Yaqzan and the Truthful Word” (Jalila, 1994) invoked “true and just Islam,” while interviews with intellectuals like Malek Bennabi expressed reformist religious sensibilities. In *Anoutha*, pieces like “Pluriel de Dames” criticised patriarchal misreadings of religion and called for the renewal of Islamic thought without confrontation. These veiled critiques illustrate what Fairclough termed “the covert circulation of power within discourse,” as editors navigated ideological boundaries while embedding subversive messages.

Visually, the magazines continued to feature traditional cultural symbols—dress, crafts, and culinary heritage—but reframed them through a modern lens. Articles such as “Why Not Be Proud of Our Traditions?” (Anoutha, 1992) encouraged adapting Algerian attire to contemporary life. *Jalila* included pages dedicated to embroidery, sewing, and interior decoration (Rubrique Les Patrons), presenting material heritage as a living component of modern feminine identity and aesthetic refinement.

Geographically, representation became narrower compared to the previous era, with coverage focused mainly on urban elites and limited references to rural or working-class women. This reflected both logistical constraints and editorial priorities, as the magazines increasingly addressed an urban, educated readership.

Economically, the integration of advertising content signalled a structural shift from political mobilisation to market orientation—especially in *Anoutha*, which began publishing advertisements for fashion, cosmetics, and household products. This evolution aligns with Hall’s (1997) notion of cultural hybridity, blending local identity with global consumerism to produce a hybridised form of media femininity.

Editorially, the magazines adopted more developed journalistic formats—editorials, analytical essays, interviews, and opinion columns—granting their discourse a more reflective and professional tone. Yet, as van Dijk (1998) observes, the absence of systematic source referencing and empirical grounding weakened the epistemic legitimacy of this discourse, making it more affective than analytical.

Despite these tensions, the pluralist phase remains a decisive turning point in the history of Algerian women’s cultural identity representation. It marked a gradual transition from nationalist mobilisation to a

diversified, self-reflective, and culturally plural discourse that cautiously engaged with modernity and global cultural flows.

3.3 Representations of Algerian Women's Cultural Identity in the Contemporary Period (2016–2023)

Building on the pluralist phase's tentative openness, the contemporary period reveals itself as a sharper bifurcation in identity discourse—between commodification and cultural preservation. The contemporary phase of Algerian women's journalism (2016–2023) marks a pivotal stage in which representations of women's cultural identity oscillate between two divergent tendencies: a commercial–aesthetic orientation that reconfigures cultural symbols into consumable, image-based commodities appealing to visual taste, and a documentary–ethical orientation grounded in religious and social values that seeks to reaffirm them within a modern media discourse. This duality is clearly embodied in *Dziriyat* and *Maw'id Hawwa*, the two leading women's magazines in Algeria over the past decade.

Dziriyat reveals multiple and often conflicting representations of Algerian womanhood. On one hand, superficial aesthetic portrayals dominate, focusing on the female body and traditional dress as visual or promotional devices devoid of deeper symbolic or cultural meaning. On the other hand, the magazine occasionally frames women as cultural agents through features on folk heritage and handicrafts, though these representations often display a form of cultural hybridity resulting from the intersection of local and Western referents. The discourse also mirrors modern social transformations by engaging with tensions between tradition and modernity—addressing issues such as women's dual roles at home and work, and the rise of hybrid festivities blending religious and consumerist practices.

By contrast, *Maw'id Hawwa* presents a more rooted portrayal of women's cultural identity, representing women as custodians of collective memory and transmitters of spiritual and folkloric heritage. Cultural and religious symbols such as *Yennayer*, *Mawlid al-Nabawi*, and Ramadan—along with traditional customs like henna, weddings, and folk attire—appear as tangible expressions of an enduring communal identity. The magazine emphasises the woman as mother, wife, and educator within a socially conservative framework, while simultaneously celebrating creative and intellectual women active in cultural and social life. This balance between authenticity and openness reflects an editorial philosophy that upholds tradition while acknowledging change.

However, the analysis of both magazines shows that the issue of cultural identity occupies a marginal position compared to entertainment and consumer-oriented content. In *Dziriyat*, identity is commodified—reduced to a marketing tool serving consumption and advertising—while *Maw'id Hawwa* adopts an instructional yet fragmented approach, treating identity as a set of moral guidelines rather than a critical cultural construct. This dynamic exemplifies Fairclough and van Dijk's notion of cultural hegemony, where meaning is rearticulated through dominant economic or social interests, turning identity into an instrument of symbolic power rather than a space of contestation.

On the linguistic level, *Dziriyat* exhibits pronounced code-switching between Arabic and French, occasionally integrating Amazigh and local dialects in festive or promotional contexts. Yet, this multilingualism functions aesthetically rather than semantically, reinforcing the magazine's commercial orientation. In contrast, *Maw'id Hawwa* relies primarily on Standard Arabic, with limited use of dialects or Amazigh in heritage-related features, thereby endowing its discourse with a documentary tone anchored in authenticity rather than globalisation.

In terms of religious and moral representation, *Maw'id Hawwa* adopts a moderate Islamic framework, maintaining regular columns on family, marriage, and work from both religious and social perspectives, and dedicating sections to religious holidays and fatwas. Conversely, *Dziriyat* treats religion in a symbolic and seasonal fashion—often as a decorative backdrop for lifestyle and beauty topics such as “Skincare in Ramadan” and “Eid Fashion.”

Geographically and culturally, *Dziriyat* centres on urban, modern, and cosmopolitan representations linked to Algiers and major cities, while *Maw'id Hawwa* devotes more attention to interior, southern, and Amazigh regions through field reports on local traditions, foods, and celebrations. Nevertheless, both magazines offer partial depictions that fail to encompass Algeria's full geographic and cultural diversity.

Regarding cultural symbolism, *Dziriyat* reappropriates traditional heritage through an aestheticised, market-driven logic, transforming folk dress and crafts into consumable visual commodities within fashion and décor features. *Maw'id Hawwa*, on the other hand, adopts a documentary–educational approach, framing heritage as shared cultural capital and reconstructing identity through collective memory. This dynamic exemplifies Hall's (1997) view of identity as a narrative construct shaped through discourse rather than an essential core—each magazine rearticulates cultural symbols in line with its editorial orientation: *Dziriyat* through the logic of the market, and *Maw'id Hawwa* through the logic of authenticity.

At the national and historical level, *Maw'id Hawwa* continues to valorise female revolutionary figures and national memory as vehicles for reinforcing belonging, whereas *Dziriyat* confines itself to aestheticised allusions to architecture and arts without explicit patriotic depth. Thus reflecting what may be termed the moral–national narrative of *Maw'id Hawwa* versus the aesthetic–consumerist narrative of *Dziriyat*, echoing Hall's assertion that history functions as a symbolic construct continually rewritten through representational practices.

Ideologically, the two magazines embody opposing orientations: *Dziriyat*—with its Amazigh–Western, Francophone-leaning outlook—tends toward a globalised discourse, whereas *Maw'id Hawwa*, rooted in an Arab–Islamic framework, promotes traditional values and social conservatism. This dichotomy exemplifies Hall's concept of representation under hegemony, wherein discourse does not reflect reality but reconstructs it according to the ideological parameters of dominant power—economic–consumerist in *Dziriyat* and religious–moral in *Maw'id Hawwa*.

Visually, layout and design serve as active agents of meaning-making. *Dziriyat* employs glossy, high-colour pages and advertising-saturated layouts, turning the magazine into a visual marketplace of femininity. *Maw'id Hawwa* favours smaller, content-driven designs aligned with its social and ethical narrative. As Fairclough and van Dijk argue, language and imagery operate as instruments of symbolic domination that shape perception and reinforce social hierarchies.

In light of these findings, it becomes evident that contemporary Algerian women's media reproduces a binary model of identity: the modern–global versus the traditional–ethical. *Dziriyat* embodies the consumerist, image-centred woman integrated into globalised market culture, whereas *Maw'id Hawwa* preserves the woman as a symbol of authenticity, faith, and collective belonging. Despite this contrast, both discourses remain limited by their lack of critical reflexivity and persistence of stereotypical patterns—confirming Hall's assertion that Algerian women's journalism continues to speak about women rather than from their lived experiences. The result is a mediated identity still struggling to articulate the full cultural and social plurality of Algerian womanhood.

4. Transformations in the Media Representation of Algerian Women's Cultural Identity

Synthesising the findings across the three historical phases reveals overarching transformations in the media representation of Algerian women's cultural identity.

The historical trajectory of Algerian women's journalism reveals a profound transformation in the media representation of women's cultural identity—from the era of national mobilisation to that of consumerist promotion, where the pluralist phase served as a transitional bridge between these two paradigms.

During the single-party period, magazines such as *Algerienne* and *Basma* portrayed women primarily as patriotic symbols and ideal citizens integrated into the nation-building project. In contrast, pluralist-era magazines like *Anoutha* and *Jalila* introduced a more diversified discourse that blended religious and social values with emerging debates on modernity and empowerment. In the contemporary phase, women's media discourse has become increasingly fragmented, oscillating between consumerist beautification in magazines like *Dziriyat* and moral-traditional instruction in *Maw'id Hawwa*, without either producing a balanced or critically engaged vision capable of reflecting Algeria's plural cultural identity.

A critical reading of this evolution indicates that the representation of women in Algerian women's journalism has remained bound by two enduring constraints: ideological hegemony and symbolic stereotyping. Across all periods, the female image has been instrumentalised within dominant structures of power—whether through the nationalist state, which framed women as “mobilising agents,” or the commercial media institutions that commodified them as “symbolic products,” or the moralistic platforms that idealised them as “ethical icons.”

Consequently, women have seldom been portrayed as autonomous, multi-layered subjects; instead, they have functioned as representational objects defined by power, economics, and the market. This dynamic aligns with Stuart Hall's theory of representation (1997), which posits that identity is not mirrored but constructed through discourse—continuously reshaped within systems of power and culture.

Moreover, throughout all historical stages, women's discourse in Algerian journalism has maintained a unifying tendency despite the country's deep linguistic, geographic, and social diversity. Amazigh, Arab, and Maghrebi pluralities often appear as decorative cultural markers rather than epistemic foundations of identity. Even in contemporary magazines that incorporate Amazigh or dialectal elements, these inclusions remain largely ornamental, functioning as aesthetic gestures devoid of genuine cultural grounding or critique—thus perpetuating a superficial representation of Algeria's multicultural reality.

It is also evident that women's journalism has gradually lost its collective and participatory ethos, which once addressed “Algerian women” as a unified national category. This has been replaced by individualised portrayals that highlight isolated models of success or idealised and celebratory images disconnected from women's complex lived realities. The absence of a sustained critical perspective has further diminished women's journalism as a potential site of intellectual reflection on questions of identity, emancipation, and citizenship, reducing it instead to descriptive or promotional discourse that reinforces, rather than challenges, existing stereotypes.

This shift—from mobilisation to beautification, and from collective representation to individual spectacle—reflects a deeper crisis in the cultural and epistemic function of Algerian women's journalism. This transformation reveals the shift of women's journalism from an agent of enlightenment to an instrument of symbolic reproduction. Once conceived as a symbolic force for social awakening, it has increasingly become a medium reproducing the narratives imposed by power or market logic.

Nevertheless, the cumulative legacy of these three stages has generated a layered symbolic memory of Algerian womanhood, interweaving authenticity and modernity, belonging and estrangement. This makes contemporary women's media a critical field for rethinking the relationship between media and identity—not as a mirror passively reflecting reality, but as a cultural actor actively shaping and interpreting it.

5. Structural Challenges in Algerian Women's Media Discourse

Despite the formal and thematic transformations that Algerian women's media discourse has undergone throughout its historical evolution, its deeper structure continues to face enduring systemic challenges that constrain its ability to represent the cultural and identity pluralism of Algerian women. Women's magazines have largely failed to transition from representing women to empowering them intellectually and culturally, remaining instead confined within institutional, economic, and ideological frameworks that reproduce ready-made images rather than foster spaces for debate and critical reflection.

5.1 Ideological and Institutional Hegemony

Ideology remains one of the most pervasive challenges shaping women's media discourse in Algeria. Across different periods, women have been represented according to dominant ideological paradigms. During the single-party era, nationalist ideology transformed women into mobilising symbols serving the nation-building project; in the 1990s, moral-religious ideology reframed them as guardians of tradition; while in the current period, consumerist ideology promotes the image of the aesthetically oriented woman integrated into global market culture.

This evolution reflects a shift in power from state control to market dominance, without achieving true editorial independence. The female journalist has moved away from political indoctrination only to become subject to commercial dependency, as media content is increasingly shaped by advertising, sponsorship, and branding logic. This dynamic illustrates what Fairclough (1995) describes as the rearticulation of power through discourse—where ideological control persists despite shifts in institutional form

5.2 Absence of a Critical Cultural Perspective

Although Algerian women's journalism has broadened its thematic range, it has yet to develop a critical cultural approach capable of interrogating the symbolic and representational systems that define femininity in popular and media culture.

Qualitative analysis reveals that identity issues are often treated as fixed categories rather than as open questions, while language, dress, and tradition are presented as folkloric symbols rather than cultural constructs subject to reinterpretation.

This lack of critical engagement has trapped women's discourse between two extremes: celebratory traditionalism, which glorifies heritage without questioning it, and consumerist exoticism, which commodifies cultural symbols without contextual depth. Consequently, women's magazines have failed to articulate an alternative epistemic vision that acknowledges Algeria's linguistic and cultural plurality. In Hall's (1997) terms, this represents a closure of the discursive field, where meaning becomes fixed rather than negotiated.

5.3 Deficiencies in Journalistic Practice

Another structural limitation lies in the professional framework of women's journalism, notably its weak documentation, scarce sourcing, and lack of investigative or analytical depth.

Most articles addressing women's issues are written in a descriptive or sentimental style, devoid of empirical grounding or scholarly referencing, rendering them closer to didactic or moralising texts than to analytical journalism. The prevalence of anonymous bylines and symbolic author signatures further reflects the fragility of documentation and accountability practices within these media institutions, undermining readers' trust and the discursive credibility of the content.

Additionally, the predominance of service-oriented genres—such as fashion, beauty, and domestic advice—over in-depth cultural analyses has shifted women's journalism from a cultural platform to a commercial lifestyle product, eroding its intellectual depth.

6 Identity Fragmentation and Weak Referential Integration

A further issue arises from the absence of a coherent identity project within Algerian women's journalism. Each magazine operates within a narrow referential horizon shaped more by the editor's personal orientation or institutional agenda than by a collective or national media vision.

For instance, *Dziriyat* reflects a Francophone–Amazigh and market-oriented aesthetic discourse, while *Maw'id Hawwa'* adheres to an Arab–Islamic, value-centred orientation. Between these two poles, the multidimensional Algerian woman is lost—without a unifying discourse that represents her as a complex subject negotiating diverse cultural affiliations. Thus, women's media remains ideologically fragmented, unable to construct a nationally integrative narrative of women's cultural identity.

7 Stagnation and the Digital Transition Gap

Amid contemporary communicative transformations, Algerian women's magazines face a major challenge: their delayed adaptation to digital media ecosystems. While online platforms have become new arenas for women's self-expression and identity negotiation, most print magazines remain bound to outdated models of communication, resulting in a loss of younger audiences and diminished cultural influence.

This digital inertia symbolises more than a technological lag; it reflects a discursive rigidity—a reluctance to embrace the participatory ethos of digital media where women can act as producers of meaning rather than passive recipients. In this sense, the digital transition gap extends the representational crisis into the virtual sphere, where identity is increasingly shaped by algorithmic visibility and audience interaction rather than editorial control.

8. Prospects for Renewing Algerian Women's Media Discourse: Towards a Transformative Model of Cultural Identity Representation

Building on the structural critique outlined earlier, this section proposes a transformative model aimed at renewing Algerian women's media discourse.

8.1 Features of a Renewed Model of Algerian Women's Discourse

A critical reading of Algerian women's media discourse reveals that, despite notable formal and thematic transformations, it still requires a renewal project capable of articulating a deeper and more realistic vision of women's representation and cultural identity. The proposed model seeks to reframe the relationship between media and identity through critical awareness rather than rhetorical repetition or symbolic consumption.

The first feature of this model is a shift from *representation* to *participation*—from portraying women as subjects of discourse to empowering them as active producers of meaning. Contemporary women's media must dismantle patriarchal structures of representation by engaging women in the processes of content creation, editing, and critique, thereby ensuring a genuine presence of diverse and plural female voices.

The second feature lies in the revalorisation of cultural identity as an inclusive symbolic system rather than as a folkloric or decorative background. This requires the reinterpretation of cultural symbols—language, dress, and social practices—within critical and cognitive frameworks that connect them to contemporary transformations, moving beyond mere nostalgia or aestheticisation.

The third feature calls for integrating critical and cultural approaches into journalistic practice, shifting from descriptive or service-oriented coverage to analytical and interpretive engagement. This would allow women's media to question dominant value systems and analyse representations of femininity within their broader economic, political, and symbolic contexts.

The fourth feature advocates for linguistic and symbolic pluralism as a source of national richness rather than as a threat to collective identity. Embracing Arabic, Amazigh, and French—within limits that serve meaningful cultural expression—should reflect Algeria's civilisational dialogue, provided that such plurality aims at cognitive communication rather than superficial display or linguistic marketing.

The fifth feature involves adopting a gender-sensitive media language that avoids both propaganda and bias, transcending the binary of “traditional woman” versus “modern woman.” Instead, it should represent women as active social agents endowed with cultural, intellectual, and human capital.

Finally, the sixth feature concerns renewing visual and symbolic aesthetics by employing imagery and symbolism as critical cultural tools rather than merely decorative or commercial devices. Such a shift would restore women's journalism to its social and aesthetic function as a medium for building collective awareness and cultivating aesthetic sensibility that authentically expresses Algeria's plural and integrated identity.

8.2 Practical Recommendations for Implementing the Transformative Model

The renewal of Algerian women's media discourse requires a set of practical and institutional recommendations that translate the proposed model into actionable strategies for reconstructing women's journalism on more balanced cultural and epistemic foundations:

8.2.1 Editorial and Content Level:

- Broaden the thematic scope of women's magazines to include issues related to science, economy, thought, and the arts, rather than limiting coverage to stereotypical topics such as beauty, fashion, and domestic life.
- Prioritise analytical and interpretive journalism—such as cultural investigations and critical essays—over descriptive or moralistic writing.
- Highlight diverse female figures across Algeria—scientists, artists, artisans, entrepreneurs—representing the country's cultural and geographic plurality.

8.2.2 Visual and Design Level:

- Reconsider the visual use of imagery and symbols, transforming them from decorative elements into meaningful semiotic tools that reflect cultural and social depth.
- Diversify visual references to include regional, historical, and heritage-related motifs, thereby reinforcing Algeria's aesthetic and cultural plurality.
- Employ balanced use of colours, typography, and layout that merges authenticity with modernity without replicating Western commercial models.

8.2.3 Professional and Institutional Level:

- Strengthen continuous professional training for female journalists in fields such as discourse analysis, cultural sociology, and gender studies.
- Ensure editorial independence from institutional or commercial pressures that compromise journalistic integrity.
- Encourage partnerships between newsrooms and universities to foster research collaboration on media, identity, and culture.

8.2.4 Cultural and Symbolic Level:

- Liberate women's media discourse from the dual domination of market and religion, establishing a balanced framework that reconciles authenticity with critical openness.
- Adopt participatory approaches that embrace multiple feminine voices and ensure inclusive representation of Algeria's sub-identities.
- Integrate interpretive analysis of cultural symbols into journalistic narratives, transforming them from ornamental features into instruments of reflection on self and society.

8.2.5 Research and Educational Level:

- Promote academic research on women's media and cultural identity from critical and interpretive perspectives.
- Support the creation of a national digital archive of Algerian women's journalism to document its historical evolution and identity representations.
- Introduce a specialised course titled “Cultural Identity in Media” within journalism curricula to strengthen identity awareness in everyday practice.

8.2.6 Digital Horizons and the Epistemic Role of Women's Media

In light of contemporary communicative transformations, the digital dimension emerges as a new extension of Algerian women's discourse. Online magazines and digital media platforms have become alternative spaces where women articulate their identities through interactive content that allows direct participation in the production of meaning and representation.

Consequently, studying digital women's media becomes essential to understanding current shifts in identity representation and its migration from print to virtual spaces—offering new possibilities for empowerment, expression, and diversity.

This analysis reaffirms that renewing Algerian women's media discourse is not merely a formal or linguistic endeavour but a cultural and intellectual project tied to the very essence of Algeria's societal transformation. Women's magazines, with their accumulated memory, symbols, and representations, are not mere mirrors reflecting women's images but social laboratories for reshaping them with greater critical consciousness.

Hence, the transition from description to analysis, from indoctrination to participation, and from beautification to empowerment represents the genuine pathway toward an enlightened Algerian women's media—self-aware, identity-conscious, and open to plurality.

As Hall (1997) reminds us, identity is not reflected but continuously reconstructed through discourse. Such a transformation can only be achieved through the integration of a critical cultural vision at the heart of media practice, and through investment in awareness, training, and research, so that Algerian women's discourse becomes a vital space for producing meaning rather than merely consuming it.

9. Findings of the Critical Reading and Prospects for Developing Algerian Women's Media Discourse

The critical reading of Algerian women's press reveals that representations of women's cultural identity have never been isolated from the socio-political contexts in which they were produced. Rather, they have reflected and reconstructed the shifting configurations of dominant power—from the authority of the single-party state, through the plurality of voices and identities, to the economic and cultural pressures of globalisation. As Hall (1997) asserts, representation is not a mirror of reality but a process of meaning production within systems of power.

The study demonstrates that, despite significant progress in articulating feminine subjectivity and promoting national values, women's media discourse remains confined within conventional representational patterns—the “model woman”, the “traditional woman”, and the “modern woman”—without evolving into a genuinely critical discourse capable of reflecting the complex and plural realities of Algerian womanhood.

Across the three historical phases, women's journalism in Algeria has shifted from political mobilisation to social education, and later to entertainment and consumption, yet it has not succeeded in establishing an independent editorial space able to question prevailing cultural values or generate alternative knowledge about women and society. In Fairclough's (1995) terms, it continues to reproduce dominant ideologies rather than transform them through discourse.

This situation calls for a structural and intellectual renewal of women's media discourse, grounded in an awareness of Algeria's ongoing social and cultural transformations and informed by contemporary critical approaches to discourse and identity studies. Central to this renewal is the academic training of female journalists and the development of content that reflects Algeria's linguistic, geographical, and religious diversity.

Moreover, there is a pressing need to move from representational discourse to participatory discourse—from reproducing pre-defined images of women to enabling women to construct and voice their own representations, thereby contributing to the formation of new collective consciousness. Women's magazines are thus invited to reclaim their historical role as platforms for awareness, cultural dialogue, and critical reflection, rather than as mere mirrors of consumerist or inherited traditions.

Ultimately, the future of Algerian women's media depends on its capacity to reconcile authenticity with renewal, and to represent Algerian women in their symbolic diversity rather than through stereotypical portrayals. Only by doing so can women's journalism regain its genuine cultural and intellectual dimension and contribute to building an inclusive national identity that both recognises and celebrates difference.

In this sense, Algerian women's media can become not only a site of representation but a site of meaning-making and cultural transformation.

10. Conclusion

This study, through its critical exploration of the evolution of cultural identity representations of Algerian women in women's journalism, reveals a deep interconnection between media, political, and social transformations in Algeria and the symbolic construction of female identity. The findings demonstrate that women's media discourse has never operated in isolation from dominant ideological structures; rather, it has evolved in tandem with the prevailing sources of authority—from the nationalist state during the single-party era, to the plurality of voices in the pluralist phase, and finally to the market-driven logic of globalisation in the contemporary period.

This confirms the first hypothesis: that identity representations in women's media are not autonomous expressions of female subjectivity but direct products of historical and institutional contexts.

The analysis further shows that cultural identity representation has oscillated between continuity and change. While core symbolic references—religion, language, and heritage—have remained present, they have been rearticulated through different discursive frameworks across phases. In the single-party period, the woman was portrayed as a mobilising national agent serving the collective project. In the pluralist phase, discourse became more negotiative, blending religious and social values with emerging notions of modernity. In the contemporary phase, representations have bifurcated between a consumerist–aesthetic model, as seen in *Dziriyat*, and a moral–traditional model, as reflected in *Maw'id Hawwa*.

This supports the second hypothesis, which links the diversity of representations to the coexistence of multiple cultural, religious, and linguistic referents within Algerian society.

On the critical level, the study validates the third hypothesis: that women's media discourse suffers from epistemic limitations, lacking a critical framework capable of interrogating dominant cultural symbols. Instead, it tends to reproduce them within moral or commercial systems. The multilingual and symbolic diversity present in Algerian society has not been harnessed as a source of cultural richness but

rather presented in fragmented or ornamental ways, limiting the discourse's ability to reflect Algeria's true identity pluralism.

The findings also reinforce the fourth hypothesis, which points to the influence of symbolic hegemony as theorised by Hall and van Dijk. Women's magazines have largely reproduced meanings that serve dominant political, economic, or religious interests. In this discourse, women remain objects of representation rather than agents of meaning-making, rendering their portrayal a reflection of the power-knowledge dynamics embedded in the media field.

Nevertheless, this evolution should not be read as a linear decline but as a dynamic transformation that reflects the ongoing negotiation of identity within shifting cultural and social contexts. Despite their limitations, women's magazines have provided symbolic spaces for women to engage with their image and redefine themselves within changing value systems. From this perspective, women's journalism constitutes a layered symbolic archive where national, religious, and aesthetic narratives intersect—making it a fertile ground for studying the dialectical relationship between media and identity in Algeria.

Accordingly, the future of Algerian women's media discourse depends on its ability to reconstruct itself through a transformative model grounded in cultural and critical awareness. This model must integrate women as producers of discourse, not merely its subjects, and reframe linguistic, religious, and heritage symbols as living elements within a national project that embraces and values difference. Such renewal would align women's media with Algeria's broader project of cultural modernisation and inclusive national identity.

The envisioned women's media is one that transcends the binary of “loyalty to tradition” versus “fascination with the West,” moving instead toward a balanced discourse that draws values from heritage, tools from modernity, and meaning from human experience.

In light of the theoretical frameworks adopted—particularly Hall's theory of representation and the concept of cultural hegemony—it becomes clear that Algerian women's media discourse has not simply mirrored social reality but actively shaped and interpreted it. Representations of women have served as instruments for reproducing culture itself. Thus, the transition from representation to participation, from indoctrination to critique, and from beautification to empowerment marks the true path toward a renewed Algerian women's journalism—one that reflects identity plurality and restores women's place as active cultural subjects.

Ultimately, this research affirms that the real challenge in renewing Algerian women's media lies in its capacity to evolve from a space of stereotypical reproduction into a critical arena for collective self-reflection. Only when women's journalism becomes a platform for open cultural dialogue and a laboratory for producing knowledge about women and society can we truly speak of a modern Algerian women's press—one that expresses a reconciled and plural identity, deeply rooted in its heritage yet open to the world.

11. References

1. Books:

1. Abdel Latif, Salah. (2002). *Specialised Journalism* (1st ed.). Cairo: Al-Ishaa Publishing and Distribution.

2. Abu Arja, Taysir. (2000). *Studies in Journalism and Media* (1st ed.). Amman: Majdalawi Publishing and Distribution.
3. Abu Zeid, Farouk. (1986). *Specialised Journalism* (1st ed.). Cairo: Alam Al-Kutub.
4. Fairclough, Norman. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.
5. Giddens, Anthony. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
6. Goffman, Erving. (1973). *La mise en scène de la vie quotidienne. Tome 1: La présentation de soi*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.
7. Hall, Stuart. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representation and signifying practice*. London: Sage.
8. Hamdi, Hassan Abdel Hamid Al-Mahrouqi. (2004). *The Role of Education in Addressing the Impacts of Globalisation on Cultural Identity* (1st ed.). Cairo: Dar Al-Haq Publishing.
9. Karami, Samir Abdel Aziz. (2008). *Women's Journalism in the Arab World* (1st ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabia.
10. Kallas, Georges. (1996). *History of Feminist Journalism: Its Emergence and Development 1892–1932*. Beirut: Dar Al-Jil.
11. Shoman, Mohamed. (2007). *Media Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Frameworks and Applied Approaches* (1st ed.). Cairo: Egyptian Lebanese Publishing House.
12. Van Dijk, Teun A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage Publications.
13. Van Dijk, Teun. (2014). *Discourse and Power* (Trans. Ghaida Al-Ali) (1st ed.). Cairo: National Center for Translation.

2. Theses:

14. Ibrahim, Yahiaoui. (2017–2018). *Satellite Channels and Youth Culture: The University Student as a Model* (PhD thesis in Sociology of Education). University of Lamine Debaghine Setif, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Algeria.

3. Journal

article

15. Arraq, Saïd. (2008). Horizons of Openness and Closure in the Semantic and Historical Formations of the Concept of Identity. *Alam Al-Fikr*, 36(4), 213–262.
16. Hall, Stuart. (1996). Introduction: Who needs identity? In Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (pp. 1–17). London: Sage.
17. Khalifa, Ijlal. (1985). Women's and Children's Journalism in the Arab World. *Arab Thought*, 8(50), 73–81.
18. Nassar, Siham. (2002). Egyptian Women's Use of Women's Magazines and the Gratifications Achieved. *Egyptian Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 3(1), 231–305.