| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Female Influencers' Self-presentation and Digital Leadership in Morocco: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis Approach to their Posted Content on Instagram

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| ABSTRACT

In recent years, social media have presented a significant virtual space for women to exercise their feminine subjectivity and realize the values of self-enhancement, ambition and leadership by managing the perceptions of others and projecting a desired social image. Many of the digital platforms host a plethora of social relations across various cultural, racial and gendered variables. With the ascent of social influencers on Facebook, tik-toc and Instagram, new modes of gender representations and leadership dynamics have come to the surface. Thus, female influencers on social media have managed to garner a larger pool of followers through impression management and positive self-presentation. This paper tries to investigate the textual and visual narratives of four Moroccan female influencers and analyze the content of their posts to unfold the strategies of impression management and self-presentation that control the way followers perceive them. The analysis of their content shows that these influencers use different modes (reels, multimodal texts, selfies...) and genres (micronarratives about everyday routines, didactic parables, quotes, poem recitations, endorsed advertisements), and interact with the media affordances at play on Instagram (like reduced anonymity, persistence and visibility), being heedful of the other generated content (likes, shares, comments) and context collapse (networked public). The analysis indicates the consistent use of strategies of impression management in five related factors, namely, self-concept, desired identity, role constraints, target value, and current or potential social image. The study aims to unfold the strategies used by these micro-influencers to project a desired social image and explain how these influencers manage the way they want their audience to perceive them (as leaders) and follow them.

| KEYWORDS

Impression management; self-representation; female influencers; Moroccan influencers; social media; Instagram; Moroccan social media

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for reshaping societal norms, perceptions, and leadership paradigms. At the core of this digital arena are female influencers, who exert substantial influence, particularly on Instagram, communicating perceptions and attitudes, monitoring impressions, and shaping public discourse. In the specific context of Morocco, a significant cohort of female influencers appropriates this platform not only for personal branding but also as a medium for self-expression, empowerment, and the redefinition of leadership roles. The proactive maneuver of female influencers on social media transcends mere digital visibility; it embodies a new form of leadership that challenges conventional hierarchies and empowers multiple out-speaking voices. However, the nature of this digital leadership and its impact on Moroccan society remains understudied, particularly from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis—a lens that accounts for the intricate relationships between visual and textual elements prevalent in social media content.

This study embarks on a detailed examination of the topic under emphasis, exploring how female influencers in Morocco express their desired identities and leadership attributes through their digital presence. Using a multimodal approach to analyze

their Instagram content, the study aims to break down the visual imageries, semiotic intricacies, and overarching narratives these influencers propagate. It seeks to reveal the underlying strategies, themes, and reasons behind their digital discourse, particularly focusing on how they present themselves, manage impressions, and address leadership, gender roles, cultural identity, advocacy, and societal impact.

The significance of this study rests in its potential to uncover the multifaceted roles assumed by female influencers within the Moroccan digital sphere. Beyond their meticulously designed and visually appealing social media profiles, there exists a complex demonstration and representation of proactive leadership. This form of leadership is not solely defined by follower counts but by the exhibited qualities, advocacy for specific causes, and the fostering of narratives centered on empowerment. Additionally, this research endeavors to fill the void in current literature by offering a comprehensive insight into how these influencers negotiate cultural norms, challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes, and impact perceptions of leadership in the Moroccan context. By uncovering the layers of meaning embedded in the multimodal content disseminated by female influencers on Instagram, this research aims to unfold the transformative potential of digital leadership. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to a broader discourse on the evolving nature of leadership, gender representation, and societal influence in a digitally interconnected world.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Gender Roles, Leadership, and Digital Engagement in Morocco.
Scholarly inquiries of cultural nuances and societal norms in Morocco concerning gender roles, leadership dynamics, and digital engagement offer remarkable insights into the intricate interplay between tradition, modernity, and digital platforms. Researchers such as Bourqia & Miller (1999) Sadiqi (2003) address the cultural fabric of Morocco, addressing culturally-laden gender roles within the societal framework. Their studies highlight traditional expectations, emphasizing the patriarchal structure that shapes gender dynamics and the prevailing societal norms that determine women's roles within Moroccan society. Moreover, works by Evard (2014) and Charrad and Stephen (2020) provide in-depth analyses of leadership paradigms in Morocco, elucidating cultural perceptions of leadership traits and styles. These studies bring to light the traditional leadership models prevalent in the Moroccan context, often characterized by hierarchical structures and masculine-centric leadership ideals. They discuss how these cultural norms influence leadership opportunities and expectations, particularly concerning women's access to leadership roles.

Additionally, research by Skalli (2011), Zaid & Ibahrine (2011) and Benchenna & Marchetti (2021) examines the evolving landscape of digital engagement within Moroccan society. They explore the intersection between traditional cultural values and the digital sphere, analyzing how Moroccan users employ digital platforms like Instagram within the context of their cultural norms. These studies highlight the adaptation of digital technologies within the Moroccan cultural milieu, demonstrating how individuals negotiate between preserving cultural values and embracing digital engagement. Furthermore, their studies demonstrate how gender roles intersect with digital engagement in Morocco. They investigate how cultural norms influence women's access to and participation in digital spaces, discussing factors such as education, access to technology, and societal perceptions that shape women's digital involvement. Generally, these scholarly investigations offer a deep understanding of the cultural nuances and societal norms prevalent in Morocco, particularly concerning gender roles, leadership expectations, and digital engagement. They underscore the complex interplay between tradition and modernity, providing insights into how cultural dynamics influence individuals' behaviors, perceptions, and interactions within the digital sphere.

2.2 Social Media Affordances and their Effects on the Online Self-image
However, the use of social media for self-presentation and impression management is to be understood in light of affordances enabled by these media. Hollenbaugh (2021) mentions three affordances that can used by influencers to promote their self-images: anonymity, persistence and visibility. He argues that social media users tend to present their actual selves under conditions of less anonymity, more persistence and more visibility. Influencers are required to present their actual selves and to select only certain aspects of their identity to influence the way their audience perceives them, due to the persistence of their content on social platforms and the high visibility of this content as it can be located and retrieved.

If these affordances have moderating effects on the influencers' self-presentation, these influencers have to face another affordance that can actually have a high impact on their self-image and on their management of audience's impression, namely the other-generated content in the form of likes, shares and comments. They have to make decisions on how to manage and react to this content. Hollenbaugh (2021, p. 86) argues that "the management of other-generated content will mediate the effects of such content on self-presentational content", and may contribute negatively to their online image.

The affordance of sharing as enabled by Instagram and Facebook, for example, may be used to share the influencers' content with other networks, and thus, this makes it difficult for these influencers to know who is reading and reacting to their posts. This is called "audience collapse", defined as "the flattening out of multiple distinct audiences in one's social network, such that people from different contexts become part of a singular group of message recipients" (Vitak, 2012, p. 451). The influencers' imagined audience may not coincide with their real audience, and they have to face this challenge and manage the resulting effects on their online self-image.

2.3 Self-presentation and Impression Management

Self-presentation and impression management are important variables in the fields   of sociology and psychology with a wealth of academic exploration dedicated to understanding how individuals deliberately attempt to shape the perceptions others have of them. Verbal and non-verbal contents, in addition to other visual cues play a pivotal role in the process of crafting and managing perceptions and impressions made by others about oneself. Researchers like Erving Goffman (1959) laid the conceptual ground for understanding self-presentation as a performance, where individuals act as actors on a stage, managing impressions to create specific images. Goffman proposed the dramaturgical perspective, likening social interactions to a theatrical performance where individuals engage in impression management to control the impressions others form of them. His idea of the "front stage" and "backstage" dynamics unfolds how individuals perform in public settings (front stage) while also having more private, authentic moments (backstage) away from the social spotlight. The analogy of acting highlights the deliberate and strategic nature of self-presentation. Just as actors adopt certain roles and behaviors to fit a character, individuals adopt particular personas or behaviors that align with the image they want to project in a given social context. This might involve emphasizing certain traits, downplaying others, or adjusting behaviors to conform to social norms or expectations.

Significantly enough, Goffman (1959) emphasized the importance of managing impressions to hold up social interactions accurately. This involves not just the creation of a desired image but also the regulation of information and behaviors to maintain consistency in that image. People continuously monitor and adjust their self-presentation strategies to ensure that the impressions they create resonate with their goals and the expectations of the audience. Goffman's work emphasizes that the impressions individuals create are not just about expressing one's true self but are strategic performances tailored to the specific social context and audience. He highlighted the importance of impression management in shaping social interactions and relationships, as well as its influence on societal structures and norms.

Similarly, Jones (1990) made substantial contributions to the study of self-presentation and impression management, particularly through his development of the self-presentation theory. This theory sheds light on the deliberate strategies individuals employ to control the impressions they convey to others in social interactions. Jones explained how individuals strategically modify various aspects of their behavior, expressions, and communication to draw specific images or impressions that resonate with their goals or desired outcomes. Central to Jones's self-presentation theory is the notion that individuals engage in a process of impression management, consciously or unconsciously, to shape how they are perceived by others. He emphasized that people adopt different strategies and tactics to present themselves in a manner that enhances their self-image or achieves particular social objectives. This theory underlines the dynamic nature of self-presentation, emphasizing that individuals actively manage their behavior and communication to create favorable impressions. It recognizes that people often adjust their self-presentation strategies based on the social context, the audience, and the goals they aim to achieve.

Cialdini (1984), a psychologist, introduced the "impression management theory," in which he highlights tactics like ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, and exemplification to craft distinct impressions. These strategies are frequently employed to form particular impressions devised for various social situations or intended results. Cialdini's framework focuses on the pivotal role of non-verbal cues in impression management. Body language, facial expressions, and spatial behavior significantly contribute to impression formation. These strategies operate within various social settings and contexts, with individuals consciously or unconsciously managing their impressions. Whether in professional environments, personal interactions, or public appearances, people deliberately control impression management to shape perceptions in accordance with their goals. The multifaceted nature of impression management, incorporating both verbal and non-verbal aspects, underscores its significance in social interactions. It is a complex orchestration where individuals manipulate and fine-tune their behaviors, expressions, and communication to influence how others perceive them, ultimately aiming to control and direct the impressions they leave on others.

Bass and Avolio (1994) work extensively on the intricate relationship between leadership and impression management, focusing on the strategic role of self-presentation for leaders. They emphasize that effective leaders actively engage in impression management to monitor perceptions among their followers and within their organizations. Gardner and Avolio (1998) argue that leadership effectiveness often relies on the ability to construct and maintain a positive image, both internally and externally. Leaders strategically employ self-presentation tactics to maximize trust, credibility, and influence, vital for garnering support and achieving organizational goals. They underscore the significance of authenticity in leadership self-presentation. In their analysis, they assume that while impression management is essential, ensuring authenticity and accordance between one's expressed image and genuine values is a prerequisite to sustained credibility and trust. According to them, effective and influential leaders should draw a balance between projecting a desired image and remaining true to their core beliefs, aligning their self-presentation with their leadership attributes and organizational objectives. Furthermore, Bass and Avolio (1994) highlight the adaptability of leaders in utilizing different impression management tactics based on situational demands. Leaders adept in impression management navigate diverse contexts by adjusting their communication styles, behaviors, and symbolic actions to meet the expectations and needs of various stakeholders. This adaptability allows leaders to effectively influence perceptions, inspire confidence, and foster a positive organizational culture conducive to achieving shared goals.

Walther (1992), a prominent figure in communication theory, underscores the intricate interplay between impression management and self-presentation within the online realm. His work elucidates how individuals negotiate and redefine their digital

personas in virtual environments, where the traditional cues of face-to-face interaction are absent or limited. Central to Walther's research is the concept of "hyper-personal communication," where individuals strategically manipulate information to present themselves in a desired manner. In these online spaces, where nonverbal cues like facial expressions and tone of voice are absent, individuals make use of textual and contextual features to convey their identities. Walther (1992) argues that this selective self-presentation includes a deliberate selection of information to shape particular impressions, spotlighting certain aspects of oneself while concealing or downplaying others.

Within this framework, Tidwell and Walther (2002) introduced the idea of "warranting theory," suggesting that information which cannot be easily controlled or manipulated by the individual holds greater credibility in forming impressions. This notion emphasizes the significance of external references or testimonials over self-generated information in shaping perceptions in online interactions. Furthermore, Walther's "Cues-filtered-out Approach" addresses the compensatory mechanisms individuals adopt due to the absence of nonverbal cues in computer-mediated communication. In the absence of gestures or facial expressions, individuals rely on alternative cues such as language style, timing of responses, and other contextual elements to form impressions of others.

Leary (2001) and Leary and Kowalski (1990) name five factors that are important in the construction of impression, two of them are concerned with the way people relate to themselves: self-concept and desired identity, and the three other factors involve the way people relate to others: role constraints, target value, and current or potential social image. The first two factors describe a process internal to the self, and refer to the way people want others to perceive them, and, in most cases, their true selves from their own perspective and self-perceptions. The three other factors regulate the relation with others, and thereby people try to appeal to their audience's values, to be consistent in their roles and to dispel any negative characteristics that others may hold about them.

In conclusion, the dynamic relationship between self-presentation and impression management reveals a complex interplay within the realm of social interactions. Self-presentation serves as the overarching framework, encapsulating deliberate strategies individuals employ to shape how they are perceived. Complementing this framework is impression management, which delves deeper into the intentional tactics individuals use to control and influence others' perceptions. These tactics, outlined in Cialdini's theory, encompass a spectrum of strategies that intertwine with self-presentation strategies. They function as tools within the broader self-presentation process, enabling individuals to actively craft and fine-tune the impressions they wish to convey. Crucially, both concepts emphasize the pivotal role of non-verbal cues in shaping impressions, underscoring the significance of aligning verbal and non-verbal behaviors. This alignment forms the core of a consistent and convincing presentation. Together, self-presentation and impression management represent a comprehensive approach through which individuals manage social interactions, strategically shaping and controlling the impressions they leave upon others. In essence, the symbiotic relationship between self-presentation and impression management signifies a nuanced interplay between intentional presentation strategies and the deliberate manipulation of perceptions. These concepts provide insights into the multifaceted nature of human interactions, highlighting the intricate ways individuals actively engage in shaping and influencing the impressions they create within diverse social contexts

3. Methodology
This study aims to analyze the strategies of impression management and self-presentation in four Moroccan female micro-influences' accounts on Instagram. To that end, a relevant methodology was used for data collection and data analysis. As the data collected was mostly multimodal texts, the analysis was done according to the social semiotics approach to multimodal discourse analysis. Multimodality which is the combination of different semiotic modes, is to be understood within an approach in which all modes are framed as one field, as one domain. Jointly they are treated as one connected cultural resource for meaning-making by members of a social group at a particular moment. (Kress, 2012). Defined as such, multimodality describes an approach that understands communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use-image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on-and the relationships between them (Jewitt, 2009).

This approach is concerned with meaning making and its social and cultural implications. Drawing on systemic functional grammar, this approach makes use of Halliday's three meta functions of language: ideational, interactional and textual, which are used in Kress &Van Leeuwen. (1996) as representation, interaction and composition. This approach is relevant to the kind of collected multimodal texts and the objectives of this study, as it can be very useful in unfolding the discursive strategies of these influences in terms of representation (self-concept and desired identity), interaction (role constraints, target value, and current or potential social image), and composition (referring to the way in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other and the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole).

The method is qualitative as it collects and analyze non-numerical date, namely text, video, photos, with a view to understanding concepts, opinions, discursive strategies of self-presentation and, impression management and experiences of these influencers. The aim is to unfold the representational, interactional and compositional strategies used to maintain a good impression management and control the way their audiences perceive them.

3.1 Research Design

This study follows the procedures used in the above mentioned approach, collecting multimodal texts from four Intagram accounts of four Moroccan female influencers: Chaima Berraz (290K followers), Ghita Iraqui(174K followers), Ihssane Benalluch (4,2 M followers), and Imane Aghoutane (322K followers). The sampling was purposive, and done according to four selective criteria: number of followers, gender, good education, good constructive content. The number of influencers was limited to four as each represent a different profile and background (Berraz: entrepreneur/content creator/interior designer, Aghoutane: journalist/influencer/ certified trainer, Benalluch: Activist/ journalist, Iraqui: Physician, psycho-dietician); these variations may give a nuanced account of how such influencers use impression management to control their audiences' perception.

3.2 Data Collection

The collection of data was exhaustive and covered almost all the publications posted to date (November 2023) on these four accounts (Berraz, 214 publications, Iraqui 255, Benalluch 851, Aghoutane 364, with a total of 1684 publications). The data was coded in terms of the five mechanisms of impression management, and categorized first in terms of modes (reels, selfies, texts with photos) and second in terms of genre (poem recitation, famous sayings, micro-narratives, endorsed ads, medical tips, comments on current events...). Then, the data was organized into two categories in which a function was dominant: representation, or interaction. A smaller sample was then constructed comprising 80 publications (20 for each influencer), avoiding redundant publications and maintaining the representational value of each publication in terms of mode, genre and impression management factors and making the qualitative analysis possible and practical. The aim was to unfold how different strategies were made operational while maintaining the actual variations in the collected data.

3.3 Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of data was done first in terms of themes and it shows that though all the four influencers share the same concerns, there are some dominant themes for each of them. The major themes identified in all the posted content of all the influencers include: micro-narratives about family and individual life, awareness-raising discourse, comments on current issues, brand endorsement, popular wisdom speeches, medical tips and advice, profession, and activism. When analyzed separately, each influencer has preferences and this is primarily related to factors like the profession or the main activity and concerns of the influencer. Berraz who identifies herself as entrepreneur and content creator focusses more on the family and wisdom speeches, while Aghoutane, as a journalist is more concerned with awareness raising and the current events. Being an activist, Benalluch's most content describes her activism and travels, whereas Iraqui's most published content is about nutrition and medical issues since she is a physician.

The influencers seem to project an image of themselves that is consistent with their professional and social roles, and is desired socially as a profile that is supposed to gain the respect of their audiences and appeal to their values and norms. Each of them highlighted what seemed to make them distinguished, attractive and worthy of respect. The analysis of data proceeded in a way that could unfold the mechanisms used in self-presentation construction and the interaction with audiences. The analysis was done in semiotic terms, focusing on three main categories: representation, interaction and composition.

3.3.1 Representation

The close study of the posted content of each influencer shows that each of them has chosen an identity to project in terms of how they perceive themselves and the attributes they deem impressive and appealing to their audiences. The influencers manage the impression of their audiences by the (re)presentation of the self in two main modes: narrative thereby they are presented as actors activating a vector toward a goal, and conceptual, thereby some attributes are assigned to them in terms of the semiotic resources they use and the postures they take. The focus of this section is on the interaction of represented participants in the multimodal text and the meaning making process that takes place.

3.3.1.1 Self-concept

The chosen identity is preceded by decisions made by the influencers based on what they judge best represent them and make them appealing to audiences. The self-concept "is a primary determinant of the impressions people try to project (Leary and Kowalski, 1990, p. 40). The images that each influencer tries to project are consistent with how they see themselves:

Berraz identifies herself as a content creator from her position as a mother, and a researcher, and excludes any other images that may interfere with this identification, hence her focus on popular wisdom-oriented content and family micro-narratives. Though She identifies other self-images in her profile like entrepreneur and interior designer, the latter have been less represented and do not have a distinguished effect.

Benalluch is more consistent in how she sees herself: an activist and (less) a journalist. Most her publications show her social role as an activist, doing her best to help people in need and defend their rights (children, poor people, underprivileged people). The self-images she projects highlight more her success story as an activist, and herself as a carrier of certain positive attributes (care, thoughtfulness...) that make her appear as a dedicated activist working to help the under-privileged in Morocco and Africa.

Iraqui is quite consistent in identifying herself as a psycho-dietician, highlighting at times, her role as a mother and wife. Most her projected self-images show this focus on her profession and her readiness to help others with issues of health. Her micro-narratives about family life make her profile more balanced as a doctor who practices what she advises others to do.

Aghoutane identifies herself as a journalist, but also claiming to be an influencer and certified trainer; however, most her projected self-images reflect her first identity as a journalist. Her fame as a journalist on Medi 1 TV has enabled her to strengthen her self-conception as a journalist with some influence. Her identification as a trainer is not highlighted in her projected self-images.

3.3.1.2 Desired identity
The identification of each influencer appears in their profile description and shows what self-images each influencer would like to be and thinks she really can be. Though each influencer makes multiple identifications and chooses many desirable social images, the actual publications show that one self-image is the most dominant (Berraz: content creator, Benalluch: activist, Iraqui: psycho-dietician, Aghoutane: journalist). The latter are classified as the real desirable social image they want to project about themselves and that is revealed through their actual publications. The other self-images are used to maintain a certain balance in their self-presentation, referring at times to their life as women, wives and mothers. Their tendency to diversify identification aims to appeal to their imagined and actual audiences who are supposed to see in the influencers a balanced model of a happy and successful life.

The affordances of social media have complicated online impression management because these technologies "collapse multiple social contexts and bring together commonly distinct audiences" (Pecone, 2015, p. 5). This context collage might explain why these influencers multiply, in their profile description, the self-images they want to project to their audiences; they apparently aim to attract more actual audiences. The focus on one desirable social image is apparently the result of the interaction of the actual audiences with the publications of these influencers who adjust their projected image in terms of the feedback they get from the audiences.

3.3.2 Interaction
The latter remark about interaction leads us to try to unfold how this desirable social image is tailored to the perceived values and preferences of the imagined/actual audiences by the influencer. The analysis of the published multimodal content which focus on the interactive participants (producer and follower) indicates that some adjustments are at play in terms of values, roles and social image. This feedback mirrored by the likes and comments, encourage or discourage these influencers to produce content that is liked/liked less by their audiences, and thus reducing the kind of publications that have less 'likes' and 'comments. For instance, Iraqui family micro-narratives receive the highest number of likes and comments, hence the highest number of this kind of posts. Aghoutane's brand endorsement publications are the least in number as they receive the least number of likes. This adjustment shows that the influencers are heedful of this feedback and try to enhance the self-image that is most desired socially by their audience.

The analysis of the semiotic resources and their combination in the posted content maintain a certain regularity in terms of the gaze and eye contact which enhance connectivity making up a demand image for the audience to engage in admiration, sympathy and affiliation, and the frame and social distance thereby the close-up and medium close shot dominate, bringing the influencer closer to their audiences, but opting at times for medium or long shots when the background is to be displayed (during travels for example). As for the perspective, the power perspective is rare, and the prevailing perspective is eye-level angle, making the receivers on equal footing with the influencer, allowing them self-identification and involvement. The modality makers are especially attractive with bright colors, with less display of details as the focus is directed toward the influencer's face and looks to maximize connectivity.

3.3.2.1 Target value
In principle, influencers should defend values that they believe in; however, most influencers tend to tailor these values in terms of the perceived preferences of their audiences and the feedback they get from their content in terms of likes and comments. They generally avoid controversy and follow the mainstream line of thought and the dominant public opinion. Their views are often balanced, moderate, and even idealistic and they avoid attacking targets. They always try to appeal to common sense and widely shared values to avoid dislikes and opposition from the audience as the context collapse makes it difficult for them to engage in problematic questions and adopt controversial attitudes. When a topic goes viral on social media, these influencers are supposed to take a stance either of sympathy (earthquake, war in Gaza) or defend the rights of the weakest side if there is no controversy (teachers' strike, in the beginning of the campaign). The influencers try also to raise awareness as regards some important issues and they thus embrace some values (preserving water, helping the underprivileged, donating money for the reconstruction of destroyed houses due to the earthquakes, return to the Greenwich time..).

Their reels are often speeches about issues related to ethics, morality and good behavior concerning for example, social relations, health and choices in life. The tendency is moderation and sometimes idealism, preaching what is universally good. The

expression of personal opinion is often done but in a way that does not provoke others, usually related to a question of taste, likes and dislike which remains personal and need not be disagreed upon in harsh terms.

3.3.2.2. Role constraints

The influencers project a self-image which actually requires that the influencer plays a social role and tries to meet the expectations "regarding how individuals who occupy those roles are to behave" (Leary and Kowalski, 1990: 41). Berraz chooses to identify herself as a content creator and that is why she strives to produce interesting publications where she preaches ideals and wisdom-oriented parables, sayings and poems. Benalluch's most publications highlight her role as a successful, prize-winning activist, giving details of her journeys in Africa, Middle East and Europe and her initiatives to improve the living of the people and defend children's right in education, among other initiatives. Iraqui's role as a psycho-dietician is consistent but her role as mother and wife is also highlighted and gains more likes than her publications as a dietician. This may be explained by an increasing interest of followers in her as a caring wife and mother, and a successful woman. The publications concerning health have a less large audience. Aghoutane's role as a journalist is a real focus in her publications, with frequent comments on current issues, embracing popular issues and giving balanced opinions, speaking in the name of the community on different issues. Her role as a brand endorser was not fully admired by her audience as they might have suspected that she is using her authority as a journalist to make money.

The relative success of these influencers in the performance of their social roles is primarily guaranteed by some power resources that they use like their authority as a journalist, dietician, activist, researcher and the attractiveness that such positions have in society. The authority deriving from their social status increases their attractiveness, social capital, credibility, and trustworthiness. This consequently makes their audiences like them, internalize their values, and be easily influenced by the content of their publications and the performance of their role. Two influencers tried to transfer these (soft) power resources but in two different ways: Iraqui's authority as a doctor was positively transferred to her family life while Aghoutane failed to transfer her authority as a journalist to perform the role of brand endorser, given the low number of likes and comments.

3.3.2.3 Current or potential social image

The interaction of the influencers with other produced content can generate transformations in the impression management strategies and the self-image that these influencers feel they need to promote more. In effect, as Leary and Lowalski (1990) argue, "the impressions people try to create are affected both by how they think they are currently regarded by others and by how they think others may perceive them in the future" (41). The feedback the influencers get from their networked audiences is a variable related to the other-produced content as a social media affordance; it can actually encourage an influencer to develop a self-image that was not initially chosen as dominant during the self-concept stage (Iraqui's family life as an example), or may force them to give up or at least reduce the publications portraying a secondary self-image (Aghoutane's attempt at brand endorsement). The future of their publications will be affected by such reactions represented by this other-created content and due to the collapse of the context mentioned earlier.

3.3.3. Composition

The analysis of the textual function which we rename as composition following Kres and Leeuven (1996), is more relevant in explaining multimodality; however, not all the publications are composed in the same way. Reels which are videos may be analyzed differently but they share with still images some features like framing, distance, perspective and salience. In social semiotics the meaning of a multimodal text is derived from the combination of the modes and resources used, which implies that each multimodal text has its own meaning according to the way these semiotic resources are edited and arranged. Besides, the meaning of these semiotic modes belongs to culture and the social context where they are put together in a media text. Therefore, the meaning of the multimodal text posted by these influencers should be constructed with reference to context, culture and the intent of these influencers.

In addition to the semiotic features discussed above in the interaction (the interpersonal function), namely, frame, distance and perspective, we add other features that belong more to the compositional function of these texts: salience and framing in posted picture. In line with the frame of image (mostly close-up and medium close shots), the salience of the influencer in the images reinforces this impression of connectivity and reduced social distance, implied by frame and distance. The influencer makes herself accessible to their audiences and this increases her attractiveness in the eyes of her followers. When the influencer presents herself with other represented participants, she avoids any dividing lines with these participants, getting physically closer to them, hugging and showing love and care (all the influencers with family members, except for Benalluch who, as an activist, makes herself closer to other participants, especially children, hugging and sharing intense emotions with them).

As for some other compositional features like information value, the affordances of Instagram organize the semiotic modes in a conventional systemic way. Therefore, this kind of relation is standardized and need not be analyzed as emanating from the influencers. Another dimension of the meaning of these texts which has an effect on the strategies of impression management is the cultural resonance that some semiotic resources may have, especially in terms of the social expectations and norms regarding women. The presentation of the self-image of the woman as caring, loving, having a successful career, respecting family life, tradition-loving and being genuinely feminine in terms of beauty, attractiveness, and elegancy resonates with these

cultural expectations and social norms and make the woman more respected and attractive. The number of followers for each influencer may be explained by the existence of many variables, and we believe that cultural resonance of each profile is one of them.

4. Discussion

The success of these influencers in attracting a large number of followers can be explained by the strategies used to construct their self-presentation and the management of impression on their followers. At the level of self-concept, each influencer has projected an actual image of themselves, portraying their desired social images that are supported by the semiotic resources they share: careers, activism, likes and dislikes, family life, ideas, opinions. What reinforces these projected selves is first their consistency over time and, their appeal to the audiences' norms and their continuous revisions of their posted content in terms of the other-created content, and with particular attention to the collapsed context of their publications.

The projected self-image of these influencers as women with social roles is another factor of attraction as these women are presented in terms of the expected values that audiences would like to see in a woman: a successful career, a beautiful, elegant woman, a caring mother who respects the values of family life, an activist who defends the rights of the underprivileged people, a well-informed woman about current issues of concern, among other attractive features. The feminine aspect is attractive for followers, as it gives these profiles a touch of success in the face of societal challenges in a society that is still evolving towards an egalitarian status for women. Nevertheless, the revision of gender roles was done with precautions, as all of them did not project rebel profiles, but stayed within the scope of what is expected, cherishing the mainstream values of femininity as caring a mother and wife, successful career women, tradition-loving women.

The causes championed by these female influencers have endowed them with a surplus value as these causes were mostly the commitment of men or male dominated organization (including women not as leaders). The leadership position that these female influencers occupy increase their appeal as activists defending children's rights in Africa, family values, opposing wars (in Palestine) and discrimination and double standards (in the Western media). Benalluch is the most prominent among them as her role as an activist has made her an exceptional woman working for the benefit of the underprivileged, supporting humanitarian causes in Morocco and Africa. The appeal of the other female influencers is partly derived from their related positions as career women working for the well-fare of the whole society, informing and advising the public on different issues, cherishing what this public idealizes as good.

Another factor that made these influencers succeed in attracting their followers is their use of relevant semiotic strategies in terms of representation, interaction and composition. The management of the semiotic resources, namely appealing photos in close-up frames, caring gaze, warm connectivity, bright colors and other features, as mentioned earlier, has increased the appeal of their profiles and publications, making them look as exceptional women worthy of leadership roles. The resonance of these semiotic resources with the Moroccan culture and the underlying values of success was really of considerable importance. They avoided radical views, and cherished idealized norms and moderate opinions. The consistent dimension of their content was maintained but revised at times in terms of the other-produced content, and this has made them maintain a social image desired and shared by the public.

5. Conclusion

This article examined the way four female influencers projected their self-images and managed the impression people may hold about them. It was argued that these female influencers succeeded to some extent at maintaining their attractiveness in the eyes of their followers by being heedful of the way they project their self-images, using different strategies related to the strategies of impression management (self-concept, desired self-image, target value, role constraints and current or potential image), being constantly headful of the feedback they receive from their followers, and making their content semiotically relevant, resonating with the Moroccan culture and context. Their views as mirrored by their content, are often moderate as regards controversial issues, idealistic in terms of values, caring in terms of human relations, informative, consistent, and respectful of societal norms. Future research might find in this article a new path that opens up new possibilities of research to shed more light on the way such influencers succeed or fail in capturing the attention of the audiences in the collapsed context of social media with challenging affordances.

Conflicts of Interest: Declare conflicts of interest or state "The authors declare no conflict of interest."
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