

Between Cultural Norms and Digital Expression: Moroccan Women's Self-Presentation on Social Media

Faiza Gallae

Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Mohammedia, Hassan II University of Casablanca, Morocco | [faiza.gallae-etu@etu.univh2c.ma]

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have transformed how individuals construct and present identities to public audiences, offering new spaces for self-expression, visibility, and community.

Drawing on Erving Goffman's **dramaturgical theory** of self-presentation, this study examines how Moroccan women navigate digital visibility within complex sociocultural expectations.

Key cultural tensions include:

- Modesty (*hshuma*) and reputation norms
- Gendered expectations of femininity
- Negotiating traditional vs. modern identity
- Public/private boundary management

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study explores how Moroccan women **strategically construct and negotiate identity** on **TikTok** and **Instagram**, balancing cultural norms and online visibility.

Research Questions:

- How do women curate digital personas on social media?
- What cultural tensions shape self-presentation choices?
- How does visibility intersect with gender norms?

METHODOLOGY

Approach: Qualitative content analysis

Sampling: Purposive sampling of public profiles

Platforms: TikTok & Instagram

Data: Visual & textual post elements

Framework: Goffman's dramaturgical model

Analysis: NVivo-assisted thematic coding of visual & textual patterns

KEY FINDINGS

Negotiation of Identity

Self-presentation reflects ongoing negotiation between tradition and digital expression, revealing layered identity strategies across platforms.

Aspirational Femininity

Strong emphasis on appearance, lifestyle, and aspirational femininity signals alignment with modern beauty and success ideals.

Confidence & Independence

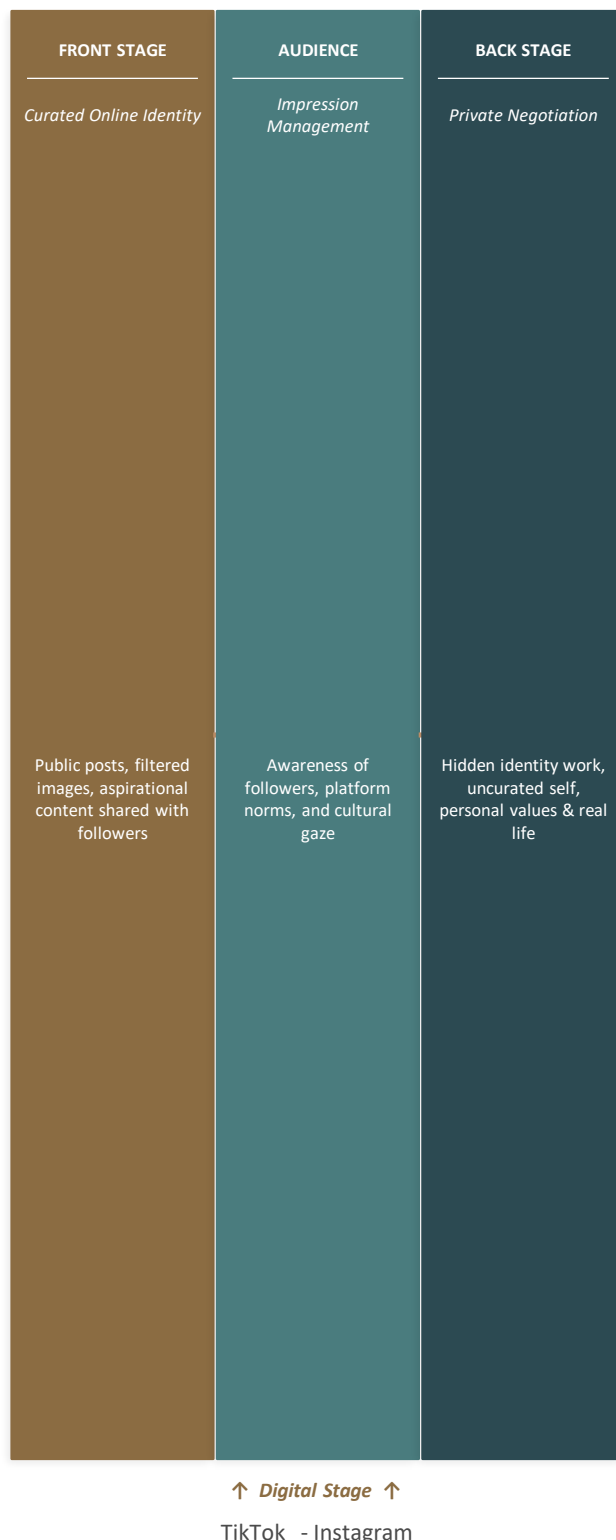
Expressions of confidence and independence actively challenge traditional gender expectations in Moroccan society.

Dual Role of Social Media

Platforms simultaneously function as spaces of cultural conformity and experimentation with identity boundaries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

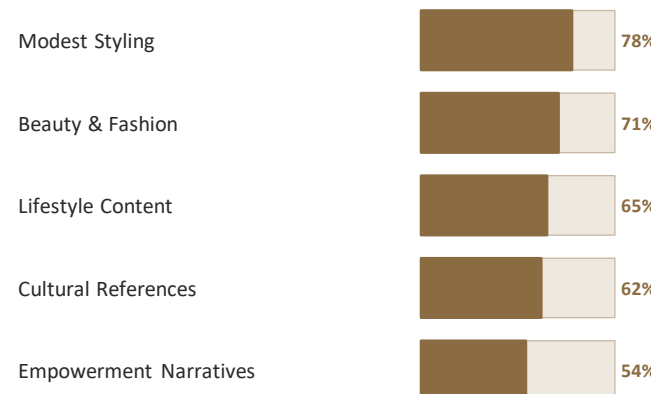
Goffman's Dramaturgical Model — Applied to Digital Spaces



PLATFORM CONTEXT

| TikTok | Instagram |
|--|---|
| Short-form video Dynamic, performative Wide reach & virality | Photo & Reels Aesthetic curation Aspirational lifestyle |

VISUAL THEMES IDENTIFIED



CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Moroccan women's digital self-presentation emerges as a carefully managed performance shaped by the tension between cultural accountability and self-expression. Rather than silencing women, norms such as modesty, *hshouma*, and gendered reputation actively structure visibility, shaping how presence is crafted and negotiated in context-specific ways.

Social media does not simply reproduce existing gender norms; instead, it operates as an active space where tradition and transformation are negotiated simultaneously, often without direct confrontation.

These findings position Morocco as a significant context for extending digital identity theories, underscoring the importance of culturally grounded frameworks that account for the lived experiences of North African and Arab women within global discussions of gender and online self-presentation.

KEYWORDS

Moroccan women

digital identity

social media

gender norms

Goffman

self-presentation

cultural expectations