



Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research



Hamma Lakhdar University - El Oued

Faculty of humanities and Social Sciences

Department of social sciences

Communication Sociology Major

Memorandum submitted to fulfil the requirements of an academic master's degree

A field: Social Sciences

Digital Memes in Popular Discourses

- A sociological study to understand ethnic memes in Algerian social media spaces -

Prepared by the student:

✓ Kiram Isra

Professor's supervision:

✓ Dr. Sahli Salim

The discussion panel:

The professor:	Rank:	Adjective:
Salem yakoup	Lecturer "A" at Chahid Hamma Lakhdar University in Oued	President
Sahli Salim	Lecturer "A" at Chahid Hamma Lakhdar University in Oued	Supervisor
Salim daha	Lecturer "A" at Chahid Hamma Lakhdar University in Oued	Examiner

University year: 2024 - 2025





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dedication

To myself in recognition of the end of a journey of determination and perseverance.

And to my family, my first supporter, may God protect them.

To my supervising professor in recognition of his efforts towards achieving the goal.

And to everyone I love, who supported me with a word or an invitation that removed thorns and obstacles from my path.

Dedicate the fruit of this humble labour.

Thanksgiving

From this platform, I extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to my supervising professor, Salim Sahli, who did not skimp on his advice and guidance since the beginning of this academic work, as his support was a real motivation and incentive for me to complete this memorandum.

I would also like to thank the defence committee for listening and paying attention to my humble work, and I would like to express my appreciation to all the professors who contributed to my training throughout my academic career and to everyone who gave me a helping hand.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my family, who have been my main support throughout my years of study, and to all my friends and colleagues who have shared this journey with me.

I would like to thank myself for my hard work and patience, it was never easy, but here I am in the midst of various difficulties and challenges and I am proudly...

Synopsis

This study seeks to address the existing gap in sociological literature related to digital memes by examining ethnic memes circulating within the Algerian digital space, with particular focus on those addressing the Wadi Souf region. The primary objective of the study is to understand how these memes contribute to the formation and reproduction of regional representations within popular discourse on social media, while uncovering the associated social and cultural meanings.

The study is guided by the central question: How do digital memes contribute to the formation and reproduction of regional representations of Wadi Souf in Algerian digital spaces?

This is further explored through several sub-questions, namely:

1. What is the nature of the dominant discourses embedded in these memes?
2. What are the forms and interpretations of user interactions?
3. Do these interactions foster social cohesion or deepen division?
4. To what extent do memes reinforce or deconstruct stereotypical portrayals of WadiSouf?

The study adopted a semiological methodology to analyze the linguistic and visual symbols, supported by a theoretical framework grounded in Symbolic Interactionism to understand meaning-making within the digital space. Participant observation was also employed to capture patterns of social interaction with these memes. The sample consisted of 15 digital memes sourced from the Facebook page “Asil,” each accompanied by two user comments, and was purposively selected.

The findings revealed that digital memes are not limited to entertainment; rather, they serve as active tools in constructing regional imaginaries, shaping symbolic imagination, and reproducing stereotypes. The study further highlighted the role

of the virtual space as a dynamic arena where meanings and local identities are continuously produced—particularly through the lens of ethnic memes related to the Wadi Souf region.

Keywords: Ethnic meme-popular discourse-virtual space -regional identity-Algerian social media.

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Introduction

Introduction

In light of the developments witnessed by the digital space, this has enhanced its value and importance, as it has come to include many different media that have facilitated the consumption of digital culture spread across the digital space in an easier and more enjoyable way for individuals. The Algerian virtual space, in particular, has witnessed rapid transformations in the field, as various modern phenomena have surfaced, especially digital memes as one of the forms of modern social communication, where they are used as a means of interaction and expression of opinions and attitudes as well as emotions in a comic and satirical style that includes a number of cultural and social symbols, whether linguistic or visual symbols.

Digital memes are a communication phenomenon that has facilitated communication between individuals. They are an updated form of traditional communication methods and forms, which were previously represented by stories, tales, popular proverbs and others, memes in turn work to form a popular discourse reflecting individuals' perceptions and representations about various matters. In this context, memes contribute in one way or another to the formation of popular discourse by the producers and consumers of digital culture. The nature of this phenomenon being not subject to any ethical or social standards makes it a flexible tool and easy to use by different groups of society. Apart from being a means of communication, memes have a strong influence on public opinion on issues related to the public interest.

I have dedicated this research to the study of digital memes that express regionalism and popular representations as well as illustrate various stereotypical perceptions about the city of Wadi Souf. This is to find out how memes contribute to the formation of popular discourse about various local areas in Wadi Souf. Studying ethnic memes through Algerian digital spaces is the most appropriate option to answer our questions and make the study smoother and more realistic.

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Ethnic memes, by their very nature, reflect regional perceptions of society's perception and representations of a particular region or group.

Therefore, through this scientific research, I will try to analyse a set of ethnic memes as a means that contributes to the formation of popular discourse through the Algerian social media platforms - Facebook. The study also seeks to know whether the latter is used to strengthen identity and social belonging or to promote division and disintegration among members of society. Through academic research, we will see the diverse methods of individuals in expressing their cultural and social backgrounds by interacting with ethnic memes.

In the first chapter, I introduced the theoretical and applied literature of my study, the most important concepts used as well as previous studies and the theoretical approach on which the study was based. As for the second chapter, which includes the field study of the topic, I defined the sample and the study tool, and finally analysed the photographic material - ethnic memes - to answer the questions posed and to reach a set of conclusions that will be the monitor for the study.

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Preface:

Algerian digital spaces, especially social media platforms such as Facebook, have witnessed a wide spread of memes as a form of contemporary popular expression. These satirical images have become an effective tool for conveying ideas and positions on social, political, and cultural issues, allowing interactors to comment on reality in a humorous, sometimes satirical or critical manner. Memes can be seen as "visual texts" that carry meanings and connotations that go beyond mere entertainment, reflecting collective visions and forming widely circulated digital discourses.

Among the most prominent topics addressed in Algerian memes are regional and ethnic representations, where different regions are portrayed in a way that reflects society's perceptions of them, whether through humour, social criticism, or reinforcement of stereotypes. These representations are not just neutral reflections of reality, but are constructed according to the prevailing cultural and social contexts, making memes a way to reproduce regional discourses that in the past were transmitted through oral jokes or other popular expressions.

In this context, the **Wadi Souf** region has a prominent presence in the digital discourses of local pages, where memes are used to represent its inhabitants in multiple ways, ranging from humour to biting sarcasm. The region is also frequently referenced in satirical pages, sometimes as an isolated region, and at other times as a space with distinct cultural and social characteristics that differ from the rest of Algeria. These digital representations provide an opportunity to understand how Wadi Souf is conceptualised within the digital space and how this is reflected in the formation of its symbolic identity in the national collective consciousness.

With the widespread spread of digital memes, this medium has become one of the most effective tools in shaping social perceptions of different Algerian regions. Among these regions, **Wadi Souf** is prominently featured in circulating memes, as it is portrayed in a way that reflects popular perceptions of its inhabitants and the nature of their lives.

This study relies on the analysis of memes posted on the Facebook page "Aseel", a page known for sharing memes of a social nature focused on posting everything related to the Wadi Souf region. By analysing these memes and interacting with them through comments, we seek to understand how perceptions

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are constructed about the Wadi Souf region and its inhabitants, and what are the social and cultural connotations of these digital representations.

This study seeks to examine the relationship between digital space, popular culture, and regional representations, through an in-depth study of memes related to Wadi Souf on the **Aseel** page, and analysing how users interact with them.

The central question:

How do digital memes contribute to the formation and reproduction of regional representations of Wadi Souf in the Algerian digital space?

This is what we will try to explore through a methodology that combines digital semiotic analysis and the study of social interaction with memes, to reach a deeper understanding of the role of the digital space in the reproduction of regional identity representations in Wadi Souf through the Asil page.

In order to deconstruct this question, I decided to deconstruct it into a set of questions that could serve as a monitor for this phenomenon:

1. What are the most prominent discourses that appear in the comments about wadi souf region, and how do they contribute to reinforcing or deconstructing stereotypes?
2. How are visual and linguistic symbols used in these memes to communicate popular perceptions of the inhabitants of wadi souf?
3. What is the nature of the public interaction with these memes through comments?
4. How does the digital space contribute to reproducing or resisting popular representations of Wadi Souf?

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Reasons for studying:

Subjective reasons:

- 1) A personal desire and interest in digital memes to understand how these memes highlight regionalism and ethnicity in society.
- 2) The desire to shed light on the phenomenon of the digital meme in a local context due to the scarcity of research and studies on these topics, especially in the sociological field.

Objective reasons:

- 1) The wide spread of digital memes, which have become one of the most prominent forms of popular expression in digital spaces, making them a fertile material for sociological analysis.
- 2) The importance of the Wadi Souf region as a subject of study due to the fact that it enjoys various popular representations in Algerian virtual spaces.
- 3) The novelty of the topic in the sociological arena, which requires shedding light on it due to its strong impact on society and its perceptions.

Objectives of the study:

1. Analyse the content of digital memes about Wadi Souf on the Aseel page, in terms of the visual and linguistic codes used.
2. Understanding the sociological connotations of these memes and how they affect the representations of Wadi Souf residents in the digital space.
3. Analyse the nature of interaction with these memes by studying comments and digital interactions.
4. Studying the impact of these memes on the construction or deconstruction of stereotypes about the inhabitants of the wadi Souf .
5. Clarify the role of irony and humour in the production of popular discourses on regionalism and belonging in Algeria.

The importance of the study:

This study contributes to understanding the role of digital memes in shaping regional stereotypes, especially in the context of Algeria where local identities play an important role in social interaction. It also provides a sociocultural

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analysis of how the Wadi Souf region is represented in the digital space, which helps to understand the interactions between reality and digital representations. This study provides a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of digital discourses associated with geographical regions, helping to advance sociological studies on digital media and popular culture. It also sheds light on the role of humour and irony in the construction of social perceptions, allowing a deeper understanding of how memes are used as tools of critique or reinforcement of stereotypes. It also helps in analysing digital interactions to understand the extent to which these memes influence the formation of public opinion about the Wadi Souf region.

Limitations and areas of study:

The virtual spatial domain of the study:

The digital platform:

Facebook: As a communication sociology major and having read many books and articles about Facebook as a digital platform, I have come up with a procedural definition of this platform.

"It is an interactive virtual space and a means of digital social media that provides users with the ability to communicate and exchange ideas, opinions, texts, photos, videos and expressions through its features such as chat rooms, posts, comments, stories, interactions and others, and is considered one of the means that contributed to bringing people closer together and enhancing communication and social unity."

This study focused on the Facebook platform because it is one of the most popular platforms in Algeria. This is due to the fact that the ethnic meme is not as popular among users of other platforms as it is on Facebook, where Facebook acts as a primary incubator for this type of digital meme because it contains many groups and pages that contain various sociological connotations of these memes, which

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helped me to study the latter in an open environment and analyse them objectively.

The target page:

An authentic page: It is a Facebook page with a social and entertainment satirical nature that is categorised under the category of digital content creators. The page has more than **45,000** followers and **16,000** likes. However, both the date and the founder of the page remain unknown.

Aseel's page is one of the active in publishing local memes about the Wadi Souf region with a social character, which makes it a suitable field for studying digital interactions about the Wadi Souf region and its representations, it should be noted that Aseel's page is the only one that displays these digital contents, so I worked on it.

The "Aseel" page was chosen as a model for the study of ethnic memes in the popular discourse of Wadi Souf city because it has an interactive fan base and relies on images and satirical texts as a means of expressing some of the cultural and social aspects that indicate ethnicity in Wadi Souf city so that the page works in one way or another to shape the popular discourse through digital memes, which in turn is considered the means through which the page communicates with its audience, and thus the page is the appropriate environment because it provides the appropriate sample that serves the research topic.

The time frame of the study:

This research covers a collection of "Ethnic Memes" posted on **Aseel** page from the first Facebook post (14/11/2024) to the last post taken on (05/02/2025) Memes were selected from different time periods to ensure a wide coverage of the digital discourse about Wadi Suf, and to avoid being affected by a specific event that may temporarily affect the content. The selection of memes published on a

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popular page such as **Aseel** also enhances the reliability of the results, as it is a platform that reflects a digital discourse shared by a large number of users.

This period is also considered sufficient to monitor the changes that occur as a result of the circulation of ethnic memes and their reflections that contribute to the formation of the ethnic identity of individuals, as well as the inclusion in this sample of the necessary variables and elements, whether from the ethnic aspect or other cultural, social and ethnic aspects reflecting the environment of the city of Wadi Souf.

Approach to the study:

- **Curriculum:** A curriculum as defined by Maurice Ingres (an organised set of processes that seek to achieve a goal). (Moazen and Ben Kassoum, 2018/2017, page 27)
- It is also defined by Abdul Rahman Badawi as the path leading to the disclosure of truth in the sciences, through a set of general rules that dominate the operation of the mind and determine the processes that reach a known result, i.e. the method is the researcher's subjugation of his research activity. (Moazen and Ben Kassoum, 2018/2017, page 27)
- As my study is based on a research methodology, to complete the requirements of scientific research and to study and understand ethnic memes in Algerian social media spaces, I relied on the semiotic approach to analyse digital memes, due to the nature of this phenomenon that combines image, text, and the cultural context in which it is produced and consumed.

Semiotic analysis: It is a set of techniques and steps used to describe and analyse an object as a signifier in itself and in relation to other parties: A procedure or strategy that aims to explore the structural units of a communication format. The analysis works to break down the components of these constructs to see their

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similarity or correspondence as analogues and then to know the functional formula that governs the construction and semantic interaction of this pattern. (Moazen and Ben Kassoum, 2018/2017, p. 28)

Therefore, I relied on the semiotic approach to analyse digital memes by following a set of steps, including the following:

1. General description of the image "Digital Meme".
 2. Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme.
 3. The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed.
 4. Emotional impact and digital engagement.
- The choice of the semiotic approach was based on several justifications:

- **The symbolic nature of digital memes**

Memes are not just satirical images, but visual texts charged with symbolic meanings that reflect certain social perceptions. The semiotic approach enables us to deconstruct these symbols and analyse their structure, to understand how meanings are constructed within memes that deal with the Wadi Souf region and its inhabitants.

- **Interaction between text and image**

In memes, visual elements are combined with linguistic texts in a complementary way that influences the understanding of the message. The semiotic approach helps to analyse this interaction between image and word, identifying how colours, gestures, and visual lines are used to produce certain connotations about the studied area.

- **Cultural and Social Contextualisation**

Memes cannot be understood without placing them in their cultural and social context, as they reflect collective perceptions that may be inherited

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or newly formed. The semiotic approach helps reveal the symbolic patterns behind these representations, enabling a deeper understanding of how these digital discourses are produced and consumed.

- **Deconstructing Digital Popular Discourse**

Memes are part of the popular discourse that develops within the digital space, contributing to the production and reproduction of stereotypes about certain regions. Using semiotic analysis, we can deconstruct these discourses and see whether they are used to reinforce stereotypes or as a tool for reshaping regional identity.

- **Analysing digital engagement with memes**

The significance of memes is not limited to their visual and linguistic content, but extends to the way the audience interacts with them through comments and shares. The semiotic approach allows us to understand how memes are received by users and how their meanings evolve through digital circulation, helping to monitor changes in regional representations of Wadi Souf.

- The semiotic approach allows us to examine digital memes as complex symbolic texts that carry meanings beyond their humorous appearance. It allows us to analyse the relationships between image, text and cultural context, providing an in-depth understanding of the regional representations of Wadi Souf in the digital space.

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Study difficulties:

- The scarcity of previous studies is due to the novelty of the digital meme in the sociological arena.
- Difficulty in identifying the sample and collecting video material that is appropriate to the subject of the study due to the lack of ethnic memes expressing the Wadi Souf region in Algerian social media.
- Digital meme content is often racist, sensitive, discriminatory or bullying, which makes it difficult to analyse and interpret objectively.
- Lack of time and preoccupation with work can be an obstacle to balancing the demands of study and professional commitments.

The first chapter:
Theoretical and applied
literature.

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature.

prologue:

Algerian digital spaces have witnessed many modern communication phenomena, most notably digital memes. As a modern digital phenomenon, digital memes have been used as a means of expression through which individuals share their thoughts and opinions. The digital meme has served as a means of shaping stereotypes about local areas in Wadi Souf, sharing their identities, and producing popular discourses, especially ethnic and regional discourses.

This scientific study seeks to understand and interpret the ways in which these digital memes work by analysing, deconstructing and interpreting them, so in this chapter I have addressed the most important concepts related to the topic of my research, which helped to understand the topic more deeply, including the most important of these concepts: The digital meme, ethnicity, popular discourse, and social networking sites, as well as this study was built on a set of different previous studies that contributed to building a systematic analysis based on the most important results achieved by previous studies, I also mention that this chapter includes the theoretical approach adopted by the **symbolic interactionist theory** due to its assumptions and ideas that serve the requirements of the topic, its terms and most important concepts were used in the process of analysing digital memes and the most important pioneers and ideas that they came up with to reach a credible and reliable analysis.

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

The first section: Theoretical literature (study concepts).

The study concept:

Digital Space:

Etymologically: It is a space that is created within computer environments and information networks by employing application software. It is a networked space that has nothing to do with familiar geographical or political boundaries (Tashur, 2015, p. 77).

Social media sites:

Terminology: Radhi Zaher defines it as "a system of electronic networks that allows the subscriber to create his own website, and then link him through an electronic social system with other members who have the same interests and hobbies, or bring him together with university or high school friends." (Nabih, 2018, page 92)

Procedural definition: Social networks are interactive social networks through which individuals exchange opinions, ideas, files and images, and allow the individual to form new relationships so that their role has become based on strengthening social relations and ties.

Facebook:

Idiomatically: Hussein Shafiq defines it as "an online social networking site that allows users to create a base for their personal profiles, different communication networks, make friends with other users, write on their friends' walls, create and join groups, post events and register as fans and admirers of anything imaginable." (Nabih, 2018, page 118)

Digital memes:

Idiomatically: Memes are a concept that expresses units of information that are transmitted from one person to another through imitation and repetition

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

through communication networks, social interactions, and some through the media. (Murad, 2024)

Procedural definition: ""**Digital Meme**" is a term that refers to digital content circulating on social media sites, which may be images or videos spread across digital spaces repeatedly and in a humorous manner, often reflecting the perceptions and behaviours of society.

Ethnicity:

Etymologically: In the early 1960s, the term ethnicity was used by G. . **G. Nicholas** used the term ethnicity in a different sense, a sense that still exists today, defining it as: "a social group almost closed to others and rooted in a mythical past, this group has its own name, customs, values and language that gives it a difference and differentiation from other groups." (Aisha, 2017-2018, page 13)

Ethnic meme:

Procedural definition: A type of digital meme that includes behaviours and expressions related to the cultural, ethnic and social identity of a group or community. This type of meme is also used to criticise or express attitudes and ideas as well as to promote division or belonging to a particular group.

The speech:

Language: It comes from the word khattab, which means matter or affair, and khattab is the cause of something, and it is said to a person, "What is wrong with you?" i.e. what is your affair?

Etymology: It is a linguistic medium for conveying a set of factual and analytical events, which I call (Guinness) the tale. (Moazen and Ben Kassoum, 2017-2018, pp. 22-23)

Popular discourse:

Etymologically: The oldest and truest form of linguistic and cultural expression, it has been able to achieve the act of communication and continuity

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

as it carries the characteristic of transmission between generations through written and spoken, it is the mirror that reflects the true image of the life of peoples. (dekdouk ,2023)

Procedural definition: It is a collective expression reflecting the perceptions, ideas and backgrounds of an informal group or group, so that the popular discourse crystallises and appears through various linguistic elements spread among individuals and may be stories, songs, folk tales represented in digital spaces in the form of memes, comments and others.

Digital culture:

Terminology: The ability to confidently use computers and electronic services that keep pace with the life of modern societies and participate in them with confidence. Its essence lies in enabling members of society to use real digital applications with confidence to fulfil their professional and personal work or their duties and tasks towards society. (Hayat, 2022, page 310)

Social interaction:

The most important manifestation of this social interaction is the process of integration into social life with the systems and laws it dictates to the individual. (Jalloul, 2021, page 308)

The code:

Etymologically: Anything that replaces something else in its connotations, not by exact correspondence, but by suggestion; that is, by a tangential or recognisable relationship, and usually the symbol in this sense is concrete that replaces the abstract. A more complex facet of the symbol is the tangible thing that suggests through the collapse of meanings into the tangible or abstract, such as the sunset, for example, which invites thinking about the state of weakness, serenity and old age, or the depiction of an old man, a symbol of winter. (Shalalaqa, 2021-2022, page 11)

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

The second section: Applied literature (previous studies/theoretical approach)

Previous studies:

Previous studies are considered a pillar and an inevitable necessity in scientific research, as they contribute to clarifying the extent of the development of research in a particular field, and provide the researcher with a knowledge base that helps him to understand his topic from many aspects, as well as build a sound theoretical and methodological framework, and avoid falling into the mistakes of those who came before him, so despite the novelty of the topic of digital memes, there are some previous studies that I may rely on in my research that helped in building sound foundations for the study. I have listed some of these studies according to the sequence of the novelty of the study, bearing in mind that all the studies mentioned below are academic scientific articles.

The first study:

- Author: Albin Wagener
- Year: 2020
- The post digital emergence of memes and gifs: meaning , and hyper narrative creativity, discourse
- Document type: Scientific article published in the academic journal post digital science and education
- Objective: The study aimed to analyse the role of digital memes and gifs in digital and post-digital communication as well as to reveal how the latter affect social interaction between individuals.

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

- The most important results:
 - 1- This media has the potential to go viral due to its nature of creating an emotional connection between individuals.
 - 2- Digital memes and gifs act as expressive capsules of knowledge and emotions.
 - 3- Memes and gifs have produced a new discourse that blends technological and human interaction. (Wagener, 2020)
- While my study focuses on ethnic memes in the Algerian social media space from a sociological perspective, this study focuses on the study of memes and gifts from a post-digital perspective, despite the differences in geographical, social and cultural aspects between the two studies, they share the study of digital memes as a tool of popular expression and communication.
- While there are some commonalities between the two studies, there are many differences as well:
 - 1- The studied media: My study focused on digital memes only, unlike this study which focused on memes and gifs.
 - 2- The paradox of time: My research is based on studying the current interaction of memes as opposed to the historical development of memes and gifs.

The second study:

- Authors: fauzi arif adhika, wahyu lukit o,rendy pandita bastari
- Year: Between 2018-2020
- Title: Internet meme: a virtual visual artefact of digital visual culture

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

- Document type: Scientific article in an academic journal.
- Objective: The study aimed to present a new approach to the study of digital memes not only as a communication tool but also as a visual phenomenon that reflects social and cultural realities and events.
- Methodology: Visual analysis using Gillian rose's framework for analysing images.
- The sample: Three memes that were in circulation between 2018-2020 were analysed:
 - 1- Ghana's Coffin Bearers Meme 2020
 - 2- Black Hole Image Meme 2019
 - 3- Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un Meeting Meme 2018
- Key Findings:
 - 1- Digital memes are not only a means of communication but also a reflective tool of historical, social and political events.
 - 2- The audience exposed to these memes does not react to them in the same way so that the individual's cultural and social background plays a big role in the way the meme is perceived. (fauzi arif adhika, 2018-2020)
- Both studies agree that memes are a means of popular communication as well as a reflective tool of social and cultural realities.
- Although there is agreement between the two studies, this does not preclude the existence of a range of differences in several areas:
 - 1- My study focused on memes in the local context and on ethnicity and cultural identity, unlike this study, which examined memes based on global examples and contexts.
 - 2- I used a semiotic approach unlike this study which relied on Gillian rose's approach to analysing images.

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

The third study:

- Author: Heidi E. Huntington
- Year: 2013
- Title: "Subversive memes: internet memes as a form of visual rhetoric"
- Document type: Academic research paper within the selected papers of internet conference

Research14-0

- Objective: To analyse memes as a visual discourse that reshapes circulating media messages.
- Approach: The study relied on the comparative analysis of digital memes using three approaches: semiotics, rhetoric, and visual rhetoric.
- Key Findings:
 - 1- Digital memes are interactive, expressive and participatory.
 - 2- Memes can be analysed using different approaches.
 - 3- Memes are not just a humorous satirical content, they are a rhetorical device. (E.huntington, 2013)
- Both studies agreed that memes are not just a means of entertainment, but also a tool for interaction, socialising and sharing ideas and opinions.
- Some of the differences include:
 - 1- This study focuses on the political aspect of the meme, unlike my study which focused on the ethnic aspect of the digital meme.
 - 2- My study is more focused on an in-depth semiotic approach to memes, unlike this study, which uses several approaches to understand memes.
 - ❖ My study was directly related to the other studies mentioned above by sharing the same **independent variable** "digital meme". My study added the sociological and ethnic aspect of digital memes,

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

which allows for a deeper understanding of these digital memes and how they shape an ethno-cultural identity in the Wadi region of Algeria.

Theoretical Approach: (Symbolic Interactionism).

The theory represents an essential control element in scientific research through which the phenomenon studied is understood, interpreted and analysed, thus providing proof and confirmation. By adopting a theoretical approach, the study suggests the credibility and reliability of the results obtained, and this is due to the importance of the theory.

A theory: It is a set of concepts, definitions and suggestions that give us a systematic view of a phenomenon by identifying the various relationships between the variables of the phenomenon, with the aim of explaining that phenomenon or predicting it in the future, so if the hypothesis is an unreal recognition of the existence of a relationship between two or more variables, the theory is a real recognition of the existence of a relationship between empirically verified variables. (Molly, 2024, page 444)

- ❖ My study was based on the symbolic interactionist theory, so that my choice of it came according to the need of the studied topic, as it is a theory based on understanding the symbols and meanings that are built through social interaction resulting from individuals, as it plays a major role in the possibility of understanding and interpreting digital memes and understanding their content of expressive and linguistic symbols and others, and I used the theory in analysing the content of comments and interactions to help understand the meanings carried by these symbols, and I added the latter in using its concepts such as symbol, interaction, and others.

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

The emergence and development of symbolic interactionism:

The centre of the development of symbolic interactionism was in the Department of Sociology at the Chicago School. The theory relied on the utilitarian school of philosophy, which is a purely American school, on the social-ecological explanation, i.e. the study of the relationship between the object and the environment, and on the methods of field study developed by anthropologists, which is now known among sociologists as the participatory observation method. (Mouly, 2024, pp. 445-446)

The real emergence of the theory of symbolic interactionism was in the twentieth century by the American George Herbert Mead after he wrote the book "Mind, Self and Society", in which the most important ideas and principles on which the theory is based came. Among the most important pioneers of the theory are: George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Victor Turner.

- The concept of symbolic interaction: Symbolic interaction refers to the interaction that takes place between individuals, within a certain social pattern, and this interaction appears in a set of behaviours performed by one actor in relation to the behaviour of the other actor. In other words, reciprocal selves produce a set of actions and reactions in symmetry with the structure of society. (Hamdawi, 2017, pp. 103-104)

Arnold Ross's concept of symbolic interaction, in his interpretation of Mead's conceptualisation, is limited to five basic assumptions: (Hamdawi, 2017, p. 107)

1. We live in an environment that is both symbolic and material, and we are the ones who make the meanings of the world and the meanings of our actions in the world through symbols. (Hamdawi, 2017, p. 107)

It is the individual who constructs his perceptions, ideas and meanings according to the various symbols that exist through social interaction and based on the backgrounds of different individuals.

The first chapter: Theoretical and applied literature

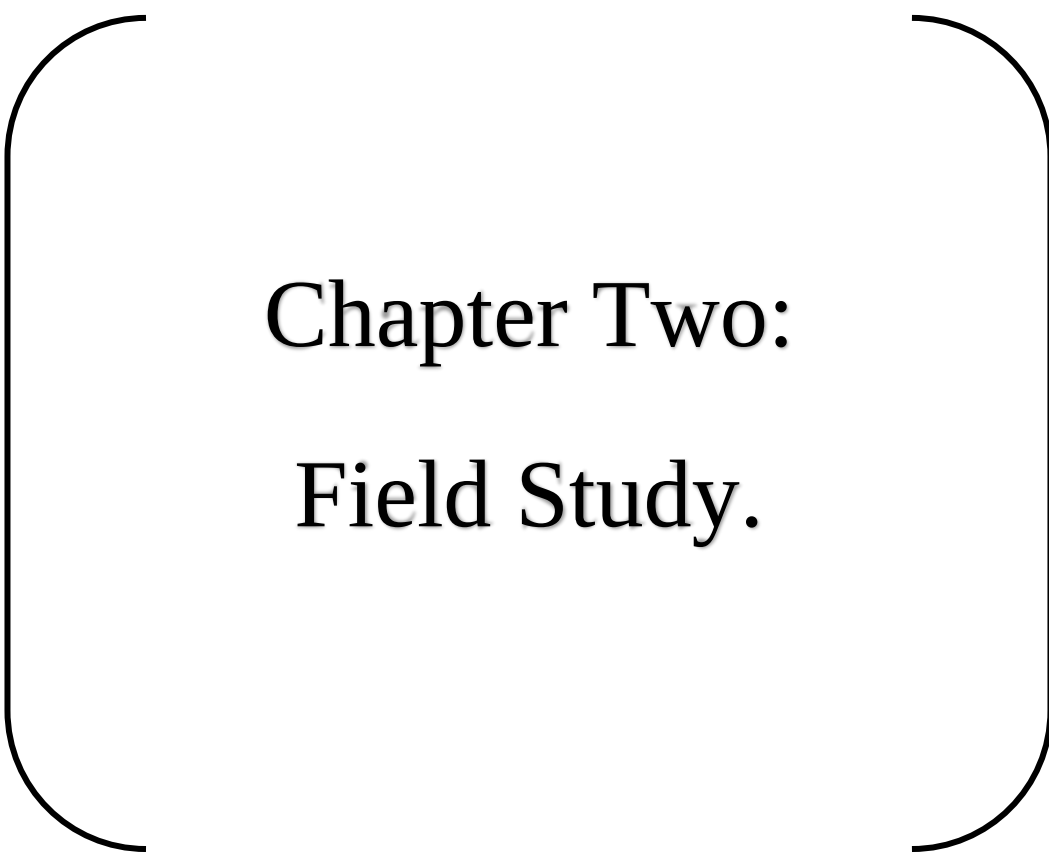
2. It is thanks to these meaningful symbols that Mead distinguishes from natural signs that we are able to replace the other because we share the same symbols. (Hamdawi, 2017, p. 107)
3. We share a culture composed of a set of meanings and values; they guide most of our actions and largely allow us to predict the behaviour of other individuals. (Hamdawi, 2017, p. 107)
4. Symbols, and therefore the meanings and values associated with them, are not isolated. (Hamdawi, 2017, p. 107)

They arise in the centre of society and through the interaction of individuals, through which each individual is informed of his or her role in society.

1. Thought is the process by which possible and potential solutions are first examined in terms of the benefits and harms to one's values before finally choosing them. (Hamdawi, 2017, p. 107)
 - ❖ Based on the symbolic interactionism theory, I chose it because it is the most appropriate theory that serves the topic and contributes to explaining the human and social behaviour of the individual in society.

abstract:

In this chapter, I have sought to build the general theoretical framework of the study by introducing the basic concepts on which the study was built, related to digital memes as well as popular discourse in Algerian social media spaces. I have also identified the most prominent previous studies that, despite their diversity and inclusion of a lot of valuable and useful information that helped shape this study, they did not address the local or ethnic aspect of digital memes, which makes this study a qualitative addition in the field, based on the symbolic interaction theory, meanings and symbols were analysed and this helped in understanding ethnic memes

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Chapter Two: Field Study.

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prologue:

The study of digital memes is the best way to understand them and know how they shape representations of regionalism and stereotypes about different local areas in Wadi Souf. Based on this, I had to conduct a realistic field study that clarifies the environment in which these memes emerged to give deeper dimensions to the various aspects of this modern phenomenon, in order to know the environment in which they are produced and the way individuals interact with them, so I tried in this chapter to shed light on the study tool and sample, as well as analysing the most important digital memes that express local ethnicity in Wadi Souf.

My study was based on **participant observation** as the main tool that brings the researcher closer to the studied reality, which helped to understand the circumstances of the formation of this phenomenon, its purpose and the different ways of individuals to interact and be affected by it. As for the study sample, it was selected in an intentional way that meets the needs of the topic, the Facebook page "**Aseel**" was chosen and a group of posts "digital memes" were analysed in addition to a number of comments that these posts received, according to the suitability of the memes for the purposes of the study. The memes were suitable for the purposes of the study, as they were expressive of the ethnicity of Wadi Souf city par excellence, different among them in terms of their content and covered different regions, with different time periods for each meme, which allowed them to be studied over a different period of time to ensure that the phenomenon is not affected by any of the circumstances trapped in time. In this chapter, these memes were analysed according to the semiotic approach with the attachment of objective sociological analysis to interpret this phenomenon objectively and truthfully.

Chapter Two: Field Study

The first research: Instrument and sample of the study.

The study tool: (participant observation).

Participant Observation

Participant observation in this study aims to enable the researcher to enter the meme circulation environment on the Facebook page “Aseel,” collecting data within its natural digital context and analyzing it through the interactions of its members. According to the SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, participant observation requires the researcher to become a member of, or at least engage with, the phenomenon under study. This involves actively following posts and comments, and con...

Memes are considered “elementary units of cultural information” that spread through imitation and are continuously reproduced within specific social environments. This means that the researcher can analyze how these memes carry symbolic and linguistic codes unique to the community of Ouargla’s El Oued region (Wadi Souf). According to one study, memes are “produced, interpreted, and understood only by those who share particular cultural codes” commonly recognized within the group. This necessitates clo...

Moreover, participant observation supports the analysis of the social impact of digital memes, particularly in the construction of regional stereotypes and representations. Communication research indicates that visual media often “mislead the public about minorities” by reinforcing stereotypical perceptions. Therefore, tracking comments and interactions on the “Aseel” page allows for an examination of how stereotypical images of Wadi Souf are either reproduced or deconstructed through memes.

Other studies on digital oral heritage have concluded that popular jokes (and therefore memes) frequently contain “stereotypical features” targeting specific ethnic, religious, or regional groups. This highlights the importance of participant

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observation in capturing such narratives from within the digital community itself. In other words, combining direct interaction with cultural symbol analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of how memes influence perceptions and identities in Wadi Souf and...

1. Tool Design

The observation tool was structured through a detailed observation table that combines personal notes with digital interaction data:

A. Main Observation Categories

Meme Analysis Categories

Category	Details
Date and Time	Timestamp of meme publication and user interaction
Meme Type	Classification: humorous, critical, satirical, political, social, etc.
Linguistic Symbols	Analysis of words, expressions, local dialects, or comments appearing in the meme
Visual Symbols	Interpretation of images: symbolic, cultural, or regional representations
Interaction Type	Nature of audience reaction: likes, comments, shares – positive or negative?
Regional Stereotypes	How Wadi Souf is represented in the meme

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Attached Comments	Content analysis of audience responses: supportive, critical, or neutral
Cultural and Social Significance	What the memes reveal about social perceptions of Wadi Souf inhabitants
Reach and Influence	Number of reactions and how memes shape public opinion

B. Guiding Interaction Questions

What type of interaction was triggered by the meme?

Were there recurring responses that contributed to constructing a regional stereotype?

How did the memes contribute to building or deconstructing regional identity?

Did comments reveal any social or geographic classifications?

What were the key visual and linguistic codes used to convey regional messages?

4. Interaction and Participation

The application of participant observation involved several steps:

Continuous interaction with memes posted on the “Aseel” page.

Posting thoughtful comments that encourage diverse perspectives and discussions.

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Sharing similar memes either based on prior analysis or in response to ongoing content.

Observing how the dynamics of the comment section evolved: Were comments humorous or critical? Did they lead to social debate or reinforce certain identities?

5. Methodological Application

Semiological Analysis

Deconstructing visual (images, symbols, logos) and linguistic symbols accompanying the memes.

Understanding how these symbols convey cultural and social meanings.

Exploring how these representations affect the collective image of Wadi Souf within the community.

Digital Interaction Analysis

Monitoring interaction patterns over time.

Comparing engagement with region-specific memes to general memes.

Analyzing comments to determine whether memes fostered unity or exacerbated social divisions.

6. Documentation

Data collection was carried out systematically using Google Sheets or Excel to store and organize the data.

Memes and related comments were documented in a structured and traceable manner.

Visual content and user reactions were archived with corresponding field notes for further analysis.

The study sample:

The sample:

In this study, a purposive sample was used to select 15 digital memes that satirically reflect ethnicity in popular discourse in the city of Wadi Souf.

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Interactions and comments:

A total of 30 memes were identified and two comments were taken for each meme. I relied on the different forms and number of interactions to help me analyse the memes more deeply and objectively.

Rationale for the sample selection:

- This sample was selected based on several methodological criteria aimed at achieving an accurate and comprehensive analysis of regional representations of the Wadi Souf region in digital discourse.

1. **Adequate representation of the studied topic:**
2. **The 15 memes** were chosen because they reflect different types of symbolic representations of Wadi Suf, both in terms of the themes addressed (humour, stereotypes, social criticism, etc.) and in terms of the diversity of visual and linguistic formats. This sample allows for a balanced analysis whose findings can be generalised to the content posted on the page.
3. **Repetition and visual patterns:**

Semiotic analysis relies on the detection of repetition in symbols and connotations, which helps to reveal dominant discursive patterns. The selection of **15 memes** ensures a sufficient number of visual and textual elements to allow these patterns to be monitored and analysed in depth.

4. **Digital interaction and its impact on meanings:**

Memes are not only analysed as static texts, but also how the audience interacts with them through comments, likes, and shares. The selection of **30 comments** enables the study of user responses, helping to understand how memes are interpreted by recipients, and whether they reinforce stereotypes or reproduce new connotations.

5. **Semiotic and hermeneutic analysability:**

The memes and comments were selected based on their richness in visual and linguistic connotations, enabling the analysis of the symbols, signs, and cultural contexts embedded in them. The selected comments represent different modes of interaction (endorsement, criticism, sarcasm, irony,

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reinterpretation), enriching the hermeneutical analysis of digitally produced meanings.

The selection of **15 memes** and **30 comments**, in addition to relying on the **diverse interactions** with the **digital meme**, was done in a systematic way that ensures a balanced and multidimensional representation of regional representations of Wadi Souf in digital discourse, allowing for a deeper understanding of the symbolic patterns produced in virtual space and their role in shaping collective perceptions of the region and its inhabitants.

Paper II: Analysing and discussing the results.

Defining basic coding classes:

- **M1:**
 - **Visual content:**
 - The colours:** The image is predominantly black and white, as seen in the yellow colour of the scene.
 - Expressions:** "The seated man" has an expression of shock and disappointment.
 - "Standing people" have expressions of anxiety and tension.
 - The characters:** Egyptian origin characters from an Egyptian drama series.
 - **Accompanying texts:**
 - Text:** "Artificial intelligence when it reaches #HassiKhalifa".
 - The language:** Arabic using the local dialect of the Wadi Suf region.
 - **Social context:**
 - The target audience:** Social media users, especially those interested in artificial intelligence.
 - **Cultural icons:**
 - The dress:** All the characters in the scene are dressed in trendy clothes.
 - Hashtag:** #Hassi Khalifa, a local place in Wadi Suf.
 - **The communicative function:**

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The goal: To poke fun at the lack of AI services in front of the local audience despite the many features it includes.

- **M2:**

- Visual content:

Colours: Warm colours, brown and green.

Expressions: "The Standing Man has a stern expression on his face.

"The Sitting Woman" has a calm and unreadable expression.

- Accompanying texts:

Text: "Christmas in #HassiKhalifa" with an emoji indicating approval.

The language: Simple Arabic.

- Social context:

The target audience: The audience consuming digital culture, especially those who are influenced by digital culture.

- Cultural icons:

Eating: Potatoes, as a popular cultural symbol of rural life.

Dress: Military uniform, to suggest rigour and seriousness.

Hashtag: #HassiKhalifa, to denote the local area.

- The communicative function:

The goal: To compare and satirise the cultural differences between Arabs and the West in cultural festive customs.

- **M3:**

- Visual content:

Colors: Muted colours.

- Accompanying texts:

Text: "When a girl from #AlBayda sits in front of you in her hair section" with a broom emoji.

The language: Arabic using the colloquial dialect of Wadi Souf.

Style: Use humour despite the fact that the attached text contains the negative phenomenon of "bullying"

- Social context:

The target audience: The audience following the page.

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- Cultural icons:
 - The dress: A girl is shown in a school uniform.
 - Hashtag: #Biadha, to denote an area in Wadi Suf.
- The communicative function:
 - The goal: Entertainment and humour to pass the time.
- **M4:**
- Visual content:
 - The colours: The image is dominated by the colour yellow.
- Accompanying texts:
 - Text: "When you marry her and tell her to cook for you" with a broken heart emoji and a face expressing disappointment.
 - The language: Local colloquial dialect.
- Social context:
 - The target group: The digital meme targets young people who are about to get married.
- Cultural icons:
 - Eating: "Mahajib is a well-known traditional Algerian dish.
- The communicative function:
 - Objective: The meme carries a kind of incitement to the youth of Wadi Souf to avoid marrying Bayada girls.
- **M5:**
- Visual content:
 - The colours: The image is dominated by the colour purple.
 - Expressions: Two faces with expressions that suggest happiness and positive energy.
- Accompanying texts:
 - The text: "Gambling and gambling" with a smiley face emoji.
 - The language: The official Arabic language.
- Social context:
 - The target group: Members of both Qamar and Taghzout regions, especially social media users.
- Cultural icons:
 - Characters: "Achraf Hakimi is a well-known Moroccan footballer.

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- The communicative function:

Objective: Compare and contrast the two regions to show the differences between them.

- **M6:**

- Visual content:

The colours: The image is dominated by the colour orange.

- Accompanying texts:

The text: "The mistake of your life if you marry her from #HassiKhalifa and tell her to cook couscous for you", in addition to an emoji indicating the scaling of the situation with an emoji of a departing man.

- Social context:

The target group: Algerian young people who are about to get married.

- Cultural icons:

Eating: "Couscous is a traditional Algerian dish.

- The communicative function:

The goal: To entertain and poke fun at the cooking skills of the Hassi Khalifa girls.

- **M7:**

- Visual content:

Colors: Warm colours.

Expressions: All three men carry expressions of joy and exuberance.

- Accompanying texts:

The text: "When you know someone from #Swing with two from #HassiKhalifa" with a laughing emoji.

- Social context:

The target group: Various members of the local communities in Wadi Suf.

- Cultural icons:

The dress code: Both men and women wear traditional Algerian clothing.

- The communicative function:

Objective: To compare the individuals of Hassi Khalifa and the city centre area of Wadi Souf.

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- **M8:**

- Visual content:

The colours: Blue and white.

- Accompanying texts:

The text: "If you meet her in the coming days on your way, know that she is from #HassiKhalifa or #Zaqoum on her way to Qari Park," they added with a laughing emoji.

- Social context:

The target audience: Followers of the Facebook page as well as members of the Hassi Khalifa and Zaqoum regions.

- Cultural icons:

Public bus: A means of public transport in Wadi Souf.

- The communicative function:

Objective: Entertainment.

- **M9:**

- Visual content:

Colours: Warm, cool contrasting colours.

Expressions: "Right Side" The girl has an expression of coldness and indifference.

"Left Side" The girl has a positive expression.

- Accompanying texts:

Text: "Miss #HassiKhalifa".

"An ordinary girl from #AlBayada".

The language: Simple Arabic.

- Social context:

The target group: People interested in aesthetics and elegance for women.

- Cultural icons:

Characters: "**Zendaya** is a foreign Hollywood singer and actress.

- The communicative function:

Objective: A comparison to show the aesthetic differences between the women of Hassi Khalifa and Bayada.

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- **M10:**

- Visual content:

The colours: The image is predominantly brown in colour.

- Accompanying texts:

Text: "Evolution" / "Hassi Khalifa"

The style: A predominantly satirical style to show the paradox of development and underdevelopment.

- Social context:

The target group: Hassi Khalifa owners.

- The communicative function:

Target: A satirical critique of the developmental situation in Hassi Khalifa.

- **M11:**

- Visual content:

The colours: Yellow, Orange, White.

- Accompanying texts:

The text: "When you marry her from the egg".

"When you marry her from Hassi Khalifa".

- Social context:

The target group: Facebook users, especially young people.

- Cultural icons:

Eating: "Couscous is a traditional Algerian dish.

- The communicative function:

Objective: To compare the dietary habits of two different regions.

- **M12:**

- Visual content:

Colours: Dark colours.

- Accompanying texts:

The text: "The benefits of marrying a university graduate from Zaquom" with emoji of a broken heart and a frozen face.

- Social context:

The target audience: Facebook users.

- The communicative function:

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The goal: To incite youth by reinforcing stereotypes that girls graduating from university, especially from the Zaqoum area, are not skilled in cooking.

- **M13:**

- Visual content:

Colours: Pale colours.

- Accompanying texts:

Text: "Pizza in #HassiKhalifa"

The language: Standard Arabic.

- Social context:

The target group: The people of Wadi Souf, especially the people of Hassi Khalifa.

- Cultural icons:

Eating: "Pizza is a modern take on Italian food."

- The communicative function:

Objective: A critique of the modernist approaches adopted by the Hassi Khalifa region.

- **M14:**

- Visual content:

The colours: The image is dominated by the colour yellow.

- Accompanying texts:

The text: "When you marry her and tell her you don't like her cooking." With smiley face emoji, man running.

Style: Sarcasm and intimidation.

- Social context:

The target group: For young people who are about to get married.

- Cultural icons:

Dress: The Hijab as a cultural symbol of Arabism and Islam.

- The communicative function:

Objective: To illustrate the behaviours and traits of the Bayadah girl as being aggressive and aggressive.

- **M15:**

- Visual content:

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The colours: The image is predominantly black and white in colour.

- Accompanying texts:

Text: "Kar #HasiKhalifa" with a smiley face emoji.

- Social context:

The target audience: Consumers of digital culture who are followers of the page or users of Facebook.

- Cultural icons:

Dress: "Hijab and Abaya" to emphasise the Islamic character.

"Shirt and trousers" to refer to the daily local dress code.

- The communicative function:

Objective: To show the local conditions in the region related to transport.

The encoding table:

<u>Attached text</u>	<u>Image "Digital Meme"</u>	<u>No.</u> <u>Monday</u> <u>Meme</u>
"Artificial intelligence when it reached #HasiKhalifa".		<u>1</u>

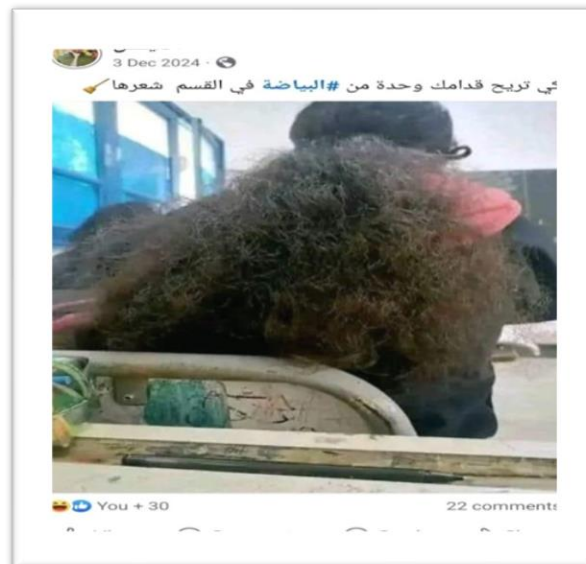
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"Christmas in #HassiKhalifa" with an emoji indicating approval.



2

"When a girl from #AlBayada sits in front of you in her hair section" with a broom emoji.



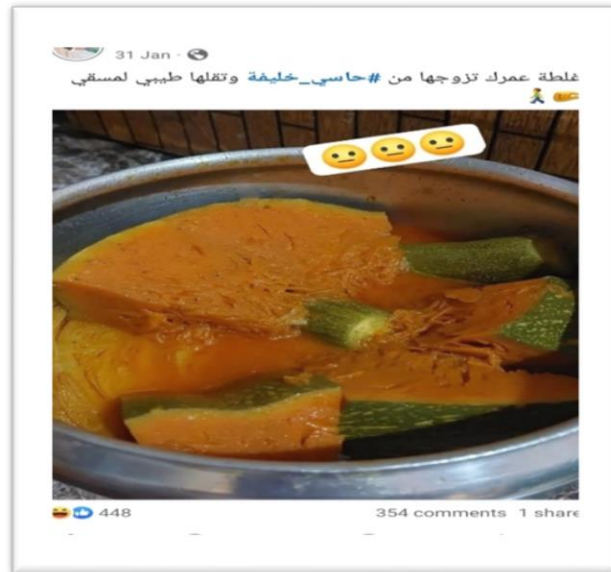
3

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"When you marry her from #Trevaoui and tell her to cook for you"		<u>4</u>
"Gambling and gambling"		<u>5</u>

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"The mistake of your life if you marry #HassiKhalifa and tell her to cook couscous for you"



6

"When you know someone from #Sonter with two from #HassiKhalifa"



7

"If you meet her in the coming days on your way, know that she is from #HassiKhalifa or #Zuqm on her way to Qari Park."



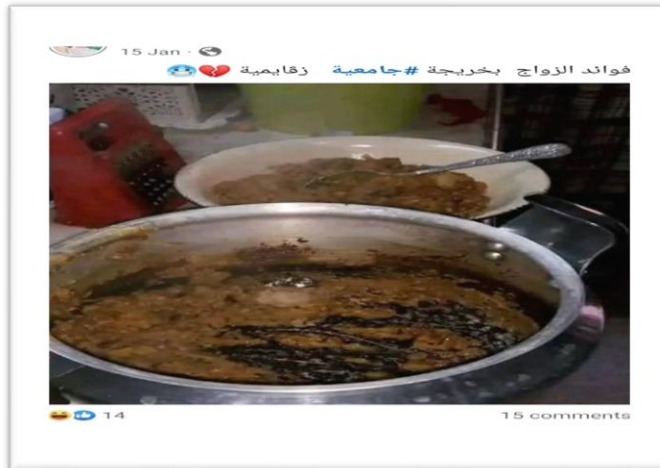
8

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"Miss #HassiKhalifa". "An ordinary girl from #AlBayada".		<u>9</u>
"Evolution"/"Hassi Khalifa"		<u>10</u>
"When you marry her from the egg" "When you marry her from Hassi Khalifa".		<u>11</u>

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"The benefits of marrying a university graduate from Zaqoum"



12

"Pizza in #HassiKhalifa"



13

"When you marry her and tell her you don't like her cooking"



14

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"Carr #Hassi-Khalifa"



15

Analyse digital memes:

M1:



1. General description of the image:

It is a staged scene showing a man sitting shocked and collapsed on the ground surrounded by a group of people, three men and two women, trying to help him, with the words meta. Ai on the collapsed man's chest and a text attached to the image that reads: "Artificial intelligence when it arrived in **Hassi Khalifa**".

2. Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

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Initial connotation: The image depicts a man with the caption META-AI in a state of shock and collapse as a result of an action or behaviour, surrounded by a group of people who are confused by the situation of the man sitting on the ground.

Implied connotation: The meme reflects the inability of digital technology to understand the local contexts of society, as well as the inability of artificial intelligence to deal with the people of **Hassi Khalifa** due to the local specificity in terms of the dialect used by the people of the region.

3. The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme shows the personal character of the residents of **Hassi Khalifa** through the way they dealt with this post. The topic of artificial intelligence was taken sarcastically, and the ethnic meme indicates an issue with artificial intelligence as it was unable to understand the colloquial terms of the **Hassi Khalifa** region, which shows the inability of artificial intelligence to understand some social and cultural contexts of regions where local dialects and expressions are used.

4) Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The post received a total of eight reactions (two likes and six reactions with the code "make me laugh"), indicating that most interactors took the digital meme with a sarcastic sense of humour.

As the comments below show, the meme has been taken with humour and irreverence.

First comment: Nothing to do with us being polite.

Second comment: Yesterday I asked him a lot and when I went to bed I told him to tell me a bedtime story.

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- Based on the above-mentioned semiotic analysis of the Ethnic Meme, in addition to analysing the nature of the interactions and comments with the post, it was concluded that this meme clearly reflects the ongoing conflict between AI and local dialects in Algeria, as a number of questions have recently surfaced in Algeria about the ability of AI to understand and interpret the local phrases and dialects of the community, as illustrated by this Ethnic Meme. The comments about this post show a reconfiguration of the stereotype by individuals using AI, whereby the According to E. (E. Huntington, '2013)**Huntington**, "digital memes are interactive, expressive and participatory"), and this can be seen in how individuals took this post and how they interacted, commented and expressed their emotions and thoughts through it.

M2:



1- General description of the image:

The picture shows a parking lot of an old country house where there is a Christmas tree in the middle of the house decorated with a bunch of potatoes instead of the usual Christmas party decorations of lights and gifts. A man wearing a military uniform is standing and greeting the parking lot with an old woman carrying a basket of potatoes. The picture shows a huge number of potatoes

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distributed in different corners of the house in addition to a text attached to this scene: "Christmas in **#HassiKhalifa**. "

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The image depicts a traditional country house with a Christmas or Christmas tree that has been decorated with potatoes instead of Christmas decorations.

Implied connotation: This meme suggests the importance of potatoes as a staple food item in the **Hassi Khalifa** region, a reference to the economic situation in the local area as a result of the high prices of some foodstuffs, especially potatoes; the image contains a clear mockery by the author of the post and the followers who expressed their opinions through comments or interacted with the meme about the local economic situation.

3- The cultural and social context in which the meme is expressed:

The meme reflects the economic situation in the **Hassi Khalifa** region, as a symbol of culture, namely food, was used in a social context to signify the living social situation, as the potato was used instead of Christmas decorations as a tool to mock the difficulty of the living situation and to signify an economic crisis. The meme also reflects the cultural overlap between a local region in Algeria "Hassi Khalifa" and Western culture, as they were merged to express some ideas and perceptions in a more appropriate and clear manner, as the meme is a clear reference to the ways in which individuals in this region react to the crises and difficulties they face.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The post "The Digital Meme" received a total of twenty interactions. Most of the interactions included the code "Laugh at me", which is a reference to the collective

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sense of humour, so that the post "The Ethnic Meme" was considered a humorous element expressing the living conditions.

First comment: Frozen Room.

Second comment: Potatoes.

It is clear from the two comments that new vocabulary and phrases were recreated to participate in the process of interacting with this digital meme, as individuals produced new terms to more clearly express their personal perceptions and some funny emojis were used, indicating a humorous and sarcastic emotional engagement with the meme.

- By analysing this ethnic meme semiotically and identifying the various interactions and comments it received, it became clear that the meme is a clear expression of the economic and social situation using the cultural symbols of the region through the changes in the Christmas tree, as the natural image of a tree is covered with decorations and lights and surrounded by gifts. But in this scene it was decorated with a group of potatoes, some change in the symbols changed its meaning completely, the Christmas tree had a connotation of celebration and joy, and through the addition of some modifications, its connotation and meaning changed to a function of the socio-economic conditions of society, and this is what Harbert Blumer came up with, that individuals interpret the world around them through the meanings the world around them through the meanings they attach to it, and these meanings are constructed and modified through social interaction. Through the analysis, I also came to answer some of the sub-questions of this study, as the analysis of this meme showed that the most prominent discourses that appear in the comments about the Wadi Souf region are sarcastic discourses that impart a sense of fun and a sense of humour. The analysis of this meme shows that the most prominent discourses appearing in the comments about the Wadi Souf region are

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sarcastic discourses that impart a sense of fun and humour and reinforce the stereotypical image of the local region through the agreement of the individuals commenting on the post that the meme is an expressive means of reality, we conclude through the analysis of this meme that creativity in using visual symbols such as the Christmas tree attached to a group of potatoes here in addition to the linguistic text such as Christmas in **#Hassi Khalifa** has helped to communicate popular perceptions and ideas about the region.

M3:



1 - General description of the image:

A photo taken from a classroom where the scene is dominated by a girl with thick and curly hair, the photo was taken by a student sitting behind the girl to illustrate an aspect of his suffering of not being able to see the blackboard because of the hair of the girl sitting in front of him. The photo was accompanied by a sarcastic text "When a girl from **#albayda** sits in front of you in the department her hair" in addition to using the broom symbol to signify the shape of the girl's hair.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the meme:

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Initial connotation: A photograph taken from a classroom of a girl with curly and damaged hair, as in the text attached to the photograph, a clear ethnicity **of the Bayada** region, where the girl's hair is attributed to one of the characteristics of the region's members.

Implied connotation: The meme clearly mocks the sitting girl with curly hair. When adding the text accompanying the image, we see some discrimination towards the girl, which indicates that all girls from **Al Bayada** have curly and damaged hair. The image also refers to social beauty standards, by mocking this type of hair, it shows that it is not one of the beauty standards in the region.

3- The social and cultural context in which the meme is expressed:

The digital meme reflects an explicit mockery of a physiological trait that the girl possesses in a school environment, which shows the prevalence of the phenomenon of bullying in the school environment among students. The digital space was also used here as a means of expressing such emotions by highlighting some of the ethnic representations and perceptions towards the **Bayada** region, which is a reference to the fact that girls in the region have curly hair, and not only that, through the meme we see a mockery of the type of hair, which is a sign that a girl with this type of hair is vulnerable to bullying and ridicule by other individuals.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The meme garnered a total of 30 interactions with each of the following symbols "Love it, Like it, Like it, Laugh it", a clear sign of acceptance of the meme's visualisation by followers and audiences.

First comment: O Hafez is like the Amazon jungle.

The second comment: I used to put my pens there.

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In addition to the interactions, these representations of whiteness were also accepted in the comments, where they supported the post's representations by continuing to bully girls and telling stories of what they used to do to girls with curly hair.

- The meme reflects the nature of Algerian popular discourse, especially in the local area of Bayada. Based on the comments, the local popular discourse has a spirit of humour and sarcasm as well as bullying of physical attributes, and it includes the production of popular ethnic and regional perceptions towards the city of Bayada, as well as clear regional discrimination and disparity that contributes to the construction of ethnic representations in the popular imagination, and this answers the sub-question By analysing this meme and relying on the semiotic approach as well as adding the sociological dimension, we see that the digital space has a large and important role in the reproduction of popular representations about local areas in Wadi Souf, such as the Bayada region in this meme, through the acceptance of the meme by the comments, this has contributed to the production of representations and the reinforcement of stereotypes towards the region.

M4:



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1- General description of the image:

The photo features a dish of a traditional Algerian dish called **Mahajib**, which is clearly overly flat and "burnt." The photo is accompanied by a caption that reads "When you marry her from #**Trivaoui** and tell her to cook you Mahajib," an ethnic reference to the **Trivaoui** region. The text is accompanied by two emoticons: a broken heart and a sarcastic face, signalling disappointment and a sense of disillusionment.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The scene shows a popular Algerian dish called **mahajib** being burnt and the text accompanying the image is a reference to the incompetence of the **Trevaoui** wife in the kitchen.

Implied connotation: The meme suggests a clear ethnic regional discrimination towards the **Trevaoui** region, as the content creator used biting humour in order to communicate certain ethnic perceptions towards the Trevaoui region, unlike the use of criticism, the meme reflected a stereotype about Trevaoui women that they are not skilled in cooking, through the scene containing the burnt food and the accompanying text.

3 -The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The digital meme shows the adherence of the people of **Wadi Souf** to customs and traditions, as the region is still conservative and uses food, which is a cultural element, as a criterion for measuring a woman's competence and marriageability. The meme also refers to the failure of a woman from a leisure background in cooking, especially in her cooking of a traditional food such as Mahajib.

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4 -Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The meme garnered 27 reactions, which shows that the post has reached a diverse group of followers, as well as a host of comments of annoyance and humour.

First comment: You don't even know how to write and if you make fun of us I will punch you in the face.

This comment shows a scathing rejection of the "digital meme" as a result of the individual's sense of offence and humiliation towards the **Trevaoui** region.

Second comment: Next time show us your sister's cooking, I'm looking for a fiancée.

This comment shows disapproval but uses humour.

- Based on the analysis of the digital meme and in addition to the attachment of comments and various interactions, we see that the digital meme can be considered one of the means of reproducing social representations and perceptions about gender roles as well as defining cultural norms in society, through the clear contrast in the comments, whether from sharp rejection or scathing mockery, this has contributed to the construction and understanding of the ethnic identity of the Trevaoui region. I can also refer here to **Irving Goffman's** theory of symbolic interactionism, where he likened social interaction to a theatre and individuals play different roles in it depending on the situation, and here the meme can be considered as a theatre that allows users to reinterpret perceptions according to their social backgrounds.

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M5:



1 - General description of the image:

The scene is a picture of two men wearing the same shirt, one is a Moroccan footballer named Ashraf Hakimi and the other is one of his fans trying to take a picture with him, both are smiling in the picture and the picture is accompanied by a text that reads: "**Taghzout and Gammar**" with a laughing emoji, personalising the scene to the local regions of **Taghzout and Gammar**, located in the city of **Wadi Souf**.

2. Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: Taking into account the initial view of the image, we see two men who are identical in dress, although there are differences between them in their physical characteristics, each of them has certain formal characteristics that differ from the other, in addition to the text attached to the words **Taghzout and Gammar**, which is an ethnic reference to the owners of the two regions.

Implied connotation: We see through this digital meme a clear distinction and differentiation between two local cities called Qamar **and Taghzout**, where two contrasting men in terms of appearance as well as fame are used to signify the differences between the inhabitants of the city and the remote and somewhat

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inland areas, which is referred to here as **Qamar**, which is considered a district and a large city with population movement, and **Taghzout**, which is subordinate to **Qamar**.

3- The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme reflects the nature of the digital culture circulating in Algerian social media, which is humorous and carries some mockery and regional and ethnic discrimination between the regions of **Wadi Souf**, as well as an indication of the discrimination between urban dwellers, who are considered the upper class of society, and the inhabitants of the interior regions.

4 - Emotional impact and digital interaction:

The post "The Digital Meme" received a large number of interactions, almost exceeding the rest of the posts on the page, as it received a total of 1.5 different expressions. The majority agreed through the interactions that the meme expressed ethnicity in a humorous and sarcastic way, as individuals explained this by using the symbol "Laugh at me" for more than 1.2, indicating that this meme appropriately expressed ethnicity among local areas in Wadi Souf and reached a large and diverse audience.

First comment: Qamar is Ashraf Hakimi.

The caption reflects the role of the individual's cultural and social background through its interpretation of meanings. The image of Ashraf Hakimi was attributed to the Qamar region, and the caption received two supportive icons.

Second comment: Hahaha past and future.

The commentary playfully expresses the specific qualities of each region, with one representing the past because it has not reached the appropriate level of his aspirations and the other representing the future because he sees it as having fulfilled his aspirations on the ground.

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- Through the interpretation and analysis of this meme, I came to agree with one of the ideas of this theory that each individual interprets symbols and events according to their background, and here the meme was not only interpreted by the creator of the digital content, but the image and the ideas it contains were reframed according to the background of each of the commenters and interactors of the post. We can also link this meme to the nature of the people of the Wadi Souf region. At the time of its publication, Algeria in general was experiencing some difficult economic conditions, so people used the meme as an outlet to pass the time and get away from the stressful situation. Another characteristic of the people of the local area is their great admiration for football, which made them use one of the players to express their emotions. The study agrees with one of **Albin Wagener**'s previous study findings that "**memes** have great potential for rapid spread due to their nature of creating emotional interaction between individuals" (Wagener '2020)), based on the many and varied comments and interactions that this meme has received.

M6:



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1- General description of the image:

The image represents a clip of the preparation of a traditional Algerian dish called couscous, a traditional food, showing a metal pot with a soup of pumpkin cooked in an unattractive way as if inedible, in addition to a text accompanying the scene that reads: "The mistake of your life if you marry her from #HassiKhalifa and tell her to cook couscous for you" with two emoticons signifying scaling down and another signifying departure, both directed at the women of the **Hassi Khalifa** region.

2- Semantic and semiotic elements included in the digital meme:

The initial connotation: The meme contains an image of a couscous eater, as it appears to be still cooking, but it does not look appetising and edible, as well as a playful satirical comment directed at the women of the **Hassi Khalifa** region.

Implied connotation: The "digital meme" is a clear mockery of regional differences in food habits and cooking methods. The meme shows a kind of limitation of the role of women from the Hassi Khalifa region in cooking, as the caption accompanying the image shows a form of warning against marrying women from the region to the point of saying "the mistake of your life", which is a bitter mockery towards a specific ethnicity of the region in terms of its women and their traditional cooking customs.

3 -The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The ethnic meme is one of the sources that reflects the differences and distinctions between local Algerian regions, especially in Wadi Souf. It illustrates the nature of the various interactions and comments and reveals some of the ethnic and racial perceptions and representations of the Hassi Khalifa region, and shows that food or cooking is one of the main determinants or criteria for marriage.

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4 -Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The post received a large number of different comments from the page's audience, including acceptance, rejection, defence and sarcasm all in one post. The meme also received 442 interactions from consumers of digital culture, with the majority using the code Laugh at me and a small number using the code Angry at me, indicating a strong and contradictory response from the audience.

- By analysing this ethnic meme, we observe the semiotics of the ongoing conflict over how individuals form, understand and interpret meanings as a result of their different cultural, social, ethnic and racial backgrounds, through the first commentary: "The Almighty says:" O you who believe, do not make fun of a people of a people, may they be better than them, nor of a woman of a woman, may they be better than them, and do not insult yourselves or call each other names, for that is the worst name after faith, and those who do not repent are the unjust ones." Don't mock (don't mock), don't pick on people (don't pick on people), don't call others bad names (don't call others bad names), sarcasm (mocking others, bullying them and belittling them whether by word, deed or gesture), we see through it another aspect altogether, as the individual commenter used the method of advice and preaching religion and urging good morals and staying away from bullying and sarcasm despite the differences that exist, as for the second comment. "We're still making fun of others, we haven't evolved yet." We see disappointment and negative feelings on the part of the commenter for saying that we haven't evolved yet because of the reactionary behaviours displayed by the creator of the digital content, but we see another side of it completely, as the commenter used the method of advising and preaching religion and urging good morals and staying away from bullying and ridicule despite the existing differences , as we see here that each individual has interpreted this meme according to his or her own reference. This is a confirmation of what was stated in the symbolic

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interactionism. The meme also shows the differences and differences that can occur when people from cities marry people from the interior regions so that differences in cultural and social habits appear, especially differences in terms of food habits and cooking methods, and this is what the meme illustrated here and in this analysis an answer to one of our sub-questions, the digital space has a great role in reproducing and resisting popular representations about local areas in Wadi Souf through the rejection of some and the acceptance of others of the audience for the digital meme and the way they express and the nature of their comments.

M7:



1- General description of the image:

The image depicts a scene of three smiling men, two of them representing the local indigenous appearance of the Hassi Khalifa region and one of them is a foreigner with Asian features. The image shows them sitting in front of a banquet of various traditional foods. The image is accompanied by the phrase "When you host someone from #City Centre with two from #HassiKhalifa" with two emojis indicating laughter.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

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Initial connotation: The digital meme reflects the position of three men of contrasting appearance, two with local characteristics and one with Asian features, seated in front of a table of various local traditional foods.

Implied connotation: The meme comically depicts the regional differences between people living in the city centre and people living in the hinterland, portraying them as local people adhering to their original old customs in terms of appearance, while the people living in the city centre are represented by the Asian man, indicating that they are privileged and distinguished from the rest of the hinterland.

3 The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme depicts the cultural differences in terms of appearance between individuals who adhere to the local identity and those who have been influenced by globalisation and the adoption of alien Western cultures, which have become widespread among different segments of society, he referred to them as the residents of the city centre. Although this meme depicts the differences and stratification between individuals from different regions, especially in terms of appearance and dress, it highlights that these dynamics and differences did not prevent individuals from living together and sitting at the same table.

4 - Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The meme garnered 95 likes from the page's audience and received a variety of comments ranging from humorous to serious.

First comment: There's a lot of bullying on this page, haha.

The person commenting clearly expressed their opinion that the digital meme was a clear bullying towards a local organisation.

Second comment: Hassi Khalifa's people are self-sufficient and would be fine if you pointed to another extremist region.

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The person expressed his opinion trying to defend the people of Hassi Khalifa, as he believes that they are neat individuals in terms of appearance and care about themselves and not as shown in the picture. He also indicated in his comment that he does not oppose bullying indirectly, as he did not want to bully the people of Hassi Khalifa, and this indicates that he may be a member of the region, as this was shown by his saying if you mention another extreme place, it would be better.

- We can see through this meme and the various interactions and comments we have seen earlier, the different dynamics through which people can interact. The meme reflects the impact of globalisation and the introduction of Western cultures into local areas, such as the downtown area here. Recently, the Algerian society has witnessed a widespread spread of Asian culture among different segments of society, especially Korean culture. As a result of the influence of Korean **soap** operas and listening to K-pop music, this has resulted in major cultural shifts. This meme was not only for the purpose of humour and joking, but it also illustrated the role of globalisation in the changes taking place in **Wadi Souf**.

M8:



1- General description of the image:

This meme shows a white and blue bus, which is a public bus for the Wadi Suf region and is used as a popular means of transport between members of the region.

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The image is accompanied by a caption that says: "If you find it next days on your way, know that it is from #Hassi Khalifa or #Zuqm going to Qa'ari Park, which is a common ethnicity for the two regions." The meme shows a bus with white and blue colours.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The image reflects the appearance of a public bus, which is used in the city of Wadi Souf, usually for travelling between small villages. This bus is linked to two local areas, Zaqim and Hassi Khalifa, through the text accompanying the image, which is written in a local language.

The implied humour: The meme is a clear mockery of the people of both areas, as the bus used to transport the locals was used to refer to them, as the mockery revolves around the constant going by the residents of the two areas to Qaari Park. We can also interpret from the text attached to the image the presence of the local slang dialect, indicating that this meme is directed to a specific area with its own ethnicity.

3- The cultural and social context in which the meme is expressed:

The digital meme depicts the local reality in Wadi Souf through the depiction of this bus, which is the most commonly used means of public transport. The meme also reflects the nature of social cohesion among the people of Wadi Souf through the comments where each individual shared their experience and talked about the situation that happened to them with or on the bus.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The post received 186 interactions, where most of the interactions were using the symbol Laugh and Like, which reflects acceptance by the audience. The nature of the meme, which carries a picture of a local reality that most individuals have

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lived through, made it easy to interact with it, as individuals felt nostalgic and longing for a memory that linked them to the bus, and the comments showed various opinions and expressions about this ethnic meme, each individual interacted in their own way and according to their social background.

- This meme uses a local social symbol in Wadi Souf, which facilitated the audience's response and interaction with it, as a public bus was used to reflect a common meaning between individuals. The meme here reflected a common ethnicity between two local areas, Zaqoum and Hassi Khalifa, and went beyond being a mere means of sarcasm. The first comment "Haha, come and see us in Raqiba" showed that this meme did not only reflect the ethnicity of two areas, but also involved another local area, namely Raqiba. This is a reference to the fact that the bus is considered one of the local social symbols in Wadi Souf, based on the attached text, we see that Qaari Park, which is an amusement park, is the only one in Wadi Souf. This is a depiction of a local reality in Wadi Souf due to the scarcity of amusement and recreation areas and the lack of interest in this aspect, taking into account the time when this meme was published, it was two days before the beginning of the end of the year holiday and this is an indication that this bus will be abundant in the coming days as we notice from the second comment "and you find it only on Friday and Saturday" that this bus is observed abundantly on Friday and Saturday and this is normal because they are two weekend days and most individuals will think of going to entertain themselves. Through all this, we note that the digital space plays a major role in reproducing local popular perceptions about the city of Wadi Souf through popular discourse, as individuals use Facebook as a tool to express their emotions and perceptions, and this is an answer to one of the sub-questions of this study, also this study agreed with the previous study of **Heidi E. Huntington** (2013), who stated that "digital memes

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are interactive, expressive, and participatory", and this is what we saw through the comments and interactions that the meme post may receive.

M9:



1- General description of an image:

On the right side of the picture is a representation of a clear comparison between two girls. On the left side is a girl with unkempt hair and no cosmetics with the words Miss #Hasi **Khofifah** and on the other side is a girl with a neat and tidy appearance wearing some cosmetics with the words An ordinary girl from #Bayadah.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The image consists of two girls with different appearance in terms of dress and hair, with a phrase referring to the geographical affiliation of two different regions for both girls, namely Bayada and Hassi Khalifa.

Implied connotation: The meme reflects popular stereotypes about the ethnicity of the Hassi Khalifa and Bayada regions, showing a clear regional comparison between the standards and determinants of beauty of the two regions.

3- The cultural and social context in which the meme is expressed:

The meme reflects the interactive nature between the people of Wadi Souf, especially between the people of Bayadah and Hassi Khalifa, as the meme expresses a comparison and regional discrimination on an important topic that is

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considered one of the cultural symbols in the beauty society, which caused a stir in the comments. Acceptance, rejection, ridicule and reworking of stereotypes. The average girl from Bayada was portrayed as tidy, neat and beautiful, unlike Miss Hassi Khalifa, who was portrayed as untidy and unattractive, exposing the ethnic social reality of both regions in terms of the standard of beauty.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The digital meme received 338 interactions, the majority of the interactions were using the funny symbol and the rest were in support of the post, and through the interactions, it clearly shows the acceptance of the post by the audience.

First comment: Long live the Bayadah girl.

Second comment: Natural beauty is much more beautiful than wearing a lot of cosmetics.

The above comments enable us to answer one of the sub-questions of the study, through which we see that the nature of the interaction is ambivalent and contradictory between acceptance, rejection and reinterpretation of stereotypes at the same time.

- The ethnic meme is not just a tool for satire and humour, but a representation of a theme that reflects the culture and identity of a society. In turn, it reinforced stereotypes on one side and deconstructed stereotypes on the other. This meme also used satire as a means of shaping popular discourse and building ethnic representations of the Bayada and Hassi Khalifa regions, as well as the regionalism and discrimination that exists between the local regions of Wadi Souf, which is expressed through digital spaces such as the use of Asil's Facebook page in this meme. I can also support my analysis here by relying on one of the findings in **Heidi E. Huntington's** previous study, which states that "the audience exposed to

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these memes does not react to them in the same way so that the individual's cultural and social background plays a large role in the way the meme is perceived." (E. Huntington ,2013)

M10:



1- General description of the image:

The image is a scene from an old cartoon, showing a dirt road leading to a modern city with tall buildings in the background. The texts added to the image are:

"Hassi Khalifa (a town in Algeria).

"Evolution" (the main topic of comparison).

The image creates a sense of contrast between the rural or desert environment, represented by the dirt road, and the modern city that symbolises 'development'.

2- The semiotic elements involved in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The image represents a transition or a road connecting two different places:

In the foreground, an unpaved road indicating a lack of infrastructure.

In the background, a developed city with high-rise glass buildings, symbolising modernity and urban development.

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The car represents movement or the attempt to reach "evolution".

The implied connotation:

The contrast between modernity and backwardness: The image emphasises the disparity between the two places, as if to highlight the inconsistency of development between different regions.

The unpaved road as a symbol of neglect: The road here can symbolise the inadequacy of development projects in Hassi Khalifa, reflecting the lack of infrastructure that connects it to developed areas.

-The city in the background as a distant dream: the placement of the city on the horizon can symbolise that 'development' is still beyond the reach of Hassi Khalifa's residents.

3. The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme reflects an Algerian reality, where there is a clear gap between some rural or desert areas and developed urban centres. Hassi Khelifa, as a region in the wilaya of El Oued, is characterised by its agricultural and desert nature, which puts it on the margins of modernisation projects compared to major cities.

4 - Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The digital meme post garnered 15 reactions from digital culture consumers, with most of the respondents using the emoticon Laugh at me to signify that they enjoy the meme and take it in a humorous and joking way.

First comment: Haha, what a situation.

Second comment: To the second growth.

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Through the two comments, we can see a sense of humour, humour and harmony where the comments indirectly reflected an acceptance of the perception presented by Al Meem.

- The meme relies on visual and linguistic irony, which makes it funny and ironic for the target audience, especially those who live in the region or are aware of the issues of development in Algeria. This type of meme carries a critical dimension, as it satirises the development gap between Algerian regions. The use of an image from a cartoon gives the meme a satirical character, which makes the meme more acceptable to the audience. The meme employs visual and linguistic symbols to convey social criticism in a satirical manner, reflecting popular frustration with the disparity in development. It also falls within the wave of Algerian memes that use humour to discuss local issues, especially those related to infrastructure and developmental justice. My study found the same results as **Wagener Albin**'s previous study that "digital memes act as expressive capsules of knowledge and emotions" (Wagener '2020)), and this is what this meme enabled us to see through the interactions and comments it received.

M11:



1- General description of the image:

The picture is a comparison of food habits between two local areas in the state of Wadi Souf under the framework of marriage. In the upper part of the picture, we

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notice a modern dish containing boiled eggs and fried potatoes with some additions to decorate the dish with the words "When you marry her from Bayada", while in the lower part we see a traditional dish of a traditional Algerian food called couscous, which is also accompanied by a text that reads: "When you marry her from Hassi Khalifa" in addition to a laughing emoji that accompanies the image, a sign of humour despite the comparison.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The meme shows the food habits of two different local areas of wadi Souf, placed in a comparative framework in a humorous way under the context of marriage.

Implied connotation: The meme refers to a part of the nature of the marital life of two different regions. It is indicated that marrying Bayada girls puts the individual under the option of inexpensive fast food throughout the marital life, unlike marrying Hassi Khalifa girls, where marriage with them is characterised by eating expensive traditional meals, as it is a heavy traditional meal rich in meat, as shown in the picture.

3- The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The publication "The Digital Meme" reflected the contrast in food habits between the local areas of Wadi Souf, such as Bayada and Hassi Khalifa here, showing how Bayada people are influenced by modern Western culture, unlike Hassi Khalifa people who still adhere to traditional food habits.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The digital meme received 428 interactions and 213 comments, indicating that a good number of the audience is interested in the content that was presented through the meme.

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First comment: The people of both regions are kind and generous people, may God bless them.

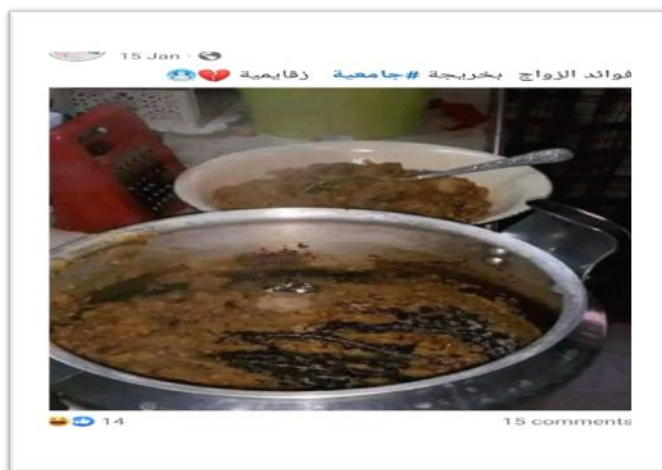
Second comment: The people of the wadi souf city are all masha'Allah.

We can see from the comments that the meme evoked a spirit of unity, reflecting the nature of individuals' interaction with such comparative situations. This answers one of the sub-questions of our study, as the meme promoted unity, belonging and partnership despite the differences and differences between the two regions.

- The meme reflects the nature of the Algerian individual in dealing with digital memes, although the meme contains an important cultural element representing the Algerian identity, individuals took the topic lightly. Through the comments, we see that despite the differences and the comparison of the Hassi Khalifa and Bayada regions, they did not treat the matter with hostility. This meme also revealed that there is an ongoing debate about the differences in local customs, especially food, between the local regions of **Wadi Souf**. Symbolic interactionism is concerned with understanding and interpreting the ways in which individuals construct and transmit meanings through social interaction. Accordingly, the message contained in the meme was communicated based on social interaction, through which a set of symbols and meanings were exchanged as one of the most important elements of the culture here, namely food, as it was exchanged between the ethnicity and local specificity of both regions.

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M12:



1- General description of the image:

The photo shows a cooking enamel with burnt food, indicating that it was overcooked, in addition to the presence of an enamel that suggests that the food was served despite being inedible. The photo was accompanied by the phrase "The benefits of marrying a #Jamia graduate from Zaqam" with two emojis, one suggesting shock and the other a broken heart, which is a sign of disappointment.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The meme depicts the consequences of marrying a university-educated girl from the local area of Al-Zaqoum, as illustrated by the image and accompanying text.

Implied connotation: The meme reflects the idea that women who graduated from the Zaqoum region are unfit for marriage because of their inability to cook. This meme shows that some local areas in Algeria still rely on a girl's cooking skills as one of the determinants of marriage.

3- The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme depicts a stereotypical image of the general society's perception of a university girl from Zagaimi, who is perceived as being unskilled in cooking as a result of her interest in developing her skills through her education. The meme

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also shows that the people of Wadi will judge educated women in a rather negative way, as some of them do not accept the change in gender roles in modern society.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

People interacted with this post by using the emoticon and liking the post, which reflects the acceptance of the post by the audience.

First comment: Lucky for me, I'm not a university girl.

Second comment: I'm a graduate of the kitchen, but it happens that I forget.

The comments reflected a range of opinions that the meme somehow reflected the local social reality in a superficial and humorous way.

- By relying on social media platforms such as Facebook, the meme has shown one of the radical cultural, social and gender shifts in Wadi Suf, specifically the Zaqim region. It clarified the current role of educated women and communicated a social phenomenon related to women in a satirical manner, which helped the spread of this meme and its acceptance by individuals. It showed the role of the educated woman and the difference between this role and the gender roles used in the past, which is that cooking is the sole responsibility of women, regardless of whether they are educated, working, graduated or otherwise. We believe that this analysis answers one of the sub-questions of our study, as this meme has reinforced the stereotypical image of women, yet it has opened a door for a wide discussion about the roles that women can play.

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M13:



1- General description of the image:

The photo is of a foreign food called pizza being cooked in an old traditional local way, relying on the old methods of wood and charcoal cooking and on a large traditional clay pot. The photo is accompanied by the phrase "pizza in #HassiKhalifa", which is a privatisation and an indication of ethnicity towards the Hassi Khalifa region.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The image clearly reflects an unusual style of cooking pizza through the use of some traditional tools and methods, in addition to the phrase #HassiKhalifa Pizza, which in turn personalises this style to the people of the region.

Implied connotation: The image shows the reality of the Hassi Khalifa region by revealing their cooking habits, especially through their cooking of modern international food, and the meme reflects the humorous aspect of accommodating the difference in the cultural and social context.

3- The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The digital meme expressed a socio-cultural aspect in a humorous and sarcastic way that contributed to the way individuals accepted this type of meme. Individuals expressed their opinions and ideas through comments and interactions

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about modernity in a humorous way. This meme also reflected the nature of Algerian society, especially the local region of Hassi Khalifa, where we see that it has blended tradition and modernity in terms of cooking style, and shows the imprinting of some Western ways and global culture in daily life while maintaining and cherishing the original and authentic local culture belonging to **Wadi Souf**.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

First comment: This is Hassi Khalifa on pizza.

Second comment: Is delivery available?

The comments reflect the positive nature in which the digital meme was taken, as they showed the humorous side of the users who participated in expressing their opinions on the topic with simplicity and humour. This interaction, whether from different emoticons or comments, reflected the common culture of the following audience and contributed to the assimilation of local belonging and unity among individuals, which answers one of the sub-questions of our study, as through various comments we see that the meme works to promote unity among the members of the city of **Wadi Souf**.

- The meme shows that the Hassi Khalifa region is influenced by Western culture in terms of food, such as pizza, which originally belongs to Italy. However, the meme also showed the adherence of the people of the region to the traditional heritage in terms of cooking style despite being a strange Western food in terms of the local cultural and social context. By analysing this meme, we see the common denominator between this study and the previous study by **Albin Wagener** in terms of his findings, as his studies concluded that "memes and gifs have produced a new discourse that blends technological and human interaction" (**Wagener** have produced a new discourse that blends technological and human interaction" (Wagener ‘

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2020) , and this can be seen through the post as it achieved communication and interaction for two aspects: human interaction between individuals and technological interaction between the individual and the medium he uses, and finally, according to the theory of symbolic interactionism, identity is formed as a result of social interaction and through the comments of individuals about this meme, they indirectly share their identities through digital spaces that show their affiliation, race, and various orientations.

M14:



1- General description of the image:

The scene shows a cartoon character of a woman wearing a headscarf with an angry expression and holding a knife in her hand, suggesting that she is angry and in an offensive state. The image is accompanied by the phrase "When you marry her from #Bayada and tell her that you don't like her cooking" with two emojis, a laughing face and a running man, which added humour to the meme.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The image is a scene from the marital life of a Bayada couple, showing the wife's reaction to her husband's ridicule of her cooking skills.

Implication: The digital meme here refers to the character of the Bayadah woman, especially when mocking or joking with her about her cooking skills, which makes her a sharp-tempered and somewhat violent woman.

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3- The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme indirectly shows the expectations of the local Algerian community, such as the people of Wadi Souf, through their comments and reactions to the post, as there is a stereotype about women's competence in cooking, and if they do not succeed in fulfilling the expectations of the community, they may meet many biting sarcasm against them, as we see in the meme an expression of the strength of character of the women of the Bayada region.

4- Emotional impact and digital engagement:

The digital meme received 31 engagements, suggesting that followers are accepting of the meme's content.

First comment: There's no joking around.

Second comment: You should be afraid.

The comments show the local character of the people of Wadi Souf, which is represented by sarcasm and humour, despite the meme containing a negative social phenomenon called **bullying**, as the comments show that the meme can be considered as a means of entertainment and social criticism.

- The nature of the interaction that the digital meme received is a humorous interaction for the purpose of entertainment and recreation. This type of meme contributes to strengthening unity and cohesion among the people of Wadi Souf by sharing their thoughts, opinions and life details in a humorous way, and this type of meme contributes to strengthening unity and cohesion among the people of Wadi Souf. Based on the meme and the comments and interactions it has received, we see an agreement with the symbolic interactionist theory. According to this theory, individuals produce meanings through their interaction with each other and through their interpretation of various symbols, such as language, images, and

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signs. According to their background, symbols in turn construct reality, as the meme is a collection of different symbols such as an angry face, a knife, and a suggestion of anger. Finally, this study agreed with the previous study by **Heidi E. Huntington**, who stated that "digital memes are interactive, expressive and participatory" (E. Huntington '2013)), and this is what we saw by analysing this meme semiotically and sociologically.

M15:



1- General description of the image:

The digital meme shows a woman wearing a headscarf trying to board the bus through the window instead of the door, which is a reference to the overcrowding of public transport, while the rest of the individuals are wearing their bags, which indicates that they are ready to go to work or attend their classes through this bus. This image depicts a daily situation in the Hassi Khalifa region through the phrase: "#Kar Hassi Khalifa", a town in Algeria.

2- Semiotic semantic elements included in the digital meme:

Initial connotation: The woman trying to enter through the window instead of the bus door indicates the lack of buses that match the number of residents in the area.

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The implied connotation:

The scene shows a clear mockery of public transport in the Hassi Khalifa region. It also highlights the daily reality in the town of Hassi Khalifa. The scene also suggests a woman's reckless behaviour resulting from a sense of anxiety and rejection of social reality due to the overcrowding and the long wait to board the bus.

3- The cultural and social context in which the digital meme is expressed:

The meme reflects the difficulty of mobility in some Algerian regions, such as Hassi Khalifa here, where it shows a social issue represented by the lack of public transport services, which leads to the disruption of some individuals from performing their jobs. The meme also expresses the ways in which the people of Hassi Khalifa deal with such circumstances, through the woman's attempt to enter the bus window without opposing the rest of the individuals, who view her behaviour as normal and proper, that the people there tend to deal with problems and difficulties in a humorous, sarcastic if not sometimes reckless, manner.

4- Emotional vulnerability and digital engagement:

The post "The Ethnic Meme" received a total of 125 interactions, including 41 likes, 79 emoticons indicating laughter, two interactions indicating both love and surprise, and one interaction indicating anger towards the post, which indicates a great response from the followers about the post.

The comments show a variation in the nature of the emotional reaction to the post:

First comment: Since 2016, buses have been stopping in the Hassi Khalifa area. It seems to me that he wants to marry one of the local girls, so marry him to shut up.

The person used other sarcasm to respond to the post author's sarcasm instead of using rejection and criticism, thus the sarcastic humour is evident in this comment.

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Second comment: I'm not from Hassi Khalifa, but why are you bullying the region all day long? I know the people of the region personally and they are great people.

The commenter used a slightly aggressive approach against the author of the post, confronting him with a blunt statement and criticising his way of thinking as well as defending the owners of the area.

Based on what we have highlighted above, it is clear through the comments of individuals on the "digital meme" the nature of the interaction. Through the first and second comments, we have seen rejectionist behaviours by the commentators, whether this rejection was in a sarcastic or defensive manner, as this rejectionist expression contributed to reshaping other representations about the Hassi Khalifa region. Through the comments, it appears that what came in the digital meme is a misconception about desperate individuals in the region, and this answers one of the sub-questions that mentioned the nature of the public interaction Through this "ethnic meme" and its other elements of interactions and comments, it appears that the digital meme is not just entertainment content, but a tool of popular expression and communication, as well as a means of shaping popular discourse, and not only that, it is a reflective tool of reality and This study agrees with the findings of the previous study by **rendy pandita bastari, wahyu lukito, fauzi arif adhika**, which stated that "digital memes are not only a means of communication but also a reflective tool of historical, social and political events" (**fauzi arif adhika**). (fauzi arif adhika '2018-2020)

The results of the study:

- The study showed that digital memes work to shape and reproduce regional representations of the Wadi Souf region in the Algerian digital space through the use of a set of visual symbols and various linguistic texts whose semantic meanings are used to express popular perceptions and attitudes about the Wadi Souf region and its inhabitants.
- The study found that digital memes, especially ethnic memes, have a strong impact on social identity and belonging, with some memes

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contributing to a sense of belonging, while others reinforce divisions between individuals.

- The study shows that the digital meme has become an effective tool for expressing perceptions, opinions and emotions, which in turn contributes to the formation of popular discourse in the Algerian virtual space that reflects the behaviours of individuals on various social and cultural issues.
- The study highlighted the role that ethnic memes play in projecting regional perceptions of Wadi Souf city, reflecting individuals' opinions and ideas about the community.
- The humour and irony of the digital meme has played an important role in expressing the social reality.

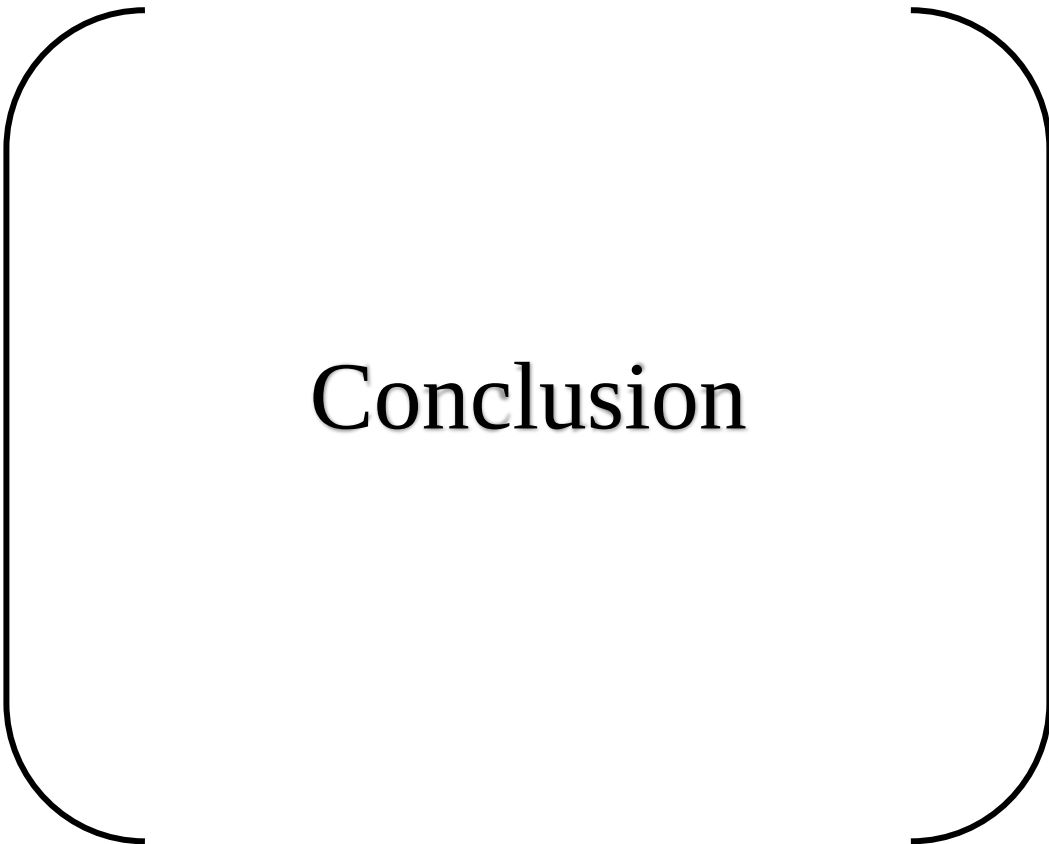
Study recommendations:

- Conducting a series of studies on the ethnic memes of Algeria's various local cities in order to reveal the customs and traditions between local areas and promote understanding and unity among members of Algerian society despite cultural and social differences.
- Develop regulatory systems and controls for mass content circulating through various Algerian digital spaces to limit the spread of discourses that incite hatred and promote conflict and division in society.
- Conduct scientific studies and research on the impact of the digital meme on individuals to understand and interpret the media messages issued through it in order to deal with them more effectively.
- Supporting digital content to produce digital memes that reflect Algeria's cultural diversity around different local dialects, customs, traditions and lifestyles to encourage pride in local identity.
- Use digital memes to raise awareness about ethnic and cultural diversity in Algeria in order to promote understanding and respect between different regions.

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abstract.

In this chapter, the methodological framework of the study has been introduced, the tool that I relied on, namely participant observation, to facilitate direct interaction with the field of study, as well as the sample selection mechanisms have been explained, and the most important methods that I relied on in analysing the study sample of digital memes circulating in popular discourse indicating the ethnicity of the different regions of **Wadi Souf** have been outlined in this chapter.



Conclusion

Conclusion

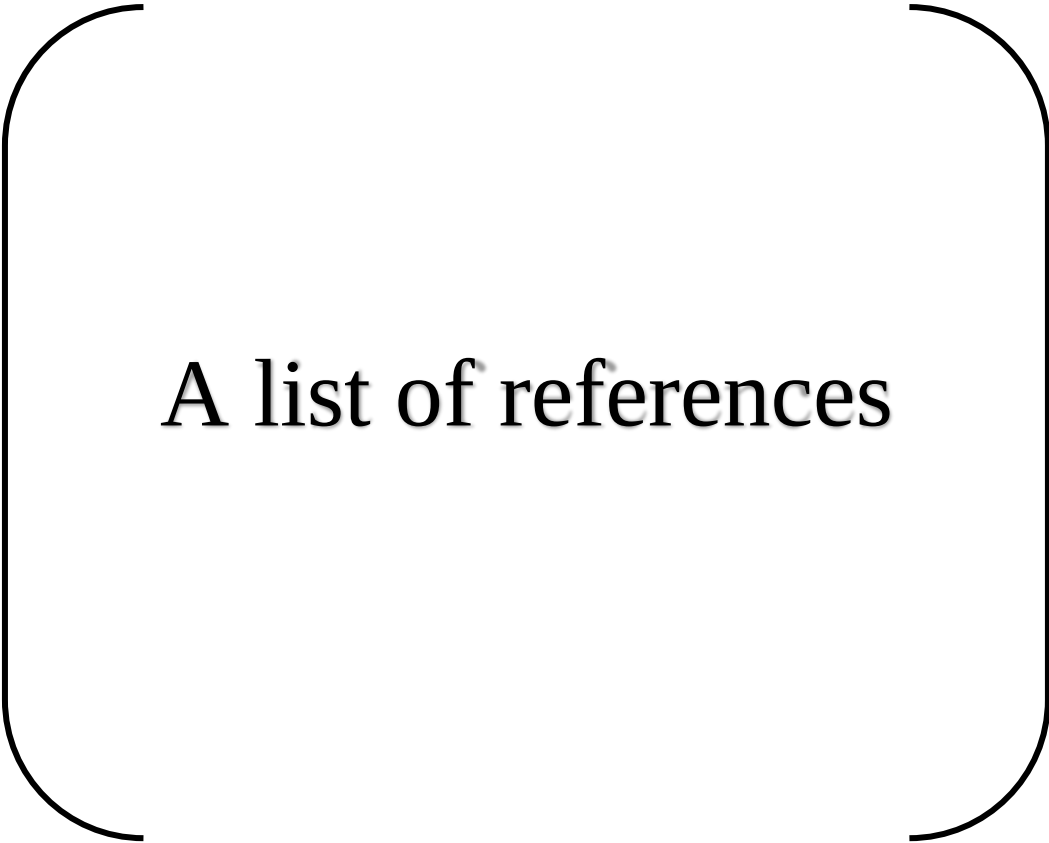
Conclusion

At the conclusion of this study, I can only say that after trying to study digital memes, especially ethnic ones, spread across Algerian virtual spaces - Facebook as an example, which is one of the forms of contemporary popular discourse carrying regional and ethnic representations about the city of Wadi Souf, it was found that these memes go beyond being just a means of entertainment aimed at passing the time and ridiculing various social, cultural and ethnic events, but rather they are one of the forms of popular discourse that contribute to the construction and reproduction of popular cultural, social and ethnic representations that express identity and regionalism. They are a form of popular discourse that contributes to the construction and reproduction of popular cultural and social representations, especially those related to ethnicities that express identity and regionalism, and the analysis of a sample of ethnic memes has shown that they are a reflective tool of the ways in which individuals behave. It also reflects their perceptions about the city of Wadi Souf through their interaction with it, given that it has gone beyond the usual role as a means of entertainment, it has become a tool that carries social dimensions and connotations through the various interactions of individuals with social events that are discussed in the memes and also the ways they interact among themselves. As for the cultural connotations, the meme is considered one of the means that contribute to the spread of culture and this was previously seen through the analysis of the ethnic meme, which included a set of cultural determinants such as food, clothing, lifestyles and others, which in turn is considered a form of local culture. Bo...

At the conclusion of this humble work, I ask God Almighty that I have succeeded in shedding light on a modern contemporary phenomenon "digital memes" from a completely new context. I also hope that through my study I have enriched the debate on a rarely researched scientific topic that deals with different

Conclusion

measures and contexts on both popular discourse and ethnic memes in Algeria and Wadi Souf, and therefore I ask for success and guidance from God, if I succeed from God and if I make mistakes from myself.



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