

Hajar Hachki

Women's Activism in The Moroccan Digital Public Sphere: Rising Above Conservatism
and Fighting for Social Change

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Work presented to the University Fernando Pessoa as part of the requirements of the degree of Master of Communication Sciences - Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing, under the supervision of Prof. Doctor Rui Torres

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Abstract

The goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate the use of the public sphere in sharing information, calling for action, and increasing awareness in regards to women's injustices and violence in Morocco. It also aims at exploring the role of Facebook pages as an instrument for social criticism, by investigating the common discourses that take place online, from the perspective of pages' administrators and editors. I will be using content analysis on Facebook, by gathering posts that analyze the common keywords, topics, and purposes of communication contents. The selected Facebook pages, from which posts will be gathered, are targeted to women, were created between 2012-2020, and include keywords on the title that indicate the content of these pages. I have used systematic sampling, by selecting every tenth post from every page.

For the theoretical background, I have used academic articles and books as secondary data to support my analysis. The results of the content analysis revealed a strong presence of words such as violence, rape, and assault among more than half of 300 Facebook posts. They also show that the main goals of communication contents revolve around calling for action and sharing information about victims of rape or domestic violence, articles about women's rights and equality, and stories about the assault. Some posts also have two goals, which is to express an opinion and call for action. Also, language varies among the posts, as there is a strong presence of English either as the main language used or as a translation to the post. Arabic is mostly used, as it is the official language of the country. The use of the English language is surprising, considering that French is the second language in the country. Multiple links, redirecting visitors to online newspapers to read about a particular subject in the context of women's rights and struggling, appeared throughout the content analysis, which could also be interesting to deeply analyze in future studies.

Keywords: Facebook Content Analysis; Women's Online Activism; Moroccan's Digital Public Sphere; Online Movements

Résumé

L'objectif de cette thèse est de démontrer l'utilisation de la sphère publique dans le partage d'informations, l'appel à l'action et la sensibilisation aux injustices et aux violence des femmes au Maroc. La thèse vise également à explorer le rôle des pages Facebook en tant qu'instrument de critique sociale, en examinant les discours communs qui ont lieu en ligne, du point de vue des administrateurs et des éditeurs de pages. J'utiliserai l'analyse de contenu sur Facebook, en rassemblant des articles qui analysent les mots-clés, sujets et objectifs communs des contenus de communication. Les pages Facebook sélectionnées, à partir desquelles les publications seront recueillies, sont destinées aux femmes, ont été créées entre 2012-2020 et incluent des mots-clés sur le titre qui indiquent le contenu de ces pages. J'ai utilisé un échantillonnage systématique, en sélectionnant chaque dixième publication de chaque page.

Pour le contexte théorique, j'ai inclus des articles et des livres académiques comme données secondaires pour étayer mon analyse. Les résultats de l'analyse de contenu révèlent une forte présence de mots tels que violence, viol et agression parmi plus de la moitié des 300 publications Facebook. Ils montrent également que les principaux objectifs des contenus de communication évoluent autour d'appel à l'action et de partage d'informations sur les victimes de viol ou de violence domestique, d'articles sur les droits des femmes et l'égalité et les histoires d'agression. Certains articles ont également deux objectifs, qui est d'exprimer une opinion et d'appeler à l'action. En outre, la langue varie selon les messages, car il y a une forte présence de l'anglais soit comme langue principale utilisée, soit comme traduction du message. L'arabe est principalement utilisé, car c'est la langue officielle du pays. L'utilisation de la langue anglaise est surprenante, étant donné que le français est la deuxième langue du pays. Liens multiples, redirigeant les visiteurs vers les journaux en ligne pour en savoir plus sur un sujet particulier dans le contexte des droits des femmes. Cela est apparu tout au long de l'analyse de contenu, ce qui pourrait également être intéressant à analyser en profondeur dans les études futures.

Mot Clés : Analyse du Contenu Facebook ; Activisme Des femmes En Ligne ; Sphère Digital Publique Marocaine ; Mouvements en Ligne

Introduction

The Moroccan Kingdom has witnessed a wave of online feminist movements since 2012 that have incited people to react through online movements, opening doors for discussions around various subjects such as domestic violence, rape, women's rights, and gender equality in Moroccan society. In 2018, there was a new law that offers protection for victims of rape or violence in Morocco, prohibits forced marriage, and mandates jail sentences for those convicted of harassment. However, activists are not fully satisfied and expressed concern about this law. According to the Washington Post, "critics say the long-sought-after law still falls short of giving women the protection they need" (O'Grady, 2018). This statement refers to marital rape, and other aspects of protection against violence that were not mentioned in the new penal code.

Stories about such topics became viral on social media, as a means to share information and raise awareness about women's living conditions in Morocco.

Most of the movements took place online, using platforms where information is shared and opinions are presented to sensitize the public and ask them to speak up for their rights by participating in online movements. These actions have been rejected by some, and enlightening by others, depending on the level of awareness and openness to the outside world. The public sphere as a whole, which consists of virtual and physical spaces, has been used as an instrument for women to raise their voice, sensitize, and call for action. The movements also aimed at building an interactive community of women who convey modern values, seek freedom, and express their opinions about certain norms established by a conservative society, where religion highly interferes.

This study aims at demonstrating the use of the public sphere in increasing awareness, disseminating information, and calling for action against disparities and violence in the Moroccan Kingdom, providing a content analysis of selected Facebook pages addressed

to Moroccan women on social media. It also intends to explore the use of Facebook pages as an instrument for social criticism, describing the extent to which administrators or editors of pages share information about what is happening in the Moroccan society that involves and concerns women. Page administrators and editors are responsible for sharing posts on the page, as well as for interacting with visitors. These are roles assigned by Facebook to refer to people who are responsible for the content posted on the pages. The administrator is the owner of the page, who later on adds an editor, giving him/her permission to publish on behalf of the page. Therefore, they represent the page and publish content by login in to the account.

The first goal of this research is to investigate women's activist discourses that are discussed on Facebook pages. The second goal is to explore the intentions communicated through the content, from the perspective of the Facebook pages' administrators and editors. These objectives will be answered through two research questions, that are purpose-oriented into investigating deeply into the subject.

First, what is the role of Facebook pages in informing women about the existing inequalities and violence in society? And second, what is the purpose of communication through the selected Facebook posts?

The initial hypotheses of the study are that Facebook pages are used to disseminate information about violence, rape, and inequalities in Morocco by portraying images showing violence, publishing about real stories and sharing news. Additionally, the administrators and editors of these pages aim at calling for action by sensitizing women to raise their voice and ask for changes, encouraging them to face domestic violence, rape, and gender inequalities.

Although online mobilization started approximately in the 1990s, some events, such as the Arab Spring, hastened and accelerated online movements in the Moroccan Kingdom. Many studies have investigated the role of social media in online women movements in the Arab World, but only a few have emphasized the discourses and discussions on

social media groups, relating them to the public sphere theory and the democratization of the internet. Furthermore, few scholars have looked at the perspective of Facebook page creators to understand their end motif and their use of resources. As a Moroccan woman who took communication classes and who pays close attention to how social media has shaped Moroccan women, I strongly feel it is important to not only explore this subject but also relate it to other motifs that have made the impact of social media as strong as it is today, in the Moroccan Kingdom. Whether or not these online mobilizations have changed something in society is not the focus, nor whether or not these movements received enough engagement. The main focus is on what is happening and what triggered it. Finally, this research does not explore the reaction of the public with respect to online discourses, but rather looks at the perspective of Facebook page creators in order to understand their intentions when publishing on social media.

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses topics required for the understanding of the researched themes. First, the public sphere theory is presented, summarizing the digital and physical spheres, and gathering most of the discussions initiated by people sharing similar interests and opinions concerning particular subjects. Afterwards, the internet and democracy is discussed from the perspective of scholars who wrote about how these two concepts are interrelated. Social media and online movements, which are the core of the study, are also presented, explaining the role of online platforms in organizing social movements. The last topic of the first chapter is the Facebook digital sphere, which refers to the characteristics of the platform which makes it part of the virtual public sphere.

The second chapter looks at similar studies conducted in the field. Some of these studies use content analysis, which is the type of research used in this dissertation. Most of the findings of the reviewed studies refer to the role of social media in disseminating information and their role in mobilization. The first part of this chapter includes studies conducted in Western countries, not only to prove the relevance of this research, but also to explore how social media has triggered the attention of many scholars, and

therefore many studies have been conducted in this field. The second part looks at studies in the Arab world. These studies refer to social media as a tool used by several Arab movements, measuring its effectiveness in order to gather people sharing similar concerns, seeking transformations and developments in their respective countries.

The third chapter of this study explores concepts that sustain the understanding of online activism and social media. Cyberactivism, for instance, is very common when referring to online movements, as the word itself infers “cyber,” generally relating to cyberspace (internet) and to computers, and activism. Social learning theory and identity are also important to discuss, as these concepts infer to the attitudes and behaviors of people online, which might impact their learning and identity. The research methodology employed in this study is content analysis, and social media are used as the core of analysis. Therefore, it is significant to introduce social media analysis. Finally, grounded theory appears when investigating the content analysis method, and hence its definition is important as well.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the methodology used for the research, which is content analysis. Information about data collection is included, to describe the steps used to gather the Facebook posts used for the analysis. Coding is the core of content analysis as it determines the way by which the findings will be evaluated. The developed code book is presented in detail, using definitions that reveal how the data was interpreted. Since most posts were expected to be in other languages, a translation of the keywords used for the analysis is presented. The categories are inspired by the code book, and therefore presented to show the overall variables employed in this study.

The fifth chapter is divided into two parts, which are respectively the findings and the discussion. The findings present a descriptive report of the sample, as well as a comparison of the categories for a deeper analysis. Tables will be used to classify the data selected from Excel, and then an interpretation of the analysis, without details. The discussion part goes into more details, and explains the findings, using examples from

the posts. In cases when the example includes a foreign language, illustrations are used to translate to English for a better explanation of the data.

Results show that the main two goals of communication content are share of information through links, and call for action through images and captions. The findings also show a strong presence of keywords such as violence, rape and assault. In regards to language, Arabic is mostly used among the sample, followed by English, the French. The use of the English language is surprising, which shows that the aim of the administrators and editors is to maximize exposure, ensuring that everyone who will come across the posts, will understand.

Chapter I - The Virtual Public Sphere

This study investigates the role of the public sphere in increasing awareness, women participation, and inclusiveness in Morocco. Although some mobilization actions took place in the physical public sphere, it all started on the internet and was then intensified through social media. Utilizing a theoretical framework, this chapter will explore topics that are crucial to the understanding of the subject. Discussing the public sphere, social media, the internet and democracy, and the Facebook digital sphere will help to demonstrate how women were inspired by the available resources to make their impact. A history of the events is relevant in this case as it shows that some patterns in some countries are repeated in other countries, where the need to speak out is necessary.

1.1 The Public Sphere Theory

The definition and the role of the public sphere have been widely discussed and debated by the scholar Jürgen Habermas, who is considered the architect of this theory. By the public sphere, Habermas et al. mean that it is “a realm of our social life where the public opinion can be formed” (1964, p. 49). This concept first appeared in the 18th century, when there were several discussions about the difference between opinion and public opinion. In their study, Habermas et al. have mentioned many characteristics that define a public sphere, as it is a vague concept and can't be defined in one sentence. They refer to it as conversations in an unrestricted fashion, ensuring freedom of expression about specific subjects (Habermas et al., 1964). Throughout the article, the authors try to incorporate all pieces that form the public sphere to make it clear and discernible from public opinion. The public sphere is “an accessible space to all citizens where the public opinion can be formed” (Habermas et al., 1964, p.49). Not only citizens can share their opinions, but the virtual space allows them to gather with people sharing similar beliefs, and take upon their voices to be heard. As stated in the article, “newspapers, magazines, radios, and televisions are the media of the public sphere” (Habermas et al., 1964, p. 1),

thus constituting a tool that mediates the communication between the society and the state, where people gather and express their worries and opinions.

Several other scholars have discussed the public sphere, giving a meaning to it and describing its features. Papacharissi (2008) has conducted studies about the politics of the internet and has studied the use of the internet as a public sphere. In his article about the latter subject, he argues that the public sphere can be considered as a forum, and should not be confused with the public space, that is not always a healthy public (Papacharissi, 2008). Papacharissi (2008) also discussed the odds of the public sphere to be creating problems with the authorities, especially within the liberal model, where public opinion does not go hand in hand with the state. He further outlines concepts of online communication, as a way to describe civic participation online. Papacharissi (2018) argues that “the access to information, reciprocity, and commercialization of the public sphere is considered to be directly affecting the social and political capital generated by online media”(p. 8). Those factors do not necessarily justify civic engagement but do facilitate public mobilization against the state, authority, or any institution that goes against the general public opinion.

Habermas received many criticisms from scholars in different fields. In an article about Civil Society and The Public Sphere, Craig Calhoun mentioned that Habermas has excluded identities from the theory of the public sphere, which he judged to be crucial as identities are often formed during the participation in public debates (Calhoun, 1993, p. 275). Calhoun dedicated close attention to the nature of the public sphere in regards to civil society and expressed his opinion about the difference between these two concepts. According to him,

the importance of the public sphere goes beyond introducing a discussion of a specific organization within civil society of social and cultural bases to develop an effective rational-critical discourse aimed at the resolution of political disputes. (Calhoun, 1993, p. 269)

This statement addresses the difference between civil society and the public sphere because according to Calhoun they are considered by some scholars to be synonyms.

Especially in the democratic theory, these two terms are claimed to have different implications (Calhoun, 1993). As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the public sphere theory has appeared in the 18th century and has been debated by Habermas as well as other scholars, regarding its functions and features. Many years after the first appearance of the theory of the public sphere, other scholars have discussed this concept such as Adut (2012), who argues that "the public sphere is used in scholarly contexts to refer to physical or virtual spaces to which there is general access, regardless of whether public-spirited communication occurs" (p. 242). That is to say, the subject discussed within the public sphere does not necessarily aim at helping the wider community. This later statement aligns with Calhoun's position about the difference between civil society and the public sphere, as the civil society generally regroups people linked by common interests.

Discussing the public sphere theory is not complete without incorporating the rise of women activism, which became more common in the last years. In an article about gender in the public sphere in the Mena Region, Skalli (2006) explains that "women have been involved in impacting the public sphere despite the norms of exclusion and marginalization restricting their physical mobility and visibility" (2006, p. 36). Although these countries are known to be severely undermining women's participation, the public sphere helped some women discuss womanhood, citizenship, and other subjects that are not necessarily considered "taboo" subjects. According to Skalli (2006), "talks about sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape were discussed by journalists" (p. 40). Those subjects stick to social and political issues mainly involving gender inequalities. In Morocco, for instance, studies about sexual exploitation and harassment started being published in the 1980s (Skalli, 2006). However, the cost of publicity for such subjects, considered sensible, is often very high. Progressive women journalists are threatened by outraged citizens, who send menacing messages to journalists on social media.

Authors have agreed on some aspects, namely that the public sphere has no limits and gives them the freedom to discuss various subjects. Habermas (1964) has mentioned that both the physical and the virtual public spheres allow people to have their voices heard. Although Calhoun (1993) argues that Habermas misses the socially constructed identity, he does agree with him about the accessibility of the public sphere. Skalli (2006) has not directly referred to the public sphere but did describe a free sphere where Moroccan women talk about certain subjects and share similar opinions

1.2 Internet and Democracy

When looking at the virtual public sphere theory, the internet comes at the center, as it is a sphere that holds many discourses, debates, and discussions. Skalli (2006, p. 36) states that “[t]he Internet is creating a new sense of accountability toward a public that is increasingly challenging in its demands for greater transparency in state decisions and policies”. The emphasis here is on the willingness of the public to reach out to opinion leaders, seeking change and reforms. This has been brought up in 2006, where social media platforms were still not as powerful as they are today.

Zaid Bouziane (2016) explored the role of the internet in conveying democratic ideas in Morocco. The author has argued that the internet is the primary means by which people communicate and form a public opinion (Bouziane, 2016). The study aimed at examining online platforms and their impact on democracy. As part of the findings of the research, Bouziane has confirmed that “young people started to generate their own media contact and become citizen journalists” (2016, p. 6). People started to use social media platforms to initiate new campaigns regarding social problems that need to be talked about in the country. Thus, it does refer to the fact that social media platforms have made the movements more influential to the extent that some of them consider themselves citizen journalists.

Another recent study (Moussa, 2013) has explored the role of the internet in empowering social movements in North Africa by focusing on the case of the Moroccan Kingdom. One of the findings claimed that “oppositional social movements in Morocco have little access to public funds, media, and other resources” (Moussa, 2013, p. 224). However, this did not stop citizens from being independent and finding new ways to make their social movements a success by creating confusion and reaching media attention. The study has relied on in-depth interviews to gather relevant information about the subject. One of the interviewees has confirmed that blogging has allowed fast communication with human rights organizations that cooperate by providing real case information to be held public. Using email marketing, online social movements found a way to reach organizations with similar opinions (Moussa, 2013). This statement aligns with what Bouziane (2016) mentioned in his research about people finding new ways to make an impact. It refers to Moroccans being open to foreign discourses. Ghannam (2011) expressed an opinion about this subject, stating that “[p]opularity of online news is gaining audience share from traditional news media, a proportion that is expected to grow as some media outlets, have ceased print editions to focus on electronic editions” (2011, p. 4). The author emphasizes the power that online discourses have over traditional ones.

Exploring the development of the internet and tracking its impact on North Africa can't be complete without mentioning the Arab Spring, which was a series of protests and anti-government uprisings that took place in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Tunisia, and Morocco. During the Arab Spring, the internet has played a decisive role in mobilizing people to protest and go out to the streets, addressing opinion leaders. That is the starting of disputes and disapproval on the internet, where the population has gotten the attention of the government and realized that by being viral on the internet, they could get results.

Fatima Sadiqi, a notorious figure in the Moroccan society, has written a book studying female movements in North Africa. This was not the only publication of the author, as she is known for her research emphasizing North African women. The book, entitled

Women's Movements in Post-Arab Spring North Africa (2016), discusses online movements before, during, and after the events, highlighting the new feminist actors and their impact on North African societies (Sadiqi, 2016). Concerning the rise of the Arab Spring, Fatima Sadiqi has mentioned secularism and Islamism as factors to the public mobilization in North Africa. Shidida (2018) and Sadiqi (2016) present similar arguments respecting women's participation during the occurrence of the Arab Spring. Women went out to the street, claiming changes and fighting for their voices to be heard. Strikes occurred in many African countries, using slogans to express their discontentment and reach the authorities. As for the internet, it was used as a weapon to spread information and attract the attention of the media. Not only did the information fly around the world, but it has also encouraged other countries to start fighting for their rights. However, as Fatima Sadiqi has mentioned, "the revolutions have failed to yield political power to women or to offer security and protection" (2016, p. 104). The statement describes the case of Morocco, as women started proclaiming their rights after the end of the uprising using online movements as a way to protest. Tunisia was the only country that benefited from an increased quota in their political participation (Sadiqi, 2016). That is to say that North African countries became more involved in women's rights after the occurrence of the Arab Spring. To describe the Post-Arab Spring change, Sadiqi (2016) refers to the movements to be more resourceful, very purpose-oriented, with a strong language to reach as many people as possible.

New communication media have enabled transparency towards the public as information is accessible to everyone (Bouziane, 2016), especially when targeting women's issues and trying to increase the attention of the government. Many scholars have dedicated efforts to research the role of the public sphere in launching online social movements that serve the right for women to share their opinion. Calling for change through reforms and the inclusion of women in daily public life became the main topic of discussion, even before the rise of the Arab Spring. However, it is undeniable that past events did participate in the development and the degree to which the latest

movement created more impact. If we go back to the early 20th century, as Skalli (2006) has claimed, “Arab women are competing for beyond it, for global sway” (p. 44).

This whole section has included mostly Moroccan authors who have studied this subject in more depth, and it does show the time difference from 2006 to 2016, where similar research was done. They all mentioned social movements, just to different degrees of impact. Social media did play a role in initiative social movements, and it did hasten the impact among the population. Bouziane (2016) discussed in his article the internet and democracy, the change that Morocco has witnessed at this level, bringing up the role of social media to make the information flow more rapidly. Skalli (2006) also mentioned the actions undertaken by Arab women to go beyond the nation and got the word spread all around the world, taking into account that at that time social media was not as powerful as it is today. That makes sense to understand what is happening today in terms of online movements that turn into massive protests that lead to changes in society.

1.3 Social Media and Online Movements

Discussing the digital public sphere, internet, and democracy cannot be completed without incorporating in the reflection the role of social media. This is considered by many scholars to be the pillar for virtual communities and gatherings. Social media has

brought the attention of scholars from diverse fields, from communication to human behavior studies. Social media contributes to the change in socially constructed norms through sharing, commenting, and getting involved in discussions (Swigger, 2011). This also implies that exchanging opinions on social media shapes some behaviors and traditions already set by the society where they occur. As Swigger mentions in a study about the role of social media in changing citizen's beliefs about democratic values, “sites like Facebook and YouTube allow and encourage users to generate content, share it, and comment on what their fellow users produce” (2011, p. 590). These two

statements claim that social media have a role in impacting people's ideas. Ghannam (2011) refers to social networks' different roles, which include "informing, mobilization, entertaining, creating communities, and increasing transparency" (p. 4). Both Ghannam (2011) and Swigger (2011) argue that social media are allowing people to not only share but also to incite women to mobilize. In the context of the Arab World, and when trying to track the impact of social media throughout the years, the term Arab Spring always appears, especially in Egypt, where it has been argued that the revolt can be framed as either "Facebook revolution" or a "People's revolution" (Zhuo, Wellman and Yu, 2011).

Egypt has a long history with online movements, starting from the rise of the Kefaya action in 2004, which took place before Facebook and Twitter were available in the country (Lim, 2012). This implies that the population was already familiar with online movements, and when social media aroused, they have strengthened the impact of the population on their political movements. In an article about the role of social media in collective actions, the Arab Spring was considered as a case study to deepen the understanding of online movements. The authors mention that "[a] lot of popular commentators described the event as the Facebook Revolution, while others were more circumspect" (Wolfsfeld, Segev and Sheaffer, 2013, p. 118).

The Arab Spring has been brought up again when discussing social media and online movements to explore the extent to which social media might shape people's actions, incite, and encourage mobilization. Ghannam has also noted the impact of social media in the Mena region, and mentions in his report the center for international media assistance: "From Morocco to Bahrain, the Arab world has witnessed the rise of an independent vibrant social media and steadily increasing citizen engagement on the Internet" (Ghannam, 2011, p. 4). The author is an independent media consultant and journalist who has a massive knowledge about the media in the Arab world. Adding to his statement about the increase of engagement on the internet, Ghannam also confirmed that Arab activists, writers, and journalists, most of the time, dealt with harsh

repercussions for their online activities (Ghannam, 2011). His insight supports what Skalli (2006) have mentioned about progressive journalists facing threats and hazards. Both references have made similar annotations in different years.

The democratic movements in some Arab Countries resulted in a new kind of activism hastened by social media, and the example of Turkey, where a wave of women activism has taken over social media, is indispensable here. Eslen-Ziya (2013) has conducted a study to understand how social media is used in social activism. The author interviewed ten activists who have great knowledge in the field and added an analysis of some documents to supplement the interviews. The author concluded that women's activists were using the Europeanization process to achieve legislative changes (Eslen-Ziya, 2013). He argued that social media was powerful when it comes to organizing actions and protests, as well as sharing information about government initiatives. According to the author, "women activists were social networking groups to engage in discussion and to organize protests" (Eslen-Ziya, 2013, p. 868). New technologies also participate in enlightening women, especially in patriarchal societies, where male dominance is considered normal. In the case of the Middle East, blogging on social media is a new place for women to freely express themselves. This case is highly reflected in Saudi Arabia where 50% of the blogs are written by women (Eslen-Ziya, 2013). The same author studied the use of Facebook in Saudi Arabia, and according to their interviewees, most of them have Facebook, and some of them are on Twitter (Eslen-Ziya, 2013).

Moving on to the context of North Africa, Loubna Skalli (2013) discusses women's rights groups against gender-based violence. According to Skalli, "[i]n north Africa, many young educated women turned to digital technologies and web tools to express their experiences and frustrations with sexual harassment" (Skalli, 2014, p. 249). Her paper also explores how social media triggers consciousness among the rising generations. She brought up the example of Women-Shoufouch (WS), which is aimed at addressing verbal harassment that women face on the street most of the time "look here", but with a more sexual connotation. Women-Shoufouch was first introduced on Facebook, and was related to victims of verbal harassment in Morocco (Skalli, 2014).

The author also included the insight of the founder of the Women Shoufouch, who claimed that it is not only about the feeling of resentment, but it also “addresses the skewed social norms and patriarchal interpretive schema that legitimates gender-based violence” (Skalli, 2014, p. 252).

Ghannam (2011) and Swigger (2011) shared similar opinions about the power of social media in the mobilization and informing the public, inciting the targeted audience through sharing and commenting on posts. Bouziane (2016) also mentioned these aspects of social media in integrating people in the discourses, giving them the right to express themselves. This applies also to citizen journalists who initiate certain topics and leave the floor for the public to react, either positively or negatively.

This chapter started with the public sphere that is the most accessible one, mentioning events along the way that made the Moroccan sphere powerful today, including social media as a medium that made movements go faster and reach results in a short time.

1.4. Facebook Digital Sphere

The first topic discussed in the chapter is the public sphere theory, referring to what scholars have mentioned, and to what extent it is complex and hard to define in one sentence.

Social networks are considered by some scholars to be part of the public sphere, as they allow participation, guarantee freedom of speech, and discuss subjects that are already mentioned in the mainstream media. Batorski and Grywińska (2018) stated that “[t]he emergence of social networking sites (SNSs) that grew in popularity after 2004 started a new discussion about the affordances of the digital public sphere” (p. 357). The availability of the digital sphere refers to the level of accessibility of those networks. Peter Dahlgren conceptualized the public sphere as consisting of three dimensions, which are structures, representation, and interaction. Structure refers to the organization of the communicative space, which has an impact on the ways in which the platform is

accessible (Dahlgren, 2005). The representation dimension signifies the media output and the propagation of information. Dahlgren (2005) argues that in the case of social networks, representation is relevant as it is illustrated through the discourses communicated online. The interaction dimension is the fact that the public can engage, refute or accept an opinion formed online (Dahlgren, 2005)

Batorski and Grywińska (2018) state that “[t]he structural dimension of the public sphere refers to issues of access, freedom of speech and the dynamic of inclusivity/exclusivity” (Batorski and Grywińska, 2018, p. 358). The representation dimension emphasizes the discourses and whether or not they are talked about in mass media (Batorski and Grywińska, 2018). These authors have discussed Facebook as a platform that fell under the characteristics of the public sphere and supported their arguments using the dimensions established by Peter Dahlgren. Batorski and Grywińska (2018) argued that “the interaction dimension is the promise of the public sphere, which includes the exchange of views and opinions among citizens” (Batorski and Grywińska, 2018, p. 358). Facebook, in this case, is brought up by the authors because it allows for opinion to be formed, and anyone who has a point of view is allowed to present it (Batorski and Grywińska, 2018).

Chapter II – Social Media and Online Movements Past Studies

The second chapter of the theoretical framework explores what has been done in terms of research that includes social media and online movements. These works do not necessarily address gender issues in their research, but they demonstrate the power of social media in organizing online mobilizations.

2.1 Similar Studies in the Western World

Benjamin Gleason explored how individuals use social media platforms such as Twitter to learn about the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement (Gleason, 2013). The movement took place in 2011 in the United States and was caused by numerous factors such as wealth inequality and the influence of the government on incomes and taxes. In his study, the author looked at the way that Twitter was used for communication. He used content analysis to answer his research questions and identified categories by reading 5% of the tweets (Gleason, 2013). Among his findings was the fact that the user-generated content using the hashtag #OWS was higher than mainstream and media agencies (Gleason, 2013). The movement aimed at expressing opposition to inequalities and the lack of democracy. Gleason (2013) judges this finding to be extremely important as it adds additional voices to the conversation about the movement. It also opens up multiple opportunities for participation as it is important for sharing information (Gleason, 2013). Throughout his study, the author attested that “the social network on hand offers a real-time search that, in this study was populated by user-generated content” (Gleason, 2013, p. 13).

In a study about digital movements of opinion, which are broadly defined as the use of online platforms in forming opinions, Mauro Barisione and Andrea Ceron used semi-automated content analysis to track the Eurosceptic attitudes toward France, Britain, and Italy (Barisione and Ceron, 2017). The authors investigated how public opinion and collective interaction develop within social media. The data collection consisted of the gathering of tweets mentioning the hashtag #austerity during a certain period of time.

The authors have concluded that the effect of the online discourses about austerity was “found in the political contexts where they occurred” (Barisione and Ceron, 2017, p. 13). They also conclude that social media empowers movements and collective actions. A prominent statement made by these authors is that “citizen empowerment in the European digital sphere and contentiousness of European politics is a consequence of social media as a networked space for public opinion” (Barisione and Ceron, 2017, p. 13).

Wang et al. (2016) have focused their research on Facebook engagement to identify popular topics about the networked narratives on the “Human of New York” page, which is a photoblog that collects interviews from citizens of New York on the street. Their research aimed at identifying the connection between the topics and the social media engagement. Using content analysis of comments, the authors conclude that there is a relationship between the subject and tone of voice, as well as the range topics that are family, career, and romantic relations (Wang *et al.*, 2016, p. 152). What the authors deducted from the analysis of the comments is that there is a degree of social media engagement depending on the topic. Additionally, the frequency of topics had no relation with the frequency of engagements, which means that all subjects were talked about, not only those with high engagement.

These studies are not necessarily about women's engagement on social media, but they are conducted in the same field and show that new technologies have impacted social movements and played a significant impact in accelerating social movements. This will highly contribute to making inferences about the extent to which social media discourses in Morocco have improved in terms of density and language. Tracking the development of social media, and looking at what other countries have done, does contribute to the relevance of the study, and will make my discussion of the content analysis clearer.

2.2 Similar Studies in the Arab World

Adam Smidi and Said Shahin (2017) presented a study about the role of social media in the Arab Spring and they conclude that “social media played a multi-pronged role in the wave of protests, and most importantly Facebook and Twitter” (Smidi and Shahin, 2017, p. 204). One of the conclusions of their quantitative research shows that social media platforms made citizens believe that their voice matters in public activities. Social media are empowering and enabled people to connect and mobilize against opinion leaders (Smidi and Shahin, 2017). Relying on social networks and the critical discourse analysis to reach his overall objective, Farid Shirazi (2012) inspected the role of social media in communication discourse in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa. Shirazi argues that “social media played an important role in citizen’s mobilization” (2012, p. 1). This finding aligns with what has been discussed in the first chapter about the role of social media in accelerating mobilization. The author aimed at questioning the *status quo* and demonstrating the power of social media discourses. Within the theoretical framework, he addressed the impact of social media in conveying information, social mobilizations, and the power of discourses (Shirazi, 2012).

Bruns et al. (2013) investigated patterns of Twitter usage during the Egyptian revolution, using content analysis to identifying the density of use of some hashtags. The authors of the research have deducted high engagement during the period of the revolution all over Twitter using hashtags labeling what was happening. The language has also been noticed to encourage people to protest in the street, as it included hashtags to reach a broader audience (Bruns *et al.*, 2013).

Chapter III – Prominent Concepts in Social Media and Communication Studies

3.1 Cyber Activism

When exploring the discourses circulating on social media, one can notice that some of them are made by regular citizens sharing their testimonials, also considered as cyber activists, which use the digital medium for mobilization. It is a way of mobilization that later leads to actions, online or offline. Skalli (2014) mentioned that few women went beyond just blogging and tweeting or sharing on Facebook, as they consider themselves as cyber activists who want to mobilize and start actions online, sometimes moving to the offline sphere.

Carty and Onyett (2016) argued that “cyberactivism is one of the more novel repertoires and resource mobilization outlets for the peace movement” (p. 238). This has been noticed in many countries, including in the Arab world, where many activists use new technologies to convey their messages online and to incite people to participate. Cyberactivism has also been presented in the post 9/11 environment, which refers to the September 11 attacks against the United States by terrorists that belong to Al-Qaeda. At that time, the internet and alternative forms of media were massively present around the globe, and discourses regarding the attacks were present all over the internet (Carty and Onyett, 2006). Based on what these authors mentioned, cyberactivism can be considered as social movements happening online to seek revolts, ask for changes and improvements in social conditions. It does not mean that they will ultimately lead to a street protest, but they increase consciousness among groups and individuals on a global scale (Carty and Onyett, 2006).

Among the main subjects of mobilization in cyberactivism are not only social factors but also political ones. When exploring the development of cyberactivism in Morocco, youth political activism came up, which is not a new occurrence and has been present in the Middle East and North Africa. A paper written about cyberactivism and protest

movements in Morocco, especially on the February 20th movement, an uprising that happened in Morocco during the Arab Spring, explored the motifs behind the new generation that is eager to protest against political leaders. According to Nour-Eddine

Laouni (2020), “the generation of Moroccan youth who grew up into political consciousness grew up in difficult political circumstances characterized by a highly restrictive political environment” (p. 2). Throughout his paper, he investigated closely the role of the internet in enhancing social movements, mentioning the role of the public sphere, where many social and political revolutions were started by cyber activists. Laouni also aimed at explaining the relationship between the use of the internet for political activism. Among his findings is the fact that “there was a low mean score attached to females in the use of the internet for online activism” (Laouni, 2012). Other scholars (Skalli, 2014; Sadiqi, 2016) have presented different arguments, claiming that women have highly contributed to online activism, especially during the Arab Spring, where the 20th February took place.

Ayyad (2019) looked at the role of social media in the boycott campaign in 2018 in Morocco, which addressed three companies: Afriquia Gas Stations, Sidi Ali bottled water, and dairy products Central Danone (Aljazeera, 2018). The qualitative and quantitative research has indicated that the majority of the participants were sharing, posting, and retweeting contents to express their concerns in regards to the boycott (Ayyad, 2019). Ayyad stated that “social media users in Morocco are taking advantage of Facebook and YouTube to express their anger” (Ayyad, 2019, p. 61). His arguments about the use of Social media for activism aligns with what other authors (Skalli, 2014; Sadiqi 2016; Laouni 2020).

3.2 Social Constructed Identity

The analysis of social media platforms and their role in mobilization also involves a socially constructed identity, who is argued by some scholars to be the result of social media groups and engagement. In a book about language and the socially constructed self, Hall and Bucholtz (2012) argue that the socially constructed identity emerges from the groups to whom we belong, and those we tend to support for their gender-based messages (2012). Guta and Karolak (2015) corroborate that “computer-mediated communication can serve as a place for construction or reconstruction of identity” (p. 118). This confirms what has been mentioned about language and constructed identity, which is an argument to say that social movements about injustices or other phenomena gather people sharing similar concerns and beliefs.

Smith and Bekerman (2011) uncovered the use of identity that emerges from groups in macro-conflict interacting in a structured setting about Jews and Palestinians, stating that “the common arguments are intricately bound up with the construction of the social roles and the orientation of participants to each other’s” (Smith and Bekerman, 2011, p. 1975). This statement can also be considered to be similar to what other authors have mentioned regarding the impact of the public sphere, which can be seen as inciting people to engage based on their common identities.

3.3 Social Learning Theory

Throughout the theoretical framework, the public sphere has been discussed as the arena where people gather to share opinions, and that depends on their motifs. It has also been argued that the internet can be seen as hastening democracy, especially in patriarchal countries where some people feel the need to talk about injustices and inequalities. When talking about socially constructed theories, several authors (Hall, 2012; Smith and Bekerman, 2011; Guta and Karolak, 2015) have acknowledged the socially constructed identity to be present in human interactions. From an academic perspective, and in the communication field, social learning theory considers that “modeling

influences produce learning principally through their informative functions and that observers acquire symbolic representations rather than specific stimulus-response” (Bandura, 1997, p. 6). This statement discusses the role of intentional observation where the person learns throughout the process of observing. Bandura also mentions associative preferences to be of major importance, because people tend to repeatedly observe what interests them and hence learn more thoroughly.

Social learning can be regarded as “one approach to understanding human behavior, and its major constructs and principles expressed in broad terms” (Maisto, Carey and Bradizza, 1999, p. 107). When talking about social learning theory, the era of social media has implications, such as the online identity that can be formed online (Hall, 2012; Smith and Bekerman, 2011; Guta and Karolak, 2015). This identity is shaped by the community to whom the individual belongs, and can be constructed online when interacting with people sharing similar beliefs.

Deaton (2015) explained that social media and social learning theory are linked although not much literature has been written about the subject. For instance, “a correlative observation has been witnessed regarding social media’s effects on student times, resources, and self-expression” (Deaton, 2015, p. 2). The attention given to what goes around social media has been connected to the ability to learn through reading and observations of images across the platforms. Guta and Karolak (2015) share similar opinions as they referred to computer-mediated communication to play a role in constructing a social identity. This relates to the occurrence of social movements that can be a result of discourses across the internet that trigger reactions.

3.4 Grounded Theory and Content Analysis

As this research will be conducted through text analysis, one theory that should be mentioned in the theoretical framework is the grounded theory. Some scholars claim that grounded theory and qualitative content analysis are similar, whether others share

opposite insights. It is important to present both perspectives to avoid any confusion in the methodology part regarding what type of research methods were used.

Ji Young Cho (2014) argues that both research methods are used to identify patterns and similarities in the text using coding, but they remain different as the grounded theory was treated in the scholarly work as an inductive research methodology, and content analysis as a method. According to Cho (2014), “[c]ontent analysis is described as a method to classify written or oral materials into identified categories” (p. 3). This author argues that there is a difference between the two concepts, and Strauss and Corbin add that “the grounded theory approach is a research methodology that employs a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a particular phenomenon” (Lai and To, 2015, p. 140). Both authors (Cho, 2014; Lai and To, 2015) contend that grounded theory is a research method to induct information. The theory explores topics and themes commonly used in texts, based on qualitative data. That is to explain that computer-based methods should be used to analyze qualitative data, which enables the structure and of the materials for valid deductions.

A proposed content analysis of social media by Lai and To (2015) includes the definition of goal and scope, data collection, data transformation, and interpretation of the findings. By following these steps, research materials are structured, which enables the identification of themes and keywords. This systematic approach aims at converting concepts that are commonly used and often present on social media. The grounded theory approach refers to collecting data that could be analyzed, relying on concepts and themes (Lai and To, 2015, p. 148).

Hsiuh-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannone (2009) explored content analysis and explained the approaches to it, which are conventional, directed and summative. According to those authors, “all three approaches are used to interpret data from a naturalistic paradigm” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2009). In the article, they refer to the qualitative

content analysis as a research method, same as the grounded theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2009).

3.5 Social Media Content Analysis

To construct a full understanding of the methodology that will be used, social media content analysis should be also addressed. As mentioned by Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2011) “content analysis should distinguish between user-generated content, user-selected content and interactive media output” (p. 209). Neuendorf explains that Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms allow users to share their content, whereas others enable visitors to comment and share with their environments. On the other hand, user-selected content is often present on YouTube, TV shows, or other media sources. According to Neuendorf, “content analysis must be clear on whether it is assumed that the message source is the media or the creator” (2011, p. 211). It is also important to consider this, to better understand the relationship of users with the content. It is also important to distinguish between content that is posted by a user to their page and content posted on the page by other users (Neuendorf, 2011), as well as being aware that the tags are important to identify similar content for coding. These steps and suggestions constitute a guide to help us through the content analysis.

Wang et al. (2016) referred to the posts as being network narratives that represent digital stories, showing the connection between people who created them and those who read and engage with them. They provide the example of Facebook posts on brands, as well as pages that have writing posts, pictures or captions.

When discussing social network analysis, the flow of information on certain posts is a good technique in content analysis to evaluate the level of impact they had. For instance, in quantitative research, group topics into categories help calculating frequencies and to identify patterns (Scott, 2012). To do so, several computer-based software exists to facilitate the process and to come up with organized and meaningful data. For example,

Ucinet is a program for social network researchers that structures, transforms the data, gives tools for analysis, and visualization options for a better presentation of the gathered data (Scott, 2012).

Michele Zappavigna (2018) observes that hashtags are a form of discourse that has its semiotics and adds impact to the discussion when it's happening online. The latter can be related to the studies mentioned above about Twitter, where investigators were able to find high engagement in certain posts (Zappavigna, 2018). That is the case of the study about the use of Twitter during the Egyptian revolution, leading me to conclude that hashtags helped to track the engagement toward the movement online.

Chapter IV – Facebook Posts Content Analysis

4.1 Research Methodology

The fourth chapter of this project presents the chosen research methodology to answer the research questions presented in the introduction. When exploring the subject, content analysis is the best fit to explore the role of social media pages in informing women and raising awareness about inequality, violence, rape, sexual harassment, and gender roles in Moroccan society. That is to say that this study will investigate Facebook posts to find patterns of topics that are discussed in order to understand the intentions of the person who publishes them; this could be either the page administrator or the editor of the Facebook pages. According to Jim Mcnamara (2005), “[c]ontent analysis is a research technique for making inferences by systematically identifying characteristics within texts” (p. 1). This particular research method gives valuable insights regarding the various discourses among the society, as well as the intended message behind them. Therefore, content analysis will be used to examine women's activism in the Moroccan public sphere by identifying the common subjects published on Facebook, taking into account the intention of the person who published. Facebook is considered to be interactive media and has been given attention in the content analysis research.

To be more precise, this study will use both qualitative and quantitative content analysis, whose purpose is to study the relationship between the selected text and its likely meaning, acknowledging that media texts are polysemic (Macnamara, 2005).

Content analysis can be both quantitative and qualitative when the study involves counting and interpretation of texts, which is what this study aims to do. Macnamara (2005) argues that quantitative content analysis gathers data about media content such as topics, the volume of mentions, and keywords in context, which can also include visual interpretation of the data. On the other hand, qualitative content text analysis

explores factors that play a significant role in audience effects. This study explores the topics that are mostly communicated through the selected Facebook pages but it also investigates the purpose of the content in regards to its audience. According to Macnamara (2005), “[r]esearchers who advocate analyzing latent, as well as manifest content as a way of understanding meanings of texts, integrate qualitative and quantitative message analysis” (p. 4). The manifest content analysis aims at describing what is easily observable on the surface, and latent content analysis aims at interpreting the meaning of the text.

This research aims at investigating women's activism discourses discussed on selected Facebook pages, then explores the purpose of communication content through Facebook from the perspective of the page's administrators and editors. These objectives will be reached through two research questions that are purpose-oriented, which means they complement each other. The research questions answered through this study are the following:

- 1- What is the role of Facebook users in informing Moroccan women about the existing inequalities and violence in society?
- 2- What is the purpose of communication through the selected Facebook posts?

4.2 Data Collection

The first step of the data collection is to gather 10 Facebook pages, from which the posts were extracted for the analysis. Accordingly, the selected Facebook pages are based on some variables to ensure that they fit into the topic on hand. The first chosen variable is the title, which must indicate that the page is addressed to Moroccan Women, along with keywords that show it is either for women's rights, feminism, or mobilization. The chosen pages were created between 2012 and 2020, for Moroccans, and by Moroccans. Another criteria is that the pages should have more than 500 subscribers, and the last post should be no older than 1 month. These criteria aimed at

selecting active pages, created between the period chosen for the analysis, to address posts to women. The engagement was not relevant in this case, as the study looks at women's activism from the perspective of the creators of the Facebook pages.

The pages selected for the content analysis were the following

Name	Date	Followers	Likes	Links
Groupes d'actions Féministe Maroc	2015	721	698	https://www.facebook.com/FeministactionSelfdefense
Kasbah Tal'fin	2018	734	709	https://www.facebook.com/KasbahTalfin
Feminists of Morocco - Les féministes du Maroc النسوية المغربي	2013	942	934	https://www.facebook.com/Feminists-of-Morocco-Les-f%C3%A9ministes-du-Maroc-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-1429907393890272
Féministes du Maroc	2013	588	583	https://www.facebook.com/Feminiistes.du.Maroc
Masaktach	2018	7,331	7,167	https://www.facebook.com/Masaktach1
L'union de l'action féministe	2019	2,103	1,927	https://www.facebook.com/UAFMAROC
Réseaux iddf-injad contre la violence basée sur	2015	1,526	1,459	https://www.facebook.com/R%C3%A9seau-lddf-injad-contre-la-violence-bas%C3%A9e-sur-le-genre-1518129271818693

le genre				
شبكة الرابطة إنجاد ضد عنف النوع	2016	783	775	https://www.facebook.com/%D8%B4%D8%A8%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%B6%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B9-1522076668121712
L'union féministe libre – UFL الاتحاد النسائي الحر	2016	18,349	18,705	https://www.facebook.com/UnionFeministeLibre
Tous contre la violence contre les femmes	2011	1,203	908	https://www.facebook.com/Tous-Contre-la-violence-contre-les-femmes-307555882604406

Table [1]: Dates, Followers, Likes, and Sources of the Selected Facebook Pages

4.3 Sampling

Macnamara (2005) argues that “[s]ampling is the process of selecting content which will be examined during the study” (p. 9). The sampling enables the equal representation of all data, and it can be probabilistic or non-probabilistic. In this case, a systematic sampling is employed to gather the posts from the selected Facebook pages. According to Macnamara (2005), “systematic sampling requires selecting the nth unit from the total population of articles” (p. 13). This is applied to Facebook pages, and therefore every 10th post from 2012 to 2020 was selected from all the pages. Onyedbadi and Uche (2019) used a similar sampling on Facebook groups, by gathering

every 15th post on the groups, to conduct a content analysis for the multidisciplinary issues surrounding African diasporas. In this case, every 10th posts from all the pages were screenshotted for the analysis. The selecting starts from the bottom, where the first post of the page occurs until the last one. By systematically gathering the 10th post from every page, 300 Facebook posts have been gathered for the content analysis.

4.4 Coding

According to Christen Erlingsson and Petra Brysiewicz (2017), “[a] code can be thought of as a label; a name that most exactly describes what this particular condensed meaning unit is about” (p. 94). When performing inductive content analysis, codes might arise from the content selected, which applies to this investigation. Jane Forman and Laura Damschroder (2007) mentioned that “[c]odes can represent topics, concepts, or categories of events, processes, attitudes or beliefs that represent human activity, and thought” (p. 48). Based on what has been mentioned about coding in content analysis, the codebook for this study includes six parts, and each has its variables which will be discussed before the introduction of the codebook. According to Zaid (2014), “in terms of coding, researchers generally adopt existing coding schemes or develop their coding schemes for categories that are not coded yet by other scholars” (p. 11). In this case, a coding scheme was developed and used for the categorization as well, to reach the goals of this study. Mcnamara (2005) argues that there is a type of content analysis referred to as inductive, which uses the data itself to construct a codebook. Since this study explores particular subjects and also aims at understanding the purpose of communication content, the codebook includes all the variables and concepts that will facilitate the categorization of the component of the Facebook posts. The following is the coding scheme that was used for gathering the results, including the rules that were used for categorizing the different part of a Facebook post:

- I. *The presence of particular words or concepts*: This refers to the exact words that are mentioned on the Facebook posts gathered from the selected 10 pages. The

words and concepts observed in this first part were violence, rape, feminism, women's rights, equality, inequality, injustice, justice, domestic violence, assault, and sexual harassment. The observation was based on the exact mention of these cited words and concepts. Since languages might differ, the Cambridge dictionary was used to translate the mentioned keywords, to avoid any misinterpretation. Therefore, the words or concepts that appear either in the caption of the post, its image, or link (if applicable) are included under the first part:

- The use of the noun << Violence >> within the post
 - French = Violence
 - Arabic = عنف
- The use of the word << Rape >> within the post
 - French = Viol
 - Arabic = اغتصاب
- The use of the word <<Feminism >> within the post
 - French= Féminisme
 - Arabic = النسوية
- The use of the phrase << Women's Rights >> within the post
 - French = Les droits de la femmes
 - Arabic = حقوق المرأة
- The use of the word << Equality >> within the post
 - French = égalité
 - Arabic = Equality
- The use of the word << Inequality >> within the post
 - French = inégalité
 - Arabic = عدم المساواة
- The use of the word << Injustice >> within the post
 - French = injustice
 - Arabic = ظلم
- The use of the word << Justice >> within the post
 - French = Justice
 - Arabic = عدالة
- The use of the phrase << Domestic Violence >> within the post
 - French = violence conjugale
 - Arabic = العنف المنزلي
- The use of the phrase << Assault >> within the post
 - French = Aggression

- Arabic = اعتداء
 - The use of the phrase << Sexual Harassment >> or << Sexually Harassed >> within the post
 - French = L'harcèlement Sexuelle / Harcelé Sexuellement
 - Arabic = اعتداء جنسي
- II. *Facebook Post Format*: The analyzed Facebook posts presented different formats, which can also speak to the type of content on it. Therefore, the posts format part was coded based on:
- *Caption only*: The description/caption on the top of the post.
 - *Caption + Image*: The posts should include only a caption and an image.
 - *Image only*: The posts should not have a caption nor a link attached to it. An image only.
 - *Caption + Link to National News*: The posts that include captions, but attached to a link to national news; this refers to either online Moroccan newspapers or web content.
 - *Content + Link to International News*: This is the same as the format above, but this link is a Foreign online newspaper.
 - *Link to National News*: The post should have only a link to national news, without a caption. The link can include an image, but no caption written on the top.
 - *Link to International News*: The post should have only a link to International news, without a caption. The link can include an image, but no caption written on the top.
- III. *Latent content analysis for the captions of the posts*:
- *A caption that expresses an opinion about a situation*: The caption written by the Facebook account owner, administrator, or editor includes an opinion about a situation. The person who wrote the caption either expressed concern or described the situation. The message can have more than one goal, but those who include an opinion will be categorized under this code section.

- *A caption that incites women to take action:* As mentioned above, a caption can have more than one goal. Those who include action verbs targeted to women, to take action toward a situation, were put under this scheme. For example, a caption that is addressed to women, telling them that it is time to say no to inequality. Another example would be a caption that convinces women to say no to violence.
 - *Asking for opinion:* This refers to a caption to encourage women to comment and share opinions regarding a specific situation. A message might include opinion and then ask for an opinion. Captions that aim at asking for opinions fell under this section.
 - *Sharing information:* A caption that includes information from the news. The information refers to a fact that is backed up by a citation to the news or the person who mentioned the fact.
- IV. The fourth part of the coding book looks at the message conveyed through the images used in the Facebook posts. The message of the image fell under these categories:
- *The portrayal of violence:* An image that includes a woman with characteristics of violence. This is very easy to notice and refers to posts that show violence.
 - *Call for actions:* Image addressed to women, asking them to say no to violence or giving advice on how to take action and fight for their rights.
 - *Others:* The images that don't fit into the mentioned sections were put under "others".
- V. *The fifth section refers to the topic of the captions that have links.* The topics of the links were categorized under the following subjects: Violence, rape, feminism, women's rights, inequality, gender equality, domestic violence, equality, assault, justice, sexual harassment, and others. The topic must include one of these words in the title that shows on the link. Two or more words might

be included such as rape and injustice, which refers to an article about rape that discusses injustice as well.

VI. *Language*: The last part of the coding scheme includes the language used in the post. In this case, since more than one language might arise, it was divided as the following:

- French = Fr
- Arabic = Ar
- English = Eng
- Arabic + Automatic French Translation (Ar+Fr)
- Arabic + Automatic English Translation (Ar+ Eng)
- French + Automatic Arabic Translation (Fr+ Ar)
- French + Automatic English Translation (Fr+Eng)
- English + Automatic Arabic Translation (ENG+ Ar)
- English + Automatic French Translation (ENG + Fr)

The code scheme presented above includes all the variables involved in the content analysis, which represents 6 keywords that can also be topics in the links, 3 languages, 3 types of messages on the image, and 4 messages on the captions. A total of 16 variables are coded on the scheme. A variable can be considered as expressions or quantities, which is used to understand the elements involved in the research. The word itself represents what the investigator intends to evaluate, which in the case of content analysis involves the construct used to measure the study (Weber, 1990). In this study, the variables are at the core of the code book, and represent the way the message on the posts, will be analyzed. For instance, for a message on the image; the image that shows a woman in a bad shape will be represented as a portrayal of violence. As latent content analysis is open to interpretation, in this case, everything will be related to the caption (if application), or the link (if applicable).

4.6 Categories

Based on the coding scheme presented above, which mentions all the variables and the rules for its selection, the categories of the content analysis were developed on an spreadsheet file (using Excel), and each post was analyzed based on those categories, following the codebook. The categories are as follow:

- 1- Post #: Every post will be coded from 1 to 300.
- 2- Source: The name of the Facebook page.
- 3- Facebook Post Format.
- 4- The message of the caption.
- 5- The message of the image.
- 6- The topic of the link.
- 7- Keywords included in the posts.

The mentioned categories are extracted from the coding scheme mentioned above, on which it will rely for the analysis of each post.

Chapter V – Findings and Discussion

This qualitative content analysis investigates the use of Facebook in women's activism by exploring the main topics discussed, the density of keywords, and the intentions conveyed through the messages. The main categories and variables, as already discussed, are divided into the post formats, the topics included in the posts, the message of the images (if applicable), the main keywords that appear repeatedly in the posts, the language used, and the goal of the caption. The analysis of the manifest is used to understand the surface of the posts from the perspective of the published, by applying the codebook constructed for the categorization. Therefore, before exploring the content analyzed in-depth, a descriptive analysis will be presented to illustrate the overall content.

5.1 Findings

After conducting a content analysis of 300 Facebook posts gathered through a systematic sampling on 10 pages between 2012-2020, the following are the findings, which were counted through Excel. The results emphasize the captions, images, links, and language, following the codebook presented above. This section will only present statistical numbers that describe the sample, which will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section.

The formats of the posts are the first observation made when gathering the contents from the Facebook pages. It is the first thing noticed when looking at posts, and therefore its impact can be prevailing. The main reason for analyzing the post formats is to see the general structures and their frequencies, and later one goes into detail into analyzing each component. In the analysis, the formats of the posts are presented separately, since the content of the caption is not the same as the content of the image. Therefore, this also explains the reason why the codebook includes goals of captions and messages on the image.

The first finding investigates the use of captions in the posts, then looks at its goal to get a clear idea of the general content. After exploring the captions, images are also analyzed, followed by the messages, as presented in the codebook. Post formats include links, which will be explored as well. After describing the variables mentioned above, another calculation is presented regarding the common keywords and the topics of the links. The calculation is done by counting the presence of the keywords within the captions and the images, as well as the density of the topics. This will reveal the common discourses on these Facebook pages, as well as the content of the external sources attached to the links. The last analysis includes the use of language, which appeared to be polyvalent and even surprising. All the findings presented below are reviewed in the discussion to better understand the women's activism discourses as well as the purpose of the communication content.

Captions

First, contents with captions are analyzed to explore its frequency, followed by a description of the goals of the captions. Additionally, images that include captions were analyzed according to what was mentioned in the coding scheme.

Post Formats	Frequency	Percentages
Captions	140/300	47%

Table [2]: Caption Frequency

Among the 300 Facebook posts generated, 47% of them have captions. This means that more than half of the posts do not have captions. However, the captions are not published alone. Therefore, another analysis was done to breakdown the use of captions and to better understand the content. This was explored according to the type of formats

mentioned in the codebook, which consist of posts with captions only, posts that have captions and images, posts that have captions and a link to redirect visitors to national news, and posts that have captions and links to international news.

This research fills the gap in the media studies field and communication research concerning the use of social media in accelerating online activism in North African countries. The use of content analysis enables a deep understanding of how Facebook page administrators and editors communicate about women's inequalities and violence, using several languages as a means to make it universal and hoping for a larger reach of audiences. This research does not explore the perspective of the targeted audience but rather looks at the purpose of content communication from the perspective of people who created those pages. In the future, similar research could be done to investigate the engagement on those selected Facebook posts, as well as a content analysis of the external sources, included on the links. The use of links that redirect visitors to an online newspaper could be studied as well to find its correlation with the motifs and purposes of the contents.

These results can initiate new studies that explore the use of Facebook pages in redirecting visitors to external sources, as a means to share information and to instruct. Another research could use user-generated content, by analyzing the comment sections and finding correlations with the purpose of communication content by authors of the posts.

Captions	Frequency	Percentage
Posts with captions only	18	6%
Posts with captions + images	87	29%
Posts with captions + links to national news	27	9%
Posts with captions + links to international news	8	3%
Total Captions	140	47%

Table [3]: Caption Formats Frequency

As mentioned in the table above, out of 140 posts, 87 have captions and images. More than half of the captions published on the Facebook pages have an image attached to it, and that is why the content of the images was also explored. Moreover, 27 posts have captions and links to redirect visitors to a website that has national news, leading to the content of the news to be explored as well. Only 8 posts have international news, and only 18 posts have captions only. These results represent 140 posts out of the 300 that were analyzed.

After extracting the number of captions within the overall 300 posts, a detailed analysis was done to understand the use of those captions, through the goals mentioned on the codebook and the categorization employed. As noted in the codebook, the captions were explored with four goals in mind:

- 1) Captions intended to express an opinion;
- 2) Captions intended to share an information/news;
- 3) Captions to call for actions;
- 4) Captions intended to ask women for opinions.

However, more than one goal might arise within the captions, which was also studied. As a result, the 140 captions were analyzed by looking at the number of posts that have one goal, and the ones with more than one goal. The results are as presented below:

Captions	Frequency
Captions with one goal	49 posts
Captions with two goals	91 posts
Total	140 posts

Table [4]: Caption Goals Frequency

As mentioned above, out of 140 posts, 49 posts contain one type of caption, which are structured as the following:

Posts with one type of caption	Frequency
Captions aimed at expressing an opinion	19 posts
Captions aimed at calling for actions	10 posts
Captions aimed at sharing news	12 posts
Others	8 posts
Total	49 posts

Table [5]: Single Caption Type

Based on the analysis above, the most common goal of the caption that is used includes the opinion of the publisher of the posts, which represents 19 posts out of 49. It means that some posts are only published to express an opinion, which can be negative or positive, depending on the topic. Common keywords demonstrate the type of discourses that are present among those captions in general.

The second common goal of captions is sharing news, which represents 12 posts out of 49. That means that the publisher shares news on the caption without expressing an opinion. Also, 10 posts out of 49 aim at calling for action and are addressed to women as all the pages selected are targeted toward women.

The remaining captions which aim at addressing more than one message will be analyzed separately. As a result:

Captions aimed at expressing opinion and calling for actions	40 posts
Captions aimed at calling for actions and sharing news	38 posts
Captions aimed at asking opinion and calling for action	5 posts
Other types of captions	8 posts
Total	91 posts

Table [6]: Two or more Caption Types

Based on the table above, several captions with two goals convey opinions and call for actions, representing 40 posts, and 38 posts are aimed at calling for action and sharing news. These numbers show that among 140 posts that have captions, calling for actions represents more than half of the overall posts. This also means that the main intention of the publishers of the Facebook posts is expressing opinions and calling for actions.

Images

When exploring the Facebook posts that have images, it came to my attention that links also have pictures, which might incite visitors to open the links and read the articles on the external sources. In order to understand the message conveyed through the images, a selection of posts that have images was gathered through the categorization. First, the images that are published alone, were analyzed, followed by the images that are linked to a caption. Images that are linked to external sources (links) were also analyzed, in order to check the most common message on the images. The messages were analyzed according to the codebook, under these categories:

- 1) Portrayal of violence;
- 2) Call for action;
- 3) Others.

As a result, we have identified a total of 23 images published alone with no caption and no link. Those images include:

Messages (Images only)	Frequency
Image with Portrayal of violence	4 posts
Images with a call for actions	16 posts
Others	3 posts
Total	23 posts

Table [7]: Messages of Posts with Images Only

As mentioned above, most images that are published without captions and links aim at calling for action, defined in the code book as a message asking women to have a reaction regarding a situation and do something about it. The fact that 4 posts out of 23 portray violence can be considered as sensitization. This will be further discussed, after reporting all the findings.

Other images are included in the 300 posts gathered, but under another format (Caption + Image), which was also be computed on excel in order to explore the common message or combination of messages.

Captions with images	Frequency
Images that portray violence	8 posts
Images that call for actions	43 posts
Images that call for actions and portray violence	26 posts
Others	10 posts
Total	87 posts

Table [8]: Messages of Posts with Images and other post formats

The categorizations used for the content analysis, as well as the codebook, show that 87 captions have images included, and the majority of them aim at calling for actions, followed by 26 posts that portray violence. Call to action is the dominant message again, followed by the portrayal of violence. In the first analysis of the posts that have images only, and based on the results, content is more targeted toward calling for actions and portraying violence, which speaks to the general intentions to sensitize and ask women to take action toward various subjects that will be presented shortly. Analysis of the images that appear on the links was also be analyzed to explore the most common message on the image.

Links

Another type of Facebook format that appeared throughout the sample is the use of links, which were counted to see how many links, in general, are used on the posts. Links redirect visitors to an external page, and according to the sources of the links, they are all either attached to national or international online newspapers that discuss a particular subject. Therefore, after computing the overall links that exist among 300, it appears that:

Links	Frequency
Links to national source	163 links
Links to international source	8 links
Total	171 links

Table [9]: Frequency of links

The table above shows that more than half of the Facebook posts include a link to an external source that discusses a particular topic. These topics were also explored by analyzing the titles appearing on the links.

Before exploring the topics, however, an analysis to identify the common keywords included in the posts was conducted.

Keywords Density

As mentioned in the codebook, common keywords that were observed either appear on the captions of the posts, the images, or titles of the links. The analysis gathered all the references of each keyword. Since more than one keyword might appear on the post, this means that the total mentions can't equal 300. Therefore, after computing all the mentions of the keyword, here are the results:

Main Keywords on the posts	Mentions
Violence	134 times
Rape	65 times
Feminism	6 times
Women's rights	86 times
Equality	68 times
Inequality	0
Injustice	8 times
Justice	10 times
Domestic violence	14 times
Assault	74 times
Sexual Harrassment	11 times

Table [10]: Keywords Density

As commented above, the word violence was the most present with a total of 134 references. The second most common word is women's rights, followed by assault, then equality, then rape. These are the most common keywords that appeared in the 300 Facebook posts gathered. The word feminism rarely appeared on the posts, as well as

sexual harassment, justice, and injustice. Most posts seem to focus on using more captivating words such as violence, assault, and rape.

As already stated, several captions aimed at calling for actions while others focused on the expression of opinion. Indeed, these posts express opinions and call for action using these specific keywords.

Topics

Part of the Facebook post formats include links that redirect visitors to online newspapers, which has been noticed when analyzing the post format variable. Common keywords included on the posts have already been reported above, showing that the words violence, women's rights, assault, equality and rape are mentioned quite a few times over the 300 Facebook posts. As for the links, topics are analyzed based on the title, which describes the subject of the news. After counting the overall number of links included in the 300 Facebook posts, 171 links appeared, whose topics are represented below:

The topic of the links	Frequency
Rape	Mentioned on 35 links
Women's rights	Mentioned on 54 links
Domestic Violence	Mentioned on 11 Links
Assault	Mentioned on 28 links
Sexual Harassment	Mentioned on 2 links

Table [11]: Topics of the links

The table above shows that 54 links discuss subjects regarding women's rights in Morocco, followed by 35 links that discuss rape. The results revealed that 28 links consider topics about assaults and 17 links discuss subjects other than what is mentioned on the list. Overall, more than half of the links redirect people to online

newspapers to read about subjects regarding women's issues in Morocco. Domestic violence is also present among the topics and it is present in 11 links.

Language

The initial expectation when gathering the posts to include in the content analysis was that most posts would be written in Arabic or French, but when skimming through the posts, I noticed that some of the posts were either in English or were translated into English. Facebook enables administrators and editors of pages to choose to translate the posts or comments. As such, one of the categories of the content analysis included the language, and the results appeared as the following:

Languages of the posts	Frequency
French	41 posts
Arabic	92 posts
English	27 posts
Arabic + English	92 posts
Arabic + French	8 posts
French, English and Arabic	40 posts
Total	300 posts

Table [12]: The language used

The table above shows the languages used in the 300 Facebook posts selected. The use of the Arabic language is very common as it is the official language of the country. However, the use of French, which is very much spoken in the country, is not very common among the selected pages. The table also shows a strong presence of the English language, with 92 translated posts and 27 posts written in English only. Surprisingly, 40 posts are translated into English, French, and Arabic, which also can be interpreted as if the publisher wanted everyone to understand the message of the posts.

The first part of the analysis explored variables that include the goals of captions, messages on the images, common keyword, and topics. It also included the Facebook ad format, which showed the common formatting for the posts and also revealed the use of links that redirect visitors to a national or international online newspaper, discussing topics such as women's rights, assault, rape, and violence in Morocco and other countries. Although not many links redirect visitors to international news sites, it is still important to analyze them, to understand the intentions of the administrators and editors of the selected Facebook pages.

A comparative analysis explored the use of English, French, and Arabic at the same time in regards to the Facebook ad formats. As mentioned above, 40 Facebook posts combine the three languages at the same time, and this analysis may clarify the reasons behind the use of three languages at once.

Post Format in English, French, and Arabic at the same time	Frequency
Caption + image	15 posts
Caption + International news	11 posts
Caption + National news	14 posts
Total	40 posts

Table [13]: Posts in three languages

The table above shows that out of the 40 posts, that include three languages at once, 15 are structured as captions and images, captions and international news, and captions and national news. This shows that some posts that include links to national or international news include three languages. The fact that English is used when including links to national and international news sites speaks to the eagerness of the administrators and editors to make the information understandable for the most majority of visitors.

As mentioned above, 92 posts include an English translation to posts, which is intriguing, taking into account that it is not the official language nor the second

language. A deep analysis was conducted in order to explore what type of posts were published in English. The variables included in the analysis are the language and goal of captions (if the post has a caption). Since one caption can have more than one message, the overall computing exceeds 92, which represents the number of posts that have the English language as a translation.

After comparing the use of language with the goal of captions, these were the results:

Goals of captions (posts with English as translation)	Frequency
Expressing opinion	30
Sharing information	35
Calling for action	48
Asking for opinion	3

Table [14]: Goals of Captions in English

The caption goals common within the 92 posts that have the English translation represent 48 calls for action, 30 opinions, and 35 posts aimed at sharing information. Only 3 of them aimed at asking for an opinion. From the perspective of the admin/editor of the page, this shows that the two main goals of the use of the English language as translation are to share information, call for actions, and express opinion using a universal language that everyone can understand.

5.2 Discussion

The findings above answer the two research questions of this study, which will be discussed in this section.

Research Question 1: What is the role of Facebook in informing Moroccan women about the existing inequalities and violence in society?

Many discourses take place on Facebook, and the content of selected posts was explored through the use of particular keywords. Additionally, several posts include links to an online newspaper about topics that portray women's issues in Morocco. Keywords and topics were identified to measure the frequency of its uses on the selected 300 Facebook posts.

Keyword density within the Facebook page

Keyword density refers to the number of times that a keyword used for the analysis appears on the Facebook posts. Facebook pages addressed to women hold discourses regarding women's issues in Morocco, and repeatedly mention the words "violence," "rape," "women's rights," "equality" and "assault. "Those keywords are used recurrently in the 300 Facebook posts selected, either on the captions or the images of the posts. They are either mentioned in Arabic, French, or English, as mentioned in the codebook. The keyword violence appeared 134 times out of 300 Facebook posts. Violence refers to physical force or power over an individual, which has a high probability to result in injury or psychological harm. Taking into account that all the Facebook pages selected for the analysis are addressed to women, the use of the word violence recurrently shows that administrators or editors of the pages often discuss violence in regards to women in Morocco.

The second most common word is "women's rights" which appeared 74 times, and can be defined as the social equality of women between men and women. This word appears several times within the posts, demonstrating that most content seeks to be reminiscent concerning women's rights in Morocco.

The keyword assault appeared 74 times, followed by "rape", mentioned 65 times. The use of these stated keywords show that among the 300 Facebook, much posts emphasize on rape and assault in Morocco, all addressed to women.

The presence of these particular keywords shows that Facebook pages targeted to Moroccan women seek to report about subjects involving the cruelties occurring against women. Taking into account that information is publicly accessible on Facebook, the use of these keywords that keep appearing are captivating and get the attention of women. The keyword equality appears 68 times among the Facebook posts, which refers to the state of being equal in status and rights.

Based on these keywords, one can assume that discourses held in the selected Facebook pages discuss issues such as assault, violence, and rape, and discuss women's rights and equality in Moroccan society. These conversations are interrelated because if rape is discussed repeatedly in Morocco, it means that violence exists. Likewise, if women's rights and equality are constantly discussed in pages addressed to women, one can assume that there is a serious concern by Facebook administrators and therefore it is talked about. In other words, there is a relationship between these keywords, although they all aim at uncovering problems and matters within the Moroccan society, which involves the Moroccan woman. The use of words such as violence, rape, and assault accentuates the overall problems that are criminalities and offenses in relation to women.

Women's activism discourses on Facebook Pages

Activism as a concept refers to a constant effort to promote and reveal problems occurring within a society, as a means to sensitize and seek improvements. The fact that Facebook pages repeatedly discuss topics such as domestic violence, rape, and assault in Morocco shows the willingness of activists to make an impact, to reach women, and to seek mobilization. Online discourses ultimately have goals, especially when repeatedly discussing matters of a particular society. The list of keywords mentioned above is computed from the posts that have captions and images. As mentioned throughout the dissertation, the gathered data includes multiple links to redirect visitors to online news websites. Each link has a title on it, which was also analyzed based on the same keyword list mentioned in the codebook. The titles on the links summarize the topic discussed, and they represent 171 out of 300.

The most common topic discussed on those links is women's rights, which was mentioned 54 times, followed by 35 topics about rape and 28 about the assault. These three topics appear the most among the links, showing that admins or editors aim at sharing as much information as possible about these three topics. Again, these are pages addressed to women, and when analyzing the presence of these topics, one can conclude that these are the main discourses talked about within the pages. The keywords that appear on the captions and the images also include similar words, which show the extent to which content focuses on these particular subjects. Based on these findings and the frequency of the references of these topics and keywords, one can conclude that these posts aim at communicating as much as possible about brutalities happening to women, and always mentioning women's rights.

Bouziane (2016) argues that, the internet is commonly used to discuss matters occurring within a society, as a means to increase the flow of information and create an impact. Words and topics involving rape, violence, and assault captivate the attention of visitors and therefore create an impact either on their minds, or it can be reflected in their actions. This study looks at the perspective of Facebook pages administrators and editors, which in this case reveals their eagerness to transmit information about these problems in Moroccan society. Online movements, as mentioned by Skalli (2016), involve the propagation of information about common problems in society, which impacts people that feel involved in it. In other words, online movements have more impact when addressed to a community that shares similar concerns. In this case, all the Facebook pages target women, so the content is more relatable for them.

By including strong keywords and links that discuss issues such as violence and rape, the posts get their attention and do create an impact. Their involvement is not analyzed in this study, but the involvement and commitment of Facebook administrators are clear in this case. They want to accentuate particular subjects, using keywords, and discussing topics that summarize women's injustices and suffering in Morocco.

The use of Links as external sources to disseminate information

Throughout the collected data, links kept appearing repeatedly, which raised more attention about their use and the ultimate goals of including them in Facebook posts. When checking the sources, and reading the titles, it appeared that they all redirected visitors to an online newspaper to read about a subject, and as mentioned above, is usually about women's rights, violence, rape or assault. These topics got the most number of mentions and therefore are the ones discussed the most. Including links eventually means sharing information with the targeted audience. Another reason for including links is to sensitize women by sharing sad news and choking stories reported by victims of rape and assault. As for women's rights, that's the most general subject that all women feel related to it, as it does not include rape nor violence.

Figure [1] below represents a Facebook post published in 2015, sending visitors to a National website name "La Marocaine", which is an online page that discusses subjects regarding women in Morocco. The title of the link below shows that the topic is about domestic violence in Casablanca. The keyword domestic violence appears on the title and the description of the video as well. Figure [2] is a Facebook post published in 2016 and includes a link with an image. The image shows a woman in a bad shape, which aims at portraying violence. The topic of the link is marital rape, which redirects visitors to news about a woman who lives in Laarach, a city in the north of Morocco, raped by her husband against her own will. Figure [3] also has a link to national news with an image, which was published in 2020. The image shows a woman with bruises in her eyes, conveying suffering, and torture. The image also aims at portraying violence along with a link to read about violence in Morocco. The title has the keyword violence, and it sends visitors to a link to read about cases of violence reported during the lockdown. All figures [1],[2] and [3] do not have captions, and the goal is only to share information through news.

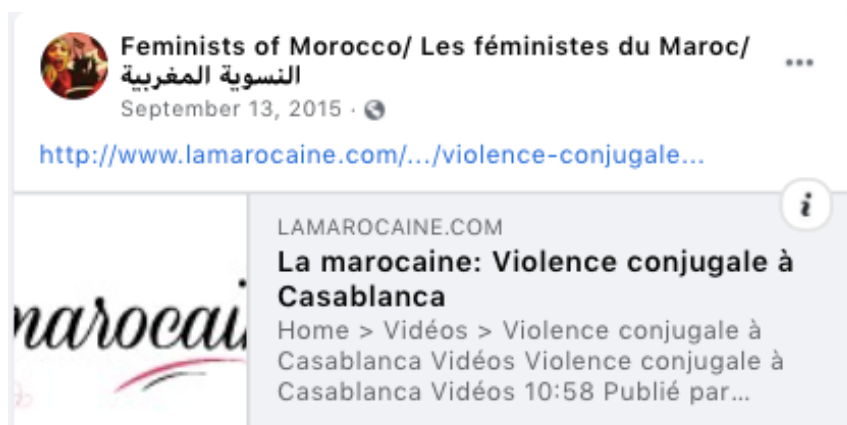


Figure [1]: Facebook Post, “Feminists of Morocco”

Post Format	Link to National News
Content	Domestic Violence in Casablanca
Topic	Domestic Violence

Table [15]: Facebook Post Analysis



Figure [2]: Facebook Post, “Federation de la ligue démocratique des droits des femmes FLDDF”

Post Format	Link to National News+ Image
Content	An investigation about marital rape in the city of Laarach
Topic	Rape
Content of the Image	Portrayal of violence

Table [16]: Facebook Post Analysis



Figure[3]: Facebook Post, “Groupe D’action Féministe Maroc”

Post Format	Link to National News+ Image
Content	892 Violence against women have been reported during the lockdown
Topic	Violence
Content of the Image	Portrayal of violence

Table [17]: Facebook Post Analysis

Creating compassion and empathy can also be another purpose when sharing links to stories and articles, as most of the links refer to a topic that shows the misery and torment of other women through images and news. The most effective way to create an impact and to sensitize the audience is by including links to real stories and credible information, to keep reminding women about what is happening in their society. Not every Moroccan woman has faced violence, assault, or rape, but we have all heard of these stories on the public broadcasting news or online.

As previously stated, this study explores the perspective of Facebook administrators and editors and does not reveal facts about the level of involvement of the targeted audience. However, the level of commitment to share as much information as possible, and to instruct women about these problems, is measured. It is measured through the density of the use of keywords such as violence, rape, and assault, as well as the incorporation of links that discuss the same topics. The public sphere theory can be brought up again in this section, as it is defined as a sphere for people who have similar beliefs, and gather together to share opinions and information (Habermas et al., 1964). Facebook pages are targeted to Moroccan women, including subjects that involve them as individuals and as citizens in a society where rape stories are heard about, every day on the news or social media. Figure [4] has an image demonstrating violence against a woman, with a link that discusses an increase in number of violence cases in Morocco.



Figure [4]: Facebook Post, “Feminists of Morocco”

Post Format	Link to National News+ Image
Content	HCP report: Chocking numbers about violence against women in Morocco
Topic	Violence
Content of the Image	Portrayal of violence

Table [18]: Facebook Post Analysis

Facebook gives the possibility to write captions, to include images or links, which maximizes the impact when the message is relevant and well written. In our corpus, 35 links have captions and others have images, as a means to build impactful posts. Online newspaper websites such as Medi1tv, Anwarpress, Febrayer, and many others are all known among the community and their content is published on Facebook. Every day, when browsing the feed on Facebook, links to online newspapers appear, to redirect people to read an article. In this case, all the articles involve violence, rape, assault, and women's rights. Other topics such as domestic violence and sexual harassment are also present although they are less mentioned, compared to the other mentioned keywords.

The information included above shows the role of the selected Facebook pages in informing women, by repeatedly including particular keywords, as well as links that discuss topics regarding issues and matters that exist in the Moroccan society, which all include women and are targeted to them.

Research Question 2: *What is the purpose of communication through the selected Facebook posts?*

As mentioned before, the content analysis explores the perspective of Facebook administrators and editors, which are the only ones who can post on a page. Therefore,

the data collected is analyzed in a way that shows the intended goals conveyed through the messages of the posts. In other words, the purpose of communication content is explored to understand the ultimate goal of publishing content on those Facebook pages, all addressed to Moroccan women.

The use of post captions to convey messages

Captions are the written information that accompanies any picture or video, which is the first one noticed when looking at the posts. The caption appears before the image or the illustration used on the posts. When analyzing the data, 140 captions appeared out of 300 posts. It is less than half of the sample, which was unexpected especially when 171 links appeared, which is more than the captions. Those selected captions revealed that more than half convey two goals, and 49 posts convey one goal. Those goals are defined in the code book and fall under four categories. When calculating the frequency of each goal, it appeared that the most common goals are the expression of opinion, calling for action, and sharing news. Captions that convey only one goal mostly aim at expressing an opinion, which represents 19 captions out of 49 captions.



Figure [5]: Facebook post, “Groupe D’actions Féministe Maroc”

Post Format	Caption Only
Goal	The text aims at expressing an opinion about women’s assault in the street. The author of this post suggest that it is important to share self-defense technique for self-development
To Express Opinion	

Table [19]: Facebook Post Analysis



Figure [6]: Facebook Page, “Feminists of Morocco”

Post Format	Caption Only
Goal To Express Opinion	The text aims at expressing an opinion global feminist and hope. The author also includes #FeministofMorocco to refer to the Facebook page name which includes Feminists and Morocco.

Table [20]: Facebook Post Analysis

Figure [1] includes a caption from a post written in Arabic. The arrows refer to the main words translated in English to show the content of the text. The author of the post expresses an opinion about women being exposed to assault and suggests that self-defense technics should be shared, to help women defend themselves when facing assault in the street. Figure [2] is written in English, and the authors mention women’s march in the USA and all around the world, which according to him, gives hope to global feminists to witness movements against injustice and violence. Both figures [1] and [2] aim at expressing an opinion only, where the authors only speak for himself without mentioning news nor facts.

The other captions that have more than one goal, mainly aim to express an opinion and calling for action at the same time, or calling for action and sharing the news at the same

time. The frequency of these combinations of goals is almost equal as respectively the first one represents 40 posts and the second combination of goals represents 38 posts. Call for action is included in both combinations of goals, which speaks to the willingness of admins or editors to ask women to react and participate in stopping violence and giving women more rights, especially victims.

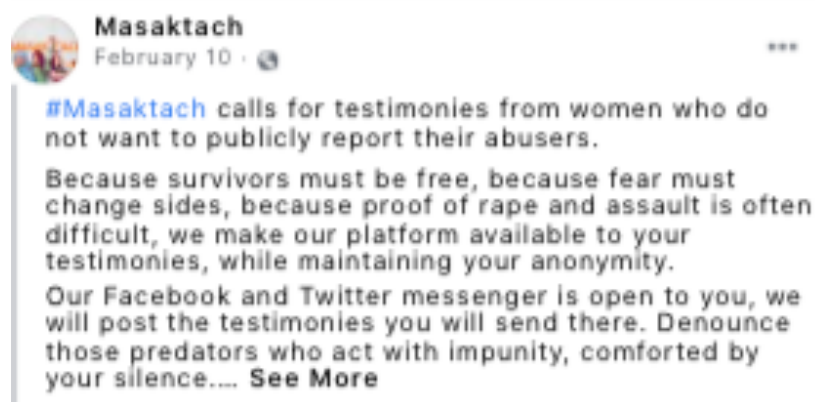


Figure [7]: Facebook post, “Masaktach”

Post Format	Caption Only
Goal To Express Opinion and To Call for action	The text aims at calling for action by inciting women to share testimonials anonymously. It also expresses an opinion by referring to victims of violence as survivors and also by stating that proof of rape and assault is often difficult
Call for Action Phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ #Masaktach calls for testimonies ○ “Our Facebook and Twitter Messenger is open to you”
Expression of Opinion Phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survivors must be free ○ Fear must change sides ○ Proof of rape and assault is often difficult

Table [21]: Facebook Post Analysis

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Figure [8]: Facebook post, “Masaktach”

Post Format	Caption Only
<p>Goal</p> <p>To Express Opinion and To Call for Action</p>	<p>The text aims at calling for action by inciting women to change their profile picture and put the one that refers to the movement (Three women with the symbol of empowerment). It also expresses an opinion by saying that it to reach women to whom we want to create an echo. An echo is a sound, and in this case, it means sending your voice through an action. The action is to change the profile picture.</p>
<p>Call for Action Phrases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You can change your profile picture ○ Share your support
<p>Expression of Opinion Phrases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To send echo

Table [22]: Facebook Post Analysis

Figure [7] is a Facebook post that has the caption only and aims at calling for action and expressing an opinion. The text is addressed to women by asking them to share their

experiences, which will be posted anonymously. Then, the author of the post refers to this action as being empowering, using phrases like “survivors must be free”, which indicates that sharing stories sets the victim free. The author mentioned “proof of rape and assault are often difficult”. This phrase means that some women are scared to speak up because they can't prove what they went through, and this author in this case tells them that it is difficult to have proof, but they should speak up. Figure [8] is another post that has a caption and an image, and also has two goals. The author used phrases to ask women to change their profile pictures as a means of participation in the movement. The text also includes “Share your support” which means that changing the profile picture is an act of support. Both phrases include action verbs and therefore are considered a call for action. Also, the text includes a phrase that refers to this action to allow reaching a larger audience to “send an echo”. The use of echo in this post indicates a voice, and it means sending your voice/ statement by participating in this action and changing your profile picture. Both figures [7] and [8] represent examples of Facebook posts that convey two goals through the use of captions.

These type of posts does not always mean changes in reforms, since many laws about rape still did not give rights to victims yet. The ideal call for action would be to reach opinion leaders and to ask for more rights for victims, and more amendments that give women power to face all these issues, so by constantly publishing about these issues, word of mouth is more likely to increase, especially when women decide to take action and to speak up as well.

The portrayal of violence and Call for action in images

Among the data gathered, 87 posts have captions and images, and 23 posts have images only. When analyzing the images, the message was the focus, which is defined in the codebook as either portrayal of violence or a call for action. The portrayal of violence refers to the use of an image depicting violence.

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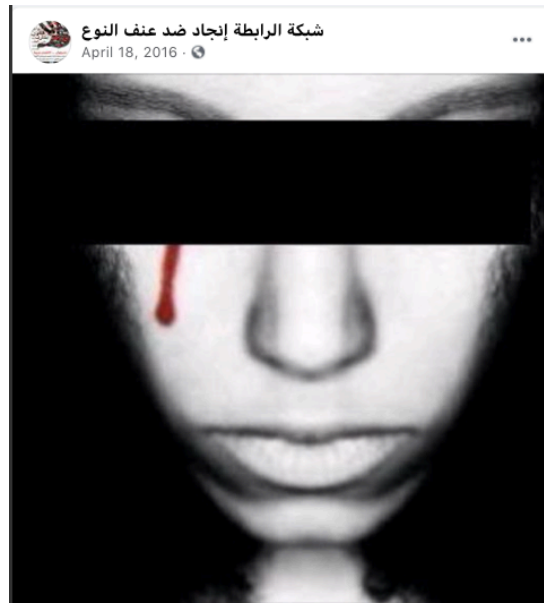


Figure [9]: Facebook post, “شبكة الرابطة إنجاد ضد عنف النوع”

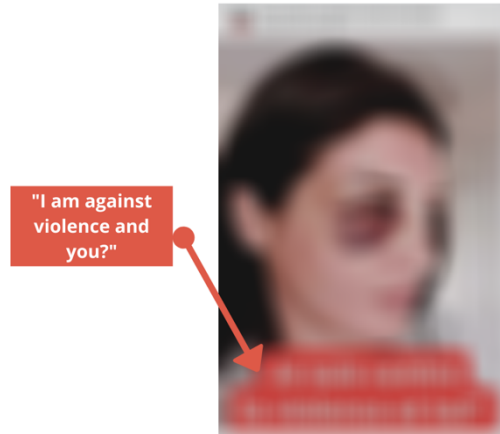


Figure [10]: Facebook post, “Tous contre la violence contre les femmes” Obfuscated picture

Figure [9] depicts a woman that bleeding from her eye, with a black illustration hiding her eyes. The use of blood in this picture is to show violence and the image in this case speaks for itself. Figure [10] also shows a woman with a bruise that is not real, but it does aim at conveying violence. By using images like the ones on figure [9] and [10], the message is to tell people who see the post that violence still exists. These images do not have captions, only women revealing violence through their faces.

Other images within the sample contain a call for action messages through the use of illustrations to ask women to say no to violence and to react. These images that only use action verbs to prompt a reaction represent 16 images.



Figure (11): Facebook post, “Tous contre la violence contre les femmes”

Figure [11] shows a woman that was exposed to violence and saying “no” through her hand. The image has a text, which asks women to share a “white ribbon” as a symbol against violence against women. The text includes an action verb “to share”, which implies inquiring women to participate.

Figure [12] below has a caption with an image. The caption is a poem to express refusal of gender inequality, with an image that says “don’t get gendered”. This word is grammatically wrong in English but is understood in Arabic. The author wrote the word “gender” in the Arabic letters without translation. Then, added few letters at the end that signify “don’t get gendered”. It asks women to refuse to be victims of gender inequality, and say no to it.

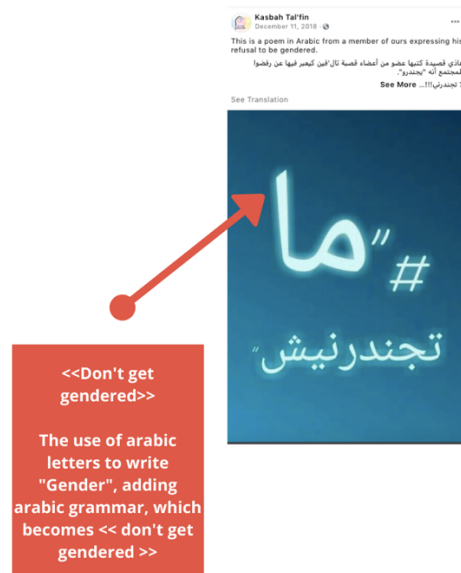


Figure [13]: Facebook post, “Kasbah Tal’fin”

The purpose of communication is at the core of the analysis, which in this case demonstrates that images aim at sensitizing women. Visuals are powerful and also the first thing people usually notice. By publishing images that show violence, women are more likely to stop, look at the picture, and think about its meaning. Many women don’t speak up about their experience with violence, rape, assault, or simply verbal

harassment. Thus, looking at pictures that show violence might make them rethink their situation, realize that it is common within the society, and hopefully do something about it. Many images included in the sample show women in bad shape and others are illustrations to tell women to say no to violence. Stories about rape, violence, and assault are very common within the Moroccan community of women, which means that publishing images that depict violence does not make it unrealistic but rather representative of what's happening in the society. This means that those images do not necessarily portray women who were victims in real life, but can be an illustration of violence, which many will relate to.

The use of Languages to ensure maximum exposure

English is a universal language, which helps people from different countries understand each other. Based on this statement, one can conclude that posts include the English language to reach as many women as possible. By including English, the author is certain that non-Arabic speakers will be understood. In this case, non-Arabic speakers are foreigners. It means that the goal is to share information outside Morocco, otherwise, Arabic and French is enough to include all Moroccans.

The findings revealed the use of captions in expressing an opinion or sharing information, and by including English, maximum exposure is guaranteed. Additionally, 40 posts include Arabic, French, and English, meaning that the authors want the message to be clear to everyone, ensuring the flow of information. The flow of information means the transfer of material from one individual to another. By using all three languages, the author is certain that every single person who reads the post will understand it. It can also be interpreted as the willingness of authors to reach women all over the world, not only the Arab community, and include them in the discourses.

French is also present in the posts, which was expected since it is spoken in the country. However, only 41 posts are in French. Those posts don't include any other language, but it is still weak as English is more present.

As mentioned above, Facebook allows users to include automatic translation in their posts, which in this case explains the presence of English among 92 posts. Although this is open to interpretation, it is obvious that the use of English means maximum exposure, which certainly is the case in this study.

Conclusion

This study tried to demonstrate the use of the public sphere in increasing awareness, disseminating information, and calling for action against disparities and violence in the Moroccan Kingdom, providing a content analysis of selected Facebook pages addressed to Moroccan women on social media. As mentioned in the literature review, the public sphere does not have one structured definition and has been reviewed by many scholars. Therefore, it is safe to mention that the public sphere is accessible to everyone, and ensures freedom of expression. In this case, Facebook can be considered as a platform that encourages the virtual public sphere to take place. The platform is accessible to everyone, encourages user-generated content, and comments. The research questions answered in this study explored the discourses that take place online and investigated the purpose of communication from the perspective of admins and editors of the selected Facebook pages. By systematically gathering posts from Facebook, the sample contained 300 Facebook posts, extracted from 10 pages, created between 2012-2020.

The content analysis revealed information about the messages included in the content, as well as the goals of the captions and images. The findings show that most posts aim at calling for actions and sharing information, which speaks to the willingness of the authors of the posts, to sensitize and ask women to react. The findings also show that some posts aim at expressing an opinion, which joins the statement about the public sphere, allowing public opinion to be formed. Additionally, images of the posts show a portrayal of violence, which aims at promoting reactions and raising awareness about what is happening to other women. It is also targeted at victims of rape and assault, as a means to show them that they are not alone. All these conclusions are based on the fact that these pages are targeted to women, and they all share discourses about problems existing in Moroccan society. Results also show that the most common keywords among the sample are violence, rape, assault, and women's rights, which are repeatedly mentioned in the posts. When analyzing the titles of the links that appeared throughout the content, the most common topics are rape, women's rights, and assault, followed by

other topics such as domestic violence. The strong presence of these topics in the links shows that authors of the posts want to share information and build credibility through these links. The constant use of the mentioned keywords on the posts, show an emphasis on particular subjects, as they are mentioned a lot throughout the sample. The posts gathered from 10 different pages demonstrate a repetition of keywords among the sample.

Activism can be considered as an attempt to promote discourses to call for action, which can be considered the case in this study. By constantly using keywords, calling for actions, and sharing information, women are encouraged to get involved and participate. In this case, participation does not necessarily mean engaging with the posts, but can simply mean speaking up and defending themselves whenever they face an issue.

The use of language speaks to the goal of the message, and in this case, it is obvious that maximizing exposure is one of the goals. As mentioned in the discussion, the appearance of the English language was very surprising, especially that it exceeds the presence of French. The fact that is most of the time included in the translation means that authors want everyone to understand the message. Many posts include all three languages, which again is a fact that shows they want to reach as many people as possible.

This research fills the gap in the media studies field and communication research concerning the use of social media in accelerating online activism in North African countries. The use of content analysis enables a deep understanding of how Facebook page administrators and editors communicate about women's inequalities and violence, using several languages as a means to make it universal and hoping for a larger reach of audiences. This research does not explore the perspective of the targeted audience but rather looks at the purpose of content communication from the perspective of people who created those pages. In the future, similar research could be done to investigate the engagement on those selected Facebook posts, as well as a content analysis of the external sources, included on the links. The use of links that redirect visitors to an

online newspaper could be studied as well to find its correlation with the motifs and purposes of the contents.

These results can initiate new studies that explore the use of Facebook pages in redirecting visitors to external sources, as a means to share information and to instruct. Another research could use user-generator content, by analyzing the comment sections and finding correlations with the purpose of communication content by authors of the posts.

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