A Sheffield Hallam University thesis

Sheffield Hallam University

SAUDI WOMEN'S IDENTITIES AND THEIR ONLINE PRACTICES ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

GHAYDA ALJUWAISER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of The Requirements Of

Sheffield Hallam University

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between Saudi women's identities in the offline sphere and their online practices on social media platforms (SMP), namely Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path, and Goodreads. The theoretical lens of Social Identity theory positions its contribution within the field of Sociology, specifically Digital Sociology (DS). The research questions the thesis addresses are: 1) How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed? 2) How do Saudi women represent their identities across SMP? 3) Do Saudi women develop and represent their identities differently across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it? If so, then how?

A multi-method qualitative approach is adopted, including online observations and semi-structured interviews. Following purposive and snowballing sampling, twelve Saudi women, who are active SMP users from different cities in Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Riyadh, Kharj and Dammam/Alkhobar) were recruited. The findings lead to four main contributions, which empirically add to and conceptually extend existing literature on the relationship between SMP practices and women's identities: a) establishing the reminiscence of online practices as one factor through which Saudi women's identities are reshaped; b) developing the understanding of SMP ecology whereby Saudi women develop different online identities across different platforms, their online practices vary across SMP that they perceive as different environments, and Saudi women cautiously manage contexts' collapse/divide with different audiences across SMP in nuanced ways; c) recognising the heterogeneity of Saudi women's positions towards religious and cultural transformations – namely, veiling, online activism, women's rights and (Saudi) feminism; d) stressing the importance of studying these digital phenomena from a Digital Sociology perspective.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Alharbi. Albadri Alazwari. Also, not to forget the Twitter academic community, namely, Pat Thomason, Thesis whisperer: Inger Mewburn, Raul Pacheco-Vega, Hugh Kearns and Harry Dyer. Many others across social media platforms could not be all mentioned here, yet I here acknowledge their long-distance support!

I extend my recognition to things, objects, places which I consider my friends! Who accompanied me throughout my PhD: Path (September 2014 – 2018), which, without, I could not have conducted the pilot study. The Twittersphere (#phdchat, #phdlife) and Facebook, who were my 'breathers', where I shared through the difficulties I faced throughout my writing and expressed my extreme happiness and relief of my accomplishments! I thank Farmville, Pocket, Evernote, Scrivener, Soundcloud and Sheffield Cafes, particularly, Nero (Peace Gardens and Moor), Café Rouge, Starbucks (Fargate and Valley Centertainment), Birdhouse Tea Company, Tamper (Arundel lane), How St, Marmaduke, Pret A Manger, and my desk @ Unit 12!
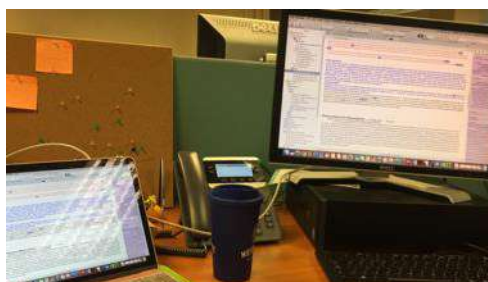
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ABAYA: "Long, full-body with no head piece (often black) cloak that all women in Saudi Arabia are required to wear" (Van Geel, 2018, p. 304).

ALSAHWAH: An Islamic religious movement, originating in the late 1960s, its peak in Saudi Arabia was between 1979 and 2001 (more details in section 1.5.1.1).

AVATAR: An icon or figure representing a particular person in a video game, Internet forum, etc. (Oxford Dictionary).

AWRAH: Areas of the body that must be clothed. These are regulated differently depending on the audience a person finds him or herself in. For women, in front of non-*mahrams* men, it is the full body except the face and the hands, and from the navel to the knee – in front of women.

AYUB: Shameful or dishonourable.

BNAT: Females in general, *Bnat* (Arabic) means girls in English, it is not related to young/old.

CENSORSHIP: intended as a 'suppression conducted by a government, private institutions, and corporations'. Moreover, used to render the word *rqabh* in Arabic, which holds both meanings of suppression and of surveillance within the social context[1].

CONTEXT COLLAPSE/DIVIDE: The concept draws from Erving Goffman's argument stating that "audience segregation occurs; by audience segregation the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting" (Goffman, 1959, p. 31). Where "people portray different images of themselves to different audiences in different social contexts" (Costa, 2017, p. 2). In platform studies (i.e. social media

---

[1] Check https://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/رقابة/?c=Social

iv

platforms), Contexts Collapse is defined as: "social media technologies that collapse multiple contexts and bring together commonly distinct audiences" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 2). On the other hand, Context Divide can be explained as "[creation of] online spaces that are divided from each other. In each online context they (users) follow social norms, values and codes of behaviours that reproduce and remediate (content across platforms)" (Costa, 2017, p. 2).

CONSERVATIVE VERSUS LIBERAL: Both concepts, within the Saudi context, are understood from a religious perspective. People are categorised as conservatives or liberal based on their following religious rules. For example, veiling practices are seen as symbolic of wider discourse; based on veiling practices, people make judgments/assumptions about others' beliefs/values/behaviours. Moreover, in relation to the AlSahwah discourse defined above, a **CONSERVATIVE** Saudi could be also known as *mtw'e* (see **MUTAWEEN** definition below). A **LIBERAL** on the other hand or *allibraliah* (as a current stream of intellectual thinking), is "a loan word in Arabic that corresponds to 'liberalism' in English". In the Saudi context, being Liberal "contradicts Islam and that its association with freedom is a foreign negative concept" (Alzahrani, 2017, pp. 97–98).

D'EWH: The art of Islamic preaching.

HALAL: Something that is religiously allowed (see also the opposite: **HARAM**).

HARAM: Something that is religiously forbidden.

HIJAB: Scarf, leaving the face uncovered, as distinction from **NIQAB** (defined below).

HURMA: Holiness or sanctity. The protection of *awra* (see **AWRA**) is often associated with *hurma*. **HURMA** can be used in reference to a woman, a sacred space (a mosque, or a home), or a sacred time (the holy month). It is the law that regulates anything that it is unlawful to obtain or look at without permission (such as **AWRA**). Intruding into the sanctity (*hurma*) of places and people is considered sinful"(N. Abokhodair, Abbar, Vieweg, & Mejova, 2016, p. 68).

ITHM: Sin.

KULWAH: Prohibiting private communication between men and women alone in the same place.

KHADIRI: Saudi citizens' tribal heritage classifications, refers to a person categorised as non-tribal *Khadiri*, e.g., tradesmen, artisans1. (see the opposite: **QABILI**).

MASHALLAH OR "MASH 'ALLAH": Phrase used to show appreciation for a person or happening. It shows respect, also reminds that everything is achieved by the will of God. The closest English translation is "God willed it." It is used to show joy and praise, and is evoked upon hearing good news.

MAHRAM: A woman's male guardian /*wali al-umr* (closest male relative).

MUHAJABAH: A woman who wears **HIJAB** (defined earlier) unlike the **NIQAB** (see the definition below).

MUTAWEEN (PLURAL)/ MTW'E (SINGULAR MALE), MTW'EH (SINGULAR FEMALE): Arabic word which in the Saudi context has several meanings: a) religious police, b) being 'highly' religiously-conservative, for example: beard (men), covering the body from head to toe (women), b) "one who performs supererogatory deeds of piety over and above the duties laid upon him by the Shariʿah (Islamic Law)" (Mack, 2013a, p. 240).

NAJDI: Refers to Najd, "the central region of the present-day Saudi Arabia" (AlOboudi, 2015, p. 282). Families whose roots are from Najd are called *Njdyyn* (plural), Najdi (singular male) and *Njdyh* (singular female). Further provided of the Najdi heritage is explained in Chapter One (section 1.5).

NSYHH: A kind of advice which is called in Arabic: *nsyhh* (Renard, 2012).

---

1 https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/tribes-and-tribalism-arabian-peninsula

NIQAB: "A face veil worn by some conservative Muslim women" (Aljaouhari, 2013, p. x). "Veil or cloth worn by women to cover the face (except the eyes). In Saudi Arabia it is traditionally black" (Journiette, 2014, p. iii).

QABILI: Saudi citizens' tribal heritage classifications, refers to a person categorised as (tribal); such families feel themselves superior to the **KHADIRI** (defined previously).

QAWAMAH OR QIWAMA: Being superior to, a degree above, or given more physical strength than someone else. A word used in the Quran to convey the responsibility of men to provide protective care for women in their families.

SHABAB: In the Saudi dialect, *shabab* is used to refer to men who are between this age group e.g., lads (English).

TARGEEM: An Arabic/Saudi dialect word which means "numbering", meaning exchanging telephone numbers with total strangers (woman/man) (Malik, 2008).

WILAYA: The situation in which a man or woman is appointed as a legal guardian of another by a judge, or assumes legal guardianship of another based on a religious edict or customary norm(check MAHRAM defined previously).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the evolving relationship between Saudi women, their identity, and their online practices across different social media platforms (SMP). The thesis objectives can be delineated into three research questions:

1) How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed?

2) How do Saudi women represent their identities across SMP?

3) Do Saudi women develop and represent their identities differently across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it? If so, then how?

I begin by explaining the theoretical and conceptual lenses through which I investigate the notion of identity and its relationship to online practices across SMP. I discuss the sociological understanding of identity, then the field of Digital Sociology (DS) (Wynn, 2009), a sub-sociological field within which I position my work and intended contribution. Subsequently, I address the other key elements of this thesis, namely: online practices and social media platforms, followed by the rationale and significance of this research within existing scholarship. Overall, I stress the scarcity of existing scholarly literature investigating relationship between identity and SMP that looks at non-Western women, and particularly Muslim, Arab and GCC[1] women. I also disclose my personal motivation and interest in pursuing this thesis topic. Before concluding this introduction I also give a short background to the study context, narrating briefly the story of the situation for Saudi women pre-1999, the year the Internet was launched to the public in Saudi Arabia (Al-Tawil, 2001; Gazzaz, 2006), and how it has changed over the last two decades (1999 – 2019). This is essential in order to fully understand

---

[1] "Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981. The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Islamic beliefs. Presidency of the council rotates annually" (Encyclopædia Britannica 2015).

and appreciate the empirical findings that I will present in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven of this thesis.

1.2   THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL LENSES

1.2.1 IDENTITY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Erikson (1963) was the first to define *identity* by pinpointing three dimensions: "Biological capacities, psychological needs, wishes, interests, conscious and unconscious motivations, in interaction with roles and values of social context that compliment and confirm one in his or her sense of being" (Watzlawik and Born 2007, p.181). This thesis focuses on the third dimension of identity: socio-contextual roles and values, as sociologists study identity "at the macro-societal level" and they embrace the "socio-contextual tradition" (Côtè & Schwartz, 2002, p. 574). The concept of identity in this study is based on the rationale that identity is social and emerges from a given social environment (S. Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008), and that "Identities are complex as there are different facets of a person" (Watzlawik & Born, 2007, p. 81).

I adopt epistemologically the lenses of Social Identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which are more relevant to the argument of this research and with which my study resonates. According to the Social Identity theory, our identities are shaped by the networks in which we are located; these networks can be spatial or metaphorical (Merchant, 2012). Social Identity theory assumes that (1) identity shifts over time as a result of interactions in the community, (2) people have different identities within different social contexts; and (3) members sometimes develop a 'multiple citizenship' with different identities for each group (Stets & Burke, 2000). All of this underpins the core arguments of this research, namely, that:

(1) Saudi women's identity shifts over time, and the differences between the online and offline spheres contribute to shaping Saudi women's identities in terms of expressed values and beliefs (for example, how the notions of *Haram* and *Halal* are negotiated and confronted online and sometimes considered controversial in relation to their established religious identity offline);

(2) different facets of Saudi women's identity e.g., gender, religious and national are represented online (on SMP)

(3) Saudi women represent their identities differently across SMP.

1.2.2 DIGITAL SOCIOLOGY (DS)

"The vibrancy we see within this space is cultural as well as techno-economic" (Carrigan, 2018, p. 7).

I position this research within Sociology and the style of writing as sociological (Erikson, 2008). However given that sociology incorporates many sub-fields, I position this research more specifically within Digital Sociology (DS) (Carrigan, 2018; Daniels, J. & Knoblauch, 2014; Kyslova, O., & Berdnyk, 2014; Wynn, 2009). DS is defined as a "sociological subdiscipline that engages with the convergence of the digital and the social" (Sauter, 2013, p. 2). I study Saudi women, their identities and their online practices on SMP. The first two of these themes (Women and Identity) could be straightforwardly understood as sociological subjects, whereas the third and fourth (online practices and SMP) are topics that non-sociological fields have investigated extensively. For example, Human Computer Interaction (HCI), Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), Social Computing, Information Systems (IS), Marketing, Education etc., have all produced extensive SMP studies. Yet, unlike the primary intended contributions of these fields, my study's concern lies beyond proposing how the social should inform software developers to re-consider platform/application design, or how consumers/educators can improve their income/teaching through understanding how SMP are practised.

This study focuses on how and why identity has evolved, is negotiated, is challenged, is confronted and is represented through online practices on SMP, in relation to the characteristics of online/offline spheres. Moreover, I focus on how the offline sphere is part of online identity representation: an underpinning 'behind the scenes' that we must understand before examining how identity is represented online. The notion of SMP *ecology* (Duffy, Pruchniewska, & Scolere, 2010, 2017; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016) shapes our understanding of why and how people represent themselves differently/similarly across SMP, and what that says about the offline sphere as an environment that is practised. As Miller et al (2015, p.7) put it: "social media as another place in which people live, alongside their office life, home life and community life".

Moreover, since Identity is a focus of examination in this thesis, this work seeks to extend literature which approaches identity as binary between on and offline, proposing a more nuanced and holistic approach to identity, whereby researchers "can more effectively describe the role of social media by understanding them as technologies of

implosion rather than separation" (Jurgenson, 2012a, p. 88). I disagree with using the term 'online identity' as separated from 'offline identity', as has been done by much literature examining the representation of identity online, for example, Shafie, Nayan and Osman (2012). I instead agree with researchers who avoided singling out 'online identity' and instead approach identity as a whole. Such as Wessels (2012) use 'identification' instead of identity, and Camacho, Minelli and Grosseck (2012, p. 3177), The former Camacho et al (2012, p. 3177) who refer to it (identity) as "identity 2.0".

Examining the notion of Identity through DS is significant as Saudi women's identities are shaped through strictly applied religious/social/political censorship (e.g., patriarchy, guardianship). Censorship is defined as a "suppression conducted by a government, private institutions, and corporations" (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2019). However, I will refer also to other forms of censorship: i.e. self-censorship (when people suppress their own intention of acting in a certain way after considering the consequences, social pressure, etc.), social censorship (where in the Arab/Muslim context that is Saudi society, family, friends, and even strangers exert pressure through their observation/surveillance of others' in order to suppress or restrict their practices (offline/online)). Moreover, the word *rqabh* in Arabic holds both meanings of censorship: suppression and surveillance within the social context[1]. Often social censorship is indeed about monitoring others so to restrict their agency.

Given the differences between the online/offline spheres in Saudi Arabia, I argue that the online/offline binary is not in the notion of identity, but that it occurs across the spheres: i.e. what different spheres offer/allow or on the contrary ban/disapprove. For example, in the absence of a public offline sphere for individual self-expression, and the online sphere became a counter-public sphere (Tschirhart, 2014). Looking at Saudi women's identities through the lenses of DS offers an understanding of identity facets: religious, cultural, gendered, personal, national and political across the offline and online spheres. This is constant with Bauman's argument that the notion of identity should be "seen as a process as should its understanding and analysis" (Bauman & Vecchi, 2013, p. 5).

Finally, I connect the concept of SMP *ecology* (Duffy et al., 2010, 2017; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016) to DS. SMP ecology is defined as "people's making of

---

[1] Check https://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/قابة/?c=Social

4

decisions based on their consideration of multiple parameters across social media platforms, including audience and norms" (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016, p. 98). The platforms this thesis investigates (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path and Goodreads) represent a broad range of possible forms of identity representation, due to their different characteristics and features. My lens connecting SMP ecology and DS resonates with Goffman's (1959) presentation of self in everyday life, that "the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting" (Goffman, 1959, p. 31). Whereby "identity is not a singular thing; identity is a role people play that shifts as audience and other contextual factors shift" (van der Nagel & Frith, 2015, p. 3).

1.2.3 ONLINE PRACTICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media platforms (SMP) can be defined as "those digital platforms, services and apps built around the convergence of content sharing, public communication, and interpersonal connection" (Burgess, Marwick, & Poell, 2017, p. 1). Building on a number of definitions of online practices on social media platforms (e.g., Horvath, 2011; David, 2014; boyd & Ellison, 2007), the concept of social media practices in this study can be delineated as: (1) online self-representation, such as choice of profile pictures, name, biography and location and ways in which they are expressed; (2) shared interests, namely knowledge and opinions; (3) choices of what (or what not) to share online; (4) management of interactions (e.g., responses, debates).

Examining the relationship between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP in this thesis has four justifications:

(1) Practices are continuous and contingent activities, which happen within a specific context (online practices across social media platform).
(2) In order to investigate practices, we have to understand them in relation to this specific context (different online practices across different social media platforms).
(3) The interaction between technology and its users should be understood beyond mere practices, and one should look at the culture, norms, traditions of both the user and the technology itself (Kuutti & Bannon, 2014; Schmidt, 2018).

As discussed previously, this thesis investigates the notion of identity as a whole, transcending online and offline boundaries (Yurchisin & Watchravesringkan, 2005). However, I refer to identity *representation* online as "a configuration of the defining characteristics of a person in the online space" (Kim, Zheng, & Gupta, 2011, p. 1762).

These characteristics consist of visual and textual communication: for example, profile image/avatar, header/ background picture, nickname and biography, which are chosen by people to represent facets of their identities online (e.g., gender, religion, interests, etc.).

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH: STATEMENT OF INTENDED CONTRIBUTION

The argument for the contribution of my research to knowledge is threefold.

Firstly, I provide an in-depth examination of the relationship between identity and online practices on SMP. This work extends literature approaching identity as nuanced and holistic. I argue that the significant boundary is in fact, between the online and offline spheres (viewed as contexts for practice), and what they offer/enable. For women in Saudi Arabia, the online space offers an alternative (and often a contrast) to the offline (public) sphere. My methodological approach (see Chapter Three) documenting the richness of online practices by using online participant observation, along with conducting semi-structured interviews with Saudi women, leads to an in-depth understanding of online practices instead of documenting them through for example surveys, data mining/harvesting or thematic analysis of tweets – as much other research has done.

Secondly, although there is a growing landscape of research on Saudi women's identity and their online practices on SMP (Alsaggaf, 2015; Binsahl, Chang, & Bosua, 2015; Bourdeloie, Silveri, & Houmair, 2017; Guta & Karolak, 2015; Lina N. Khashogji, 2016; Madini & de Nooy, 2013), yet, there is a scarcity of studies of Saudi women's identity, and particularly of their identities' evolution and negotiation throughout online practices on SMP.

Finally, as far as I can ascertain at the time of writing, no other studies have examined Saudi women's identities representation online across different SMP as I have done. In this regard, the body of scholarship on how identity facets are represented across different SMP (Duffy et al., 2010, 2017; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016) is extended here to a non-Western context - Saudi women – for the first time.

1.4 PERSONAL MOTIVATION AND INTEREST

I was 15, when I first explored the Internet 'realm'. It was 1999. My mother was the one who brought the Internet to our house; my father was not in favour of this 'entrance' – because of what he had heard about it – but he did not ban us from using it. It was not until 2013 that I joined Path. I mention this to explain that one of the main reasons for choosing this topic was starting to observe how I and my friends across different SMP (Path, and Twitter) represented our profiles differently. Back then, I held an 'academic naivety', where I thought identities are fragmented: online/offline. At that time, I titled my PhD proposal as: *Different Social Media Platforms, Different Identities*. It was not until somewhere between July and August 2017, after two years of data collection, that I realised that identity is not separated entities, it is the spheres that differ. At this stage, my passion to pursue my thesis shifted from observing and analysing how profiles differ, to how identity is developed, shifted and negotiated. Moreover, the #endguardianship campaign, which 'popped' on my research timeline before the end of my second data collection phase (January 2016 – April 2017), led me to recognise that Saudi feminism/activism had become part of my thesis. Thus, is where my interest in the connexion between facets of Saudi women's identity developed. Throughout the process of writing up, editing, re-writing, reading and all the way to submitting my thesis, my personal motivation and interest gradually developed, 'I saw myself amongst these women' as I answered a question within a panel on February 2018: 'you spoke about your participants' experience, have you had similar experiences'? throughout my PhD journey, I learnt about and understood my country, Saudi women, the notion of identity, and so much more about the "fluid relationships between online and offline cultural life" (Barnes, 2012, p. 34).

1.5 THE SAUDI CONTEXT

Saudi Arabia was established on 23rd September 1932, through an alliance between Wahhabi Islam and the house of Al Saud (the Saudi ruling family). The establishment of Saudi Arabia united different provinces in the peninsula: Unification of the Kingdom *twhyd almmlkh*: Hail, Hijaz, Najd, AlHassa, and Asir (Figure 2).These provinces had – broadly speaking – tribal socio-political systems, and the Hijaz province was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (Nevo, 1998; Weston, 1987). The Saudi anthem, and flag with its inscription: There is no God but Allah and Muhammad

is the Messenger of Allah, the image of the palm and the sword are considered as visual symbols of the Saudi national identity (Nevo, 1998) (Figure 1).

Figure 1 The Saudi flag. Source: Gettysburgflag.com

The main four 'pillars' of the Saudi identity are: Islam, Saudi, Arabia and the tribal heritage. The "Hanbali school of Sunni Muslim jurisprudence" (Weston, 1987, p. 87), besides holding the two holy mosques (Makkah and Al-Madinah) on its land, makes Saudi Arabia known historically as the hub of Islam (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2018). 'Saudi' defines the country by its affiliation to the ruling house of Al-Saud. The whole history of Saudi society and its legal system cannot be understood without taking account of political and religious forces. The first article of the basic system of governance states that "God's Book and the Sunna of His Prophet are the country's constitution" ("Saudi Arabia: The New Constitution: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," 1993, p. 258). As Weston (1987, p. 99) puts it: "To be a Saudi Arab is without question to be a Muslim". Arabic is the official language and the Kingdom is entirely located in the Arabian peninsula (Ibid, 1987). Finally, the tribal heritage connection provides the fourth pillar of the Saudi identity: for example, *Najdi* is the tribal heritage identity for Saudis with roots in the Najd province (Figure 2).
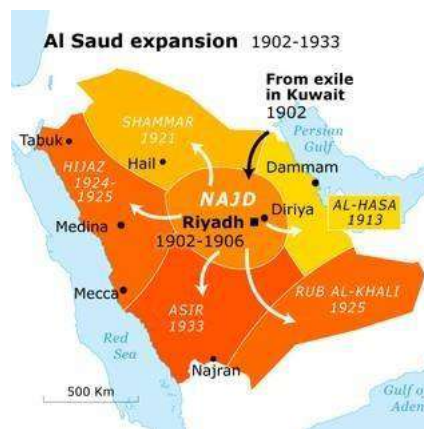
Figure 2 An illustration of the provinces in Saudi Arabia pre-1932. Source:
https://www.quora.com/What-was-Saudi-Arabia-called-before-Islam

This short background sheds light on Saudi women's identities in the context of Saudi Arabia, where identity facets include the religious (Islam), national (Saudi), ethnic (Arab), and tribal heritage e.g., Najdi, Hijazi, Sharif, besides gender and other aspects that this thesis will discuss in the next chapters. However, in relation to the data in this study, it is vital to offer some clarification of the symbolic importance of a Saudi woman's last name in relation to tribal identity. For example, a woman holding a Najdi last name represents her familial identity which is part of the Najd heritage. Najd is important in relation to the establishment of Saudi Arabia, as the location of the capital, Riyadh etc. Despite the recent changes in the Saudi society, namely, the situation of women and relaxing of veiling, Najd has been always – commonly speaking – highly conservative in its concern for women's honour and reputation as part of that of the Najdi heritage one. Moreover, *Qabili* and *Khadiri* are tribal heritage classifications, where *Qabili* refers to a person categorised as tribal; such families feel themselves superior to the non-tribal *Khadiri*, e.g., tradesmen, artisans. Najdi families are very mindful of these categorisations in marriage arrangements.

Another example from the Western province, is the Ashraf in Hijaz, who hold a similar pride to that the Najdi people feel, in their heritage. The Ashraf were the rulers of Hijaz within the Ottoman empire and before the rule of Al Saud. Their family roots are linked by blood to the Quraysh: The Prophet Mohammed's family. One more thing to mention about Hijaz is that it was not until King Faisal's reign (1964–1975), that the first stages of development of the Hijaz region occurred when Faisal was viceroy of Hejaz (1926 – 1930). This will be echoed in Chapter Five when I discuss one of my participants who represented her national identity on Twitter.

Doumato's (1992) argued that the four aforementioned pillars of national identity are a myth: Doumato challenged the assumption that women in Saudi Arabia have a 'cohesive' national identity. Arguing that thy hold, rather, 'varying degrees' of each identity facet. Moreover, as "national identity is an object of modernity" (Voicu, 2013, p. 170), it is important to highlight here that studies on Saudi national identity have shifted over the years, from focusing on the four 'pillars' of the Saudi identity discussed above, to "hazm" "decisive" nationalism or hazm nationalist identity (Doaiji, 2018; Karasik, 2015) (Figure 3). This (Saudi national identity and Saudi nationalism) will be further analysed and discussed in chapters to come.

Figure 3 A picture circulated on Saudi media, both online and offline (printed newspaper etc). The depiction of the Saudi flag aligned with Saudi soldiers is interpreted as a symbol of the new Saudi nationalism. Source: (Karasik, 2015)

1.5.1 SAUDI WOMEN'S SITUATION IN THE KINGDOM
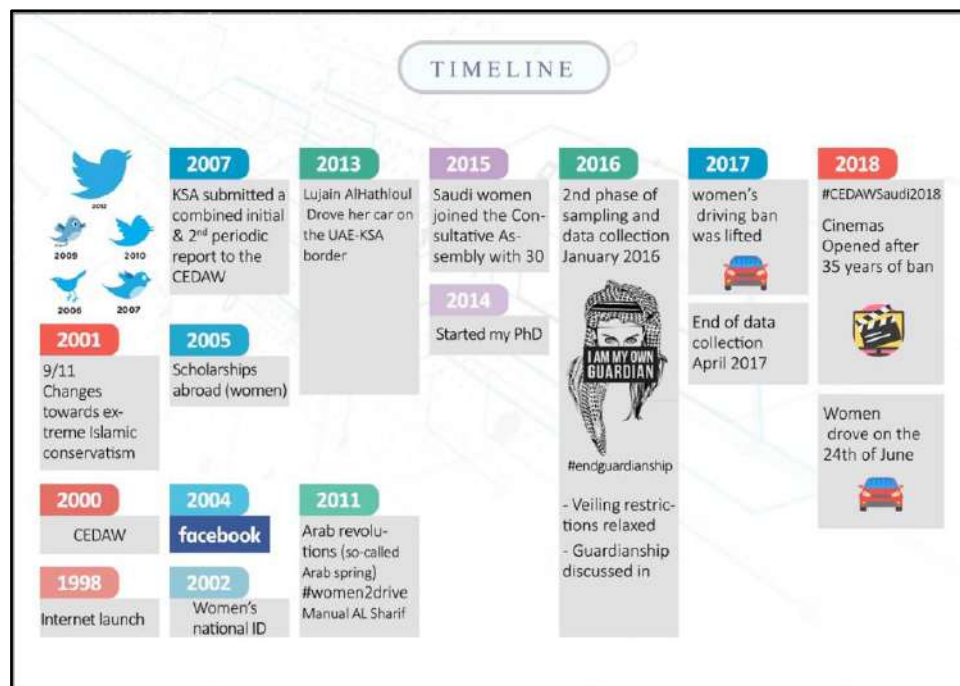
Figure 4 A timeline of significant milestones/transformations Saudi women have seen across the online/offline spheres since the launch of the internet in 1999

Eman Al-Hussein, a Saudi female blogger, wrote: "It is never easy to write about Saudi Arabia[1]". Writing this section was indeed difficult, firstly because of the complex of factors shaping women's situation in Saudi Arabia; secondly, because of the rapid transformations the Kingdom has gone and is going through, particularly the changes of the public sphere for women. However, I try to give an overall picture of how Saudi

---

[1] Deleted blog post on http://emanalhussein.com

10

women's situation has changed since the launch of the Internet in 1999. However, since my participants were born between 1974 and 1992, I here give some glimpses of the public sphere for women in Saudi Arabia before the launch of the Internet.

1.5.1.1 Saudi Women Pre-1999

No one can distinguish for certain when/why and how AlSahwah Al-Islamiyya , or 'Islamic Awakening' (Alharbi, 2015) arose and came to dominate Saudi Arabia. Alsahwah is an Islamic religious movement, originating in the late 1960s as a religious identity substituting for the pan-Arabist identity *alqwmyh al'erbyh* (the defeat of the Arab coalition by Israel during the 1967). Alsahwah was established through an alignment between the Salafis/Wahabi *Ulama* (religious clerics) in Saudi Arabia and Muslim Brotherhood who immigrated from Egypt, Syria and Iraq, following 1967 *Naksa* who were opponents of the pan-Arabist and secularism[1] (Hamming n.d; Le Renard 2008; Renard 2012). Between 1960 and 1979, the Salafis/Wahabi *Ulama* and Muslim Brotherhood allocated strong positions in Saudi Arabia, namely the ministries of education and media (Hamming n.d; Le Renard 2008).

The Saudi government back then encouraged, cradled and supported Alsahwah (Wagemakers, Kanie, & Van Geel, 2012). The Alsahwah movement "strongly dominated the ideological sphere at that time" (AlMaghlouth, 2017, p. 5). The formal education curriculum, government media and T.V channels were all dominated by *alshwyyn*: religious clerics. According to Renard (2010, p.2), from this point religion in Saudi Arabia became "a ubiquitous point of normative reference in education, the media and political discourse".

The peak of Alsahwah probably took place between 1990 – 2001 (before the 11/9/2001 attacks), and started with opposition to the American forces/military bases in Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf war, and, moreover, *alshwyyn* were the prominent players in opposing the first 'women to drive' movement, in November 1990 (Alharbi, 2015; AlMaghlouth, 2017; Altoaimy & A, 2017; Hamdan, 2005; Hamming, n.d.; Jadaliyya, 2012; Amelie Le Renard, 2014; Amélie Le Renard, 2010, 2012; Sendi, 2017; Van Geel, 2016). Furthermore, the Alsahwah movement "made the veil a symbol of national and Islamic identity" (Sendi, 2017, p. 112). It can be argued that the attacks in New York on September 11th, 2001, marked the beginning of the decline of Alsahwah, as "9/11

---

[1] 'Neo-Salafis and individuals inspired by modernity' as Hamming (n.d) puts it.

sparked a new demand—from the outside as well as from inside the Saudi kingdom—for reforms, also with regard to the position of women" (Wagemakers et al., 2012, p. 62). This was during the reign of King Abdullah, when Saudi Arabia took a shift against Islamism/Islamic extremism, followed by accelerating changes towards *alwasatiyyah*: justly balanced Islam, following the worldwide accusation of Saudi Arabia as responsible for 9/11 because of its extremist/Jihadist ideology (Mack, 2013b) (Figure 4).

However, Alsahwah had strongly shaped Saudi women's gender/religious identities. Hamdan (2005) states that, until 2002, female students' education was supervised by the Department of Religious Guidance, as opposed to the Ministry of Education, which was reasonable for male education. Since 1980 female students' education programme have focused on the significance of appropriate moral conduct, which suggests their being controlled outside school or college– in every open space – by the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice *hy'eh alamr balm'erwf walnhy 'en almnkr*, or eventually, the Saudi religious police *alhy'eh*. Moreover, gender segregation "was more emphasised" in the public sphere after Alsahwah (Sendi, 2017, p. 116), where *Iktilat* (gender mixing) where perceived as a sin.

For example, the wearing abaya and Niqab in all sectors/public places was enforced, giving more power to the religious police; the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice restricted and censored women in the public sphere, through veiling and banning cross-gender communication (Mack, 2013b). Moreover, female preaching, *aldaiyat,* had arisen following Alsahwah (Amélie Le Renard, 2012)[1]. Even entertainment events were dominated by *alshwyyn*. The Alsahwah discourse was the formal discourse, and anyone who opposed it would be stigmatised as a liberal and a sinner in Islamic beliefs. Here, Alsahwah constructed what I call *othering* amongst the Saudi society: ideal Muslims who obey Alsahwah without discussion versus liberals who voice their opposition (AlMaghlouth, 2017; Eman Alhussein, 2018).

In my personal experience, even in Jeddah, my home city, which is – generally – depicted as the most 'liberal' city in Saudi Arabia (i.e. the most relaxed/less dominated by Alsahwah (Nasseef 2015; Geel 2018), I remember in the early 1990s that a woman

---

[1] Other forms/practices of Islamic preaching arose through Quran Memorisation drill *thfyz alqran* and Islam preaching to non-Muslim foreigners such as workers, who were invited to convert to Islam. Both forms of Islamic preaching were practised by men and women, through certain centres which were authorised by the Saudi government e.g., Muslim World League.

could not enter a video store without a *mahram*: a male companion. In public educational institutions, such as schools, Music and girls sport classes for example, were considered *Haram*: a sin, and a student who played Music, and a teacher who demanded female sport classes were punished in a way or another, either their parents were called (the student) or criticised by the school administration/colleagues (the teacher)[1].

1.5.1.2 Public/Private Boundaries and Women's Presence in The Saudi Physical/Offline Sphere

According to van Geel: Gender segregation has become a basis in the public sphere of the Saudi interpretation of Islam (Van Geel, 2016). Moreover, visual and physical boundaries are part of socio-cultural codes in Saudi Arabia (AlKhateeb, Humphries-Smith, & Eves, 2015). It is important to stress here that I do not claim generalisations, and I acknowledge that these private/public and gendered-segregated boundaries do not apply to all cities/spaces/places in Saudi Arabia. For example, it is common for houses in Saudi Arabia to have two reception rooms (*majles*/salons) that are gender-segregated, and to have gender-segregated entrances. Yet in my personal experience – my family house – we never had this type of architecture. Indeed, men do not sit with women in the same salon, unless the men are *mahrams*, but we do not have either gender-segregated salons or entrances. I do not know if it is because of my family's own traditions and norms, or because of Jeddah itself being a more 'liberal' city. However, there are some apartments in Jeddah, which I have visited, that do have gender-segregated entrances and salons. On the whole, as Rebecca Lindland puts it: "'It depends' should be the motto of Saudi Arabia" (Lindland, 2017).

In Islam, privacy is emphasised in the holy text, the Quran. I here quote from the extensive works Vieweg and Abokhodair have done around the notion of privacy, and on the right of privacy, known in Arabic as: "*Haq al-khososyah*", within the GCC Arab contexts. They have explained thoroughly how privacy is practised in the Muslim cultures through the aspects of *awrah* and *hurma*, (N. A. Abokhodair, 2017; N.

---

[1] For further personal reflection on Alsahwah, I recommend reading two blogs by Eman AL Hussain:

(1)   http://emanalhussein.com/2018/01/01/reflections-on-three-decades-of-religious-dominance-the-1980s/

(2)   http://emanalhussein.com/2018/01/24/reflections-on-three-decades-of-religious-dominance-the-1990s/

Abokhodair et al., 2016; N. Abokhodair, Hodges, & Vieweg, 2017; N. Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016; Harrell et al., 2017):

1. "*Haq al-khososyah*" (حق الخصوصية), is an "individual's right to protect some aspects of their private life and maintain confidentiality to safeguard his/her reputation and aspects of his/her life that are kept away from the interference of people" (N. Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016, p. 3)

2. "Privacy is first mentioned in the context of instructing people to seek permission before entering another's home. The purpose is to protect the sanctity—or *hurma*—of the house and the body. One is required to knock on a door three times before accessing another's space. This rule is in place to avoid walking in on another while in a state of undress, or while with one's spouse/family. Entering without permission risks exposing one's "*awrah*" (عورة). In Islam, awrah literally means the intimate parts of one's body". (N. Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016, p. 3)

3. "Privacy is again mentioned in the Quran in relation to a law that promotes the respect of others by warning Muslims to refrain from bad manners that can lead to an invasion of others' privacy. This is based on the prohibition of spying, gossiping, and mistrust" (N. Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016, p. 3)

In this context of privacy in the Islamic world, Saudi women are obliged by law to cover their bodies by wearing Abaya. They are also – generally speaking – obliged to cover their heads with a scarf, the Hijab, while it is optional – also generally speaking – to cover their faces with a Niqab. These rules are subject to different levels of conservativeness; moreover, they depend on the place women are in. For example, on some beaches in Jeddah, which are open to the public, one can see women without even Abaya. In the same city, one can go to a mall in a highly conservative district and find the religious police outside advising women to cover their faces. So again, as mentioned earlier: it depends.

However, the aforementioned religious-cultural norm of privacy does apply also and shape the architectural/interior design of Saudi houses/domestic space, reflecting "a space-based patriarchy where men are depicted as located in the public space, and women in the private space" (Hosni, 2017, p. 2) and "the domestic domain of a Muslim home is regarded as a female space" (Zulkeplee, Aird, & Buys, 2015, p. 16). Therefore, women's presence in their own houses or in others' (visiting) presents many forms of gendered/gender-segregated spaces (Abu-Ghazzeh, 1995).

Here, spaces are gendered, also in terms of "gender exclusive spaces" (N. Abokhodair et al., 2016, p. 54) or gender-oriented (AlKhateeb, Humphries-Smith, & Eves, 2014) spaces 'for women only'. It is important to mention here that women only spaces exist also in the public space. For example, the Luthan Hotel Spa in Riyadh is only for women[1]. Another example is when theme parks dictates a day per week for women only, such as the AlShallal theme park in Jeddah, which sets aside Wednesday for exclusive entrance of women (Figure 5).
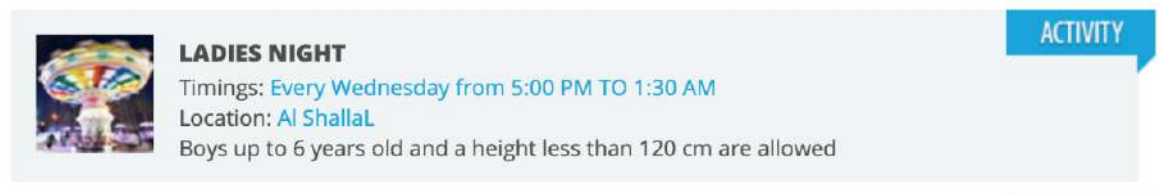
Figure 5 Screenshot taken from Al Shallal theme park website (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia), states the women-only opening days. Source: Alshallal.Com.Sa[2]

1.5.1.3 The Launch of The Internet in Saudi Arabia: The Change of Saudi Women's Situation (1999 – 2019)

Public access to the Internet in Saudi Arabia commenced in 1999 (Simsim, 2011, p. 102). In 2019, Saudi Arabia had 30.2 million internet users (Statista.com, 2019[3]). Internet in Saudi Arabia is subject to government censorship: for example, all international WWW traffic must go through the main proxy server at Internet Service Unit (ISU) for content filtering (Al-Tawil, 2001, p. 626). The person who is searching/looking for not approved content will see a warning message[4] and their activity is also logged (i.e. ISU will keep a log of this activity).

Given the situation in the physical public sphere for women in Saudi Arabia, the web was literally a different sphere for Saudi women:

> SMP provide opportunities for people to compensate for what may be unavailable to them in their offline contexts. SMP are not simply computer-mediated versions of their offline equivalents, but represent new

---

[1] http://www.luthanhotel-spa.com

[2] http://www.alshallal.com.sa/activitiesandevents.php on 11/11/2018

[3] https://www.statista.com/statistics/462959/internet-users-saudi-arabia/

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_in_Saudi_Arabia#/media/File:SaudiCensorship.png

social spheres in which people can selectively shape their identity and the way in which they communicate with others (Selim, 2017, p. 175).

Indeed, Saudi women's identities can be hidden online – if they wish – so that no one can identify who – for example – a woman's family or father are. The web enabled the existence of an uncensored sphere: no family, school or religious police are present online. In other words, no one is watching, no one had the authority to say, 'this is *Haram'*, and women could practise cross-gender communication, where "the online communication, between Saudi men and Saudi women made them, to some extent, overcome this gender separation" (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, women had the opportunity to voice demands for their rights, e.g., driving, custody after divorce, an end to the guardianship. System which subordinates women to a male guardian *mahram/wali al-umr* (closest male relative). According to the system:

> Women are considered as legal minors under the control of their [guardian] and are subject to legal restrictions on their personal behaviour that do not apply to men' with women requiring 'male consent for issuing travel documents, registering records for delivery (birth certificates) and death reports, being released from state institutions (like prisons or rehabilitation health centres), and the permission to travel abroad" (Tønnessen, 2016, p. 8)[1].

All the same, it is important to highlight that the social censorship that affects the offline sphere had not 'vanished' online: in fact, Saudi women navigate the online sphere, even if they use pseudonyms, according to the 'imagined' audience online (Alsaggaf, 2015). Moreover, the online sphere is practised differently by individual Saudi women: Saudi women took different positions-conservative, so-called liberal, and 'neutral' - towards the online discussion of their situation. In other words, we cannot claim that the majority of Saudi women practised the online sphere or perceived it as empowering, an opportunity for demanding rights, or voicing dissent.

---

[1] The guardianship law was abolished – except for marriage approval – on August 2019, before submitting the correction of this thesis following the viva (1st May 2019). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/saudi-women-can-now-travel-without-a-male-guardian-reports-say

Figure 6 The Arabic cover of Girls of Riyadh. Source: (Al-Haddad, 2009)

Early examples were online forums, spaces for Saudi women who had writing skills and where they became part of an online community of Saudi writers and intellectuals. In fact, online forums were the early beginnings of several Saudi novelists of today. One of them, and probably one of the best known Saudi women, is Rajaa Alsanea, who in 2004 published her novel titled "Girls of Riyadh" *"bnat alryad"* (Guta & Karolak, 2015). The novel caused a heated debate between Alsahwah and the so-called Saudi liberals online and offline (see for example: Shihada 2013; Gwynne 2013; Michalak-Pikulska 2013). Alsanea wrote her novel on an online forum called *Jasad Althaqafa* (which could be translated as: the body of culture) (Figure 6).

SMP followed online forums, and Saudi users 'migrated' from online forums to Facebook and then from Facebook to Twitter. Twitter, which was founded in 2006, was not translated into Arabia until 2012 (Twitter, 2012; BBC, 2012), when large numbers of Arab and Saudi users 'swarmed' to Twitter. In fact, Saudi users are – to date – the second majority of Arab and GCC users (after UAE) (Statista, 2018) (Appendix 1). The Arab revolutions (so-called Arab Spring), reflected "a wave of grassroots consciousness" (Ammar, 2018, p. 21) for Saudis in general and for Saudi women in specific, where, for example, Manal Al Sharif filmed herself driving in Saudi Arabia in May 2011. This marked the beginning of the spread of the #Women2Drive Campaign from the online sphere (Facebook and Twitter) to the offline one. The video went viral and encouraged other Saudi women to do the same (Mourtada & Salem, 2011). Two years later, Lugain Al-Hathloul drove her car across the UAE-KSA borders and also filmed her journey (Al-Nahedh & Al-Sheikh, 2018). However, it is arguable that Facebook become less popular for Saudi uses somewhere between 2011-2012, when Twitter 'supersede' Facebook being more instant, live and viral (Alim, 2017). Nevertheless, even Twitter subsequently become less favourable, as somewhere

between the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015 it suffered from a rise of cyberbullying and spam (Al-Khalifa, 2015; Al-Saggaf & Chutikulrungsee, 2015).

However, since the Internet was launched to the public in Saudi Arabia in 1999 (Al-Tawil, 2001; Gazzaz, 2006), two decades later (2018) the country has gone through enormous transitions (Kuppuswamy & Nithya Rekha, 2015). The situation of women is no exception in these rapid changes, and the online sphere is considered one of strongest players in such transformation (Aline, 2015). The Internet had given Saudi women greater opportunities over the years to express their opinions, discuss the challenges that they face, establish their own businesses, become bloggers and writers and more. For example, besides the aforementioned online campaigns, Saudi women have become influencers as Youtubers and Snapchatters (Bin Mirdhah, 2015; Taylor, 2015), sharing their daily lives with the public with and without wearing the Hijab or veil. Saudi women's advocacy on online spaces has played roles in a variety of transformations in the offline spheres of life. They used "alternative civic spaces to organise and enact social and political change" (Neumark, 2017, p. 15). The discourse of Saudi feminism has arisen in the last two to four years (2013 – 2018) in scholarly literature, media broadcasts, SMP and the Twittersphere especially (Alrasheed & Lim, 2018; Doaiji, 2018; El-Fassi, 2014; Tschirhart, 2014; Wagner, 2011). Two of Twitter's most important Saudi women's campaigns/movements, which either started offline and moved online or vice versa, played – and still play – vital roles in transforming the situation of women in Saudi Arabia: #Women2Drive (Addawood, Alshamrani, Alqahtani, Di-Esner, & Broniatowski, 2017; Aljarallah, 2017; H Grigsby, 2013; Tokdemir, Agarwal, & Wigand, 2016; Yuce, Agarwal, Wigand, Lim, & Robinson, 2014) (2011 – 2017) and #Endguardianship (2009 – present[1]) (Doaiji, 2017; Hassanein, 2018) (Figure 7). I will be referring to them later in the literature review in relation to Saudi feminism/activism.

---

[1] The campaign started in 2009. In May 2014, a Saudi woman, Safaa Hassanein (whose last name was unidentified until her publication cited in the text) put a post on her Tumblr account with the sentence #iammyownguardian, and the post become the symbol of the #endguardianship campaign when it went viral on Twitter in July 2016.

Figure 7 Saffa's poster (2014) on her Tumblr account. Source (Hassanein, 2018, p. 237)

Although the impact of the online sphere on Saudi women could not be summarised in full in this section, I give one example of an online Twitter campaign to which the Saudi government has been responsive: #Endguardianship. The #Endguardianship campaign started its second phase (the first was in 2009) in July 2016 on Twitter. Less than a year later, a royal decree recommended the repeal of the guardianship law (Oliphant, 2017) and the Saudi Consultative Assembly debated the first proposal to end the guardianship law on Saudi women (Alshomrani, 2018)[1].

It is important to state that the change that Saudi women experienced cannot be explained only through the impact of the online sphere. This is not because it would be an exaggeration, but because, through two decades (1999 – 2019), a number of factors played roles in transforming women's situation in Saudi Arabia. Another factor is the government's action, especially following the 9/11 attacks and the international pressure on Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism. Additionally, in January 2015, King Salman succeeded to the Crown, and the Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman launched the 2030 vision (2016), and Saudi women have since faced an accelerated pace of change: the revision of the guardianship law and the Shura discussion of it (July 2017), the lifting of the driving ban (September 2017) (Chulov, 2017; Hubbard, 2017), and women finally driving on the 24th of June 2018.

Official orders have granted families including women to be allowed to enter the football stadium (October 2017) where several public events (such as music concerts) take place. This has seen a wide female presence, despite the shock of the more

---

[1] The guardianship law was abolished – except for marriage approval – on August 2019, before submitting the correction of this thesis following the viva (1st May 2019). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/saudi-women-can-now-travel-without-a-male-guardian-reports-say

conservative Saudi community. More recently (2018), cinemas have been reopened after a 35-year ban. In general, the presence of women offline is seeing rapid changes (Figure 4). Danielewicz-Betz (2013, p. 296) argues the "Saudi society can be described as a "society in flux" where traditional customs and values are mixed and blended with Western ones".

Studies on Saudi women's online practices to date are scattered over a spectrum of different disciplines (e.g., education, computing, information systems). Moreover, there is a relatively small body of literature which investigates Saudi women's identities, and that relationship to online practices in general and on SMP in specific (Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Alfurayh, 2016; Aloufi, 2017; Alruwaili, 2017; Alsaggaf, 2015; Binsahl et al., 2015; Bourdeloie et al., 2017; Guta & Karolak, 2015; Journiette, 2014; L. N. Khashogji, 2016; Madini & de Nooy, 2013). This thesis builds on and extends these works with a focus on identity development and negotiation through experience of online practices on SMP, moreover, identity facets representation online across SMP, where SMP ecology offers an in-depth understanding of identity representation online in relation to how SMP are perceived as different environments. I offer a comprehensive examination of Saudi women's identity and their online practices on SMP, where the offline/online intertwine.

1.6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter Two comprises a literature review addressing scholarly works which examined identity development through online practices, as well as the limited scholarship on SMP ecology. The chapter finishes by identifying the literature gap in existing scholarly works regarding the relationship between women's identity and their online practices on SMP, specifically within Muslim, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Arab and GCC contexts, and more precisely: Saudi Arabia. This review is followed by the methodology detailed in Chapter Three. Four data analysis chapters follow: Chapter Four: Reminiscence of Early SMP Practices, Chapter Five: Examining Online Representation and Sharing 'Tactics' on SMP, Six: Examining Online Identity Representation in Relation to SMP Ecology and Seven: The Ongoing Negotiation Between Identity and Online Practices on SMP. Chapter Eight presents a discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Scholarship on Identity, women and SMP is enormous, yet a substantial subset of it must be tackled in the context of this thesis. I focus on: (a) identity change and development in relation to online experience, namely, online practices on SMP; (b) sharing strategies online, namely, how the navigation of audience(s), context(s) collapse/divide and private/public boundaries shape identity representation online; (c) how SMP ecology emerges through online practices, where online identity is represented differently across SMP; (d) women's identity in relation to their online practices on SMP, with specific focuses on Muslim, MENA, Arab GCC and Saudi women's identity and its relationship with their online practices on SMP. This chapter aims not only to highlight the relationship between my work and the literature (particularly by highlighting existing gaps), but also to lay out literature of reference underpinning the data analysis chapters.

I wish to highlight the interdisciplinarity of the literature landscape. Given that this thesis in positioned within digital sociology, I quote Carrigan's (2018, pp. 3-16) argument:

> Digital sociology should be seen as a project … an openness within the discipline and beyond it, involving proactive engagement with a wide range of trends: digital humanities, digital anthropology … and beyond.

Indeed, sociologists face difficulties when conducting studies of online practices, because of "the lack of sociological theory and methodology on the internet as a social space". Therefore, "sociologists who study the internet often have to pull from other disciplines to inform their research" (Christensen, 2018, pp. 568–570). My thesis draws on work from Social Science and Humanities, and Human-Centred Computing. These different disciplines offer a thorough understanding of the relationship between identity and online practices on SMP, in particular, Saudi women's identities' development and negotiation in relation to their online practices on SMP. Finally, I finish this chapter with a short conclusion, stating the literature gaps which it is hoped, this thesis data analysis will help to address/contribute to filling these research gaps.

2.2   IDENTITY AND HOW ONLINE EXPERIENCES CAN AFFECT IT

The online sphere is an extension of the offline one, so that "there is no generic and monolithic" online identity (Arora, 2012, p. 614). Indeed, online identity representations are not "separate entities, but are affected and shaped by social norms and cultural conventions present offline" (Dyer, 2017, p. 219). Therefore, Identity is re-presented online, in a different sphere from the offline one, which 'offers' different mediums to 'draw' a 'cosmetic' form of identity representation, e.g., profile picture and username. Moreover, as identity develops and changes, its representation online, as well is "subject to changes in audience and relationships that unfold in the long-term" (X. Zhao & Lindley, 2014, p. 2432). In this respect, such transformations could be examined through (a) revisiting early studies on identity representation online (1999 – 2004) as the precursors to newer/more recent ones. (b) reviewing literature which reports similar work: examining how identity is developed and changed in relation to people's online experiences and online practices. This section offers a review of relevant literature which provides context for Chapter Four: Reminiscence of Early SMP Practices.

2.2.1 EARLY ONLINE STUDIES ON IDENTITY REPRESENTATION ONLINE

In early scholarship, the online sphere was perceived as a second life and the notion of identity online was examined as fragmented, such that people could perform an 'online' identity different from that in the offline sphere, for example a woman using a male avatar, or a grandmother use another of a child, etc. As Arora (2015, p. 604) puts, "At the birthing of the Internet, there was a dominant trend to disengage and disassociate from physical place". For example, Turkle (1999) examined the notion of identity within the early stage of identity representation online, where users could choose names and pictures to represent themselves online. Turkle's research findings were based on MUDs: a 'multiplayer real-time virtual' platform for gaming and chatting (J. E. Davis, 1999, p. 74). At that time, anonymity, pseudonymity and identity were new terms – with respect to the online realm – to the academic literature, in which new technology online practices added a new dimension to study of identity: it offered new ways of representation. Moreover, terms like: 'manipulate personal identities', 'invented self-

representing pseudonymity' 'identity presented in real life' (Wood & Smith, 2004), 'identity play' (Turkle, 1999) and the real/virtual binary, were all heavily and commonly used when writing about/analysing online identity representation practices. Moreover, participants of these studies sought anonymity to 'protect' them, voicing their concerns about the 'exposure' of their identity, for example, when "knowing characteristics like the sender's gender, race, and social standing could lead to an unfair hearing based on a receiver's personal biases and stereotypes" (Wood & Smith, 2004, p. 64).

However, this set of early literature on identity online was criticised for studying online identity as fragmented, and claiming the so-called online/offline and virtual/real identity binary. For example, Kennedy (2006, p. 863) argued against what she called "Turkle's "outdated" argument, claiming that a word like authenticity can no longer apply". Furthermore, Kennedy asserted the importance for internet research, when examining the notion of identity, not to lose "the sight of identity as embodied experience … identity as practice" (Ibid, p. 873). Another critique stressed that the "virtual and the real are now enmeshed and entangled; a cornucopia of realities now inhabits this united space" (Arora, 2012, p. 605). Part of this 'enmeshing' could be attributed to the launch of Web 2.0, namely, SMP such as Facebook, Which, as suggested by several studies, has "influenced users to be honest and open on the site given that they are likely involved" and "Facebookers tends to be 'honest'" in their identity representation online (Farquhar, 2013, p. 448). Yet, it is important to quote here, Hogan's (2012, p. 14) point that "We may live in a global village, but our huts still need curtains". Anonymity and pseudonymity are still part of today's online practices, namely SMP, yet the interpretation of anonymity and pseudonymity is not limited to a second life or 'virtual' identity, but extended through the lenses of audiencing, privacy and context collapse/divide[1], which I will be discussing shortly.

Interestingly, the same patterns of anonymity and pseudonymity in research conducted in Western (mainly UK and US) studies (Turkle, 1999; Wood & Smith, 2004), were echoed in early studies on Saudi women online, which documented the hesitation of Saudi women to reveal their identities online. They felt protected in that sphere, as they could hide their real identities under anonymous nicknames (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004; Al-Salem, 2005; Yurchisin & Watchravesringkan, 2005). Interestingly, Oshan

---

[1] Glossary of Terms

(2007, p. 301), compared between Western women and Saudi women, emphasising that although both faced "technological, cultural, and sociological barriers" yet Oshan stressed that the concerns of Saudi women to reveal their identities online is "more cultural (i.e. family restrictions, lack of time) and psychological (i.e. security and privacy)".

2.2.2 LITERATURE ON HOW IDENTITY DEVELOPED AND CHANGED IN RELATION TO ONLINE EXPERIENCES

Since the inception of social media platforms, few researchers have examined identity development and its change in relation to online experience. This line of research concluded that "research has so far primarily focused on identity expressions and less on identity development" (Wängqvist & Frisén, 2016, p. 139). Moreover, participants in these studies reported using their real names on their SMP accounts, and that their close friends were part of their online audience (Davis, K., & Weinstein, 2017; Manago, 2014).

This finding was argued to contradict early works on identity online in the 1990 – previously discussed – where users 'anonymously post in a digital world akin to the faceless context', suggesting that "Changes to online life over the last twenty years have precipitated a movement away from the anonymity of the 1990s Internet toward an increasing interweaving of online and offline life" (Davis, K., & Weinstein, 2017, p. 13). This echoes the arguments of Arora (2015) and Kennedy (2006). However, critiques of existing literature on identity development and change in relation to the online experience are located within the fields of psychology and social psychology (for example based on the work of Erik Erikson (1950, 1968, 1980) on adolescent identity development). However, there is a lack of a sociological perspective on such development and change.

More recent attention has been extended to include the change in people's attitudes towards privacy (Georgalou, 2016). One study which examined the shift of privacy practices online is that of Tsay-Vogel et al. (2018, p. 1), who examined privacy perceptions and self-disclosure behaviours over a five-year period (2010 to 2015). Their findings conclude that privacy attitudes become more relaxed over time; moreover, self-disclosure practices increase across offline and online spheres, where "the negative relationship between privacy concerns and self-disclosure weakened across time".

Finally, within the Saudi context, Journiette (2014) – as far as I know – is the only study which examined Saudi identity development and change. The study focused on women only, and concluded that "young women in Saudi Arabia construct their identity through negotiation. Faced with blurred lines of personal, religious and national identity, negotiation is unavoidable in the complex structure in which the women's expression and development takes place" (Journiette, 2014, p. xi).

2.3 SHARING STRATEGIES ACROSS SMP

There is a large volume of studies of SMPs on sharing, audiencing, context collapse/divide, where the audience does not consist only of people whom we know online, but also our offline relationships, such as family members and friends could be part of our SMP audience. It is recognised that users are "selective of the people who see their content online" (Camacho, Minelli, & Grosseck, 2012, p. 3181). However, few studies examined the notion of identity as a whole. It might be because many of these studies are scattered across non-humanities/sociological fields, e.g., computing, IS. However, as discussed before (section 1.2.2), different terms are used in online identity representation, such as impression management (Shafie et al., 2012), self-presentation (Hogan, 2010; Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008), identity construction (Almjeld, 2008; Alsaggaf, 2015; S. Zhao et al., 2008), identity performance (X. Zhao et al., 2013), identity management (Georgalou, 2016; X. Zhao, Lampe, Ackerman, & Cosley, 2016), re-presentation (Subrahmanyam, Smahel, & Greenfield, 2006) etc.

However, these works – generally speaking – can be summed as following online practices: SMP users first decide to create a SMP account, followed by their choice of platform, then the construction/formation of the SMP account profile, on which online identity representation takes place. Users sense the audience of each platform, and thereby make decisions on their textual/visual representation online: how to represent themselves, e.g., which profile picture, and username to choose. This depends on various factors, such as the purpose of the account and privacy settings. Online representation, shared content and privacy setting are all subjected to change through time; a user may deactivate an account, change the username/profile picture, delete posts etc. (depending on the SMP features, which are commonly called in the literature, affordances): "Over time the expected use or perceived norms of particular social

media could change, affecting participants' own practices and experiences" (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016).

In the following sections, I discuss how existing SMP studies address these angles: representation, navigating the audience, context collapse/divide[1] and sharing strategies e.g., what to post, not post or delete.

2.3.1 SMP AUDIENCING

SMP users have a sense of the audience in all their online practices, whereby they present themselves based on different audiences: for example, adjusting profiles and using nicknames (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Tufekci, 2008). The audience consists of *followers* (Twitter and Instagram), *friends* (Facebook), Also – if the SMP account is public – *Lurkers* constitute another part of the audience. However, despite the large landscape of studies on online identity representation, which address the audience within their investigations, few works have examined the imagined audience prior to online representation. Litt and Hargittai (2016, p. 1) proposed the imagined audience(s) model (Figure 8), in which they classified the imagined audiences of their participants as to: "either very broad abstract imagined audiences or more targeted specific imagined audiences". These audiences encompass different audience 'genres' composed of personal, professional, communal (i.e. local community) and 'phantasmal' (i.e. politicians) ties. Moreover, we can think of privacy concerns and audiences as two faces of the same coin: participants manage their privacy in relation to the audience(s) that they have in mind for their sharing (Litt & Hargittai, 2016). Having said that, it is worth adding that "the ideal audience is often the mirror-image of the user" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 7), meaning that users prefer to have an audience with which they have more in common and less disagreement. All in all, the audience is complex and multiple; we can segregate it, and we always navigate it when we share or unshare.

---

[1] Glossary of Terms
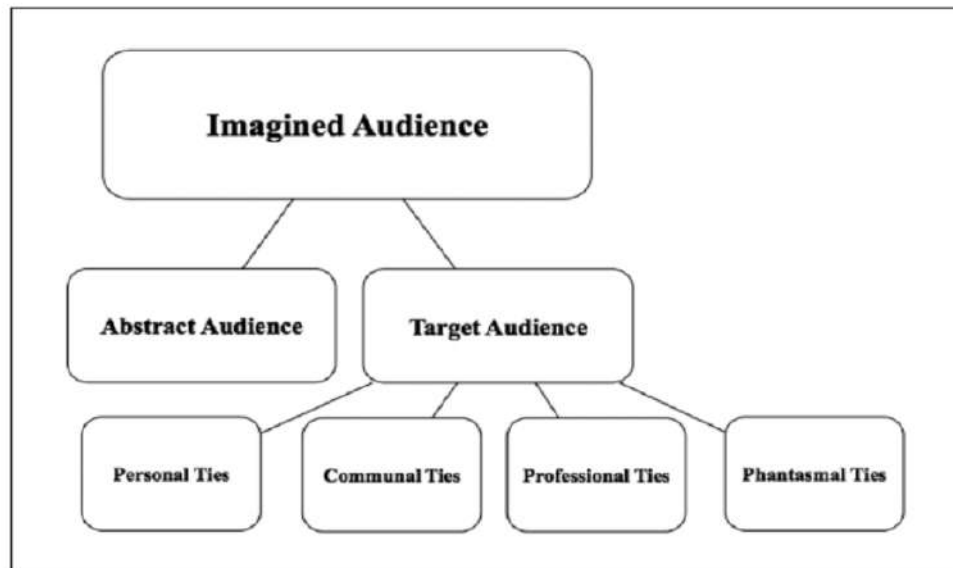
Figure I. The different imagined audience compositions participants tended to think about–and fluctuate among–as they posted on social network sites.

Figure 8 Imagined audiences. Source: Litt and Hargittai (2016, P. 5)

2.3.2 CONTEXT COLLAPSE/DIVIDE

The terms context collapse/divide (Costa, 2017; Davis, J. L., & Jurgenson, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Vitak, 2012; Vitak, Lampe, Gray, & Ellison, 2012) emerge to reflect the notion that users try to segregate their audiences, and conversely that they may be collapsing, e.g. "merging", all audiences sub-groups into one. In the first instance, users avoid 'exposure' of their content to certain users whom they know in person, this perhaps because the content would cause tension among families or friends, or even, more complicated, have a negative impact on the user's work/profession (Vitak et al., 2012).

Users have an 'imagined audience' on each platform or even different audiences on the same platform, and might wish that certain people cannot see certain content. The terms context collapse/divide and imagined audience refer to similar online practices, and it has been suggested that it is "unlikely that anyone could tweet context-independently with no concern with audience, given our understanding of audience influence on self-presentation" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 6). Davis and Jurgenson (2014) proposed – instead of collapse/divide – the terms context collusions "an intentional collapsing of contexts" and context collisions "an unintentional collapsing of contexts". For example, sharing identical content across different SMP is an instance of context

collusions; another form is choosing identical profile pictures and usernames across different SMP. Context collisions could emerge because of algorithm, friends in common etc. Individuals differ in the extent to which they seek or are comfortable with the blurring of contexts. therefore, "users manage context collapse, both embracing open boundaries and reinforcing contextual walls by way of social media affordances coupled with user practices" (Ibid, 2014, p. 483).

2.3.3 *PRIVATE/PUBLIC BOUNDARIES*

Having laid out an overall picture of intended audience, and context collapse/divide, it is important to discuss the possibilities for users to control their privacy through technology settings, and the expected effect of doing so (Harbers & Neerincx, 2017). Understanding privacy involves not only which settings we choose, but also why we choose them, and how and why individuals manage tensions between public and private content and interactions (Marwick & boyd, 2011). The "contextual aspects of privacy" (Wessels, 2012, p. 1265) are underresearched; although many SMP studies have investigated the notion of privacy, few of them examined the notion of identity in relation to privacy. Among the few examples of such studies are Georgalou (2016) and Wessels (2012). Moreover, there is a gap between sociological and technological aspects of identity which "relates to the way people practise identity and in how they understand public−private boundaries" (Wessels, 2012, p. 1264). The way people set private/public boundaries on SMP, is related to the notion of identity, since it reflects their view of how they want to be seen and recognised by selected others (Georgalou, 2016). In such practices, the audience/context, shared content and privacy share a are reciprocally related. On the other hand, audience size and diversity composition will influence disclosures and the choice of privacy settings conversely, privacy concerns and the privacy settings selected influence disclosures varying ways (Vitak, 2012). The larger the audience a user has, the greater their privacy concerns are likely to be.

Moreover, since the launch of the Intern et, users have always been concerned, not only with what and what not to share, but also what is private and what is public. Sharing in the early days − as section 2.2 explained − was practised with hesitation, cautiousness and fear of strangers. Years after, with the plethora of SMP, oversharing has raised the issues of audiences and context collapse/divide. Users manage and control their SMP accounts and what they share by classifying both the platforms and the content: "We present ourselves differently based on who we are talking to and where the

conversation takes place to navigate networked audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 1).

On Facebook, for example, a user could choose a group of friends with whom he/she shares 'private' information, whereas with the rest of his/her friends, the user shares more 'public' information (Heivadi & Khajeheian, 2013). In such practices, social media users actively make conscious decisions on their use of particular platforms and choices of privacy settings in order to separate different social spheres and social groups apart (Costa, 2017). Such behaviour reflects a desire to separate multiple dimensions of one's identity (and the audiences) to which each is displayed (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016). For example, a user could perceive the Facebook audience/context as private, yet Twitter as public. This is made even more complicated, by the fact that a Twitter account could be set to be private! This complexity of multiple private/public boundaries across multiple SMP accounts, leads us to the next section: SMP ecology.

2.4 SMP ECOLOGY: SMP PERCEIVED AS DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

From a sociological standpoint, six decades ago, Goffman (1959) in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, stated:

> "a social role will involve one or more parts and that each of these different parts may be presented by the performer on a series of occasions to the same kinds of audience or to an audience of the same persons" (Goffman, 1959, p. 9)

Goffman referred to the different identity presentations (and parts thereof) people develop across different social situations, which apply to representations of identity online, namely, *SMP ecology* (defined previously in section 1.2.2). For example, 'Identity play' was identified in the behaviour of participants in one of Turkle's studies, where a study subject "could create five names for herself on her account as a chance to lay out 'all the moods I'm in all the ways I want to be in different places on the system'" (Turkle, 1999, p. 644). Indeed, recent literature echoes Turkle's data and confirms the validity of Goffman's tenets of identity presentation in the online domain. It showed that individuals do not always want to present the same identity across all online situations, hence the need for multiple accounts or sites (Polonski & College,

2017). Furthermore, discussion of navigating identity representation online has invoked Goffman's point regarding different targeted audiences(s), where audience segregation occurs when the individual ensures that those he/she plays different parts before different audiences/in different settings (Goffman, 1959).

Moreover, it applies particularly to the case of SMP, showing how "users address multiple audiences through a single account, conscious of potential overlap among their audiences" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 7). The application of Goffman to the online sphere has been both criticised (Hogan, 2010; Zarghooni, 2007) and endorsed for its validity amongst SMP studies, in particular the idea that identity representation online is faceted (Dyer, 2017). The critique that the lens of the 'new' version of Goffman to the online sphere has received by Hogan (2010) was justified through the opposition to the mere application of Goffman's (offline) presentation of self to online settings, since 'real-time interaction' (Hogan, 2010), immediate communication and body gestures are missing or happening very differently online. However, both works, had more criticism of Goffman's dramaturgical performance and front/back stage theory, whereas they both gave more credit to 'extend' Goffman's presentation of self-online. Herein, I agree with what Zarghooni (2007, p. 22) argument that Goffman's approach to self-presentation cold be explained with amendments, since it was developed with a "non-computerised environment in mind". However, the idea of faceted identity become the norm of identity representation across SMP, such that Costa (2017) identified such context separation as the taken for granted way of using social media. SMP differ in terms of their interfaces, features, and affordances (van Dijck, 2013); consequently, online practices and representations of identities across various platforms also differ, a topic several studies have investigated. Van Dijck (2013) argued that online identities are shaped by the differences between social media platform interfaces, so that users represent their identities differently across different SMP e.g., a professional profile on Linkedin and a personal one on Facebook. In this regard, platforms are "not considered artefacts but rather a set of relations that constantly need to be performed; actors of all kinds attribute "meanings" to platforms" (Jose van Dijck, 2013, p. 26).

Consistent with this view, Dyer (2015) investigated young people's online practices across two SMP, Facebook and Twitter, that differences site in design influenced users' role performance, their perceptions of the nature of their audience, and the ways in which they acted, interacted, and presented themselves. All these findings suggest that

online practices differ across different platforms and that SMP users themselves are not only aware of such differences, but incorporate them in their strategies of social media use. Through a comparison between us women engineers' identity representation across LinkedIn and Facebook, it was found that 80% of participants were "forced to face some issues when using social media, such as balancing boundaries of professional and personal relationships in which they have to perform a certain identity over another" (D. Wang, 2013, p. 117).

An important argument to be raised here is the socio-technical 'interweaving' which shapes identity representation practices across SMP. As French and Bazarova (2017, p. 852) put it, "Socially and technologically situated practice shaped by multiple intersecting influences". These influences are not merely the technological features of the platform, but also what users bring to the platform; users negotiate their identity representation on different SMP. Such identity representation online – through the lens of SMP ecology – combines Sharing Strategies, namely, audiencing, context collapse/divide and privet/public boundaries. It is an interplay of the social and technological architectures: how these platforms are designed (features), and how the user utilises them (identity). Duffy, Pruchniewska and Scolere (2017, p. 1) call this: "platform-specific self-branding", and argued that platform-specific self-brands, are created according to the perceived affordances of individual platforms how they fit within the larger social media ecology. Affordances means not only privacy settings, or profile 'curating' features, but also how users adopt these architectures socially. Indeed, more recent works argue the need for studying the plurality of SMP, and related practices "through [their] architectures networks and cultures" (Arora, 2012, p. 614). Others bring norms into the conversation, arguing that each SMP has its own norms of sharing, as X. Zhao, Lampe and Ellison (2016, p. 93) argue: "Another need that drives platform choice is whether the content to be shared is normative, or perceived as 'appropriate', for a particular platform. In many cases, the concern for sharing the right kind of content took precedent over concerns around audience".

2.4.1 SMP PERCEIVED AS DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Figure 4. Ranking of use motivations across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Figure 9 Ranking of use motivations across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram And Snapchat. Source Alhabash and Ma (2017, P. 9)

Despite the prolonged "multi-platform era" (Polonski & College, 2017), referring to availability and people's use of multiple SMP, there remains a paucity of research investigating how SMP are perceived as different environments. Although there is a growing body of research comparing different SMP usages, much of it is mostly quantitative (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Blank & Lutz, 2016; Thelwall, 2017), with little in-depth understanding of how participants perceive SMP as different environments, persuaded by qualitative investigation e.g., interviews, online observation. Nevertheless, the findings of these studies propose significant outputs. For example, profiles and use motivations differ across SMP (Alhabash & Ma, 2017) (Figure 9). However, there is a relatively small body of qualitative works on SMP ecology (Duffy et al., 2017; Dyer, 2017; Kaskazi, 2014; Polonski & College, 2017; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016).

Table 1 summarises the findings of some of these woks, specifically how SMP are perceived as different environments. Yet it is important to highlight here, that there is a large volume of published studies on Facebook and Twitter, whereas there is a paucity of examination of other platforms (Stoycheff, Liu, Wibowo, & Nanni, 2017). Indeed, several studies have called for more research on platform research other than Facebook and Twitter (Dyer, 2017; Polonski & College, 2017). At the time of writing this chapter (November 2018), the numbers of studies whose titles referred to the platforms of

interest in this thesis were: Instagram (5,920), Snapchat (722), Goodreads (123) and Path (4[1]), in comparison to Facebook (85,800) and Twitter (64,600)[2]. Furthermore, studies on these platforms which examined the notion of identity were similarly scarce.

It is important to mention here Donath's argument on the relationship between platforms design (Donath 2014). She argues that interface metaphors, that is, how an interface is designed to either resemble an environment (e.g. desktop) or to represent interactions in an operational form (e.g. design of buttons, links, etc.) shape people's understanding of which "social situations" (Donath 2014, p 48) these platforms will enable. This includes shaping the users' perception of how private or public the space they are in is (Donath 2014).

She gives the example of early chat-rooms, where the 'room' metaphor shaped the users' understanding of chats' privacy (i.e. openness vs. closedness), in the way a room would be perceived in the offline sphere. This is echoed in Chapter Six, where some participants used metaphors in relation to different SMP design (interface/feature), for example, that Twitter is an open backyard. I will be discussing this again in Chapter Eight (section 8.3.3.7).

---

[1] This was the most difficult platform to search studies about, I found two of them by chance.

[2] When searching through Googlescholar.com using: 'allintitle:', followed by the platform name, e.g., allintitle: Snapchat.

Table 1 A review of studies that examined SMP as different environments

Platform	Perceived as an Environment For
Facebook	- Entertainment, self-documentation (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).
Twitter	- Entertainment (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). - Membership intention (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017). - A better reflection of identity. Some users explained that they "feel free to express themselves" and never thought about who could read their tweets, so they were able to express more aspects of their personality. To send messages to other people known by the user; to publish one's personal viewpoints and thoughts; and to share news-like information with others. Twitter addresses an innate human desire to converse and to be heard (Kaskazi, 2014). - A networked audience combines elements of the writer's audience and the broadcast (Marwick & boyd, 2011).
Instagram	- Brand community engagement and commitment, showing affection, following fashion, and demonstrating sociability (Phua et al., 2017). - content that was "visual" and highlighted "my artistic taste" (X. Zhao, Lampe, Ackerman, et al., 2016).
Path	A unique place for the participants' "diary" and "reflection," with an example of the same photos updated to, place for reflection: a limited audience with close ties, and a place already curated and filtered for important memories (X. Zhao, Lampe, Ackerman, et al., 2016).
Goodreads	No studies have compared Goodreads to other platforms, except the Librarythings[1]
Snapchat	Passing time, sharing problems, and improving social knowledge (Phua et al., 2017).

2.5   SHARING STRATEGIES ON SMP IN NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS

I have so far discussed the paucity of research on identity development and change in relation to online practices on SMP (section 2.2), and the growing, yet limited work on identity representation online in relation to audiences, context collapse/divide and SMP ecology (section 2.3 and 2.4). In this section, I address cultural aspects of the relationship between identity and online practices on SMP. A critique several studies have raised is that existing research on SMP is dominated by Anglo-Saxon and Western contexts, namely, the UK and USA, calling for cross-cultural studies on SMP consumption, or at least more SMP studies in non-Western contexts, e.g., Asia, MENA (Costa, 2017; Duffy et al., 2017; Georgalou, 2016; Jackson & Wang, 2013; Marwick

---

[1] See for example: Worrall, A. (2015). " Like a Real Friendship": Translation, Coherence, and Convergence of Information Values in LibraryThings and Goodreads. *iConference 2015 Proceedings*.

& boyd, 2011; Polonski & College, 2017; Selim, 2017; C. Zhao, Street, & Hinds, 2012; X. Zhao, Lampe, Ackerman, et al., 2016).

For example, Costa (2017) criticised the way the concept of affordance has been largely used to describe "intrinsic" properties of a platform and its architecture, arguing that these are actually outcomes of the way these platforms are used in Anglo-American contexts. The fact that privacy choices are affected by the role of socio-cultural norms is highlighted by (Georgalou, 2016; Wessels, 2012). Marwick and boyd (2011) pointed out the limitations of our understanding of the social media audience, and the need for more context-specific conceptions of considering language, cultural referents, style, and so on as part of comprise online identity presentation. It has also been pointed out that, whilst SMPs afford opportunities to try out different identities and challenge norms, at the same time, the internet reflects pre-existing social structures and can increase their effect (Gazali, 2018). This is indeed echoed by Selim (2017, p. 4), who argued that the few available researches on SMP usage in non-Western contexts were "partially explained by the affordances that social media provide, which compensate for the unavailability of certain modes of expression and communication within offline cultural contexts, and by cultural differences in value priorities".

The largest cross-cultural investigation of SMP adoption is the one of Miller et al (2015), an ethnographic study of nine countries: Brazil, Chile, China, England, India, Italy, Trinidad and Turkey. They emphasise that sociality and communication are inevitably mediated by culture and so their concern is not with SMP per se, but with what they are used to communicate. Theirs is an important investigation to cite here, as Miller et al. addressed the sociological perspective of online practices on SMP, by adopting Goffman's ideas to understand identity representation on SMP across the countries of investigation. Moreover, Miller et at. coined the term 'scalable sociality': "employed to differentiate platforms as more private or more public sites for socialising", arguing that "each of these platforms corresponds to a position of greater or lesser privacy and smaller or larger groups" (Ibid, 2015, pp. xvii- 5). Their findings show considerable regional differences in SMP content. For example, a previous study by Miller (2011) concluded that "the secret of Facebook's success, along with that of similar social networks, lies not in change but in conservatism" (Miller, 2011, p. 217). This is aligned with findings by Costa (2017), in relation to women's adoption of SMP and its relationship to their religious/social/cultural identities. Costa's study in South Turkey – a Muslim region – revealed that "people perform – on social media -

traditional social relations and selves that conform to traditional social norm" (Costa, 2016, p. 170).

Findings of SMP studies which compared Western (US) and non-Western contexts (such as China) suggest that the differences between collectivistic cultures and individualistic ones play a role in the diversity of SMP uses, for example:

> The importance of the family, friends and one's groups may be partly responsible for Chinese participants' lesser use of SMP. Whereas in the USA culture, where the importance of self and having more but less close and enduring friendships, may be partly responsible for USA participants' greater use of SMP (Jackson & Wang, 2013, p. 910).

Moreover, the use of SMP, in China, is "intricately related to offline social and physical contexts" (Kou, 2017, p. 126). Another example is Mazur, E. and Li, Y (2016), who explored Identity and self-presentation on social networking websites, through a comparison of Chinese and American emerging adults' online profiles. One of their findings suggested that the online identity representation of Chinese emerging adults – male and female – "remains compatible with group-oriented values" (Mazur & Li, 2016, p. 12).

Recently, researchers within the GCC and specifically, Saudi Arabia, have shown an increased interest in privacy and technology/ SMP adoption. Besides the extensive works by Vieweg and Abokhodair discussed earlier, in the Chapter One (section 1.5.1.2) (N. Abokhodair, 2015; N. A. Abokhodair, 2017; N. Abokhodair et al., 2016, 2017; N. Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016; Harrell et al., 2017; Vieweg & Hodges, 2016), there is a growing literature by Saudi researchers on privacy and cultural adoption of SMP (Aleisa & Renaud, 2017; Baazeem, 2018; Ghazy & Almakky, 2017; Sami Al-Saqer & Seliaman, 2016). However, this body of research is largely confined to the design and user experience area. Few studies have carried out cross-cultural comparison between Saudi users and users from other cultures, namely, UK and Australian (Almakrami, 2015; Selim, 2017). Both of these concluded that, the public/offline Saudi sphere, cultural norms and traditions shape Saudi users' SMP use. In this respect, for example, Saudi users' perception of Twitter as a counter-public sphere, has a role in their online practices on this platform e.g., activism. Indeed, an investigation of technology adoption within the Saudi context argued, "Saudi society was committed to many established relationships, structures and identities, a commitment that has resulted in the social shaping of technologies" and "social shaping

of technology is the primary factor in technology construction and choice" in the Saudi social contexts" (Al Lily, 2013, p. 220).

However, few SMP studies have been carried out within non-Western cultural contexts, and the few that exist are scattered across countries and fields of study. Moreover, the majority of them involved quantitative investigations such as surveys. Few of them have examined identity in relation to online practices on SMP. In the next section, I will review specifically studies' findings on women's identity and their online practices on SMP, with a narrower focus on Muslim, Arab, GCC and, finally, Saudi women.

2.6 WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND ONLINE PRACTICES ACROSS SMP

In this section I review the limited literature on women's identities and their online practices across SMP. I acknowledge studies on women's identities and their online practices, such as, for instance, research on gender and ICT, such as that of Wacjman (2010), who argued that women's identities, needs and priorities are shaped to some extent in relation to digital technologies (Wacjman, 2010, p. 13). Yet, in my view such argument is too heavily stressing on the role of digital technologies in shaping women's identities, instead of a vis-à-vis relationship, particularly in countries and cultures where face-to-face interactions are still predominant and where how women's offline identities shape their use of technologies (such as)SMP. For example, veiling as part of religious identity practice offline can be practised online through either posting veiled women's pictures (e.g., wearing Niqab), or even by not sharing any pictures at all.

Other studies to consider are those that used comparative methods, including women and men in their samples (Farquhar, 2013), and studies that employed quantitative methods, e.g., surveys. For example, Thelwall and Vis (2017) carried out a comparative study of *Gender and Image Sharing on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Whatsapp in the UK*, through a quantitative methodology: surveys. They concluded that female users shared photos and images more frequently on Snapchat, had more privacy concerns, and were keener to share pictures of their children. In contrast, however, my study is concerned with in-depth qualitative approaches, which analysed women's SMP profiles or posts, and particularly with studies that examined

representation of identity facets, namely, gendered, religious, national, ethnic and social/cultural.

In the USA, Almjeld (2008, p. 147) explored gendered, feminine and womanhood identity constructions on MySpace profiles, and concluded that "MySpace functions as a gendered new media space and literacy practice involved in modern gendered/feminine identity construction". SMP were not perceived as effective for professional communication, and privacy issues were the major concerns in adopting SMP. In Greece and Iceland, studies found that women feel SMP "should be public, but some keep their profiles private because they fear potential negative interactions from the public" (McGuire, 2017), and that women "choose, in different ways, which side of themselves that they want to display on Instagram" (April Caarp, 2016, p. 2). For Icelandic women, Instagram provided, in comparison to other SMP, a more private environment. It was used as a medium for communication with friends and family, and a way to stay connected with others: checking what they were doing, maintain in social connections and seeking entertainment (Johannsdottir, 2013).

Overall criticism of scholarly work within Western contexts is about two main aspects: (1) women's concern about their audience is not because of religious or cultural censorships but is social, (b) it pays attention/interest towards gendered identity in terms of LGBT and sexual online representation but not on other aspects of gendered identity (De Vries & Peter, 2013; Subrahmanyam et al., 2006). For example, Nagel and Frith (2015) explored women's nudity on Reddit, concluding that pseudonyms and online anonymity provided participants with 'safety and security' from trolling, harassment and being stigmatised; having the opportunity of not using real names online allowed participants "to control what they reveal about themselves and who they reveal it to" (van der Nagel & Frith, 2015).

These findings are informative, yet their cultural contexts are different. Explanation of why it is more secure/safe not to reveal a user's (offline/official) identity online is more complex than their interpretation might suggest. For example, collective identity, religious and political censorships may be higher 'threats' in non-Western contexts. In more censored and less 'individualised' cultural contexts, where breakings societal, religious and political orthodoxies is regarded as 'taboo', the search for anonymity, practices of pseudonymity, and audience/context divide is higher.

Other studies of non-Western women's identity in relation to their practices across SMP in Asia and Africa (Nigeria, China and India) concluded that women were

concerned and careful in their sharing practices (i.e., self-disclosure of intimate information), through limiting and segregating their audience, and adjusting privacy settings. Moreover, SMP offered these women a medium to represent their identities, express their voice (e.g., on social, religious and political matters), given them a sense of agency, and increased their eagerness to share their personal-daily life activities (Aravindh, 2017; Dermody, 2017; Foluke Adeumi Oduba, 2017; Nasir, 2014).

2.6.1 WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND THEIR ONLINE PRACTICES ACROSS SMP WITHIN MENA AND MUSLIM (NON-ARAB) CONTEXTS

In the Israeli-occupied territories, Shahar and Lev-on (2011) investigated through a survey Haredi women's gendered/religious identity facets in relation to their online practices and how they perceive these practices in Haredi society. 92% of the participants agreed with the statement: "I think that the Internet can weaken people religiously". Moreover, the study regarded "ultra-Orthodox women as a user community that adapts the technology in ways that would enable them to integrate it into their life routines without harming their core values and ideology" (Shahar & Lev-on, 2011). Given the Westernised life style in the Israeli-occupied territories, the findings suggest the women's religious identity shaped their online practices.

Other examples from European countries, are Midden and Ponzanesi (2013) and Waltorp (2013; 2015). The former analysed online practices of Muslim women in the Netherlands, indicating that being a Muslim is an important part of these women's identity, both online and offline. The study concludes that faith and religious practices are important markers of Muslim women's agency (Midden & Ponzanesi, 2013). Waltorp (2013, 2015) conducted a long-term anthropological study that explored how young Muslim women in Copenhagen negotiated their gendered/religious identity facets within their online representation on SMP. Though living in a Western cultural context, their sense of morality – as religious orthodoxies e.g., modesty and decency – regulated their visual representation in which "moral negotiations take place in the activities of presenting, audiencing and interacting in social media" (Waltorp, 2013, p. 568) "keeping the family's honour intact through the display of virtuous behaviour' online" (Waltorp, 2015, p. 49). Both studies' findings suggest that Muslim women's religious identity shapes their online practices, although they are living in a Western context.

In the context of predominantly Muslim (yet non-Arab) countries, Syariati (2016, p. 47) investigated textual and visual representation of ten Indonesian Muslim women on Facebook, and found "a propensity of the masquerade" of textual and visual identity representation of these women, namely, usernames and profile pictures. Moreover, the "devotion on Islamic teachings" by the women in the study impacted their online identity representation. Riaz Aksar and Pasha (2016, p. 79) explored Pakistani women's Facebook usage, and highlighted their "desire for privacy", reflected in not showing their identity. Moreover, as Riaz Aksar and Pasha argue:

> This elaborates the cultural and social system of Pakistan, which restricts the women from making contacts openly. Women (on SMP) hide their actual real-life identity and adopt the personality which they desire to be. Although the conflict emerges but they can speak their heart out to anonymous people without exposing their identity.

Finally, before moving to Arab/GCC women, examples of studies of Iranian women's identity and its relation to their online practices on SMP found that although Iranian women (on Facebook) benefit from anonymity by hiding, using fake profiles and controlling their audience with whom they can share certain articles and comments, Iranian users tend to prevent others from identifying them by hiding their profile, or by using a name different from their full name, with various ways disguising the name (Heivadi & Khajeheian, 2013) e.g., using false names. Moreover, given the political, religious and cultural/social censorship (s), which is similar to different GCC countries as well, especially considering women, that SMP have given Iranian women a new public sphere (Gheytanchi, 2009).

2.6.2 WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND THEIR ONLINE PRACTICES WITHIN ARAB/GCC CONTEXTS

Through the scrutiny of the limited literature on Arab/GCC women's identity in relation to their SMP practices, I noticed that works on Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, (basically countries which experienced the Arab revolutions in the 2010 - 2012 period) are more focused on political identity and feminism; for example, how SMP are perceived as "politicised publics", a counter-public sphere for women online (Barnes, 2012, p. 108).

Overall, this literature shows that Arab/GCC women share common identity representation practices on SMP. For example, a study found that Iraqi women adopted

one of two strategies of identity representation online: "either adorned a digital burqa and remained anonymous or wore a digital business suit and migrated to social media platforms where interaction is highly formal" (Gazali, 2018, p. ii). Another work on UAE women discussed their preference for anonymity, and, in relation to SMP ecology, their preference for Twitter over Facebook (Strong & Hareb, 2012). In contrast, Kuwaiti women entrepreneurs "preferred using Instagram over Facebook and Twitter when marketing to their customers". They perceived Instagram as "a photo album" (Alghaith, 2016, pp. ii–iii). Qatari women in Abokhodair and Vieweg[1] (2016, p. 679), it was found, "may want to show a photo of themselves without Hijab to only female friends and *mahrams*". Abokhodair and Vieweg conclude that users' online identity is constructed in two different ways: in a constant relationship with their offline identity (e.g. using real names), and by benefiting from the anonymity that online platforms offer by managing their audience through two different accounts. Moreover, across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, identity facets were represented by adjusting privacy preferences on different platforms to confront different audiences, reflecting how "privacy is a socially constructed and culturally bound concept" (Ibid, p. 672) where offline identity is passed on social media platforms through online practices.

2.7 SCHOLARSHIP ON SAUDI WOMEN: IDENTIFYING THE IDENTITY EXAMINATION GAP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ONLINE PRACTICES ACROSS SMP

Across a spectrum of fields, there is a considerable body of empirical work on Saudi women within social science and humanities. While these works' findings are informative, they suffer from several limitations with regard to the topic of this thesis. Existing works have examined topics such as empowerment (Al-Bakr, Bruce, Davidson, & Kropiunigg, 2017), education (medical sector) (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016), leadership (Albakry, 2015), journalism (Kudri, 2014), political participation (offline) (Azimova, 2016), and cultural adjustment of female international Saudi students (living

---

[1] Their study included participants from Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

abroad in the US, Canada and Australia) (Alhazmi, 2013; Alwazzan & Rees, 2016; Arafeh, 2017; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Szilagyi, 2015).

While studies focusing on Saudi women's identity within SMP practices are few, there is a growing (since 2013, when the #Women2Drive Twitter campaign became noticeable) landscape of research on Saudi women's online practices on blogs or across SMP. However, this body of research has not addressed the notion of identity. Moreover, there are limitations due to disciplines, methods and positionality. Scholarship is scattered across disciplines: applied/socio linguistics (Albawardi, 2017; Alenazy, 2017), Education technologies (Al-Salem, 2005; Al Lily, 2011; Alaugab, 2004; Alkahtani, 2012; Kutbi, 2015) business and marketing (Al-Haidari & Nasser, 2017).

Methodologically, studies used textual analysis of blogs (Tamimi, 2010; Tschirhart, 2014) were quantitatively oriented e.g., surveys (Luppicini & Saleh, 2017), or their data was collected through data mining/harvesting (tweets). Where thematic/discourse/corpus analysis were carried out, their conduction was done through data harvesting/mining, which addressed mainly the #Women2Drive online campaign (Addawood et al., 2017; Aljarallah, 2017; AlMaghlouth, 2017; Almahmoud, 2015; Altoaimy & A, 2017; Chiara Livia Bernardi, 2015; H Grigsby, 2013; Ibahrine, 2016).

There are few qualitative, in-depth works on Saudi women's online practices across SMP. Some of them investigated the topics of: Saudi feminism and activism (online/offline) (Al-Nahedh & Al-Sheikh, 2018; Alrasheed & Lim, 2018; Altuwayjiri, 2017; Amer, 2016; Asadi, 2011; Hayat, 2014; Luppicini & Saleh, 2017; Oshan, 2007; Saleh, 2014; Alshehab, 2017). However, these studies have not addressed the notion of identity aligned with online practices. Furthermore, the landscape of research which examined merely the notion of Saudi women's identities – without addressing online practices – is limited (Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Alfurayh, 2016; Aloufi, 2017; Alruwaili, 2017; Alsweel, 2013; Doumato, 1992; Journiette, 2014; Sheridan, 2015). Studies of Saudi women within the fields of women and gender studies, sociology of women and anthropology (Aljaouhari, 2013; Almosaed, 2004; AlMunajjed, 1997; Amélie Le Renard, 2008, 2010, 2012; Amelie Le Renard, 2014; Van Geel, 2016, 2018; Wagemakers et al., 2012) build understanding of Saudi women's identities, and address the complexity of religious/gendered/social-cultural facets of identity and how they are changing. Yet, they have not examined this in relation to online practices and SMP.

It is worth highlighting here the few 'gurus' in the field of Saudi women's studies, whom I consider key references in thesis:

- Soraya Altorki and her exceptional anthropological work (Altorki, 1986; Altorki & El-Solh, 1988), which, although relatively old, are still remarkable due to Altorki's own positionaity as an insider.

- Amélie Le Renard, who conducted longitudinal ethnographic research (Le Renard, 2008, 2010, 2012; 2014).

- Yeslam Al-Saggaf, studying Saudi women's early online practices on online forums, followed by Facebook and more recently Twitter (Al-Saggaf, 2016; Al-Saggaf & Begg, 2004; Al-Saggaf & Nielsen, 2014; Al-Saggaf, Utz, & Lin, 2016; Al-Saggaf, Williamson, & Weckert, 2002; Al-Saggaf & Weckert, 2011, 2016).

I take these examples of research as models because of the thorough empirical work and analysis of data, particularly the longitudinal ethnographic data collection offline and online. Moreover, these works covered different facets of Saudi women's identity, namely, gendered, religious and social/cultural, and included two different cities (Jeddah and Riyadh).

Works that examined Saudi women's identities in relation to their online practices across SMP – which is the focus of this thesis – are still few (Alsaggaf, 2015, 2019; Binsahl et al., 2015; Bourdeloie et al., 2017; Guta & Karolak, 2015; Lina N. Khashogji, 2016; Madini & de Nooy, 2013). They also have a number of limitations which my thesis aims to overcome; their investigations were conducted by Western or 'outsider' researchers, who are either living outside Saudi and 'theorise' the situation of Saudi women from a Western perspective; works by male researchers, who have restricted entry to the female community, and furthermore they have tackled only one SMP such as Facebook or Twitter, and involved samples comprising mainly Saudi students studying abroad (i.e., the US, Canada and Australia), or women from only one city (e.g., Riyadh, Jeddah) thus ignoring the complex differences among various locations in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, considering the representation of identity facets across SMP, Alsaggaf (2014; 2015; 2019)[1] conducted the only study – as far as I know – which carried out online observation of Saudi women's online identity representation

---

[1] The 2014 citation is a poster based on Alsaggaf (2015) PhD thesis, and the 2019 is a paper published on January 2019, also based on her PhD thesis.

combined with two rounds of semi-structured interviews, and spotted different visual identity representation facets, namely, that Saudi women's visual online representation is gendered, and in some cases political in terms of the othering of the West, e.g., racism and Islamophobia towards Muslim women's veiling.

Overall, there are no studies which examined (a) Saudi women's identity change/development, (b) online identity representation facets and (c) SMP ecology: different identity representation across different SMP, which are the key points of focus and empirical investigation of this thesis.

Overall, across all these studies, the key findings are the following:

• There are continuities between Saudi women's online and offline worlds. Saudi women fear judgement by society, and they value the need for privacy and security.

• Saudi society is conservative and gender-segregated, and the online sphere offers Saudi women a free space to communicate with the opposite sex, and unveil. Offline gender segregation has been eroded since the Internet was launched in Saudi Arabia, but it is still stronger offline than it is online.

• Saudi women's identities are "constructed, gendered, and tightly managed when they address multiple audiences" (Alsaggaf, 2015, p. ii).

• Restrictions on Saudi women differ and vary by different regions (e.g., what applies in Riyadh does not apply in Jeddah).

• Young Saudi women with their own cultural circles have different aspirations and go beyond the models that are supposed to determine their ways of life (e.g., marriage and children). There is a new generation of Saudi women engaging in different activities such as informal business, writing, shopping, or work.

Considering the timeline of studies on Saudi women's online practices (2002- 2018), the research focus has shifted over the years. Empirical findings shifted from addressing anonymity/pseudonymity, veiling and cross-gender communication, to documenting Saudi women's cautious willingness to use their real identity "to make it easy for friends to find them" (Binsahl et al., 2015, p. 81). More recently (since 2013), research focus and findings have shifted towards feminism, activism and campaigning online, such as in the #women2drive campaign, and recently (2018) in #endguardianship.

This body of knowledge requires further expansion. The scarcity of sociological studies on Saudi women' identity is a main motivation for my work, given the complexity of

Saudi women's identity facets, where the gendered, religious, and cultural/social aspects intermingle.

2.8 SAUDI WOMEN'S IDENTITY FACETS

As I discussed in the introduction (section 1.5), the main characteristics that distinguish Saudi women's identity are: first and foremost, religion. Secondly, Saudi culture as a "complex mixture of traditional and Islamic values to a degree that makes it difficult to distinguish between the social and the religious" (Al Lily, 2011, p. 119). The key dimensions of Saudi women's identity could be highlighted as their national identity as Saudis, their religious identity as Muslims, their gendered identity as women and their social identity emerging from the social environment of the Saudi community (norms, beliefs and traditions). These identity facets are complex and overlap with each other, so that we cannot understand, for example, gendered identity without bearing in mind the religious one. Doumato (1992) argues that the concept of the ideal Islamic woman is a symbol of national identity in Saudi Arabia: an overlap of religion, gender and national identities within the same context. Moreover, religion and nationalism are compatible; as Tschirhart puts it: "Adherence and submission to Islam are supreme in any vision of Saudi women's reform. Second to Islam is nationalism and pride in being Saudi" (Tschirhart, 2014, p. 7).
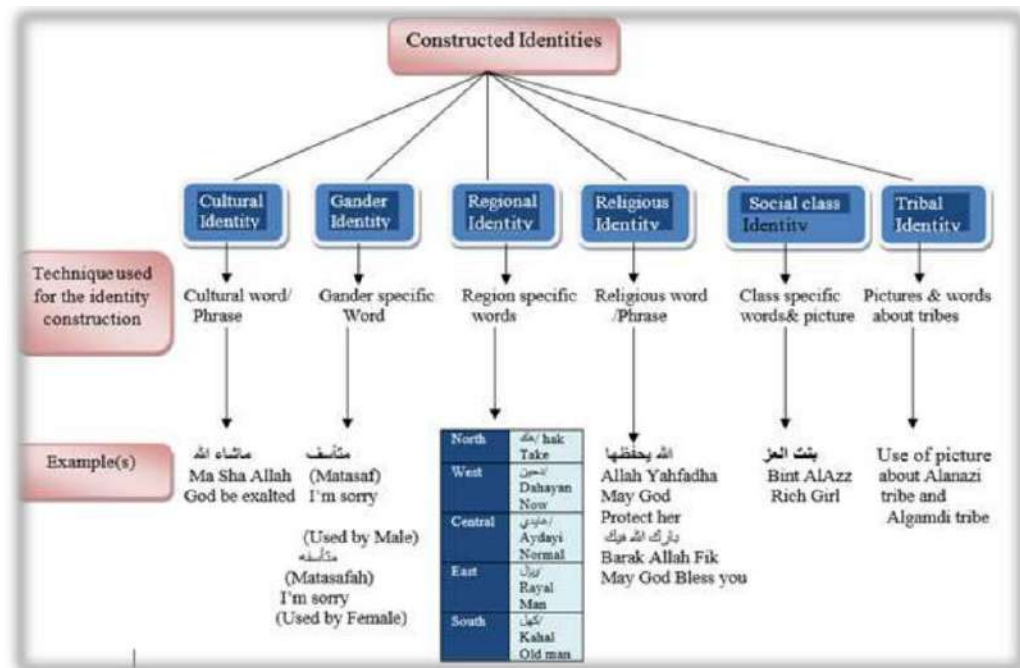
Figure 10 Different constructions of Saudi youth identities online, through their (youth) language.

Source: Alenezi, Kebble & Fluck (2018, P. 251)

45

The only study (that I am aware of) examining the notion of identity in such precise detail is Alenezi et al. (2018) (Figure 10). It explored "the strategies and ways in which language and other means were used by Saudi Arabian youths to construct and enact their various identities online" and involved both males and females. The authors concluded that Saudi youths (18 – 30) years represented online, through their language, the gendered, tribal, regional, and religious facets of their identities.

There is a growing – theoretical – literature on Saudi feminism (mainly in Arabic) (Alrasheed & Lim, 2018; Doaiji, 2018; El-Fassi, 2014; Muaygil, 2018; Tschirhart, 2014). Yet, there is almost no empirical work on the subject, in terms of conducting field work and analysing data. Some work on Saudi women's activism and movements exists within linguistics, using discourse/critical analysis and data harvesting/mining (mainly Tweets) (Addawood et al., 2017; Aljarallah, 2017; AlMaghlouth, 2017; Almahmoud, 2015; Altoaimy & A, 2017; H Grigsby, 2013; Sahly, 2016; Yuce et al., 2014). This work, however, does not tackle Saudi women's own perceptions and experiences of online practices on SMP.

Regarding Saudi feminism, Rob Wagner (2011, p. 8) coined the term *Saudi-Islamic feminism* arguing that "young Saudi women contend that a Saudi-led feminist movement must include the rights accorded women in the Qur'an and specifically in Sharia". Tschirhart (2014, p. 4) adopted this term to "explore how the Saudi blogosphere has facilitated the production of a Saudi Islamic feminist identity" concluding that "research should be guided by an awareness that Saudi women's standpoint is unique and largely resists Western frameworks of feminist theory" (Tschirhart, 2014, p. 8).

On activism and movements, Alothman (2013, p. ii) explored through a survey *The Roles, Motivations and Expectations Toward Using Social Media for Social and Political Purposes*, and concluded "Respondents indicated SMP, especially Twitter, connect them with others on the basis of social issues and common political interests". Similarly, Altuwayjiri N. (2017, p. 13) found:

> The use of Twitter by Saudi women as a news medium, but most importantly as a virtual, feminised, political public sphere where they can self-express and demand their rights, while compensating for their exclusion from the actual physical political public sphere.

One notable work by Al Nahedh and Al Sheikh (2018, p. 7): *A Voice Unsilenced: Saudi Women Advocating Their Rights, 1990-2017*, through analysis of women's rights

demands and campaigns during 1990 – 2017, concluded that "women's activism is severely constrained, not only due to political and cultural factors, but also due to contradictions existing within the movement itself". Collectively, these studies confirm the gendered/religious facets of Saudi women's identity, showing clearly that religion cannot be detached from any understanding of Saudi women's identity.

Regarding national Saudi identity in general and Saudi women's national identity in specific, Voicu (2013, p. 169) states:

> National identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive. Although the other types of collective identity – class, gender, race, religion – may overlap or combine with national identity, they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction.

This overlap is part of Saudi women's identity facets discussed earlier, each of which overlaps with the others. For example, Samin (2008, p. 197) (in one of the rare works examining the Saudi tribal discourse on online bulletin boards) suggests that "discussion forums can enable the reinforcement and entrenchment of traditional values and norms within a contemporary context[1]". Samin's findings do indicate that Saudi tribal identity is represented and negotiated online, and moreover that women are part of this discourse. Alenezi et al. (2018) is the only empirical study that I am aware of, looking at the representation of Saudi national identity on SMP, but it does so from a linguistic perspective, and includes both genders in its sample. Moreover, it only represented the heritage facet of Saudi identity. Both Samin and Alenezi et al, included both men and women in their samples.

Another example is Journiette (2014), who examined thoroughly Saudi women's negotiation of national/religious identity facets, and discussed the identity transformation Saudi women are experiencing in recent years. Yet another is Alqahtani (2015, p. 34), who in his thesis: *Fluid Cultures and Identifications: The Intercultural Communication Experiences of Saudi International Students in the UK*, examined national and tribal/heritage facets of Saudi identity and how they are evolving. While some of the participants in this latter study chose to "identify themselves in terms of more regional identifications such as 'Hijazi'", Alqahtani argued that this might be

---

[1] Their sample was "bulletin board of the Najdi and Qahtan tribe", on which they carried out "intensive debates over issues such as intermarriage between tribal and non-tribal Saudis and the participation of women on tribal Internet forums" (Samin, 2008, p. 197).

because of the "history of their regions in Saudi Arabia (i.e., Hijaz) and their historically independence from the rest of the Saudi state", which I have discussed earlier (section 1.5).

2.8.1 CULTURAL FACET OF IDENTITY: OTHERING

Othering can be defined as a "process or a rhetorical device by which one group is seen as 'us' and another group as 'them' (Danielewicz-Betz, 2013, p. 275). As Voicu (2013, p. 170) puts it, "All collective identity identifies itself by denying the other, demarcates inside from outside, stretches a distance between 'us' and 'them'".

In this thesis I refer to two forms of othering: (a) the formation of cultural boundaries to construct the "other" and situate the participants as belonging to an "us" (Arabs/Muslims) (Alsaggaf, 2015) (i.e. Saudis vs. Westerners); (b) what Danielewicz (2013) calls *Saudi-Saudi othering*, and Eman AlHussein calls *Saudi exclusion* (AlHussein, 2018)[1] (i.e. conservatives versus liberals).

Interestingly, the two forms of othering overlap. In the first case, of Westerners vs. Arabs/Muslims, the West in considered as the other, in terms of its differences: nonbelievers versus Muslims, objectification of women versus virtuosity. Here "The use of Islam and the West may infer opposition, embody mutual misconceptions about both cultures, and may assume both are homogeneous" (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004, p. 263). In the second instance - Saudi-Saudi othering/Saudi exclusion - "liberals"[2] usually "connotes Western ideologies". For example, the conservatives' view of 'liberal' women on the subject of gender segregation is contrary to that adopted by Islamist women (Le Renard, 2010), and the description of "supporters of women's rights to drive as 'liberals' connotes Western ideologies" (Almahmoud, 2015, p. 19) (see Chapter One, section 1.5.1.1).

However, only a few studies have examined both forms of othering within the Saudi context (Alenazy, 2017; Alzahrani, 2017), and only two studies have examined the othering discourse online (Alsaggaf, 2015; Danielewicz-Betz, 2013), of which one (Alsaggaf) observed Saudi women's othering: Westerners versus Arabs/Muslims on

---

[1] http://emanalhussein.com/2018/10/29/evolution-of-exclusion/

[2] See Glossary of Terms

Facebook. At the time of writing, no empirical studies have examined Saudi-Saudi othering on SMP.

2.9   CONCLUSION

In this literature review, I have presented the scholarly context and key debates framing my thesis, and built my argument regarding the need for more conceptual and empirical work on (a) women's identity development/change and negotiation in relation to their online practices across SMP, (b) in-depth/qualitative investigations of women's representations of identity facets across SMP, and (c) the emergence of an SMP ecology in the various representation of women's identity across SMP.

Through an in-depth, multi-method qualitative empirical investigation, this thesis adds to the debate on the online sphere, and extends it to that on the offline one, and argues that the identity of Saudi women should be examined as embodied and in a holistic unit, yet representing its complexity and diversity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

"Each researcher's journey in uncovering the phenomenon is unique and nonlinear" (Bansal, Pratima, 2012, p. 510).

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first frames my methodology design: theoretical paradigm, strategies of inquiry and data collection tools; semi-structured interview and online observation. This part also includes sampling and recruiting methods, and the reasons for conducting a pilot study. In section two, on data collection, I explain how I conducted semi-structured interviews and online observation. I break each of them into two phases: the pilot study and the main phase of data collection. In between, I reflect on what I learnt from the piloting, and what I changed for the main phase of data collection. I then, in section three, discuss my analysis approaches, highlighting translation challenges, and delineate the three analysis methods which I followed to reach the analysis presented in later chapters. In the last three sections I reflect on ethical considerations, validity and reliability and reflexivity. I summarise by introducing the data analysis chapters.

3.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section I discuss the adoption of constructivism as my theoretical paradigm, and the multi-method qualitative approach employed. I then discuss my interview guides and online observation designs, including which SMP I explored and how I utilised their interfaces to conduct the online observation data. Constructivism is the paradigm of this research. One of the fundamental assumptions of constructivism is "there is no single reality 'out there' about a particular phenomenon; instead, there are multiple realities constructed in the minds of the people under study" (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2006, p. 7). Moreover, "meanings are varied and multiple" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). To investigate the notion of identity in this thesis, I combine two qualitative methods, to minimise what Schmidt (1992, p. 306) call: "the blind spot of the operation of perception, and provide a, reality-guarantee" for the first-order observer. I observed Saudi women's online practices on SMP, and interviewed them, to understand their

identities. I analysed these different perceptions of identity facets, to grasp the varied and multiple meanings of Saudi women's identity. As "constructivists believe that they should study the phenomenon in the field where it occurs" (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2006, p. 7), I chose online observation of SMP, to study Saudi women's online practices on these platforms. Moreover, I relied, through combining online observation and semi-structured interviews on my participants' views to investigate the relationship between their identities and their online practices on SMP. My aim was, rather than starting with a theory, to inductively develop an understanding of Saudi women's identity, by generating meaning from the data collected (Creswell, 2013). An inductive approach was chosen as it put the focus of my research on women's voices (i.e. the participants), on how they present themselves (to me in particular) and represent themselves online. Other approaches to data analysis driven by pre-existing frameworks would have meant the risk of imposing categories on my data that have been generated in other contexts, and therefore of missing other important themes. Categories emerging from studies of Muslim/Arab/GCC women might not entirely apply to data pertaining to Saudi women. An inductive approach enabled me to identity themes that other similar studies had not examined.

3.3 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

I adopted a qualitative approach, I justify this methodological choice through three lines of reasoning: my familiarity with this method (Turner, 2010), since I adopted a qualitative approach in my M.A[1]; second, the aims and objectives of my work; to explore how the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP has evolved and changed, how Saudi women represent their identities across SMP and whether Saudi women develop and represent their identities differently across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it. All of these, I argue, can be best understood through a qualitative approach. For investigating Saudi women's online practices, and gaining a thorough understanding of their identity, I argue, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate approach. "Qualitative methods generally aim to answer questions about the 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon rather than 'how many' or 'how much', which are answered by quantitative methods" (Bricki and Green, 2007, p. 164). I aim, through this thesis, not only to give the readers

---

[1] Back in 2010 at King Abdul-Aziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

an in-depth understanding of Saudi women's experience, in terms of their online practices, which could be explored through a survey or a questionnaire, but also to give my participants the voice to tell their stories. Only a qualitative research could give them such an opportunity (Polit & Beck, 2010). Thirdly, the notion of identity, which is a core concept of this research, is something which only a qualitative approach can examine (Maxwell, 2009), in (digital) sociology, despite psychology's use of fixed scales to 'measure' identity. I focus on the cultural context of this research; on understanding the meanings that online practices on SMP have for Saudi women, on the accounts that they give of their lives and their experiences in this online sphere.

3.3.1 MULTI-METHOD APPROACH

Taking into account the combination of data sources can bring a broader knowledge in theory and practice; furthermore, the complementary strength of using multiple methods can overcome the limitations in one, I chose a multi-method approach via semi-structured interviews (King & Horrocks, 2010) and online observations (Kozinets, 2015). Through interviews, I built a dialogue with my participants about their online practices in relation to their values, norms and beliefs. I was able to grasp and map the concept of identity. I also observed their online practices in the form of netnography (to be explained shortly) to log their online practices on SMP and to explore how they represent their identities. Online observation and interviews lead to rich data sources and analysis (Bansal, Pratima, 2012). these tools enabled me to gain a deep understanding of the relationship between Saudi women's online practices and their online/offline identities. I sought — through data analysis — to investigate the relationship between what we (my participants and I) discussed in the interviews and what they practised online. How similar or different were their represented online identities to the claims made in their interviews? I designed a follow-up interview to ask them about their online practices, to understand in-depth the why questions, such as: why veiling or unveiling? why deleting some posts? Moreover, whether or not their online practices changed through the online ethnography data collection period, in both positions, 'the Why?' is the question to which I was looking for an answer.

3.3.2 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS DELINEATION: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The interview guide design was developed through two stages: a pilot study (Appendix 5) (Appendix 6) and a main phase of data collection (Appendix 7) (Appendix 8) Interviews give a detailed 'story' pertaining to my participants' online experiences, and as extended-focused conversations, increase the trustworthiness of identity analysis (Bricki and Green, 2007). I built trust with my pilot study participants at first, by being an online friend across SMP for more than three years. Furthermore, the interviews strengthen this trust, through which my participants got to know me face-to-face and then recommended additional women for the snowballed sample (to be discussed in detail in the sampling and recruiting section 3.3.5). For the Pilot Study (March - September 2015), I designed my first interview guide by following the thesis aims and objectives. I used my online observation notes to design the follow-up interview guide. In the main phase of Data Collection (January 2016 - April 2017), I followed my revised aims and objectives, which I settled on after my project approval on February 2015). For intensive validity consideration, I sent the interview guide to two of my friends, who are Saudi women, SMP users and well educated (M.A level). By which, I sought their feedback; if they were the participants what would they want to change (e.g., clarifications)? I then followed my supervisors' edits and comments. Considering the linguistic differences between English and Arabic, in designing my interview guides I revised the wording in terms of 'tone' differences, for example, English words/sentences which could sound as an order in the Arabic i.e., Give me an example of versus can you please give me an example of (what the question is about). Also, although I wrote the questions in classical Arabic language; *al-fuṣḥá*, during the interviews I used Hijazi Arabic (A Saudi dialect similar to my own spoken dialect) as much as possible.

3.3.3 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS DELINEATION: ONLINE OBSERVATION

Here, I justify why I adopted online observation in the form of netnography, followed by explaining the online observation techniques I utilised to collect data on SMP online practices. I then depict the SMP that I observed in this research, by discussing each platform's features and interfaces and the associated data collection tools. It is reported

that online observation, in the form of ethnography, started in the early 1990s (Driscoll & Gregg, 2010; Gatson, 2011). This adaptation of traditional ethnography to an online domain has taken different forms, which are difficult to categorise. For example, Gatson (2011) categorised online ethnography according to three pre-existing ethnographic methods: Traditional field methods, Autoethnography, and Multisited/extended-case ethnography. However, these forms of online ethnography are not distinct entities. My methodology falls within Gatson's three categories: (1) my personal experience of both Saudi spaces/communities: offline and online, exist in my research presentation. (2) I acknowledge that I am an insider of both communities, and (3) I engaged in online ethnography by exploring different spheres including both offline (face-to-face interviews) and SMP. Moreover, since 2011 (Gatson's publication date) several forms of online ethnography have emerged with the proliferation of web 2.0. For example, a recent paper lists seven different forms of online ethnography (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017) (Table 2).

Table 2 Costello, Mcdermott and Wallace (2017) online ethnography forms

Online ethnography form	Scholar
Virtual ethnography, ethnography for the Internet	Hine (2000, 2015)[1]
Cyber-ethnography	Ward (1999)
Connective ethnography	Dirksen, Huizing and Smit (2010)
Netnography	Kozinets (1998, 2002, 2010, 2015)
Computer- assisted webnography	Horster and Gottschalk (2012)
Netnographic grounded theory	Healy and McDonagh (2013)

Several criticisms have been made of online ethnography, for instance, that traditional ethnography cannot be simply mimicked through this online version. Scholars were suspicious that this form of ethnography is 'fast ethnography' where ethnographer bias can be a serious threat to research integrity. Furthermore, the transience of online identity, distances it from 'stable' and 'real' offline identity (e.g., changing accounts, online representations) (Driscoll & Gregg, 2010). In defence, online ethnographers

---

[1] In her book *Virtual Ethnography*, Hine (2000) lists three other forms of ethnography, besides what I mention in this part: media ethnography, anthropological online ethnography and network ethnography (Driscoll & Gregg, 2010).

argued that one of the "principles" of virtual ethnography is not simply looking at what happened online. Researchers should gain intimacy through their immersion in participants' everyday practices, especially since Web 2.0 enables us to share our daily habitus: check-ins, sleep, awake etc., where such practices are anchored to real life identities. All of these can be more presented online than offline, and are categorised methodologically as "adequate ethnography for online culture". Another angle of defence is autoethnography. As Kozinets (2015, p. 158) puts it:

> It is almost impossible to avoid autoethnography when representing contemporary online culture, just as it is almost impossible not to have an online profile when functioning on so many sites requires them, such reflexivity can be … through researchers consideration of their own online practices.

With respect to the aforementioned list of forms of online observation (Table 2), I adopted Netnography, a term Robert Kozinets (1998) has coined as a developed methodological version of traditional ethnography, which I will discuss in detail shortly.

"The researcher as an instrument" refers to the unique skills needed by interpretive researchers. Choosing online observation resonates with online ethnographer argument that the experience an online ethnographer holds is vital (Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2015). In their book, *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds* Tom, Boellstorff, Nardi and Pearce (2012) state that studying online games requires the researcher to be a gamer. If the online ethnographer wants to study the highest level of a game, he or she must reach the same level as a gamer. Being a Saudi woman and an active social media user and devotee (Kozinets, 1998), such experience provided me with the skills to interpret online practices on SMP. Although there are other methodological options to collect online data, such as big data mining (e.g. data harvesting), content analysis etc, online observation enabled a day-by-day monitoring of my participants' practices, for example, their deletion of some of their posts, their communication with other SMP users; their online friends, and changes to their online representation. Netnography is a modification of ethnography, online ethnography and virtual ethnography (Bowler, 2010). Netnography is a participant-observation, qualitative method, investigating online communities. The use of netnography has spread from the fields of consumer, marketing, management and business research (Costello et al., 2017; Kozinets, 1998, 2002; Langer & Beckman, 2005; Weijo, Hietanen, & Mattila, 2014). Netnography

relies on three elements of data collection: (1) directly copied content from the Computer Mediated Communication of online community members e.g., forums threads (2) observational data and (3) data the researcher sketches as field notes (Bowler, 2010; Kozinets, 2002).

In this thesis, I applied netnography on SMP, which I observed participants' practices rather than 'online community members' communication. Therein, I applied netnography by 'tweaking' Kozinets' guidelines as follow: All SMPs that I observed were relevant to both me and my participants, they were active and interactive platforms. My sample was heterogenous in terms of age groups, educational levels, residence, heritage and employment status (to be discussed in the sampling and recruiting section 3.3.5). I consider myself as an insider to these platforms. Netnography data were collected through (1) observational data and (2) field notes. For the purpose of data collection, I created a researcher account on five SMPs: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Goodreads and Path (Figure 11) (Figure 12) (Figure 13). Each account had a profile picture and a symbolic user name, with letters and numbers; the names and biographies did not reveal my identity. When needed, depending on the platforms' interface. I also created a header and a biography. Observation and data capture varied between a weekly and daily basis. On some platforms I monitored participants' profiles changes (e.g. avatar, header, name and bio). Screen shots were taken both via desktop and mobile versions (iPhone), as posts' dates can be found on the mobile version but not on the desktop one. I used the Evernote app to log additional observation notes, if needed. Whenever possible, at the end of the online observation period, I downloaded a Pdf file of participants' posts, from during the agreed data collection periods (March – June 2016, February - September 2016) following informed consent research ethics. In the case of some platforms, I received, on a regular basis. email updates of my participants' posts. All data were stored on my iPhone and personal laptop and also on an external hard disk.

I now give an overview of each platform's interfaces and features. In total five different SMPs are presented here: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Goodreads and Path. (In the data collection part, I will elaborate on the profile representation that I chose on each platform). I categorise them into three sections: (1) platforms that I observed on weekly basis (2) platforms that I observed on a daily basis.

Weekly basis observation

goodreads

Goodreads is a social media platform for sharing books reviews and recommendations, launched on 2006, it was bought by Amazon on 2013 (Nakamura, 2013). My personal experience on Goodreads started on 2011 and since then I have been an active user. The site language is only English. Hence, Active Saudi users, have high English proficiency. As every SMP, Goodreads account requires a username, profile picture and a biography. The main activities on Goodreads are adding books, checking their reviews, liking book reviews, quotes, and commenting on users' activities. Also, messaging is available. Privacy on Goodreads is highly restricted, as each user chooses who can see/browse his/her account, and even Goodreads members, if they were not friends, can be restricted to browse other users' accounts. Users can also choose to allow friending, following reviews or none of them and they can add a question to approve or refuse friend requests. Users also can block other users from seeing their activity or contact them. I took screen shots on my laptop of my participants' profiles by the beginning, middle and end of the online observation. I checked their accounts on a regular basis, weekly or twice a month. For observation, I used, mainly, the desktop version, as the app interface does not allow such procedure. By the end of the online observation, I downloaded a pdf file of their books shelves and online observation. Goodreads was one of the platforms that I received my participants' updates through the email. Therefore, I combined between these updates and the what I stored/logged.

facebook.

Facebook is a well-known platform and a large scale of scholarly literature has examined it. Creating an account on Facebook is an eternity commitment, it saves users' data forever, and even if the user did not share his or her location, Facebook can detect and suggest friends either nearer to their geographic location or their mobile contacts (if you uploaded the app on your smartphone). During my data collection, in 2015 and 2016, I have not noticed any changes which affect my online observation process. Except that Emojis were added on February 2016 where I started to de the second online observation phase, also the feature of save articles to read later, was added. When I first created my researcher account on Facebook on March 2015, using pseudonym letters and numbers, I had to changed it to letters from my first and last name.

Same as Goodreads, the case of Facebook online observation was on a regular check basis, either weekly or twice a month. since my participants were not very active on the platform. I took screenshots of my participants' profiles and by the end of the online observation, I downloaded a pdf of their activities during the data collection period, using the desktop version. I added two of the participants as friends and followed the third, because her profile was public. Facebook desktop version was the main source for browsing participants' profiles. I faced algorithms stalking with my research account on Facebook. For example, where Facebook connects suggested people around my area to be added as my friends; Sheffield, and people who are friends of my friends (participants). I also received participants' updates via the email which I used as part of the data.

Figure 11 Weekly basis observation: Goodreads and Facebook

Daily basis observation

Instagram

Instagram is a visual platform established in 2010 (Totoatmojo, 2015). Since then several features and improvements were added. I had no problems creating a research account on Instagram, however, the platform had added several changes during my both data collection phases. Its logo has changed, posts' translation feature, time and date of the posts on the IOS app and by the end of my online observation Instagram story and live streaming were launched. Instagram is one of the three SMP that I observed my participants' online practices through daily basis. The iPhone app was downloaded to my phone, so I took screenshots of their posts, where I monitored their profiles changes (e.g. Avatar, header, name and bio). By the end of the online observation I failed to download a pdf, the file was corrupted and did not contain all the posts. I had to take screen shots for each post, both on the desktop and the iPhone app. One feature helped me on Instagram iPhone version, is the date of the post which is not available in the desktop version.

Twitter

Same as Facebook, Twitter has led to a plethora of research literature, launched on 2006, it was not that popular in Saudi Arabia until it was offered in Arabic around 2011. Its peak started with the 'Arab spring', When I was testing the data collection tools in the pilot study, I used the feature of archiving the data and storing them via Twitonomy. however, the website was limited to what I need for a long span of practices, as it allows only a limited part of the timeline to be downloaded. Moreover, I was not looking for metadata, as in computational social science (e.g., connected accounts, active hashtags, sentiments). I took screenshots and downloaded a pdf of the timeline by the end of the 1st data collection. Twitter was the second platform that I observed my participants' online practices on a daily basis, monitored their profiles changes (e.g. Avatar, header, name and bio) via taking screenshots, mainly on my iPhone. Same as Facebook, Twitter suggested common followers/following to my account, however, my account was private (closed).

Figure 12 Daily basis observations: Instagram and Twitter

Daily basis observation

Path

Path (2010 – 2018) was launched in 2010, in September 2018 the developers announced the termination of its service (http://blog.path.com/post/178172780707/the-last-goodbye). Saudi users were the second highest consumers after Indonesia (https://pando.com/2014/05/22/-paths-kiss-of-death-compliment-its-hugely-popular-in-indonesia/) (Indonesia contains the largest single Muslims population in the world. This may not be relevant, but might be worth considering in relation to identity and social practices). It was a closed SMP where the user could only add an exact number of friends (For more details, check https://path.com/about). Path's interface had limited options, for example, profile picture, header, and username. Sharing options on Path included images (from the photo album or an instant camera photo shot), music, books, movies, and a check-in options (check the pictures on the bottom right in this figure). Users posts called 'thought', removing a friend called 'unshare' and there were four sharing privacy options: (1) public: anyone who used Path could have seen this user's 'thoughts' by visiting their account; (2) friends: only friends whom the user had added could have seen their posts; (3) closed thought: the user chose those users whom they wanted to share their 'thoughts' with, and could have changed this option every time; and (4) 'inner-circle': the user's Path account remembered their 'friends' whom they chose to be in the inner-circle (users could have changed the list at any time), and users shared their 'thoughts' with them only when they pressed the inner-circle button (a star) (check the pictures on the bottom right in this figure).

Users could have connected their Path account to several other platforms such as: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and many others. As with many other SMP, Path had a messaging option; this used to be part of the application, on 20 June 2014, Path introduced Talk as a parallel application, where the Path account could have been used to send and receive messages(http://blog.path.com/post/89363839677/introducing-path-talk) (check the pictures on the bottom right in this figure). Users on Talk could have activated or deactivated the option of read messages (indicating their message had been read, which was similar to the two blue ticks on WhatsApp). On Talk, there were several communication options (check https://path.com/talk), one of which was recording voice messages. Path was the third platform I observed my participants' online practices through daily basis. Path had no desktop version, I used the iPhone app for online observation. I used screenshots only to conduct the data, along with monitoring their profiles changes (e.g. Avatar, header, name and bio). By the end of the online observation, I had to take screen shots for posts by each month.
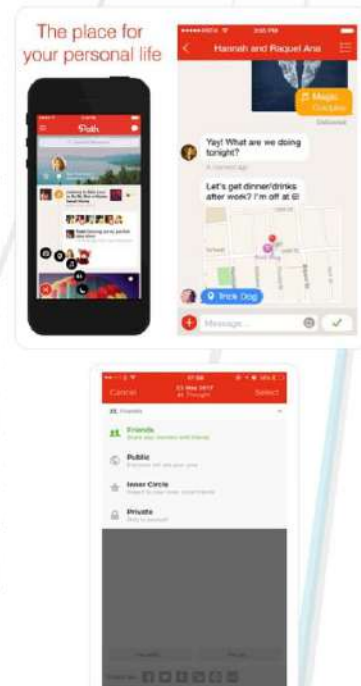
Figure 13 Daily basis observation: Path

A number of points need explaining here, regarding the choice of SMP for both phases of the study:

1) In the interview guide, the list of SMP that I asked my participants about (Appendix 5, 6, 7 and 8), was chosen based on a) my own experience of SMP popularity amongst Saudi women, (b) several statistics of most popular SMP in Saudi Arabia[1].

2) The platforms that I studied as part of the online observations were those of my participants' choice: I asked them what the platforms they were active on/uses the most and I planned my observation of those that they had mentioned (the differences amongst these platforms are explained in Figure 11, 12 and 13). I decided to exclude Whatsapp and Telegram because, although they are classified as SMP, their features and interfaces are so very different from Twitter, Facebook etc. and therefore the types of interactions and representations Twitter, Facebook, etc. offer are very different from Whatsapp and Telegram (e.g. replying to posts publicly, retweeting, liking a post etc.), and this would have made both the design of data collection and the data analysis difficult. Furthermore, some participants expressed the opinion tin our interviews that Whatsapp and Telegram are not SMP in their view.

3) Finally, the choice of Goodreads needs additional clarification as it is the only "domain-specific" SMP I chose to include. The reason is twofold: a) it was the choice of participants' themselves as they were active on it and considered it SMP, b) Goodreads' features and interface allow interactions that are comparable to those on the other selected platforms such as identity representation (via profile picture, naming, biography, etc) and could therefore provide useful data in response to my research questions[2].

---

[1] See for example:

https://arabiangazette.com/social-media-in-the-arab-world-2015-report/

https://www.statista.com/statistics/605876/most-frequently-accessed-social-networks-saudi-arabia/

https://www.statista.com/statistics/284451/saudi-arabia-social-network-penetration/

[2] An additional reason is the paucity of research on Goodreads (Chapter 2, section 2.4).

3.3.4 THE PILOT STUDY

I conducted a pilot study for two reasons: (1) to test the methodology and the possible challenges to overcome; (2) to see if this data would answer my research questions (Turner, 2010). Moreover, piloting is one of the vital components of validity (Anney, 2014; Maxwell, 2009). As Maxwell (2009, p.227) states:

> One particular use that pilot studies have in qualitative research is to generate an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying—what I have called "interpretation".

Piloting the online observation and semi-structured interviews provided me with the opportunity to refine my study design. Indeed, my initial interview guides (the first and follow up interviews), were developed and went through several revisions, as a result of spotting their limitations to "separate the wheat from the chaff" (Kozinets, 1998, p. 369), such as: informative questions versus non-relevant ones (Turner, 2010) (I will elaborate on this in the section in data collection section 3.4). Another important motive for doing the pilot study was to get the access I needed to the online community, through a purposive sample, which led me to a wider, snowball sample (more details in the next section.

3.3.5 SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT

Two methods of sampling were used in this research. In the pilot study I chose a purposive sample, whilst I used the snowballing method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) for the main phase of the data collection. Purposive sample is "a selection of individuals based on specific purposes of the research based on information available about these individuals" (Ibid, 2003, p. 297), which "can be used to achieve representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 235). Moreover, "researcher self-disclosure to participants is essential for the building the relationship with the participants' and gaining access and 'the quality of the researcher-participant relationship plays a key role in qualitative interviews" (King & Horrocks, 2010, pp. 30, 88–89). Therefore, I chose a purposive sample for the pilot because it was from an online community to which I had access. I started with the participants from my online network, who, knew and trusted me, since Turner (2010, p.757) highlighted: "the importance of acquiring participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information". Moreover, the women that I targeted in my sample

were Saudi women who used social media, and my participants knew who I was, where I lived, what I was doing in the UK and what my PhD thesis is about so my health and safety was a consideration. Pilot study participants shared their experience openly and in-depth, moreover, their trust paved the way for the snowballing sample.

For the pilot study, I recruited my sample using Path (Path.com) through my network of contacts, subjected to two conditions; I had not met them or talked to them (by phone, WhatsApp etc.), for ethical and objectivity considerations. I recruited the sample by announcing that I was conducting a study on Saudi women's online practices and I needed a small sample for a pilot study (Figure 15), and I declared that my preferred location was the city of Jeddah. I received responses from four participants from three different cities in Saudi Arabia: Jeddah, Dammam and AlKharj[1] (Figure 14). The next step was to collect their email addresses via Path Talk (https://path.com/talk) (Figure 13), and the consent procedure was completed by email (written consent). All the pilot study participants had used the Internet and SMP for more than 15 years (Figure 18, Chapter Four).

Figure 14 The map of Saudi Arabia with participants' cities of origin. Source: Alamy.Com[2]

---

[1] A city in the north of Saudi Arabia, one hour (south) by car from the capital city Riyadh

[2] https://bit.ly/2HxuQPK
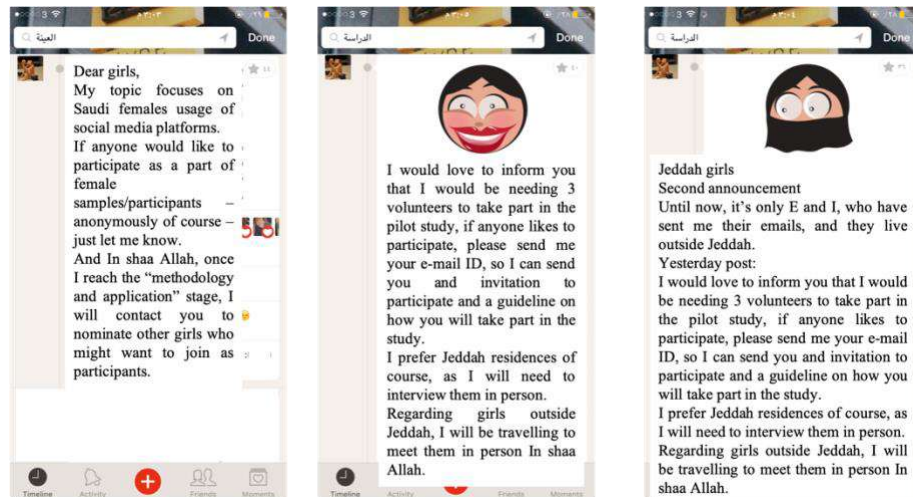
Figure 15 Translated screenshot of a 'thought' (post) I posted on Path's as part of the pilot study sample recruitment (February 2015)

As for the choice of snowballing for the main data collection, my pilot study sample knew me and trusted me, and they could introduce me to members of their networks with confidence. Thus, getting consent and trust would be easier. Moreover, for my own safety, meeting people to whom I was introduced by others was preferable to meeting with total strangers that I know nothing about. My pilot study participants had observed the online practices and experience of their friends on SMP. I asked my pilot study participants to introduce me to their Saudi women online friends according to the following criteria: (1) Using SMP for at least 1 year, (2) From different age groups (women born in 1980 - 1989 and 1970-1979) — since the pilot study participants were all born between (1990 – 1992), (3) Having social media accounts on different platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Path, Instagram etc.) (4) The pilot study participants had known them online for a long time (minimum two years).

I sent invitations through emails to the proposed sample in order to get their agreement and consent. To those who replied, I sent the consent forms and waited until I arrived in Saudi Arabia then sent a third email to confirm the date and place to meet. When I arrived in Saudi Arabia, I sent invitations through Whatsapp to the participants to arrange suitable dates and times for interview. Before the follow-up interview, I sent the interview guide to two of the participants (who I knew checked their email regularly). It is important to mention here that four out of eight of the participants were users whom I was following through my personal social media accounts.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 PILOT STUDY (MARCH - SEPTEMBER 2015): INTERVIEWS

In preparation for the Interview, I tested the audio tape recorder, and I had a backup. When choosing the venue, I asked participants to pick a quiet place, since I needed the recording to be clear. I started the interview by explaining the purpose of my research and the expected duration of our interview. I also addressed the confidentiality of the recorded conversation and how the recordings would be used for transcribing and would be disposed of afterwards. Within the interview, I encouraged participants to elaborate on their answers. For transitions between questions, I mentioned the previous question and what was the next one. Prior to the interview end, I asked participants if they had any questions and invited them to read the interview guide themselves to add any extra information. Venues for the interviews varied. I met M3 in a library in Jeddah, a place chosen by her because her parents did not allow her to meet strangers outside her home unless it was a "formal" place such as a university or library. There is a women-only sector inside the library. A1's interview took place at the food court in one of the malls in Jeddah. In Alkhobar, I met A2 in a cafe at one of the hotels. The fourth participant, I4, was interviewed via Skype.

3.4.2 PILOT STUDY (MARCH - SEPTEMBER 2015): ONLINE OBSERVATION

I tested the online observation tool within the pilot study period (three months; March - June 2015). I followed almost the same procedure in the main phase of data collection, except (1) reducing the number of platforms that I followed, according to my participants' authorisation. (2) privacy considerations, which I will discuss in the section learned through the pilot study. I will also reflect on privacy issues in the section on ethics parts, and how lack of control over some privacy features, which are not available through the platforms/apps, could impact research ethics.

Figure 16 Example of my researcher account/ profile on Path

Prior to the data collection, I asked/checked with my participants which SMP they used on a daily basis and which of them they authorised me to follow. Some of them mentioned their account during the interview; others sent them via the emails. In each account, I started with my full name, my position as a student and my current place for residence (Sheffield, UK). However, I changed all the usernames to symbolic ones (with 12 characters of letters and numbers). The main reason for this adjustment was due to research ethics and participants' privacy concerns, to avoid making them recognisable. Furthermore, research accounts' profile pictures were, at this early stage, Sheffield Hallam University's formal icon (Figure 16) (I will explain shortly how and why I changed that in the main phase of data collection). The biography in each account - if applicable - was: Researcher Accounts No Adds.

Table 3 Interviewees' acronyms and characteristics[1]

Pilot study sample					
Participant Acronym	**Year of Birth**	**City of Residence**	**Educational Level**	**Employment Status**	**Marital Status**
M3	1992	Jeddah	Bachelor	Was unemployed	Single
A1	1992	Jeddah	Bachelor, in 2017 she started her M. A[2]	Was unemployed	Was unmarried (got married in 2016)
A2	1991	Alkhobar	M.A	Employed	Was unmarried (got married in 2016 and bore a son in 2017)
I4	1992	Alkharj	Bachelor	Employed	Single
Main phase of data collection					
A5	1974	Jeddah	Post doc	Employed (Assistant Professor at a University)	Married with three children
R6	1978	Dammam	Bachelor	Volunteer	Divorced with four children
L7	1974	Dammam	Diploma after the high school	Unemployed	Married with three children
S8	1989	Alkhobar-Dammam	Bachelor	Employed/Un employed[3]	Got married during the data collection period
W9	1989	Riyadh	Bachelor	Employed	Single
M10	1990	Riyadh-Qassim[4]	Bachelor	Unemployed	Got married during the data collection period
A11	1980[5]	Jeddah	Bachelor	Unemployed	Married with five children
R12	1989	Dammam-UK[6]	M.A	Employed on leave[7]	Married with no children

[1] Their educational levels, employment, and marital statuses have changed since 2015

[2] Master of Art

[3] She was working with her father when I met her the first time, then in the follow-up interview after she got married, she left the job

[4] She got married during the data collection period and moved from Riyadh to Dammam then eventually Qassim.

[5] She did not tell me exactly when she was born, although with calculations of her: high school and bachelor graduation (17, 22 years respectively), plus the duration of her marriage (19 years) which she told me in the interview (January 2016), 1980 is the approximate year. I could not go back to double check with her because she withdrew from the follow-up interview.

[6] She had started her PhD in the UK when I met her.

[7] She had a scholarship from her work to pursue her PhD

Table 4 Interviews' location, medium and duration

Participant Acronym	First Interview Location/Medium	First Interview Duration	Follow-Up Interview Location/Medium	Follow-Up Interview Duration
M1	Face-to-face; Jeddah; public library	33m	Skype	10m
A1	Face-to-face; Jeddah; Food court, shopping centre	17m	Skype	19m
A2	Face-to-face; Alkhobar; hotel café	37m	Skype	15m
I4	Skype	40m	Skype	37m
A5	Face-to-face; Jeddah; her house	1h	Face-to-face; Jeddah; her house	55m
R6	Face-to-face; Alkhobar; café, shopping centre	29m	Face-to-face; Dammam; her sister's house	45m
L7	Face-to-face; Alkhobar; café, shopping centre	29m	Face-to-face; Dammam; her house	45m
S8	Face-to-face; Alkhobar, cafe	1h:15m	Face-to-face; Dammam; Café	13m
W9	Face-to-face; Riyadh; restaurant	26m	Rebtel	1h:15m
M10	Face-to-face; Riyadh; Female-only café, shopping centre	12m	GoogleDoc	-
A11	Face-to-face; Jeddah; café, shopping centre	1h	_[1]	-
R12	Face-to-Face; London; Ladurée café in Covent Garden;	1h	Face-to-Face; London; café in a Hotel	1h

[1] She withdrew from the follow-up interview

In the previous section: SMP in this thesis, I discussed in detail how I observed and logged online data. In this part, I reflect how I started with a narrow conception of online observation in the pilot study, which I developed later. For example, I kept a log of how many posts my participants shared on each platform. I then wrote down all the statistics and entered them into an excel sheet, then tables and charts were designed using Microsoft word. Afterwards, following my PhD confirmation report feedback, I focused on qualitative investigation, where I settled that my methodology was a multi-method qualitative approach. As I continued the data collection process, the main concepts: identity, online practices and women were my lenses.

Table 5 Privacy settings across the researcher's platforms (my platforms which i used for the online observation)

Platform	Privacy Settings
Twitter	Private account
Facebook	Account privacy settings were: who can see my stuff? Friends only, who can look me up? Friends only
Instagram	Private account
Path	Was totally easy due to its original settings, no one can add you unless they request to do so, and you accept their request.
Goodreads	Public account

3.4.3 LESSONS/EXPERIENCES LEARNED THROUGH THE PILOT STUDY

Through practising both online observation and interviews, I learned several lessons and gained valuable experience. Regarding the interviews, for example, I practised how to elaborate on participants' answers, and how to build the follow-up interviews according to their online practices. I also learned to be more confident and dare to ask probing questions such as, 'and why is that?' I also become aware that the duration of the interview, although it is important, does not necessarily equated to the quality/richness of its data. Therefore, I revised my interview guides, both first and follow-up ones, and identified questions that did not serve or enrich my understanding/focus.

68

As for the online observation, I faced several challenges that I had not anticipated. For example, when I created the researcher accounts on each platform in the pilot study, I used my university email (Sheffield Hallam). I kept receiving on different platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, friends' suggestions, based on my email (Sheffield community). I found this a threat to ethical issues, revealing my identity and those of my participants also. I then created a separate email for these accounts. I also learned that some participants were happy to share their experience of being a participant/interviewee, instantly sharing our meeting on Path (e.g., 'I met Ghayda today because I am one of her research participants').

The confounding of my user/researcher identities led me, within the online observation period, to stop my personal usage on all SMPs for three months. I became an observer. Moreover, I gained a sense of how often participants used different platforms for different usage, and how only certain platforms were rich and had valuable to enrich my data. For example, Twitter, Instagram and Path held most online practices in terms of daily practices. They were/are also — within my participants' community — the most popular ones. Tumblr, LinkedIn, Facebook and Goodreads were least common. Finally, It is worth mentioning, although feminism had emerged in the pilot study data collection in A2's and I4's posts on Path, one of the limitations of my pilot study was not asking I4 and A2 about those posts.

3.4.4 MAIN PHASE OF DATA COLLECTION (JANUARY 2016 - APRIL 2017): INTERVIEWS

I conducted the first interview on the 18th of January with A5 in her house in Jeddah (where I had met her one year previously). We talked for three and a half hours, but the interview duration was 1 hour and 14 minutes. The second and third interviews were on the 15th of February, I interviewed three participants (morning and afternoon). The first interview was conducted in at the home of R6 and L7 (two sisters) in Dammam, and lasted for 45 minutes. The second with S8 at a public cafe in Dammam also, took only 13 minutes. I sent to A5 and S8 Amazon gift cards as a token of gratitude, but R6 and L7 refused because I had already visited them with a gift of chocolate. In this part, I merged the first and follow up interviews for each participant, I present them by participant's city of residence.

Regarding the interview venues, A5 invited me to her house in Jeddah. This it was my first interview that I conducted in a participant's home. The follow-up interview was

also held at her house. The atmosphere was quiet and cosy. As for A11, I met her at a café in Jeddah. She told me that she could not find her driver, so she took a taxi to meet me. A11 was a tricky participant; although she expressed her full commitment, even after the online observation period, when I suggested that the follow-up interview be face-to-face, she withdrew from the study. She agreed to a distance interview, but the idea of a face-to-face interview caused — as far as I understand — her withdrawal. She said that although her husband knew about the study, he did not authorise her to continue[1]. However, I travelled to Dammam to meet R6, L7 and S8. In the first interview, I met R6 and L7 (together) and S8 at cafes in Alkhobar. In the follow-up interview, I asked the permission of R6 and L7 to visit either of homes, because the first interview was noisy and the recording was difficult to hear and transcribe (the place was noisy with children screaming, and the crashing of plates, cutlery etc.). As for the follow-up with S8, it took place at a café in Dammam. She asked for the second interview to be in Dammam because she had moved there after she got married[2].

As for W9 and M10, I flew to Riyadh to meet them for the first interview, I met W9 at a restaurant, and M10 asked me to meet her at a female only cafe, and her mother accompanied her. I conducted the follow-up interview with W9 via the phone using the Rebtel application for international calls. As for M10, I tried to conduct the follow-up interview on the phone, but we had difficulty to find a convenient time for both of us[3], so I suggested that she record her answers, as I had already sent the questions to her. Eventually, the interview was done through GoogleDrive. Finally, because R12 was a PhD student in the UK, both our interviews took place in London. The first took place at Ladurée café in Covent Garden; the second took place at a cafe at a hotel.

3.4.5 Main Phase of Data Collection (January 2016 - April 2017): Online Observation

In the main phase of online observation, following my participants' choice of platforms that I could follow, I deactivated my research account on Linkedin and Tumblr, as none

---

[1] My own instinct that this was not the reason

[2] Another reason was, it was raining heavily and the highway between Alkhobar and Dammam was flooded.

[3] I was in UK; she was in Saudi Arabia; the winter time difference was 3 hours then 2 hours. The only suitable time for her was morning between 8 - 12 which was for me from 5 - 9 or 6 - 10.

of the participants were using them. I unfollowed the pilot study participants on Twitter, and followed the second group of eight participants. I did the same on Instagram and Path. Any other platforms: Goodreads and Facebook, I unfriended my pilot study participants and added the snowball sample participants. Details of all other observation techniques have been provided previously (section 3.3.3).

There are two issues I want to highlight here regarding the online observation: (1) I suspended my online observation between June and July 2016, due to Ramadan. (2) in contrast to 'cutting social media' within the pilot study online observation, in this stage there was one platform I did not stop using through the second online observation phase: Twitter. The main reason was that I had started to use it as a formal medium more than a personal one. I needed to be active on Twitter and to stay up-to-date with national issues in my region, especially women's issues (I will discuss this in detail at the end of this chapter, in the section on validity and reliability, under immersion). I kept a log/notes of my online observation using the Evernote app, as I could use it on three devices: MacBook, iPhone and Samsung mobile (my Saudi sim card device). Evernote enabled me to update my notes on different devices by using the syncing feature, to avoid any unintended loses.

3.4.6 CHALLENGES

In Figure 11 (section 3.3.3) I mentioned how LinkedIn and Facebook are both 'algorithm stalking platforms'. I also explained in section 3.4.3, following discussion of the pilot study data collection, how I changed my email which, was registered to my researcher account on the platforms. I here mention a third challenge I encountered during my online observation period: my profile picture. I mentioned that I used the SHU logo as my profile picture. Hence, as the contexts collapsed (see section 2.3.2), I decided to change all the profile pictures to the platforms' formal logo. I decided this when I added my main-phase participants on Path, and I noticed how friends common to me and my participants could see the profile picture with my university email; the same was the case for Twitter. For ethical and privacy reasons, I changed the profile pictures to be more generic.

Context-collapse[1] occurred as well with my Twitter and Instagram researcher accounts. Two participants had followed me, one on Twitter and the other on Instagram (both in

[1] Glossary of Terms

the pilot study and in the main phase of data collection). Since I was not active on my account (I used the account for observation only, e.g. I was a lurker), they were only able to see who I was following (although I am not sure they did either). This was an issue that I had no control over. I could not decline their request, as a researcher-trust issue, and I also could not 'ban' them from the possibility of identifying the other participants. Private/public privacy options were a challenge as well on Instagram, because I could not tell if the account was public or private unless I used another account to check. Another problem was being very cautious/aware of the location feature to be turned off.

It is important to highlight here that, although I was not intending to focus on women of higher social class and certain levels of education, I am aware of these characteristics in my sample. It is worth mentioning here that as of 2015, 52% of all university graduates in Saudi Arabia were female, and that women constitute 51.8% of Saudi university students[1]. Furthermore, I recognise the impact of the participants' social class, education and English proficiency on the findings, and this will be reflected in the discussion of data. For example, in section 3.8, I discuss how A5's education level, English ability and profession (writer/academic) (Table 3) made our conversation around feminism easier and clearer in comparison to the case of R6 and L7. Another example, in Chapter 7 (section 7.6.4), were the answers to my question regarding whether the word 'enslaving' in the #StopenslavingSaudiwomen was equivalent to #Endguardianship. I elaborate further on the impact of such characteristics of my participants on my findings and in relation to the thesis' limitations in Chapter 8 (section 8.4.1).

3.5 ANALYSIS

To analyse my data, I followed Thematic Analysis. It is important to highlight here, that for the visual data from online observation, I adopted Kozinets (2015) approach. I argue that this method is a form of thematic analysis in various respects: (1) it is inductive, (2) it also includes coding, memoing and theming. Data Analysis took place in three phases: in stage one I analysed the interviews using thematic analysis, in stage two I used Kozinets (2015) approach to analyse the online observation data; and in stage three I compared and merged the themes from both previous stages. It is worth

---

[1]   https://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2015/05/28/More-women-than-men-in-Saudi-universities-says-ministry.html

noting here, that I tested all analysis methods on a small part of the data before I started my main analysis.
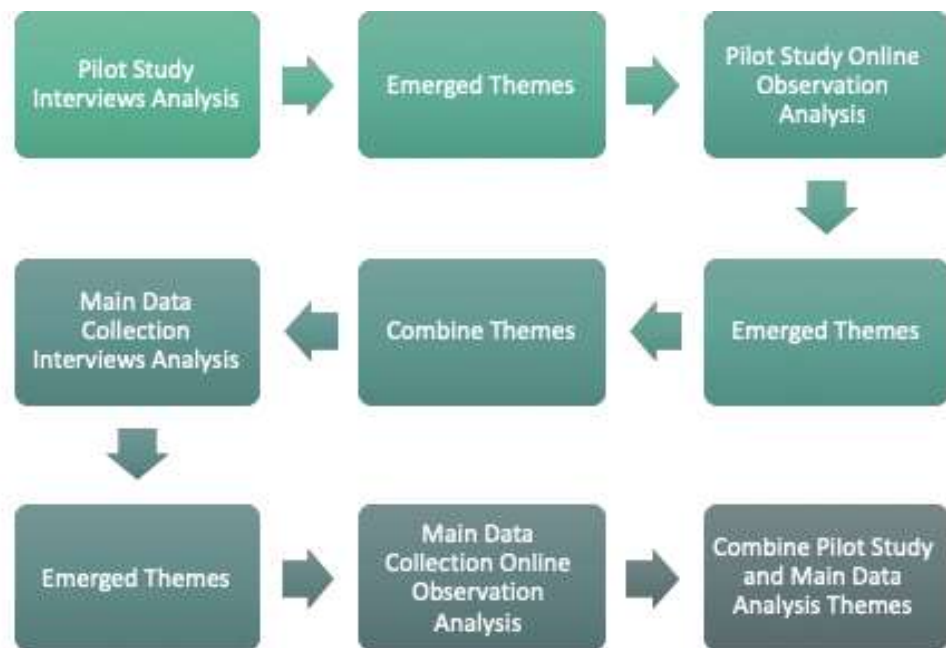
Figure 17 Data analysis process

3.5.1 *STAGE ONE: THEMATIC ANALYSIS FOR INTERVIEWS*

The early stages of interviews data analysis started with by Verbatim transcribing approach (King & Horrocks, 2010, pp. 142–174). I chose this method to understand in detail my participants' data, I also made sure to note their non-verbal communication. I reviewed several works on thematic analysis (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bricki and Green, 2007; Chapman, Hadfield, & Chapman, 2015; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Turner, 2010). As Bricki and Green (2007, p.24) defines Thematic Analysis as follows:

> A thematic analysis is one that looks across all the data to identify the
> common issues that recur, and identify the main themes that summarise all
> the views you have collected.

All key references on thematic analysis agree on its main stages: Immersing yourself in the data by reading them repeatedly, generate codes and themes each time you read the data and minimise merge the codes and themes in the final stage for the writing up. Below, I list the steps that I followed in doing thematic analysis for interview transcriptions:

73

1.   I transcribed the interview using the Scrivener app, which enabled me to listen and transcribe in the same window, using a verbatim transcribing approach - as mentioned previously[1] (Table 6).

Table 6 Interview transcription conventions

'…'	Beginning and end of participants' excerpts.
[... (En)]	All sentences/words between brackets [..] and with (En), means the words were said in English: participants' code-switching.
(En)	By the end of the excerpt means that the whole interview was conducted in English, no translation needed (this is the case with one interview with one participants: A2, only).
(…)	Researcher clarifications
Bold	Emphasis

2.   I then exported the transcriptions to a docx; Microsoft word file.

3.   I printed the transcriptions, read them, and did the first round of coding, annotating possible themes (Appendix 10).

4. I then uploaded the docx files to Dedoose (I will discuss this in detail in the section on QDAS 3.5.4) and continued coding (Appendix 9), annotating, writing memos and generating themes. This was only possible for the interview transcriptions' data (I will explain shortly the technical issues I faced with Dedoose when uploading the visual data).

5. Finally, I exported the memos, quotations, codes and themes as docx files, and started writing the analysis on Scrivener.

6. Early stages of data analysis of the pilot study interviews started in October 2016; parts of the analysis were submitted in a paper which had been reviewed several times (submission, feedback/rejection between 2017 – 2018) and finally published in a journal paper (November 2018) (Appendix 12). These comments and edits were beneficial and enriched my analysis process.

3.5.2 STAGE TWO: VISUAL ANALYSIS; ONLINE OBSERVATION DATA

I tested the visual analysis through academic presentations which built my understanding of data analysis. Since my early upgrade report submission, I gained

---

[1] Same section, first paragraph, page 73.

sense of my participants' online representation, which I claim was the first step to analysing the visual data, for example, how their pictures reflected, represented a feminine/gendered identity. I then represented parts of the visual data between June 2016[1] and April 2017[2] at different venues (Appendix 12). To do so, I had to review the visual data to represent online practices as defined in this thesis, together with other aspects of identity such as national/regional identity. I followed Kozinets' (2015, p.119) analytical coding-based method which has six stages to be followed in sequence: (1) Coding, (2) Noting, (3) Abstracting, (4) Checking and (5) Generalising. Another source of data which was a core part of my analysis, is the online observation notes, which I revised regularly whilst coding, theming, memoing and writing the analysis. The notes reminded me and helped me to focus on and understand my participants' online practices. They also helped me when I merged the analysis of the interviews and online observation to identify the commonalities and contradictions among the data. I wanted to use Dedoose for the visual analysis. However, I faced technical issues such as its storage capacity. For example, I could not upload all my data at once to the application; I had to upload them in different stages (e.g., 10 pictures at a time). I found this to be time and effort consuming, so I decided to do it manually. I combined the final themes from the first and second analysis stages to write my final analysis chapters.

3.5.3 TRANSLATION ISSUES

Bryman and Burgess (2002, p. 2018) argue: "Analysis in qualitative research is continuous in that it interweaves with other aspects of the research process", in this context, they give an example illustrating how analysis is not 'merely' dealing with the data in front of the researcher, but considering other aspects such as the social relations of fieldwork: how data accounts are generated and the ways in which the researcher (and the data he or she generates, such as observation notes or interview transcripts) relates to the empirical site. This is important given my own relationship to my field of research. As my data was conducted mainly in Arabic, and analysis had to interweave with language and Arabic/Saudi cultural contexts (as other aspects of my research

---

[1] Arab social media conference, University of Reading

[2] British Association Conference (BSA) 2017

process). Therefore, translating and understanding the data are mutually related. For example, veiling had to be explained in advance in the introduction, then elaborated on in the discussion: an understanding of gender-segregation, Hijab, Niqab and cross-gender communication, had to be explained and stressed on as part of the translation process. Translation here is not merely 'literal' one, but cultural as well. Several studies have discussed the translation dilemma of qualitative data, raising the question: Is meaning lost in translation? (van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). Through reviewing several scholarly writings which addressed this dilemma (Al-Amer, Ramjan, Glew, Darwish, & Salamonson, 2015; Chen & Boore, 2010; Farghaly & Shaalan, 2009; Regmi, Naidoo, & Pilkington, 2010; Santos, Black, & Sandelowski, 2014; Temple & Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010). I took the following decisions regarding Arabic/English translation:

a) I worked in the original language (Arabic) as long and as much as possible. After I had familiarised myself with the data and made sense of them in Arabic. I coded most of the excerpts using English words, except for codes related to the Arabic, Saudi and Muslim contexts (such as *Haram*, *Ayub*, *Shabab*, see Glossary of Terms).

b) I took a Qualitative Research Methods online course on the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) platform Coursera[1].

c) I undertook the translations with the support of a professional freelance translator, who is a native Arabic speaker and social media user across different platforms as well. This also involved my working as a "translation moderator in cooperation with the translator" (van Nes et al., 2010, p. 315) to make sure that what the participants said was well presented and interpreted, besides paying special attention when metaphors were translated, either in quotations or in the findings (Ibid, 2010).

Since I am bilingual, I translated the interview guides, participants sheet and consent form English to Arabic. I claim that at this phase I knew what questions I wanted to ask and how I wanted to ask them. My own knowledge of my community and the Saudi social media-internet spheres enhanced my ability to translate the forms. My supervisors noted that I should be careful with voice-translation, i.e. whether the tone of English (which was originally submitted for review to my supervisors) was a barrier when translated to Arabic (e.g., if the tone was strict or un-friendly), in this case Arabic

---

[1] Qualitative Research Methods, University of Amsterdam
https://www.coursera.org/account/accomplishments/certificate/VCAE8B6L9UJX

linguistics usage should be taken into consideration. I took this into account when I translated the interview guide, participants sheet and the consent form (Appendix 3) (Appendix 4).

All interviews were conducted in Arabic, except one of the pilot study interviews[1]. It was not before I reached the analysis writing stage that I was able to decide which quotations I wanted to represent in my thesis. I shared these excerpts with a freelance translator, although, I did not rely wholly on her translation. As a researcher who conducted the data by myself, I spotted a few misinterpretations whilst reviewing her translation. For example, the phrase *eayilah muhafaza* was translated as traditional, which is *taqlidia* in Arabic, which was not the context meaning; the equivalent was conservative[2].

Moreover, for screenshots of participants' posts e.g., tweets, retweets, I followed the same approach in translating Arabic posts into English, I noted explicitly in the data analysis chapters (Chapter Four, Five, Six and Seven) which screenshots where translated and I overlay the English (translated) text on the Arabic one. I present examples of the translations (both the interviews and the screenshots) in the appendices (Appendix 11).

3.5.4 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS SOFTWARE (QDAS)

I used Dedoose to analyse the interview transcriptions. Coding, theming and memoing were easier with Dedoose for several reasons: visualisation, organising my ideas, editing and resolving what is called the 'coding fetishism'; over-coding (Richards, 2002), by merging or deleting codes and themes. Before Dedoose, I tried Atlas.ti7 and Nvivo10 for the pilot study data (some of the keywords and screenshots are attached in the appendices). However, I decided to use Dedoose instead, as it is a more reliable software.

3.6 ETHICS

Ethics protocols were taken into consideration in each phase, from translating the consent forms to making English version content clear in Arabic. For example,

---

[1] A2 asked for the first interview to be in English, as it will be easier for me to transcribe – she suggested

[2] Check http://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/تقليدي/ and http://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/محافظ/

presenting the data for publication purposes. I submitted my university ethics approval application on February 2015 and received my ethics approval by the end of March 2015 (Appendix 2). However, online research comes with difficult techno-ethics-challenges. I encountered several instances where my participants were totally open to share that they were part of my sample. For example, during both the pilot study and the main phase of data collection, two participants shared on Path with common friends (between me and them) that they had met me for a research interview (A1 and M3).

Moreover, considering the political laws of my country, I was very cautious and kept in mind the restrictions on the freedom of speech (Alsaggaf, 2015), to avoid any harm resulting from what my participants might share, either in the interviews or by observing their SMP accounts. I tried my best to find a balance between analysis objectivity; i.e. not to turn a blind eye to parts of the data and the presentation of sensitive data, such as political opinions. For the sake of protecting participants' identity, I chose various ways of printing, presenting and saving data. For the interviews, for example, I deleted any possible identifiable information and I relied on translation to protect also Arabic data, so the Arabic reader would not be able to identify my participants' identities through search for Arabic tweets. For the printed materials, I shadowed participants' names and avatars to avoid any possible relation between the two: posts and avatars. For saved data, I deleted voice recordings and non-visual data (interviews). However, there were unexpected ethical issues I encountered: consent, data confidentiality and visual data representation ethics and publication.

Written *Consent* was a 'bit weird' for some participants. For example, my friend, who is R6's daughter and L7's niece, helped me to get their written consents. According to my friend, R6 and L7 said: *'why should we be very formal! let it be more relaxed'*. W9 told me before handing her signed consent form: *'I signed it because I trust you'*. I consider this issue of trust due to the cultural context of sharing – possible – sensitive information, a fear of putting one's name to something: disclosure of her identity related to the information she shared). A11 as I mentioned before, found it difficult to sign the consent online, she sent her approval via Whatsapp. Other participants read the participants' sheets and the consent forms, but, they gave me their consent verbally.

Regarding *Data Confidentiality*, although I was very cautious not to reveal my participants' identities, I recall M3's reaction when I asked her if would be acceptable to mention some details about her in a paper I was working on. She said, *'My love, I do not mind if you even write my full name in your thesis'*. M3 was a participant who

was happy to be identified with her full identity, which is something I was not expecting from a member of the Saudi community. Besides participants' anonymity, there were other ethical issues on which I had to make decisions, as it is the researcher's responsibility to protect participants from any harm, I was very cautious in representing discussing sensitive issues/opinions that they shared with me. As this work will at some point be part of published, material that is public and open to read, it is my responsibility, not only to anonymise their identities but also to cause them any harm/misinterpretations/misunderstanding. For example, one of my participants shared with me a personal episode that happened to her online (a romantic relationship). I mentioned this within the analysis without indicating which participant she was. Another participant shared with me sensitive information about her husband's job, which I chose not to represent or discuss in the thesis. because it has nothing to do with the topic of my research; I was not sure that she was aware that this would be recorded and transcribed word by word, line by line.

Considering *Visual Data Representation and Publication*, as the internet never forgets and the data is searchable (e.g., Images.google.com has a feature of uploading any picture and it can be tracked), I had to make various decisions on what to represent through written publications and visual ones (e.g., seminars, conferences and posters/presentations). According to research ethics, I promised my participants not to use any images/pictures of them without their permission, but with online observation this is not the only challenge (Gatson, 2011), as my SMP are different in their privacy features, private versus public. For example, as Twitter data is open and permanent, the tweets, even the pictures, can easily be searched and my participants' identities could be exposed. Here, the translation from Arabic to English made it easier, as the original language cannot be translated easily; therefore, I decided to translate the tweets and hide the profile picture of my participants' posts. Moreover, I shared retweets with a clear profile picture but hiding who retweeted it. I followed this strategy with searchable images/pictures.

3.7   VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In this section I discuss nine components of validity and reliability according to a line of relevant literature (Bricki and Green, 2007; Maxwell, 2009; Viani et al., 1996) 1) audit trail; transparency, 2) peer debriefing; bias threat, 3) the choice not to employ respondent validation, 4) sampling; how in the snowball sample, I maximised the

sample variance, 5) Interviews, reflecting on the questions, researcher-participant relationship and rapport 6) triangulation: multi-methods; the online/offline data, 7) prolonged engagement in the field; 'Immersion/crystallisation', 8) confronting the evidence; analysis, and 9) Reflexivity; reflecting on my positions as a Saudi, female researcher and devotee (active social media user).

For the *Audit trail; Transparency*, transparency of methods is part of validity and reliability (Bricki and Green, 2007). In this chapter I explained step-by-step my strategies of inquiry, starting with the data collection, all the way to how I analysed the data. I also attached appendices for interview guides, participant sheet, consent form and further coding and theming. I claim that all of these provide an 'audit trail', making my methodology reproducible. Another point to consider when talking about transparency, is a systematic method, which I described exhaustively in the three analysis stages.

Considering *Peer Debriefing; Bias Concerns*, although "an observer is generally much less of an influence on participants' behaviour than is the setting itself" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 243). I was aware that taking screenshots during the online observation period could fail to log some of my participants' online practices, as such selection could be influenced by what struck me as an observer. Become of such bias threats, I explained in section 3.3.3, how at the end of the online observation span – I revised/revisited my participants' SMP accounts, to retrieve any data which I might have missed.

I chose not to seek respondent validation: sending send the interview transcripts, for several reasons: a) It was hard enough for them to dedicate their time for the two interviews; b) even if I did go back to them with the transcription, all the data would be translated into English, consequently, their own words would not be used verbatim the concern was with theming, patterns and categories more than exact/precise words; c) although they had read and consented, reading their words as a textual version could possibly raise their fear/concern. Instead of going back to the participants to review the interviews, I did that partly in the follow-up interviews, where I summarised what we had discussed before starting my questions. I also gave a careful thought as to what to share/represent, to ensure that my participants' identities are protected. Finally, I agree with Maxwell's (2009, p.244) argument: "participants' feedback is no more inherently valid than their interview responses; both should be taken simply as evidence regarding the validity of your account".

Regarding *Sampling,* "sampling in qualitative research is neither probability sampling nor convenience sampling, but falls into a third category: purposeful sampling" (Patton, 1990, cited in Maxwell, 2009, p.235). In the sampling and recruiting section (3.3.5) I discussed how and why I recruited both samples: purposive and snowballing, I argue my choice to expand my sample characteristic via snowballing as part of validity, with the diversity in age groups, educational levels, employment statuses, heritage origins, cultural backgrounds and different provinces in Saudi. All of this gave me a broader interpretation of data and different perspectives and opinions on my topic: online practices and identity.

Moreover, it is important to assert that I do not aim for generalisation, and I acknowledge that my sample is limited in in various respects. Although I argue that my participants are representatives of Saudi women who use social media, according to their online experience and SMP consumption, there are several limitations:

a) My participants had the privileges of being educated, freedom of transportation (e.g. having a driver, in some cases being able to travel outside the kingdom).

b) Even with the heterogeneity I claim through the findings, this sample is homogenous in terms of the online community, in other words: they share common friends/ ties.

c) It is important to highlight that the Saudi population is over 21 million (citizens) of whom more than half of them are females, according to the latest statistics (General Authority of Statistics, 2018).

Nevertheless, since I recruited Saudi women from different provinces in Saudi Arabia of different ages, cultural backgrounds, educational levels and employment statuses, I claim this to be in its quality a representative sample but not a generalizable one. It represents a small part of Saudi women who live in well-developed cities, have access to the internet, have at least a post high school diploma, have well-established experience with the internet in Saudi Arabia since its early beginning and especially SMP, on which they are active (I will elaborate on this in section 3.8).

For the *Interviews*, as "validity in qualitative research is the result not of indifference, but of integrity (personal communication)" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 243), I asked for my participants' permission before recording our conversation (Bricki and Green, 2007). On two occasions, my participants asked me not to share some information. In one case M3 asked me just not to share such information. In another interview, A5 simply asked me to stop the recording. In both situations, I respected their choices, although trying to "minimise" your effect on the interviewee is an impossible goal" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 243). To avoid influencing what the interviewees say, besides reviewing the

interview guides with my supervisors, I designed the interview guide by starting from general questions about their online experience, since they started using the internet. I then specified the questions on SMP. In the main phase of data collection, when I asked my participants about active hashtags during the online observation period, I started with general hashtags before finishing with #endguardianship, the reason being to leave sensitive questions to the end (Bricki and Green, 2007), in case some participants were opposed to this topic, the topic alienated them from continuing the interview and/or answering my other questions productively.

I remember when I4 asked me, as an answer to one of my questions, 'what do you think?' I simply told her that I am a researcher; I could not express my opinion during the interview. I could do it later, when we finished, but not during it. I also sensed when my participants expressed their disagreement with a topic (e.g. in relation to Saudi women), where I remained silent. I also assured them, repeatedly, that there was no right or wrong response, and they had as much time as they as they needed time to think about the answer. Moreover, I asked them for further clarifications of their answers, in different parts of the interview. At the end of each interview, I invited them to reread the questions by themselves, in case they had anything more to add. This produced – on many occasions – further inputs and data.

However, I claim interviews on validity through asserting the importance of my familiarity with SMP practices, especially on the Saudi online sphere, and how my relationship with my participants was a crucial part of my position as a researcher, which earned me their trust to collect such deep data. They proved Bricki and Green (2007, p.13) call: 'Life histories', which they define as:

> one type of in-depth interviews, they are illustrative case studies which are very good at looking at people's lives in general … they will tell you how much things have changed, evolved over decades and how broader social change has affected the lives of individuals.

Moreover, such a relationship made it easier and more relaxed to build a dialogue between me and them. On some occasions, the interview lasted for more than an hour, and the whole meeting lasted for four hours (R12 and A5 follow-up interviews).

Regarding *Triangulation; Multi-Methods*: Using Online/Offline Data, as "Triangulation allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 245). In the section on my multi-method approach (3.1.2), I explained why I chose multi-methods, in this short section, I argue this triangulation as part of my research validity (Bricki and Green, 2007; Maxwell, 2009).

The comparison between two sets of data on online practices enabled me to spot differences and commonalities. It also deepened my understanding of identity, as I discussed in Chapter One (section 1.2.1, 1.2.2) that online and offline are not separated spheres, identity is a whole, with different facets. Online observation and interview dialogues with my participants validate each other by confronting and report as well. Moreover, notes which I took from both ethnography and interviews helped me to shape a bigger picture of my participants' online practices, aligned with their identities. For example, A11 repeatedly mentioned in the interview that she was from a noble heritage; Al Ashraf. Her online representation and shared practices followed the same pattern, the pride of belonging to such roots. This is part of the commonality/unity of her online/offline identity; who she is versus others; I/we versus them.

Considering ***Prolonged Engagement in The Field; 'Immersion/Crystallisation'***, immersion is "a process whereby researchers immerse themselves in the data they have collected by reading or examining some portion of the data in detail" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 1), and crystallisation is:

> The process of temporarily suspending the process of examining or reading the data (immersion) in order to reflect on the analysis experience and attempt to identify and articulate patterns or themes noticed during the immersion process.

Since the beginning of my method choices, I chose verbatim transcripts for interviews, I also had a time span to read, reread and analyse the data, since the pilot study was done in 2015, and the main phase of data collection ended in early 2017. This long period allowed me to immerse myself in the data for between 1 - 2 years, during which I was transcribing, coding and theming for months. Moreover, my 'long-term participant observation' minimised my inference with my participants' online practices. Indeed, my "sustained presence as a researcher in the setting studied" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 244) which, in the case of my research, is SMP, crystallised my view of Saudi women's online practices and identity. The follow-up interviews, in fact, offered in-depth clarifications and rich data.

Regarding ***Confronting the Evidence; Analysis***, "any differences you find are an important source of data in themselves" (Bricki and Green, 2007, p. 27), and deviant cases through data comparison are parts of validity, and they "counter the twin dangers of respondent duplicity" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 244). In the visual data for example, the poetic trait of Arabic language was evoked, where my participants used Arabic poetry and literature texts as captions under their posts. Captions to posts (image/picture)

captions were rarely justified; the caption did not explain why the picture was posted, or why this caption was used for that post. This was one of the main challenges I faced whilst doing visual analysis of the online observation data.

3.8 REFLECTING ON MY POSITION AS A SAUDI, FEMALE RESEARCHER AND DEVOTEE

"I tried, with both success and failure during my ride, to remain detached" (Duneier, 1999, quoted in Dean, 2017, p.1)

Since being reflexive is accounting for the role of the researcher in the research (Beck, 2015), in this last part I reflect on being Saudi, a woman and an active social media user doing research on Saudi women online; a "female indigenous researcher" (Alsaggaf, 2015, p. 71; Altorki, 1994, p. 66). I begin with how my research journey has helped me to understand my own online practices and identity; it deepened my understanding and broadened my horizons of what I knew about my own community/country; how I see Saudi Arabia and Saudi women. As Tsourvakas (1997, p.9) puts it: "The research "instrument" is the human investigator, who reflexively becomes an inseparable part of both the action itself and the ensuing description". I tried to distance myself from the data during the data collection phases, by 'detoxing' from all or most SMPs (e.g. Path, Twitter and Instagram). This enabled me to look at the data, especially online practices, from different perspective, for example, how identity is practised online.

Although I claimed my relationship with my participants, my familiarity and access to both the online and offline community as advantages, I quote Altorki (1988, p.55), who conducted an anthropological study on Saudi women in Jeddah two decades ago, when she reflects on her research experience as an insider: "I discovered that almost every one of the advantages had its negative side". For me, as for Altorki, the advantages of being a devotee and part of the Saudi community raised disadvantages, from the anxiety of being subjective and biased, to how I could report on my participants, who had become my friends. I here negotiate my relationship with my research by being a "research instrument". It was difficult for me at the end of my online observation to go back to being a user only, where my participants and I no longer had a researcher-participant relationship. This made me wonder, for example, if I might be a subject of another research by another researcher, investigating either SMP practices in general

or Saudi women's online practices on Twitter. Such thoughts reflect what Kozinets asserts: "the key element is not to forget the participative, reflective, interactive and active part of our research when using the communicative function of social media and the internet" (Kozinets, 2015, p. 97).

As the term reflexivity reacts to awareness of the "unavoidable mutual influence of the research participants and the researcher on each other" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 234). I echo what happened in one of the follow-up interviews with two participants (R6 and L7), when I asked about the term: Saudi feminism, and neither participant was aware of that term, in Arabic either *AlNasawiya*, or English. I then had to explain what feminism is, whilst I was struggling with my consciousness: was I leading this conversation? Was I giving them my own perspective of feminism and Saudi feminism as well? Another incident happened within my follow-up interview: with W9, who was not familiar with De Beauvoir's book, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, or Suffragette movie (2015). W9 said that she did not think it was necessary to watch the 'Suffragette' in order to understand feminism: *'This is common-sense, you understand it by reason, I do not have to read someone's thoughts to arrive to an understanding, Yes you have to know the conception, maybe afterwards ask others about it, I read about it'* (W9). Because of this misunderstanding I had to explain to W9, that the reason I asked about Simone de Beauvoir and 'Suffragette', was because I had spotted their popularity on SMP as feminist figures, in the Saudi online sphere.

Finally, my positions in this study as user and researcher conflicted. I was born in Riyadh, raised in Jeddah. My heritage is Najdi (from the middle of Saudi), and my style life is Hijazi; I wear Hijab, but do not wear Niqab. I am also an expatriate, living abroad and have experienced living on my own. These factors combined with my own beliefs (e.g., that Niqab is unnecessary; Hijab is the form of veiling I believe in and perform), not to ignore my own online experience, which I have mentioned before (section 1.4). All in all, these played a vital and challenging role in my research, from sampling to writing up. For instance, veiling was an issue to 'wonder' about in interviews; should I unveil my face or cover it? Would this impact the participant's impression of me? In Jeddah, for example, I wore a grey Abaya, although when I travelled to Riyadh and Alkhobar, I wore black Abaya; I uncovered my face in Alkhobar but covered it in Riyadh.

The cultural differences among Arab countries also played a part: for example, the access to female participants would be easier if such a study were to be conducted in

Egypt, as the public space for women is not gender-segregated (compared to Saudi Arabia). Furthermore, regarding education backgrounds, not all participants' educational background was the same as mine. In either case, this affected my work (such as the previous examples about discussions with A5, R6 and W9 about feminism).

However, regarding class, I would say that my participants' social class were not that different of mine, and this I think made it easier to build my relationship with them, and to be relaxed in our interviews. I imagine it would be difficult if I had interviewed women from provincial towns, where our differences and the environment (i.e. in terms of finding a suitable meeting place) could have been a barrier. While this means that my sample represents a specific urban and social class, it also means that I was able to conduct fieldwork in a safe and mutually agreed upon way.

Finally, my distance from Saudi and its daily life while living and studying in the UK contributed to my view of the data and to my approach to the analysis. I was seeing Saudi women's situation from a different perspective, as I was living abroad on my own, immersed in a different culture. I was following the social changes taking place in the Saudi public sphere through the Internet and seeing the effects during my short visits to Saudi (for example during Ramadan). Given all this, my questions were probing and trying to comprehend my participants' views of such changes and their identity evolvement through their online experience. It would have been different had I been doing this study while living and studying in Saudi Arabia, and my methodology and empirical approach would have been shaped by that.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter mapped the methodology of this research. Constructivism was the theoretical paradigm, and a multi-method qualitative approach was the strategy of inquiry. Online observation in the form of Netnography, and semi-structured interviews were the main data collection methods. A pilot study was conducted between March – September 2015 to test the data collection tools, followed by the main data collection phase between January 2016 – April 2017. Two sampling methods were adopted: purposive (pilot study) and snowball (main phase of data collection), with a total of twelve participants (one participant withdrew from the follow-up interview), between the ages of 24 – 43, from three regions in Saudi Arabia: western, eastern and central. Each participant was interviewed twice, before and after the online observation

period. Interviews were conducted through face-to-face, Skype and in one case Google Docs. Data were analysed in three stages: interview data, online observation data and merging both sets of findings to write up the data analysis chapters. Two methods were utilised to analyse the data: thematic analysis and Kozinets (2015) procedure. Ethical considerations were discussed in terms of consent, data confidentiality and data representation. At the end of the chapter, the validity and reliability of the methodology were argued from different angles, including transparency, sampling, data collection, analysis and finally reflecting on my role as researcher in terms of position and power relations.

CHAPTER 4: REMINISCENCE OF EARLY SMP PRACTICES
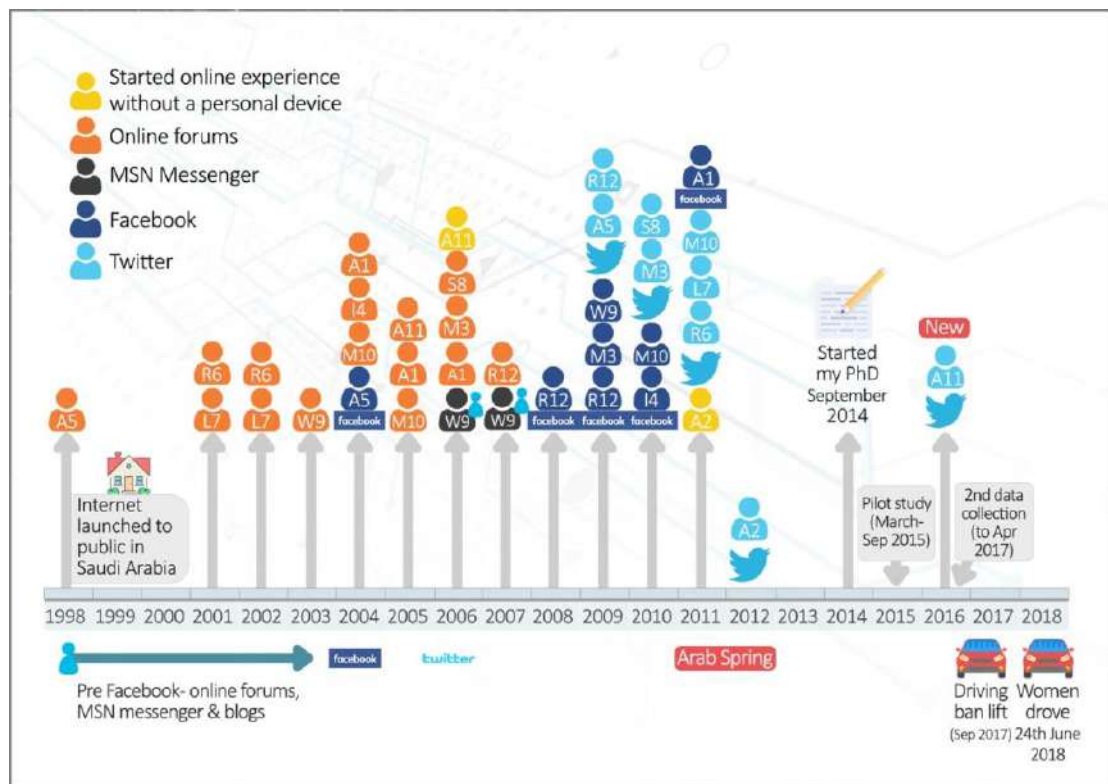
Figure 18 Timeline of participants' online practices based on the interviews[1]

'*You see, we have already walked through that social phase, if you're talking about the situation in Saudi society at the time of thriving online forums and while Alsahwah era was reaching its peak. I used to be part of this world, of that phase. It's obvious why I call Twitter* (consider Twitter as) *a secluded place; if someone knows that you're texting a boy online, writing or blogging online, they might get judgmental. I was a very active person when it came to parties, and stuff like that, where Alsahwah people were in charge of all those activities, so I never talked about it, not to anyone [this was my second life (En)[2]]' (*A5*).

---

[1] S8 and A2 did not state exactly in which year they created an account on Facebook

[2] All over the data analysis chapters (Chapter Four, Five, Six and Seven) all sentences/words between brackets [..] and with (En), means the words were said in English: participants' code-switching. See Chapter Three, section 3.6.1, Table 6.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter answers part of the first research question: *How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed?* The chapter reports on participants' early SMP online experience, e.g., their move from online forums to SMP, and their earliest accounts on SMP. Section 2.2 in Chapter Two has already framed the scholarship on identity and how online experiences can affect it. Identity representation online is subject to changes; people's online experiences and online practices develop and evolve. For example, early internet users sought anonymity to 'protect' them, voicing their concerns about the exposure of their identity (i.e. on online forums), while now identity representation online is more open. This might be influenced by SMP privacy policy, for example by Facebook policy about only allowing profiles associated to a real-life name, or it might be the result of cultural shifts on how interaction online is viewed. Nevertheless, the way in which identity is represented online has evolved.

More research is needed on this matter, as existing work is (a) conducted in Western contexts (mainly UK and US), and (b) few researchers have examined identity development and its change in relation to online experience (i.e. most existing studies focused on *identity expressions* and less on *identity development* (Wängqvist & Frisén, 2016)). I will be discussing in the conclusion (section 4.5) how the data discussed in this chapter reinforced, challenged and developed existing works on the relationship between identity development and online experience.

 Figure 18 draws a timeline of participants' online experience, which shows they had gone through similar phases: (1) online forums - both oldest and youngest participants reported in the interviews that online forums were their first online spaces: *'All of us ... all of us used online forums'* (R6)*, 'I, of course, started with online forums, like everyone else'* (S8); (2) chatting; (3) blogging; and (4) SMP - Facebook and then Twitter. However, though the opening part of the first interview guide explored the beginning of participants' online practices and their entrance into the Internet, and despite the wide range of data my participants shared with me regarding the origins of their online experience, e.g., chatting and blogging, the main focus of this thesis is SMP. Thus, I highlight this part (participants' online experience pre-SMP) in the introduction only to give a brief background of participants' transfer from online forums to SMP, and the differences in their time of 'arrival' to the online sphere.

For example, in Figure 18, you can see the span of A5's online experience before the launch of Facebook; she started using the Internet in 1999, had six years of experience on forums, chatting and blogging before Facebook was launched in 2004 and she created an account. Though R6, L7, and A11 were born between 1970 – 1980, and so were in the same age group as A5, which should have enabled them to have experienced the launch of the Internet in Saudi Arabia (1999), R6, L7, and A11 differed in the exact moment they first used the Internet. For example, A11's online experience started in 2006-2007[1]. Younger participants, born between 1989 and 1992 (A1, A2, M3, I4, S8, W9, M10, and R12) had a shorter experience with online forums. Moreover, younger participants were just about to start their online experience when Facebook and Twitter were launched and became popular. For example, M10's early online experience was of online forums and MSN messenger; it was not before 2004-2005 that she entered the Internet, when she was in her last year of elementary school[2] (Figure 18).

This chapter is structured as follows: (1) and (2) the online reminiscence: participants' movement from online forums to SMP, participants' arrival to SMP, phases of the Saudi Twittersphere, and participants' reminiscence of SMP digital memories; (3) the transition of SMP online practices, which includes the transitions of online identity representation practices and textual and visual representations; and (4) the transitions of (a) online sharing 'tactics', (b) online relationships, and (c) cross-gender communication. I finish with several concluding remarks and a foreword to Chapter Five.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' MOVEMENT FROM ONLINE FORUMS TO SMP

Both A5 and S8 had a Saudi community on online forums, that is, a group of people who moved from one platform (online forums) to another (SMP) at the same time. A5's online friends on online forums recognised her later on Twitter, as they already knew her real name. It is important to note here that at this stage, SMP participants

---

[1] A11 mentioned that she used to go to Internet cafes, then she acquired a laptop and started to use it more often - as a daily practice, that is why I marked her general online experience before when she first had an account on online forums (Figure 18).

[2] Check the educational system in Saudi Arabia https://www.scholaro.com/pro/countries/saudi-arabia/education-system

began to use their authentic names, though they had previously used pseudonyms on the online forums. Two exceptions to this are M3 and A5; the former stated clearly that since the beginning of her online experience, she had always used her first or last name, while the latter (A5) began to use her full name as a signature on her online forums posts. I will tackle this later in The Transition of Textual Online Representation: Naming (section 4.4.1).

However, S8 shared with me another episode of how she and her circle of friends on online forums migrated together from the forums to Twitter and how S8's online representation held an identification[1] of her identity, whereby her online forum 'friends' recognised her Twitter account later; as S8 put it, *'The identity of my profile[2] was the same'* (S8). When S8 moved to Twitter, she was not planning to meet members of her online forums, though she knew them via their pseudonyms, which they continued to use on Twitter: *'I knew that these accounts were their accounts; I discovered that, and they also discovered it was me'* (S8). S8 was recognised because of her online representation: her date of birth and her avatar (profile picture); she recalled that her avatar was the same on both the online forums and on Twitter.

These two episodes mark how online representation forms an online identity through identification[3] of an account, e.g., profile picture; it also shows the participants' early encounters with the issue of online/offline identity, where the fear of exposing their offline identity (the name specifically) became more relaxed on SMP.

4.2.1 PARTICIPANTS' ARRIVAL TO SMP: FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

In general, Facebook was the first SMP on which participants created accounts, followed by Twitter. As R12 put it, *'Twitter was a natural progress to the Facebook ... you know what I mean, something I entered after Facebook'* (R12). A2 was the only exception, as her first SMP account was on Twitter: *'Basically, if I can say it is Twitter ... like heavily Twitter'* (En[4]) (A2). However, compared to Twitter, Facebook

---

[1] Chapter One, section 1.2.2

[2] She mentioned specifically her avatar and date of birth.

[3] Chapter One, section 1.2.2

[4] A2 excerpt was said in English

was more linked to the offline sphere in terms of the opportunity to strengthen family ties, and offline relationships were one of the reasons participants created accounts in the first place (M3, A5, R6[1], S8, M10, A11, and R12). Moreover, Facebook was a platform for building a writing career (A1, I4 and W9).

Several examples illustrate how offline relationships were the reason many participants created accounts on Facebook. M3's friends persuaded her to join Facebook before her high-school graduation. R12 was also introduced to Facebook via her friends on a higher educational level, that is, university. S8's Facebook account was a short-term platform (she deactivated it shortly afterwards): *'It wasn't an intellectual activity, it was a familial one - family communication/ties only'* (S8). Another excerpt from R6 illustrates how her family members encouraged her to create an account on Facebook: *'I created an account on Facebook because of the people around me'* (R6). All of the previous examples show how an early arrival to SMP became tied to offline life, where participants would add their family members and friends to their online accounts (on Facebook) using their real names.

One interesting episode was described by M10, where jealousy of her younger cousin was her motive for joining Facebook. M10 began with a general explanation of joining Facebook, where algorithms meant adverts on websites that she used to visit promoted Facebook. She refused – at first – to create an account back then: *'I have to know who you are ... then I can create an account on you* (she means Facebook) *.... I have to see you'* (M10). A few months later, M10's female cousin – who is younger than her[2] – was checking Facebook. M10 noticed her cousin's presence on Facebook, so she asked her, 'What are you doing?' Her cousin answered, 'I'm on Facebook.' M10 told me she was jealous of her cousin at that moment: *'Why does she know how to use Facebook and I don't? She is younger than me!'* (M10), and that was why M10 decided to create an account on Facebook; she did not want to be, as M10 put it, *'illiterate'* in front of her cousin. It is important to highlight here that the period of four years (the age gap between M10 and her cousin) indicates how quickly SMP was introduced to the younger participants, despite the length of their online experience between online forums and SMP, and how it created a knowledge gap within such a short span of time!

---

[1] L7 did not mention her Facebook experience, as R6 was the most 'talkative' in our interviews.

[2] M10 was in high school and her cousin was in primary school

Here, M10's offline identity as an educated person was challenged by the knowledge of the online sphere through Facebook. Using this platform gave her an opportunity to gain self-esteem.

4.2.2 FACEBOOK AND TWITTER AS PLATFORMS FOR INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY

Moving from the reasons participants created accounts on Facebook to how they utilised Facebook, I begin with R12. For R12, Facebook was an online platform which she used to circulate offline events. R12 was part of a group of female university students, who arranged several events offline to discuss highbrow topics (e.g., books on orientalism, philosophy). They - R12 and her university female classmates - shared some of the offline events they had organised on their Facebook group: *'The basic usage was with my university friends, not with other girlfriends ... I mean, there was an intellectual interest at that time/back then; I mean, I mean it helped us a lot in our beginnings when we created the group and so on'* (R12). Here, SMP practices served the offline sphere; R12's identity as an intellectual and an active member of her society started offline, then the online sphere served them, not the other way around. In both spheres, her offline identity, that is, her authentic name was unveiled. I will be referring to this example in Chapter Six (section 6.3.6), where I mention R12's recent (to our interview) Snapchat practices, where she shared 'highbrow topics'.

In A11's case, she drew a line between the online/offline spheres in terms of finding on Facebook what she could not find offline (in Saudi). When I asked A11 directly why she had created an account on Facebook, and whether someone she knew had told her about it, A11 did not give me a direct answer; instead, she listed other reasons why she had created an account on Facebook:

> *'No, not because someone told me about it; it's because I like to communicate with people who I won't necessarily meet in real life, you know. I like to talk about topics beyond the offline sphere. I like designing pictures and adding captions to them, posting articles, I mean ... If I worked for a magazine, it would be great because I love writing* (incomplete sentence)*; it doesn't have to be a prose of my own* (that she wrote)*, it could be a prose piece of yours – I'd take it and add it as a*

caption to a picture ... especially Facebook. I posted so many pictures ... all of them were my designs' (A11).

Here, A11 managed to practise her offline/online identity through her online practices. First, she used her authentic name, which she later told me is a common name, so that different female members of her family held the same first and last name; the middle name is the identification[1] of a person's identity. However, she also added her female relatives, who knew her offline, in an online space (Facebook). Yet, in relation to her husband's situation (discussed earlier in the methodology chapter, section 3.2.4), she practised on Facebook what she could not do (not only find) offline: publishing articles and posting images of her paintings.

Another excerpt from A11 illustrates her eagerness to be part of the 'intellectual community', e.g., to add/follow Facebook accounts of writers and users who held and expressed opinions she valued: *'Why would I follow someone who is interested in makeup and trivial stuff? I could go to the shopping mall and find them, do some shopping and that's it'* (A11). A11 recalled how she searched through Facebook accounts that circulated knowledge and share 'highbrow topics'. At the same time, she criticizes the shallowness of some Saudi women's accounts on Facebook. This 'narrative' of A11, expressing repeatedly how she practised online what she could not practise offline, will be echoed several times in this chapter and in Chapter Five and Chapter Seven as well.

Three participants shared the eagerness to utilise SMP (Facebook and Twitter) as platforms to practise writing: I4, and A5. I4 and W9 both had a similar experience: for I4 and W9, SMP were media on which to communicate and to hone their writing skills. For I4, it was Facebook; she was in the third year of high-school, and Facebook was intended to be a blog. Although I4 already had a blog, she wanted to build connections with writers who were interested in the field of literature. Facebook was a gate way for contact with writers and becoming a member of the online writers' community. The aim was also to gain visibility for what she published. I4 used to post her blog link on her Facebook account, and whenever she blogged, she would share her writings on Facebook. I4 admitted that back then, as a new user, she did not really understand the idea of this particular platform. Similar to I4, W9 utilised a shorter form of writing,

---

[1] Chapter One, section 1.2.2

namely, Twitter, with 140 characters[1].   W9 used Twitter to construct a 'writer's' reputation for herself, and to build relationships with intellectuals and writers:

> *'I was trying to have an audience, even if it was a limited one, not because I was aiming to be an influencer/famous-public figure, but to have a group of readers of my writings as an attempt to go beyond, to reach and broaden my own circle to exchange thoughts and ideas'* (W9).

Another participant, A1, mentioned the practice of writing on Facebook as part of her early online experience, though not specifically for the sake of being a writer, nor to be a member of such a community. A1 recalled her beginning on Facebook, where she described her old writings as 'rubbish': *'My beginning was on Facebook; I totally abandoned it - early writings were just rubbish'* (A1). Finally, for A5, Facebook later became a medium for professional purposes of her own academic career. A5 had already practised writing on online forums, moving then to Facebook followed by Twitter: *'My whole life is written-textual communication'* (A5).

The similarities of aspirations held by A11, I4, and W9 to be part of a community of intellectuals and writers, thus gaining a 'writer's reputation', could be interpreted from the perspective of the heritage of the Arabic language, where writing prose and poetry is seen as a highbrow cultural practice that confers a prestigious social status on whoever is involved in it (e.g., writers and poets). This helps to explain why writing was so important to those participants; I4, W9, and A11 needed a space for self-actualisation as writers and as part of an intellectual community. Furthermore, when comparing between A11 and A5, we can see how the former looked online for an opportunity which she was unable to get offline because of her husband. In the case of A5, though she found the opportunity online, the restrictions were not from her family but from the community, as A5 could not find such a community offline. W9 and I4 had no offline restrictions, but they also found online what they could not find offline: because of the lack of opportunities. All of these women's cases show how the open online sphere offered them several opportunities, in contrast to the restricted public sphere for women in Saudi Arabia in the pre-online era. The only exception among all the previous cases is R12, who had the opportunity to practise offline intellectual activities, such as a reading group, and for whom the online sphere (Facebook) was a

---

[1] Extended to 280 in 2017

medium for circulating (e.g., events) not an opportunity to build or be part of an intellectual community.

4.2.3 PHASES OF THE SAUDI TWITTERSPHERE

In response to my questions on early SMP practices, specifically the early usage of Twitter, R12 presented her thoughts in a neat and organised order. She divided her Twitter practice into three phases: (1) pre-Twitter's Arabic translation and pre-the Arab Spring, where she would post personal thoughts and write in English. R12 described her beginnings on Twitter as *'a simple beginning'* (R12). Here, R12 marks the period when Twitter was in English, R12 joined Twitter to follow non-Arabic speakers/foreigners, to talk in English: *'It was before there were any communication with Arabs or chit-chat or getting into discussions ... It was even before the Arab Spring, so this was the beginning of Twitter'* (R12). In Figure 18, you can see that R12 joined Twitter in 2009, when, according to several participants, Twitter was a quiet and peaceful sphere for Arab users. However, when Twitter was translated into Arabic in early 2012, it became more popular for non-English speaking users, including Saudis (see section 1.5.1.3)

However, A5 joined Twitter within the same period as R12 (Figure 18); A5 recalls those days with the 'we' voice:

> *'In Twitter, we started at that time 2008-2009; I started in which year?* (she asked herself) *The intellectual revolution ... really a blow of an intellectual wave, not only in my case - my level* (she means level of education and knowledge)*, the whole society back then, before I travelled abroad had experienced an intellectual revolution, and Twitter [was the best place (En)] that we could write on; I used to craft my writings as a genre of literature* (she means writing in a poetic style)*'* (A5).

Here, online practices were part of a collective identity online, a formation of an online collective identity such as *'we'* writers and *'we'* intellectuals, as A5 stresses in this excerpt. I want to refer here to the excerpt I started this chapter with, where A5 describes Saudi online practices within the 1999 - 2008 era as a social path[1]; both

---

[1] Page 88

excerpts illustrate how back in 2008-2009, Twitter started as a platform for expressing opinions. However, two years later, according to my participants, Twitter had become an annoying space, which A1 described as *'an open backyard'*. I will be discussing this in Chapter Six (section 6.3.1), when I tackle SMP ecologies, and I discuss how the participants had perceived the environment of Twitter to have become less friendly.

The second phase which R12 marked was the so-called Arab Spring, which I refer to as Arab revolutions instead; here, two other participants reported on their own online practices/experiences within that period. R12 considered this period as rewarding for a range of reasons:

> *'It reshaped my thoughts a lot, I mean - how to say - I mean a lot [of my concepts ... freedom (En)] and such, which until recently, it still dominated my thinking ... so I got into this intellectual mood at that time ... Twitter [in a way (En)] I could write [personal (En)] stuff, I mean, I mean, at that time, around 2011-2012 until late 2012 ... It was the Arab Spring phase in the news and [cultural (En)] stuff and Saudi Arabia etc. ... so there was a local engagement with it* (she means Saudis engaging in those topics)*, so this was the second phase ... the Arab Spring ... It was a local and Arab-nation, you know what I mean'* (R12).

This part highlights how the online sphere, Twitter, had affected participants who were engaged, active, and interested in such matters in the Arab region by providing a political online atmosphere, which encouraged them to shape an opinion, or at least, to view the opinions of others.

Yet, this was so in the cases of A2, S8, W9, and R12 only as participants who stated that Twitter was a platform for practices such as freedom of speech and online activism. Other participants (A1, M3, I4, A5, R6, L7, M10 and A11) acknowledged in some parts of the interviews that the opportunity to have a voice in this space, Twitter, was only for other users, but not for themselves. Two contrasting examples of A11 and A2 are illustrated here, A11 described Facebook as a platform that became annoying within the Arab revolution peak period:

> *'I had no specific topic that I discussed on my Facebook account; I dedicated my account to* (she did not complete the sentence) *... there were no specific accounts that I used to follow ... only quarrels and fights such*

as the Egyptian revolution (this was in 2011) *which relied on Facebook, there was no specific approach of my account'* (A11).

Here A11 compared her calm/dreamy online practices on Facebook, with how Facebook, during 2011/2012, became a space for Egyptian activists. A11 later moved from Facebook forever.

A2 mentioned the Arab Spring period when she recalled her early SMP practices on Twitter; at that time, she used mainly Twitter to keep up with news, or as she put it, *'what is happening in the region'* (A2). This was how she got involved with the Twittersphere:

> *'Ah, let us have it from Twitter's point of view - first usage was sharing my daily activities. I considered that as my micro blog for myself, so I used to tweet about everything that was happening in my life, and after in the next stage, then I started to be interested in politics because 2011-12 was the peak of, you know, revolution in Arabia so my only concern was what was happening and trying to follow people who tweeted like a lot about details about what is happening in the region' (En[1])'* (A2).

This was just before A2 moved to Dubai; her engagement on Twitter changed afterwards, as I will discuss shortly in the transition part (section 4.4.2), where A2 talks about changing her online representation, her biography on Twitter following her move to Dubai, and holding down a job.

To sum up this section, we can see how, though almost all the participants had gone through the same period, with the Arab Spring peaking on SMP, yet, their identities were not re-shaped/influenced in the same way. Whereas W9 and R12 saw the Arab Spring as a beneficial and 'golden period' (Figure 19), A11 saw it as *'annoying'*. This will be referred to later in Chapter Seven, when I discuss participants' negotiation of online campaigning and activism (section 7.6.3).

---

[1] A2 excerpt was said in English

4.3 PARTICIPANTS' REMINISCENCES OF SMP EXPERIENCE AS PART OF THEIR MORE RECENT ONLINE PRACTICES

Before I move on to the transition section, I provide a tweet by W9 (Figure 19), which I spotted during my online observation of W9's Twitter account: *'A friend of mine, who is ten years older than me, asked me once: What is the usefulness of writing within all this chaos? That's why I deleted my blog, this was in the period that followed the disappointment of the Arab Spring'* (W9). Here, W9 was recalling a period of the Saudi Twittersphere between 2011-2013, where blogging and writing were practices for expressing opinions within an optimistic sphere of change (the Arab revolutions). However, such circumstances had moved in another/unexpected direction, and the government started taking action against online activists, as was reflected by many SMP users, who had deactivated and deleting their accounts/deleting their tweets. The atmosphere itself (Twitter) was no longer a platform for 'free' expression. This example depicts how the offline sphere, namely, social censorship, reshaped online practices on SMP, mainly Twitter, where the 'ease' of unveiling the authentic/offline identity, e.g., one's name, began to encounter another obstacle. First, it was the fear of strangers and the 'judgment' of Saudi offline/online communities, and then the government became 'alarmed' by the rise of online activism. This will be tackled again in Chapter Five (section 5.3.2), as in relation to participants' practices of deleting their posts on SMP, where R12 explained the reason for deleting her tweets within the online observation period.

Figure 19 Translated Screenshot of W10's tweet

4.4   THE TRANSITION OF SMP ONLINE PRACTICES

Participants drew comparisons between their old and current SMP online practices[1], particularly, how their online representation, namely, profiles, became more authentic (e.g., using real names, or having an authentic photo as a profile picture). This angle of transition illustrates also participants' self-development of their identity process, where their online sharing 'tactics' became more 'mature'. Moreover, it shows how the fear of strangers and the opposite sex in online relationships and cross-gender communication orthodoxies became more relaxed.

4.4.1 THE TRANSITION OF ONLINE IDENTITY REPRESENTATION PRACTICES: THE TRANSITION OF TEXTUAL ONLINE REPRESENTATION: NAMING

All participants (except M3) used pseudonyms both on online forums and on SMP. Indeed, A5, as mentioned previously, started to reveal her full name on online forums by adding it as a signature on her posts. Here, the SMP phase can be called the early authentic stage of online representation practices. However, I address first the case of M3, who did not hesitate to reveal her authentic identity from the beginning of her online experience: *'I used my real name in everything'* (M3). M3's case sheds light on online/offline identity confrontation. To explain further, M3 recalled an episode where using her full name, that is, her last name online, caused her online harassment: a man stalked her through her accounts across SMP, asking her to show her face (send a picture of her to him)[2]:*'I don't like to write my family's name* (last name)*, not that I have a specific reason for that - I can write my father's name, and I wrote it once on Instagram'* (M3). This episode highlights how, in the Saudi culture[3], the last name of a person - especially a woman - holds a social status, as the last name of a Saudi woman indicates to which region, heritage, and family she comes from, and thus is the 'cradle'

---

[1] At the time of our interviews

[2] She told me this in the part of the interview when we were discussing an episode she could not forget as part of her online experience

[3] I explained in Chapter One (section 1.5)

of her whole family's reputation. Anything a woman shares/does online will be referred to not as her own practice, but as her family's.

Other participants justified using their real name on SMP. A5 indicated that the online community had become more familiar with Saudis in general, and Saudi women in particular, using their real names: *'Everyone knows everyone already, as I told you; it is a space[1], culture[2] if you want to call it or [whatever (En)]. It became common; more and more people whom we know started to use their real names; I felt that'* (A5).

> Me: It became acceptable?
>
> A5: *'Yes, it became acceptable, and it's not fair to waste all of my writings and hide behind a pseudonym when I have no problem with using my real name and nor has my family any objection to it or my society or my environment, and not even my husband - it doesn't make any difference to him, so why waste my work? Ok, there were some people who did not want to use their real names for certain societal reasons which affected them personally, but me? I did not have a problem, as far as this became acceptable within the online context'* (A5).

Here, A5 had spotted a transitional phase of Saudi online practices, especially for women, where it became normal and common to abandon pseudonyms and start using real names. A5 explained how her family background, that is, the offline sphere, played a role in 'easing' this 'move'. The case of A5 illustrates how the offline sphere, namely, the family, plays a role in online representation practices, which in the case of this section is naming. I will refer to this excerpt later in Chapter Seven (section 7.2.3) to stress how the online/offline identity confrontation was 'lighter' in the case of A5, as she had always had her family's and husband's support, not only in revealing her authentic identity online, but also on other levels like travelling on her own and living abroad.

Another example, in relation to the family role in participants' decision of revealing they authentic name, was A2: *'I used to use nickname before that I don't know why I*

---

[1] She used 'space' in the context of astronomy to describe how imaginary it is

[2] She refers here to the (online) space ethics: online community common 'ethical codes'.

thought it is like you know it is Ayub[1] and my family will go against that' (A2) . This was in the beginnings: A2's early online representation practices, her hesitation of revealing her name – unlike the case of A5 – was because she thought her family would disapprove. Later, similar to other participants' cases, A2 started to use her authentic name. this will be discussed shortly (section 4.4.2).

However, in another part of our interview, and in contrary to the reason for participants' hesitation – in early online representation practices – to use pseudonyms, had transformed to a pressure on participants to use their real name. This is the case of Twitter: '*So, most of the people I knew offline were on Twitter, and no one was writing under a pseudonym compared to the online forums nowadays. It's now the contrary; life has become more authentic'* (A5). This indeed shows how online representation practices have gone through different phases, not only of participants' experiences, shared in this thesis, but even for other Saudi users. The felt 'community pressure' which A5 noted here could be felt by other SMP users in the Saudi online community.

The last example to mention within the naming representation practices is that of M10, who added another reason why she decided to use her real name on Facebook, *'I had to use my real name, especially because I have a bad memory when it comes to memorising pseudonyms'* (M10). This suggests that M10 was making it easier – by using her real name on Facebook - for other members who had a bad memory for memorising pseudonyms. M10 also mentioned another reason in this context, which is the authenticity of this online community (Facebook); M10 was revealing her name to people who knew her offline - they were not just online strangers. I will be referring to this aspect shortly in the discussion of relationship transition (section 4.4.5), where M10 compares her early fear of building relationships online with how she felt afterwards when she had the 'strength' to go ahead and communicate with people whom she did not know personally.

---

[1] Glossary of Terms

4.4.2 THE TRANSITION OF ONLINE IDENTITY REPRESENTATION PRACTICES: THE TRANSITION OF TEXTUAL ONLINE REPRESENTATION: BIOGRAPHY

Participants were asked to recall the biographies they used to have on their early SMP profiles, though for many, this proved quite difficult. Only three participants were able to recall this accurately, and offered further explanations of why they had chosen this biography. In this example, M3 justifies choosing her biography as an expression of herself, and recalls one of her biographies, which lasted for 6 months, the longest period she had ever held on to a biography, as M3 declares. M3's biography was a poetic one:

> *'Regarding the Bio, I believe it should be a phrase that defines me. I mean, I focused for a while on a line from a poem - I guess it belongs to "El-Feitori" the Sudanese poet[1] - it said: "Others are blind, despite how much they make an effort to hear me, they still can't see me either by figure or soul." It fully defined me for about 6 months. Then I thought it just didn't anymore, so I changed it' (M3).*

The case of M3's biography here is an online representation of her offline identity in terms of poetry as part of the Arabic cultural heritage. Moreover, the extract from the poem itself reflects part of the 'veiled/hidden' identity; the blind other who cannot see her, and sees only what she represents online. The other aspect of offline identity representation online is how M3's biography here was a practice of self-expression: *'It fully defined me'* (M3). This online practice of representation the self is echoed in W9's more recent online representation practices, discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.2.1), where she considered her biography on Twitter as a 'self-exploration process'.

The second example in this part is A2, who changed her biography on Twitter in 2012 to what she called a 'professional' one to accommodate her new position (job) and her M.A major/field of study. Here, the biography as an online practice presents A2's offline identity, her work, and her educational qualification. The platform - Twitter - is no longer a personal one, but rather has become a platform where she presents herself online as a qualified employee. In the next part of this chapter, which is about sharing

---

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed_Moftahh_Elfitory

tactics, I will present another excerpt from the interview with A2 where she explained this shift in her online representation practices, choosing a professional online representation of her profile (e.g., stating her educational qualifications and being more aware of her employer following/observing her Twitter account).

The third and last case in this section is that of M10, who used not to write an extended bio: *'I used not to pay too much attention: I would write a line or two, no more. I don't even write a lot'* (she means her engagement and participating) (M10). Yet, in Chapter Five (section 5.2.3), within the same theme, namely, textual online representation, I will illustrate M10's more recent biography on Twitter, where she states her study major, chemistry, along with other details, which are longer than the old biography that she recalls in this chapter. However, participants' recall of their textual representation and biographies held different meanings, and varied in their importance to them, whether they wrote it targeting a specific audience (A2), practised it as a self-exploration/expression (M3), or considered it as a 'trivial' part of online identity representation practices (M10).

4.4.3 THE TRANSITION OF ONLINE IDENTITY REPRESENTATION PRACTICES: THE TRANSITION OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION: PROFILE PICTURES

To explore participants' visual online representation transition, namely, profile pictures, since I do not have any archives of participants' old online visual representation, I relied on their memories only:

> *'The picture I remember that I used to put the same simple items, I think that it is the same avatar that I've left on for the last 5 years, I'm not the type of user who changes their profile pictures constantly. You know my avatar on Goodreads? Probably it is the same old one - I haven't changed it'* (M10).

Indeed, my online observation shows M10 had not changed her profile picture on any SMP. The case of M10 here is an exception to the fluidity of online representation, regarding her profile picture, which is part of participants' online representation. Indeed, I spotted through my online observation that several participants had changed

their profile/header pictures or/and their biographies within the data collection periods, three and eight months (pilot and main), respectively. I will elaborate on this in Chapter Five (section 5.2), and in the same section, I will discuss online representation, with more visual examples of when participants changed both their visual and textual representations. However, M10's picture in Figure 20 is one of the few opportunities I had where a participant's old visual representation was still available to be captured through my online representation.

Figure 20 Screenshot of M10's profile picture on Goodreads taken through my online observation during the main phase of data collection period (February 2016 - September 2016)

I4, A2 and M10 had overlapping choices of visual representation, namely, profile pictures. I start with A2, who described this choice of her visual representation back then as 'normal' (bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis):

> Me: What was your profile picture?

> A2: *'It was like a normal; like, I picked from Google images, but I don't remember; **it was so normal, like a woman with a veil**'* (A2) (En).

A woman and a veil are a gendered and cultural codes of gendered offline culture. Here, A2 describes her choice of visual representation by twice saying 'it was normal'. Another example is I4 recalling her old pseudonym in a reference to her avatar of that time: *'Frankly, I was participating in Tumblr through a nickname, "Performance", because at the time, I recall I was blogging on Tumblr, while the avatar photo was for a girl who plays an instrument.'* (I4). Again, gender was also part of I4's visual representation, where she had chosen her avatar to reflect her pseudonym, but in the same practice, she added gender, a girl playing.

The cases of I4, A2 and M10 caught my attention, as they were no different from their more recent ones, depicted later in Chapter Five (section 5.2.3), where I examine in

more detail the possible relationship between participants' identities and their choices regarding visual representation. This similarity suggests a semi-established aspect of participants' online identity representation; despite the complete transitions their online practices had gone through, some parts have elements that are more 'rigid' than others.

In contrast, R12 and W9 recalled using a profile picture other than that of a woman. R12 did not give me an exact answer regarding which avatar she had used previously; in part of her answer, where she mentioned her recent profile picture, R12 added, *'But before now, but at the same time, I don't put other photos of other women, no, ... I mean, something [symbolic (En)]'* (R12). I did not ask R12 what she meant by symbolic, because she could not recall exactly which profile picture she used to have. The following excerpt from W9 might explain what R12 meant by 'symbolic'. W9 the word 'normal' within the same context as A2 earlier, regarding early SMP visual representation practices. Yet, this time, it was *'a **normal**[1] picture such as a background of a tree or a painting'* (W9). Pictures of nature might be interpreted here as symbolic.

To conclude this section, it is important to highlight how participants' representation transition process was to some extent limited. While all participants' early visual online representation began with avatars, with W9 stating, '*Of course it's not my authentic picture*' (W9), and participants' naming representation had shifted from anonymity to authenticity, yet in relation to the visual part, the situation was more complicated. To date – as I still follow my participants – the majority of them still use avatars as profile pictures, with the only four exceptions being those of A2, A5, W9, and R12, who use their authentic photograph as a profile picture on SMP. Interestingly, though A5 uses her photo on all SMP, she still covers her hair as much as she can, even though she is not Muhajabah, in that she does not wear the scarf on all occasions; she wears the scarf in Saudi, but outside Saudi she only wears it if she attends formal events to represent her country. A2, on the other hand, has chosen only to share her authentic photo on Path, where her profile picture shows her wearing the Hijab, and she does occasionally post her photograph on Path for a limited/closed audience. W9 is similar to A2 in that she chooses only Path to share her photo, and the profile picture is of her as a child or is a selfie with Niqab. Finally, R12 chooses a tiny hard-to-zoom photo of herself on Twitter and Instagram as her profile picture. All in all, the change in participants' visual

---

[1] Bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis. See Chapter Three, section 3.6.1, Table 6.

representation has not shifted dramatically compared to the naming practices. I will be returning to the previous examples of A2, A5, W9, and R12 in Chapter Five (section 5.2.2), and in the visual representation section, but in more details.

4.4.4 THE TRANSITION OF ONLINE SHARING 'TACTICS' AS SELF-IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Over time, the participants developed 'tactics' to control their sharing online practices across SMP. A2 mentioned that she used to Tweet about everything, but that now she is wiser: *'I am big enough now. I am grown up now. I don't have to do stuff like that; then I stopped suddenly from Twitter to Path'* (En[1]) (A2). For A2, this change of practices from what she used to share but no longer shares, was part of her identity development, as her old practices were for 'young people' and her current ones are for 'adults. S8 echoed a similar change in her online sharing practices, where she used to share 'much' information on her Twitter bio, such as her birthday and her study major, but, *'Now, I barely write a line ... I don't like to be talkative'* (S8). M3 also expressed how she used to express her feelings habitually on Facebook, through posting quotes, grumbles, and daily activities at school, but she had stopped doing this.

Here is an example from A1, comparing her old posts on Facebook with her current activity: *'My beginnings were on Facebook; I totally abandoned them - early writings were just 'rubbish'* (A1). Recalling her early posts on Facebook enabled A1 to realise how much she had changed. This process of self-identity development was echoed in another part of A1's narrative, where she recalled how she used to pretend to be 'another person', in other words, representing a personality/character which pleased her audience, but was not her authentic character, her offline self. The transition of A1's online practices is represented through the Arabic expression *'I got slapped', denoting* life lessons; she had faced different situations online where her 'fakeness' was exposed to others, and her audience knew she was pretending to be someone else. Since then A1 had learned to be 'herself', and so she had stopped pretending to be 'ideal' or 'perfect'.

Here, the online (SMP) experiences of A2, S8, M3, and A1, are part of their self-identity development. Initially, they practised SMP without 'limits', moreover, as a

---

[1] A2 excerpt was said in English

second life − such as was the case of A1. In their early online experience on SMP, participants were not aware of what they later saw as 'oversharing' and 'childish' (A2 and M3). The case of S8 indeed highlights oversharing in the word 'talkative'. However, over time, participants' presence on SMP became more 'controlled'.

4.4.5 THE TRANSITION OF ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

This section discusses an aspect of the participants' early online/offline conflict, where they recall their early fear of developing relationships online with strangers of both sexes. Early friending practices were done with 'caution'; they were limited and were practised with hesitation and fear. Indeed, participants filtered their relationships with strangers according to pre-existing offline practices; the fear of strangers offline was transferred to the online sphere.

A11 explained how she was selective regarding whom she followed on Twitter, as she followed only certain accounts:

> *'I follow people whom I chose carefully, I seldom take my relationships with people to another level, not because I've been through many experiences, yes - I am young, and it's very hard for me to have many relationships; in college, I had two or three friends only, and we're still in touch'* (A11).

A11 here was applying her rules for offline relationships to the online sphere, where she had certain tactics and types of people with whom she chose to build close relationships.

'I was afraid[1]'; this is where M10 recalled the online relationships transition. She explained how she was highly cautious with online relationships, she did not trust anyone, she did not build relationships with anyone whom she did not know offline. Family censorship was also part of M10's caution:

> *'Online I did not - back then - make relationships with anyone, until I enrolled in the university[2]. Here I felt I am finally strong - I can do these*

---

[1] Bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis. See Chapter Three, section 3.6.1, Table 6.

[2] It is interesting that M10 also mentioned enrolling in the university as a turning point, saying that she used to have 'limited friendships', but once she enrolled in the university, she started to add people whom she did not know offline.

things, but back then, before, no I used to have fear, I used to have ... I don't know - I was convinced ... I used to believe that, no, my family would go against it ... They might say this or this ... My family did not interfere. I was afraid by their reaction that they might do something' (M10).

I here probed on her answer:

Me: You did not trust people, back then?

*M10: **'I was afraid**[1]. Yes, I used to have one of my friends* (a female friend)*; she was highly cautious about these things* (making friends online)*. M10 here recalls her friend's advice: 'Don't make friends with anyone whose face you have not seen' M10 then elaborates, 'Then I figured that not at all* (her family were not against M10 to build online relationships at all) *they gave me the full freedom; live your life, I did not receive any criticism, it was only because of me* (she means her fear and caution) *something inside me said: be cautious when you interact with people online'* (M10).

The previous excerpts from M10 reflect how her offline sphere affiliations, her friend and her family, were part of her early decisions to build online relationships. These online practices were challenged and negotiated by her offline identity in terms of 'What does my family think of this?' Moreover, M10's friend's advice in this episode translates the offline understanding of the stranger-known boundaries: 'If you have met someone face-to-face, it is ok to add them online.' Here, online relationships were perceived as virtual, not-real. Interestingly, the part where M10 says she felt she became strong is an antonym to her being weak before! By spending more time in this space – the Internet – M10 gained more experience and consequently, became strong. It is important to highlight here that this example from M10 is similar to examples from almost all other participants, with common themes being the fear of strangers and entering an unknown world where you do not know who you are communicating with.

However, to a certain extent, the participants found some 'mid-way' tactics for building relationships online, and in some cases, moving them offline. Several

---

[1] Bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis. See Chapter Three, section 3.6.1, Table 6.

participants explained how their fear of strangers had eased over time. The first example is I4:

> *'Also, communicating with some girls just online, I actually speak with them via WhatsApp and other SMP; I remain in touch with them, as we used to chat via Facebook messages, and we added each other as friends. We added each other on other SMP and talked on the mobile phone'* (I4).

In another part of the interview, I4 mentioned that she had extended some of these online relationships with female friends to the offline sphere, where she had met them face-to-face. Another example is R12, who recalled recalling being cautious when building relationships online, in her early online experience: '*Not like now ... it was different'* (R12).

4.4.6 THE TRANSITION OF CROSS-GENDER COMMUNICATION PRACTICE

This final section of the chapter explores the last part of participants' transition of SMP online practices. In this sub-theme, the participants recall their early interactions with the opposite sex on SMP, where the offline gender segregation orthodox dominated their fear of adding men as friends. The religious concept of '*kulwah*', which prohibits private communication between men and women when they are alone in the same place, made them believe it would be a similar issue if they added a man to their Facebook friends list.

A1 and I4 commented on their early experiences with Facebook: *When I signed up, I was very afraid of "online friends", especially of the opposite sex [It was horrible (En)]'* (I4). For I4, having a man as an online friend equated to having his number on her mobile, which in the Saudi culture, is not allowed, as it could indicate that a woman is having a romantic relationship with a man. I4 explained: '*I have always treated my Facebook account as* (in the same way) *my personal cell number'*. I4's sister, who played a vital role in I4 narrative about her online practices' narratives, was against I4 adding strangers as online friends: *'How can you add strangers? People whom you don't know'*. I4 responded to her sister's comment by saying that *'It is just an SMP!'* I4 recalled that she used to be afraid of such comments to the extent that she deleted

one of her male friends. In time, however, it became normal for I4 to add strangers and male friend.

This episode illustrates an immediate translation of offline codes of behaviour, *'having his number on my mobile'* (I4), where offline orthodoxies moved online. Though the online sphere does not look and feel like the offline sphere, the offline was the only sphere participants knew; therefore, they assumed that similar rules of cross-gender communication would apply online. It is worth mentioning here that *Targeem*[1] is a courting strategy among men and women in Saudi culture. This happens in the offline sphere, where a man would write his number on a piece of paper and give it to a woman 'secretly', making sure no one saw them. This was in the old days, when the religious police were in charge in the public sphere, and if the police saw any woman and man exchanging numbers, they might put them in detention. However, this episode of I4 might translate the fear of prohibited/hidden cross-gender relationships offline, moving to the online sphere, since at this stage, the boundary between the two spheres was still vague.

The case of A1 is similar to that of I4 in terms of adding members of the opposite sex as friends on SMP. A1's early online relationships were like those of I4. A1 thought that adding men as friends on Facebook was '*Haram*', the Islamic concept of prohibited deeds that make the Muslim person who performs them a sinner: '*I was very uncommunicative when it came to adding men. I thought it was 'Haram' to add a male friend. It was the 'alsahwa' era. I am a very different person now'*. (A1). Thus, A1's initial online practices were influenced by the Islamic awakening era, 'alsahwa'. However, by the end of A1's answer, she concluded that she had changed significantly; she eventually accepted that adding men as friends on social media platforms was allowed. This incident reflects the negotiation of religious identity online practices, namely, cross-gender relationships.

However, the fear of adding strangers and male friends has slowly changed, and cross-gender communication has become more 'relaxed'. Participants recalled how their interactions with the opposite sex slowly changed compared to their early online practices on SMP. A11 for example, though she used to set her Facebook account to

---

[1] Glossary of Terms

'private', on some occasions would open her account to accept some male friends (*shabab*[1]):

> *'I used to sometimes open my account to accept some friend requests from alshabab, I have no problem with that as long as he is polite. I mean, in fact, sometimes, your relationship with alshabab could be smoother than the ones with girls'* (A11).

In this excerpt, A11 discusses how she filters and draws boundaries with her male friends.

Indeed, cross-gender communication had eased for I4 and A1 as well, as I4 and A1 had decided to 'relax' their cautious approach: *'I started feeling better about adding accounts from the opposite sex, under one condition: if they have personal skills or talents in writing or reading or something like that'* (I4). The transition of cross-gender communication practices online shows how such negotiations between the online practices and offline identity have reshaped participants' religious identity. Whereas communication/building relationships with the opposite sex used to be '*Haram*', it has now become 'ok'.

4.5   CONCLUSION

This chapter answered part of the first research question: *How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed?* It represented participants' reminiscences of their early negotiations of their identity through their online practices on SMP. This included the transitions they had been through in terms of the religious and cultural/societal facets of their identity in relation to their visual/textual identity representation across SMP, and also the transitions of their online relationships on these platforms. Imagined audiences, orthodoxies of veiling and cross-gender communication dominated the majority of participants' identity negotiations and their online practices across SMP, yet the data extended to how SMP, namely, Facebook and Twitter, were perceived as environment since participants' early usage of them, where the Saudi Twittersphere emerged (section 4.2.3). Generally, more relaxed cultural norms and traditions featured in the practices of many participants across SMP: the willingness to use authentic

---

[1] See Glossary of Terms

names instead of pseudonyms, sharing personal/face photos, and cross-gender communication. This was a negotiation among participants' social/familial/cultural/religious/gendered identities, i.e. between religious and gendered identity facets. They initially held a fear of strangers and of the opposite sex, as the 'way of life' and communication as it is practiced offline was the only practice of identity disclosure and cross-gender communication that they were familiar with at that time. Examples are the cases of A1 and I4, who in their early online experiences, refused to add men as friends on Facebook, but over time relaxed their practices in terms of communication with the opposite sex. Another is the case of A5 who – through time – started to share photos of herself (i.e. showing her face). This resonates with several studies of Saudi women's online practices, where anonymity was preferred in the early days (Al-Saggaf et al., 2002; Al-Salem, 2005; Journiette, 2014; Oshan, 2007). However, such transition from anonymity to disclosure was not the case of all participants. Although, online communication had made Saudi women "less inhibited about the opposite gender" as "the continuous dialogue between the two genders may make them get used to each other's presence" (Al-Saggaf & Begg, 2004, p. 10), there were participants who still minimised their cross-gender communication either through privacy features, e.g., by adding only females as friends on Path, or setting several boundaries to such communication (e.g., comments, messaging, etc). Moreover, they preferred to maintain anonymity and pseudonymity online, across some or all SMP, and they were constantly cautious about the content they shared on SMP, which they adapted after sensing their audience which indeed mirrors Saudi conventions of offline communication (Madini & de Nooy, 2013, p. 252). This confirms the work of (N. Abokhodair et al., 2016; Alruwaili, 2017; Alsaggaf, 2015, 2019; Alshehab, 2017; Asadi, 2011; Guta & Karolak, 2015; Stanger, Alnaghaimshi, & Pearson, 2017). Whereas existing literature emphasised how the Saudi cultural context imposes a pressure on Saudi women to use pseudonyms and their fear of their identity disclosure, this study's findings suggested rather the opposite: there are Saudi women who choose – personally – to disclose their authentic identity, and this occurred even in their early usage of the internet (online forums), and then on SMP such as Facebook and Twitter. These contradictions bring out the individual differences and the personal choices of these women to hide or disclose their identities online. The nuance of personal choices of representation and personal identity specifically is one of the findings that emerged from this study.

For example, M3 and A5 showed early attempts to disclose their offline identity online, which could be explained due to A5's 'open-minded' family; she acknowledged that neither she nor they had any trouble with her using her name online/writing under her authentic name. However, why would this be also the case of M3 who never – as she reported – used a pseudonym, bearing in mind the fact that her family is conservative? This could be explained in M3's own words she said continually that she did not want to do something behind her family, so she chose to write with her authentic name from the beginning: her family knew about her presence online, and using her authentic name felt – for her – a constant reminder/alert or a self-censorship method, which was influenced more by a familial than a social/cultural or religious perspective. Similarly, a question could be raised: why would A5 choose – in the beginning – to use a pseudonym although her family is open-minded? This could be explained by the fear experienced by new users on online forums about using their authentic names. As A5 put it: *'Everyone was using pseudonyms'*. I will elaborate on this when I discuss fear as a dominant theme of participants' identity representation practices online (section 8.2.5). However, the case of M3 in particular could challenge the findings of previous studies, in which anonymity was not – always – the preferred online identity representation after all! However, the discussion of the findings will be extended in Chapter Eight (section 8.1, 8.2, 8.3.3.1). I now move to Chapter Five, where I represent a 'more recent' data of participants' visual/textual identity representations across SMP, where I investigate the second research question: *How do Saudi women represent their identities across SMP?*

CHAPTER 5: EXAMINING ONLINE REPRESENTATION AND SHARING 'TACTICS' ON SMP

'On Instagram for example, I have many general followers, and I have personal followers such as my high school friends, my cousins and relatives, so I have to restrict what I should post to the public. I mean especially when we have private family events, I know I cannot post about it publicly because it will be shown to a lot of people. Same applies about phrases I post on photos, I have to be very careful, so my words will not get misunderstood or something like that' (A1).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the second question of this thesis: *How do Saudi women represent their identities across SMP?* The data analysis in this chapter illustrates participants' identity representation online, where visual/textual online representation, e.g., profile pictures and biography and sharing 'tactics', e.g., audience segregation, are all part of participants' online identity. Section 2.3 and 2.8 I framed concepts relating to sharing strategies across SMP, which this empirical chapter will address: the sense of the audience of SMP users' online practices, how they present themselves based on different audiences, for example, adjusting profiles and using nicknames. Moreover, it has been established that 'audience' is complex and multiple. SMP users segregate it in various subgroups, and always navigate these differences when, for example, sharing or unsharing. Furthermore, audience segregation is linked to context collapse/divide, where users try to segregate their audiences, but might end up collapsing them despite their intentions. Finally, audience size and diversity composition will influence disclosures and the choice of privacy settings, and therefore how private/public boundaries are set, adjusted and negotiated. I will be discussing in the conclusion (section 5.4) how the data in this chapter reinforced, challenged and developed existing works on SMP audiencing, context collapse/divide and private/public boundaries. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first addresses online representation, which includes textual and visual representation, specifically: profile pictures, header pictures

(if applicable), names and biography, where I shed light on online representation of the following aspects of identity: gender identity, Arab identity, religious/Muslim identity, political and national identity. The second focuses on sharing 'tactics', including setting private/public boundaries, the decision to delete SMP posts, audience segregation, cross-gender communication across SMP and collapsing contexts through identical posting across SMP.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS' ONLINE REPRESENTATION PRACTICES ACROSS SMP

5.2.1 TEXTUAL REPRESENTATION PRACTICES: NAMING AND BIOGRAPHY

The revealing of the full name, first and last names, on SMP, is in some cases a 'tactic' of hiding instead of openness. This was the case for R6 and A11. R6 explained how that full name is common among other female members of her extended family. The same point was echoed in my interview with A11 who mentioned that there are many female members of her extended family with the same name. Here, the online textual representation is managed in relation to R6's and A11's familial identity. Using their authentic name online, might be interpreted as transparency in identity offline/online representation. However, R6 and A11 explained in the interviews how sharing their authentic names online could not identify their authentic identity; who exactly is R6 or A11 among the extended family members. This is interesting because of the way naming is 'played', not in the forms of pseudonyms, but through authenticity!

Another form of textual representation is the biography. Through the online observation, I witnessed how several participants changed their biographies across SMP. I could not ask them about each biography, because I knew from previous experience in the pilot study that answers to such questions would be either *I do not remember* or *I do not know*, and also because I felt – in different occasions- that this type of questions (leading to participants struggling with recall) causes tension. So I preferred to ask about the biography in general and if it emerged through the interviews, such as M3 case in Chapter Four (section 4.4.2) then it would be part of the data, not to forget the online observation data I already had. However, I asked them why they changed their biographies and why did they choose them. Different reasons emerged.

In relation to identity representation online, A5, S8 and W9 all mentioned boredom, ambiguity and mood as three different explanations for their choice and changing of their biographies across SMP: *'I change my bio because I get bored with it, sometimes I like ambiguity sometimes I like transparency, so it depends on the mood ... at present I'm in the status of ambiguity'* (S8). Ambiguity here is the opposite to transparency, where the latter means exposing personal information about S8, such as her educational qualifications, marital status etc. Figure 21 illustrates two biographies of S8: Twitter and Instagram. During our interview, S8 explained that by ambiguity she meant the absence of any personal details which could reveal further personal information on her profile, except for her being Saudi and her full name, S8 used her full name on both Instagram and Twitter. In contrast, R6 did not consider sharing information about herself on her SMP biography as an option *'It is not suitable'* (R6). Here, R6 - although she did not mention it explicitly - preferred ambiguity instead of openness.

Hard to be categorised.

♀ Saudi Arabia 🔗

Light settles in my heart and my soul … why should I feel afraid of walking through darkness?
Arabian ❤️ 🇸🇦
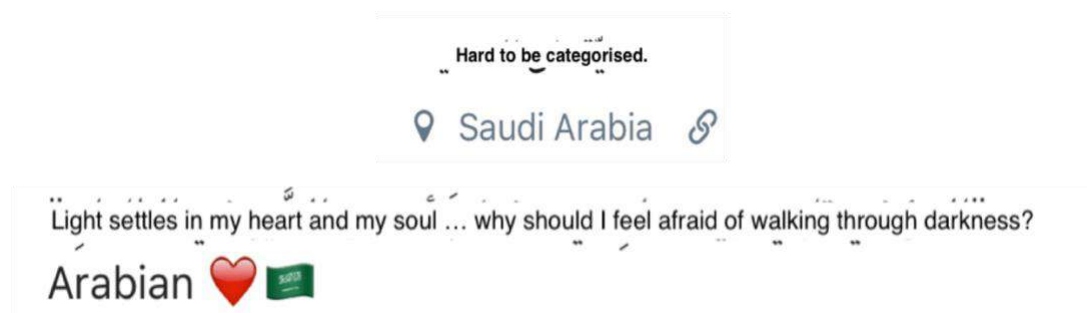
Figure 21 Translated screenshots of S8's biographies across Twitter (above) and Instagram (below)

The last example to present here is the one of W9, who considered her choice of the biography - besides depending on her mood - as a part of a self-discovery process: *'The bio depends on my mood ... when I discover myself, I'll write a new bio on Twitter ... I'm still discovering myself'* (W9). Here, it is interesting that W9's choice of biography is seen as something for oneself, rather than for others, an audience. This example echoes M3's excerpt presented in Chapter Four (section 4.4.2), where she chose an Arabic poem as her biography because the poem 'expressed her'. In Figure 22, W9's visual and textual representation echo each other, where W9's biography on Twitter states her love of writing, research (academic research) and crochet. Although this section has focused on textual online representation only, it is worth mentioning here that some of W9's profile pictures, on both Twitter and Path, do represent books and crochet as a depiction of her personal hobbies: writing, research and crochet (Figure 22).

Figure 22 Screenshots of W9's biography (translated) on Twitter (above) and profile pictures on Twitter and Path (below), from left to right (February - September 2016)

The previous examples shed light on the explanations participants gave as reasons for their textual online representation choices, such as ambiguity and transparency, which are related to personal identity; preferences of representation (the cases of S8 and W9) and privacy concerns and audience awareness (the case of R6).

5.2.2 VISUAL REPRESENTATION PRACTICES: PROFILE/ HEADER PICTURES AND SHARED PHOTOS

I spotted through my online observation how participants changed their online visual representation, what I call the 'fluidity of online representation'. Figures 23, 24 and 25 illustrate I4, W9 and A11's change of their visual representation during the online observation periods[1], as shown in their profile/header pictures. Similar to participants' textual representation, boredom, ambiguity and mood were mentioned again in some participants' explanations of why they changed their profile pictures. This was the case for A1, M3, I4, A5, R6, S8, and W9. For example: *'I change them from time to time according to my mood'* (R6).

Two other participants, A5 and R12, gave a further explanation - besides mood and ambiguity - for changing profile pictures, depending on having a new photo: *'if I have a new nice photo* (she laughs)*'* (A5),

---

[1] Three months in the case of I4 and eight months in the cases of W9 and A11

'I mean I do not think that choosing a profile picture depends on the mood, it depends on having a new picture ... which is suitable for posting ... so it's then shared ... I mean I'm being honest with you (she laughs)*'* (R12).

All of these explanations are personal choices of visual representation, which was addressed previously in W9's example, earlier (section 5.2.1).
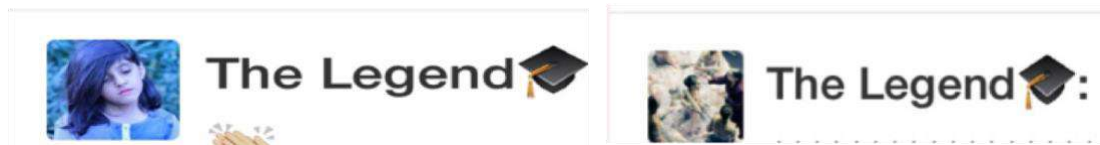
Figure 23 Screenshots of I4's Path profile pictures between March - June 2015
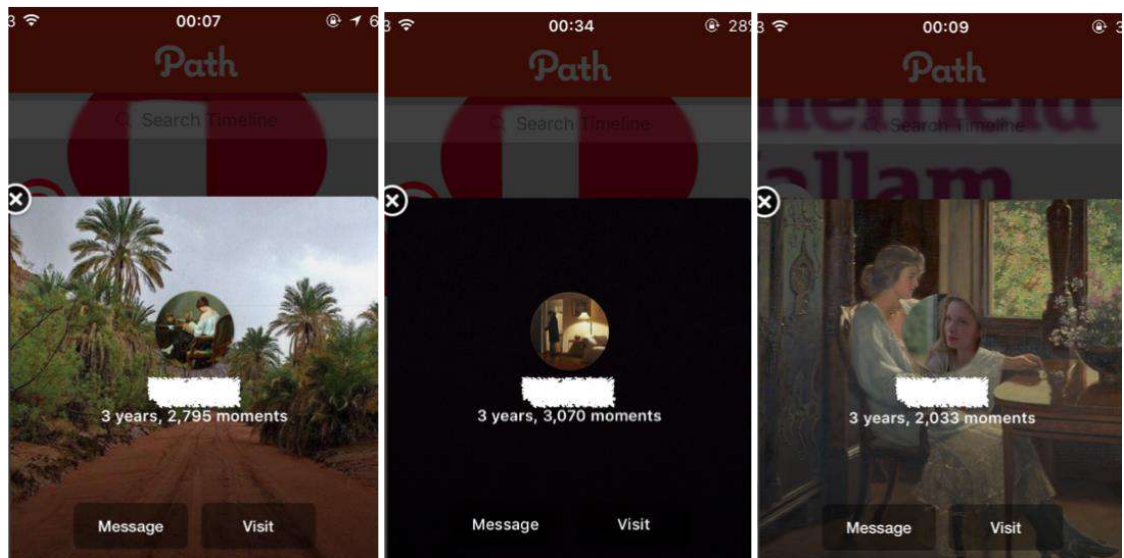
Figure 24 Screenshots of W9's Path profile pictures and headers between February - September 2016

119
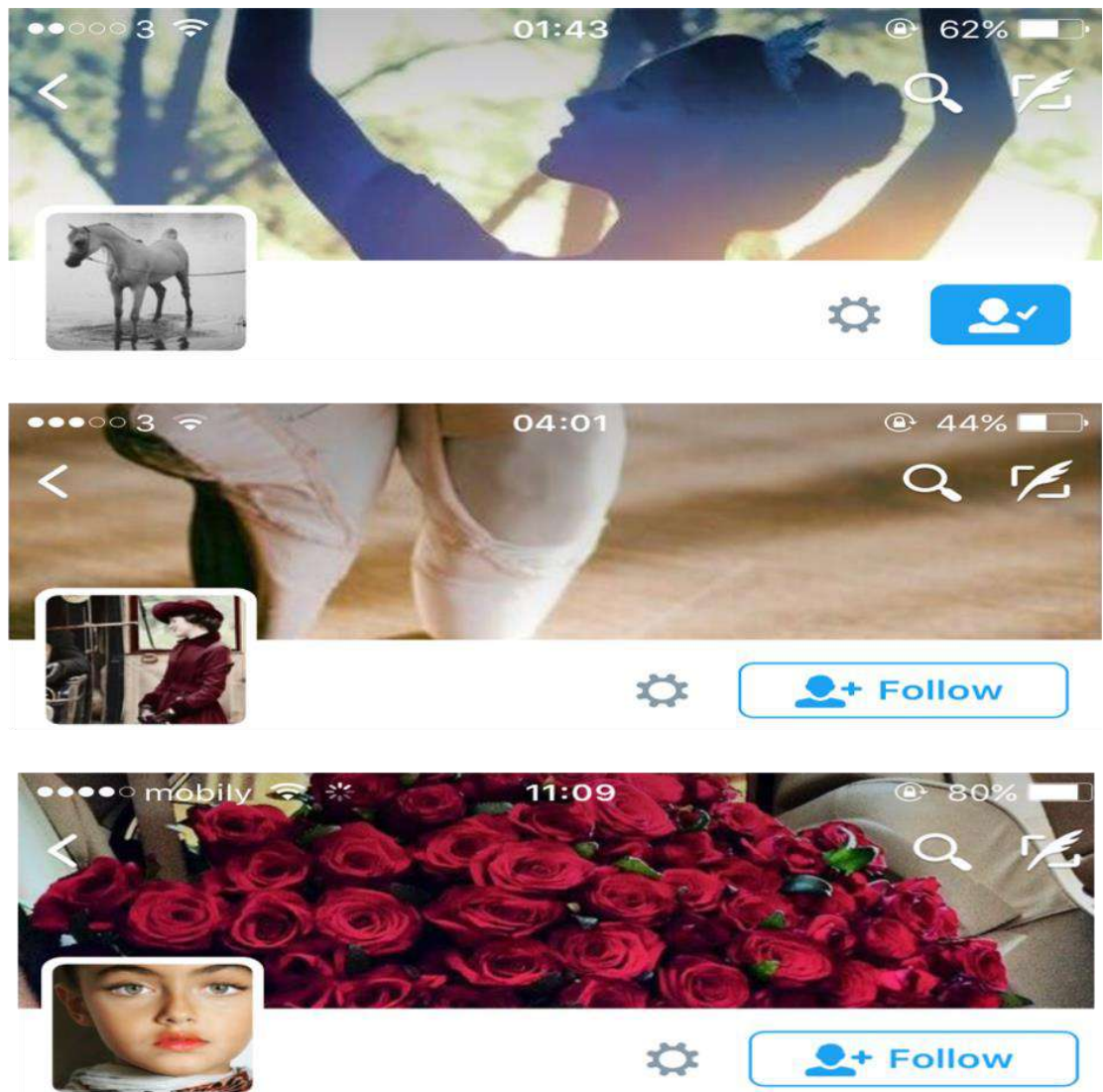
Figure 25 Screenshots of A11's Twitter profile pictures and headers between February - September 2016

Yet, the reasons why participants change their visual representation are different from their choice of their visual representation on SMP. Whereas participants might change their visual representation depending on their mood, due to boredom, the choice of which visual material they share on SMP is decided according to audience social censorship across SMP. For example, in the following excerpt, R6 combines both the reason for changing her profile picture and which picture she chose to upload: *'Yes, I use iconic pictures depending on my mood'* (R6).
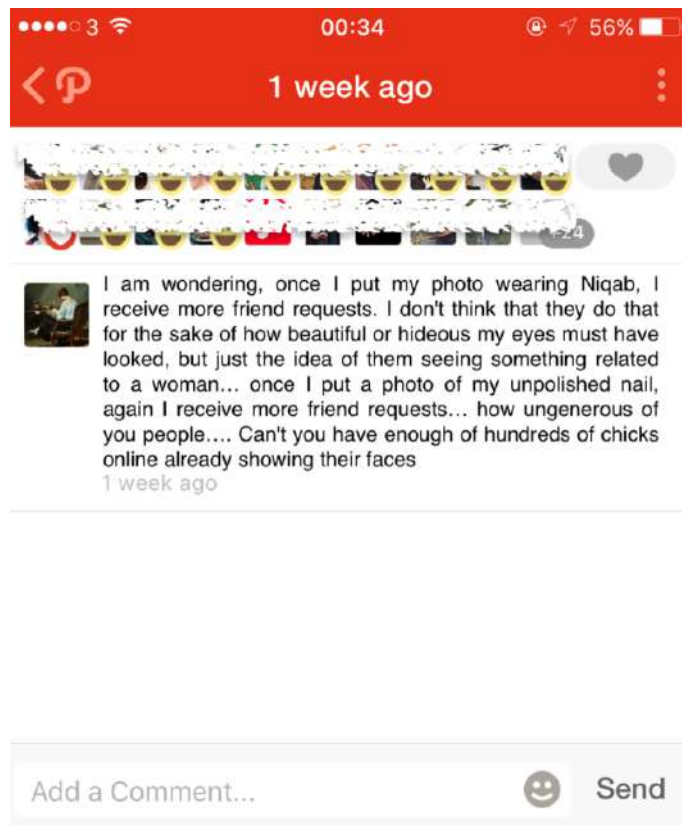
Figure 26 Translated screenshot of W9's post on Path where she expresses her concern about the rise of 'friends' requests from men whenever she uses her photo with Niqab as a profile picture on Path

In Figure 26, W9's post on Path explains why she hesitates to use her photo with Niqab as a profile picture on Path, where her photo 'attracts' more male requests to add her as a friend on Path. Indeed, in our interview, I brought this up, as I had spotted how W9 had used her photo as a little girl as her profile picture on Path, then changed it to her photo wearing Niqab (same as what she wore offline). Therefore, I asked her why she had uploaded/removed both those two pictures (the photo with Niqab and the photo of her as a little girl): was it was a random change of her online representation, or was it because of the audience? W9 explained how she could be harassed or misjudged if she shared a photo of her face without Niqab:

> *'I want to express my identity. I put my picture as a child because this is what I can do, or I add my photo wearing Niqab, which is what I look like in the street, but sometimes, for example, you get harassments. I mean someone could come and when he sees your eyes, for example, he likes them or he gets a feeling that exposing your body your identity he thinks, "Oh ya Allah"* (let me go ahead)*'* (W9).

Here, W9 literacy brought the word 'identity', showing a wish to represent her identity on the online sphere as she did in the offline one. Yet, this 'online transparency' may be interpreted by men as an invitation for a romantic relationship. W9 explained further she is 'convinced' she is Muhajabah; wearing a scarf on her head only, yet, she could not share such photos of herself online, because of her family's disapproval. I will discuss this episode further in Chapter Seven, to discuss the participants' online/offline identity confrontation; visual online representation in the case of W9 (section 7.2.3).

A11 echoed W9's episode. When I told her (A11), that other participants changed their profile pictures depending on their 'mood', she said it was not the same for her. A11 elaborated that she had changed her profile picture on Twitter once because she felt it 'seduced' Saudi men[1]: *'unfortunately, a Saudi man judges you through your picture'* (A11). Here, the case of A11 is similar to W9 in terms of the interpreted seduction, yet, A11 is referring to an iconic picture of a woman, not a photo of herself wearing Niqab or even a 'human being' photo. In these two episodes (W9 and A11) visual representation was dictated by SMP audiences, although W9 had no problem with revealing part of her authentic identity, and A11 did not even use her authentic photo; the audience reaction played a role in their hesitation/or reluctance to share a 'female' photo!

This section discussed participants' visual online representation practices, where some of them change their profile pictures continually, which I called the fluidity of online representation. Yet, the reasons given by the participants for such practices (changing their visual online representation) differ from merely boredom, to audience social censorship (W9 and A11); moreover, visual online representation is managed differently across SMP (Twitter and Instagram in the case of A5).

5.2.3 *TEXTUAL AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION AS PART OF GENDER, ARAB, RELIGIOUS/MUSLIM, POLITICAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION*

In this sub-section, I focus on how specific aspects of participants' identity are represented online through textual and visual representation on SMP profiles. Some of these examples have already been presented in the previous section, to which I will be

---

[1] A11 did not tell me which picture exactly

referring. I start with A11, who elaborated on the previous episode; changing her profile picture on Twitter because she felt it seduced men (section 5.2.2). In consequence, A11 decided to choose, instead of a picture of a woman, a picture of a horse: *'It means no one can come near or looks, otherwise, they'll get a kick versus any word* (she laughs)*'* (A11), A11 added what a horse picture represents: *'It represents me ... I feel it represents me ... patient and you feel that it encompasses many nice things ... I love horses so much'* (A11) (Figure 27) (Figure 28).

The interpretation of this excerpt is twofold: The first is the self-representation, what the horse means to A11 reflects a trait of her own self - patience. Here, visual online representation is, like the previous examples of W9 and M3, a self- representation. Yet, through my online observation, I spotted R6 also using a horse picture as her header on Twitter (Figure 27). Here, A11 and R6's online visual representations are part of their Arab identity, as the horse, in the Arabic heritage, has a special status, even in the Islamic text, the Quran, the horse is associated with goodness and strength.

Figure 27 Screenshot of A11's header photo on Twitter
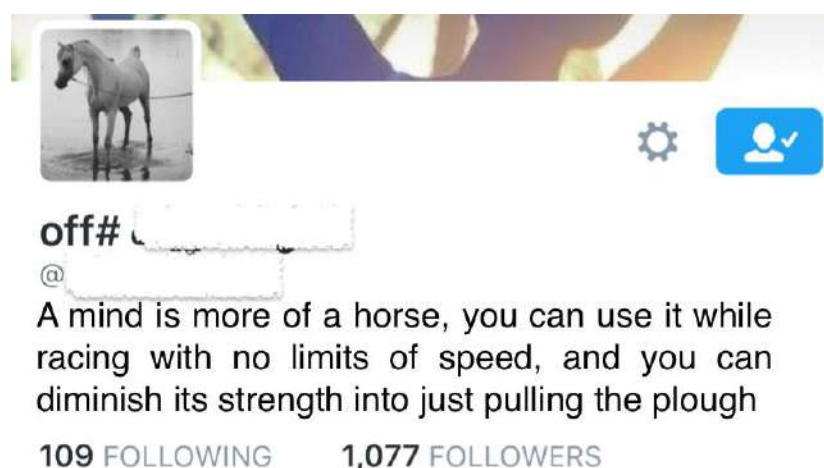
Figure 28 Translated screenshot of A11's profile picture on Twitter

Figure 29 Screenshot of R6's profile picture on Twitter

Moreover, in one of A11's - constantly changing - biographies on Twitter, A11 used not only a picture of a horse as her profile picture, but also a biography likening the mind to a horse *'a mind is more of a horse: you can use it while racing with no limits of speed, and you can diminish its strength into pulling the plough'* (A11 biography) (Figure 28). This poetic comparison might reflect how A11 wants to be seen by her followers in terms of how she controls her sharing as if she is riding a horse. In other words, this might be a hidden message to her audience, showing her maturity and awareness of the shared content on her Twitter account. Indeed, the crafted poetic biography is part of how Arabic speakers can boast, reflecting the status writing has in the Arabic culture. This is aligned with what I discussed in Chapter Four (section 4.2.2), in the case of I4, W9 and A11's eagerness to be part of a community of intellectuals and writers online, moreover, to be one of them; a writer.

Figure 30 Screenshot of pilot study participants (A1, A2, M3 and I4) profile pictures across SMP
(March-June 2015)

Figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 32 illustrate different profile pictures of participants across SMP, as part of participants' gendered visual representation. All of

the pictures depict pictures of females, either young veiled/unveiled women or a small girl. These choices could be interpreted as representations of participants' both gendered and also (in the case of the veil) cultural identities (the veil). Moreover, L7's profile picture in Figure 31 depicts two siblings, a small girl and a small boy, which could be interpreted as a representation of her familial circumstances; L7 has children, a boy and a girl. On Instagram, L7 sometimes used one her small daughter's pictures; in one of them L7's daughter was wearing a graduation hat, having graduated from primary school[1].

Figure 31 Screenshot of L7's profile picture on Twitter (February - September 2016)

In Figure 32, M10's choices of visual representation through her profile pictures are indeed gendered, yet, her choice of a picture of a girl wearing a lab coat (first picture from the right), holding a chemical mixture, represents M10's educational field; chemistry. Here, M10's visual representation combines both her gendered and personal identity as a female chemist. It is worth mentioning here that on her biographies on Twitter and Instagram, M10 states her educational qualifications (Figure 33).
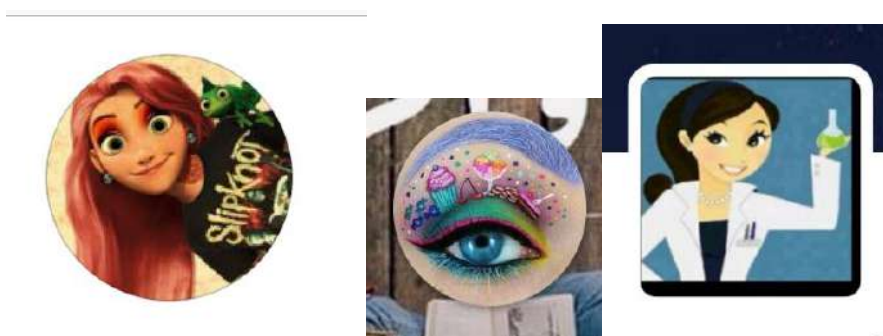
Figure 32 Screenshots of pilot M10's profile pictures across SMP: Instagram, Path and Twitter, from left to right (February - September 2016)

---

[1] Check the educational system in Saudi Arabia https://www.scholaro.com/pro/countries/saudi-arabia/education-system

Chemistry, READing and more !! 💪😌🎓

I like the light of the sun | Fan of Reading | Blogger | ١٩٩٢ | Chemist | 330# I am | I am disgusted by animals and I am afraid of them | and I curse darkness

Figure 33 Translated screenshots of M10's biographies across SMP: Instagram and Twitter, from left to right (February - September 2016) [1]

R6's holds a conservativeness and firmly established religious identity. Indeed, in Figure 34, R6's biography on Twitter represents part of her religious identity, where she states her pride and honour to be a servant of Allah and a follower of Islam, the religion of Prophet Mohammad – peace be upon him. Another example of religious identity representation is the one of A1 (Figure 35) whom I discussed Chapter Four (section 4.4.6), in relation to her early fear of adding members of the opposite sex as friends on Facebook. A1 brought the Islamic Awakening, Alsahwah, which shaped her initial online practices. In our interviews, A1 expressed her 'regret' at losing part of her religious identity as a consequence of relaxing her pre-established online religious identity, I will elaborate on this point in Chapter Seven where I examine the ongoing negotiation between participants' identities and their online practices on SMP (section 7.3.1). However, the examples of both R6 and A1 illustrate how religious identity can be represented online through participants' textual representation; biography.

and I felt much more honoured and privileged that I could almost touch the stars as I was one of your worshippers and a follower of beloved prophet Ahmed.
📍 Dammam

Figure 34 Translated screenshot of R6's biography on Twitter

My lord and the God of all wonderings and queries.

Figure 35 Translated screenshot of A1's biography on Twitter

---

[1] It is worth mentioning, that M10's biography on Twitter was changed from: a student of chemistry @ (a university) to a chemist, following her graduation, during the online observation period

One unique example is one of A2's profile pictures on Twitter, with the logo of the womentodrive campaign; this was before the driving ban was lifted on September 2017. Although A2 never shared political opinions through Twitter, within my online observation, neither did she bring this up in our interviews. This picture depicts online activism as part of A2's political identity. However, I did not ask her about the picture, because I felt it would be uncomfortable for her, as such sensitive topics might cause hesitation of participants to participate in the study given the restrictions of freedom of speech in Saudi Arabia. However, in Chapter Seven (section 7.6.3), I will refer to this picture as a reflection of online activism and rebellion, where part of the data illustrates participants' online/offline identity negotiation, in terms of the absence of an offline sphere for activism, whereas an opportunity is offered in the online sphere, as a counter-public sphere for activism through campaigns such as endguardianship.

Figure 36 Screenshot of A2's profile picture on Twitter with the logo of the #womentodrive campaign, (March - June 2015)

The last three examples I present here are part of represented national and heritage identity. The first is the case of S8's biography (Figure 21, section 5.2.1). Here, S8 represents an aspect of her national identity, where the emoji of the heart is side by side with the Saudi flag. This might be interpreted as a representation of S8's pride in her nationality and love of her country. The second is part of M10's biography on Twitter (Figure 37), where she states that she is 330. 330 is a symbol which emerged on Saudi Twitter years ago, as a symbol of equality. To explain this further, in the Saudi culture, 110 and 220 are sarcastic jargon ways of referring to Saudi citizens' tribal heritage classifications, where 220 refers to a person categorised as *Qabili* (tribal); such families feel themselves superior to the non-tribal *Khadiri*, 110, e.g., tradesmen, artisans[1]. Here, M10 declares that she is 330, which means neither 220 nor 110. 330 here is part of national identity representation, where M10 asserts that she is a Saudi citizen,

---

[1] https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/tribes-and-tribalism-arabian-peninsula

regardless of any other 'racist' tribal heritage statuses classifications, such as 110 and 220.

Figure 37 Translated screenshot of M10's biography on Twitter (February - September 2016)

Figure 38 Screenshots of A11's different profile pictures on Twitter (February - September 2016)

The third and last example in this section of this chapter is the case of A11, who expressed both in the interview and through her online representation her pride in her noble ancestors: AL-Ashraf. Indeed, A11's user names on Twitter and Instagram state clearly her last name: Al Sharifah. In Figure 38, A11 uses picture of King Faisal as profile pictures on her Twitter account, different pictures at different points of my online observation. In Saudi history, Al-Ashraf and the Hijaz province specifically received special and generous interest and development during King Faisal's reign.

5.3 SHARING 'TACTICS' ACROSS SMP

The second part of this chapter aims to frame participants' SMP audiences' segregation and the divide between contexts. I start by giving a wider picture of participants' sharing tactics, which include drawing private/public boundaries, audience segregation, cross gender communication, deleting posts and collapsing contexts as a contrast to context divide. Regarding the overlap between data presented in this part of this chapter: Sharing tactics across SMP and Chapter Six: SMP Ecology, the presented data aim to pave the way for the reader to recognise how online sharing practices' strategies combine different dynamics, e.g., offline social censorship and perceiving SMP as different environments. This section is divided into five sub-themes: (1) setting private/public boundaries, (2) the decision to delete SMP posts, (3) audience

segregation: having multiple accounts on the same SMP, (4) cross-gender communication across SMP and (5) collapsing contexts through identical posting across SMP.

5.3.1 SETTING PRIVATE/PUBLIC BOUNDARIES

In general, private is where participants choose to 'close' a platform (set to private), where they allow or refuse specific users to follow them/add them as friends. These are the case of Instagram and Snapchat, where it is possible to set the accounts to private. The public is the opposite, where the platform is open to everyone and participants have no control on who can view their posts. This is also available on different SMP, such as Instagram and Snapchat. Yet, the private/public boundaries get more complicated in the case of Path, for example, where only added friends can view participants' posts, and participants can 'unshare' or 'unfriend' users whom they do not wish to view their posts. At the same time Path itself has other 'circles' of sharing[1]. Moreover, whether participants practise SMP as private/public depends on: (1) the platform's privacy settings e.g., the ability to make Twitter private; protected tweets, (2) perceived SMP environments and attachment to SMP. For example, R12 shared her personal information and daily life activities on Path, which for her is a 'private' platform, yet, she would never post the same content on Twitter, because it is a 'public' platform. For all participants, shared content on SMP has an inverse relationship with the privacy settings; the more the platform is public the more restricted their shared content is. In Table 7, I classify the platforms I followed/observed through the data collection that participants authorised me to follow, into private/public, depending only on the online observation data.

---

[1] See the Part on Path in the methodology chapter as I have already explained its privacy options (section 3.1.4).

Table 7 Participants' private/public choices of their SMP accounts (Twitter and Instagram only) and whether they have multiple accounts on the same SMP

Participant/Number of Accounts on The Same Platform and Whether These Accounts Are Public or Private	Twitter	Instagram
A1	One account, public	One account, private
A2	One account, public	Two accounts, one public the other is private
M3	Two accounts. The one I followed is public. M3 did not declare whether the other is public or private	Two accounts, one public the other is private
I4	Two accounts, both public	One account, public
A5	Two accounts, both public	Two accounts, both public
R6	Two accounts, both public	One account, public
L7	One account, public	One account, private
S8	One account, public	One account, public
W9	One account, public/private (W9 kept changing her privacy settings on Twitter)	One account, public
M10	One account, public	One account, public
A11	One account, public	One account, private
R12	One account, public	One account, public

I start by raising and answering the questions of what was public and what was private for the participants. What was acceptable to be shared on a public platform and what was restricted to a private one. The following excerpts of A11 define where are the public/private boundaries for her. She shared her travels and paintings on Instagram, although she set her account as private, so only people she approved could follow her. However, A11 treated her Instagram account as public, meaning that, although it was

private/closed, she considered what she posted on Instagram as if it was posted on an open/public account. A11 had both male and female followers on her Instagram account. She described her practices on Instagram as 'generic', meaning she did not include her family and children:

'because it is not closed, it's private ok, but there are people which I added ... accepted their adds in the first place ... they are not my relatives and I do not know them, shabab from Doha, Kuwait, from everywhere, so it's difficult that they see my personal life details I do not like details like pictures, as with books this is no problem these are things which do not affect me personally, the book could be with me today and with you tomorrow, but my children! and my life and my house (are private)*'* (A11).

The words 'my children' were used three times in A11's narrative, to explain how even 'private' sharing of her children's photos was a 'red line'. A11 constantly shifted through the interviews between Instagram and Snapchat. In general, she explained which privacy rules she sets, for both Instagram and Snapchat: *'Even on Snapchat, forget that I would post pictures of my house or food'* I asked her: Do you mean privacy?

'Yes, I mean if there is a gathering, I post a picture of a general scene, if there is a wedding venue entrance or in the house, I could post a picture of the hall prior to guests' arrival, I could post a picture of the flowers for them also ... I mean technology is becoming more and more open, I like it (she meant Snapchat) *Someone told me, "you have disappeared from Snapchat" I told her, "I travel a lot". I have not travelled or anything, you find that I do not post anything on Snapchat for weeks, I do not. I mean a gift I got from someone, beauty creams which I newly bought, but what is behind A11[1] this is ambiguous, because there are friends which I added from Kuwait, Riyadh, they might be nuts or stupid or whatever, I do not know and there could occur a touch between me and them. She might take a picture of me or my children* (by "she", A11 meant any female follower whom she did not know personally)*'* (A11).

---

[1] She mentioned her name

Here, the house, children and herself were all private and not suitable to be shared. Other pictures, which can be posted by anyone, such as books and public places, wedding venues or cafes, are only temporarily associated with the sender. Another point to highlight here is the aim to be 'ambiguous', so that the audience/followers are not able to 'trace' the user, or which A11 was totally aware of. Thus, A11 avoided offering a 'traceable path' of posts, which could lead to her private life, e.g., home and family. This a similar concern was echoed in M3 interview, in which she also classified what was acceptable to be shared, and what was personal, not suitable for public sharing:

> *'I do not know, I love my privacy so much, I gave it high consideration. Despite whatever I share, I do not like to share things about my family, or my future plans, what I've done, locations I've visited. but if it's related to writing my diaries, or books, I share them without any hesitation; university diaries, general diaries, they are not private, they're general stuff'* (M3).

Again, it is the family that is of concern, and also, one's location. In contrast, the books are publicly shared content, and so are diaries' covers. This last point is important, because M3 meant her diary notebooks' covers, not the written 'personal' contents of the diaries themselves.

Echoing the public/private muddle where SMP privacy settings become more confusing, as A11 put it previously: *'I mean technology is becoming more and more open'* (A11), L7 mentioned a recent episode where she was notified by her nephew of a picture she had posted on her Snapchat 'public' story by mistake, L7 explained that she had not known her story was public, she thought she was sending it privately to her contacts. However, the story was posted publicly, until L7's nephew pointed this out to her. This was before L7 had worked out how to set her Snapchat to private, so that only allowed friends could see her snaps. I will refer to this episode again in the next section, SMP post deletion practices, where 'mistakenly' posted material is one of the explanations participants' gave for deleting their posts on SMP.

L7's example here shows how having families or friends as an audience on SMP dictates sharing choices. This was the case of A1 for example, for whom family values, norms and traditions dictates her sharing practices. Here is an excerpt of A1, with which I started this chapter:

> *'On Instagram for example, I have many general followers, and I have personal followers such as my high school friends, my cousins and relatives, so I have to restrict what I should post to the public. I mean especially when we have private family events, I know I cannot post about it publicly because it will be shown to a lot of people. Same applies about phrases I post on photos, I have to be very careful, so my words will not get misunderstood or something like that'* (A1).

A1's Instagram was public, where she followed the 'rules of sharing mentioned in her except. Yet, she told me she later set her Instagram to private, because of some online 'mobbing' she received in relation to her posts. A1 did not tell me which kind of mobbing and from whom; however, I interpreted from her excerpt that it came from the same audience she had on her Instagram account: family and friends.

What reaffirms my interpretation is that A1 added the information that since she had turned her Instagram account to private, she knew how to control her posts in the future whenever she received one of these 'mobbings'. In other words: the circle of audience from whom she envisaged such harassment was narrowed. The case of A1 is indeed similar to the cases of W9 and A5, who both explained how their sharing practices were managed thoroughly, taking into account their family's approval/disapproval of their posts.

The case of A5 shows how SMP could change according to private/public settings. A5's Snapchat account was at the time of in our first interview, then in our follow-up interview, she informed me that she had made it public. As a consequence of setting her Snapchat to public, A5 had sat certain sharing rules: never snap/post a 'live' snap showing her face, only upload photos *'The same as Instagram'* (A5). A5 explained that because she used Snap most of the time when was at home, she mostly took pictures of her hands *'I bet that my followers have memorised by heart my rings'* (A5). Here, the audience pressure arose in relation to platforms' openness: the more open the audience, the less personal content was shared. Moreover, because A5's Snapchat account was public she minimised taking videos of herself; showing her face, instead she started using Snapchat similarly to Instagram: posting pictures only[1].

---

[1] This was before Instagram enabled two new features: live Instagram and the ability to record longer videos.

When asked R12 whether she represented herself differently across SMP, she totally agreed and indeed indicated she was aware of the nuances of sharing content across platforms; she was familiar with which platforms are most suitable for certain information, their privacy, and the audience for that each platform. This excerpt of R12 explains further:

> *'Yes, yes, it's different and I am aware that it is different. I mean it depends to what extent the network is closed. The more it's closed the more I'm more comfortable in which stuff [I share with people (En)] and such stuff, the more it's open the less what is called* (she recalls the word for stuff/information) *I mean [expose (En)] I mean [my life (En)] because firstly I consider it [privacy (En)] secondly I think it's not a safe thing or even comfortable that one would talk about his/her life [in public (En)] you know what I mean, and I'm against whoever does those things, you know what I mean, I mean even with my close group, there is a certain part I try not to [expose (En)]'* (R12).

Here, the private/public boundary is practise thoroughly and carefully, yet, the variation here does not depend on whether a specific platform is set to private or public, but on how platforms themselves are perceived as public and private, even if their privacy settings are all set to public. R12 gave an example of Path, where she could - as she put it previously - 'expose' her life, e.g., check in a location or share her daily activities, whilst on other platforms such as Twitter, she did not share the same content.

The case of A5 echoes R12 excerpt. A5's Twitter and Instagram accounts were public, according to what she told me, yet she considered Instagram more private than Twitter, so she could not use the same profile picture on Instagram as on Twitter as I mentioned earlier in Chapter Four, A5 stressed in both interviews (first and follow-up) that she could not use her Instagram profile picture on Twitter *'I cannot ... they would eat me[1]'* (A5). A5's profile picture on Instagram was originally a picture of her wearing a swimsuit, A5 had 'cut' the photo and presented only her face; in the original picture A5 was not wearing a scarf at all. She considered Instagram more private/closed, and Twitter as widely open/public, so A5 could not share her Instagram profile picture,

---

[1] She means criticises her harshly

otherwise, the 'large' audience on Twitter would recognise the unveiled original photo and criticise her harshly.

Similar to A5, M3 assured me that she did not want to have a private account, yet she restricted the content which she shared as public:

> *'As I told you last time* (she meant in the first interview) *the most common and highly important thing is that I do not make my SMP private ones, but I try to make the information I share as general as possible. I do not share anything, I do not share private information, I think that's all'* (M3).

The choice of M3, to set all her SMP accounts to public, whilst controlling her shared content, shows how the private/public boundaries can be firmly established over time, with no need for segregating audiences.

Here, it looks as if the platform is public, yet the user (M3) treats it as private. M3 in this episode 'gave up' on setting private/public boundaries, she accepted the fact, being on a social media platform, she had to control what she shared. This indeed could be interpreted further as indicated that once a participant has an account and shares content, there is no 'escape' from audience social censorship; there is always an observer for whom participants tailor their content, no matter how wide/small the audience is. The next section, on SMP posts' deletion practices, confirms this, showing that, even on Path, the most closed, private, personal and 'comfy' platform, the audience played a role in participants deleting their posts!

The setting of private/public boundaries is complex, as it combines the offline/online audience, e.g. followers/friends who are also participants friends/relatives. All participants' set private/public boundaries, either in terms of the shared content itself, irrespective of the platform (A11, M3, A5), or depending on which medium they shared on (R12, A1). All in all, private/public boundaries are varied, there is no single approach to the public/private sharing question.

5.3.2 THE DECISION TO DELETE SMP POSTS

In response to my question to all participants, 'Why would you delete posts on SMP? they brought up several reasons. However, focusing on how the decision to delete posts on SMP is related to participants' online/offline identities, I present firstly the example of W9. W9's friends censorshiped her posts (socially) on Path. Some of these friends

were both her offline and online friends; she knew them offline initially. In some cases, W9 would share personal information about her offline friends, and they asked her to delete certain posts that they did not want to be recognised by others. In other words, they did not want their personal life to be shared online with strangers whom they did not know: W9's other Path friends. Here, online practices are not only about the participants themselves; they are also about their offline friends who are among participants' SMP friends, such that friends' social censorship is added to family, society and government censorship.

As deletion depends on which SMP content is shared, and on the public/private boundaries. This is the case of Twitter, the platform on which S8 mentioned she might delete posts. When I asked S8 why she explained:

> *'Twitter is public and open, and I do not want anyone to hold something on me* (she means against her)*. I delete things which I do not want to last. For example, I delete my replies to people, especially the ones where I was angry when I posted them* (she laughs)*. I do not delete the posts, but I delete the mentions* (meaning she deleted the replies the most)*'* (S8).

In another part of this excerpt, S8 mentioned: 'holding something against me' and if 'I was angry' to mark the risk and defend her reasons behind all deletion acts.

This echoes one of W9's reasons for deleting posts: if such posts are sensitive, namely, political. Here, deletion practice occurred in the relation to retweets, where W9 explained how she would undo her retweets, such as a political tweet, saying to herself, *'I will not endure the consequence'* (W9). The awareness of sensitive political tweeting was part of un-sharing on SMP. It was not only about the avoidance or hesitation to share political material; it was about posting then withdrawal from such participation. This example of W9 distinguishes Twitter among other platforms, in terms of cautiousness. It illustrates, indeed, how SMP features play a role in deletion practices, and how the social censorship of online posts (tweets in this example) extends to what users circulate; retweets. For this reason, Twitter users are forced to state in their biography, for example, 'retweets are not endorsements'. Furthermore, users always kept up-to-date with new forms of deletion/undoing posting/sharing.

In relation to political tweeting and deletion, through the online observation, I monitored - in some cases - posts which participants had deleted. This was the case of R12, of whom I noticed, by the end of my online observation data collection period,

that she had deleted almost all her Twitter timeline. In our follow-up interview I brought this up, and R12 justified deleting her tweets based on the risk of online bullying. She considered that her old tweets, namely, those posted during the Arab revolutions period, were sensitive and could put her at risk, even at the time of our interview (due to recent political circumstances). R12 explained that she used her real name and photo on Twitter, which identified her identity as a lecturer at a university. R12 did not want to compromise her job or her reputation; moreover, academics are not supposed to get involved in politics. In the following excerpt, R12 explains further:

Me: Have you deleted any posts across SMP? If yes, then why? The last time I checked your Twitter account I found that you had almost deleted more than 2000 tweets ...

R12: (she laughs, we laughed) *'Firstly I deleted it not because my opinions have changed or [whatever (En)] but because I'm a lecturer at a university, there were opinions of mine [more sensitive (En)] are related directly to the [state (En)] I mean the government'.* (R12).

Me: Ok

R12:

'So it was hard on me, I mean that if I want to share other things/stuff that there will be people ... especially the parts, firstly they were [sensitive (En)] but I used not to care about them even when I was a T.A but now I care about them because of the bullying issue, digging out tweets, so this could impact me a lot especially as I have not got the [PhD (En)] you know what I mean. So those are two overlapping reasons firstly because of the job yes so I cannot be [more open (En)] especially as my topic is about [a sensitive (En)] topic so I do not want anyone to know about it or know what I'm doing. The other thing is the bullying issue ... digging the [tweets (En)] out has become faster' (R12).

The last point to discuss within this theme is a comparison of three episodes of I4, L7 and A5 on the same platform: Snapchat, where they all deleted pictures of them posted mistakenly. However, I4 and L7 had different reasons from A5. I start with I4, who, because of an unauthorised screen-capture, by one of her Snapchat friends, of her

Snapchat story picture, decided to delete the snap/picture[1]. I4's episode indeed echoes L7's experience of a Snapchat story mistakenly posted publicly, as mentioned earlier. A5 join I4 and L7, by sharing with me a third episode of her deleting a Snap (on Snapchat) that she, had mistakenly published to the public story instead of sending it privately (section 5.3.1). In the picture, A5 was unveiled, wearing makeup and, as she put it, *'saying meaningless things[2]'* (A5). A5's snap was intended for her female friends only; afterwards she realised she had mistakenly posted it publicly.

I4, L7 and A5's deletions might be mistakenly interpreted as related to veiling, I4 and L7 deleted their snaps in relation to veiling for religious reasons; they did not want their pictures to be circulated/revealed to strangers, especially men. They deleted their snaps, not because of privacy, but because I4 and L7 adhered to religious veiling. In contrast, A5 is not Muhajabah at all; she deleted the post because of her job status as a doctor/assistant professor, and her family; she did not want to post pictures of herself without a veil to the public. A5 was only trying to tailor her practices to the self-censorship of her offline audience; family and society. This issue will be addressed in Chapter Seven (section 7.2.3), where I explain how A5's online/offline spheres clashed, because her family (mother and father) wanted her always to wear a scarf on her head when posting pictures publicly online, and while her status as an assistant professor raised expectations of her online representation; she had to wear a scarf always as a 'ideal model' for her students and a representative of her work; the university. The clash comes from her offline veiling practices: she did not wear Hijab, yet both her parents and her work demanded her only to wear scarf in online photos, with the exception, that her work will not tolerate the removal of her scarf offline, whereas for her parents it was acceptable.

To conclude this point, reasons for deciding to delete SMP posts differed across participants. The shared content online could belong to and, be censored by offline friends who were at the same time part of the online audience, which played a role in urging a participant to delete a post (W9). Political censorship was also an alert to participants regarding what was shared, especially on Twitter (S8, W9 and R12).

---

[1] This illustrates how the deletion could be 'useless' in the case of SMP posts taken via screenshots. Taking a screenshot is noticed on Snapchat, yet, could not be discovered on other platforms!

[2] She meant things which were not related to 'intellectual practices' (e.g., books, reading, writing, events or academia), such as personal reflections, music/songs, scattered-thoughts about life, relationships etc.

Religious veiling and conforming to a participants' community's expectations are other reasons why participants might decide to delete SMP posts (I4, L7 and A5).

5.3.3 AUDIENCE SEGREGATION: HAVING MULTIPLE ACCOUNTS ON THE SAME PLATFORM

Some participants segregated their audiences on the same platform, by having two accounts on the same platform. This was the case for A1, A2, M3, I4, A5, R6, and W9. In general, these platforms were: Twitter, Instagram and in one case (A1) Path. Some of these 'extra' accounts were deactivated later, such as the cases of A1 and W9. Having two accounts on the same platform was justified by different reasons. In relation to the focus of this thesis and this chapter, I only present the cases of A2, I4, A5 and R6. The other cases of A1, M3 and W9 are beyond the focus of the relationship between online practices and online/offline identity[1].

In the case of R6, she created another account to be able to mention 'fitness' and food diet regimes: *'I do not want others to know about my diet and I do not want them to know my name, I later deactivated this account'* (R6). R6 had two online identities (accounts) on the same platform: Twitter. Her authentic identity was revealed in the first one – the one I followed in my data collection – and the second one was a pseudonym. It is interesting that in this excerpt, R6 says she deactivated the second account on Twitter, yet, in the follow-up interview with both R6 and L7, R6 again mentioned having another account on Twitter, which came as a surprise for her sister (L7), as she did not know[2].

This not only show how audiences are segregated on the same platform through having two online identities, it also shows how R6 kept hidden the other account from her own sister, this shows a need for personal privacy, not only among strangers; Twitter followers, but also from family members! R6 mentioned many times how her male

---

[1] W9 created a second account on Twitter to avoid 'oversharing' her personal distress, being in a bad mood, and A1 created a second account on Path to stalk someone else. I did not ask her who, or for other details, as I felt it was a sensitive topic to discuss and I might be interfering in her personal life.

[2] I did not ask R6 about this point, that she had said before that she had deactivated an account and now admitted, still having another account, because I had forgotten what she said in the first interview. It was not before the data analysis that I realised this contradiction. Moreover, it was not suitable to tell her, as it would be as if I was telling her she was a liar ☺.

cousins had been following her on Twitter since she used her full name. She was aware of that, so she restricted her Tweets and even retweets so her words would not be 'misunderstood'. Some of these words were romantic poems; since R6 is divorced, she thought her male cousins might think she was in a love affair or tweeting/retweeting such content for someone (a man) in her life, which of course would be unsuitable for her reputation among her family members, especially men.

R6 mentioned also how it was a 'privilege' to be 'unidentified' in the old days; she meant in online forums where she used to use a pseudonym. This raises the issue of offline/online spheres and identity in challenge and confrontation. It also recalls R6's account of her early online experience, in which, although she chose to give her real name on SMP, namely, Twitter, the same 'fear' continued in the SMP phase, that her words should not be misunderstood by her family members who were also part her online audience. Segregating audiences through having multiple accounts on the same platform; Twitter, here provided a solution which is not very different from her early online practice in identity representation: anonymity.

Despite A5 having two accounts on each of two platforms: Twitter and Instagram, all four accounts were public. On Twitter and Instagram, A5 had a personal account with her name and photo used as a profile picture, and another professional account, under the identity of her publishing company i.e. the company logo. A5 shared – on her professional accounts – the latest updates of her business, e.g., a book published, a book fair in which the company participated. However, A5's personal accounts were more active in general than her professional accounts.

A5 saw her personal accounts as 'hers': *'it's mine'* (A5) so she felt more comfortable on them *'[it's nice to have* (En)*]' I mean such a specific account'* (A5), A5 here means an account with her authentic identity: full name, job and photo. Yet, according to the online observation and the interviews, the only shared content on A5's Twitter account was her activities as a publisher and a writer; nothing about her personal life, e.g., her daughters, or travel. A5 repeatedly stressed how highly cautious she was on SMP, especially Twitter: *'I do not want to write as a doctor* (PhD)*, though I added to my Twitter bio that I'm a doctor at ....*[1] *university'* (A5). A5 specifically mentioned political topics as the main topics she never discussed on Twitter.

---

[1] The name is deleted for ethical considerations

Both A5's accounts had boundaries, although on her personal Instagram account she did share pictures of her travels, conferences and venues she attended etc. A5 – as explained earlier in the section on The Decision to Delete SMP Posts (section 5.3.2), never posted a picture of herself without Hijab, again, because of her family and her academic status. She had to present herself online in a conservative way, wearing a scarf on her head. This illustrates how A5's offline status was always at the back of her mind; reminding her of the social censorship, her audience and boundaries, despite the platform she was on.

However, the audience segregation here was not because of content that was more suitable for one audience than another, or to have another account with a pseudonym, it was in order to have an account with the participant's authentic identity: full name and photo, and another as part of her (A5) business. At the same time, A5's personal account on Instagram was more relaxed in comparison to her Twitter account, where she posted selfies, photos of her children and her travels, etc.

Three cases akin to A5's were A2, M3 and I4. Similar to A5's 'it's mine', A2 described her second account on Instagram was the 'professional me'. A2's 'professional' account on Instagram is set to public, whereas her first Instagram account was set to private; only for her close friends, where A2 shared photos of herself e.g., selfies:

> *'On Instagram I have two accounts, one is so private, it is only for my close friends and I only post my pictures there, the other one used to be private but then I made it like public and I use it like a public profile where I share my professional photos, that is it'* (A2).

I did not ask A2 if her photos were with or without the Hijab, but through my online observation, on Path A2 always used pictures with Hijab, unless it was within the inner circle. I4's case was similar to A2's: she created two accounts on Twitter, one for professional purposes and another one (which I4 authorised me to follow) for her personal practices.

I4 and M3, like A2, both had second accounts on Twitter for professional purposes *'Twitter is not for myself, it is because I want to follow educational accounts, research and to look for a job of interest to me'* (M3). I4 also created a second account on Twitter, but, it was because she wanted to feel more 'comfortable,' as no one knew her and no one expected anything from her. Here, expectations are a form of the fear, I4

elaborated that *'in the account I gave to you I have relatives, and I feel a little bit uncomfortable for them to know certain information'* (I4).

Audience segregation in the case of A2 was because she wanted to represent herself differently to two different audiences; the first was her friends and family, and the second was the professional community, where she controlled carefully how she represented herself in terms of how she wanted her work colleagues, boss etc, to see her. I4's segregation of audience was a combination of the cases of R6 and A2; she used the word professional, yet, she was not representing herself to a specific professional community, work colleagues etc. Since I4's friends and family already knew about her personal account on Twitter, she chose to have a second one, where she looked for jobs, since she did not wish her relatives to know such information. Although M3 did not mention her family or friends, we can here see a pattern in I4's and M3's cases, where looking for a job was something, they did not want their families and friends, who knew I4 about their accounts on Twitter, to know about.

Contrary to the previous cases, other participants, when asked if they had two accounts on the same platform, said 'No'. These are the cases of L7, S8, M10, A11 and R12. Interestingly, L7 expressed her wish to have two accounts on the same platform. When I asked her why she was keen to have another account on the same platform, she explained that there were things she wanted to talk about without others knowing it was her.

In summary, we can learn that segregating SMP audiences through having two different accounts on the same platform was an opportunity for some participants to hide from a larger audience, which could include relatives were not welcome to know certain sensitive and personal information, e.g., losing weight, looking for a job (M3, I4 and R6), or to set boundaries between the professional and personal (A5 and A2). In contrast, others did not feel the need to have another account on the same platform – as far as they shared with me and according to what I observed. This might have been because they already practised audience segregation through different SMP accounts, which is another version of audience segregation. Another possibility was that they were sufficiently aware of the content shared on their platforms and found a mid-way to conform to different audiences' expectations.

5.3.4 CROSS-GENDER COMMUNICATION ACROSS SMP

The third aspect of participants' sharing tactics was their management of cross-gender communication. A1, A2, A5, R6, L7, and S8 did not mention any recent episodes of cross-gender communication on SMP; moreover, cross-gender communication was not the focus of my interview guide. However, in the interviews, M3, I4, M10, W9, A11 and R12, all brought up cross-gender communication in relation to their SMP sharing practices, which I present here. Before presenting the examples of M3, I4, M10, W9, A11 and R12, however I want to summarise here my online observation of A1, A2, A5, R6, L7 and S8's SMP accounts in relation to cross-gender communication.

As for A1 and A2, whom I followed on Path, they did have male friends on Path, and they communicated with them through their Path post comments. It is important to highlight here that A2 worked in a non-gender segregated work environment, and lived on her own outside Saudi Arabia (in Dubai) to study and work. This made cross-gender communication in the case of A2 more relaxed. A5 had already told me (section 4.4.1) how 'liberal' she was, therefore, for A5 cross-gender communication was acceptable, both online and offline. She had male friends, whom her family, husband and daughters knew about and had met.

R6 and L7 were highly religious and conservative, both online and offline. They did not – according to my observations and the interviews – have any communication with the opposite sex online, as I did not spot any mentions/comments on their Twitter or Instagram accounts. S8 has declared in Chapter Four (section 4.4.4), in the section on The Transition of Online Sharing 'Tactics' as Self-Identity Development, that she was not 'talkative', and according to my observation of her Twitter and Instagram accounts, she seldom commented or got into discussions in general. Nevertheless, she did not express fear or rejection of cross-gender communication online. This might be interpreted as indicated that she set the boundaries by limiting her online relationships with the opposite sex, although, at the same time, communicating with men online was not something S8 feared or hesitated to do. This overall picture explains how different participants' acceptance and practices of cross-gender communication online was, moreover, how the offline sphere plays a role either in highly restricting it (R6 and L7) or the ease of such communication (A5 and A2).

However, A11 is the first example of cross-gender communication, whose preferred manner of communication with men was restricted to 'public' comments and mentions.

A11 was talking here in general, about both her Twitter account and her private Instagram account, and by public she meant the mentions and comments that were seen by her friends/followers on the two platforms, in contrast to direct messaging. However, the example which A11 brought up in relation to cross-gender communication was on Instagram's private messaging only:

> *'Even if there are some shabab who enter the direct* (messaging)*, I ignore them. Why? Because there are limits … if you put a mention, I'll happily answer you … but do not raise it in the private messaging … if you approach the private messaging, then it means there is something personal'* (A11).

By personal, A11 was setting the boundaries for the opposite sex, where the only allowed context of communication between A11 and them was visible to all of her Instagram friends; approaching her through direct messaging was taken to mean that a man wanted to flirt with her or build a romantic relationship.

I want to mention here, that A11 told me that she did approach men on Twitter through direct messaging; she shared with me an episode in which, she used Twitter's direct messaging to criticise a Saudi author, who had published a book that was merely a grouping of his tweets. A11 criticised this author for calling himself a writer. When she told him that, he blocked her. A11 was still upset about it and expressed in the interview how rude this was. However, I raise this episode here to highlight that it appears that it was acceptable for A11 to be the one who sent direct messages to men, but not the other way round. Here, cross-gender communication is blurred, and it depends on the circumstances and who initiates the communication; it is acceptable if it is the woman (A11), not the man. When A11 (a woman) sent a message, she was not looking for an inappropriate cross-gender relationship (It is part of gender role assumptions in Saudi that a woman would not send a message to an unknown man for romantic purposes); she used direct messaging for certain purposes, such as expressing her opinion, as in the case of the episode in this paragraph.

Another example of cross-gender communication boundaries set by participants, are the ones of M10 and R12, who restricted their Path accounts to girls[1] only. Through

---

[1] Females in general, but *Bnat* (Arabic) is the equivalent to girls in English, *Bnat* was the word used by participants. It is not related to young/old.

observing M10's SMP accounts, I spotted that she had no males on her Path friends list. I asked her about it in our follow-up interview. She explained,

> *'Yes, mmm, girls and women in general are kinder and nicer in dialogues, discussions, replies and comments. and also, because when I talk in certain 'girls talk' I will not have a barrier nor shyness of anyone ... we are all the same'* (M10).

Such a view was echoed in the case of R12, who felt more comfortable on Path because she added girls only: *'It's even for girls so I can feel more comfortable'* (R12). M10 and R12 differ in terms of their veiling, M10 is conservatives, wear Niqab in Saudi Arabia and never reveal her face in public; moreover, when we met, she chose a café for women only, accompanied by her mother. In contrast, R12 does not wear Hijab in the UK, shares her photo as a profile picture on her SMP accounts. Nevertheless, they both used Path as a platform for girls only. Here, cross-gender communication boundaries are not related merely to participants' acceptance or refusal, but are about using SMP (Path) for their personal preference and comfort.

The case of W9 was the contrary to those of M10 and R12; she loved Path because it enabled her to *'live as if I am living with people, just like Snapchat, except that it offers the opportunity to communicate with the opposite sex'* (W9). W9 distinguished between her accounts on Path and Snapchat according to cross gender communication; she did not add males on her Snapchat, yet she did on Path:

> *'because Snapchat is video and I'm a person who does not believe in coming into sight and sending videos of myself to someone* (she meant taking videos/pictures of herself on Snapchat, where male friends could see her) *even if it's OK for me to unveil my face* (she meant wearing Hijab only) *I could add them* (male friends) *yet in consequence of being in a conservative family I will not do that I'm not that type of girl who does that'* (W9).

W9 here sees Path as an opportunity to communicate with the opposite sex. She mentioned several times in our interviews how the offline Saudi sphere is highly gender-segregated, where women are restricted and have few opportunities to communicate with men in public. By this, she meant the open relationship were not hidden, romantic ones. W9 elaborated that, the online sphere, in contrast enabled Saudi women to understand how to communicate with men, so when a woman got married –

in W9's opinion – it was easier for her to communicate with her husband as a friend, not as a stranger. W9 raised the issue of offline/online negotiation in her comparison between Path and Snapchat, as she did not add men on Snapchat as she took videos and photos of herself, although she could do that without her family knowing. Yet, W9 refused to do something online of which her family would disapprove. The cross-gender communication boundaries here are set according to many aspects, benefiting from the online sphere as a space to communicate with the opposite sex, yet limiting such communication in terms of offline/online consistency of veiling!

Although cross-gender communication, though seemed to be easy and relaxed in Chapter Four, nevertheless, the offline and online spheres have – to some extent – similar restrictions. Participants differed in their 'sensitivity' towards communicating with the opposite sex online. Some of them did not mention it at all (A2 and S8), others brought it as the first thing when I asked them about an episode which they could not forget. The nature of this communication, a request to see a woman's picture, or hear her voice, was another measure that set the limits of cross-gender communication (M3 and I4). Private/public boundaries played a role in cross-gender communication, where direct messaging was considered a closed place between a man and a woman; *Kulwah* and visible communication to all followers/friends was equal to the offline public sphere (A11). Shaping SMP audiences through limiting a platform community to girls only was another form of cross-gender communication limits (M10, R12). Moreover, who initiates the communication is the criterion of whether such communication was acceptable or not (A11). Established and strict religious and familial values and identity limited online cross-gender communication to the minimum or none at all (R6 and L7). Interestingly, online cross-gender communication was seen by one participant (W9) as beneficial, means of gaining experience of communication skills with the opposite sex, considering the limitation of such interaction in the offline sphere.

5.3.5 COLLAPSING CONTEXTS THROUGH IDENTICAL POSTING ACROSS SMP

I here arrive as the last part in this chapter, where participants' sharing tactics collapsed instead of segregating audiences. In this part, I show how participants connected their SMP accounts and posted identical content across different platforms at the same time. During my online observation, I spotted cross-sharing practices on both A5 and M10's SMP, namely, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Instagram in the case of A5 only). A5

sometimes connected Twitter and Facebook, but it was not an automatic practice, A5 chose to share posts from Facebook to Twitter, because on Facebook she had her family and it was also the platform where she was able to network with Arab writers and publishers outside Saudi Arabia. Therefore, she shared her latest personal and professional news and achievements, to update her family members who did not follow her on other SMP, or whom she did not often meet face-to-face. Moreover, she used Facebook as an opportunity to raise her professional profile as a writer and a publisher among the Arab online intellectual community.

M10 was not sure, when I asked her about posting identical content across SMP, if she had connected her Twitter and Facebook accounts. However, she clarified that *'if I did that it might be to ease the 'movement' and publishing the same 'talk'* (she means content) *in another place and on another platform'* (M10). These two examples illustrate how, despite the nuanced practice of SMP context segregation, in some cases, participants (A5 and M10) replicated their shared content across SMP, as a practice of collapsing context, in contrast to dividing them. This occurred here the content was general and suitable for a larger audience, and due to keenness to share content with an audience that used one platform only (Facebook) as in the case of A5.

In align to A5 and M10, W9 and R12 disliked such 'replicated' sharing across platforms, R12 expressed her disapproval of such online practices: *'It's the absolute contrary, I'm against this idea ... firstly because each account has a certain purpose so if these posts were similar, why would I have similar accounts?'* (R12). Here, R12 echoes the necessity of audience segregation, discussed earlier (section 5.3.3), where each SMP has its own purposes. This will be examined in more detail in Chapter Six (section 6.3), where I explain how participants perceived Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Goodreads, Path and Snapchat as different environments, and their participants' identity representation online varied accordingly.

W9 also opposed connecting platforms as, in her opinion, this could lead to some of people, whom she had added, only on a certain platform, adding her/discovering her on other platforms, whereas she did not want to be in contact with them and so did not want them to be part of other platforms' audience: *'They could imagine an ideal character of me .. . this is our society'* (W9). By 'they', W9 meant Saudi people can be judgemental and have high expectations, whereas some of her practices might not meet their expectations, such as her posts specifically on Path (e.g., grumbling, adding/communicating with male-friends) the platform which W9 perceived as a

closed environment where she shared personal opinions, expressed her feelings, shared her daily life pictures etc. Only with a specific/small audience of her choosing.

Moreover, W9 brought up her understanding of the offline sphere in relation to her explanation of why she did not share identical content across platforms, W9 set such boundaries because she anticipated, the reaction of people who knew her both offline and online, based on her experience of her own society; Saudi society. This not only illustrates how participants managed their representation across SMP and their awareness of each SMP audience, it also suggests that the Saudi online community is not very different – in W9's opinion here - from the offline one. However, this online/offline negotiation is the focus of Chapter Seven.

Collapsing contexts through identical posting across SMP was practised to a minimum (A5 and M10), where certain content was shared identically across different platforms for particular reasons, such as keeping in touch with the family, maintaining a professional reputation on a beneficial platform (A5), or circulating the same content instead of creating it from scratch (M10). However, other participants preferred to keep up audience segregation through having different content across different platforms (W9 and R12). This is the focus of Chapter Six: SMP ecology, to which I move to after I finish with a short conclusion of this chapter.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated the second research question: *How do Saudi women represent their identities across SMP?* It represented the online observation data of participants' online practices across SMP – within the data collection periods. It supplemented the online observation with the interviews, where participants discussed and explained their identity representation e.g., why choosing not to share certain content. The analysis showed the enmeshed online/offline spheres relationship, where online practices represented participants' identity facets and the interviews explained identity negotiations of these representations, such as the choices of profile pictures, posted photos and online veiling practices. The data documented identity facets representations, namely, national, political and Arab, extended existing literature on privacy, private/public boundaries, imagined audiences(s) and context collapse, where the online practices Saudi women's – in this research – convey when they represent their identities across SMP: there is always imagined audiences, fear of context collapse, the divide of audiences/contexts through setting private/public boundaries.

My findings showed that my participants' online practices of identity representation online were shaped by the audience they had in mind (Kaskazi, 2014; Litt & Hargittai, 2016). Sharing strategies were practised with self-censorship and self-consciousness, such as setting private/public boundaries (Waltorp, 2013), and deleting posts (Georgalou, 2016; Johnson, Egelman, & Bellovin, 2012; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Y. Wang et al., 2011). Moreover, participants' visual/textual identity representations represented several identity facets: gendered, ethnic (Arab), religious (Muslim), political (A2: #Women2Drive logo) (see for example Figure 36, in section 5.2.3), national, Saudi, heritage (Hijaz/Ashraf: A11, Najd: W9) and socio/cultural (last name, tribal identity, family reputation) (N. Abokhodair et al., 2016; Al-Ghamdi, 2015; Bourdeloie et al., 2017; Fadaak & Roberts, 2018; Guta & Karolak, 2015). This resonates with a line of work suggesting that Saudi women "showed a negative attitude towards posting their personal photos due to cultural considerations" (Binsahl et al., 2015, p. 81), and where expressing political opinion (Twitter) was considered "a little dangerous" (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 14).

Indeed, all participants managed their audiences across SMP to somehow limit their photo-sharing practices. For example, for I4 Snapchat was only for women contacts; M3 made her Instagram private because she did not want people other than her family and relatives to see her hand. This echoes Al-Saggaf's (2011, p.14) observation that Saudi women were "aware of the danger of displaying their photos" and were "very conscious about their privacy". Moreover, friends and family are part of the online audience, consequently, my participants "appropriate their shared content for the audience" (Dyer, 2015, p. 20).

Moreover, this chapter gives evidence that identity representation online is not separated from so-called offline identity, although participants knew they were representing their identities on a different sphere: the online sphere. This is aligned with Alsaggaf's (2015, p. ii) findings regarding "the continuities between Saudi women's online and offline worlds [and] the ways that cultural expectations shape participants' online self-presentation and social activities". It also echoes the view that:

> Identity presentation and performance online can be seen as a malleable concept, performed with and through a varying array of semiotic modes, whilst remaining grounded in offline social norms and expectations (Dyer, 2017, p. 220).

In my study, the participants' offline cultural expectations (such as veiling, cross gender communication) shaped their online self-presentation and practices and their privacy (*al-khososyah*) concerns (N. Abokhodair et al., 2016) dominated their online practices on SMP. Thus, the participants navigated their online practices on SMP according to their cultural contexts.

Other findings of visual/textual representation also echoed previous literature, both on Saudi women or cross-cultural Western/non-Western ones. These findings are not new per se, but they strength the validity and reliability of my work, and that they extend the scope of these findings by empirically studying a new set of people, in a new way. For example, M10 said she chose to use her authentic name on Facebook so people who knew her could add her and also because *'everyone were using their authentic names'*. This resonates with previous research findings that Saudi female international students "reported using their real and accurate identity to make it easy for friends to find them" (Binsahl et al., 2015, p. 81). Moreover, M10's example is aligned with A5's justification of her willingness to use an authentic name on online forums because everyone had started to do so; both suggest the role of a form of peer pressure online (Brown, Czerniewicz, & Noakes, 2015). Boredom/mood were also voiced as explanations of the change of online representation. This resonates with a number of studies (Aljasir, Bajnaid, Elyas, & Alnawasrah, 2017; Kwak, Choi, & Lee, 2014; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Wittig, 2016). Yet, my findings found that boredom related to what I call the *fluidity of online representation*, namely, visual representation: changing profile picture, which Alsaggaf (2015) had also discovered as part of her online observation of Saudi women's online practices on Facebook. I will extend this discussion in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 6: EXAMINING ONLINE IDENTITY REPRESENTATION IN RELATION TO SMP ECOLOGY

'Actually, you can see me on Twitter as a totally different person; I don't know why ... maybe it is the nature of Twitter? It is like everybody there is trying to be, to like, you know, to 'show-off', and to reflect a personality that they don't have. But for me, no, it is about, like, sharing stuff that is worthy to be shared; they are more public[1].' (A2)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates the third research question of this thesis: *Do Saudi women develop and represent their identities differently across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it? If so, then how?* The chapter brings the SMP ecology to show how participants perceive SMP as different environments, and how participants' choices of representation and sharing differ across SMP. In Section 2.4 we saw how identity representations of online differ across SMP, where individuals do not always want to present the same identity across all online situations (i.e. SMP ecology). Moreover, that the idea of faceted identity become the norm of identity representation across SMP. Given that SMP differ in terms of their interfaces, features, and affordances, online practices and representations of identities across various platforms differ consequently. Furthermore, SMP users constantly try to balance boundaries of professional and personal relationships, where each SMP has its own norms of sharing, e.g., different Twitter account for each purpose. However, such influence is not merely because of the technological features of the platform, but also what users bring to the platform; users negotiate their identity representation on different SMP.

It is important to highlight here, that participants' online representation and sharing tactics (Chapter Five, section 5.3) overlaps with the concept of SMP ecology, where the understanding of how participants represent their identities on SMP and segregate their audience's connections with how they perceive SMP as different environments.

---

[1] She meant that what she shares on Twitter is more public

There are two aspects that shape the SMP ecology and that lead to the perception of SMP as different environments. The first is perceiving SMP as different spaces; this is depicted through participants using spatial metaphors to describe SMP, where Twitter, for example, is described as an *'open backyard'* (A1). A second aspect of perceiving SMP as different environments is the participants' expressions of attachment to certain SMP, through some expressions, such as A2 calling Path the *'comfy app'* (A2). Thus, participants perceived SMP as different spaces and their attachment to SMP shaped the SMP ecology. In addition, perceiving SMP as different environments consequently played a role in shaping participants' online representation and sharing practices across SMP, which form parts of participants' online identities.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first deals with textual and visual representation in relation to SMP ecology, where I elaborate on participants' visual and textual online identity representation that I began to discuss in Chapter Five and the relationship between visual and textual online identity representation and development of different online identities across SMP. The second section explores perceived SMP environments, where I explain how Twitter, Facebook, Path, Instagram, Goodreads, and Snapchat are perceived as different environments in relation to spatial metaphors of and attachment to SMP.

6.2 VISUAL AND TEXTUAL REPRESENTATION IN RELATION TO SMP ECOLOGY

6.2.1 VISUAL REPRESENTATION IN RELATION TO SMP ECOLOGY

In this part, I present two types of visual representation variance across SMP. The first is the choice of avatars as the profile picture, while the second is participants' sharing of 'personal' photos across SMP, whether photos of their faces or parts of their bodies, or photos of their family members. The sharing of personal photos includes participants either using them as profile pictures or posting them as part of platform posts, e.g., Instagram posts. This will be explained in more detail shortly.

Regarding avatars as profile pictures, A5, R6 and A11 explained how their choices of visual representation indeed differed across SMP: *'Yes, different profile pictures for different platforms'* (R6). A11 explained why using the same picture across SMP was

unnecessary for her, as she considered it a *'replication' of self-representation across SMP: 'I feel it's redundant, I don't like redundancy ... anything new, if you don't have a picture, A11, chill off (speaking to herself)'* (A11). R12 explained how she selected her profile picture according to her perception of platforms' environments. For example, Goodreads is a library for books and reading, and therefore, her profile picture depicted books. In discussion of the perceived environment of Goodreads, later in this chapter (section 6.3.5), I discuss three profile pictures of M3, I4 and W9 on Goodreads; all are pictures of books and reading (Figure 43). Indeed, the online observation data confirm participants' variation of online representation across SMP. For ethical considerations, I cannot illustrate any single participant's profiles across SMP because this would reveal her identity[1].

However, in contrast to the above mentioned participants' use of different visual representations across SMP, a few participants had replicated their profile pictures across SMP, that is, they used the same profile picture for different SMP. This was the case of A1 and I4, who used the same profile picture across Instagram and Path (A1) and Instagram and Twitter (I4) (Figure 39) (Figure 40). This might be interpreted as a practice of online identity identification [2], where the audience would recognise A1 and I4 through their profile picture. In fact, this overlaps with S8's example, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Four (section 4.2) in relation to participants' movement from online forums to SMP, where S8 was recognised on Twitter by her friends on online forums through her visual representation; she used the same avatar for her Twitter profile picture as she used for her account on online forums. Here, visual representation forms an online identity in the online sphere through replication and consistency.

---

[1] See Chapter Five, which explores textual and visual representation, for some examples of different participants' visual representations across platforms (section 5.1).

[2] Chapter One, section 1.2.2
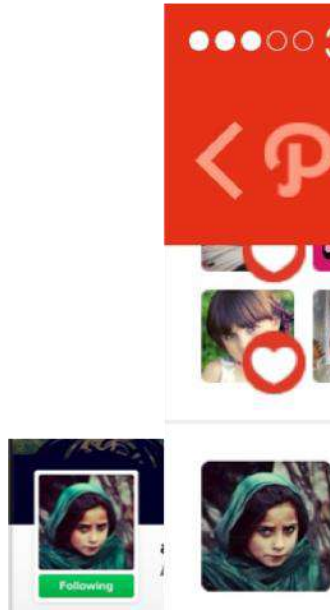
Figure 39 Screenshots of A1's Instagram (left) and Path (right) profile pictures between March - June 2015

Figure 40 Screenshots of I4's Instagram (left) and Twitter (right) profile pictures between March - June 2015

Table 8 summarises participants' visual representation regarding personal photos. Through my online observation, A1, I4, M3, R6, and M10 never posted personal photos on public platforms: *'I don't post pictures of my hands and feet*[1]*'* (R6). By 'public', I refer here to the public/private boundaries explained earlier in Chapter Five (section 5.3.1). 'Public' platforms are those on which any user can view participants' posts, in contrast with 'private', where only certain friends/followers are allowed to view participants' posts. By 'personal' photos, I mean photos of participants' faces, e.g.,

---

[1] She literally means her hands and feet

selfies, photos of participants' family members; parts of participants' bodies, such as hand/leg[1]; or participants' personal spaces, such as rooms/homes, etc.

The cases of A2, A5, S8, W9, and A11 show a variety of visual representation practices across SMP. L7 posted and used (once) a photo of her little daughter's[2] graduation from primary school[3], which is considered personal. This photo was shared on L7's 'private' Instagram account. The issue becomes even more complicated with the cases of A2, S8, W9 and A11, where W9 and A2 would use photos of their faces - W9 with the Niqab and A2 with the Hijab - as profile pictures on Path, but not on Twitter or Instagram. Moreover, S8 used a photo of her feet (wearing shoes) as a profile picture on Instagram, and A11 once posted a photo of her hand on Instagram. Finally, contrary to the previous examples, R12 and A5 were the only participants who used photos of their faces as profile pictures, both on Instagram and Twitter (Table 8). A5 was the only one who – besides using a photo of her face as a profile picture - posted selfies on her Facebook and Instagram accounts, both of which are public.

The audience – as always – censored participants' visual representation. Though R12 did use her photo as a profile picture on both Twitter and Instagram, she told me in the interviews that she had intentionally uploaded a 'tiny' version, so it would be difficult to zoom in on it. The last example is A5, who used a photo of herself in Hijab on Twitter, but on Instagram used a photo without the Hijab, although with a circle around her head, making it hard to see that she was not wearing it. A5's photo on Instagram is a photo of her wearing a swimsuit; however, she told me that if the same picture were shared on Twitter, the 'large audience' of Twitter would criticise her harshly (Chapter Five, section 5.3.1, Chapter Six, 6.3.4).

---

[1] Literally her hand or leg

[2] Though both R6 and L7 used avatars as their profile pictures, here L7 is more flexible than her sister.

[3] Check the educational system in Saudi Arabia https://www.scholaro.com/pro/countries/saudi-arabia/education-system

Table 8 Classifies participants' visual representation choices: personal photos

Participant Acronym	Posts Personal Photos on SMP? Yes/No	If Yes, Then on Which Platform and Which Type of Personal Photos?
A1	No	-
A2	Yes	Path: profile picture with Hijab and posts a selfie with Hijab for all Path friends
M3	No	-
I4	No	-
A5	Yes	Twitter and Instagram, profile pictures, selfies, photos of herself and her children
R6	No	-
L7	Yes	Instagram (private): photo of her little daughter
S8	Yes	Instagram: profile picture, photo of her feet (wearing shoes)
W9	Yes	Path: profile picture with Niqab and another one, her photo as a child
M10	No	-
A11	Yes	Instagram (private): photo of her hand
R12	Yes	Twitter and Instagram: Profile picture, the photo is small, taken from a distance, R12 is wearing a hood on her head, hard to be zoomed

I discuss all of these visual representations to give a wider picture of how participants' visual online representations overlap with private/public boundaries and how contexts collapse/divide and segregate audiences' practices, as explained before in Chapter Five. In other words, not only is there no single type of participants' visual representation across SMP, but there are also different factors that shape participants' visual representations, sharing tactics, and perceptions of SMP as different environments, for example, A5's different profile pictures across Twitter and Instagram. Other factors include participants' religious/cultural identities and the high awareness of audiences' social censorship(s).

6.2.2 TEXTUAL REPRESENTATION (NAMES AND BIOGRAPHY) IN RELATION TO SMP ECOLOGY

Participants used different names across SMP, for example, using their authentic name on Goodreads and a pseudonym on other SMP, e.g., Path, which illustrates how they perceived Goodreads, Path, and Twitter as different. For example, R12 used her authentic name on Goodreads because *'everyone is using their authentic names on Goodreads'* (R12). Here, the online community textual representation is part of how the platform environment (Goodreads) is perceived as more 'authentic' and genuine. I will elaborate on this later in this chapter (section 6.3.5). However, for ethical reasons, visual illustrations of naming practices cannot be presented in the thesis[1]. Instead, Table 9 shows participants' name choices across SMP during the online observation periods.

Besides naming, biographies as textual online representations differed across SMP as well. For example, R12 explained how her Instagram biography reflected the perceived environment of Instagram. She defined Instagram as a space for visual expression and for capturing moments: *'Instagram - as I told you, I share my pictures and my books, so I wrote in the bio that I document the moment/moments that can't be kept but I can record them, something like that'* (R12). Indeed, when I checked later R12's biography on Instagram, it was similar to the one she had mentioned in our interview: *'Moments can't be captured, yet I still can make them remembered'* (R12's biography on Instagram).

Similar to the issue of visual representation, participants' textual representations varied across platforms. However, the perceived environment of each platform played a role in participants' choices of textual representations; for example, the perceived level of authenticity on Goodreads inspired participants to use their authentic name (first or full). Moreover, the choice of biography could be made according to the perceived environment of the platform (as R12's Instagram biography). This section of the thesis, which deals with visual and textual representation in relation to SMP ecology, is intended to pave the way for the next section, which deals with SMP ecology, where I

---

[1] The exception is the names that I know through my personal observation as a friend of my participants, have been changed, as in the case of I4's name on Path in Figure 23.

examine in detail the perceived environments of Twitter, Facebook, Path, Instagram, Goodreads, and Snapchat.

Table 9 Participants' naming choices across SMP

Participant/Platform and Naming	Twitter[1]	Instagram[2]	Goodreads (If Observed)	Path (If Observed)
A1	Mention: First name + abbreviation of her middle name Name: First name + middle name + emoji	Mention: first name + first letter of the middle name Name: First name	Not observed	First name
A2	Mention: Nick name Name: Full name	Mention: nick name Name: Full name	Full name	First name
M3	Mention: First name + first letter of her surname + number[3] Name: First name	Mention: first name + first letter of her surname + number[4] Name: First name, (she changed it from time to time to the full name)	Full name	Not observed
I4	Mention: Pseudonym name Name: Emoji	Mention: Pseudonym name Name: Full name	Full name (Ar)	Pseudonym name + emoji (graduation hat)
A5	Mention: @First name + first letter of her middle name + family name Name: Full name (Ar)	Mention: @first name + first letter of her middle name + family name Name: Full name	Full name	Not observed
R6	Mention: @First letter of her first name + family name Name: Full name (Ar)	Mention: @first letter of her first name + family name Name: No name	Has no account	Has no account

[1] All names are in English, unless I noted (Ar) at the end of them, which means that the name was written in Arabic, since the only option on Twitter for the selected language is English

[2] All names are in English, unless I noted (Ar) at the end of them, which means that the name was written in Arabic., since the only option on Instagram for the selected language is English

[3] I did not ask her what the number stood for

[4] I did not ask her what the number stood for

Participant/Platform and naming	Twitter[1]	Instagram[2]	Goodreads (if observed)	Path (if observed)
L7	Mention: @Nick name + middle name + a number[3] Name: Nick name + surname (Ar)	Mention: @nick name + middle name + a number[4] Name: No name	Has no account	Has no account
S8	Mention: Derivative name Name: Full name (Ar)	Mention: Derivative name Name: Full name	Not observed	Not observed
W9	Mention: @First name + first letter of her middle name + family name Name: First name. Then changed both to a pseudonym	Mention: First name + number[5] Name: First name + middle name	First name	First name
M10	Mention: First letter(s) of her first, middle and surname + a number[6] Name: First and middle name (Ar)	Mention: First letter(s) of her first, middle and surname + a number[7] Name: First and middle name	First and middle name	Derivative name
A11	Mention: @First letter of her first name + family name (she changed it from time to time to add (SA; Saudi Arabia abbreviation, following her surname) Name: Full name (Ar)	Mention: Daughter of[8] + surname Name: Full name (Ar)	Has no account	Has no account
R12	Mention: First name + first letter of the surname Name: Full name	Mention: First name + number[9] Name: Full name	Not observed	Not observed

[1] All names are in English, unless I noted (Ar) at the end of them, which means that the name was written in Arabic, since the only option on Twitter for the selected language is English

[2] All names are in English, unless I noted (Ar) at the end of them, which means that the name was written in Arabic., since the only option on Instagram for the selected language is English

[3] I did not ask her what the number stood for

[4] I did not ask her what the number stood for

[5] I did not ask her what the number stood for

[6] I did not ask her what the number stood for

[7] I did not ask her what the number stood for

[8] 'Daughter of' is an English translation from Arabic. It denotes part of the Arabic familial identity; belonging to a male (father) or a tribe.

[9] I did not ask her what the number stood for

6.3 SMP ECOLOGY: PERCEIVED SMP ENVIRONMENTS

Up to this point, I have framed how participants segregated their audiences across SMP; moreover, I have explored how participants' choices of sharing and representation varied across these platforms. In this part I discuss how each platform was perceived as a different environment, meaning that for many participants each had its audience/community/group, to with which sharing practices differed. A2's comment, with which I started this chapter, gives an example of her different 'selves' across Twitter and Path:

> *'Actually, you can see me on Twitter as a totally different person; I don't know why ... maybe it is the nature of Twitter? It is like everybody there is trying to be, to like, you know, to 'show-off', and to reflect a personality that they don't have. But for me, no, it is about, like, sharing stuff that is worthy to be shared; they are more public'* (A2).

A2 here offers a comparison between her identity representation across Twitter and other SMP, e.g., Path, indicating that how she represented herself on Path was completely different from how she represented herself on Twitter. I mentioned earlier in Chapter Four (section 4.4.4) A2's online identity shift on Twitter, where she became a 'grown up' and how her biography and shared content on Twitter targeted a professional audience.

Here, I present an excerpt from A2, where she explains how she realised the importance of her professional representation on Twitter:

> *'When I was in Dubai, one of the CEOs of a company, he was following me on Twitter in Dubai, then he was like, you know ... watching me to see what kind of mentality I have, what kind of, you know, wordings I use. Then he approached me, and asked me to, you know, join his company. So, he was like ... interviewing me through Twitter. So, this was, like, a major thing because it is a position in social media, so he wanted to test me through social media, through Twitter. So, I thought, 'This is remarkable! Twitter is not only about yourself; it is about how to sell yourself, so you have to be careful. So, from that point, I started to use social media wisely'* (A2).

Here, A2 makes a comparison between how she used to perceive Twitter and how she came to view it later. Before, she had represented herself, without bearing in mind that her online representation would affect her offline sphere and job. However, following the incident of a CEO 'recruiting' her through SMP, she began to perceive Twitter as a professional environment, where she could promote her professional reputation.

As a result of this, Twitter was no longer about her 'personally', but it became about her career opportunities. Therefore, the audience she was aware of extended from her family, friends, and the online Saudi community, to a professional audience, with attendant social censorship Moreover, A2's perception of the environment of Twitter aligned with the public/private boundaries that emerge in this excerpt where A2 classifies the shared content on Twitter as more public. This perceived public open space of Twitter will shortly be echoed again in the perceived environment of Twitter, which A1 described as 'an open backyard' where everyone shouts and screams.

A very important clarification to make here is participants' usage of the word 'place', which is *mkan* in Arabic[1], versus the concept of space, which in Arabic is *masaha*. Participants' usage of 'place' is not equivalent to the meaning of location. When participants call SMP "places", as in *'the picture totally differs according to the place'* (A5), they mean that literally, as when they surf in Facebook, it is a place they spend time in, where they socialise, meet people, laugh, talk and so on, and then they log out/ leave the place. They do not use the word 'space' (*masaha*), because masaha is related to a measured physical space, e.g., km2. In my analysis, I use only the word 'space' to avoid confusing English speakers with the difference between 'place' and 'space'. Yet, in the interviews, I have kept the literal English translation of the word mkan as 'place'. This is crucial to clarify why participants used the word 'place' (as translated in the excerpts), and I use the word 'space' in the analysis.

Furthermore, understanding participants' offline sphere is crucial to understand why participants use such spatial terms. For example, as discussed earlier in Chapter Five (section 5.3.4), the way R12 and M10 chose Path for 'girls only' suggests that the gender-segregated offline sphere plays a role in the perception of SMP as different spaces. Moreover, the concept of *kulwah*, explained earlier in the Glossary of Terms, is echoed in A11's example in the same section (Chapter Five, section 5.3.4) of cross-gender communication on Instagram, with the perception of direct messaging as

---

[1] See Glossary of Terms

equivalent to being in the same room, and where comments/mentions are viewed as posts in a public space, e.g., a stage in front of a large audience.

As previously highlighted, participants' attachment to SMP is another element of the perceived environments of SMP. Besides spatial expressions and spatial metaphors, participants expressed their feelings towards SMP, for example, the love of Goodreads as a platform to express opinions of books: *'It's very nice ... I write my opinions; I love it so much'* (W9), or the feeling of belonging and being missed by followers on a certain platform, as was the case of A11 on Instagram, who felt she was missed and valued by her Instagram followers: *'I mean, I'm being honest with you, they* (meaning her Instagram followers), *they make me feel that: We missed your words, we miss your talks'* (A11). All of these forms of attachment to SMP played a role in participants' varied choices of online identity representation across SMP, that is, the reasons they chose to be there (on a platform) and how they chose to represent their identities, as well as controlling their content and segregating their audiences across platforms.

To finish this part, I present an issue A1, M3, I4, A5 and R12 raised in the interviews, regarding the different online identity representations across SMP. In contrast to an attempt to be 'a totally different person'(A2) across different SMP, as A2 put it, A1, M3, I4, A5 and R12 saw this context divide as a matter of 'common sense' (R12):

> *'Some people consider it as a negative thing, or they see people as contradictory, but I don't think it is ... I feel they complete each other because you are that person; there is no way that you are, I mean, either [expressing yourself (En)] or [presenting yourself (En)], I mean [who you really are (En)] no way. You know what I mean? It must be must be* (she repeated) *that in the end, on social media, you are representing a part of you'* (R12).

This argument of R12, which is reflected also in the views expressed by A1, M3, I4 and A5, brings the participant as part of the conversation, part of this research. However, some participants saw SMP as representations of different aspects of a user's identity. Indeed, I4 objected to the word 'rules', which I used in my question about having certain 'rules' for SMP practices, as she saw it rather as knowledge of how to use these platforms, using the word 'goal' to express a user's intention in using each app or platform. For example, whereas Snapchat is not suitable for 500 snaps or posting job adverts, it is useful as a platform to *'capture the moment'* (I4). A1, M3 and A5 echoed I4's opinion that users have the common sense to use the different SMP

differently and it is normal to do so, as each platform has its own environment. The way the user deals with such platforms and whether they feel comfortable depends on the platform they use and on their purpose in creating an account initially.

6.3.1 PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT OF TWITTER

Several participants (A5, S8 and A1) perceived Twitter as a toxic environment where – according to S8 - even if a user is not 'fighting', the surrounded environment will affect her/his mood. A1 left Twitter because of *'news tragedies and hurtful press releases from all around the world, or even about regular people's catastrophes'* (A1); she added that, for her and for others, Twitter was no longer intriguing. Indeed, for a long time, many users have been abandoning Twitter because they consider it to be full of personal fights and bullying, wars and disasters (see Chapter One, section 1.5.1.3). Spatial expressions emerged in A2's and S8's narratives and their descriptions of Twitter. As A1 put it, *'Twitter is a backyard where everyone is yelling and screaming'* (A2), and according to S8, it is a war zone: *'It became annoying and you feel that you are entering a war zone; I mean even if you aren't in the mood for fighting with others, you find others who brawl'* (S8).

Spatial metaphors such as *'open backyard'* and *'war zone'*, used to describe Twitter as a toxic, unwelcoming, and unsafe platform for the user's sharing practices and whether they might be open or less conscious, all formed part of how participants' practised their sharing 'tactics' according to the perceived environment of a platform:

> *'I mean, this is what Twitter requires you to do, to be a bit cautious, especially with your personal information a lot, a lot, because there are a lot of people whom you feel their duty in life is to spy on you/stalk you. This is the bad thing about Twitter cons* (disadvantages). *It's true that it is an open world ... a lot of people hear you, but it comes with consequences'* (S8).

S8 here raises the issue of personal safety as well as the negativity Twitter fights carry, where 'thoughtless' sharing on this open space comes at a cost. This echoes the examples of W9 and R12, mentioned earlier in Chapter Five (section 5.3.2) about the decision to delete posts, where S8, W9 and R12 discussed the decision to delete their

tweets, mentions/replies or to undo retweet[1] because of the people on Twitter whose 'duty is to spy/stalk users'. Indeed, the example of A5's 'swimsuit' profile picture on Instagram, mentioned previously (Chapter Five, section 5.3.1), illustrates how online identity representation – visual in the case of A5's picture – is shaped according to the perceived environment of Twitter, as open, public, highly censored, and dangerous, e.g., subject to bullying and criticism.

However, some participants had not abandoned Twitter, but had become lurkers or less active, such as the case of A5, who became less active except for reporting her – work related only – Instagram posts. A5 also explained that the only situation in which she would write on Twitter would be in relation to her writing profession, such as communicating with famous authors through their Twitter accounts, or posting/reposting her own publication activities, e.g., book fair participation. Indeed, though a less active user, A11 was still attached to Twitter — she perceived Twitter as a space she belonged to: *'That's why I miss Twitter and I admire it. I am not always on Twitter; I don't have to post a lot of stuff'* (A11).

It is interesting that, in relation to the professional online community of writers and publishers on Twitter, A11 mentioned twice that Twitter attracts an 'intellectual class', whereas she could not find such people on Instagram or on Facebook. A11 elaborated that on Twitter, one could find writers and intellectuals who had 'proved' their truthfulness: *'They proved these are their personal accounts. I mean, you don't feel it's a trivial/ridiculous account or …. accounts. No, there are people there for real, so you are dealing with a life'* (A11). A5's and A11's engagement on Twitter presented two types of perceived Twitter environments: A5 as a writer, publisher and intellectual, and A11 as a reader keen to meet such a community – A5's community – on Twitter, though she (A11) was more a lurker than an active member!

However, in contrast to perceptions of the unwelcoming environment of Twitter, and its evolution into a noisy space, Twitter, more than any other platform, was perceived as a source of news. The news on Twitter was described as 'nice' and 'regenerative[2]' (L7). Moreover, *'Twitter is nice, you follow the news'* (R6), *'Also, personally Twitter is for news'* (R12), and *'Twitter is nice now; it's full of lots of newsfeeds'* (M10). News

---

[1] Undo retweet is a feature added to Twitter on May 2012 https://techlomedia.in/2012/05/twitter-v3-1-0-8-for-blackberry-now-available-in-the-blackberry-beta-zone-6313/

[2] Updated newsfeed

landscapes for many participants were both national and international, especially locally - among Saudis, with the Saudi Twittersphere. Here, W9 and A11 explain their thirst to keep up-to-date with their community members' personal lives: *'I want to know what's happening with people'* (W9). Twitter here was also perceived as a source of social events – in Saudi – which could be circulated, noticed, and tracked through hashtags, and a search feature described as 'handy', where A11 could search for any 'incident', e.g., viral event. These excerpts illustrate how the participants' need to be on Twitter is explained through their perception of Twitter as a space where people, including the participants, share their lives, which involves opinions and self-expression.

S8, for example, perceived Twitter as a space for expressing and voicing opinions:

> *'Why do I prefer Twitter? Because I can deliver my voice to the largest number of people, I mean, that my voice is open - it reaches the greatest number of people; it is the one which I express myself on'* (S8).

R6 felt Twitter encouraged her to write: *'I feel it has a space of freedom even with 140 characters*[1]*'* (R6). This space for expression included perceiving Twitter as an online Saudi sphere, presenting an aspect of national identity, where part of the engagement on Twitter was related to a collective identity: being part of this society as a citizen. This is why A5 called Twitter *'the beat of the nation'* (A5). A5 considered Twitter as somewhere where popular opinion could be measured: *'Twitter has become a tool to measure people's opinions towards a certain issue'* (A5). A5 also likened Twitter to journalism, where users were using their real names: *'But Twitter* (is written) *with the nation's members pens or with the nation's opinion'* (A5).

All of these issues will be the focus of the next chapter, Chapter Seven. Interestingly, this engagement on Twitter was both active and silent; lurking also formed part of the participants' Twitter online practices. For example, although A5 was highly aware of her online representation on Twitter, which included the content she shared through tweets and retweets, A5 was a good observer and tracker of the latest updates on Saudi issues, such as her familiarity with the Endguardianship campaign. Nonetheless, A5 had not engaged with the hashtag either by tweeting or retweeting.

---

[1] This was before the 280 characters extension

It is worth referring here to an issue I addressed earlier in Chapter Four (section 4.2.3), where R12 neatly illustrated the three stages of the Saudi Twittersphere through which her online practices had passed. Similarly, some participants recalled the 'old days' of Twitter through expressing their annoyance with what Twitter had become, for example, *'You follow and see, you write only when you need to; it's not like before at all'* (A5). Moreover, another phase of the Saudi Twittersphere was brought up by A5, whose description of Twitter shifted during our conversation between trusting Twitter as the voice of the nation to feeling what Twitter was no longer a transparent platform for such information. A5 rectified her earlier view, suggesting that recently Twitter no longer represented the whole nation: *'Not like before ... now it has a specific tendency'* … *'I don't write on Twitter anymore, because I cannot find my group'* (A5). By tendency, A5 meant the flood of spam on Twitter (in the MENA region), where accounts are bought and faked. She also echoed the comments of what S8, W9 and R12, reported earlier, regarding bullying, stalking etc. By 'my group', A5 meant her friends who were intellectuals, writers, and publishers. This case of A5 illustrates the relationship between SMP ecology and online identity representation, through the appropriation of online identity representation according to the perceived environment of Twitter; both had shifted over the years. For example, the sharing of personal content, e.g., opinions and daily activities on Twitter in the 'old days' had shifted to become more cautious and restricted.

However, despite the 'ugliness' of Twitter discussed above, participants still found it difficult to abandon Twitter as a platform. We can see this attachment to Twitter in A11's previous comments, where she expressed how she missed Twitter[1]. Moreover, A5 mentioned how - from time to time - she felt she missed Twitter, yet, she later expressed the view that Twitter is no longer as friendly and welcoming as it used to be. Another example is W9, who had deactivated her account several times (she did not mention how many times exactly), and each time she returned to Twitter and created another account. W9 acknowledged how much Twitter was 'beneficial': *'It's beneficial ... it's hard to delete ... though I have deleted it, I created another account*

---

[1] Page 156

again'[1] (W9). In this case what Twitter offers, e.g., sources of knowledge, is what makes it hard to let go of it.

Overall, Twitter was perceived as a toxic environment, as reflected in the spatial metaphors used to describe it, including *'open backyard'* and *'war zone'*. Accordingly, shared content and visual identity representation were practised cautiously (A5's profile picture and S8, W9 and R12's avoidance of political tweeting). Consequently, participants' becoming less active and practising lurking through tweeting only for certain purposes, e.g., professional, show the shift in online practices regarding the perceived unwelcoming environment of Twitter. Yet, more than any other platform, Twitter was perceived as a space for expressing and voicing opinions and as a source of news, and some participants had an attachment to Twitter because it remained a beneficial platform, e.g., it had valuable shared content. The perceived environments of the Saudi Twittersphere have gone through different phases, e.g., from being a welcoming space where personal sharing was safe versus becoming an unwelcoming space where bullying is an anticipated harassment toward unplanned/thoughtless sharing practices, and each participant's online practices were accordingly tailored differently.

6.3.2 PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT OF FACEBOOK

In Chapter Four (section 4.2), I explained participants' movement from online forums to SMP, while in Chapter Five (section 5.3.3), I mentioned how some participants had deactivated their Facebook accounts, while others had held onto them, but only for certain reasons and for specific purposes of sharing. The perceived environment of Facebook played a role in the online identity representation of those participants who still had accounts on Facebook. Such was the case of A5, M10, and R12, who considered Facebook as an archive and a box of memories, and as a way of keeping in touch with family and friends. I have mentioned previously R12's reason for keeping her Facebook account; although she was no longer active on Facebook, R12 could show up there from time to time to share her latest personal updates about what was happening in her life: *'I don't use Facebook, but I make sure that it's open and it's updated; for example, my latest* (meaning her latest updates)' (R12). For A5, Facebook

---

[1] Recently, W9 has deleted her tweets, changed her Twitter mention and even blocked all her followers except a few (around 20 followers) including me (she kept my account).

was a platform where she kept in touch with her family members: *'I have my father-in-law and my husband on Facebook'* (A5).

Here, the perceived environment of Facebook was twofold: (1) the attachment to Facebook as an album of life and as a medium for reminiscences of visual or written memories. This is indeed echoed in the following excerpt, where from M10 who, like as, explained that her online practices on Facebook were limited to 'liking' and 'reposting' at most: *'I also connected Instagram with Twitter and Facebook to post photos and save them in one place'* (M10). This is part of identical sharing across SMP, previously discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.3.5); moreover, it shows how participants perceived Facebook as a space[1]. This leads us to the second part of the perceived environment of Facebook: (2) Facebook is perceived as a similar space to an offline gathering of family/friends, where A5 and R12 would share a certain 'genre' of information with a specific offline community which happened to be part of Facebook's online audience.

Furthermore, in the case of A5 only, Facebook was perceived as a professional environment, which she had always found beneficial as a means of communication with Arab writers and authors, as – according to A5 - Facebook is highly popular among Egyptians and the broader North African's (from Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria) (discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.2.2, 4.2.3). Through this type of communication, A5 could receive manuscripts from junior/early career writers, who sought her opinions or wanted to publish their manuscripts through her book publishing business. A5 shared with me an episode when a girl from Palestine (Gaza strip) asked her to ship her books (A5's books) to the Gaza strip. Here, Facebook acted as a channel between Arabs, especially readers, writers, and publishers. A5's professional identity was represented on Facebook, besides her familial identity discussed above. Therefore, A5's online practices on Facebook also formed part of her professional identity representation, e.g., publications and writing.

Finally, some participants perceived Facebook as a space for non-Saudis and non-Arabs. For this reason A11 and R6 had left Facebook as discussed previously (section 4.2.3). A11 left because of the Egyptian revolution and all the 'headache and noise' by Egyptian users who were prolific on Facebook. Interestingly, this was echoed in both R6's and A5's discourse about Facebook. In this excerpt from R6, she illustrates how

---

[1] The word 'place' in participants' discourse is equivalent to 'space' in English, as previously explained.

offline relationships were the reason she created an account on Facebook initially, and yet, she deactivated her account because Facebook had become a space of 'foreigners': *'I created an account on Facebook because of the people around me, that's all. I didn't feel I want to be active'* (R6).

> Me: Why?
>
> R6: *'I don't know, I felt it was for foreigners; I mean, even the participation and such, I didn't feel I had friends. I didn't like it'* (R6).

Here, the online feeling of belonging (or not) to a platform's community emerges, where A5, for example, like R6, considered Facebook as a space full of foreigners (not Saudis), and she did not feel she wanted to be there regularly. Instead, she preferred Path to Facebook because the former was a platform for *'Saudis only': 'I don't know ... I don't like to talk too much on Facebook ... on Facebook - all of them* (she means the users) *aren't Saudis ... a lot of them aren't Saudis'* (A5). This suggests that part of the perceived SMP environment – in this case, Facebook – is these platforms' communities and involves being among a participant's society members (Saudis). Here, SMP users – A5 and R6 – managed and selected which SMP they preferred to be active on, according to each platform's online community. In the next part, Perceived Environment of Path, I will refer to the presence of Saudis on Path, where A5 probably felt a sense of belonging to Path more than to Facebook.

In summary, Facebook was perceived as an archive and a box of memories so that it was not possible to deactivate it, yet, participants checked/posted from time to time. Those who were still active on Facebook perceived it as a space for offline family/friends to get together. In addition, Facebook was in one case perceived as a professional environment, part of a professional identity representation (A5) but also as a space for non-Saudis, a reason given by A5 and R6 to justify their disaffection with it. In comparison, Path was perceived as a gathering space for an online community of Saudis, an issue that is examined in the next section.

6.3.3 PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT OF PATH
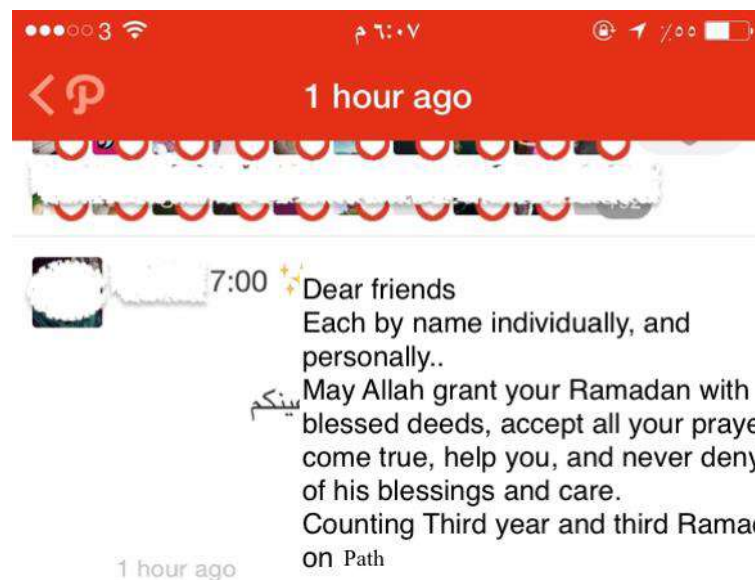
Figure 41 Translated s*creenshot of one of A1's posts on Path where she congratulates her friends on the month of Ramadan (Muslims' holy month)*

The perceived environment of Path was fostered through different 'players'. Path, amongst all the other platforms, was always spoken of favourably - with nine out of the twelve participants using expressions like *'the top of the top'* (A2), *'I love Path ... I like it'* (W9), '*Path is nice'* (M10). Why Path? Why not Facebook? Nine of the participants had already either left Facebook or were less active on it in comparison to other platforms. The reasons why they had left Facebook could be explained through my own experience as a user of Path; my online observation of A1, A2, I4, and W9, on Path; and the nine participants who shared their preference of Path among other platforms, made it clear that Path is unlike Facebook. I mention here some general reasons, yet what exactly is the perceived environment of Path that makes it special?

From my personal experience and through my online observation, Path – as an app – was the SMP the participants found to offer greater privacy. While there were annoying algorithms, which suggested whom to follow on Facebook, these appeared on the main timeline. Moreover, Facebook asks for the full name/authentic name and many other details, whereas Path did not. It required just a profile picture, header and a username, which could be changed and could be anything literary, even if it is only a character, e.g., a full stop (.). The interface of Facebook, even on the application, has many details, yet Path had the friends' posts only. Moreover, in contrast to Facebook, Path offered the opportunity to be invisible; no one could have checked a user's albums, tags, favourite music, location etc. Even if through there is the option on Facebook to hide

them from non-friends, on Path one's profile was less obvious. Having said that, I will now present participants' explanations of why they preferred Path, in their own words.

A1, A2, I4, A5, S8, W9, M10 and R12 had all immigrated from Twitter to Path. Path was perceived as an escape to a quieter and nicer, 'comfy' space, as A2 described it. S8 thought it was 'nice'; she used it regularly, yet, did not consider it as being as 'serious' as Twitter. What S8 meant by 'serious' that she was more 'formal' in terms of using more traditional Arabic language[1] instead of the Saudi Arabic slang, and she avoided posting humorous tweets, e.g., laughing. In contrast, on Path, S8 was more 'relaxed' and 'easy going', where she would laugh, post 'silly' thoughts, and share her daily life activities, e.g., check in: *'Path my personal life of course … I mean my personality ... my things, I mean, my personal life - they don't have interference with Twitter at all ... Yes, often; I mean most of them – thoughts, opinions, that's all'* (S8). A similar excerpt, by A1, where she explains her attachment to Path, echoes S8's comments: *'Because it's all about sharing daily activities; the community which surrounds you on Path encourages you to go in to it'* (A1). Here, Path is compared to Twitter using the analogy of a meeting at work (S8, Twitter) and a gathering of friends (A1, Path). Moreover, A1 brought up the online community on Path – which I will be considering shortly – as part of Path's 'encouraging' environment.

In this context, A5 let her students add her on Path to show them her 'real' personality. A5 mentioned several times that she was not the traditional 'doctor' (academic) character her students would expect: *'Let them know I'm not the personality/within the traditional/common/known context of a doctor* (PhD)*'* (A5). In Chapter Seven, I elaborate on this point in more detail, analysing the boundaries of the offline/online relationships in the case of A5. However, again, the perceived environment here is similar to a difference between A5 at work and her role as a friend communicating personally with her student as friends, not as students.

The selection of a circle of friends on Path builds a community in this space, such that participants who used Path perceived its environment as 'manageable' and controllable. A5 and R12 cited the online community of Path as an explanation for their preference. Path offered them the freedom to choose their friends, drawing strict boundaries between the lists of friends, and allowing a user to unshare others: *'But on Path I can choose who I add, unlike Twitter, an open platform, and everyone is*

---

[1] Similar to the distinction between formal and colloquium English e.g., yes versus yeah

following me (friends)'; *'though Path is limited, you add who you want, and you don't add who you don't want'* (A5). R12 was watchful regarding adding friends on Path:

> *'I don't add anyone ... if I do, I add someone I know or a common friend or someone I know I could meet one day ... I mean, I don't add people with pseudonyms, for example ... They must be people I'm sure I could meet ... you know what I mean. And of course, from both sexes'* (R12).

Here, Twitter is compared to Path, as discussed previously, regarding how open and 'exposed' it is. Moreover, though the naming practices are more 'playable' on Path, as mentioned before, this was inconvenient for R12, who refused to add anyone whom either she did not know offline or whom she knew she would not meet one day. The authenticity of the circle of R12's friends on Path was related to the content she shared on this platform.

However, in contrast to A5 and R12, A1 and M10 explained that family and offline friends were not welcome or authorised to be on Path. In this excerpt, M10 describes Path as a 'non-relatives' space:

> *'But it's very, very nice. I even made a move on Path that I don't add any relatives or anyone whom I know ... only one of my friends because I'm sure that she won't do anything I mean* (she means she will not annoy her) *and another cousin of mine also; she is trustworthy, I mean in shaa Allah* (an Arabic word which means God's willing)*, and that's it ... No one that I know in person at all; only those two, and you are the third one'* (M10).

Indeed, A1 was clear from the beginning that she did not have her family or friends on Path, but had only strangers, both male and female: *'As you know and we ALL know, Path is a very private thing; even people whom you know offline aren't allowed to enter Path - they have to have certain privileges so then they could be within this space'* (A1). Here, the perceived environment of Path in the cases of A1 and M10 is more than any other SMP, a 'pure' online environment, where the community is gathered through online relationships. It is worth mentioning here that A1 explained to me that even Path female friends whom she met offline would become later a 'burden' to her; she would start to feel that she had to be more cautious, since these friends had met her offline!

Given that the perceived environment of Path was as relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, A5 and I4 explained how Path had provided them with a space for expression: *'Path has given me [somehow* (En)*] a space'* (A5). For A5, the value of

Path as a space was not due to extending/broadening her circle of relationships or getting to know people, but rather a platform which enabled her to express opinions and share information which she could not share on other SMP. Similarly, I4 described Path as a *breather* (breathing space) more than as a medium for communication. Here, privacy features, the online community and the audience of this platform, all played a role in the perception of Path as a space where fewer restrictions were taken into account. It is important to stress here that participants' need of such space, where they felt more restful in terms of what they could share/post, among friends whom they knew and trusted, were the main reasons why Path was perceived in such a way. Yes, what Path affords – as explained above – is important, but only because the participants needed an online space with such affordances. Thus, they adopted Path because it had the features they required.

An interesting episode in relation to Path's online community is that although A1 added her Path the 'privileged' friends, she still controlled her content through deleting posts! A feature limited to Path among other SMP I observed in this study, where users can know who has seen their posts, emerged as part of A1's justification of her deletion practice, that is, the decision to delete posts on Path. A1 controlled her posts according to the 'newest friend' she had on Path: if A1 added a new friend, she might delete a certain thought[1] because she did not want this newcomer to her online community to see it. Here, Path was perceived as an environment where the audience is monitored, in addition to imposing social censorship by the audience. It is somewhere users can observe the observer and monitor in advance what the audience/observer can see! This illustrates how, regardless of how closed, manageable, and controllable the platform is, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Five (5.2.3), the audience will always be censoring of participants' content.

It is worth mentioning here, as I discussed earlier in this chapter in the introduction[2], how offline attitudes in relation to gender-segregation can be applied on SMP. In the case of Path, we saw that M10 and R12 controlled their Path community to form a 'girls only' space: *'In general, girls are kinder'* (M10), *'I only have girls on Path to feel more comfortable'* (R12) (see Chapter Five, section 5.3.4). Here, M10 and R12 use Path friending choices to make it a space for girls only. This brings cross-gender

[1] Path posts were called thoughts, as explained in the methodology chapter (Figure 13)

[2] Page 151

communication into the context. In contrast to M10 and R12, as I discussed previously in Chapter Five, W9 considered Path as a platform where the opportunity to communicate with the opposite sex is offered, unlike Snapchat, which was a 'girls only' platform for W9! Path was perceived differently by M10, R12 and W9; the former two perceived it as a gender-segregated space, yet W9 perceived it as a gender-mixed space!

Visual representation was also adjusted according to the perceived environment of Path. Earlier, in Chapter Five, in the visual identity representation section, I mentioned the example of W9, who, whenever she shared her a photo of herself wearing the Niqab on Path, would get more male follower requests. In this part, W9 stated that she never shared her photo with the Niqab on other platforms; she might share a photo of herself as a child on Instagram, but not on Twitter:

> *'I could put it on Instagram, I have already ... I could put it on Path because it's personal ... Path and Instagram because the picture is small-it's hard to be recognised ... but with Twitter, I don't share my photo on it because Twitter is open wide to a lot of people who know me'* (W9).

Here, in comparison to Twitter, Path is perceived as a more relaxed environment with relaxed veiling restrictions. Moreover, the same 'tactics' of visual representation which R12 used on Twitter and Instagram, such as the photo being hard to zoom in on, as mentioned earlier in Visual Representation in Relation to SMP Ecology (section 6.1.1), were also practised by W9, since she knew that the profile picture on Path was also 'tiny' and it would be difficult for her to be recognised.

The sense of being among the Saudi community on Path, which I discussed earlier at the end of the section on the Perceived Environment of Facebook (6.3.2), emerged through W9's and A5's discourse on the Path community. For W9, Path was a live space where she could see others' personalities, opinions, and mentalities: *'It's very entertaining, as if you are hanging out with people or in actual communication with the society'* (W9). The 'society' is Saudi members, whom the offline sphere might restrict in such a space for discussion, negotiation, and exploration. However, while Twitter was perceived as a counter-public space for such discourse, Path was repeatedly emphasised as being more 'controlled' in terms of whom W9 wanted to communicate/foster discussions with. A5 compared the non-Saudi community on Facebook to the Saudis-only community on Path, when she explained why she did not feel she wanted to be on Facebook more often: *'I mean, all of them are, of course, Saudis'* (A5), so she knew each of them in person/face to face: *'You feel [still (En)] a*

community whose members know each other' (A5). This suggests a sense of belonging that A5 and W9 felt on Path, which was an aspect of their national identity as Saudis. Moreover, A5's circle of friends on Path - as she put it - *'are the elites, the elect, very [select* (En)*]'* (A5). The members of this group are alike in one way or another: *'Everyone knows the others'* (A5). Here, A5 had chosen a community of offline Saudi friends, whom she would meet and introduce to each other online, where she might feel that what she shared with them on Path was familiar, in other words, they discussing topics familiar to them all.

Finally, despite the popularity of Path among most of the participants, not all of them had accounts on Path. This was the case of R6, L7, and A11. Both R6 and L7 disliked Path; they had created accounts on it, but had later deactivated them: *'I didn't like it at all'* (R6). R6 added a possible reason for her dislike of Path: *'Maybe because we weren't that active on it'* (R6), speaking of herself and on behalf of her sister L7. R6 and L7 saw Path as a platform for the younger generation; however, in contrast, A5 had told me that her daughter called Path *'the elderly platform'*, an opinion A5 agreed with: *'Yes, yes, Path is for the elders ... cool young youth aren't there* (on Path)*'* (A5). Here, Path is perceived through a categorisation of the users' generation/age groups: an environment for elderly people versus another one for the younger ones!

To sum up this section, the participants perceived Path as a quiet and 'comfy' space, where personal/ daily activities could be shared less cautiously. They viewed it as an 'encouraging' environment, where circles of friends could be managed and controlled. Therefore, visual representation was shaped according to such a 'cosy' environment, e.g., fewer veiling restrictions in comparison to other platforms. Path, more than any other SMP, was seen as relaxed and comfortable, and its atmosphere made it a 'breather' for expressing what could not be voiced on other SMP, e.g., Twitter. Moreover, Path was perceived as an environment for Saudis, with a sense of belonging to a user's community and of being among Saudis in contrast to Facebook users being among non-Saudis. Yet, Path afforded the feature of allowing users to know who saw their posts it was perceived as a platform to observe the observer, as posts are highly 'monitored'. Path was perceived differently among participants in terms of cross-gender communication and age-group classification: a gender-segregated space versus a gender-mixed space, and an environment for 'elderly' people versus for the younger ones, respectively.

6.3.4 PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT OF INSTAGRAM

The perceived environment of Instagram shaped some participants' visual and textual representations on this platform. I refer here again to the case of A5's profile picture on Instagram A5 stressed twice in our interviews that she could not use the same profile picture on Instagram as on Twitter: *'I can't ... they* (followers on Twitter) *would eat me*[1]*'* (A5). Here, A5 shows her perception of Instagram as a less public space, a more relaxed platform, where veiling practices are loosened.

Another example of the perceived Instagram environment, in relation to textual representation, is the case of R12, whose choice of biography on Instagram was explained in terms of the purpose of the platform, to 'document moments' so that can be remembered (section 6.2.2). R12 perceived, Instagram is as the keeper of visual memories; therefore, a biography, in her case, was composed in relation to its perceived purpose:

> *'I mean my same aim, I mean, I'm telling you for documentation - it's a documentation of nice memories'... 'so it's, for example, the idea of Instagram is that I [post a good picture (En)] for me; others use Instagram for other purposes/features on Instagram for pictures in general'* (R12).

Indeed, A5's biography on Instagram echoes R12's case, where she had written: *'few memories ... and nice things'* (A5's biography caption on Instagram) (Figure 42)

Few memories .. and nice things

Figure 42 Translated s*creenshot of A5's biography on Instagram*[2]

Overall, the participants perceived Instagram as a semi-private space, where veiling practices were more relaxed, and as a record of visual memories; therefore, textual representation on Instagram, namely, biography, could be shaped as a demonstration of its purpose as a photograph album

---

[1] She means they would criticise her harshly

[2] Translated from Arabic to English

6.3.5 PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT OF GOODREADS

Figure 43 Screenshot of M3, W9 and I4 profile pictures on Goodreads (from left to right)

Goodreads, according to the participants, is akin to a library, a book club, an intellectual gathering, and a notebook; it is the platform designed for bookish users. Those participants who used Goodreads explained how this perceived environment of Goodreads shaped their visual and textual representation *'because it is Goodreads'* (R12), as I discussed earlier in this chapter (section 6.1.1). Visual representation, that is, choosing a profile picture, whether it is a personal photo, or an avatar, was in terms of pressure from other Goodreads users, as a factor in choices of visual representation:

> *'no on Goodreads I use a book as a profile picture ... I mean I can use my photo on Goodreads but I'm using a book picture and also people's pictures on Goodreads which you often find; avatars, it would be a normal thing, unlike other platforms I mean'* (R12).

Indeed, Figure 43 shows the visual representations, chosen by M3, I4, and W9 on Goodreads, with their profile pictures depicting books and reading. Moreover, the gendered (feminine) visual identity representation discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.1.3) is illustrated in M3's Goodreads profile picture (Figure 30). Regarding the textual representation, the Goodreads environment encouraged the participants to 'of course' use their authentic name, that is, first/surname, and online representation took a more 'identifiable' shape in comparison to other SMP. R12 and A5 all stated in the interviews that they used their authentic name on Goodreads (Table 9).

The cases of A5 and A11 on Goodreads echo their 'encounter' on Twitter, discussed earlier (section 6.3.1). As Goodreads was perceived a book club and an intellectual gathering, A5 played the role of the writer/intellectual and A11 that of the reader, eager to observe these gatherings. For A5, Goodreads was not a platform which she would check and post on daily; she preferred to share her book reviews on a blog instead of sharing them on Goodreads. However, the increasing success of A5's professional publication activity took her back to Goodreads to check her books and the readers'

reviews of them. For A11, Goodreads was considered the platform where she could find intellectuals' opinions on books – which was also the case of A5. A11 did not mention her account on Goodreads in the interview, yet, she checked the book reviews regularly. In fact, she mentioned the name of a Sudanese female poet, as she enjoyed reading her fans' reviews and comments: *'People who register on Goodreads - you feel that they know writing well'* (A11). Interestingly, in relation to the perceived environment of Goodreads as a community of intellectuals, R12 maintained her Goodreads account because of the type of social communication she found on this platform:

> *'My social communication is unique in comparison to the social communication on other platforms; it offers me the opportunity to know people's opinion about books in a way which no other website has offered me as a whole, I mean who liked and disliked the books'* (R12).

To sum up this part, Goodreads was perceived as a library, a book club, and an intellectual gathering, where visual representation was shaped accordingly, e.g., pictures of a girl reading, images of books. The Goodreads environment encouraged authentic identity representation, that is, names, and Goodreads' perceived environment as a community of intellectuals fostered 'unique' social communication on this platform.

6.3.6 PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENT OF SNAPCHAT

This final part of this chapter briefly discusses Snapchat. Although it was not one of the platforms I observed through my data collection, nonetheless, Snapchat appeared in several participants' narratives in terms of comparing its perceived environment to that of other SMP. This was the case of W9, for example, who, as discussed previously (section 6.3.3), compared Path and Snapchat in terms of cross-gender communication and veiling. W9 considered Snapchat as one of her favourite SMP, which she perceived as a platform that brought her closer to her friends and relatives, and a space where she kept up to date with a certain circle of friends regarding daily activities, and with whom she – likewise – shared her activities. Snapchat offered W9 *'the feeling that others have something new in their lives'* (W9).

She explained that because she was the only girl in her family (one girl among five brothers), and her social life was quite limited, Snapchat offered her

'the opportunity to deliver the current moment via the video to my friends, especially friends who live in other cities (meaning outside Riyadh, her city of residence), *I follow people whom I know online or in person - my relatives or my brothers - and I'm very much enjoying it. That's it - the existence of Snapchat is entertaining for me, and honestly, it has made me close to many of my friends and relatives and my colleagues. I began to know their updates, and likewise, they know what's happening in my life. It's one of the nicest SMP, honestly'* (W9).

Here, Snapchat was not only perceived as a space for 'girls gatherings', but also W9 utilised Snapchat as compensation for her not having sisters, as it gave her the sense of being among female friends and family members, whereas it was difficult in the offline sphere to 'catch up' with all of their updates. Snapchat was an environment akin to a neighbourhood and an extended family.

The personal/professional private/public boundaries discussed previously in Chapter Five (sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.5), are related to how Snapchat was perceived by A5 and A11, respectively. For A5, her sharing practices on Snapchat had changed after she switched the account from private to public. Therefore, she had become 'less visible and more careful of her snaps/posts, since - as stressed repeatedly in this thesis - the audience contributes to shaping participants' sharing practices. Another example is the case of A11, who explained her adds 'strategy' on Snapchat, which was not very different from her Instagram audience:

'Also, those whom I added on Snapchat and I accepted their adds are not anyone, and I don't have shabab, Why? Because it's very personal ... If, God forbid, my boy mistakenly posted a picture of me, it would reach, it would be (inaudible). *So, I feel it's very personal'* (A11).

Snapchat was perceived as personal; therefore, A11's visual representation took into account her audience. Moreover, there was an awareness of the 'possible' misuse of Snapchat – as an app – on her phone, e.g., if her child took a picture of her and posted it mistakenly, exposing an image she would have chosen to conceal from that particular audience – one that might include censure.

Finally, participants perceived Snapchat as a scholastic and informative-by-entertainment platform. This was the case of A5 and R12, where A5, for example, read books live on Snapchat, either her own books or the books of other authors that she

was reading at the time[1]. Though Snapchat was a personal platform for R12, she shared generic and ordinary material: *'From time to time, I post a snap for 4-10 minutes on a certain topic'* (R12). These topics are 'serious ones' - one of them struck me as a distinctive genre of participants' online practices on SMP, other than personal daily practices, such as travelling, or visiting cafes or restaurants. R12 told me that she had talked on Snapchat (prior to our interview) about capitalism. R12, in Chapter Four, recalled her intellectual offline group, which she had formed with her university colleagues, and for which she later created a Facebook group (section 4.2.2). Moreover, through my online observation of R12's Twitter timeline, I could see that she represented this aspect of her intellectual/academic identity (Figure 44, Chapter Six, section 6.3.6), where she would read and translate views on topics such as capitalism, socialism, etc. On Snapchat, R12's scholastic background formed part of her identity, where she represented on SMP topics she was passionate about, both personally and academically.

Ultimately, participants' perceptions of the Snapchat environment varied. It was viewed as a medium to strengthen relationships with friends and relatives, and a space where daily activities were shared in immediate, live, and visual formats. This difference applied to its content as well, where participants perceived Snapchat as private as personal, also as a mixture of informative/entertaining and personal /intermediate, according to the participant's purpose in using this platform, whether it was public or private (A5 and R12). Veiling practices were generally restricted, even in the case of A5, who after setting up her Snapchat account to public, started to minimise her appearance to pictures she posted across Instagram and Snapchat, to avoid recording videos of herself.

---

[1] She also utilised it personally e.g., to express her boredom as well, saying to her followers, 'Today, I'm bored' (A5). Yet, it was mainly a part of her A5 professional identity representation.
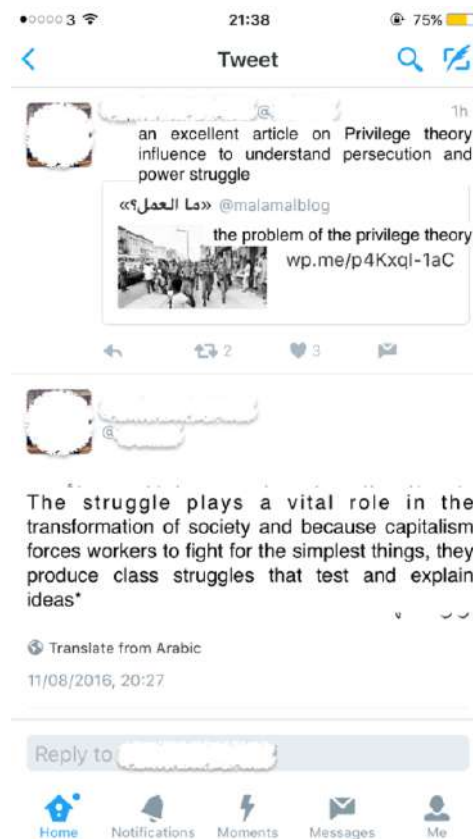
Figure 44 Translated s*creenshot of one of R12's Tweets on capitalism*

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated the third research question: *Do Saudi women develop and represent their identities differently across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it? If so, then how?* It focused mainly on SMP ecology (section 2.4), how participants' identity representations differed across SMP. The data showed a complex interplay between identity and online practices, adding to the previous discussion in Chapter Five, of representation of identity the perception of SMP as different environments echoed – in some respects – the offline classifications of space/place, such as veiling, gender-segregation and public/private (in the sense of space/place). However, participants developed and represented their identities differently across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it. This was practised as a consequence of perceiving SMP as different environment. Twitter, for example, was seen as public, 'open backyard', and a 'war zone'; therefore, what was shared, and a participant's choices of profile picture should be more cautious and restricted. The imagined audience were seen to differ across platforms, with content and profile representations more relaxed on Path, perceived as the 'comfy app' and the 'breather', because of its audience being limited and more 'controllable'.

182

Participants' identity representation(s) were faceted; they switched and adapted their online practices across different SMP where/when they addressed multiple audiences across different SMP. Saudi women in this study faced context collapse/divide, where they segregated their audiences across SMP, by having either multiple accounts on the same platform or different accounts across platforms, and their identity representations differed according the audiences/contexts of each SMP. These findings are aligned with studies in several studies across cultures, Western (the UK and USA) (Costa, 2017; Davis, J. L., & Jurgenson, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Sibona, 2014; Vitak, 2012; Vitak et al., 2012), Arab, GCC and Saudi contexts (N. A. Abokhodair, 2017; N. Abokhodair et al., 2017; N. Abokhodair & Vieweg, 2016; Almakrami, 2015; Alsaggaf, 2015, 2019).

Moreover, participants switched their accounts from public to private, according to the audience of each platform, or limited their shared practices (private information) across platforms, or to different 'circles' on the same platform (Path). This was done according to different forms of censorship(s) (political/social/familial). Participants gave preference to certain platforms in comparison to others, depending on these platforms' privacy options, such as the case of Path. In relation to this particular question, the findings in Chapter Six were aligned with the works on SMP ecology (Duffy et al., 2010, 2017; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016). Where platforms were perceived as different environment, some of these perceptions resonated with other scholarship, for example, Twitter being perceived as source of news (Almalki, 2016; Deller, 2011; Quan-Haase, Martin, & McCay-Peet, 2015; Sveningsson, 2015). However, they contradict others, such as the view of Facebook being public, and the rise of its popularity following the Egyptian and Syrian Revolutions, which "made the Facebook site more attractive" (Binsahl et al., 2015, p. 90). In fact, my participants either abandoned or became much less active on Facebook. Moreover, A11 declared that she had deactivated her account on Facebook because of the Egyptian revolution noisiness'.

However, my findings extend the discussion of these concepts to other SMP, which have received limited attention in existing scholarship: Instagram, Path, Goodreads and Snapchat. These platforms as discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.4.1), are presently under-researched. These findings on SMP Ecology (section 6.3) enrich and contribute to these platforms' studies, and I will elaborate further on this in section 8.3.3.6. I now move to the last data analysis chapter, which answers a more 'current' (within the data

collection periods) part of the first research question: participants' identity negotiations, evolvements and development in relation to their online practices.

CHAPTER 7: THE ONGOING NEGOTIATION BETWEEN IDENTITY AND ONLINE PRACTICES ON SMP

'What I'm convinced of is that I'm Muhajabah, but because I'm in a Najdi society I cover my face (she meant with Niqab) *and my family knows that: that I'm not that type of girl who would do something behind her family's back, something they do not know about. Because I want to express my identity, I put my picture as a child because this is what I can do, or I add my photo wearing Niqab, which is what I look like in the street'* (W9).

7.1 INTRODUCTION

I here arrive at the last data analysis chapter, which answers another part of the first research question: *How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed?* It is worth summarising briefly how I arrived at this chapter. In Chapter Four, I examined the early negotiation between participants' identities and their practices on SMP, in which the binary distinction between online/offline spheres become – somehow – blurred. An example is the relaxation of pseudonymity in terms of using authentic names instead of pseudonyms, as participants used to do. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I looked into participants' recent – to my data collection period – representation practices, how they represented their identities on SMP, and how they developed different 'online' identities, with an emphasis on the online, as there is no clear binary between the online/offline identity aspects.

I have argued about the need to overcome the paucity of studies that address the notion of identity aligned with online practices in general. Moreover, this line of research is dominated by Anglo-Saxon and Western contexts, namely, the UK and USA, and studies which have been carried out within non-Western cultural contexts, and the few that exist are scattered across countries and fields of study. Furthermore, this previous research examined merely the notion of Saudi women's identities – without addressing online practices. The relationship between identity and online practices must be

examined in relation to cultural aspects. For example, the differences between collectivistic cultures and individualistic ones play a role in the diversity of SMP uses. However, given the complexity of Saudi women's identity facets, where the gendered, religious, and cultural/social aspects intermingle, these nuanced must be accounted for. In all the previous analytical chapters, I referred to this chapter at various points, as I explained that the online/offline identity negotiation would be tackled here. An example is the case of A5's Instagram versus Twitter profile pictures, and how she felt – according to the interviews – obliged to wear a scarf on her head because of her family and her academic status. This was an ongoing identity negotiation in relation to online visual representation practices. A5's religious identity did not, in her view, require her to wear Hijab; as reported in this chapter, she clarified that she was not Muhajabah at all, yet, she had to represent herself in that way online, because her familial and societal norms forced her to. Moreover, her academic identity as an assistant professor[1] required her to, since she did not wish to invite criticism from her work colleagues/administration by representing herself online, photographed without Hijab. The ideal appearance of a female lecturer at a Saudi university is – at least – wearing a scarf on her head.

A5's case is an example of an ongoing negotiation between participants' identities and their online practices, where participants negotiate how their online practices impact or reshape the religious, gendered and national facets of these identities. Moreover, the relationship between offline and online spheres: confrontation or overlapping. This chapter comes as an epilogue to the discussion of the relationship between participants' identities and their online practices on SMP.

I divide this chapter into five main themes: (1) The ongoing clash between the offline sphere and participants' online practices, (2) The Alsahwah hegemony as part of religious identity negotiation with SMP online practices, (3) Othering as part of identity negotiation, (4) Religious principles negotiated in terms of #polygamy_marriage_assembly (hashtag went viral on Twitter within my online observation) (5) Feminism and identity negotiation (#Endguardianship).

---

[1] At the time of writing, she had been promoted to associate professor

7.2 THE ONGOING CLASH/CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE OFFLINE SPHERE AND ONLINE PRACTICES

7.2.1 THE CLASH/CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ONLINE/OFFLINE FRIENDING

A11 shared an episode of receiving a wedding invitation through Instagram, from one of her male followers. She brought up this episode three times: a Saudi guy invited her to his wedding in Jeddah through Instagram messages. He approached her saying *'You are my sister and so on*[1]*'*, A11 expressed her total dismay at to such invitation, since he was – only – an online friend who had always been– as A11 put it: *'well– mannered'*. A11 told him she appreciated his invitation, yet she could not make it to the wedding, simply because she could not go to the wedding venue and say: *'I am invited by the groom'*. A11 added that she could neither ask him for his sister's number, nor ask his family to invite her directly, so she declined in a polite way. A11 elaborated, *'This is* (acceptable) *in the West, not here* (by 'here' she meant Saudi Arabia)' (A11). In this episode, A11 declared that the reality if she had been Western woman in the West, she would had accepted the invitation with no hesitation, but in Saudi, it is too complicated. However, this will be discussed shortly (section 7.4.1) regarding how some participants made comparisons between the Saudi society and the 'Western' one – as they understood it, which is a form of cultural othering.

This episode reflects how there is an ongoing clash/confrontation between online/offline spheres, where moving online relationships to the offline sphere – despite the relaxation of cross–gender communication online – is not an option. The clash was about A11 family and reputation, where in the Saudi culture – generally speaking – weddings are gender– segregated, and female guests are asked – if not recognised by the groom's or the bride's families and friends – who invited them. Therefore, A11 could not risk her social status, nor she could tell her husband she was going to a wedding to which a male – online– friend had invited her. Here, we can compare

---

[1] Other compliments which A11 did not say literally, instead she used the words 'you and you and you' in Arabic.

between the cases of A5 and A11, where A5, as mentioned earlier (section 4.4.1), had an open – minded family and a husband with whom she was open with, inviting her male friends to her house, so that A5's friends, initially her online friends, later become her offline friends. As A5 put it *'I have no problem of saying to my husband these are my friends'* (A5). Here, the main difference between A5 and A11 is the family/husband: open– minded versus highly conservative, respectively.

7.2.2 THE CLASH/CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ONLINE APPEARANCE AND ACADEMIC STATUS

The ongoing clash between online/offline spheres differed across participants. This was the case of A5. Although her cross–gender communication was the most relaxed among all participants, her online practices did confront offline social censorship because of her academic status as an assistant professor, causing her to ask: *'Where is the borderline?'* (A5) between her online representation and her offline sphere, in terms of the familial and societal 'expectations'. A5 explained extensively how she tried to find a balance between her expected professional offline identity and her personal online practices, namely, posting pictures of herself on SMP, wearing makeup and being actively engaged in various intellectual events, such as book fairs. She experienced her personal dilemma, saying: *'sometimes I want to know where the borderline is? Where is the borderline?' (*A5). A5 questioned what constituted right and wrong visual sharing: '*because it is pictures and videos, I mean for example, sometimes I say is it right to say that or not? post a picture of it or not?'* (A5).

Strangers reminded A5 of her status as an assistant professor '*It is definite that someone will send a message to me and say: Doctor whatever'* (A5). The borderline, thanks to these comments, was easier for A5 to draw: *'Of course since I'm a doctor this draws the lines [this is* (En)*] excellent. I even say to them: if I was not a doctor, I do not know what could have happened, but [nice* (En)*] I mean'* (A5). A5 meant that she might have shared 'inappropriate' posts. But what were 'inappropriate posts'? This could be explained by the earlier episode mentioned in Chapter Five (section 5.3.1), where I asked A5 about her profile picture on Instagram, which was round shaped, showing her face 'only', a semi– Hijab photo, since she could not share a full photo of herself wearing a swimsuit. Moreover, representing her authentic offline identity online: full name, photos and academic status, 'served' A5 as an alarm '*because I take pictures of me sometimes spontaneously, I mean, and sometimes I say oh, I mean I wish that* (she

meant posted something inappropriate) *but I have [nothing nothing to hide* (En)*]'* (A5). A5's rectification, *'I'm not doing something wrong' 'I have nothing to hide',* refers to how, even if she posted *'spontaneously',* she was still aware of what to share/not to share. A5's episode illustrates the ongoing negotiation between her online identity representation and the social censorship of offline sphere– where her online audience was part of the offline sphere.

Another clash of spheres in the case of A5 was when she talked about her students following her on Path:

> *'In the end, let them know this aspect of my personality, after all I'm not saying anything wrong, but I'm not the character which the Doctors are constituted within, what is known about them. I talk with everyone about everything, unlike other colleagues/staff. I mean, Doctors have their own world for themselves I mean, so [it is nice (En)][1] '* (A5).

A5 here acknowledged that her 'online relationship' with her students, which she 'authorised' to enter a highly personal online space: Path, as simple/open relationship, was 'nice' and special/different in comparison to how she saw her colleagues – other academics – communicate with their students e.g., drawing boundaries between them such that they might not add their students as friends on their SMP accounts. This might be interpreted as indications that the main difference between A5's aforementioned hesitation and cautiousness on Snapchat and her 'carelessness' on Path, was that her Snapchat was open to everyone, where Path had only the users whom A5 accepted as friends, as explained previously in Chapter Six (6.3.3). However, the justification *'I'm not saying anything wrong',* emerged in this part as well, to endorse the 'audience in mind' which was always present in participants' online representation, even on the 'comfy app': Path. Moreover, such justification refers to the online/offline identity negotiation: A5's personal identity versus her academic status.

---

[1] A5 told me that two of her students had graduated and now had become her friends, and visited her at her home.

7.2.3 THE CLASH/CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ONLINE APPEARANCE AND SOCIETAL/FAMILIAL CENSORSHIP

A5 shared an episode where she faced 'hidden' criticism on her online appearance, but this time from her family and friends not academic colleagues. This criticism had nothing to do with A5's academic status; it was from 'highly' conservative community members, who – according to A5 – were not in favour of Saudi women's representation online, e.g., without Niqab. A5 mentioned an episode concerning her mother's friend, as part of our discussion on Alsahwah here A5 clarified that her presence online was unpleasant for people who are 'from the Alsahwah generation'[1]. A5's mother's friend approached her saying, *'Mashallah, you appear everywhere'* (A5). A5 was not sure if her mother's friend was complementing or criticising her: *'You know when you do not know?'* (A5). Her mother's friend added, *'and sometimes you appear wearing makeup'* (A5). This episode shows how the choice of online representation is indeed subjected to offline social censorship. The audience – as presented in different examples through previous data analysis chapters (for example Chapter Five, section 5.2.3) – is not only an online one. The case of A5, shows how the online/offline binaries become blurred, where participants had to make certain choices of online representation in consideration of these social pressures. Their response might be to: (1) changing their online appearance according to the 'safest' cases: to reduce anticipated criticism, (2) try to find a balance between the offline social censorship and online appearance – as A5 says – *'the farthest people* (in Saudi) *are concerned with, is to put a scarf on your head'* (A5). (3) challenge such a clash and maintaining their self-representation online, or (4) choose to hide by using a pseudonym!

A5, despite her open–minded family, decided to choose option 2: finding a balance between her online appearance and familial censorship. Being aware of her family's reaction/opinion towards her online representation, when A5 posted pictures of herself on SMP whilst travelling, she made sure that she was wearing Hijab because of her family *'I mean my mother and father'* (A5). Moreover, as explained earlier in Chapter Five (section 5.3.2), A5 did not wish her students to see pictures of her without Hijab; she told her daughters not to post pictures of her without a scarf on SMP. A5 explained that she *'is not in the mood'* for hearing criticising comments and responding to them:

---

[1] See Glossary of Terms

> *'it is not worth it, but if I am Muhajabah, I mean [even (En)] if part of my hair is out or such, people here don't care about it, the most important thing for them that you are wearing a scarf on your head [that's it (En)] I mean'* (A5).

As mentioned, several times (section 4.4.3, 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3), A5 did not wear a scarf offline when she was travelling; she did not wear a Hijab. Yet, on SMP she only posted pictures of herself with a scarf on her head. All of this depicts how the existence of an ongoing offline social censorship which applied online to A5 unveiling, whether in the comments A5 had mentioned, or her own sense/caution of possible: conflict with societal values and traditions.

However, W9 brought up another form of clash between online appearance and family: being part of the Najdi heritage. Through the interviews, W9 explained the reason why she did not add men as friends on Snapchat[1]:

> *'and I'm a person who does not believe in exposing myself and send videos of myself* (to men) *at all, even if it is ok for me to unveil my face. I can add them, but because I am in a conservative family, I will not do that, I'm not that type of a person who does something secretly* (behind her family's back)*'* (W9).

In another part of our interview, W9 echoed the same justification for sharing her photos on SMP: *'I have no problem with adding my photo, but my family might feel a little uncomfortable'* (W9). Moreover, in relation to her profile picture – mentioned in Chapter Five (section 5.2.2) – W9 clarified why she could not put her photo with Hijab, but she could only share the one with Niqab. W9 is Muhajabah (bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis):

> *'What I'm convinced of is that I'm Muhajabah, but because **I'm in a Najdi society** I cover my face* (she meant with Niqab) *and my family knows that, I'm not that type of a girl who would do something behind my family's back, something they do not know about, because I want to express my identity I put my picture as a child because this is what I can do, or I add my photo wearing Niqab, which is what I look like in the street'* (W9).

[1] Page 134

In another part of our interview, W9 brought up religious identity negotiation in terms of veiling practices: *'I understand banning the burqua/Niqab because revealing the face is Halal in Islam'* (W9). All of those excerpts illustrate W9's identity negotiation between what she believed/ was convinced was the right thing to do: share her photo with Hijab only a scarf on her head on SMP. Yet, her family – similar to A5's case – would oppose it. Moreover, religious and familial identity negotiation confront each other here. For W9, wearing Hijab is aligned with her religious belief that showing one's face is not *Haram*, yet, the family disapproved. It is worth highlighting here that W9's identity negotiation was different from that of A5, in terms of (1) if W9's family approved, she would share her photo with a scarf on her head, whereas if A5's family approved she would remove it totally. In both cases, the religious identities (beliefs about veiling practices W9 and A5 followed) were different from what they both (W9 and A5) represented online.

(2) The heritage being part of a Najdi family. Najd – as explained in Chapter One (section 1.5) – is a Saudi heritage related to the middle province in Saudi Arabia, e.g., Riyadh[1]. In W9's case, her family still held on to this heritage and were concerned about preserving its honour. This brings a collective identity to the familial and religious identity aspects discussed above: Najidis do not allow women to unveil online. W9 had the opportunity to remove the Niqab and post her photos online, yet, she herself not only obeyed and respected her family's traditions, but also herself talked with pride of such heritage: 'I am Najdi'. Whether or not she agreed with how her family heritage obliged W9 to represent herself, she still holds on to this collective identity when representing herself.

The last example to present on the theme of The Clash Between Online Appearance and Societal/Familial Censorship is the case of R6, whom I referred to before with regard to the familial censorship of her Twitter timeline, namely retweets. R6 explained that if she retweeted romantic poetry (on Twitter), this would be understood in a wrong way (section 5.3.3). R6 explained, *'especially as they know our situation'* (R6). Regarding her situation as a divorcee, as such romantic quotations might be interpreted as indication she was having or seeking a romantic affair. This represents the offline/online

---

[1] Not all Najdi women on SMP are veiled (wear Niqab), in fact, there are many women of Najdi origins who post/share their photos online without even a scarf on their head. Indeed, some of them even appear wearing cut T– shirts or even short pants.

confrontation, how the offline social censorship is strongly connected with the familial reputation[1]. Like W9, R6 is Najdi with Qassimi roots. During our interviews, R6 always stressed how conservative her family is. Although R6 had not mentioned the relation between her Najdi– Qassimi roots/heritage and her online representation, through my analysis of R6 discourse and our face– to– face interviews, I managed to grasp the connection between R6's and L7's family reputation, as Najdi/Qassimi and a religious family. Therefore, R6's representation online – given her authentic online representation discussed earlier in Chapter Five (section 5.3.3) and Chapter Six (section 6.2.2, Table 9) – faced a clash with her offline familial identity, since members of her family, namely men, were also part of her online audience as well.

This theme has reviewed two aspects of the ongoing clash between some participants' offline sphere and online practices: First of all, the relaxation of cross-gender communication discussed earlier in Chapter Four (4.4.6), was limited to online friending. Such 'ease' was unapplicable to offline friending, as shown in the case of A11. Moreover, cross-gender communication differed across participants, where A5's open-minded family/husband contrasted with the case of A11. Therefore, there is an ongoing clash between online friending practices and offline ones, where identity is negotiated through othering: drawing comparison between Western and Saudi society's gender segregation orthodoxies (A11). Secondly, the offline sphere's social censorship of the online sphere, influencing online representation, as in the cases of A5, R6 and W9. Personal, religious, familial and heritage identities are negotiated as an attempt to find a 'mid-line' between offline expectations and online practices. The next section examines the continued impact of Alsahwah on some participants' online practices, in relation to identity negotiation.

7.3 THE ALSAHWAH DOMINANCE AS PART OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN SMP PRACTICES

In Chapter One, I gave a background of the Islamic Awakening: the Alsahwah period, which dominated the public religious discourse in Saudi Arabia for three decades since

---

[1] As mentioned in Chapter Five, R6 had another Twitter account, which her sister had discovered at the time of our follow– up interview (section 5.2.3).

1979 (section 1.5.1.1). Alsahwah is a dominant theme in this thesis; in Chapter Five (section 5.2.3) I mentioned Alsahwah, for example, how the restricted public offline sphere had shaped participants' early cross–gender communication online, and early negotiation between participants' identities and their online practices on SMP. Serendipitously, one of the viral hashtags within my online observation period was #What_Alsahwah_had_provided, which I asked all participants about. Furthermore, Alsahwah was a dominant theme when discussing participants' religious identity, which is an integral part of their gendered identity as well.

I begin this part with an excerpt of A5, who at the end of our follow– up interview, asked me, *'When do you finish?* (she meant my PhD) *and what are your initial findings?'* (A5). I told her that one of my initial findings was how participants' values and opinions had changed over time. Here A5 asked whether she had told me about 'her past' or not? I told her: Yes you told me about the online forums period. A5 explained that what she meant by 'her past' was as follows: *'You cannot detach online forums from Alsahwah and the way within Alsahwah ... You cannot detach Alsahwah from social media'* (A5). This frame the offline/online Saudi spheres' emergent relationship and echoes the early negotiation between participants' identities and their online practices on SMP (Chapter Four): how participants perceived the online sphere building on their understanding of the offline sphere of those days, where the Alsahwah hegemony was predominant.

7.3.1 RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IS BOTH LOST AND GAINED ON SMP

A1 and L7 reported different positions towards such religious identity transition. A1's excerpt, which I referred to in Chapter Four earlier (section 4.4.6), considered religious identity shifts as negative. In this excerpt A1 used – in Arabic – literally 'religious identity'; she explained how her online experience changed part of what she used to believe; things that she used to consider as 'red lines' were loosened:

> *'The internet had given me a new passion in life, new friends, and constant excitement, but I lost a great deal because of it, such as a great amount of time, and a part of my beliefs and religious identity. In other words, there was some stuff, actions, and activities that I used to see as a thin red line,*

that never should be crossed, but the internet desensitised all those boundaries, it is been definitely less sensitive for me to cross over'[1]' (A1).

This illustrates how dominant the Alsahwah hegemony was on participants' religious beliefs: i.e. being 'good Muslims'. In Chapter Four (section 4.4.6), A1 mentioned Alsahwah within the context of early fear of adding men as friends on Facebook. Therefore, Alsahwah was a presence in the relationship between her online practices and her religious identity.

A1 and L7 shared a common gained religious advantage of SMP. A1 saw SMP as a means to gain religious knowledge. L7 mentioned a similar advantage, where she was able to follow Saudi female preachers: *'I had not imagined that one day I would hear her voice ... I mean this made it easier for me to ... I cannot attend the lectures ... it made it easier for me to hear them on SMP'* (L7). Female preaching was indeed part of the Alsahwah discourse, aligned with gaining Islamic knowledge. L7 raised the subject of restricted freedom of movement, as a result of which she was unable to attend female preachers' lecturer in mosques. Yet, the online sphere offered her an alternative solution. L7's case, in particular, illustrates how, instead of the online sphere reshaping her religious identity, in terms of losing trust in such religious figures (female preachers) the online sphere enhanced her religious practices and enabled her to maintain such sacred activity.

---

[1] She meant: "Frequent habits cause guilt desensitisation".

7.3.2 #WHAT_ALSAHWAH_HAD_PROVIDED VIRAL HASHTAG ON TWITTER

Figure 45 Translated screenshot of R6 retweets of #What_Alsahwah_had_provided

In response to my question about #What_Alsahwah_had_provided, participants' engagement with the hashtag differed. I begin with R6, whose retweets of this hashtag I had spotted on Twitter (Figure 45). R6 expressed her favourable disposition towards the Alsahwah era. She said that people who were born after the Alsahwah 'generation'[1], had ruined everything. By 'ruined', she meant become less religious and less holding to their religious principles. *'They become very open– minded ... I say that the Alsahwah era is beautiful, despite all its problems'* (R6). It is worth highlighting here, that the last phrase of R6's opinion: *'despite all its problems'*, indeed echoes the retweets in Figure 45, where R6 endorses – by retweeting – a tweep's[2] opinion explaining the difference between Alsahwah advantages and disadvantages. For example, Alsahwah discourse had established a firm religious identity, admittedly there were some mistakes, yet, they were 'human' mistakes which were the public speakers' fault, not that of the hegemony itself.

---

[1] I use generation here according to what R6, L7 and A5 used literally. Participants in this thesis all considered themselves part of the Alsahwah generation, even those who were born 1990– 1992 e.g., I4. However, participants who were born between 1970 – 1989 were the most impacted by this hegemony.

[2] A single user of Twitter is called tweep, and the plural are called tweeps
https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tweep

L7 joined the conversation, clarifying that she was not part of Alsahwah 'generation', although, she had relationships with others who were part of it (*alshwyyn*), L7 agreed with her sister (R6): *'I want them'* (L7). By them, she meant *alshwyyn*: people who believed in the Alsahwah discourse. L7 added, *'She* (pointing her sister R6) *was controlling me in the house mashallah'* (L7). We laughed, I commented that R6 is *mutawa* highly religious conservative, R6 contradicted me: *'I am not mtw'eh, but our generation was forcing us, though back then, in those days I was in the elementary school ... the government was supporting it ... laws apply everywhere*[1]*'* (R6). Here, R6 and L7 identified different factors as shaping their religious identity. In L7's case, it was family pressure (her sister) which forced her to follow a certain hegemony, to be part of the group. R6 brought up the formal dominate atmosphere in the country, which was served and encouraged on a political level. In this case, identity negotiation becomes puzzling, as the norms and beliefs which were perceived and practised in the Saudi society, as typical, habitual and standard, had become neglected, both by the members of the society and the formal country institution, e.g., local Saudi media. That is why R6 and L7 still felt hesitation regarding the continued and ongoing change in the Saudi society, which was reshaping and challenging their religious beliefs and principles. I will be discussing R6's opposition to #endguardianship at the end of this chapter to explain this further (section 7.6.5).

This section has given a glimpse of how the Alsahwah hegemony emerged through several participants' narratives. The Alsahwah era was an integral part of participants' identities, as shown when the negotiation of gendered/religious identity aspects was brought up through the interviews aligned with addressing Alsahwah (A1). Moreover, the pace of change in Saudi Arabia within the last few years, has challenged the Alsahwah hegemony. R6's and L7's positions towards #What_Alsahwah_had_ provided, illustrates how religious identity is negotiated through a nostalgic narrative (R6), where the complete abandonment of Alsahwah hegemony is condemned: it had both negative and positive effects (R6). The discussion between R6 and L7, shed light on religious practices among two sisters from one family, showing that Alsahwah established religious identity is constructed in some cases (L7) through imitating the ideal (R6), instead of 'individual/independent' conviction of it: L7 was forced to be part of a group who happened to be part of Alsahwah generation. However, othering is part

---

[1] We then entered into a conversation about this era and how politics have played a role in shaping that period.

of Alsahwah hegemony emerged through the data, manifested in opposition of the West and liberals versus Muslims and Saudi religious conservatives. This is the theme of the next section.

7.4 OTHERING AS PART OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Othering emerged in – almost – all interviews' discourse. It came in different forms: The first was the 'West' versus Arab/Muslims, as participants perceived it; a comparison between Saudi online practices and what they believed happens in the 'West' i.e. what 'Westerns' do. The 'West' was also criticised in relation to the #Burkiniban viral hashtag, which I spotted through the online observation and asked my participants about. A burkini is "a type of swimming costume that some Muslim women wear, which covers the arms, legs and hair"[1]. #Burkiniban started trending on Twitter between 16 – 26 August 2016 (Pramiyanti, 2016), as backlash towards an incident which took place on the 16th of August 2016 in Nice, France, when a police officer forced a Muslim woman who wore Burkini (which had been banned by the mayor of Nice) on the beach to remove it in public[2]. The second form of othering was among Saudis themselves, religious conservatives and liberals. This appeared in #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen, a hashtag in opposition to #endguardianship. This made me question: who is liberal? and what is 'liberalism' from my participants' perspectives?

7.4.1 OTHERING OF 'THE WEST' AS PART OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

A11 kept referring to, throughout our interviews, the view of the West as more tolerant to certain online practices. I here refer to the previous incident of A11 mentioned earlier in this chapter, when a Saudi man invited her to his wedding (section 7.2.1), A11 then compared her response as a Saudi woman to suggesting that if she were a Western woman in a Western country, she would be delighted and willing to accept his invitation. A11 elaborated expressing her willingness to share every single part of her personal life if she was a Western woman or in a Western country, as the for westerners, sharing

---

[1] https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/37182988

[2] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37056742

practices in the online sphere is an open, day– to– day, occurrence. Here, identity negotiation was brought up, where A11 positioned her society (Saudi society) as an entity to be protected: *'We are a conservative society and we have to protect it'* (A11). A11 distinguished herself as a member of a conservative society, when she criticised open day– to– day sharing practices, e.g., users posting every episode in their lives, or accepting a wedding invitation from a stranger. A11's identity negotiation favoured her identity as a conservative Saudi woman, so that her online practices were indeed a way of reinforcing and 'protecting' her society.

It is worth discussing here the perceived superiority of the West, in A11 opinion, distinguishing it from what she would approve to happen in Saudi Arabia, in the Saudi society. A11 did not see the West it is a 'role model', she saw the Wes as open and tolerable. Despite that an online wedding invitation from a stranger could be accepted by a woman in the West, A11 saw the West as superior in terms of the personal freedom/choice, where a society member is not censored/judged/restricted by its community/family. In the same time, A11 was speaking about the West as modern and better, in several terms, like how they raise their children better: they do not use them as marketing tools on SMP. Moreover, from my own experience of my own society – including myself – in many cases when a Saudi talk about something good in another context (the West in A11's case), he or she understands that the context/society is different. Yet, the practise itself is good but not to happen in Saudi because of the different context. I discussed this to explain that the excerpts/incidents mentioned in this chapter are more complex than if A11 would accept/approve what happens in the West to happen in Saudi, but these practices are better for/within a certain context, which she is totally aware they are not possible to happen in Saudi.

Another form of othering of the West emerged through the question on the #Burkiniban (explained in section 7.4.1). Many participants were shocked and disappointed that in France – as a democratic Western country – the model of freedom, someone had forbidden women from practising their choice of what they wear. A5 and W9 were upset by this. W9 was not sure if she had spotted the #Burkiniban hashtag on her timeline, yet, I spotted several retweets by her of (Figure 46) and (Figure 47). W9 mentioned religiously-conservative Christian women, and people who have skin problems, who have the same right as Muslim women to wear the Burkini: *'as long as I'm clean I can wear whatever I want'* (W9).

Figure 46 Screenshot of W9's retweet of the #Burkiniban

Moreover, W9 explained how this (banning Burkini) is against liberalism (bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis):

> *'which France claims this is extreme secularism. I'm not that good with concepts* (she meant abstract terms such as globalisation) *but I see that globalisation has proven its failure. **They** figured that globalisation cannot fit all cultures. Now, globalisation is **Westernised*** (and) *takes control of* (i.e. dominates) *all other cultures'* (W9). She continued, *'In France and **Western** countries in general **they** have an ethical /moral arrogance towards **us**, so I'm happy that their plans have failed so **they** can* (discount) ***their** arrogance and get down a little, so **we** can exchange thoughts'* (W9).

These excerpts indeed illustrate identity negotiation within the othering of the West as a whole. The #Burkiniban was part of Twitter practices as a viral hashtag, which participants discovered/engaged with through lurking, retweeting or tweeting about.

A5 expressed her personal disagreement with wearing the Burkini on the beach. She clarified this as her own opinion of following the public dress– code, and how such open sites as beaches and spas have their own dress– code rules, which should be respected. However, for A5, banning the Burkini appeared to contradict the principles of freedom, which Western societies 'boast' about:

> *'if that's you in France and everyone – supposedly be – is free, I mean I mean, though I do not like it ... but in the end either you are with the cause or not, leave them* (women who wore Burkini) *alone, if you are demanding freedom [that's it (En)] I mean'* (A5).

200

Both W9 and A5 voiced othering, by criticising the 'hypocrisy' of the West's purported respect of personal freedom. Yet, the othering in A5's case was framed within the context of Arab versus Westerns rather than 'we Muslim women', as in the case of W9.

Figure 47 Translated screenshot of W9's retweet of an Arabic Tweet criticising the 'duplicity' of France secularism, quoting another Arabic Tweet which discussed the paradox of a Muslim woman - wore Hijab – who achieved a golden Olympics whilst France is banning the Burkini

#Burkiniban brought up othering: we/us versus they/them, where W9 identified herself as a Muslim woman who saw the ban as part of the Western arrogance towards Islamic religious practices: veiling in this case. She argued that the claims of freedom, human rights etc were tested and failed in this situation (banning the Burkini). It is worth highlighting that in my data collection I did not spot any subsequent discussion about the fact that the burkini ban was later found unconstitutional in France. However, conservativism, which A11 had stressed previously 'we have to protect it', appears here as a right for a conservative Muslim community within France society, from W9's point of view. In both cases, A11 and W9 voiced othering, yet criticised the perceived 'West' from different angles. A5 brought up othering, and also criticised the practice of conservativism in Western society, is in terms of following the dress– code of a foreign country.

7.4.2 SAUDI OTHERING AS PART OF IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

'Local' othering emerged as part of my question about #Saudiwomendominateliberal-women, which was the opponent hashtag to #endguardianship. I therefore was keen to investigate this 'local' othering in relation to the label of Liberal within the Saudi context. A5 and S8 clarified how they were classified as liberal Saudi women by conservative Saudis, both women and men. S8 explained that she saw such categorisation as unfair. Liberal – according to S8 – depends on the form of veiling;

wearing a scarf without a veil on the face (Niqab) was perceived as liberal[1]. A5's online representation (wearing makeup and revealing part of her forehead hair) was another reason for more conservative individuals to classify her as Liberal. I mentioned before (section 4.5.3, 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3) that A5 was not Muhajabah; she wore a scarf on her head because of the Saudi tradition, either inside Saudi Arabia or at formal events outside Saudi Arabia. I asked A5 directly about her online appearance, and whether she had encountered any criticism because of her online representation e.g., wearing makeup, revealing part of her hair:

> Me: Have you found any comments regarding Hijab? Do they (I meant the online audience) see you as a conservative or not?

> A5: *'Of course not, I am – in the view of people – considered liberal'* (A5)

A5 explained that any picture of her which she posted on SMP should be with Hijab; moreover, in public events she also would be wearing Hijab. A5 had taken pictures of herself with many famous intellectual figures in Saudi Arabia at public events and posted them on SMP. One day, she did receive a comment by a conservative Saudi man: *'This is circulating of women pictures, sister, God bless you'* (A5 recalling a comment she received on Instagram)[2]. This comment was a criticism of A5's visibility online, in the opinion of whomever sent this comment to A5 (probably a man), he/she considered A5's pictures on Instagram a sin: a woman who was not covering her face e.g., wearing Niqab.

Both criticisms of A5's and S8's appearance/veiling practices were made by conservative religious Saudis, represented in this thesis by R6. A conservative who criticised Saudi Liberals. R6 took the classification of liberal to a broader level, combining othering of the West and the difference of practising liberalism in the Saudi context. R6 had repeatedly explained how liberalism is wrongly understood within the Saudi context (bold added in the following excerpt for emphasis):

> *'You see, I'm telling you, the concept here is **different than in the West**, for example, the concept of liberalism **in the West** I mean is a pleasant concept that seeks for I mean freedom and equality and so on ... it is a good*

---

[1] We laughed about that, and how I am considered very liberal because in my hometown – Jeddah – I wear a coloured (grey) Abaya.

[2] See D'EWH/NSYHH in the Glossary of Terms

*thing **in the West**, here (in Saudi) they (those considering themselves liberals) have wrongly taken advantage of it, to become against religion, it has become freedom other than religion. Nevertheless, why do liberals **in the West** call for equality, freedom and religious freedom? I mean you feel a liberal in the West is other than the liberal here ... who has become a deformation he became against religion and such you feel he is flunkey[1] [2] ’* (R6).

R6 here negotiates her identity as a religious conservative versus the Saudi liberals whom she accuses of practising liberalism in contradiction to what Western liberalism is! The othering in this case compliments the West and criticises others, who happens to be part of the same society/nationality (Saudi), ethnicity (Arab) and religion (Muslim). This is a form of othering and identity negotiation within a local context: the Saudi society. With regard to #endguardianship for example, othering emerged when Saudis are criticised for demanding the end of guardianship, in contrast to conservative Saudis who consider themselves followers of religious principles. Such othering combines several identity aspects: religious (Muslims– Sunnah), gender (female) and national (Saudi). The conservatives – as R6 – hold onto Alsahwah discourse, which established the narrative of othering initially. The liberals on the other hand – in the case as A5 and S8 – are judged and categorised according to Alsahwah narrative of othering, e.g., their veiling practices. In a later discussion of #endguardianship (section 7.6.4) I will elaborate on the ‘heated’ discourse between the two groups where this type of ‘local’ othering was echoed.

Othering has emerged through the data as part of identity negotiation. The West was perceived as relaxed in moving cross-gender communication across online/offline spheres, and sharing daily life activities online (A11), whereas the Saudi society was depicted conservative and in need of ‘protection’ through drawing the boundaries of moving online relationships with the opposite sex offline, and protecting privacy by minimising the sharing of offline activities online. In contrast, the West was criticised for hypocrisy in this claim to observe the right of freedom, as illustrated in the case of

---

[1] R6 used a word in Arabic which means: a person who performs relatively menial tasks for someone else, especially obsequiously https://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/l%D9%90مَّعَة/

[2] I here allude to a joke ‘fight terrorism with music’ which become a saying among those who call themselves Saudi liberals. On the Saudi Twittersphere

#Burkiniban. Another form of othering that arose was a national/local one, between liberals and religious conservatives. A5 and S8 negotiated their identities as liberals, being perceived and classified as such by religious conservatives, because of their opinions on women's rights and relaxed veiling practices. R6 in contrast, represented the religious conservatives, criticizing Saudi liberalism as different from the 'Western' version. Here, the two forms of othering emerge: West versus Muslims and Saudi liberals versus Saudi religious conservatives. The next section represents the two ideological positions: liberals, (A5) and religious conservatives, (R6 and L7) negotiation of gendered/religious identities, through diverse responses to another viral hashtag: #Polygamy_Assembly.

7.5 RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES THROUGH RESPONSE TO #POLYGAMY_ASSEMBLY

The #Polygamy_assembly hashtag went viral within the online observation period. The hashtag was based on a proposed assembly, which a Saudi woman had suggested, to discuss a solution for unmarried women, whereby if a single male married any woman above the age of 30, as a 'prize' could get a second wife. This was a serious suggestion and was featured on a T.V show in 2016[1]. In response to my question regarding #Polygamy_assembly, R6 and L7 both laughed at it. Yet, what this conversation promoted following my question is worth addressing here. R6 argued that polygamous marriage is *Halal* and lawful in Islam. A discussion arisen between L7 and R6 in which L7 added: *'though under certain conditions'* (L7), meaning that polygamy marriage – for men – is restricted to certain circumstances.

R6 opposed the idea of giving an opinion on such a fundamental component of religion; she remained silent. Although R6 laughed also, and admitted that women disapprove of polygamy, she explained that there are both successful examples and other cases which caused people to disapprove polygamy. R6 referred to the Islamic precept; she preferred not to participate in such a (religious) controversial topic. L7, on the other hand, started by stressing that she did not wish polygamy for herself (she also laughed). She then listed several reasons why Islam allows polygamy, for reasons such as if a man's wife

---

[1] Unfortunately, there is no English reference to the episode. However, this is the complete interview (Arabic clip) https://youtu.be/OTFFQL4tSCI

is ill and he does not want to divorce her, or she is unfertile, and he loves her but at the same time he wants children. Moreover, L7 added that it is better for a woman to live as a second wife with half a man and bear children, rather than remain single and lose the chance to have children.

#Polygamy_assembly had not appeared on A5's timeline, although the idea itself was familiar to her. A5 had encountered the same suggestion from one of what she called *'the women from the different path',* referring to Saudi female figures who are considered religious conservatives. When I mentioned the names of two Saudi female preachers from my own knowledge as examples, A5 responded, *'One of those two were asking women to share their husbands ... someone said that one year ago or so. I said, is she stupid or what? May God make her own husband marry another woman'* (A5). We laughed, and A5 knocked on the table as a gesture of enthusiasm.

Such dialogue is important to understand how the online discourse challenges religious beliefs, and how such beliefs are negotiated; how religious identity is indeed an integral part of gendered identity. The case of polygamous marriage illustrates an ongoing negotiation between religious/gendered identity aspects and Twitter online practices: the viral hashtag. Although R6 and L7 could imagine how polygamy could affect women, they held onto their religious beliefs regarding: polygamy being religiously permissible. A5, on the other hand, came from a different position, where she considered herself as from a 'different path' to women who call for encouragement of polygamy as a solution for unmarried women. This resonates with the previously discussed Saudi othering: liberals (A5) versus religious conservatives (R6 and L7).

7.6 FEMINISM AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Here I discuss how several participants negotiated their gendered/national/religious and political identities in relation to feminist online practices. Feminism here incorporates participants' understanding of feminism, which I noted were based on feminist figures, such as Simone De Beauvoir and the Suffragette movement, which were part of several participants' online practices. This stimulated questions on the online feminist discourse among Saudi women on SMP, and Saudi feminism: What is Saudi feminism? And what does feminism mean for you (participants)? Identity negotiation emerged through the answers on different aspects: othering, religious versus gendered identity etc. Another part of feminism in this section is online activism, rebellion and campaigning, which were all part of participants' Twitter timelines, e.g., #Endguardianship. Participants

205

negotiated their political/national identities, such as W9 stressing she was not a rebel or activist, yet there was a certain form of online campaigning for which she might be an activist. Finally, I examine #Endguardianship, where identity negotiation took a larger part in the interviews in comparison to online practices such as tweets/retweets. In this part, the discourse addressed the English and opponents' versions of the campaign: #StopenslavingSaudiwomen and #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen, respectively, which reverberated with othering.

It is worth mentioning that, although feminism had emerged as a theme in the pilot study data collection in A2's and I4's posts on Path, one of the limitations of my pilot study that I mentioned in the methodology chapter (section 3.4.3) was that I did not ask I4 and A2 about those posts. However, the follow–up interviews in the main phase of the data collection did address feminism, where I investigated participants' opinions (A5, R6, L7, S8, W9, M10 and R12) regarding feminist figures, Saudi feminists on SMP and Saudi feminism as a concept, Furthermore, the main phase of the data collection was aligned with the feminist discourse which emerged in the pilot study data. This illustrates how feminism was an ongoing online discourse among participants, despite the difference between the two online observation periods and participants' age groups. This reverberation is – I consider – one important finding which I explored through the data analysis.

7.6.1 WESTERN FEMINIST SYMBOLS AND THE NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY

Simone De Beauvoir's book *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (Figure 49), and the Suffragette movement (Figure 48), were Western feminist points of reference which I spotted in some participants' online practices, on Twitter and Goodreads. Moreover, in the case of A11[1], De Beauvoir's book was brought up in the interviews. Figures 48 and 49 illustrate examples of W9 retweeting a review of the movie Suffragette[2] by a Saudi woman on Twitter, and De Beauvoir's book *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* as part of

---

[1] Surprisingly, Simone De Beauvoir's Memoirs was brought up by A11, whilst she was explaining why she liked to read Western literature translated into Arabic. Here she given the example of Simone De Beauvoir's book, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, where she expressed her enthusiasm for its 'eloquent style of writing'.

[2] https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3077214/

I4's bookshelf on Goodreads, respectively. However, in relation to the theme of this chapter and the focus of this thesis, I discuss the case of A5 only, who voiced identity negotiation in relation to the discussion of De Beauvoir's book on Twitter, among Saudi women specifically.

A5 was familiar with both the Suffragette movie and Simone de Beauvoir's diaries; *'I have her diaries ... I read them ... I mean I bought them'* (A5). I explained to A5 that I had to read de Beauvoir's diaries because of what I observed online (the popularity of de Beauvoir's book), I asked her what she thought was the cause of such popularity among Saudi women online. The following excerpt argues the role of Arabic adoption through translation and discussion of De Beauvoir in the Saudi context:

> *'I read it because I wanted to know about the book* (she was curious)*, Yes of course de Beauvoir is not similar to us at all ... she is similar to ... or I mean she belongs to a specific era– period in France [which is totally different (En)] than us I mean ... I feel that de Beauvoir is a model which expressed her thoughts/opinions ... This is the only point ... she is a model which said* (expressed her views) *but if you see or if you go [deep (En)] in her mentality it is not only 'I want to drive' it is 'I do not want to get married and I want to do love with anyone* (she meant with the same sex)*'* (A5).

In the above excerpt, A5 used 'us', voicing her identity as a Saudi, Muslim woman. She expressed how De Beauvoir as a French woman who lived in a different era, was different from 'us' Saudi women, so De Beauvoir's feminism was not 'suitable' to be fitted as part of the Saudi feminist discourse. The 'us' is indeed part of othering – discussed earlier in this chapter. A5 mentions driving here, as a symbol of Saudi feminism, which I will be addressing shortly. In short, if one of the demands of Saudi feminists is driving, and De Beauvoir is considered an icon of feminism, then those 'feminists' do not know exactly which type of feminism De Beauvoir was following. A5 argued that if the Arabic version of De Beauvoir's book explained the 'real' sexual orientation and opinion of De Beauvoir towards marriage (the Arabic version of the book omits this: it did not include it in the translation), Saudi women who would look at her opinions differently, in terms of Muslim religious identity where sex outside marriage is forbidden and romantic relationships between members of the same sex are taboo.

Figure 48 Retweet by W9 of a Saudi woman's tweet, talking about the movie 'Suffragette'

Figure 49 Screenshot by I4's read books on Goodreads, and Simone De Beauvoir's 'Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter' was one of them

7.6.2 FEMINIST IDENTITY AND OTHERING

Figure 50 Translated screenshot of A2's sarcastic post on Path: feminist forever

A sarcastic post on Saudi feminism that I spotted in the pilot study, is one of A2's posts on Path (Figure 50), where she expresses her annoyance with the public offline sphere in public events, where organisers announce 'proudly' there are seats for women. A2 interpreted this as meaning: *'you are lucky that we thought of you and allocated a 'small' space for you, whereas in fact you are a burden'* (A2), A2 ended her thought with: *'feminist forever'*. The thought promoted further discussions with some of A2's friends on Path including some Saudi men who opposed A2's opinion: 'You are overreacting' and 'You feminists turn everything into a conspiracy'. A2 responded to this by asking where exactly is the overreacting? She insisted, *'I'm the most anti–feminism in Saudi* (anti Saudi feminism) *what I added here is sarcasm'* (A2). A2 here negotiated her gendered identity, denying that she was a feminist, and distancing herself from other Saudi feminists. Yet, her audience considered her opinion as feminist, and consequently classified her as a feminist. Although A2's friends' comments are beyond the focus of the data collection, however, this conversation is vital to be presented in this section to shed light on feminist identity negotiation and another form of othering among Saudis, namely, on construction of womanhood.

7.6.3 ACTIVISM, REBELLION AND CAMPAIGNING ONLINE
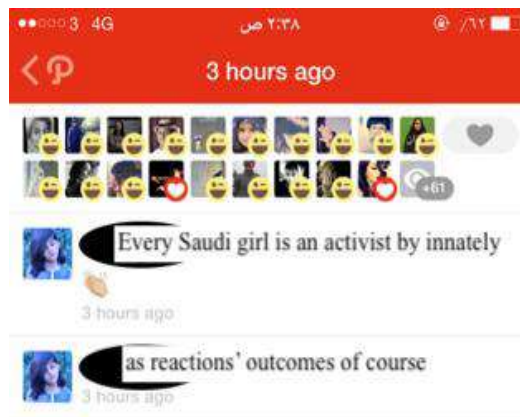
Figure 51 Translated screenshot of I4's sarcastic post on Path that every Saudi woman is a rights activist

A comment, I4 added on Path (Figure 51) stated that: *'every Saudi woman is naturally a rights activist (...) as an outcome of a series of reactions'* (I4). In I4's opinion, restrictions imposed on women in Saudi Arabia made them – as a reaction – rights activists. This was one of the first parts of the data which brought feminism and activism into play. Although I4's post is sarcastic, it does indicate the emergence of a 'wave' of activism in the online sphere. Moreover, it highlights the confrontation between the restrictions imposed offline and women's objections to them, which they express more freely online.

Activism, campaigning and rebellion was brought up in the main phase of the data collection, when W9 mentioned repeatedly that she *'is not a rebel'*, *'I'm not a protester*, *'I'm not an activist. I contribute to them, support them* (Saudi female activists hashtags)*, yet, I do not create a hashtag every day'* (W9). By this, W9 referred to the #endguardianship online campaign. W9 brought up her own favoured cause, on which she envisaged being an advocate one day: *'but if I decided one day to do something similar, I would choose mental and psychological illness. Because I feel it is an abandoned cause in our society'*(W9). W9 explained how she was lucky to be a daughter of an educated family who understood her mental illness, supported her and offered the treatment she needed. Here, a different version of campaigning online emerged, where W9 could see herself as an activist for good causes, yet not a rebellion.

This 'suggested' version of campaigning online is similar to the case of R6, from whom I spotted two viral hashtags on her Twitter timeline: the first was راح_نفلسكم#: #wewillbankruptyou. This campaign targeted a Saudi mobile phone carrier: Mobily, calling to boycott the company because of their decision to stop providing an all you

can eat data offer. The second was another online boycott campaign addressed a Saudi dairy company, *Almra'ey*, with outrage about their price increases. #المراعي_منتجات_نشتري_لن: #wewontbuyalmaraaiproducts (Figure 52). Both campaigns were mentioned by R6 and L7, criticising the companies greediness, fraud and monopolism, moreover, expressing their support and favour to such online campaigns. What is interesting is R6's classification of such advocacy as *'loyalty to the country',* which L7 had agreed with; *'Right'.* R6 explained that even if the government had reduced the prices, such companies hold a monopoly. This highlights how online advocacy could be part of national identity: what counts as loyalty to the country and what does not.

Figure 52 Translated screenshot of R6's retweet of #wewontbuyalmaraaiproducts campaign

In the absence of an offline sphere for activism, online advocacy practices utilise the online sphere to counter the public sphere. Yet, participants held contradictory positions toward online activism, campaigns and advocacy. For example, R6 was against #endguardianship, and retweeted the opponents' hashtag: #Saudiwomendominate-liberalwomen (to be discussed shortly). Yet, she was an advocate of other 'versions' of online activism. Moreover, W9 negotiated her identity through – similar to the case of A2 – distancing herself from feminist activism, rebellion and advocacy, and drew her 'own' aspiration for advocacy which was part of her personal identity: her own experience with mental illness. R6, on the other hand, brought national identity to the negotiation, complimenting online boycott campaigns as a representation of national loyalty, whereas she considered #Endguardianship as against religious principles.

7.6.4 THE #ENDGUARDIANSHIP CAMPAIGN

#Endguardianship, is an online Saudi feminist campaign took place in the last three months of my online observation: July – September 2016 (Chapter One, section 1.5.1.3). #Endguardianship had many 'versions', both in Arabic #سعوديات_نطالب_بإسقاط_الولاية: #Saudiwomendemandendguardianship, and in English: #StopenslavingSaudiwomen. Throughout my online observation, I spotted the supporters' and the opponents' hashtags: #سعوديات_يسقطن_الليبراليات #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen. All participants encountered the campaign on their Twitter timeline. Yet, their participation differed, whether it was through tweeting/retweeting, observing and building an opinion, whether it simply 'rang a bell': meaning that it was familiar, but they knew nothing about it, such as the case of M10.

When I asked S8 which hashtags she had been active on the most within the previous months (between our first interview and our follow–up one, January 2016 – January 2017), her immediate answer was #endguardianship: *'it is the only hashtag that I've really participated in'* (S8). Similarly, R6, W9 and R12 had the same response to my question. A large range of topics was discussed in the interviews; however, I classify participants' responses to this specific topic into three groups: (a) those against endguardianship (R6), (b) those supporting endguardianship (A5, L7, S8, W9 and R12): *'Aaa, [it is good I'm one hundred percent* (En)*] with the cause [one hundred percent* (En)*] ... I'm with them a hundred percent'* (R12), and (c) those who knew nothing about the endguardianship campaign, except that it was trending on Twitter (M10).

While A5, L7, S8, W9 and R12, were all supporters of #endguardianship, yet their way of expressing such an opinion varied. The comment A5 had on the campaign was regarding the opponents' Arabic version: #سعوديات_يسقطن_الليبراليات: #Saudiwomendominate-liberalwomen and the English version: #StopenslavingSaudiwomen. A5 described herself as a *'free woman';* she travelled abroad on her own, with her husband's permission of course, but only because this was the legal requirement in the Saudi law. Moreover, A5 grew up – as she put it – in *'an open– minded family'*; consequently, seeking a guardian's permission, in her case, was struggle– free. In this case, #endguardianship in A5's opinion, was a woman's right, which should be gained.

S8 was the only participant whose online practice I spotted, tweets, throughout my observation, in which she expressed her total support for #endguardianship (on Twitter).

The occasion of S8's tweet was the hashtag, reaching 100 days', exposure (Figure 53). W9 referred to the same celebration, as part of explaining her support of the campaign:

> *'I try to contribute to it* (the hashtag) *on a daily basis, with whatever I could offer. For example, when the campaign completed 100 days, I tweeted using hearts Emojis ... I mean I don't have many tweets frankly ... but I mean I contribute to it* (the hashtag)*, if I have something, I would share it, I try from time to time to write something. The most important thing is to be a contributor/to be part of it* (the campaign)*'* (W9).

Figure 53A tweet on S8's Twitter timeline using the Arabic acceding version: 100 days of #Saudiwomendemandendguardianship[1]

In both examples, S8 and W9 considered themselves part of this campaign, they negotiated their identity as supporters versus the opponents. They classified themselves under a particular group among the Saudi Twittersphere towards the campaign. This distinction encompassed the 'stigma' faced by the supporters of this campaign e.g., classification as liberals, which I will be discussing shortly (section 7.6.5). Consequently, S8 and W9 identified themselves as Saudi 'liberal' women which resonates with the Saudi liberals othering Saudi conservatives discussed previously (section 7.4.2).

A sense of belonging and admiration was voiced repeatedly through R12 and W9 interviews, they expressed their solidarity with the hashtag and admiration of the women who were active on it:

---

[1] The sentence in S8's tweet is part of a Hadith (sacred saying by Islam's Prophet Mohammed), which states that "a woman completes a man, an honourable man treats women with honour and integrity, and only a vile and dishonourable man humiliates and degrades women."

> *'The cause itself, I consider it excellent, and I very much admire those girls – Mashallah[1] – those who are persistent and add a number to the hashtag every day[2]. This is frankly astonishing ... so I try – as far as I could – this is it* (she meant she tried to be part of the campaign as far as she could) (W9).

This excerpt resonates with S8's and W9's previous example of celebrating the campaign reaching 100 days. Moreover, W9 here represents a form of ideal identity: looking at the active tweeps of #endguardianship with pride and respect, trying to be part of them – as much as possible – without 'exceeding' the boundaries she set to her Twitter practices. These boundaries were addressed (section 7.6.3), where a form of W9 identity negotiation was expressed, identifying herself – repeatedly – as is not an activist or rebel. Therefore, the maximum participation she could offer to the campaign was tweeting/retweeting.

Both W9 and R12 had expressed their gratitude to #endguardianship, as an informative campaign, through which their eyes were opened to things they had previously known nothing about or had not understood, enabling them to connect the dots. Although they are Saudi women, living in the same country, they become more aware of women's situation in Saudi Arabia: '*I mean I myself ... it taught me new things*' (W9), *'I mean the things I knew about this topic following the campaign, I was really [ignorant* (En)*] about it'* (R12). For R12, her sense of pride was focused on how this campaign had stimulated various intellectual discourses, such as articles written by Arab women, especially Saudi women, and brought up other struggles which Saudi women face on a daily basis, such as, how Saudi women are facing their families (father, brother etc.), whereas Saudi men, in their demands (e.g., political) are only facing the authorities. Identity is negotiated here in terms 'how I was' and 'how I became'; moreover, it is negotiated through a feminist viewpoint: gender inequality between men and women in Saudi Arabia, namely, patriarchal power.

---

[1] Mashallah or "Mash 'Allah" is an Arabic phrase used to show appreciation for a person or happening. It shows respect, and also reminds that everything is achieved by the will of God. The closest English translation is "God willed it." It is used to show joy and praise and is evoked upon hearing good news. https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=mashallah

[2] She meant there is an ascending number for every day e.g., #Saudiwomendemandtheendof-guardianship1, #Saudiwomendemandtheendofguardianship2

Similar to W9 and R12, and in relation to the 'enlighten' of the #Endguardianship, S8 raised the issue of self-identity development within the context of becoming more 'liberal'. She recalled the role of the religious police in protecting Saudi society, and how she used to be *mutawa*: a highly religious woman (S8), where only because of SMP, and online campaigns such as #Endguardianship, she would be one of the opponents: #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen. She laughed as a gesture of how funny it would be if she was.

Figure 54 A retweet on S8's Twitter timeline of K's Account, with the Arabic acceding version of #endguardianship

However, one of my questions about #endguardianship was on #Stopenslaving-Saudiwomen, the English version of #endguardianship. I spotted the hashtag through a retweet of S8 (Figure 54). Therefore, I asked all participants (in the main phase of the data collection) about it. My focus was on the word 'enslaving', and whether the hashtag was an equivalent of #endguardianship, or it brought a different discourse of demands to the campaign. Moreover, through my online observation I spotted how the opponents of #endguardianship heavily criticised the English hashtag #StopenslavingSaudiwomen, calling it as a 'cry out for foreign agenises'. This was – consequently – pictured as a betrayal of Saudi nationalism.

Participants whose English proficiency was fairly high (A5, S8, W9 and R12) all agreed that the word enslaving is not *'of course'* an equivalent to endguardianship: *'It is not equivalent at all]* (she laughed) (R12). A5, W9 and R12 interpreted the use of the word enslaving as a means to grasp the attention of the Western media: *'It is very obvious through the translation that it targets the Western audience'* (R12), *'No of course not, the [discourse* (En)*] is totally [different* (En)*]'* (A5). Although, W9 declared that her English ability was limited, '*I assume this is normal, I mean when someone is*

communicating with people outside the country, he has to put a 'vibrant' word' (W9).
W9 and R12, both justified the use of the word enslaving instead of guardianship, on
the basis that the Western 'target' would not comprehend what guardianship means, but
'enslaving' is more powerful.

However, A5, S8, W9 and R12 agreed that stigmatising supporters as betrayers of the
country because of using the English version of the campaign #Stopenslaving-
Saudiwomen was ludicrous. W9 and S8 viewed the suggestion by some opponents that
the campaign was backed by foreigner agencies, was *'ridiculous'* as S8 put it. I shared
with S8 my thoughts (not my opinion), on how there were different discourses, reactions
and opinions towards this online campaign; one of them – which I mentioned – was that
this online movement was supported up by foreign/Western countries. So, I said; 'I am
unable to hold a specific opinion', S8's responded:

> *'[still (En)] the hashtag [under progress (En)] I mean, you don't know ...*
> *it is an issue when you check the tweets and you find people who really*
> *believe in conspiracy theory ... it does not make sense I mean'* (S8).

For S8, it was ridiculous to think that the 'real' founders and backers of this online
campaign were not Saudi women. This was echoed in W9's interview, where she
brought such claims into our conversation (the suspicion that the hashtag is backed by
foreign countries), W9 mentioned how this is a *'good hashtags, which Saudi – female –*
citizens started' (W9). Here, the othering is denied, yet national identity is voiced. S8
and W9 challenged #endguardianship opponents' discourse: othering women who were
active on the campaign as liberals or betrayers of Saudi nationalism. The gendered–
national identity is addressed here where W9 used the word 'citizens', to stress that
#endguardianship demands are genuine and not 'fabricated' or 'dramatized'. It is worth
brining up here, a point R12 raised in the interview, regarding Saudi nationalism. R12's
argument was the input #endguardianship opponents brought to the notion of Saudi
citizenship, specifically, Saudi women's citizenship. She noted that Saudi women who
supported #endguardianship, had confronted the accusation of being non– Saudis, by
uploading their national ID card or passports as proofs of their citizenship. S8, W9 and
R12's points of view flowed from the English version of #endguardianship:
#StopenslavingSaudiwomen to Saudi women citizenship, all within the context of
negotiating national identity in relation to the feminist #endguardianship campaign.

It is important to point out here, that English proficiency differed across participants;
therefore, not all participants understood how 'enslaving' was different from

#endguardianship. In the cases of R6 and L7, I translated #StopenslavingSaudiwomen to the literal Arabic translation: *tawuqqufo an istebaad almaaraah alsuoodiyah*. R6 understood how different the two expressions were, but our discussion on this hashtag stopped there. However, in other parts of our conversation, especially when L7 interrupted her sister, expressing her disagreement with R6's opposition to #endguardianship. R6 then used the word 'enslaving', I will return back to this in the next section.

7.6.5 #SAUDIWOMENDOMINATELIBERALWOMEN AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

#سعوديات يسقطن الليبراليات: #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen, was a hashtag opposed to #endguardianship which I spotted throughout my online observation, on R6's Twitter timeline. R6 retweeted tweets that used this hashtag (Figure 55). 'Liberal', as explained previously, was a stigma which religious conservatives apply to Saudi women who demand the ending to guardianship. Yet, the hashtag also suggested that those 'liberal' women were not Saudis, as the former part of the hashtag declared that the opponents of #endguardianship were the 'true' Saudi women, whereas the supporters were liberals, who did not belong to/represent the Saudi society. This echoes previous sections, namely, the Saudi othering and S8, W9 and R12's[1] discussion on the relationship between demanding women's rights and Saudi nationalism. Therefore, R6 retweeted this hashtag as an endorsement of such an opinion: demanding the end of guardianship is a liberal idea and those women who do so do not represent 'our' society. The othering: we versus them is discussed in the following paragraphs.

---

[1] R12 had an opinion on #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen, she classified Saudi women who launched this hashtag as former– #endguardianship supporters, who withdrew from this campaign, and stigmatised #endguardianship demands as 'liberal' invocations.

217

Figure 55 A retweet on R6's Twitter timeline of one of the opponents to #endguardianship, with the hashtag #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen

When I asked R6 about the #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen hashtag – without referring to her Twitter practices – R6 explained:

> *'Yes, you see ... there are members of the Saudi society who are still holding to this ... I mean ... even if there are now some people who want to end guardianship, no ... there are still others who oppose them'* (she meant they are against ending guardianship). *R6 continued: 'Yes, I am telling you ... I mean ... for example: we ... though I personally suffered from the guardianship law ... yet I do not demand ending it'* (R6).

R6 had been divorced five years ago (2012), previously she struggled in court for three years to get her divorce. Moreover, she struggled to obtain custody of her children. However, she stated her rejection of ending guardianship twice in our interview:

> *'I mean I could not register my own child in the school, I could not transfer my children across different schools, I could not take all my rights because of this guardianship law, though I do not agree with ending guardianship'* (R6).

R6's opposition to #endguardianship was threefold: (1) guardianship is part of religious principles; (2) ending guardianship would result in the 'loss' of control of Saudi girls; (3) this would result in 'ruining' the reputation of a girl's family.

As a religious conservative, R6's religious identity is viewing religious principles as superior to – women's so called – right to end guardianship. Yet, R6 offered the condition that some male guardians abuse their authority over women through, for

example, that some women have no guardian at all, e.g., a widow whose father had died, and who had no brothers or sons:

> *'Guardianship is part of our religion, that the man is responsible for the women'... 'Of course, for many cases or a woman who doesn't have anyone* (she meant she does not have a man who is responsible for her) *but that guardianship ends, no I disagree ... this is part of our religion: guardianship is part of our religion, that the man is responsible for the women ... there are men who abuse the guardianship role, yes, but these are exceptional cases'* (R6).

However, there is a disagreement by opponents of the #endguardianship between *qawamah*[1] and *Wilayah*[2], which I brought into the conversation, following up on R6's opinion that 'a woman must have a guardian'. R6 responded, *'No I mean a woman cannot get married without a guardian, a woman must have a guardian, it is good for a woman to have someone who takes care of her and so on'* (R6)[3]. It is worth mentioning here that in Saudi Arabia, people hesitate to discuss religious principles, and they leave it to religious clerics thinking that they know better, for example, it is prohibited i.e. a sin to make up one's own mind on such issues i.e. *fatwa*.

However, besides R6's disagreement with the ending of guardianship because of her religious beliefs, familial and societal identity was brought up, when she expressed fears that ending guardianship would result in young girls fleeing the country, ruining their families' reputation and families losing control over their daughters. This was voiced twice, first when I asked R6 directly: Why do you disagree with ending the guardianship law? She explained, *'Because I know that the consequences are more'* (R6), she later explained what these consequences would be. R6 had brought up – prior to our interview – an incident broadcasted on CNN[4] about three Saudi women who fled the country. R6

---

[1] See Glossary of terms

[2] See Glossary of terms

[3] At this point, I could not go into a discussion of my own opinion, and how guardianship in Islam is only applicable in marriage, and even in this case, there are exceptions, like women who are old enough to make their own choice, but that was not the right time or place. Moreover, as a researcher I had to withhold my own opinion to avoid leading the conversation

[4] https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/16/world/saudi–women–asylum–seekers–us/index.html

brought up this story as an example of how this incident had ruined those women's families' reputations, as a result of their being the centre of media attention:

> *'Especially what you hear about women who flee the country ... we couldn't control our boys ... imagine how the situation will be with our daughters ... girls are emotional, they are easily fooled by the concept of freedom concepts and so on'* (R6).

Thus, R6 negotiated, through her opposition to #endguardianship, familial and societal identity, in terms of the family's reputation, values and power: (i.e. 'controlling our girls').

7.6.6 PARTICIPANTS' VOICING CONTRASTING IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

This last section addresses contrasting views on women's rights among participants (R6, L7, W9 and R12). As previously mentioned, #endguardianship promoted extensive discussions on the wider landscape of women's rights, women's activism and Saudi women's situation in the country. Two of these brought up legal age, with the suggestion that women in Saudi Arabia should have legal independence at the same age as men (21) (see Chapter One, section 1.5.1.3 regarding the legal age and the guardianship law). Currently, a Saudi woman needs a guardian's approval in certain situations e.g., permission to travel. Which is one of the main demands of #endguardianship. Another debate took place in R6 and L7's interview, where the latter opposed the former's rejection of #endguardianship. This is another finding I consider interesting, where two sisters with identical socialisation and family backgrounds had different views on a religiously controversial matter. These arguments can be interpreted as feminist, where women negotiate their religious/gendered identities in terms of what counts as a woman's right, and what could be considered as religiously prohibited: *Haram*.

Given R6's stance towards #endguardianship, in which she applied guardianship to everything, including marriage: a woman should be given the permission and be married through her guardian e.g., father. Both W9 and R12 exempted marriage from their opposition to guardianship: *'Except marriage I think, because it is part of the religion'* (R12). Moreover, W9 blamed the misuse of law by extremists who claim that guardianship is part of religion, without mentioning marriage: *'Whoever thinks this is a practice of religion this is not religious ... yes, there is guardianship in marriage but*

not, that is not religious, it is not your right to force me to do everything' (W9). W9, R6 and R12 all agree that a woman is obliged by religion (Islam) to have a guardian in marriage, they consider it a religious fundamental. Yet, their interpretations of what is taken as a religious fundamental differ. Here, religious identity is negotiated within the context of women's rights.

However, the cases of R6 and L7 were remarkable: sisters of a similar age, raised in the same way, educated at the same school, yet holding different positions toward #endguardianship. At the end of R6's statement about the supporters being 'exceptional cases', L7 suddenly – yet shyly – interrupted her sister, voicing her opinion and expressing her agreement with #endguardianship. L7: *'I agree with #endguardianship'* (she laughed) (L7). R6 was shocked, she paused for couple of seconds and asked her sister: 'Why?'. L7 avoided eye contact with her sister, and continued talking as if she had not been interrupted:

> *'My sister, I feel it is enough ... I mean ... the world is open ... you cannot control even your daughters ... they hold things* (she meant devices e.g., smart phones) *I've never had until I become a mother with children and such, though our daughters are young ... I mean ... the world is open, we cannot* (control it)*'* (L7).

I kept listening, leaving the conversation to them. R6: *'You mean guardianship in what exactly? So, they could travel and such?'* L7:

> *'Guardianship means that I can travel ... go out ... I will be accompanied by someone ...* (i.e. she would not be alone) *but he* (whoever was with her) *he is not my guardian ... I take my kid ... I take ... I would not go alone even if I travelled on my own ... what would I do? Sins are everywhere, even in the home'*[1] (L7).

By the end of my conversation with R6 and L7, R6 seemed to have reached a new "middle" view: *'The laws could be changed, the system is to give the woman her rights'*

---

[1] In another part of the interview, L7 brought up a similar discourse: *'but if I want to go to Bahrain, me and you* (R6) *we can't go I mean ... we need permission from my side and her side* (each one's male guardian)*, so we can't ... in this case, we are grownups ... I mean there is no need for someone to be behind our back?'*

(R6). Considering R6's personal experience of divorce, she confined women's rights to *'guardianship over her children*[1]*'* (R6)[2].

L7 negotiated her gendered identity, her rights as a grown-up woman. She confronted the legal and societal restrictions imposed on her: travelling with a guardian's permission. Moreover, by stressing 'control your daughters', L7 acknowledged the transformations inside and outside Saudi Arabia brought by new technologies, viewing, SMP as among part of the drivers of change in Saudi Arabia. Yet, she admitted that such control is 'out of control': no longer feasible because of the 'open world' where technologies, namely, smart phones, the Internet and SMP have enabled the younger generation to skirt their parents' control. It is worth highlighting that – through my observation – L7 reflected over the considerable the value of respect between the older and younger generations, as she was lowering her gaze out of respect while talking to her older sister (R6), and how it is practiced in Saudi culture.

Besides marriage, when the issue of legal age was brought into the conversation an argument began, with R6 deploring how L7 accepted underage girls travelling abroad without their guardian's consent. L7 denied this, and qualified her opinion setting the age of 35 as a criterion for independence: *'but when she is over 35 that is it ... no one is my guardian ... she wants to misbehave*[3]*?'* (L7). Here L7 started talking in the first–person: she suddenly used "me", as if she was positioning herself as an over thirty– five year – old Saudi woman, who still needed a guardian to approve her travel abroad. The legal age at which should be considered free of guardianship was mentioned only by R12 and L7, twenty– one, and thirty – five, respectively. The gap between R12 and L7's suggestions could be explained considering their different ages (Table 3, section 3.4.2) and personal experiences: R12 studied abroad and lived on her own, while L7 had never left Saudi, and was raised in a highly conservative family.

---

[1] R6 added: *'they say* (a woman) *can now move her children and enrol them in schools ... but I do not know'.*

[2] Interestingly, travelling abroad without the guardian's consent was not mentioned. R6 claimed that other GCC countries have laws regulating guardianship, and in truth all GCC countries require the guardian's consent for travelling and even issuing a driving licence, just like Saudi Arabia.

[3] She meant ethical misdeeds (e.g., drinking alcohol, getting pregnant outside of marriage, etc.)

7.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter tried to answer a second part/more recent – to the data collected – of the first research question: *How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed?* The emerged themes, from the data analysis, showed that participants' negotiations of identities in relation to their online practices across SMP were ongoing, in terms of the online/offline cross-gender relationships and visual representation, and how these online practices were always filtered through religious/societal and familial censorships. In this chapter I extended the discussion of the enmeshed relationship between identity and online practices (Dyer, 2015, 2017; Jurgenson, 2012b), in support of the argument against the fragmented examination of the notion of identity in SMP studies. I also extended the concept of 'othering' within the Saudi context (Alenazy, 2017; Alzahrani, 2017), and the discussion of the othering discourse online (Alsaggaf, 2015; Danielewicz-Betz, 2013). Because there are no previous empirical studies to examine Saudi-Saudi othering on SMP in light of the relationship between identity and online practices on SMP, the findings of this work enrich the scholarship on othering in two ways: the first is the othering of the West and Western ideas and culture, which is part of a larger discussion in MENA studies West/East identities negotiations. The second is othering as part of Saudi national/religious/gendered identity negotiations, where othering occurs within the same society (Saudi) rather than in contrast to the West.

The line of sociological research qualitatively examining Saudi feminism and online activism, namely, the #Endguardianship campaign (Alrasheed & Lim, 2018; Doaiji, 2018; El-Fassi, 2014; Muaygil, 2018; Tschirhart, 2014), had not applied the lenses of the relationship between identity and online practices. I captured this relationship in the case of Saudi women who were not 'high profile activists' (as Doaiji, 2018 did), but ordinary tweeps with different views not only on guardianship, but also on Saudi feminists and other womanhood-related topics e.g., the burkini ban. My findings highlight how there are no univocal ways in which these women see these issues, and no univocal ways in which their views are expressed on SMP, contrasting the practices and SMP identities of high profile activists.

I now move to the last chapter in this thesis: Discussion and Conclusions.

CHAPTER 8: FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

> We should think instead of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 2014, p. 222).

In this chapter, I summarise answers to my research questions and then add final discussion of my findings besides the ones I have already included in each data analysis chapter. In light of this, I also discuss possible future work regarding the examination of the notion of identity through online practices across SMP, and of Saudi women's identity. This is followed by a concluding personal reflection as a Saudi woman, a Devotee (section 3.8) and an "female indigenous researcher" (Alsaggaf, 2015, p. 71; Altorki, 1994, p. 66).

The thesis investigated the evolving relationship between Saudi women's identities and their practices across different social media platforms (SMP). The data analysis attempted to answer three research questions. Chapter Four investigated part of RQ1: *How has the relationship and negotiation between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP evolved and changed?* This chapter captured participants' reminiscence of their practices on SMP (i.e. cross-gender communication, choices of visual/textual identity representation: profile picture/username), and their identity negotiation, development and change. Chapter Five examined RQ2: *How do Saudi women represent their identities on SMP?* It examined my participants' identity representation and sharing strategies on SMP. Chapter Six explored RQ3: *Do Saudi women develop different online identities across SMP depending on the medium and their use of it? If so, then how*? It illustrated participants' different identity representation across SMP. Finally, Chapter seven investigated the second part of RQ1: there I represented participants' more recent – to my data collection periods –identity negotiations in relation to their online practices across SMP.

Overall, the findings showed SMP to "constitute heterosocial spaces" and "offer the possibility of hi-jacking prevailing social codes" (Bourdeloie et al., 2017, p. 12) for Saudi women. At the same time, paradoxically, Saudi women – in this thesis – created "multiple, yet culturally acceptable, identities and social roles"; they were "in a constant state of change and growth, of negotiation and questioning" (Alsweel, 2013, pp. 183–208), and– as shown in A2's online practices on Path – it resulted in a loosening of some cultural norms and traditions (veiling, for example), which contradicts Tamimi's (2010, p. 44) argument that "the Internet has not succeeded in breaking down gender and social boundaries as expected". Moreover, it contradicts the claim by Camacho et al (2012, p. 3177) that the online sphere offered SMP users an "opportunity to present themselves as without being constrained by the social values that officially govern" them or to "escape the constraints, norms and values of the society in which they live".

In fact, my findings echo what Abokhodair, Abbar, Vieweg and Mejova (2016, p.76) concluded on GCC women's privacy practices and their gendered/societal/familial facets of identity: "the multifaceted nature of these ever-evolving—but traditionally entrenched—values that have multiple life spans". As Van Geel (2016, p.20) stated, Saudi women's:

> Perception of modernity does not consist only of material progress (e.g. internet, television, mobile phones, infrastructure) but also has a religious dimension grounded in Islam.

This suggests the continued attempt to find a balance between personal choices and societal/familial orthodoxies, which might indeed be very similar to what is experienced by women on social media in other cultural/religious/national contexts. Finally, the findings resonate with previous studies on Identity development, Identity representation changes through online practices (Davis, K., & Weinstein, 2017; K. Davis, 2010; Eggens, 2013; Manago, 2014; Amélie Le Renard, 2010). However, I now move to the second section of this chapter, where I discuss a number of insights to argue that the findings of this thesis add to the scholarly works across a spectrum of fields: Digital Sociology, Identity scholarship on Saudi women, and SMP studies.

8.2 INSIGHTS

8.2.1 THE NOSTALGIA OF ANONYMITY

One of the striking findings relates to a theme that very few studies have explored (van der Nagel & Frith, 2015): what I call from anonymity to *the nostalgia of anonymity*, such as the case of R6, who acknowledged how – for her – anonymity was a privilege in the old days (online forums). Instead of embracing the revelation of 'real names' online, some users might prefer anonymity for different reasons than bullying or trying to avoid certain people or arguments. It might because they want to still hold the right to be anonymous. This supports Hogan's (2012, p.14) argument that there "still exist functional reasons for pseudonyms, in response to context collapse, and personal motivations of identity". Some Saudi women in my study chose to represent/share part of their SMP content "without these getting in the way of each other or personal and professional obligations", such as the cases of I4 and R6, who created another account on Twitter to ask about job opportunities and food/diet, respectively. This suggests that although participants' disclosure of their authentic identities might be perceived as 'courageous', this act of courage could itself become another burden!

To explain this further, again taking the case of R6 as an example, a question could be asked about what are the differences between the need for anonymity then and now? In the beginning, it was because R6 thought – similarly to other participants – that it would be *Ayub* (Chapter Four, section 4.4.1), as A2 stated. Later, R6 was brave and comfortable enough to use her name on SMP. However, in our follow-up interview, she admitted she had created another account on Twitter, using a pseudonym to ask about food/diet. Moreover, she acknowledged her hesitation to retweet romantic tweets and explained that this was because of the fear of being misunderstood by her male cousins, who followed her on Twitter. Therefore, as the Arabic idiom says: 'The ceiling has dropped', meaning that the space of freedom has become narrower than before. Anonymity had again become a need for some Saudi women in this study (R6), this was evidenced, not only by R6's case, but also by my online observation (Table 9, section 6.2.2), which illustrated how some participants used both authentic names and pseudonyms across SMP. Anonymity as a form of identity veiling was still part of Saudi women's online identity representation in this study, and it can be seen as a choice of self-protection.

This brings a comparison between offline veiling/physical veiling rules as protecting certain parts of women's identity or of their bodies: what to display and what not, as opposed to online veiling of identity. How/in which terms are they different/similar? They both are dictated by censorship (societal, familial, religious), yet the former is 'less escapable', if the expression could be used. To explain this further, the online sphere offers the option of 'avoidance', i.e. avoiding face-to-face communication: a photo of oneself online unveiled could not be compared to an unveiled physical body (offline). For example, in the latter case, one might be 'physically' around family/society members, who may comment/take action offline if veiling orthodoxies were broken (acknowledging there could be other repercussions in the online sphere, e.g., bullying). Also, in the online sphere, as in the cases of R6 and A11, there can be benefits from the full name being a common one (section 4.2.1). Online, it is just a name; offline it is a certain person with a disclosed identity. Moreover, online, a woman could unveil on a closed platform such as the case of Path, with a controlled audience. Not one would easily know who she was, if she did not reveal her name/offline identity. In this case, this depends on her self-censorship, what she – away from the offline veiling restriction – wanted to reveal.

8.2.2 RELIGIOUS IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Several findings on religious identity development as part of online practices on participants' religious Identity development have not - as far as I know - identified before my study. A rare example is Hamidaddin (2016): *Harmonious Being: A Space for an Alternative Way of Exploring Religion*. This is a semi-autoethnographic study of his experience across online forums and public (offline) events in Saudi Arabia (Jeddah), where he reflected on the transformations of the Saudi religious discourse both offline/online. As explained in Chapter One (section 1.5.1.3), Saudi society – in general – and Saudi women in particular have faced and still face changes with respect to religious identity and its relationship to the online experience in general. The words of I4 and A1: *'[it was horrible* (En)*]'* (I4), and *'I am a very different person now'* (A1), voiced how religious identity was reshaped, A1 expressing something like regret about being 'less religious' than before. I4 explained how her admiration toward clerics had declined, because of the contradictions of these religious clerics' opinions and discourse towards/regarding women's issues/rights, before/after their presence on SMP, e.g., T.V shows/interviews. In other respects the change was presented more explicitly, e.g., A5's comment, quoted in Chapter Four (page 88), where she set the

scene of the offline sphere restrictions pre-online activities, and S8 who looked back at herself before SMP, when she was *mtw'eh*, and – as she said - if there were no SMP she would be one of the سعوديات_يسقطن_الليبراليات# Saudiwomendominateliberal-women. She had been *mtw'eh* and she became liberal or, to be more precise, she was perceived as liberal because of her views/opinions on women's rights.

These episodes not only captured how the pre-online sphere (Alsahwah era) shaped religious/gendered identity facets, but highlight the contrast between Alsahwah conservatism and so-called 'liberalism'. These findings open a broader discussion on Saudi women's religious identity development, change and transformation, not only through and because of their online experience, but more recently because of the changes in the offline sphere, i.e., gender-mixing, women driving, etc. If Weston (1987, p. 99) said, "To be a Saudi Arab is without question to be a Muslim", then a question would be asked here: how has the pre-online 'version' of Islam for Saudi women, their interpretation of, for example, what is *Halal/Haram* changed? And to what extent? The phenomenon of atheism expressed on Social Media (Twitter) among Saudis, and incidents of young Saudi women fleeing the country[1] i.e. because of domestic abuse, all raise questions of how to understand the transformations of the 'Saudi' religious identity in relation to the enormous changes the country has been and is going through, especially in women's situation. Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this research, yet the data shed some light on religious identity development, such as the case of A1 (Chapter Seven, section 7.3.1) and S8 (Chapter Seven, section 7.6.4, pp. 196-197): how they used to be highly religious and became 'less' religious, or even liberal, as in the case of S8. Future studies could examine the impact of offline/online dynamics of change in Saudi Arabia on reshaping/challenging religious identity, between different generations e.g., Saudi women who were born between 1970-1990 and other who were born after 2000.

---

[1] See for example the most recent case (2019) of Rahaf Al-Gannon
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rahaf_Mohammed

8.2.3 PERSONAL IDENTITY ACTUALISATION: A SPACE FOR WRITING, PUBLISHING AND BEING PART OF AN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

One of the findings which extends previous works relates to the reasons why Saudi women are looking for a community online (Al-Saggaf, 2012; Al-Saggaf & Begg, 2004; Al-Saggaf & Weckert, 2016; Al-Saggaf et al., 2002). Some of the women in this study sought SMP, particularly Facebook and Twitter, as platforms for self-actualisation: to be writers, part of an intellectual community. Those were the beginnings; some women continued in that field (A5 and her publishing career), some limited their practices but remained in that field (R12 who translated and published). Others did not further their career in publishing; they did not pursue their practices of writing to the level of publication (A11, I4 and W9). The only change A5 experienced was that instead of the online sphere being it as A5 described – a second life, it actually became her life, where her writing, work and publishing all took place. These began on SMP and were shared there, as it is part of who she was. The online sphere offered these participants a space free of restrictions for such practices, where they did not have to get a publisher as approval, get permission from a journal or magazine to publish a piece of their writing, be forced to expose their identities to these publishers/magazines, or even get permission from their families to do so. Instead, they could publish their writings through blogs and SMP, and be heard by a broader community of Arab intellectuals.

The opportunities those women had online are currently available offline: writing, publishing, attending intellectual events e.g., poetry nights. The 'intellectual scene', in Saudi has become more accessible for women, although this, it is possible that some women might not be accessing these opportunities either because of their families (i.e. not allowing them to write/publish, attend these venues, be visible in public), or other constraints or preferences. However, although the restrictions offline have been relaxed, it would be interesting to examine further, Saudi women's writing skills and what opportunities they need. What do the online/offline spheres offer? What are the possible restrictions? What does it mean/take for a Saudi woman to be an intellectual Saudi female, part of the intellectual community? And what roles do SMP play in all of this?

8.2.4 ONGOING LIFE CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDHOOD IDENTITY

The case of W9's identity representation: '*I put my picture as a child because this is what I can do, or I add my photo wearing Niqab, which is what I look like in the street*' (W9), W9 shows her negotiation of her representation online in relation to her offline veiling practices. Just as she was unable to reveal her face offline, she could not do it online either. In Chapter Five I discussed how she elaborated on this, when she said that because of being Najdi, because of her familial heritage, she could only represent herself in a certain way online, i.e. wearing Niqab. This reflects a negotiation of different identity facets: cultural/societal and gendered/religious. W9 also added that although she was willing to wear Hijab, as revealing her face was *Halal* (permitted religiously), yet her familial status forbade it. What is interesting about this particular case of W9, which was however beyond the focus of the data analysis, is the ongoing life connections with childhood identity alongside the societal codes for childhood dress. Putting her picture as a child was acceptable, but being a grown woman, changed everything. This brings a whole wider discussion of Muslim gendered identity; what a someone can wear/how she can present herself if she is a girl, and how this feminine identity changes at a certain age, where – in certain interpretations of Islam – veiling becomes an obligation. Even more interesting is the case of A5, who did not wish her students to see pictures of her without Hijab; she also told her daughters not to post pictures of her without a scarf on SMP. Both W9's childhood example and this example of A5 could be interpreted as reflecting another connection between the expectations of childhood behaviour and children's lack of boundaries and cultural restrictions compared to the adult world. This demonstrates how social media allows the inadvertent leaking of what would previously have been 'contained' in the private sphere.

However, parts of the findings were consistent with previous research, as is the case of A1's explanation of her private Instagram account and deleted posts on social media platforms *'So, my words won't get misunderstood'* (A1) (section 5.3.1). Al-Saggaf, Williamson and Weckert (2002) indicated that Saudi women who use new media platforms (in their case it was online forums) fear the "misunderstanding or misinterpretation over their content of a message". Both examples, despite the thirteen-year gap (2002 – 2015), are still valid to show how women navigate and sense political/government/social/familial censorship(s), keeping the audience in mind. Regarding privacy, the case of R12's deletion of her Tweets because she foresaw what

might be dangerous for her academic position, aligns with A5's cautiousness about her online representation because of her academic status. Both recall Camacho, Minelli and Grosseck's (2012) findings of audience/context collapse and professional identity representation in the sense that participants felt the need to protect their personal life and show some level of concern about the influence their digital footprint on their professional life. Moreover, it contradicts existing literature (Marwick & boyd, 2011) suggesting that SMP users "are far more concerned with parents or employers viewing their Twitter stream than a complete stranger" (Ibid, p, 16).

Another part of the findings is the wish to adopt a representation of identity which is 'disconnected' from the offline sphere. It is a quasi-second life, yet not in terms of 'making up' a fake account/character, but of being 'away from' the offline daily life practices and, maybe, restrictions. This is the case of A11 online practices on Twitter and Instagram, of which she said: *'On these platforms it is me only'* (A11). She was not the mother of five children, or the wife who could not publish her writings or participate in exhibitions with her paintings; she was the person she wanted to be. SMP were a second life for her. This is echoed in other studies, where participants from Western cultural contexts (the UK and USA), explained the "stuff" they "upload and share": "Because I liked it very much and I think the pictures and the stuff I upload present me the way I am" (Camacho et al., 2012, p. 3180), "This is my personal network. This is where I don't have to be politically correct, this is where we can be ourselves" (Vitak et al., 2012, p. 557).

8.2.5 *FEAR AS SHAPING SOCIAL IDENTITY*

Now that I have revisited my research questions in light of my findings, and highlighted how these resonate with or contradict or extend existing literature, I here discuss an overall theme which dominated what participants shared and their representation(s) across SMP: (in their own words) fear. Fear was always present and related to participants' online practices, where the audience was always a factor, influencing what participants shared or deleted, and how they represent their SMP profiles in terms of what they wrote, posted (visual content) or re-shared (i.e. retweeted). Saudi women in this study came to SMP with fear of disclosure, disclosure of their authentic identity. Therefore, they developed different private/public binaries on the same SMP and/or across different SMP as discussed in Chapter Five and Six. Despite the relaxation of cross-gender communication and authentic identity representation practices, this fear – which originated from the offline sphere and was transferred to the online – continued

to be there, even regarding the more recent practices of online identity representation in all participants' cases.

However, it manifested itself on different levels: fear for A5 and R12 was because of their academic positions; the fear of A11 was rooted in her familial situation: her strict husband. A5, W9 and R12 shared a fear of political participation online, A5 stressing *'I am not saying anything wrong'* several times. W9 deleted/undid[1] political retweets and R12 deleted old tweets. W9 and A5 shared the fear of their families' disapproval in case of veiling, albeit differently: for A5, her family disapproved of the complete removal of her scarf while in the case of W9, it was the removal of her Niqab. The fear in the case of A1 was related to the audience in general, to being afraid *'so my words do not get misunderstood'*. R6 also had a fear of being misunderstood similar to A1, yet she specifically named her male cousins, discussing a complicated situation of being a divorcee in the Saudi society, in her conservative religious family, where the familial censorship of her practices extended to the online sphere.

S8 and R12 shared the fear of cyberbullying; they both admitted deleting tweets/mentions so they could avoid any possible bullying on Twitter. The fear of L7 was religious, where she acknowledged her hesitation to share songs/music on Snapchat because it would be a sin (*ithm*) – assuming music is *Haram*. Therefore, she would delete a video snap of a piece of music she was listening to. Also, L7 had a fear of being criticised by conservatives who were her friends on Snapchat (i.e. her snapchat audience). The fear of something or of someone was always present. At first it was cross-gender communication (I4 and A1) and expressing political views (A5), and it continued to the family, colleagues and acquaintances who happen to be part of these women's online audience.

Two instances of fear that was expressed less strongly are the cases of A2 and M10. A2 expressed her early fear of using her authentic name: *'I though it is Ayub and my family would go against it'* (A2) (Chapter Four, section 4.4.1), yet she was the only participant who did not mention the fear of adding strangers or male friends, even when she recalled a particularly memorable episode of her online experience (answer to one of the interview guide questions, (Appendix 5). Cross-gender communication was not an issue at all for A2, compared to other participants, perhaps because she had been exposed to a mixed environment, which M3 and I4 had not. For example, I know from a personal chat with A2, that she had worked as an intern between her graduation from

---

[1] On Twitter, undoing retweets is called: undo https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-retweet

the university and her move to Dubai. The internship was in a non-gender-segregated offline sphere. This may be because cross-gender communication is more relaxed in the Eastern region - which I mentioned earlier in the literature review- as this part of Saudi Arabia is more tolerant to veiling and open spaces for both sexes. Jeddah is also a more relaxed city in terms of such offline practices, so why it was it not the same for M3? I explain that by M3's conservative/strict family, which I have highlighted in the methodology chapter (e.g., meeting at a female-only public library instead of a cafe). However, it is worth mentioning here how communicating with men was not a matter of shock or fear for all participants; A2 is an example.

M10 also brought up the early fear of strangers when she started adding friends on Facebook, yet afterwards she did not express similar fears of sharing, for example, political content, or fear of the opposite sex because she did not add men to her private account on Path; therefore, she did not communicate with men at all. It might be interpreted that M10 did not express her fear, as the online sphere appeared to be a small part of her life, a leisure activity rather than a space for expressing opinions with a larger audience, engaging with her society's issues. The online sphere was a space she sat it up where she could relax. It is important to note here that (while she did not mention fear) M10 – similarly to many other participants – stated her 'cautiousness' about what she shared online.

8.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

8.3.1 CONTRIBUTION TO DIGITAL SOCIOLOGY (DS) AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

> For many people, such experiences challenge what they have traditionally called "identity", which they are moved to recast in terms of multiple windows and parallel lives. There is no simple sense in which computers are causing a shift in notions of identity (Turkle, 1999, p.2015)

In the introduction chapter, I discussed the theoretical and conceptual lens of Social Identity theory, which inspired this research, beginning from the understanding of the notion of Identity as a social product/socially constructed (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002), where the online/offline binary – when examining identity and SMP – does not exist. I argued that DS is the field to which my work contributes the most, with the

examination of the notion of Identity in relation to online practices across SMP and considering identity as a whole instead of an online/offline binary.

A binary distinction can be found across the online/offline spheres, not across identity, as there is indeed "no escape from Identity" (Voicu, 2013, p. 169). Women's identity as portrayed in this thesis was a product of values and beliefs which shaped their view towards themselves and the world around them. Participants' identity facets (religious, cultural, gendered, ethnic, national and personal) all shaped their online representation practices, just as they shaped their offline practices. Yes, they might uncover their faces online and do the opposite offline, communicate freely with men online and restrict that in offline communication, but all of this was part of their identity negotiations because of the difference between the spheres themselves. If they could do offline what the online sphere allowed them to do, they would do it, as in the examples of A5 and W9, who clarified that their families did not accept their representing their offline veiling online. Several participants voiced their hesitation to share online because of the audience that was part of the offline community as well; in other words: the same people were there! The same social censorship that they encounter offline might be practised online; a key difference is that the online sphere enabled them to hide their practices, limit their audiences etc. However, their identities, what they believed was right/wrong, what they wanted/did not want to do, both offline/online had no different 'versions', only different facets.

This extends the Digital Sociology's conceptualisation of the phenomenon of Identity beyond its representation online, by contextualising its representation online in a larger context of identity representation. Here, I captured the 'untold' online: what participants discussed, explained, justified in the interviews added to what they explicitly represented online. I will be elaborating in my argument of the contribution of this work to SMP studies (section 8.3.3) on how the lurker (i.e. participants' lurking) matters.

I want to give here one example of how Digital Sociology conceptually framed the examination(s) of Saudi women's identity and their online practices on Twitter. Through online observation, I spotted viral hashtags that were part of the Saudi feminist discourse on Twitter at their peak virality: #Burkiniban, #Polygamy_assembly and #endguardianship. The first two hashtags had not been examined in previous literature, and there is scant work about the third, #endguardianship. These works did not include the people involved, the women affected. The only two related works I am aware of were an autoethnographic paper by Safaa (2018), who is the founder of

#IAmMyOwnGuardian, and Duaiji (2017, 2018) who offered a valuable overview of the campaign however based not on research on a participant sample, but on her own experience on SMP.

I not only analysed tweets of these campaigns but also identified a third angle of opponents/supporters to this campaign, such as M10 who was not aware of or not interested in the whole conversation/discourse. Moreover, I voiced the negotiations of feminism: women's rights, such as the topic of the legal age in section 7.6.6. This enriches our understanding of identity representation online by highlighting how not all aspects of identity online are visible in what people post and do, and that identity online is also about what they do not voice or do. This will be discussed further (section 8.3.3.4) where I discuss how lurking matters, and that what is shared on SMP is only part of identity representation, whereas what is not shared is another part that online observations only can not capture.

The generalization of my findings in connection to other research in other cultural contexts (i.e. USA and UK) is to do with the relationship between identity and online practices across SMP, such as private/public boundaries, audiences segregation etc. I extended the understanding of audience segregation in the Saudi context. On the other hand, I argue that the concept of audience segregation holds in the Saudi context, for example regarding differences in social censorship: what is accepted/not accepted as represented/shared online across different cultural contexts and for different users' genders. My findings show that when examining issues such as these, it is important to consider the cultural context online and offline, and to be sensitive not to replicate and apply frameworks developed in Western contexts.

My findings could be revisited to contribute to the existing knowledge in different disciplines and to the formulation of other theoretical frames that I did not directly contribute to (see for example: Whiting & Williams, 2015) For example:

> Research on social media does not necessarily warrant new theories of communication. Existing theories, such as uses and gratifications, can be honed, scoped, and elaborated, as researchers compare platforms, users, and practices across the rapidly expanding social media ecology (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010, p. 313).

Another field that could benefit is that of Human-Computer Interaction, particularly as the discipline is currently striving to decolonise itself in terms of sites of work and cultural concepts applied to developing new technologies (Bidwell, 2016).

The key theoretical contribution to future Digital Sociology work stemming from this doctoral project is the integration of Goffman's concept of presentation of self (applied to online settings) (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Goffman, 1959; Miller, 1995) and that of SMP ecology.

Before the Internet and the online sphere, in his work on presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1959) argued, the difference is in whom we present ourselves to:

> "audience segregation occurs; by audience segregation the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting" (Goffman, 1959, p. 31).

Indeed, the online sphere gave participants mediums and tools to choose how to represent their identities, and the difference between the online/offline sphere is the reason why what they represented online could be different from what they presented offline. Turkle's (1999) early reinterpretation of Goffman online was based on Microsoft Windows and MUDs. Interestingly, one of Turkle's participants commented "I'm different in the different chats" (Turkle, 1999, p. 643). Almost two decades after Miller and Turkle's works, current literature on the application of Goffman's presentation of self-online still echo the same 'metaphor'. A large landscape of SMP research has cited or adopted Goffman's presentation of self to study online environments, especially studies taking sociological approaches (see for example: Biçer, 2014; Johansson, 2007; Kalinowski & Matei, 2011; Pietraß, 2010; Tufekci, 2008), however, few of them examined the notion of identity through the sociological approach in relation to SMP.

Goffman's attention to the importance of the environment, and his understanding of how differing social spaces can result in differing social actions and interactions, as well as the expression "Social networks sites etiquette" (Camacho et al., 2012, p. 3177), could apply to SMP sharing strategies. Each platform has its own 'etiquettes of sharing', so that "individuals need to understand the norms that dictate appropriate behaviour within that context" (Buehler, 2017, p. 9). This includes how users represent their identity. Interestingly, such strategies and 'tactics' of identity presentation were discussed in Goffman presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1959). This extends the adoption of Goffman's dramaturgical performance online (Zarghooni, 2007), not only on Facebook (Alsaggaf, 2015) but across other SMP (Twitter, Instagram, Goodreads, Path). Moreover, this is not only about different platforms, but

also different cultural contexts: Arab/Muslim and gendered representation of identity (women).

8.3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO STUDIES ON SAUDI WOMEN

> The social construction of identity is the first reason why it is dynamic or only relatively stable. A person's identity is not a monolithic construct but comprises several aspects. These aspects are not separate, but influence one another and thereby lead to changes in one's identity (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002, p. 511).

I adopted an inductive approach. Through inductive analysis, the findings articulated different dimensions of Saudi women's identity, i.e. Identity facets. Apart from Alenezi, Kebble and Fluck (2018), presented earlier (section 2.8), no other study has offered an analysis of Saudi women's Identity facets. These facets of identity are important to recognise in studying Saudi Women due to their complexity in terms of representation of self online (e.g. national, religious, tribal interconnected with class and gender). Moreover, several findings contribute to studies of visual identity representation online, for example what identified A11 and R6's use of the Horse symbol, which is part of the ethnic facet of identity (i.e. Arab, since I have not found any other study which noted the Horse as a visual symbol of Arab identity)[1]. These findings informs future studies of the importance to investigate these facets of identity representation online across different SMP, particularly in non-Western contexts, where visual representations might communicate unique aspects of identity facets and negotiations around them.

Finally, regarding the tribal heritage facet, the findings challenge the view that "identity expression of national Identity is an inherently political process often challenging traditional allegiances" (Weston, 1987, p. 104), which in other words is where Saudis as citizens confront their tribal origins. No prior study challenged national allegiances (i.e. being Saudi), while my findings show that this aspect of confronting Saudi national identity should be considered. This supports Voicu's (2013, p.169) argument: other

---

[1] I have found one study on the Horse Image of from a Cultural Perspective: Chinese culture (Bo-xuan, 2009). I also found two articles on Saudi and Muslim websites (Arabnews and Alukah, respectively) which discussed briefly the value of the Horse symbol in the Arabic culture:
http://www.arabnews.com/node/296232 , http://www.alukah.net/web/jeraisi/0/40323/ .

types of collective identity – class, gender, race, religion – may overlap or combine with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction:

> The concept of identity can be defined in terms of sameness vs. difference ... All collective identity (nation, region, ethnic group) identifies its-self by denying the other, demarcates inside from outside, stretches a distance between 'us' and 'them' (Voicu, 2013, p. 170).

Beside the scarce works on the Alsahwah era, no other study has examined the relationship – through Saudi women's narratives – of the Alsahwah discourse and Saudi women's online experience. I had not planned to focus specifically on Alsahwah, however Alsahwah emerged strongly during the pilot study in A1 and I4's narratives, then in the main data collection in the first round of interviews with A5, R6 and L7. During my online observation between February – September 2016, the Alsahwah hashtag burst on my Twitter timeline. Therefore, I had to ask all participants about it. These findings showed that although Alsahwah discourse is "not as strong as it was during the 1980s and 1990s, but it is still present" (AlMaghlouth, 2017, p. 283): Saudi women in this thesis were mobilised by its ideology and some of them had grown up to be loyal followers (R6 and L7).

The Alsahwah discourse is a background against which many women in this study viewed their identity transformation and negotiation – whether they were in support of Alsahwah or not: what they used to be and what they became. It was manifested, for example, in A1's regret of losing part of her religious identity, in I4's disappointment in and disillusion with religious clerics, in A5's recalling how she used to keep her beliefs to herself and hide her readings, and how she found online a community where she could speak her mind, in R6 and L7's narrative *'I am part of the Alsahwah generation'* (R6) and *'I am not part of Alsahwah generation, she is* (pointing to R6)' (L7). It was in S8's narrative about what she used to be and what she had become: *'I used to love the religious police: Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice'* (S8). Apart from three or four blogposts by Eman AlHussein[1], we do not have works that examine in-depth the Alsahwah movement's rise and fall, its

---

[1] http://emanalhussein.com/2018/01/11/football-stadiums-and-the-credibility-of-religious-scholars/

http://emanalhussein.com/2018/01/01/reflections-on-three-decades-of-religious-dominance-the-1980s/

early impact before and its vestiges, all of which are vital in shaping Saudi women's identities.

8.3.2.1 Heterogeneity, Personal Identity Differences

I illustrated in the methodology chapter (Table 3) the participants' different characteristics: age group, educational level, employment and marital status. In this section I discuss how there is no single factor by which to interpret the evolution of these women's identities and their practices on SMP. Participants in this study shared similar scenarios of the evolved and evolving relationship between their identities' and their practices on SMP. At the same time, participants' narratives differed in many respects. For example, in Chapter Seven I addressed how even the two sisters (R6 and L7) had opposite views toward guardianship. I want to discuss R6 and L7 together to stress one of the important findings of this thesis: considering Saudi women's identities in their differences, not regarding certain traits of their personal identities (e.g., R6 being the most talkative, shyness of L7) but in their gendered and religious identity, which were brought to the fore up by the guardianship discussion.

Two sisters who grew up in the same house, had the same socialisation, went to the same school and were exposed to the same religious discourse (Alsahwah), nevertheless disagreed on what women are capable of, on women's rights to be independent and have the freedom of travel, and also the suggestion of a legal age for a woman to do so. Their stance might be viewed as still conservative, as reflected in the suggested age of 35 as the legal age for independence. Moreover, L7 stressed that she would not be travelling alone, and she would take one of her sons (still a male guardian). However, she still had a different view from her sister, who saw guardianship as part of the religion principles, whereas L7 did not. The situation between R6 and L7 says a lot about a wider picture of the Saudi society when it comes to the situation of women in terms of societal and cultural norms and traditions, where many are looking to find a balance, a compromise instead of complete opposition and rebellion.

M10's identity in relation to her online practices did not – according to the data analysis – experience 'transformations', except that her fear of strangers had relaxed. R6, on the other hand, still held to her religious principles, still believed in the Alsahwah discourse, and opposed 'liberals', a discourse of othering that Alsahwah initiated. Although almost all the participants had gone through the same period, with the Arab Spring peaking on SMP, yet, their identities were not re-shaped/or influenced in the

same way. Whereas W9 and R12 saw the Arab Spring as a beneficial and a 'golden period' (Figure 19, Chapter Four, section 4.3), A11 saw it as 'annoying'.

8.3.3 CONTRIBUTION TO SMP STUDIES

8.3.3.1 Reminiscence

"Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 2014, p. 225)

Participants' reminiscences detailed in Chapter Four and the more recent data on Saudi feminism and #Endguardianship, add to studies of identity and online practices studies, in particular as Saudi and SMP studies. Besides the cases of (Al-Nahedh & Al-Sheikh, 2018; Yamani, 2000), the growing literature on Saudi women's SMP consumption in the last few years (2013 – 2018), had failed to give a panoramic view (if it is possible to use the word) of the relationship between Saudi women's identities and their online practices. Prior work has not examined the change Saudi women's identities experienced over a long-time span (e.g.., a decade), since the emergence of the online sphere in Saudi Arabia. I provided a broader representation of Saudi women's identity evolution through time. For example, A5 voiced the experience of 'we' writers, 'we' the first who used our authentic names (Chapter Four, section 4.2.3). this history/part of personal online memory is under presented in existing literature, where almost all studies focused on their participants' recent SMP use experience. Moreover, the data offered anecdotes of part of Saudi women's narrative of their offline experience/pre-internet: Alsahwah, the early days of online experience, the transitions and the most recent engagement with feminist campaigns such as #Endguardianship. This view on evolving practices should be something that future studies of online contexts should consider, or at least should not ignore given the accelerated changes in Saudi Arabia regarding women.

8.3.3.2 The Fluidity and Ephemerality of Online Representation

Few researches have discussed how this type of ephemerality impacts SMP research, where participants changed their profile images and even rewrote their profile descriptions (Walker, 2017). Vis's (2016) blog: *Research resilience: why academics and funders alike should care about #RIPTwitter*, discussed how researchers should be

aware of continental differences platform privacy and data mining rules, the same line of reasoning could apply to my experience with the data collection process. In which, since the beginning of my empirical work, I faced what I call 'the fluidity of online representation' in writing my data analysis. This applied to online representation practices, privacy and private/public boundaries. Participants' online practices in this study were not fixed nor predictable. Not only did they change through the years but also, they changed during my online observation: for example, changing their biographies, profile/header pictures, deleting posts/tweets, deactivating accounts and setting private accounts to public and vice versa (i.e. setting public ones to private). Hogan and Quan-Haase (2010, p. 313) argued the importance of SMP research data in "the unfolding in the here and now of cultural, environmental, and political events and people's lives … since users constantly update data and the traces of the data vanish in the archives". This thesis has indeed dealt with cultural, and political events in Saudi women's lives, despite how much participants' online practices, accounts profiles etc had changed since the data collection ended. Future research should be aware that online observation data should capture SMP ephemerality and consider overarching themes beyond such ephemerality: despite how quickly SMP design changes (interface/features) it is important to look at the patterns of identity representations and online practices (e.g., when adapting with new privacy features). Future researchers should keep track of these interface/features changes, as this would be a valuable archive of SMP history to analyse in relation to users' practice.

Finally, considering that "Social media are rapidly evolving. New platforms emerge and disappear every year" (Blank & Lutz, 2016, p. 7), and in line with Farquhar's (2013, p. 469) argument that "Facebook trends and fads found in this article are likely to pass", Path's 'death' (2018) (Figure 56) is an example of platforms' ephemerality, I started using Path in 2013, conducted my research in 2015 – 2016. A few months prior to my thesis submission, Path suddenly announced its closure. Were the data useless? Following Hogan and Quan-Haase's (2010) view, quoted above, I argue the contrary. The findings would be useful for future research across a spectrum of fields, such as value sensitive design, where cross-cultural privacy research is needed. Moreover, as I will be discussing shortly, it is relevant to SMP ecology (section 8.3.3.6); the case of Path in comparison to Twitter, for example, extends growing works on SMP ecology: how SMP are perceived as different environments.

Figure 56 The announcement of Path closure September 2018

8.3.3.3 Empowerment: Are SMP Really Empowering Women in Saudi?

A number of scholars have concluded that SMP offered Saudi women the freedom of speech, possibility for political activism etc. Indeed, prior to the collection of my data, I assumed SMP were necessarily mediums of empowerment for women in Saudi Arabia, and I did not expect some participants' lack of notice of viral "activist" hashtags. The cases of A11, M10, R6 and L7 oppose these superficial generalisations. A11 described the familial, societal and cultural background she came from. The online sphere was a 'breather' for her, a sphere where she could be a writer, share her paintings and use her authentic name. However, she was aware her name was a common name (section 4.2.2), that revealing it on SMP would not reveal her familial identity. In other words: SMP did not 'empower' her to challenge, for instance, the restrictions imposed by her husband. Yet, SMP did empower her in a different way: to be a writer and artist, so maybe it was not political empowerment, but there was a sense that SMP gave her something that she could not do before.

Both M10 and R6 still held to their religious conservative identity despite their active use of SMP, although R6 acknowledged the usefulness of SMP to learn other people's opinions and how Instagram is a window through which to see the world. M10 also – as a case – represents the 'lurker', the SMP user who might be aware of things happening around him/her, yet does not feel the need to express opinions or even hold any. Although she was aware of the #endguardianship campaign, M10 did not want to discuss such issues (e.g., women's rights) with me, or maybe she actually did not care about these issues/topics: they were not part of her priorities. In these case scenarios,

being active Saudi women Twitter users, did not 'empower' them to be, for instance, rebels!

This shows that there are Saudi women who are active on SMP, who did not leave the 'Plato's cave' (Pouyioutas, 2012). Several taboos that used to prevail in the offline sphere pre-Internet, during the twenty years of Alsahwah, had been eroded one by one: gender mixing, cross-gender communication, veiling orthodoxies, musical concerts, women's appearance in the public sphere and women driving. However, SMP did not come as 'saviours' of Saudi women, such that 'necessarily' all Saudi women who use these platforms benefit from them, have similar views of their rights, demand the same rights, etc.

8.3.3.4 Lurking Matters

Despite the growing literature on Saudi women's political activism online such as #women2drive (Aljarallah, 2017; AlMaghlouth, 2017; Altoaimy & A, 2017; H Grigsby, 2013; Sahly, 2016), and more recently #endguardianship (Doaiji, 2017; Hassanein, 2018), which focused merely on Saudi feminists campaigns and the online practices of active Saudi feminists, one of the contributions of this thesis that such literature has not presented is highlighting the value/voice of the lurker. A5, for example, did not participate in the #endguardianship campaign on Twitter, yet when I asked her, she was aware of the ongoing discourse online at that time (section 7.6.4). This suggests that there are Saudi women who are not recognised online for their activism 'enthusiasm' or expressing their opinions online, where other studies can spot them and include them in analysis, e.g., data harvesting, tweets mining. Yet, these women do have opinions, discuss women's rights topics, and voice their support or opposition. Therefore, the interviews combined with online observation revealed how building political opinions can occur through lurking and observing, rather than just active participation and engagement.

An example is the case of R12, an intellectual who was doing her PhD in critical literature[1], who talked and tweeted about capitalism and leftist topics such as postcolonialism (section 6.3.6, Figure 44). When I asked her about the impact of SMP on her, R12 acknowledged how the #endguardianship online discourse educated her. R12 expressed her 'feminist' identity, stressing how the opponents/supporters

---

[1] At the time of editing this chapter: 20 January 2019, she had passed her viva.

discourse on Twitter is intellectually 'healthy', in the sense that it can broaden women's – specifically Saudi women's – horizons regarding their situation in the country. R12 herself acknowledged that she learned so much through lurking and observing the supporters'/opponents' views on Twitter, about women in Saudi.

8.3.3.5 Activism and Saudi Feminism

In Chapter Seven (section 7.6) I discussed the negotiations of religious/gendered/national facets of identity. Participants had discussed the issue not only as women, but as Muslim Saudi women, something that brought up the 'heated debates' of cultural/societal restrictions, religious principles and participants' view of themselves as women. To start with the #endguardianship, A5, W9 and R12 expressed their agreement with the independence and equality of women in Saudi, regarding the legal age of independence and ending guardianship, whereas R6 opposed it from both religious and familial identity angles (the reputation of the family, the emotional weakness of little girls and guardianship being part of religious principles). The case of L7 came at mid-point between those of A5, W9 and R12 on the one side and R6 on the other, to oppose guardianship only after a woman reaches thirty-five years of age, moreover, she thought a woman should not travel alone, but should be accompanied by a male guardian (*mahram*).

The discussion on #Polygamy_Assembly also brought up religious-gendered identity negotiation. A5 expressed the 'silliness' of the idea of the Polygamy Assembly as a whole (see Chapter Seven, section 7.5); she did not mention or discuss that polygamy is *Halal* in Islam; her feminist identity led her opinion. Whilst R6 and L7 admitted their disapproval of being affected by polygamy, yet that stressed the rationale for it in Islam, and – what was the most interesting in R6 and L7's discussion –she expressed a patriarchal view regarding polygamy, in which polygamy could be beneficial for women who reached a 'certain age', to have a half share in a husband and get the chance to have children. Moreover, the #endguardianship campaign showed crucial challenges facing Saudi women in their lives, especially divorce, as in the case of R6. #Endguardianship demonstrates that Twitter was a tool of protest, somewhere for Saudi women to negotiate, and even challenge, the boundaries imposed on them by societal and cultural rules; it also allows the women access to animated discussions of a kind that are highly restricted in the public sphere. Furthermore, #endguardianship had fostered and framed contrasting positions and different Saudi discourses (e.g., opponents versus supporters) rather than carrying only one position on the matter:

participants showed mindfulness regarding the diverse nature of individuals in Saudi society, such as the case of A5 and R12. Significantly, the campaign had led to change in the country, through updates to the legal system (e.g., the recent royal decree on guardianship[1]). The #endguardianship opponents had used Twitter to support the need to preserve traditions and to uphold conservative values, such as in the cases of #Saudiwomendominateliberalwomen. The Twittersphere did work as an environment where "questions and concerns of social recognition and political participation have been brought before the Saudi public" (Doaiji, 2017, p. 5).

Although for my study I did not recruit Saudi feminist activists, the data captured other appearances of activism, such as S8 tweeting support for the #endguardianship camp, W9 retweeting such messages, A5 and R12 discussing their support for these campaigns. These findings, I argue, make my work a valuable contribution to existing literature on Saudi women's online activism and feminism, as my data, for example, contradicted Alsaggaf (2015), whereby I have found evidence of political action and empowerment from some participants' views. I have also gone beyond those works that have not tackled some worldwide campaigns on SMP in which Saudi women participated: #Burkiniban and #Polygamy_assembly. With regard to the former, Pramiyanti (2016, p. 1) interestingly, analysed part of Twitter discourse on the #Burkiniban, and concluded – similarly to this thesis' findings, that there was a "form of solidarity and negative sentiment towards burkini ban", whereas the Polygamy has not been examined as part of an online discourse, but a theological topic (see for example: Jawad, 1991; Johnson, 2004; Van Wichelen, 2009; Taeyun, 2011). I presented empirical insights about participants' views (online and offline) about the campaign: I talked with Saudi women and observed their online practices in relation to online campaigns/feminist discourse.

Another point, in relation to the contribution of this work to the scholarship on Saudi feminism, is capturing evidence of Saudi women reading Simone de Beauvoir contradicted El-Fassi (2014) who argued that Saudi women were not aware of de Beauvoir's works. At the same time, the feminist discussions resonate with 'Saudi Islamic feminism' (Wagner, 2011), about which Tschirhart (2014, p.8) argued: "Research should be guided by an awareness that Saudi women's standpoint is unique and largely resists Western frameworks of feminist theory", Bourdeloie, Silveri and Houmair (2017, p. 12) concluded, "the Internet is not a space in which

---

[1] See Chapter One, section 1.5.1.3

Saudi women defy head-on their social reality, gender segregation and gender inequality" and Renard (2010, p. 13) concluded:

> Young women who adopt the discourse of the "rights of women in Islam" do not do so in the sense of opposition to "westernisation"; rather, they do so in order to draw a distinction between Islam and non-Islamic "customs and traditions". Their strategy is to distinguish, given the restrictions that are imposed on them, those that derive from religion and those based on "customary practices", appropriating arguments of Saudi Islamic feminism.

Furthermore, these findings could contribute to a wider Islamic feminism(s) scholarship, on Muslim and Arab-Muslim women, for example, the claim that Muslim women "rely on the teachings of Islamic discourses as a source of human rights, freedom, and equality" (Alsweel, 2013, p. 211), or that "the Islamic principle of gender justice … reverts to the cultural, theologically-based code of ethical egalitarianism" (Winkel, 2017, p. 102). Interestingly, Miller et al. (2015, p.127), argued the importance of understanding social media as providing "scalable sociality" in that SMP can be "simultaneously both more conservative and more liberating than life offline". In this respect, Gazali (2018, p.30) in her study: *Digital Burqa or Business Suit: Social Media and the Gender Digital Divide Among Resettled Iraqi Women*, stated how her results contradicted early feminist scholarship, where the cyberspace was a "liberating gender-neutral terrain void of structural barriers to entry".

When I interviewed M10, I tried to encourage her to elaborate on her answers, and she stuck to what she had said. M10, was a Saudi woman born in 1990, who was active across different SMP. Therefore, I 'expected' her to be more open to women's issues on Twitter or SMP in general. Yet, hashtactivism, women's online campaigns, and the call for Saudi women rights etc., made no difference to her! This could be interpreted as being due to M10's conservative family and her religious values, so that SMP impact on her beliefs had an insubstantial influence. In summary, scholarship on Arab/GCC and Saudi women's activism online, where SMP are perceived as a counter-public sphere, should take such paradoxes into account.

8.3.3.6 SMP Ecology and Privacy

I explored online identity representation across five SMP: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Path and Goodreads. The complexity of identity facets and SMP features

interweave, and related insights extend growing work on SMP (Duffy et al., 2010, 2017; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016). Participants made "decisions based on their consideration of multiple parameters across social media platforms, including audience and norms" (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016, p. 98). The findings of this thesis contribute to the field by demonstrating what these platforms mean to different users across cultures and how they consume such platforms in different ways. It broadened the narrow consideration of platforms' characteristics and so-called affordances to how users (Saudi women in the case of this thesis) perceive SMP as different environments in relation to their cultural context and identity facets.

It resonates with earlier works which concluded that Twitter meets "an innate human desire to converse and to be heard" (Mischaud, 2007) creating an active, communicative network; noted that connections between individuals differ in strength and meaning (Marwick & boyd, 2011) and Snapchat brings people closer, enhance/strength existing family/friends relationships (Vaterlaus, Barnett, Roche, & Young, 2016). At the same time, some of the findings contradict the way this environment of Twitter is perceived in a number of previous works, in that Saudi women in this thesis felt more pressure from Twitter audience viewing their profiles. While Kaskazi's (2014) participants felt less pressure, the audience on Twitter was always invoked (Marwick & boyd, 2011) for Saudi women in this thesis. It also contradicts how Facebook was perceived by Saudi users, for example, claims that their "self- disclosure on Facebook is 'public by default'" and they "welcome public self-disclosure, are more likely to protect only important content, and are not concerned about disclosing information that is considered mundane (Almakrami, 2015, p. 243).

Moreover, some of the findings also extended the reported perceptions of this environments of certain SMP to others. For example, what Camacho (2012) had found about the usage of Facebook by men and women - "I have a private wall, only my friends" (Camacho et al., 2012, p. 3180), here it appeared on Path closed circle (see Figure 13 in Chapter Three). Also, participants did tend "to remain on a few dominant platforms" (Polonski & College, 2017, p. 3), yet instead of Facebook, Path and Twitter were more dominant than other SMP in my study. Moreover, in Dyer (2015)'s study, Facebook was "a diary" for his participants' lives, while in my research Path was viewed as the 'convenient' platform for Saudi women to share their daily life. There is a dearth of works on platforms other than Facebook and Twitter, particularly on how the platform perceived as an environment.

Other secondary findings, within SMP ecology, emerged through the analysis. These include identical posts across SMP, i.e., connecting Facebook to Twitter, which is similar in other works across Twitter and Instagram (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016). Another is M3 holding onto her Tweets, in line with the idea that some platforms "are more associated with 'keepable'" SMP than others (X. Zhao, Lampe, Ackerman, et al., 2016, p. 148). Furthermore, A5 and R6's 'generational' differences between Path usage, echoes existing works on Snapchat consumption by parents/young adults, and how perceptions of the environment and norms of SMP change over time, i.e., the decline in Twitter popularity and the migration to Path (Vaterlaus et al., 2016).

As for the privacy contribution, it refers particularly to cross-cultural aspects. This study responded to the call for cross-cultural studies on: Web 2.0/SMP (April Caarp, 2016; Foluke Adeumi Oduba, 2017; Johannsdottir, 2013); for a "nuanced and sophisticated understanding" (Arora, 2012, p. 604), on privacy (Y. Wang & Ur, 2013) and on SMP ecology, where "considering affordances at the environmental level should be confirmed in other contexts and methods" (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016, p. 98). Costa (2017, p. 9) pointed out, "the lack of studies on social media and the everyday life in non-western countries". As Abokhodair et al (2016, p. 66) argued, "Privacy is framed as a communal attribute, including not only the individual, but the behaviour of those around them". The incident of I4 and the Snapchat screenshot of her photo resonates with these previous findings within a Western context (Xu, Chang, Welker, Bazarova, & Cosley, 2016), where a similar episode happened to female participants, who confronted contacts who took a screenshot of their photos, and asked them to delete it. The authors explained that "the nature of their relationship (close/not-close) helps determine whether the no-screenshotting norm applies" (Ibid, 2016, p. 1668).

8.3.3.7 The (Spatial) Metaphor Matters: SMP as Space/ Place

Another possible lens that could be applied to my data as part of future work is a spatial one.

> Adopting spatial metaphors to understand virtual space indicates that there is an implicit agreement that the Internet has spatial characteristics in common with real-world places. Web 2.0 is not a novel and utopic space but a realm which is shaped by socio-cultural action and human relations (Arora, 2012, p. 10).

In Chapter Six (section 6.3.1), spatial metaphors such as *'open backyard'* and *'war zone'*, emerged through some participants' narratives (A1) (S8). Marwick and boyd (2011) argued, "Technology complicates our metaphors of space and place, including the belief that audiences are separate from each other". While this discussion pertains mainly to Chapter 6, I include it here as it refers to the possible future development of these findings.

Further work could be done on how SMP are perceived as spatial environments through metaphors or personal experiences by users (Arora, 2012; Lucero, 2017; Stromer-Galley & Martey, 2009; X. Zhao, Lampe, Ackerman, et al., 2016; X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016). Costa (2017, p.1) claimed that SMP users "actively mould online social environments that largely resemble those existing in the offline world". Therefore, the spatial dimension is another angle of SMP ecology, where SMP can often be perceived as different spaces/places. Here, the offline practice in space/place might move online. For example, Twitter is "a public park" (Madianou, 2013, p. 254), Facebook a "sitting room party which accounts as private place and at the same time is filled with friends to have discussions out of public intervention" (Heivadi & Khajeheian, 2013, p. 553). or Goodreads is a library (section 6.3.5), Twitter is "public" (Marwick & boyd, 2011), whereas Facebook is a "private social space" (Heivadi & Khajeheian, 2013, p. 553).

In this respect, Arora (2015, p.601) proposed a *Typology of Web 2.0 spheres: Understanding the cultural dimensions of social media spaces*, a sociological examination built on a "social scientific method of mapping relations between the material (e.g. new technologies and its spaces) to the semiotics (concepts)". Arora proposed a five-fold typology that "captures the cultural dimensions of new media spaces: 1) utilitarian-driven, 2) aesthetic-driven, 3) context- driven, 4) play-driven and 5) value-driven (Figure 57). She stressed the importance of the metaphor "as a cyber-architect" (Arora, 2012, pp. 601–603), which echoes "Metaphor matters" (X. Zhao, Lampe, & Ellison, 2016, p. 133). Future studies could consider whether different SMPs could be characterised in terms of Arora's typologies of cyberspace (Figure 57).

Table 1. Typologies of cyberspace.

Types of space	Place as metaphor	Virtual space issues/focus
1. Utilitarian-driven	Highways	Information infrastructures, digital divide, online traffic, virtual communities, shared space, convergence
2. Aesthetic-driven	Homes	Customization, personalization, ownership, taste, private vs public space
3. Context-driven	Parks	Cyber-leisure, social network sites, situated activity online; gendering online space; online pluralism
4. Play-driven	Playgrounds	Engagement, interactivity, corporate blogging, work-play, hard play, gaming
5. Value-driven	Museums	Emotion, affective spaces, nationalism and online tourism, digital *flaneur* and browsing, politics of information

Figure 57 Typology of Web 2.0 spheres: understanding the cultural dimensions of social media spaces.
Source: Arora (2015, p. 607)

> The virtual sphere is constituted of diverse social network spaces, each with its own cultural elements. By paying attention to how offline performances overlap with those online, much insight can be gained into how social practice extends and/or transforms the virtual realm (Arora, 2012).

This brings the cultural adoption of technology to the discussion, where, for instance, in the discussion of Public/Private Boundaries and Women's Presence in The Saudi Physical/Offline Sphere (section 1.5.1.2), I gave some examples of physical gender-segregated spaces/places in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, me online, as the data in this thesis had showed, SMP were perceived as public (Twitter), semi-public (Instagram), semi-private (Goodreads) and private (Path, M10 and R12 said it is for girls only). Van Geel (2016, p.20), concluded, based on the offline space, that Saudi women's "strategies when dealing with women-only public spaces and ikhtilāṭ vary from wanting to keep the status quo; wishing to strengthen women-only public spaces; strengthening them as an intermediary phase towards more ikhtilāṭ, or attempting to undermine them". The women-only public spaces and *ikhtilāṭ* arose also online; SMP were gender-segregated: private for girls to relax their practices (similar to removing their veil offline when in private company with other girls and women), and Public, where cross-gender communication takes place, where veiling is applied.

8.4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

It is said that there is no perfect thesis, there is only a finished thesis, and that the best

thesis is a finished one[1]. This thesis covered a great deal of ground, yet it only scratches the surface of many major issues, themes and phenomena. As I approach the end of my doctoral work, I thought, as a bilingual researcher (English and Arabic), how the examination of the notion of identity in Arabic (*Alhuwiyya* الهوية) would open a 'whole new world' for a future investigation. With regard to the concept of identity within three contexts of Arab identity, Muslim identity and the Saudi national identity, for example, it could lead to the scrutiny of the works of non-eastern scholars on Arab, Muslim and Saudi identity, and of works by both eastern and non-eastern scholars who examined the concept of identity through online practices etc. Other future work across a spectrum of fields could take place with reference to value sensitive design (See for example: Zolyomi, 2018), cross-cultural privacy (Y. Wang & Ur, 2013), and ephemerality. Regarding the latter, the combination of default deletion on some SMP (such as Snapchat) and selective saving with notifications raises a number of useful distinctions around ownership of digital content: the difference between sharing and showing information, and between senders giving and receivers taking ownership (Xu et al., 2016, p. 1672).

An interesting idea emerges in an expression S8 used to distinguish her Twitter online practices of retweets and tweets as respectively 'strong and weak:' *'Frankly, not a strong participation, most of them are retweets'* (S8). This could be taken further for SMP studies, where liking, favouring, 'emojing' (i.e. adding emojis), posting/reposting, all could be perceived differentially by users, who might distinguish among them as to what counts as (strong/weak) participation and what does not.

Furthermore, further research could focus on sociolinguistics, where – for example – words like fear, private/privacy, expressions like: *'I am not doing anything wrong'*, could be examined through the lens of discourse analysis. Moreover, applying a voice-approach analysis of identity (I, me, us and them) (Watzlawik & Born, 2007) would be of interest. Moreover, some of the findings in this thesis echo the notion of Ideal Saudi women (Doumato, 1992), where for example: Saudi "girls insisted that they always carefully tend their online profile, as they want to fit the image of the 'girl from a good family'" (Bourdeloie et al., 2017, p. 12), and Saudi women are "often considered/seen

---

[1] These sayings are echoed on the Academic Twittersphere, for example:
https://twitter.com/Tomi_Ola/status/359248875644653568
and https://twitter.com/justinkeene/status/3872460513 . It is unknown who said it first.

to be culture bearers[1]" (Van Geel, 2016, p. 6, 2018, p. 24). It would be interesting to conduct research on Ideal identity (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002), from the perspective of Saudi women. Finally, future work arising from this thesis could build on Litt and Hargittai's imagined audience mentioned in Chapter Two (section 2.3.1), which could be elaborated on for various SMP.

As well as these possibilities, future work could also stem from some methodological/theoretical limitations of this present research, which I acknowledge and reflect on in the next section.

8.4.1 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

I acknowledge that my sample is limited (12 participants), and furthermore that participants were privileged – to an extent – in terms of their educational qualifications, because they lived in modern cities, they were in employment, had good English fluency, travelled outside Saudi Arabia and (in the cases of A2, A5 and R12) they lived abroad on their own. All these characteristics raise a number of questions, as many Saudi women from rural areas e.g., villages, have no education, may not have travelled outside Saudi Arabia due to stronger restrictions imposed on them, and may have a different story to tell about their online practices on social media platforms. Thus, this thesis raises no generalisation claims when it comes to Saudi women as a totality, but only with regard to a subset.

Moreover, taking into account that there will always be a gap between what participants say and what they do online (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010, p. 309), it is worth highlighting that comments or statements on, for example, participants' cross gender communication, or adding/not adding male friends, cannot be taken for granted; it might be general information on some expectations for some of participants' male friends. In other words, it is highly possible that participants would not reveal their cross-gender communication where such information was sensitive/personal. For example, I did not have the chance to ask A11 about the viral feminist hashtags, yet I could say through my observation that she not only avoided participation – I of course could not tell if she noticed the hashtags on her timeline or not – but within the #endguardianship campaign, she retweeted a tweet complementing the role of the

---

[1] The same sentence was part of Van Geel's (2016; 2018) work, the former used the word: considered, the latter used to 'see' instead.

father in a girl's life, and asserting how fathers are the supporters of women and how a man could be a woman's strength. Was it a hint through which A11 was opposing to the #endguardianship? Opposing the Saudi feminist 'wave'? I do not know, and this is beyond the focus of my analysis.

Another example was A2, who at the time of our interview was still using the same avatar and she invited me to check it out: *'I think it is been there for a long time. I haven't even changed it. You can see it there in Twitter it is still there'*. Yet, A2 changed her profile picture afterwards. Indeed, even her new profile picture was a woman with a veil.

Finally, as identity presentation "can be seen as a malleable concept, performed with and through a varying array of semiotic modes" (Dyer, 2017, p. 220), it would be interesting for future studies to investigate specifically visual identity representation online, which could be part of visual digital sociology, while in my study I observed it only to a limited extent and in combinations with other forms of representation online. For example, the representation of the national identity facet in S8 and A11's cases (section 5.2.3), as few studies have investigated the online representation of national identity. Bouvier (2012, p.37) for example, examined the display and expression of identity on Facebook by undergraduate students in Cardiff, Wales. The findings show a "high use of nationalist identity categories (Welsh) and biological ethnic classification alongside other lifestyle identities".

8.5 PERSONAL REFLECTION

In the introduction chapter I shared my early online experiences (section 1.4). Here, at the end of my doctoral work, I wonder: what if I had conducted an auto-ethnographic study? A number of personal reflections spring to mind.

Throughout this work, I positioned myself as an insider both online and offline. I saw myself among those women who were my participants. Much of what they shared was familiar to me, regardless whether I agreed or disagreed with all what they shared. I did not know that, by observing my participants' accounts, I would be compelled to rethink about myself being observed, about the researcher as a participant. Moreover, I did not expect my personal relationship with them – following the data collection – to be a concern of mine. I also learnt a great many lessons:

● I learned how the data can be unpredictable, although I was not planning this thesis to discuss Saudi feminist campaigns, activism and feminism become part of my study as they actually turned out to be, which I did not expect. Nor did I expect national identity, namely, AlAshraf, the Noble heritage, Hijaz and Najd, to be part of my examination of Saudi women's identity.

● I learned that – even with conducting two different samples within different periods of times – the data could strength each other. In which, I did not notice at first the overlap between the pilot study and the main data collection in these respects (A2 and I4).

● I learned how – although within a small sample – my participants' opinion could be heterogenous, where I did not expect that two sisters could disagree on a gendered/religious issue such as guardianship (R6 and L7).

● I learned that data collection could be tricky and surprising, especially when a participant withdrew from the study (A11), which I did not expect.

● I learned how I started – as a researcher – naively, viewing online identity and offline identity as clearly distinct. I did not know how complicated and blurred the intersection between the online and offline identity binaries could be.

● I learned how lurking matters, as I did not know that lurking/being an observer could be rich and even more important than what was represented online. Moreover, I learned that anonymity still hold a value for SMP users (Saudi women in the case of this study), as I did not expect the anonymity-reverse (privilege): a preference for anonymity, as in the case of (R6).

● I leaned that online campaigning and the value/notion of activism could hold different meanings for different people, I did not imagine activism could take different forms for Saudi women, such as W9 and R6 cases (mental illness and boycott, respectively).

As a woman who interviewed women, I encountered a number of surprising - to me - incidents. One was my experience with A11, where she agreed to participate in my study because she was eager to see me, fulfilling her curiosity; perhaps I was intriguing to her. In the interview she flattered me, saying, *'On Twitter I follow people like you, women who read, are intellectual and study abroad'* (A11). She deactivated her Twitter account later and created a new one, she criticised other Saudi women who have no interest in reading and intellectual topics, she also voiced how she admired books, writers and readers. This is part of Ideal Identity (section 8.4), in which a person would criticise issues to voice her own superiority in another instance.

R12 taught me that it is normal to have different representations of identity across different platforms! Another surprise was when A5 and I shared the same online memories, and A5 took the position of a researcher asking: *'I always ask myself why'* (A5), where she questioned: why do people migrate from one platform to another, why platforms' popularity rises/declines over times, and why sharing changed across SMP? From my position, the fear of leading the dialogue, and concern about whether participants were expressing opinions without the researcher's influence, was a challenge through my interviews. I became aware of power relations in the main phase of data collection, in Riyadh, in February 2016, when I asked W9 'How do you describe a Saudi woman?' She said (letters are capitalised in the following excerpt for emphasis): *'See, I do not like YOUR questions, describe such-and-such women, you know? Cause I feel THEY are putting us in a fixed model. At the end we are all human! We are alike, except that if YOU lived within a certain environment, you learn things, you find things and YOU have to adapt to it[1]'* (W9). This was the first time I become alarmed about who was leading the conversation, or in other words, how I became 'you' and she became 'us'! I recognised that I was, from her point of view, the researcher - *other*.

All of these are issues regarding my position as Saudi woman in Saudi Arabia, but what about my position as a social media user who was conducting her research online?

---

[1] She means the Saudi context

I am a Saudi female citizen, part of Saudi society's culture, a Saudi woman who has been active online for 20 years, who lived 29 years of her life in Saudi Arabia until 2013, when I decided to study in the UK. Since then, I have been on the move between the UK and Saudi Arabia. On-going back to Saudi Arabia, I recognised that I had changed and so had my country and society. In the last few years (2015-2019), the women's situation in Saudi Arabia has changed dramatically. When I started my PhD thesis in 2014, women were still not allowed to drive. Additionally, during my data collection journey, I started to realise that I did not know everything about Saudi women. For example, I had understood from my previous experiences visiting Riyadh (before 2016), that unveiling was prohibited, so when I travelled there to conduct interviews, I wore *Luthma* (a kind of Niqab that covers nose, cheeks and mouth). When I visited AlNakheel mall in Riyadh, I saw Saudi women without Hijab sitting at the café on the ground floor. This was a shock for me.

Moreover, as I have been following the developments of women's issues in my country, 'shock' was the regular reaction. On the 26th of September 2017, the driving ban was lifted. Other new developments included a woman playing Oud[1] at public venues in Riyadh, another singing in the middle of a mall in Jeddah, a (formal) female football team established, all of which would seem to promise a new era for Saudi Women, and most important the guardianship law was abolished – except for marriage approval – in August 2019[2], This leads me to a question about the difference between the offline and online spheres in terms of cross-gender communication. Gender mixing in the offline-public sphere took slow and small steps in 2017 and 'burst' in 2018 with women driving, music concerts, cinemas, public events in which Saudi women and men work and meet together in 'public', families attending football games and other accelerating changes in the offline-public Saudi sphere.

Within the period of my PhD research (September 2014 – February 2019), huge transformation affected the situation of women in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi offline-public sphere. Even in the case of my participants' online representation, particularly, veiling. For instance, M3 and A11 both shared with me their online veiling rules: they do not post pictures of their body, namely, hand. Yet throughout my personal

---

[1] "An Arabic stringed musical instrument resembling a lute or mandolin "
https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/oud

[2] As I was working on the corrections to this thesis following the viva: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/saudi-women-can-now-travel-without-a-male-guardian-reports-say

observation of M3 a year after my data collection period ended, M3 and A11 did show their hands in a public post on Instagram after all. Moreover, M3, who had after described Snapchat, as the 'ugliest' platform among other SMP two years after our interview, became an active user on it. She also started to share Snaps with her voice to both male and female friends. Furthermore, I4 shared her photo with Hijab as a profile picture on Path (somewhere between August and September 2018), and on Facebook (January 2019).

However, the difference between the online/offline sphere for women in Saudi Arabia has opened a new chapter in their identity evolution. This raises a new possibility for future research, investigating the relationship between Saudi women's identities and their online practices on SMP, especially for younger Saudi women i.e., born in the year 2000 and afterwards, who now are eighteen years old, able to drive a car, attend concerts, mix with men in public places, have less public sphere religious police control on their veiling offline, have more opportunities to build a career (such as writing, publishing, drawing), participating at public events etc. All of these were opportunities that participants in my study did not have.

All the above practices, which have become easier for women offline than before, may reshape Saudi women's identities. For example: will Saudi girls now have SMP accounts before the age of eighteen? Would their practices still start with fear of the opposite sex? Would they hesitate to communicate with men online? Furthermore, if they used pseudonyms or multiple accounts across SMP, would it be because for same reasons as participants in this study, and that other earlier scholarship on Saudi women have found? So many questions could be asked for future studies examining Saudi women's online practices in general and on SMP in relation to the notion of identity.

As Stuart Hall said[1]: "Identity is an ever-unfinished conversation" (cited in Stacey, 2014, p. 46). Saudi women's identity is facing and experiencing another level of transition, evolution and negotiation, which are not merely about the differences between the offline and online spheres. As a Saudi sociologist argued in 2017, in an article he published just after the announcement of the lifting of the driving ban,

> The value crisis in Saudi society shall be the fundamental issue of society
> upon the coming years, not to mention crisis that future changes would

---

[1] This comment by Hall is quoted from a documentary titled: *The Unfished Conversation*
http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/interviews/stuart-hall-project-john-akomfrah-interview

bring into our life, which will surly affect our aspects of re-understanding values and meanings of things (Alshuqir, 2017, p. 5).

Indeed, values as part of the notion of identity are challenged by all the changes the Saudi society, and particularly women, are experiencing and will be likely facing in the future. This is not to claim that the Saudi society will no longer be described as conservative or religious, nor that instead it will be described as liberal. Yet, the lifting of several imposed restrictions on women offline will surely reshape not only Saudi women's identities, but also the Saudi identity and the whole society. I think that the Saudi society will still hold to its conservativeness on many levels, and there will still be several instances of patriarchal power over women. The conflict regarding women's rights will continue, yet it would be a negotiation and conflict between women and their families, their communities and society's traditions, and maybe no longer with the legal/governmental laws. I have personal opinions on these matters, some of which concern the importance of changing the religious and curriculum discourses in Saudi Arabia, yet I would probably need another PhD to explain it further.

As a final remark, I met M3 in a library in Jeddah in March 2015, because her parents did not allow her to meet strangers outside her house (section 3.4.1). In November 2018, M3 got her driving licence and now she is behind the wheel! If I were about to conduct my pilot again, I wonder if M3 would be able to meet me at a cafe?

REFERENCES

Abokhodair, N. (2015, April). Transmigrant Saudi Arabian youth and social media: privacy, intimacy and freedom of expression. In *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 187-190). ACM.

Abokhodair, N., Abbar, S., Vieweg, S., & Mejova, Y. (2016, May). Privacy and twitter in qatar: traditional values in the digital world. In *Proceedings of the 8th ACM Conference on Web Science* (pp. 66-77). ACM.

Abokhodair, N., Hodges, A., & Vieweg, S. (2017, February). Photo sharing in the Arab Gulf: Expressing the collective and autonomous selves. In *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (pp. 696-711). ACM.

Abu-Ghazzeh, T. M. (1995). Domestic buildings and the use of space: Al-Alkhalaf fortified houses—Saudi Arabia. *Vernacular architecture*, *26*(1), 1-17.

Addawood, A., Alshamrani, A., Alqahtani, A., Diesner, J., & Broniatowski, D (2018, June). Women's Driving in Saudi Arabia–Analyzing the Discussion of a Controversial Topic on Twitter. Paper presented at the International Conference on Social Computing, Behavioral-Cultural Modeling & Prediction and Behavior Representation in Modeling and Simulation, Lehman Auditorium, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA.
Retrieved from
http://sbp-brims.org/2018/proceedings/papers/latebreaking_papers/LB_16.pdf

Al-Amer, R., Ramjan, L., Glew, P., Darwish, M., & Salamonson, Y. (2016). Language translation challenges with Arabic speakers participating in qualitative research studies. *International journal of nursing studies*, *54*, 150-157.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2015.04.010

Al-Bakr, F., Bruce, E. R., Davidson, P. M., Schlaffer, E., & Kropiunigg, U. (2017). Empowered but not equal: Challenging the traditional gender roles as seen by university students in Saudi Arabia. In *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education* (Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 3).
Retrieved from
http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire%0Ahttp://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire/vol4/iss1/3

Al-Ghamdi, N. S. (2015). Saudi Scholars' Heritage Language and Their Ethno-Cultural Identity in Multilingual Communities: An Exploratory Case Study. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, *11*(1), 28-35. https://doi.org/10.3968/6124

Al-Haddad, J. (2009, December 10). رواية) بنات الرياض) *Girls of Riyadh (novel)* [blog post]. Retrieved from http://juberbook.blogspot.com/2009/12/blog-post_10.html

Al-Haidari, N. N. (2017). *The use of social media in business by women entrepreneurs in the KSA: The case of Instragram* (Doctoral thesis). University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
Retrieved from https://open.uct.ac.za/handle/11427/24984

Al-Khalifa, H. S. (2015). On the Analysis of Twitter Spam Accounts in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Technology Diffusion (IJTD)*, *6*(1), 46-60. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJTD.2015010103

Al-Nahedh, M., & Al-Sheikh, H. (2018). A Voice Unsilenced: Saudi Women Advocating Their Rights, 1990-2017. Retrieved from http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu

Al-Saggaf, Y. (2012, June). Social Media and Political Participation in Saudi Arabia: The Case of the 2009 Floods in Jeddah'. Paper presented at Cultural Attitudes towards Communication and Technology Conference, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia.
Retrieved from
http://sammelpunkt.philo.at:8080/2134/1/001-
015_Session%25201a%2520-%2520Al%2520Saggaf_f.pdf

Al-Saggaf, Y. (2016). An exploratory study of attitudes towards privacy in social media and the threat of blackmail: The views of a group of Saudi women. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, *75*(1), 1-16.

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Begg, M. M. (2004). Online communities versus offline communities in the Arab/Muslim world. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, *2*(1), 41-54. https://doi.org/10.1108/14779960480000242

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Chutikulrungsee, T. T. (2015). Twitter usage in Australia and Saudi Arabia and influence of culture: an exploratory cross-country comparison. In *Refereed proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference: Rethinking communication, space and identity.*
Retrieved from http://www.anzca.net/conferences/past-conferences.

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Nielsen, S. (2014). Self-disclosure on Facebook among female users and its relationship to feelings of loneliness. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *36*, 460-468.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.014

Al-Saggaf, Y., Utz, S., & Lin, R. (2016). Venting negative emotions on Twitter and the number of followers and followees. *International Journal of Sociotechnology and Knowledge Development (IJSKD)*, *8*(1), 44-55.
https://doi.org/10.4018/IJSKD.2016010103

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Weckert, J. (2011). Freedom of expression online in Saudi Arabia from a liberal, individualistic and a collectivistic perspective. *Ethical Space*, *8*(1/2), 61-68.

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Weckert, J. (2004). The effects of participation in online communities on individuals in Saudi Arabia. *ACM SIGCAS Computers and Society*, *34*(1), 1.

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Williamson, K. (2004, September). Online communities in Saudi Arabia: Evaluating the impact on culture through online semi-structured interviews. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 5, No. 3).

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Williamson, K. (2006). Doing ethnography from within a constructivist paradigm to explore virtual communities in Saudi Arabia. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, *2*(2).

Al-Saggaf, Y., Williamson, K., & Weckert, J. (2002). Online communities in Saudi Arabia: An ethnographic study. *ACIS 2002 Proceedings*, 62.
Retrieved from
http://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1162&context=acis2002

Al Salem, A.A. (2005). *The impact of the Internet on Saudi Arabian EFL females' self-image and social attitudes* (Doctoral Thesis). Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana.
Retrieved from https://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/920/

Al-Saqer, N. S., & Seliaman, M. E. (2016). The Impact of Privacy Concerns and Perceived Vulnerability to Risks on Users Privacy Protection Behaviors on SNS: A Structural Equation Model. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, *7*(5), 142-147.
Retrieved from
https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4af4/e56b5ef75ba7345beda6ac554831c29fea2d.pdf

Al-Tawil, K. M. (2001). The Internet in Saudi Arabia. *Telecommunications Policy*, *8*(25), 625-632. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0308-5961(01)00036-2

Al Lily, A. E. (2011). On line and under veil: Technology-facilitated communication and Saudi female experience within academia. *Technology in Society*, *33*(1-2), 119-127.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2011.03.005

Al Lily, A. E. (2013). The shaping of educational technologies in Saudi Arabia: An examination of how the social fabric shapes social the construction and use of technologies. *Technology in Society*, *35*(3), 203-222.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2013.04.001

Alaugab, A. M. (2007). *Benefits, barriers, and attitudes of Saudi female faculty and students toward online learning in higher education* (Doctoral thesis). University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/304847697?pq-origsite=gscholar

Albakry, A. H. (2016). *Voices of women leaders in corporate institutions in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral thesis) University of San Francisco. California.

Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1798851077?pq-origsite=gscholar

Albawardi, A. (2017). Digital literacy practices of female Saudi University students: Insights from electronic literacy logs. *Language Studies Working Papers*, *8*, 12-22.

Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Areej_Albawardi/publication/318884089_Digital_Literacy_Practices_of_Female_Saudi_University_Students_Insights_from_Electronic_Literacy_Logs/links/59835137a6fdccb3bfc5b837/Digital-Literacy-Practices-of-Female-Saudi-University-Students-Insights-from-Electronic-Literacy-Logs.pdf

Aleisa, N., & Renaud, K. (2017). Yes, I know this IoT device might invade my privacy, but I love it anyway! A study of Saudi Arabian perceptions.

https://doi.org/10.5220/0006233701980205

Alenazy, K. (2018). *The delegitimisation discursive strategies of women's right to drive in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral thesis). University of Essex, Colchester, England. Retrieved from http://repository.essex.ac.uk/22861/

Al-Fassi, H. A. (2014). Does Saudi Feminism Exist?. *Arab Feminisms: Gender and Equality in the Middle East*, 121-31.

Alfurayh, L. I. (2017, March 2). (Not) the Saudi women you hear about: the developed identity of Saudi women in Australia (Version 1).

https://doi.org/10.4225/03/58b77d5ac3d00

Retrieved from

https://figshare.com/articles/_Not_the_Saudi_women_you_hear_about_the_developed_identity_of_Saudi_women_in_Australia/4711996

Alghaith, S. (2016). *Understanding Kuwaiti women entrepreneurs and their adoption of social media: A study of gender, diffusion, and culture in the Middle East* (Doctoral thesis). Colorado State University. Fort Collins, Colorado.

Alhabash, S., & Ma, M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students?. *Social Media+ Society*, *3*(1), 2056305117691544. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117691544

Alharbi, S. O. (2015). *The Image of the West in Saudi poetry 1920-1990.* (Doctoral thesis). Exeter University, Exeter, England.
Retrieved from https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/18232

Al Hazmi, A. (2013). *What does it look like to be in a mixed-gender environment? A phenomenological study of the experience of Saudi international students in a mixed-gender environment* (Doctoral thesis). RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.
Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/43494762.pdf

Alhojailan, M. I. (2012). Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, *1*(1), 39-47.

Alim, S. (2017). Understanding the Use of Twitter for Teaching Purposes in Saudi Arabian Universities. *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (IJWLTT)*, *12*(3), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJWLTT.2017070101

Aljaouhari, S. (2014). *Between obedience and rebellion: a field study on the young women of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral thesis). University of Southampton, Southampton, England. Retrieved from https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/371740/

Aljarallah, R. (2017). *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Twitter Posts on The Perspectives of Women Driving in Saudi Arabi* (Master Dissertation). Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
Retrieved from
https://repository.asu.edu/attachments/191130/content/Aljarallah_asu_0010N_17318.pdf

Aljasir, S., Bajnaid, A., Elyas, T., & Alnawasrah, M. (2017). Themes of Facebook Status Updates and Levels of Online Disclosure: The Case of University Students. *International Journal of Business Administration*, *8*(7), 80-97. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijba.v8n7p80

Alkahtani, N. (2012). *The impacts of social media and electronic mediating: Improving educational outcomes for Saudi women within an electronic social networking environment* (Doctoral thesis). University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://waikato.researchgateway.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10289/6327/thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Alkhaled, S., & Berglund, K. (2018). 'And now I'm free': Women's empowerment and emancipation through entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia and Sweden. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *30*(7-8), 877-900. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2018.1500645

AlKhateeb, M. S., Humphries-Smith, T., & Eves, B. (2014, September). *Space Design and Privacy in a Saudi House.* Paper presented at Time, Space and the Body 3rd Global Conference, Oxford, United Kingdom. Retrieved from http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/21314/

Al Maghlouth, S. (2017). *A critical discourse analysis of social change in women-related posts on Saudi English-language blogs posted between 2009 and 2012* (Doctoral thesis). Lancaster University, Lancashire, England. Retrieved from http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/88762/

Almahmoud, J. (2015). *Framing on Twitter: How Saudi Arabians intertextually frame the Women2Drive campaign* (Doctoral thesis). Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., United States of America. Retrieved from https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/760905/Almahmoud_georgetown_0076M_12975.pdf;sequence=1

Almakky, H. (2017). *Facebook user interface design to suit the Saudi Arabian culture* (Doctoral thesis). Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, Dorset, England. Retrieved from http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/29627/

Almakrami, H. A. A. (2015). *Online self-disclosure across cultures: A study of Facebook use in Saudi Arabia and Australia* (Doctoral thesis). Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. Retrieved from https://eprints.qut.edu.au/84494/4/Hashem Almakrami Thesis.pdf

Almalki, A. M. (2016). *A survey of Saudis' behaviors toward twitter as a news gathering tool* (Master Dissertation). Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas. Retrieved from http://lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1780569741?accountid=13827

Almjeld, J. M. (2008). *The girls of MySpace: New media as gendered literacy practice and identity construction* (Doctoral thesis). Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/ap:10:0:::10:p10_accession_num:bgsu1212610595

Almosaed, N. (2004). Violence against women: a cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *24*(1), 67-88. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360200042000212124

AlMunajjed, M. (1997). *Women in Saudi Arabia Today*. Springer.

AlOboudi, S. M. (2015). NAJD, The heart of Arabia. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, *37*(3), 282-299. Retrieved from http://myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1718290884?accountid=14771%0Ahttp://bf4dv7zn3u.search.serialssolutions.com?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-8&rfr_id=info:sid/ProQ%3Atechnology1&rft_val_fmt=info

Aloufi, A. (2017). *Gender and national identity in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral thesis) San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California. Retrieved from http://sfsu-dspace.calstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.3/186531/AS362017IRA46.pdf?sequence=1

Alruwaili, T. O. (2017). Self-Identity and Community Through Social Media: The Experience of Saudi Female International College Students in the United States. Retrieved from https://media.proquest.com/media/pq/classic/doc/4322910455/fmt/ai/rep/NPDF?_s=4ZmWCkTUzm9GBDtMg2coQ5%2Fwc50%3D

Alsaggaf, R. M. (2015). *Identity construction and social capital: A qualitative study of the use of Facebook by Saudi women* (Doctoral thesis). Leicester University, Leicester, England. Retrieved from https://lra.le.ac.uk/handle/2381/35977

Alsaggaf, R. M. (2019). Saudi women's identities on Facebook: Context collapse, judgement, and the imagined audience. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, e12070. https://doi.org/10.1002/isd2.12070

Alshehab, H. M. (2017). Female Saudi International Students Daily Practices on Social Media in Australia. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research*, 5(12), 39-77.

Alshomrani, S. (2018, March 4). الشورى» يناقش أول توصية تمنع الولاية على المرأة «Shura discusses the first recommendation to end guardianship on women. *Alhayat Online*. Retrieved from http://www.alhayat.com/m/story/27802160

Alshuqir, A. (2017, October). قيادة المرأة للسيارة: دور علم الاجتماع في التحول الوطني Women's leadership of the car: the role of sociology in national transformation. *Hekmah.Org*. Retrieved from http://hekmah.org/قيادة-المرأة-للسيارة-دور-علم-الاجتماع/

Alsweel, R. A. (2013). *The Impact of English as a Second Language on Saudi Women's Roles and Identities* (Doctoral thesis). George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. Retrieved from http://ebot.gmu.edu/handle/1920/8085

Altoaimy, L. (2017). *Driving Change, 140 Characters@ a Time: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of the Twitter Debates on the Saudi Ban on Women Driving* (Doctoral thesis). Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7050081

Altorki, S. (1994). At home in the field. *Etnofoor*, (1), 53-71.

Altuwayjiri, N. (2017). Political Tweeting: The Impact of Social Media on the Political Awareness of Saudi Women. In *Arab Women and the Media in Changing Landscapes* (pp. 149-165). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-62794-6_9#citeas

Alwazzan, L., & Rees, C. E. (2016). Women in medical education: views and experiences from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Medical education*, *50*(8), 852-865. https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12988

Alzahrani, N. Tracing the meaning of ideological keywords; a diachronic corpus-assisted study of the discursive construction of 'allibraliah' in the Saudi context. Retrieved from https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/corpus/conference-archives/2017/general/paper53.pdf

Amer, M. (2016). *Examination of Saudi Arabian women's perception of social media use* (Doctoral thesis). Bowie State University, Bowie, Maryland. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1878084451?pq-origsite=gscholar

Ammar, D. (2018). Penning Her Way to Power: Feminism and Writing in Saudi Women's EFL Classrooms. *Intersections: Critical Issues in Education*, *2*(1), 4. Retrieved from https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/intersections/vol2/iss1/4/

Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, *5*(2), 272-281. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1419/f7b54e6b7f1215717a5056e0709f8946745b.pdf

Arafeh, A. K. (2017). *From the Middle East to the Midwest: The Transition Experiences of Saudi Female International Students at a Midwest University Campus.* (Doctoral thesis). Midwest University, Wentzville, Missouri.
Retrieved from http://dc.uwm.edu/etd

Aravindh, R. V. (2017). Manifestation of Women in Social Media: An Intrinsic Analysis of Contents Shared By Women In Facebook. *Education*, *30*(40), 56.
Retrieved from http://ijrcs.org/wp-content/uploads/201712073.pdf

Arora, P. (2012). Typology of Web 2.0 spheres: Understanding the cultural dimensions of social media spaces. *Current Sociology*, *60*(5), 599-618.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392112440439

Asadi, L. (2011). Voices of Saudi Women Bloggers. *Educational Technology*, (3), 31–36.
Retrieved from
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/6814490/Lobat_Asadi_TESOL_Perspectives_Nov2011p31-36.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1550517461&Signature=pF2A2St8egaKmHDLqDS6D%2BYmtJA%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DAsadi_L._Saudi_Female_Bloggers_TESOL_Per.pdf

Azimova, A. Y. (2016). *Political Participation and Political Repression: Women in Saudi Arabia.* (Master Dissertation). University of Denver, Denver, Colorado.
Retrieved from
http://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd%0Ahttp://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1186

Baazeem, R. M. (2019). The Role of Religiosity in Technology Acceptance: The Case of Privacy in Saudi Arabia. In *Censorship, Surveillance, and Privacy: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1787-1808). IGI Global.
https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-4053-3.ch010

Bansal, P., & Corley, K. (2012). Publishing in AMJ—Part 7: What's different about qualitative research?.

Barnes, S. W. (2012). *Categorizing women: gender and social media during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution.* (Master Dissertation). American University, Cairo. Retrieved from http://dar.aucegypt.edu/handle/10526/3258

Bauman, Z. (2013). *Identity: Coversations With Benedetto Vecchi*. John Wiley & Son

Beck, E. N. (2015). The invisible digital identity: Assemblages in digital networks. *Computers and Composition*, *35*, 125-140. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2015.01.005

Bernardi, C. L. (2015). *Digital media and women's issues in Egypt and Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Warwick, Coventry, England. Retrieved from https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.668923

Bernebring Journiette, I. (2014). *Negotiating Identity in the Kingdom: A Conversation with Five Young Saudi Arabian Women about Identity Development and Expression* (Master dissertation). UPPSALA University, Uppsala, Sweden. Retrieved from https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:719506/fulltext01.pdf

Bidwell, N. J. (2016). Decolonising HCI and interaction design discourse: some considerations in planning AfriCHI. XRDS: Crossroads, *The ACM Magazine for Students, 22*(4), 22-27.

Bin Mirdhah, K. (2015, December 29). Saudi Snapchat star: I'm no YouTube celeb, 'I just like to talk to my fans.' *English.Alarabiya*. Retrieved from https://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/digital/2015/12/29/Saudi-Snapchat-star-I-m-no-YouTube-sensation-I-just-like-to-talk-to-my-fans-.html

Binsahl, H., Chang, S., & Bosua, R. (2015). Identity and belonging: Saudi female international students and their use of social networking sites. *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, *6*(1), 81-102. https://doi.org/10.1386/cjmc.6.1.81_1

Blank, G., & Lutz, C. (2016, July). The social structuration of six major social media platforms in the United Kingdom: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Google+

and Pinterest. In *Proceedings of the 7th 2016 International Conference on Social Media & Society* (p. 8). ACM.
https://doi.org/10.1145/2930971.2930979

Borgerson, J., & Miller, D. (2016). Scalable sociality and "how the world changed social media": Conversation with Daniel Miller. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, *19*(6), 520-533.
https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2015.1120980

Bourdeloie, H., Silveri, C. G., & Houmair, S. (2017). Saudi Women and Socio-Digital Technologies: Reconfiguring Identities. *CyberOrient*, 11(1).
Retrieved from http://www.cyberorient.net/article.do?articleId=9822

Bowler Jr, G. M. (2010). Netnography: A method specifically designed to study cultures and communities online. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*(5), 1270-1275.
Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss5/13/

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.
https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brown, C., Czerniewicz, L., & Noakes, T. (2016). Online content creation: Looking at students' social media practices through a connected learning lens. *Learning, media and technology*, *41*(1), 140-159.
https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2015.1107097

Buehler, E. M. (2017). "You Shouldn't Use Facebook for That": Navigating Norm Violations While Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook. *Social Media+ Society*, *3*(3), 2056305117733225.
https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117733225

Bullingham, L., & Vasconcelos, A. C. (2013). 'The presentation of self in the online world': Goffman and the study of online identities. *Journal of information science*, *39*(1), 101-112.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551512470051

Burgess, J., Marwick, A., & Poell, T. (Eds.). (2017). *The SAGE handbook of social media*. Sage.

Camacho, M., Minelli, J., & Grosseck, G. (2012). Self and identity: Raising undergraduate students' awareness on their digital footprints. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *46*, 3176-3181.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.032

Carrigan, M. (2018). "Sociologia Digital: Problemas E Propostas." In L. Alves, P. & Nascimento (Ed.), Novas Fronteiras Metodológicas Nas Ciências Sociais. Salvador: EDUFBA.

Caarp, A. (2016). *Alla är lyckade och lyckliga på Instagram: En retorisk receptionsstudie om hur unga kvinnor upplever och tolkar innehållet som visas på Instagram Everyone is successful and happy on Instagram: A rhetorical reception study on how young women experience and interpret the content displayed on Instagram*.
(Doctoral thesis). Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden.
Retrieved from http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:ltu:diva-54977

Chapman, A. L., Hadfield, M., & Chapman, C. J. (2015). Qualitative research in healthcare: an introduction to grounded theory using thematic analysis. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, *45*(3), 201-205.
https://doi.org/10.4997/JRCPE.2015.305

Chen, H. Y., & Boore, J. R. (2010). Translation and back-translation in qualitative nursing research: methodological review. *Journal of clinical nursing*, *19*(1-2), 234-239.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2009.02896.x

Christensen, W. M. (2018). Digital Sociologies. Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews, 47(5), 568–570. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306118792220g

Chulov, M. (2017, September 26). Saudi Arabia To Allow Women to Obtain Driving Licences. *The Guardian Online*.
Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/26/saudi-arabias-king-issues-order-allowing-women-to-drive

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist*, *26*(2), 120-123.
Retrieved from
http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/21155/3/Teaching%20thematic%20analysis%20Research%20Repository%20version.pdf

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). Qualitative research guidelines project. Retrieved from http://www.qualres.org/HomeImme-3829.html

Costa, E. (2017). Social Media as Practices: an Ethnographic Critique of 'Affordances' and 'Context Collapse'. Working Papers for the EASA Media Anthropology Network's 60Th E-seminar).
Retrieved from
http://www.media-anthropology.net/file/costa_socialmedia_as_practice.pdf

Costa, E. (2016). *Social media in Southeast Turkey: Love, kinship and politics*. UCL Press.

Costello, L., McDermott, M. L., & Wallace, R. (2017). Netnography: range of practices, misperceptions, and missed opportunities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1609406917700647.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917700647

Côté, J. E., & Schwartz, S. J. (2002). Comparing psychological and sociological approaches to identity: Identity status, identity capital, and the individualization process. *Journal of adolescence*, *25*(6), 571-586.
https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2002.0511

Crabtree, A., Tolmie, P., & Rouncefield, M. (2013). "How Many Bloody Examples Do You Want?" Fieldwork and Generalisation. In *ECSCW 2013: Proceedings of the 13th*

European Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, 21-25 September 2013, Paphos, Cyprus (pp. 1-20). Springer, London.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.

Danielewicz-Betz, A. (2013). Cyberspace othering and marginalisation in the context of Saudi Arabian culture: A socio-pragmatic perspective. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, *9*(2), 275-299. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2013-0015

Davis, J. L., & Jurgenson, N. (2014). Context collapse: Theorizing context collusions and collisions. *Information, communication & society*, *17*(4), 476-485. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.888458

Davis, K., & Weinstein, E. (2017). Identity development in the digital age: an Eriksonian perspective. In *Identity, sexuality, and relationships among emerging adults in the digital age* (pp. 1-17). IGI Global.

Davis, J. E. (1999). An interview with Sherry Turkle. *The Hedgehog Review*, *1*, 1-71.

Davis, K. (2010). Coming of age online: The developmental underpinnings of girls' blogs. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *25*(1), 145-171. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558409350503

De Ruyter, D., & Conroy, J. (2002). The formation of identity: The importance of ideals. *Oxford Review of Education*, *28*(4), 509-522. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498022000013643

De Vries, D. A., & Peter, J. (2013). Women on display: The effect of portraying the self online on women's self-objectification. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *29*(4), 1483-1489. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.015

Deller, R. (2011). Twittering on: Audience research and participation using Twitter. *Participations*, *8*(1), 216-245. Retrieved from http://www.participations.org/Volume 8/Issue 1/PDF/deller.pdf

Dermody, S. M. (2017). Changing Roles and the'Online Self': A Qualitative Study into the Way that Young Women and Teenage Girls Change Their Social Media Usage Overtime. Retrieved from
http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1145026&dswid=-456

Doaiji, N. (2017). Saudi Women's Online Activism: One Year of the "I Am My Own Guardian" Campaign. *Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW).* 1–18. Retrieved from
http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/doaiji_saudi-guardianship-system_online.pdf

Doaiji, N. (2018). From Hasm to Hazm: Saudi Feminism beyond Patriarchal Bargaining. In M. Al-Rasheed (Ed.), *Salman's legacy: the dilemmas of a new era in Saudi Arabia* (pp. 117-146). Oxford University Press.

Doumato, Eleanor A. "Gender, monarchy, and national identity in Saudi Arabia." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 1 (1992): 31-47. Retrieved from
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13530199208705547?journalCode=cbjm20

Donath, J. (2014). *The social machine: designs for living online*. MIT Press.

Driscoll, C., & Gregg, M. (2010). My profile: The ethics of virtual ethnography. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *3*(1), 15-20.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2010.01.012

Duffy, B. E., Pruchniewska, U., & Scolere, L. (2017, July). Platform-specific self-branding: Imagined affordances of the social media ecology. In *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society* (p. 5). ACM. Retrieved from
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58b37319ff7c508925e2d112/t/58de483f59cc68dfe6ab67fc/1490962497212/Platform-Specific_Self-Branding_Imagined.pdf

Dyer, H. T. (2015). All the Web is a Stage: The Effects of Design and Modality on Youth Performances of Identity. *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth*, *19*, 213-242. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1537-466120150000019007

Dyer, H. T. (2017, July). The Presentation of Selfie in Everyday Life: Considering the Relationship Between Social Media Design and User in the Online Actions and Interactions of Young People. In *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society* (p. 6). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3097286.3097292

Eggens, M. (2013). Identity Development of Emerging Adults and their Self-Presentation on Facebook.

Eman Alhussein. (2018, November 9). *The Evolution of the Culture of Exclusion* [blog post]. Retrieved from http://emanalhussein.com/2018/10/29/evolution-of-exclusion/

Erikson, K. (2008). On sociological writing. *Sociological Inquiry*, *78*(3), 399-411. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.2008.00246.x

Fadaak, T. H., & Roberts, K. (2018). Young adults, new media, leisure and change in Saudi Arabia. *World Leisure Journal*, *60*(2), 127-139. https://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2018.1456956

Farghaly, A., & Shaalan, K. (2009). Arabic natural language processing: Challenges and solutions. *ACM Transactions on Asian Language Information Processing (TALIP)*, *8*(4), 14.

Farquhar, L. (2013). Performing and interpreting identity through Facebook imagery. *Convergence*, *19*(4), 446-471. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856512459838

Gatson, S. N. (2011). The methods, politics, and ethics of representation in online ethnography. *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*, *4*, 245-275.

Gazali, S. (2018). *Digital burqa or business suit: social media and the gender digital divide among resettled Iraqi women* (Doctoral dissertation). University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0364564

Gazzaz, O. B. (2006). *Internet influence and regulation: a case study in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral thesis). Leicester University, Leicester, England. Retrieved from https://lra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/30569/1/U224331.pdf

Georgalou, M. (2016). 'I make the rules on my Wall': Privacy and identity management practices on Facebook. *Discourse & Communication*, *10*(1), 40-64. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481315600304

Gheytanchi, E. (2009). Gender Roles in Social Media World of Iranian Women. *Social media in Iran: Politics and society after*.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Harmondsworth.

Guta, H., & Karolak, M. (2015). Veiling and blogging: social media as sites of identity negotiation and expression among Saudi women. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *16*(2), 115-127.

Green, J., & Bricki, N. (2007). A guide to using qualitative research methodology. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10144/84230

Grigsby, H., & Friedman, B. (2014) Women2Drive Movement. Retrieved from https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/37426007/Women2Drive_Movement_Contemporary_Saudi_Consciousness_on_Womens_Position_in_Society_by_Hope_Grigsby.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1550525402&Signature=pIsUImtJ8Rh5MuKb98sViM49sLA%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DWomen2Drive_Movement_Contemporary_Saudi.pdf

Gwynne, J. (2013, March). "The lighter that fuels a blaze of change": Agency and (cyber) spatial (dis) embodiment in Girls of Riyadh. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 37, pp. 46-52). Pergamon.

Hall, S. (2014). Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Diaspora and visual culture* (pp. 35-47). Routledge.

Hamdan, A. (2005). Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements. *International Education Journal*, *6*(1), 42-64.

Hamming, T. (n.d.). Opposition in the Saudi Kingdom: The House of Saud threatened by an Islamic Awakening and Liberals?
Retrieved from
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30690740/Saudi_Arabias_Islamic_Awakening_TH.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1550527879&Signature=8kuJl1bjdhQkR2UeaKtkexOBi9U%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DOpposition_in_the_Saudi_Kingdom_The_Hous.pdf

Harbers, M., & Neerincx, M. A. (2017). Value sensitive design of a virtual assistant for workload harmonization in teams. *Cognition, Technology & Work*, *19*(2-3), 329-343. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10111-017-0408-4

Harrell, D. F., Vieweg, S., Kwak, H., Lim, C. U., Sengun, S., Jahanian, A., & Ortiz, P. (2017, June). Culturally-grounded analysis of everyday creativity in social media: A case study in Qatari context. In *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM SIGCHI Conference on Creativity and Cognition* (pp. 209-221). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3059454.3059456

Hassanein, S. (2018). I Am My Own Guardian: Reflections on Resistance Art. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, *14*(2), 236-241. https://doi.org/10.1215/15525864-6680348

Hayat, A. (2014). *The Online Veil: A Study of the Impact of Culture on Saudi Women's Online Communication and Presence* (Doctoral thesis). Saginaw Valley State University, Michigan. https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.4842.7840

Heivadi, T., & Khajeheian, D. (2013). Construction of social identity in social media: An investigation of Iranian users' appearance in Facebook. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, *4*(12), 547-555.
Retrieved from http://journal-archieves31.webs.com/547-555.pdf

Henri, T., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. *Psychology of intergroup relations*, *2*, 7-24.

Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. Sage.

Hogan, B. (2010). The presentation of self in the age of social media: Distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *30*(6), 377-386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893

Hosni, D. (2017). Middle Eastern Women's 'Glocal': Journeying between the Online and Public Spheres | *Digital Islam. CyberOrient,* 11(1).
Retrieved from http://www.digitalislam.eu/article.do?articleId=9814

Hubbard, B. (2017, September 26). Saudi Arabia Agrees to Let Women Drive. *New York Times Online*.
Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-women-drive.html

Humphries-Smith, T., & Eves, B. (2015, July). *Visual representation of the concept of privacy in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia's houses design: a comparative study of the traditional and contemporary*. Paper presented at ARCHDESIGN'15, Turkey.
Retrieved from http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/22406/

Ibahrine, M. (2016). The dynamics of the Saudi Twitterverse. *Political Islam and Global Media: The boundaries of religious identity*, 203.

Jackson, L. A., & Wang, J. L. (2013). Cultural differences in social networking site use: A comparative study of China and the United States. *Computers in human behavior*, *29*(3), 910-921. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.11.024

Jadaliyya. (2012). *Profile of a Contemporary Conduit*. Nora Abdulkarim on Twitter and Political Dissent in Saudi Arabia.
Retrieved from http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7823/nora-abdulkarim-on-twitter-and-political-dissent-i

Jawad, H. A. (1991). Women and the question of polygamy in Islam. *Islamic Quarterly, 35*(3), 181.

Johannsdottir, A. (2013). *Instagram: What motivates young Icelandic women to use Instagram to communicate?* (Master dissertation). University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden. Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/16668866.pdf

Johnson, M., Egelman, S., & Bellovin, S. M. (2012, July). Facebook and privacy: it's complicated. In *Proceedings of the eighth symposium on usable privacy and security* (p. 9). ACM.

Johnson, H. (2004). There are worse things than being alone: polygamy in islam, past, present, and future. *Wm. & Mary J. Women & L.*, 11, 563.

Jurgenson, N. (2012). The IRL fetish. *The New Inquiry*, *28*.
https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004

Karasik, T. (2015, June 7). Nationalism is taking on a new meaning in Saudi. *Thenational*. Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/nationalism-is-taking-on-a-new-meaning-in-saudi-1.104307

Kaskazi, A. (2014). Social network identity: Facebook, Twitter and identity negotiation theory. *iConference 2014 Proceedings*. https://doi.org/10.9776/14276

Khashogji, L. N. (2016). *The influence of social media on gendered identity in Saudi Arabia, in relation to the religious curriculum throughout Saudi schools: media, politics and human development* (Doctoral thesis). Kingston University, South West London, United Kingdom. Retrieved from https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/37876/

Kim, H. W., Zheng, J. R., & Gupta, S. (2011). Examining knowledge contribution from the perspective of an online identity in blogging communities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *27*(5), 1760-1770. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.03.003

King, N., Horrocks, C., & Brooks, J. (2018). *Interviews in qualitative research*. SAGE Publications Limited.

Kou, Y. (2017, September). Exploring Offline Context and Consciousness in Everyday Social Media Use. In *IFIP Conference on Human-Computer Interaction* (pp. 126-135). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68059-0_8

Kozinets, R. V. (1998). On netnography: Initial reflections on consumer research investigations of cyberculture. *ACR North American Advances*.
Retrieved from http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/display.asp?id=8180

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 61–72. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935

Kozinets, R. V. (2015). *Netnography: redefined*. Sage.

Knoblauch, H., & Daniels, J. (2014). Q & A: pioneering digital sociology. *Contexts*, *13*(4), 6-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504214558208

Kurdi, E. (2014). *Women in the Saudi Press* (Doctoral thesis). Cardiff University, Cardiff, Wales.
Retrieved from
http://orca.cf.ac.uk/73313/12/Women_in_the_Saudi_Pres%202016%20Edited.pdf

Kuppuswamy, P., & Rekha, S. N. (2015). The Effect of Social Networks Media on the Quality of changes in the people life style: A study report on Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Middle East. *IOSR J. Eng. www. iosrjen. org ISSN*, *5*(2), 2250-3021.
Retrieved from
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/37054916/e5232833.pdf?awsaccesskeyid=akiaiwowyygz2y53ul3a&expires=1550529363&signature=b1dgfnffgmv1o

eyrojheft4wehk%3d&response-content-disposition=inline%3b%20filename%3diosr_journal_of_engineering_iosr-jen.pdf

Kutbi, A. I. (2015). *How undergraduate female students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia perceive social media as a learning tool: An exploratory study* (Master dissertation) University of Windsor, Windsor, Canada.
Retrieved from
http://scholar.uwindsor.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6289&context=etd

Kuutti, K., & Bannon, L. J. (2014, April). The turn to practice in HCI: towards a research agenda. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 3543-3552). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557111

Kwak, K. T., Choi, S. K., & Lee, B. G. (2014). SNS flow, SNS self-disclosure and post hoc interpersonal relations change: Focused on Korean Facebook user. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *31*, 294-304. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.10.046

Kyslova, O., & Berdnyk, E. (2014). New Media as a Formation Factor for Digital Sociology: The Consequences of the Networking in the Society and the Intellectualization of the Communications. *Studies of Changing Societies*, *2013*(3), 67-106. https://doi.org/10.2478/scs-2014-0154

Langer, R., & Beckman, S. C. (2005). Sensitive research topics: netnography revisited. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *8*(2), 189-203. https://doi.org/10.1108/13522750510592454

Le Renard, A. (2008). "Only for women:" Women, the state, and reform in Saudi Arabia. *The Middle East Journal*, *62*(4), 610-629. https://doi.org/10.3751/62.4.13

Le Renard, A., & Rundell, E. (2010). Personal Development and "Women's Rights": Women's Appropriation of Religion in Saudi Arabia. *Critique internationale*, (1), 67-86.

Retrieved from
http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/ci_feminism_iran_alr.pdf

Le Renard, A. (2012). From Qurʾānic circles to the internet: Gender segregation and the rise of female preachers in Saudi Arabia. In *Women, Leadership, and Mosques* (pp. 105-126). Brill.

Le Renard, A. (2014). A Society of Young Women: Opportunities of Place. *Power, and Reform in Saudi Arabia*.

Lefdahl-Davis, E. M., & Perrone-McGovern, K. M. (2015). The cultural adjustment of Saudi women international students: A qualitative examination. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *46*(3), 406-434. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022114566680

Lim, M. (2018). Unveiling Saudi feminism (s): Historicization, heterogeneity, and corporeality in women's movements. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, *43*(3), 461-479.

Lindland, R. (2017, September 30). Keeping Up with The Kardashians Is Easier Than Keeping Up With A Modernizing Saudi Arabia. *Forbes Online*.
Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccalindland/2017/09/30/keeping-up-with-the-kardashians-is-easier-than-keeping-up-with-a-modernizing-saudi-arabia/#74a0df6367dc

Litt, E., & Hargittai, E. (2016). The imagined audience on social network sites. *Social Media+ Society*, *2*(1), 2056305116633482.
https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116633482

Lucero, L. (2017). Safe spaces in online places: social media and LGBTQ youth. *Multicultural Education Review*, *9*(2), 117-128.
https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2017.1313482

Luppicini, R., & Saleh, R. H. (2017). The role of online social networks for divorced Saudi women in the face of social, psychological, economic, and legal challenges. *Technology in Society*, *51*, 142-152.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2017.07.008

Oduba, F. A. (2017). *Self-Disclosure and Motivation in Social Media Use among Nigerian Women* (Doctoral dissertation). Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, Texas.
Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1947583752?pq-origsite=gscholar

Mack, G. (2013). *The Modern Muhtasib: Religious Policing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral thesis). McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
Retrieved from
http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1541777534842~746

Madianou, M. (2013). Humanitarian campaigns in social media: Network architectures and polymedia events. *Journalism Studies*, *14*(2), 249-266.
https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2012.718558

Madini, A. A., & Nooy, J. D. (2013). Disclosure of gender identity in Internet forums: A case study of Saudi Arabian forum communication. *Gender, Technology and Development*, *17*(3), 233-257. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971852413498741

Malik, N. (2008, May 6). Sex and the city of Riyadh. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/may/06/sexandthecityofriyadh

Manago, A. M. (2014). Identity development in the digital age: The case of social networking sites. *The Oxford handbook of identity development*, 508-524.
https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199936564.013.031

Manago, A. M., Graham, M. B., Greenfield, P. M., & Salimkhan, G. (2008). Self-presentation and gender on MySpace. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *29*(6), 446-458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2008.07.001

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New media & society*, *13*(1), 114-133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*, *2*, 214-253.
Retrieved from http://www.corwin.com/upm-data/23772_Ch7.pdf

Mazur, E., & Li, Y. (2016). Identity and self-presentation on social networking web sites: A comparison of online profiles of Chinese and American emerging adults. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, *5*(2), 101.
Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Elizabeth_Mazur/publication/284453884_Identity_and_Self-Presentation_on_Social_Networking_Web_Sites_A_Comparison_of_Online_Profiles_of_Chinese_and_American_Emerging_Adults/links/581896ac08ae50812f5da2a3/Identity-and-Self-Presentation-on-Social-Networking-Web-Sites-A-Comparison-of-Online-Profiles-of-Chinese-and-American-Emerging-Adults.pdf

McGuire, H. (2017). College-aged women on Instagram: an analysis of gender and social media. *Senior Capstone Projects*. 695.
Retrieved from https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/695

Merchant, G. (2012). Unravelling the social network: theory and research. *Learning, media and Technology*, *37*(1), 4-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2011.567992

Michalak-Pikulska, B. (2013). Girls from Riyadh by Rajaa Alsanea as a literary statement of changes within contemporary Saudi society. *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, *66*(2).
Retrieved from http://www.czasopisma.pan.pl/Content/82215/mainfile.pdf

Midden, E., & Ponzanesi, S. (2013, November). Digital faiths: An analysis of the online practices of Muslim women in the Netherlands. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 41, pp. 197-203). Pergamon. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2013.07.012

Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., McDonald, T., Nicolescu, R., Sinanan, J., ... & Wang, X. (2016). *How the world changed social media* (Vol. 1). UCL press. Retrieved from https://scienceandsociety.duke.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Social-Media-Politics-Short.pdf

Miller, H. (1995, June). The presentation of self in electronic life: Goffman on the Internet. In *Embodied knowledge and virtual space conference* (Vol. 9). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hugh_Miller5/publication/267682346_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Electronic_Life_Goffman_on_the_Internet/links/55dc135d08aed6a199ac7448/The-Presentation-of-Self-in-Electronic-Life-Goffman-on-the-Internet.pdf

Miller, D. (2011). *Tales from Facebook*. Polity.

Mischaud, E. (2007). Twitter: Expressions of the whole self. An investigation into user appropriation of a web-based communications platform. *London: Media@ lse. Retrieved May*, *20*, 2008.

Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A. (2011). The role of social media in Arab Women's empowerment. *Dubai, Dubai School of Government*, *1*, 26.

Muaygil, R. A. (2018). Beyond Sacredness: Why Saudi Arabian Bioethics Must Be Feminist. *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, *11*(1), 125-143. https://doi.org/10.3138/ijfab.11.1.125

Nakamura, L. (2013). "Words with friends": socially networked reading on goodreads. *Pmla, 128*(1), 238-243.

Nasir, S. (2014). *Finding voice through social media?: a critical analysis of women's participation in the online public sphere in India* (Master dissertation). University of Canterbury, Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand. Retrieved from https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/9679

Nasseef, K. A. (2015). *Women's Empowerment Strategies in NGOs in the city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia-Exploring the Complexity and Challenges of the Cultural Context* (Doctoral thesis). University of Leeds, Leeds, England.
Retrieved from
http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/11205/1/Whole%20thesis%20Final%20Draft%20(Khadija%20Nasseef).pdf

Neumark, S. I. (2017). Reverberations of the Arab Spring: Women's Use of Information Technology in Morocco. *Stream: Inspiring Critical Thought*, *9*(2), 15-25. Retrieved from http://journals.sfu.ca/stream/index.php/stream/article/view/231

Nevo, J. (1998). Religion and national identity in Saudi Arabia. *Middle Eastern Studies*, *34*(3), 34-53. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701231
Othman, Z., Aird, R., & Buys, L. (2015). Privacy, modesty, hospitality, and the design of Muslim homes: A literature review. *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, *4*(1), 12-23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2014.12.001

Oliphant, R. (2017, September 27). Saudi Arabia urged to ditch "male guardianship" law after lifting ban on female drivers. *The Telegraph Online*.
Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/27/saudi-arabia-urged-ditch-male-guardianship-law-lifting-ban-female/

Oshan, M. S. (2007). *Saudi women and the internet: gender and culture issues* (Doctoral thesis). Loughborough University, Loughborough, England.
Retrieved from https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/handle/2134/7906

Pempek, T. A., Yermolayeva, Y. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2009). College students' social networking experiences on Facebook. *Journal of applied developmental psychology*, *30*(3), 227-238. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2008.12.010

Phua, J., Jin, S. V., & Kim, J. J. (2017). Gratifications of using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat to follow brands: The moderating effect of social comparison, trust, tie strength, and network homophily on brand identification, brand engagement, brand commitment, and membership intention. *Telematics and Informatics*, *34*(1), 412-424. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.06.004

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. *International journal of nursing studies*, *47*(11), 1451-1458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2010.06.004

Polonski, V. (2017). *Commitment issues: toward an understanding of young people's social media choices in the multi-platform era* (Doctoral thesis). University of Oxford, Oxford, England.
Retrieved from https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:6d738215-33d1-4de2-b680-dd3def88f1bd/download_file?safe_filename=Vyacheslav_Polonski_DPhil_Thesis_2017_Archive.pdf&file_format=application%2Fpdf&type_of_work=Thesis

Pouyioutas, P. (2012). Plato's Allegory of The Cave in The Digital Era of The Internet, Web 2.0 Applications, Social Networks and Second Life–An Educational, Political and Social Interpretation. *Mccsis*, 137.
Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/qaisar_mahmood3/publication/283540434_digital_storytelling_and_self_healing_of_women_survivors_of_violence_evidence_from_pakistan/links/563dc8be08ae8d65c012d40f/digital-storytelling-and-self-healing-of-women-survivors-of-violence-evidence-from-pakistan.pdf#page=166

Pramiyanti, A. (2016, January). Exploring The Conversations Of Burkini Gate On Twitter Community. In *International Conference on Transformation in Communication (ICOTIC)*.
Retrieved from
https://libraryeproceeding.telkomuniversity.ac.id/index.php/icotic/article/view/5591

Quan-Haase, A., Martin, K., & McCay-Peet, L. (2015). Networks of digital humanities scholars: The informational and social uses and gratifications of Twitter. *Big data & society*, *2*(1), 2053951715589417. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951715589417

Regmi, K., Naidoo, J., & Pilkington, P. (2010). Understanding the processes of translation and transliteration in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *9*(1), 16-26.
Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/160940691000900103

Richards, L. (2002). Qualitative computing--a methods revolution?. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *5*(3), 263-276. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570210146302

Sahly, A. (2016). *Examining presence and influence of linguistic characteristics in the Twitter discourse surrounding the women's right to drive movement in Saudi Arabia* (Master dissertation). University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida. Retrieved from http://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6125&context=etd

Saleh, R. H. (2014). *The Supporting Role of Online Social Networks for Divorced Saudi Women* (Doctoral thesis). Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada. Retrieved from https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/31204/1/Saleh_Ramzia_2014_thesis.pdf

Santos Jr, H. P., Black, A. M., & Sandelowski, M. (2015). Timing of translation in cross-language qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, *25*(1), 134-144. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732314549603

Sara, A. (2015). Digital activism for women's rights in the Arab World. In *Upholding Gendered Peace at a Time of War conference. Beirut, Lebanon*. Retrieved from http://womeninwar.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Beirut/8/Aline%20Sara_Digital%20Activism%20for%20women's%20rights%20in%20the%20Arab%20World.pdf

Saudi Arabia: The New Constitution: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (1993). *Arab Law Quarterly, 8*(3), 258-270. https://doi.org/10.2307/3381589

Sauter, T. (2013, November). The culture of the digital: pinterest and digital sociology. In *Proceedings of the TASA 2013 conference*. Retrieved from https://tasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Sauter.pdf

Schmidt, K. (2018). Practice and Technology: On the Conceptual Foundations of Practice-Centered Computing. In *Socio-informatics* (pp. 47-103). Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, S. J. (1992). The logic of observation: An introduction to constructivism. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*, *19*(3), 295-311.

Selim, H. (2017). *Why the caged bird sings: cultural factors underlying the use of online social networks among Saudi Arabian and UK users* (Doctoral thesis). University of Sussex, Falmer, Sussex, England.
Retrieved from http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/70592/1/Selim%2C%20Heyla.pdf

Sendi, K. (2017). The Limitations of U.S. White Middle-Class Feminism in the Middle East. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 5(1), 109–120. Retrieved from http://ijgws.com/journals/ijgws/Vol_5_No_1_June_2017/11.pdf

Shafie, L. A., Nayan, S., & Osman, N. (2012). Constructing identity through Facebook profiles: online identity and visual impression management of university students in Malaysia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *65*, 134-140. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.102

Shahar, R. N. B., & Lev-On, A. (2011). Gender, religion and new media: Attitudes and behaviors related to the internet among Ultra-Orthodox women employed in computerized environments. *International Journal of Communication*, *5*, 21.

Sheridan, D. (2015). *"It is not in the Stars to Hold our Destiny but in Ourselves": Tales of Saudi Muslim Women Maintaining their Identities in US Higher Education* (Doctoral thesis). Utah State Unviversity, Logan, Utah.
Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/4635/

Sibona, C. (2014, January). Unfriending on Facebook: Context collapse and unfriending behaviors. In *2014 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 1676-1685). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.214

Shihada, I. M. (2013). Breaking Silence in Rajjaalsanea's Girls of Riyadh. *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL) Vol, 3,* 59-74.

Stacey, J. (2015). The unfinished conversations of cultural studies. *Cultural Studies*, *29*(1), 43-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2014.917232

Stanger, N., Alnaghaimshi, N., & Pearson, E. (2017). How do Saudi youth engage with social media?. *First Monday*, *22*(5). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v22i5.7102

Statista. (2018). Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com

Statistics, G. A. of. (2018). General Authority of Statistics. Retrieved from https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/43

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 224-237. https://doi.org/10.2307/2695870

Stoycheff, E., Liu, J., Wibowo, K. A., & Nanni, D. P. (2017). What have we learned about social media by studying Facebook? A decade in review. *New Media & Society*, *19*(6), 968-980. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817695745

Stromer-Galley, J., & Martey, R. M. (2009). Visual spaces, norm governed places: The influence of spatial context online. *New Media & Society*, *11*(6), 1041-1060. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809336555

Strong, C., & Hareb, H. (2012). Social Media Fashion among Digitally Fluent Young Arabic Women in the UAE. Journal of Middle East Media, 8(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1186/1745-6215-14-46

Subrahmanyam, K., Smahel, D., & Greenfield, P. (2006). Connecting developmental constructions to the Internet: Identity presentation and sexual exploration in online teen chat rooms. *Developmental psychology*, *42*(3), 395.

Sveningsson, M. (2015). "It's only a pastime, really": Young people's experiences of social media as a source of news about public affairs. *Social Media+ Society*, *1*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604855

Syariati, D. (2016). Constructed Virtual Identity of Muslim Women in Social Media. *Ongoing Asia*, 47.
Retrieved from http://jurnal.uii.ac.id/CCCMS/article/view/7121/6334

Szilagyi, A. (2015). "I Am Different From Other Women In The World" The Experiences Of Saudi Arabian Women Studying Online In International Master Programmes. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, *18*(1), 85-98. https://doi.org/10.1515/eurodl-2015-0006

Taeyun, J. U. N. G. (2011). Women, Islam and Everyday Life: Renegotiating Polygamy in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies, 17*(1), 132-141.

Tamimi, I. (2010). *Women in the Segregated Society of Saudi Arabia: Using the Internet as a Protesting Tool* (Master dissertation). University of West England, Bristol, England. Retrieved from
https://www.academia.edu/1442468/women_in_the_segregated_society_of_saudi_arabia_using_the_internet_as_a_protesting_tool

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. Sage.

Taylor, A. (2015, April 21). Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram posts show a different side to life in Saudi Arabia. *Independent Online*.
Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle- east/snapchat-twitter-and-instagram-posts-show-a-new-side-to-life-in-saudi-arabia-10192609.html

Temple, B., & Young, A. (2004). Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative research*, *4*(2), 161-178.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104044430

Thelwall, M. (2017). Reader and author gender and genre in Goodreads. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000617709061

Tokdemir, S., Agarwal, N., & Wigand, R. T. (2016, August). Social media, spillover, and Saudi Arabian Women's right to drive movements: Analyzing interconnected online collective actions. In *2016 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining (ASONAM)* (pp. 803-810). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/ASONAM.2016.7752330

Tønnessen, L. (2016). Women's activism in Saudi Arabia: Male guardianship and sexual violence. *CMI Report*.
Retrieved from
https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2475289/Women%E2%80%99
s%20Activism%20in%20Saudi%20Arabia%3A%20Male%20Guardianship%20and%
20Sexual%20Violence?sequence=1

Totoatmojo, K. M. (2015, May). The Celebrity Endorser (Selebgram) Effect Toward Purchase Intention On Instagram Social Media. In *ASEAN/Asian Academic Society International Conference Proceeding Series*.

Tschirhart, P. (2014). The Saudi Blogosphere: Implications of New Media Technology and the Emergence of Saudi-Islamic Feminism. *CyberOrient*, *8*(1).
Retrieved from http://www.cyberorient.net/article.do?articleId=8864

Tufekci, Z. (2008). Can you see me now? Audience and disclosure regulation in online social network sites. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *28*(1), 20-36.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467607311484

Turkle, S. (1999). Cyberspace and identity. *Contemporary sociology*, *28*(6), 643-648.
Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2655534

Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The qualitative report*, *15*(3), 754-760.
Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf

Ur, B., & Wang, Y. (2013, May). A cross-cultural framework for protecting user privacy in online social media. In *Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on World Wide Web* (pp. 755-762). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2487788.2488037

Van der Nagel, E., & Frith, J. (2015). Anonymity, pseudonymity, and the agency of online identity: Examining the social practices of r/Gonewild. *First Monday*, *20*(3). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v20i3.5615

Van Dijck, J. (2013). 'You have one identity': Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, culture & society*, *35*(2), 199-215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443712468605

Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.

van Geel, A. (2016). Separate or together? Women-only public spaces and participation of Saudi women in the public domain in Saudi Arabia. *Contemporary Islam*, *10*(3), 357-378. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-015-0350-2

van Geel, A. C. F. (2018). *'For Women Only': Gender Segregation, Islam, and Modernity in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait* (Doctoral thesis). Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands.

van Geel, A. C. F., Meijer, R., Wagemakers, J., Aarts, P. W. H., & Kanie, M. (2012). Saudi Arabia Between Conservatism, Accommodation and Reform. Retrieved from https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/101321/101321.pdf?sequence=1/handle/2066/115411

Van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: is meaning lost in translation?. *European journal of ageing*, *7*(4), 313-316. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-010-0168-y

Van Wichelen, S. (2009). Polygamy talk and the politics of feminism: Contestations over masculinity in a new Muslim Indonesia. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 11*(1), 173-188.

Vaterlaus, J. M., Barnett, K., Roche, C., & Young, J. A. (2016). "Snapchat is more personal": An exploratory study on Snapchat behaviors and young adult interpersonal relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *62*, 594-601. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.04.029

Vidyasagar, G., & Rea, D. M. (2004, August). Saudi women doctors: gender and careers within Wahhabic Islam and a 'westernised'work culture. In *Women's studies international forum* (Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 261-280). Pergamon. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2004.06.008

Vieweg, S., & Hodges, A. (2016, February). Surveillance & modesty on social media: How Qataris navigate modernity and maintain tradition. In *Proceedings of the 19th ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing* (pp. 527-538). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2818048.2819966

Vitak, J. (2012). The impact of context collapse and privacy on social network site disclosures. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *56*(4), 451-470. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.732140

Vitak, J., Lampe, C., Gray, R., & Ellison, N. B. (2012, February). Why won't you be my Facebook friend?: Strategies for managing context collapse in the workplace. In *Proceedings of the 2012 iConference* (pp. 555-557). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2132176.2132286

Voicu, C. G. (2013). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities, 18(1).

Wagner, R. L. (2011). Saudi-Islamic Feminist Movement: A Struggle for Male Allies and the Right Female Voice. *Peace and Conflict Monitor*, *29*. Retrieved from http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfm?id_article=789

Wacjman, J. (2010). Feminist theories of technology. *Cambridge journal of economics, 34*(1), 143-152.

Walker, S. (2017). *The Complexity of Collecting Digital and Social Media Data in Ephemeral Contexts* (Doctoral thesis). University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. Retrieved from https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/40612/Walker_washington_0250E_17763.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Waltorp, K. (2013). Public/private negotiations in the media uses of young Muslim women in Copenhagen: Gendered social control and the technology-enabled moral laboratories of a multicultural city. *International Communication Gazette*, *75*(5-6), 555-572. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048513491912

Waltorp, K. (2015). Keeping cool, staying virtuous: social media and the composite habitus of young Muslim women in Copenhagen. *MedieKultur: Journal of media and communication research*, *31*(58), 49-67. Retrieved from http://ojs.statsbiblioteket.dk/index.php/mediekultur/article/view/19373

Wang, D. (2013). *Women in Engineering: Identity Communication in Social Media* (Master dissertation). Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. Retrieved from https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/1748

Wang, Y., Norcie, G., Komanduri, S., Acquisti, A., Leon, P. G., & Cranor, L. F. (2011, July). I regretted the minute I pressed share: A qualitative study of regrets on Facebook. In *Proceedings of the seventh symposium on usable privacy and security* (p. 10). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2078827.2078841

Wängqvist, M., & Frisén, A. (2016). Who am I online? Understanding the meaning of online contexts for identity development. *Adolescent Research Review*, *1*(2), 139-151. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-016-0025-0

Watzlawik, M., & Born, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Capturing identity: Quantitative and qualitative methods*. University Press of America.

Weijo, H., Hietanen, J., & Mattila, P. (2014). New insights into online consumption communities and netnography. *Journal of Business Research*, *67*(10), 2072-2078. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.04.015

Wessels, B. (2012). Identification and the practices of identity and privacy in everyday digital communication. *New media & society*, *14*(8), 1251-1268. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812450679

Weston III, F. W. (1987). Political legitimacy and national identity in Saudi Arabia: Competing Allegiances. *Fletcher F.*, *11*, 81.

Winkel, H. (2017). Multiple religiosities, entangled modernities and gender: what is different about gender across religious cultures?. *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik*, *1*(1), 89-109. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41682-017-0006-6

Wittig, K. (2016). Privacy in Social Networks After the Global Surveillance Disclosures. *Knowledge & Information*, 146. Retrieved from https://www.oapen.org/download?type=document&docid=615495#page=157

Wood, A. F., & Smith, M. J. (2004). *Online communication: Linking technology, identity, & culture*. Routledge.

Wynn, J. R. (2009, June). Digital sociology: emergent technologies in the field and the classroom. In *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 448-456). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2009.01109.x

Xu, B., Chang, P., Welker, C. L., Bazarova, N. N., & Cosley, D. (2016, February). Automatic archiving versus default deletion: What Snapchat tells us about ephemerality in design. In *Proceedings of the 19th ACM conference on computer-supported cooperative work & social computing* (pp. 1662-1675). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2818048.2819948

Yamani, M., & Royal Institute of International Affairs (GB). Middle East Programme. (2000). *Changed identities: The challenge of the new generation in Saudi Arabia*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Yuce, S., Agarwal, N., Wigand, R. T., Lim, M., & Robinson, R. S. (2014, April). Studying the evolution of online collective action: Saudi arabian Women's 'Oct26Driving' Twitter campaign. In *International conference on social computing, behavioral-cultural modeling, and prediction* (pp. 413-420). Springer, Cham. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nitin_Agarwal10/publication/261295671_Studying_the_Evolution_of_Online_Collective_Action_Saudi_Arabian_Women's_'Oct26Driving'_Twitter_Campaign/links/0f3175341ec2c0c2c8000000.pdf

Yurchisin, J., Watchravesringkan, K., & McCabe, D. B. (2005). An exploration of identity re-creation in the context of internet dating. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, *33*(8), 735-750. Retrieved from http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/9071/volumes/v32/NA-32

Zarghooni, S. (2007). A study of self-presentation in light of Facebook. *Institute of Psychology, University of Oslo*. Retrieved from

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5b09/38b252864d120a318d885be668392c88af7f.pdf

Zhao, C., Hinds, P., & Gao, G. (2012, February). How and to whom people share: the role of culture in self-disclosure in online communities. In *Proceedings of the ACM 2012 conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work* (pp. 67-76). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2145204.2145219

Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in human behavior*, *24*(5), 1816-1836. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.02.012

Zhao, X., Lampe, A. C., Ackerman, M., & Cosley, A. D. (2016). *After You Press "Share": Supporting Identity Management and Identity* (Doctoral thesis). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Retrieved from https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/133183

Zhao, X., Lampe, C., & Ellison, N. B. (2016, May). The social media ecology: User perceptions, strategies and challenges. In *Proceedings of the 2016 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 89-100). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858333

Zhao, X., & Lindley, S. E. (2014, April). Curation through use: understanding the personal value of social media. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 2431-2440). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557291

Zhao, X., Salehi, N., Naranjit, S., Alwaalan, S., Voida, S., & Cosley, D. (2013, April). The many faces of Facebook: Experiencing social media as performance, exhibition, and personal archive. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1-10). ACM. Retrieved from https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2470656

Zolyomi, A. (2018). Where the stakeholders are: tapping into social media during value-sensitive design research. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 1-4.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – DATA ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN SELECTED COUNTRIES INCLUDING SAUDI ARABIA

Active social network penetration in selected countries as of January 2018

Country	Share of internet users
UAE	99%
South Korea	84%
Singapore	83%
Hong Kong	78%
Argentina	76%
Saudi Arabia	75%
Malaysia	75%
Thailand	74%
United States	71%
Australia	69%
Canada	68%
UK	66%
China	65%
Mexico	64%
Philippines	63%
Turkey	63%
Brazil	62%
Spain	58%
France	58%
Italy	57%
Vietnam	57%
Japan	56%
Indonesia	49%
Russia	47%
Germany	46%
Poland	45%
Global average	42%
Egypt	40%
South Africa	32%
India	19%
Nigeria	10%

Source
We Are Social
© Statista 2018

Additional information:
Worldwide; We Are Social; January 2018; Active accounts on the top social network in each country compared to population

statista

APPENDIX 2 – SHU RESEARCH ETHICS FEEDBACK

Research ethics application

8 messages

Adam, Alison <acesaa3@exchange.shu.ac.uk>   3 March 2015 at 12:49
To: "Aljuwaiser, Ghayda A (student - ACES)" <Ghayda.A.Aljuwaiser@student.shu.ac.uk>
Cc: "! ACES Research Ethics Committee (FREC)" <aces-frec-mb@exchange.shu.ac.uk>, "Ciolfi, Luigina"
<aceslc6@exchange.shu.ac.uk>

Dear Ghayda,

Your research ethics application was considered at the meeting of ACES FREC which was held last week. I am
pleased to inform you that your application has been approved subject to the following points. We do not expect a
response to these points, instead we are asking that you take them into account in your research.

1.   The committee were concerned about the safety and security of the student and participants in the
interviews, due to the topic of research. We wondered if there could be any negative reactions to undertaking
such research, even if it is in a public place. We feel sure that you understand any cultural issues far better
than we do so we are not expecting a specific response, rather we want to ensure that you have taken this into
account.

2.   Please consider the SHU policy and regulations around data storage, protection and encryption prior to
carrying out the research.

Regards,

Alison

Professor Alison Adam

ACES FREC Chair

Cultural, Communication & Computing Research Institute
Sheffield Hallam University
Cantor Building
153 Arundel Street
Sheffield, S1 2NU

a.adam@shu.ac.uk

Finch, Rachel <acesrf1@exchange.shu.ac.uk>   16 August 2016 at 09:45
To: "Aljuwaiser, Ghayda A (student - ACES) (Ghayda.A.Aljuwaiser@student.shu.ac.uk)"
<Ghayda.A.Aljuwaiser@student.shu.ac.uk>

APPENDIX 3 – PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet

Saudi Women's Online Practices in Social Networks

استخدامات المرأة السعودية لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي

Introduction:

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh,

My name is Ghayda Aljuwaiser, I am a PhD candidate at Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom. The aim of my study is to discover Saudi Women's online practices in social media platforms. The study is in its initial stage; therefore, I need your participation as a social media user in order to collect a sample for my study.

تمهيد:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

اسمي غيداء الجويسر، أدرس في جامعة شيفيلد هالام في بريطانيا حاليا وأسعى للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في التواصل الإلكتروني وذلك عبر التّعرف على استخدامات المرأة السعودية لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي. لاتزال دراستي في مراحلها الأولى. أحاول في الوقت الراهن الحصول على عينة لإجراء دراسة استطلاعية (مبدئية) لذا فإنني في حاجة لمشاركتكِ كمستخدمة لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي.

How can I Participate?

You can participate in the study in two ways:

1. Accepting me as a follower for two or more of your social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc.) for three months, starting from March 2015 - June 2015. I will have an account with my full name and my student profile URL at Sheffield Hallam University.

2. Allowing me to do an interview with you face to face (twice, before and after your participation) so I can talk to you in-depth about your social media usage experience.

كيف يمكنني المشاركة في الدراسة؟

يمكنك المشاركة في الدراسة عبر طريقتين:

١، قبولي كمتابعة لكِ في الشبكات الاجتماعية التي تستخدمينها)تويتر، فيسبوك، انستجرام الخ (لمدة ٣ أشهر بدءًا من مارس ٢٠١٥ وحتّى يونيو ٢٠١٥ .سيحتوي حسابي على اسمي الكامل، و رابط لصفحتي على موقع جامعة شيفيلد هالام.

٢ .السماح لي بإجراء مقابلة معكِ)مرتين، قبل وبعد المشاركة (حتى أتمكن من التحدث معكِ بشكّل مفصّل عن تجربتكِ في استخدام الشبكات الاجتماعية

Data Protection and Privacy:

I assure you that your name will not be used, and I will refer to each participant by case number (for example: participant number 1). All of the data will be saved in my personal computer, which is password-protected. No one else will have access to the raw data. Moreover, I will not save any personal pictures that you publish without your permission. At the completion of my PhD studies, parts of the raw data - which doesn't contain or refer to participants' identity - will be stored for a limited time on a hard drive in a locked cabinet in my Director of Studies' office at Sheffield Hallam University.

خصوصيتي وحماية معلوماتي:
)مثال :المُشاركَة رقم ١ (أؤكد لكِ بأن اسمك سيظل مجهولا، وستتم الإشارة إلى جميع أفراد العينة عبر الترقيم.
سيتم حفظ جميع معلوماتك الخاص محمية برقم سري، لن يتمكن أيا كان من الاطلاع على معلوماتك كذلك، لن أقوم بحفظ أي صورة شخصية لكِ دون أخذ الإذن منكِ بذلك .بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة سيتم الاحتفاظ بأجزاء محددة من البيانات التي لا تحتوي أي تفاصيل عن هوية المستخدمين، وذلك لمدة قصيرة على قرص صلب في درج مغلق في مكتب المشرفة على الدراسة في جامعة شيفيلد هالام.

How will you use my data?

The main information that I aim to collect is: how and why do Saudi women use social media. The findings will be discussed with my PhD supervisors and published several times at different stages of the study, such as: Academic reports, conferences, publications, presentations and finally as a PhD thesis.

كيف سيتم استخدام معلوماتي؟
الهدف الرئيسي من جمع المعلومات في هذه الدراسة هو التّعرف على :كيف ولماذا تستخدم المرأة السعودية الشبكات الاجتماعية، سيتم نشر النتائج على عدة مراحل أثناء الدراسة مثل التقارير الأكاديمية المؤتمرات العلمية النشر العلمي، العروض التقديمية وأخيرًا كرسالة دكتوراه منشورة بإذن الله.

Can I contact you? And How?

At any time that you need to discuss your participation, you can contact me via mobile or email.

هل يمكنني التواصل معكِ؟ وكيف؟

يمكنكِ التواصل معي في أيِّ وقت حول مشاركتكِ في الدراسة، عبر الجوال أو الإيميل.

How can I find out about the results of the study?

Following the pilot study, I will pursue my research for three years in total, the whole thesis will be freely available in English on Sheffield Hallam University database, then it will be translated to Arabic in order to be obtainable through Saudi libraries.

كيف يمكنني الاطلاع على نتائج الدراسة؟

بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة الاستطلاعية بحول الله، ستستمر الدراسة لمدة ثلاث سنوات، وستتوفر الرسالة بعد مناقشتها على موقع جامعة شيفيلد هالام، وسيتم ترجمتها للغة العربية حتى يصبح من الممكن الحصول عليها عبر قواعد بيانات الجامعات السعودية. كذلك، يمكنني إرسال نسخة لكِ عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

Participation, withdrawal and further information:

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time within the data collection period (3 to 6 months). However, if during or after the study you needed any further information regarding your participation you can contact my supervisors or my studies department at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK.

حرية المشاركة أو الانسحاب من الدراسة والحصول على معلومات إضافية:

المشاركة في هذه الدراسة تطوعية ١٠٠٪، لكِ الحرية الكاملة في المشاركة أو عدمها، أو حتى الانسحاب من المشاركة خلال مدة جمع البيانات)بين ٣-٦ أشهر. (وفي حال حاجتك أثناء أو بعد المشاركة في الدراسة لأي معلومات أخرى فيمكنكِ التواصل مع مشرفتي أو القسم العلمي في جامعة شيفيلد هالام.

APPENDIX 4 – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

نموذج موافقة على المشاركة

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

Saudi Women's Online Practices in Social Networks

عنوان الدراسة:

استخدامات المرأة السعودية لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies الرجاء التّكرم بالإجابة على الأسئلة التالية عبر وضع علامة صح تحت إجابتك	YES	NO
1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me. ١. لقد قمت بقراءة المعلومات في الخطاب المُوَجَّه للعينة، ولديّ فكرة واضحة عن الدراسة		
2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. ٢. تمت الإجابة على جميع أسئلتي حول مشاركتي في الدراسة بشكل مرضٍ، وأعلم أنه بإمكاني الحصول على أي معلومات إضافية في أي وقت.		
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. ٣. أعلم بأنه بإمكاني رفض أو الانسحاب من المشاركة في الدراسةأثناء المدة الموضحة إعطاء أي أسباب لذلك، دون أن يترتب على ذلك أية نتائج دون السابقة في الورقة		
4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet. ٤. أوافق على تقديم المعلومات التي تحتاجها الباحثة ضمن ضوابط الخصوصية التي تم توضيحها في الخطاب المُوَجَّه للعينة		

5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. تم توضيحها في الخطاب التي الشروط ٥. أرغب في المشاركة في الدراسة تحت المُوَجَّه للعينة		
6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. ٦. أوافق على استخدام معلوماتي مع بقائها مجهولة المصدر والهوية، لاستخدامها لأغراض بحثية فقط.		

Participant's Signature المُشاركة توقيع:

_____

Date التاريخ: _____

Participant's Name (Printed) اسم المُشاركة: _____

Contact details التواصل طريقة:

_____

Researcher's Name (Printed) اسم الباحثة: Ghayda Aljuwaiser/غيداء الجويسر

Researcher's Signature توقيع الباحثة:

Researcher's contact details معلومات التواصل مع الباحثة:

Ghayda Aljuwaiser غيداء الجويسر

Email البريد الإلكتروني:

ghayda.a.aljuwaiser@student.shu.ac.uk

galjuwaiser@kau.edu.sa

Mobile الجوال :

00966551126688

Whatsapp واتساب:

00447445295425

Supervisor's Name (Printed) اسم المشرفة : Luigina Ciolfi

Supervisor's Signature:

Supervisor's contact details معلومات التواصل مع المشرفة:

Dr. Luigina Ciolfi

Reader in Communication

Communication and Computing Research Centre - C3RI

Sheffield Hallam University

Cantor Building, Room 9120

153 Arundel Street

Sheffield S1 2NU, UK

Tel +44 114 225 6826 - Fax +44 114 225 6702

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

الرجاء الاحتفاظ بنسخة من نموذج الموافقة

APPENDIX 5 – PILOT STUDY – FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE

In-depth Interview Guide

Saudi Women's Online Practices in Social Networks

<u>The First Interview: Before the Virtual Ethnography:</u>

<u>A: Previous Internet and Social Networks Usage Experience:</u>

<u>1: Internet Usage In General:</u>

• For how many years have you been using the Internet?

• At which age did you first use it? (Year)

• How do your usage and practices differ now than before? Your online communication with others, the information you've shared online, online activities, online friends and groups?

<u>2: Social Networks Usage:</u>

• What was the first Social network/s u've used?

• What were your profile avatar/s, bio/s, and design/s?

<u>B: Current Social Networks Usage:</u>

• What r the social networks that you're using currently? U've created accounts on even if u don't use them anymore?

• Among them which are the Most /Least used? And Why?

Tumblr

Ask.Fm

Pinterest

Flickr

Instagram

Twitter

Facebook

Linkedin

Snapchat

Kiwi

Phhhoto

Path

Wordpress

Blogger

Foursquare/Swarm

Telegram

Keek

Periscope

Vero

Photo

Goodreads

أبجد

رفّي

Google Plus/ iGoogle

• Do you have more than one account in the same social networks? (If YES then why)?

• Do you your profile avatar/s, bio/s, and design/s? If YES, then what do you change and why?

C: Between The Online & Offline:

• How do you describe your online relationships experience from the beginning of your usage until now?

• Can you share one episode that happened to you when you started using social networks that you find important and that you remember well?

• D: Saudi Women:

 If u can describe Saudi women in words, how can u define them? Distinguish them among other women?

 How have social media impacted Saudi women online and offline?

The Second Interview: After the Virtual Ethnography

A: Virtual Ethnography Period:

• How was your experience as a participant followed by a researcher?

• Within these months, has your social networks usage changed and how?

• Have you added new/excluded old contacts? If yes, Why?

• Did you create new accounts or closed old ones? If yes, Why?

• Have you faced any privacy issues that concerned you? If yes, How?

•   Since we spoke last, have these months of your engagement in Social Networks; had an impact on your offline life? If yes, How? Can you make at least one example?

•   Have you used social media in any way that is new or different for you? Why?

B: The End of The Interview:

•   Do you have any questions?

•   Do you want to add any thoughts?

•   Thank you for your participation, I really appreciate what you have given from your time and the information that you have shared with me, appreciating taking a part of this study I want to offer you a gift from me as a researcher, a 10£ voucher from Amazon and another 10£ iTunes card valuing your precious contribution.

The follow up interview:

المقابلة البعدية:

Participant Code:

رمز المبحوثة:

The follow up interview: After The Virtual Ethnography

المقابلةالبعدية: **بعد مدة الاثنوغرافي**

A: Virtual Ethnography Period:

أ: خلال مدةالاثنوغرافي:

- Within these months, has your social networks usage changed and how?

- Have you used social media in any way that is new or different for you, for example: have the usage of the mediums/platforms changed, if yes, then how?

- خلال هذه الأشهر الثلاث، هل تغيّر استخدامك للشبكات الاجتماعية؟ وكيف؟ كمثال: قل/ازداد استخدامك لشبكة معينة؟

- Did you create new accounts on other social media platforms? If yes, on which platform and why?

- هل قمت بإناء حسابات جديدة على شبكات اجتماعية أخرى؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فماهي وماالسبب؟

- Since we spoke, have these months of your engagement in Social Networks had an impact on your offline life? If yes, How? Can you make at least one example?

منذ آخر مرة قمنا بالتحدث فيها، هل أثر استخدامك للشبكات الاجتماعية على حياتك خارج الانترنت؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فكيف؟ هل يمكنك ذكر مثال واحد على الأقل؟

- If I asked you about the 'Unspoken rules of social media' on the platforms that you use, what to share, do and do not's etc., are there differences across them? If yes, then how?

إذا قمت بسؤالك عن ''القواعد غير المكتوبة في الشبكات الاجتماعية ''على الشبكات التي تقومين باستخدامها، ما تتم مشاركته، المسموح وغير المسموح الخ، هل هناك اختلاف مابين شبكة وأخرى؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فكيف؟

B: Questions Of The Netnography Notes:

:أسئلة تتعلق بملاحظات الاثنوغرافي

Depends on the Participant, in general:

:ترتبط على المبحوثة بشكل عام

- Have u deleted any posts? If yes, then why?

هل قمت بحذف مشاركات على أي من الشبكات الاجتماعية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فلم؟

- Discussion about significant things which have been observed within the ethnography

C: Snowballing & Famous/Popular Saudi Women Social Media Accounts:

العينة الثلجية و أكثر حسابات السعوديات شهرة/شعبية:

Famous/Popular Saudi Women Social Media Accounts:

أكثر حسابات السعوديات شهرة/شعبية:

- Who are the most known Saudi Women on social media? Either you follow or not, and why are they famous? Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat etc.

ماهي أكثر الحسابات المشهورة والتي لها شهرة لمستخدمات الشبكات الاجتماعية من السعوديات؟ سواء كنت تتابعينهن أم لا،)تويتر، انستقرام، يوتيوب، سناب شات الخ(
وفي رأيك ما سبب شهرتها؟

- Is there an impact of being known Saudi women on social media?

Snowballing:

العينة الثلجية:

- In order to recruit a following sample for my study I need you to suggest to me a number of Saudi Women that you know and who use social media platforms so I can invite them to take a part in the study. Please note that there are some preferred characteristics which must be taken in account:

بهدف جمع عينة أخرى لدراستي، أحتاج منك أن تقترحي لي عددا من الحسابات على الشبكات الاجتماعية لسعوديات لك معرفة سابقة بهن لأتمكن من دعوتهن للمشاركة في الدراسة. على أن تنطبق عليهن المعايير التالية:

- Using social media for more than one year as minimum

يستخدمن الشبكات الاجتماعية منذ عام على الأقل -

- From different age groups

من فئات عمرية مختلفة)الثمانينات/ السبعينات(-

- Using different platforms

يستخدمن/لديهن حسابات على أكثر من شبكة اجتماعية -

- You know them for a long time

لك معرفة سابقة بهن منذ مدة طويلة -

- Willing to contribute

لا مانع لديهن في المشاركة في الدراسة -

- From different cities in Saudi Arabia

يسكن في مدن مختلفة في السعودية -

D: The End of The Interview:

نهاية المقابلة:

- Do you have any questions?

هل لديك أي أسئلة إضافية؟ -

312

- Do you want to add any thoughts?

<div dir="rtl">

- هل تودين إضافة أي شيء؟

</div>

Thank you for your participation, I really appreciate what you have given from your time and the information that you have shared with me, appreciating taking a part of this study I want to offer you a gift from me as a researcher, a 10£ voucher from Amazon and another 10£ iTunes card valuing your precious contribution.

<div dir="rtl">

جزيل شكري وتقديري لمشاركتك، ممتنة بشكل كبير لوقت الذي منتحيه لي والمعلومات التي قمت بمشاركتها معي، وتقدير وتعبير عن امتناني لمشاركتك سأقوم بتقديم هدية بسيطة لك وهي قسيمة بقيمة ٦٠ ريال تقريبا)١٠ جنبيه استرليني (من امازون وأخرى بنفس القيمة من متجر آيتونز وذلك كشكر لمشاركتك.

</div>

APPENDIX 7 – MAIN PHASE OF DATA COLLECTION – FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE

Ghayda

16-Dec-2015

In-Depth Interview Guide

Saudi Women's Online Practices in Social Networks

The First Interview: Before the Virtual Ethnography

دليل المقابلة المتعمقة

استخدامات المرأة السعودية لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي

المقابلة الأولى قبل الاثنوغرافية الافتراضية

General Information

Year of birth?

Education/Employment?

City of residence

معلومات عامة:

مواليد سنة؟

الدراسة/العمل؟

المدينة؟

A: Previous Internet and Social Networks Usage Experience:

1: Internet Usage in General:

• For how many years have you been using the Internet?

• At which age did you first use it? (Year)

• How do your usage and practices differ now than before? Your online communication with others, the information you've shared online, online activities, online friends and groups?

أ. الخبرة السابقة للانترنت والشبكات الاجتماعية:

١. استخدام الانترنت بشكل عام:

- كم مضى على استخدامك للانترنت حتى الآن؟ السنة، كم كان عمرك وقتها؟

- ماالذي تتذكرينه عن بداية دخولك للانترنت؟ المواقع، الاستخدام؟ الأصدقاء؟؟

- كيف اختلف استخدامك للانترنت منذ ذلك الحين حتى الان؟ تواصلك مع الآخرين على الشبكة العنكبوتية، المعلومات التي تشاركينهم بها؟ الأصدقاء والمجموعات؟

2: Social Networks Usage:

• What was the first Social network/s u've used? And when, can you remember?

• Why did u choose it? How did you feel about your online engagement?

• What were your profile avatar/s, bio/s, and design/s?

<div dir="rtl">

٢. استخدام السوشيال ميديا:

- **متى** استخدمتي وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لأول مرة: الفيسبوك، تويتر الخ؟

- ماسبب اختيارك آنذاك لهذه الشبكات بالذات وكيف كان شعورك تجاه استخدامها في البداية؟

- ماالذي تتذكرينه عن صورة بروفايلك والنبذة عنك والاسم الذي كنتي تستخدمينه؟

</div>

B: Current Social Networks Usage:

• What r the social networks that you're using currently? U've created accounts on even if u don't use them anymore?

• Among them which are the Most /Least used? And Why?

<div dir="rtl">

ب. استخدامك الحالي لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي:

- ماهي الشبكات الاجتماعية التي لديك حسابات عليها حاليا؟ حتى وإن كنت لا تستخدمينها بكثرة.

- وماهي أكثر الشبكات الاجتماعية التي تسخدمينها بشكل شبه يومي، ولماذا؟

</div>

Ask.Fm

Pinterest

Tumblr

Phhhoto

Flickr

Instagram

Keek

Snapchat

Twitter

Facebook

Path

Linkedin

Kiwi

Wordpress

Blogger

Foursquare/Swarm

Telegram

Periscope

Vero

Goodreads

Abjad

Raffy

Google Plus/ iGoogle

• Do you have more than one account in the same social networks? (If YES then why)?

• Do you your profile avatar/s, bio/s, and design/s? If YES then what do you change and why?

<div dir="rtl">

- هل لديك أكثر من حساب على شبكة اجتماعية واحدة؟ مثلا حساب رسمي وحساب شخصي؟ ولماذا؟

هل صورتك، ومعلوماتك تختلف من شبكة لأخرى؟ كيف ولماذا؟

حينما تقومين بتغيير صورتك ومعلوماتك ماهي الأسباب التي تدعوك لذلك؟

</div>

C: Between the Online & Offline:

• How do you describe your online relationships experience from the beginning of your usage until now?

• Can u tell me more about your relationships on social media?

• If I ask you to talk about (you) between online and offline what would you say? Has the Internet impacted your life? And how? Can u tell me an example?

• Can you share one episode that happened to you when you started using social networks that you find important and that you remember well?

o   Can you share one episode that happened to you recently in social media and what

<div dir="rtl">

ج. بين الانترنت والعالم الخارجي:

- كيف هي علاقاتك مع الاخرين على الشبكات الاجتماعية؟

- كيف تصفين علاقاتك مع الاخرين على الانترنت منذ بداية استخدامك له وحتى الان؟

- إذا سألتك عن مايحدث على الشبكة العنكبوتية وخارجها، كيف أثر الانترنت على حياتك؟ هل يمكنك ذكر أمثلة لذلك؟

- هل يمكنك تذكر حدث معين على الانترنت مازلتي تتذكرينه حتى الان منذ بداية استخدامك له؟ ولم مازال عالقا بذاكرتك؟

- كذلك هل هناك موقف على الشبكات الاجتماعية مثلا حدث معك مؤخرا تعتبرينه مميزا، مختلفا؟ ولماذا؟

</div>

D: Saudi Women:

• If u can describe Saudi Women in words, how can u define them? Distinguish them among other women?

• How have social media impacted Saudi Women online and offline?

. المرأة السعودية:

- إذا كان يمكنك وصف المرأة السعودية في بضع كلمات كيف تصفينها؟ كيف يمكن تمييز المرأة السعودية عن غيرها؟

- من وجهة نظرك كيف أثر الانترنت عموما و وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي خاصة على المرأة السعودية على الانترنت وخارج الانترنت؟

APPENDIX 8 – MAIN PHASE OF DATA COLLECTION

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW GUIDE

In-depth interview guide
The Saudi woman usage of social media
The after interview
January- February 2016
دليل المقابلة المتعمقة
استخدامات المرأة السعودية لشبكات التواصل الاجتماعي
المقابلة البعدية
يناير-فبراير ٢٠١٦

The (research subject) code:

رمز المبحوثة:

A. Using social media recently (During the last eight months (February to September)

- Have you created any new accounts on another social media platforms? If your answer is "Yes", please specify which platforms exactly, and the reason behind choosing them in particular?

- What are the most significant events you've followed or reacted upon (for example: a certain hashtag) during the previously stated period?

- Have you ever deleted any of your posts or comments on any social media platform? If your answer is "Yes", please specify why?

أ: استخدام الشبكات الاجتماعية في الفترة السابقة

- (خلال هذه الأشهر الثمانية)من فبراير إلى سبتمبر:
- هل قمتِ بإنشاء حسابات جديدة على شبكات اجتماعية أخرى؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فماهي هذه الشبكات وما سبب اختيارك لها؟
- ماهي أبرز الأحداث التي قمت بمتابعتها أو التفاعل معها)هاشتاج مثلا (خلال هذه الفترة؟
- هل سبق أن قمت بحذف مشاركات على أي من الشبكات الاجتماعية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فلم؟

B. Questions, related to the researcher notes while following accounts, in particular:
(Will be sent in a separate file)

ب. أسئلة تتعلق بملاحظات الباحثة أثناء متابعة الحسابات)بشكل خاص(:

318

C. Questions, related to the researcher notes while following accounts, in general:

The last patch of my questions is related to me following all accounts of the research subjects generally. I have came across a few observations in that period that I want to ask you about:

1- Do you often connect you accounts? For instance, do you connect your Twitter account to your Instagram? Which accounts do you prefer doing that to, and which you don't? If the answer is "no" please specify why?

2- Have you ever bumped into the word "feminism" while using any social media platform? If you answer is "Yes", what do you think of Experiencing "feminism" in the Saudi society/ by the Saudi women.

3- I have witnessed a wide appealing from some Saudi women on reading Simone de Beauvoir writings, and watching Suffragette. Have you read anything for Beauvoir or watched that certain movie? If your answer is "Yes", why do you think they both witnessed that much of appeal?

4- I' d like to ask you about some specific hashtags, which was very active especially during the last 8 months. We have noticed that some people have participated in sharing it, while others declined. Anyway, what do you think of those who participated and those who declined? Have you participated yourself? And please explain your answer either way. (Yes: participated, No: declined).

#Saudiwomen_dominates_libralwomen

#International_women_day 8th of March 2016

#Iammyownguardian

#Together_to_cancel_guardianship_system

#Polygamy_assembly

#Government_should_pay_for_saudiwomen_drivers

#What_awakening_had_provided

#stopenslavingsaudiwomen

#Burkiniban #burkini

ج. أسئلة تتعلق بملاحظات الباحثة أثناء متابعة الحسابات)بشكل عام(:

آخر قسم من أسئلتي يتعلق بمتابعتي عموما لكل حسابات المبحوثات، وقمت بحصر عدد من الملاحظات في تلك الفترة التي أود سؤالك عنها:

١ ـ هل تقومي بربط الحسابات ببعضها؟ مثلا تويتر بانستجرام؟ ماهي الحسابات التي تقومي بربطها والتي تفضلين عدم ربطها؟)إذا كانت الإجابة بلا فلماذا؟(

٢ـ هل مر عليك مصطلح النسوية من خلال استخدامك للشبكات الاجتماعية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فما رأيك في استخدام النسوية في المجتمع السعودي/المرأة السعودية؟

٣ـ Suffragette لاحظت إقبال عدد من السعوديات على قراءة أعمال سيمون دي بوفوار ومشاهدة فيلم قرأتي لسيمون أو شاهدتي الفيلم؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فماهو برأيك سبب هذا الإقبال عليهما؟

٤ـ أود سؤالك عن بعض الهاشتاقات التي كانت نشطة خلال الـ٨ أشهر الماضية، البعض شارك فيها والبعض لم يشارك، على كل حال، ماذا تعرفين عن كل منهم، هل قمت بالمشاركة فيه ولماذا في الحالتين (نعم:المشاركة ولا:عدم المشاركة)

#سعوديات_يسقطن_الليبراليات

#يوم_المرأة_العالمي ٨ مارس ٢٠١٦

#اليوم_العالمي_للمرأة

#سعوديات_نطالب_بإسقاط الولاية

#معا_لإنهاء_ولاية_الرجل_على_المرأة

#stopenslavingsaudiwomen

#Burkiniban #burkini

#جمعية_تعدد_الزوجات

#سعوديات_يطالبن_براتب_للسائقين

#ماذا_قدمت_الصحوة

D. The end of the interview

- Do you have any additional questions?
- Do you want to add anything?

د. نهاية المقابلة:

ـ هل لديك أي أسئلة إضافية؟

ـ هل تودين إضافة أي شيء؟

Thank you for your participation in my research, I really appreciate the time you have given helping me, and answering my questions. I also appreciate the amount of information you have shared during the study. As I value you taking part of this study I want to offer you a gift from me as a researcher, a 10$ voucher from Amazon gift card in return of your precious contribution.

APPENDIX 9 – DEDOOSE CODING EXAMPLE

Codes

- ▶ activists & activism
- ▶ afforances/features and interfaces
- ▶ audience
- ▶ censorship
- ▶ criticism/opinion/
- ▶ cross gender communication
- ▶ different practices across different platforms
- ▶ friending/ relationships (both offline and online)
- ▶ Identity
- ▶ Linguistics/wording/expressions
- ▶ Mapping Online Practices
- ▶ online representation
- ▶ online spaces (SMPs) as places
- ▶ online/offline contexts
- ▶ outside-inside saudi arabia
- ▶ personal identity development
- ▶ practices changed
- ▶ public vs privet
-     right-accepted/wrong-notaccepteded practice
- ▶ Saudi society,cultural norms, tratiditions, values

Saudi Women

-     SMP celebrisim
- ▶ SMP two-folded
- ▶ SMPs filtering
- ▶ SMPs locating
- ▶ social media consumption
- ▶ social media platforms value
- ▶ usage and consumption
- ▶ veiling
- ▶ ىا voice approach (I) = identity

APPENDIX 10– EXAMPLE OF THE DATA ANALYSIS OF A2 (PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANT) FIRST INTERVIEW WHICH WAS THE ONLY INTERVIEW CONDUCTED IN ENGLISH. THIS WAS PART OF THE MAIN PHASE OF THE INTERVIEWS ANALYSIS, ACCOMPANIED WITH THE MAIN DATA INTERVIEWS

A2 1st interview:
- she asked for an English interview because it will be easier for me to transcribe and analyze, she is a master degree holder from UAE in social media and public relations, she also hold a bachelor in English literature and translation from Saudi Arabia, she worked as a translator for a long time.

A: Previous Internet and Social Networks Usage Experience:

1: Internet Usage in General:

- For how many years have you been using the Internet?

2012

at which age

- maybe 21st
- Why did you use it at first?
- it was something related to my college it wasn't like heavy if I have research I go online and search about it, then when I first had my iPhone in 2011 I started using the internet in general and I felt that it is very important.

- what about the websites you were using?
- I used to go to two forums but it wasn't like skimming it was like participating and do something there then I focused only on Twitter

2: Social Networks Usage:

- What was the first Social network/s that you've used?
- basically, if I can say it is Twitter, but before that I don't know if that considered as social networking that msn messenger (Microsoft massager) but then Twitter like heavily Twitter.

- What were your profile avatar/s, bio/s, and design/s?
- it was like a normal like I picked from google image but I don't remember it was so normal like a woman with a veil and I think it is been there for a long time I haven't even change it you can see it there in Twitter it is still

Comments (right margin):

Commented [AG1]: -one of the lenses to see/understand the data/intro to data analysis:
-family/community/others/reputation/audience/censorship
عيب/سمعة/عرض-
-what is right what is wrong

Commented [AG2]: لازم تتكلمي عن حماسة المتكلم مقارنة بالواقع
what she says vs what she does or what she can do. despite her 'enthusiasm' in reality she adheres her parents then her husband like Careem and Uber for example. Saudi women change and activism is 'comfy' online, but when it comes to the 'reality' their families, community etc. their 'actions' is restricted and 'prohibited'. Yes, they've changed in a sense, how they think what they believe etc., hence, what they can do cannot change unless the offline sphere 'reality' changes; allows them to make the change they want. However, measuring the 'impact' of the online on the offline is beyond the ... of this research.

Commented [AG3]: what is the theme of this interview?

Commented [AG4]: table for all participants when they started using the internet

Commented [AG5]: the same table

Commented [AG6]: theme the beginning

Commented [AG7]: M2 also, knowledge, educational

Commented [AG8]: smart phones

Commented [AG9]: years needs to be filled into a sheet with the related event

Commented [AG10]: value/importance, motivation of usage

Commented [AG11]: theme beginning, all of them began with forums

Commented [AG12]: online spaces as places

Commented [AG13]: participating is doing

Commented [AG14]: Twitter is the beginning

Commented [AG15]: digital memories

Commented [AG16]: theme: what counts as social media?

Commented [AG17]: gendered identity, online identity-representation

in Instagram I have two one is so private it is only for my close friends and I only pose my pictures there, the other one used to be private but then I make it like public and I use it is like a public profile that I share my professional photos that is it.

- What are the social networks that you use mostly? And Why?
- I think we've passed the first part of the question, (And Why) is the second one what is so special about
- • Goodreads
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Instagram

actually Facebook I don't use it heavily I use to use it back in Dubai because I was **working** in social media Facebook is part of my job so yeah from that I used to like **of course occasionally** on Facebook the active sometimes but **when I came here I just forgot it totally,** for Path I feel it is like a friendly I can say it like a 'comfy' social platform for me because I can share my thoughts my pictures my locations what I am listening to what I am watching anything that comes to your mind and all my **friends** are there the friends that I cannot meet physically or face to face I can meet them like you know **for digital they** are also my close **friends** so I found myself there so yeah this like '**Path is on the top of the top**'

- Is your online appearance/s (For example your profile) remain/s the same, or do you change it from time to time? If YES then what do you change and why?
- **actually you can see me on Twitter totally different person** I don't know **why maybe is the nature of Twitter it is like everybody there trying to be to like you know to 'showoff' and to reflex personality that they don't have** but for me no it is about like sharing stuff that worth to be shared there more public? Twitter is like it is actually I told you Twitter

Commented [AG41]:

Commented [AG42]: the figure of all the SMPs 'throw descriptions/comments of/on/about each platform (word cloud)

Commented [AG43]: KSA

Commented [AG44]: when u leave a platform u forgot it totally, remembering & forgetting (is it about the En and Ar? find out)

Commented [AG45]: Facebook

Commented [AG46]: why is it comfy?

Commented [AG47]: R1

Commented [AG48]: apart/online/away but close

Commented [AG49]: R2

Commented [AG50]: Path

Commented [AG51]: already asked, but could be argued that it is asking the same question in different forms (validity & reliability)

Commented [AG52]: I asked about appearance, she answered: 'different person'

Commented [AG53]: A1 said it is the backyard

Commented [AG54]: fraud online how she sees others

Commented [AG55]: for important, profession, do something there, useful medium

she can paint on faces like she is crazy like actually she could sell her soul through Instagram and now she is popular here and she most of the movie makers are using her to give some effects to their movies so yeah actually Saudi women made her way to just like you know to make her life more you know official through social media more I feel more than men because men they have all chances all the way so it is not they it is difficult for them but for women it is so difficult so for a Saudi women to reach that level is so amazing yeah

the last question about Saudi women: what about using their real names and the nicknames

for me it is so brave to use your real name because there is no shame on that for me I used to use nickname before that I don't know why I thought it is like you know it is ""عيب and my family will go against that and no actually if you use your real name you will be you will restrict yourself to not do shallow stuff that you know impact your image or you know crack your image on the internet so use your real name and just act who you are

is it difficult for them or easy or doesn't it depend?

u know some of them you know in our society to say a women's name is like your say either just قتلتي عرضهم يعني that is so so I don't see any harm to use your name at the end your name is your id your name is everywhere so if you use it on internet and use it wisely to watch out every word you writing so it is not difficult actually because you are gonna reflect who you are so if you write your name you will be restricting you're in yourself and for me it is very good but you're using your nickname no one will know you and from that point of view you will have the freedom to do everything you want

but did the internet and social networks specially made it easily more accepted to use their real face like avatars their real names

yeah maybe the last two years I 've notice that you know before that I was like how like when you like lesson in the beginning of a women a girl her picture is

Commented [AG110]: admiration, who u admire; goes to ideal identity paper

Commented [AG111]: men vs women in SA

Commented [AG112]: this part contains:
-SMPs as business, success platforms, opportunities, popularity, marketing
-Saudi women vs men online /offline spheres
-'mentalities' of Saudi women

Commented [AG113]: here it is about online representation/part of/aspect of online identity

Commented [AG114]: reputation

Commented [AG115]: -what she thinks now
-what she used to think

Commented [AG116]:
-when u talk about this particular participant u say how she, herself, represents her name differently across different platforms: Anfal, Anfal AlRajab: e.g., Twitter vs Path

Commented [AG117]: 2013-2015, goes to years/timeline part

Commented [AG118]: before 2013

324

APPENDIX 11 – TRANSLATION EXAMPLE

1. Original excerpt:

شوفي احنا مشينا في الخط الاجتماعي اذا انتي بتتكلمي عالمجتمع زمان ايام المنتديات وايام كانت الصحوة على اشدها ترى وانا كنت ضمن هذا المجتمع فانا كان بالنسبة لي ليش عالم تويتر عالم مفصول لانه لو تبي تقولي لاحد انك تراسلي ولد ولا بتكتبي ولا ما يعني ابدا ما هيعجبه انا من النوع اللي كنت نشيطة حفلات ومدري ايه ومن كان مسيطر على كل الأنشطة دي غير حقون الصحوة يعني او حقون توجه معين فما كنت اتكلم ما كنت اقول this is my second life

Ghayda's Translation:

'You see, we walked through this social trail[1], if you are talking about the situation of the Saudi society back then, within the online forums period, and when alsahwa era was on its peak, if you were part of this society, for me the Twitter realm was a secluded part, why? Because if you want to tell someone that you are texting a boy online or you write online no one will tolerate it[2]. I'm the type of people who are active, parties and stuff[3], and who were in charge/dominating such events? Alsahwa people[4], or any other certain party[5]. So, I used not to talk about certain things[6], this[7] was my [second life[8] (EN)]'

Translator's Revision/Translation:

'You see, we have already walked through that social phase; that if you're talking about the Saudi society situation at the time of thriving online forums and while AlSahwa era was reaching its peak. I used to be part of this world, of that phase. It's obvious why I call Twitter (consider Twitter as) a secluded place; If someone knows that you're texting a boy online, writing or blogging online, they might get judgmental. I was a very active person when it came to parties, and stuff like that, where AlSahwa people

[1] online intellectual movement

[2] they couldn't understand it

[3] cultural events

[4] highly conservative and extremist mentalities

[5] intellectual groups who dominated public social events in the society

[6] she means offline

[7] this isn't about Twitter only, it's about her whole early online experience

[8] The word second life was said in English

was in charge of all those activities, so I never talked about it, not to anyone [this was my second life (En)*]*

2. Original excerpt:

<div dir="rtl">

تويتر كان يعني كان من شسمه تطور طبيعي للفيسبوك فهمتي

</div>

Ghayda's Translation:
'Twitter was a natural progress to the Facebook .. you know what I mean, something I entered after Facebook'

Translator's Revision:
'Twitter was just the next more progressed step after Facebook, If you know what I mean, another platform that I joined after joining Facebook'

3. Original excerpt:

<div dir="rtl">

فيسبوك ما طولت فيه ما كان نشاطي فيه ثقافي كان اجتماعي يعني عائلي تواصل عائلي فقط

</div>

Ghayda's Translation:
'it wasn't an intellectual activity, it was a familial one, family communication/ties only'

Translator's Revision:
'I joined Facebook just for a little while, I was never active on an intellectual level, I just used it to communicate with my family"

4. Original excerpt:

<div dir="rtl">

لا لا مش انه احد قال لي عليه بس احب اني اخذ وادي مع ناس مو شرط ضروري نقابل بعض في الحياة الواقعية عرفتي احب اننا نتكلم نسولف في خارج احب اني اصمم صور احب اني انزل مقالات احب يعني انا لو مثلا اشتغلت في مجلة مرة حيصير.... لاني باستمرار احب الكتابة طبعا من تركتها صرت كلها اكتب عال... انسق مثلا مش لازم ليا تكون خاطرة لكِ مثلا اخذها اوركبها على صور يعني خاصة الفيسبوك على اني نزلت صور كثيرة كلها تصاميم

</div>

Ghayda's Translation:
'no, not because someone told me about it, it's because I like to communicate with people who I won't necessarily meet in real life, you know, I like to talk about topics beyond the offline sphere, I like designing pictures and add captions to them, post articles, I mean .. if I worked for a magazine it would be great because I love writing

326

(A11 didn't complete the sentence) it doesn't have to be a prose of my own (that she wrote), it could be a prose of yours I take it and add it as a caption to a picture .. especially Facebook. I posted so many pictures .. all of them were my designs'

Translator's Revision:

'No, it wasn't because of someone's recommendation or anything, I joined it because I like to get along with people, whom I won't necessarily meet on real life, You know, I like to talk about topics beyond the offline virtual sphere, got it? I like designing pictures, and posting them with added quotes, I also like writing articles, I mean it would be great, if I could work in a magazine oneday (A11 didn't complete the sentence) as I always like to write and write again. The caption doesn't always have to be written by me, it could be your prose or part of a poem written by someone,and I might post it along with a picture designed by me, especially on Facebook, I posted so many pictures, they were all designed by me'

5. Original excerpt:

ايه طبعا من البداية بديت باسمي الصريح كان برضو فيه اهتمام ثقافي في الفيسبوك انا وصديقاتي كنا ناوين نسوي جروب ثقافي فكنا زي استخدمنا الفيسبوك يعني كمنصة لهذا الموضوع وسوينا جروب هناك فيه و اذا سوينا ايفينت نشاركها هناك بس كان الاستخدام الاصلي اذكر بنات الجامعة مش بنات .... يعني بس كان فيه اهتمام ثقافي هذيك الفترة يعني يعني ساعدنا كثير في بداياتنا اذكر لما سوينا الجروب وزي كذا

Ghayda's Translation:

'the basic usage was with my university friends.. not other girlfriends .. I mean there was an intellectual interest at that time/back then, I mean I mean it helped us a lot in our beginnings when we created the group and so on'

Translator's Revision:

'Yes of course, I joined Facebook stating my real name from the very first moment. We basically cared for it on intellectual level, I mean we needed to start a cultural group, and Facebook was the perfect platform for that, and we there shared all cultural events. Yet, the main and basic usage behind if was connecting mainly with our college girls colleagues. At that time people had much interest in cultural topics and I believe we helped that aim a lot back then'

6. Original excerpt:

ايش ابغا بوحدة تتابعلي مكياج وما مكياج والخرابيط هاذي اروح السوق وأسألها وانتهى الموضوع ادخل المول اتسوق وانتهى الموضوع الاشياء اللي مو موجودة في بلدي

Ghayda's Translation:

'why would I follow someone who is interested in makeup and trivia stuff, I could go to the shopping mall and find them, do some shopping and that's it'

Translator's Revision:

'Why would I be interested in following someone who updates me with makeup and all that mumbo jumbo related stuff, while I could go to a mall and start shopping for those things, and that's it. Yet, I would be more interested to follow the talk about things that I can't already find in my country'

7. Original excerpt:

حياتي تواصل كتابي

Ghayda's Translation:

'My whole life is written-textual communication'

Translator's Revision:

Yours is great, Ghayda ♥, just add "a" *(a written- textual…)*

8. Original excerpt:

اللي انا اتابعهم نقوة الناس صعبة وما ادخل بسرعة في احد يعني سبحان الله ما تقولي تجارب اوصح صغيرة بس مااندفع عندي الاندفاع مرة مرة صعب في الكلية يعني عندي صاحبتين وثلاثة بس وللان بس على تواصل واتصال

Ghayda's Translation:

'I follow people whom I chose carefully, seldom that I take my relationships with people to another level, not because I've been through many experiences, yes I am young, though I'm not (translate) it's very hard for me to (translate), in college I had two or three friends only, and we're still in touch, so about my online relationships, no there weren't any face to face meetings'
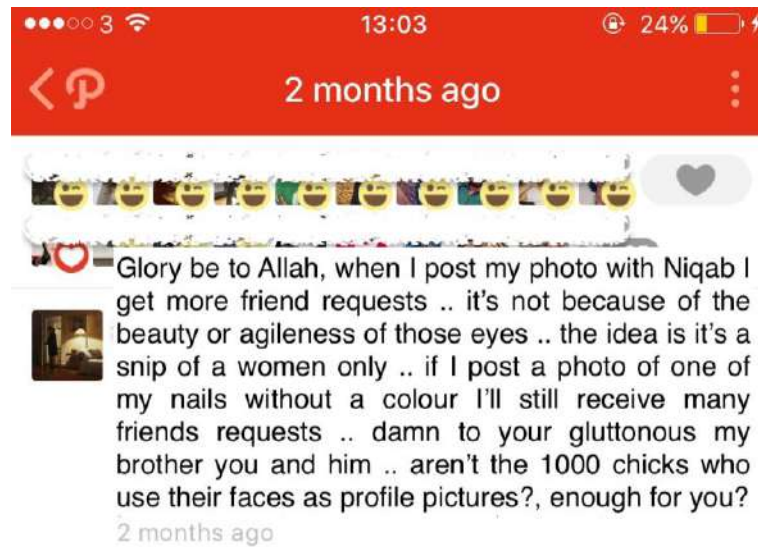
Translator's Revision:

It's true I am still young, but I don't think of myself as an impulsive person, I don't get impulsive that easy; in college I had only two or three friends that I am still in touch with till now.

9. Original excerpt:

سبهااان الله لين حطيت صورتي بالنقاب كثرت ███ طلبات الصداقة .. هو مب من زين وإلا شين هالعيون .. هو بس فكرة إنه طرف حرمة .. لو أحط ظفري وبدون مناكير بعد بتكثر طلبات الصداقة .. الله أبو شفاحتكم أخوي أنت وياه .. يعني ما كفاكم المليون ألف مزة اللي حاطين وجيههم

2 months ago

Ghayda's Translation:

Glory be to Allah, when I post my photo with Niqab I get more friend requests .. it's not because of the beauty or agileness of those eyes .. the idea is it's a snip of a women only .. if I post a photo of one of my nails without a colour I'll still receive many friends requests .. damn to your gluttonous my brother you and him .. aren't the 1000 chicks who use their faces as profile pictures?, enough for you?

2 months ago

Translator's Revision:

I am wondering, once I put my photo wearing Niqab, I receive more friend requests. I don't think that they do that for the sake of how beautiful or hideous my eyes must have looked, but just the idea of them seeing something related to a woman… once I put a photo of my unpolished nail, again I receive more friend requests… how ungenerous of you people…. Can't you have enough of hundreds of chicks online already showing their faces

10. Original excerpt:

الدماغ كـ الخيل ...يمكن ان تنطلق به تسابق الريح.. و يمكنك ان
تربطه ليجر المحراث

Ghayda's Translation:

A mind is like a horse, you can compete the winds with it ..
and you can tide it to Plows the plow

Translator's Revision:

A mind is more of a horse, you can use it while racing with no limits of speed, and you
can diminish its strength into just pulling the plough

11. Original excerpt:

ربي ورب الأسئلة

Ghayda's Translation:

My lord and the God of the Wondering

Translator's Translation:

My lord and the god of all wonderings and queries.

APPENDIX 12 – PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS BASED ON THIS DOCTORAL WORK

- ## PRESENTATIONS

- Poster presentation at the British Sociological Association (BSA), April 2017: *Saudi Women's Online Practices on Social Media Platforms: A Qualitative Multi-Method Study.*

- Presentation at METHOD2017, Sheffield Hallam University, May 2017: *Position, Power and Relation: Reflections of a Saudi Female Researcher.*

- Presentation at Digital Stuff, Cardiff University, July 2017: *Saudi Women's Online Practices on Social Media Platforms: A Qualitative Multi-Method Study.*

https://digitalstuffcardiff.wordpress.com/events/conference/presentations/session-1/

- Presentation at Pantheon Sorbonne, Paris, France, February 2018: *Two Decades of Online Practices (1998 – 2018): What Can We Learn? The Case of Saudi Women.*

https://orientsoccidents.hypotheses.org/388

https://orientsoccidents.hypotheses.org/428

- **PUBLICATIONS**

- Extended abstract presented at (and published in the proceeding of) Designing Interactive Systems (DIS) 2017, Workshop on Designing for the Arab World, June 11, 2017, Edinburgh, UK:

Aljuwaiser, G. (2017, June). Western Design, Arab Adoption: Social Media Platforms and Arab Cultural Contexts; The Case of Saudi Women's Online Practices. In *Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Designing Interactive Systems, Workshop on Designing for the Arab World* (pp. 24 – 29). ACM.

https://arabhci.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/arabhci-dis17-proceedings.pdf

- Extended abstract presented at (and published in the proceeding of) iConference 2018, March 2018, University of Sheffield:

Aljuwaiser, G. A. (2018). Saudi Women Online Practices on Social Media Platforms: A Qualitative Multi-Method Study. *iConference 2018 Proceedings*.

https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/100231

- Journal article published November 2018:

Aljuwaiser, G. (2018). Cultural adoption through online practices across social media platforms: the case of Saudi women. *Cyberorient, 12*(1).

http://www.cyberorient.net/article.do?articleId=9899