



The Role of Influencers on Social Media in Disseminating Values of Material Luxury Among Algerian Youth: A Field Study in the Municipality of Souidania

AMMARI AMEL

University of Algiers 2 (Algiers, Algeria)

amel.ammari@univ-alger2.dz

ID : 0009-0003-5761-9277

MAMMERI DJAMILA

University of Algiers 2 (Algiers, Algeria)

djamila.mammeri@univ-alger2.dz

ID : 0009-0004-0882-508X

Louiza Malek

University of Algiers 2 (Algiers, Algeria)

louizamalek.12@gmail.com

0009-0007-5976-8136

Received: 10/01/2026 ; **Accepted :** 15/03/2026 ; **Published:** 22/06/2026

Abstract

This study aimed to deconstruct the socio-communicative impact of digital influencers in shaping consumer consciousness and directing young people's preferences toward values of material well-being and body-related practices in the municipality of Souidania. The study was based on a central research problem that questioned the nature of this influence in light of the declining role of traditional socialization institutions. To achieve the objectives of the research, an integrated theoretical approach combining the structural-functionalist perspective and the theory of digital cultivation was adopted. A quantitative methodology was applied to a purposive sample of 150 young individuals, and a questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument.

Keywords: Digital influencer; Digital cultivation theory; Material well-being; Body practices; Youth.

Introduction

Contemporary society is witnessing a radical transformation in its value and behavioral structures, driven by the massive technological boom and the emergence of social media platforms as a key actor in shaping modern socialization. The digital space is no longer merely a channel for communication or transient entertainment; rather, it has evolved into an integrated socio-communicative environment exercising a powerful symbolic influence in reshaping both collective and individual youth consciousness. This is particularly evident through the rise of “digital influencers” as reference groups and alternative role models that attract the attention of younger generations behind screens.



In the context of this accelerating communicative flow, traditional socialization institutions—particularly the family system—are experiencing a functional imbalance in regulating and shaping youth cognitive and behavioral preferences. This has opened the way for digital influencers to steer the consumer consciousness of this group. This influence is clearly manifested in the adoption of emerging concepts centered on “material well-being” as the sole measure of success and social prestige, as well as the increasing emphasis on “body rituals” and physical appearance as symbolic and competitive values for self-affirmation and social distinction among peers.

This study seeks to shed light on this phenomenon within the Algerian local context, focusing on a sample of youth from the municipality of **Souidania**. It examines the relationship between the intensity of exposure to digital influencers and the transformation of value perceptions related to consumption and appearance. The study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining the structural-functionalist perspective and the theory of digital cultural cultivation. It also relies on a descriptive methodology and a questionnaire administered to a purposive sample of 150 young respondents, with the aim of deconstructing the mechanisms of this influence and identifying its field manifestations that are reshaping the consumer identity of Algerian youth.

1-The Research Problem:

The media system has undergone profound structural transformations throughout history, from the primitive traditional means and mass communication that characterized the twentieth century—seen as an extension of human senses, according to Marshall McLuhan—to the digital revolution of social media platforms in the twenty-first century. This accelerating technological expansion has not only dissolved spatial and temporal boundaries, but has also enabled digital spaces to perform sociological roles and to reshape functions that were once exclusive to traditional socialization institutions, foremost among them the family, as the primary transmitter of cultural heritage and the social imaginary.

Accordingly, social media platforms have become today the main competitor to the family in shaping the consciousness of younger age groups, particularly youth. This increasing exposure and continuous digital immersion are explained through the propositions of Cultivation Theory, which states that intensive and regular exposure to digital content on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok inevitably produces long-term cumulative effects on the cognitive and value systems of young people. This continuous reception contributes to distorting their perception of social reality and replacing it with a constructed and directed vision that corresponds to the virtual content presented by influencers, thereby generating a behavioral readiness to adopt such modern patterns as the dominant cultural standard.

These structural transformations can be approached sociologically through the structural-functionalist perspective, by identifying the dysfunction affecting traditional socialization institutions. This has allowed the emergence of the digital space as an alternative subsystem possessing its own mechanisms of regulation and guidance through processes of cultural cultivation (cultivation), contributing to the transformation of contemporary individuals into



what Gilles Lipovetsky describes as “liquid individuals,” where materialist thinking dominates, the culture of appearance and bodily commodification is reinforced, and the senses are subdued under the authority of the mobile image, which imposes a temporal and psychological presence accompanying young people in the most detailed aspects of their daily lives.

This phenomenon is objectively manifested in the increasing attraction of youth toward “digital influencers,” who have, through their daily and entertainment-oriented content, become reference groups and models of personal success and development. Based on the field data of the exploratory study conducted in the municipality of Souidania (Algiers Province), it was found that this influence operates through clear dynamic mechanisms observed in youth reality. These mechanisms are completed through behavioral imitation resulting from cultivation processes, reflected in changes in clothing styles, hairstyles, and an increasing tendency toward the consumption of luxury goods, fast food, and supplements (such as synthetic protein), in pursuit of a physical body that mirrors the influencer’s ideal image. This ultimately results in a directed cultural cultivation that produces a complete appropriation of consumer consciousness and orients youth behavioral preferences toward the dominant modern trend.

From this perspective, the research problem of the present study lies in attempting to uncover the nature of the psycho-social and communicational mechanisms used by digital influencers on social media platforms, and how these mechanisms contribute to reshaping the value structure of Algerian youth in the municipality of Souidania, particularly in its dimension related to material luxury and bodily rituals, during a critical age stage in which identity and personality are being formed. This leads to the formulation of the following main research question: How do the communicational and entertainment mechanisms of digital influencers on social media contribute to the cultivation of consumer consciousness among the youth of Souidania municipality, and direct their behavioral preferences toward adopting values of material luxury and bodily rituals?

2. Study Hypothesis:

- The communicational and entertainment mechanisms adopted by digital influencers contribute to the cultivation of consumer awareness among youth and direct their behavioral preferences toward adopting values of material luxury and bodily rituals among the youth of Souidania municipality.

3. Conceptual Definitions:

1/ Social media platforms: Social media platforms are defined as internet-based applications focused on user-generated content, which includes impressions created by users, typically experience-based, shared, and archived online for easy access by others who may be influenced by these impressions (Zerouati & Sayah, 2020, p. 7).

2/ Digital influencer: A digital influencer is defined as a social actor within the virtual space who possesses a large audience of followers on social media platforms and derives symbolic authority from their ability to produce daily and interactive content, making them a “reference



group” capable of influencing the choices and attitudes of recipients (Schröder & Van den Bulck, 2020).

Operationally:

It refers to any content creator (Algerian or foreign) followed regularly by the youth of Souidania municipality on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, and who represents for them a role model in appearance or behavior.

3/ Digital Cultivation: Digital cultivation is the cumulative communicational mechanism resulting from continuous and intensive exposure to digital content through new-generation media platforms, which, over time, reshapes users’ cognitive and value structures and standardizes their perceptions of social reality in line with the patterns presented virtually (Dahlgren, 2021).

Operationally:

It refers to the frequency and intensity of exposure of Souidania youth to digital influencers, which gradually and imperceptibly leads to the cultivation of their awareness toward adopting specific lifestyles and consumption patterns.

4/ Material luxury: It is a value-oriented cultural tendency emerging from hyper-consumption societies, where individual worth is no longer measured by traditional social status but by the ability to pursue leisure commodities, material display, and bodily and aesthetic commodification as tools for identity construction and the pursuit of instant pleasure and luxury (Lipovetsky, 2006, p. 28).

Operationally:

It refers to the tendency of Souidania youth to adopt a lifestyle based on imitation of the luxury consumption patterns displayed by digital influencers, where purchasing behavior is not driven by basic biological or functional needs, but primarily by symbolic value and prestige. The acquisition of brands, visiting luxurious places, and following travel and entertainment trends presented online become the main criteria for achieving happiness, social status, and distinction among peers.

5/ Body rituals: Body rituals are defined as a set of visible behavioral and physical practices performed by individuals on their bodies (such as clothing, grooming, muscle building, and cosmetic use) in order to reshape physical appearance and market it as a form of “symbolic capital” aligned with prevailing aesthetic standards in society (Dahlgren, 2021).

Operationally:

They refer to the behavioral changes among Souidania youth in clothing style, hairstyles, or the consumption of dietary supplements (such as proteins) in order to achieve a physical body and outward appearance that mimics the ideal image of influencers.

4. Theoretical Framework of the Study:

This study is based on an integrated sociological and communicational approach that combines the structural-functional perspective as a sociological framework explaining structures and roles, which views society as a system composed of interrelated parts and focuses on the relationships between these parts and the society as a whole (Talat Lotfi &



Kamal Abdel Hamid Al-Zayyat, 2012, p. 77), and the theory of digital cultivation as a communicational framework explaining long-term influence mechanisms and processes of value standardization.

This approach aims to deconstruct the impact of digital influencers on consumer behavior and body rituals among the youth of Souidania municipality, and its main components are structured as follows:

1. Structural-Functional Perspective (Structural Functionalism): The study adopts the functionalist approach to explain the transformation in the roles of socialization institutions. The family is viewed as an original social system that has experienced a functional dysfunction in regulating and guiding the values of younger generations due to technological influx. This gap has allowed social media environments to emerge as an “alternative subsystem” that has absorbed the roles of traditional institutions and redefined value-based functions by presenting “digital influencers” as new reference groups that determine standards of behavior and social conformity, in line with the demands of contemporary consumer society.

2. Digital Cultivation Theory (Digital Cultivation Theory): If functionalism explains “why” the family has declined and the digital sphere has advanced, cultivation theory (developed by George Gerbner and adapted to the digital context) explains “how” this influence operates empirically. The study assumes that the intensive and regular exposure of the youth of Souidania municipality to the daily and entertainment-oriented lifestyles of influencers produces a long-term cumulative effect that reshapes their cognitive imaginary. This continuous cultivation gradually draws youth consciousness toward adopting the virtual images displayed on screens—values of material luxury, appearance, and branding—as the “real and ideal cultural reality” to be imitated and reproduced in everyday life.

5. Field Study Methodological Procedures:

Study Population and Sample (Population and Sample):

- **A. Study Population:** The target population consists of Algerian youth (males and females). The field has been geographically limited to the youth of Souidania municipality (Algiers Province), due to its semi-urban nature and significant sociological and urban transformations, making it a fertile environment for observing the impact of digital flows on youth behavior.
- **B. Sample:** Based on the nature of the phenomenon and the requirements of the quantitative approach, a purposive sample of 150 respondents was adopted. The justification for this sampling method lies in a key sociological criterion: targeting young people who have active accounts on social media platforms.
- **C. Research Method:** In line with the objectives and hypotheses of the study, a quantitative method was adopted. Epistemologically, the quantitative approach is based on the paradigm of objective measurement of individuals’ characteristics and behavioral traits within a group, allowing for the observation of field indicators in a comparative manner to reach robust sociological generalizations and conclusions.



Operationally, this approach is implemented through a questionnaire as the main tool for data collection and quantification of the phenomenon.

The quantitative method enabled the measurement of the extent and distribution of materialism and individualism among the youth of Souidania, as well as tracking variations according to socio-demographic, psychological, and social variables. It also allowed the quantification of indicators derived from the theoretical framework, which were operationalized into direct and indirect questions measuring youth engagement with digital platforms, their interaction with influencers, and the extent of their imitation of digitally displayed lifestyles.

In the data analysis phase, the collected field data were coded and tabulated into simple (univariate) and cross-tabulation statistical tables, followed by an integrated reading combining numerical statistical analysis with systemic sociological interpretation to unpack the mechanisms through which postmodern values permeate the behavioral system of the study sample.

The questionnaire is considered the primary instrument and the backbone of quantitative data collection in this study; it was designed and constructed based on the theoretical foundations and indicators derived from the research hypotheses.

6/- Presentation and Discussion of Field Results:

Socio-demographic Variable Distribution

Socio-demographic variable	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	47	31.3
	Female	103	68.7
	Total	150	100

Age Distribution

Age	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
15–20	34	22.66
20–25	41	27.33
25–30	31	20.66
30–35	16	10.66
35–40	28	18.66
Total	150	100

Educational Level

Educational level	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Middle level	7	4.7
Secondary level	27	18
University level	92	61.3
Postgraduate (Master's–PhD)	24	16
Total	150	100



A- Presentation and Discussion of the Socio-demographic Data of the Study Sample:

The composite Table No. (1) provides a comprehensive reading of the socio-demographic structure of the study sample, consisting of 150 respondents from the youth of Soudania municipality. Their main characteristics are distributed as follows:

- **First: Gender variable:** The results show a clear numerical dominance of females, with 103 respondents representing (68.7%), compared to 47 males (31.3%). This indicates, at a preliminary level, that females in the studied area are more responsive and more engaged with the digital field under investigation.
- **Second: Age variable:** The findings reveal that the age group (20 to under 25 years) occupies the leading position in the sample with 41 respondents (27.33%), followed by the youth category (15–20 years) with (22.67%), then the (25–30 years) group with (20.67%). The remaining percentages are distributed among older age groups. This distribution reflects that the peak of digital engagement and consumption through online platforms is concentrated among university students and individuals in early stages of social independence, who are more exposed to digital screens and influencer content.
- **Third: Educational level variable:** The table shows a clear dominance of university-level respondents, with 92 individuals (61.3%), followed by postgraduate studies (16%), secondary education (18%), and finally middle school education (4.7%). This result clearly indicates that the educated and university-level segment of the youth population is the most engaged with social media platforms. Consequently, digital influence and exposure to influencers should not be understood as marginal or random behavior, but rather as a structured pattern practiced by an educated group that possesses both the technological and symbolic tools necessary to adopt contemporary modern values and consumption patterns.
- **Table 2: Time Spent on Social Media Platforms**

Time spent on social media	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	16	10.7
2 – 4 hours	82	54.7
More than 5 hours	52	34.7
Total	150	100

The statistical data presented in Table (2) shows that the overall trend indicates that the vast majority of the study sample youth in the municipality of El-Soudania fall within the category of high exposure to social media platforms, where digital influencers' accounts are highly prevalent. The first-ranked category is the group of young people who spend “2 to 4 hours” per day on social media, representing 54.7% (N=82). This is followed by the category of very heavy users who spend “more than 5 hours” per day, accounting for 34.7% (N=52). In contrast, the low exposure category (less than one hour) records the lowest percentage at only 10.7% (N=16).

**Table 3: Relationship Between Age and Interaction with Influencers' Content**

Age group	Non-interacting (N)	Non-interacting (%)	Interacting (N)	Interacting (%)	Total (N)	Total (%)
15–20	4	11.76	30	88.24	34	100
20–25	3	7.32	38	92.68	41	100
25–30	4	12.90	27	87.10	31	100
30–35	2	12.50	14	87.50	16	100
35–40	8	28.58	20	71.43	28	100
Total	21	14%	129	86%	150	100

. The cross-tabulated statistical data presented in Table (3) shows that the overall trend highlights strong indicators regarding youth engagement levels with digital influencers' content across different age groups. In general, the vast majority of respondents tend to interact with influencers' content, with an overall percentage of 86% (N=129), compared to a very small proportion of non-interacting respondents of 14% (N=21).

The highest level of digital interaction is recorded in the 20–25 age group, with a rate of 92.68% (N=38 out of 41 respondents), followed closely by the younger group aged 15–20, which also shows a very high interaction rate of 88.24% (N=30 out of 34 respondents).

The age groups 25–30 and 30–35 maintain similarly high and stable interaction levels, at 87.10% and 87.50% respectively.

In contrast, the oldest group in the sample (35–40 years) records the lowest level of interaction compared to the other categories, with 71.43% (N=20 out of 28 respondents). This group also shows the highest rate of non-interaction at 28.58%.

These descriptive findings confirm that interaction with digital influencers is a widespread behavior among the youth of El-Soudania. However, it reaches its peak intensity during early youth (15–25 years) and gradually declines with increasing age and social responsibility.

Table 4: Distribution of the Sample According to Reasons for Admiring Influencers' Lifestyle

Reason for admiration	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Freedom and disregard for others' opinions	54	36%
Adventures and luxurious lifestyle	39	26%
Lack of adherence to social customs and traditions	23	15.3%
Fame	15	10%
Elegance and personal style in clothing	19	12.7%
Total	150	100%

The statistical data presented in Table (04) reveals the underlying motivations and value systems behind the admiration of digital influencers among the youth sample in the municipality of El-Soudania. The first-ranked category is "freedom and disregard for others' opinions," with 36% (N=54).



The second most important motivation is directly related to lifestyle patterns, namely “adventures and the luxurious lifestyle they live,” with 26% (N=39). This is followed by “lack of adherence to social customs and traditions,” which accounts for 15.3% (N=23). The remaining percentages are distributed between “elegance and personal clothing style” at 12.7% (N=19), while “influencer fame” ranks last with only 10% (N=15).

Overall, these descriptive findings indicate that admiration for digital influencers is not merely driven by entertainment or superficial interest, but rather by deeper value-based and behavioral dimensions associated with the desire for individual freedom, and fascination with representations of material luxury and ostentatious lifestyles displayed on screens as an idealized model of life among youth.

General Discussion and Comprehensive Interpretation of Field Results

The statistical indicators extracted from the four field tables form an integrated explanatory system that objectively supports the study’s hypothesis, which states that the communicative mechanisms of digital influencers effectively contribute to the extraction of consumer consciousness and the orientation of youth preferences toward values of material luxury.

This socio-communicational dynamic can be interpreted through the following dimensions:

1. Time Intensity as a Core Structure of Digital Cultivation

The field results demonstrate a high level of continuous digital exposure among the youth of the municipality of El-Souidania to influencers’ accounts, where approximately 89.4% of respondents spend between 2 hours and more than 5 hours daily browsing and following content.

When this temporal indicator is correlated with the high engagement levels reaching 86% (peaking among the key age group 20–25 years at 92.68%), it becomes evident—communicatively—that we are not dealing with casual or sporadic exposure, but rather with a state of “fully immersive digital interaction.”

This sustained and prolonged engagement constitutes, according to Digital Cultivation Theory (Schröder & Van den Bulck, 2020), the fundamental mechanism of cumulative cognitive formation. A youth immersed for long hours in front of the screen unconsciously internalizes the visual and symbolic content presented, paving the way for a process of “value standardization” that reshapes their perception of social reality.

2. Value Rebellion and the Functional Alternative of Socialization Institutions

The cultivation process becomes more profound when examining the motivations behind youths’ admiration for influencers. The results show that the primary driver of continued following is attraction to the influencer’s “freedom and disregard for others’ opinions” (36%), coupled with “lack of adherence to customs and traditions” (15.3%).

From a sociological perspective, and within the Structural Functionalist framework (Parsons, 1951), these figures reflect a clear functional dysfunction in traditional socialization institutions (such as the family and local community in El-Souidania), which are no longer fully capable of regulating youth aspirations toward individual freedom.



This dysfunction has enabled the digital influencer to emerge as an alternative sub-system and a new reference group that attracts young people by presenting a model of the “autonomous and superior individual.” As a result, youth progressively detach from local normative frameworks and adopt an alternative value system constructed within the digital space.

3. The Induction of Consciousness Toward Material Luxury and Body Rituals

The final symbolic and material outcome of this cultivation process appears in the ranking of the second main motive: admiration for the influencer’s “adventures and luxurious lifestyle” (26%).

This fascination with an ostentatious lifestyle represents the practical embodiment of the concept of “material luxury,” where the digital environment has successfully shifted youth interests from basic utilitarian thinking toward symbolic and conspicuous consumption. In this context, the young individual comes to perceive brands, sculpted bodies, travel experiences, and luxury consumption—displayed on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok—as the only symbolic capital through which social status, happiness, and prestige can be achieved among peers (Dahlgren, 2021).

Conclusion

Based on the theoretical framework and the empirical field study, it can be stated that the digital space, represented by social media platforms and influencer accounts, is no longer merely an entertainment-based communicative environment. Rather, it has transformed into an alternative structural system endowed with soft power and a strong capacity to orient the collective consciousness of young people.

The field data from the youth of the municipality of El-Souidania reveal that the high temporal and interactive engagement with influencers constitutes the main cumulative mechanism of “digital cultivation.” Through this process, the consciousness of this group is gradually drawn into new patterns of perception, leading to the adoption of values of material luxury, aesthetics, and body rituals displayed on screens, and their normalization as benchmarks of social success and prestige.

From a sociological perspective, the results confirm that this value shift would not have expanded without a relative functional dysfunction in traditional socialization institutions—particularly the family and the local community—which have experienced a decline in their normative and regulatory capacity in the face of the algorithmic and visually attractive flow of digital influencers. This situation has allowed influencers to emerge as a new “reference group” that actively reshapes the cognitive and behavioral preferences of youth.

Finally, this study opens new research perspectives that call for strengthening media and digital literacy mechanisms, and for rebuilding the functional roles of traditional socialization institutions so that they can better protect youth awareness and achieve a structural balance between local cultural identity and the demands of contemporary digital consumer globalization.



References

1. Dahlgren, K. (2021). *Visual Cultivation on Social Media: How Instagram and TikTok shape youth perceptions of lifestyle and body image*. *Journal of Digital Culture & Society*, 7(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.14361/dcs-2021-0208>
2. Schröder, M., & Van den Bulck, J. (2020). *Digital Cultivation Theory: A dynamic model for algorithmic media environments*. *Media Psychology Review*, 24(3), 311–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2020.1789402>
3. Zerouati, M., & Sayah, F. (2020). Contribution of social media influencers to the local sustainable tourism development: Case study of the Algerian influencer Mohamed Djamel Taleb. *Journal of Development Research and Studies*, 7(2), 5–15.
4. Ghrairi, M., & Qallouz, I. (2016). The structural functionalist theory: Towards a new perspective for explaining social phenomena. *Journal of Studies and Research*, University of Chlef.
5. Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Free Press.
6. Parsons, T. (1951). *The Social System*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
7. Schröder, M., & Van den Bulck, J. (2020). Digital Cultivation Theory: A dynamic model for algorithmic media environments. *Media Psychology Review*, 24(3), 311–329.
8. Hussein Al-Nasser. (2020). *Youth stage: characteristics and changes*. Saudi Arabia.
9. Ibrahim Talat Lotfi, & Kamal Abdel Hamid El-Zayyat. (2012). *Contemporary theory in sociology*. Cairo: Dar Gharib for Publishing and Distribution.