

THE RISE OF DARIJA IN MOROCCAN DIGITAL ADVERTISING: LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND THE POWER OF INFLUENCE

A ASCENSÃO DA DARIJA NA PUBLICIDADE DIGITAL MARROQUINA: LINGUAGEM, IDENTIDADE E O PODER DA INFLUÊNCIA

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Received: 03 Jan 2025

Accepted: 05 Mar 2025

Published: 16 April 2025



Abstract: This article examines the sociolinguistic transformation of advertising in Morocco. It mainly focuses on the integration of Moroccan Arabic (Darija) in influencer marketing. Historically, Moroccan advertising has relied on French and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). This usage reflects class hierarchies and formal authority. However, the rise of digital platforms and social media influencers has brought a shift toward new, informal, localized, and affective modes of communication. Based on the literature in media studies, sociolinguistics, and marketing, this review shows how Darija has become a strategic linguistic resource to create cultural intimacy and audience engagement. The article tries to cover data from traditional advertising to influencer culture in order to examine language ideologies and hierarchies in Morocco. The goal is to see the commodification of Darija within globalized

marketing practices. By reviewing different studies and theoretical frameworks, this paper argues that the popularity of Darija in digital content is not simply a marketing trend, but a reflection of particular sociocultural changes. Therefore, this paper offers a critique on how language, identity, and consumer behavior are linked together in the context of Moroccan digital advertising.

Keywords: Influencer marketing. Darija. Digital advertising. Cultural intimacy. Media discourse. Ideology.

Resumo: Este artigo analisa a transformação sociolinguística da publicidade no Marrocos, com foco especial na integração do árabe marroquino (Darija) no marketing de influência. Historicamente, a publicidade marroquina tem se baseado no francês e no árabe padrão moderno (MSA), refletindo hierarquias sociais e autoridade formal. No entanto, o surgimento das plataformas digitais e dos influenciadores nas redes sociais provocou uma mudança em direção a formas de comunicação novas, informais, locais e afetivas. Com base na literatura das áreas de estudos de mídia, sociolinguística e marketing, esta revisão mostra como a Darija se tornou um recurso linguístico estratégico para criar intimidade cultural e engajamento do público. O artigo busca abranger dados desde a publicidade tradicional até a cultura dos influenciadores, a fim de examinar as ideologias e hierarquias linguísticas no Marrocos. O objetivo é analisar a mercantilização da Darija dentro das práticas de marketing globalizadas. Ao revisar diferentes estudos e marcos teóricos, o artigo argumenta que a popularidade da Darija no conteúdo digital não é apenas uma tendência de marketing, mas reflete mudanças socioculturais específicas. Assim, o texto oferece uma crítica sobre como linguagem, identidade e comportamento do consumidor estão interligados no contexto da publicidade digital marroquina.

Palavras-chave: Marketing de influência. Darija. Publicidade digital. Intimidade cultural. Discurso midiático. Ideologia.

1. Introduction

The Moroccan advertising has experienced a transformation especially with the different developments in digital technology, increased internet usage, and the popularity of social media. These structural changes have not only changed how products are marketed but also reshaped how communication and representation are portrayed in public discourse. Traditionally, Moroccan advertising primarily relies on top-down mass media platforms such as television, radio, and print. These sources actually share messages in a one-directional manner and often favor elite or urban consumers. These messages are generally delivered in French or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which are both languages associated with formality, modernity, and institutional authority. However, this pattern has shifted especially with the emergence of social media influencers and content creators whose communication style is more informal, personalized, and rooted in local linguistic and cultural references.

This shift from mass-mediated advertising to influencer-driven promotion reflects a global trend in which peer-to-peer marketing and authenticity have become key elements of successful brand strategies. In the Moroccan context, this transformation has a particularly complex dimension due to the country's multilingual reality and the sociopolitical weight of language choice. On the one hand, French continues to dominate high-prestige domains such as business, science, and administration; on the other hand, MSA retains its role in education and official communication. As for Moroccan Arabic (Darija), its use has often been restricted to the private domain since it is considered to be unsuitable for formal or professional environments. However, in recent years, Darija has emerged as a central language of digital communication especially within social media. In fact, influencers frequently adopt Darija in their videos, captions, and collaborations with brands and use it as a tool to create emotional intimacy, reflect everyday realities, and enhance the relatability of their content. Therefore, the growing presence of Darija in digital advertising has led to a set of important sociolinguistic and cultural questions: How does the use of Darija challenge traditional language ideologies that view it as informal or unworthy of public use? In what ways does it enable influencers to build trust and authenticity with their audiences? And how do these linguistic strategies reflect or reshape narratives about identity, modernity, and consumer behavior in Moroccan society? These questions are particularly relevant given the role of influencers and the fact that they are both cultural intermediaries and economic actors who contribute to the shaping of public taste, values, and aspirations.

Although there is a body of scholarship on influencer culture, digital marketing, and language politics in North Africa, the link between language choice and influencer advertising remains underexplored particularly from a Moroccan perspective. Existing studies tend to focus on either the sociolinguistic hierarchies between French, Arabic, and Amazigh in formal institutions, or on the political uses of language in media. Less attention has been paid to how Darija is being commodified and strategically used in the everyday practices of digital influencers who occupy an important space in the advertising economy. This article addresses this gap; it actually offers a sociolinguistic and cultural analysis of how Darija functions within social media advertising and even highlights its dual role as a marker of authenticity and a marketable linguistic asset.

The main objective of this study is to explore how the use of Darija in Moroccan influencer marketing have the ability to reshape patterns of communication, encourage audience engagement, and add a symbolic value in advertising. It is important to note that the article at hand adopts a literature-based approach and is based on theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics, media studies, and cultural theories. It reviews existing research on language and advertising, the emergence of influencer culture, and the commodification of language in neoliberal market contexts within the Moroccan setting. Through this interdisciplinary review, the article examines how Darija has become a legitimate, effective, and emotionally resonant tool used for commercial communication in the digital age.

This article is based on one main question which is: How has the use of Darija in digital advertising in Morocco redefined audience engagement, linguistic hierarchies, and consumer identity? This question is to understand that language is not merely a neutral vehicle for transmitting information but a social practice embedded with power, ideology, and cultural meaning. Studying the evolution of language use in Moroccan advertising and analyzing the symbolic functions of Darija in contemporary digital content offers new ideas about the ways linguistic and media practices construct notions of modern Moroccan identity, belonging, and consumption. Through addressing these elements, the article seeks to make a contribution to certain debates in the fields of media and communication, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies. It explores the need to consider the role of non-standard and vernacular languages in shaping the dynamics of digital culture and consumer engagement. Furthermore, this article also sheds light on how influencers mobilize local language resources not only to increase their reach and impact but also to negotiate their own position within Morocco's complex linguistic and cultural hierarchy. Therefore, this study argues that the rising of Darija in digital advertising is indicative of certain shifts within

the Moroccan society. These shifts are strictly related to language legitimacy, cultural proximity, and the changing nature of persuasion and representation in the age of social media.

2. Methodology

This article uses a qualitative, literature-based methodological approach. In fact, it provides a comprehensive and critical examination of the role of Darija in contemporary digital advertising that is mainly controlled by online influencers. Unlike empirical studies that rely on primary data collection methods, this research is an extensive review and synthesis of existing scholarly sources. The methodology reflects the article's nature as a theoretical and conceptual investigation rather than an empirical one; it falls within interdisciplinary academic conversations across sociolinguistics, media studies, digital marketing, and cultural studies.

The initial phase involves a systematic and strategic search for relevant academic literature. Sources are identified using academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories of universities. The focus is done on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference papers, and credible reports. Keywords used in the search include “*Moroccan Arabic advertising*”, “*Darija in digital marketing*”, “*influencer culture Morocco*”, “*language commodification*”, “*sociolinguistics of Morocco*”, and “*digital influencer marketing*”. This selection process prioritizes publications from the last twenty years to ensure contemporary relevance; however, there are certain works from earlier periods to provide historical and theoretical context.

Based on the interdisciplinary aspect of the paper at hand, literature is collected from multiple fields. For sociolinguistic research, it provides frameworks on language ideologies, linguistic hierarchies, and the symbolic value of vernacular languages within postcolonial societies. Media and communication studies are used since they offer an idea on digital marketing trends, influencer dynamics, and audience engagement strategies. For cultural studies and postcolonial theory, they both provide critical perspectives on identity construction, language politics, and hybridity in the Moroccan society. While the emphasis is on Moroccan studies to maintain cultural specificity, comparative studies from other North African and Middle Eastern contexts are also incorporated to enrich the analysis and draw parallels. It is important to note that the literature within this paper is organized both thematically and chronologically. On the one hand, the thematic categorization enables a

structured exploration of key topics such as the historical dominance of French and Modern Standard Arabic in Moroccan advertising, the socio-political implications of language choice, the rise of influencer culture as a new marketing paradigm, and the changing role of Darija as a strategic linguistic resource. On the other hand, the chronological ordering within themes facilitates the tracking of linguistic practices and marketing strategies over time. This portrays shifts brought about by digital technologies and changing consumer behaviors.

As for the conceptual framework, it is mainly derived from theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu on linguistic capital and Monica Heller on linguistic commodification. They are used to interpret the symbolic functions of Darija in influencer marketing. These theoretical lenses help readers understand that language is not only a communication tool but it is rather a marker of identity, power, and market positioning. The literature is analyzed critically; in fact, there is a comparison between different authors' perspectives to identify consensus, controversies, and gaps. This literature review method is chosen to explore the linkage between language, culture, and digital marketing without relying on empirical data collection. This approach allows the article to build on existing knowledge and synthesizing insights from various disciplines. The goal is to provide a coherent and in-depth understanding of how Moroccan influencers use Darija to negotiate authenticity, intimacy, and commercial appeal in the media environment.

3. Framing Language Use in Moroccan Media: A Critical Review

3.1. From Traditional Advertising to Influencer Culture

Advertising in Morocco has always followed international advertising trends but with certain local differences caused by the country's unique historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. For many years, the main medium for advertising in Morocco is traditional mass media including television, radio, and print outlets such as newspapers and magazines. Television commercials are particularly prominent and influential since they are often produced in French or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which are the two languages associated with formal communication, education, and authority. These advertisements typically use a top-down communication style and present products and brands with polished, formal messaging which is often intended for elite audience. This approach mirrors advertising models that focus on broadcasting messages from brands to passive consumers which emphasizes clarity, professionalism, and imagery (Ennaji, 2005).

However, in today's digital world, the increasing accessibility of the internet in Morocco has reshaped the conventions within media especially among younger

demographics who are more connected and socially active. This has led to a clear shift toward digital advertising strategies that prioritize engagement, interaction, and personalization over direct exposure. The rise of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and more recently TikTok, has created new spaces where brands can communicate more directly and actively with consumers. These platforms enable two-way communication and content sharing which can build communities and encourage emotional connections between brands and audiences.

This digital transformation has been accompanied by the rise of influencer culture; in fact, social media influencers have become key figures in Moroccan marketing ecosystems. Influencers act as micro-celebrities who engage in peer-to-peer communication which is different than the classical/traditional top-down advertising model. Their content is often informal, conversational, and local; these features make the ad. more relatable and authentic to the followers. This informal tone, combined with the use of everyday language and cultural references, allows influencers to build trust and emotional engagement more effectively than conventional advertisements (Abidin, 2015; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016).

In Morocco, this new trend has become popular. In fact, this reflects global developments but with an adaptation to local cultural and linguistic specificities especially that now influencers represent diverse social backgrounds and often bridge multiple languages and cultural registers. In fact, their ability to communicate in Darija along with French and sometimes English enables them to connect with various segments of society in a way that traditional advertising has struggled to do. This new paradigm is not only a shift in advertising technique but also signals a big transformation in how consumer identity is constructed and negotiated. Therefore, we can say that influencer marketing in Morocco plays a dual role; it is not only a market for products, but it also contributes to the shaping of cultural norms, social values, and language use within contemporary Moroccan society (Duffy, 2017; Zaid & Ibahrine, 2022).

3.2. Historical Language Hierarchies in Moroccan Media:

Language in Morocco carries a social, cultural, and political significance. Historically, the linguistic aspect of Moroccan advertising has reflected the different hierarchies and power dynamics within the Moroccan society. French, introduced during the colonial period and maintained as the language of administration, education, and the elite, has long symbolized modernity, prestige, and economic opportunity. It has dominated public life in professional settings and formal communication including traditional advertising.

Advertisements produced in French are often perceived as targeting the urban, educated elite since they are considered to convey sophistication and status. Similarly, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the standardized and formal variety of Arabic used across the Arab world, has served as the language of official discourse, religious texts, and media. MSA gives advertisements a sense of authority and legitimacy which are related to national identity and pan-Arab cultural affiliations.

By contrast, Darija, the Moroccan Arabic dialect spoken in daily life by the majority of Moroccans, is traditionally marginalized in formal and commercial domains. It is initially considered to be informal, colloquial, and even inappropriate for professional or public contexts; indeed, Darija is rarely used in advertising or media campaigns. Its use is often associated with oral, intimate, or low-prestige communication. This linguistic marginalization reflects particular social perceptions about the status of dialects versus “standard” languages and is usually linked to issues of class, education, and cultural authority (Bentahila & Davies, 2002).

However, social media and digital platforms have dramatically challenged these linguistic hierarchies. In digital advertising and influencer content, Darija has been considered to be the preferred language of communication. This shift is driven by the need for authenticity and closeness with audiences particularly younger consumers who value informal, relatable, and cultural interactions. Influencers and brands increasingly incorporate Darija in their posts, videos, and sponsored content to create a sense of intimacy and trust. The use of Darija enables them to connect on a personal level with followers which portrays the sense of shared cultural practices, humor, and everyday realities that might be lost or diminished in French or MSA.

Therefore, the rise of Darija in advertising is not simply a stylistic choice but a reflection of deeper social changes. It signals a growing acceptance and valorization of Moroccan dialect as a legitimate and powerful medium of communication. Moreover, Darija’s use in marketing reflects a hybrid linguistic identity, where speakers fluidly combine Darija with French and sometimes English to express modern Moroccan realities shaped by postcolonial, global, and local influences. This code-switching or language mixing becomes a marker of identity and belonging which could reinforce a sense of cultural pride and resistance to the elitism which is traditionally associated with French and MSA (Benrabah, 2013).

This means that the linguistic turn in Moroccan advertising has important implications for understanding power, representation, and consumer engagement. As Darija

gains ground, it challenges the conventional norms of linguistic prestige and redefines how language functions within Moroccan media and marketing. It also raises questions about who is included or excluded in this new linguistic dilemma, and how language shapes access to cultural and economic capital. This dynamic tension between standard and vernacular languages in advertising continues to change which reflects the ongoing negotiation of Moroccan identity in media.

3.3. Darija's Growing Presence in New Media and Advertising:

The increasing presence of Darija in new media and advertising represents a transformation in the Moroccan linguistic and cultural aspects. For many years, Moroccan Arabic/Darija has been largely excluded from formal communication channels, particularly in media and advertising. Instead, the linguistic space is generally dominated by French, seen as the language of modernity and prestige, and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the formal language of religion, education, and official discourse (Miller, 2013). Darija is relegated to informal, everyday conversations and often stigmatized as unsuitable for serious or professional contexts. However, the digital revolution and the rise of social media have dramatically altered this linguistic hierarchy.

Darija has found a natural home in the informal, interactive, and participatory environments of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. Influencers, content creators, and everyday users are embracing Darija as their preferred medium of communication. This has created content that resonates more with Moroccan audiences by reflecting their lived realities, humor, and cultural references (Ennaji, 2005). This shift is particularly significant among younger generations who view Darija not only as their mother tongue but as an important part of their identity and a means of asserting cultural authenticity in a globalized world (Boutkhil, 2016; Miller, 2012).

The use of Darija in new media allows influencers to cultivate a sense of intimacy and immediacy with their audiences. Unlike the top-down and scripted nature of traditional advertisements in French or MSA, Darija-based content often adopts a conversational, relatable tone, characterized by humor, colloquial expressions, and regional idioms. This informal register enables creators to build trust and emotional connections which are essential for successful influencer marketing. Brands have taken note and recognized that campaigns incorporating Darija tend to generate higher engagement rates and call for stronger consumer-brand relationships (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020).

Incorporating Darija into advertising is also a strategic response to the changing demographics and media consumption patterns in Morocco. Internet usage has increased especially among youth living in urban and peri-urban areas. These digital consumers prefer content that reflects their linguistic realities and cultural nuances. Therefore, advertisers use Darija not only to make their messages more accessible but also to position their products as locally and culturally relevant. This represents a move away from the homogenizing, elite-focused advertising strategies of the past toward a more inclusive and localized marketing approach. Furthermore, the rising of Darija in new media challenges longstanding sociolinguistic ideologies about language and power. The formal languages of French and MSA continue to hold institutional prestige, but the widespread use of Darija on digital platforms is democratizing language use and broadening the linguistic scope of Moroccan public life. This linguistic democratization reflects larger social and cultural shifts including the desire for greater cultural self-expression and the rejection of colonial linguistic legacies. It also highlights the fluidity and hybridity of Moroccan identity, as many users frequently code-switch between Darija, French, and English within a single piece of content which mirrors real-life multilingual communication (Miller, 2012).

However, the prominence of Darija in new media is not without its complexities. While it has enabled a big segment of society to engage in public discourse and advertising, the dominance of urban Darija dialects may marginalize speakers of rural dialects and minority languages such as Amazigh (Berber). These languages have historically been excluded from mainstream media and are less represented in commercial content which can raise concerns about linguistic diversity and cultural inclusion (Sadiqi, 2014). Additionally, the commodification of Darija raises critical questions about the line between cultural authenticity and marketing strategies: to what extent is the use of Darija a genuine expression of local identity, and to what extent is it a calculated commercial tactic aimed at appealing to consumer emotions?

Despite these challenges, the growing use of Darija in digital advertising represents a meaningful cultural shift. It signals a break with the past, where language is tightly controlled by social elites and institutions and opens new spaces for creative expression and cultural negotiation. As digital technologies continue to change and have more access to different regions of Morocco, Darija's role in media and advertising is likely to expand further. This can reshape notions of language, identity, and consumer culture in the country. This trend portrays the importance of recognizing language not only as a tool for communication but as a powerful marker of cultural belonging and social change in the Moroccan media.

3.4. Linguistic Commodification and Marketing Strategies

The use of language in marketing extends far beyond mere communication; it has become a strategic resource in the globalized economy. This is where linguistic elements are commodified and turned into marketable assets. Linguistic commodification refers to the process by which language varieties, styles, or dialects are packaged, sold, and exploited for economic gain in addition to the symbolic value of the products and brands (Heller, 2010). In the Moroccan context, the incorporation of Darija into advertising and influencer content is a clear example of this phenomenon.

Brands and marketers in Morocco increasingly recognize that language choices shape consumer perceptions and emotional responses. By using Darija, advertisers tap into a powerful cultural reservoir that resonates with local audiences' identities and experiences. Darija carries connotations of familiarity, warmth, and authenticity, qualities that modern consumers seek within this overwhelming flow of globalized and often impersonal marketing messages. This linguistic strategy makes products feel more accessible and culturally grounded which create a sense of trust and loyalty among consumers (Coupland, 2003).

This process goes with the concept of “globalization” which describes how global marketing practices are adapted to fit local cultural contexts (Robertson, 1995). In Morocco, global brands and local businesses alike adjust their promotional language to reflect local linguistic realities through mixing Darija with French or English to reach diverse segments of the population. This hybridity in language use signals not only a commercial tactic but also a negotiation of identity in a postcolonial society where language is deeply tied to history, power, and social belonging.

Darija's commodification also reflects an emergent cultural politics of language. For many young Moroccans, using Darija in advertising and influencer culture acts as a form of resistance against the perceived elitism of French and the formality of MSA. It challenges longstanding linguistic hierarchies by elevating a vernacular dialect that is usually stigmatized and excluded from public and commercial domains. Therefore, the rise of Darija in marketing discourses participates in redefining what is considered prestigious, modern, or “cool” language in Morocco (Bourdieu, 1991). Furthermore, this commodification is not without its tensions. While Darija's use in marketing celebrates cultural authenticity, it also risks oversimplifying or stereotyping Moroccan identity for commercial purposes. Marketers may selectively highlight certain linguistic or cultural traits that appeal to consumer desires while ignoring the full complexity and diversity of Moroccan society. The strategic

deployment of Darija can therefore serve both to empower and to instrumentalize cultural identity. Therefore, we could say here that the linguistic commodification of Darija within Moroccan influencer marketing highlights the different ways language intersects with culture, identity, and economy. It shows how language operates as a symbolic resource that brands and influencers actively cultivate to position themselves within the competitive digital marketplace. As Moroccan advertising continues to change, the link between global marketing imperatives and local linguistic realities remains an area for sociolinguistic and media studies research.

3.5. Media Discourse and Construction of Audience Identity

Language and media are inseparable in shaping how reality is constructed and understood by audiences. Drawing on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), it becomes evident that the language used in media, whether traditional advertising or influencer content, is never neutral or accidental. Instead, every linguistic and stylistic choice carries ideological weight and encodes particular assumptions about the target audience, their identities, tastes, values, and social positions.

In Moroccan influencer marketing, the increasing use of Darija in sponsored content exemplifies how language shapes media discourse to create engagement and community. Influencers often adopt an informal, conversational tone through the usage of humor, colloquial expressions, and relatable narratives to connect with their followers. This strategy taps into shared cultural knowledge and everyday experiences which allows audiences to feel represented and understood in a way that formal, scripted advertisements typically cannot achieve. The use of storytelling around daily struggles, aspirations, or emotional moments in Darija-based content cultivates intimacy and trust. This actually positions influencers as authentic insiders rather than distant celebrities (Zaid & Ibahrine, 2022).

However, this move towards localized, informal language raises important questions about representation and inclusivity. While Darija-based content may resonate strongly with many Moroccans, it also potentially excludes or marginalizes those who do not identify with this linguistic register, such as speakers of Amazigh languages or those who prefer French or MSA for various social or educational reasons. Therefore, the linguistic choices in advertising reflect and reinforce particular social divisions and cultural norms which can shape who is “included” in the imagined audience and who remains peripheral. Moreover, the construction of audience through media discourse is inherently strategic. Advertisers and influencers tailor their language to appeal to specific demographic segments, lifestyles, and

consumer behaviors. For example, younger audiences may be targeted through platforms like TikTok or Instagram with playful, fast-paced Darija content, while older or more elite segments might be addressed through more formal language on television or print media. This segmentation affects not only how products are marketed but also how different groups perceive themselves and their place within society.

This layered process highlights the political dimensions of language use in media. Beyond selling products, language in advertising and influencer content actively participates in shaping social realities, identities, and power relations. As Morocco undergoes these social and technological changes, the media's role in negotiating cultural values and norms becomes more significant. Despite the growing interest in Moroccan media and digital culture, there is still a gap in research which is related to how language choices in influencer marketing influence audience construction and cultural representation. This article aims to contribute to filling this gap by exploring how Darija functions as a key linguistic resource in these emerging discourses and offers new ideas into the complex link between language, media, and society in Morocco.

3.6. Social Media Influencers and Consumer Behavior

Social media influencers have emerged as important agents that shape consumer behavior in Morocco and worldwide. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers often build their reputations through digital platforms by creating authentic, relatable content that resonates with niche audiences. Their unique position as perceived peers rather than distant icons gives them considerable persuasive power. This power enables them to influence followers' attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions in a more personalized and interactive way than traditional advertising methods. This dynamic has revolutionized marketing strategies, especially in contexts like Morocco where digital media consumption is increasing (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Influencers function as intermediaries between brands and consumers because they are the ones who translates marketing messages into culturally relevant narratives that align with the values and aspirations of their followers. Their ability to weave products or services seamlessly into everyday conversations creates an environment of trust and familiarity, which traditional ads often lack. For Moroccan consumers, who are exposed to a diverse linguistic and cultural environment, influencers' use of local language varieties (Darija in our case) further strengthens this bond by reflecting shared cultural codes and lived experiences. This connection enhances consumer engagement and emphasizes brand loyalty, as followers feel

that influencers genuinely adapt the products rather than merely promoting them for financial gain (Abidin, 2016).

Research on consumer behavior highlights several psychological mechanisms through which influencers affect decision-making. For example, social proof plays a critical role; in fact, when individuals see others in their social or cultural group using a product, they are more likely to perceive it as desirable and trustworthy. Influencers, with their visible and engaged follower bases, provide this social validation in digital spaces. Additionally, para-social relationships which are one-sided emotional attachments followers develop toward influencers can increase consumers' receptiveness to marketing messages. In Morocco, community and social belonging are highly valued; therefore, these para-social ties amplify influencers' impact on shaping consumption patterns (Lou & Kim, 2019).

The rise of influencer marketing also reflects particular shifts in media consumption habits and trust in institutions. Traditional advertising and mass media have often been viewed with skepticism, particularly among younger audiences who prefer peer recommendations and user-generated content. Influencers, as 'everyday experts' or micro-celebrities, provide a credible alternative that blends entertainment, information, and promotion. In the Moroccan context, this phenomenon is especially pronounced due to historical mistrust of top-down communication channels and the appeal of more grassroots, authentic voices (Freberg et al., 2011). However, the influence of social media personalities is not uniformly positive or straightforward. While many consumers appreciate the accessibility and relatability of influencers, there is growing awareness of the commercial interests within their content. The blurred boundaries between genuine endorsement and paid promotion raise ethical questions about transparency and consumer protection. Moroccan regulatory frameworks on advertising disclosure are still evolving, and influencer marketing often operates in a grey area where followers may not fully recognize sponsored content. This ambiguity can affect consumer trust and complicate the dynamics of influence (Evans et al., 2017).

Moreover, the effectiveness of influencer marketing varies depending on several factors including the influencer's credibility, the relevance of their content to the target audience, and the nature of the product or service being promoted. Authenticity remains a key determinant; that is, followers are more likely to respond positively if they perceive the influencer as sincere and adopt their values. In Morocco's diverse social life, this requires influencers to be attuned to regional, linguistic, and cultural differences in order to tailor a content that resonates authentically with specific audience segments (Audrezet, de Kerviler,

& Moulard, 2020). Therefore, social media influencers play a transformative role in shaping consumer behavior by blending cultural proximity, linguistic relatability, and digital interactivity. Their growing importance challenges traditional advertising paradigms and calls for an understanding of how digital cultures mediate consumption. For Moroccan marketers and scholars, investigating these dynamics offers an added-value into the intersections of media, culture, and economics in a society going through technological and social change.

3.7. Cultural and Sociolinguistic Implications of Language Use

The use of language in advertising and media does not merely serve a communicative function but also carries significant cultural and sociolinguistic implications, particularly in a multilingual and multicultural context such as Morocco. Language choice in media and marketing reflects and shapes identity, power relations, and social stratification. This makes it a critical area of study in understanding contemporary media (Heller, 2010). Moreover, Morocco's linguistic environment is complex since it is characterized by the coexistence of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), French, Amazigh languages, and Moroccan Arabic (Darija). Each language variety is associated with distinct social meanings and functions. Traditionally, French and MSA have occupied positions of prestige and authority in formal settings such as education, government, and official media, while Darija has been relegated to informal, everyday communication.

This linguistic shift carries deep cultural significance. Darija's growing use in public and commercial discourse challenges long-standing sociolinguistic hierarchies and invites a reconsideration of what constitutes legitimate and prestigious language use. By incorporating Darija, media and advertising campaigns tap into local cultural knowledge and call for a sense of belonging and authenticity among Moroccan audiences. This strategy not only enhances message effectiveness but also affirms the cultural identity of a general demographic that may feel marginalized by exclusive use of formal languages (Benrabah, 2013). As for the sociolinguistic implications, they actually extend beyond mere language preference to issues of cultural representation and empowerment. Using Darija publicly validates a linguistic variety that historically faced stigmatization. This contributes to movements of linguistic democratization and cultural pride. For younger generations especially, Darija represents a medium through which they can express their realities, humor, values, and aspirations in ways that resonate more deeply than formal Arabic or French. This reclamation of Darija in media aligns with postcolonial efforts to valorize indigenous languages and counteract colonial linguistic dominance (Heller, 2010; Bourdieu, 1991).

Moreover, the hybridity evident in many digital and advertising texts where Darija is interspersed with French, English, or Amazigh reflects Morocco's dynamic cultural identities and social realities. This code-switching and language mixing serve both pragmatic and symbolic functions which signal cosmopolitanism, creativity, and adaptive identity performance. Such linguistic practices in influencer marketing and digital advertising showcase the fluidity of language boundaries and highlight the negotiation of local and global cultural influences (Al Zidjaly, 2012). However, this change in linguistic aspect also raises questions about inclusivity and access. While the rise of Darija enhances cultural proximity for many Moroccans, it may simultaneously exclude non-Darija speakers, such as Amazigh communities or international audiences. The predominance of Darija could also reinforce urban-rural divides or class distinctions if access to digital media remains uneven. Therefore, language use in media and advertising is not neutral but is embedded in social dynamics of inclusion, exclusion, and representation (Heller, 2010). Therefore, the cultural and sociolinguistic implications of language choice in Moroccan media and advertising show a complex link between identity, power, and communication. Understanding these dynamics is important for comprehending how media shapes cultural narratives and consumer identities in a globalized yet locally nuanced context. This perspective also highlights the role of language as a symbolic resource that marketers and influencers strategically refer to in order to connect with audiences and negotiate cultural meanings.

3.8. Comparative Perspectives: Moroccan Advertising vs. Global Trends

Advertising worldwide has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades, fueled by the different technological advancements and shifting consumer behaviors. The global rise of digital platforms, especially social media, has disrupted traditional advertising models, shifted the emphasis from mass-market broadcasting toward highly personalized, interactive, and influencer-driven content. However, this global evolution manifests in diverse ways when localized in different sociocultural contexts, as illustrated by Morocco's unique advertising (De Mooij, 2019).

With this global advertising's transformation, there has been a move away from one-directional, top-down communication toward dynamic, peer-to-peer engagement. Influencers, once considered marginal celebrities, have become vital intermediaries between brands and consumers through creating trust and relatability to build loyal audiences (Freberg et al., 2011). This trend is especially pronounced among younger demographics worldwide, who increasingly rely on social media personalities for product recommendations, lifestyle

inspiration, and social validation. Countries like the United States, South Korea, and Brazil exemplify mature influencer markets, with highly professionalized content creation and monetization strategies that often blend entertainment with commerce (Marwick, 2015).

In Morocco, this global shift toward influencer marketing is present but shaped by distinct historical, linguistic, and cultural factors. Unlike predominantly monolingual Western contexts, Morocco's trilingual environment creates a complex linguistic palette for advertisers. This multilingualism offers brands flexibility but also requires careful navigation to resonate authentically with different audience segments (Bourdieu, 1991). For example, influencers might use Darija to establish intimacy and cultural authenticity with local youth, while French or MSA might be used to convey professionalism or target more urban, elite audiences. This linguistic hybridity reflects Morocco's postcolonial realities and identity. This means that there is a distinct contrast with many global markets where language choice is less politically and socially charged.

As for the socioeconomic conditions in Morocco, they indeed further influence the scope and nature of advertising practices. As mentioned before, internet usage has expanded, but the access remains uneven particularly between urban and rural areas which affects the reach of digital campaigns. Additionally, Morocco's youthful population, with over 60% under the age of 30, represents a digitally but culturally rooted consumer base that values both global trends and local traditions. This demographic reality compels brands and influencers to develop content that balances modernity with respect for Moroccan social norms, religious sensibilities, and family values (Khan, 2020).

Culturally speaking, Moroccan advertising exhibits a nuanced negotiation between embracing global consumer culture and affirming local identities. For example, where Western influencer content might emphasize individual achievement, self-expression, or even rebellion, Moroccan influencer marketing often foregrounds community, social harmony, and cultural pride. This distinction shapes not only the thematic content of advertisements but also their visual aesthetics and linguistic style. Advertisers in Morocco incorporate symbolic elements including traditional motifs, music, or culturally specific humor in order to forge emotional connections with audiences while still adopting contemporary digital formats and trends (Zaid & Ibahrine, 2022).

As for regulatory and media differences, they also contribute to the comparative uniqueness of Moroccan advertising. Morocco's media sector is characterized by a blend of state-owned outlets, private broadcasters, and a burgeoning digital media scene. This pluralism creates both opportunities and constraints for advertisers. For instance, traditional

media channels often adhere to conservative content guidelines which projects social expectations, while digital platforms offer more creative freedom but face challenges related to monetization and audience fragmentation. This coexistence leads to hybrid advertising strategies that combine broad-reaching TV or radio campaigns with targeted social media efforts, an approach less commonly seen in countries where digital platforms have largely eclipsed traditional media (Napoli, 2011).

Furthermore, Moroccan advertisers must contend with different consumer trust dynamics compared to global markets. Studies show that Moroccan consumers tend to place significant trust in influencers who show authenticity, cultural knowledge, and personal integrity, rather than merely serving as brand supporter (Duffy, 2017). This consumer behavior reinforces the importance of linguistic and cultural proximity. This makes local language use, especially Darija, a powerful tool for building rapport. In contrast, some global markets emphasize influencer expertise or aspirational lifestyles more heavily which indicates how consumer values shape advertising styles differently.

This comparative perspective highlights how Morocco's advertising industry exemplifies a global phenomenon: *the globalization of marketing*. As global advertising practices diffuse into new territories, they are simultaneously adapted and transformed by local cultural logics. This usually results in hybrid forms that reflect both universal trends and specific national characteristics (Coupland, 2003). Therefore, Moroccan advertising serves as a case study in the negotiation between global forces and local agency which illustrates how digital media can adopt cultural expression even as it integrates international marketing innovations. By situating Moroccan advertising within these global dynamics, scholars and practitioners have clearer idea into how digital and influencer marketing evolve in diverse contexts. It shows the necessity for culturally informed strategies that acknowledge linguistic complexities, social values, and media infrastructures. For Morocco, this means that successful advertising is not just about adopting global digital tools but about incorporating them into the local cultural identities and consumer expectations.

4. Implications of the Review

The literature reviews reveal several important implications for understanding the shifting dynamics of language, media, and consumer culture in Morocco. First, it demonstrates that Darija has gone through a significant transformation from a marginal and informal vernacular to a central linguistic tool in branding, influencer communication, and

public discourse. This transition signals an important cultural shift in which localized forms of expression are being re-evaluated and re-integrated into formal, commercial, and even institutional communication. It challenges long-standing assumptions about linguistic hierarchies in Morocco where French and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) historically dominated public and elite domains.

Second, the role of social media influencers as cultural intermediaries suggests a new model of audience engagement that is less about persuasion from authority and more about building perceived authenticity and trust. Influencers not only promote products, but also mediate values, lifestyles, and social trends. Their use of Darija allows them to appear relatable, emotionally connected, and culturally relevant. These findings imply that the future of advertising in Morocco and possibly in other postcolonial and multilingual contexts will be shaped less by top-down narratives and more by peer-driven and culturally grounded discourse.

Third, this literature review highlights how language functions as a commodity in this digital economy. Darija, once excluded from formal communication, is now strategically used to produce intimacy, local identity, and brand loyalty. This commodification process reflects global trends in digital marketing, but it is uniquely shaped by Morocco's linguistic and cultural features. Importantly, it raises ethical and political questions about representation: who gets to speak, in what language, and for whose benefit? These concerns open space for further reflection on inclusivity, class dynamics, and linguistic justice in media practices.

Finally, the review shows the emergence of hybrid language practices mainly code-switching between Darija, French, and English as a form of modern identity performance. This hybridity reflects certain postcolonial realities but also serves a functional purpose in targeting diverse consumer segments. However, it may also contribute to the exclusion of certain groups who are not fluent in all three languages which can reinforce the socio-linguistic stratification.

We could deduce that the literature suggests that the convergence of influencer culture, linguistic innovation, and digital advertising is not only reshaping consumer behavior, but also redefining what it means to be modern, Moroccan, and digitally connected. These transformations call for continued academic attention to the intersections of language, media, and power in an increasingly digitized and commercialized society.

5. Synthesis of Findings

Based on the literature examined, several overarching findings emerge concerning the use of Darija in Moroccan media, advertising, and influencer culture. Although this article is based on a literature review rather than original empirical research, synthesizing the key insights across studies allows us to identify significant trends and patterns that define the current Moroccan media-scape.

a) Linguistic Shift Toward Localization:

One of the clearest findings is the increasing centrality of Darija in public and commercial communication. While French and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) continue to play roles in formal contexts, Darija has emerged as a key medium for reaching mass audiences, particularly younger demographics. The literature consistently shows that Darija is perceived as more authentic, relatable, and emotionally engaging. This shift reflects a localization trend in marketing and media strategy, where language is tailored to the cultural and emotional proximity of the audience rather than imposed from institutional norms.

b) The Strategic Role of Influencers in Language Normalization:

Influencers are not simply content creators; they are strategic agents who help normalize and popularize Darija in professionalized digital spaces. Their use of the dialect, often blended with French or English, creates a form of linguistic hybridity that reflects both their personal brand and the audience's cultural expectations. The review indicates that influencers shape language practices in subtle but powerful ways. They reinforce the legitimacy of Darija by using it in contexts associated with prestige, aspiration, and authority such as product endorsement, life advice, or social commentary.

c) Language as a Marker of Socioeconomic Targeting:

The use of Darija is not only cultural but also commercial. Many advertisers and brands strategically refer to Darija to appeal to specific socioeconomic classes. For instance, ads for local consumer goods or telecom services often use Darija to connect with middle- and working-class audiences, while luxury brands may prefer French or English to signal elitism. However, this binary is increasingly blurred, with hybrid campaigns using multilingual approaches to broaden their market reach. This pattern suggests that language functions as a marketing tool, carefully calibrated to audience identity, aspiration, and purchasing power.

d) Emergence of a Hybrid Linguistic Ecosystem:

The synthesis of literature also shows that Morocco's media space is not linguistically divided but increasingly hybrid. Code-switching between Darija, French, and English is now a common feature of advertising slogans, social media posts, and influencer content. Rather than signaling confusion or linguistic erosion, this hybridity is portrayed as a sign of cosmopolitanism and digital fluency. It enables communicators to blend local authenticity with global appeal which is a strategy that seems particularly effective in engaging tech-savvy, urban youth.

e) Cultural and Ideological Shifts:

Beyond advertising and consumer behavior, the literature points to ideological shifts in how language is linked to national identity, social class, and cultural legitimacy. The growing presence of Darija in formal and semi-formal domains signals a challenge to long-standing language ideologies that privileged "pure" Arabic or French. It also reflects an evolving sense of Moroccan modernity, where local culture and digital innovation are not seen as opposites but as mutually reinforcing. This dynamic is especially evident in how influencers frame their identities as both rooted in local values and parallel to global trends.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

This literature-based exploration of Darija's role in Moroccan advertising, digital media, and influencer culture has shown a rich linguistic and cultural transformation. The increasing visibility and valorization of Darija reflect a general reconfiguration of communicative norms in Morocco; one where local identity, market logic, and global digital culture intersect.

The review demonstrates that Darija is not merely a vernacular dialect confined to informal settings. Instead, it has become a powerful communicative tool in public discourse, digital branding, and consumer outreach. Its rise is partly driven by its perceived authenticity and emotional resonance especially among Moroccan youth. Social media influencers and advertisers alike have capitalized on these attributes and now integrate Darija into content strategies to create relatability, trust, and consumer engagement. What also emerges from the reviewed literature is a new model of linguistic legitimacy which is no longer defined solely by institutional standards (like French or Modern Standard Arabic) but increasingly shaped

by market dynamics, audience reception, and digital fluency. Influencers, in particular, serve as linguistic trendsetters since they negotiate between traditional cultural forms and modern global aesthetics. This hybridization of language mirrors the hybrid identities of their audiences: Moroccan, Arab, African, francophone, and globally connected. At the same time, the expansion of Darija into new domains raises questions about representation, inclusion, and the future of Morocco's multilingual sphere. While Darija empowers some voices, it may also marginalize others especially those who are less proficient in code-switching or who are excluded from digital networks. Moreover, the widespread use of Darija in advertising can lead to the commodification of local culture which reduces complex identities to marketing formulas.

Given these complexities, future research should go beyond description and critically examine the power dynamics embedded in language practices. For instance, empirical studies could explore how different social groups perceive the use of Darija in public media, or how language choices affect consumer trust and purchasing decisions. Further inquiry could also investigate the implications of Darija's rise for educational policy, linguistic identity, and digital inclusion. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track how the role of Darija evolves as Morocco's media ecosystem continues to globalize. Comparative research with other diglossic or multilingual societies in North Africa or the Middle East may also yield valuable ideas into shared patterns and unique aspects

In conclusion, the integration of Darija into advertising and influencer communication represents more than a linguistic trend, it is a reflection of Morocco's shifting cultural, economic, and social paradigms. Therefore, it indeed deserves sustained academic attention, not only from linguists and media scholars but also from those interested in identity, power, and cultural change in the 21st century.

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