

Evolving Modes of Communication in Present-Day Morocco

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Abstract—In the rapidly shifting communicative landscape of 21st-century Morocco, this paper examines how traditional and modern modes of communication coexist, compete, and converge. Drawing on historical, sociolinguistic, and technological perspectives, it traces the evolution of Moroccan communicative practices from oral storytelling and colonial media legacies to the rise of digital platforms, social media, and hybrid interactional norms. The study employs a mixed-methods approach—combining ethnographic fieldwork, media content analysis, surveys, and digital analytics—to explore how Moroccans navigate a multilingual, media-rich environment shaped by regional variation, generational divides, and policy reform. The paper identifies key drivers of communicative transformation, including media liberalization, mobile internet penetration, and the proliferation of citizen journalism and digital activism. It documents the growing influence of platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok among youth and urban users while highlighting the persistence of traditional channels like radio and television, especially in rural and elderly populations. Linguistic practices such as code-switching and non-verbal cultural expressions are shown to play a critical role in shaping communicative nuance and identity. Institutional dynamics—such as regulatory frameworks, press freedom reforms, and civic engagement initiatives—are analyzed to reveal the tensions between state control and digital openness. The paper also addresses structural inequalities, including the digital divide, gender disparities, and access barriers, emphasizing the ethical and infrastructural challenges of inclusive communication. Ultimately, the study argues that Morocco's evolving modes of communication reflect broader societal transformations—negotiating between heritage and innovation, centralization and decentralization, and local identity and global connectivity. It calls for culturally attuned, equity-driven strategies to ensure that digital progress translates into meaningful participation and representation for all segments of Moroccan society.

Keywords— Multilingualism – Digital Transformation – Oral Traditions – Code-Switching – Media Liberalization – Digital Divide – Civic Engagement – Cultural Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Morocco's communication landscape has long been characterized by its rich cultural tapestry and multilingual heritage. From the enduring traditions of oral storytelling Arabic and Amazigh communities to the early influence of colonial French media, communication in Morocco has historically reflected the nation's complex identity and socio-political dynamics. Over time, state-controlled radio and television established a centralized information flow, while print journalism began to diversify voices in urban areas.

In today's interconnected world, understanding the evolution of communication is more critical than ever. The rapid globalization and proliferation of digital technologies have reshaped how Moroccans interact, access information, and express themselves—locally and globally. This transformation offers insight into broader societal changes, including shifts in cultural values, political engagement, and economic development.

This article argues that Morocco's modes of communication are undergoing a profound shift, driven by digitalization, changing cultural norms, and policy reforms. By examining historical contexts and emerging trends, we aim to illuminate how these evolving practices mirror and influence contemporary Moroccan society.

II. TOOLS & METHODS

To capture the complexity of Morocco's evolving communication landscape, this study adopted a multidisciplinary methodology that integrates qualitative inquiry, quantitative measurement, and technological analysis. This triangulated approach ensures that the findings are not only empirically grounded but also culturally and contextually sensitive, reflecting the layered realities of Moroccan society.

2.1 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative dimension of the research was designed to foreground lived experiences and cultural practices that cannot be fully understood through statistics alone. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in both urban centers such as Casablanca and Rabat, and rural communities in Berrechid and Sidi Rahal, allowing for direct observation of communicative behaviors in diverse settings. Data was collected from attending community gatherings, classrooms, and local media production sites to document oral traditions, interpersonal exchanges, and emerging digital practices. Semi-structured interviews with media professionals, educators, policymakers, and community leaders provided insider perspectives on how communication norms are shifting under the pressures of globalization and digitalization. In addition, content analysis of traditional outlets (radio, television, print) and digital platforms (social media feeds, online news portals) was undertaken to identify recurring themes, narrative, and discursive strategies. This qualitative corpus illuminated the symbolic and identity-laden dimensions of communication, highlighting how Moroccans negotiate multilingualism, cultural heritage, and modernity in everyday communication.

2.2 Quantitative Methods

Complementing the qualitative insights, quantitative methods were employed to measure the scale and distribution of communicative practices across demographic groups. Surveys were administered to a representative sample of Moroccan citizens, stratified by age, gender, education level, and geographic location. These surveys gathered data on media consumption habits, platform preferences, linguistic choices, and perceptions of press freedom. Statistical analysis was then applied to interpret the survey results, revealing patterns such as generational divides in platform usage, rural-urban disparities in internet access, and gendered differences in digital participation. Regression models and correlation tests were used to explore the relationship between socio-economic status and communicative behavior, while cross-tabulations highlighted the interplay between linguistic repertoire and media preference. By quantifying these dynamics, the study was able to situate individual narratives within broader societal trends, offering a strong empirical foundation for understanding Morocco's communication evolution.

2.3 Technological Tools

Finally, technological tools were integrated into the research design to capture the digital dimension of Morocco's communicative transformation. Digital analytics platforms were employed to track social media trends, engagement metrics, and content circulation across platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These tools provided insights into the velocity and reach of digital communication, as well as the role of influencers and citizen journalists in shaping public discourse. Geographic mapping was used to visualize the distribution of communication infrastructure, highlighting disparities between urban hubs with dense connectivity and rural regions with limited access. This spacial analysis underscored the persistence of the digital divide and informed discussions on policy interventions. Together, these technological instruments allowed the study to move beyond descriptive accounts, offering a dynamic picture of how digital ecosystems are reshaping Moroccan communication practices in real time.

This combination of tools and methods provided a comprehensive understanding of Morocco's communication landscape, highlighting the interplay between tradition and innovation.

III. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Morocco's communication practices are deeply rooted in a rich tapestry of oral traditions and linguistic diversity. Long before the advent of modern media, storytelling, poetry, and proverbs served as vital tools for transmitting knowledge, values, and history across generations. These oral forms – often performed in Darija and Tamazight – were not only cultural expressions but also mechanisms of social cohesion and education. Even today, oral culture remains influential, especially in rural communities and traditional gatherings.

The country's multilingualism is a product of centuries of cultural confluence. "Morocco's multilingualism, shaped by

Arabic, Amazigh, French, and Spanish influences, reflects both pre-colonial diversity and colonial restructuring of linguistic hierarchies" (Ennaji, 2005). Modern Standard Arabic and Standard Tamazight are the official languages, while Darija dominates everyday speech. French, introduced during the colonial period (1912-1956), became entrenched in administration, education, and media, and continues to play a prominent role in business and higher education. In northern regions, Spanish also persists due to historical ties with Spain, and English is increasingly gaining ground among younger generations and globalized sectors.

The colonial legacy significantly shaped Morocco's media and language landscape. Under French rule, communication systems were reorganized to serve colonial interests, with French becoming the language of governance, law, and elite education. Indigenous languages were marginalized, and media outlets were used to propagate colonial ideologies. Post-independence efforts to reclaim linguistic sovereignty led to Arabicization policies, which aimed to elevate Arabic in education and administration. However, these reforms often sidelined Amazigh languages (Tashelhit, Tamazight, and Tarifit) and created tensions between cultural authenticity and practical access to global networks.

The transition from state-controlled media to more liberalized platforms began in the late 1990s and accelerated in the 2000s. historical, Moroccan media –especially radio and television– were tightly regulated by the state and used as instruments of national unity and political control. Reforms introduced in the early 2000s, such as the creation of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA) and the liberalization of broadcasting laws, allowed for the emergence of private radio stations, independent (not affiliated to political parties) newspapers, and online platforms. Despite these advances, challenges remain, including censorship, financial pressures on independent outlets, and uneven access to digital tools.

This historical backdrop sets the stage for understanding how Morocco's communication modes continue to evolve – balancing tradition and innovation, local identity and global influence.

IV. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Morocco has entered a new era of communication, where digital platforms dominate everyday interactions, media consumption, and civic engagement. This transformation is driven by widespread internet access, the ubiquity of smartphones, and the explosive growth of social media.

4.1 Rise of Social Media Platforms

Social media has become the backbone of Moroccan digital life. "With sites such as Facebook and WhatsApp achieving over 75% penetration among online users, social media use has skyrocketed in Morocco over the past several years" (Statista Research Department, 2024). As of 2025, WhatsApp remains the most used platform, with 75% of Moroccans relying on it for daily communication, especially among youth and urban populations. Facebook holds strong with 80% usage, serving as a hub for news, entertainment, and

community engagement. Instagram has gained traction, particularly among younger users and women, with 42% of the population using it regularly. TikTok continues its upward climb, now used by 25% of Moroccans, driven by users under 25 who favor shorty-form, creative content. YouTube has emerged as a major player, used by 40% of the population, especially for tutorials, entertainment, and independent commentary.

These platforms aren't simply tools for connection; they're also changing how Moroccans communicate their identity, get information, and take part in public discussion.

4.2 Mobile Internet Penetration and Smartphone Usage

The digital shift is underpinned by impressive infrastructure growth: internet penetration reached 90.7% in early 2024, with over 34 million users online; mobile subscriptions exceed the population, with a penetration rate of 135.1%, indicating widespread smartphone penetration; mobile internet speeds have improved significantly, averaging 36.5 Mbps, making streaming and real-time communication more accessible.

This connectivity has democratized access to information, though disparities persist between urban and rural areas, and among different age and income groups.

4.3 Role of Influencers, Citizen Journalism, and Digital Activism

Digital platforms have empowered a new generation of communicators: influencers on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok shape public opinion, promote brands, and spark cultural conversations; citizen journalism has flourished, with individuals using smartphones to document events, share news, and challenge mainstream narratives; digital activism plays a growing role in political engagement. During the 2021 legislative elections, parties leveraged social media for outreach, while grassroots movements used platforms to mobilize support and raise awareness. These developments reflect a shift from passive media consumption to active participation, where Moroccans are not just recipients of information but creators and critics.

V. TRADITIONAL VS. MODERN CHANNELS

Morocco's communication ecosystem today is a layered blend of legacy media and digital innovation. While urban youth gravitate toward online platforms, traditional channels like radio, television, and print media continue to play a vital role –especially among older generations and rural communities. “Despite the digital shift, traditional outlets such as radio and television remain influential, particularly among older generations and rural populations” (Zaid, 2017).

5.1 Persistence of Traditional Media

Despite the digital surge, radio and television remain deeply embedded in Moroccan society: Radio is the second most popular medium after television, with 79.4% of households owning a radio set as of 2005. It remains a lifeline in rural areas, offering local news, religious programming, and music in Arabic and Amazigh dialects. Television still dominates media consumption, especially among older adults.

Channels like Al Aoula and 2M provide state-sanctioned news and cultural content, while satellite TV offers international programming. Print media, though in decline, retains influence among urban elites and older readers. Newspapers such as *Le Matin* and *Al Massae* are still circulated, though readership skews toward those with higher education and income levels.

5.2 Shift toward Online News Portals and Streaming Services

The digital tide has reshaped how Moroccans access information: by 2025, 92.2% of the population uses internet, with 78% getting their news online. Online news portals like *Hespress*, *Le360*, and *ChoufTV* have overtaken print media in reach and influence. Streaming platforms such as *YouTube* and *TikTok* are increasingly popular for entertainment and commentary, especially among youth aged 18-34. The rise of live streaming and video podcasts has enabled independent voices to bypass traditional gatekeepers, fostering new forms of civic dialogue.

5.3 Hybrid Communication Practices

Moroccans often blend old and new modes of interaction: WhatsApp is ubiquitous, used by 75% of the population, with 95% checking it daily. It is common to see people confirm appointments via WhatsApp and then meet in person. In rural areas, face-to-face communication remains essential, but is increasingly supplemented by mobile messaging and voice notes. Hybrid media consumption is also evident: older adults may watch TV news and then discuss it with younger relatives who read updates on Facebook and Instagram.

This coexistence of traditional and modern channels reflects Morocco's transitional media landscape –where generational, geographic, and socio-economic factors shape how people connect, inform, and express themselves.

VI. LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL NUANCES

Morocco's communication practices are deeply shaped by its multilingualism, code-switching habits, and non-verbal cultural expressions, which vary across regions and social contexts. These nuances reflect both historical legacies and contemporary adaptations. “Code-switching between Darija, French, and Tamazight is increasingly prevalent in educational and online contexts, illustrating Morocco's dynamic linguistic adaptability” (Ennaji, 2008).

6.1 Code-Switching and Multilingual Content Creation

Moroccan Arabic (Darija) is the dominant spoken language, but it frequently blends with Tamazight, French, and increasingly English, especially in urban and digital spaces. Code-switching –the fluid alternation between languages– is common in everyday speech, classrooms and online content. For instance, a single sentence might include Darija, French verbs, and English tech terms: “Ana kan-codé f GitHub, je télécharge les updates, et I debug the software b tech tools”. Studies show that teachers and students in Moroccan high schools often switch between languages to clarify meaning, express identity, or adapt to audience expectations. This linguistic fluidity fosters creativity in social media, advertizing and music, where multilingual expressions resonate with diverse audiences.

6.2 Non-Verbal Communication Styles

Gestures and body language play a vital role in Moroccan interactions: A hand over the heart signals gratitude or sincerity; extended greetings often include multiple enquiries about health, family, and work, reflecting warmth and social bonding; eye contact varies by gender and status –men may avert their gaze when greeting women as a sign of respect; hospitality rituals, such as offering mint tea or placing the right hand over the heart after a handshake, are culturally significant and convey welcome and respect.

6.3 Regional Variations in Communication Preferences

French is the most common language in Rabat and Casablanca, but Spanish influences are stronger in northern Morocco, especially in Tangiers and Tetouan. Amazigh dialects –Tashelhit, Tamazight, Tari fit, and others– are widely spoken in mountainous and rural regions, shaping local communication styles and expressions. Darija itself varies regionally, with distinct vocabulary and pronunciation. These linguistic and cultural nuances not only enrich Morocco’s communicative landscape but also serve as markers of identity, solidarity, and adaptability in a rapidly changing society.

VII. INSTITUTIONAL & POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

The transformation of communication in Morocco is deeply intertwined with institutional reforms, legal frameworks, and political dynamics. While progress has been made toward liberalizing media and promoting civic engagement, tensions persist between state control and digital freedoms. “Although Morocco’s 2011 Constitution introduced formal protections for press freedom, digital content still continues to face scrutiny under laws targeting societal values” (Benchenna & Marchetti, 2021).

7.1 Government Regulation and Censorship

Morocco’s Constitution (2011) guarantees freedom of expression (Article 25) and press freedom (Article 28), marking a pivotal shift toward participatory governance. However, Law N° 88-13 on press and publication imposes penalties for “false information” and content deemed threatening to the monarchy and public order. The government exercises content control through the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA), which is now expanding its jurisdiction to regulate digital platforms like Facebook and YouTube. A proposed media social law (2025) aims to combat misinformation and incitement, requiring platforms to appoint legal representatives in Morocco and comply with content moderation standards. Critics warn that vague language around “protecting societal values” could legitimize state censorship, especially of dissenting voices and political activists.

7.2 Media Reforms & Press Freedom Progress

Since 2011, Morocco has seen notable reforms, including the abolition of prison sentences for press offenses under the 2016 Press & Publishing Code. Independent outlets like *Le Desk* and *Tel Quel* have emerged, offering critical journalism and alternative narratives. In 2024, King Mohammed VI

issued royal pardons for jailed journalists, signaling a potential shift toward greater media openness. Despite these advances, press freedom remains fragile. The government continues to prosecute journalists under criminal law rather than the Press Code, raising concerns about judicial independence and media autonomy.

7.3 Role of Communication in Civic Engagement

Communication has become a strategic tool for civic participation, especially since the 2011 constitutional reforms. Platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are widely used for citizen mobilization, public deliberation, and social accountability. Initiatives such as *chikaya.ma* (for grievances) and digital petition platforms reflect efforts to institutionalize citizen feedback mechanisms. However, digital activism faces challenges: surveillance, misinformation, and limited access in rural areas hinder equitable participation. This complex interplay between regulation, reform, and resistance illustrates how Morocco’s communication landscape is both a mirror and a motor of political transformation.

VIII. CHALLENGES & INEQUALITIES

While Morocco’s communication landscape is rapidly modernizing, significant disparities persist in access, literacy, and digital inclusion. These challenges reflect broader socio-economic divides and raise ethical concerns about equity, representation, and privacy. “Internet access disparities between urban and rural populations persist, highlighting the need for targeted infrastructure under the Digital Morocco 2030 initiative”, Data Reportable, (2024).

8.1 Digital Divide: Rural vs. Urban

Urban areas enjoy high connectivity, with over 70% penetration, while rural areas lag behind at 40.4%. Infrastructure gaps –especially in mountainous and remote areas– limit access to mobile networks and broadband. The Digital Morocco 2030 strategy aims to connect 1,800 rural communities and achieve 70% 5G coverage nationwide. Public-private partnerships, such as Orange Maroc’s “Ecoles Numériques”, are expanding digital access in schools.

8.2 Generational, Educational & Gender Gaps

Youth aged 15-34 are the most connected demographic, with 76.9% online, compared to less than 50% among older adults. Literacy rates remain uneven: 73% nationally, but only 66% for women and significantly lower in rural areas. Digital literacy is a barrier even among connected users –many lack the skills to navigate online platforms securely and effectively.

Women face lower access to devices and internet, especially in rural and conservative communities. Despite progress, only 69% of women without formal education own a phone, compared to 98.6% of university-educated women. Literacy programs have made strides, with women comprising 80% of participants, but challenges in outreach and retention persist.

8.3 Ethical Concerns: Misinformation, Surveillance, and Privacy

The spread of misinformation on social media platforms has raised concerns about civic trust and public health. Surveillance practices by Moroccan authorities have been criticized for targeting journalists and activists without adequate oversight. Morocco's Law N° 09-08 and the National Commission for the Protection of Personal Data (CNDP) regulate data privacy, but enforcement remains inconsistent. The proposed social media law (2025) seeks to curb harmful content, but critics warn it may legitimize censorship under vague definitions.

This debate is really about balance: how to protect citizens from harmful content without undermining democratic freedom. The vagueness of "societal values" is the crux –if left undefined, it risks becoming a catch-all justification for silencing dissent.

8.4 Access Barriers & Socioeconomic Inequality

Poverty limits access to devices, data plans, and educational resources. Geographic isolation and lack of transportation hinder school attendance and digital engagement. Language diversity complicates content accessibility, especially for Amazigh-speaking communities with limited digital resources.

These challenges underscore the need for inclusive policies, targeted investment, and community-driven solutions to ensure that Morocco's communication evolution benefits all segments of society.

IX. FUTURE OUTLOOK

As Morocco continues to embrace digital transformation, the future of communication promises to be more intelligent, inclusive, and participatory. Emerging technologies, evolving professional roles, and grassroots innovation are reshaping how Moroccans connect, express, and organize. "Emerging AI and smart technologies, supported by national research hubs and global partnerships, are reshaping Morocco's communication systems with a focus on inclusive innovation" (Morocco World News, 2025).

9.1 AI and Smart Technologies in Moroccan Communication

Morocco is positioning itself as a regional AI leader, with initiatives like the Moroccan International Center of Artificial Intelligence at Mohammed VI Polytechnic University driving research and innovation. AI is being integrated into smart cities (e.g. Casablanca, Benguerir), enhancing traffic management, public safety, and resource efficiency. In education, AI-powered platforms personalize learning experiences, while in healthcare, AI improves diagnostics and patient care. The National AI Strategy and partnerships with global tech firms (e.g. Oracle, Huawei) aim to foster ethical, inclusive AI development.

9.2 Evolving Professional Roles in Media and Marketing

The 2035 Outlook Study by *Les Impériaux* highlights a shift toward hybrid skill sets –blending data analytics, digital strategy, and creative storytelling. Professionals are expected to balance specialization (e.g. AI ethics, UX design) with versatility across platforms and disciplines. Continuous training and human capital investment are seen as essential to

keep pace with technological change and global competitiveness.

9.3 Inclusive & Participatory Communication Ecosystems

Morocco's development frameworks increasingly emphasize community-driven communication, especially in rural and marginalized areas. Initiatives like *chikaya.ma* and participatory budgeting platforms foster citizen engagement and feedback loops. Interfaith and intercultural partnerships – such as those supporting sustainable agriculture and women's cooperatives– demonstrate how communication can bridge divides and empower local voices. The push for gender-inclusive policies, digital literacy, and decentralized media models aims to reduce barriers and amplify diverse perspectives.

9.4 Anticipated Trends & Opportunities

Voice-base interfaces and multilingual AI assistants could enhance accessibility for Amazigh-speaking and illiterate populations. Blockchain and decentralized platforms may offer new models for secure, transparent communication and civic participation. Youth-led innovation hubs and digital incubators to play a growing role in shaping Morocco's media and tech landscape

X. CONCLUSION

The evolution of communication in present(day Morocco reflects a complex interplay between tradition and innovation, identity and globalization, regulation and resistance. From the deeply rooted oral traditions and multilingual exchanges to the dynamic rise of digital media, Moroccans have continuously adapted how they express, connect, and engage with their world.

While modern tools such as social media and AI offer new possibilities for civic participation and cultural expression, they also surface persistent inequalities –from digital divides and literacy barriers to regulatory ambiguities around freedom of speech. The coexistence of legacy media with emerging digital ecosystems reveals a communication culture that is not in rupture, but in transformation –layered, adaptive, and uniquely Moroccan.

As Morocco continues to navigate this landscape, it must invest in inclusive infrastructure, protect linguistic diversity, and balance technological innovation with ethical safeguards. These efforts are not merely technical –they are cultural imperatives that will shape how future generations define belonging, agency, and voice in an increasingly interconnected world.

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