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Relations 2.0, Strategies of Friendship Management on Facebook in Tunisia

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The Facebook platform is ahead of other social networks in Tunisia in terms of some registered users and is characterized by extensive use, especially among young people aged 18 to 30. To better understand how these young people use this communication tool, this study proposed a reflection on social representations of friendship offline and online on this platform. It also aimed to understand how young Tunisian users define friendship in everyday life, to compare these definitions with those actually created and maintained online on Facebook. The survey highlighted the replication on the platform of implicit social and friendly norms. It was also able to determine the strategies of appropriation of the social network by users. Strategies are ranging from preserving privacy to improving professional life.

Keywords: Friendship, relationship, online ethnography, Facebook, social network, strategy, standards, ethics

New technologies in contemporary societies question our relationship with one another and our ways of communicating with one another. Interpersonal relations are no longer carried merely out face-to-face but are increasingly integrated into a multitude of socio-technical tools such as social networks present on the Internet. Many questions about the impact of these tools on our social ties have emerged over the years in the media and academic spheres. We are now part of an increasingly connected society that is questioning the actual quality of these connections. It is in this socio-technical context that our questioning finds its essence. Understanding social skills, and more specifically friendship, these days also means understanding the tools that allow society to express itself in a particular context.

Facebook remains by far the most popular social media platform in Tunisia. The number of Facebook users in the country has steadily increased over the past six years, according to the findings of the Arab Social Media Report series (Salem, 2017). Tunisia is one of the most active Arab countries. It has the most active users daily, among all Facebook users in the country, after Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The number of Facebook accounts reached 7,100,000 out of a population of 12,000,000 in 2018[1].

The growth rates in the country have fluctuated over time, influenced by multiple political, social and economic factors. For example, after the popular uprising in Tunisia in 2011, there was a significant increase in the growth rates of Facebook users in the country, with the public, government and political authorities increasingly using social

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media as a means of communication, mobilization, and engagement. Overall, Tunisia is one of the countries that has mostly maintained its share of total Facebook users with slight fluctuations.

Social media users in Tunisia remain mostly youthful. On average, 62.3% of Facebook users are aged 15 to 29, while 37.7% are over 30. While Facebook users in Tunisia remain mostly youthful, the trend is towards a more balanced age distribution in the country. Over the past six years, Facebook adoption by users over 30 years of age has been slow, but steady (Salem, 2017).

In terms of gender balance, there have been significant changes in terms of gender distribution in Tunisia. The country ranks second after Palestine with the highest number of gender-balanced Facebook users in the Arab region, with nearly 43% of users being female.

Our object of the study is limited to the Facebook platform which uses the term "friend" to describe the social links developed between users. Questioned by this designation, we try to understand what offline and online friendship means for Tunisian users aged 18 to 30, and to determine how their sociability is articulated between these two spheres. Studies on this theme are rare in Tunisia despite the platform's rather significant penetration rate compared to other social networks. Our ambition is, therefore, to shed light, however, limited, on social practices through this platform.

This study is divided into three major parts. The first is devoted to the conceptualization of the term friend. The second is the research questions and methodology. The third presents the results.

The use of the word "friend" is imposed by the technical architecture of the Facebook platform. It does not leave the choice to the user to opt for another alternative. All people on the network automatically acquire the title of friend. While, the offline social network of an individual is much more complex and diverse, consisting of a set of interpersonal links that combine various groups, ranging from simple acquaintance to a co-worker, to a family member. Bidart (1997) shows that our close sociabilities are made up of many types of links that do not necessarily lead to friendship. Indeed, before acquiring the title of a friend a relationship goes through several levels: the simple acquaintance, the friend, the colleague-friend, then the friend. Offline links are multiple.

Faced with this ambiguity that is the status of a friend on the digital social platform, some authors have taken an interest in drawing up typologies of the people making up a user's Facebook network. In this sense, Marlow (2009) proposes a typology comprising four types of friends :

(i) Those who are on the friend's list after accepting the friendship invitation.

(ii) Friends with whom there is reciprocal but occasional communication.

(iii) Those with whom there is no reciprocity. One seeks to communicate, but the other does not respond to its interactions.

(iv) Those with whom sustained relationships are maintained.

A more developed typology is developed by Stenger and Coutant (2012). It includes the offline Facebook user link. The authors highlight other categories of friends including, among others, intimates, acquaintances of daily life and past and family members. The above typologies support the idea that there is not one type of relationship, the "friend," as the technical tool imposes, but a diversity of social ties present on the platform. This binary and restrictive conception imposed by the digital social network does not give users the possibility to manage their relationships, as they want. Livingstone (2008) shows in a study of London teenagers that young people often like to sub-categorize their "friends" to limit the dissemination of personal information to different audiences on the network.

The above raises the following questions for us. What is an online and offline friend and what are their respective specificities? What strategies do Facebook users have in place to manage the different "friends" on the platform? How do they manage the dissemination of personal information? What impact, however positive or negative, does digital presence have on offline social relations? In what way, if so? Does the use of the term "friend" have all its legitimacy or, conversely, is it a semantic exaggeration? Can we envisage a redefinition of the concept of friendship? Should we determine plural conceptions of the social bond? All of these questions have contributed to the development of our research questions.

Research Questions

In this paper, we aim to answer the following two questions: How do users aged 18 to 30 define offline and online friendship on Facebook? In what ways do they maintain and manage the link between these relationships in the two worlds?

Methodology

We opted for a qualitative approach with sixteen Facebook users aged 18 to 30.[2] People in this age group are often referred to as "Generation Y" or "Internet generation" (Kerneis et al., 2012). Also called digital native (Prensky, 2001), this generation is known to have grown up in a digital environment such as the computer, the Internet and cell phones.[3] It is generally the biggest consumer of new technologies and digital in general: use of the Internet, possession of cellular devices, possession of computers, etc. The activity of this generation of young adults on social media is significantly higher than the entire population, all actions combined, especially since Facebook is the most used social network in Tunisia.

Social media use in Tunisia

Active social media users	Percentage of the total population	Social users accessing via mobile	Percentage of the total population
7.20 million	62	6.40 million	55

Source: HootSuite (January 2018)

Number of Facebook users and demography in Tunisia

Total number of monthly active Facebook users	Annual change in Face book users January 2017 (percent)	Percentage of Facebook users accessing via mobile	Percentage of Facebook profiles declared as female	Percentage of Facebook profiles declared as male
7.20 million	+13	89	44	56

Source: HootSuite (January 2018)

Average Facebook engagement rates in Tunisia

Average engagement rate for Facebook page posts (all types)	Average engagement rate for Facebook page video posts	Average engagement rate for Facebook page photo posts	Average engagement rate for Facebook page link posts	Average engagement rate for Facebook page status posts
4.39	4.16	3.39	4.18	4.14

Source: HootSuite (January 2018)

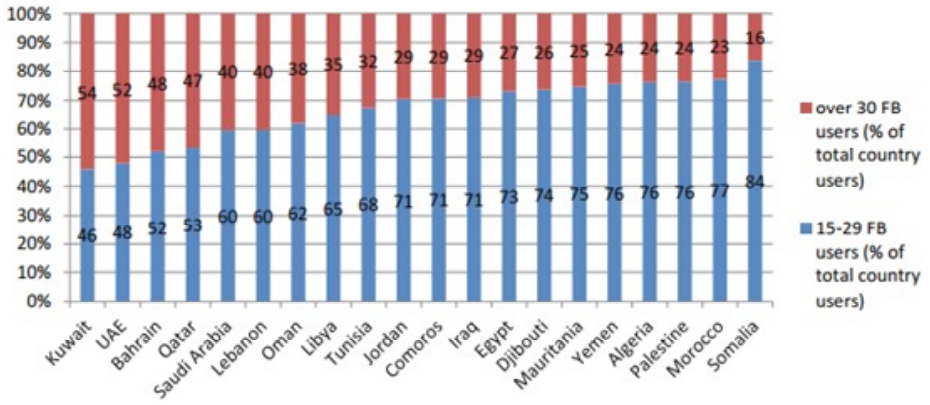

Figure 1. Breakdown of Facebook users by age[4] in the Arab states.
source: (Araba Social Media Report, 2014)

As the first step in our methodology, we observed sixteen user profiles online over two months. In the second, we chose to conduct semi-directed interviews with each of our participants.

Qualitative Approach

Any qualitative research aims to understand a complex social phenomenon in its context. That is why we opted for this approach in the sense that it corresponds to the orientation targeted by this research. We interviewed Tunisian users of the Facebook platform to understand the definition they give to friendship in general and online and offline relationships in particular. We also want to know if there is a possible link between these two worlds. Understanding the phenomenon depends above all on the experience of the participants. It is this logic that framed our data collection, based in particular on non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Online Ethnography

Ethnography is a descriptive study of various human groups and their social characteristics. This technique makes it possible to study the behavior and actions of a given group or community in its original context. Virtual or digital ethnography is already increasingly being discussed. It involves the study of electronic media, such as the Internet, through techniques as varied as online surveys, interviews, content analysis and observations (Hine, 2008). This type of research must take into account the connections between the offline and online world. The offline conduct and actions of an individual or group should not be separated from those experienced online. Hine proposes to study the relationship between these two worlds and not to consider them as closed spaces. It is in the sense that we try to orient our research to determine the link and possible connections between the online and offline worlds.

Sampling

Let us recall here that by definition, the sample is a set of individuals or elements that have common characteristics and in which a researcher is interested. For our study, the sample

includes a group of 16 people. Eight women and eight men, made up of Facebook users aged 18 to 30, residents of the capital Tunis.[5] Participants meet the following criteria:

(i) Socio-demographic characteristics determined by the research (gender and age),

(ii) Registration for at least one year on Facebook,

(iii) Significant activity on the platform (at least one visit and one activity per day),

(iv) Permission to enter the researcher's network without confidentiality restrictions (if applicable) to observe profile characteristics and interactions.

In terms of participant recruitment, we were able to reach people through participants selected through the "snowball" technique. First, an initial telephone meeting provides an opportunity to explain the research process and confidentiality rules to each participant. We then ask our respondents to send us a friendship request so that we can carry out the non-participating observation for two months.[6]

Non-Participating Observation

Observation is a data collection technique that allows the researcher to observe behaviors that occur in a specific situation for a limited period. In our study, we opt for a non-participant observation that reveals much relevant information about the behaviors adopted on the Facebook platform. Indeed, we believe that interviews alone cannot capture all the contours of the subject. This technique is a means to limit, a little bit, this difficulty.

It should be noted, however, that the observation contains two significant limitations. On the one hand, objectivity, since the researcher must be integrated into the group to be able to observe it while maintaining a certain distance to keep the necessary distance to guarantee certain objectivity. To avoid this problem, we have chosen never to interact directly on the pages of users and this, to keep a certain distance especially since these interventions would not bring corresponding elements relevant for our research. This technique also carries a specific risk in that participants are likely to modify their practices knowing that they are being observed (Bonneville et al., 2006). In our case, the fact that our research takes place on a digital platform considerably limits this risk. The participant does not feel directly observed and should not significantly change his (should be "their" not "his") behavior on the platform.

To conduct these observations correctly, we prepared a grid consisting essentially of four parts. In the first, we report the personal information of users visible on their wall such as the city, gender, age, family ties, number of friends, number of photographs and finally, the number and type of statutes published. The second section focuses on the participant's interventions on his wall. We record the nature of his interventions (status updates, photo sharing, links to articles). The primary purpose of this section is to determine the participant's use of Facebook.

The third part is dedicated to friends' interventions on the participants' page. It takes into consideration the nature and repetition of interventions. This makes it possible to know who are the most active friends by like, comments or publications on the Facebook page of the participants. We devote the fourth and last part to the recurring phenomena observable in the participant, suggesting the existence of implicit standards within the platform. Observation thus helps to draw up a portrait, however general, of each of our participants and to prepare our interviews adequately.

Semi-Directed Interviews[7]

To conduct our interviews properly, we prepared an interview guide consisting of categories, subcategories, and follow-up questions. The interview begins with general questions about offline friendship, such as "What do you think a friend is? We then concentrate on more precise friendly relations. Then comes the turn of the questions on their use of Facebook (what tool to connect, what frequency of connection, the primary motivation to integrate the network, uses made on the platform, etc.)[8]. The last part of the interview consists of asking questions related to the theme of online friendship and also the possible links between their online and offline activities in terms of sociability. The interviews were all recorded for transcribing.

Profile of Participants

In the table (see Annexure), we present the socio-demographic characteristics of participants such as age, gender, place of residence and occupation. We also specify the intrinsic characteristics of the Facebook platform such as the date of registration on the network, the number of minutes or hours spent per day on the network and the tool used for the connection. All this information was collected during telephone interviews and semi-directed interviews.

Offline/Online Relationships and Friendship Management Strategies on Facebook

I. Offline/Online Relationships

In this research section, we propose the analysis and discussion of data concerning two main themes, namely, on the one hand, the demonstration of continuity between the offline and online spheres and, on the other hand, the strategies put in place by participants to manage these relationships. We also focus on three significant aspects in this case: latent norms on digitized space, real/virtual duality and finally questions on the socializing or desocializing aspect of the platform.

Offline Continuity Online

Respondents see online relationships as an extension of offline relationships. There is indeed a continuity between the two worlds. The anchoring of the Facebook platform in the daily lives of users only accentuates this trend. Borders thus become blurred and sometimes almost absent." The banality of self-exposure tends to reconfigure relations between the public, the private and even the intimate" (Munier, 2011). Different ways illustrate this continuity: the influence of the socio-technical tool on social relations, the back and forth between offline and online worlds and finally, "digital" responsibility.

Influence of the Digital Social Tool on Social Relations

Participants unanimously answered questions such as "Does using Facebook impact your offline relationships? Moreover, if so, in what ways?". For them, being on Facebook inevitably changes their social relationships. The impact of the digital social network takes many

forms. Indeed, the role of facilitator/accelerator in the development of friendly relationships returns iteratively in the discourse of our interviewees. The network facilitates the emergence of common interests that would not be visible offline. Facebook plays the role of a relational catalyst in this sense (Cardon, 2013).

As Marwa (23) explains: "The social network allowed me to get to know people who had the same interests as me. We gradually started going out together for a coffee, usually on weekends. This summer we even attended two concerts at the Carthage Festival. We got closer. The sharing of activities on the platform and the different interactions that go with them, such as posts, likes, and comments, participate in the development of certain social skills. In this case, "the banality of self-exposure tends to reconfigure relations between the public, private and even intimate spheres" (Munier, 2011).

The simplicity of the technical tool for organizing meetings seems to facilitate offline meetings and, in turn, the development of relationships: "Facebook played an important role at the beginning in making it easier to see each other or to know if we were going to be in the same place at the same time" (Khaled, 29). This applies especially to relationships with a relatively low degree of intimacy: "Facebook is an effective way to keep a relationship alive, but it can never replace an offline friendship [...] It's easy to organize things, it's easy to just say hello without having to do more" (Ibtihel, 24). The simple fact of being connected to the network maintains the relationship even if the exchanges are almost non-existent: "it can bring a little closer in a certain way, even if there is no real exchange, you still keep that contact" (Ali, 26 years old).

This leads us to wonder about Facebook's place in more intimate relationships, because as Salem (27) previously expressed, using the platform does not bring true friends any closer. It would act more on maintaining weak ties than strong ones. Indeed, for strong links, Facebook offers a complementary tool to communicate. As Khaled (29) explains: "I think it is an extension of real-life relationships. It is just another place to talk and meet."

The tool can also hurt relationships when it exposes the practices of some users. Ali (26) gives an example of these "bad surprises": "people who were in one place when they were not supposed to be there. Deception and lies are very present on Facebook. Visibility of users' behavior or actions, normally hidden and unknown in offline life, may harm the relationship between two or more individuals. In this sense, the disclosure of elements of a Facebook friend's personality becomes a break in a relationship. Imen (21) criticizes the crying individualism of some of his friends on the network: "People are little concerned about others. Only the self is constantly staged." Ibtihel (24) castigates intolerance in the publications of some of his friends: "My affection for them is intact, but my image of them is no longer necessarily intact. Despite these disappointments, however, the friend is not removed from the network. His publications were simply ignored by the user so that he would not "lose face" (Goffman, 1974) at a future meeting. When certain choices, political in particular, or interests are highlighted on the platform, this can constitute a "relational brake." This barrier is more visible with already weak ties since our interviewees say they do not make discoveries about their close friend's personality through the digital social network.

"I do not feel like wasting my time discussing topics that do not interest me. Some of my friends on Facebook spend their time talking about ideology and political parties in Tunisia and elsewhere. (Rachida, 30 years old).

Going Back and Forth

By “going back and forth” we mean the set of elements that are exchanged from offline life to the digital platform and vice versa. The comings and goings between these two worlds take many forms. Articles, information or comments on Facebook can furnish offline conversations.” We have all seen the same things, so we have something to talk about when we meet. We need a discursive pretext and to find something to spend time at the café no more and no less” Mourad (29 years old). “Round trips can also take the form of a thank you on a friend’s wall following an act in offline life earlier.” Mohammed (26): “I helped a friend who found himself in a difficult psychological and material situation [...] As thanks he went to post a compelling message on my wall. It meant a lot to me.”

In this specific case, Facebook becomes a communication tool in its own right because it allows thanking a friend for being there in difficult times (Xavier, 2013). The platform also has an efficient function inherent in managing daily life with friends. It is used to organize offline meetings.” I organize football games through Facebook. I extend the invitation, and it is done. I do not even have to use my phone. I use it less and less to organize my activities. Facebook and more convenient and cheaper especially (Mourad, 29). This round trip, although useful, can cause some stress for the user. Salem (27) explains that he knows in advance that the friend who posted an article will talk to him face to face about it: “I know that this person, I will see her in real life and that she will tell me about her article.” This example also reveals a recurring phenomenon in the discourse of the participants: the opposition between the virtual and the real.

The term “real life” is frequently used by participants to describe their off-grid life. The correct term is each time associated with another like “real relationships,” “real friends,” “real discussions” etc. This dichotomy remains in the (better “on an” instead of “in the”) linguistic level, because for our participants offline and online are not two completely distinct worlds and what happens on the platform is generally perceived as very real. “I use much information on Facebook in real life. Even after the revolution of January 14, 2011, the media in our country did not say everything. I inform myself on Facebook, and it helps me to position myself ideologically, I feel more in phase with my daily life.” (Salah, 19 years old).

Digital Responsibility

Friendship is often governed by unspoken rules that coordinate and condition interactions (Bidart, 1997). Developed by the partners, these generally implicit rules are specific to each friendship relationship for a given context and period. If these rules are broken, the person “loses face.” She feels uncomfortable because of the social sanctions applied by other actors during the interaction (Goffman, 1974). We noted the presence of several rules of “convenience” in the offline friendly relationships of our participants such as reciprocity, valuing and respecting shared memories, non-judgment of acts, indisputable trust, support, etc. The question at this stage is whether these standards are reproduced on Facebook and how they manifest themselves on the platform (Casilli, 2010).

According to our participants, there are “ethics” (Rachida, 30) and “implicit norms” (Khaled, 29) to be respected in digital space as in offline life. These norms are unsaid and make sense to participants: “These are things you cannot do in your real relationship. I would never write inappropriate or derogatory comments on a friend’s wall. I will not be able to post our disagreements on Facebook. I am surprised that some people would have the nerve to do it publicly” (Fatma, 26).

Emna (24) supports the same idea by saying that she will not "dirty someone's wall." Imen (21) shares this idea and reminds us that norms and rules of life must also be present on Facebook. She is careful what she writes on a friend's wall so she "does not put him in an awkward situation." This is a form of responsibility that every Facebook user must respect. Offline relational norms easily apply to the digital social network, because participants' behaviors, according to them, are the same as offline. To behave differently from real life on Facebook is schizophrenia. "I am the same on the platform and elsewhere. Besides, I use my real name, not like some hiding cowardly behind aliases" Emna (24 years old). For Khaled (29) too, the same rules apply, "my Facebook page is a bit a reflection of who I am in life [...] It is a bit in my image."

We also noticed that in our respondents' speeches the terms "obligations" and "expectations" come up iteratively, especially about certain subjects such as the need to answer the friend and wish him a happy birthday. Several standards also surround this practice. Indeed, the platform is there to recall an anniversary, so it is natural to send a message in this sense to the friend in question. However, this practice is not done in any way, nor with any public. Before wishing the birthday of a Facebook friend, a reflection on the intensity of the existing links with this person is conducted. Salah (19) wonders before writing a birthday message if he knows the person well enough. The wish is more easily and without hesitation realized with people who are intimate or with whom interactions are regular. With family members and close friends, it is something else. I want to show that I am here, that I do not forget them, that they matter to me." (Fatma, 26). In the case where the links are weak or not activated for a long time, the exchange can raise questions or even create discomfort, as Khaled (29) explains: "I only wish a happy birthday to the people I see regularly. I cannot do it with people I do not have frequent contact with. Maybe they will think I need a favor."

This obligation/expectation also manifests itself in other situations. When a user takes the trouble to send a message or to publish on another user's wall, it is the rule to reply. The example of Mourad (29) shows it well: "if someone posts something on my wall, I feel obliged to like" or again (Ali, 26) "sometimes I like posts that I have not read just to show that I have seen them." Rachida (30) gives a concrete example: "My relatives sent me pictures of their holidays; I think it is normal to look at them and put comments." These obligations/expectations are mutual and reciprocal. Marwa (23) underlines the symmetry of these expectations within the network: "My friends expect me to react quickly to their publications. I also expect them to react when I make comments. If I notice that some people do not, then I pout what they publish.

The norms around friendship relationships can be exchanged between the online and offline worlds. Indeed, norms within a couple or a group of friends are born on the digital platform and can be consolidated in real life.

"Everyone is shooting at Facebook. It certainly has its disadvantages like any other technology. However, it also has certain virtues. I met Josiane, a French friend on the platform a few years ago. I know many people who knew friends on Facebook who later became friends in real life." (Rachida, 30)

Also in the other direction, offline relationships can condition friendship acceptance on the platform. As Mourad (29) explains "when someone sends me an invitation I feel embarrassed not to accept it especially when I know I will probably meet him live later. Khaled, (29) says that "in some cases when people who work with me send me a friendship request, it is difficult for me to decline it... I say yes, but I am sure I will not communicate with some of them. The acceptance of friendship is made in this case to spare the other and not to lose face (Goffman, 1974) because the user knows in advance that relations will not develop anyway.

We have in what preceded underlined the continuity between the offline and online spheres. The digital social network is not entirely detached from the lives of our respondents, but instead well anchored in their daily lives. Facebook has allowed friendly relationships to be maintained and sometimes developed. We also noted the round trips between the offline and online worlds. The last part of this section was devoted to the issue of replicating "real life" rules and standards on the platform. We will devote the next part of our research to strategies developed by our respondents to manage friendship on Facebook.

II. Friendship Management Strategies

Erving Goffman (1973, 1974), points out that latent rules manage behavior in society and generally takes place within specific frameworks. The actor in presentation chooses to play such or such a role or to wear such or such mask according to the person with whom he interacts. Offline interactions are usually with a single audience: family, friends, colleagues, etc. On the platform, all the user's audiences are in the same place. How then is the management of these many audiences on Facebook? Our research shows that our respondents apply several strategies for managing online friendship.

Classification and Sorting

Pre-Selection: We noted that the strategies adopted by respondents begin as soon as the friendship request is received. The acceptance of the latter is a green light to let the other enter his intimacy (Joignot,2014). Starting from the idea that the profile is considered private, thus revealing a part of the personality, participants do not necessarily want to reveal it to anyone. Ali (26) explains: "I cannot add someone to my Facebook account without feeling comfortable with what they see on my wall. I will have trouble accepting my supervisor at work, or my teacher.

Specific family ties such as brother, sister, mother or father are also excluded from the network. For example, Imen (21) thinks his father's absence as a Facebook friend is apparent: "He knows I have a Facebook account. However, he never sent me an invitation, and even if he does I will not accept it [...], I do not want him to see what I post on the network. Moreover, I do not think that such an intimate relationship has a place on the platform. This is explained by the fact that the Tunisian family context remains conservative according to our respondents despite all the changes brought about by new communication technologies, especially the Internet.

Exposure: For some respondents, Facebook is the digital extension of their image in real life. The page represents them as they are and therefore believe that it is not necessary to hide information from some and reveal it to others. As Emna (24) argues: "I am the same on my Facebook. I do not suffer from digital schizophrenia-like some people do. I am honest and direct. In everyday life, I am like that too [...] The information on my page is accessible to everyone. I take responsibility for everything.

Privacy or privacy (these words are repeated) concerns are not mentioned. The information on the page reflects how to behave and be offline. The role played on Facebook is no different from that played in society. In this sense, what is said on the platform could be said offline: "I am fully responsible for what I share on Facebook. I am like in real life. Besides, I do not make any difference. I am not a hypocrite." (Ali, 26).

Filtration: Other respondents allow access to their pages to a vast number but choose to filter personal information to publish only those that do not disclose their privacy too much. It is a form of self-censorship. Mourad (29) explains it this way: "Some write stuff or publish photos and later regret it. I pay attention to what I share and resist the temptation to be if only for a short time, other people's center of interest. Failure to filter published information can sometimes lead to several problems. Some recall incidents that have undermined the credibility of users who have not taken into consideration the platform's specificities.

"A friend of mine is working in the public administration had told her supervisor that she was sick so she could take sick leave for a few days. Except that she ended up publishing holiday photos with her family forgetting that her superior had access to her page" (Rachida, 30).

Filtration is also used to maintain a consistent message to the various audiences present on the network. It is a form of digital diplomacy. Salem (27) says: "I have very different friends on my Facebook account and I pay attention to what I post so as not to shock some of them. I remember posting an article a few years ago about religion and secularism. It cost me some pretty sharp comments."

All respondents, whether they consider themselves to be revealing or censoring themselves, consider publications that they consider superficial and futile generally about elements of the daily life of some of their contacts to be unjustifiable. They present examples illustrating the activities of some of their Facebook friends: "I shop at the Monoprix" (Salem, 26), "Live from the doctor" (Fatma, 26), "I brush my teeth" (Marwa, 23), "I ate that at my mother's" (Emna, 24), "playing football" (Rachida, 30). Thus "on the platform, everyone cultivates his image and adapts it to the opinions of others by updating his profile and his photos while resorting to various strategies, such as the display of his library (Bookshelf) or his tourist and gastronomic choices (Cities I've Visited or Local Picks): the exhibition of personal tastes constantly adjusted to the comments of friends becomes a currency of exchange making it possible to increase the visibility and the attractiveness of the Facebooker" (Munier, 2011).

Although our participants disagreed with these types of publications, none of them were directly involved in these situations. As Emna (24) explains, "I would be very embarrassed to intervene to give lessons. Everyone is free to manage their Facebook as they wish. This restraint is intended not to embarrass the contact.

Preservation of Intimate Spaces

We noticed that we respondents (this sentence is weird) went directly through chat or private messages when it came to discussing their intimate lives. Nothing is publicly mentioned on the platform. In the case of offline intimate relationships, this fact is more visible. Marwa (23) says: "I only write to my friends in private. I feel more comfortable like this, and it adds an intimate dimension to our relationship. Mourad (29) supports this point and takes as an example of his relationship with a close friend: "You do not write in a visible or public way. When we need to exchange information or feelings, we necessarily go through the private sector. The platform sometimes complements the telephone as a tool for intimate communications: "to talk to a friend about something private I contact him either by private message or directly by telephone. I prefer messages; however, because they are free (Salem, 27)."

The use of Facebook can, however, provoke a form of laziness in the maintenance of relationships in "real life" (Doucet, 2013). Our participants corroborate this observation. Marwa (23) says that the use of the technical tool encourages a certain relaxation in maintaining social ties: "It goes without saying that it is easier to greet someone on Facebook than to call them or send them a message by phone. Salah (21), for his part, recalls the practical aspect of the platform that requires no effort to maintain relationships: "by writing a few words without the slightest effort, I can keep in touch without taking the trouble to call each time. It's convenient for maintaining rather weak relationships without getting too involved."

Use of Switching-Code and Neologisms

The interviews with our respondents allowed us to notice that they master the terminology of the Facebook world and that the terms inherent to the platform are sometimes quoted in French and other cases in English even if our participants are Arabic speakers and that for the majority (13 out of 16) the language of the platform is French. Our respondents often use terms such as the wall, like the newsfeed, news feed (repeated word), inbox, privately, add, add, unfriend, delete, nickname, post, poster, etc. in their speeches. This terminology is sometimes integrated into the Tunisian dialect, thus giving words that are specifically local such as: npartagi (I share), nlayki (I like), nsupprimi (to delete), ntagui (to tag), nposter (to post), etc. English terms are sometimes used as verbs in French." I am not the type to like anything that has to do with other people's private lives, and I am not going to post pictures of myself for others to see on Facebook." (Imen, 21 years old)

As Dalsuet (2013) points out, this terminology and these neologisms allow users to feel in and to be connected. I belong to the other Facebook community to Tweeter. Anyway, you do not have a choice these days; you have to be up to date." (Salem, 27 years old)

Pragmatization of Use

Some participants particularly distinguished themselves by an exclusively pragmatic use of the platform. From the interviews, we learned that Facebook is not seen as a social network for making friends, but rather for developing professional ties that can lead to change in the professional or social situation." I use Facebook and LinkedIn to build professional relationships and maximize my chances [...] I admit that sometimes I exaggerate by saying I have a degree in mechanics when I do not [...] the end justifies the means" (Youssef, 20).

Mourad, 29, argues along the same lines: "I do not publish anything very personal on Facebook. I am trying to make professional connections to leave the country and find a better job where I can finally progress and grow because I am suffocating here."

To pursue studies elsewhere than in Tunisia is Houda's objective (24 years old): "My degree in Arabic literature is not going to serve me too well here given the economic situation of the country. The unemployment rate in our specialty is one of the highest. I use whatever I can get my hands on as social networks to find a solution. I have LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Who knows, maybe a contact could open new horizons for me."

Sharing his political convictions and trying to recruit people who can help on the ground is Mounir's main objective (19): "Facebook for me is not synonymous with playing games or relaxing, it's a good tool for sharing convictions. It can play a major political role if it is used wisely."

Conclusion

Our research has highlighted the reproduction on the platform of implicit social and friendly norms. In this sense, behavior and attitudes displaced in digital space are sharply criticized by our respondents. They also try to comply with these standards by avoiding spreading personal details on Facebook. The platform also offers the possibility of reproducing intimate and confidential spaces thus allowing to reinforce the quality of the friendly bond. The "offline" thus greatly influences the "online." We were also able to determine the strategies of appropriation of the platform by our respondents. Strategies are ranging from preserving privacy to improving professional life.

Two other aspects characterize Facebook. On the one hand, the positive aspect of the structure allowing the user to benefit from the potential of the platform to develop his relations, to maintain them and to create new ones, and on the other hand, a negative aspect in the sense that the platform impacts interactions where face-to-face contact is now less and less emphasizing the desocializing aspect of the structure. This raises questions about the impact of new technologies on the nature of future sociability (Turkle, 2013).

Notes

[1]While there are 1,620,000 subscribers on Instagram and 880,000 on LinkedIn. Source: Digital Discovery, online https://www.digital-discovery.tn/chiffres-facebook-instagram-linkedin-tunisia-2018/

[2]This corresponds to people born between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s.

[3]We believe, however, that Prensky's definition of the Internet generation does not take into account the social inequalities within this age group. Indeed, even if our respondents all live in the capital Tunis, their social origins may differ. This can eventually influence how they appropriate the technological tool.

[4]Tunisia: 15-29 FB users (68%), over 30 FB users (32%).

[5]We selected the participants using the snowball technique. They are all domiciled in Tunis although most of them come from different cities of the country. Moreover, working abroad and having only a month and a half to do the interviews, we have opted for this choice to save time in our search especially as we live in the capital Tunis. A quarter of the Tunisian population lives there, and as previously specified, the city constitutes the first economic and industrial pole of the country and shelters a third of Tunisian companies producing a third of the national gross domestic product, which makes it a popular destination for job seekers.

[6]The non-participating observation took place from April 2 to June 5, 2017.

[7]The results of this research reflect the individual experiences of Facebook users aged 18 to 30 that we interviewed at a specific time and place. Our results are therefore relative to the time of the interviews, in our case, from August 5 to September 7, 2017.

[8]This allows us, among other things, to cross-reference the information gathered in the interviews with the results of our non-participant observation. What is said and what is done on the Facebook platform by users.

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Annexure

Table 1. Profile of participants

	Nickname	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Place of residence	Registration on Facebook	Time spent on Facebook	Login device
1	Marwa	F	23	Secondary School	Student	Tunis	2008	3-4hours	Smart Phone/ Computer
2	Salem	M	27	Secondary School	Employee (private company)	Tunis	2007	2-3hours	Smart Phone
3	Khaled	M	29	Secondary School	Executive (Public Administration)	Tunis	2009	1 hour	Smart Phone/ Computer
4	Ibtihel	F	24	Primary School	Employee (private company)	Tunis	2011	2-3hours	Smart Phone
5	Youssef	M	20	Secondary School (did not finish his studies)	Looking for a job	Tunis	2013	5-6hours	Smart Phone
6	Ali	M	26	Secondary School	Employee (private company)	Tunis	2010	3-4hours	Smart Phone
7	Imen	F	21	Primary School	Étudiante	Tunis	2011	3-4hours	Smart Phone Computer
8	Rahma	F	26	Secondary School	Executive (bank)	Tunis	2011	3-4hours	Smart Phone Computer
9	Mourad	M	29	Secondary School	Executive (Public Administration)	Tunis	2009	2 hours	Smart Phone
10	Emna	F	24	Secondary School	Self-employed	Tunis	2012	2-3hours	Smart Phone
11	Mohamed	M	21	Primary School	Student	Tunis	2013	3-4hours	Smart Phone Computer
12	Mounir	M	19	Secondary School (Grade 5)	Employee (private company)	Tunis	2013	2-3hours	Smart Phone Computer
13	Fatma	F	26	did not finish her studies (Primary or Secondary)	Housewife	Tunis	2010	4-5hours	Smart Phone Computer
14	Rachida	F	30	Secondary School	Executive (private company)	Tunis	2008	2-3hours	Smart Phone Computer
15	Salah	M	19	Primary School	Student	Tunis	2011	3-4hours	Smart Phone
16	Houda	F	24	Primary School	Looking for a job (Bachelor of Arts)	Tunis	2011	5-6hours	Smart Phone Computer

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