

## The dissemination of Tunisian TV series via Internet and social media during Ramadan

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تاريخ القبول: 02 – 05 – 2018

تاريخ الاستلام: 10 – 03 – 2018

### Abstract

During Ramadan, Tunisian TV channels used to present to the Tunisian audience a variety of shows (cooking shows, religious programs, recitation contests and chant the Qur'an, skits, etc.) and Tunisian and Arab series.

In light of the consecutive technological developments that are taking place in the media landscape, we jump to the discussion of social media content presence in the era of media hybridization and integration. This may be applicable also to discussing television programs on these electronic platforms, which not only provide new contents, but also new patterns of content creation treatment and distribution.

Through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the various social media platforms of our research corpus, we clearly demonstrated that social media are considered as a second screen whose viewers use to watch their television series during the month of Ramadan. This can be justified by advancing two reasons: The first is the non-availability of the viewer during the display of the series, and the second is the rich content available on the social media compared to what the traditional TV offers.

### Keys words

Tunisian TV ; social media ; TV channels ; various social

### ملخص

تعرض القنوات التلفزيونية التونسية خلال شهر رمضان ، مجموعة متنوعة من العروض (برامج الطهي والبرامج الدينية ومسابقات التلاوة وترديد القرآن والمسرحيات ، إلخ) ، والمسلسلات التونسية والعربية.

وفي ظلّ التطورات التكنولوجية العديدة التي تشهدها الساحة الإعلامية ، بدأنا نتحدث اليوم عن وجود محتوى تلفزيوني بالميديا الإجتماعيّة في عصر إندماج وسائل الإعلام. كما أصبحنا ، نناقش البرامج التلفزيونية بهذه المنصات الالكترونية التي لا يقتصر دورها على تقديم محتويات جديدة فحسب، بل أيضاً كيفية بناءها ومعالجتها وتوزيعها.

ومن خلال التحليل الكمي والنوعي لمختلف منصات الميديا الاجتماعية لعيّنة بحثنا ، نؤكد أنّ الميديا الاجتماعية تعتبر شاشة ثانية لمشاهدة المسلسلات التلفزيونية خلال شهر رمضان. ويمكن تفسير ذلك من خلال سببين: أولاً ، عدم توفر المشاهد أثناء عرض المسلسل وثانياً ، تقديم الميديا الاجتماعية محتوى غنيّ مقارنة بما يعرضه التلفزيون.

### الكلمات المفتاحية:

التلفزيون التونسي ، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ، القنوات التلفزيونية ، القيم الاجتماعية

## Introduction

During Ramadan, Tunisian television has always been the mirror and the reflector of shared set of values and normative foundations of society, depending greatly on the people and their societal membership and individual experiences (Chouikha, 2014). Accordingly it has been transformed into a place of family sociability after being intermingled with all forms of the social connectivity and individual interactivity.

Tunisian TV channels on the other hand used to present a variety of shows (cooking shows, religious programs, recitation contests and chant the Qur'an, skits, etc.) in addition to Tunisian and Arab series. In fact, during OPEN SIGMA event organized in 2015<sup>1</sup>, Hassan Zargouni (CEO of SIGMA CONSEIL) stated that 76% of Tunisians watched the local TV channels, during the month of Ramadan 2014.

It is also useful to emphasize the point that the technological component was and still determinant in the emergence of new practices of media production and consumption. Thus, the television has benefited from the technical progress since the sixties, the date of appearance of the VCR improvements. In a similar vein, consecutive technological innovations are increasingly penetrating the media industry, hence we begin today to evoke the question of television's content presence on social media platforms in the era of media convergence (Belaid, 2014, Quemner, 2015).

<sup>1</sup> A big statistic event which take place every year in Tunisia, at the end of January, by SIGMA CONSEIL COMPAGNY

In this complex context, we try to enrich and forward the discussion of television programming on social media, and evidently the role of these platforms into the new dynamics of creating, sharing and redistributing of content, since we argue that the problematic has not yet been addressed fully in the Tunisian context.

Moreover, we notice today, the presence of all the Tunisian TV channels, on different social media (Giacobino, 2015). All of them have at least Facebook pages and YouTube channels, especially as we talk in 2015 about 1.826.000.000 internet users, whose most 5.000.000 are present on Facebook (Medianet, 2015).

It should be stressed also that, Facebook IQ (2015) has recently reported that the MENA community tends to celebrate the festivities of Ramadan on Facebook, by exchanging information or sharing content (48 million posts/month), of whom 92% use their mobile devices. The website has also reported that most of these conversations are generated by Facebook users who are between 25 and 44 years old.

As we talk today about the Social TV, 77% of active Facebook users have access to this social media along prime time. Facebook is also the second screen which is dominating the landscape, followed successively by YouTube and Twitter (FACEBOOK IQ (2), 2015). The same goes for Tunisia, hence some mentioned rates regarding Ramadan of 2014, confirm the interest granted by Tunisian people to the social media during Ramadan.

Today, social media is used massively by the old TV channels as a new way to "be visible on the Internet" (Balagué and Fayon, 2010: 50). Many TV channels have also benefited from these new free platforms to ensure the visibility of their media content to a wider audience.

The present study addresses vigorously the dissemination of Tunisian television series via the Internet and social media in the era of media convergence, during the month of Ramadan, and seeks initial answers to the following questions:

- In the era of media convergence, which TV content has been provided by Tunisian TV series producers on social media for the benefit of their TV public?
- What are the consequences of the passage of the Tunisian classic TV screen viewers to the social media?

The general testable assumption that the current study supports is that the distribution of Tunisian series on the Internet and social media has pushed the Tunisian viewers to adopt new practices. They became also active, in view of the availability of new interactive information platforms and a rich and diverse content.

## **1. Methodology and research corpus**

### **a. Methodology**

We have chosen to conduct our empirical research during the month of Ramadan as the television practices are developing throughout this period of time and people in charge of TV channels programming and scheduling pay a careful attention to arrange this month's programming.

Methodologically speaking, in order to answer our research questions properly, we have adopted quantitative and qualitative analyses of television's content offered by producers of Tunisian television series on social media. In accordance with our study goals exigencies, we have tailored an operational framework that captured content's dynamics within social media platforms (Like clicks, shares and comments).

We sought to follow the number of items posted on these social media, users' interaction with these elements, the subject of these elements and the frequency of topics and items processed on these social media, and to identify the type of information published on social media of Tunisian series were selected as the object of study (text / links to articles, photos or video / audio files) and their subjects.

This approach allows us to define on the one hand, how the Tunisian producers disseminate their series via the Internet and social media, due to the availability of new platforms as Facebook and YouTube, and on the other hand, the new practices of Tunisian viewers and consumers of content.

Given the complexity of approached topic and due to its much-needed exigency, we find that the interactive model proposed by Rouquette (2009) to be meaningful in the context of our research framework, its theoretical model includes the following elements:

- Scope of shares of the surfer on the content and the choice of subjects;
- Ability to review of comment or others;
- Interactivity expression or participation.

### **b. Research corpus**

The Tunisian TV offers a rich and varied schedule program. The typology of Tunisian media landscape is largely characterized by the absence of specialized channels, and even those that existed in the past were forced to abandon the sector because of many constraints including economical ones.

Subsequently, the Arab television series have always attracted a large number of viewers compared to other television productions. A Saudi media study (Alouche, 2004) has pointed out that the TV drama recorded a 99.7% of audience, followed by religious programs and news programs. This explains the exorbitant number of advertising during the dissemination of TV series, as such programming attracts many viewers.

In Tunisia, during the month of Ramadan 2014, SIGMA CONSEIL's studies confirmed that the Tunisian sitcom "Nssibti Laaziza" diffused by "Nesma TV" has been distinguished from others competing channels by posting 27.7% of audience and 43.7% from the total part of the landscape, while the "Maktoub 4" series has captured the same audience, it held the largest part of the landscape, 58%.

We have chosen as research corpus the TV series "Maktoub 4", broadcasted on the private Tunisian channel "El Hiwar", after breaking the fast, during Ramadan 2014.

Note that the first season of this series has been broadcasted on the first national channel "Wataniya 1" but after the events of 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Sami Fehri (the film maker of this series) has launched its own channel "Ettounisiya". However due to some problems with the official authorities, the distribution of the fourth season of this series has been performed on "El Hiwar" channel.

This TV series, consisting of 23 episodes, was diffused from 29<sup>th</sup> June 2014 to 31<sup>th</sup> July 2014 with a break of three days (18, 19 and 20 July 2014), because of the assassination of Tunisian soldiers on Chaambi Mountain.

If there is a soap opera that accurately reflects the political and social reality of the post-revolution situation in Tunisia, it is obviously, this series (Ksibi, 2014). The merit also of this series, "is to have pierced the dense web of Ramadan atmosphere that obscures the truths and fared reality with scenes of false gaiety and alienating. It played outside our eyes, trades that plague our social situation, namely the repression, the torture and the corruption that make Tunisian people sick "(*ibid*:2).

In our analysis, we were approached various social media broadcasting of these series. The TV series "Maktoub 4" was presented on two social media platforms, Facebook and YouTube and on the original TV channel broadcaster's interactive platform, "Ettounisiya". Below the table showing our research corpus:

**Tableau 1: The research copus**

Social Media	Fan / Followers number <sup>2</sup>
Facebook [Since 13/05/2014]	64 653 fans
YouTube	36 026 followers
The TV channel's platform <sup>3</sup>	-----

As this is the fourth season of the Tunisian series "Maktoub", only one Facebook page was devoted to all seasons of this series, including the fourth one. Besides, in the launching of the first season of this series, there was no intention to launch a second season. This explains the absence of a sign indicating that it is the first season of the series.

Therefore, the Facebook page of this series was entitled directly in Arabic "Maktoub" (Fate). To announce that this is the fourth season, the administrator has just changed the cover page.

The episodes of the TV series "Maktoub 4" were broadcast on the YouTube channel of the channel "Ettounisiya<sup>4</sup>". This channel has also aired the series on its traditional screen. So this is a playlist among others, named the soap. We will thus have the YouTube channel of the series. This is an interactive platform that is related to different social media television channel. A section was also devoted to episodes of "Maktoub 4" series.

Each episode whose quality is HD was divided in three parts. The user can react to the content, by liking content or commenting or tweeting or sharing on the Google +. The reactions of users are displayed directly on their social media profiles or accounts.

It should be noted that the emergence of social media, has participated on the emergence of the new profession "the community manager" (Belaid, 2015). In order to create content on social media, to manage a community, to interact with it, to communicate a company's message (who works on his behalf) to the outside and to share with the company the reactions of its community. Moreover, we tend to call the community manager of a Facebook page "the administrator". In our study, the community manager is the mediator between the producers of the TV series "Maktoub4" and the viewers of this series.

## 2. Results

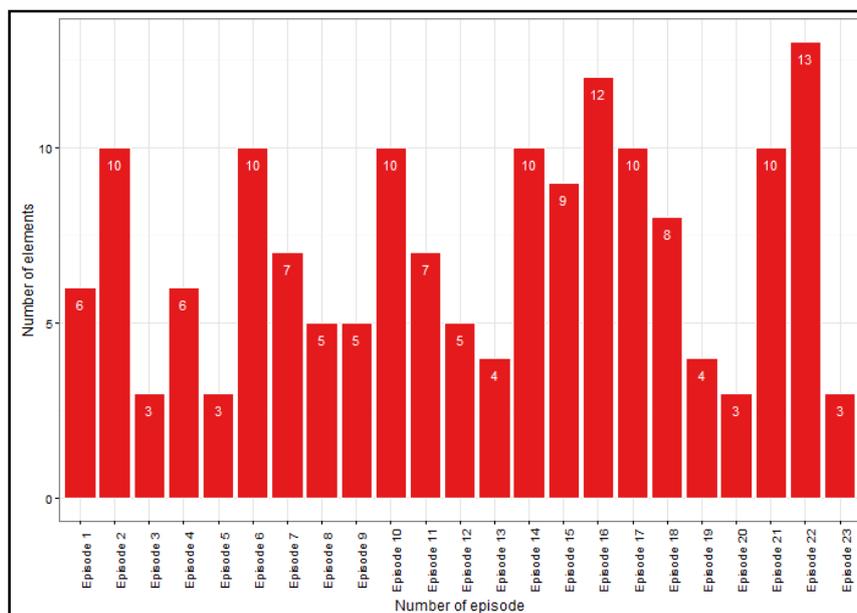
<sup>2</sup> This number has been saved in the beginning of the studies but it has been developed during the Ramadan month.

<sup>3</sup> This platform is related to different options on social media as *Like click*, share, tweet and comment. Since 05/07/2014, the channel has started publishing links from its platform on the Facebook.

<sup>4</sup> Actually, it's named « Elhiwar Ettounsi »

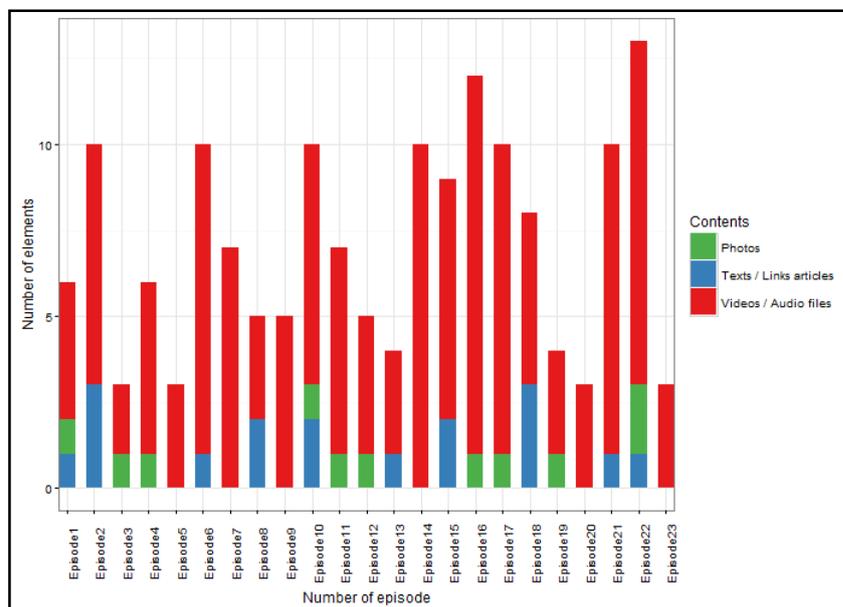
The Tunisian series "Maktoub4" was broadcasted during Ramadan 2014, on the private Tunisian TV channel "Ettounisiya". But the content of this series was not only broadcasted on the traditional screen. We also recorded the presence of content related to this series on social media. We talk about Facebook pages, YouTube channels and the interactive platforms of the channel itself, on which a variety of content has been published regularly.

**Graph 1: Evolution of the number of elements published during the broadcasting of the series "Maktoub4"**



According to the graph 1, the pace of publications on the Facebook page of "Maktoub 4" series is not stable. The number of items on this page varies between three and thirteen elements. But after the publication of each episode of this series on the classic screen, there are always posts on the Facebook page. As a result, the Facebook page of "Maktoub 4" series was quite active in terms of content posts.

**Graph 2: Evolution of elements published on the Facebook page of "Maktoub4" series**



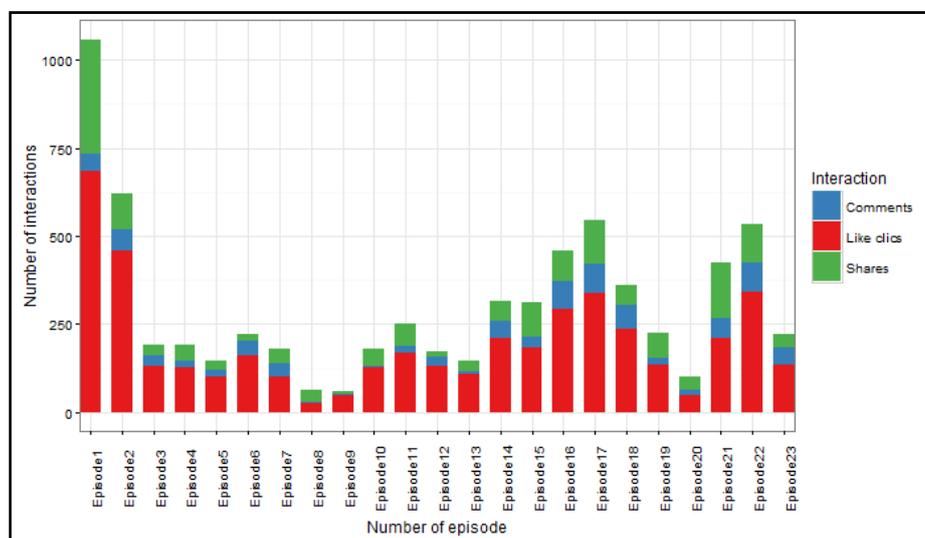
According to the graph 2, the administrator of the Facebook page of "Maktoub 4" series tends to diversify the content published on the page: photo, video and text. But he focused more on videos which represent the episodes of the series.

At the same time, we note also that the number of photos published with the broadcast of episode n°22 is elevated, compared to the number of photos published during the other episodes.

Texts and links of articles are ubiquitous on the Facebook page of "Maktoub 4" but still fewer than the videos.

On this Facebook page, publications are synchronized with the diffusion of the episode on the classic screen. So the viewer always finds content to read or to see on the Facebook page of the series.

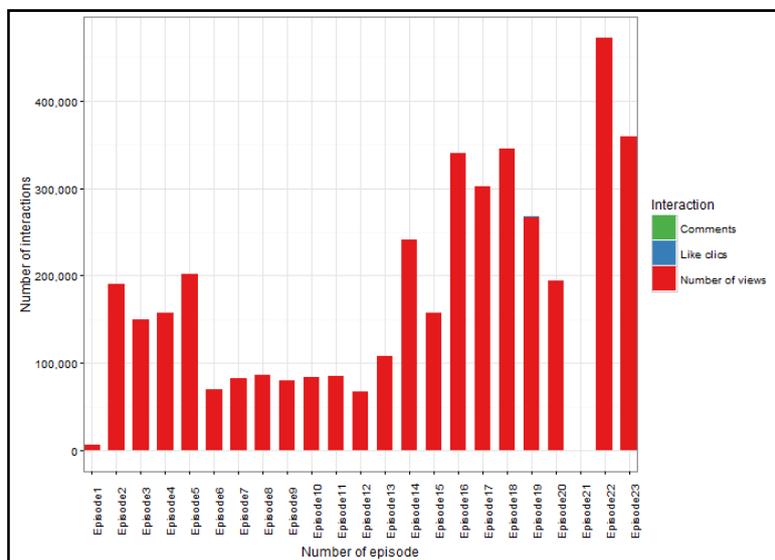
**Graph 3: Interactivity between Internet users and elements published on the Facebook page of « Maktoub4 » series**



According to the graph 3, the content published on the Facebook page of "Maktoub 4" series, attracts Internet users. They react with the content. But there are fewer comments and many more Like clicks. While the number of Like clicks reaches sometimes 690 clicks, the number of comments for any episode does not exceed one hundred and the number of shares does not exceed three hundred and fifty.

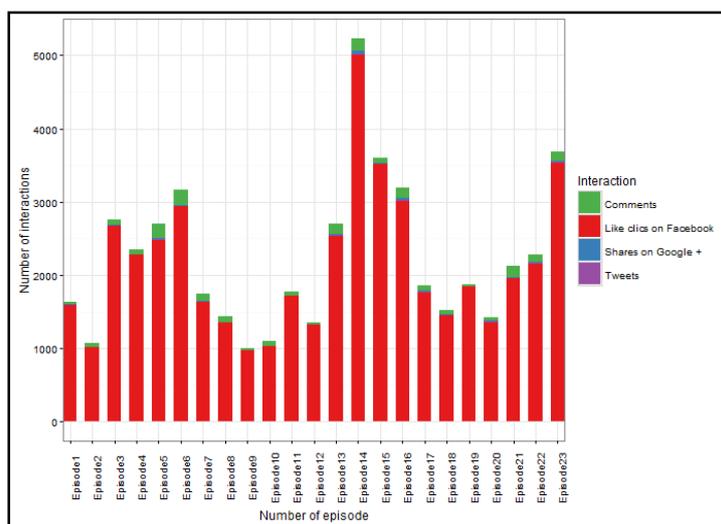
Meanwhile, the Facebook page of the series recorded strong interactivity, following the passage of all episodes. Internet users were still active.

**Graph 4: Interactivity between Internet users and the episode diffused on the YouTube Channel of "Maktoub4" series**



According to Computer graph 4, the episode posted on YouTube channel attracts many YouTubers. The number of views since the start of the series until its end, is between 70000 and 470000 views, yet no comment or Like click was recorded throughout the broadcast of the series. The number of Like clicks did not exceed three hundred, while the number of comments did not even exceed the fifties.

**Graph 5: Interactivity of Internet users with the episode diffused on the « Maktoub4 » series' platform**

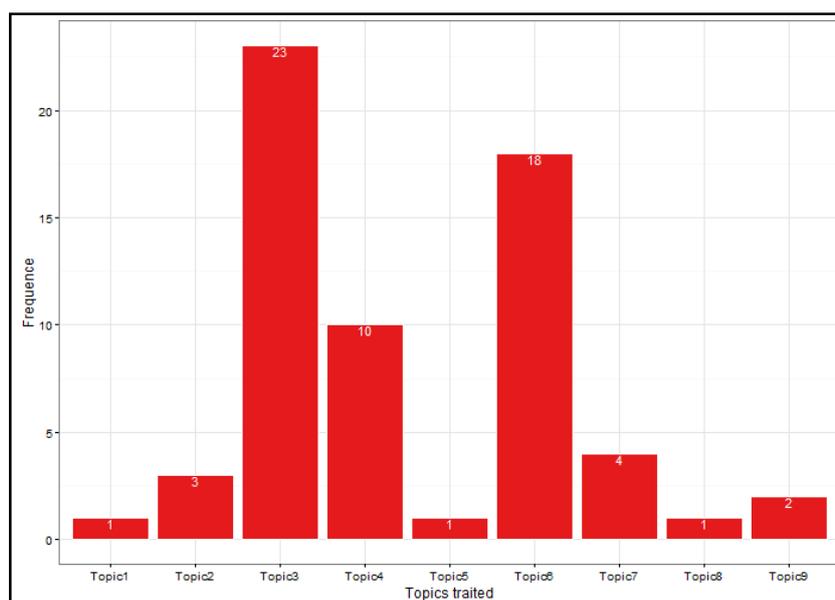


According to the graph 5, the episode posted on the channel's platform attracts the attention of many Internet users. The number of Like clicks since the start of the series until its

end varies between 1.000 and 5.000 views. But there are few comments, tweets and sharing on Google +.

It should be noted that the flow of users their reaction varies from one episode to another. But the platform rarely recorded comments.

**Graph 6: Frequency of topics treated on the Facebook page of "Maktoub4" series**



*Topic1 :The annoucement of the channel's programmation*

*Topic 2: The annoucement of the beginning of the episode*

*Topic 3: The diffusion of the episodes*

*Topic 4:The annoucement of the audience*

*Topic 5: The annoucement of the time of diffusion*

*Topic 6: The replay of the episode*

*Topic 7:Information about the series (script, team,etc.)*

*Topic 8:The questions of Internet users*

*Topic 9:The links to the plateform of the series*

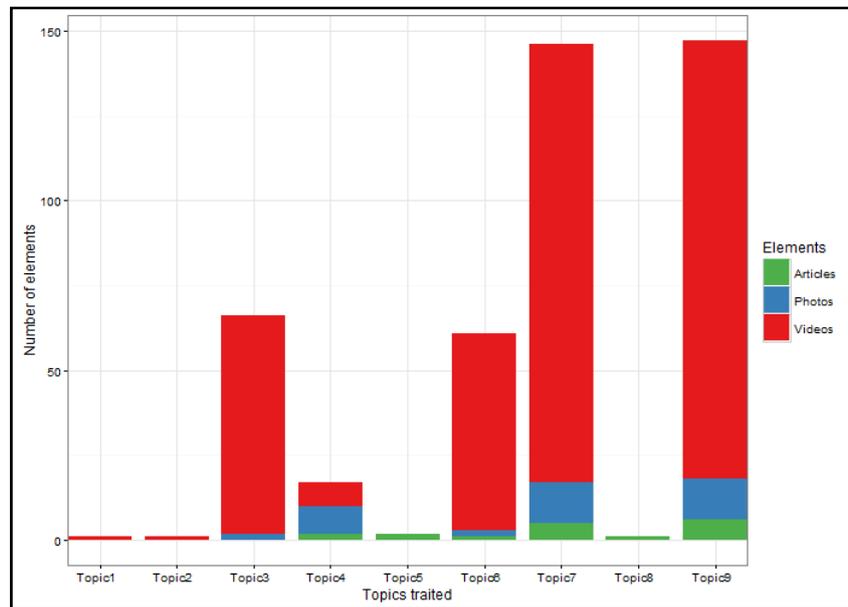
According to graph n°6, nine topics were treated on the Facebook page of the series. The administrator of the page does not just disseminate the episodes of the series, but tries to present to the user a rich and a varied content by announcing, for example, the time of the broadcast or the starting of the episode on the classic screen, or by posting the series' photos or information about the series, etc.

The administrator of the Facebook page publishes also links related to the series' platform. Otherwise, he republishes the episode already posted on the page or to publish the development of events of the series, in the form of photos or texts.

The administrator posts from time to time, statistics of the TV channel audience in Ramadan. These audiences show that the TV channel "Ettounsiya" on which is diffusing the "Maktoub 4" series was ranked first TV, in the audience ratings level.

Similarly, the administrator of the Facebook page appreciates chatting with users by asking them some questions about the development of events of the episode, the reactions of the actors, etc.

**Graph 7: Frequency of element posted on the Facebook page of "Maktoub4" series depending on the topic**

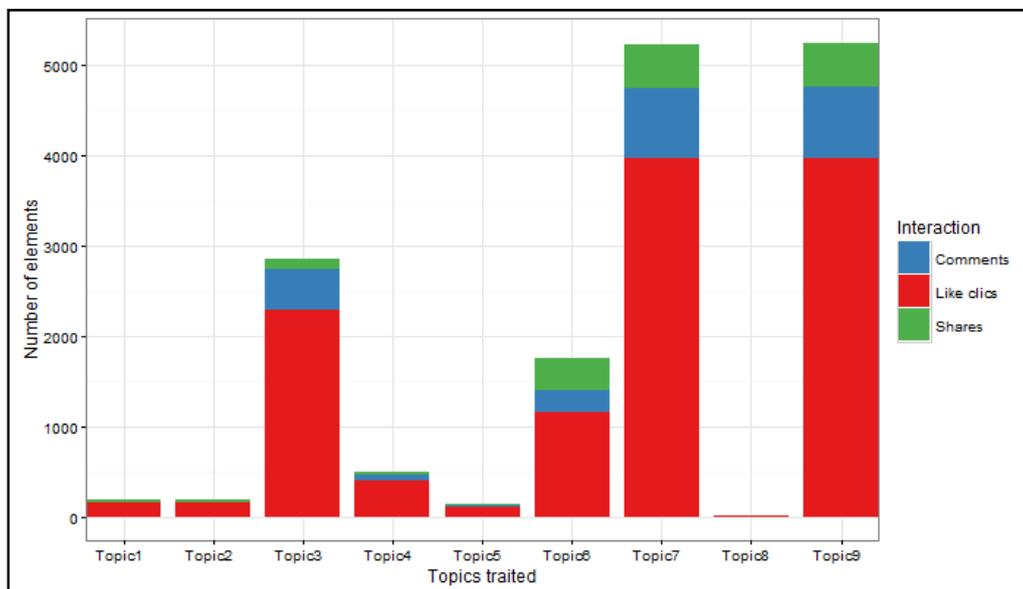


- Topic1 :The annoucement of the channel's programmation*  
*Topic 2: The annoucement of the beginning of the episode*  
*Topic 3: The diffusion of the episodes*  
*Topic 4:The annoucement of the audience*  
*Topic 5: The annoucement of the time of diffusion*  
*Topic 6: The replay of the episode*  
*Topic 7:Information about the series (scenario, team,etc.)*  
*Topic 8:The questions of Internet users*  
*Topic 9:The links to the plateform of the series*

The graph 7 shows that the administrator of the Facebook page of the series "Maktoub4" tends to publish the video of the series. As for the photos, they are the second variable appreciated by the administrator. The majority of pictures provide information about the series.

Moreover, few articles are published. Those which are published on the Facebook page, talk about the series' script, actors and other details. Otherwise, they announce the audience or the links of the platform which broadcasts the series.

**Graph 8: Interactivity with elements posted on the Facebook page of « Makroub4 » series depending on topics treated**



The Graph 8 shows that people react much more after the diffusion of the episodes of the series, either through like clicks, comments or shares. But, they also like following information about the series.

Similarly, the internet users are interested in the replay of the episode, which explains the number of comments, like clicks (circa 4000) and high shares (circa 500).

Although the administrator of the Facebook page offers Internet users the opportunity to express themselves by asking them questions, few users comment posts. They just like or share the content published.

We should remember, according to the quantitative analysis, that Facebook page of the series was quite active through publications (videos, photos, status .etc.). But the flow of publications was not constant, which has influenced the flow of feedback from users through like clicks, shares and comments.

The quantitative analysis reveals that the Facebook page and YouTube channel of dedicated to these series, have recorded interactivity with users, through the different variables: the Like clicks, the number of views, the shares, the comments and others. But it has been confirmed that the interactivity with the YouTube channel is not related to the Facebook page as

the number of views recorded on the YouTube channel is higher. Each social media works in its own way as YouTube attracts more viewers.

The rapid increase in numbers of views on YouTube reflects that the fans of this media are higher than the number of active fans on the Facebook page. Henceforth, YouTube is considered as the best platform to disseminate audiovisual contents. It is the same for the platform of the series, although the number of views does not exceed the YouTube one, as Facebook and YouTube are ranked by ALEXA (2014) as the most visited websites by Tunisian people.

According to the qualitative analysis, Internet users connect to social media of the series; first of all, to follow the episodes and secondly, to have additional information about the series. Moreover, the Facebook page is considered as a medium of detailed information about the series.

Additionally, there are some viewers who watch the replay of the series on social media. But the same number of viewers is also interested in the replay of the series on the classic screen. Thus, the presence of other information mediums as Internet and social media did not overlook the presence of traditional media.

However Internet users are also interested in announcements (of the audience, of the broadcast schedules, of the channel's program.etc.) as much as they are interested in the series.

Finally, Google + and Twitter as a social media do not have a large audience in Tunisia because of the lack of public's interactivity on the Net. These social media are not recommended to Tunisian TV channels as there is not a community to attract.

## **Conclusion**

Through this article, we tried to study on the one hand the relationship that TV maintained with its viewers and on the other hand, patterns through which producers are seeking to create a strong link between different actors involved in this process.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the various social media of our research corpus, we confirmed that social media are considered as a second screen whose viewers use to watch their television series during the month of Ramadan. According to participant observation, this can be justified by two reasons: first of all, the non-availability of the viewer during the passage of the series and secondly, by the rich content available on the social media.

Regarding the content availability on social media, we confirm that each social media assumes a very specific function. Better yet, the administrator of the Facebook page is called to

publish many more photos to attract Internet users and to create interactivity with them. In fact, the distribution of the series will be made in the form of photos. But to have more interactivity on the page, it will be better to publish more content. So, the interactivity on social media depends on the content available on the new information mediums, and this content is richer than the content diffused on the classic television screen.

Similarly, we recorded interactivity on the virtual platform between the public television series via comments below posts. So "digital social networks give the opportunity to users to participate actively in the production of media content. They favor the emergence of new relationships and enhancing existing relationships "(Proulx and Kwok, 2011: 105). The exposition to the television on social media is rooted in social, information and communication practices, as it creates an interaction between viewers («receptors») and broadcasters of television content and has an idea about attitudes of viewers. The receiver becomes active relative to the frame in which the technical device intervenes after being passive.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses of the various social media platform for our research corpus lend strong support to the assumption that each social media has its own public, even if they have the same goal. We speak indeed of a heterogeneous public.

However, when we talk about a virtual public space, we expect that the ordinary user's total freedom and disinhibition. It is true that the new reception modes are available for the benefit of the Internet users to express themselves with regard to content circulated on the web, by which all users can present their evaluation of the content quality; but the audience is not active enough in interaction process with this content. It is perhaps not surprising that the audience is more interested in audiovisual elements (videos and photos), which pushed social media managers to publish less text and focus much more on audiovisual contents.

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