Journal of Social and Political Sciences

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Exploring the Sociocultural Extensions of Changing Musical Taste: A Sociomusicological Study of Morocco's Social Dynamics

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Abstract

This article proposes a sociomusicological exploration of Moroccan music, specifically highlighting how musical taste can be a strong tool for analysing social change. Using a qualitative design, the study focuses on two main variables: identity and social values. Moreover, it examines two key sociomusiocological dimensions: music diffusion and consumption. Eighteen artists, including music composers, lyricists, and singers participated in the study through semi structured interviews. The content analysis of transcriptions revealed seven main themes: music's function as entertainment, the hybrid / ambiguous musical taste, the hidden agenda, music broadcast reconsideration, (social) media and musical socialization, Moroccan values and the need for censorship, and the "danger" to the Moroccan musical identity. The findings demonstrate a noticeable shift in consumers' general musical taste, attributed to significant changes in music diffusion and consumption patterns. Consequently, this shift has a profound impact on consumers' identity and social values. Therefore, the study suggests that Moroccan society is currently experiencing significant social changes.

Keywords: Sociomusicology, Musical Taste, Identity, Social Values, Social Change

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, societies are confronted with multidimensional challenges that necessitate an understanding of societal transformations. Scholars from various fields have directed their attention towards societal changes, examining them through different lenses such as economy, politics, educations, and culture. Music, being a cultural and social event (Clarke & Cook,2004), has garnered significant interest due to its ability to reflect the present and evoke memories (Laughey, 2006), as well as shape social reality (Clayton et al., 2011). Sociomusicologists, including Born (2000), De Nora (2000,2003), Martin (2002,2006), Hennion (2003), Hesmondalgh (2008), Ellis (2009), and Frith (2011) have conducted research on the interplay between music and society. These investigations have explored themes such as identity, taste, gender roles, power relations, and the impact of technology on music production, diffusion, and consumption. Through these studies, a deeper

understanding has been gained regarding how music influences the attitudes, behaviors, and identities of individuals and groups, as well as how consumers shape the music industry.

The present article aims, therefore, to utilize music, specifically musical taste, as a lens to explore and comprehend the social changes occurring in the specific context of Morocco. This choice is justified by the fact that musical taste serves as a key concept upon which many interpretations of the social in music are founded. It is a significant marker of various categorizations, such as social class and identity, whether social or musical. Bourdieu (1984) argues that musical taste not only indicates one's position within the hierarchical social structure but also reinforces that position. Ellis (2009) further emphasizes that "even in a globalized culture and a supposedly classless society, then, musical preference still indicates a lot about social identity and status" (p.53). Musical taste can reflect one's life style, age, sense of belonging to a specific community, and even their value system. Ellis (2009) highlights additional aspects such as dress style, behaviors, attitudes, and even the values of those who adhere to specific musical genres. Furthermore, Van Eijck (2001) suggests that cultural and musical preferences, viewpoints, and consumption patterns are part of a broader framework that encompasses moral, social, and cultural values.

Based on this perspective, studying and analyzing musical taste can provide valuable insights into social dynamics. Specifically, it can reveal how patterns of music diffusion and consumption not only reflect and indicate changes within a society but also have the potential to produce those changes. This applies to both personal and musical identity and ,more importantly, to the value system.

1.1 Context of the study

The present study focuses on the specific context of Morocco, where the current music scene has been undergoing continuous development and change. More recently, there has been a growing sentiment that has quickly solidified into a strong conviction: a musical turn is underway. The signs of this turn can be observed on various levels. Firstly, there has been a noticeable change in patterns of musical consumption. Listeners now tend to prefer newer styles, such as pop, rap and rai music, while traditional musical styles and "classy-cal" music, which were previously favored, have taken a backseat. Secondly, the process of musical diffusion has further reinforced this shift. The majority of media outlets have actively encouraged this change by progressively downplaying previously preferred styles and prioritizing the broadcast of new music. All this has resulted in a social debate, particularly regarding the sociocultural extensions of this musical turn. Many social actors and institutions, in addition to artists themselves, have started to raise questions on the eventual impact of this shift in musical taste, particularly on the local musical identity and also the value system.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the social dynamics produced by this change in Moroccan musical taste. More precisely, it seeks to explore and understand the sociocultural implications, including the impact on consumers' personal and musical identities, as well as their social values. It is worth pointing out that the latter variables are significant sociocultural markers through which societies' change can be approached and evaluated. Following this perspective, the present study focuses on understanding the changes that Moroccan society is currently experiencing through the lens of music. By tracking current trends and preferences in musical taste and examining their eventual impact on social values and identity, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the development and evolution of Moroccan society.

1.3 The rationale

The purpose of this article is to address the gap in sociomusicological research within the Moroccan context. This study is unique as it aims to analyze the change in musical taste and its impact on consumers' identities and social values, which has rarely been explored in previous studies. Consequently, this study offers a new perspective to explore and understand the dynamics of Moroccan society. By investigating the relationship between music and social change, this research contributes to the general knowledge in the field of

sociomusicology, particularly in the context of North Africa. Overall, this article provides valuable insights into the sociomusicological aspects of Moroccan music and its implications for broader societal transformations.

1.4 Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Moroccan (new) artists perceive the role of music in contemporary Moroccan society, considering the influence of different social actors and society as a whole?
2. How do they assess the local current musical taste? And how it is currently established?
3. What is their perception regarding the mechanisms and contexts that condition the dissemination and consumption of music?
4. How does the new "imposed taste" impact Moroccan society, particularly consumers' social values and identity?

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework

The conceptual and theoretical framework of this study is framed by central constructs namely sociomusicology, globalization, and standardization.

2.1 Sociomusicology: fundamentals

As a distinct and relatively new field of music studies, sociomusicology reflects "the turn to the social" in music. It offers wide and specific empirical possibilities through which the musical product, event, practice, and performance can be approached. In this perspective, it proposes a developed vision that considers music as a lens to capture, analyze, and understand individual and collective behaviors, and thus, social dynamics. It also proposes new insights into the musical act, capable of meeting the vital need "to cope with the enigma of this art which is both very immediate, subjective, emotive, and also highly symbolic, so powerfully able to mobilize groups and carry social identities" (Clayton et al., 2011, p.253). [1]

At the heart of sociomusicology, the triangle of production, diffusion, and reception emerges as a fundamental methodological foundation through which a complex network of meanings, themes, relationships, interactions, and tensions is explored and analyzed. In this regard, DeNora (2003) explains that the sociological approach to music seeks "to capture the actual mechanisms through which doing music is simultaneously doing other things – thinking and remembering, feeling, moving/being, and co-operating, coordinating, and sometimes colluding with others" (p.155). Within this vision, sociomusicologists primarily focus on key themes and perspectives to deconstruct "how the social comes to be inscribed in the musical?" (Denora, 2004, p.3). The most important themes include identity construction / change, musical tastes and social classes, music and sociocultural/political discourses, musical identity, music and sociopolitical activism, the impact of new technologies on music production, diffusion, and consumption, power relations, patronage and sponsorship, the economic basis, legalities and commodities of musical creation and diffusion, and finally, processes of musical renewal.

The main focus of the present study was on musical taste and its dialectical relationship with patterns of music diffusion and consumption. In other words, the aim was to explore and understand how individuals' and groups' preferences and choices in music are influenced by the ways in which music is disseminated and consumed within the specific context of Morocco. Equally important, the objective was also to shed light on the reciprocal influence between music diffusion and consumption patterns, as both factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' musical preferences and the overall trends within the music industry.

2.2 Globalization in music

Within the dynamics of globalization, the field of music has witnessed deep shifts that have touched upon different levels: epistemology, production, dissemination, consumption, institutions, and system of values (Stoke, 2004; Baltzis, 2005)). First, musical practices have started to abide by a postmodern vision that

transcends the restrictions and conventional rules of "old" modern music. Lyotard (2009) describes the latter condition by stating that "composers today have the feeling that everything is possible and that they must invent for each work not only its musical form, but the rules of the music" (p.38). Second, music production, with the new technological facilities, has been able to bypass "old" institutional and organizational structures. Artists have started to benefit from real margins of freedom to create, produce and communicate directly with their audiences. Third, the dissemination of music has witnessed an unprecedented evolution with advantages brought by digitalization, virtualization, and thus, time and space compression (Baltzis, 2005). Fourth, these conditions have engendered global traditions of music consumption for "more and more people gain access to a wider range of musical styles, genres and cultures" (Baltzis, 2005, p 142-143).

All these changes have resulted in real transformations in societies' system of values and musical tastes. Varriale and Varriale (2016) argue that globalization has established a "cosmopolitan taste" supported by processes of "aesthetic socialization". However, the two scholars note that "existing research has rarely reflected on the mechanisms which generate a taste for non-national cultural forms" (p.44-45). Therefore, attention should be drawn to the ways contemporary societies have engaged in these processes of familiarization. It would be interesting to investigate the role played by what Varriale and Varriale (2016) call the "new institutions" brought by aesthetic socialization in instituting "different legitimation strategies" (p.48).

2.3 Standardization of music

Standardization in music refers to the replication of the same "formulaic" and thematic patterns in songs for purely commercial aims. Adorno (1941) argues that "imitation" or what he refers to as the "competitive process" plays a dominant role in this regrad. He explains that when a specific song achieves success, numerous others quickly emerge imitating that successful song. The most successful types of hits and the proportions between elements are replicated, resulting in the establishment of standardized norms. Therefore, failure to adhere to these new norms leads to exclusion. Alongside the same lines, Frith (1995) cites "formula song" as the model followed by artists to reach the "imposed" line of sameness. Songs need to "to have a particular sort of use value-it had to be *adaptable"* (p.161). The latter phrase refers fundamentally to the markets' pressure and needs; it refers to how the music business dictates the norms and standards that a song should abide by. Additionally, Wicke (1990) evokes structural similarity as the principal aspect of standardization. The same sounds, rhythms, breaks, and sound effects are systematically used. Wicke's (1990) further details how artists profit from the facilities offered by new technology and digitalization, specifically their reliance on sampling and sequencing techniques to reach sameness.

3. Methodology

3.1 Method

This study utilized a qualitative method due to its ability to provide specific and detailed information (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). The primary objective was "to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis" (Queirós et al.,2017, p.370), and therefore, "to increase our understanding of what is going on" (Black, 1994, p.426). It is important to note that, in social research, qualitative method "has a longstanding history of contributing to an understanding of social structures, behaviors and culture" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.27). This is attributed to its ability to vividly depict and present phenomena as lived by the participants under study, capturing their intricate details and unique perspectives (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Therefore, the ultimate aim of the study was to comprehend and elucidate the intricacies of social relations (Queirós et al.,2017).

3.2 Sampling and participants

The present study employed purposive sampling, specifically targeting "information-rich respondents" (Kumar, 2018, p.805). A total of 18 participants, primarily music makers (singers, composers, and lyricists), were involved in the research. This included 5 participants representing pop music, 5 participants representing rap, 4

representing rai, and 4 music creators who work outside of these genres. The main objective was to contextualize the perspectives of all participants regarding the general musical landscape in Morocco and to compare their different views. The age of participants ranged from 24 to 62 years old, with 14 males and 10 female participants.

3.3 Data collection procedures

The main instrument used for data collection was semi -structured interviews, which were conducted both face-to- face and online using applications such as Zoom and Skype. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour and was recorded after obtaining the consent of the participants. It is important to note that this approach allowed for flexibility in commenting on interviewees' answers and asking follow -up questions, which is highly recommended in this type of research (Kothari, 2004). The core questions of the interviews were organized in a protocol that followed a gradual progression from general to specific, meticulously formulated to address the various aspects of the research's qualitative questions.

It is worth highlighting the significance of these direct interactions as they provided a close understanding of artists' viewpoints. The discussions evoked important ideas and themes, offering deep insights into how Moroccan artists, particularly those working within the "nouvelle scene", perceive and comprehend the uses and functions of music within Moroccan society.

In this context, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher's professional background as a musician, as well as his personal relationship with these artists, greatly facilitated the process of interaction. This rapport allowed for fluid handling of questions that may have been considered "daring" or potentially embarrassing, specifically those related to the artists' personal opinions and attitudes towards the role of music in Moroccan society, as well as the agendas and forces that influence patterns of music diffusion and consumption. As a result, the study was able to generate highly revealing findings.

3.4 Data analysis methods

The core data of the study was primarily obtained through interviews. The first step involved organizing and filtering information before proceeding with coding and content analysis. Creswell (2007) explains that:

> Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. (p.148)

In this optic, the first step was to transcribe all records into transcripts. The second step involved repeated in-depth readings to identify key words, expressions, statements, and passages directly related to the research questions. This was followed by open coding, organizing the different answers, notes, remarks, and comments into coded fragments. These reflections were then reduced into labeled units. Creswell (2007) describes this phase as "reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments" (p.148). Hesse – Biber (2010) explains that coding is meant "to find larger themes or significant patterns of meaning in the data by grouping, comparing, and contrasting various codes" (p.94). Gradually, a pattern of general categories and classifications emerged.

Subsequently, a thematic content analysis was conducted to identify salient themes and concepts that answered the research questions. Kumar (2018) defines this approach as the process of "analyzing the contents of interviews or observational field notes in order to identify the main themes that emerge from the responses" (p.880). "It requires ... to 'translate' all those meanings in your material that are of interest ... into the categories of a coding frame" (Schreier, 2012, p.5). This allows the analyst to work within "hermeneutic circles" that permit the inference of valuable interpretations to be inferred (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 35).

4. Results

The transcription, coding, and categorization of the different interviews conducted with Moroccan singers, music composers and lyricists have resulted in the emergence of seven main themes: music's function as entertainment, the hybrid / ambiguous musical taste, the hidden agenda, music broadcast reconsideration, (social) media and musical socialization, Moroccan values and the need for censorship, and the "danger" to the Moroccan musical identity.

4.1. Music 's function as entertainment

The perception of the interviewees regrading music's role in society generally included cultural, educational, psychological, and moral functions and purposes. They also believed that musical creativities should be primarily aesthetic expressions and highly artistic platforms for conveying ideas and messages that reflect the opinions, stories, desires, aspirations, sufferings, etc. of both artists and listeners/ consumers. Many artists stressed the undeniable fact that music is a powerful cultural and educational tool that contributes to the development of psychologically and aesthetically balanced generations. However, this perception also revealed an underlying skepticism that the interviewees could not hide concerning the current role of prevalent musical forms in Moroccan society. Numerous artists expressed their dissatisfaction with how society, as a whole, and decision –makers, official institutions (such as the Ministry of Culture, radio channels, TVs), and festival organizers, in particular, understand the significance of music in Moroccan society. Their understanding mainly revolves around entertainment, amusement, and superficiality. The other essential functions of music, involving spiritual, educational, and moral dimensions, are given less priority and are relegated to secondary or tertiary positions:

> **Participant 2:** I consider, drawing on my humble experience in this domain, specifically with regard to music production in Morocco, that Moroccans do not deal with music as a cultural tool to enhance the general taste, or as an educational tool that help establish citizenship and humanistic values...music remains occasional for Moroccans, they use it in their parties, weddings and festivals that sometimes have electoral and political aims.
> **Participant 4:** I really do not understand what is going on...I cannot see where the problem is.... you know, there is creativity but there is dazzle, we, in Morocco, we do have dazzle, but nor art... We are not aware of the necessity for art, we still tend to say "this is just music".
> **Participant 5**: music is first of all entertainment... we use it in all our daily life activities as a form of distraction.
> **Participant 6**: I think that music relates to both education and entertainment...but I think that in Morocco it is more related to entertainment... I do not think that the role of music in Morocco has to do with culture, education and morals.

Some artists sounded an alarm bell against these new "supposed" roles of music. According to them, the Moroccan youth is currently being educated by buzz songs and at times, by "irresponsible" artists:

> **Participant 9**: the current songs include vulgar words, and some artists do that on purpose to attract more followers and to get more views on YouTube.... and I do not want to get into that vicious circle.
> **Participant 10**: today, it is the buzz songs that educate the current generation.

Additionally, other artists expressed genuine feelings of disappointment and bitterness towards the way the Moroccan state perceives art, particularly music:
> **Participant 9**: art is not taken seriously by those in charge of culture, and the proof is evident in what happened during the corona crisis.... they do not care about how the daily life problems of artists.... how they manage their daily needs.... Consequently, they do not care about art.

4.2. The hybrid / ambiguous musical taste

Most of the interviewees, regardless of their generational belonging and musical specialty, used interrelated

terms to describe the current Moroccan musical taste: perturbed, dispersed, weak, monotone, mainstream, distorted, disordered, contradictory, and hybrid. These descriptions were intended to severely criticize the current taste, which is dominated either by "foreign" musical influences, whether oriental or occidental, or by a strong popular hallmark that positions popular songs at the forefront of preference. The role of the media was aggressively denounced in this context. Many artists expressed their dissatisfaction and opposition to the local broadcast policies, which are often deemed "unfair". As a result, the prevailing taste is considered "non – Moroccan", hybrid, and perturbed. According to the interviewed artists, this significantly impacts the Moroccan musical identity:

> **Participant 1**: the current taste is hybrid…it is a multi- identity taste and it is seldom close to Moroccan original identity.
> **Participant 3**: the taste is being distorted.... and we have started to lose many things that we grew up with… that we inherited from our fathers and grandfathers: The *Andalusian music*, *Gharnati*, *Malhoune*, *Al Aita* music with all its varieties, *Taktouka Jabalia* in the North.... at that time the taste was classy.
> **Participant 5**: unfortunately, our current taste is deteriorating, ... our taste is being destroyed .... quality is really scarce .... we only have very poor music.... there is no depth in our songs.⌷
> **Participant 7:** The Moroccan taste is really "disordered", there is no longer that classy taste .... I respect the current youth, and I respect all tastes, but I think that the occidental styles are dominating out taste.
> **Participant 18**: The Moroccan musical taste has significantly evolved in recent years .... (laughing)... and believe me, I ask myself this question all the time... and I think that taste has changed and has shifted towards a negative perspective... I can say that it is actually a contradictory taste.
> **Participant 16**: our taste follows the mainstream music, which is the case in the whole globe.... the problem is that all the other styles are not doing well.... the mainstream music that is dominating is pop rap and rai.
> **Participant 17**: the current taste? I would say it is monotone.... each two or three days, there is a singer that appears on the scene, singing lyrics that are bizarre.... lyrics that, you know ...I do not even want to say a word to describe them.

At a different level, one of the revealing points raised by the interviewees was the current cultivation of musical taste from bottom-up, passing from younger to older generations. According to them, in the past, music and songs were passed on from parents to children, within an upward dimension. In other words, younger generations were musically educated through their parents' taste. The domestic music consumption, which mainly relied on local musical standards, had a tangible impact on kids and teenagers' musical taste. The situation nowadays is completely different. Some interviewees noted that the musical taste now goes in a bottom-up direction. Music and songs (and therefore taste) are introduced to and "imposed" on homes through kids and adolescents. Parents then become passive receivers who, in turn, intentionally develop a new "updated" musical taste:

> **Participant 7**: the factor of age also impacts the taste. The current generation is totally different form previous generations.... what is revealing again is that, for our generation, we consumed music through our parents, but now it is kids and teenagers who introduce music to homes.... so it is the opposite.... now songs pass from young to adult while previously they passed from adults to kids and adolescents .... that is why our success measurement today is kids and teenagers.

4.3. The hidden agenda

Many interviewees insisted that the prevalence of a particular musical taste is "imposed". However, this opinion was never explicitly explained. Instead, interviewees often tended to use terms, pronouns, or phrases like "they", "them", and "those who" to refer to individuals, institutions, or organizations whom they accuse of imposing a "hidden agenda". Additionally, it is worth noting that this accusation was directed towards both local and global powers:

Participant 10:it is the opposite, here, we do our best to normalize trivialized populism in the name of art, even in TV channels...art for them is those shows broadcast on Saturdays.... sometimes, I thought that this was arbitrary. Actually, it is not, I am sure that it is done on purpose, it is intentional.

Participant 14: it is imposed by the media, possibly for a specific political agenda.... the media that encourage these musics may be working towards an agenda that is connected to foreign influences…a cultural trend originating from a global power that remains unknown to us.

Participant 16: in our case, the objective is to destroy the society, they are working with an external agenda.... this is operationalized from outside the Arab world...they want us to go in this direction because this helps in obliterating the Arabic identity, Arab nationalism and Islam.

Participant 17 we have parties that encourage low-quality music for hidden agendas, and this is the truth...unstructured music has prevailed, and we do not know the hidden reasons.

Participant 18: in our radios channels, we notice the absence of Moroccan songs....at least, there should be an equity, 50% for Moroccan songs and 50% for others.... there is intentional exclusion of Moroccan musical works.... me, for example, I have produced many works and was solicited by many theaters abroad, but I am absent here .... this is an example.... there is an absence of many Moroccan musical genres.... so there is willingness to sabotage the taste...this willingness to not endear Moroccan music, especially in national radio channels, which massively broadcast foreign songs .... where is our identity?

Other interviewees argued that the hidden agenda aims to undermine local social values by promoting specific musical tastes and artists:

Participant 11: I personally think that it is not spontaneous or arbitrary, it is planned.... the destruction of values through what they call art, or fashion, or showbiz.... now we can notice that certain female singers are fashion models, more concerned with their image and appearance... and people appreciate them, listen to their works, 50 or 60 millions of followers.... I do not limit this to the local, but I think that this is related to global polices that wants to destroy the local taste, thought, and values.

Participant 9: there are key persons who are responsible for the current musical decadence, they do everything to prevent classy music from reaching the whole society.... importance is given to trivial figures to the detriment of real creators.

4.4. Music broadcast reconsideration

The conducted interviews revealed a shared viewpoint among the interviewees, expressing dissatisfaction with the broadcasting schedule of many of Moroccan TV and radio channels. Numerous open protestations were made regarding the strong bias towards the broadcasting of newer genres like pop, rap, rai, and other foreign styles at the expense of Moroccan traditional music styles, such as Andalusian music, *Malhoune,* and *Al Aita* music. Respondents expressed frustration with the "imposed" broadcasting of specific styles that gain legitimacy and popularity based on inflated views on digital platforms like YouTube. This practice forces many media outlets to prioritize these new styles, resulting in a significant reduction in the presence of other music genres. Consequently, this systematic broadcasting has led to the imposition of a specific musical taste, which, according to the interviewees, implies an implicit intention to construct a new Moroccan taste.

To address this situation, many respondents emphasized the necessity for an equitable broadcasting schedule that considers all Moroccan musical styles. They believe that implementing such a fair strategy would contribute to the consolidation of Moroccan musical identity in our media programs:

Participant 4: what is important, here, is to reconsider the programming of TV and radio channels......to cherish our heritage ....to endear our Moroccan musics to the youth through solid communication strategies that include the teaching of these musics.

Participant 8: I cannot talk about the taste of the Moroccan public, but I am talking about what is imposed on this public...unfortunately, you may have noticed that all persons in charge of music broadcasting, sponsors, and even those working in artistic events are more concerned with numbers and percentages...they pay attention to the number of views on YouTube, which is unreal, to decide on the

musical style that should be promoted.

Participant 13: there is a problem... how many radio stations do we have? And abroad, if you notice, there are hundreds of these stations. There is a special station for jazz music, another one for blues, another for French music… here, no. all stations have the same musical content, and this is a real problem, which means "everyone follows the herd".

Participant 9: I think that each era has its music and its mode… times have changed.... but besides all these new musics, there should be classy music, traditional music, classical music...these musics are eternal.... now that we have all the possibilities to promote these classy styles, very little efforts have been done.

Participant 14: if you want to listen to Moroccan original musics, with their Moroccan roots, we should wait for Ramadan... it is when we begin listening to the *Andalusian music, Malhoune*.... (Laughing) and similar things…so there is a problem of identity.

Participant 16: here in Morocco, we do not have specialized radios ....in the occident, there are channels for jazz , Flamenco or classical music.

Considering the same bias in broadcasting, interviewees observed that certain musical components, which are integral to the Moroccan musical identity, are being neglected. In this regard, some of them, being Moroccan Jewish artists, highlighted the Jewish component, including all its musical variations, as the forgotten aspect. Even when it is included in programming, it often appears as "guest" music, as if it were detached from the broader Moroccan repertoire:

Participant 11: I do think that there is a little bit of tokenism in the way Jewish music is put on the radio, for example....so they want to show that they are diverse… they bring Jews, put a bit of Jewish music and say: look, we have Jewish music.... like if they did not feel that they had to put the Jewish thing.

Participant 15: there is not just one Moroccan Jewish music, right? The synagogue music is also a Moroccan Jewish music, and songs in Julio Spanish and *Hakatia* are also Moroccan Jewish music, as are the songs in Judeo Amazigh… the women's songs from Tafilalet are Moroccan Jewish music, but, you know, those do not get airtime in television, and they are not on the radio.

Participant 17: so you know that they have moments like " a special" , and they schedule the *Shgouri*. What I think would be good for it is to be just a part of the Moroccan repertoire instead of being put separately into a different program. I think that it is important foe it to exist just like the other repertoires.

4.5. (Social) Media and musical socialization

The previous debate on the hybridization and deterioration of Moroccan musical taste was intricately linked to the powerful role and impact of media outlets. Many interviewees emphasized the decisive power of the media in terms of imposing and promoting specific musical styles, such as the new musical forms of pop, rai, and rap, along with the latest popular hits. This influential function is carried out through the systematic broadcasting of standardized hits, which familiarizes and indoctrinates listeners, including children, adolescents, and sometimes even adults, with these new styles. Some interlocutors drew a clear comparison between how the media, in the past, "educated" and familiarized audiences with the rich repertoire of Moroccan music, and how this role is currently shifting towards intentionally imposing a singular musical tendency:

Participant 1: it is with the help of the media which play a major role.... sometimes you do not like a song, but by dint of listening to it several times in a single day, you start singing it even though you do not like it...can you imagine that?

Participant 8: styles broadcast on radios have familiarized the public with specific types of modes and musics.

Participant 10: yes, the Moroccan taste has deteriorated, but who contributed to that? It is the media that have accustomed the listener to listen to these styles...the current generation believes that the Moroccan music is limited to specific artists...before, our media, TV and radio educated us on many musical styles, we listened to *Al Hamdaouia*, *Hussein Slaoui*, so we had variety, a very rich musical

heritage.

Participant 11: social media and even TV have followed the same tendency: inviting buzz people and artists to show programs....and these people do not represent Moroccans.... before TV programs included shows that contribute to music education, things that benefited us and our children.... no a single vulgar word was used.

Parallel to the systematic broadcasting of the same styles, interviewees reported that "serious" songs are intentionally excluded from radio and TV schedules. Some participants revealingly denounced the "peculiar" practices of certain officials who blatantly show their rejection of these works, using the pretext that the public prefers other styles. Even more astonishing was the fact that some individuals in charge of music dissemination in radio and TV openly asked for money to schedule artists' songs:

Participant 10: there are very good musical productions that are not known to the public…works on which lyricists and composers have invested intense efforts.... the question, then, remains why radios channels do not diffuse such works? In fact, radios, today, are paid to diffuse songs.... me, for example, I worked on a religious song for the sacred month of Ramadan, and I offered it to a radio channel so that it can be broadcast.... and, then, I was amazed at the fact that one of the officials told me that I need to pay a considerable amount of money so that my song could be broadcast many times.

Participant 9: there are some journalists who simply asks artists to pay them so that their newspapers, radio station or website promote the artists' musical works.

From a different perspective, one of the remarkable points raised by interviewees regarding the power of social media in favoring certain musical styles over others was the role that digital platforms, specifically influencers working through them, have on the success or failure of a hit. One of the respondents argued that a reliable strategy to promote a song is to ask an influencer to talk about it on their digital channel. This paid service heavily impacts the spread of the song due to the influencer's' large number of followers:

Participant 9: now there are pages on Instagram (dealing mainly with scandals and Buzz), with millions of followers, where you ask and pay the page owner to talk about your song to promote it in the same way another artist would pay to criticize it!

4.6. Moroccans' values and the need for censorship[1]

The Majority of artists interviewed agreed that currents songs incorporate and disseminate very "dangerous" ideas and values. They also agreed on the need for "rational" censorship that would help limit the deterioration of Moroccan youth's morals and, consequently, their current deviant behavior. Severe accusations were made against new genres such as pop, rap, and rai, and their lyrics' negative impact on Moroccan youth. Some artists were accused of intentionally using "deviant" texts. Interviewees explained that a considerable number of their colleagues (artists), in an attempt to quickly gain popularity, simply opt for topics that include a great deal of audacity, severely impacting consumers' morals and culture. Respondents consistently used adjectives and phrases like "daring" and "vulgar" to describe the quality of words and ideas propagated by current pop, rap, and rai songs:

Participant 2: we cannot say anything to people because we are responsible for the education of generations, and consequently, we need to be aware of what we are transmitting to the public.... we have to show interest to our elegance.

Participant 5: the majority of our youth are consuming music that deal with disastrous content, specifically rap songs.... these songs deal with topics that ruin the minds of Moroccan youth.... their lyrics are vulgar, and they have become a taken- for- granted content.

Participant 6: there are works of pop, rap ,and rai that negatively impact values.

Participant 1: yes, definitely. I in favor of censorship. These artists working via digital platforms will persist, and no one can censor them…but when we talk about television and the subvention provided by the Ministry of Culture in the name of the state to encourage particular arts, there should be a commission.... not just anyone can pretend to be an artist.

Participant 8: Unfortunately, nowadays we notice a considerable number of artists who prefer to choose audacious topics that affect our culture as Arabs and Muslims so that they can rapidly reach popularity.

Participant 14: when we afford a certain education to our children, and then they listen to our radios with lyrics, sorry to say, that are daring, it undermines the work of parents.

Participant 9: I think that there should be a union for art and artists.... not everyone can become a singer, not everyone can be given the authorization to be a singer, like it is the case in Egypt.

Although interviewees expressed support for censorship, they strongly emphasized that it should not result in any form of oppression or infringement upon artists' creative rights. Creators must always be allowed to thrive in an environment of artistic freedom. The challenge lies then in striking a delicate balance between the right to create and the responsibility to censor:

Participant 15: yes, I have called for censorship in many media platforms...of course, it is not about repression or the confiscation of the right to create, but what I mean is the filtration of what is diffused to the listener and the public.

4.7. The "danger" to the Moroccan musical identity

A manifest skepticism was expressed by respondents towards the present and the future of the Moroccan musical identity. Many of them showed their fear for the local musical identity, affirming that that the future might witness the dissolving of the Moroccan music in the world mainstream music, and thus, the vanishing of the Moroccan musical specificity. Their doubts related to the quality, whether at the level of form or content, of the musical styles currently being produced and disseminated. A set of words was systematically used to connote this feeling: buzz, vulgar, triviality, and degradation:

Participant 5: these musics produce degradation, and they also produce a society that will be impacted by this degradation.... unfortunately, all these songs describe our life in a bad way, and they are now a part of our musical identity.... our youth do not know about our traditional music, but they know the current vulgar songs.

Participant 10: to be frank with you, everybody tends towards "musical shorthand" .... henceforth, we will not have a musical repertoire that will include the current musical works.... we will not hear in the future, for example, that this song was composed by that artist and performed by the other one.... these works will vanish...and unfortunately, this is a kind of art that cannot be inherited.

Participant 13: I am for the youth's diligence, they need to keep pace with their generation, and this is the natural aspect of continuity.... but what is coming really scares because there is a word that has taken ascendency: the buzz.... one can use a vulgar word and it creates buzz, and then, it is considered as a Moroccan song.

Within the same perspective and through the different interactions, there was a clear rejection of any claim made by Moroccan "new" artists that their music represents Morocco or the Moroccan musical identity:

Participant 13: for me, every musical style that is distant from Moroccan musical identity is foreign, hybrid, and it will add nothing to Moroccan music. On the contrary, it will enrich the original style.

Participant 10: these musics are not ours...they are not Moroccan .... why are they here in our society?

Participant 18: no, they do not represent the Moroccan song. This latter is totally different...I cannot include jazz and pop effects and pretend that it is Moroccan music.

Drawing on previous skepticism and rejection, many respondents expressed, therefore, the necessity to preserve the Moroccan musical identity. They insisted, in this respect, on the importance of setting up mechanisms and contexts that would help protect the local authenticity:

Participant 13: for me, every novel work is beneficial, but the most important thing is to preserve our roots.

Participant 16: if we do not preserve it...we will trivialize it, because if we trivialize, we will end up

trivializing everything.... if we lose old artists...all people who have struggled to construct music and create something ...we see what is happening today... so we have so many things that are important, and we have to preserve them.

Participant 17: new artists are trying to do something up to date, that is good… I am for this and I like novelties but we should always keep a *"beldi"* touch, we must not move ahead and erase the past... all the ancient things have become fashionable…so we must keep our music, this is our identity.

Participant 7: what we are trying to do is to include these new musical styles into the Moroccan repertoire...when working on pop, for example, we try to do a certain fusion .... that is to say, to fuse pop with *Gnawa* music or *Chaabi* music.... with purely Moroccan instruments like "*taariga*" .... so if we do not add this Moroccan feeling, everything is lost.

The different responses reported through interviews confirm the existence of a general trend that characterizes Moroccan current music and, consequently, the prevailing musical taste. They directly or indirectly support the remarkable dominance of Moroccan new styles, namely pop, rap, and rap, which has evidently resulted in a significant preference for these genres. According to the interviewees, the reasons behind this primarily relate to an unbalanced radio and TV broadcast that favors the new genres at the expense of other styles. This bias is justified by the number of views that new hits achieve on YouTube and other digital platforms. It is also justified by a "hidden" general willingness to operationalize a "turn" in the whole local musical landscape. All these factors lead, according to the interviewees, to the construction and "imposition" of a musical taste that they describe as a hybrid, ambiguous, and distorted.

The viewpoints expressed by the interviewees also confirm the negative impact of this new taste on consumers. According to them, the content of these musics/ songs poses a real "threat" to the entire local value system. The interviewed artists, therefore, invoked the term censorship, calling for rapid and strict measures to minimize the current normalization of vulgarity and nonsensical audacity. While they acknowledge that artistic censorship might limit creativity, they consider it a necessary measure.

Equally important, the different reactions of the interviewees embody a strong belief that the newly "imposed" taste negatively affects the identities of the listeners and viewers, both personally and musically. According to them, this can be explained by the gap that exists between the music being produced, diffused, and consumed, and the Moroccan musical identity. This gap encompasses both content and form, which are perceived to lack any real aesthetic and artistic value. The content is deemed vulgar and empty, consisting of an odd language (often a mixture of words from different languages), while the form is heavily shaped by "foreign", mostly western, rhythms and music arrangements, as well as by an "anarchic" use of technological tools. The interviewed artists expressed a remarkable unanimity regarding the inability of these musics/ songs to represent the Moroccan musical specificity. Working on new styles borrowed from the West and sometimes from East will only contribute to the success of the original styles, not to Moroccan music as a whole. Therefore, Moroccan contemporary artists are seen as incapable of preserving the Moroccan musical roots and identity.

That being said, all these conclusions drawn by the interviewees can largely be interpreted in light of musical globalization, and its sociocultural extensions, primarily standardization. The current change in Moroccan musical taste is, in fact, a result of the powerful cultural globalization that has imposed a standardized taste. It is worth mentioning, within this context, that Morocco, like other countries, has "suffered" the cultural /musical consequences of globalization. This has, in turn, resulted in the standardization of processes of music production, diffusion, and consumption. It is in this context that Moroccan new artists have engaged in producing "formulaic" songs to meet the newly "imposed" standards, and, at the same time, guarantee a presence within the local musical scene. The same holds true for local media outlets, which have had no choice but to engage in the same globalized stream. The result has been the dissemination of the same musical genres, socializing Moroccan listeners with a standardized taste that significantly deviates from the local musical specificity and identity.

The emergence of a new standardized musical taste has had a significant impact on the local value system and the identity of listeners, as highlighted by the interviewees. This phenomenon serves as a clear indicator of a real change occurring within Moroccan society. Consumers have now begun to embrace the new music, which

incorporates elements from both Western and Eastern traditions, and regard it as an integral part of the Moroccan musical repertoire and culture. This shift in perception represents a transformation in the collective consciousness of Moroccans regarding their local musical identity. Consequently, ideas and values that were previously considered "foreign" and potentially dangerous, as expressed by the interviewees, are now being embraced and accepted within a social context that has always exhibited its own unique sociocultural characteristics. This suggests that Moroccan society is currently undergoing profound transformations in terms of sociocultural specificity, all through the lens of musical taste. However, it remains uncertain, particularly in the near future, how far –reaching these transformations will be in terms of impacting the entire value system and the identity of Moroccan consumers. The potential extensions of these changes are yet to be fully explored and understood.

5. Policy implications

The findings of this study highlight the need for the implementation of various measures and decisions to address the current situation in Moroccan music. Firstly, official institutions responsible for cultural and musical affairs should intervene, particularly through the subventions they provide, by imposing a quota on music producers, requiring them to incorporate Moroccan authentic music in their future works. This would help preserve the cultural identity and diversity of Moroccan music.

Secondly, measures should be taken to reshape the role of music in Moroccan society, allowing it to fulfill its conventional roles as a credible and powerful sociocultural marker, as well as a positive force for social change. This requires a reconsideration of the weak role of the syndicate, including its position, functions, and framework of operation, in order to strengthen its impact and influence. Additionally, there should be a reassessment of the role of music critics, who should intervene when necessary to contribute to this reshaping process.

Thirdly, official and private media institutions, such as television and radio channels, should exercise a minimum level of censorship over musical productions. However, it is important to ensure that this measure does not infringe upon artistic freedom, but rather maintains a balance between creative expression and cultural preservation.

Additionally, the Ministry of Culture and intellectuals interested in the arts should take responsibility for guiding and redirecting the general musical tendency when necessary. While this may not always be effective in the face of global dynamics, it can at least contribute to maintaining a minimum level of balance and authenticity in Moroccan music.

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