

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF NABATI POETRY: REMEDIATION, AUDIENCE ROLE, AND AUTHENTICITY NEGOTIATION

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Digital
authenticity;
digital
ethnography;
Nabati poetry;
remediation;
TikTok.

This study examines how *Nabati Poetry* is transformed within the digital ecosystem of TikTok. The research explores the ways in which poetic structure adapts to the platform's logics, the role of audiences in shaping contemporary popular literary practices, and the negotiation of authenticity within participatory digital spaces. Employing a multimodal digital ethnography approach combined with qualitative content analysis, six TikTok videos featuring *Nabati Poetry* published between 2020 and 2025 were purposively selected based on audience engagement and thematic richness. The findings reveal that structural adaptation occurs through compressed verses, heightened emotional intensity, and expressive visuality in order to align with TikTok's algorithmic dynamics. Audiences emerge not merely as passive recipients but as value curators, actively shaping performative norms and determining the visibility of poetic content. Authenticity, moreover, is shown to be negotiated not only through adherence to classical forms but also through cultural resonance, visual strategies, and participatory relevance. This study contributes to Arabic digital literary studies by demonstrating how platform cultures reshape oral traditions through remediation, audience agency, and sociotechnical aesthetics.

Article History:

Received: 2025-07-19
Revised: 2026-05-04
Accepted: 2026-05-26
Publish: 2026-06-15

المخلص

الكلمات المفتاحية:
الأصالة الرقمية؛
الإثنوغرافيا الرقمية؛
الشعر النبطي؛ إعادة
التوظيف؛ تيك توك

تتناول هذه الدراسة كيفية تحول الشعر النبطي ضمن النظام البيئي الرقمي لتطبيق تيك توك. وتستكشف هذه الدراسة الطرق التي تتكيف بها البنية الشعرية مع منطق المنصة، ودور الجماهير في تشكيل الممارسات الأدبية الشعبية المعاصرة، والتفاوض حول الأصالة داخل المساحات الرقمية التشاركية. باستخدام نهج إثنوغرافي رقمي متعدد الوسائط مقترفاً بتحليل محتوى نوعي، تم اختيار ستة مقاطع فيديو من تيك توك تعرض الشعر النبطي، نشرت بين عامي 2020 و2025، بشكل هادف بناءً على تفاعل الجمهور وثناء الموضوعات. تكشف النتائج أن التكيف البنيوي يحدث من خلال الأبيات المضغوطة، والكثافة العاطفية المتزايدة، والمرئية التعبيرية من أجل التوافق مع ديناميكيات خوارزميات تيك توك. يظهر الجمهور ليس مجرد متلق سلبي، بل كمنسق للقيم، حيث يشكل نشاط المعايير الأدائية ويحدد مدى ظهور المحتوى الشعري. علاوة على ذلك، يتضح أن الأصالة يتم التفاوض عليها ليس فقط من خلال الالتزام بالأشكال الكلاسيكية، بل أيضًا من خلال الصدى النقابي والاستراتيجيات البصرية والأهمية التشاركية. تساهم هذه الدراسة في الدراسات الأدبية الرقمية العربية من خلال إظهار كيفية إعادة تشكيل ثقافات المنصات

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للتقاليد الشفوية من خلال إعادة الصياغة، ووكالة الجمهور، والجماليات الاجتماعية-التقنية.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Arabic literature is undergoing a significant cultural transformation in response to the development of digital media. One of the most prominent manifestations of this dynamic is the revitalization of *Nabati* poetry through platforms such as TikTok. This phenomenon reflects not merely a change in medium, but also indicates a fundamental shift in the processes of production, distribution, and reception of Arabic poetry in the digital age. Although this trend is becoming increasingly prevalent in online spaces, the form and meaning of *Nabati* Poetry within the realm of digital mediation, along with its implications for the aesthetic and cultural positioning of such poetry, remain rarely the primary focus of academic study.

Although the field of digital literature has developed rapidly in recent years, the academic response to the transformation of forms of Arabic literature, particularly *Nabati* poetry, remains relatively limited. Conventional studies tend to situate *Nabati* poetry within a historical and structural framework, with an emphasis on aspects of cultural identity and oral characteristics within a traditional context (Abdullah, 2004).

Meanwhile, much of the academic focus on contemporary Arabic poetry has centered on its ideological and political dimensions, as evidenced by analyses of classical *qasīdah* used in jihadist propaganda (Gatt, 2022). Even within the broader field of Middle Eastern studies, research into digital poetry has largely focused on phenomena such as 'Instapoetry' in Iran, which is used as a medium for political and aesthetic expression in a visual-oral form (Rezai, 2023).

However, distinctive Arab oral poetry genres such as *Nabati* Poetry are virtually absent from academic discourse on the transformation of digital literature. Yet, as Thomas (2020) points out, social media, with its participatory nature, has given rise to new forms of digital literature that not only expand literary practice but also challenge the conventional boundaries of the Arabic poetry genre. This has led to a neglect of the potential for strategies to preserve oral literature through digital platforms.

This research is an exploratory qualitative study, as it aims to understand the dynamics of aesthetic transformation and the production of *Nabati* Poetry in the digital realm (Ajah, 2022). In response to the dynamics of form, circulation, and reception of Arabic literature in the digital realm, this study designs a methodological framework that is adaptable to the unique characteristics of contemporary Arabic literature within the social media ecosystem (Lenze, 2018).

The approach employed is multimodal digital ethnography (Palmberger, 2025; Westmoreland, 2022), combined with qualitative content analysis. The digital ethnography approach was chosen because it is capable of capturing participatory cultural practices, creators' performativity, and audience dynamics holistically within the social media ecosystem. This approach is more suitable than a purely semiotic approach, which tends to focus on the analysis of signs without considering the social context, platform relationships, and real-time user engagement (Paoli & D'Auria, 2021).

The primary data was sourced from six TikTok videos on the theme of *Nabati* Poetry uploaded between 2020 and 2025. These videos were selected through a manual search using a number of popular keywords in Arabic, such as *shi'r nabaṭī*, *qasīdāt badawīyyah*, *nabaṭī 'aṣrī*, and *shā'ir nabaṭī*. Most of the uploads originated from accounts showcasing Bedouin cultural symbols through language, visual settings, or recitation styles indicating an affiliation with regions of the Arabian Gulf with a *Nabati* Poetry tradition. The primary

focus was on videos presenting poetry visually via image slides or through oral recitation without written text. Audio content was transcribed manually to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the structure and meaning of the poetry delivered orally.

The data selection process was based on three main criteria: (1) content presenting *Nabati* Poetry in Arabic; (2) styles of expression and themes that reflect the distinctive characteristics of Bedouin poetry; and (3) the level of user engagement as evidenced by the number of likes, comments and bookmarks on each post. The entire data collection and analysis procedure was conducted in accordance with ethical principles in digital media studies, including privacy protection, respect for the original context of the posts, and the anonymity of user identities (Flewitt, 2011; LaFave & Mainz, 2018).

This study utilizes the digital mediation framework (Couldry & Hepp, 2018) to examine how *Nabati* Poetry, as a form of traditional oral literary expression, undergoes transformation within digital environments such as TikTok. Digital mediation is understood as a social and cultural process that not only alters the form of poetic delivery but also reconstructs the modes of production, distribution, and interpretation within a participatory space governed by platform logic—namely, algorithmic systems, interactivity, and popularity metrics that shape user behavior. This framework was chosen because it demonstrates that social media is not merely a technological medium, but a cultural actor that helps determine the aesthetic value and cultural position of Arabic poetry within the contemporary digital context.

Furthermore, Bishop (2019) introduces the concept of ‘algorithmic performativity’ (Ferrante, 2025) describing how creators—including digital poets—adapt their creative expression to the logic of the platform. The audience is no longer merely a passive recipient, but rather part of a metric system that determines the visibility and aesthetic value of a work. In other words, the form of poetry, the manner of recitation, and even video editing techniques are modified to meet the expectations of algorithms and public taste, resulting in a negotiation between the authenticity of expression and the potential for virality.

The concept of authenticity in literature (Kogan & Koloskova, 2025) has also undergone a redefinition. Peterson (2005), authenticity is not something fixed and essential, but is socially constructed within specific historical and cultural contexts. In the digital realm, the authenticity of *Nabati* Poetry no longer depends solely on geographical origins or fidelity to classical forms, but also on the extent to which the work is able to forge emotional and cultural connections with an online audience.

The novelty of this research lies in the three key contributions it makes to the development of digital Arabic literary studies. Firstly, it expands the scope of digital Arabic literary studies as an interdisciplinary branch within the evolving field of Digital Humanities (Tang et al., 2020). Secondly, it demonstrates that digital platforms are not necessarily a threat to tradition, but rather have the potential to become active partners in the preservation of oral literary forms such as *Nabati* Poetry (Moghaddam, 2010). Third, to offer a methodological framework sensitive to the socio-cultural context of the Middle East—a region that remains relatively under-represented in the global landscape of Digital Humanities, despite the field’s rapid development across various parts of the world.

Based on this framework, this study is designed to address three key questions that reflect new dynamics in the relationship between Arabic literature and digital media. First, how does the structure of *Nabati* poetry adapt to the logic of digital platforms? Second, what role does the audience play in shaping contemporary popular literary practices? Third, how is the concept of authenticity in Arabic literature transformed within a participatory and algorithmic digital ecosystem? These three questions are formulated to open up new analytical spaces that transcend the boundaries of conventional approaches in the study of Arabic literature, which have hitherto tended to separate the study of texts and oral

traditions from developments in digital media.

Preliminary findings from content analysis reveal patterns that contradict the common assumption that social media tends to trivialize oral literary traditions. Conversely, TikTok's algorithms actually foster the emergence of creative strategies for preserving *Nabati* Poetry. One such strategy is the use of hybrid hashtags such as #nabaṭī_ʿaṣrī (Modern Nabati) and the selection of soundtracks that reflect cultural identity, enabling the poetry to retain its essence whilst adapting to the platform's algorithmic dynamics (Shukur et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of the revitalization of *Nabati* poetry through social media offers a new perspective on Arab modernity in the digital context. This transformation reflects the adaptive capacity of Arab culture to respond to global technological developments without losing its traditional roots. A process that can be understood as 'glocalised digitalization'—that is, local adaptation to global digital formats—demonstrates that the Arab world is not merely a passive consumer of technology, but an active agent in renegotiating meaning, aesthetics and cultural values within the digital sphere.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the data analysis, this study reveals two interrelated dimensions within the framework of deconstruction. First, it identifies how the meaning of poverty is constructed in Islām Ṣādiq's short story collection *Alwān min al-Faqr*, showing that poverty is articulated through hierarchical binary oppositions embedded in the narrative structure. Second, it demonstrates how these constructed meanings are subsequently destabilized through a deconstructive reading, which exposes internal contradictions and reveals the instability of the hierarchies that initially appear dominant. Through this process, poverty emerges not as a fixed or singular concept, but as a relational and fluid meaning shaped by textual interplay and socio-cultural context.

This study examines six TikTok videos on the theme of *Nabati* poetry using a multimodal digital ethnographic approach. The findings suggest that the digital medium functions not only as a space for distribution, but also as an arena for cultural transformation in which *Nabati* poetry undergoes adaptations in form, meaning and function. As a traditional oral poetic form rooted in Gulf Arab societies, *Nabati* is known for emphasizing spontaneity, rhythmic beauty, and an emotional connection with the audience. In the digital space, these characteristics undergo significant shifts due to interactions with short-form video formats, algorithmic features, and patterns of user engagement that differ from those in traditional forums such as *majalis* or *nadwah*.

Table 1. Documentation of Nabati Poetry on TikTok

No.	Text	Account	Link
1	بتعم في صدري الفوضى وتحتله وأعيش في حزني وفي خيبة آمالي غلاه يا جعلني أدمحها ولا أبالي يا طيب عذره لو أنه جا على حله غلاه يا جعلني أدمحها ولا أبالي ومع ذلك الله يببجه والله يحله بموت من طاري هجرة على بالي الصبر محمود في المذهب وفي الملة وما مر بالأول لزوم يمر بالتالي	3aze.d / @3aze.d	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9QYYHBY/
2	لا والله الا شدوا البدو نجاج كل هدم ميناه وارترد زمه شد الشديد وقربوا كل مطواع وراعي المحبة فرق البين شمله غدا لهم دون الرفيعه تمزاع كل بغى درب عزل وانقسم له واقليبي اللي من هوى البيض منصاع كما يصوع الصيد رام خطم له حبه يخج القلب ما يوجع اوجاع لاشك قلبي مودعه بيت نملة	حمود الصاهود @huomod6	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9QjuW6a/
3	الأصيل اصيل وخاوي الشهم الرصين وللمعاسير والنشاب فكاكها ونومس بمقامك وخلق رزين وابعد عن العلوم اللي تقلل من نفسك ومن عزها	مهند خاظا/ @mohannadmzaza	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9QAYcXB/
4	كثر التواضع مشكله بعض الاحيان يقبل احترامك بال نفوس الضعيفه الطيب فينه طبع والشيمه ادمان وشوفاته فوق الجبال المنيفه ما نلتفت للي يجازي بنكران ولا نكسر مهما يقول الهديفه دام الثقه بالنفس عزه للنسان نحيا على مبدأ الحياه الشريفه	Haima Al- Jaafari/@hemaaljaafari	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9QDnEFQ/
5	انفكت السبحة وضاع الخرز ضاع حاولت ألمه يا سليمان وأزريت صار الذهب قصدير والورد نعناع أنكرت ريحه يوم شميت الباب طايح مات أبوه رحمه الله عليه الباب طايح والمسامير خلاع والحب فيه السوس والفار بالبيت الحب فيه السوس والفار بالبيت	3aze.d/@3aze.d	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9QajBuV/
6	البارحه قضيت ليالي هواجيس غريق في بحر المهاوين غطاس والجوف لأجت به خفي الدواجيس الناس في نومه وأنا مخالف الناس يا وجد قلبي يوم شدو على العيس واقفت ضعائهم على ذيك الاطعاس طالعت انا بالعين زين الوعيس وعينه تراعيني كما عين قرناس وأنا اتعود من جميع الوساويس ومن شر منهو بين الاضلاع خناس	@x5-911 / الوتين الخالدي	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9CjXWUJ/

Adapting *Nabati* poetry structures for TikTok requires condensing the verses to fit the short duration. In this process, the *wazn* and *buhūr* patterns are rarely preserved in their entirety; some poets retain only the basic rhythm, whilst others abandon prosody in favor of performance flexibility. This phenomenon underscores Bolter dan Grusin (2000), concept of remediation, namely that new media do not merely condense text, but also renegotiate prosodic traditions into more concise, visual, and performative forms.

Furthermore, digital performativity also influences the way *Nabati* poetry is constructed and received. Poets no longer simply recite their poems, but also incorporate body language, dramatic intonation, background music and visual effects. According to performativity theory, meaning is never static but is constantly reproduced through performative acts. This is evident in how *Nabati* poetry on TikTok is judged not only on the strength of the text but also on the style of delivery, visual appeal, and the extent to which it sparks audience interaction through likes, comments, and shares.

The second key aspect is audience involvement in shaping popular literary practices. In the classical *Nabati* tradition, the audience plays a strongly receptive role, for instance by memorizing, quoting, or circulating specific verses. However, on TikTok, the audience is not merely a passive recipient but actively co-creates meaning through comments, duets, and remixes. This demonstrates the existence of a participatory culture, as described by Jenkins (2006), in which the public transforms into both producers and consumers (prosumers) of cultural texts. Such interactions show that the continuity of *Nabati* in the digital space is determined not only by the poets, but also by the resonance and creativity of the audience.

Furthermore, the involvement of TikTok's algorithms amplifies these dynamics. The theory of algorithmic performativity explains that algorithms not only govern the distribution of content, but also shape patterns of cultural production. *Nabati* poetry videos that fulfil "algorithmic logic"—such as ideal duration, popular audio rhythms, or the use of specific hashtags—have a greater chance of going viral. Thus, *Nabati*'s survival on TikTok is measured not only by its aesthetic value, but also by its ability to adapt to the platform's algorithmic rules.

The third aspect is the transformation of the concept of authenticity in digital Arabic literature. In the oral tradition, *Nabati*'s authenticity is measured by linguistic fluency, depth of meaning, and its connection to tribal or community values. However, in the digital context, authenticity shifts to a socially negotiated construction between the poet, the audience, and the platform. A poem is considered "authentic" not merely because of its fidelity to tradition, but because of its resonance with the experiences of the young Arab generation in the virtual space. This aligns with the view of authenticity as a product of discourse, rather than an essential quality of the cultural text.

In the case of the six videos analyzed, a dialectic between tradition and modernity is evident. Some poets retain classical *Nabati* diction to assert cultural identity, whilst others blend it with contemporary Arabic slang to connect more closely with a digital audience. This dialectic is reminiscent of the concept of glocalization in cultural studies, wherein local practices negotiate with the global logic of digital platforms. Thus, *Nabati* poetry on TikTok can be viewed as a form of hybrid literature that combines traditional values with digital communication styles.

This study will demonstrate that *Nabati* Poetry on TikTok is not merely a reproduction of tradition in a new medium, but rather a complex form of transformation in Arabic literature. Adaptations of structure, audience engagement, and negotiations of authenticity indicate that digitalization opens new opportunities for the sustainability of oral literature. However, this sustainability is also vulnerable to the logic of commodification and algorithmizing, which may shift aesthetic orientation towards popularity. Consequently, an

understanding of *Nabati* Poetry in the digital space must be situated within a theoretical framework that integrates digital mediation, performativity, cultural participation, and authenticity as discourses.

The adaptation of Nabati poetry's structure to the logic of digital platforms

The adaptation of *Nabati* Poetry within the digital ecosystem not only reflects a shift in medium but also marks a significant structural transformation. Platforms such as TikTok, which operate on algorithmic logic, compel traditional literary forms to adapt to short durations, engaging visualization, and high emotional intensity. In this context, *Nabati* Poetry, which originates from the Bedouin oral tradition, must reformulate its form, rhythm, and narrative in order to remain functional within the digital participatory space (Coudry & Hepp, 2018). The remediation occurring here is not destructive but constructive—offering new opportunities to preserve old forms in a new package (Bolter & Grusin, 2000).

With this adaptation in mind, six TikTok videos on the theme of *Nabati* Poetry were analysed based on user engagement and the themes of the poems. The Table 2 below presents quantitative data covering central themes, poetry quotations (transliterations), and engagement metrics such as the number of views, likes, saves and shares.

Table 2. Documentation of *Nabati Poetry* on TikTok: Transliterated Texts and Audience Engagement

No.	Central Theme	Poetic Transliteration	Views	Likes	Saves	Shares
1	Love, heartbreak, sincerity	<i>Bita'amm fī ṣadrī al-fawḍā wa-taḥtalluh Wa-a'ish fī ḥuznī wa-fī khaybat āmālī Ghalāh yā ja'alanī admāḥuhā wa-lā ubālī Yā ṭīb 'udhruh law annuh jā' 'alā ḥilluh Ghalāh yā ja'alanī admāḥuhā wa-lā ubālī Wa-ma'a dhālik Allāh yabīḥuh wa-Allāh yaḥilluh Bamūt min ṭārī hijrah 'alā bālī al-Ṣabr maḥmūd fī al-madḥhab wa-fī al-millah Wa-mā marra bi-al-awwal luzūm yamurr bi-al-tālī</i>	14,700	269	105	124
2	Love, separation, emotional plea	<i>Lā wa-Allāh illā shaddū al-badū nujjā' Kull(in) hadam mabnāhu wa-irtadda zamlah Shadda al-shadīd wa-qarrabū kull miṭwā' Wa-rā'ī al-maḥabbah farraqa al-bayn shamlah Ghadā lahum dūna al-rafi'ah tamazza' Kull baghā darb 'azl wa-inqasam lah Wa-yā qalbī alladhī min hawā al-bīd manṣā' Kamā yaṣū'u al-ṣayd rāmin khaṭama lah Ḥubbuh yakhujju al-qalb mā yūji' awjā' Lā shakka qalbī mawḍi'uh bayt namlah</i>	101,400	1,288	333	394
3	Honor, dignity, and self-respect, Social	<i>al-Aṣīl aṣīl Wa-khāwī al-shahm al-raṣīn Wa-li-al-ma'āsīr wa-al-nashāyib fakkākhā Wa-nūmis bi-maqāmika wa-khallika razīn Wa-ib'ad 'an al-'ulūm allī</i>	27,000	407	31	76

critique and Sincerity	<i>Tuqallil min nafsika Wa-min 'izzatihā</i>				
4 Honor, dignity, and self-respect	<i>Kathru al-tawāḍu' mushkilah ba'ḍ al-aḥyān Yaqillu ihtirāmuka bi-al-nufūs al-ḍa'ifah Al-ṭayyib finā ṭab' wa-al-shīmah idmān Wa-shūfātinā fawqa al-jibāl al-manīfah Mā naltafit li-llī yujāzī bi-nukrān Wa-lā nankasir mahmā yaqūl al-hadīfah Dām al-thiqah bi-al-nafs 'izzah li-al-insān Nahyā 'alā mabda' al-ḥayāh al-sharīfah</i>	659,600	10,300	1,706	3,264
5 Social critique, love decay, household ruin	<i>Infakkat al-subḥah wa-ḍā'a al-kharaz ḍā' Ḥāwaltu alammahu yā Sulaymān wa-azrayt Ṣāra al-dhabab qaṣḍīr wa-al-ward na'nā' Ankartu rīḥuh yawm shammayt Al-bāb ṭāyih (Māta abūh raḥmatu Allāh 'alayh) Al-bāb ṭāyih wa-al-masāmīr khallā' Wa-al-ḥabb fih al-sūs wa-al-fār bi-al-bayt Wa-al-ḥabb fih al-sūs wa-al-fār bi-al-bayt</i>	36,400	383	154	94
6 Love, separation, emotional plea	<i>Al-bāriḥah qaḍaytu laylī hawājīs Gharīq fī baḥr al-mahāwīn ghaṭṭās Wa-al-jawf lā jat bih khafī al-dawāḥīs Al-nās fī nawmah wa-anā mukhālīf al-nās Yā wajd qalbī yawm shaddū 'alā al-'īs Wa-aqfat ḍa'āyīnuhum 'alā dhīk al-aṭ'ās Ṭāla'tu anā bi-al-'ayn zayn al-wa'īs Wa-'aynuh turā'inī kamā 'ayn qurnās Wa-anā ata'awwad min jamī' al-wasāwīs Wa-min sharr man hu wa bayn al-aḍlā' khannās</i>	273,700	7,244	1,038	1,846

The data in Table 2 show that the relationship between theme, poetic form and audience engagement is not linear, but rather contextual. Video 4, for example, which addresses the themes of self-esteem and dignity, actually recorded the highest engagement (659,600 views; 10,300 likes; 3,264 shares), despite not featuring an extreme simplification of structure. This finding confirms that the success of poetry adaptations on TikTok does not lie in the reduction of complexity alone, but in the ability to harmonize poetic structure with visual rhythm and the logic of the platform's distribution. In this context, TikTok's algorithm can be understood as part of a new aesthetic ecosystem that selectively affirms certain forms of expression (Couldry & Hepp, 2018).

Conversely, the third video, which was relatively shorter and more concise, generated only moderate engagement (27,000 views; 407 likes; 31 saves). This suggests that a short duration does not automatically guarantee audience resonance if it is not balanced by thematic strength and visual impact. Thus, excessive compression in the structure of a poem risks eroding the narrative depth that is precisely needed to build emotional connection—a paradox that comes to the fore in the fast-paced landscape of digital communication.

Structurally, the poems in the TikTok videos show a tendency towards simplifying the stanzas and condensing meaning, whilst retaining elements of repetition and musicality as rhetorical strategies. In the first video, for example, the single-stanza structure relying on the repetition of phrases such as *Ghalāh yā ja'alanī admaḥuhā wa-lā ubālī* serves to reinforce the emotional impact whilst maintaining attention within a scrollable space. This strategy indicates a shift from narrative complexity towards performative effectiveness. This

phenomenon aligns with the concept of “medium reform” proposed by Bolter & Grusin (2000) wherein new media tend to prioritize accessibility and immediacy over traditional aesthetic depth.

Thus, the transformation of poetic structure within the digital environment does not merely reflect a trend towards simplification, but also mirrors a negotiation between classical aesthetics and the demands of the new medium. Table 3 below summarizes the structural forms and key semiotic techniques employed in each video in response to these dynamics.

Table 3. Adaptation of the *Nabati* Poetry structure in the TikTok format

No	Structural Adaptation	Visual/Auditory	Techniques Rhetorical Effects
1	Single-stanza structure with repetition	Minimalist visuals, slow-paced music, vocal emphasis	Rapid emotional intensity and short-term attention retention
2	Sequential narrative (multi-stanza)	Text slides, measured recitation rhythm, sequential visuals	Gradual and sustained emotional engagement
3	Reflective monologue (inner dialogue)	Minimal text, emphasis on vocal intonation	High intimacy with limited audience reach
4	Short performative declamation	Close-up framing, natural voice delivery	Perceived authenticity with variable depth
5	Extended structure (classical pattern)	Symbolic/nature-based visuals, meditative audio	Strong cultural resonance and collective appeal
6	Free-form social metaphorical expression	Contrasting visuals, humorous/ironic elements, dynamic audio	Intellectual appeal and high virality potential

Table 3 shows that structural patterns which maintain a gradual narrative or forms approximating classical patterns, such as in multi-verse models and long-form structures, tend to produce more stable and profound rhetorical effects. A gradual narrative allows emotional engagement to develop progressively, whilst a long structure, supported by symbolic visuals and meditative audio, is capable of building a broader cultural resonance. These findings suggest that, within the context of *Nabati* Poetry, effectiveness in the digital space is not solely determined by the degree of formal compression, but rather by the alignment between the poem’s structure and its presentation strategy.

Conversely, highly compressed forms, such as single stanzas with repetition or brief performative recitations, can indeed create emotional intensity rapidly and an authentic impression, but tend to yield more limited retention or varying depths of meaning. Meanwhile, the monologue reflection model offers strong intimacy, yet with a relatively narrow reach. On the other hand, the exploration of social metaphors combined with contrasting visual elements and irony actually opens up opportunities for intellectual engagement whilst enhancing the potential for virality.

From a remediation theory perspective, TikTok functions not only as a distribution medium but also as an ‘aesthetic agent’ that reshapes the way poetry is produced and consumed. This medium encourages the reformulation of form without entirely erasing its traditional identity. Consequently, a hybrid form of expression emerges that retains oral elements, yet is restructured within the visual, auditory, and temporal frameworks characteristic of digital platforms.

Thus, the transformation of *Nabati* Poetry’s structure on TikTok reflects a process of negotiation between traditional aesthetic values and the demands of digital performativity.

Effective adaptation is not merely a simplification of form for the sake of accessibility, but rather the ability to integrate poetic structure with contextual and resonant presentation strategies. Within this framework, traditional literature does not undergo reduction, but rather rearticulation, it transforms in accordance with the media landscape without losing its aesthetic trace.

The role of the audience in shaping contemporary popular literary practices

In the digital ecosystem, the relationship between creators and audiences is no longer linear or one-way. Audiences now play an active role not only in consuming, but also in shaping, distributing, and reproducing the meaning of circulating literary content. Jenkins' (2006) concept of participatory culture serves as a crucial framework for understanding these dynamics, particularly within the context of *Nabati* Poetry on TikTok. Interactions such as likes, saves, shares, and comments are not merely indicators of popularity, but forms of participation that contribute to the aesthetic legitimacy of a work.

The data in Table 2 reveal significant variations in audience engagement, which correlate with the themes and presentation strategies of the poems as summarized in Table 3. Video 4, for example, which addresses the themes of self-esteem and dignity through a performative recitation format, recorded the highest engagement (659,600 views, 10,300 likes, 1,706 saves, and 3,264 shares). This high level of response indicates that the combination of socially resonant themes and authentic presentation is capable of mobilizing collective engagement. In this case, the audience not only appreciates the content but also implicitly acts as a 'curator of values', affirming the relevance of certain themes within the digital public sphere.

Conversely, the third video, which features a monologue-style reflection with a minimalist approach, shows a more limited level of engagement (27,000 views, 407 likes, and 31 saves). Although it possesses introspective depth, the limitations of its visual elements and performativity mean its reach is not as strong as that of other formats. These findings confirm that, within networked publics, the success of content is determined not only by the intrinsic quality of the text, but also by the alignment between the form of presentation and the audience's affective expectations.

Furthermore, engagement patterns also reveal that more complex and gradual poetic structures can remain competitive, and even excel, when supported by the right presentation strategy. Video 6, for example, with its relatively lengthy narrative structure and exploration of emotional metaphors, achieved 273,700 views and 7,244 likes. This aligns with Table 3, which shows that gradual narratives and lengthy structures yield more stable emotional engagement and strong collective resonance. Thus, the audience responds not only to the content but also to the way the poetry is presented in a visual-auditory format.

Audience participation also occurs at a qualitative level. In videos with high engagement, the comments section often evolves into a space for collective interpretation, where users not only express appreciation but also quote, interpret, and even modify the verses of the poem. This phenomenon reflects the practice of produsage (Bruns, 2015), where the boundary between producer and consumer becomes fluid, and the meaning of the text is collaboratively produced within the digital ecosystem.

On the other hand, TikTok's algorithmic logic reinforces the audience's role as a driver of visibility. Every user interaction contributes to the recommendation system that determines the distribution reach of content. In this sense, the audience not only shapes aesthetic preferences but also determines the very infrastructure of the poem's circulation. The virality of a video, therefore, is not merely the result of aesthetic quality, but rather a product of the dynamics of collective engagement accumulated within the algorithmic system.

The table 4 below presents a comparison between audience engagement levels and poetic themes, to clarify the relationship between the role of the audience and the popularity of *Nabati* Poetry

Tabel 4. Audience Engagement by *Nabati* Poetry Theme

No	Central Themes	Likes	Saves	Shares	Description
1	Love, heartbreak, sincerity	269	105	124	Moderate; reinforced by repetition and rapid emotional intensity
2	Love, separation, emotional plea	1.288	333	394	High; gradual narrative fosters stable emotional engagement
3	Honor, dignity, and self-respect (reflective)	407	31	76	Limited; high reflective depth but narrow reach
4	Honor, dignity, and self-respect (performative)	10.300	1.706	3.264	Very high; strong themes with authentic and direct presentation
5	Social critique, love decay, household ruin	383	154	94	Moderate; strong social metaphors but suboptimal distribution
6	Love, separation, emotional plea (narrative complex)	7.244	1.038	1.846	Very high; lengthy structure and metaphors reinforce resonance

As shown in Table 4, the level of audience engagement is determined not only by the theme, but also by the way in which that theme is presented through structure and presentation strategies. Themes that embody collective values, such as self-esteem, dignity and social relations, tend to generate the highest levels of engagement when conveyed in a performative and direct manner. This is evident in the 'honor, dignity and self-respect' (performative) category, which recorded the highest figures across all indicators. Conversely, the same themes in a reflective form demonstrate far more limited engagement. Thus, it can be concluded that audience resonance does not stem solely from the theme, but rather from the interaction between the theme, poetic structure, and visual-auditory strategies.

On the other hand, themes of love and emotional relationships exhibit a more varied pattern. When presented through a step-by-step narrative or more complex structures, such as in the categories of love, separation, and emotional plea, audience engagement increases significantly. However, in simpler and more condensed forms, similar themes tend to elicit a more moderate response. This indicates that, within the context of digital literature, narrative depth and the rhythm of presentation remain crucial factors in fostering emotional engagement, even amidst the trend towards fast-paced content consumption.

These findings also underscore that digital literary practices cannot be separated from the social dynamics mediated by the audience. High engagement with certain themes reflects a collective selection process regarding values deemed relevant, authentic, and representative. In this regard, the audience functions as a curatorial agent that not only responds but also directs the visibility and legitimacy of specific forms of poetic expression.

Furthermore, these engagement patterns have implications for the production strategies of the poetry itself. The findings in Table 5 indicate that forms featuring gradual narratives, strong performativity, or the exploration of contextual metaphors tend to elicit a higher response. This encourages poets to adapt their style by incorporating elements that are more responsive to the platform's mechanisms, such as an emphasis on vocal rhythm,

contrasting visuals, or the selection of diction that is easily recognizable and shareable. This phenomenon can be understood as a form of algorithmic performativity (Bishop, 2019), wherein aesthetic production is no longer entirely autonomous but negotiates with the logic of digital distribution.

Overall, the role of the audience in *Nabati* Poetry practices on TikTok extends beyond that of a mere recipient. They become central actors in the processes of distribution, interpretation, and the reproduction of meaning. The boundary between poet and reader is becoming increasingly fluid, alongside the emergence of interactive spaces that enable active participation in the formation of collective meaning. This transformation opens up opportunities for the democratization of literary expression, yet simultaneously introduces new tensions between the demands of aesthetic authenticity and the pressure to conform to tastes and algorithmic logic.

The transformation of the concept of authenticity in Arabic literature within the digital ecosystem

The authenticity of *Nabati* Poetry is often associated with its geographical origins, its ties to the Bedouin community, and an oral delivery style passed down through generations. However, within a digital ecosystem such as TikTok, the concept of authenticity undergoes a significant transformation. The process of digitalization not only reproduces cultural expressions but also redefines the parameters of value and meaning through algorithmic mediation and online audience interaction.

According to Peterson (2005), authenticity is a social construct shaped through historical and cultural consensus. In the digital space, this consensus is no longer controlled by traditional cultural institutions, but is shaped by user engagement and platform logic. Thus, authenticity does not rely on a single authority, but on the dynamics of collective participation occurring in real time.

A TikTok video featuring *Nabati* Poetry does not necessarily have to originate from a Bedouin poet to be considered authentic. What is more important is its ability to evoke an emotional response, display certain visual cues (such as Arab attire, desert landscapes, or a distinctive vocal style), and gain validation from users through likes, comments and shares. Aesthetic authority thus shifts to the realm of digital interaction.

Findings from the video analysis indicate that signs of authenticity are constructed through a combination of traditional aesthetics and digital production techniques. Traditional aesthetics are preserved through cultural symbols, whilst digital elements add new value in the form of visual effects, background music, and algorithmic dissemination strategies. It is this fusion that ensures the work remains perceived as ‘authentic’ in the eyes of the digital audience.

For example, one of the videos with the highest engagement features a young poet dressed in a *thawb* and *ghutrah*, reciting poetry against a desert backdrop with soft traditional music. Although the recitation was digitally recorded, these symbols reproduce the image of the “desert poet” that aligns with users’ romantic expectations of *Nabati* Poetry

This phenomenon demonstrates what Bolter & Grusin (2000) term the ‘remediation of authenticity’, the repackaging of traditional values into new formats that actually reinforce perceptions of authenticity in the eyes of the digital audience. Authenticity is not lost, but rather remediated to suit the context of contemporary cultural consumption.

This transformation is also inseparable from what Bishop (2019) describes as algorithmic performativity. Creators do not merely present poetry, but also manage signs of authenticity to make them compatible with TikTok’s logic—for instance, by inserting hashtags such as #shi’r_nabāṭī_’aṣīl (authentic *Nabati* poetry) or selecting visual effects that evoke a sense of nostalgia.

In this context, authenticity becomes a performance that is constantly negotiated and redefined through user engagement and algorithmic responses. Authentic does not mean 'original' in a historical sense, but rather 'convincing' in an aesthetic and emotional sense within the platform's context. Consequently, authenticity becomes fluid and adaptable to the demands of technology and audience expectations. Consequently, the boundary between authenticity and commodification becomes blurred. On the one hand, users can access and appreciate *Nabati* Poetry widely, even from outside the Gulf Arab community. On the other hand, the value of authenticity itself becomes part of a content monetization strategy—the more "authentic" it appears, the greater the chance of it going viral and being monetized.

This phenomenon reflects how authenticity has shifted from something inherited to something actively produced and negotiated within the digital space. This shift also reveals the logic of digital capitalism, where aesthetics and culture become commodified resources. Furthermore, this redefinition of authenticity opens up new spaces for inclusion. Some of the videos analyzed show that women, the Arab diaspora, and even non-native speakers are beginning to produce or engage with *Nabati* Poetry online. This marks a shift from an exclusive-traditional model towards a participatory-global model.

Whilst within a traditional framework this might be regarded as a form of 'contamination', in the digital space it is interpreted as an expansion of identity and cross-border preservation. As noted by Couldry and Hepp (2018), digital media reengineers cultural participation, where authority over representation is no longer exclusive, but rather collaborative and open.

Thus, the concept of authenticity in Arabic literature within *Nabati* Poetry is no longer bound by origins or fixed forms, but rather by the ability to forge emotional, visual, and cultural affiliations within an algorithmic framework. Digitalization here functions not merely as a new medium, but also as a new terrain for the production of meaning, authority, and literary.

The reconstruction of Nabati Poetry through digital transformation and participatory authenticity

The findings of this study confirm that *Nabati* Poetry in the digital age no longer appears in a wholly traditional format, but has undergone a structural transformation that follows the logic of platforms such as TikTok. The adaptations made include the simplification of verses, short rhythms, and the dominance of visual and audio elements. At first glance, these changes may appear to be a degradation of literary form, as they reduce the narrative length and rhetorical depth of Bedouin oral tradition. However, upon closer examination, this phenomenon can instead be understood as a creative strategy to maintain the vitality of poetry within a fast-paced digital ecosystem that is user-attention-oriented.

In line with the framework of mediatization proposed by Couldry and Hepp (2018), this transformation demonstrates that oral literary forms possess the flexibility to adapt to new media without losing their essence. TikTok, as a space for the production and consumption of culture, introduces a new logic: short, concise, and instant. Consequently, oral poetry must also adapt to compete with other popular forms of content. It is this adaptation that enables *Nabati* Poetry not only to survive but to find a new audience beyond traditional circles. In other words, mediatization does not signify the loss of tradition, but rather the emergence of a new configuration that blends old values with new formats.

Beyond formal aspects, audience engagement is a crucial element revealing the shifting function of *Nabati* Poetry within the digital space. Responses in the form of likes, comments, shares, and even remixing are not merely indicators of popularity, but form new, participatory practices. Poetry is no longer understood solely as the final work of a poet, but also as the starting point for a cultural dialogue with the audience. For instance, several

Nabati Poetry videos on TikTok are frequently used as duets by other users, whether to add musical harmonies, brief translations, or even intertextual critiques.

This phenomenon aligns with the concept of prosumer culture (Méndez-Lazarte et al., 2025), in which the audience does not merely act as passive consumers, but actively co-constructs meaning alongside the creators of the work. In this context, literary authority in the digital space no longer rests entirely with the poet. Power over the meaning and authenticity of poetry is collectively negotiated with the audience through online interaction. Thus, *Nabati* Poetry on TikTok demonstrates a paradigm shift from the 'sole authority of the poet' towards a 'collegiality of meaning' between the poet and the digital community.

This transformation has direct implications for the interpretation of literary authenticity. Whereas in the classical tradition authenticity was measured by fidelity to form and Bedouin oral performance, in the digital landscape authenticity is determined more by the text's ability to evoke emotional resonance and cultural connections with the online community. A short video featuring a young man reciting poetry against a backdrop of a desert, accompanied by rebab music and wearing a thawb, may not fully meet historical criteria. However, these symbols create an emotional effect that convinces the audience of the "authenticity" of the tradition.

Peterson's (2005) theory of performative authenticity is relevant for explaining this phenomenon. Peterson asserts that authenticity is not an essential property inherent in a work, but rather a social construction formed through practices of interaction and cultural consensus. In the digital space, these practices are expressed through the number of likes, comments, and shares. Authentic, within the TikTok framework, means being able to generate an emotional connection that is collectively recognized by users.

This perspective is reinforced by Al Hamimy (2025) analysis of Nizār Qabbānī's poem *Ilā Bairūt al-Unsā*. In his study, Al Hamimy asserts that the authentic meaning of modern Arabic poetry arises from emotionally and culturally layered elements that are contextually negotiated, rather than from absolute adherence to formal structure. Thus, whether in classical or digital contexts, the authenticity of Arabic poetry always depends on the relationship between the text, the audience, and its socio-cultural context. The main difference lies solely in the medium and the logic of participation underpinning the process.

Furthermore, this phenomenon demonstrates that *Nabati* Poetry in the digital space functions more broadly than as a mere aesthetic expression. It becomes an arena for the negotiation of identity and values amidst the tide of algorithmic globalization. Through TikTok, this poetry fulfils a dual role: strengthening Arab cultural bonds whilst negotiating its position within global popular culture. This process demonstrates that the Bedouin oral tradition not only endures but also undergoes an expansion of meaning and function. *Nabati* is no longer merely a local identity but also a global symbol accessible to users across cultures.

This shift simultaneously underscores that TikTok and similar digital platforms function as spaces of cultural brokerage—intermediary spaces enabling Arab traditions to interact with a global audience. Consequently, the boundaries between authenticity, entertainment, and commodification are becoming increasingly blurred. Authenticity is no longer understood as something pure, but rather as a performance negotiated within the algorithmic arena. This renders poetry not merely an aesthetic text, but also digital content subject to the logic of attention capitalization.

Thus, this discussion demonstrates that structural transformation, audience participation, and the shifting meaning of authenticity make *Nabati* Poetry a concrete example of the adaptability of Arabic oral literature in the face of technological pressures. These dynamics confirm the findings Al-Onazi et al., (2025) that *Nabati* Poetry on TikTok is

not merely present as entertainment, but as a form of reconstruction of oral tradition within a participatory cultural framework. This shift simultaneously marks the transfer of literary authority from the exclusive domain of the poet to a collaborative public sphere.

Finally, it can be asserted that *Nabati* Poetry in the digital age reflects a new epistemology in perceiving the authenticity of Arabic literature. Authenticity is no longer viewed as a static legacy, but as the result of a dynamic negotiation between text, audience, and algorithm. This is proof that Arabic oral literature is not fragile in the face of changing times, but rather flexible, creative, and capable of transforming into a new, authentic form because it is shaped collectively.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Nabati* Poetry has undergone significant structural adaptation within the digital ecosystem. Platforms such as TikTok have driven a transformation in form through the simplification of verses, expressive visualization, and emotional compression to suit short, fast-paced formats. This adaptation is not destructive, but rather serves as a creative strategy to preserve the oral traditions of Bedouin poetry within a new medium. User engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments, indicates that structure and presentation techniques have a major influence on the resonance of the poetry with a digital audience.

Furthermore, audience participation not only affects the visibility of the work but also helps shape new norms within digital literary practice. *Nabati* Poetry within the social media sphere has seen an expansion of its function—not merely as an aesthetic expression, but also as a space for negotiating values, identity, and cultural affinity. Authenticity is no longer measured by fidelity to classical forms, but by its success in forging emotional connections within a participatory digital landscape.

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