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The Impact of Social and Digital Media on Traditional Agenda Setting Theory in Relation to The Arab Spring Revolutions

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA ON TRADITIONAL AGENDA

SETTING THEORY IN RELATION TO THE ARAB SPRING REVOLUTIONS

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Abstract

The growing complexity of modern communications leads to enhanced abilities for individuals to disseminate information to the public. Traditional definitions of mass communication theories must to evolve to consider new modes of communication. Engaged individuals using modern technologies become citizen journalists and informed opinion leaders, able to take over the agenda setting functions of traditional media sources, including gatekeeping and framing techniques. In times of conflict, individuals increasingly use social and digital media to inform the public, rather than relying on traditional news outlets, leading to the need to expand traditional definitions of agenda setting theory. This paper draws conclusions from the Arab Spring conflicts to show how the use of digital and social media has changed the traditional characterization of agenda setting theory, allowing individuals to gain the ability to influence the communication of salient issues to the public, as opposed to conventional media sources.

To examine the how digital and social media use has influenced agenda setting theory, the prominence and relevance of key events occurring in the Arab Spring were analyzed to frame survey questions aimed at understanding the primary source of information for the public. A sample population of individuals who actively use both traditional and new media were surveyed to understand which modes of communication played a more key role in setting the agenda during the Arab Spring. This study provides insight into how digital and social media influenced the role of agenda setting during the Arab Spring, and thus how the traditional theory of agenda setting should expand to consider the rise of new modes of communication.

Introduction

Advances in technology arising from the progression of globalization has changed the way societies communicate. The ubiquity of the internet and the use of social media has drastically increased the level of interconnectivity of people across the globe. Sources of information, the speed at which we can access this information and the availability of complementary and contradicting opinions has increased exponentially. According to José van Dijck, author of *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*, 82% of the world's population over the age of 15 used a social media platform in 2011. The development of the internet and social media has changed the public's interaction with traditional media sources and how they set the global agenda. The rise of new forms of media through the globalization of communication impacts the established definitions of mass communication theories.

Agenda setting theory is described by Maxwell McCombs as "the power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues," (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Traditional media disseminates messages drawing the public's attention to issues each specific media outlet deems newsworthy. Unable to cover all real-time events, especially in times of conflict, selective messages shape the image of a specific environment to the public, though they are distorted snapshots of events (Howard & Hussain, 2011).

Originating in Walter Lippman's *Public Opinion*, the theory of agenda setting came from his idea that media creates mental images of the world which does not necessarily reflect the reality of the world (Lippmann, 1921). Media uses various techniques to frame reality in a way that is interesting to target audiences, with traditional media acting as the gatekeepers for the flow of information. In times of conflict, the urgency for media to disseminate information increases, leaving no guarantee that the messages will remain accurate or cover realistic

perspectives (Salwin & Stacks, 2008). The increasing use of social and digital media has transformed the role of agenda setting to allow any individual with a social media account access to a global audience. Individuals have become their own citizen journalists, editors, publishers and gatekeepers. The evolution of media changes traditional definitions of mass communications theories and gives a wider range of perspectives through which to view the world. Though the theories still exist, their definitions must be adapted to fit the evolution and globalization of the media and communications industry.

Literature Review

The aim of the Arab Spring was to liberate oppressed populations. With government-regulated mass media, new media gave individuals the ability to set agendas and influence public opinion (Benett & Segerberg, 2011). Younger generations promoted the use of social media to bypass government controls and bring light to salient issues not featured in traditional media. The agenda setting powers of national and international traditional media sources hindered the dissemination of truthful and representative news to the public (Loader, 2011). Social media gave power to the affected people to inform the public both nationally and internationally about their misgivings, motives and methods for revolution during the Arab Spring (Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012). This conflict is an example of how globalization and the development of new media broadens our perceptions of reality and alters traditional approaches of media on agenda setting theory (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

The Arab Spring began with citizen discontent with government, specifically in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. The proximity of the nations involved, triggered the wave of protests which later became known as the Arab Spring (Bruce, 2014). Sociopolitical and economic climates in the effected countries hindered basic rights of their populations. Educated

citizens were unable to find work or provide for their families, while extortion, inflation and corruption continued to rise (Howard & Hussain, 2011). Police brutality and repressive rulers combined with worsening economic conditions for majority of the citizenry caused unrest and led to revolutions aimed at overthrowing dictatorial leaders and ousting corrupt governments (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). Though results of the demonstrations varied for each country, the use of social media as a tool for communication was prevalent between and throughout these Arab nations (Bruns, Highfield & Burgess, 2013). The theory of agenda setting explains that a naturally curious public seeks information on salient topics through media outlets. The suffering of the people involved in the Arab Spring revolutions appealed to the world and called for the support of basic freedoms for oppressed populations. The ability of social media to set the agenda on the Arab Spring led to a global awareness of events and an enlightened conversation on human rights and fair governing, which resulted in the ousting of oppressive leaders, furthering the move to the democratization of Arab nations.

The Arab Spring

The worsening oppression of citizens in Egypt and Tunisia caused two major events which sparked revolutions. In Tunisia, a street vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi, was being extorted by local police and could not pay the fine. After appealing to the authorities, Bouazizi was physically assaulted by police officers. Frustrated with the lack of response from the Tunisian government, Bouazizi set himself on fire outside of his local government office (Howard & Hussain, 2011). This event was not initially covered by the media in Tunisia, but videos and photos of the self-immolation spread across social media creating an uproar of discontent and a sense of urgency to demand democratic rights. Only then did traditional media outlets air the event, using social media as primary sources of information (Lotan, Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney,

Pearce & Boyd, 2011). The people of Tunisia revolted, and with the help of international hackers and activists, they maneuvered government firewalls and organized a movement to oust the ruling regime (Duffy, Howard, Freelon, Hussain, Mari & Mazaid, 2011). Digital and social media became an effective tool to inform the global public when traditional media outlets failed to do so (Brown, Guskin & Mitchell, 2012).

Media in neighboring Arab countries were reluctant to cover the Tunisian events, yet the immense support on social media could not allow traditional outlets to remain silent (Rinke & Roder, 2011). Ignited by a similar situation in which Khaled Said, a local Egyptian Internet Café owner, faced extortion from local police officers and refused to pay their demands. After exposing the wrongdoings of the local police in his community, the officers assaulted Khaled until he was dead, then lied about his cause of death. As photos and stories of the event spread across the internet, an enraged public, both within Egypt and in the Middle Eastern community, gained a growing sense of purpose to fight for their freedom (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). The organization of their revolution began as a collective identity developed on the Facebook page created to memorialize Said called "We are All Khaled Said". Demonstrations in Tahrir Square united the Egyptian people, with social media acting as the driving force and primary means of communication (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides & Freelon, 2012). Attempts from Egyptian government to shut down the internet failed, and news of the revolution spread across the world. Activists used social media to strategically and effectively plan their revolution while informing the world of the reality of their situation (Brown, Guskin & Mitchell, 2012).

Citizen Journalists

The majority of protesters in these revolutions were relatively educated, young citizens with access to internet and social media platforms. Digital media played a paramount role in the

success of these revolutions, not only providing a medium to organize rallies and demonstrations

but in alerting the world to the misgivings occurring in Arab countries (Stepanova, 2011).

Though some debate the effectiveness of new media in the outcomes of the revolts, new media

outlets enabled the public to form collective actions and engage in citizen journalism while

taking over the agenda setting function of mass media outlets (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

Populations of the countries in the Arab Spring used social media to influence the understanding

and perspective of the publics outside of their nations, in order to create global awareness of the

wrongdoings of their governments when traditional media sources failed to portray events that

the citizens deemed newsworthy in a timely and relevant manner (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides &

Freelon, 2012). The use of social media provided a sense of solidarity among the Arab people for

those who experienced similar discontent with their own governments. In addition, the education

of the global publics on the Arab Spring protests allowed for volunteers and cyber activists to

support the movement towards better governing of the Arab people (Howard & Hussain, 2011).

    With the deaths of Mohammad Bouazizi and Khaled Said, social media was fundamental

to informing the public, uniting protestors and disseminating credible information to national and

international audiences (Lotan, Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney, Pearce & Boyd, 2011). Traditional

media outlets would not cover the reality of all events, nor could they be trusted to do so with the

presence of political gatekeepers. Social media became a reliable and inclusive source of

information and thus, transformed the traditional definition of the agenda setting function of

mainstream media sources (Loader, 2011). McCombs & Shaw 1972 state, "individual difference

in responses to the media agenda are grounded in the physiological concept of need for

orientation, the idea that we have an innate curiosity about the world around us and a desire to

become familiar with that world". This desire to know about the events which transpired in the

Arab Spring revolutions could not be informed by the biased local traditional media outlets or

the slow to respond international news media outlets (Howard & Hussain, 2011).

Gatekeepers

Social media aided the development and dissemination of internal communications,

coordination, informing and mobilizing mass publics to join the cause for revolution (Aday,

Farell, Lynch, Sides, & Dewar, 2013). Though dictatorial governments tried to censor and negate

the impact of social media by arresting bloggers and social media users, while cutting off access

to the Internet, determined citizens found a way to regain access to engage the public (Lotan,

Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney, Pearce & Boyd, 2011). Various methods to bypass government

censorship included switching to dial-up Internet, using proxies and engaging sources outside of

the Arab countries involved to disseminate information on behalf of citizens (Duffy, Howard,

Freelon, Hussain, Mari & Mazaid, 2011). Local news and radio media outlets run by the

government portrayed biased information and understated actual events. International news

outlets were unable to bypass government controls to gain access to realistic information to

inform the world about the misdeeds occurring in the Arab nations involved (Aday, Farrell,

Lynch, Sides & Freelon, 2012). The lack of transparent media and the worsening political

oppression only added to the frustration of the citizens. New media platforms allowed users to

spread direct, firsthand information and realistic accounts of events to facilitate the participation

and activism of large groups of citizens both in and outside of the Arab nations (Aday, Farrell,

Lynch, Sides, Freelon, Sides & Dewar, 2013). YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and blogs helped in

engaging a wider audience of international media outlets to continue ongoing conversations

about democracy, liberty and human rights for oppressed populations (Loader, 2011).

Agenda setting theory is based on the concept that issues covered in media outlets are the topics that the public use to be informed and form their own opinions. This concept is transparent for democratic governments where certain freedoms exist and citizens can freely express opinions. However, in dictatorial governments, public agenda is set by the dictators, who take over the gatekeeping function of media agencies. News media must follow the rules set by leaders or face consequences for not doing so (Neumann, Guggenheim, Jang & Bae, 2014). Ekaterina Stepanova of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations states that, "no region, state, or form of government can remain immune to the impact of new information and communication technologies on social and political movements," (Stepanova, 2011). As the main decision maker on what is published in the news, local media outlets were forced to frame issues according to the non-democratic leaders, limiting the credibility of these media sources (Rinke & Roder, 2011). The question on who sets the agenda for media outlets was crucial to hastening the switch to social media in the Arab Spring, given the need for the global public to be informed (Neumann, Guggenheim, Jang & Bae, 2014). The bias of traditional media sources and limitations from gatekeepers directly caused the need for new media outlets to take over the agenda setting function of traditional media (Russel, 2011). Social media platforms gave the citizenry a way to conduct political conversations and pressure governments into change (Loader, 2011). The resilience of social media users creating informed dialogue proved to the dictatorial governments that the qualms of their people could not be ignored (Rinke & Roder, 2011).

Framing

The agenda setting role of traditional media in the Arab Spring was also greatly affected by framing techniques (Neumann, Guggenheim, Jang & Bae, 2014). Framing is described as a

"central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration," (Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss & Ghanem, 1991). Traditional media were forced to frame issues in a certain light by order of their governments (Rinke & Roder, 2011). News outlets in Tunisia, Egypt and neighboring Arab countries reported on the protests because of the prevalence and effectiveness social media, however traditional media used framing techniques to deemphasize the violence of events so as not to fuel ideas of revolution (Russel, 2011). Arab news sources highlighted statesmanship and political perspectives rather than human interest frames while social media provided a multitude of frames allowing the public to make their own judgements (Bruce, 2014). The lack of transparency due to framing techniques only created greater support for the use of social media to circulate realistic accounts of the transpiring events (Hamdy & Goma, 2012).

As the framing and gatekeeping functions of agenda setting of media were transferred to users of social media, citizen journalism became a primary source of information for the public (Russel, 2011). International media outlets including Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN used social media posts as primary sources of photos and videos documenting events. Social media users became principal filters or gatekeepers for information (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides & Freelon, 2012). This disintermediation of information resulted in a more open marketplace concept for news on the Arab Spring (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides, Freelon, Sides & Dewar, 2013). Young, educated citizens, filtering out messages of salience to them and their personal interests, became active engagers of the dialogue on the emerging democratic governance in Arab nations (Loader, Vromen & Xenos, 2014). The political debate sparked and ended riots, with changes in regime based on the opinions of the oppressed people expressed through social media setting a new global agenda (Wolfsfeldt, Segev & Shaefer, 2013).

Social Media and the Arab Spring

Some argue the use of social media to increase political participation and mobilize publics locally and internationally was fundamental to the reform of Arab governments (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides, Freelon, Sides & Dewar, 2013). Engagement on social media allowed for the large-scale mobilization of various, sometime even opposing, parties of the citizenry on a level much greater than traditional media outlets (Anduizia, Christiancho & Sabucedo, 2013, Bell & Gross, 2011). Bennet and Segerberg state, "the very features of a contemporary protest that are so impressive are also the ones that may undermine conventional political capacity such as maintaining agenda focus," (Bennet & Segerberg, 2011). The ability for citizen journalists to educate the public and call for action indicates a greater importance for social media outlets (Earl & Kimport, 2011). The increased interactivity and personalization of communication through digital technologies bridged cultural and political gaps with the goal of overcoming a greater opponent (Howard, 2011).

Social media in the Arab Spring proved to be an effective tool to guide the conversation of the public agenda (Howard, 2011). The combination of dictatorial governments hindering the dissemination of significant messages to the public, the biased framing techniques used by conventional media, and the growing need for realistic information and collective action against the censorship and repressive rulers all contributed to a transfer of agenda setting power from traditional media outlets to social media. The ability for digital and social media to provide a multitude of sources of primary information allowed for the formation of political debates within the Arab nations, guided revolutionary forums for action and spread ideas globally for the advocacy of democratic rights (Duffy, Howard, Freelon, Hussain, Mari & Mazaid, 2011). Years

later, the revolutions that took place in the Arab Spring remain examples for advocating the role of individuals in setting global agendas on salient issues (Howard & Hussain, 2011).

Using the example of the Arab Spring, a correlation can be drawn to understand how the overall agenda setting function of traditional news outlets has changed with the rise of new media. Without the use of social and digital media, the voices of the people involved in the conflicts of the Arab Spring would not have been heard as prominently as they were. Given the national and international hindrances of traditional media outlets, new forms of media have become increasingly important in spreading news to the public and in gaining support for the movements to gain basic and necessary human rights for the populations of the nations involved in the Arab Spring. New media has transformed the world and continues to gain a more important role in the dissemination of news, as traditional media sources become more influenced by gatekeepers, framing techniques and is giving way to new forms of media to set agendas on salient issues to the public.

Research Question

This paper will explore how the increasing use of digital and social media has influenced agenda setting theory, considering the role of individuals versus traditional media sources in the Arab Spring conflicts. Given the rise of new forms of media through the globalization of communication and media tools, this paper aims to evaluate how the use of new media outlets have taken over the functions of traditional media outlets in communicating salient issues to the public. Using a timeline of important events which occurred during the Arab Spring, and a survey of individuals within the Middle East and the international community, this study aims to understand which communication methods played the most prominent role in setting the agenda for the conflicts. This research emphases the comparison between traditional media and social

media in focusing the public's attention to gain support for salient issues during the Arab Spring. I expect the findings of this research to show how the increasing use social media played a pioneering role in agenda setting of the Arab Spring conflicts as opposed to traditional media sources. Conclusions can then be drawn as to how the traditional definition of agenda setting theory is required to evolve as mass communication methods have changed, increasing the importance of the educated individuals and citizen journalists in setting global agendas and informing the international publics over traditional media sources.

Methods

To begin this study, a timeline of events, referred to in Annex A, which occurred during the Arab Spring was gathered to understand the series of incidents that occurred and which events would be most easily recollected by the public, years after their occurrence. A selection of politically newsworthy events occurring in the nations involved in the Arab Spring were then chosen to be featured in a survey to a sample population. These events include the death Khaled Said, self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a series anti-government protests, the presence of, and clashes with military forces, the ousting of government leaders and the implementation of new governments in affected nations. Specific events were chosen based on the largest and most significant milestones of the Arab Spring, based on various timelines available from credible sources. Given that not all events could be used in this study, the selection was focused to those which occurred during the beginning, turning point, and conclusion of protests and revolutions within the Arab Spring. The survey conducted gathered preliminary information on participants and their perception of the role that various sources of information played in providing informing the public on the Arab Spring, as well as their opinion of the accuracy of these sources of information. The survey then aimed to gather information on how the sample population learned

of the selected events, specifically what the major and most memorable sources of information were in keeping the global audience informed on the conflicts.

Participants

Given the geographical relevance of events which occurred during the Arab Spring, the sample population used in this survey was focused on those within the Middle Eastern international community who actively sought out news or were frequently exposed to messages on the Arab Spring during the time in which events occurred. To understand the role of social media versus traditional media during the Arab Spring, the sample population was chosen based on the individuals who were likely to remember the occurrence of significant events. The survey also aimed to understand how this population stayed informed once they were exposed or had knowledge that unrest had begun within the nations involved. According to a study by PEW Research Center, the most active users of social media platforms fall within the 18-50 age range. In addition, the report also states that, "Arab Publics Most Likely to Express Political Views Online," (Pew Research Center). Given this information, the sample population was focused on 25-50-year-old participants within the Middle Eastern and international community who were exposed to both traditional and new media sources during the period in which events occurred. Also, given that the Arab Spring started in 2010, the specific age range of the sample participants was chosen accordingly to gather information from those most relevant to the study. Participants were asked a series of questions to understand if they would make suitable participants in this study based on their exposure to information on the Arab Spring as events occured.

Measures

The timeline of events highlighted in Annex A, in addition to research obtained through literature established the prominent events which occurred during the Arab Spring. These events

were narrowed down to the most significant events which would be easily recollected by the

sample population. Research into the dates of posting and the depth of news stories was also

analyzed to understand which media sources were first to report on major occurrences of the

revolutions. Specific events were featured in the survey as the most prominent events which

were likely to be remembered by survey participants. Using a basic questionnaire, participants

were emailed the survey using Google's online forms. Preliminary questions were focused on

understanding the extent to which the participant was exposed to news about events of the Arab

Spring and if they would be ideal to participate in the study. Participants who had limited

exposure to news from both traditional and new media sources were excluded from the study.

The remaining participants were then asked a series of question on which events they found most

memorable and of these, what was the primary source for gaining information. Additionally,

participants were asked which sources of media they trusted most to keep them up to date on the

Arab Spring.

Procedure

Preliminary survey questions indicated which survey participants were not relevant to the

study and therefore could not be included in the final analysis of results based on their lack of

exposure to messages on the Arab Spring which appeared on both traditional and new media

sources. The remaining surveys responses were then organized, with each question tallied by

frequency of answers. Each question on a specific event which occurred during the Arab Spring,

as well as the overall perception of events and the source of information was measured. From

this, we can see which source of information was most popular for each individual event, as well

as the overall perception of the sample population. To get a clear view of this information, pie

charts were created for each question to show the most popular source of information. From the

information gathered from this analysis, a comparison can be drawn between the most and least

popular sources of information during the Arab Spring. It is important to note that the survey

classified traditional news media as newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television and online

newspapers. Messages by traditional media sources on social media platforms were also

considered traditional media. Political parties, government employees and citizens were all

considered individuals who reported on the occurrence of events and were considered as citizen

journalists.

Results

In line with the previously described study by PEW Research Center study indicating the

most active users of social media platforms fall within the 18-50 age range, Figure 1 shows the

age range of survey participants.

Figure 1. Age range of survey participants
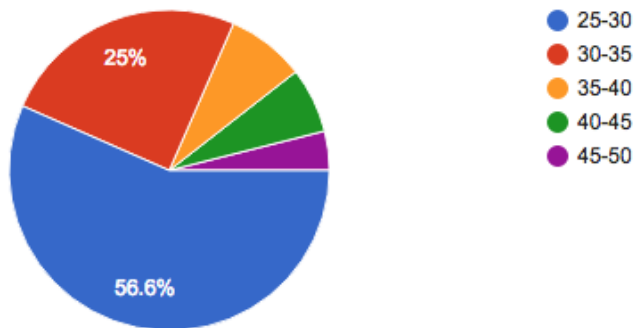
As described by the Pew Research Center study, the majority of participants in this survey were

between 25-35 years old. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents, 75% to be exact,

based in the Middle Eastern international community were of Arab background, 97.4% of which

were active daily on social media and were exposed to both traditional news sources as well as

social media during the conflicts occurring in the Arab Spring.

Following the preliminary questions to understand the relevance of each respondent to the survey and discarding irrelevant respondents who would not be suitable for the study, the sample population was asked general questions on their impression of sources of information during the conflicts of the Arab Spring.

Figure 2. Primary Sources of Information on the Arab Spring
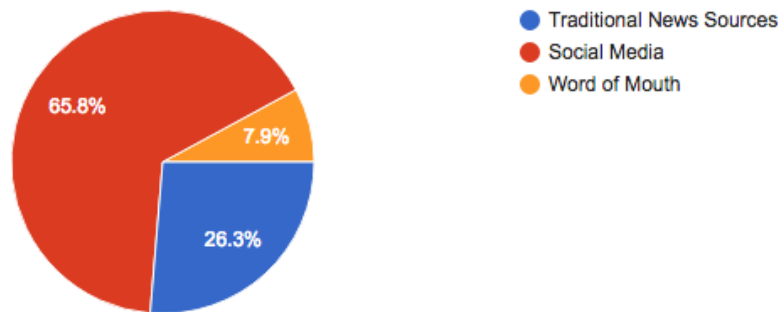
As shown in Figure 2, 65.8% of respondents indicated that social media was their primary source of information for updates on the Arab Spring, while only 26.3% indicated that traditional news sources were their primary source of information. The remaining 7.9% relied on word of mouth. Within the sample population, 73.7% of survey respondents trusted social media over traditional news sources in maintaining accuracy when informing the public about the events which occurred during the Arab Spring, given the government control of national news outlets in the affected nations.

The following section of the survey asked participants about their primary source of information for specific, significant events which occurred during the Arab Spring, providing background information on events in which specific names may not have been easily recollected. Participants were asked to answer questions based on how they received information to the best of their ability, even if they could not remember the details of each specific event.

Figure 3. Primary source of information on the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi
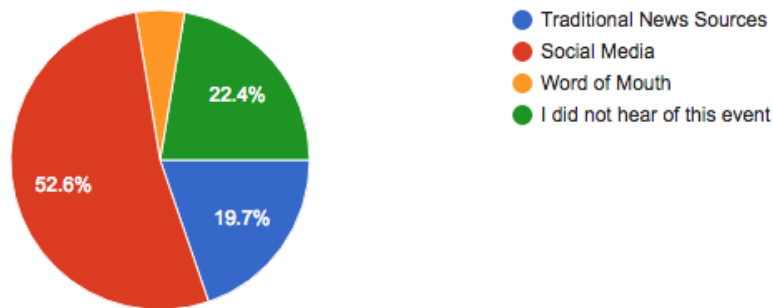

Figure 3 shows that 52.6% of the sample population received information of the death of

Mohamed Bouazizi via social media. In comparison, only 19.7% of the population heard of this

event through traditional news sources, while almost a quarter of respondents did not hear of

Mohamed Bouazizi at all.

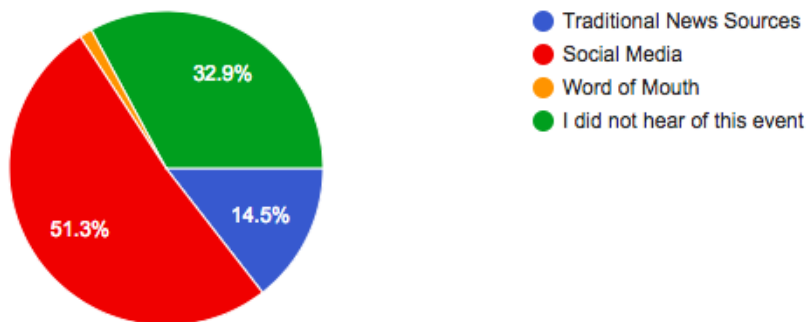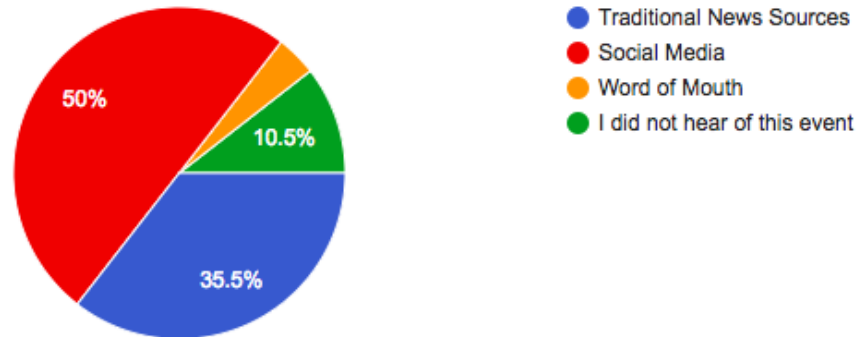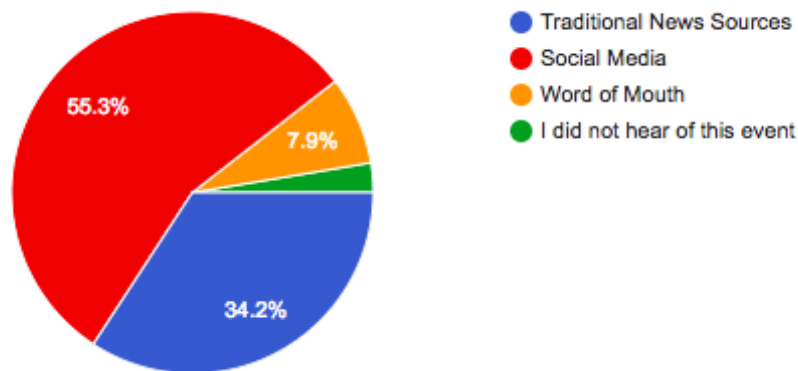*Figure 4.* Primary source of information on the death of Khaled Said

Figure 4 shows 51.3% of survey participants were informed of the death of Khaled Said via

social media platforms. While 32.9% of the sample population did not hear of the death of

Khaled Said, or were unable to recall the specific event, only 14.5% of respondents heard about

Said's death via traditional news media sources.

Figure 5. Primary source of information on Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine ben Ali fleeing into exile


Similar to previous event survey questions, Figure 5 shows that the primary source of information for 50% of the sample population of the Middle Eastern international community recalled the fleeing of Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from social media sources, while 35.5% were informed via traditional news sources.

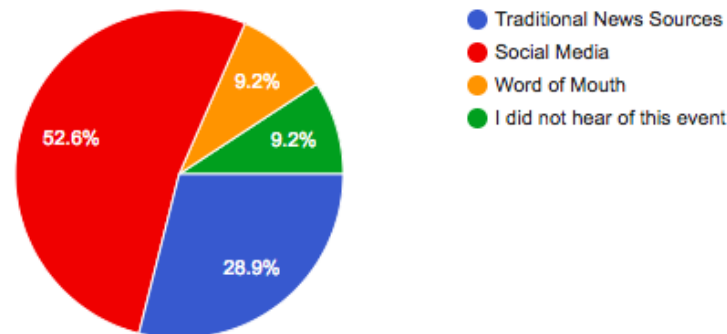*Figure 6.* Primary source of information on protests occurring in Tahrir Square in Egypt

Again, social media held majority of the sample populations opinion of social media being the primary source of information for protests in Tahrir square in Egypt, while 34.2% of participants received this information from traditional news sources.

Figure 7. Primary source of information on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepping down
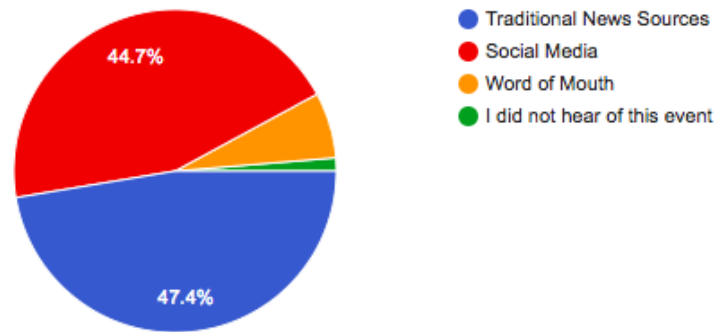
Breaking the trend of social media's majority share in being the primary source of information for specific events during the Arab Spring, the stepping down of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was more widely recollected from traditional news media sources, though 44.7% participants still recollected this information from social media sources.

*Figure 8.* Primary sources of information for the capture and death of Mummar Gaddafi

As shown in Figure 8, social media sources again were the primary source of information, while only 28.9% of respondents recollected this information from traditional news sources. Almost 20% of the sample population did not hear of this event or heard of it through word of mouth.

Figure 10. Primary source of information for the liberation of nations involved in the Arab

Spring

Figure 10 shows that the primary source of information for the liberation of nations involved in

the Arab Spring was primarily through social and new media outlets, though traditional news

media still maintained to inform 23.7% of the sample.

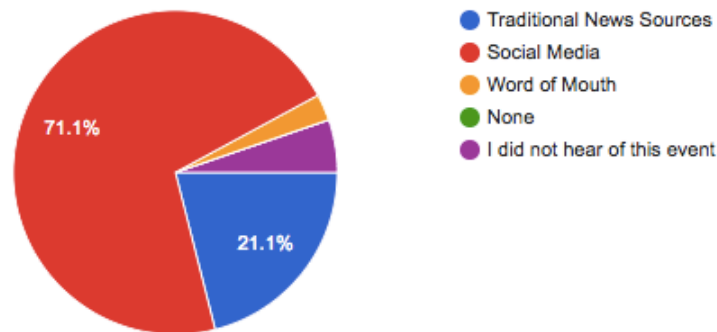*Figure 11.* Primary source of information on the start of the Arab Spring conflicts, specifically in

Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria
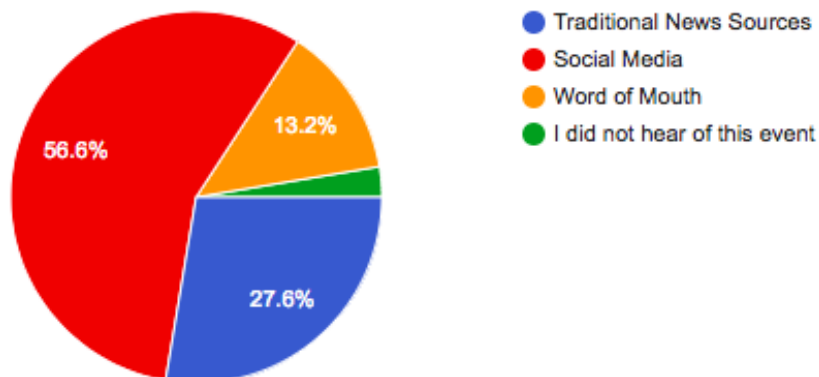
As a more general question, survey participants were asked what the primary source of

information was for informing them of the beginning of conflicts that originated in Tunisia,

Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria which would later become known as the Arab Spring.

Majority of the sample gained their first impressions from social media posts, while almost a quarter gained information from traditional news sources.

Figure 11. Primary source of information which played the most important role in informing the public of events during the Arab Spring

Lastly, participants were asked their overall impression of what they though the most important primary source of information was in keeping the public informed on the series of events which occurred during the Arab Spring. Figure 11 shows 71.1% of participants named social media as the most important, while only 21.1% of the sample population found traditional news media sources to play the most important role in informing the public.

Discussion

The findings of this study consistently show that social media played an essential role in not only providing information to the public but in also being the primary source of timely and accurate information of specific events and the overall conflicts which occurred in the Arab Spring over traditional media sources. From the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi to the liberation of oppressed Arab nations, social media was the guiding source. In the few instances where traditional media sources were the most notable primary sources of information, the event was greater in global political importance than it was in a socioeconomic aspect. However, the

overall consensus is that social media played a more significant role in informing the public of events which occurred during the Arab Spring over traditional media sources.

The revolutions of the Arab Spring began with the people's discontent with government and need for basic human rights necessary to make a living. Given the presence of government firewalls and political gatekeepers hindering the free flow of pertinent information to traditional media, social media was able to allow the oppressed people of the Arab nations to gain a sense of solidarity, increase public knowledge and gain support for their cause. Social media played was paramount in uniting the discontented populations within the Arab nations involved, providing a medium for organizing collective action for the strategic planning of protests and demonstrations, and to have their voices heard across the globe. Citizen journalism and allowed for members of the population engaged on new media outlets to frame messages which greatly influenced the understanding and perspectives of the publics outside of the Arab nations, to truly recognise the struggles the Arab people faced during these conflicts when traditional media sources failed to inform the public.

Based on the research conducted in this study, conclusions can be drawn as to how the traditional role of agenda setting theory is required to evolve as mass communication methods have changed, increasing the importance of the educated individuals and citizen journalists in setting global agendas and informing the international publics over traditional media sources. Today, most of the educated population is widely exposed to both traditional and new forms of media and increasingly use new media as a primary source of information. The growth in the use of mobile devices allows us to demand and consume information at a moment's notice, decreasing the demand for traditional news sources available through television, radio and newspapers. The rise of technology has also changed our perception of the credibility of sources

of information, further weakening the position of traditional news in informing the public. This, combined with government regulation of traditional news sources has allowed the agenda setting functions of media to be transferred to new media sources given the public's rising demand for accurate, bite sized, timely and credible information from the source of the action.

Limitations

Of course, numerous limitations exist in conducting research required of the discussion on the role of social media in the Arab Spring. Firstly, measuring social media statistics proves difficult as conversations on the subject and the perspectives presented on traditional and social media have changed greatly over time. Investigations into the initial posts on the Arab Spring proved difficult to find given the mass amounts of mentions on various aspects of the conflicts as time passed and the fact that the results of the conflict in each individual affected nation varied greatly. The discussion of these variations in the results of the Arab Spring have also gained more prominence over the initial events of the conflict. Given the historical timeline of events, it is possible that survey participants were not exposed to all events. In addition, the timeline of events did not include each and every event that some participants may have deemed more important than others. The perception of importance of the events which occurred during the conflicts may vary based on the respondents' nationality, cultural background, location during the time the events occurred and the respondents' political views.

One of the greatest limitations among the survey participants is their ability to accurately recollect the source of information received over a long-term period. Though impressions may be remembered, given the domino effect of news spreading over time, limitations exist in the ability for respondents to accurately recollect the primary sources of information for events that have occurred over five years ago. As news may have originated over social media, news networks

quickly picked up the stories and portrayed them as breaking news, though the original source of information was not necessarily the news outlet themselves. The ability for viewers or readers to remember and distinguish the sources of information for news portrayed on traditional media sources adds to the limits of the research. Though respondents were exposed to both social and traditional media sources, they also may not have been aware of the changing role of media sources in setting the agenda and therefore the source of information may not have held much significance as opposed to the message itself.

Limitations also exist in the fact that survey respondents were Middle-Eastern based. Though they represent a population of the international community, their historical ties to events which occurred during the Arab Spring may have been biased. Alternatively, due to the fact that these were Middle-Eastern based participants, they may also provide better chances of recollecting accurate information. Another limitation to the Middle Eastern community may also be that the press is government controlled in some nations and may not allow the accurate portrayal of political messages to the publics. In some cases, the government may also have control of the internet which would further influence how and what information the public within a specific domain receive. Further limitations arose when researching the timeline of events which occurred during the Arab Spring as internet in Saudi Arabia is government controlled and since Saudi Arabia's dispute with Qatar, certain websites such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya have had limited access. These two websites were very widely used during the Arab Spring and could not be studied without the use of a virtual private network.

Finally, tracing information that was passed via word of mouth is nearly impossible however, this is also a main factor of the rise of social media and citizen journalism. Given that social media is not a traditional source of news and is also not easily traceable, distinguishing

between fact and fiction adds further limitations in identifying the original sources of information for the publics on the Arab Spring conflicts. Understanding the historical relevance of the issues varies from person to person. Each individual would have a different experience in either learning about the conflict by word of mouth while others may have actively sought out updated information on a regular basis. The varying levels of exposure and the individuals desire to learn more would also create a variance in survey results.

<div align="center">**Recommendations**</div>

It is without a doubt that the agenda setting theory has maintained its relevance over the years, yet with the rise of new forms of media, the formal definition of agenda setting theory must expand to account for the changes that have occurred in the way we communicate given the growing interconnectivity of populations provided by the globalization of technology. Traditional news is no longer the primary source of information for the majority of populations and may not be as trustworthy to accurately portray global events in a timely manner. Agenda setting function stipulates that traditional media informs the public on salient issues however the public now questions whether traditional media deems salient issues that are important to the public, specifically which public, and if they can be trusted to frame messages in an unbiased fashion.

The findings of this study investigate how the public portrayed the role of agenda setting function of traditional media versus new forms of media. The results show that specifically in the Arab Spring, traditional media fell short of informing the international community on the misgivings of the Arab people fighting for their rights. For multiple reasons, these populations were forced to turn to social media to gain support for their cause. Irrespective of the varying

results of the revolutions in each Arab nation, the use of social media undoubtedly aided in the

dissemination of pertinent information necessary for the revolutions.

   This study shines light on the reality that communication methods have changed greatly

with the rise of new forms of media. The traditional definitions of mass communications must

therefore evolve to keep up with the advancements in technology and an ever-globalizing world.

The theory of agenda setting must too, be expanded to take into account the changes in the role

of traditional media sources, making way for new media. The gatekeeping and framing practices

which were once solely a function of traditional media are now being transferred to the hands of

citizen journalists with social and digital media accounts. With the growing demand for timely,

accurate and unbiased information, the agenda is no longer set only by traditional news sources.

The definition of agenda setting theory within mass communications must therefore expand to

maintain its accuracy in these times of change.

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APPENDIX A: Timeline of Events Occurring in the Arab Spring

TIMELINE - Arab Spring: a year that shook the Arab world - Reuters

January 14, 2011 - After days of clashes in Tunisia in which dozens are killed, and having made empty promises of reforms and elections, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali flees to Saudi Arabia.

January 25 - Anti-government protests begin across Egypt.

January 28 - Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak orders troops and tanks into cities to quell demonstrations. Thousands cheer at news of intervention of the army, widely seen as a neutral force in politics.

January 29 - Yemen's ruling party calls for dialogue with the opposition. Supporters of President Ali Abdullah Saleh attack Yemenis trying to march in solidarity with Egyptian anti-government demonstrators.

February 3 - A day of anti-government protests brings more than 20,000 people onto the streets in Yemen's capital Sanaa.

February 11 - Mubarak steps down and a military council is formed to run the country's affairs.

February 14 - Anti-government "Day of Rage" in the Gulf state of Bahrain, inspired by popular upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia.

February 15/16 - The arrest of human rights activist Fethi Tarbel starts a riot in the Libyan city of Benghazi.

February 24 - Anti-government militias take control of central coastal city of Misrata after evicting forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

March 5 - The rebel National Transitional Council in Benghazi declares itself Libya's sole representative.

March 15 - Bahrain declares martial law.

March 16 - Bahraini forces crack down on protesters, clearing hundreds from the camp that had become their symbol.

March 16 - Security forces break up gathering in a square in Syria's capital, Damascus, of 150 protesters holding pictures of imprisoned relatives.

March 17 - The U.N. Security Council votes to authorise a no-fly zone over Libya and military action to protect civilians against Gaddafi's army.

March 18 - Snipers kill 52 protesters at Sanaa University. Saleh declares a state of emergency.

March 19 - The first air strikes halt the advance of Gaddafi's forces on Benghazi and target Libya's air defences.

April 19 - Syrian government passes bill lifting emergency rule.

June 3 - A bomb explodes at Saleh's palace in Sanaa, wounding the president, the prime minister and the parliament speaker. Saleh leaves for treatment in Riyadh.

June 20 - A Tunisian court sentences Ben Ali and his wife Leila Trabelsi, in absentia, to 35 years in jail for theft and for illegally possessing large sums of cash.

July 31 - Syrian tanks storm the city of Hama, residents say, after besieging it for nearly a month. At least 80 people are killed.

August 3 - Mubarak trial opens. Wheeled into a courtroom cage on a bed, Mubarak denies charges of killing protesters and abuse of power.

August 21 - Rebels enter Libya's capital, Tripoli, with little resistance. Gaddafi makes audio addresses over state television calling on Libyans to fight off the rebel "rats".

September 23 - Saleh returns from Saudi Arabia, greeted by gunfire and explosions.

October 20 - Gaddafi is captured and killed as NTC fighters take his hometown Sirte, ending a two-month siege.

October 23 - Libya declares the liberation of the nation.

— In Tunisia, the Islamist Ennahda party wins 90 seats in the 217-seat constituent assembly in the country's first democratic election.

November 12 - Arab League suspends Syria.

November 18. - Thousands of people, frustrated with military rule, protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square and in other cities.

November 22 - Egyptian military leader Hussein Tantawi promises that a civilian president will be elected in June 2012, six months sooner than the army had planned.

November 23 - Saleh signs a deal brokered by Gulf states in Saudi Arabia. Saleh is to hand over to his deputy, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. New presidential elections set for February 2012.

— An inquiry panel investigating abuses says Bahrain's security forces used excessive force to suppress pro-democracy protests earlier in the year, torturing detainees to get confessions.

November 28 - First round of voting in elections for Egypt's lower house. The staggered election runs through January.

December 13 - U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay reports death toll from nine months of unrest in Syria has risen to more than 5,000.

2012

January 10 - Syria's president Bashar al-Assad, in a televised speech at Damascus university, says he will not stand down and vows to strike "terrorists" with an iron fist.

January 14 - Tunisia holds celebrations in the capital to mark one year from the ousting of its autocratic leader.

Arab Spring 5 years on: Timeline of the major events and uprisings in the Middle East by

Lydia Smith of the International Business Times

It has been five years since the series of uprisings and protests spread across the Arab World in 2011. Originating in Tunisia, after a man set himself alight in protest at his treatment by police, the Arab Spring movement quickly took hold in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen and Bahrain.

2010

December: Protests begin in Tunisia following Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation on 17 December. On 14 January, 10 days after Bouazizi dies, President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's rule is over. In Algeria, protests flare up over poor housing in the capital Algiers.

2011

Egypt Revolution anniversary: 40 powerful photos of the 25 January 2011 protests
January: Protests begin in Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Morocco and Syria. On 25 January, after the Tunisian government is overthrown, thousands of protesters demonstrate in Tahrir Square in Cairo against President Hosni Mubarak. The square will become a symbol for the ongoing Egyptian democracy demonstrations.

Protests begin in Jordan in reaction to a fuel price increase planned by the government.

February: Mubarak resigns on 11 February and transfers his powers to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Four days later, protests break out against Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya. Protesters in the northern city of Benghazi start an uprising that will develop into the Libyan Civil War.

The unrest reaches Morocco, where protesters demanding reforms and social justice.

Demonstrations begin in Iraq against corruption among public officials and ineffective security apparatus.

In Bahrain, protests begin with the aim of achieving greater political freedom and equality for the majority Shia population, but demonstrators are met by security forces, tear gas and rubber bullets. Within months, most of the demonstrations are violently broken up by government forces. Dozens of protesters are killed and hundreds jailed.

Egypt Arab spring
March: The former Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik, resigns on 3 March.

In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Gulf states send troops into the country to support the Sunni Al Khalifa monarchy, after an uprising by the kingdom's Shia majority. Dozens of protesters are

killed, but the West, which has vital, security interests related to Iran, is subdued in its criticism and the revolt is quashed.

June: The President of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, is injured in a failed assassination attempt. His vice president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi, is made acting president of Yemen.

August: The Battle of Tripoli takes place between 20 and 28 August in Libya, between loyalists of Gaddafi and the National Transitional Council – which is attempting to overthrow the state's leader and take control of the capital. Rebel forces capture and gain control of the city, effectively overthrowing Gaddafi.

October: Coptic Christians in Egypt launch protests against the destruction of a church. On 20 October, Gaddafi is killed by rebels in the city of Sirte. Three days later, the National Transitional Council (NTC) officially declares an end to the 2011 Libyan Civil War.

November: Gaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, is captured on 19 November after hiding in Nigeria. Protests take place in Cairo's Tahrir Square once again, with tens of thousands of demonstrators protesting against the military junta. The public opposition to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) is one of the biggest demonstrations since the toppling of Mubarak, with clashes taking place between protesters and soldiers.

December: Egyptian women take to the streets to protest against human rights violations. Photos and videos posted online afterwards show troops violence was rife during the protest. The shirt of one protester, wearing a headscarf, is pulled up as she is dragged half-naked across the street.

2012
January: Syrian president Bashar al-Assad gives a speech on 10 January, blaming the uprising on foreigners and stating it will require the co-operation of all Syrians to stop the rebels.

Egypt's de facto leader, field marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, announces that the decades-old state of emergency will be partially lifted .

Protests against Libya's NTC force the deputy head, Abdel Hafiz Ghoga, to resign.

February: The former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, officially resigns and transfers his powers to his vice president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi.

The Syrian government launches an attack on the city of Homs on 3 February.

In Libya, clashes between Arab Zawi and African Tebu groups in Al-Kufra in the south-east of the country, kill scores of people.

April: Thousands protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square for a quicker transfer of power following the disqualification of 10 presidential candidates – including the top three contenders – by Egypt's election commission.

May: Egypt holds its first free presidential elections in decades. The former prime minister Ahmed Shafik and Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Mursi win.

The Syrian regime kills more than 100 people, with almost half of the victims children, in the Houla massacre.

Hundreds of Salafi Islamists clash with security forces over the selling of alcohol in Tunisia.

In Libya, Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi dies.

June: Hosni Mubarak is sentenced to life in prison by an Egyptian court. His minister of interior, Habib el-Adly, is also given a life sentence, but Mubarak's son's Gamal and Alaa are cleared of corruption.

Egypt's election commission announces Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Mursi has received the most votes in the presidential elections.

A Tunisian court sentences former Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to prison.

July: Syrian regime forces kill around 225 people in the village of Tremseh, near Hama. The Red Cross officially declares the Syrian uprising a civil war on 15 July.

A bombing in Damascus kills members of President Assad's inner circle, including his brother-in-law Asef Shawkat.

Syrian regime forces and opposition fighters begin a battle to capture Syria's largest city, Aleppo. The United Nations report that more than 200,000 Syrian refugees have fled the country since fighting broke out.

August: Libya's NTC hands over power to the General National Congress (GNC), who elect Mohammed Magarief as the interim head of state.

In Tunisia, former president Ben Ali is given a life sentence for the killing of protesters.

September: The Free Syrian Army moves its headquarters from southern Turkey to northern Syria, into areas controlled by the armed opposition.

On 11 September, Islamic militants kill the US ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, in a bombing in Benghazi, Libya. US Foreign Service Information Management Officer Sean Smith is also killed.

October: The Free Syrian Army seizes control of Maarat al-Numan in the province of Idlib, a town which links the capital Damascus with Aleppo. It also captures Douma, the biggest suburb of Damascus.

A bombing in Beirut kills Wissam al-Hassan, chief of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces, among other people.

November: Protests break out against Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi after he grants himself unlimited powers to "protect" the nation. His decree gives him the power to legislate without judicial oversight or review of his acts.

In Libya, the National Congress elects Ali Zeidan to the post of prime minister.

December: Egyptian president Morsi announces a controversial referendum on the new constitution will be held on 15 December. He is forced to annul his earlier decree due to a backlash.

In the first round of the referendum, 57% vote for the draft document, but the vote is plagued with widespread allegations of rigging and irregularities. The second round is held a week later, which confirms the new constitution has been approved. It is signed into law on 25 December.

The government declares Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group after a bomb blast in Mansoura kills 12 people.

2013
January: Protests break out in Egypt against Morsi on the second anniversary of the 2011 revolution, with demonstrators gathering in Tahrir Square.

February: Syrian rebels begin an offensive on Damascus. The UN states the death toll of the Syrian civil war has now exceeded 70,000.

March: On 6 March, Syrian rebels capture the city of Raqqa, the first major city to fall under rebel control in the war.

April: The minaret of the Great Mosque of Aleppo, built in 1090, is destroyed during weapon fire between government forces and rebels.

June: Syrian regime forces retake Al-Qusayr, a city in western Syria.

July: In Egypt, Morsi is deposed as president in a coup d-etat, which is followed by clashes between security forces and protesters.

August: Ghouta, the region around the site where Damascus was founded, is hit by a chemical attack on 21 August. Various areas controlled by the Syrian opposition are hit by rockets containing sarin, a chemical weapon which acts as a nerve agent. Later reports estimate that up to 1,000kg of sarin was dropped on Ghouta in the attack, claiming upwards of 1,000 victims, with the majority reportedly women and children.

2014

January: Conflict between the Syrian opposition and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant erupts.

In Tunisia, the parliament passes the country's first constitution since President Ben Ali was ousted in 2011.

February: The government in Egypt resigns, allowing former army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to run for president.

March: Tunisian president Moncef Marzouki lifts the state of emergency imposed in 2011 during the ousting of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.

In Libya, the GNC sacks prime minister Ali Zeidan after a tanker filled with oil from a rebel-held port breaks through a Libyan navy blockade. Businessman Ahmed Maiteg is elected as his replacement.

May: Syrian rebels withdraw from the siege of Homs.

In Egypt, Sisi wins the presidential election.

June: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria militant, to become known as Isis or the Islamic State, declare a caliphate in territory stretching from Aleppo to the eastern Iraqi province of Diyala.

Libyan prime minister Ahmed Maiteg resigns after the supreme court states his appointment was unlawful.

Fighting breaks out between forces loyal to the GNC and the new parliament. The situation deteriorates over the coming months and Tripoli airport is largely destroyed by conflict. Thousands are displaced as the conflict escalates.

August: Islamic State militants take control of the Raqqa province The city becomes the de facto Isis capital.

James Foley, an American freelance journalist, is beheaded in an Isis propaganda video which features Mohammed Emwazi - who is dubbed "Jihadi John".

ISIS or Daesh?
A militant waves an Islamic State flag in Raqqa, Syria Reuters
September: The United States and five Arab countries launch air strikes against Islamic State in Aleppo and Raqqa in Syria.

October: Islamic State seizes control of the port of Derna in eastern Libya.

November: The armed group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, based in Egypt's Sinai peninsula, pledges allegiance to the Islamic State, which is increasing in power and controlling parts of Syria and Iraq. The area renames itself the Sinai Province.

December: In Tunisia, Nidaa Tounes party candidate Beji Caid Essebsi becomes president after beating Marzouki in the elections.

2015
January: Kurdish forces push Isis out of Kobane, a city in the Aleppo province, after four months of fighting. Isis takes control over Sirte, a port city between Tripoli and Benghazi.

February: Egyptian air forces carry out strikes on Islamic State positions in eastern Libya, after Isis release a video which allegedly shows the killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians.

Egypt seeks UN mandate to sanction international intervention in Libya.

March: In Syria, opposition forces push back government forces. The new Jaish al-Fatah, Army of Conquest, Islamist rebel alliance actively backed by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, captures the north-western province of Idlib after two months of fighting. The militants are a coalition of mainly Islamist groups, including the al-Nusra Front.

May: Ousted president Morsi is sentenced to death over the mass breakout of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners. He is sentenced to 20 years in prison in April over the arrest and torture of protesters during his rule from 2012 to 2013.

In Syria, Isis seize the ancient city of Palmyra.

 Palmyra tomb towers Isis
Islamic State militants took control of the historic city of Palmyra in May 2015 iStock
June: An Isis gunman kills 38 people, mostly tourists, on a beach at the resort Sousse in Tunisia, marking the worst terror attack on Tunisian soil. Shortly afterwards, the government announces the closure of extremist mosques.

In Syria, fighting between Isis militants and Kurdish fighters intensifies between Raqqa and the Turkish border. Islamic State attacks Kobane and seizes part of the city of Hassakeh, while Kurdish forces take Ain Issa and the northern border town of Tal Abyad.

July: Isis launches several attacks in North Sinai.

September: Russia carries out its first air strikes in Syria, stating it will target Isis-held territories. However, the West and Syrian opposition say it targets anti-Assad rebels instead.

In Libya, a Tripoli court sentences Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam and eight other former officials to death for crimes carried out during the 2011 uprising against his father.

October: Isis claims responsibility for the downing of a Russian airliner in Sinai. The aircraft, an Airbus A321 operated by the Russian airline Kogalymavia, crashed on 31 October killing all 224 people on board.

November: Mohamed Emwazi, the British Isis militant known as Jihadi John, dies in a drone strike by the US military in Syria. He has now appeared in a number of Isis propaganda films depicting the beheading of victims including, James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines and Alan Henning.

December: The UK launches air strikes against Isis after the Paris attacks in November.

The Syrian army allows rebels to evacuate the remaining area of Homs, allowing the Syrian city to return to government control for the first time since 2011.

2016
January: ISIS destroys the oldest Christian monastery in Iraq, St Elijah's monastery in Mosul.

ISIS militants carry out attacks in Jakarta, Indonesia, leaving eight dead and at least 20 injured.

The UN states violence suffered by civilians in Iraq "remains staggering", with at least 18,800 killed between 1 January 2014 and 31 October 2015.

APPENDIX B: Survey - Sources of News in the Arab Spring

The wave of protests and conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa where citizens demanded better governing and human rights later became known as the Arab Spring. This survey is based on your recollection of how you received information on the events which occurred during the Arab Spring. Even if you do not remember the precise details of events, please answer the following questions on how you received updates and information on the Arab Spring to the best of your ability.

Note: Traditional news sources include newspapers, TV channels, radio stations, direct online news websites (eg. CNN.com, [bbc.com](bbc.com), Aljazeera.com, etc.) only.

What is your age? *

25-30
30-35
35-40
40-45
45-50

What is your cultural origin? *

Western
Latin
African
Arab
Asian
Other:

How often do you use social media? *

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Never

During the Arab Spring conflicts beginning in 2011, were you exposed to both news and social media? *

Yes
No

What was your primary source of information for updates on the Arab Spring? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media

Word of Mouth
Other:

Do you think social media was more accurate than the news in informing the public about events of the Arab Spring given the government control of news outlets in the affected nations? *

Yes
No

Events of the Arab Spring
The following questions are based on events which occurred during the Arab Spring. Please answer to the best of your ability.

Where did you first hear about the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi? Mohamed Bouaziz set himself on fire after being extorted by the police and not being able to pay the fines asked of him. *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of the death of Khaled Said? Khaled Said was beaten to death by police in Egypt. Khaled's death inspired the Facebook page "We are all Khaled Said" which led to the organization of protests against the Egyptian government. *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear about the protests beginning in the Arab Spring nations, specifically in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear about the Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fleeing into exile? *

Traditional News Sources

Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of the protests occurring in Tahrir Square in Egypt? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepping down? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of the Muslim Brotherhood? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of military and militias taking control of the Arab nations involved in the Arab Spring? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of the capture and death of Mummar Gaddafi? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of the first elections occurring in Egypt? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Where did you first hear of the liberation of the nations involved in the Arab Spring? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
I did not hear of this event
Other:

What form of media do you think played the most important role in informing the world of the events that occurred during the Arab Spring? *

Traditional News Sources
Social Media
Word of Mouth
None
I did not hear of this event
Other:

Student Biography

Arianna R. S. Khan
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Born in Boston, Massachusetts of Caribbean background, Arianna was raised among an international community in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where she returned to work after completing a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science from the University of Florida. Arianna also perused a certification in international relations, and minors in business administrational and mass communications at her time at the University of Florida. Arianna has developed a passion for international brand and communication strategies where she has been able to put her knowledge to practice at the International Energy Forum (IEF). The IEF is an intergovernmental international organization which provides a neutral platform aimed at fostering greater mutual understanding of energy markets, policy, and data transparency to build more stable energy futures among its 72-member countries and industry stakeholders. As part of a very small staff with a wide scope of work, Arianna has worked to develop the IEF brand and communication strategies to engage stakeholders and maintain the organizations neutrality, while furthering the global effort for stable and sustainable global energy markets.

FIU School of Journalism & Mass Communication

MMC 6950

Mass Communication Professional Projects (3 Credits)

FIU – GSC – Student Agreement of Understanding

I understand all deadlines in this class are extremely firm. I also understand that if I do not hand in the various drafts of my professional project on the due dates I will NOT receive feedback from the instructor. All assignments must be in paper form, emailed assignments are not considered. Last, I understand that without feedback from the instructor I risk failing and not graduating on time and that anything below a B- is not a passing grade for the professional project.

Arianna Khan (21 April 2018)