TRACING NEWS ON TWITTER: FORCES SHAPING
NEWS CONSUMPTION AND PERCEPTIONS
IN GULF COUNTRY MEDIA SYSTEMS

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**ABSTRACT**

In the news media environment, the systemic relationship between the media and public is reflexive, where the media shape public life and vice versa. This dissertation centers on explaining the relationship between the media environment and news consumers in media systems in five countries that share similar sociocultural values, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Kuwait. This study identified state intervention as an influential factor that alters news consumers' perceptions of the credibility and quality of news content as well as their consumption habits. This dissertation conducted a multinational survey of Twitter news consumers in order to investigate a range of issues relating to news consumers with a fuller consideration of the media system (structure) as a significant tool that can help understand news audiences' behavior and attitudes towards the news. Findings suggests that the level of state intervention in the media landscape shapes participants' attitudes and behaviors toward news. Participants who experience a high level of state intervention steer clear of the regulated traditional media outlets, want to obtain news independent from the government, and perceive a very low level of credibility and quality of traditional media. When it comes to participants from a country with greater press freedom, they perceive traditional media outlets as more credible with higher quality content than Twitter because they believe that their government does not interfere with the flow of news. The overall relationship between media systems (structures) and news consumers (agents) arises in the nature and kind of state intervention that must be taken into consideration if one is to grasp news consumers' attitudes and behavior in these gulf countries.

To my beloved father and mother, for whom I do all my work.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Many decades ago, Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) posed a question related to the concepts of the press and its role in society, "Why is the press as it is? Why does it apparently serve different purposes and appear in widely different forms in different countries?" The field of media studies has made gradual progress in addressing these types of questions. According to Siebert et al. (1956), "the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (p. 2). From their perspective, journalism and other forms of media will mirror the "basic beliefs and assumptions, which the society holds" (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 2). Therefore, these beliefs may differ from country to country because each culture has its own principles and priorities (Hallin & Giles, 2005). Since then, media system typologies have become an essential element in comparative analysis among media scholars (Hallin, 2016), as the news environment is influenced by social and political structures, which may influence consumers' habits.

This dissertation tackles three different dimensions of the news environment in the Gulf region. Firstly, state interventions have for decades controlled media outlets and limited consumer options since their only options were media outlets controlled by governments or loyal to the government. Secondly, the appearance of online media, especially Twitter, has changed news production and consumption by creating an independent and unrestricted space as well as offering new source options. Finally, the use of Twitter has released journalists from certain laws and regulations, and blurred the

boundaries between journalists and audiences, which has forever changed the traditional shape of journalism.

The media's main power is to play a significant role in promoting democracy by providing basic news and information as well as forming a safe public sphere, where the public can have an active role in "civic affairs, in enhancing national and cultural identity in promoting creative expression and dialogue" (Moniruzzaman, 2018, p. 70). The debate regarding media and democracy revolves around two ideas: democratizing media as an important value and promoting the media role in democratizing societies (Raboy, 1998). However, there is a mutual relationship between journalists and government officials as well as politicians to coalesce beneficial news resources in the Western world and as a way to build and apply government agendas through news stories in most developing countries (e.g. Cook, 1998). However, while the media sometimes have the intention to operate and be seen as free presenters of information, they are contested in their own right by governments and laws, which obstruct the media's role in the democratization of societies.

The typology of national media systems is outdated. Classical and influential typology defined by Siebert et al. (1956) was developed during the Cold War when there was a rivalry between Western liberal states and Soviet-style autocracies. Scholars' efforts to contribute to Siebert et al.'s typology were valuable and rewarding (Altschull, 1984, 1995; Curran, 1999; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Picard, 1985). Among other things, the emergence of online media technologies and social media platforms is a key challenge, which requires further systematic theoretical thinking in developing alternative

media approaches. However, these normative models developed by Western scholars cannot be applied to the media systems of Gulf countries. This is not only because there are more mixed elements of media and social systems compared to standard ones described by various typologies, but also because there are numerous differences regarding Western and non-Western autocracies with no clear-cut distinction.

Governments in the Gulf region have reached the highest level of interventions in media systems to the point where every principal dimension is influenced by state interventions. For instance, state involvement has created a restrictive media environment that causes low levels of journalistic professionalism, and manipulates the press market in which governments directly or indirectly own media outlets and constructs them to be mouthpieces for government policies. Despite the fact that the above discussed models mostly deal with democratic countries, the complex arguments invite in-depth cross-cultural comparisons to reveal the different roles media play in modern countries. Of course, applying some media system analytical dimensions to the Gulf countries is just a preliminary step for a better understanding of media systems in the Gulf region as well as providing reasonable ways to explain news consumers' behaviors in these environments.

State interventions create a unique case in which understanding the state's role is essential when studying media as it influences both news producers and consumers. Governments issue press laws and ethics, license laws, and aggressive threats that force journalists to produce content that serves government interests and hinder journalistic autonomy and professionalism. Journalists are expected to work in an environment that is more interventionist. Meaning that journalists who work in countries with restricted

freedom are more likely to take a passive approach in producing news to avoid political repercussions and being subject to punishments by the states' laws. Also, despite state ownership of media outlets—private and appointed— that allow states to hold power over media outlets, journalists, and content, governments have vague regulations and indefinite "red lines" that must not be crossed, indicating a lack of professionalism and journalistic corruption (Lynch, 2006; Pintak & Ginges, 2012; Rugh, 2004). On the other hand, news audiences who live in countries without a free and independent press are deprived from having the power to choose, and the only options are media outlets either controlled by governments or are loyal to the government.

Over the last two decades, the Internet has appeared as one of the most remarkable innovations with the greatest impact on the history of news. It has created more opportunities for both audiences as news consumers and journalists as news producers. For audiences, the Internet has shifted the way information is created and consumed because of its nature as an immediate and unlimited supplier of information not subjected to gatekeeping (Scott, 2005). Also, the distribution of news and information through digital media outlets is no longer restricted to those in power, nor limited to media organizations. Individuals who know how to use the Internet have the ability to produce and distribute information as well (McNair, 2009). For journalists, the Internet allows them to provide more personal opinions, and include news audiences in the gatekeeping process (Singer, 2005). Thus, the new rules of digital media supersede old media policies due to the Internet gaining increasing dominance. The media structure is rapidly shifting, now more than ever, since online media and technology are redefining

journalism, challenging governments and politicians, and allowing those who have long been silenced to speak up loudly.

Away from state interventions, social media has created a direct line that links news organizations and journalists to sources and audiences. It plays a great role in the production and exchange of news, where it becomes an important part of journalists daily routines that influences their judgment (McGregor & Molyneux, 2018), and one of the preferred sources for obtaining news updates (Broersma & Graham, 2013; Paulussen & Harder, 2014). Especially in countries where a free and independent press is absent (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012), it creates a relatively safe space where people distribute and discuss political issues and political corruption away from the surveillance of state restrictions (Boulianne, 2019; Howard & Hussain, 2013; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Also, online media platforms are more like a public sphere that has formed consumers' habits and offers unbiased public information where news consumers can get alternative news venues (Castells, 2012; Fogerty, 2011).

Global increases in social media usage, such as Twitter and Facebook, has contributed in changing the way news is produced and distributed by news organizations and shifting how citizens discuss and interact with online news. For instance, in the third world countries social media provide a chance of shifting the political system in authoritarian regimes (e.g. Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). This was clear in Egypt and Libya where the public used Facebook and Twitter to "to share their political positions and document abuses of state power across global communication networks" (Creech, 2015, p. 1011). Yet, there are only a preliminary understanding of the news quality on Twitter,

and how credible Twitter is as sources for news compared to traditional media outlets, especially during critical events and the extent to which the public relies on social media for news updates as well as the impact that social media have on traditional media viewing patterns. Also, questions remain regarding how news consumers create their media repertories in this unique media environment where states hold power over traditional media outlets and Twitter raises news consumers' awareness and knowledge of news events that might be impossible to appear on the traditional media, and whether these developments enhance or curtail news consumption and interaction.

Social media has created the opportunity for more public freedom and independence in engaging in discussing the news. The field of journalism and news production is influenced by "the social and political structures within which it operates" (Siebert et. al., 1956, p. 2). Thus, the structures of media systems in these authoritarian regimes could influence the way that people consume and interact with news. For example, Gulf countries have a significant influence on media structures (macro-level) and news consumers (micro-level). This forces news organizations to produce content that serves the governments' interests (Pintak & Ginges, 2012), and deprives audiences from having the power of choosing. Therefore, the mutual relation between media systems and agency in these environments does not exist in traditional news platforms. However, technological innovations provide people a rich media environment protected from government interference, which appears to enhance the mutual relation between media structure and news consumers. Yet, there is a lack of research that investigates the

connection between media structure and the public, and the role that the public plays to influence the media structure and vice versa, especially in developing societies.

The concept of "duality of structure" that is introduced by Giddens (1984) is of particular importance in this context, as media systems construct and constrain the way audiences engage with their media environment, (with the online news environment being more difficult to control by media systems), and as audiences have the power to make choices and to do otherwise. Through this, human agents as news consumers are able to choose and enact their media preferences. However, governments and/or media industries have their own agenda and motivation that causes them to guide media consumption to meet those ends (Webster, 2009).

The essential concept in Giddens' approach, "duality of structure" will be a beneficial tool to interpret the mutual relation between media systems and agency that is mainly caused by technological innovations, especially in the Gulf region, as well as by the new rules that journalists adopt in this free and independent online news environment. Drawing on Giddens' (1984) duality of structure concept, Morley (1992) argues, "macro structures can only be reproduced through micro processes" (p. 19). Therefore, news consumers' behaviors in a given society would offer a great explanation regarding the power of media systems where it describes how media functions on a micro-level in news audience processes, without eliminating their consumption from the process of media structure.

This study conducted a multinational survey of Twitter news consumers in five countries from similar media systems with comparable use of social media for news

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purposes, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Kuwait. The Gulf countries represent authoritarian media systems, with Kuwait being an exception, and share similar sociocultural values. This comparative research aims to investigate the relationship between media structures (macro-level) and Twitter news consumers (micro-level) in different societies. In other words, to what extent do people perceive state intervention in their news media, and how do those perceptions affect their attitudes and behaviors toward news? Also, the role of journalists in the news environment will be assessed as they are influenced by the macro-level structure and can also influence news consumers. Thus, they are a significant factor in this equation, linking the duality of micro- and macro-level dimensions.

Firstly, this dissertation discusses different media system typologies in the world to develop a framework for analyzing media systems in the Gulf region to discuss the similarities and differences between the characteristics of each media system. Then, it discusses the nature of online media in Gulf media environments and journalistic practices in these relatively free spaces. It explains how online news consumers develop cross-media news repertoires and sees whether there is any connection between media systems and news consumption. The dissertation explores three different areas in the news environment equation from the audience's perspective: 1) state intervention and its influence on news media consumption habits, 2) the credibility and quality of produced news stories in both traditional and online media outlets, and 3) news users' habits and consumptions in different media systems focusing on how news consumers create their media repertories in this rich media environment.

## Dissertation Overview

The main focus of this project centers on explaining the relationship between the media environment and news consumers in different media systems in five countries by surveying social media news consumers. This population is important because it will reveal how the public use online media platforms to engage in more involved forms of news use, and whether the structures of media systems enhance or curtail news consumption and interaction. Also, some of the selected countries apply strict rules and regulations on traditional news outlets, which could influence news consumers' habits. Thus, focusing on social media news consumers seems ideal for the purpose of this dissertation. Understanding the nature of macro-micro relationships as well as the mutual interaction between media systems and individuals' actions is logical, as media systems can be both a restriction and an enabling factor for news consumers, as well as news consumers almost always "have the possibility of doing otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 258). Thus, news consumers have a great power to modify media systems (Giddens, 1984).

The following sections begin by analyzing normative media approaches for the classification of media systems in an attempt to lay the groundwork for the first step in a longer process of developing a typology, a framework, for analyzing media systems in the Gulf region. After reviewing all typologies, Chapter 2 discusses the role of state interventions in influencing different dimensions of media systems, such as journalistic professionalism, press market, media laws and regulations, and the pressure on the news environment caused by states in order to explore the media characteristics of each system,

including a detailed explanation of state interventions. Understanding the forcible coexistence of state interventions and journalism in the Gulf region could be a key to elucidating news consumer habits in these rich media environments. Also, the credibility and quality of news will be a topic of discussion as they may be influenced by different factors, such as regulations and professionalism of news producers. Chapter 2 attempts to come up with an initial classification for media systems of the Gulf countries in an effort to explain patterns of interrelationship among political and media systems, and to gauge how characteristics of a given media system may change the news field.

Online media platforms, particularly Twitter, and journalists' activities in the online environment are the focus of Chapter 3. Online media platforms provide a rich and free space for audiences where mainstream media still functions under governments' authority and audiences seek alternative news venues. Also, Twitter has been a valuable journalistic tool and allowed journalists to spread news mixed with their analysis, thoughts, and comments to provide significant influence on the daily work routine of journalists. Following this, the innovations of new technological and social media outlets are important factors in this equation as social media has revolutionized news consumers' habits. This has led to scholars rethinking and redefining major concepts in the communication field, and answering questions that "go to the heart of the model of source-message-receiver with which the field has struggled" (Morris & Ogan, 1996, p. 39). Thus, the desire to use social media and the Internet for news updates in the Gulf countries' strict media environment explains Twitter and online news outlets, which includes journalists' activities. Furthermore, Chapter 3 discusses the online news

environment and its role in the Gulf region, including three different types of journalists, such as unidentified journalists who use nicknames to remain anonymous and avoid getting accused of undermining the basis of the society.

News consumers and media repertoires are the focus of Chapter 4. How news consumers value news and select it from the news media environment is the main theme that this covered as well as looking at the relationship between news use and social connection. Media repertoires and news consumption in Chapter 4 addresses a background on news media consumption and draws a connection between that and the media system, its connection to the government, the news environment and political pressure, and the role of journalists on online and traditional news platforms. These factors may influence users' news repertoires and consumption, especially in countries where there is no freedom of speech. It is expected that factors vary among media systems, such as journalistic roles, funding, media policy, government involvement, and rules and regulations that may influence news consumers' repertoires as well as motivations. Following this, Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical framework in which this investigation is to proceed, and presents research question and hypotheses. Chapter 6 explains the research methods and measures used. The findings of this dissertation are presented in Chapter 7. The disscussion and conclusion are presented in the final chapter, Chapter 8, which also includes the key takeaways of this study.

# CHAPTER 2

## MEDIA SYSTEMS

**Development of Media Typologies**

Typologies, in a broad sense, have been a fundamental tool of comparative social analysis for a long time, and include a cluster of values and characteristics on several variables that seem to simultaneously occur in a natural and patterned way (Stinchcombe, 1968). A system, in general, is a group of interdependent elements combined to create a unified whole. Thus, a media system can be defined as a group of media institutions and practices that are internally complex, but interact with one another (see Hallin, 2016; 2015). Therefore, a media system in a given society should "comprise all mass media organized or operating within a given social and political system (usually a state)" (Hardy, 2008, p.5).

Media systems are embedded within multiple social systems (e.g. economic, political, cultural, religious, and others), though in some systems, they may not be obviously separated; media institutions and legislations may be a part of the government (Hallin, 2016). A great deal of comparative studies of media systems has not just focused their analysis on media systems, but on a group of related elements: political economy, media policy, journalistic professionalism, and government. To develop a schema that more fully integrates comparative elements that expand into understudied regions, especially Middle Eastern and North African countries, this chapter first discusses the development of media system typologies in the Western world, before turning to developing dimensions that accurately capture the complexities of Gulf countries' media

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systems.

## Typologies of Media Systems in the Western World

### *Four Theories of the Press*

Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's (1956) *Four Theories of the Press*, is

considered the seminal framework for comparative research on media systems among

Western scholars. They proposed the first typology of media systems and argued that

media systems "reflect" and impact the social structures in which they operate. Thus, this

relationship can be examined by looking at basic philosophical beliefs and assumptions

that the society holds: beliefs about human nature, the nature of state and society, and the

nature of knowledge and truth (Siebert et al., 1956).

Siebert et al. (1956) thus offered four different models of media systems:

"libertarian," "social responsibility," "communist," and "authoritarian." The authoritarian

system, they argued, grows out of the absolutist political traditions in different parts of

Europe during the 16th and 17th century in favor of supporting and advancing government

policies. This model shows different patterns of media ownership, private and public, but

both controlled via government licensing and censorship to prevent criticism of the

government. Historically, it is considered the most common model of media system.

The libertarian model, practiced primarily in the U.S. and U.K., is based on the

philosophies of rationalism and natural rights. It is mostly characterized by private

ownership and commercialization, and is thus usually free of government interference.

The social responsibility model is a modification of the libertarian model, developed in

the U.S. and the U.K. in the 20th century, and is characterized by privately owned media

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organizations operating with an assumption of social responsibility. The Soviet Communist model has similar elements to the authoritarian model, but goes further in its control over the flow of information. Instead of leaving media in private hands and monitoring them, the government directly runs the media, and the media function as an arm of the government, usually towards the goal of social transformation.

Siebert's typology of media systems "has been immensely influential … [and] almost every articles and book dealing with philosophical bases for journalism alludes to this book, comments on it, or quotes from it" (Merrill, 1983, p. 16). For a long time, Siebert's framework has impacted the way Western scholars view media systems, even though there were serious efforts to revise Siebert's typology and propose alternative approaches, such as the work of Altschull (1984, 1995), Curran (1999), Hachten (1987), Merrill (1983), Nerone et al., (1995), and Picard (1985). Hatchen's (1987) *The World News Prism* introduced a five-concept typology of media systems: authoritarian, Western (a combination of Siebert et al.'s libertarian and social responsibility models), revolutionary, communist, and developmental. Merrill and Lowenstein, (1971, 1979) expanded Siebert et al.'s typology of media systems into Five Theories by adding a category based on ownership. They argue that Siebert et al.'s typology lacked flexibility, and that analyzing modern press systems under their model was overly restrictive. Their fifth model recognized three different categories of press ownership: private, multiparty, or government ownership. However, critics note this may have been a superfluous addition, since that Siebert et al. (1956)'s typology was based on both ownership of the press and its functions (Ostini & Ostini, 2002).

*Agents of Power*

One of the main criticisms of Siebert et al. (1956)'s typology is that it was highly based in the Cold War context, and it's heavily bilateral "us" versus "them" analysis no longer holds in a multilateral world (Altschull, 1984). As Altschull (1984) argues, "One of the most critical of all difficulties we face in efforts to avoid the perils of global confrontation lies in labeling and in the language of conflict" (p. 108). After a comprehensive major review of the history and prime function of the world press, Altschull (1995) concludes that today, there are three categories of media typology: market/first world, communitarian/second world, and advancing/third world. Thus, Altschull (1984, 1995) was another significant revision to Siebert et al. (1956)'s typology of media systems, primarily adding "modified economic identifications" Altschull (1984, 1995).

Altschull's typology was based on three different standpoints: the purposes of media, beliefs about the media systems, and interpretations of press freedom. In straightforward terms, Altschull's market systems model indicates that a media system functions with no outside interference. His communitarian model suggests that media systems serve the public by delivering the agenda of political parties or governments. His advancing model proposes that media systems operate as partners of government and serve the interests of government. In Altschull's view, all media systems are seeking the truth and trying to be socially responsible in order to serve the public; however, each model accomplishes this in their own different ways. However, the market systems model seems to exclude the media from having a role in political and educational systems.

Although it is important to keep in mind that these alternatives proposals and many others not cited here increased understanding of the diversity of media systems and communication around the Western world. However, they mostly "failed precisely where the *Four Theories* succeeded– namely in avoiding a media-centric approach, and in offering an explanation rather than merely a description of different media systems" (Mihelj & Downey, 2012, p. 3), with an exception of the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004).

### *Comparing Media Systems*

Hallin and Mancini (2004) attempt to fill a gap created by Siebert et al.'s (1956) *Four Theories of the Press*. The authors propose some answers to the question posed by Siebert et al., "Why is the press as it is? Why does it apparently serve different purposes and appear in widely different forms in different countries?" Hallin and Mancini's work gets deeper into analyzing historical, cultural, and communication research in the United States and Europe, but their typology is a less ambitious effort than Siebert et al.'s typology since they confine themselves to Western media systems. They reflect on the main argument of Siebert et al. (1956), "that the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 1-2). They argue that the media systems "reflect" social structures and "have an impact of their own on other social structures" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 8). Therefore, they emphasize that there is a mutual relationship between media systems and political systems, a relationship that, for this dissertation, could influence the news environment at both producer and audience levels.

**Four Analytical Dimensions**

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) Comparing Media Systems analyzed 18 liberal democracies across the European continent and some Atlantic nations. They offer three well-known models of media systems, which are the "polarized pluralist model", the "democratic corporatist model," and the "liberal model". Hallin and Mancini's original contribution is the articulation of three distinct patterns of Western media systems based on four main analytical dimensions of comparison:

1. The structure of the media market, particularly focusing on the strong or weak development of mass dissemination of news content.

2. Political parallelism, which is the nature of linkages, formally or informally, between media and political parties or other political institutions.

3. The development of journalistic professionalism; as measured by the independence of journalists and their commitment to remain core principles of practice.

4. The level of state involvement in the media system.

However, Hallin and Mancini (2004) did not formulate these dimensions, but rely on some of the earliest studies on comparative analysis of media systems. For instance, Hallin and Mancini adopted the concept of political parallelism from Seymour-Ure's *The Political Impact of the Mass Media* (1974); however, they took it to an advanced level by expanding these dimensions and examining their linkages.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) state, "media systems are shaped by the wider context of political history, structure, and culture" (p. 46). Media have a great power in

influencing and shaping societies, politics, and the public perceptions. Media intervene between societies and politics by providing citizens knowledge about the issues of politics, while also imposing cultural norms and directing the public's political choices (Kemp et al., 2016; McQuail, 1994). In some cases, media and politics come into conflict due to particular political agenda or interests. This tension can lead governments to adopt policies that impose media censorship and limit media's role in society. In this case, media outlets try to adopt one of two solutions; one is to claim autonomy from governments, and the other is to accept and try to shape government policy. In both cases, news is filtered to a certain extent, in that a gatekeeper regulates the content of political information that the public receives (Bennett, 2001; Graber, 2012; Prat, 2014).

The degree and nature of the relationship between media structures and political economy in Hallin and Mancini's (2004) models has also been widely discussed. For instance, state intervention is stronger under the Polarized Pluralist and Democratic Corporatist Models than the Liberal Model, particularly around the issue of press subsidies in the Liberal Model, where press subsidies are seen as "threaten[ing] the autonomy of media from the state" (p. 80). Thus, news content in the Liberal Model tends to be more market oriented than news media in other models.

*Polarized Pluralist Model*

Hallin and Mancini (2004) summarize the characteristics of the three major models of media and politics with a connection to journalistic professionalism and politics. First, the "Polarized Pluralist Model" tends to feature low mass-circulation press, due to state intervention, high levels of political parallelism, and weak journalistic

professionalization because the value of press freedom appeared late in the market structure. Journalists in these countries focus on political life and are considered to be more "dependent" on political elites. Hallin and Mancini (2004) point out that "the state plays a great role as an owner, regulator, and funder of media, though its capacity to regulate effectively is often limited" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 73). However, this seems to have shifted over the past decades, where there are conflicts over the autonomy of journalists who play a role in spreading the "savage deregulation."

*Democratic Corporatist Model*

Second is the "Democratic Corporatist Model," which describes the media systems of northern and central European countries and shares some of the Liberal Model's characteristics, such as "strong development of rational-legal authority" and a legacy of journalistic professionalism. Countries in this model represent a coexistence between freedom of the press and state intervention since "media are seen to a significant extent as social institutions for which the state has responsibility" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 74). In this model, state intervention does not prevent journalistic autonomy and professionalism, but allows for institutionalized media regulation and press subsidies that allow broadcasting specialists high levels of autonomy away from the government. In Democratic Corporatist countries, the press maintains external pluralism, especially among national outlets that tend towards toward neutrality. while local papers do not tend to avoid their political tendencies. Democratic Corporatist countries are identified by their moderate pluralism; under this system, a verity of media system characteristics that otherwise seem incompatible coexist.

*Liberal Model*

The final model in Hallin and Mancini's (2004) book is the "Liberal Model." The defining features of this model include a commercial news market that supports liberal values (such as autonomy and freedom), a low level of state intervention, a high tendency toward the professionalization of journalism, and a low level of political parallelism. The U.S. media system is the purest example of the Liberal Model. The societies that adopted the Liberal Model have established and developed liberal institutions relatively early compared to other societies that have adopted the other two models. Furthermore, most media outlets are characterized by internal pluralism; however, external pluralism in Britain is the only exception of the Liberal countries.

**Limits of Previous Models**

Even though these media typology, as well as many others not cited here, brought great clarity to understanding the diversity of media systems around the Western world, they all have one fundamental problem — these scholars made an effort to "prescribe rather than to describe social phenomena by using an empirical basis for inquiry" (Ostini & Ostini, 2002, p. 45). For instance, Siebert et al.'s (1956) typology has concentrated its analysis on normative theories based on the structures of traditional mass media, and these normative theories are known mainly for a lack of explanatory power. Also, the Siebert et al.'s typology lacks flexibility that would make analyzing modern press systems difficult because it was formulated by the ideology, historical, and political circumstances of its inception (see Altschull, 1984). Siebert et al.'s typology deliberately ignored individual journalists' autonomy, professionalism, and values, and concentrated

on structural factors. Also, Siebert et al. (1956) mainly focused on traditional mass media; thus, new media types and changing forms of traditional media seem to be excluded from their typology (McQuail, 1994).

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work can be criticized for choices that they made or decided to ignore. The authors clearly stated a "lack of fit" of some of the cases and acknowledged, "many media systems must be understood as mixed cases" (p. 297). Even though, the common characteristics that fully justify each model of media are emphasized, yet it is noteworthy that media systems of some individual countries can deviate from the ideal models. For instance, France fits the Polarized Pluralist Model, along with Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, but the authors concede that it is really a "borderline case … falling somewhere between the Polarized Pluralist and Democratic Corporatist models" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 90). Also, the authors admit that there are "substantial differences between the United States—which is a purer example of a liberal system—and Britain, where statist conservatism, liberal corporatism, and social democracy have been stronger than in the United States" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 198). The uncertainty of how the three models are related or could be applied to the rest of the world is obvious when the authors state that they "could probably have added Australia and New Zealand—whose historical connections make them very similar to Western European countries … without making the conceptual framework significantly more complex" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 7). Also, the German media system, which in most elements looks more like the British system than other countries in the Democratic Corporatist Model, is identified as having a democratic media system. Furthermore, "the

differences among national media systems described in … this book are clearly diminishing" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 294) due to of commercialization.

**Typologies of Media Systems in the Arab World**

Most existing media typologies and comparative frameworks are designed in a variety of ways in Western countries to try and offer an ideal understanding of the relationship between media and politics in that context. Non-Western countries are often not included, with the exception of Rugh's work (2004) on various Arab media systems. He noted these countries tend can be understood best as national media systems, and further categorized them into four types according to the degree of state control of the media: the mobilization press (Syria, Sudan, Libya, Iraq before 2003), the loyalist press (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Palestine), diverse print media (Lebanon, Kuwait, Yemen, Morocco), and the transitional system of print media (Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria) (Rugh, 2004). However, the influence of governments on journalistic professionalism is not taken into consideration in Rugh's work.

In a mobilization press model, a media outlet restrains itself from criticizing political systems and fully supports a government's official positions. The loyalist press is known for its privately funded media that clearly support current regimes, abstain from criticizing the government officials, and show no diversity in editorial opinion. The diverse print media allows some independence and room for diversified news content and opinions. The press in this category enjoy a certain degree of political freedom and the news content and opinions do not always propagate and advocate the government's official positions. This allows for a plurality of opinions, competition, and outspokenness

as well as taking control over the editorial policies of their media outlets. The transitional system of print media is where the media system oscillates between adopting the government's view and social criticism. It is known for its nascent freedom of expression, although strict state control remains (Rugh, 2004).

**GCC Media Systems Classification**

Most of the studies on media systems analyze Western, highly capitalist and developed countries, and there is a lack of research into media systems in the Middle East and some developing countries. For some, the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004) is considered the most common taxonomy in comparative studies of media systems, and tends to be universally applicable outside the Western democratic nations (Hafez, 2016). However, Hallin and Mancini's typology was never meant to be applied outside of North American and Europe, but the political and cultural components of their typology offers analytic utility when studying the Gulf countries. One of the central aims of this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for a first step in a longer process of developing a typology and framework for analyzing media systems in the Gulf region. To highlight differences and similarities in the GCC, the four main analytical dimensions of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work, supplemented with terms developed by other scholars, will be taken into consideration when looking at the GCC media landscape. In what follows, these dimensions and criteria well be discussed with regard to their relevance for the studied Gulf countries.

**State Interventionism**

State interventionism is one of the four major criteria that Hallin and Mancini

(2004) utilized to assess the similarities and differences between Western media systems. This dimension investigates the types and degrees of involvement that elected governments have on media systems. In the USA, state interventionism is very low because private companies control the media markets, but is growing in Central and North Europe without impacting journalistic autonomy and professionalism due to their public broadcasting corporations. State intervention tends to be strongest in Mediterranean European countries due to the fact that directors of public broadcasting are appointed by parliament, and the government indirectly applies its influence over media outlets and content through the boards of public broadcasters. Looking at this dimension, such classification appears quite interesting while a number of questions remain. For example, how does the British media system take place in a liberal model while sharing important characteristics of both the Liberal and Democratic Corporatist models?

Western media systems are not completely liberalized, as interference comes from laws, rules, and regulations issued by democratically elected officials. This allows journalists to run a self-governing media system that embodies certain professional traits. This is not the case in most Gulf countries, where governments effectively apply vague 'red lines' that cannot be crossed. Undeniably, there is still a deep gap to be crossed between the West and the GCC, where private media outlets are really a state media, and their directors are either appointed by the government or have to be loyalist in order to survive. At the same time, a relative reduction in state intervention is notable in Kuwait, where journalists and people put constant effort into extending the boundaries of freedom of speech and expression. However, the relationship between media and government is

mostly static. Sometimes the coexistence between both spheres seems to be in a flexible equilibrium while, in fact, it is a way of the government to suggest media is independent from government control.

**The News Environment and Political Pressure**

There is a need to analyze journalism practices and its connections to media systems to better understand variations between media systems and social contexts in different contemporary societies (Cook, 1998) as well as its influence on news consumption. Researchers have developed different studies relating to this topic within the field. The first group of studies focuses on professional journalism cultures and social forces that influence journalistic performance. Scholars mostly agree that there are three basic levels of influence in news production: the individual, organizational and the social level of influence (e.g. McQuail, 2010; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; & Preston, 2008). Recently, studies in the practice of journalism have proven the dominance of the social and organizational level factors over individual level (e.g. Hanitzsch et al., 2010; Mellado, 2012; Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen, & Wu, 1997).

In the other line of research, studies on media systems have identified different how political, economic, social and cultural factors impact journalistic performance (Hujanen, Lehtniemi, & Virranta, 2008). A large body of scholarship has proven that political factors are the main external factor that journalists are susceptible to in their daily routine (e.g. Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Ciaglia, 2013; Hallin & Mancini, 2004), followed by economic factors (Bagdikian, 2004; Hanretty, 2014).

The immediate work environment and the structure of news organizations and newsrooms also restrain journalism practices at the level of individual news organizations and news workers (Hanitzsch et al., 2010; Tuchman, 1978). Scholars who focus on structural hierarchies identify five overlapping factors that effect news coverage: individual worker characteristics, media routines, organization characteristics, the environment of media organizations, and the ideological or social system (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). When applying this hierarchy-of-influences model, scholars found that journalists in Western democracies consider the interaction of organizational and process factors to have a great influence compared to other factors (e.g. Hanitzsch et al., 2010; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011). In contrast, journalists in eroded and non-Western democracies perceive political factors as more influential than other factors (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011).

At the organizational level, economic factors, mainly ownership, has been considered a major force shaping news production (e.g. Benson & Hallin, 2007; Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor 1985; Sigelman, 1973; Weaver et al., 2007), and offers a corollary for describing the extent to which the media is subordinated to the power of state. There are three general types of ownership in this literature: private, public, and state ownership where governments have maintained a strong grip on editorial management (Hanitzsch, Hanusch, & Lauerer, 2016). In the Gulf region, these three types of ownership do not seem to fit because states mostly have the dominant power over the media. Private ownership is sometimes directly appointed by the government and public ownership of media does not exist. Therefore, journalists are expected to work

in an environment that is more interventionist. This means that journalists who work in countries with restricted freedom are more likely to take a passive approach in producing news to avoid political repercussions and being subject to punishments by the state.

**Governments and News Productions**

In a truly liberal democracy, government does not interfere with media operators and journalists. The defining features of Hallin and Mancini's "Liberal Model" are a commercial news market that supports liberal values, such as autonomy and freedom, a low level of state intervention, and a high tendency towards professionalism among journalists. The nature of democracy implies that free and open media platforms are necessary for citizens to communicate and enhance critical practices that exist in democratic societies (McConnell & Becker, 2002). They argue that mass media in a steady democracy is crucial for individuals to enhance their understanding of their society. However, full free media and press environment appears to be inapplicable. In media-driven democracies, governments and politicians have a great impact on the news agenda and news frames by using different techniques (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981).

**Intervention with News Production**

Governments sometimes seek to control the information flow to protect a stated public interest; therefore, they restrict journalists to limit their ability to report on particular events. A large body of scholarly literature considers the press environment of developing countries, where press laws and ethics, license laws, political ideology, and governmental aggression in some of these countries coerce journalists into producing content that serves governments' interests (Elmasry, 2012; Mellor, 2007, 2008; Rugh,

2004). The logical explanation of state-controlled media in the developing countries

comes from a political belief in the power of media as voice and expression outlets

(Ayish, 2001); thus, governments want to protect their own interest even if they are

misguiding people. Governments in these societies seem to consider the political role of

media in both local and regional affairs. Therefore, individuals and private corporations

should not have control over media systems. For instance, some government television

systems in the Arab region have made a major change in terms of administrative and

financial autonomy of media channels. However, their editorial agendas continue to be

subordinate to government policies (Ayish, 2001), which "have inhibited the growth of a

participatory public sphere in Arab societies" (Ayish, 2002, p. 140). Basically,

governments control and monitor all kinds of media channels, but under different terms

and conditions. The government's explicit ownership of media outlets transfers a

complicated financial system of private and appointed ownership to indirectly hold power

over media outlets, journalists, and content (Lynch, 2006; Rugh, 2004).

The applied laws and regulations create threats to the journalistic authority and

put it at risk. The freedom press report (2019) indicates that almost half of the world's

population lives in societies where the press environment is not free. Furthermore, only

13 percent of the world's population has the benefit of a free press, where journalists

produce robust political news away from the government's intrusion and journalists work

in a safe environment. Freedom House (2019) also divides the world into three categories

in terms of freedom of the press: free, partly free, and not free. For instance, Eurasia and

MENA countries are known to have the worst-performing zone in the world for press

freedom because of the autocratic regimes which clearly show disdain for media autonomy and allow few avenues of free expression.

**Political Parallelism**

Political parallelism is another major criterion that Hallin and Mancini (2004) identified to understand the relationship between media and political parties or ideologies. In Western countries, political pluralism is clearly visible in the polarized pluralist model more than democratic corporatist model and liberal model. However, the situation among the Gulf countries that mostly fits the transitional or soft authoritarian models is quite different. The national media are known for a high degree of political parallelism, with some variations within countries, and a particular exception for the Kuwaiti media system. Furthermore, the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 resulted in political changes in the Gulf countries. Political participation is usually very high in Kuwait and Bahrain, where the role of the parliamentary institution is obvious, growing in Oman with their appointed Majlis A'Shura (Consultative Council), but is very limited outside the royal family in Saudi Arabia and UAE.

The system of parliaments will pave the way for representative democracies in the Gulf states, where parliaments reflect the public's demands for change by creating a forum for expression. The three Gulf countries have the most active parliaments in the region that seek, in some cases, fundamental democracy reforms. At one end, Kuwait's parliament is one of the most important political bodies in the country, where members adopt diverse political and cultural ideologies and get elected by the public with no government interference or pressure on the election process (Herb, 2002). Kuwaiti

parliament's is considered as the highest and most active in the region that challenges the emir and the government in the past few years (Power, 2012). In Bahrain, the parliament was established the mid-1970s, but only survived for a short amount of time. Then, it was partially revived in 2002 by the new king.

Political conditions in Bahrain have been far more turbulent than other countries in the region because of sectarian tension between Sunnis and Shias. Thus, parliament was the government's way to ease sectarian conflict, but was not effective enough and instead, it became one of the sources of continuing political turmoil (Power, 2012). The Bahraini political conditions can be summarized to three points: 1) parliament has limited powers, 2) the ruling family manipulates the parliament's members, and 3) there are no formal political parties (Power, 2012). The Omani parliament has been slower compared to other Gulf countries with responsibilities that are limited to economic development. Lately, the ruling Sultan, president, gave parliament members nominally significant legislative powers as a response to popular unrest in the country.

It is worth noting that Saudi Arabia has a consultative parliament (Majlis A'Shura) that is a wholly appointed institution and its roles revolve around advising the king with no legislative power. Similar to that, the UAE has a consultative council that is fully elected by the public but with limited ability to comment on governmental policies, which makes the parliament and its election relatively meaningless. Generally speaking, the Arab Spring in early 2011 was a turning point for the region's political environment. The parliaments in these Gulf countries, of course, are weak, superficial, and sometimes nominal, but significant. Parliaments need to overcome some challenges, such as the poor

parliamentary system and limited nature of political society that is imposed by governments in order to be more effective. Also, one of the major suggestions to strengthen parliament in Gulf countries is the establishment of meaningful political parties that can develop policies favorable to the public's interests.

**Political and News Environments in the GCC Countries**

Looking at media laws and the relationship between journalists and governments is essential for the sake of the dissertation. Scholars state that political news arises as a result of a cooperative relationship between politicians and political journalists who exchange resources, such as exclusive information, that both sides rely to reach their goals (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981; Gans, 1979; Larsson, 2002). However, during this process journalists "may be under considerable pressure to report on them in ways that their sources find congenial" (Cook, 1998, p. 89). Political motivations are powerful and ubiquitous (Maurer, 2017); thus, politicians are able to push their influences forward to impact the news product and agenda (Berkowitz, 2010).

The authoritarian media system applies strict editorial taboos inside media organizations, such as not allowing the discussion of democracy and freedom of speech. Most developing countries have issues in terms of freedom of speech and the press (Rugh, 2004), which might influence users' news repertoires and consumption. There are several cases and evidence of government interference in press freedom before and after the appearance of social media. As governments in these countries apply pressure via laws and ethics, license laws, political ideology, and aggressive threats, they force journalists to produce content that serves government interests (Elmasry, 2012; Mellor,

2007, 2008; Rugh, 2004). For instance, authoritarian governments (e.g. Egypt) have required all online newspapers and bloggers to obtain a special license from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in order to stay in business. However, Twitter opens a new path for journalists to freely express themselves and engage in controversial debates without government limitation and control. Twitter also allows the public to consume a vast amount of news from all over the world about their country without their governments' regulation, especially as "the technology of the Internet embodies the culture of freedom" (Castells, 2012, p. 231). Online media changed the way that people receive and interact with information, especially in developing countries (Lotan et al., 2011).

In some developing countries, such as Saudi Arabia, media legislation has been a feature of the government since the first press law in 1963, and it continues to be applied in the revision of the law in the 2003 Press and Publications Act, as well as in a 2011 update. The Saudi government has always played a very active role in media policy to keep the public under control. The Saudi "basic law" explicitly does not protect freedom of the press or expression. According to Article 39: "information, publication, and all other media shall employ courteous language and the state's regulations, and they shall contribute to the education of the nation and the bolstering of its unity." The article goes on to prohibit any expression that "foster[s] sedition or division or harm[s] the state's security and its public relations or detract from man's dignity and rights." The Saudi basic law sets boundaries of acceptable speech by issuing rules.

The Ministry of Culture and Information in Saudi Arabia is authorized to control

and monitor all different kinds of media outlets. However, the government believes in the importance of the press in giving power to the country in the region and creating a harmonious society. Therefore, the Saudi officials offer some protection to practice critical journalism in a way that supports government interests. In 2005, the jurisdiction over the media was removed from the court system to the Ministry of Culture and Information, including the right to shut down any media outlets that violate Saudi press law. The Saudi government takes immediate action when there is a questionable news stories, with no law for prior restraint in media platforms (Green & Karolides, 2009). These types of restrictive media laws could be one of other reasons that put most of the GCC countries sit at the bottom of press freedom rankings, which shows the sweeping authoritarian power that governments in the Gulf region apply to direct news organizations.

The revised Saudi press laws of 2003 and 2011 led to a more liberal press environment, with fines for press violations playing a significant role in impacting audiences' news consumption, exposure, discussions, and its connections to user's interaction. Also, social media platforms, especially Twitter, threaten media censorship in general. The news-centric social media accounts, with both anonymous and known operators, have become the first option for Saudi news consumers (Almalki, 2016; Alothman, 2013), largely because of low public trust in traditional media outlets (Sabir, 2012). With Twitter becoming a dominant mode of news consumption for Saudis, a huge shift in audiences' consumption, exposure, discussions, and interaction with news stories is expected (Almistadi, 2014).

Overall the strict media laws narrow journalists' boundaries and discourage journalists from disappointing the government. Potential violations of the law operate as a way for governments to stifle dissent and gag journalists. Press law is also a sword waved in the faces of journalists and opinion leaders. Such laws challenge journalists to balance between their role as contributors to democracy by "providing people with relatively accurate, accessible, diverse, relevant, and timely independently produced information about public affairs" (Nielsen, 2017, p. 1252). Although journalists' prime power is to inform the public and play a significant role in promoting democracy when they provide basic news and information (Patterson, 2013), the public is aware that it is almost impossible for journalists to exercise this power where strict press censorship exists.

**Media Industries**

The development of media markets is another category used by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Similarly, Merrill and Lowenstein (1979) have categorized different press models based on different types of media ownership. Furthermore, Altschull's (1984) typology was based on the economics of the press as a fundamental element for characterizing world press systems. It is important to examine Arab media in similar terms of ownership, as well as how developments around ownership have changed the media culture in the region. Given the large body of research that suggests aggressive governments in the Arab region threaten journalists and force them to produce content that serves governments' interests (Elmasry, 2012; Mellor, 2007, 2008; Rugh, 2004), it would seem that some news stories appear to be impacted more by personal tastes and

interests of government officials than professional norms protected by an independent ownership structure. In terms of ownership, funding, and control, Arab media outlets can be divided into two types: government owned and privately owned (Miladi, 2006). Egypt was the first Arab country to start satellite broadcasting, followed other Arab countries that developed state-run satellite channels, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Algeria.

The development of state-owned media outlets in the Arab region may be traced back to the early years of television broadcasting in the Arab world, when the British colonial administration created broadcasting channels on the model of the BBC to keep governments from owning their own stations (Head, 1985). However, after the post-independence period, many countries' leaders believed that the unstable political, economic, and social conditions necessitated government ownership of broadcasting systems. Katz and Wedell (1977) explain that "the virtual abandonment throughout the developing world, of Western patterns of broadcasting in which, however defined, the broadcasting system has some element of autonomy from the government of the day" (p. 212). Television channels became a mouthpiece for government policies and perspectives on national and international issues, and events (Ayish, 2002), which has led to the creation of strict editorial taboos inside news organizations.

**Government-Controlled Television and Emerging Press Freedom**

In many Arab countries, government-controlled television seems to be the dominant model among local and regional broadcasting systems in the region. (Rugh,1987). However, in the past 15 years, media freedom has increased in some Arab countries, which has led to more independent and oppositional news outlets (Ayish, 2002;

Cooper, 2008; Elmasry, 2012; Mellor, 2008). Saudi state media control began during the 1990 Gulf crisis (Guaaybess, 2001) as the government attempted to defend itself from perceived threats to its "legitimacy and stability such as challenges to its alliance with the United States and criticism of its political system, decision-making processes and image in the Arab world" (Hammond, 2007, p. 1). During the 1990s, Egypt started broadcasting the Egyptian satellite channel, Libya established the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and Algeria owned and operated seven television channels. The UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and other Arab countries also established their own state-owned television channels. However, these channels did not adopt television discussions of sensitive political and economic subjects (Bahry, 2001); it was more about satisfying some of the Arab audience's hunger for news under government surveillance.

During that time, Saudi Arabia launched the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and other media networks in the Arab region led by the royal family members and Saudi investors. Saudi hegemony in the Arab world has impacted the public by limiting their information to only sources that the Saudi government has control over. As Zayani (2012) explains: "Through the private funding of Saudi royal princes, moguls and entrepreneurs with exceptional financial resources and with the ability to tap into political power, the kingdom created a multi-platform media empire which encompasses much of the pan-Arab media" (p. 314). These investors were indirectly appointed by the government to suggest they were independent from government control.

For decades, government-controlled television in the Arab region was the only broadcasting model, despite impressive developments of television programming and

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technology (Boyd, 1999). However, Ayish (2001) said that the logical explanation of state-controlled media in the Arab world comes from a political belief in the expressive power of media. Arab governments seem to value the political role of television in both local and regional affairs, so much so that individuals and private corporations should not have control over the broadcasting system. Though, in recent years, some government television systems in the region have made a major change in terms of administrative and financial autonomy of media channels. However, their editorial agendas continue to be subordinate to government policies (Ayish, 2001), which "have inhibited the growth of a participatory public sphere in Arab societies" (Ayish, 2002, p. 140). Basically, governments continue to control and monitor various media channels, but under different terms and conditions. Arab governments' explicit ownership of media outlets transformed into a complicated financial system of private and appointed ownership that allowed governments to indirectly hold power over media outlets and content (Lynch, 2006; Rugh, 2004).

**Gulf TV News Media: Al-Jazeera vs. Al-Arabiya**

Media in the Arab world has long been constrained by government control and is known for the lack of press freedom and the inability to foster genuine political discourse (Zayani, 2004). However, in the last three decades, Arab media has seen an influx of satellite channels providing political, entertainment, sport, and religious content. The proliferation on non-state sponsored channels created optimism in the region as the public applauded the introduction of large numbers of TV channels as a first step toward political change in the Arab world that would eventually give voice to unheard

politicians. Gulf media systems are still far from being liberalized or protected

democratic systems because broad legal restrictions limiting journalistic and media

organizations' independence persist, though the establishment of news channels Al-

Jazeera in 1996 and Al Arabiya in 2003 were the focus of new optimism. Al-Jazeera

offers a variety of alternative viewpoints, including diverse perspectives on issues of

human rights and freedom of speech. Content also allowed criticism of Arab leaders and

the hosting of Arab dissidents. Both channels aim to offer responsible freedom and

rational debates that would create a new Arab public sphere and be run independently of

the state (Lynch, 2004).

When the former Emir of Qatar and the foreign minister helped Al-Jazeera start

building its image as the first free news channel in the Arab region (Al Nashmi, 2011),

people became optimistic about Al-Jazeera's role in limiting the region's media

censorship. However, some audiences began to feel offended by some of Al-Jazeera's

coverage (Al Nashmi, 2011). Al Jazeera failed to be objective when it criticized the

Qatari government, and people lost hope in Al-Jazeera as a model of the free news

environment. Also, Al-Jazeera has long been accused of being a mouthpiece for extremist

groups by a Bush administration that criticized the network for acting as a "mouthpiece

for the terrorists" (El-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2003, p. 40).

It is obvious that Al-Jazeera has been considered a major headache in the Gulf

region since its inception. Al-Jazeera's slogan, "the opinion, and the other opinion" (Seib,

2005, p. 601), which seems normal in the Western media environment, is extraordinary

among Arab media. Therefore, it creates a threat to the hegemonic control over the media

in the Gulf region. Many Gulf countries felt attacked by Al-Jazeera, such as Kuwait, which ordered a shutdown of Al-Jazeera's office because of troubles the channel's content was causing (Ferguson, 2011). Al Jazeera has also caused massive problems for the Saudi government, fostering debate about sensitive topics involving Saudi Arabia, hosting political opposition figures to criticize the Saudi policy in the region (Bahry, 2001), and spreading rumors.  In fact, Al Arabiya was established in the first place to defend the Saudi government from Al Jazeera criticism (Hammond, 2007).

In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt cut ties and blocked Qatar in the biggest diplomatic crisis to hit Gulf countries in decades. A few weeks later, Saudi Arabia and its allies issued 13 demands asking the Qatari government to meet within ten days. According to The Guardian, one of these demands included a stipulation that Qatar close down Al Jazeera news networks, both Arabic and English versions, for good (Wintour, 2017). The Qatari government refused to negotiate these demands, which provoke an infringement on Qatar's sovereignty. Al-Jazeera and Al Arabiya heavily covered the ongoing crisis, and each channels' views seemed highly subjective, based on their interest and their location.

**Professionalization**

The level of journalistic professionalism is one of the original criteria for describing Western media systems in Hallin and Mancini (2004). Scholars have used indicators of journalistic professionalism—such as journalists' educational backgrounds, involvement in professional associations, adoption of professional values such as impartiality and objectivity, presence of journalistic ethics and ethical self-regulation,

heavy media consumption, working conditions, and many others (e.g. Kirat, 1993, 1998; Weaver et al., 2007). Also, factors such as the political, social, economic, and cultural heritage and context, in part, appear to influence journalistic professional orientation and role perceptions (e.g. Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Pintak, 2014; Waisbord, 2013). For instance, Egyptian journalists put loyalty to governments among their highest responsibilities as journalists (Ramaprasad & Hamdy, 2006), which explains the power of the political context in shaping journalistic values and professional roles.

Similar to Europe's Mediterranean region, journalistic professionalism is largely underdeveloped in the Arab region. In general, the degree of professionalism in journalism is very low in Gulf countries, because of government press laws and ethics, license laws, political ideology, and aggressive threats that force journalists to produce content that serves government interests. In fact, this indicates a serious problem in journalists' work and illustrates unethical practices among journalists in the region. It is undeniable that the Gulf media capital is "loyalist" to the state. However, scholars emphasize the importance of journalists' professional autonomy; thus, they can fulfill their democratic functions in society (e.g. Van Dalen, Albaek, & de Vreese, 2011) regardless of their complex relation with politicians and government officials.

It is obvious that some journalistic values and ethics are clearly developing among Arab media outlets that adhere to Western standards (Hafez, 2002). For instance, the codes of ethics used by Al-Jazeera and some private newspapers in Kuwait contain many of the values that are fundamental to Western journalists, such as objectivity and accuracy. When reflecting on Western and Gulf journalistic ethics, though, one should

consider similarities and differences. The Iraq war in 2003 showed community bias in U.S. journalists covering the conflict who intentionally ignored all the rhetoric concerning accuracy and objectivity. This indicates that journalists, despite their professionalism, are "prone to nationalist temptations and biased coverage of world affairs at times of severe crisis" (Hafez, 2016, p. 244). Thus, the real problem is not what Siebert et al. (1956) concluded when they pointed out that in authoritarian regimes, like in the Gulf region, journalists hold values that are readily distinguishable when compared to Western journalists.

Having said that, a lower level of professionalism is not due to a lack of professional training and education, as studies showed that journalistic professional standards are very often taught at universities in the Gulf region (e.g. Kirat, 2016; Sakr, 2004; Pies, 2008). However, the professional gap between journalists in the Gulf countries and their Western colleagues is caused by direct or indirect state intervention. Across the GCC, some common criticisms of professional journalism include journalists being seen as spokespersons for states, lack of in-depth reporting to avoid manipulating public opinion, and an exaggerated focus on routine government activities (Kirat, 2016). Gulf governments still have a significant influence on media outlets, making it the primary framework for understanding contemporary journalism practices in the region, which hinders professionalism.

**Journalistic Professional Autonomy**

Scholars emphasize the importance of journalists' professional autonomy so that they can fulfill their democratic functions in society (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981; Van

Dalen, Albaek, & de Vreese, 2011) regardless of their complex relations with politicians and government officials. This in turn, requires journalists who live in these difficult conditions to fear retributions from their governments and report crucial political news under governmental pressure. Also, this leads a great number of independent journalists to operate from abroad (Hem, 2014) and use anonymous social media accounts (Almalki, 2016; Aldaihani, 2015) to publish news stories in other countries' media outlets or their unidentified online account instead of publishing at home media outlets.

It is undeniable that there are threats to democracy and freedom of expression in some developing societies because of the government's interference with media. Thus, online media seems to provide more freedom, which allows the public in these strict societies to further engage in rational and free discussion as well as offers them a freer news environment. Past research indicates that the establishment of online news practices not only created more freedom and independence for the public, but also caused a notable problems when journalism failed to remain independent. Social media platforms have become news outlets because of their information sorting and navigating features, such as the ability to do quick searches, create hashtags, and share breaking news immediately (Lampos, De Bie, & Cristianini, 2010; Sankaranarayanan, Samet, Teitler, Lieberman, & Sperling, 2009; Popescu & Pennacchiotti, 2010). Specifically, many social media users have said that tracking the news on online media platforms was preferable because it is fast and has an easy format (Ballard, 2011; Charney & Greenberg, 2002). However, the growth of social media threatens the future of traditional newspapers, especially in

countries where the media is run by the government (Alotaibi, 2015), and where people distrust the press as well as politics.

**Credibility and Quality of News**

Over the past few decades, online media have become an important source for acquiring news (Metzger, 2007), becoming indispensable in news production (Phillips, 2012) especially with news distribution (Al-Rawi, 2017). Online media as an alternative news source opens a new path for both journalists to freely express themselves, and for audiences to consume news away from government limitations and control, especially in these authoritarian environments. Governments have failed to control the flow of news even by applying traditional media strict rules; therefore, journalists and consumers have started practicing new rules and, in some cases, created a strong opposition press. The online media provide residents of Gulf countries easier access to more news sources free from censorship, but these developments have caused concerns with the type of produced news. The problem is that online media challenge the journalism field because it has become a fertile ground for spreading low-quality content or misinformation, as well as redefining the classic idea of journalistic practices in which the line between audiences and journalists has blurred.

Social media offer a useful complication to the media systems that enable and/or constrain the process of news production. Hence, the role of social media as a news tool must be taken into consideration when classifying mass media systems in the Gulf region. The quality and credibility of the online content raises concerns among news consumers and scholars. Online news consumers evaluate the news and information they consume in

terms of quality and credibility, even if they dot not have enough knowledge or perception of the news production process. On the other hand, the popularity of online media has attracted scholars' attention to the ways social media has challenged traditional media outlet as a source for news.

**News Credibility**

There has been a major concern with credibility in the journalism field for decades, starting with early inquiries of source credibility as a significant element in accepting the content of persuasive messages (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003). These inquiries into source-related persuasion naturally led to investigations of sources, messages, channels or mediums, producers, and receivers (e. g. McGuire, 1989). News consumers' perceptions of news have been measured in terms of consumers' news desires and needs (Lacy, 1989), the way of framing news stories (Kiousis, 2001), news content's characteristics (Austin & Dong, 1994; Wathen & Burkell, 2002), medium or channel carrying the news stories (Bucy, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Kiousis, 2001), or the producers of news content (Hamilton & Hunter, 1998; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

In general, these scholars empirically compare the credibility of the same news story presented in two different outlets and evaluate the level of perceived credibility of certain media outlets in comparison to others. In the current multimedia environment, users have an overwhelming amount of media or channels that provide news, and consumers have the ability to go anywhere to obtain news of interest; thus, scholars have focused their attention on the news sources as a main factor that could create differences

in consumers' perceptions of news credibility. Credibility of media has become a popular research topic in recent years as online media outlets (e.g. websites, blogs, and social media platforms) become significant news sources (Banning & Trammell, 2006; Johnson & Kaye, 2008; Johnson, Kaye, Bichard, & Wong, 2007; Singer, 2006). The gradual developments of online media have raised concerns about the credibility of news content (Metzger et al., 2003). News content is no longer fixed in place or time as traditional media outlets, but instead is openly distributed and produced across the online environment, placing heavy burdens on news consumers who often lack the ability to evaluate the credibility of source or messages (Greer, 2003; Metzger et al., 2003; Sundar, Knobloch, & Hastall, 2007).

These shifts in the news media environment led scholars to shed light on the credibility of sources and news content since online media seems to blur the lines among news sources and content that is publicly reframed and reinterpreted. According to the available literature, the source of news becomes increasingly important in this online environment. Scholars have offered numerous definitions of news media credibility and different dimensions for measuring news credibility. These include, trustworthiness fairness, morality, accuracy, knowledgeability, completeness, and being factual (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). These dimensions have been widely used in evaluating credibility across a variety of contexts online media platforms (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000, 2007; Greer, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Molyneux & Coddington, 2019). The familiarity of the source (Altheide, 1978; Dunwoody & Ryan, 1987; Johnson & Kaye, 2004) and the

structural features of online media outlets (Fico, Richardson, & Edwards, 2004; Flanagin & Metzger, 2007) are associated with perceived credibility.

This online news landscape raises an important question: How do people who live in a regulated media environment perceive the credibility of online media platforms? In most Gulf countries, the trust in traditional media is low level due to strict laws and regulations. Thus, online media provides the residents of Gulf countries easier access to more sources of news that are free from censorship. Previous studies have examined the differences between perceived credibility of online media outlets and traditional media outlets focusing on news content (Johnson & Kaye, 2008; Kaye & Johnson, 2011; Kiousis, 2001) and providing mixed conclusions. Thus, understanding how news consumers in these strict media environment perceive the credibility of both traditional and online media outlets can provide insights into news consumption habits, as well as investigate if regulated media outlets force the public to not consider the credibility of online news outlets because they have no other options.

**News Quality**

News quality has been widely discussed among audiences and journalists as a fundamental element in considering what to publish and consume. Audiences evaluate news quality based on their needs (Lacy, 1989). Journalists meanwhile have a set of characteristics to determine the quality of news, though the term is often intuitive in its usage (Eide, 2011). Thus, defining journalistic quality is notoriously difficult because it involves great complexity and is a matter of subjective judgment (Neuberger, 2014; Urban & Schweiger, 2014). However, the relationship of news credibility and news

quality is strongly correlated as content credibility can be seen in content quality among other characteristics (Metzger et al., 2003). Also, news audiences build their perception of news on four general categories: credibility, quality, liking, and representativeness of news content (Sundar, 1999; Sundar, & Nass, 2001). Thus, credibility is one of the main aspects of quality that can assist news audiences in making judgments in choosing particular information over others (Taylor, 1982).

The perspective in determining journalistic quality differs among individuals to the point where what is perceived as quality content can be seen as poor by others (Olsen, 2012). There "is no quality in an item itself, but only some kind of convention to interpret certain objective indicators as high or low quality" (Urban & Schweiger, 2014, p. 822). Thus, the difficulty in defining news quality has given rise to a plethora of news quality criteria. Scholars have reviewed the literature and pointed out that six common quality criteria that can be identified: diversity of viewpoints, impartiality, relevance, accuracy, comprehensibility, and compliance with ethical standards (Urban & Schweiger, 2014). Although quality criteria are important in audiences' perception of journalistic quality, news audiences are usually not able to recognize them in news articles. It has been found that when making changes in quality criteria, users' evaluations are not influenced (Urban & Schweiger, 2014) as their news assessment seems to be much simpler than what quality criteria actually mean.

The difficult for news audiences to make precise quality judgments could be attributed to the characteristics of news consumption, where audiences seem to scan through news articles, as opposed to carefully reading; thus, they lack the necessary skills

to form accurate quality judgments (Weinreich, Obendorf, Herder & Mayer, 2008; Metzger, Flanagin & Medders, 2010). Therefore, evaluating journalistic quality is not a high priority to readers or influencing their motivations to form accurate judgments (Prochazka, Weber, & Schweiger, 2018). Instead, they make heuristic judgments based on a small number of notable criteria that are easy to recognize and evaluate in any given article (Prochazka et al., 2018). These heuristic cues for judging journalistic quality include media brand and image (Nandan, 2005), reputation for credibility (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1966), overall quality (Burgoon, Burgoon, & Buller, 1986), and high-quality visuals (Urban & Schweiger, 2014; Fichter & Jonas, 2008).

The literature on journalistic credibility and quality on both online and traditional media outlets have reached different conclusions, indicating different elements signal quality in different environments. This dissertation extends previous research on the perceived credibility and quality of news content on both traditional media outlets and Twitter as a news site where state intervention plays a main factor on influencing the news production process. Journalists who are affiliated with traditional media are obligated to produce certain news stories and are restrained from reporting on certain issues due to restrictions on journalists' degree of freedom in making their own choices. Thus, news credibility and quality are damaged under such conditions

**Analysis of Gulf Cooperation Council Media Environments**

The coexistence of the media and the state in some Middle Eastern countries have led to reduced punishments against journalists, which allows a high degree of journalistic professionalism to grow, expanding the scope of speech freedom (e.g. Lebanon and

Kuwait). However, this is not the case in most Gulf countries that claim to have a more liberal press environment, but also stipulate harsh penalties for press violations. Scholars have argued that a more liberal press would serve the government's best interest "in light of expanding global information from satellite television and the Internet" (Rugh, 2004, p.77). With this context in mind, the following sections elucidate the media environment in the studied countries. When examining media environment in the GCC countries, constitution, penal codes, media laws, and current media landscape will be taken into consideration as significant elements that can influence autonomy of journalists and free expression in any region.

**Kuwait**

Kuwait has the highest press freedom ranking of any Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country. In its 2019 report, Reporters Without Borders ranks Kuwait at 108th out of 180 countries in press freedom. The country is definitely in the "Partly Free" category according to Freedom House's index, the only country in the region. The Kuwaiti media system is known for several privately-owned newspapers that offer robust political discussions and express various opinions. This can be ascribed to its Constitution and its active Parliament, where different opinions are freely discussed. The Kuwaiti Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, as Article 36 states: "Every person shall have the right to express and propagate his opinion verbally, in writing or otherwise, in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by law." Also, Article 37 makes it clear that: "Freedom of the press, printing and publishing shall be guaranteed in accordance with the conditions and manner specified by law." However, just like any

other GCC country, freedom of expression should be within the limits of the law. Thus, freedom of press can be unguaranteed when it comes, for instance, to heads of government.

The 1961 version of the media law had limited restrictions for freedom of expression and freedom of the press. However, the updated version in 2006 enhanced freedom of speech guarantees and loosened press restrictions, which opened the door for privately-owned news outlets that offer diverse opinions and views on multiple political and social issues (Selvik, 2011). The 2006 Press and Publications Law still includes several sections explaining prohibitions on reporting, while allowing citizens to file a criminal complaint against journalists they suspect of breaking the law. Therefore, the public has a generous opportunity for bothering journalists. The new law liberalized the country's media environment, but newspapers still have to request a special license from the Ministry of Interior to operate. Also, the ministry has the authority to ban any book, film, and magazine they suspect of being morally offensive.

In Kuwait, criticizing the Emir-president, or disclosure of private information is considered a crime that could put violators in jail. Such a law may make it difficult for journalists to practice freedom of the press and expression. Article 21 includes unreasonably broad restrictions, such as prohibiting journalists from publishing any news story that may "disdain or insult" judges or public prosecutors, or influence "the value of the national currency or what would lead to worries about the economic status of the country." Such rules and instructions narrow down journalists' boundaries and frighten journalists about reporting on disappointing economic news in order to avoid any

potential violations of the law. The revised press law still has limitations that can lead to prison terms, shut down news publications, and heavy fines. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior shut down the Al Jazeera office for press law violations when the network covered protests. Also, the Ministry accused a good number of journalists of undermining the basis of Kuwaiti society and sentenced them to various amounts of prison time.

Freedom of expression on online media outlets was to some extent affected by the restrictions imposed from the updated press law. The law has been modified several times since 2006 to create more regulation of these online environments after they gained popularity among citizens. In 2016, the Kuwait parliament drafted a new Electronic Media law that monitors all online-based publications, including newspapers, social media accounts, and blogs. This law indicates that all news services must acquire a special license from the Ministry of Information in order to legally operate. Even though the media system in Kuwait has become tighter—not looser— in term of restrictions, it still has a press environment that enjoys a plurality of opinions, competition, and outspokenness within the press market. The Kuwaiti media system is considered one of most liberal press systems in the Arab world along with Lebanon. Such an environment allows a few completely privately-owned newspapers that are owned by Kuwaiti elite families and businessmen to establish and have a great impact on the Kuwaiti political agenda (Selvik, 2011). The current media landscape enjoys a relatively evolved level of diversity and expression freedom with varied opinions, which is unattainable in most Arab countries (Rugh, 2004).

**Oman**

Oman ranks near the bottom of press freedom rankings due to its notably restrictive press laws. In its 2019 report, Reporters Without Borders ranks Oman at 132nd out of 180 countries in press freedom and is categorized among the "Not Free" media systems. Journalists in Oman practice self-censorship and avoid crossing red lines in coverage stories related to the government. After the Arab uprisings, the Omani government appeared ready to strike down any optional movements by embracing greater censorship on both online and traditional news outlets. The Omani press law indicates that all local and foreign journalists are required to acquire a license, and there are specific requirements to be eligible to get the license. The requirements include age, education, reputation, and experience.

Like other GCC countries, the Omani 1984 Press and Publications Law contains various restrictive laws that can limit freedom of the press and expression. For instance, the prohibitions include news stories that might criticize the sultan—the president—, damage the country's economy, or defame a public figure. The law criminalizes any harm to "public order", which seems to frighten journalists of violating the letter of the law. Another example exists in Article 28 that prohibits publishing "any item that could prejudice the behaviors and general ethics." Therefore, journalists may avoid certain important topics, such as sex trafficking operations, victims of domestic violence, or sexual assault, for fear of breaking Article 28.

In 2002, the Telecommunications Act includes the 1984 Law, and brought more restrictions to online news outlets. For example, Article 61 criminalizes any "any person

who sends, by means of telecommunications system, a message that violates public order or public morals", and violators may face up to one year in prison and a fine of up to $2,600. In the wake of the Arab spring, the Omani Sultan issued a royal decree that tightened the country's press law. This royal decree updated Article 26 of the Press and Publications Act to ban "anything that may prejudice the safety of the state." The prohibition applies to all types of media, including visual, audio, print, and online. Given the restrictions in the Omani press law, both journalists and bloggers feel that their right of traditional and online free speech, contradicts the international law, and contains excessively broad restrictions.

**United Arab Emirates (UAE)**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) ranks at 133rd in the press freedom rankings in 2019. It dropped 20 places after the Arab Spring upheaval in 2011. The UAE applies very restrictive press laws including Internet blocking policy, and self-censorship, which makes its media systems categorized as "Not Free" according to Freedom House. The UAE penal code makes it a crime to publicly criticize the UAE's rulers and damage the country's economy. The UAE's 1980 Press and Publications Act, which are considered the most restrictive press laws in the region (Duffy, 2018), results in a media system that practices self-censorship and stays away from "red lines" in coverage at home. Some of these "red lines" in the UAE's press law are overly broad and could simply lead to an infringement for even the most harmless reporting. For example, Article 81 prohibits publication of news that "causes damage to the national economy." Such an ambiguous law could prevent reporting negative business news because it could possibly prompt

criminal allegations. Article 84 forbids journalists from "maligning a public official" or anyone "assigned to perform a public job". Therefore, exposing corruption in a government agency seems unattainable even with an accurate story. The violations of the 1980 Press and Publications Act could lead to punitive punishments such as fines of up $5,445, imprisonment for up to two years, and a temporary closure to a news publication.

The updated UAE's press law in 2009 made journalists feel more optimistic at first glance because the new law bans the jailing of journalists. However, the law was only a cosmetic change, and includes huge fines for violations. In the new laws, journalists who are "disparaging" government officials or members of the royal family could be fined up to $1.36 million and failing to pay fines often results in jail time. The broad restrictions on "disparaging" officials could prevent journalist from reporting on official malfeasance or incompetence because it could easily be considered disparaging and lead to a significant fine. Such an umbrageous limitation could cause journalists to exercise self-censorship. In the case of UAE, the media environment creates an interesting dichotomy between how the government is simultaneously keeping its local media channels restricted, while the international news organizations (e.g. CNN, Reuters, and Al Arabiya) that are podcasting from media zones set up in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi are enjoying relative freedoms. Online media environments in the UAE, just like any other Gulf country, are not a safe space to discuss sensitive topics. Journalists and individuals are frequently arrested over Tweets and discussion on social media platforms. The government has made it clear that there are lines being drawn regarding speech on online platforms; thus, residents must be aware of these lines.

**Bahrain**

Reporters Without Borders (2019) ranked Bahrain at 168th out of 180 countries in freedom of the press, which shows the sweeping power that the government applies to direct media organizations. Bahrain dropped 25 places after the Arab Spring upheaval in 2011, and this can be blamed in Bahraini "relentless crackdown on pro-democracy movements, its trials of human rights defenders and its suppression of all space for freedom" (Khamis & Alwadi, 2015, p. 47). The Freedom House (2019) categorizes Bahrain's press status as "Not Free." It seems that the Bahrain Constitution assures freedom of expression and the press in agreement with the law. Article 23 of its constitution clearly states that "freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed. Everyone has the right to express his opinion and publish it by word of mouth, in writing or otherwise under the rules and conditions laid down by law." However, some parts of the constitution contradict free expression by further restriction. For instance, the constitution hampers this freedom by warning against violation the "fundamental beliefs of Islamic doctrine, … the unity of the people" or evoking "discord or sectarianism." Also, Article 24 states that these freedoms applied to printed material, "guaranteed under the rules and conditions laid down by law."

There is a myriad of prohibitions on the press in the Bahraini penal code, ratified in 1976, that undeniably obstructs the freedom of the press and expression guaranteed in the constitution such unknown length of imprisonment for "any person who incites with the use of one of the publication methods to develop hatred of the ruling regime or show contempt towards it." Thus, reporting on government corruption seems unattainable

because such a criticism could be considered guilty of inciting contempt. Furthermore, different articles provide for imprisonments and fines for "false or malicious" news contents, disclosing information from a closed government's meeting, false report on public hearings, defamation, and many other things. However, there is no clear definition of what can be considered, for instance false or malicious news contents; thus, the decision goes to the broad discretion of prosecutors and judges.

The Bahraini government revised its 1979 press law in 2002, assuring that the new law would allow more freedoms and provide more protections for journalists than its predecessor. However, Bahraini journalists found the new law still to be quite restrictive. Journalists may still face for up to five years in prison for publishing material critical of the King of Bahrain. Also, government ministers are authorized to mete out punishments and penalties as they see fit without any judicial oversight. Another concern is that the Ministry of Information still has the authority to license publications and ban contents that may harm the Kingdom, which in fact grants authorities to make censorship decisions. In Bahrain, it is not necessary to regulate and monitor local television or radio stations since the government continues to have a complete monopoly of all traditional media. Thus, an opposition news station cannot run and invest inside Bahraini land. The 2002 updated press law included "electronic media" to the law's purview, giving the information ministry a wide leverage in supervising all different online media outlets and regulating speech in these new media environments.

The Bahraini government is a majority shareholder of the Bahrain Telecommunications Company. Thus, they practice censorship of the Internet by

blocking political blogs and shutting down websites that may cause harm to the government, such as human rights pages. Interestingly enough, the Ministry of Information has the right to block a website without any court review. Given the regulatory environment, the current media landscape in Bahrain shows lack of press freedoms that the public may use to criticize state policies and shows the great power the government has when applying decisions that infringe on online and traditional media outlets' speech.

**Saudi Arabia (SA)**

Saudi Arabia features one of the most restrictive media environments in the world. Of the six GCC countries, Saudi Arabia placed near the bottom in press freedom rankings. In its 2019 report, Reporters Without Borders ranked Saudi Arabia at 172nd out of 180 countries in freedom of the press, which reveals the sweeping power of the Saudi government to direct journalism and other media outlets. Unlike the other Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia's "basic law" does not protect freedom of the press and expression. Article 39 mentions expression by indicating that "information, publication, and all other media shall employ courteous language and the state's regulations, and they shall contribute to the education of the nation and the bolstering of its unity." The article continues to explicitly forbid any expression that "foster[s] sedition or division or harm the state's security and its public relations or detract from man's dignity and rights." The basic Saudi laws demonstrate that rules set boundaries of acceptable speech. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Culture and Information, controls and monitors all different kinds of media platforms. However, the Saudi press has some sort of protection to practice critical

journalism and the Saudi government considers the news media as a great tool to support

government interests and create a harmonious society.

Saudi Arabia revised its 1963 press law with the 2003 Press and Publications Act,

which led to a more liberal press environment and stipulated penalties for press

violations. Scholars looked at this move as the Saudi government's view that a more

liberal press served the royal family's best interest "in light of expanding global

information from satellite television and the Internet" (Rugh, 2004, p.77). In 2005, the

jurisdiction over the media was transferred from the court system to the Ministry of

Culture and Information, which has the right to shut down any media channels that

happen to have violated the press law. The Saudi government does not apply prior

restraint in all media platforms, but it takes an immediate move when alerted to

problematic news stories (Green & Karolides, 2009).

**Typologies of Media Systems in GCC Countries**

Given these disparate conditions, which are not adequately captured by previous

comparative media systems literature, there is, of course, a need to update the typology of

national media systems. The emergence of online media technologies further complicate

the presence and development of media credibility and quality. For instance, the typology

developed by Siebert et al. (1956) during the Cold War reflects a rivalry between

Western liberal states and Soviet style autocracies. Nowadays, many authoritarian states

can be categorized as partly liberalized or soft authoritarian. Also, previous models for

the classification of national media systems did not make an effort to develop typologies

including media systems outside of Western countries. Thus, there is no room to include countries that do not fall clearly into democratic and authoritarian media systems.

Even when models based on economic factors are included such as the topologies of Altschull (1984, 1995), media in these capitalist Gulf economies are grouped into three different categories, although clear similarities exist. For instance, Siebert et al. (1956)'s model would place Oman, UAE, and Bahrain in the same category, as would the models of Altschull (1984, 1995), Hallin & Mancini (2004), and Rugh (2004). However, the media and political system in Bahrain seems to involve a combination of more authoritarian and Soviet Communist elements, which could place it somewhere between these two models. There are numerous differences between Western and non-Western autocracies with no clear-cut distinction between them. Despite the fact that the above discussed models deal mostly with democratic countries and does adequately describe authoritarian or transitional Gulf countries, the complex arguments invite in-depth cross-cultural comparison to reveal the different roles media play in modern countries. Of course, applying some media systems classification analytical dimensions to the Gulf countries is just a preliminary step for a better understanding of the media system in the Gulf region.

In Gulf countries, state intervention in the media sector is still stronger because effective democracy does not exist in the region, with the exception of Kuwait. Using Hallin and Mancini's (2004) dimensions, state interventionism is a very low in Kuwait, where the private media outlets have the ability to operate freely, but also growing in UAE and Oman, with UAE-relative freedoms enjoyed by international news

organizations, such as CNN and the Wall Street Journal. It tends to be strongest in Saudi

Arabia and Bahrain where the media sector is still highly censored and controlled

appendix to the ruling families. Thus, journalistic professionalism is heavily influenced

by the level state intervention, as Hallin & Mancini (2004) discuss. The more

governments intervene in media; the less likely journalistic professionalism becomes. For

instance, state interventionism is very low in Kuwait, which increases levels of

autonomous journalistic professionalism. On the other hand, state intervention in Bahrain

reaches its highest level, which results in a very low of journalistic professionalism. It is

significant to realize that state intervention in Gulf countries is a main factor that

significantly influences the other dimensions of media systems.

Political pluralism is clearly visible in Kuwait, as it is categorized as a diverse

print media (Rugh, 2004), more than Oman where guided pluralism exists (Brumberg,

2002) or Bahrain, which has controlled pluralism (Power, 2012). However, there is no

formal political parties in any of these three Gulf countries; but instead, there are political

blocs or societies. Saudi Arabia and the UAE restrict almost all political activities

through a combination of dictatorial laws and power. Similar to the Polarized Pluralist in

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) typology, newspaper markets in the Gulf region are usually

small and elitist. In terms of ownership, funding, and control, Gulf media outlets can

either be government or privately owned (Miladi, 2006). There are a great number of

private daily newspapers in the GCC regions, Saudi Arabia has 18, Kuwait has 14,

Bahrain and the UAE each have 12, and Oman has six newspapers. The political

pluralism dimension in these Gulf countries, of course, are weak, superficial, and

sometimes nominal; thus, it is not a significant factor in Gulf countries media systems.

Most of the GCC press is state-owned; thus, they are "characterized as intergovernmental in nature even though they are private and independent newspapers" (Ziani, Elareshi, Alrashid, & Al-Jaber, 2018, p. 55). The rest is simply exercising self-censorship and working under strict editorial taboos (Rugh, 2004). In most cases, the governments' control or the state owned of news outlets and journalists exist by privately appointing ownership for all different types of newspaper to indirectly hold power over media and content (Lynch, 2006; Rugh, 2004). Thus, even when allowing private capital to enter media markets, governments remain the dominant player in most Gulf countries, with the exception of Kuwait, where newspapers have a high level of independence from the editorial stances of the government (Alkazemi, Dashti, Kaposi, & Duffy, 2018). When social media, particularly Twitter, gained popularity as a news source in the Arab world, governments in Gulf countries updated their media laws to include online content to enhance freedom of speech guarantees and loosen press restrictions in the online environment. At the same time, governments started social media surveillance program to monitor the public's activities on these sites.

The Kuwait media system is characterized by the prevalence of private ownership and a state-owned press that is free from politicians' interference (Ayish, 2010), commercialization, high level of independence, and high self-censorship. Oman has private newspapers that depend fully on advertising and a few state-owned newspapers. It can be characterized by many unwritten rules that restrict the freedom of speech, and medium level of independence and self-censorship. The UAE is a unique media

environment, featuring an interesting dichotomy between international news organizations (e.g. CNN, Reuters, and Al Arabiya) that enjoy relative freedoms similar to Kuwait. However, local media outlets are characterized by the prevalence of private ownership strongly aligned with the government and are seen as a megaphone for the government, indicating a low level of independence, and high self-censorship. A similarly high-restrictive media environment exists in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain where the press outlets are privately owned, but reflects the government's positions and viewpoints. Thus, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain's media systems are characterized by a low level of independence from the editorial stances of the government, where newspaper editors are directly or indirectly appointed by states, and high self-censorship (Duffy, 2014; Rugh, 2004).

The patterns of interrelationship among political and media system characteristics in the studied Gulf countries are summarized in Table 2.1. As has been mentioned earlier, the analytical dimensions introduced by Hallin & Mancini (2004) were applied to the media system in the Gulf region. Gulf countries have not been fully discussed in media systems typologies, and Arab countries in general are considered exceptional because of their unique political systems that give no value for democracy. The four dimensions for the analysis of media systems are political parallelism, journalistic professionalism, media market and role of the state, with some modifications to ensure that Gulf countries' media systems typology presented here have a perfect fit. First, the role of state dimension (state intervention) encompasses all other dimensions because ruling powers in the Gulf region exercise a controlling influence over these dimensions. Second,

political parallelism was substituted with social media surveillances because the tradition of political parallelism remains absent in the region, and social media has been linked to changes in the political arena in the region but involves a much larger process of cultural change. This chart is just the first step to offer a means for comparing GCC countries to

Table 2.1. *State Intervention in GCC Media Systems*

| Dimensions / Country | Laws and Regulations | Economic | Professionalization | Social Media Surveillance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Saudi Arabia** Strong state intervention | State imposes strict laws and regulations Licenses for publishers High self-censorship Not free/172nd | Private ownership Low level of independence Editor of newspapers is appointed by states | Weaker professionalization | Powerful Surveillance Updated laws and regulations |
| **Bahrain** Strong state intervention | State imposes strict laws and regulations Licenses for publishers High self-censorship Not free/167th | Private ownership Low level of independence Editor of newspapers is appointed by states, | Weaker professionalization | Powerful Surveillance Updated laws and regulations |
| **UAE** Strong/ Medium state intervention | Strict laws and regulations on local media outlets – law or medium on international news organizations Licenses for publishers high self-censorship Not free/133rd | Private ownership Strongly aligned with the government Low level of independence | Weaker professionalization | Powerful Surveillance Updated laws and regulations |
| **Oman** Medium state intervention | Relatively medium laws and regulations Licenses for publishers self-censorship Not free/132nd | Private ownership and state-owned Depend fully on advertising Medium level of independence | Relatively strong professionalization | Medium Surveillance Updated laws and regulations |
| **Kuwait** Limited state intervention | Relatively soft laws and regulations Licenses for publishers self-censorship Partly free/108th | Private ownership and state-owned (no politicians' interference) Commercialization, high level of independence | Strong professionalization | Limited Surveillance Updated laws and regulations |

one another, developing dimensions that accurately capture points of comparison. Thus, capturing complexities of Gulf countries' media systems by applying media typologies that have been developed by various scholars is the first step to understanding the patterns of interrelationship among political and media systems in the Gulf region.

A better understanding of media systems will lead to clear explanations of the practices of news consumers. The media system in a given society is complex because of the relationship between media systems and other fields, such as politics and economy. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that "one cannot understand the news media without understanding the nature of the state, the system of political parties, the pattern of relations between economic and political interests, and the development of civil society, among other elements of social structures" (p. 8). However, media consumers have not been considered as a main variable that can define media systems based on their behaviors. This dissertation will fill this gap in media systems research by exploring the news consumption of people and their behavior as the locus of agency that contributes to the formation of media systems as a form of social life.

# CHAPTER 3

## ONLINE NEWS ENVIRONMENT AND JOURNALISTS

The Internet undoubtedly is one of the most remarkable innovations that has made the greatest impact in the history of communication (Barton, 2005). It has shifted the way information is created and consumed because of its nature as an immediate and unlimited supplier of vast amounts of news and information not subjected to gatekeeping (Scott, 2005). The distribution of news and information through digital media outlets are no longer restricted to those in power, nor limited to media organizations. Individuals who know how to use the Internet have the ability to produce and distribute information as well (McNair, 2009). For journalists, the Internet allows them to provide more personal opinions, and include news audiences in the gatekeeping process (Singer, 2005). The new rules of digital media supersede old media policies due to the Internet gaining increasing dominance.

There is a general agreement that online media form a significant and constant feature of the global communications landscape and will remain vulnerable to the influence of media and strengthen the profession. One of most obvious impacts is that online media is considered a fundamental element in journalism to the point where some of the most read and well-known newspapers in the world have ceased to produce print copy editions (e.g. Curran, 2010), and have drastically cut their news staffs (e.g. Downie & Schudson, 2009). Even though the Internet has been a positive force in journalism, traditional media in most countries, even in democratic nations, have tended to resist the existence of new technologies (Regan, 2000; Singer, 2003). Traditional news

organizations were fearful and suspicious of these changes to their established

journalistic norms and values (Hermida, 2010b; Rosen, 2005). Optimistic supporters of

new technology assured that these technologies would only influence the way journalists

communicate, but not eliminate the field of journalism (Regan, 2000; Singer, 2003;

Shirky, 2011). This chapter first discusses the nature of the online news environment and

the prevalence of social media that has changed news productions forever before turning

to the Twitter revolution in the Arab world. Also, this chapter describes different types of

journalists in these authoritarian regimes who produce news content that might be

questionable in some cases due to the anonymity of their identities.

**Online News Platforms**

As technology changed and blogging gained in popularity, blogs spread like

wildfire in the Arab region, reaching more than 40,000 blogs by 2006. They became

more influential than ever due to the Arab region struggling to find a platform that

provided balanced coverage, where they felt free to talk about any subject and not

restricted to government regulations (Hamdy, 2009). News audiences seem to see blogs

as their dream medium in contrast to traditional media outlets that are limited and

restricted. Blogs created a free platform for Arabs away from government intervention;

however, bloggers were very careful when it came to their real identities. Early bloggers

used nicknames in order to remain anonymous and avoid getting accused of undermining

the basis of the society (Lacey, 2009). Also, bloggers who expressed their feelings about

sensitive topics and criticized the government faced a number of serious accusations and

jailed because of their blogs' productions (Lacey, 2009).

Similar to blogs, Twitter, a free social networking and microblogging service, has a great and controversial influence on journalism. Twitter is considered one of the most well-known social media platforms. As of August 2019, there are 330 million monthly active users, 41% of these are daily active users. The number of tweets that are sent reaches 500 million tweets per day in more than 35 languages. Twitter as a social platform has become among the most important means by which news is published. It has been a valuable journalistic tool and allowed journalists to spread news mixed with their analysis, thoughts, and comments to provide a significant influence on the daily work routine of journalists (Willnat & Weaver, 2018; Zeller & Hermida, 2015). Twitter has dramatically changed the work environment of journalists by bringing a positive impact as well as more challenges. The accelerated popularity of social media in the news field has created a special relationship where journalists adopt social media to practice journalistic and para-journalistic activities of reporting, evaluation, and dissemination (Subašic & Berendt, 2011).

**Twitter and News Productions**

It is notable that the global increase in online platform usage contributes to the changes in the way news is produced and distributed, and how citizens discuss and interact with online news. Twitter as a news platform is more like a public sphere that allows people to stay informed about topics and events that are relevant to them, especially in non-democratic societies where mainstream media still functions under governments' authority and audiences seek alternative news venues. Twitter is considered a news outlet where users share breaking news and information, such as

tracking social and political movements, bringing to light news events, or discussing

controversial topics (Lampos, De Bie, & Cristianini, 2010; Popescu, & Pennacchiotti,

2010). Also, traditional news organizations and journalists were early adopters of Twitter

due to "its speed and brevity make it ideal for pushing out scoops and breaking news to

Twitter-savvy readers" (Farhi, 2009, p. 28). Twitter has been used as an important

journalistic tool for everyday news reporting (Zeller & Hermida, 2015) where more than

85% of trending topics on Twitter are news-related content (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon,

2010). Traditional news organizations use Twitter as resources for news stories (Lariscy,

Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009) or as source of developing enticing news headlines

that are published by strangers' tweets (Copeland, 2011). Thus, Twitter has become a fuel

for traditional media outlets, e-newspapers, and blogs to collect news stories. Almost all

traditional outlets in the U.S. have official accounts on Twitter (Messner, Linke & Eford,

2011).

At various occasions, Twitter has proved its importance role in creating news for

both the traditional media outlets and the public. Twitter's role has been found in political

communication where politicians and individuals adopt Twitter to engage in public

debate and discourse, particularly during election campaigns (Graham, Jackson, &

Broersma, 2016; Jungherr, 2016; Kruikemeier, 2014; Larsson & Ihlen, 2015; Skogerbø,

Bruns, Quodling, & Ingebretsen, 2016). Scholars have given more attention to the role of

Twitter for publishing breaking news coverage (Allan, 2012), and during serious

situations, including but not limited to natural disasters (Bruno, 2011; Cooper, 2011),

uprisings, protests (Hermida et al., 2014; Knight, 2012; Vis, 2013), and social movements

(Bailo & Vromen, 2017; Lim, 2013; Miller, 2017; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011; Youmans & York, 2012). Another emphasis of research focused on the impact of Twitter on journalism practice (Messner et al., 2011; Hermida, 2010a & 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012; Canter, 2013; Russell, Hendricks, Choi & Stephens, 2015). Scholars found that Twitter has become an important tool in journalism to the point where journalists consider Twitter an integral part of their daily work (Parmelee, 2014) and citizens see it as an essential source for news gathering (Broersma & Graham, 2012 & 2013).

The popularity of Twitter and its frequency of use has impacted journalism practice and audience's consumption. Twitter becomes a way of generating story ideas allowing for a wide selection of sources that can provide alternative viewpoints (Brands, 2014; Metag & Rauchfleisch, 2017; Parmelee, 2014). Others point out that news on Twitter allows journalists to cite political elites and government officials as news sources in their reporting (Broersma & Graham, 2012; Moon & Hadley, 2014; Skogerbø et al., 2016; Wallsten, 2015). Several studies have examined the types of tweets cited in news reporting and found that journalists cite tweets from ordinary citizens and other non-official sources (Broersma & Graham, 2013; Paulussen & Harder, 2014). Given the studies available, the increasingly significant role of Twitter in the news system as a source for both journalists (news producers) and audiences (news consumers) has impacted journalist source relations and news audience attitudes.

**The Twitter Revolution in the Gulf Region**

Arab news organizations or gatekeepers are more likely to align with the governments' preferences than their own personal opinions. However, the rise of social

media created a functioning professional relationship between online platforms and citizens against a dictatorship government. The use of social media in the Arab Spring grabbed scholars' attention (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Weber, 2011), in which social media was seen as "organizing agents and amplifying vehicles of collective action" (Barisione, Michailidou & Airoldi, 2017, p. 3). Unlike traditional media outlets in the Arab region, social media helps transform citizens' voices into real world protests (Juris, 2012; Lim, 2012) by creating a new digital form of political power (Barisione et al., 2017), where people with different backgrounds unite by creating "shared repertoires of contention" (Lim, 2012, p. 244). Social media has helped citizens in the Arab world bridge social capital, reinforce collective identity (Milan, 2015; Tufekci, 2014), fight negative images fabricated by opposition (Treré, 2015), bring activists' stories and traditional media coverage to amplify the movement (Bailo & Vromen, 2017; Chadwick, 2017), enhance civic engagement (Papacharissi, 2015), and smooth the diffusion of emotional and motivational content of the movement (Jost et al., 2018; Penney & Dadas, 2014).

Social media platforms were considered a significant tool in helping distribute news and information as well as mobilizing protesters during the Arab Spring by creating "safe spaces" for protesters to discuss the movement's agenda and provides "a type of public commons for free speech" that does not exist elsewhere (Khamis & Vaughn, 2012, p. 157). Others emphasize the power of social media in which movements, such as the Arab Spring, would not have happened without social media (Alqudsi-ghabra, 2012). Emphasizing the power of social media in constructing the public's understandings of

shared concern and ideology in a political movement identity that is sometimes addressed by a hashtag (Bastos, Mercea & Charpentier, 2015; De Choudhury, Jhaver, Sugar & Weber, 2016; Earl, 2018).

The easy-to-use features of social media play a great role in the production and exchange of news during the Arab Spring in which Arab governments became fearful of how unrestricted access to social media platforms could affect their regimes and ideologies. Therefore, governments started to strictly censor the information available online by blocking blogs that oppose the government. During the Arab Spring revolution, some Arab governments blocked all access to the Internet as a whole to prevent the publishing of anti-government views. Even though Arab governments restrict Internet freedom, online users have always found ways to fight back by using technological tools, such as web proxies and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). Thus, restrictions and censorship of online materials seems to be a failing mission and will go out of control every time governments try to as its popularity in the region as a new-found freedom space.

## Journalism and Twitter

The innovations of new technological and social media outlets leads scholars to rethink and redefine some major concepts in the communication field, and answer questions that "go to the heart of the model of source-message-receiver with which the field has struggled" (Morris & Ogan, 1996, p. 39). Social media redefines the classic idea of journalistic practices in which "sources become media, media become sources, users become media, and this sequence would continue because they are all at the same

horizontal level of conversation or active listening" (Noguera-Vivo, 2013, p. 105). The

desire of using social media and the Internet for news updates has been supported by

many scholars (Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Evans, 2009) in which journalists and

audiences make social media platforms one of the preferred sources for obtaining news

update (e. g Broersma, & Graham, 2013; Paulussen & Harder, 2014).

**Type of Journalists on Twitter**

In general, journalists on Twitter tend to be categorized in three groups. The first

group is professional journalists who have been trained by specialists and have to follow

a specific set of ethical standards and guidelines. Mostly, they are affiliated with a news

organization and officially connected with that organization to do a particular set of tasks.

Professional journalists  normalize the use of social media, specially Twitter (e.g.

Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012; Lawrence, Molyneux, Coddington, & Holton, 2014;

Molyneux & Mourão, 2017) to fit the old professional norms and practices. Studied point

out that journalists use social media for: 1) newsgathering and sharing (Creech, 2015;

McGregor & Molyneux, 2018; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018; Thurman, 2018; Willnat

& Weaver, 2018), 2) branding themselves and promoting their work (e.g. Holton &

Molyneux, 2017; Molyneux, 2015; Molyneux, Holton, & Lewis, 2018), and 3) increasing

interaction and engagement with the audience (e.g. Gil de Zúñiga, Diehl, & Ardèvol-

Abreu, 2018; Molyneux, 2015; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018).

The second includes non-professional journalists that are known as citizen

journalists. Citizen journalists are ordinary citizens who have not been trained to work in

the field of journalism, but are interested in sharing news and have access to most tools

available for professional journalists. Citizen journalists are non-professionals who are involved in information-sharing, including a variety of contexts within which citizen involvement can take place, ranging from capturing a single news event (a short video of a single moment), reporting at irregular intervals, or steadily producing news (Wall, 2015). Also, citizen journalists could be sharing news content on their own through personal blogs or personal social media accounts, or could be part of a project conducted by professional journalists (Roberts, 2019).

Along with professional journalists and citizen journalists who use Twitter for news production, there is another significant player in the field of journalism in most Gulf countries: unidentified journalists that offer news services only on Twitter. They have no names and no profile pictures to reveal their identities. These journalists could be professional journalists or citizen journalists who want to remain anonymous in order to freely express their feelings about certain issues or criticizing the governments without fear. This is similar to what early bloggers did in some of these authoritarian regimes who used nicknames to hide their identities (Lacey, 2009). This type of journalists is relatively new, and they produce their own news stories based on their own sources. Those unidentified journalists play the traditional role of both editor-in-chief and news reporter; thus, taking full responsibility of what is being posted on their Twitter account. In fact, these journalists mostly use Twitter as their main and only distribution method, only targeting news consumers on Twitter. Unidentified journalists are not affiliated with news organizations; thus, their interaction and informal language seem to get people's attention.

News consumers in these authoritarian regions where media outlets are fully monitored by governments are aware of the fact that the government's agenda lies under each published news story by professional and citizen journalists, especially stories that are sensitive and can influence governments' regulations and policy. Therefore, they steer clear from them and want to obtain news independent from the government by seeking a different news outlet, such as these anonymous news Twitter accounts. However, it is worth noting that these unidentified journalists could be operating as another form of propaganda as Al-Ghazzi, (2014) and Carter, Maher and Neumann (2014) discovered when they studied the role of citizen journalists in social media.

**News on Twitter: The Challenge for Journalists**

Social media, especially Twitter, has grown to promote equal opportunities for both ordinary users and journalists in having a role in news framework, in opposition to traditional news outlets or to professional journalists who are subject to the filters and processes of gatekeeping (Roberts, 2019). Along with that, social media has bought several challenges to the field of journalism especially when it comes to the quality and credibility of the produced content. Social media has been found to be a fertile ground for spreading low-quality content or misinformation that is produced by social media users or professional journalists who sacrifice the accuracy/quality for speed, provide non-professional or low-quality news contents, and sometimes, participate through creating and/or spreading misinformation and fake news, relating to what Quandt (2018) refers to as "dark participation". These factors play into traditional journalistic values and practices, raising more questions about the integrity and reputation of journalism as well

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as the necessity for news authentication and verification in the digital age to distinguish between the "news" and the so-called "news".

Journalists and news organizations have sacrificed quality for speed (Stepp, 2009; Tandoc Jr et al., 2018; Weaver & Willnat, 2016), which takes news distribution away from traditional gatekeepers and "can threaten the integrity of the editorial process" (Foreman, 2015, p. 157). Journalists have allowed speedy distribution of news as they are enthusiastic in being quick in publishing and depend on grabbing the attention of the audience by making them "click" on their news stories (Scott, 2017; Tandoc Jr et al., 2018). Scholars have argued that fake news can travel and spread through social media at lightning-quick speeds, which makes fake news a part of audiences' daily news routine (e.g. Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Tandoc Jr et al., 2018). Also, the algorithms of social media platforms are "designed to prioritize engaging rather than trustworthy posts" (Shao, Ciampaglia, Varol, Flammini, & Menczer, 2017, p. 2), which creates difficulties in finding quality news content that is trustworthy (Ciampaglia, Nematzadeh, Menczer, & Flammini, 2018). Another challenge centers around news audiences who are now being included and allowed to significantly affect the news content (Hermida, 2012), and sometimes, takeover a journalist's role in news production by producing non-professional news content (Wall, 2015), which leads to crucial changes in journalistic values (Hermida, 2013) and creates a significant threat to the future of journalism.

# CHAPTER 4

## MEDIA REPERTOIRE AND NEWS CONSUMPTIONS

### News Consumption Across Platforms

Scholars are concerned that audience attention might get distracted moving between sources because of the enormous diversity in the news media landscape, which makes news inescapable (Dunaway, Searles, Sui, & Paul, 2018). Thus, Molyneux (2017) argues that studying news consumption requires looking at news use across different media platforms, even though smartphones seem to be the preferred news platform for the majority of people. The rapid change of news consumption practices is notable. There are three huge shifts in users consumption practices that are identified by Purcell et al. (2010). First, people used to consume news in specific places and at given times, such as the daily 8 o'clock news broadcast (Swart et al., 2017a), but now they individually select any moment to consume news on their smartphones. Second, people shifted from generalized news to customized news to fulfill personal needs and desires. Finally, people switched from being passive recipients to being active contributors (Purcell et al., 2010).

People use the variety of news media platforms available to them in the process of being aware of what is going on around them. In today's news media, individuals have access to an increasing number of platforms, and sometimes combine the use of legacy media with online media by expanding and navigating different norms of news media consumption. The digitalization not only offers users an abundance of news sources but also allows people to be exposed to news content they want to consume, when, where, and how. Thus, news users selectively adopt their own paths across the media landscape,

and consume news content on different media platforms (Picone, Courtois, & Paulussen 2015). Previous research has tried to map current news consumption changes in two different ways. One possible way is to investigate the news stories which users spend the most time reading by trying to trace news users' clicking behaviors on online media (e.g. Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013), or conducting surveys to interrogate audiences' news usage (e.g. Mitchell, Holcomb, & Page, 2013; Newman, Levy, & Nielsen, 2015). The second way is to conduct an in-depth investigation to discover the value of news in users' daily lives and how they consume news content (e.g. Zerba, 2011). However, focusing on both ways of perceived news use and the perceived importance of news platforms is significant in order to be able to comprehend the complexity of news use.

**Tracing News on Twitter**

Twitter becomes a useful tool for citizens to get news updates because of its wide range of content choices. However, audiences try to narrow these abundant choices down by applying their personal preferences. Yet, there is no clear evidence of how Twitter users create their personal characteristics across this platform and what drives them to contribute in news dissemination by sharing, liking, and recommending news content in this environment. Studies emphasize that speed and simplicity of online news are what attract audiences to consider social media, especially Twitter, as the primary source for news updates. However, these digital technologies and online news platforms allow journalistic practice to experience a quick acceleration, which has a variety of consequences. Twitter news accounts may produce ever-shallower news content because

of the fundamental temporal characteristics of news reporting in this environment such as speed, immediacy, and simultaneity.

It is notable that the global increase in social media usage such as Twitter and Facebook contributes in changing the way that news is produced and distributed by news organizations and shifting how citizens discuss and interact with online news. For instance, in the third world countries social media provide a chance of shifting the political system in authoritarian regimes (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). This was clear in Egypt and Libya where the public used Facebook and Twitter to "to share their political positions and document abuses of state power across global communication networks" (Creech, 2015, p. 1011). Yet, there are only a preliminary understanding of how reliable social media are as sources for news compared to other media outlets, especially during critical events and the extent to which the public relies on social media for news updates as well as the impact that social media have on traditional media viewing patterns. Also, questions remain regarding how the public use social media platforms to engage in more involved forms of news use, and whether these developments enhance or curtail news consumption and interaction.

In most developing world countries, all different kinds of media channels function under the government's scope. However, "the technology of the Internet embodies the culture of freedom" (Castells, 2012, p. 231). Social media change the way that people receive and interact with news, especially in the Middle East (Lotan et al., 2011), which have created the opportunity for more freedom and independence for the public to engage more in news discussion. The following sections will address the media repertoires and

how news consumers value news and select it from the news media environment, as well as the relationship between news use and social connection. After that, the paper offers a background on news media consumption and draws a connection between that and the media system, and its connection to the government, the news environment and political pressure, and the role of journalists on Twitter. These factors may influence users' news repertoires and consumption, especially in countries where there is no freedom of speech.

## Media Repertoire and News Consumptions

People put together their cross-media news repertoires to select from the rich media environment, which could be analyzed to elucidate user behaviors. In response to the growth of a wide range of technological platforms that individuals use to consume media, scholars have noticed that audiences develop media repertoires that meet their own tastes and circumstances, and satisfy their needs (Reagan, 1996; Yuan, 2011). Scholars differently defined the term "repertoire". For Hasebrink and Popp (2006), "media repertoire" is a person's entire set or portfolio of media outlets that are selected for daily consumption. Thus, a media repertoire is a collection of media outlets "combined into a comprehensive pattern of media use", which is "characteristic for individual users" (Bjur et al., 2013, p. 28). Also, a media repertoire has been defined as a group of media outlets that are banded together in the same location or situation, which an audience could adopt once entering that location/situation (Taneja et al., 2012). Therefore, media repertoire from Hasebrink and Popp's perspective includes an abundance of media outlets that are used momentarily or largely by audiences while Taneja et al. consider media repertoire as a limited media outlets selection that existed in

a specific location/situation such as home, work, etc. Consequently, media repertoire is "the collection of communication channels and identifiable routines of use for specific communication purposes within a defined community" (Watson-Manheim & Bélanger, 2007, p. 268).

Even though the media selection and exposure includes gratification as a significant factor that causes audiences to adopt diverse media repertoires, there is a correlation between news consumption and place, which could influence individuals' news repertoires. Peters (2012) and Soja (1996) indicate that research into everyday life practices should consider the "spatiality" of human life besides the importance of "historicality" and "sociality" conditions. Schrøder's (2015) concept of "worthwhileness equation" tries to explain the relationship between news consumption and place by investigating the interrelationship of seven dimensions that are situated under news media repertoires. These dimensions focus on time spent, situational fit, normative pressures, public connection possibilities, price, participatory potential, and technological appeal. Audiences obtain these dimensions as a part of their media socialization, which determines the approaches of choosing news that then become part of someone's news media repertoire.

**Worthwhileness**

The notion of "worthwhileness" is derived from audiences' daily selections from the online "supermarket of news" (Schrøder, 2015, p. 61). It is undeniable that the anywhere/anytime technologies give rise to news consumption but it is worth noting that the high news consumption sometimes came from "worthwhileness by default"

(Schrøder, 2015, p, 74) wherein news consumption occurs by coincidentally, serendipitously, or unconsciously because audiences are exposed to news headline or overview. The "worthwhileness" of news sometimes is determined by "public connection" (Schrøder, 2015), that is defined as news content that leads to "an orientation to a public world where matters of shared concern are ... addressed" (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2007, p. 3). The concept of public connection has been extended "to include any news content which helps maintain relations to one's networks and the wider society" (Schrøder, 2015, p. 63). Therefore, individuals may follow news content that does not personally influence them but instead it concerns those around them (Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2017a).

The value of news is based on its use in people's daily social interactions (Heikkilä, Kunelius, & Ahva, 2010) more than technological medium or platform (Schrøder, 2015). News value "lies in its ability to help people navigate within personal, professional, cultural, and political networks and in showing how individuals' everyday life is related to those of others" (Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2017b, p. 907). Thus, individuals' news selections revolves around being fabulous in their social group regardless the types of chosen news. The role of news for people in digital societies creates a connection between individuals, in which news becomes meaningful in users' daily life contexts. Some scholars argue digitalized news impacts the way that news used to be perceived as a genre of information to be a part of social experience (Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan, 2012; Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010) Swart et al. (2017b) introduce four dimensions of mediated public connection that

help to better understand how individuals connect to public life through digitalized news, which alters the media landscape. These dimensions are inclusiveness, engagement, relevance, and constructiveness.

**Inclusiveness**

The inclusiveness dimension examines the issues that people are connecting with and over. The news in traditional media is known as a bridge that connects individuals' community issues to what is happening outside their own world, which are considered universal and collective public issues (Coleman & Ross, 2010). Public news does not only benefit users in navigating their daily life and being active in society but also helps them to feel of a sense of belonging (Schrøder, 2015). The establishment of print news enhanced the creation of the modern nation as "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991, p.46). People became able to read the same newspapers everyday, which helped them to notice themselves as part of the bigger picture, going beyond the range or limits of their own societies and towns. In similar fashion, during the early days of television where there were limited options of channels, audiences considered TV news as a point of reference not because they were exposed to the same news content but watching news became embedded in their daily routines such as consuming news during dinner times in the household (Madianou, 2009). Historically, consuming the same news content allows people to express collective belonging through feelings of connection.

The new technologies and social media resulted in a huge change in the news landscape, which impacts the function of news as a social connection. Digitalization expands the news discourse that used to connect people within a society, and instead it

gives news audiences unlimited media choices in which they can navigate through different combinations of news outlets (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2010). This could minimize the overlap in news content consumed, and diminish the common experience between audiences as well as create a diversity of people's rituals and habits. Digitalization news allows audiences with similar interests to connect and be more visible; however, the collectivity of news on online media may lower the possibility of social connection (Swart et al., 2017b). Audiences have the ability to go anywhere to get news that interests them, which pulls the attention from legacy platforms. Thus, the features that online media news platforms, such as Twitter, offer change the whole concept of news consumption in which audiences have the possibility to set a variety of social agendas in different places. Technologies contribute to the creation of a free media environment and give people courage to have a voice (Gauntlett, 2011). Also, it gives the necessary opportunity for the public to shape what they discern as publicly relevant news content, which scatters the news media's power to integrate individuals in a social world (Swart et al., 2017b).

One of news media outlets' objectives is to connect audiences to particular public issues of society. Then, audiences should differentiate between public and private issues, but these boundaries are blurred and under negotiation (Swart et al., 2017b). However, the public is not only a space where people discuss relevant issues but it is a place where people debate over what constitutes public affairs (Kaun, 2012). The innovations of new technological and social media outlets, which are considered one of the biggest moves that took place within mass communication, have revolutionized people's lives. What is

considered as public information might get expanded in the age of digital transformation wherein individuals have access to other's personal spaces. An example of this is what is happening in social media platforms where people share private affairs, emotions, and personal information, which tend to lead towards a datafied society (Lewis, 2014). These trends allow boundaries between public and private issues to continue blurring and become hybrid notions (Chadwick, 2013).

The blurred boundaries between what is perceived as being public or private matters have redefined the general terms of 'the news' (Swart et al., 2017a). The term used to be exclusively utilized by journalists for a specific genre and guideline; however, the public audiences in online communities, such as bloggers and social media users, play a significant role in the news production along with journalists. The question of what is news becomes hard to answer because of the difficulties of distinguishing between what journalists bring as news and other types of information that are presented by users. Therefore, recognizing what users now perceive as newsworthy and how that aligns with journalists' notion of publicly relevant issues have become crucial for news media outlets in order to build relationships with their audiences and preserve their societal relevance.

**Engagement**

The second dimension of public connection is engagement wherein news users are less active in participating in society when they have something in common (Swart et al., 2017b). In the past decades, the public interaction with traditional institutions has been decreased, such as the lower number of people who vote in elections. This is applicable to the declining audiences of newspapers as traditional institutions that lose

their ability to impact people's everyday lives. The declining audiences of newspapers

and broadcasters and the rise of social and digital news media fit within this broader trend

where traditional institutions are losing influence on people's everyday lives. Putnam

(2000) attributed this decline in civic engagement to the fact that people distrust press and

politics along with the concern of losing personal interaction to non-verbal cues. For

instance, declining trust in press and politics in developed countries could explain the

establishment of a huge number of Twitter accounts as news sources (Almalki, 2016), or

as a tool that helped citizens to organize revolutions or marches.

The potentialities of social media change the way that people communicate with

each other by allowing them to interact with a worldwide audience and exchange vast

streams of content. However, "because online content creation is not bound to specific

formats, the forms that engagement through news takes have become increasingly

diverse" (Swart et al., 2017b, p. 910). The rise of social media has led scholars to

redefine public participation within the current digital revolution (e.g. Banaji &

Buckingham, 2013; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Vidali, 2010; Adler & Goggin, 2005). There

is some evidence pointing out that the diversity of platforms that users are exposed to

increases their levels of civic engagement (Molyneux, 2017). However, research on

citizen journalism tends to ignore the online users that are identified as "engaged

listeners" (Barnes, 2014, p. 554). Barnes (2014) argues that "engaged listeners may not

be taking the opportunity to make an active contribution, but they still value the

opportunity to do so" (p. 554), which is considered a valuable way for shaping opinions

and decision-making.

The "engaged listening" is a form of civic engagement even if audiences did not actively engage with news and public affairs. For example, the decreasing number of subscriptions at newspapers and the decline in TV news viewing rates may not speak to the fact the people are less interested in news. It may indicate the viewing habits of millennials to rely on digital news media more often and, instead, count on older family members to inform them about what is happening in the rational news outlets (Costera Meijer, 2007; Marchi, 2012). Likewise, some people might find the new content on social media or digital journalism platforms fit most with their personal lives and concerns, which enhances their engagement. Also, digitalization opens the door for a vast amount of news content, which makes the public look for news that has the same agenda that they have in a way that does not conflict with audiences' agenda. Harrison and Barthel (2009) point out that the importance of online media platforms comes from the ability of "vastly more users to experiment with a wider and seemingly more varied range of collaborative creative activities" (p. 174). However, Hardey (2007) argues that what makes these new media technologies important is "inherently social so that users are central to both the content and form of all material and resources" (p. 870). Researchers argue that people adopt diverse media repertoires by combining news from both digital and traditional platforms or by completely ignoring traditional news media (Schrøder & Kobbernagel, 2010; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2013). The main point here is to better understand the way that alternative news platforms become more valuable in connecting the public and its relation to the type of news that is situated in people's daily lives.

**Relevance**

The third dimension of public connection is relevance, which investigates the way and the reason that lead the public to connect with each other through the news content that are embedded in their daily lives (Swart et al., 2017b). News consumption is mostly habitual, such as watching sports or celebrities' news to maintain friendship. Also, studies found that people engage in reading newspapers to enhance their own feeling of being good citizens as well as to create social prestige because one of the civic duties that norms dictate is to follow news updates (e.g. Couldry et al., 2007). New technologies, particularly social media, offer a vast amount of news, which causes a wide range of audiences to adopt new habits and patterns, which help to keep relation with others especially distant one. Others point out that converting from print newspapers to online newspapers influences society because people get inquisitive about reading news in a new way despite its source (Ahmad, Hussain, & Aqil, 2014). Digitalization helps audiences to develop news media repertoires without requiring them to gather in fixed places and times as it used to be in the traditional era. For instance, scholars found that smartphone users have developed 'checking cycles' of certain apps and websites while they are performing their daily activities such as waiting for the bus (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2014). Therefore, checking news updates becomes one of people's daily routines, which influences "the transcendent values attached to these new news media repertoires" (Swart et al., 2017b, p. 911).

The availability of news in the digital era is inadequate to gain user's attention; thus news must be significant and enjoyable (Costera Meijer, 2013). Also, journalists

publish news based on its ability to transfer credible and ideal content but news audiences, on the other hand, are more interested in news content that is applicable or appropriate to be inserted in their daily lives in order to use them as subjects of discussion (Bird, 2003). It is clear that the relevance of the news becomes a key point that attracts news users' attention and helps them to decide which alternative news outlets to follow and what type of new content to care about. Relevance and awareness band together, which means that users pay attention to a relevant and comprehensive news, while awareness on the other side helps audiences to increase the relevance of news (Martin, 2008).

News relevance can enhance people's public connection in different ways. Simply, news may interlock with users' daily lives when it interferes with their town or workspace. However, the majority of published news does not directly influence those who consume it (Dobelli, 2013). Yet, people consistently consume news even though a great number of them do not consider news as part of their civic duty (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). People have the ability to add relevance to news even if it is not personally impacting them when news is framed in a particular way that makes the story seem credible and reliable (Martin, 2008). However, individual users are part of bigger social circles such as families, coworkers, or clubs. As Schrøder (2015) points out, the "worthwhileness" of news is determined by "public connection" that "include[s] any news content which helps maintain relations to one's networks and the wider society" (p. 63). Then, individuals may follow news content that does not personally influence them but instead it concerns those who are with them in the same social circles.

**Constructiveness**

The last dimension of mediated public connection is a lack of constructiveness, which has been heavily discussed by journalism scholars. News is good at bringing up awareness for discussed issues, but it fails to offer any type of solutions. This failure leads consumers to feel helplessness (Couldry et al., 2007) and weak to do anything about it (Glasser, 1999; Gyldensted, 2011), which causes some audiences to move to other sources (Schrøder & Kobbernagel, 2010). The rise of new technologies and social media in the news media landscape influences the constructiveness of news. First, there is a huge amount of news where the public can find solutions to discussed problems by "connecting people with others' expertise" (Swart et al., 2017b, p. 913). Also, the advanced development of algorithms on online news platforms allows users to filter and personalize their news updates, which may cause them to miss important news content because they rely on algorithms to pick news for them (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2014).

The power of digitalization opens a new path for users to engage more with the news by sharing, commenting, or debating, which creates an interlocking between online news users and journalism production. For instance, Twitter is considered a news outlet because of its features, such as the ability to do quick searches, create hashtags, and share breaking news immediately (Lampos, De Bie, & Cristianini, 2010; Sankaranarayanan, Samet, Teitler, Lieberman, & Sperling, 2009; Popescu, & Pennacchiotti, 2010; Evans, 2009). However, these features are threatening the future of traditional newspapers, especially in developing countries where media is run by the government (Alotaibi,

2015). Thus, independent journalists and news users become able to freely express themselves and engage more in some controversial debates without the government's limitations and control.

In general, the technological innovations have formed news consumers' habits and rituals and allowed them to have infinite access anywhere and anytime. For example, smartphones allow users to continuously check the news, which may change their behavior when they are notified about horrible events that just happened, such as a school shooting. Also, news can be produced by non-journalistic organizations, which may harm the credibility of sourcing in the journalism field. It is clear that these technologies have changed the way that individuals connect to public life through digitalized news. Yet, consumers become more selective and overcome with this infinite access by creating their cross-media news repertoires. Thus, the "worthwhileness" of news comes from consumers' daily selections from the online "supermarket of news" (Schrøder, 2015, p. 61). Sometimes, the news selection relies on the social point of view in which news becomes meaningful in users' daily life contexts. Yet, the way that people consume, expose, discuss, and interact with news could vary across platforms. The question becomes what criteria news consumers use to create their cross-media news repertoires and connect their relations to the wider society.

# CHAPTER 5

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

**Overview**

Scholars indicate that media platforms are formed by the structures of political

systems. Siebert et al. (1956) first introduce this new approach of thinking regarding the

interaction between the media and the public. They realize that "the press always takes on

the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates"

(Siebert et al., 1956, p. 1). Their argument suggests that journalism accomplishes its

coherence through interactions with other spheres of public life. It has been

acknowledged that the relationship between media and public is homogeneous where

media shape public life and vice versa (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The understanding of

this systemic relationship will help explain the way people interact within the media

system they are in when it comes to tracking news and creating repertoires across media

platforms.

Human behavior is one of the main elements of the social world that has been

studied by different prestigious who base their discussion on either objectivist or

subjectivist perspectives with no middle ground. Anthony Giddens makes a brilliant

move regarding his idea on the delicate relationship between macro-perspective (structure

or external) and micro-perspective (agency or internal) forces. Thus, Giddens' approach

explains the importance of both the macro-level structures and micro-level traits of social

systems. Giddens uses selected terminology to explain the complex interrelations

between agency and structure. The relationship between human agent and social forces

may not seem obvious at first glance. Therefore, the focus here will be on explaining the usage of these essential concepts as well as their relation to media systems (structure) and news audience (agency), with "duality of structure" being the fundamental concept for studying news consumers in media systems. Journalistic professionalism is crucial to the understanding of media structure duality as it can be influenced by structure and in turn, influence agents.

**Theory of Structuration**

Even though the theory of structuration can provide a great theoretical framework that explains the connection between the motivations of news users and the media structures they utilize, it is not widely applied to media consumption (Webster, 2009). Applying Giddens' approach to media systems will allow for a greater understanding of the relationship between the media environment and news consumers for two broad reasons. First, communication scholars mostly study audiences from a psychological point of view by trying to investigate issues such as media choice and patterns of media consumption. They rarely consider the connection between agency and structure, making the choice and consumption of media users an outcome of individual agency (Bräuchler & Postill, 2010; Couldry, 2004, 2012; Webster, 2009). On the other hand, in media system studies, the relation of structure to agency is hardly examined (Peruško, Vozab, & Čuvalo, 2013). However, there are rare exceptions, Webster (2009) builds on Giddens' structuration theory to develop a "theory of media choice that views agency and structure as mutually constituted" (p. 221), where he argues that the choices and habits of media audiences from the available media context can in turn result in a change in that content.

Thus, Giddens' theoretical approach can offer a substitutional framework for media system research in which it reconciles the agents' behaviors with the media structures they utilize (Peruško, Vozab, & Čuvalo, 2013; Webster, 2009).

Second, Giddens (1984) sees audiences as strongly voluntaristic in which he argues that human agents "have the possibility of doing otherwise" (p. 258), unless they have been forced by coercion or physical power. However, the structures of media systems in most Gulf countries are built to deprive audiences from having the power of choosing. The authoritarian governments in Gulf countries have vague regulations and indefinite "red lines" that must not be crossed by media professionals. These "red lines" influence both media structures (macro-level) and news consumers (micro-level) and indicate a lack of professionalism, poor press laws and ethics, journalistic corruption, and control that forces journalists to produce content that serves governments' interests (Pintak & Ginges, 2012). Furthermore, it guides news consumers toward a particular way of media use that aligns with the governments' perspectives.

Media structure is rapidly shifting, now more than ever due to technological innovations and online media, which is redefining the relation between structures and human agents. Audiences become able to change media systems properties by reproducing structures when they ignore the rules of governments or find replacement outlets for their media use. Therefore, the essential concept in Giddens' approach "duality of structure" will be a beneficial tool to interpret the mutual relation between media systems and agency that is mainly caused by the technological innovations, especially in the Gulf region. The concept of duality is of particular importance in this context, as

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media systems construct and constrain the way audiences engage with their media environment. Drawing on Giddens' (1984) duality of structure concept, Morley (1992) argues, "macro structures can only be reproduced through micro processes" (p. 19). Therefore, news consumption in a given society would offer a great explanation regarding the power of media systems where it describes how media functions on a micro-level in news audience processes, without eliminating their consumption from the process of media structure.

In the context of the present study, it is important to generate general insights into the interaction between structure and agency, with journalistic professionalism as an important factor that leaves its mark on how human agents as audiences organize their online news tracking. Thus, three elements are important. As the first step, using Hallin & Mancini (2004)'s analytical dimensions as presented in Table 2.1 to develop a set of characteristics that can be applied to the selected five countries in order to guide media system analysis. Second, the focus on journalistic professionalism as media actors bearing in mind the influence of factor one, including resources, and rules and regulations (written and unwritten). These dominating factors are a significant key explaining how journalism works in a certain society and how their work influences news consumers' repertoires and motivations. Journalistic professionalism and independence can be limited not only by the structure (media system), but also by news consumers who have an overwhelming amount of choices as termed by Schrøder (2015), the "supermarket of news" (p. 61). Thus, journalists want to attract audiences' attention. Leading to the third point, consumers become more selective and overcome this infinite access by creating

cross-media news repertoires, keeping in mind that news consumers criteria may be influenced by both media system and journalistic professionalism.

Previous chapters have shown that most existing media typologies and comparative frameworks are designed to try and offer an ideal understanding of the relationship between media and politics, which is a macro-perspective (structure or external). In another line of research, studies on news consumers has focused on media choice or audience behavior, which is a micro-perspective (agency or internal). The relationship between macrolevel structures or microlevel traits has not been fully investigated. Therefore, the focus here will be on explaining the relationship to media systems (structure) and news audience (agency), with "duality of structure" being the fundamental concept for studying news consumers in media systems.

This chapter describes the research questions that will be addressed and the hypotheses that will be tested throughout this dissertation in order to understand the systemic relationship between the way people interact within the media system they are in when it comes to tracking news and creating repertoires across media platforms. Understanding the nature of macro-micro relationships as well as the mutual interaction between media systems and individuals' actions is logical, as media systems can be both a restriction and an enabling factor for news consumers, as well as news consumers almost always "have the possibility of doing otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 258). Thus, media systems have a great power to modify news audience behavior and news audiences selectively adopt their own paths across the media landscape.

**The Duality of Structure**

Structuration theory attempts to recast human action based on the impact of both structure and agency, known as the "duality of structure" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). Structuration theory bridges two philosophical schools of thought that have largely been observed as incompatible: those who are concerned with structure as the only way to explain social behavior and those who are concerned with agency as human agents are independent of structures (Giddens, 1984). Two major schools of sociological enquiry can be in line with "society" and the "individual" (Giddens, 1984, p, 162). Basically, structuration theory sets out to "put an end to each of these empire-building endeavours" (Giddens, 1984, p. 2) by revamping the mutually exclusive dualism of the aforementioned schools of thought, but rather they feed into each other.

The duality of structure can be described as the "essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices" (Giddens,1979, p. 69). Thus, social structure exists in the actions of human agents, and people live within the existing structure as well as create a new social structure in the course of everyday life. Giddens (1979) states, "The concept of structuration involves that of the *duality of structure*, which relates to the *fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency*" (p. 69). It is clear that Giddens' approach elucidates the interdependence between structure and agency in shaping and changing society, and shows that both are dependent upon one another and recursively related. The "duality of structure" is the core element of Giddens theoretical approach. Therefore, it is necessary

to understand the mutual relations between agents and structures in their linkage to media systems.

Firstly, drawing on Giddens' structuration theory, structures and human agents are the fundamental elements of any media systems. Structures are "rules and resources" that are related to media systems. In this context, rules are a set of explicit or accepted regulations that act as guidelines in order to govern the performance of media professionals. Thus, news consumers are bound by media system structures, and at the same time, can influence and change those structures, which in Giddens' view is a part of agents' actions. This is "a dynamic and simultaneous process" (Dany, 2013, p.42), where the rules and standards of media systems (structures) can be influenced by audiences (agents) when they, for instance, reproduce, replace or ignore these principles. The continual interaction between the structures of the media environment and audiences' media use are notable (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 2005; Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff & Virk, 2012; Yuan & Ksiazek, 2011).

Media systems and structure fields "change through a process of struggle among the agents working within them, and the direction of change is not predetermined", and as a result, other fields that are related to media, such as politics and economics, will also become affected (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 81-82). Thus, the structure of media systems is "determined, at any given moment, by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field" (Johnsons, 1993, p. 7). The practices of news audiences are what create the interrelationship between media systems (structure) and audiences (agency). Media systems function within certain ideologies as well as policies and

produce content that aligns with their agenda and also attract the audiences' attention. Thus, audiences are a main factor in this equation. Audiences build their media choices based on the structure of the media system, their choices can alter or hold the respective media environment. However, media producers are able to manipulate these choices "by manufacturing a structured set of options that guide media choice" (Webester, 2009, p. 227). In sum, media systems as structures impose certain restrictions on the audiences' behavior and actions. However, with time, these structures become more malleable due to the audiences' behavior that often constitutes future structures (Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Meyen, 2018; Webster, 2009).

**Media Systems (Structure)**

The discussed typologies of media systems and many others not cited here brought a great understanding of the diversity of media systems and communication around the globe by exploring different media characteristics. The criteria includes types of media ownership, particularly focusing on the diversity of ownership, the level of government involvement in the media system, as well as media laws, regulations, licensing authorities, and media ministries. Using Giddens' terminology, structures in media systems are the factors that media organizations and institutions in a given society share, such as the political, economic, professional, and governmental factors. More specifically, structures are the rules and regulations that govern media systems. From Giddens' perspective, "rules and resources" are embedded within social systems. In this context, resources are the rich and structured media environments that provide media services and materials to human agents through technological tools. Through this, human

agents are able to choose and enact their media preferences. However, governments

and/or media industries have their own agenda and motivations that cause them to guide

media consumption to meet those ends (Webster, 2009). In this context, rules are a set of

frameworks or guidelines that exercise control over media systems and dominate how

media professionals function, such as codified rules (media laws) or professional

principles (ethical codes). By using media systems as a structure, rules put more

restriction on social actions taken by human agents (news consumers), while resources

facilitate actions (Giddens, 1984).

RQ1: How do residents of gulf countries perceive levels of state intervention?

The continuous production and reproduction of news through the actions of news

consumers raises a concern regarding routinization, which leads Giddens (1984) to argue

that "routine is integral both to the continuity of the personality of the agent … and to the

institutions of society, which are such only through their continued reproduction" (p. 60).

As media use is intertwined with people's everyday lives, news consumption becomes

embedded in their daily routines. Thus, routine and habit are considered one of the factors

that may influence behavior and preferences of agents when they consume news.

RQ2: To what extent are people aware of the influence that state involvement has

on their media consumption habits?

The press of freedom ranking that is conducted by Reporters Without Borders is

based on different elements, such as the nature of political systems, promotion of

democracy, and the journalism environment in a given society. None of the previous

studies related specifically to the relationship between press freedom and people's

perceptions of state involvement. Thus, news consumers are expected to have different perceptions and understandings of the influence that their media system may play in their media choice or their behaviors.

H1: The lower a country's press freedom ranking, the more state intervention its residents will perceive.

Social media have become critical tools for news-gathering and participating in other social/political activities, especially in a non-free and independent press society (Boulianne, 2019). Obtaining news stories that are free of censorship and promote free expression space are what push news consumers in non-democratic countries to online sites along with running away heavy state control of news content (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Thus, bridging news consumers with news content of all viewpoints from different political orientations, including governments supporters and opponents.

H2: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will consume more news by social media than by traditional media.

**Journalistic Professionalism (Quality/Credibility)**

Journalistic professionalism is underdeveloped in the Gulf region. In general, the degree of professionalism in journalism is very low in Gulf countries due to different reasons, such as government press laws and ethics, license laws, and aggressive threats that force journalists to produce content that serves government interests, hindering journalistic autonomy and professionalism. In fact, this indicates a serious problem in journalists' work and illustrates unethical practices of journalists in the region.

Journalistic professionalism is heavily influenced by the level of state intervention as Hallin & Mancini (2004) discuss, not by lack of professional training and education (e.g. Kirat, 2016; Sakr, 2004; Pies, 2008). Having said that, in most GCC scenarios, some weaknesses and common criticisms of professionalism journalism include journalists being seen as spokespersons for states, lack of in-depth reporting to avoid manipulating public opinion, and an exaggerated focus on routine government activities (Kirat, 2016).

Journalists' professional roles have been the subject of great concern among scholars in the last five decades (e.g. Cohen,1963; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Vos, 2005), offering intuitive understanding of journalistic professionalization as well as their rules on both the news environment and the public (e.g. Donsbach, 2008; Weaver & Willnat, 2012), primarily through examining the roles of journalists around the world in journalists' professional views (e.g. Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). However, no attention has been devoted to the connection of journalistic professionalism and news consumers' perceptions of both credibility and quality of news—that is to say, the journalistic professionalism in a given society appears on the organization practices and the content decision. Thus, it might play a role on news consumers perception about the quality and credibility of journalism. The possible effective interaction of macro-micro relationships between journalistic professionalism and quality journalism in news consumers' perception may reveal parallel patterns within the field of journalism studies.

RQ3: How do consumers rate traditional media in terms of credibility?

RQ4: How do consumers rate traditional media in terms of quality?

The relationship between social media and journalists has drastically shifted the way journalism works because of audiences' involvement in the news framework and has created challenges that may affect and threaten the future of journalism (e.g.Hermida, 2010b; Hermida, 2012). One of these challenges is that social media has been a fertile ground for spreading low-quality content or misinformation. News producers have sacrificed quality for speed (Stepp, 2009; Tandoc Jr et al., 2018; Weaver & Willnat, 2016), which takes news distribution away from traditional gatekeepers and "can threaten the integrity of the editorial process" (Foreman, 2015, p. 157). Journalists have allowed speedy distribution of news as they are enthusiastic in being quick in publishing and depend on grabbing the attention of the audience by making them "click" on their news stories.

RQ5: How do consumers rate Twitter in terms of credibility?

RQ6: How do consumers rate Twitter in terms of quality?

Previous studies have found inconsistent results when it comes to the relation between news consumers' choices of news media are and their perceptions of news credibility. The credibility of news plays a significant role in creating cross-media news repertoires (e.g. Kiousis, 2001; Yuan, 2011). While some studies found a weak correlation between perceived credibility and media use (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987), some were not significant (Wanta & Hu, 1994). Having said that, news content in Twitter can be produced by non-journalistic organizations, which may harm the credibility of sourcing in the journalism field. It is clear that social media sites have changed the way that individuals connect to public life through digitalized news.

None of the previous studies related specifically to the influence of state interventions on news credibility and quality. Thus, news consumers are expected to have a negative perceptive of state intervention in terms of credibility and quality of produced news content since governments set explicit regulations that act as guidelines for the performance of professional journalists.

H3: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate traditional media lower in terms of (a) credibility and (b) quality

Twitter has raised news consumers' awareness and knowledge of news events that might be impossible to appear on the traditional media.

H4: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate Twitter higher in terms of (a) credibility and (b) quality.

**Media Repertoire and News Consumptions (Agents)**

News consumers (human agents or agency, the other branch in Giddens formulation of structural duality), is the "capacity to make a difference" (Giddens, 1984, p. 14) or the "transformative capacity" (p. 33). From Giddens' view, agency is strongly connected with power as one of agency's main characteristics argues that human agents almost always "have the possibility of doing otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 258) unless forced by coercion or physical power. Before the era of online media, news consumers in these Gulf countries are deprived from having the power of choosing, and the only option they had was the different media outlets that either control by governments or loyal to the government.

The notion of agents in Giddens' view is highly independent, where structures enable and limit future actions. In addition, human agents are knowledgeable and capable actors commit actions that are "intentional or purposeful" (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). In this context, human agents are news consumers or media users who purposefully choose media and their choices can be performed at a time and place based on their personal preference. Agents are aware of the media environment that they reside in and think about the best way to utilize the available resources and are able to provide a rational explanation for their choices as well as its causes or consequences. Agents are free to create their cross-media news repertoires by selecting from a rich media environment or enact their preferences by finding suitable content. Derived from the concept of "duality of structure", audiences' choices (agents' actions) reproduce and reconstitute the structure of the media system that form the future consumption (Webster, 2009; Yuan & Ksiazek, 2011).

People put together their cross-media news repertoires to select from a rich media environment, which can be analyzed to elucidate user behaviors. Scholars have noticed that audiences develop media repertoires that meet their own tastes and circumstances, and satisfy their needs (e.g. Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Reagan, 1996; Taneja et al., 2012; Van Rees & Van Eijck, 2003; Yuan, 2011). Studies in news repertoires point out that news consumers rely on diverse types of media outlets for acquiring news in order to make sense of the world. Also, they found that audience characteristics (e.g. gender, age, education, income) play a crucial role in news consumers' selection of media repertoire media users select.

RQ7: What media repertoires do users create across all available media outlets?

Also, it is important to note that Twitter as news-heavy social network have formed news consumers' habits and rituals and offer them different news accounts that may or may not be associated with news organizations. In Gulf countries, Twitter news accounts intend to be categorized in various groups. The first group is traditional news organizations that adopted social media to reach their online audience. The second includes online news organizations that have no traditional copies of their work but are known and have web pages that adopt social media to extend their reach to target audiences. The final group is Twitter news accounts that have neither traditional copies nor web pages but have millions of followers. Some of these news accounts are anonymous: they have no names and no profile pictures that can reveal their identities.

RQ8: What media repertoires do users create across Twitter news accounts?

One of Twitter's features as a source for obtaining news updates is the interaction and engagement between journalists and audiences, where journalists interact with audiences to brand themselves, (Holton & Molyneux, 2017; Molyneux, 2015) and audiences can interact with journalists to take part in the news production process. This special relationship seems to create a large shift in the audiences' consumption, exposure, discussion, and interaction with news stories.

RQ10: How do audiences interact with journalists on Twitter, in terms of retweets, likes replies?

## Conclusion

The research questions and hypotheses explain the news consumption in a given

society to offer a greater understanding regarding the power of media systems, describing

how media functions on a micro-level in news audience processes without eliminating

their consumption from the media structure process. It may well be that the structure of

media systems leaves their influence on how news consumers organize their use of

media, especially Twitter, into various repertoires. Thus, the essential concept in

Giddens' approach "duality of structure" is of particular importance in this context, as

media systems construct and constrain the way audiences engage with their media

environment.

**CHAPTER 6**

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses posed in the previous

chapter, this research centers on a quantitative analysis of data that were collected by a

web-based survey designed for people from five Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman,

United Arab Emirate, and Saudi Arabia). This study investigates the relationship between

news consumers (human agents) and the media systems (structures) where media systems

are quite similar, and the use of social media for news purposes is comparable.

**Population of Interests**

The target population of this study was residents of gulf countries, who are

interested in consuming news on social media platforms. The selecting participants was

concentrated on those who are eighteen years of age and older, interested in following

news on online platforms, and have a basic knowledge of the type of media system that

operates in their countries. Social media news consumers would be an ideal population to

investigate for different reasons. First, social media redefines the classic idea of

journalistic practices where journalists used to act independently and make their own

choices away from sources and any other forms of influence, such as audiences.

However, social media creates a direct line that links news organizations and journalists

to sources and audiences. Social media plays a great role in the production and exchange

of news in which it becomes 1) an important part of journalists daily routines that

influences their judgment (e.g. McGregor & Molyneux, 2018), and 2) one of the

preferred sources for obtaining news updates (e.g Broersma, & Graham, 2013; Paulussen & Harder, 2014). It also has formed consumers' habits and offers unbiased public information (Fogerty, 2011), especially in countries where governments interfere with news production (e.g. Castells, 2012).

Second, the authoritarian governments in Gulf countries have a significant influence on media structures (macro-level) and news consumers (micro-level), which forces news organizations to produce content that serves the governments' interests (Pintak & Ginges, 2012), and deprives audiences from having the power of choosing. Therefore, the mutual relation between media systems and agency in these environments does not exist in the traditional news platforms. However, technological innovations give people a rich media environment that is protected from government interference, which seems to enhance the mutual relation between media structure and news consumers. The concept of "duality of structure" that is introduced by Giddens (1984) is of particular importance in this context, as media systems construct and constrain the way audiences engage with their media environment, (with the online news environment being more difficult to control by media systems), and as audiences have the power to make choices and to do otherwise.

**Sampling Procedures**

This is a comparative research that aims to investigate the relationship between media structures (macro-level) and Twitter news consumers (micro-level) in different societies where media systems are quite similar, and the use of social media for news purposes is comparable. The study conducted a multinational survey of Twitter news

consumers in five countries that share similar media system characteristics with comparable Twitter usage. These countries were selected for their highly usage rates of social media, and they represent authoritarian media systems and share similar sociocultural values.

An online survey was developed using Qualtrics survey software. All participants in each country completed an identical survey. Therefore, the survey came in Arabic and English languages to allow participants to choose their language of choice. There are different reasons for adapting a web-based survey to collect data for this research. Firstly, it is both time- and cost-efficient to conduct an online survey, as there is no need to pay for postage. Secondly, since the study is a multinational comparison, the target population will be easily reachable through an online survey. Thirdly, the nature of online survey simplifies data collection, which will reduce the time burdens facing the researcher. Fourthly, the online platform offers database software that would reduce the data entry error caused by this process (Wright, 2005).

This study adopted a snowball sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method that does not involve random selection with the chance being unknown. In the case of the selected five Gulf countries, a population list is not available, and one cannot be created, and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no private company in the region provides such service. It is largely noticed among quantitative scholars who are interested in surveying Gulf countries' citizens as Kazan (1993) puts it: "choosing a random sample constitutes a serious problem in the gulf … because there are no tax or voter registration rosters … to allow for parameter selection in their populations" (p.

117). Knocking on doors is not encouraged due to cultural and legal purposes in the region. Also, the Gulf countries are known for their poor mail delivery system and calling telephone numbers randomly would raise people's suspicion; thus, people will not respond willingly and accurately (Abdulrahim, 1999; Alblowi & Zahid, 2019; Mühlbacher, Leihs & Dahringer, 2006; Salmeen, 2005).

The snowball sampling technique seems to fit with the purpose of this study as it will require recruitment of a large as possible sample of Twitter news consumers through the Twitter network. Recruited participants were asked to introduce and convince people in their social network to participate in the survey. A non-probability sampling web-based survey is known for its lack of a sampling frame of the entire population, which prevents the researcher from drawing inferences about the entire population. However, this was not the case in this dissertation. The demographic characteristics of the respondents match some of those provided by the Census center of each of the studied countries. Also, this study collected a large number of participants due to different methods the researcher used. The researcher first, advertised the study on different social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. Second, the researcher used several approaches for recruiting study participants aiming to increase the sample size and came up with a more diverse set of participants that could reduce biases (Johnston & Sabin, 2010). The following describes the sampling procedures and the approaches for recruiting study participants.

The researcher created a tweet (in Arabic), which outlined a brief explanation of the research and invited Twitter users to participate in the survey by clicking on a link

that led participants to the online survey (See Appendix A). The tweet included a link to the online survey in both Arabic and English. Once the participants reached the survey page, they would see an introductory invitation that included all (relevant) essential information starting by introducing the researcher, the purpose of the study, and explaining the importance of their participation. Also, it informed participants that the survey is completely anonymous and voluntary, and encouraged them to pass the survey on to their social media friends.

The main recruitment method was through social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Researchers have effectively leveraged social media to enhance research recruitment processes. It has been found that social media is an effective recruitment method to reach large sample of participants and hard-to-reach populations (Frandsen, Thow & Ferguson, 2016; Topolovec-Vranic & Natarajan, 2016). The following are different methods that will be applied to get as large and diverse sample as possible.

First, the researcher started distributing the survey to all potential participants around him, such as family, friends, and contacts via different social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp accounts, and text message. Second, the researcher relied on (www.socialbakers.com) to get journalists and social media influencers' Twitter accounts. This webpage is feature in classifying social media users in each country based on different categories (e.g. media professionals, celebrities, politicians, etc.) and their number of followers. Thus, a list of the top 30 journalists and social media influencers in each of the studied countries was created. Then, the researcher contacted journalists and social media influencers through e-mail, or any other

electronic forms that are listed in their Twitter profiles to recruit them as potential

participants who may have large percentage of followers who are interested in news in

the Twitter forms. The recruitment email included all (relevant) essential information

starting by introducing the researcher, the purpose of the study, and explaining the

importance of their participation. Also, it informed participants that the survey is

completely anonymous and voluntary, and encouraged them to pass the survey on to their

Twitter followers (See Appendix B). Also, this research topic may get journalists'

attentions, especially those who are from Gulf countries where there is a lack of research

in this area. They were asked to take part in the survey and participated in spreading the

original tweets by retweeting, quoting the tweet, and asking social media users to

participate, and/or creating a new tweet that contains a link to the survey. The researcher

assured the diversity of the selected journalists and social media influencers in terms of

gender, political orientations, types of journalists (professional, citizen, or freelance

journalists), forms of journalism (online or traditional forms), and interests (e.g. political,

business, sport). This recruitment method would allow accessing a variety of subgroups

of the target population in order to reduce bias.

Third, the researcher contacted the journalist association in each surveyed Gulf

countries where they had been recruited and asked to share the survey link with their

journalists, mailing lists, and posted the link of the survey on their newsletters (See

Appendix C). Also, the researcher contacted social sience research centers that exist in

almost every university in Gulf countries, where one of their duties is to help distribute

surveys that are conducted for academic purposes (See Appendix C). An invitation e-mail

with a link of the survey was sent to these research centers, and they had been asked to

share the survey link with their mailing lists, which should include faculty, staff, students,

and alumni e-mail lists. These different recruitment methods were adopted hoping to lead

to a large sample from each studied country and reduced bias in the sample. Again, a

non-probability method will be used because there are no panel survey companies in the

Gulf countries that can provide a probability sample that can represent the entire

population. Thus, snowball sampling could be the perfect method to get the hidden or

hard to reach populations in which it is almost impossible to get participants through the

use of probability method (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

The survey questionnaire was created in English first (Appendix D) and then

translated into Arabic (Appendix E) by a native Arabic speaker and conducted by a

professional translation service (Appendix F). Study was approved by Temple

University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix G). A pre-test and preliminary

survey included 18 participants and was collected between December 23, 2019 and

January 10, 2020. The pre-test was conducted before the distribution of the actual survey,

in order to verify the translation of English into Arabic and to test the reliability of some

items, as well as to test the efficacy of the survey such as its questions and format. After

the pre-test was completed, no problem was noticed. The pre-test survey responses were

deleted before the final distribution of the actual survey. Since the study focuses on news

consumers who are a citizen of one of the five studied countries and have a Twitter

account, participants were exclusively citizens or residents alien of one of the selected

five countries. The web-based survey was conducted between the December 23, 2019 to January 10, 2020, and collected 1,774 valid responses.

The success of getting this high number of valid responses can be roughly attributed to four reasons. First, the fact that only a few studies have examined news consumers and the press system in the region due to sensitivity of this subject, which attracts people's attention to participate. It seems that the online survey is their only hope to deliver their voices regarding this subject. Second, the nature of the online survey allows participants to freely answer without fear of being critical of their government officials. Third, the verified translation of the survey into Arabic gives people the option to choose their preferred language, which increases the odds of getting people whose preferred language, for example, is not English. Fourth, the researcher applied different recruitment methods, such as professional journalists and journalism associations, to get as large and diverse samples as possible, which seemed to be successful that reached large Twitter news consumers from each studied country.

**Measures**

Survey questionnaires utilized a variety of formats (e.g. multiple choices, ….) in order to keep participants engaged. In order to answer the addressed research questions and to test the hypotheses, the survey instrument (see Appendix 4) were divided into different sections: demographics and personal news preferences, audience perceptions of government intervention in media landscape, the quality and credibility of produced news in traditional media outlets and twitter news accounts, and the media repertoires across platforms**.**

**Demographics and Personal News Preferences**

There was a filter question asking participants if they are a citizen of one of these five countries, and if they were not and selected "Other", they were taken to the end of the survey. The participants were asked a standard set of demographic questions as they are related to key variables of interest in this study. Participants were asked about their age and whether they are male or female. They were asked their highest level of completed education with choices ranging from "high school" to "doctorate."

The survey collected 1,774 valid responses, 52% from males and 48% from females. Participants from Saudi Arabia made up 35.5% of the sample; 18.4% were from Kuwait; 17.2% were from Bahrain; 13.5 were from Oman; and 12.3% were from United Arab Emirates. Participants ages 18 to 24 made up 25.3% of the sample; 39.9% were aged 25-34; 23.0% were aged 35-44; 8.4% were aged 45-54; and 3.3% of the sample were over 55. With regard to education 52.6% of the sample were a college graduate.

These demographic characteristics match some of those provided by the Census center of each of the studied countries. In term of gender and level of education, the Census report of Kuwait and Oman each country closely matches the sample of this study. For instance, the Kuwait Census report indicates that 49.6% of the total population is male, and the Oman Census report indicates that 49.2% of the total population is male. However, slightly more than half the sample studied here has a bachelor's degree and is similar to the percentage that is provided by the Census center of each country. The sample of this study is younger than the population of each country, which could be

reasonable since the survey was distributed in social media where the young generation is more active and present than the older generation.

There were four multiple choice questions addressing participants' personal news preferences. To determine the main reason of following news, participants were asked when they follow the news closely, "Only when something important is happening" or "Most of the time, whether or not something important is happening". They were be asked about the topics they regularly get news about with an option to select more than one topic. Other news preferences are related to news sharing with a list of ways people might discuss or share information. Participants were presented with the following matrix of statements and asked to rate how each of them describe their news sharing habits on a five-point scale ranging from 1 "never" to 5 "always."

a) Share a news story with someone either digitally or in hard copy

b) Discuss, comment, replies on the news on social media

c) Like news posts on social media

d) Comment about the news on a website, blog, or letter to the editor

e) Call into a live radio or TV show

f) Post or submit your own news content to a news outlet, newsletter, or online forum

Participants were asked how they prefer to get their news with three options, "reading it", "watching it", or "listening to it" on a five-point scale ranging from 1 "never" to 5 "always."

**Audience Perceptions of Government Intervention**

RQ1 asks, "How do residents of gulf countries perceive levels state intervention?" To measure people's perception about state intervention, participants were asked three different questions:

1. Participants were presented with the following matrix of statements and asked to rate the level of influence they feel each has on news content in their country on a five-point scale ranging from 0 "low" to 4 "very high."

   a) The applied laws and regulation on news media outlets

   b) The role of Ministry of Information Institutional practices

2. Participants were presented with the following matrix of statements and asked to rate the level of influence they think each has on their news consumption habits on a five-point scale ranging from 0 "not at all" to 4 "extremely."

   a) The feeling of being watched by governments' surveillance programs

   b) The fear of talking publicly and openly about some sensitive topics

3. Participants were presented with the following matrix of statements and asked to think about all of the various news organizations they are familiar with, and to rate how influential each factor is on news content in their country on a five-point scale ranging from 0 "not at all influential" to 4 "extremely influential."

   a) The independence of the editorial

   b) Self-censoring practices of journalists

   c) Professional journalistic practices

d) The internal system that governs decision-making processes of news organizations

The previous items were educed from the media system typologies that have mostly been applied by theorists who analyzed media system in different societies. All eight items were loaded together, and the scale found to be highly reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha$ = .81), and responses were summed to provide a perception of state intervention score ranging from 0 to 32. A score of 0 represents low level of perception of state intervention, and a score of 32 represents high level of perception of state intervention. The final score for the participants on the scale is the sum of their ratings for all of the eight items ($M$ = 16.43, $SD$ = 6.67).

RQ2 asks, "To what extent are people aware of the influence that state involvement has on their media consumption habits?" To measure people's awareness of the influence that government has on their media consumption habits, participants' answers to two of the previous statements which are about the level of influence participants think each of the following statements has on their news consumption habits on a five-point scale ranging from 0 "not at all" to 4 "extremely." The exact wording is "The feeling of being watched by governments' surveillance programs", "The fear of talking publicly and openly about some sensitive topics". Items were loaded together, and the scale found to be highly reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha$ = .76), and responses were summed to provide a level of the influence of state intervention on their news consumption habits score ranging from 0 to 8. A score of 0 represents low level of influence that state intervention has on news consumption, and a score of 8 represents high level of influence

that state intervention has on news consumption. The final score for the participants on the scale is the sum of their ratings for all of the eight items ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 2.42$).

H1 predicts, "The lower a country's press freedom ranking, the more state intervention its residents will perceive." This was tested by comparing people's perceived levels of state intervention with the 2019 world press freedom index ranking, a published annual ranking of countries that is conducted by *Reporters Without Borders* (RWB). In its 2019 report, RWB ranks Kuwait at 108th, Oman at 132nd, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at 133rd, Bahrain at 168th, and Saudi Arabia at 172nd out of 180 countries. H2 predicts, "Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will consume more news by social media than by traditional media". The participants were asked how often they get news from "television", "radio", "newspaper", "Twitter", "Facebook", "WhatsApp", "a news website", "a mobile app", and "friends, family, and acquaintances" on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Television, radio, newspaper and friends, family, and acquaintances were grouped together as traditional media outlets ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 2.61$). Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, a news website, and a mobile app were grouped together as online outlets ($M = 9.91$, $SD = 3.03$).

## Traditional Media Outlets

### Credibility

RQ3 asks, "How do consumers rate traditional media in terms of credibility?" To measure the credibility of news on traditional media, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements about the news on a ten-point scale: "can be trusted," "is fair," "is informative," "is accurate," "tells the whole story," "is biased," and

"is opinionated." Biased and opinionated scores were reverse-coded so that higher scores on all dimensions indicated higher credibility perceptions. These items measure the concept of credibility and were adapted from the Gaziano and McGrath (1986) scale as used in other works (Bucy, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2000; Molyneux & Coddington, 2019). Participants' rating of traditional media credibility was summed and divided by the number of items to produce a traditional credibility score ranging from 1 to 10 ($M$ = 5.91, $SD$ = 1.64; all credibility items together $\alpha$ = .82). H3a, "Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate traditional media lower in terms of credibility." To test this hypothesis, responses' perception of state intervention ($M$ = 16.43, $SD$ = 6.67) was used to see if participants' perception of state intervention predicts their rating of traditional media credibility.

**Quality**

RQ4 asks, "How do consumers rate traditional media in terms of quality?" To measure the quality of news on traditional media, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements about the news on a ten-point scale: "considers different opinions," "reports relevant facts," "is complete," "is objective," "does not contain errors or contradictions," "is understandable," and "does not insult or discriminate." These items were adapted from Prochazka, Weber, and Schweiger (2018) as used in other works (Molyneux & Coddington, 2019). Participants' rating of traditional media quality was summed and divided by the number of items to produce a traditional quality score ranging from 1 to 10 ($M$ = 6.22, $SD$ = 1.74; all quality items together $\alpha$ = .92). H3b, "Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will

rate traditional media lower in terms of quality." To test this hypothesis, responses'

perception of state intervention ($M = 16.43$, $SD = 6.67$) was used to see if participants'

perception of state intervention predicts their rating of traditional media quality.

<div align="center">

**News on Twitter**

</div>

**Credibility**

RQ5 asks, "How do consumers rate Twitter in terms of credibility?" To measure

the credibility of news on Twitter, participants were asked to rate their agreement with

the following statements about the news on a ten-point scale: "can be trusted," "is fair,"

"is informative," "is accurate," "tells the whole story," "is biased," and "is opinionated."

Biased and opinionated scores were reverse-coded so that higher scores on all dimensions

indicated higher credibility perceptions. These items measure the concept of credibility

and were adapted from the Gaziano and McGrath (1986) scale as used in other works

(Bucy, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2000; Molyneux, & Coddington, 2019). Participants'

rating of Twitter credibility was summed and divided by the number of items to produce

a Twitter credibility score ranging from 1 to 10 ($M = 6.35$, $SD = 1.29$; all credibility items

together $\alpha = .71$). H4a predicts, "Consumers who perceive higher levels of state

intervention will rate Twitter higher in terms of credibility." To test this hypothesis,

responses' perception of state intervention ($M = 16.43$, $SD = 6.67$) was used to see if

participants' perception of state intervention predicts their rating of Twitter credibility.

**Quality**

RQ6 asks, "How do consumers rate Twitter in terms of quality?" To measure the

quality of news on Twitter, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the

following statements about the news on a ten-point scale: "considers different opinions," "reports relevant facts," "is complete," "is objective," "does not contain errors or contradictions," "is understandable," and "does not insult or discriminate." These items were adapted from Prochazka, Weber, and Schweiger (2018) as used in other works (Molyneux, & Coddington, 2019). Participants' rating of Twitter quality was summed and divided by the number of items to produce a Twitter quality score ranging from 1 to 10 ($M = 7.01$, $SD = 1.51$; all quality items together $\alpha = .97$). H4b, "Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate Twitter higher in terms of quality." To test this hypothesis, responses' perception of state intervention ($M = 16.43$, $SD = 6.67$) was used to see if participants' perception of state intervention predicts their rating of Twitter quality.

**Media Repertoires Across Platforms**

RQ7 asks, "What media repertoires do users create across all available media outlets?" The participants were asked how often they get news from "television", "radio", "newspaper", "friends, family, and acquaintances", "Twitter", "Facebook", "WhatsApp", "a news website", and "a mobile app" on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). All traditional news sources (television, radio, newspaper, and friends, family, and acquaintances) were grouped together and divided by the number of itesms in the scale to produce a traditional news sources scale ranging from 1 to 5 ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.65$). All online news sources (Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, a news website, and a mobile app) were grouped together and divided by the number of itesms in the scale to produce an oline news sources scale ranging from 1 to 5 ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.60$).

**Traditional Media Repertoires**

RQ8 asks, "What media repertoires do users create across traditional media outlets?" To measure news users' traditional media repertoires, participants were asked a collection of questions to determine their media repertoires. Participants were asked how often they read newspapers in print, and how often they listen to news on the radio, with responses from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Participants were asked a filter question of whether or not they watch news on television. If yes, they were asked how often they watch "local television news", "Arab network television news (such as Al-Arabiya, Al Hadath TV)", and "international television news channels that broadcast to the Arab World (such as BBC Arabic, CNBC Arabic, Sky News)", with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

**Twitter Repertoires**

RQ9 asks, "What media repertoires do users create across Twitter news accounts?" To measure news users' traditional media repertoires, participants were asked about their Twitter repertories, and to rate how often they get news from "traditional media's social media accounts", "online news organizations that have no traditional copies of their work", "Twitter news accounts that have neither traditional copies nor web pages", "professional journalists' accounts", "citizen journalists' accounts", and "social media influencers" on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

**Audience Interaction on Twitter**

RQ10 asks, "How do audiences interact with journalists on Twitter, in terms of retweets, likes, replies?" To measure audience's interaction with journalists on Twitter,

participants will be asked how often they "reply to journalists' tweets", "Re-tweet

journalists' tweets", and "like journalists' tweets" on a five-point scale ranging from 1

(never) to 5 (always).

## Limitations

This dissertation experienced several limitations related to sampling,

measurement, and analysis. The weaknesses of sampling design revolve around three

main issues dealing with the sampling bias, diversity of participants, and validity, with

the lack of representativeness as a prime weakness of the snowball sampling technique

(Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Woodley & Lockard, 2016). In regard to sampling bias, the

researcher relied on the initial recruitment participants who were asked to refer the survey

to others in the same target population based on their personal biases (Cohen & Arieli,

2011). In most cases, these series referrals would lead to a group of participants who

share similar characteristics that may not exist in the wider population. In this context, the

researcher tried to reduce the impact of this weakness by using different recruitment

methods that targeted different subgroups of the target population as noted by scholars

(e.g. Johnston & Sabin, 2010).

Second is a lack of participant diversity due to the sampling bias. There are two

reasons for that. First, participants were asked to recruit participants by referring the

survey to others, which increases the degree of homophily existing on social network

sites (SNS). Twitter and other SNS have a high level of homophily in which users are

more likely to interact with those they share similar characteristics (Colleoni, Rozza, &

Arvidsson, 2014; Himelboim et al., 2016). Therefore, participants in this study are more

likely to share similar beliefs and interests. Second, snowball sampling method is known for its ability to assist researchers who have difficulty in locating potential subjects. The researcher was able to get participants from a large sample that represented different age, gender, and education groups. Also, gender and level of education closely matched those provided by the Census center of each studied country. However, while the sample of this study is younger than the average population of each country, it may still be useful for making process inferences.

The third weakness of this design was related to the validity (Barratt, Ferris & Lenton, 2015) in which the external validity of findings arising from snowball samples cannot be determined (Couper, 2000). A lack of external validity in snowball sampling is due to the fact that participants are not randomly selected, which creates a sampling bias. Applying this technique would not allow the researcher to draw a generalizable conclusion beyond the sample itself, but well-validated measures could be developed to enhance the internal validity in order to explain the relationships between variables within the sample. The drawn sample of this study will not be representative of a large population; thus, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. It is worth noting that uncertainty to recruit initial respondents and convince them to share the survey was one of the struggles of adopting this sampling technique.

Another limitation is related to measurement and analysis. The studied countries were grouped into one of three levels of state intervention to create a new variable, "press freedom rankings," based on the press freedom rankings conducted by Reporters Without Borders. This variable is not statistically accurate to measure the relationship between a

country's press freedom ranking and participants' perception of state intervention because it is difficult to draw a line using just press freedom rankings. Therefore, the analysis included this variable with the variable of participants' perception of state intervention and both showed almost the same results.

Also, the Likert statements that were used to measure people's perceptions of state interventions were worded in a way that did not fully reflect the actual elements of state interventions. These Likert statements still captured and measured the level of state intervention, but at the same time, avoided crossing red lines that would affect participants' responses. The wording of these questions clearly asks people to rate their perceived level of state intervention and makes no mention of direct government roles in order to avoid fearful or unsafe feelings that participants may have. It seems a waste of time and resources to develop survey questioners that people cannot or will not answer due to the sensitivity of the subject. In a context like these Gulf countries, such questions cannot be asked so openly, and there are also serious ethical questions about forcing the answers to these questions in these systems.

The strengths of using the snowball sampling method are mostly technology-driven. It makes it possible to build a sample that is difficult to reach because of distance (Johnston & Sabin, 2010). Snowball sampling is both time- and cost-efficient, simplifies the data input, and reduces data entry error. Also, speed of response is another great advantage of using this technique. Due to the popularity of Twitter and the large number of Twitter users in the region, the demographic characteristics of the respondents match some of those provided by the Census center of each studied countries. In terms of gender

and level of education, the Census report of Kuwait and Oman closely matches the sample in this study. Again, slightly more than half of the participants have a bachelor's degree, a similar percentage to that provided by the Census center of each country.

Online surveys can provide a well-designed survey that can show a better look of the questionnaire, which may attract people to share it with others (O'Connell, 2000). Also, since this study contains questionnaires that discuss the role of media systems and government in news industries, people may feel more comfortable to take part in the survey through online platforms compared to more traditional research methods. Also, trust will be evolved through the chain referral process, in which recruited participants will be excited to take a part in a survey that comes from acquaintances or peers (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). If the researcher pays enough time and effort at locating and recruiting initial participants, this could turn out to be a powerful method to cover samples from different geographical locations (O'Connell, 2000).

The sample comprised entirely of Twitter users, whose responses and attitudes may not reflect those of equivalent non-Twitter users. The sample of this study is younger than the population of each country, which could be reasonable since the survey was distributed on social media, where a younger generation is more active and present. Furthermore, this dissertation may also be limited by the imprecision in the measurement of press freedom rankings created and used to test H1. It was not an ideal measure of testing the correlation between a country's press freedom ranking and residents' perception of state intervention.

# CHAPTER 7

# RESULTS

## Overview

This chapter presents results from the data that were collected by a web-based survey of people from five Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirate, and Saudi Arabia) that was hosted on Qualtrics. The goal of this dissertation is to investigate the relationship between news consumers (human agents) and the media systems (structures). The core element of Giddens (1984) theoretical approach, "duality of structure", theorizes the mutual relations between agents and structures in their linkage to media systems. Drawing on that and looking at the patterns of interrelationship among political and media system characteristics in the studied Gulf countries that are summarized and presented in the literature of this dissertation (see Table 2.1.), this dissertation assumes that news consumers would be influenced by the media system that operates in their countries.

## Demographics

The web-based survey was conducted between December 23, 2019 and January 10, 2020. The total engagement of the original tweet that included the survey's link was 7,625, among them 2,721 twitter users clicked on the link. The survey collected 1,774 valid responses, 52% from males and 48% from females. Table 7.1 presents demographic information of the study participants from all of the studied Gulf countries. With regard to the current economic situation, 81.3% of participants believe that the economic

situation in their country is good, and the majority of the sample (66.7%) agreed that life

in their country is better today than it was before.

**Table 7.1.** *Demographic characteristics of sample*

| Demographic | Bahrain | Kuwait | Oman | SA | UAE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Country** | 16.8% (306) | 18% (327) | 13.4% (240) | 39.9% (683) | 11.9% (218) | 100% (1774) |
| **Gender** | | | | | | |
| Male | 36.9% (113) | 49.8% (163) | 41.2% (99) | 67.9% (464) | 39.4% (86) | 52.1% (925) |
| Female | 63.1% (193) | 50.2% (164) | 58.8% (141) | 32.1% (219) | 60.6% (132) | 47.9% (849) |
| **Education** | | | | | | |
| High school | 2.6% (8) | 3.7% (12) | 5.8% (14) | 14.1% (96) | 2.8% (6) | 7.7% (136) |
| Some Collage | 14.7% (45) | 21.4% (70) | 19.2% (46) | 16.8% (115) | 14.7% (32) | 17.4% (208) |
| College Graduate | 59.2% (181) | 46.8% (153) | 54.2% (130) | 50.1% (342) | 58.3% (127) | 52.6% (933) |
| Masters | 16.7% (51) | 18.0% (59) | 12.9% (31) | 11.7% (80) | 16.5% (36) | 14.5% (257) |
| Doctorate | 6.5% (20) | 9.8% (32) | 7.5% (18) | 5.1% (35) | 6.4% (14) | 6.7% (119) |
| Less than high school | 0.3% (1) | 0.3% (1) | 0.4% (1) | 2.2% (15) | 1.4% (3) | 1.2% (21) |
| **Age** | | | | | | |
| 18-24 | 21.1% (64) | 29.1% (95) | 28.3% (67) | 24.7% (169) | 24.3% (53) | 25.3% (448) |
| 25-34 | 47.5% (144) | 37.9% (124) | 39.7% (94) | 37.8% (258) | 39.0% (85) | 39.9% (705) |
| 35-44 | 24.1% (73) | 20.5% (67) | 22.4% (53) | 22.7% (155) | 27.1% (59) | 23.0% (407) |
| 45-54 | 4.6% (14) | 8.3% (27) | 7.2% (17) | 10.7% (73) | 8.3% (18) | 8.4% (149) |
| 55-64 | 2.6% (8) | 3.7% (12) | 2.1% (5) | 3.7% (25) | 1.4% (3) | 3.0% (53) |
| Over 64 | 0.0% (0) | 0.6% (2) | 0.1% (1) | 0.4% (3) | 0.0 (0) | 0.3% (6) |

**Personal News Preferences**

There were three multiple choice questions addressing participants' personal news

preferences. In this study, 52.9% of respondents reported following news when

something important is happening, and 47.1% of respondents followed news most of the

time, whether or not something important is happening. The majority of participants

preferred to get news either by reading it (51.9%) or watching it (40.8%). Only a small

percentage of respondents preferred listening to news (see Table 7.2).

**Table 7.2.** *Personal news preferences*

| News Preferences | Bahrain | Kuwait | Oman | SA | UAE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Following news | | | | | | |
| Most of the time | 52.3% (160) | 51.4% (163) | 49.2% (118) | 42.3% (289) | 46.3% (101) | 47.1% (836) |
| When something important is happening | 47.7% (146) | 48.6% (159) | 50.8% (122) | 57.7% (394) | 53.7% (117) | 52.9% (938) |
| Getting News by: | | | | | | |
| Reading it | 58.2% (178) | 50.5% (165) | 56.7% (136) | 48.6% (332) | 50.5% (110) | 51.9% (921) |
| Watching it | 33.3% (102) | 43.4% (142) | 34.6% (83) | 45.1% (308) | 40.8% (89) | 40.8% (724) |
| Listening to it | 8.5% (26) | 6.1% (20) | 8.8% (21) | 6.3% (43) | 8.7% (19) | 7.3% (129) |

Other news preferences are related to news consumers' involvement in news

activities such as sharing news stories, posting news content, discussing the news with

others in person or digitally etc. In this study, participants seemed to take an active role

and engage more with news. For instance, participants showed that they discuss the news

with others in person or over the phone (range from 0 to 4, $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.14$) and they

share a news story with someone either digitally or in hard copy ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.30$)

(see Table 7.3). Results indicate a significant preference for liking news posts on social

media ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.22$) over calling into a live radio or TV show ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.81$) $t(34.38) = 3095$, $p < .001$. What was fascinating is that participants indicated a

significant preference for discussing the news with others in person ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.14$) than on social media ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.22$), $t(17.85) = 4529.3$, $p < .001$, which may

indicate that participants do not feel safe talking about news in social media due to the

online surveillance programs that some Gulf governments apply, as this study

hypothesized.

**Table 7.3**. *News consumers' involvement in news*

| Likert Statements | Mean: 0-5 | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Discuss the news with others in person or over the phone | 3.35 | 1.14 |
| Share a news story with someone either digitally or in hard copy | 2.88 | 1.30 |
| Discuss, comment, replies on the news on social media | 2.64 | 1.22 |
| Like news posts on social media | 2.53 | 1.22 |
| Post or submit your own news content to a news outlet, newsletter, or online forum | 1.89 | 1.17 |
| Comment about the news on a website, blog, or letter to the editor | 1.88 | 1.06 |
| Call into a live radio or TV show | 1.33 | 0.81 |

**Perception of State Intervention**

The first step in understanding these results is to provide a clear explanation of the

participants' perception of the level of state intervention in the media landscape

(structure). The studies countries were grouped into one of three levels of the state

intervention: 1) low intervention, Kuwait, (108th out of 180), 2) medium intervention,

Oman (132nd) and UAE, (133rd), and 3) strong intervention, Bahrain (168th) and Saudi

Arabia (172nd). GCC state interventions summarized in Table 2.1. explaining the level of

state intervention in media landscape for each of the studied countries. RQ1 asks, "How

do residents of gulf countries perceive levels state intervention?" People's perception of

the level of government intervention in media systems was a significant part of this study.

The results showed that participants' perception of the level of state intervention

in the media landscape aligns with press freedom rankings in which participants from low

level intervention environments perceived lower level of state intervention (range from 0 to 32, $M = 10.64$, $SD = 6.57$) comparing to medium level ($M = 14.15$, $SD = 5.23$) who show that the state intervention in their media systems are identified to be at a medium level, or to strong level ($M = 19.40$, $SD = 5.54$) who believe that the state intervention in the media landscape is very strong (see Figure 7.1). A one-way ANOVA was used to

**Figure 7.1.** Audience perception of state intervention



determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of countries that represent three levels of state interventions. There was a significant difference in mean perceptions of the state intervention [$F(2, 1771)=342.93$, $p < 0.001$] between the three levels. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated mean

differences score for perception of state intervention across all three groups were statistically significant.

        The finding of the previous question showed that participants' perception of the state intervention aligns with the press freedom rankings. RQ2 asks, "To what extent are people aware of the influence that state involvement has on their media consumption habits?" The findings showed that participants' awareness toward the influence that governments have on their news consumption aligns with the level of the written and unwritten media rules that apply to the media landscape in each level of state intervention (see Figure 7.2). The results indicate that participants who live in a high state intervention

**Figure 7.2**. Awareness of state influence on news consumption habits

level have a high level of awareness (range from 0 to 8, $M = 4.94$, $SD = 2.37$) more than

participants who live in medium level of state intervention ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.94$), or

participants who live in low level of state intervention ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 2.14$). A one-way

ANOVA was conducted to compare the difference between the tested groups. There was

a significant difference in mean awareness of the influence that state intervention has on

news consumers' habits [$F(2, 1771)=165.12$, $p < 0.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the

Bonferroni test indicated mean differences score for perception of state intervention

across all three groups were statistically significant.

H1 predicted that "The lower a country's press freedom ranking, the more state

intervention its residents will perceive." Supporting hypothesis 1, results of the regression

indicate that participants perception of the levels of state intervention are positively

related to the press freedom ranking of the studied countries ($b = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$) (see

Table 7.4). Demographic variables (age, gender and education) were added to the

regression model to determine which variables were significant predictors of the

perception of the level of state intervention. Results show that being male ($b = 1.22$, $p <$

$0.001$) was positively and significantly related to the perception of state intervention,

while being younger ($b = -0.07$, $p < 0.001$) was negatively significant to the dependent

variable.

The high level of state intervention in most Gulf countries might have a great role

in directing news consumers to consume news from certain media outlets as an attempt to

avoided limitation and restriction that government officials apply to control news content.

Therefore, H2 predicts, "Consumers who perceive higher levels of state involvement will

**Table 7.4.** *A single linear regression on participants perception of the level of state intervention*

| | Perception of State Intervention | |
|---|---|---|
| | b | SE |
| (Intercept) | -3.29* | 1.41 |
| Press freedom rankings | 0.13*** | 0.005 |
| Education | 0.08 | 0.07 |
| Gender (Male) | 1.22*** | 0.28 |
| Age | -0.07*** | 0.01 |
| | F = 175.3 | $R^2 = 0.2822$ |

$N = 1,774$; ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

consume more news by social media than by traditional media." Hypothesis 2 was not supported. It was expected to see a negative relationship among traditional media news sources and a positive relationship among the online news sources; or at least a wide variation between the two of them. However, their coefficients are nearly identical. Consuming news by social media is significantly related to the perceived levels of state involvement (b = 0.05, p < 0.001); as well as consuming news by traditional media (b = 0.04, p < 0.001) is positively related (see Table 7.5).

**Table 7.5**. *A single linear regression on consumed news sources*

| | Traditional Sources | | Online Sources | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | b | SE | b | SE |
| (Intercept) | 3.51*** | 0.72 | 9.39*** | 0.86 |
| Perception of state intervention | 0.04*** | 0.01 | 0.05*** | 0.01 |
| State intervention (rankings) | -0.003 | 0.002 | -0.01** | 0.003 |
| Confidence in traditional media | 0.54*** | 0.06 | 0.31*** | 0.07 |
| Confidence in online media | -0.05 | 0.03 | -0.02 | 0.03 |
| Education | -0.03 | 0.03 | -0.02 | 0.03 |
| Gender (Male) | 0.42*** | 0.12 | 0.32* | 0.14 |
| Age | 0.04*** | 0.006 | 0.01 | 0.007 |
| | F= 17.42 | $R^2 = 0.04426$ | F= 7.155 | $R^2 = 0.02372$ |

$N = 1,774$; ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

## Credibility

Because authoritarian governments apply strict written and unwritten rules to control news content, RQ3 asks, "How do consumers rate traditional media in terms of credibility?" In general, participants across all countries in this study reported that they perceived the credibility of news content in traditional media to be (range from 1 to 10, $M = 5.91$, $SD = 1.64$). In general, traditional media outlets were rated highest in informative ($M = 6.48$), opinionated ($M = 6.26$), and trustworthy ($M = 6.02$). On the other hand, traditional media outlets were rated lowest in fairness ($M = 5.38$), bias ($M = 5.40$), comprehensive ($M = 5.90$). (see Table 7.6) Interestingly enough, the results showed significant differences in the participants' rating of the credibility of the traditional media outlets among the studied countries.

**Table 7.6.** *Overall credibility of traditional media across all countries*

|        | Trustworthy | Fairness | Informative | Accuracy | Comprehensive | Bias | Opinionated | Overall |
|--------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|---------------|------|-------------|---------|
| Mean   | 6.02        | 5.38     | 6.48        | 5.91     | 5.90          | 5.40 | 6.26        | 5.91    |
| Median | 6           | 5        | 7           | 6        | 6             | 5    | 7           | 6       |
| SD     | 2.34        | 2.25     | 2.16        | 2.22     | 2.24          | 2.63 | 2.67        | 1.64    |

The one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of countries. There was a significant difference in mean rating of traditional media credibility [$F(4, 1769)=127.45$, $p < 0.001$] between the countries. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated test indicated mean differences score for rating the credibility of traditional media across all five countries were statistically significant except between UAE and Oman, where the difference was not statistically significant (see Table 7.7). Again, there is alignment

between the level of the state intervention and participants' perception of the credibility

of traditional media in which countries from low level intervention were rated the highest

in all the seven credibility measurements while countries from high level were rated the

lowest in all the seven credibility measurements.

**Table 7.7.** *Credibility of traditional media by country*

| S.I. | C | | Trustworthy | Fairness | Informative | Accuracy | Comperehensive | Bias | Opinionated | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High Level | Bahrain | Mean | 4.50 | 3.64 | 5.97 | 4.37 | 4.91 | 4.15 | 6.91 | 4.92 |
| | | Median | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| | | SD | 1.66 | 1.50 | 1.66 | 1.71 | 1.70 | 1.95 | 2.26 | 1.09 |
| | SA | Mean | 5.84 | 5.50 | 5.92 | 5.82 | 5.49 | 4.73 | 4.96 | 5.47 |
| | | Median | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5.57 |
| | | SD | 2.61 | 2.44 | 2.39 | 2.40 | 2.44 | 2.63 | 2.53 | 1.61 |
| Medium Level | Oman | Mean | 6.26 | 5.55 | 6.66 | 6.03 | 6.06 | 5.75 | 6.53 | 6.12 |
| | | Median | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6.28 |
| | | SD | 1.86 | 1.87 | 1.87 | 1.82 | 2.01 | 2.29 | 2.48 | 1.12 |
| | UAE | Mean | 6.44 | 5.44 | 6.97 | 6.20 | 6.54 | 6.44 | 7.42 | 6.49 |
| | | Median | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 6.42 |
| | | SD | 1.67 | 1.74 | 1.61 | 1.71 | 1.64 | 2.02 | 2.04 | 1.05 |
| Low Level | Kuwait | Mean | 7.38 | 6.61 | 7.69 | 7.26 | 7.14 | 7.00 | 7.38 | 7.21 |
| | | Median | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7.71 |
| | | SD | 2.08 | 1.98 | 2.01 | 1.90 | 2.10 | 2.60 | 2.66 | 1.72 |

Because of the influence that state intervention has on traditional media outlets,

H3a predicts: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate

traditional media lower in terms of credibility. A simple linear regression was calculated

to test whether participants' rating of the credibility of traditional media outlets will be

influenced by their perception of the level of state intervention. (see Table 7.8).

Supporting hypothesis 3a, the results of the regression indicate that participants'

perception of the levels of state intervention are negatively related to the rating of the credibility of traditional media (b = -0.24, p < 0.001). Results indicate that who are from a country with lower level of state intervention rated the credibility of traditional media outlets higher (b = -0.16, p < 0.001). Thus, there is a direct relationship between participants' rating of the credibility of traditional media and both the perceived and the actual level of state intervention in media landscape.

**Table 7.8.** *A single linear regression on the credibility and quality of traditional media*

|  | Credibility | | Quality | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | b | SE | b | SE |
| (Intercept) | 70.44*** | 2.55 | 59.19*** | 2.48 |
| Perception of State Intervention | -0.24*** | 0.04 | -0.008 | 0.04 |
| State intervention (rankings) | -0.16*** | 0.01 | -0.13*** | 0.01 |
| Education | -0.09 | 0.12 | -0.17 | 0.12 |
| Gender (Male) | -1.06* | 0.55 | 0.56 | 0.49 |
| Age | 0.05* | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.02 |
|  | F= 98.9 | $R^2 = 0.2164$ | F= 42.91 | $R^2 = 0.1057$ |

$N = 1,774$; ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

**Quality**

RQ4 asks, "How do consumers rate traditional media in terms of quality?" Similar to credibility, participants across all countries in this study reported that they perceived the quality of news content in traditional media to be (range from 1 to 10, $M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.74$), and to be rated lower than credibility (see Table 7.9). In general, news in traditional media outlets were rated highest in comprehensibility ($M = 6.88$) and relevance ($M = 6.82$). On the other hand, traditional media outlets were rated lowest in diversity ($M = 5.37$) and impartiality ($M = 5.41$). Again, the results showed noticeable differences in the participants' rating of the quality of the traditional media outlets among

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**Table 7.9.** *Overall quality of traditional media across all countries*

|  | Diversity | Relevance | Accuracy | Comprehensibility | Impartiality | Ethics | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 5.37 | 6.82 | 6.01 | 6.88 | 5.41 | 6.81 | 6.22 |
| Median | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.16 |
| SD | 2.32 | 2.24 | 2.25 | 2.04 | 2.39 | 2.27 | 1.74 |

the studied countries. The one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of countries. There was a significant difference in mean rating of news quality in traditional media outlets [$F(4, 1769)=69.999$, $p < 0.001$] between the countries. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test that indicated that the mean score for rating the quality of traditional media in Kuwait ($M = 7.27$, $SD = 1.62$) was significantly higher than in Oman ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 1.30$), UAE ($M = 6.49$, $SD = 1.23$), Saudi Arabia ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 1.96$) and Bahrain ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.16$). The mean score for rating the quality of traditional media in Saudi Arabia was lower than in Oman and UAE, but this difference was not statistically significant (see Table 7.10). Also, the mean of rating traditional media quality in UAE was not significantly difference from the mean in Oman. Again, the level of the state intervention seems to play a main role in influencing participants' perception of the quality of traditional media in which countries with low levels of state intervention were rated the highest in all the six quality measurements while countries from high level were rated the lowest in all the six quality measurements.

Because of the overlap between credibility and quality criteria, H3b predicts: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate traditional media lower in terms of quality. A simple linear regression was calculated to test whether

**Table 7.10.** *Quality of traditional media outlets by country*

| S.1 | C | | Diversity | Relevance | Accuracy | Comprehensibility | Impartiality | Ethics | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High Level | Bahrain | Mean | 4.15 | 5.95 | 4.70 | 6.50 | 3.91 | 6.12 | 5.22 |
| | | Median | 4 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 5.33 |
| | | SD | 1.83 | 1.76 | 1.72 | 1.72 | 1.59 | 1.87 | 1.16 |
| | SA | Mean | 5.28 | 6.56 | 5.78 | 6.44 | 5.46 | 6.39 | 5.98 |
| | | Median | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| | | SD | 2.50 | 2.54 | 2.50 | 2.29 | 2.67 | 2.58 | 1.96 |
| Medium Level | Oman | Mean | 5.57 | 7.91 | 6.31 | 6.95 | 5.57 | 7.13 | 6.45 |
| | | Median | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.41 |
| | | SD | 2.04 | 1.79 | 1.85 | 1.88 | 2.08 | 1.84 | 1.30 |
| | UAE | Mean | 5.44 | 7.08 | 6.63 | 7.05 | 5.40 | 7.33 | 6. 49 |
| | | Median | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6.33 |
| | | SD | 1.90 | 1.74 | 1.58 | 1.68 | 1.94 | 1.72 | 1.23 |
| Low Level | Kuwait | Mean | 6.49 | 7.71 | 7.08 | 7.98 | 6.61 | 7.76 | 7.27 |
| | | Median | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 7.66 |
| | | SD | 2.21 | 2.17 | 2.09 | 1.65 | 2.17 | 2.09 | 1.62 |

participants' rating of the quality of news in traditional media outlets will be influenced by their perception of the level of state intervention. (see Table 7.8). The hypothesis was not supported. The results of the regression indicate that there is no relationship between the participants' rating of the quality of news in traditional media outlets and their perception of the level of state intervention. However, what was interesting is that the press freedom rankings is negatively related to the participants' rating of the quality of news in traditional media (b = -0.13, p < 0.001). In other words, participants who are from a country with low freedom of press rankings rated the quality of traditional media outlets higher (see Table 7.8).

**Credibility**

RQ5 asks, "How do consumers rate Twitter in terms of credibility?" In general,

participants across all countries in this study reported that they perceived news content in

Twitter to be (range from 1 to 10, $M = 6.35$, $SD = 1.29$). Interestingly enough, t-test

analysis showed that participants reported that they perceived news content in Twitter to

be more credible than traditional media outlets $t(9.01) = 3356.5$, $p < .001$, which may

indicate that participants have faith in Twitter as a news source that is not regulated as

much as traditional media outlets that are mostly owned or controlled by the state. In

general, Twitter as a news source was rated highest in informative ($M = 7.47$), fairness

($M = 6.62$), and comprehensive ($M = 6.52$). On the other hand, news on Twitter rated

lowest in opinionated ($M = 4.88$), trustworthy ($M = 6.26$), and comprehensive ($M = 5.90$)

(see Table 7.11). The results showed significant differences in the participants' rating of

**Table 7.11.** *Overall credibility of Twitter across all countries*

|  | Trustworthy | Fairness | Informative | Accuracy | Comprehensive | Bias | Opinionated | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | 6.26 | 6.62 | 7.47 | 6.32 | 6.52 | 6.44 | 4.88 | 6.35 |
| Median | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 6.42 |
| SD | 2.06 | 1.96 | 2.01 | 1.97 | 2.06 | 2.60 | 2.07 | 1.28 |

the credibility of news on Twitter among the studied countries. The one-way ANOVA

was used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between

the means of countries. There was a significant difference in mean rating of Twitter

credibility [$F(4, 1769)=57.549$, $p < 0.001$] between the countries. Post hoc comparisons

using the Bonferroni test indicated test indicated mean differences score for rating the

credibility of Twitter across all five countries were statistically significant except

between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where the difference was not statistically significant

Also, the mean of rating Twitter credibility in UAE was not significantly difference from

the mean in Oman. Surprisingly, Saudi Arabia was rated low comparing to Bahrain and

other countries that are considered to have a medium level of state intervention. Again,

there is alignment between the level of the state intervention and participants' perception

of the credibility of Twitter in which countries with low levels of state intervention were

rated the lowest in all the seven credibility measurements while countries with high levels

were rated the highest in all the seven credibility measurements, with Saudi Arabia being

an exception (see Table 7.12).

**Table 7.12.** *Credibility of Twitter by country*

| S.I. | C | | Trustworthy | Fairness | Informative | Accuracy | Comprehensive | Bias | Opinionated | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High Level | Bahrain | Mean | 6.71 | 7.49 | 8.57 | 6.82 | 7.19 | 7.86 | 5.54 | 7.17 |
| | | Median | 7 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 7.28 |
| | | SD | 1.60 | 1.57 | 1.49 | 1.43 | 1.73 | 1.94 | 1.64 | 1.01 |
| | SA | Mean | 6.54 | 6.43 | 7.03 | 6.45 | 6.45 | 4.89 | 4.55 | 6.05 |
| | | Median | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 6.14 |
| | | SD | 2.29 | 2.24 | 2.26 | 2.23 | 2.34 | 2.41 | 2.37 | 1.41 |
| Medium Level | Oman | Mean | 6.15 | 6.77 | 7.59 | 6.36 | 6.49 | 7.06 | 5.05 | 6.5 |
| | | Median | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 6.64 |
| | | SD | 1.73 | 1.62 | 1.80 | 1.65 | 1.81 | 2.36 | 1.80 | 1.02 |
| | UAE | Mean | 6.04 | 6.64 | 7.82 | 6.20 | 6.60 | 7.67 | 5.38 | 6.62 |
| | | Median | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 6.42 |
| | | SD | 1.70 | 1.60 | 1.48 | 1.72 | 1.62 | 2.10 | 1.88 | 0.91 |
| Low Level | Kuwait | Mean | 5.33 | 6.08 | 7.06 | 5.64 | 6.01 | 7.05 | 4.47 | 5.95 |
| | | Median | 5 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 5.85 |
| | | SD | 2.05 | 1.83 | 1.91 | 2.05 | 2.00 | 2.35 | 1.81 | 1.22 |

Because the online media outlets open the door for news audience to consume

news that is less regulated and controlled especially in the authoritarian regimes, H4a

predicts: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate Twitter higher in terms of credibility. A simple linear regression was calculated to test whether participants' rating of the credibility of news on Twitter will be influenced by their perception of the level of state intervention. The hypothesis was supported. The results of the regression indicate that there is a direct positive relationship between the participants' rating of the credibility of news on Twitter and their perception of the level of state intervention (b = 0.40, p < 0.001). Results show that participants from a country with high press freedom ranking is negatively related to rating the credibility of Twitter (b = -0.02, p < 0.01). Results also indicate that being young (b = -0.10, p < 0.001) was negatively related to ratings of the credibility of news on Twitter (see Table 7.13).

**Table 7.13.** *A single linear regression on the credibility and quality of Twitter*

|  | Credibility | | Quality | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | b | SE | b | SE |
| (Intercept) | 39.75*** | 2.16 | 36.88*** | 2.12 |
| Perception of State Intervention | 0.40*** | 0.03 | 0.53*** | 0.04 |
| State intervention (rankings) | -0.02** | 0.009 | -0.03*** | 0.009 |
| Education | 0.35** | 0.10 | 0.29** | 0.10 |
| Gender (Male) | -0.28 | 0.43 | 0.23 | 0.42 |
| Age | -0.10*** | 0.02 | -0.08*** | 0.02 |
|  | F= 34.66 | R2 = 0.0866 | F= 56.19 | R2 = 0.1347 |

N = 1,774; ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

**Quality**

Because of the correlation between quality and credibility in which scholars have emphasized that high quality news should be credible and trustworthy, RQ6 asks, "How do consumers rate Twitter in terms of quality?" Similar to Twitter credibility, participants

in this study reported that they perceived the quality of news content on twitter to be (range from 1 to 10, $M = 7.01$, $SD = 1.51$), and to be rated higher than credibility (see Table 7.14). In general, the quality of news on Twitter was rated highest in relevance ($M = 7.76$), comprehensibility ($M = 7.55$), and diversity ($M = 7.32$). On the other hand, the quality of news on Twitter was rated lowest in accuracy ($M = 6.37$) and impartiality ($M = 6.49$). The results showed noticeable differences in the participants' rating of the quality

**Table 7.14.** *Overall quality of Twitter*

|        | Diversity | Relevance | Accuracy | Comprehensibility | Impartiality | Ethics | Overall |
|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------------|--------------|--------|---------|
| Mean   | 7.32      | 7.76      | 6.37     | 7.55              | 6.49         | 6.55   | 7.01    |
| Median | 8         | 8         | 6        | 8                 | 7            | 7      | 7.16    |
| SD     | 2.01      | 1.97      | 2.03     | 1.90              | 2.11         | 2.20   | 1.51    |

of news on Twitter among the studied country. The one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of countries. There was a significant difference in mean rating of quality of news in Twitter [$F(4, 1769)=38.025$, $p < 0.001$] between the countries. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated test indicated mean differences score for rating the quality of Twitter across all five countries were statistically significant except between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where the difference was not statistically significant

Also, the mean of rating Twitter credibility in UAE was not significantly difference from the mean in Oman (see Table 7.15).

The level of the state intervention aligns with participants' perception of the quality of Twitter in which countries from low level intervention were rated the highest in all the six quality measurements while countries from medium and high level were rated

the lowest in all the six quality measurements, with Saudi Arabia being an exception (see

Table 7.15). Interestingly enough, t-test analysis showed that participants reported that

they perceived the quality of news content in Twitter to be higher than traditional media

outlets $t(14.43) = 3479.3$, $p < .001$, which might indicate that the limitations that

government apply to the produced news stories in traditional media outlets restrict

journalists' degree of freedom in making their own choices; thus, news quality will be

damaged.

**Table 7.15.** *Quality of Twitter by country*

| S. I | C | | Diversity | Relevance | Accuracy | Comprehensibility | Impartiality | Ethics | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High Level | Bahrain | Mean | 7.99 | 8.75 | 6.75 | 8.42 | 7.15 | 7.70 | 7.79 |
| | | Median | 8 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| | | SD | 1.61 | 1.50 | 1.43 | 1.44 | 1.60 | 1.75 | 1.11 |
| | SA | Mean | 7.07 | 7.31 | 6.56 | 7.18 | 6.43 | 6.13 | 6.78 |
| | | Median | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| | | SD | 2.24 | 2.19 | 2.29 | 2.22 | 2.40 | 2.44 | 1.76 |
| Medium Level | Oman | Mean | 7.56 | 8.05 | 6.57 | 7.69 | 6.67 | 6.83 | 7.23 |
| | | Median | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7.33 |
| | | SD | 1.75 | 1.73 | 1.75 | 1.62 | 1.76 | 1.86 | 1.21 |
| | UAE | Mean | 7.25 | 8.11 | 6.30 | 7.75 | 6.53 | 6.83 | 7.13 |
| | | Median | 8 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 6.5 | 7 | 7.33 |
| | | SD | 1.88 | 1.72 | 1.69 | 1.50 | 1.89 | 1.82 | 1.15 |
| Low Level | Kuwait | Mean | 7.07 | 7.34 | 5.54 | 7.26 | 5.85 | 5.96 | 6.50 |
| | | Median | 7 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6.5 |
| | | SD | 1.94 | 1.77 | 2.13 | 1.67 | 2.04 | 2.06 | 1.36 |

The level of state intervention may influence the perceived quality of produced

news in which news consumers might rate news on Twitter higher in terms of quality

because it is not subjected to the government's rules and regulations that prevent any

content that criticizes government officials. Therefore, H4b predicts: Consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention will rate Twitter higher in terms of quality. A simple linear regression was calculated to test whether participants' rating of the quality of news on Twitter will be influenced by their perception of the level of state intervention. The hypothesis was supported. The results of the regression indicate that there is a direct relationship between the participants' rating of the quality of news on Twitter and their perception of the level of state intervention (b = 0.53, p < 0.001). Results show that participants from a country with higher press freedom ranking rated the quality of Twitter lower than those who have higher press freedom ranking (b = -0.03, p < 0.001). The results of the regression also indicate that being male is positively significant with the dependent variable. (see Table 7.13).

## News Repertoires

### Cross-Media Repertoires

News consumers put together their cross-media news repertoires to select from a rich media environment; therefore, RQ9 asks, "What media repertoires do users create across all available media outlets?" Results show that majority of participants across all countries (*M* = 4.60, *SD* = 0.79) go to Twitter as their first news source, followed by friends, family, and acquaintances (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 0.97), and television (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = 1.20). Surprisingly enough, Facebook (*M* = 1.46, *SD* = 0.85), newspaper (*M* = 1.71, *SD* = 0. 95) and radio (*M* = 1.98, *SD* = 1.03) are participant's least favorite news source options (see Table 7.16).

**Table 7.16.** *Cross-media repertoires*

| News Sources | Mean: 0-5 | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Twitter | 4.60 | 0.79 |
| Friends, family, and acquaintances | 3.38 | 0.97 |
| Television | 3.32 | 1.20 |
| WhatsApp | 3.19 | 1.32 |
| Mobile news apps | 3.18 | 1.43 |
| News websites | 2.47 | 1.30 |
| Radio | 1.98 | 1.03 |
| Newspaper | 1.71 | 0.95 |
| Facebook | 1.46 | 0.85 |

When participants who watch television to get news updates were asked about their television news repertoires, the results show that the majority of participants go to Arab network television news such as Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, Al Hadath TV ($M$ = 2.31, $SD$ = 1.81) followed by international television news channels that broadcast to the Arab World such as BBC Arabic, CNBC Arabic, Sky News ($M$ = 2.12, $SD$ = 1.72) (see Table 7.17).

**Table 7.17.** *Television repertoires*

| TV News Channels | Mean: 0-5 | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Arab | 2.31 | 1.81 |
| International | 2.12 | 1.72 |
| Local | 2.06 | 1.69 |

**Twitter Repertoires**

Twitter as news-heavy social network have formed news consumers' habits and rituals and offer them different news accounts that may or may not be associated with news organizations; therefore, RQ10 asks, "What media repertoires do users create across Twitter news accounts?" The results show that the majority of the respondents rely on

non-traditional/professional Twitter news accounts more than traditional/professional

accounts. Participants identified three distinct repertoires they use to manage the massive

news content on Twitter, which are online news organizations that have no traditional

copies of their work ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.04$), Traditional media's Twitter accounts ($M =$

$3.41$, $SD = 1.28$), and Twitter news accounts that have neither traditional copies nor web

pages ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.18$) and Social media influencers ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.24$) (see

Table 7.18).

**Table 7.18.** *Twitter repertoires*

| Twitter News Sources | Mean: 0-5 | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Online news organizations that have no traditional copies of their work | 3.58 | 1.04 |
| Traditional media's Twitter accounts | 3.41 | 1.28 |
| Twitter news accounts that have neither traditional copies nor web pages | 3.31 | 1.18 |
| Social media influencers | 3.16 | 1.24 |
| Professional journalists' accounts | 3.12 | 1.19 |
| Citizen journalists' accounts | 2.86 | 1.24 |

**Audience Interaction on Twitter**

RQ11 asks, "How do audiences interact with journalists on Twitter, in terms of

retweets, likes, replies?" The results show that participants were not really active when it

comes to communicating with journalists. Participants tend to take a passive role when it

comes to interact with journalist; therefore, they prefer to like a journalists' tweet ($M =$

$2.84$, $SD = 1.14$), and re-tweet a journalists' tweet ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.15$) (see Table

7.19).

**Table 7.19.** *Audiences interaction with journalists*

| Interaction with Journalists | Mean: 0-5 | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Like a journalists' tweet | 2.84 | 1.14 |
| Re-tweet a journalists' tweet | 2.69 | 1.15 |
| Reply to a journalists' tweet | 2.13 | 1.05 |

## Summary of findings

The findings from this dissertation show that people are aware of the level of state intervention in media landscape. Participants perceptions of the state intervention align with the rules and regulations that governments in the Gulf region implement to control the news flow, and differ greatly from country to country, in which participants in a country of high state intervention are more likely to identify the high level of government's involvement in news production. Participants seem to be aware that when a government interferes with the free flow of news, their news consumption will be influenced.

The present study found that in general participants perceive the credibility and quality of news in Twitter to be higher than news in traditional media. The participants perception of the perceived credibility and quality of news content are influenced by the level of state intervention in which participants from a country with a lower level of state intervention perceived the credibility and quality of news in traditional media to be higher than news on Twitter, and vice versa. It was hypothesized that participants perception of the level of state intervention would be associated with participants rating of credibility and quality of both news in traditional media outlets and news on Twitter.

Other findings include that participants are highly likely to use Twitter for news updates more than any other news outlets, with a handful of participants who still read newspapers or listen to Radio. Television is identified at the top of the traditional news media repertoires, with Arab news channels is being participants' first choice, followed by international news that aired in Arabic. In the identified Twitter repertoires, online news organizations that have no traditional copies of their work dominate the preferences of the participants in Twitter repertoires, as well as Twitter news accounts that have neither traditional copies nor web pages and Social media influencers. Professional and citizen journalists' Twitter accounts are not among the most common repertoires.

**CHAPTER 8**

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The main focus of this project centers on explaining the relationship between the media environment and news consumers in different media systems in five countries by surveying social media news consumers. The study conducted a multinational survey of Twitter news consumers to investigate the relationship between media structures (macro-level) and Twitter news consumers (micro-level) in these authoritarian countries that apply strict rules and regulations on news outlets, which are theorized to influence news consumers' habits. This chapter offers an illustration of the relationship between news consumers and media systems in an increasingly abundant and complex media environment as state intervention was used to explain this relation. This study lays the groundwork for understanding news consumers' behavior in cases where state intervention is a major factor impairing freedom of expression and in turn, influencing news consumers' behavior and attitude.

The evidence presented here suggests that the level of state intervention in the media landscape forms participants' perception and directs their news consumption. Participants who are experiencing a high level of state intervention are steering clear from the regulated traditional media outlets, want to obtain news independent from the government. It is obvious that participants believe that traditional media outlets produce high-quality news content, but government intervention in news production influences the public perception of the credibility of the news. The public's distrust of government-run media causes a huge shift in news consumers behavior in which they give up on

traditional media outlets, and rely on online media outlets. These are considered more credible as they are free from government control that is directed more at news that does not serve government interests. This chapter provides a review of results followed by a discussion of the main takeaways from this dissertation, including its contribution to the literature of news consumption and theory of media choice.

## Review of Results

This dissertation conducted a multinational survey of Twitter news consumers in five Gulf countries: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. This dissertation investigated a range of issues relating to news consumers with a fuller consideration of the media system (structure) as a significant tool that can help understanding news audiences' choices and perceptions of produced news. For this dissertation, it is not a question to what degree government in Gulf countries have the means to control the news production but rather to what degree such control influences people's perception of the produced news, and to what degree are people aware of government involvement in the first place. This dissertation answered 10 questions and tested 6 hypotheses. Of these hypotheses, four were supported. Overall, the level of state intervention appeared to play an essential role in determining participants' news choice and altering their perception of produced news in both traditional and online media outlets.

It was hypothesized that participants from a higher press freedom ranking environment are less likely to have a positive perception of the levels of state intervention, and this was highly supported (see H1, which shows that the freedom of

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press rankings is positively related to participants' perception of the level of state intervention). This dissertation found that participants' perception of state intervention appears to differ substantially among the studied countries, which aligns with the Gulf country council media systems classification presented in the literature of this dissertation. Participants from Kuwait perceived the state intervention in the media landscape to be low as the Kuwaiti laws and regulations are not seen as restrictive as in other Gulf countries. The perception of the level of state intervention from Kuwaiti participants reflects the high-ranking Kuwait gets in the press freedom rankings. Participants from Oman and UAE, where the level of state intervention is medium with UAE having relative freedoms enjoyed by international news organizations that are targeted at Arab audiences, perceived the level of state involvement in the produced news to be medium. However, unlike all participants from other Gulf countries that were surveyed, participants from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, where direct state intervention reaches its highest level, perceived the interventions in media freedom to be extremely high. While expected, this is very interesting as participants' perception of the level of state intervention appears to structure and direct their subsequent action regarding their news consumption and their view of the credibility and quality of produced news.

This study hypothesized that people who perceive higher levels of state intervention would consume more news by social media than by traditional media, but this was not the case. Participants tended to consume news through the variety of news media platforms available to them. They seemed to combine the use of traditional media with online media by expanding and navigating different norms of news media

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consumption. The fact that the results indicate that although study participants find traditional media outlets less credible with lower quality content, it does not prevent news consumers from including traditional media outlets in their news consumption habits. As will be noted later in the chapter, this could be explained by the desire for diverse viewpoints as a way for news consumers to expand their filtered bubble.

What was interesting was that the state intervention in the media landscape influenced the news flow in the same manner as news audiences' consumption habits. The results found that participants are well aware of state involvement and admit that their news consumption habits are subject to these involvement effects. Participants from a high level of state involvement where governments apply rules that restrict the freedom of speech, believe that their news consumption habits are highly influenced due to the feeling of being watched by governments' surveillance programs or the fear of talking publicly and openly about some sensitive topics. Participants who believe that government involvement in media highly influences their news habits tend to be found in a country with a lower rank of freedom of speech and press, while participants who are in a country with a high rank tend to consider the government involvement only to a small degree. The findings presented here indicate that news audiences' consumption habits are subject to the level of written and unwritten rules that states apply to restrict the freedom of speech. In this case, infinite media choice does not lead to unlimited options because it is somehow caused by direct government interference.

It was hypothesized that news consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention would rate traditional media lower in terms of credibility and quality. Rating

the credibility of traditional media was directly tied to participants' perception of state intervention. The hypothesis relating to the perception of state intervention and the rating of traditional media quality is not supported. As will be seen later, the problem with professionalism in the Gulf region is not caused by a lack of professional training and/or education. Therefore, the quality of news is supposed to be high except with political content where intervention occurs most. It was also hypothesized that news consumers who perceive higher levels of state intervention would rate Twitter higher in terms of credibility and quality. Rating the credibility and quality of Twitter was highly related to participants' perception of the level of state intervention.

The results found that participants from a country with a less restrictive media environment, such as Kuwait, tended to rate the credibility and quality of traditional media outlets higher than Twitter. However, participants from a country with a moderate restrictive media environment, such as Oman and UAE, perceive the news content on both the traditional media and on Twitter as being equally credible, but with news on Twitter being higher in terms of quality. In the case of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, where media are known to have the most restricted rules, participants tend to rate the credibility and quality of news on Twitter to be extremely higher than traditional media. In general, the results showed that respondents demonstrate an apparent greater rate of credibility and quality of Twitter than of traditional media outlets. This can be explained from the perspective of state intervention in the media landscape because perceptions of credibility and quality seem to be derived by the level of state involvement.

Finally, results found that participants prefer to get news from Twitter more than any other online or traditional media news outlets. Traditional media outlets, especially newspaper and radio, are found to be participants' least favorite news sources, with television being an exception. Twitter, as a news source that enables access to news content anytime and anywhere, provides news audiences greater freedom to exercise their news preferences. These results showed that online news organizations with no traditional copies of their work, Twitter news accounts with neither traditional copies nor web pages, and social media influencers are the most widely used Twitter news accounts. Surprisingly, perhaps, traditional media and professional journalists are not among the most widely followed Twitter news accounts. For some participants, the affordance of participation matters in Twitter especially when it comes to giving a like to journalists' tweet, or when participants take an active role in distributing news content by re-tweeting a journalists' tweet.

## Contributions to the Literature

This dissertation explores different areas in the news environment equation from the audience's perspective, while taking into consideration the role of structures (state intervention) in shaping consumption patterns. No previous studies have specifically investigated the relationship between press freedom and news consumers' perceptions of the level of state involvement, the credibility and quality of produced news content in all available media outlets, and media repertories created in this rich media environment. The results presented in this study show that people's perception of the level of state intervention forms their media choice and their behaviors.

Of course, understanding media system characteristics is essential in observing and explaining how public news consumption and behaviors are formed. For a long time, scholarly attention has mainly been "user-centric," which has been noticed before (e.g. Giddens, 1987; Webster, 2009). Giddens (1987) noted, "The human agent is treated as the prime focus of social analysis. That is to say, the main concern of the social sciences is held to be the purposeful, reasoning actor" (p. 59). Similarly, McPhee (1963) raised deep concerns that "most of our modern social research is irretrievably microscopic; that is, it is only about individuals in the mass" (p. 4). Unfortunately, it is not adequate to conceptualize audiences and their outcomes as the combination of individual actions, but instead, conceptualize audiences with the media structures they employ. There seems to be something missing when trying to understand news audiences exclusively from the psychological point of view because structure is the "very medium … of human agency" (Giddens, 1987, p. 220). This dissertation fills this gap by taking the role of structure into consideration when exploring news consumption of audiences and their behavior in dynamic media environments.

This study contributes to the literature on government involvement in a media environment in developing countries by measuring audiences' perception of the level of state intervention on their employed media system. Much of the existing literature in media systems acknowledges that a high level of state intervention in media environments threatens journalists to produce content that serves governments' interests even though they are misguiding audiences (e.g. Elmasry, 2012; Mellor, 2007, 2008;

Rugh, 2004). This study takes a step further from previous literature by evaluating the level of state involvement in the eyes of news audiences.

Participants of this dissertation appear to have a great understanding of the state intervention in the media landscape, which influences their news consumption habits. In countries where state intervention in media systems has been identified to be strong (Saudi Arabia and Bahrain), participants perceptions of state intervention reflect the strict rules and regulations that are applied in these countries. News consumption habits, therefore, are influenced by this intervention in which participants in these countries tend to rely on Twitter for news updates over traditional media outlets. Additionally, participants from these countries have very low confidence in traditional media outlets and a high level of confidence in social media. Participants from a country with a medium level of state intervention (Oman and UEA) perceive the state intervention to be at a moderate level, hence, their news consumption habits are not highly influenced. Additionally, they show an equal level of confidence in both traditional and online media outlets. Participants from Kuwait, which is an exception to the Gulf region with limited state intervention, perceive the level of state involvement to be low, and think this level of involvement does not affect their consumption habits. Unlike other Gulf countries, Kuwaitis have confidence in traditional media outlets, while showing low confidence in online media. As expected, participants' confidence in all available media outlets are associated with their perceptions and attitudes towards the level of state intervention in the media system they use.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on the credibility and quality of news content by taking a step back and arguing for a fuller consideration of media systems as a fundamental element that helps understand how and why news credibility and quality are perceived in media environments under government surveillance. Many studies have focused on the issue of news credibility and quality in both traditional and online platforms, of that research, none have considered news consumers' perceptions of state intervention. Previous studies have investigated the credibility and quality of a variety of traditional and online news types, and provide mixed conclusions, suggesting that news credibility fluctuates due to different social, cultural, and ethical events. Some studies have found that the Internet is considered to be more credible than traditional media, others have emphasized that online-based news content is less credible and has a lower level of quality than traditional media types (e.g. Flanagin & Metzger, 2000, 2007; Greer, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2008; Kaye & Johnson, 2011; Kiousis, 2001).

This dissertation examines the rules of state intervention in shaping news consumers' perception of the credibility and quality of produced news. Overall, participants perceive Twitter to be more credible and having higher news quality than traditional media outlets. Also, this study identified strong relationships between the perceived level of state intervention and perceived credibility and quality of produced news. The findings presented here suggest that the government's involvement in the media landscape damages news credibility and quality, where participants who perceive a high level of state intervention rate the credibility and quality of traditional media lower than Twitter. In contrast, participants who perceive a medium level of state intervention

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tend to perceive news content on Twitter and traditional media outlets equally in terms of credibility and quality. When it comes to participants who perceive a low level of state intervention, the credibility and quality of traditional media outlets are rated much higher than Twitter. Government involvement in media forcibly restricts news producers' degree of freedom in making their own choices, which distorts the news credibility and quality in people's eyes.

This dissertation appears to find similar results to studies of audience cross-media news repertoires. The majority of participants prefer going to social media sources more than traditional media. Twitter is first choice for news updates, while newspapers and radio are surprisingly at the bottom of participants' cross-media news repertoires. These results suggest that social media is an increasing threat to the future of journalism in Gulf countries. Television, compared to other traditional media outlets, remains the most popular news source. Findings indicate that online news organizations with no traditional copies of their work, Twitter news accounts with neither traditional copies nor web pages, and social media influencers are gaining attention on Twitter more than professional journalists. This raises concerns surrounding the professional journalistic skills of these accounts.

## Contributions to the Theory

This dissertation aims to focus on explaining the relationship between media systems (structure) and news audience (agency). The essential concept in Giddens' (1984) approach "duality of structure" has been a beneficial tool to interpret the mutual relation between media systems and agency for studying news consumptions and

behaviors. Prior research has not entirely considered the role of media systems in explaining news consumption (see Webster, 2009). Most studies about news audiences focus on the motivations and needs that drive audiences to a certain type of media platform and a certain type of content from a psychological point of view. This is not to minimize the importance of those approaches as they provide useful explanations on the motivations that drive individuals to consciously choose a specific type of mediated communication or another. This dissertation studies news consumers in terms of agency and structure as an alternative framework would help to climb off the flaws of the psychological approach. This alternative framework highlights the value of understanding how choices are made, and how people perception of news environment is formed.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries share similar sociocultural values but apply a different range of rules and regulations that allows governments to intervene to a certain degree. Thinking of audiences in terms of agency and structure indicates that media systems in these authoritarian countries cast an external constraint on news consumers actions, as Webster (2009) puts it "agency and structure as mutually constituted" (p. 221). That is, while "human agents" are strongly voluntaristic and are capable of acting freely, social structure exists in their actions and people live within existing structures and also create new social structures in everyday life. Understanding the patterns of news consumption and people's perception of credibility and quality of news content requires accounting for structural variables that enable and/or constrain consumption and perception. When considering "structures as separate and unbending, activity can only play out in the arena of individual action," (Webster, 2009, p. 236)

which limits the conceptualization of agency. This study finds that news consumers both influence and are influenced by media structure, especially in these complex growing media environments.

In the past, people consumed the news on traditional media outlets because it was the only thing available, Now, those consumers can avoid traditional media outlets due to the growing size of online media environment. People perceive the structure of media constraining their news consumption as well as the credibility and quality of produced news, now consume large amounts via online media. However, when audiences think that the structure of media enables their news consumption and perception, they might tend to consume news via traditional media. Whether media systems as structures enrich or impoverish, human agents enact their news preferences within the structures available to them. On the basis of these patterns of consumption, due to structure influences, agents reproduce, replace or ignore structures principles, even if they are unaware of their actions in this process. However, for good or ill, news consumers can be fully understood with reference to structures that shape news consumption habits.

Giddens' approach takes agents seriously, emphasizing the power of agents to choose and  change structures. Based on his approach, news consumers (agents) and media systems (structures) are deeply interwoven and cannot be separated. The results of this dissertation help to make a really clear argument about how agency and structure can be seen as mutually constituted. Perceptions of state intervention are very salient in the results, influencing the way people consume news as well as their perceptions of credibility and quality of produced news. When state intervention plays up, news

consumers' behavior and attitudes are significantly influenced. Therefore, the choices news consumers make within their news environments can be an expression of their agency. The results indicate how the specific practices authorities apply to media structure leads to changes in the way audiences exercise their choice, which can alter those very structures.

Part of the duality of structure in Giddens' (1984) approach is that agents have the ability to change the structure. In this dissertation, this can be seen in news consumers' repertoires and their perception of produced news. In these Gulf countries' media system, news consumers (agents) perform choices constrained by the level of state intervention. Thus, the more the state intervenes into the media sphere, the more likely consumers will turn to online news sources. This has been going forward since the appearance of online media (Castells, 2012; Fogerty, 2011). The way people repeatedly use online media or avoid traditional media over time causes a change in structures, in which most authoritarian regimes update their media law by extending their oppressed and publications law to include the realm of cyberspace.

Again, agents "have the possibility of doing otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 258), and many opt to consume what aligns with their interests. If the news content works in the government's favor, it will be ignored. If it does not, it will be consumed repeatedly. Hence, agents set their news preferences within the structures they employ, and in doing so, they reproduce and alter those structures, even if they are unaware of their actions. This continuous interplay between news consumers and media systems result in news choices, and thus, shape the media environment at micro/macro levels. News consumers

in this digital environment are undoubtedly more active today than they have ever been. However, the media structures they use are directly or indirectly influenced by state intervention. Thus, the agency of news consumers cannot be seen as separate and unbending from structures. The microlevel actions of agency and macrolevel influence of structures is the most appropriate way to understand the nature of news consumers' behaviors and attitudes.

## Discussion of Main Variables

### State Intervention in Media

Decades ago, Siebert et al. (1956) introduced a new approach of thinking regarding the interaction between the media and the public. They realized that media platforms are formed by the structures of political systems suggesting that journalism accomplishes its coherence through interactions with other spheres of public life. Decades later, Hallin and Mancini (2004) acknowledged that the relationship between media and public is homogeneous where media shape public life and vice versa. The full understanding of this systemic relationship helps to explain how people interact within an established media system. Previous research in state intervention has mostly been focused on the nature and degree of state intervention in the media landscape (e.g. Zhao, 2012). Perhaps surprisingly, studies on the subject have not dealt more with audiences' perception of media systems and their news consumption habits when discussing the influence of state intervention on consumers. This dissertation takes the discussion of state intervention to another level by including news audiences into this equation. It can be assumed that the main factor which in this connection influences the news audiences is

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largely due to state involvement, especially in authoritarian regimes. A related point to consider is that the level of state intervention differs between countries, even in authoritarian regimes, as well as the extent and direction of such intervention (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Thus, news consumers' perception of state intervention may also vary.

No attempts were made to dig deeper and discover how people perceive the level of state intervention within their media system, and even less was done to find underlying impacts such intervention had on news consumers. This matter deserves closer study and therefore, this dissertation fills this gap in media systems research. One of the premises of this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for developing a typology, a framework, for analyzing media systems in the Gulf region, and to test this framework by exploring how audiences express their agency in these systems that are totally controlled by state intervention. As has been mentioned earlier, the analytical dimensions introduced by Hallin & Mancini (2004) were applied to the media system in the Gulf region keeping in mind their unique political systems that give no value for democracy. In the case of the Gulf region, state intervention is not seen as one dimension of a media system as Hallin & Mancini (2004) stated, but rather as a broader multidimensional category with different factors. These subdimensions will be presented here under different headings, corresponding to participants' perception of the three main areas of news environment influenced by direct government interference.

**Media Laws and Regulations**

The structures of media systems in most Gulf countries are built to impair the free flow of news. It is an attempt to deprive audiences access to news content that is

dominated by the government's views. The Gulf countries have issued vague regulations and indefinite "red lines" that influence both news consumers and media professionals. These laws and regulations indicate a lack of professionalism, poor press laws and ethics, journalistic corruption, and control that forces journalists to produce content that serves governments' interests (Pintak & Ginges, 2012). On the other hand, it guides news consumers toward a particular way of media use that aligns with the governments' perspectives. News content in a given country and the degree to which they reflect the government's views are conditioned by these rules and regulations. This would be especially remarkable in all Gulf countries, with an exception of Kuwait, that have no opposition press. Apart from being restricted by these rules and regulations, the most significant aim of the present study is to address the question of such control. What are the threats to and conditions of news consumption?

There are two different ways how governments and states steer and control news content in the media environment. First, there are applied laws and regulations on news content across all available media outlets with the tendency to show the government's views as the only view or as the public view. However, these laws and regulations may have consequences not only for sensitive news topics, but also for news which the country's rulers think may harm or damage social cohesion. Second, the practices of the Ministry of Information keep media outlets under its supervision. This is an important factor that will be discussed later in this chapter. At this point, it is important to highlight the link between the extraneous role governments play in the news production process and audiences' perception of the produced news.

People's perception of the influence of such laws and practices differs radically according to the state intervention environment they are experiencing in their media system. This is evidence that supports the fact that direct government interference leads to distortion of the news in people's perception. When comparing the intervention applied by governments, one would find that the differences are much greater according to the level of press freedom in each country. Governments in the Gulf region intentionally influence the flow of news in an attempt to "tailor" the news content so that it can serve their own interests. News audiences as consumers feel that media outlets do not make any effort to satisfy their needs for news. Therefore, news consumers see this intervention to be a type of distortion that has important effects on what they can consume.

**Professionalism**

The second way how governments steer and control news content in the media environment is represented by the Ministries of Culture and Information's practices. These ministries exist in all Gulf countries with practices that occur in different directions and extents. Ministries make it difficult for journalists to cover many events, meaning that journalists' autonomy heavily depend on ministries' practices and guidelines. These ministries impose various practices, such as licensing on all newspaper forms, appointing editors-in-chief or at least approving a newspaper's appointment, and updating censorship criteria, which can be summarized into four major techniques (AlAwad, 2006: Alshamiry; 1992; Rugh, 2004).

First, journalists must obtain a prior license from the Ministry before engaging in any journalistic activities. Second, there are detailed guidelines and instructions about the types of materials and subjects that may be published. Third, editors-in-chief are either appointed by the Ministry or have to be a loyalist. Fourth, ministries directly or indirectly provide financial subsidies especially for newspapers that are facing financial difficulties (Almaghlooth, 2013). All of these practices create self-censorship practices for both editorials who have to exercise censorship over their own papers (Al Shebeili, 2000), and for journalists who have to exercise censorship as a response to the editorial censorship. The extent of these practices differs between countries depending on the freedom press rankings.

People's perception of the influence of such practices on journalistic professionalism differs radically according to the level of state intervention they experience. People from low press freedom rankings complained about the structures of these practices as they believe it damages the professional journalistic practices and decision-making process within news organizations. On the whole, these practices are reflected in the process of producing media content, affecting the decisions of gatekeepers. People's perception of journalists revealed that news consumers are aware of the low level of professionalism mainly caused by the Ministry's practices. Studies showed that journalistic professional standards are often taught at universities in the Gulf region (Kirat, 2016; Sakr, 2004; Pies, 2008). Also, journalism education and training are also expanding rapidly with good quality and a high level of academic preparation.

Clearly, the lack of professionalism in the Gulf region is not due to a lack of education or professional training (Kirat, 2016; Sakr, 2004; Pies, 2008), but because of serious unethical practices by responsible ministries in each of the studied country. People's perception of journalistic professionalism aligns with previous studies that investigated professional journalists. Scholars point out that weaknesses and criticisms of professionalism journalism in the Gulf region are related to press freedom (Kirat, 2016; Hafez, 2016). With the exception of Kuwait, journalists in the Gulf region are still vulnerable to government pressure. Journalism associations need to negotiate the "red lines" of publishable and non-publishable materials and subjects to improve professionalism as a valuable asset in the development of public power.

Looking to the future of journalism in the Gulf region, the finding reveals the necessity to change or at least soften these practices with editors-in-chief having more authority. Journalists lack the crucial political news that can help political reform, which can only occur with free press systems. Journalists have been seen as spokespersons for the state. This has created a gap in the relationship between news consumers and journalists, challenging the professionalism in the media environment. Also, numerous events happen all around the world that concern the public who are increasingly tending to favor news in the online form over traditional form (Hermida, 2013). This is a universal challenge to established professional norms and values of journalism. Social media is a fertile ground for spreading low-quality content or misinformation (Stepp, 2009; Tandoc Jr et al., 2018; Weaver & Willnat, 2016). Having said that, this challenge becomes much bigger in the Gulf region, where people strongly criticize and question the

journalistic professionalism, and at the same time, have an unlimited supply of easily accessible news content.

**Consumption Habits**

The previous discussion of state intervention has mostly been based on the influence that the government and its ministries have on different levels of news production processes. However, the question of whether news audiences change their consumption habits merits closer attention. State intervention has a decisive influence on news consumption habits and before the Internet, governments guided news consumers towards a particular way of media use that aligned with the governments' perspectives by offering new content that served government interests. The development of the Internet, especially the rise of social media platforms, opened up many new ways for people to consume news along with a redistribution of power in the media environment caused a power shift in the news production process (Hermida, 2010a), especially in authoritarian regimes. It also threatened media censorship in general. Governments in the region revised and tightened press laws with heavy fines that apply on both traditional and social media platforms especially in the wake of the Arab spring. The violations of the revised press law could lead to punitive punishments such prison terms, shut down online news publications, and huge fines.

The power and freedom of digitalization collided with state intervention in updated press laws. In the beginning, news consumers felt more comfortable discussing sensitive subjects. However, after serious punishments for online law press violators, online news consumers started monitoring their consumption, keeping in mind overall

press policies. They tried to fight back by using technological tools, such as web proxies and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). Restrictions and censorship of online materials seem to be a failing mission and will go out of control every time governments try because the popularity of online media in the region makes it a new-found freedom space. The question becomes to what extent do restrictions of online materials influence news consumption habits?

It is fascinating that there is a strong connection between the perceived level of state intervention and the awareness that news consumers have on state influence on their news consumption. The findings presented here suggest that news consumers have different perceptions and understandings of the influence their media system play in their media choice or their behaviors. News consumers are fearful of governments' attempts to interfere in these online media; therefore, participants reported that they are very careful when it comes to discussing news events. As discussed earlier, news consumers do not feel safe talking about news on social media due to surveillance programs that are applied by states. Rather it appears that they tend to discuss news in person, especially sensitive topics. The updated press laws succeed in creating a fear-based environment where people are afraid to explicitly consume and discuss news content in these relatively free online media environments.

The presented results indicate that people's perceptions of state intervention affect their attitudes and behaviors toward news. Participants in this study showed that high-level perception of state intervention explained a significant amount of awareness on how governments influence and change consumption and behaviors toward news. The more

state intervention, the more likely people think such intervention influences their consumption; because the probability of hampering news flow is high. With the problem stated in this way, it should be clear that news consumption is highly connected to the nature of press freedom in a given country as well as people's perceptions of such systems. Winding up the discussion of news consumers' perception of state intervention, it can be said that this factor shapes consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Looking at media environments in the Gulf region, governments have created the best conditions for limiting journalists' autonomy and consumers' options. On the other hand, the dominant perception of news consumers coincides with that of press freedom rankings that is mainly influenced by state intervention.

While participants reported that state intervention influenced and changed their consumption habits, no correlation was found between consuming news through online media outlets and the perceived level of state intervention. The results indicate that participants use the variety of news media platforms available to them in the process of becoming aware of what is happening around them. They combine traditional and online media by expanding and navigating different norms of news media consumption. Similarly, news audiences selectively adopt their own paths across the media landscape and consume news content on different media platforms (Picone, Courtois, & Paulussen 2015). One explanation for this find could be that news audiences prefer to be exposed to diverse viewpoints in order to expand their filter bubble. Having said that, news consumers might be able to identify "fake news" or news content that presents government viewpoints. Another possible explanation is that participants trust traditional

media outlets for different topics. However, concerning political news where governments interfere the most, news consumers rely on other online sources for a more unbiased and diverse coverage. Online media provides easier access to more news sources with more power to evaluate traditional media news content in terms of trust. The authoritarians find it necessary to control news content that can be very dangerous to these regimes, but not all news content is equal. Therefore, the types of news matter when looking at content in the media environment. There is a very different dynamic about what news may be more or less sensitive than others. The kinds of news that are damaging to the government are what authoritarians pay more attention to, while other types of news, such as at the local level, are usually independent. Thus, news content may result in different levels of credibility and quality in the audiences' eyes.

**Perception and Reality of State Intervention**

It is undeniable that governments are able to constrict and suffocate the media sphere in a way that the public is not fully aware of, especially how the ministry of information can play at the production level. So much of state interventionism in the media sector is not fully known among the public; therefore, this dissertation compared people's perception of state intervention with the press freedom rankings for each country that represents the actual level of interventions. It can be argued that the elements that this dissertation used to measure public knowledge of state intervention can be trusted. These elements actually capture the actions that are taken by government officials in the Gulf region for two main reasons.

First, the findings provide a clear explanation of the participants' perception of the level of state intervention in the media sector. Participants' perception of the level of state intervention in the media landscape aligns with press freedom rankings in which participants from low-level intervention environments perceived lower level of state intervention. Also, the findings showed that participants' awareness of the influence that governments have on media aligns with the level of the written and unwritten media rules that apply to the media landscape in each level of state intervention. Second, these elements are derived from media typologies that have been developed by various scholars as a way of understanding the patterns of interrelationship among political and national media systems. It should adequately capture points of state intervention from the public perspective.

**The Perceived Impact of the Intervention on News Credibility and Quality**

Many previous studies on the perceived credibility and quality of news in both traditional and online media focus on three separate concepts: source credibility, message credibility, and media credibility. Scholars have empirically compared the credibility of the same news story presented in two different outlets and evaluated the level of perceived credibility of certain media outlets in comparison to others. Studies have not investigated whether the influence of state interventions is related to the perceptions of credibility and quality of news. It was noted that during wartime when people distrust the government's actions, people tend to distrust the traditional media and rely on online media platforms, such as blogs, as more trustworthy and credible options (Graf, 2006; Johnson & Kaye, 2007).

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The current study identified state intervention as an influencing factor altering news consumers' perceptions of credibility and quality of news content. It was expected that people in a country of "low freedom press rank" would perceive traditional media outlets as more credible with higher quality content than Twitter because they believe their government does not interfere to control the flow of news. On the contrary, people in a country of "high freedom press rank" will perceived Twitter as more credible with higher quality content than traditional media outlets because they believe the tremendous amount of government control of the media influence the produced news content.

**Perceptions of Credibility and Quality of Traditional Media**

Ratings of traditional media credibility across all countries found to be slightly above the midpoint on the credibility scale with being fair and biased were rated the lowest among all seven credibility scales. Perceiving a high level of state intervention may have been enough to harm credibility ratings for the news content in traditional media, but this perception was insufficiently to affect informative measures. Participants, in general, think that news in traditional media can be informative and somehow trustworthy, but that they cannot be fair or unbiased in their coverage. For, instance, traditional media in Bahrain —press freedom ranking 168th out of 180— was rated below the midpoint on the credibility scale as the lowest among the studied Gulf countries. One possible explanation could be that Bahrain's rulers are Sunni with the majority Shia sect seen as belonging to Iran, therefore, they bring threats to the Gulf region (Matthiesen, 2013). The Bahraini government has been trying to silence the Shia community by blocking their news station and taking away their political rights. Another possible

explanation for the lowest ratings of bias and fairness score could be that traditional media mostly presents government viewpoints. They are not allowed to conduct critical coverage of certain issues especially when it conflicts with government interests.

Throughout history, media systems in authoritarian regimes have made changes to tightly control the flow of news without intentions of creating more freedom for journalists. In most Gulf countries, news producers are giving clear instructions not to publish certain news topics. Audiences are aware that the very regulations that applied in the media landscape prohibit criticism of governments or discuss problems in a society such as corruption. News content would not flow freely in these environments, such regulations are viewed as harming the credibility of traditional media. The heavy intervention of state controlling media limits the level of credibility of news in traditional media.

Although the pattern of findings maps nicely to the prediction drawn from the influence of state intervention, evaluations of news quality were unrelated to the perception of state intervention. The relationship of news credibility and news quality is strongly correlated as content credibility can be seen in content quality among other characteristics (Metzger et al., 2003). Similar to rating the credibility of traditional media, it was expected to find stronger correlations between people's perception of state intervention and rating the quality of traditional media. That was not the case, the level of state intervention had no significant impact on news quality, which presented a puzzle that should not be overlooked. Several possible explanations will be discussed, and these

explanations do not count against the influence that state intervention has on news consumers' behavior and attitudes.

First, the previous discussion of journalistic professionalism indicates that professionalism in the Gulf region is heavily influenced by the level of state intervention, not by lack of professional training and education. Having said that, it is obvious that traditional media outlets can provide a better quality of media content since they care about journalists' qualifications, including education and professional training. One should think that the explanation is also in the rating of the six quality measurements. Diversity and impartiality were rated the lowest among quality measurements in all five countries. These measurements are heavily overlapped with credibility measurements that were rated lowest, which are fairness and bias. News consumers believe that media outlets cannot voice their concerns publicly especially concerning politics or minority rights. The lack of viewpoint diversity in news reporting is just a lack of fairness, while the lack of impartiality is another way of reporting that traditional media offer biased information. Third, since governments either own or direct traditional media outlets, they have the ability and resources to produce high-quality content that is consistent with the goals of the government's views.

**Perceptions of Credibility and Quality of Twitter**

In contrast to traditional media outlets, Twitter was rated relatively high in terms of credibility and quality across all countries. Evaluating people's perception of credibility and quality of Twitter is particularly crucial given the increasing use of Twitter as a news source in the Gulf region. Results of this dissertation show that

participants' perception in this study of Twitter's news credibility and quality was in the higher ranks, despite social media being a fertile ground for spreading low-quality content or misinformation. Twitter's high rating could be explained by the level of state intervention in the media landscape, which appears to be decisive for people rating all available news content. Again, people who perceive a high level of state intervention or live in a country of "low press freedom rank" rate Twitter high in terms of credibility and quality, with an exception of Saudi Arabia which will be noted later in this chapter. By contrast, people who perceive a low level of state intervention or live in a country of "high press freedom rank" rate Twitter low in terms of credibility and quality.

In Kuwait, Twitter is not credible enough for news updates compared to traditional media outlets, and the produced news on Twitter is perceived to be low. This can be attributed to the fact that Kuwait enjoys the highest press freedom of any Gulf country with the only Gulf country a "Partly Free" press status. The relative amount of press freedom enjoyed by professional journalists lures news audiences to rate traditional media higher in terms of credibility and quality. Participants who are from Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) rated traditional media and Twitter in terms of credibility and quality equally. A good possible explanation is that the level of state intervention in these two countries is perceived to be at a medium level, aligning with the press freedom rankings. So, participants feel that both mediums are subjected to the same level of state intervention. It becomes a matter of perceptions of message credibility and quality.

Saudi Arabia has been found to be a special case as participants rated the credibility and quality of both traditional media and Twitter to be low. Several different

explanations can be given for the low credibility and quality ratings of both mediums in the case of Saudi Arabia. First, the 2011 updated media law included "online media" to the law's purview, allowing the Ministry of Information to impose punishments such as heavy fines and imprisonment for both journalists and audiences who violated these online laws and guidelines. Of course, Saudi Arabia is like most Arab countries that have extended their oppressed and publications law to shape the nebulous realm of cyberspace, even in places like Kuwait. However, Saudi Arabia has taken more serious steps to colonize Twitter than other countries, in which the Saudi government provides everyday citizens on Twitter the tools to police each other and not just a government policing society.

Second, all online newspapers, Twitter news accounts, journalists in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to have a webpage and must request a license from the Ministry of Culture and Information (Zamil, 2013); violators would be held legally accountable (Jawad, 2013). Once they receive a license, they must follow guidance regarding boundaries of acceptable news coverage. The government's bureaucracy imposes such suffocating requirements for an online presence that they are able to enact a sufficient degree of control. Third, Saudis are very active on Twitter to the point where the Saudi government admitted they tried to monitor Twitter but failed, and Twitter went out of control because of its popularity (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Also, Twitter in Saudi Arabia is full of unkwon/spams accounts that are found to be responsible for "inauthentic engagement tactics such as aggressive liking, re-tweeting and replying" (Twitter, 2019, para 6). The

armies of trolls and everything that clouds the Twitter-sphere in Saudi Arabia, mucks up this space by creating additional social noise and diluting the credibility of news.

Fourth, the demographic and geographic features of Saudi Arabia are another explanation of why Saudis look at both traditional media and Twitter as not a valuable stream of information. Saudi Arabia, compared to other Gulf countries, is a giant country with a citizenry of more than 22 million. Saudi Arabia is by far the largest media market in the region in the Gulf region. It has the largest, not just the size but the depth, demographics scope of society. It seems that there is something about the size and the density. The nature of social media and Saudi Arabia is quite unique from other Gulf countries because of structural factors, which may be worth further investigation. Focusing on structural factors has been the center of Siebert et al.'s (1956) typology. This dissertation deliberately ignored the structural factors because of the similarity of socio-cultural values these countries share.

Drawing on the notion of agents in Giddens' (1984; 1979) view, human agents are knowledgeable and capable actors commit actions that are "intentional or purposeful" (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). It can be argued that findings on participant's perception of rating credibility and quality of both traditional media outlets and Twitter demonstrate a contrast effect. The level of state intervention in a given country mainly impacts news consumers' attitudes toward produced news. Those cases where governments clearly interfere in the flow of news by direct or indirect censorship may help to explain the logic behind the perceived level of credibility and quality that individual users have of news content. Agents are aware of these controlled media environments that cannot serve the

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public interest. They reside in and think about how to evaluate news content, and are able to provide a rational explanation for their perceptions.

**Repertoires of Media Use**

There are five distinct repertoires that participants use to manage a growing supply of news sources available at any time. Participants identified their cross-media repertoires in a growing and complex environment. At first sight, the repertoires appear to reflect the influence of state intervention on media landscapes. The news media repertoires created by participants of this study are largely based on online media platforms. Among comprehensive available choices, news users' repertoires selection includes Twitter, WhatsApp, mobile news apps, and news websites, along with television as the only traditional media platform. Arabic and international television news channels were reported as a predominant traditional media source, illustrating the distrust in local television news channels. It is notable, however, that newspapers and radio were not common among participants. This could mean that news audiences who live in a strict media environment know that the government agenda lies under each news story in traditional media, especially those that are sensitive and critical.

In Twitter, news account repertoire is tied to specific unprofessional news accounts. Some of these accounts raise concerns, first about the rising number of consumers turning to these unprofessional accounts, such as social media influencers, and secondly, about the agenda these accounts have which in some cases hide their identities. Many people purposely avoid news professional twitter news accounts. This evidence suggests that news audiences turn to Twitter for news updates not because of its

properties and affordances, but rather to stay away from content that has been interfered with. News audiences in these environments prefer to sacrifice the importance of journalistic professionalism for the sake of getting news free from strict media censorship.

Another possible explanation of this behavior is that these unknown/unprofessional Twitter news accounts may be able to fill the news gap of the media in the Gulf country despite their identities or professional training. Or they may be professional journalists who prefer to use nicknames in order to remain anonymous, which gives them more opportunities to express their feelings and criticism of political subjects, similar to early bloggers in the Gulf region who used the same technique to stay safe. Also, these accounts may report from outside the region and governments are not able to do anything about it. Previous studies found that Twitter challenges the objectivity norm by applying a sense of humor with personal opinions as a way for journalists to reveal their opinions with an ironic eye (Molyneux, 2015). Thus, these unprofessional Twitter news accounts may apply the same technique to gain popularity and create a strong personal brand on the online media environment. This may also help to explain why Gulf residents' repertoires are tied to specific online and Twitter news options.

In creating media repertoires, participants rely on their power of choosing. The fact that Twitter repertoires are mostly tied to specific untraditional media accounts offers an important insight into the power of agency. From Giddens' view, agency is strongly connected with power as one of agency's main characteristics argues that human agents almost always "have the possibility of doing otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 258). Before

the era of online media, news consumers in authoritarian countries were deprived from having the power of choosing, and their only option was the different media outlets either controlled by governments or loyal to the government. Such structures enabled news consumers agency and forced agency by coercion or physical power that is represented in strict media rules.

It can be argued, as seen through news repertories, that the power of digitalization creates a particularly powerful type of news consumers that can exercise their agency and in doing so, fuel the duality of media by reproducing and altering structures. It is noteworthy that participants in this study purposely avoid professional Twitter news accounts, which increases threats to the future of traditional media outlets, especially newspapers that were people's least favorite news sources in both traditional and Twitter repertories. Although, it can be concluded that news consumers may benefit more from exercising a powerful form of agency, it creates some challenges that may affect and threaten the future of journalism.

The first threat centers on the nature of operators behind these accounts. Unknown Twitter news accounts are an increasing threat to the future of professional media since news consumers are willing to rely on these accounts that are subjected to a lack of professionalism. Ordinary people are now being able to significantly affect news content, and sometimes, takeover a journalist's role in news production. Social media has equalized the ability of both ordinary and professional media users in creating and sharing news stories by providing access to most journalistic tools. This allows non-professionals to offer news content different to what professionals can offer (Garcia-

Perdomo, Salaverria, Kilgo, & Harlow, 2017) and make an impact on social media

platforms (Lasorsa et al., 2012). These ordinary people can produce non-professional

news content (Wall, 2015) that leads to crucial changes in journalistic values (Hermida,

2013) and creates a significant threat to the future of journalism.

The second challenge is that social media is a fertile ground for spreading low-

quality content or misinformation. So, with the great influence on all media outlets

caused by direct government interference, the chance of spreading low-quality content or

misinformation would be higher. News audiences may sacrifice significant of journalistic

standards and values for the sake of getting news content that is not regulated or

controlled. Then, finding quality news content that is trustworthy is going to be difficult.

Both Twitter users, as non-professional along with professional journalists are able to

participate through creating, spreading, and consume news that is considered anonymous.

These factors and threats play into traditional journalistic values, raising more questions

about the integrity and reputation of journalism as well as the necessity for news

authentication and verification in the digital age to distinguish between the "news" and

the so-called "news".

**Recommendations for Future Studies**

Future studies of news consumers attitudes and behavior can build on this study in

taking the role of state intervention into consideration as an influential factor that hinders

news consumption and perception. To use an example from this dissertation, previous

studies on perceived credibility and quality of news in traditional and online media

outlets found mixed conclusions. This study finds clear patterns in rating credibility and

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quality of media outlets in which the more the state intervention is, the less credibility and quality people's perception of traditional media will be, and the more credibility and quality people's perception of online media will be.

Future studies should consider replicating this study under different circumstances where the participants come from a representative sample. Perhaps the use of a larger and more representative sample will reveal more interesting evidence. It may be that the sample of Twitter users did not find the professionalism of traditional media outlets particularly important since they seem to rely on Twitter. Future researchers may want to compare the credibility and quality of different types of Twitter news accounts, such as professional journalists' accounts and citizen journalists' accounts, to have a better understanding of the differences in perceived credibility and quality of diverse Twitter news accounts. This will help to learn more about thousands of Twitter news accounts.

It is recommended that future research should examine the activity of Twitter news accounts because the produced news content of these accounts is a crucial factor in the journalism field. It is vital to explore this along with the fact that the roles of gatekeepers have changed. The media environments in Gulf countries have been subjected to state intervention, and governments are always inventing new techniques to limit freedom and to turn technological innovation to their own advantage. Also, future studies should look closely at news consumers in these authoritarian regimes and investigate the reasons that may lead them to rely on unknown Twitter news accounts more than, for instance, citizen journalists. Also, future studies should analyze both traditional media sources and Twitter news accounts to examine political agendas in each

type of news source. Finally, future studies could evaluate the credibility of different types of news coverage because the state intervention in the Gulf region is mainly directed to control political and sensitive news topics that may harm the country's rulers. So, it may be argued that news consumers trust online media only for political news coverage, but when it comes to other types of news, they rely on traditional media outlets.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this dissertation is not a question of to what degree Gulf countries have the means to control the flow of news, but rather to what extent do people perceive state intervention in their news media, and how do those perceptions affect their attitudes and behaviors toward the news? Also, how does such control lead to distortion of the news in the eyes of news audiences? The question that derives this dissertation was put by Siebert et al. (1956), "Why is the press as it is?" arguing that "the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 2). Giddens' approach, "duality of structure," was a beneficial tool that interprets the mutual relation between media systems (structure) and news audience (agency). It is assumed that a country with a freer press system normally will not interfere with the flow of news. Therefore, the applied laws and regulations will be less strict than a country with a less free press system.

At this point, this dissertation highlights the link between media systems (structures) and news consumers (human agents), emphasizing the influential practices of state interventions on news consumers' behavior and attitudes. As seen through Giddens' lens, the main reason for news consumers to behave in a certain way and to have a

particular perception about credibility and quality of produced news is state intervention in the media sector. More concretely, authoritarian governments have the power and resources to implement media laws and regulations that create conditions for arbitrariness, which results in a feeling of insecurity within news consumption. The Gulf countries are just one case that indicate that structures fundamentally matter when trying to understand news audiences because structure is the "very medium … of human agency" (Giddens, 1987, p. 220).

Participants of this study indeed reported different perceptions of state intervention based on the level of the press freedom their countries employ. The results presented here indicate that people's perception of state intervention results in huge influences in attitude and behavior toward produced news. This study illustrates that evaluations of news credibility and quality are influenced by the amount of press freedom enjoyed in the country. As traditional news media outlets attempt to navigate the rules and regulations that are imposed by authorities, audiences perceive a relatively low level of credibility and quality of produced news. All these low evaluations of traditional media news have real consequences on media repertoires, in which traditional media outlets are hardly identified as audiences' media repertoires. On the contrary, perceptions of credibility and quality of Twitter are found to be higher than traditional media, which appears in participants' media repertoires that heavily rely on non-traditional media outlets.

State intervention effects are important and must be taken into consideration if one is to grasp news consumers' attitudes and behavior. In authoritarian regimes, the

influence of state intervention appears obvious, making press freedom, even with the existence of online media, no longer a topic of optimistic discussion. This dissertation is an initial exploration of state intervention effects by investigating the relationship between the structure of media systems and news consumers in countries with a unique media/political environment. The findings of this study lay the groundwork for a first step in a longer process of analyzing and understanding contemporary media practices in the region. Media systems in general have the ability to enrich or hamper the news production. However, for good or ill, they are the forces that influence news consumption and perception.

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**THE ORIGINAL TWEET WITH A LINK TO THE ONLINE SURVEY**

**Abdullah Almalki**
@a1_malki

أرجو التكرم بالإجابة على هذه الاستبانة وإعادة نشرها في مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي كونها متطلب للحصول على درجة الدكتوراة في الإعلام والصحافة. تهدف الاستبانة إلى معرفة العلاقة بين الأنظمة الإعلامية ومتابعة الأفراد للأخبار في خمس دولٍ خليجية. شكرًا لكم 💐🙏

templeklein.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_08…

Translate Tweet
11:09 AM · Dec 23, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

# APPENDIX B

## THE RECRUITMENT EMAIL (ENGLISH)

Dear,

This is Abdullah Almalki, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Klein College of Media and Communication at Temple University. For my dissertation project, I am examining the relationship between media structures (macro-level) and Twitter news consumers (micro-level) in different societies (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, and Kuwait) where media systems are quite similar, and the use of social media for news purposes is comparable. Because you are a journalist/social media influencer who has an active Twitter account with a great number of followers, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the online survey. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible and then share the survey with your followers on your social media accounts by retweeting the original tweets that I have created in both Arabic and English language to attract as large participants as possible.

The survey questionnaires will require approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding, nor is there any known risk. Your participation is voluntary. You have the option to not respond to any questions that you choose. No identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address will be collected. Your responses will remain anonymous. While Qualtrics will record that you have completed this survey, the researcher, Abdullah Almalki, will not have any access to this information and will be provided with a unique survey ID to ensure your anonymity. Qualtrics is a research software company that is used to design, send and analyze surveys. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, please contact the researcher team at almalki@temple.edu or the research advisor Dr. Logan Molyneux at logan@temple.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding the relationship between media structures and Twitter news consumers.

Abdullah Almalki
Ph.D. Candidate
College of Media and Communication
Temple University

# THE RECRUITMENT EMAIL (ARABIC)

عزيزي / عزيزتي:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، وبعد:

أخوكم عبدالله محمد المالكي، باحث دكتوراة في كلية الإعلام والاتصال بجامعة تمبل الأمريكية وأنا حاليًا في مرحلة كتابة رسالة الدكتوراة كمتطلبٍ للحصول على الدرجة. في رسالة الدكتوراة، أحاول الكشف عن العلاقة المحتملة بين الأنظمة الإعلامية (المستوى الكلي) وطريقة استهلاك الأفراد للأخبار (المستوى الجزئي) في خمس مجتمعات خليجية مختلفة (الملكة العربية السعودية، البحرين، عمان، الإمارات العربية المتحدة، والكويت)، حيث تتشابه أنظمة الإعلام فيها، ويميل الأفراد فيها إلى استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كمصدر مهم للأخبار. هذا الاستبيان جزء من المتطلبات للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص الصحافة من جامعة تمبل الأمريكية.

تمت دعوتك للمشاركة في هذا البحث ومحاولة نشره في حساباتك على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي لأنك صحفي خليجي وشخصية اجتماعية مؤثرة خصوصا على برامج التواصل الاجتماعية وتملك عددًا كبيرًا من المتابعين المهتمين بالمحتوى الذي تقدمه. أخي الفَاضل، ادعوك بكل لطف بالمساهمة في الإجابة على هذه الاستبانة ونشرها بين أوساط متابعيك على برنامج تويتر. إذا رغبت في المساهمة فَي هذا البحث، ارجوا منك التكرم بالإجابة على جميع الأسئلة بكل صدق، ومن ثم ارجوا منك التكرم بنشر هذه الاستبانة للحصول على أكبر عدد ممكن من المشاركين من خلال إعادة التغريدة الموجودة على حسابي باللغتين العربية والانجليزية.

يجب أن تعلم أن مشاركتك في هذا الاستبيان تطوعية. لديك الخيار بعدم الرد على أي أسئلة لا ترغب في الإجابة عليها. وبإمكانك اختيار عدم المشاركة أو الانسحاب في أي وقت بدون أي مسائلة أو جزاء. سيستغرق إكمال الاستبيان حوالي ١٠ دقائق فقط من وقتك. ومع ذلك نرجوا منك المحاولة قدر الإمكان للإجابة على جميع الأسئلة. علمًا بأن جميع البيانات التي سوف تقوم بوضعها تخضع للسرية الكاملة وللاستخدام الأكاديمي فقط. كما أنه لن يتم سؤالك عن البيانات الشخصية مثل الاسم، البريد الإلكتروني، أو عنوان (IP) الخاص بك. ردودكم ستبقى مجهولة تمامًا. بينما سيسجل (Qualtrics) –برنامج مخصص لنشر وتحليل الاستبانات–– أنك أكملت هذا الاستطلاع، لن يتمكن الباحث، عبد الله محمد المالكي، من الوصول إلى هذه المعلومات وسيتم تزويده بمعرف استطلاع فريد لضمان عدم الكشف عن هويتك. إذا كانت لديك أسئلة أو مخاوف أو شكاوى أو تعتقد أن البحث قد أضرك، فيرجى الاتصال بفريق البحث:

الباحث: عبدالله محمد المالكي

almalki@temple.edu

مستشار البحث: د. لوقان مولينو

logan@temple.edu

كما أني شاكرًا لك مقدمًا ما بذلته من جهد ووقت في إنجاز هذه الاستبانة والوصول إلى أفضل النتائج والتي ستساهم في الكشف عن ماهية العلاقة بين الأنظمة الإعلامية واستهلاك الأفراد للأخبار، راجيًا من الله أن يرعاك ويحفظك.

أخوك:

عبدالله محمد المالكي

جامعة تمبل

كلية الاعلام والاتصال/قسم الصحافة

# APPENDIX C

## LIST OF JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATIONS AND RESEARCH CENTERS

### A. List of Journalists Associations

- The Saudi Journalists Association (SJA)
- Bahraini Journalists Association (BJA)
- Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA)
- Omani Journalistic Association (OJA)
- UAE Journalists Association (UAEJA)

### B. List of Research Centers

- Social Science Research Center at Umm Al-Qura University
- Prince Mishaal bin Majed bin Abdul Aziz Center for Social and Humanities Research at King Abdulaziz University
- Center of Excellence for Concrete Research and Testing at King Saud University
- Institute of Research and Consulting at King faisal University
- Scientific Research Center at King Khalid University
- Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at Taibah University
- The Research Sector at Kuwait University
- The Research and Development Office at Gust University
- United Arab Emirates University research Center
- Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences at University of Sharjah
- Institute for Social & Economic Reserach at Zayed University
- The Humanities Research center at Sultan Qaboos University
- Social sciences research center at University of Bahrain

# APPENDIX D

# SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES  (ENGLISH)

## Tracing News on Twitter: Forces Shaping News Consumption and Perceptions in Gulf Country Media Systems

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey about the relationship between news consumers and media systems. Your responses to the survey questioners are confidential and available to the researcher and faculty supervisor. Filling this online survey that should take no longer than 15 minutes for you to complete. Please answer every question as accurately as possible. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at [almalki@temple.edu](mailto:almalki@temple.edu). You may now begin the questionnaire.

> Abdullah Almalki
>
> College of Media and Communication
>
> Temple University

1. **What is your country of origin?**
   - □ Bahrain
   - □ Kuwait
   - □ Oman
   - □ Saudi Arabia
   - □ United Arab Emirates
   - □ Other _____

2. **Which of the following statements best describes you? I follow the news closely...**
   - □ Only when something important is happening
   - □ Most of the time, whether or not something important is happening

3. **Whether online or offline, do you prefer to get your news by...?**

   - □ Reading it
   - □ Watching it
   - □ Listening to it

4. **Below is a list of ways people might discuss or share information about news issues and events. Please indicate how often you do any of the following:**

|  | Never<br>1 | Rarely<br>2 | Sometimes<br>3 | Often<br>4 | Always<br>5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.** Share a news story with someone either digitally or in hard copy | | | | | |
| **B.** Discuss, comment, replies on the news on social media | | | | | |
| **C.** Like news posts on social media | | | | | |
| **D.** Comment about the news on a website, blog, or letter to the editor | | | | | |
| **E.** Call into a live radio or TV show | | | | | |
| **F.** Post or submit your own news content to a news outlet, newsletter, or online forum | | | | | |
| **G.** Discuss the news with others in person or over the phone | | | | | |

5. **Now, thinking about news sources, How often do you…**

|  | Never<br>1 | Rarely<br>2 | Sometimes<br>3 | Often<br>4 | Always<br>5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Get news from television? | | | | | |
| Get news from radio? | | | | | |
| Get news from newspaper? | | | | | |
| Get news from Twitter? | | | | | |
| Get news from Facebook? | | | | | |
| Get news from WhatsApp? | | | | | |
| Get news from a news website? | | | | | |
| Get news from a mobile app? | | | | | |
| Friends, family, and acquaintances? | | | | | |

# Section 1: Traditional News Sources

6. **Thinking about the traditional news sources, how confident are you that these traditional sources can get you the news and information you need.**
   - ☐ Very confident
   - ☐ Confident
   - ☐ Somewhat confident
   - ☐ Not very confident
   - ☐ Not at all confident

**7. How often do you read any newspapers in print?**
o Never
o Rarely
o Sometimes
o Often
o Always

**8. How often do you listen to news on the radio?**
o Never
o Rarely
o Sometimes
o Often
o Always

**9. Do you watch news on television?**
o Yes
o No **(skip to 11)**

**10. Now, thinking about TV news habits, How often do you…**

| | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**A.** Watch local television news?
**B.** Watch Arab network television news (such as Al-Arabiya)?
**C.** Watch international television news channels that broadcast to the Arab World (such as BBC Arabic)?

**11. Please think about the traditional news outlets and circle the option that best represents your perceptions of the characteristics of the news you read on the account:**

| Not all likely | | | | | | | | | Extremely likely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**A.** This news can be trusted
**B.** This news is fair
**C.** This news is informative
**D.** This news is accurate
**E.** This news tells the whole story
**F.** This news is biased
**G.** This news is opinionated

**12. Please think about the traditional news outlets in your country and circle the option that best represents your perceptions of the quality of journalism in your country:**

|  | Not all likely | | | | | | | | | Extremely likely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

A. Diversity of viewpoints in journalistic coverage (diversity)
B. News focus in actual and socially relevant issues (relevance)
C. News is complete and accurate (accuracy)
D. News is understandable by audience (comprehensibility)
E. Neutral and balanced news coverage (impartiality)
F. The compliance of ethical standards (Ethics)

# Section 2: Twitter News Outlets

**13. Thinking about the Twitter news accounts, how confident are you that these Twitter news accounts can get you the news and information you need.**
- □ Very confident
- □ confident
- □ Somewhat confident
- □ Not very confident
- □ Not at all confident

**14. How often do you news form…**

|  | Never 1 | Rarely 2 | Sometimes 3 | Often 4 | Always 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.** Traditional media's social media accounts? | | | | | |
| **B.** Online news organizations that have no traditional copies of their work? | | | | | |
| **C.** Twitter news accounts that have neither traditional copies nor web pages? | | | | | |
| **D.** Professional journalists' accounts? | | | | | |
| **E.** Citizen journalists' accounts? | | | | | |
| **F.** Social media influencers? | | | | | |

**15. Unlike with traditional media outlets, news audiences on Twitter can take an active role in a news story and engage with journalists. Thinking about your news habits in Twitter, how often do you…**

|  | Never 1 | Rarely 2 | Sometimes 3 | Often 4 | Always 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.** Reply to a journalists' tweet | | | | | |
| **B.** Re-tweet a journalists' tweet | | | | | |
| **C.** Like a journalists' tweet | | | | | |

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**16. Please think about the Twitter news account and circle the option that best represents your perceptions of the quality of news in Twitter:**

|  | Not all likely | | | | | | | | | Extremely likely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**A.** This news can be trusted
**B.** This news is fair
**C.** This news is informative
**D.** This news is accurate
**E.** This news tells the whole story
**F.** This news is biased
**G.** This news is opinionated

**17. Please think about the Twitter news account and circle the option that best represents your perceptions of the quality of news in Twitter:**

|  | Not all likely | | | | | | | | | Extremely likely |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**A.** Diversity of viewpoints in journalistic coverage (diversity)
**B.** News focus in actual and socially relevant issues (relevance)
**C.** News is complete and accurate (accuracy)
**D.** News is understandable by audience (comprehensibility)
**E.** Neutral and balanced news coverage (impartiality)
**F.** The compliance of ethical standards (Ethics)

## Section 3: Media Systems

**18. Please rate the level of influence you feel each of the following has on news content in your country:**

|  | Very Low | Low | Medium | High | Very High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

**A.** The applied laws and regulation on news media outlets
**B.** The role of Ministry of Information Institutional practices

**19. How much do you think each of the following influence your news consumption habits:**

|  | Not at all<br>0 | Slightly<br>1 | Somewhat<br>2 | Moderately<br>3 | Extremely<br>4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.** The feeling of being watched by governments' surveillance programs. | | | | | |
| **B.** The fear of talking publicly and openly about some sensitive topics. | | | | | |

**20. Now, thinking broadly about all of the various news organizations you are familiar with, how influential is each of the following factors on news content in your country?**

|  | Not at all<br>Influential<br>0 | Slightly<br>influential<br>1 | Somewhat<br>influential<br>2 | Very<br>influential<br>3 | Extremely<br>influential<br>4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A.** The independence of the editorial. | | | | | |
| **B.** Self-censoring practices of journalists. | | | | | |
| **C.** Professional journalistic practices. | | | | | |
| **D.** The internal system that governs decision-making processes of news organizations. | | | | | |

## Demographics

**21. In what year were you born?** _____

**22. Please indicate your gender:**

o   Male
o   Female

**23. Please indicate your level of education:**

o   High school
o   Some College
o   College Graduate
o   Masters
o   Doctorate
o   Other _____

# APPENDIX E

# SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES  (ARABIC)

<div dir="rtl">

**الاستبانة**

**متابعة الأخبار على برنامج التواصل الاجتماعي تويتر: العوامل المؤثرة على استهلاك الأخبار وتصوراتها في أنظمة الإعلام في دول الخليج**

شكرًا لك على موافقتك على المشاركة في هذا الاستطلاع حول العلاقة بين مستهلكي الأخبار والأنظمة الإعلامية. سيستغرق إكمال الاستبيان حوالي ١٠ دقائق فقط من وقتك. ومع ذلك ارجوا منك المحاولة قدر الإمكان للإجابة على جميع الأسئلة. علمًا بأن جميع البيانات التي سوف تقوم بوضعها تخضع للسرية الكاملة وللاستخدام الأكاديمي فقط. كما أنه لن يتم سؤالك عن البيانات الشخصية مثل الاسم، البريد الإلكتروني، أو عنوان (IP) الخاص بك. ردودكم ستبقى مجهولة تمامًا. يرجى الإجابة على كل سؤال بأدق ما يمكن. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة حول هذه الدراسة، فلا تتردد في التواصل معي: almalki@temple.edu

عبد الله المالكي
باحث دكتوراة
كلية الإعلام والاتصال
جامعة تيمبل

**١. في أي دولة تقيم؟**
- البحرين
- الكويت
- عمان
- المملكة العربية السعودية
- الأمارات العربية المتحدة
- أخرى _____

**٢. أي من العبارات التالية تصفك بشكل أفضل؟ أتابع الأخبار عن قرب ...**
- فقط عندما يحدث شيء مهم
- معظم الوقت، سواءً كان هناك شيء مهم أو لا

**٣. بغض النظر عما إذا كنت تتابع الأخبار عبر الوسائل التقليدية أو الإنترنت، هل تفضل الحصول على الأخبار عن طريق ...؟**
- قراءتها
- مشاهدتها
- الاستماع إليها

**٤. فيما يلي قائمة ببعض الأساليب التي يمكن أن يناقش بها الأشخاص أو يشاركون فيها معلومات حول القضايا والأحداث الإخبارية. يرجى توضيح عدد المرات التي تقوم فيها بأي مما يلي:**

| أبدًا | نادرًا | أحيانًا | غالبًا | دائمًا | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | مشاركة قصة إخبارية مع شخص ما الكترونيًا أو في نسخة ورقية |
| | | | | | مناقشة، تعليق ، أو الرد على الأخبار على وسائل التواصل الإجتماعية |
| | | | | | وضع علامة إعجاب على المنشورات الإخبارية في وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي |
| | | | | | القيام بالتعليق على الأخبار على موقع الانترنت أو المدونات أو بإرسال رسالة إلى الصحيفة |
| | | | | | الاتصال على البرامج المباشرة |
| | | | | | نشر أو إرسال محتوى إخباري خاص بك إلى وسيلة أخبارية أو عبر الإنترنت وبرامج التواصل الإجتماعي |
| | | | | | مناقشة الأحداث الإخبارية مع الآخرين سواءً بشكل مباشر أو عن طريق وسيلة الكترونية |

</div>

٥. عند التفكير في مصادر الأخبار المختلفة، كم مرة تحصل على الأخبار من...

| | أبدًا | نادرًا | أحيانًا | غالبًا | دائمًا | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | القنوات التلفزيونية؟ |
| | | | | | | محطات الراديو؟ |
| | | | | | | الصحف الورقية؟ |
| | | | | | | تويتر؟ |
| | | | | | | الفيس بوك؟ |
| | | | | | | برنامج واتس آب؟ |
| | | | | | | المواقع والمدونات الإلكترونية؟ |
| | | | | | | تطبيقات الهواتف المحمولة؟ |
| | | | | | | الأصدقاء والعائلة والمعارف؟ |

**القسم الأول: مصادر الأخبار في وسائل الإعلام التقليدية**

٦. عند التفكير في مصادر الأخبار التقليدية، إلى أي مدى تثق في أن هذه المصادر بإمكانها توفير الأخبار والمعلومات التي تحتاجها؟

- واثق جدًا
- واثق
- واثق إلى حدٍ ما
- لست واثق جدًا
- لست واثق جدًا

٧. كم عدد المرات التي تقرأ فيها الصحف المطبوعة؟

- أبدًا
- نادرًا
- أحيانًا
- غالبًا
- دائمًا

٨. هل تستمع إلى الأخبار على الراديو؟

- أبدًا
- نادرًا
- أحيانًا
- غالبًا
- دائمًا

٩. هل تشاهد الأخبار على التلفزيون؟

- نعم
- لا (انتقل إلى السؤال رقم ١١)

١٠. الآن، الرجاء تحديد التصورات الخاصة بك في فيما يتعلق باستخدام القنوات التلفزيونية للحصول على الأخبار: كم مرة تشاهد الأخبار على ...

| | أبدًا | نادرًا | أحيانًا | غالبًا | دائمًا | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | القنوات الإخبارية المحلية |
| | | | | | | القنوات الإخبارية العربية (على سبيل المثال قناة العربية ، وغيرها) |
| | | | | | | القنوات الإخبارية الدولية التي تبث باللغة العربية (بي بي سي عربي ، سكاي نيوز عربية) |

١١. يرجى تحديد الخيار الذي يمثل أفضل التصورات الخاصة بك بما يتعلق بمصداقية الأخبار التي تحصل عليها من الوسائل الإخبارية التقليدية (صحف ورقية، قنوات التلفاز، ومحطات إذاعية):

| | غالبًا جدًا ١٠ | ٩ | ٨ | ٧ | ٦ | ٥ | ٤ | ٣ | ٢ | نادرًا جدًا ١ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| يمكن الوثوق بها | | | | | | | | | | |
| أخبارها منصفة | | | | | | | | | | |
| أخبارها غنية بالمعلومات | | | | | | | | | | |
| أخبارها دقيقة | | | | | | | | | | |
| أخبارها تروي القصة كاملة | | | | | | | | | | |
| أخبارها منحازة | | | | | | | | | | |
| أخبارها عبارة عن آراء | | | | | | | | | | |

١٢. يرجى تحديد الخيار الذي يمثل أفضل التصورات الخاصة بك بما يتعلق بجودة الأخبار التي تحصل عليها من الوسائل الإخبارية التقليدية (صحف ورقية، قنوات التلفاز، ومحطات إذاعية):

| | غالبًا جدًا ١٠ | ٩ | ٨ | ٧ | ٦ | ٥ | ٤ | ٣ | ٢ | نادرًا جدًا ١ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| تنوع وجهات النظر في التغطية الصحفية (التنوع) | | | | | | | | | | |
| تهتم بالأخبار الحقيقية والمتعلقة بالمجتمع (الأهمية) | | | | | | | | | | |
| تقدم الأخبار بشكلٍ كامل ودقيق (دقة) | | | | | | | | | | |
| الأخبار مفهومة من قبل الجمهور (الشمولية) | | | | | | | | | | |
| تغطية أخبار محايدة ومتوازنة (حيادية) | | | | | | | | | | |
| الامتثال للمعايير الأخلاقية (الأخلاق) | | | | | | | | | | |

## القسم الثاني: مصادر الأخبار في تويتر

١٣. عند التفكير في مصادر الأخبار على برنامج التواصل الإجتماعي تويتر، إلى أي مدى تثق في أن تويتر قادرٌ على توفير الأخبار والمعلومات التي تحتاجها؟
- ○ واثق جدًا
- ○ واثق
- ○ واثق إلى حدٍ ما
- ○ لست واثق جدًا
- ○ لست واثق على الإطلاق

١٤. عند التفكير في مصادر الأخبار المختلفة، كم مرة تحصل على الأخبار من...

| | دائمًا | غالبًا | أحيانًا | نادرًا | أبدًا |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| حسابات وسائل الإعلام التقليدية على تويتر | | | | | |
| المؤسسات الإخبارية التي لديها صفحة على الإنترنت وليس لديها نسخة ورقية؟ | | | | | |
| الحسابات الإخبارية على تويتر والتي ليس لديها نسخ تقليدية أو صفحات على الانترنت؟ | | | | | |
| حسابات الصحفيين المحترفين؟ | | | | | |
| حسابات الصحفيين المواطنين؟ | | | | | |
| حسابات المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي؟ | | | | | |

١٥. بخلاف وسائل الإعلام التقليدية، يمكن للعامة على برنامج التواصل الإجتماعي تويتر القيام بدور نشط في المساهمة في العملية الإخبارية والتواصل مع الصحفيين. عند التفكير في عاداتك عندما تتصفح الأخبار على تويتر، كم مرة تقوم بالتالي:

| | دائمًا | غالبًا | أحيانًا | نادرًا | أبدًا |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| الرد على تغريدة صحفيّ | | | | | |
| إعادة تغريد تغريدة صحفيّ | | | | | |
| الإعجاب بتغريدة صحفيّ | | | | | |

١٦. يرجى تحديد الخيار الذي يمثل أفضل التصورات الخاصة بك بما يتعلق بمصداقية الأخبار التي تحصل عليها من حسابات التواصل الاجتماعي تويتر:

| نادرًا جدًا ١ | ٢ | ٣ | ٤ | ٥ | ٦ | ٧ | ٨ | ٩ | غالبًا جدًا ١٠ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | يمكن الوثوق بها |
| | | | | | | | | | | أخبارها منصفة |
| | | | | | | | | | | أخبارها غنية بالمعلومات |
| | | | | | | | | | | أخبارها دقيقة |
| | | | | | | | | | | أخبارها تروي القصة كاملة |
| | | | | | | | | | | أخبارها منحازة |
| | | | | | | | | | | أخبارها عبارة عن آراء |

١٧. يرجى تحديد الخيار الذي يمثل أفضل التصورات الخاصة بك بما يتعلق بجودة الأخبار التي تحصل عليها من حسابات التواصل الاجتماعي تويتر:

| نادرًا جدًا ١ | ٢ | ٣ | ٤ | ٥ | ٦ | ٧ | ٨ | ٩ | غالبًا جدًا ١٠ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | تنوع وجهات النظر في التغطية الصحفية (التنوع) |
| | | | | | | | | | | تهتم بالأخبار الحقيقية والمتعلقة بالمجتمع (الأهمية) |
| | | | | | | | | | | تقدم الأخبار بشكل كامل ودقيق (دقة) |
| | | | | | | | | | | الأخبار مفهومة من قبل الجمهور (الشمولية) |
| | | | | | | | | | | تغطية أخبار محايدة ومتوازنة (حيادية) |
| | | | | | | | | | | الامتثال للمعايير الأخلاقية (الأخلاق) |

**القسم الثالث: النظام الإعلامي**

١٨. يرجى تقييم مستوى التأثير الذي تشعر به لكل مما يلي على محتوى الأخبار في بلدك:

| أبدًا | نادرًا | أحيانًا | غالبًا | عالي جدا | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | القوانين واللوائح المطبقة على وسائل الإعلام |
| | | | | | دور الممارسات المؤسسية لوزارة الإعلام |

١٩. إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن كل من العناصر التالية تؤثر على عادات استهلاك الأخبار لديك:

| أبدًا | نادرًا | أحيانًا | غالبًا | عالي جدا | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | الشعور بأنك مراقب على برامج التواصل الاجتماعي |
| | | | | | الخوف من المناقشة العلنية لبعض المواضيع الحساسة |

٢٠. الآن، بالتفكير على نطاق واسع في جميع المؤسسات الإخبارية المختلفة التي تعرفها، ما مدى تأثير كل من العوامل التالية على محتوى الأخبار في بلدك؟

| ليست مؤثرة إطلاقًا | مؤثرة قليلا | مؤثرة إلى حد ما | مؤثرة جدًا | مؤثرة للغاية | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | استقلالية التحرير |
| | | | | | ممارسات الرقابة الذاتية على الصحفيين |
| | | | | | الممارسات الصحفية المهنية |
| | | | | | النظام الداخلي الذي يحكم عمليات صنع القرار في المؤسسات الإخبارية |

**المعلومات الشخصية**

٢١. ما هو تاريخ ميلادك؟ _____

٢٢. الرجاء تحديد نوع جنسك:
- ○ ذكر
- ○ أنثى

**٢٣. الرجاء تحديد المستوى التعليمي:**

- ○ شهادة ثانوية
- ○ طالب جامعي
- ○ درجة البكالوريوس
- ○ درجة الماجستير
- ○ شهادة الدكتوراة
- ○ آخر اذكره: _____

# APPENDIX F

## TRANSLATION CERTIFICATION

I, Mahmoud Ali, a professional translator certified by the American Translators Association, with certification number 533508 certify hereby that the translation of the three documents listed below is an accurate translation of the source documents. This certification is provided to researcher: Abdullah Al-Malki, PhD candidate at the Klein College of Media and Communication.

1. Consent form in Arabic

2. Recruitment Email

3. Survey Questionnaire

Date: 12/5/2019

Signature:

# APPENDIX G

## IRB DETERMINATION

The following letter was issued by Temple University Institutional Review Board in 2019 to Dr. Logan Molyneux, the supervisor of this dissertation.

Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects Research that Does Not Require Continuing Review

Date: 13-Dec-2019

| | |
|---|---|
| Protocol Number: | 26314 |
| PI: | MOLYNEUX, LOGAN |
| Review Type: | EXEMPT |
| Approved On: | 13-Dec-2019 |
| Committee: | A1 |
| School/College: | MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION (1700) |
| Department: | KLEIN:JOURNALISM (17030) |
| Sponsor: | NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR |
| Project Title: | Tracing News on Twitter: Forces Shaping News Consumption and Perceptions in Gulf Country Media Systems |

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The IRB approved the protocol 26314.
The study was approved under Exempt or Expedited review. The IRB determined that the research **does not require a continuing review**, consequently there is not an IRB approval period.

If applicable to your study, you can access your IRB-approved, stamped consent document or consent script through ERA. Open the Attachments tab and open the stamped documents by clicking the Latest link next to each document. The stamped documents are labeled as such. **Copies of the IRB approved stamped consent document or consent script must be used in obtaining consent.**

**Note that all applicable Institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation**. These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees' websites for further information.

**Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:**

● **Amendment requests - All changes to the research must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.** Changes requiring approval include, but are not limited to, changes in the design or focus of the research project, revisions to the information sheet for participants, addition of new measures or instruments, increasing the subject number, and changes to the research funding.

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Changes made to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects and implemented prior to IRB approval must be promptly reported to the IRB.

- **Reportable New Information -** using the Reportable New Information e-form, report new information items such as those described in HRP - 071 Policy - Prompt Reporting Requirements to the IRB **within 5 days**.
- **Closure report** - using a closure e-form, submit when the study is permanently closed to enrollment; all subjects have completed all protocol related interventions and interactions; collection of private identifiable information is complete; and analysis of private identifiable information is complete.

**For the complete list of investigator responsibilities, please see the HRP – 070 Policy – Investigator Obligations, the Investigator Manual (HRP-910), and other Policies and Procedures** found on the Temple University IRB website: https://research.temple.edu/irb-forms-standard-operating-procedures.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.